

ROMANCE READERS

AND

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ROMANCE WRITERS:

A Satirical Novel.

*IN THREE VOLUMES.*

BY THE AUTHOR OF  
'A PRIVATE HISTORY OF THE COURT OF ENGLAND, &C.'

GNATHO. *Quid agitur?*

PARMENO. *Statur.*

GANTHO. *Video.*

*Numquid nam hic, quod nolis, vides?*

PARMENO. *Te.*

GNATHO. *Crede.*

TERENCE.

M.G. LEWIS, ROSA MATILDA, HORSLEY

*CURTIES, &c. parlent.*

*Hélas, mon Dieu, craignez tout d'un auteur en courroux,*

*Qui peut——* BOILEAU.

VOL II.

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THE EFFECTS  
OF  
ROMANCE READING.  
CHAP. IX.

SIR JOHN AND LADY WRINGHAM.

No huswife led a better life;  
She to *false steps* was e'en hard-hearted,  
\* \* \* \* \*  
And thought the nation ne'er could thrive,  
Till all *frail girls* were burnt alive!

PRIOR.

LADY WRINGHAM has been introduced to the reader, as a *ci-devant* laundress; and such was *really* her origin, though she was so very much noticed by the rector and his family.\*

Sir John Wringham, the diminutive husband of this lady, was a wealthy baronet, and the last of his noble house: he was sent to study the law at the Temple, and which dry business seemed to accord very well with abilities in which were united much shrewdness with intense plodding. He wished for an heir, to inherit his title and dignity, but he had an almost unconquerable preference to the life of a bachelor; and he continued to study away at his chambers in the Temple, until he had actually attained his forty-fifth year.

However, Sir John was rich and great, as far as related to his purse and the ancestry of his family; though mean in aspect and low in stature: twice, without much exertion on his part, was he, in succeeding elections, chosen member for the county of ———, and sparing of his breath in St. Stephen's chapel, except in giving his *aye*, when he plainly saw most votes would carry the day; and as sparing of his good dinners and of unlocking his coffers; his respiration never suffered from overexertion. And while a steak and a pint of wine contented him at the Temple Coffee-house, the strong box, being unincumbered with any other visitors than this *sparing* baronet, it was so well filled, that Sir John scarcely knew, himself, the extent of his riches.

One laundress had washed for him and cleaned his chambers for ten years; she was pretty, but rather masculine, and turned of thirty: for three whole years, had Sir John been assailing her chastity in vain! "*By gosh*, she knew how to manage such a little *whiffling* being as he!" and having that kind of *violent* virtue, which scratches and fights to defend itself, many a time has she laid the amorous knight sprawling on the floor, from a well aimed blow, and confined him to his chambers, under pretence of a cold, from the black eyes inflicted by her Amazonian fist.

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\*Her Ladyship's origin—*Historique*.

Once in a quarter, Sir John Wringham used to meet a party of brother students at a club, held at the house of an inn-keeper, who had assisted Sir John in gaining his elections: there, as the bottle passed briskly about, was it much lamented that the baronetage of Wringham should be in danger of extinction from the want of heirs male. This repeated remark dwelt on the mind of the knight; and he wished to bequeath his honours to posterity: he loved Sukey Wiggins, his laundress; he felt he could not be happy without her, and he had many *striking* proofs of her virtue; which finding impossible to conquer, he actually made his honourable proposals, in due form: and the astonished and delighted Sukey, biting her little finger till it bled, to see if she was actually awake; sending for the apothecary, to know if she was in her right senses; and going to a famous fortune-teller, who, after she had thrown out, herself, every possible hint, told her she would certainly be very soon married to a very rich man, and be a *lady*,—she soon knew that Sir John Wringham had really, in right *arnest*, made honourable love to her.

She did not want for an abundant share of low cunning; and she played the tyrant over her infatuated lover, as well as any high bred lady of birth and fashion could possibly have done; and seeing herself sure of her man, she did not let him rest, till she had obtained from him a written promise to let her have the entire disposal of much more than the half of his immense fortune.

And now behold her, Lady Wringham! proud, haughty, insolent, and overbearing—her ignorance, which was unnoticed in her humble state, now rendered glaring and conspicuous; pluming herself on her virtue, and more for her imaginary beauty and perfections.

If a poor, young, inexperienced girl, had the misfortune, through the perfidy of a treacherous lover,

“Before a wife, to be a nurse,”

Oh! what virulent abuse was heaped upon the *nasty creature*, by Lady Wringham! Hanging, she declared, was too good for her! such bold, infamous hussies ought to be flayed alive! At the same time, she detested the wife who had not the happiness of being a mother: she, herself, thank God, was the *joyful* mother of *eight*: but really, indeed, she must say, she did not expect to have *little ones* so fast! but it was God Almighty’s pleasure! Then if ever any lady shewed any kind of fondness for a faithful dog, a bird, or a kitten, or indeed expressed only common compassion for them; if this lady chanced, at the same time, to be childless, Lady Wringham would be sure to say, “Aye, aye, if you had any *little ones*, you’d never think about *them there* brutes.”

Such is always the common-place jargon proceeding from a narrow and contracted heart! children, the dearest tie under heaven, creatures, when not even bound to us, by nature’s strongest bands, the most helpless, the most interesting objects of creation! But cold must be the heart that, though it gives to you its tenderest affections, and feelings of a widely differing nature, can yet unnoticed, and too often spurned, see the fawnings of the fond spaniel; and the faithful guardian of our person and property is the dog of every description. Oft-times, by such pretended fond parents, is the imprisoned bird pining for want of food; and, unrewarded, the half-famished cat for her useful abilities, nor given a share of that food which her vigilance, in keeping the house clear from vermin, has deserved. The principles of honour should make us kind to the brute

creation; we are their lords; he who destroys his fellow creature “shall surely die:” the lives of animals are ours; they are given into our hands, and it behoves us to treat them, by no means with ridiculous fondness, but with kindness and humanity; while we reflect,

“That HE who doth the ravens feed,  
As providently caters for the sparrows.”

The three first children with whom Lady Wringham presented her husband, were, much to his disappointment, all girls: at length, a puisne boy made his appearance. The country air being recommended for the future baronet, a magnificent house and grounds were purchased at Eglantine, and my Lady affected to be quite enamoured of the *rual* scenes about this charming village.

Here the young gentleman grew strong and hearty: the prolific lady added four more children, two boys and two girls to the family; and with those that were old enough, she strutted to church, like an old fat hen, with her chickens trotting after her.

The *eighth* child, Mr. Leslie had the honour of christening, when first this *amiable* lady was introduced to the reader; and four times had he the more agreeable honour of touching twenty bright guineas, which the lady picked out for him, each time she had a child made a christian; for she liked to “do things *like themselves!*”

She spared no expence in the articles of dress; nor in any kind of ostentatious vanity; but never gave away a sixpence to relieve a distressed and worthy object—“there was the parish,” she would say, “for those poor wretches! and God knows, Sir John paid enough to the poor’s rates”—and as for common beggars, “they were such a set of *wagabones*, that they ought to be whipped at the cart’s tail.”

When first she married, she had a little diffidence of herself, and held her tongue; but her equipage, her husband’s rank and wealth, procured her numerous acquaintance; she met with many ignorant people among her betters; they said all that came uppermost: she was therefore resolved in her turn to dash forward, and be as easy and as unreserved as the best of them! and if any chose to laugh at her, she would think within herself, “let those laugh *as wins*, I can *buy* them all.”

Her profusion, which was mistaken for carelessness about money, and knowing she had the entire management of Sir John’s heavy purse, induced the rector, who was getting rather out at elbows, to pay implicit court to her ladyship; as he hoped, some day, to be able to coax her out of a good round sum of money, to be paid in *any* way that was most agreeable to *her*, or which would be much better, as most convenient to *himself*.

Lady Wringham at this time was grown *very* fat, old looking and coarse; and never would be any thing else, than *very* vulgar; yet, the fashionable Mr. Leslie, to carry his point, did not scruple to flirt with her in that kind of way, as made her fancy he had a tender inclination for her person; which made her really not wonder at her elevation to dignity; but she began to think even that she might have done better for herself, with the irresistible charms she was mistress of.

She was uncommonly proud and arrogant to all her country neighbours, except those she dignified by the appellation of quite *your tip-top quality folks*: she would sometimes honour Mrs. Susanna Bradbury by a call; and two or three times in the winter, invite her and her niece to a family dinner! but begged, above all things, Mrs. Susan would never think of introducing *her* to her friend Mrs. Edmonds, as it might very much injure her virtue and *reputation*: Mrs. Susan took no notice of her silly remarks; she

reflected from whence they came, and that it was literally casting “pearl before swine,” to attempt, by dint of reasoning, to convince obstinate and ignorant self-approbation.

Lady Wringham honoured the family at the farm house for some time, only by a swaggering curtesy, an high *elevation* and violent *toss* of the head; but since the last visit of the rector to his living, when he brought down his family, and she saw them all take so much notice of the young ladies, she was much more familiar; but she never visited them before, except once or twice in a year: she said, she believed they were quite *commonish* kind of people, for she had never heard of one *title* among them.

Sir John was something of an original character, before his marriage; he was now a mere non-entity, particularly in the presence of his dear Sukey; who governed with absolute sway—when he did even dare to reflect, he wondered at himself that she could ever charm him so much, to give up the reins to her management as he had done—but then, how many dear children she had brought! *doubly* dear, for they were very expensive, and Sir John was getting fast onwards to that period of life, which, when the affections attaching themselves beyond judicious boundaries, is very aptly called *dotage*. In these spoilt children “of his age,” did Sir John centre all his delight; he was continually seen dandling the smaller ones on his knee; playing with them at *see-saw*, and singing to them all the babies’ songs, and reciting the old nurse’s tales, which he had heard himself, in his days of infancy; then he would sometimes lead the others about the grounds and the environs of the village; while perfect strangers to him or his title, who might chance to visit that part of the country, and the unruly children have escaped him, and been, perhaps, in the apparent danger of being run over by a horse or a carriage, have much mortified him, by saying, “Do, my pretty dear, go back to *grandpapa*, when he calls you.”

Now, though there was not such a *violent* disparity of age between Lady Wringham and her husband, yet, she has given a foolish titter on such occasions, and would frequently talk to her confidential friends of her *youth* having been *sackerficed*; and tell the false-tongued rector and the *quizzing* Sir Charles Sefton, who would often flatter her for her youth and the charms of her person, “Ah! dear me; what *sinifies* title or riches? to be sure, Sir John is a very good husband, and a loving father to the *little ones*, but I have a sad prospect before me of being nothing more *nor* a nurse to him, in the very prime of my life!”

## CHAP. X.

## NEW PROPENSITIES.

Fancy, whose delusions vain  
 Sport themselves with human brain;  
 Rival thou of Nature's power,  
 Cans't, from thy exhaustless store,  
 Bid a tide of sorrow flow,  
 And overwhelm the soul in the deepest woe;  
 Or, in the twinkling of an eye,  
 Raise it to mirth and jollity!

COOPER'S *Poetical Blossoms*.

MARGARET, now in some degree, convinced of the caprice of quality, moped away her hours at home, during a long rainy week: all her bright visions of conquest seemed fled, while the prophecies of Mrs. Kennedy occupied all her thoughts.

Confident in her own mind, that all she had foretold her would be verified, she detested the very sight of poor Phelim O'Gurphy, and was sure that he must be "the *lowest of the low-born.*"

She flew to her old resource of incredible romance; and read till she almost made herself sick and blind. Mary felt the power of love; and she was sure also that her love was hopeless; could she ever raise *her* thoughts to the nephew of Sir Edward Harrington? doomed by birth, wealth, and fashion, to figure only in the great world! Impossible. The rose fled from her cheek, and though her duty made her cheerfully and implicitly follow all her former occupations, yet her spirits sunk, and her father and uncles saw, with much anxiety, this, the loveliest blossom which adorned the house and garden of Eglantine Farm, drooping and fading daily before their eyes: Mary, whose cheerful vivacity, whose continual gaiety inspired them all with gladness, now smiled but faintly, and that smile was evidently forced.

Edward, the most affectionate of fathers, trembled for both his girls; he fancied that their mother had been consumptive, and that they both inherited it; for though Mary looked not so fresh as formerly, yet, in the presence of Margaret, who was now as pale as a ghost, she looked better.

In the mean time the girls were both indulged in every thing they could wish for; compelled only to drink asses' milk; to take every thing good and strengthening, in order to repel the silent, slow, but sure and death-dealing malady. Their malady was seated only in the heart and the imagination; it was the heart of Mary that was assailed; and though the flight of the arrow was quick and sudden, it was buried deep! while the frenzied imagination of Margaret, fed to satiety, and destroying itself by "the food it fed on," was the only cause of her heavy eye and chalky-coloured cheek.

Towards the latter end of the following week, a beautiful summer's day seemed to exhilarate every inhabitant of the farm-house; a brightness shone in the heretofore languid eyes of Mary, and she sang, as usual, while she worked; and though her songs were of the

plaintive kind, yet her listening father and uncles, who were busy arranging papers in an adjoining room, were delighted to hear that she *did* sing; but Margaret still neglected herself, and sat in a corner reading, with her fingers stuck in her uncurled and uncombed hair, her knees and chin together; while a romance of the fourteenth century laid on her lap: from which she lifted her head every now and then, to say, "La! I wish my sister would not make such a noise!"

The third time she made this remark, Mary gave a sigh, and thought, within herself, ah! why should I sing? She then applied herself to her needle, and was silent.

Just as the clock struck two, who should enter the apartment, but Frederic Harrington and Lady Isabella Emerson! the glowing rose again quickly bloomed on Mary's cheek: Harrington had never visited the farm before! an equal emotion kindled in his bosom; and Mary could not be blind to his accompanying blush and love-fraught eye.

Margaret too was highly gratified, for Lady Isabella almost flew to her, and embracing her, said, "My lovely friend, I am sure you are not well." "Oh! yes, now I am," said Margaret, speaking from the native impulse of her heart, "I was really ill, but the presence and condescension of your ladyship has quite cured me." "Sweet girl!" replied Lady Isabella, and taking up the book, she added, "Come with me into the garden; it is so delightful after the rain; and I want to have a little talk with you." She then, with a charming familiarity, took up the book, and drawing Margaret's arm through her own, walked with her into the garden: while Mary moved, to acquaint her father and uncles of the presence of these noble visitors.

Frederic, however, prevented her; "Oh! stay, Miss Marsham," said he, as he respectfully, and tremblingly took her hand, "the servant is gone to Mr. Marsham; but they are now very busy in arranging some paper, which they cannot leave; and which it will not be five minutes before they have done with; we wish not to be treated here as strangers, but as familiar friends; and, oh! suffer me, dear Miss Marsham, to enjoy those short moments, winged, indeed, too swiftly with bliss, in your charming company." "Oh! sir," said Mary, "why address me in this high-flown strain of flattery? Have you then, so very poor an opinion of my understanding, as to imagine I can be pleased with it?" "It is *concurring*, and in some degree, *afflicting* circumstances, which alone render me eager to seize the present fleeting minutes; suffer me then to make use of this blessed opportunity, the last perhaps, I shall find of unburthening my thoughts to the too amiable Miss Marsham." "The last!" involuntarily and emphatically uttered Mary, "Oh! I hope not." The manner of her uttering this simple expression, and the deep blush that suffused her cheek, imparted hope, in her brightest array, to the breast of Frederic. "The sweet illusion," said he, "of thinking that Miss Marsham regrets my absence, will soothe the pangs of separation, and act as a tutelary divinity, to steel my breast with courage and my arms with success, in the day of battle." "Battle!" repeated Mary, while the hue of the lily succeeded to the rose on her cheek, and a drop, like the dew of the morning, stood trembling on her long eyelash.

"O God!" said the empassioned Frederic, "time presses; I go, perhaps never to return; never to see you more! Pardon, I beseech you, pardon my temerity;" and he clasped the timid, though then unresisting Mary to his bosom, while he kissed off the liquid assurance of more than *common* concern for his safety.

She would fain have chid her lover, but she found it impossible; and there was a respect attending the action, which would have rendered resistance on her part (all circumstances considered) both prudish and fastidious. The servant entered, saying, "My master, sir, is quite distressed that my interruption just now, obliged him to go over a great part of the paper he was engaged with, again: and the Captain being obliged to depart next week, they are settling some family affairs of importance; but the gentlemen will really have done in less than ten minutes."

Frederic intreated him to desire his master to take his time, as Lady Isabella and himself had no particular engagement to call them home; and he inwardly blessed the delay, and prayed that Lady Isabella, towards whom he now felt perfectly indifferent, would remain some time longer with her friend: and he might make himself easy in that respect, for they had strayed to the meadows, conversing on many interesting matters.

Harrington now made the best of his time, and endowed as he was with every insinuating art of persuasion, he was not long ere he wrought on the mind of the young and innocent Mary, so far, as to draw from her a faint and timid promise, of giving him that hope of her affections, which would enable him to support the pain of absence.

Frederic Harrington had formerly been an officer in the Guards; but not well pleased with a service, active only in deeds of continued dissipation, he had quitted it, at the request of his uncle, coinciding also with his own wishes after the death of his mother.

He became acquainted with the honourable and reverend Theodore Leslie at the University of Oxford, when that gentleman had gone there to keep a long term, previous to his being made Master of Arts. Frederic was fascinated with the easy and fashionable manners of the young divine, and entered into a firm friendship with him; but his frequent loans to this reverend gentleman had so impoverished him, together with much money purposely and gallantly lost to Lady Caroline Leslie, that his uncle, entirely to wean him from so destructive and dangerous a society, though he severely felt the separation, yet judged it better that he should again enter the army, and accompany the grand expedition to the Scheldt, when he might also be of service to his country, and distinguish himself by his personal courage and merit.

Sir Edward Harrington likewise regretted that so many fine young men, who might be usefully and bravely employed, and become an honour to Great Britain and themselves, should be lounging away their hours on the pavements of Bond-street and Pall-mall. Severe might be the lot, deep the sorrow of their surviving relatives, should they perish; but they would have this consolation, that the youthful heroes died on the bed of honour, and did their part in ensuring the safety of their island from the grasp of the usurper: and such as these enable the honest artificer, the industrious farmer, and the useful citizen to carry on their employments in peace and security, and spread the table of the wealthy tradesman with "luxury and ease."

It was but in brief, that Frederic acquainted his Mary with *one* cause of his departure; which was the impoverished state of his finances: his persuasions to Lady Caroline Leslie *had conquered her*; for he had prevailed upon her to take back the sum she had lost to him, on the evening of that day he first beheld the charming Mary: this, in as delicate a manner as possible, towards her ladyship, did he explain to Mary, on the accusation he received from her, of his being a general lover. He owned that he had never

seen any woman so beautiful and fascinating, in person, as Lady Isabella Emerson; but it was *person alone*; and its “skin-deep” and fugitive impressions had departed for ever!

The irradiating mind of Mary, while it embellished her countenance, made the charms of that countenance, though quick in their effects, increasing and durable in their impression.

Mary was easily disposed to believe all that her Harrington told her—perhaps the reader may think *too* easily: but Mary was very young, Frederic irresistibly insinuating and handsome, and they were also on the point of separating, perhaps never to meet again: she had found the object of her choice *virtuous* and *innocent*, when compared to what she had once thought him; and when she reflected on the distance between them, when she knew how many high-born and wealthy ladies to whom he had a right to aspire, she felt that conscious and gratified pride which cannot but glory in being the preferred choice of such a man.

Mary was not a model of *perfection*; far from it; she was a mere human being, subject to error: she had no vice, she shuddered at the thought of committing a crime! she was prudent as any girl of eighteen, but was not without the natural weaknesses of frail mortality.

Too soon, much too soon for Frederic Harrington, and why should we endeavour to conceal it from our readers, for their own hearts will tell them, if we did not, that too soon also for Mary did the three brothers enter the parlour, and put a stop to the most interesting conversation which she had ever held with any one.

In the mean time Lady Isabella and Margaret were not idle. “My dearest girl,” said the lady, as she turned over the leaves of the volume which Margaret had been perusing, “What stuff are you reading here? Why you might as well read Mother Bunch’s Fairy Tales, or a Defence of Witchcraft.” “La! my lady,” said Margaret, “I really presumed to think that you and I were something alike in our ideas; and that your ladyship was as romantic almost as myself.”—“I, my dear?” exclaimed her ladyship; “yes, I am the most romantic creature living; but quite in a different way; I never go beyond probability; and the romances I peruse, shew me, if not the *exact* picture of human life, at least what it ought to be: I’ll send you some of *my* books; they will not stuff your brain with ideas of ghosts, magic and witchcraft; but will ennoble your ideas, enlarge your understanding, and teach you how to charm, and not so like one of the antiquated sybils you are so fond of reading about.”

Lady Isabella had the art of giving a charm to all she uttered: Margaret was convinced that all she said must be right; and she regarded her ladyship with the fondest admiration; while she felt deeply confused at her own slatternly figure, as she looked on the style and tasteful elegance of Lady Isabella’s dress: she adjusted her tucker, smoothed her dishevelled hair, as well as she could, with her fingers! but casting her eyes downwards, she saw two defects in her light pink striped gown, which she could not then possibly repair; one was a greasy spot, in circumference of about an half-crown piece; the other a large hole, much the same size, which she had burnt as she stood over the kitchen fire reading, after having given some orders to the cook-maid, and which had been caused by the red-hot poker; while just before, she had unconsciously dipped the other end in the dripping-pan, being herself wholly absorbed in the study of her favourite romance.

However, spite of her grotesque figure, Lady Isabella continued to caress her, as she wanted to make both a *tool* and a *fool* of her. She took care to tell the silly and credulous girl, in the course of their conversation, that Sir Charles Sefton was desperately in love with her.

“Indeed, my lady,” said Margaret, “I cannot think it; though to be sure, I must tell you, that the evening of Mr. Leslie’s ball, I really did think something; but, dear me, he never took the least notice of me in the world the other night, but even turned his back upon me!”

“I can tell you, my love, the reason of all that,” said the crafty Isabella; “you must know, my wise brother-in-law, Mr. Leslie, is desirous that I should marry the charming Sir Charles Sefton, whose heart is so devoted to you; but we neither of us like one another: well! my brother had taken upon himself the delightful task of watching us both that night; and therefore, Sir Charles, at my intreaties, never once looked towards you.” “Well, I don’t know how it is; but I must say, I did rather like him,” said the imprudent Margaret, who knew not the artifice of her ladyship; “but I thought he was afraid of Mrs. Kennedy; he told me once she was a ——.” “She is,” interrupted Lady Isabella, “the dearest creature in the world!” For Lady Isabella knew not that Sir Charles had carried his *quizzing* powers so far, as to persuade Margaret into a belief of Mrs. Kennedy being skilled in the *black art*—and Lady Isabella often found her that safe confidential friend, who, while she patiently endured all her sarcasms, would also, while she concealed the many improper secrets Lady Isabella confided to her, be not only silent, but as far as lay in her power, assisting likewise: thus, though Lady Isabella inwardly despised the pliability of her principles, ridiculed her person, and some of her flights of imagination in her writings, yet she ever pretended for her the most kind and disinterested friendship.

“Pray, my lady,” said the pondering Margaret, “who did she mean by the *rich gentleman, older than myself*, who would have evil designs upon me?” “Not Sir Charles, you may be certain,” replied Lady Isabella; “he loves you too well to injure you in the smallest degree: no, he, I am sure, will study nothing but your happiness: though I do not implicitly believe all that Mrs. Kennedy may tell with the cards, yet sometimes, I assure you, she *does* hit *right*; but then, I believe, that is all by mere chance! and what, indeed, is it but *chance* that governs our destiny?”

Lady Isabella now perceiving that she had impressed Margaret with every idea she could wish respecting Sir Charles, proposed returning to the house, promising to send her the books as soon as she arrived at the parsonage.

It may be easily seen, that from taking an improper bent, the refined understanding of Lady Isabella was perverted to the worst of purposes, and the pernicious works she perused, the ill example of her nearest relatives, and a naturally mischievous disposition, all combined to corrupt her heart, and render her careless of future consequences, so as she could but achieve her desired pursuit. That heart had a degree of warmth which made love requisite to the happiness of her existence; she had loved Major Raymond, but she never had regarded any man with that degree of partiality which she felt for Frederic Harrington. Her penetration was most quick and acute; she saw, after the last visit of the farm-house family to the parsonage, that the heart of Frederic was lost to her for ever; she had suspected it, at the preceding visit, but she hoped, if it had only strayed from her, she should yet be able to recover it: now, her wounded pride made her fixed in the resolution

to spurn him from her, even if she saw him sighing at her feet in despair.

She was resolved in private to give Raymond every hope; while in public she must affect to receive the addresses of Sir Charles Sefton with pleasure and satisfaction; though she inwardly detested him, and put every art in practice to rid herself of a lover so very uncongenial to her taste.

She determined, if possible, to drive him into some kind of intrigue, which might take up his time and attention; and it will be thought strange that she should pitch upon Margaret for this manoeuvre: but she saw that the girl, if she took proper care of her person, was by no means disagreeable: she knew also that Sir Charles Sefton was a professed admirer of all the sex, and doted on variety, in whatever female form it appeared, that was not downright ugly and deformed; Margaret Marsham, four years younger than Lady Isabella, was just his favourite age, and a coral lip quite seduced him; such had Margaret.

The perfidious lady designed first to delude her mind with those seductive novels, whose chief subject is love, and that was generally produced by *beauty*; and these novels did not always make *marriage* the *finale* of the piece, but rather taught the young mind to lean to love *unrestrained* and *unlimited*—

“Love, free as air.”—

Lady Isabella, to aid her own plot, and gratify her revenge on the lovely Mary, for robbing her of the heart of Frederic, cared not one straw whether or no she was the ruin of a poor innocent credulous girl, or for any afflictions she might heap on her family: such, such alas! are the fatal principles which sway the mind of that being who gives herself up to the free indulgence of her inclinations; who makes use of a brilliant understanding, by daring to doubt an hereafter, flies in the face of her God, while she spurns decorum and every moral tie and obligation: pride, vanity, and revenge, throw in their baneful ingredients, and render a compound of all that is base and dishonourable.

Into these digressive reflections we are, perhaps, *too* often led, in the depicting characters, some of which, we are sorry to write it, are actually in existence—we acknowledge that we ought to leave it to the minds of our readers to make what comments they please, and which will present themselves differently to differing dispositions.

Lady Isabella, after some general and polite conversation with the worthy family of Eglantine Farm, walked home, accompanied by Frederic Harrington; he proved but a very stupid companion for her, and in vain he endeavoured to say something civil; she saw through it all, and regarded him only with contempt, though with such well-assumed indifference, that a less honest heart than Harrington’s might have been deceived.

In about half an hour after her arrival at home, came a packet of novels to the farm-house, which, though of modern date, were not of that modern kind to lash at vice and strip it of its beauteous mask; no, they consisted of such as would delude the weak and unwary mind to dislike the formal ties of marriage, and, if so tied, to meditate adultery; to break through the prudent bands of parental restraint, and give up all to love, which so far from being branded by these seductive writers with the title of *illicit*, was

styled *virtuous*; though scoffing at the idea of nuptial chains, and confiding only in the honour of the betrayer.

Amongst these works was Madame de Staël's dangerous novel of *Delphine*; and also that no less dangerous work (unless when perused by a young female of uncommon purity and strength of mind), Rousseau's *Heloise*. Nor can we quite agree with that great man, when he says, "the heart of a female, who should be corrupted by that work, was *corrupt* before."

The expression is far too strong: youth is not the season for firmness; extreme prudence in the morning of life, is a virtue as unnatural as it is rare: the weak mind of an inexperienced country girl may be softened and easily warped, which never was wicked, or in any degree *corrupt*.

Margaret read these works with avidity; she laughed at, she ridiculed herself, and her former taste! but she languished for a congenial soul of the opposite sex, with whom she could experience the extatic raptures proceeding from the unrestrained and delightful union of hearts, where no vulgar "human tie" should render common their moments of superlative bliss!

Among other books, Lady Isabella lent her victim a few translations from the French, wherein she found the heroine generally a *married* woman; this served to strengthen her in the opinion of the invalidity and futility of the marriage-ceremony. She found every coquettish art was put in practice by these Gallic nymphs, to ensnare the hearts of men: Margaret, therefore, became more careful of her outward appearance; studied long before her glass each look that might be most becoming: she was cautious of opening her mouth, but smiled prettily, with her lips closed; her eyes were no longer rolled towards heaven, but taught to speak the languor of *earthly* love, or sometimes to leer with meaning and vivacity: it has before been observed, they were naturally good.

Her animation and the improvement of her personal appearance astonished her friends, for she was cunning enough to conceal, and study in private, the sources of her present transformation: as the morals of her once cherished romances were irreproachable and strict in the extreme, so her father never had forbidden their perusal; but she well knew how much her present readings condemned the pure principles he preached from the pulpit, and which actuated his private life.

Mary, though her colour faded, appeared yet more sweetly interesting than ever: Margaret's studies, wholly confined to the books she had borrowed from Lady Isabella, left the choice which the circulating library afforded entirely to Mary; who sent always for those novels whose subject was the softer passion; but then it was always *virtuous* love and its reward which they described. Poems, also, she read, whose delightful pensiveness suited the present turn of her mind; and it was the song of love alone which now breathed its notes from her harmonious voice.

## CHAP. XI.

## A SEPARATION AND A GRAND PLOT.

I forbid my tears: but yet  
It is our trick; Nature her custom holds,  
Let shame say what it will.

SHAKESPEARE.

—————These reside  
In courts, and do their works with bows and smiles;  
That little engin'ry, more mischievous  
Than fleets and armies.

YOUNG.

THE worthy Sir Edward Harrington had, from his first meeting with Charles Marsham, determined to exert all his influence and interest with the great, to procure for this excellent officer a lucrative and respectable situation.

An appointment of great trust and importance was, at length, at the baronet's intercession, bestowed upon him, and in which post he was to accompany the grand expedition. The news arrived to Charles as sudden and unexpected as it was gratifying and pleasing, and he hastened to join the fleet, which was daily expected to sail, and fill a situation for which he was, from both abilities and experience, so amply qualified.

The brothers at the farm-house had all of them a property, formerly belonging to a deceased sister, equally divided between them, in an annual income: this deed of gift was necessary to be perused and copied before their separation; a power of attorney was also to be made out, and which Ralph, though the eldest, with a kind of *presentiment* on his spirits, insisted on being given to his brother Edward.

These papers were the cause which occasioned their delay, in waiting on the noble guests who did them the honour of a morning visit previous to the week fixed for the departure of Charles. The sorrows of the hitherto cheerful Mary seemed now begun; she was the favourite of her uncle Charles, and, next to her father, she loved him.

He pressed her, at parting, to his heart; and gave her, with parental fondness, his blessing and advice, which sufficiently proved he had penetrated into the causes of the present change in her person and manners, while the last sentence he flatteringly pronounced, was, "Oh! my beloved Mary, guard your heart!"

More than thrice did the secret mount to her lips, but female bashfulness as often prevented its escaping them; she longed to confide her thoughts to her dear uncle, yet she suffered him to quit her, with the corroding secret of her heart yet unrevealed.

She looked anxiously at her window as he turned the corner of the lane which led into the London road, and saw the last flutter of his white handkerchief, as, with an half-averted head, he waved the signal towards her; and while she could distinguish the clattering sound made by the hoofs of his favourite mare, he did not yet appear as quite departed. The dead silence that ensued made her tears stream afresh, and though still

blessed with a kind uncle and a worthy and affectionate parent, she felt at that moment as if left alone in the world without a single friend.

She leaned her aching head against the little book-case which contained the instructive library her generous uncle had given her; kissed the lettered backs of some of the volumes, and gave herself up to all the indulgence of sorrow; for she well knew that each of the inhabitants of the farm, wholly occupied with their own regret and anxiety, could afford her but little comfort.

No one in Mr. Marsham's mansion could be more generally missed, nor could the absence of any one be more regretted, than that of Charles; his constant cheerfulness, his benevolent and truly humane heart, his easy address and fund of military anecdote, made his society always desirable, and the deprivation of it severely felt by his family. The servants had a pleasure in preventing his wishes; and his nieces were both emulous of performing for him every little office of kindness in their power: the shirts that were made for uncle Charles were worked at with more diligence and pleasure than for any one else; and they each would contend whose turn it was to twitch out the hair to mark C. M. on his cambric pocket-handkerchiefs or cravats.

A summons to tea took Mary from her library into the common parlour: her father and uncle remarked her red and swoln eyes, but they remarked only in silence; while uncle Ralph drew the tea-table with equal taciturnity towards her.

Margaret's grief was more violent, but Margaret was not now under the influence of an artificial character; she was herself, she was a Marsham; and her bosom was only warmed and animated by natural affections; her arms were crossed on a table, and she sobbed bitterly as she rested her face upon them.

Edward, after refusing the bread and butter which was handed to him, broke silence by saying, "I shall eagerly look at the ship-news in every newspaper that arrives." "And will you believe," said Ralph, drily, "any thing that *those vehicles of falsehood* may utter? especially when you must recollect how often they deceived us in the late Corunna business!"

"The nautical intelligence, as it comes from Lloyd's," said Edward, "is the only part which may be almost implicitly relied upon."

Ralph sipped his tea, and *nodded*, for he could not *articulate* an assent: the weight of his heart sunk like lead in his bosom; yet, unlike that ponderous metal, it rose to his throat, and seemed to choak the passage of utterance: his matter-of-fact character would not suffer him to let it be perceived that an heavy presage appeared to speak to his convicted mind, that he never should behold his much loved brother again.

They all retired early to rest; and for a few days, their several most favourite occupations lost their charms; but Charles wrote to one or other of them by every post, and the described happiness of his much ameliorated situation, the flow of high spirits which ran through his letters, made them participate in his felicity! though it cost them the sacrifice of his society.

In the mean time, the plotting Lady Isabella was not idle; Sir Charles, through her artful persuasions and pretended love of quizzing, had had two or three stolen interviews with Margaret: the false character of a girl from the country had often been imposed upon him in town, in his purchased amours; here he found it in its true, its native simplicity and credulity: Margaret's youth and virgin innocence were sufficient to please the taste of the

moment in this depraved libertine; he harboured against the unsuspecting girl the basest designs; and while he laid his iniquitous plans to effect her ruin, he meant his short-lived attachment to her to be as transitory and fleeting as the passion with which she had inspired him; their sudden separation as momentary as the first impulse which urged him to attempt her seduction! and as totally oblivious, on *his* part, as it might be agonising on *hers*.

Raymond, young, thoughtless, and insinuating, was now again reinstated in the heart of Lady Isabella: Sir Charles was engaged with his new intrigue as deeply as her ladyship could wish; so that he had neither time nor inclination to watch her movements.

Every plan was laid by Lady Isabella and her lover for a trip to Gretna Green, where the enamoured Raymond was to receive her vows for life, under the sanction of the hymeneal Vulcan of that celebrated place for stolen weddings: but how to compass this northern tour was the most difficult! for Lady Isabella had not been so circumspect, but that her brother and sister began strongly to suspect that her tenderness for Major Raymond was again revived: the Major's visits, also, became so frequent, as to draw on him cool and averted looks, peevish contradictions, and distant and unrepeatd invitations to stay dinner or supper, when he might chance to call near the hours of either.

The Rector and his lady always slept in separate apartments; Lady Caroline had experienced of late very sleepless nights, could not rest alone, she must have her dear Isabel with her; so that Isabella began to fear it would be impossible to effect her escape from the country; and she knew it would be impracticable for the Major to obtain leave of absence for such a length of time, which might enable him, on their removal from Eglantine, to watch the different occasions which might offer, of carrying off his divinity without molestation.

In the perplexity of her mind, one morning, as Lady Isabella lay ruminating on her pillow, a golden thought on a sudden struck her;—she rose, and repairing to the study, she sent for Sir Charles Sefton's servant, to request from her his master to rise, and take a walk with her on the lawn, as the morning was uncommonly beautiful.

Sir Charles, ever joyful to obey the wishes of the object of his adoration, rose immediately; but was surprised to see a thick and cloudy atmosphere, and a morning very far from a pleasant one; however, if his beloved chose to call winter summer, or to call a thick fog beautifully clear, it was his duty to acquiesce.

“My dear Charles,” said she, extending her delicate hand as he entered, while the sentence thrilled to his soul; “I hope I have not interrupted any pleasant visions; but I want to have a little conversation with you; and I am about to require your assistance in a matter which, I assure you, interests my wishes so much, that I have been unable to sleep the whole night.”

“Believe me,” said the enamoured Baronet, while he *endeavoured* to look all that was tender and captivating, “that I feel blessed beyond conception, that it is in my power to afford any assistance to the wishes of Lady Isabella Emerson; and believe me, most adorable of women, that not only my person and fortune, but my life is at her disposal.”—“Oh! it is not a boon so precious as *your* existence which I have to beg,” said the bewitching Isabella, with the smile of an Hebé, “no; but you know my brother-in-law consents to every thing which you propose; and I wish you to exert your influence with him, to let us, before we quit this place, have a *masquerade* on the lawn!”

“Indeed, Lady Isabella,” said Sir Charles, in a tone of tender reproach, “Mr. Harrington was the person to have influence over Mr. Leslie; mine, I must say, in this family, appears to be lost!”

“Well! but you know,” said she, affecting not to understand him, “he is not here, or I certainly would have applied to *him* rather than to *you*.”—“Would you?” replied the Baronet, with a desponding look.—“Assuredly,” said she, “from the very unaccountable influence, my *dearest* fellow, which he had over my brother and sister.”

Lady Isabella’s art, in this morning’s adventure, shone conspicuous: she had appointed the study as the place of assignation with Sir Charles; she knew her brother’s hour of rising, and she knew also, that now that hour was just on the point of striking; and he generally repaired to his library and studied half an hour, or more, before breakfast. Her *deshabille* was negligently elegant; a stray ringlet or two were suffered to sport from beneath the pale blue Turkish turban, which confined her luxuriance of hair: she threw herself in a careless attitude, half lying, half sitting, on a purple satin library-sofa; and while she raised her delicate fingers to play sportingly on the *candelabra* which stood beside it, the snowy whiteness of her hand appeared dazzling: an angle of the finest symmetry, and well-formed little foot, derived new beauty from the soft kid morning boot which embraced it.

Sir Charles longed for the period when he could shew off such a goddess of beauty and fashion, as his own, and when he could read in every morning print the notoriety of the dashing and lovely Lady Isabella Sefton!

Enraptured at the thought, and seeing an object before him that would have imparted extasy to the most cynical and apathetic, he fell on his knees, seized the hand which hung by her side, and pressed it with ardour to his lips and heart; entreating her to name the happy day, when he might call her his.

The softness of her consenting looks, accompanied with a gentle sigh, made Sir Charles easily conceive that he might *himself* name the day, without any opposition on the part of her ladyship: “Whatever day you please,” said she, hiding her face, “in the fortnight after our departure from this place.”—“Cruel Isabella,” said he, “why so long delay my happiness?”—“Oh! now,” said she, with the most childish and affected modesty, “you take advantage of my partiality for you: we will say, in a week then after we leave Eglantine.

The Baronet then insisted she should seal this promise with her lovely lips; and at that moment, to the great satisfaction of her plotting ladyship, at that tender interval, her reverend brother-in-law entered his study!

With well-acted confusion, rose from the sofa and stood before him, the apparently trembling Isabella. Sir Charles smiled, and said, “Oh! sir, your divine sister has at length consented to name the period when she will bless me with her hand!”

“These raptures, sir,” said the Rector, endeavouring to look grave, while satisfaction beamed from his eyes, “are very unbecoming in people of rank and fashion; Lady Isabella Emerson is intitled to more respect; she is not yet, Sir Charles, your wife; and the situation I found my sister in on the sofa, is very improper indeed for a woman of her quality. I am happy, certainly, that she is sensible of the worth of a husband, such as you will make her; but I must, in my house, beg more decorum of manners, while she is yet in her single state.”

Lady Isabella retired in well-feigned confusion, inwardly rejoicing that her plan had succeeded so far; and more disgusted with, and hating Sir Charles Sefton worse than ever; who now, sure of her ladyship, plotted the carrying on his *subaltern* amour, as he styled it to his confidential servant, with the little ugly *grisette*, Marsham!

When he had sufficiently wrought on the pliability of this credulous girl's mind, it was his intention to carry her off, and pretend to the Leslies some urgent business in London: the masquerade, however, if he could but get that to bear, would render such a step unnecessary, for the disguises and opportunities of this species of entertainment would easily effect an *elopement*; and the same important business was in agitation, and intended to be effected by Major Raymond and Lady Isabella; for she felt certain that Mr. Leslie, secure in her attachment to Sir Charles Sefton, would invite the Major; if not, he could come disguised: he would not be distinguished in the throng, and she should neither be watched, nor in any degree suspected.

They assembled at a late hour to breakfast. Lady Isabella, generally all life and chat, took her chocolate in silence; the Rector was all good-humour, and wished to encourage the *modesty* of his lovely sister-in-law to look up and smile; Sir Charles was rapture too *visible* to be *sincerely* heartfelt; Mrs. Kennedy kept feeding the pug-dog.

Lady Caroline, with the MORNING POST in her hand, looked off from the perusal of fashionable intelligence, to ask what was the matter with them all! *Her* Theodore described and explained the study scene, and again looked grave. "And what of that?" said Lady Caroline, with all the unblushing effrontery of fashion; "Why, my dear Isabella, you blush, and look as ridiculously bashful about it, as an awkward country girl! It gives me, however, really, sincere pleasure to hear that you have at last consented to name the time, when you will make this worthy gentleman happy;" and giving a meaning look to her husband, as she concluded her speech, and which he appeared perfectly well to understand, the breakfast was dispatched in haste, and taking her sister by the arm, they left the Baronet and the reverend gentleman together.

"It looks d—lish odd, I must say, my dear fellow," began Mr. Leslie; "but I had, this morning, a bill come in for above two hundred pounds, and till my next rents become due, it will be very inconvenient for me to pay it: I would willingly have given my bond for the payment of it, at that time, but the fellow insists on having his money *immediately*. If you could oblige me with the loan of three hundred pounds, I should esteem it a singular favour? and I will give you a power to receive that sum when my next rents become due."—The Baronet was *silent*!

The Reverend Theodore Leslie had never before asked to borrow any sum of Sir Charles Sefton: reflection, with the rapidity of lightning, darted through his mind. "How," thought he, "did Sir Charles continue always so wealthy, giving, as he did, in to every species of fashionable expence and amusement, unless he was very close indeed in many other respects? But yet he had never seemed to care much about money; and though Lady Isabella had a fortune, he appeared very willing to take her without any!"

The Baronet's busy mind also underwent a quick succession of ideas; he did not like to lend money, neither to give it away, unless to put in practice some very favourite pursuit: but, to please his future lady, to obtain the masquerade he had promised her, if possible, and the power this loan might give him over the Leslies, to do as he pleased; to

make their house his home, and invite thereto whoever he might think proper: all these circumstances made him feign a generosity he by no means felt.

“Well, my dear friend,” said he, after a long, and to Mr. Leslie, a puzzling and painful pause,—“and is this really all the mighty favour you have to ask of me? Be assured, double that sum is yours, at pleasure.”

He then hastened to his writing-desk, and gave a bill on his banker, to be paid at sight; but he did not *double* the sum, nor did he forget to take the proffered bond.

However, with all his shallow principles, he knew it would be the height of indelicacy, at that moment, to ask a favour in return; and reserved the masquerade scheme till after dinner, when the cloth and servants should be withdrawn.

In answer to his then strenuously urged request, the Reverend Theodore Leslie said, “My dear Sir Charles, I have but one objection, that is the prejudice of the country people: you well know, I am sure, and will acknowledge, that I have no aversion to any one fashionable amusement in the world, *au contraire*, and many is the masquerade in town that I have accompanied *you* to: but to have such a *divertisement* at the parsonage, I fear will be inadmissible; nor can we accomplish it, I am sure, without giving offence to these votaries of the *old school*; and it will cast a stigma on my professional character that I know not how I should wipe off. Now there is Edward Marsham, for instance, my curate; why, I suppose nothing on earth would make him bring his family to such an entertainment! and I declare the good folks at the farm-house are the most decent people in this place: I do not like to have a party without them; and that girl, Mary Marsham, is an ornament to any circle, and indeed the other improves very much of late.”

Lady Caroline turned up her lip with a contemptuous sneer. “Oh!” said Lady Isabella, “as to my little sensible Margaret, I quite *love* her!”—“And so do I, *most passionately*,” said the Baronet, half *quizzing*, half serious, as he watched the looks of his Isabella, who, though inwardly pleased, pouted and affected to be jealous.

Lady Caroline, who had seen much of his pointed attentions lately to Margaret, eyed him with an archness which rather disconcerted him; but the *badinante* gaiety of her tone relieved him, as she said,—“Now are you not a very pretty fellow, and likely to make a most fashionable husband, since the time you only *expect* to obtain the title, you talk of loving another *passionately*! Oh! I glory in such a charming disciple of the *New School*.”

Lady Caroline’s spirits were uncommonly buoyant since the morning loan; she had also won a considerable bet on the exact colour of a horse, with a young fox-hunter who had called just before dinner; she caused general mirth by some of her sprightly sallies, given with all the originality and dash of the *haut ton*.

The indefatigable Sir Charles again reverted to the subject of the masquerade. “I have hit upon an expedient,” said Mrs. Kennedy; “when I was in Ireland, we often used to have fancy-balls: suppose Lady Caroline proposes to give such an entertainment! and every one invited to it be requested to appear in character; you will thus avoid the stupid throng of dominos; and instead of dancing on the lawn, let them dance in the ball-room, where, when they are all assembled and ready to begin dancing, let Lady Caroline or Lady Isabella propose some little change of disguises and present the company with masks.”—“You are a dear creature, Kennedy,” said Lady Isabella; “and therefore, dear brother,” continued she, turning her persuasive and bewitching countenance full upon him, “let us

finish with this *unique* affair, as, by the week after, we shall most probably have quitted this place; and, as this is but Tuesday, if we have it the latter end of next week, we shall have time to collect a tolerable set, and to send to London for masks and many other charming and requisite *et-ceteras*; which we must all be secret about, for I would not be without the Marshams' family for the universe."

"I am sorry the Lieutenant is gone," said Mr. Leslie; "there was a great deal of originality and spirit about that fellow; I liked him much: but Sir Charles and Lady Isabella were very glad he *was* gone: Lady Isabella, though she liked him, feared him more; and Sir Charles knew he could better impose on the unsuspecting virtue of Edward, and the simplicity of honest Ralph, than on the mind of a man who had mixed so much in the world as Charles Marsham; whose high sense of honour would not tamely suffer any insult offered to his family, nor endure the wrongs of a seduced niece with patience or impunity."

The plan adopted by Mrs. Kennedy was highly relished by the whole society: the Rector gave his now unreluctant consent; and Mrs. Kennedy's tasteful talents were immediately put in requisition: the decorations and the whole style of the entertainment were to be under her direction; and she was engaged every evening and morning in penning sonnets and hand-bills to accord with each different character, and which shewed how prolific were her ideas and how versatile her talents.

## CHAP. XII.

A MASQUERADE, A DISAPPOINTMENT, AND  
A SURPRISE.

A combination and a form indeed!  
Where every god did seem to set his seal,  
To give the world assurance of a man.  
SHAKESPEARE.

She thrice essay'd to speak; her accents hung,  
And, fault'ring, dy'd unfinished' on her tongue,  
Or vanish'd into sighs.  
DRYDEN.

ON the day appointed in the following week, Mary Marsham, in the habit of a flower-girl, and Margaret as an Arcadian shepherdess, attended by their father and uncle, repaired to the parsonage, in order to be present at the fancy-ball given as a farewell *fête* to all his genteel parishioners by the Honourable and Reverend Theodore Leslie. Mr. Rouveau and Mrs. Edmonds, on this occasion, received cards of invitation; but being gone to London on business, it was unknown whether that was really the cause of their absence, or whether, not having been invited to any of the Rector's private parties, or their own dwelling never having been *honoured* by a visit from Lady Caroline, they scorned to accept this public desire of filling up and adding variety to the motley group.

Mrs. Susanna Bradbury, however, to please her dear niece, Lady Ringwood, resumed all the graceful ease, good-nature, and politeness she had hitherto shewn in the Rector's elegant parties, and with a cordiality and pleasantry, as if she had never been neglected, made her appearance again at the parsonage.

Sir Edward Harrington, not to appear fastidious, or too immediately to give up his connexion with this family after the departure of his nephew, accepted the invitation, and with that usual affability which made him a welcome guest wherever he appeared, arrived at the rectory the preceding evening, after dispatching a letter to his dear nephew, who was detained at Ramsgate with his regiment, waiting, not only for a fair wind, but for a fresh embarkation of troops before they sailed.

The Rector and his Curate departed not from their professional character, but attended merely as lookers-on at this elegant and *unique* species of entertainment. Lady Caroline Leslie appeared as the Goddess of Chance, with a dice-box in one hand, which she shook, as a challenge to all those who chose to inlist under her standard; while she waved a flag gracefully with the other hand towards a door, which opened into a card-room brilliantly lighted up and filled with tables for cards and other games of hazard. The flag her ladyship held, which was painted on India silk by the ingenious Mrs. Kennedy, displayed, on a rose-coloured ground, a scattered pack of cards, and at each corner bags overflowing with guineas, with this motto:—“*He who fears to venture, must never hope to gain.*” Her ladyship, however, gained but few volunteers.

Lady Isabella appeared in the dress of a pilgrim; Sir Charles Sefton as a Turk, in a very splendid habit, and looked uncommonly well; Major Raymond a friar.

Sir Edward Harrington, who was in the masquerade secret, being no dancer, declined appearing in any fancy dress till after the dancing began: Mrs. Kennedy looked characteristic as a Norwood gipsy; and Lady Wringham, as the renowned Queen of Egypt, made a very comely and very richly dressed Cleopatra, but she moved alone, and told the Rector she thought he might as well dress himself and appear as her *Tantony*.

Mrs. Susanna Bradbury looked and performed the character of the Virgin-Queen Elizabeth, to admiration; the only fault that was found with her appearance was, that she looked much too handsome for this female glory of Great Britain. Lucy Ringwood, as a novice of St. Dominick, looked most bewitching and lovely: she took up the Rector's sole attention till the arrival of a minstrel in the evening, who never quitted her till the hour of supper, when he refused to unmask, and left the brilliant party wondering who he was.

The guests who were expected from London, and my lady's quality friends in the country, in the environs of Eglantine, were all previously told to come disguised and in masks. With well-feigned astonishment, Lady Isabella beheld the servants bringing in a large deal packing-case, addressed "to the Right Honourable Lady Caroline Leslie, to be opened in the presence of herself and party assembled for the fancy-ball." The servants were then ordered to open it, and on the top lay the following note, which Lady Caroline read aloud.

"My dear Caroline,

"As you did me the favour of inviting me to your fancy-ball, '*know, by these presents,*' that I will most certainly accept the invitation, and I shall bring with me a party of friends at eleven o'clock, so completely disguised, that it will puzzle all your wise heads put together, to find us out; I must therefore beg your party to wear what I have sent; for I see no wit or spirit in a fancy-ball, unless the face is covered. Love to Isabel and your reverend husband.

"Your's, affectionately,

"SOPHIA LESLIE."

"From the Marchioness, I declare," said Lady Caroline, while Lady Isabella and the party thronging round her, were examining the masks. "What must we do?" added Lady Caroline, turning to her husband. "Do," repeated he, "why, of course, the dancers must wear them: not that I much approve of it; but now there is no alternative; it is too late to answer her ladyship's letter; besides, if we did not act as she requests, it might cause offence, which we must be very careful of giving there; and it would look also just as if we did not wish her or her party to come; which would infallibly ruin us with the Marquis, for he does so doat on his wife."

Now it was well known to most of the company, and to the world in general, that though the Marquis did *so doat on his wife*,\* that he kept a mistress, in great splendour, and who absolutely governed his lordship with the most arbitrary and despotic sway; and that, to give five hundred guineas for a pair of bracelets\* to encircle the wrists of this Sultana, was thought by him a mere trifle.

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\**Historique.*

“I could wish, sir,” said Edward Marsham, “if you will pardon me, that my girls should—” “My dear fellow,” said Mr. Leslie, quickly interrupting him, “do not be uneasy, it is a mere frolic of the Marchioness of Leslie: it is only for an hour or two, every one will unmask at supper, and then we shall all laugh at each other; neither you nor I, my dear friend, will cover our faces at all: it is only the dancers and the young folks; come, come; mirth and good humour are the order of the evening.”

No one, after this, could be fastidious enough to make an objection to what appeared so reasonable: Lady Wringham alone, who had been highly complimented by the Rector, was long obstinate; and, pouting, she declared it was quite *scandalous* to hide *people's beauty* under such nasty, ugly, painted things! “My dear madam,” said Lady Isabella, “it will only heighten yours; and when you unmask at supper, you will astonish every one with the wonderful *comparison!*”—“*Comparisments*, my lady,” she replied, “are *odorous*; and I am sure I *ar'nt* a bit like that red-brown broad face which Lady Caroline has picked out for me.”

“Excuse me, Lady Wringham,” said Lady Caroline, “now you surely must recollect that you are personating an Egyptian Queen! and do you think she was as fair as our unripened beauties of the North?”

“Besides,” said Sir Charles Sefton, “I think a beautiful woman should always wear an ugly mask; it gains her so many admirers the moment she unmask, that the effect is rendered irresistible in the bosoms of all those who regard her.” “Well, well, *give us hold* of the mask,” said the polite lady, “I'll *e'en* put it on.” And immediately Lady Isabella, with playful freedom, said, “Now, I must insist on all you men-creatures quitting the room; for as this is so hung round with pier-glasses, it will be a better place for us to put on our masks, than to be running up stairs to our different dressing-rooms.”—“Well, I do declare, you are so *funny*, Lady Isabella,” said Lady Wringham; but never mind, I *has* got on mine.”

“Well, then,” said Lady Caroline, after receiving a look from her sister, “Come up stairs with me; and let us leave the girls to do as they please.” Lady Caroline little thought of the regret she was preparing for herself and her noble and reverend partner, by thus attending to those expressive looks of her sister, which she always so well understood.

Lady Isabella now having got rid of all whom she feared, and making the doors secure, prepared for a change of disguise with Margaret. “I wish you were a little taller,” said she, “but the dress I am in has been made so wide and full, that it will fit you, and the little difference of our height will not be perceived in the breadth of our figures: imitate my manner, my sweet girl, as much as possible, as I will yours, and it will cause fine diversion.”

Margaret was very willing to come into this scheme, which promised so much amusement; and retiring into a recess, they quickly changed habits, unperceived by the rest of the female party, who were all occupied in choosing their masks.

In the mean time, Lady Isabella had caused the friar, Major Raymond, to change dresses with the Turk, Sir Charles Sefton; who, not having the smallest suspicion of what was going forward, or, indeed, that she now loved any one upon earth but his own dear self, readily came into the plot, as it would facilitate his elopement with Margaret; whom, as her ladyship in the pilgrim's disguise, he could very well pay unremitted attention to; and as a few days was all he wished for to carry on his iniquitous commerce with the

unhappy victim of his libertinism, he rejoiced in the scheme of Lady Isabella, who laughed inwardly at the success of her plans.

Proud of her confidence, he retired with Major Raymond to a summer-house at the bottom of the garden, where they mutually exchanged their disguises, after the Major had made some strong objections, as had been before preconcerted between him and her ladyship.

And now all the wit and small-talk of a masquerade enlivened the present gay assembly, which soon became crowded with masks in various characters: the transformed Raymond, from a friar to a Turk, took particular notice of the pretty shepherdess; while the Friar Sefton was very busy in extorting confession from the female pilgrim, to whom, when he declared he knew her, notwithstanding her disguise, he imparted in private the metamorphosis he had undergone. Lady Isabella confided also to her brother and sister the change *she* had made with Margaret; but took special care not to mention that which she had effected between her lovers; and thus *they* exulted in the unremitting attention paid to her by the well-made Sultan of the East.

Just before supper, entered two new characters in masks, whom none of the party were able to recognize, either by voice, figure, or manners: he, who seemed the youngest, was possessed of a fine and elegant form, which appeared to every advantage in the dress of a German hussar; the other was in that of a Highland chief, with a pair of boots of a very foreign make, with enormous long gold spurs: he strutted about in these boots, and afforded much diversion\*; boasting that they were the boots and spurs of General Le Febvre, taken prisoner by the English in the last winter's Spanish campaign. The Hussar, with a *badinage* which was pointedly half serious, expressed with all the native high sense of pride peculiar to his country, his indignation at the idea of wearing\* another man's boots! The Chieftian, however, whether to render the action absurd, or actually making a boast of these leathern achievements, vauntingly told all the company that they were really and *bona fide* General Le Febvre's boots which then covered his legs. At length a warm dispute took place at the side-board, between the Highland Chief and the German Officer, over two or three tumblers of champaign, about which regiment it was that took the French general prisoner! The Highlander positively declared he was taken by the Prince's regiment, while the Hussar contended, and indeed with unquestionable veracity, by all those who saw the action, that it was a\* private hussar belonging to the King's German Legion, who first took him, and turned him over to the care of another soldier belonging to a different regiment, while he continued *his* services in the field of combat.

The contest grew so warm, that the Chief challenged the Hussar immediately to retire and settle it in that way conformable to the laws of honour. In vain the party interposed; the indignant officers haughtily bade good-night to the gay assembly, who, with all the indifference of fashion, continued their amusement; except that part of the company whose feelings and principles were not extinguished by the fatal contagion of the goddess Dissipation, who builds her temple close by that of Vice.

A faint sickness, which she could not account for, came over the feeling and compassionate Mary; in vain she endeavoured to persuade herself that it was only

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\* *Historique.*

\* *Historique.*

common humanity for a fellow-creature; why then did she not feel equally as keenly awake to the safety of the Highland Chief? No, a nearer and more lively interest seemed kindling in her bosom towards his companion: she shuddered at, and severely condemned the inconstancy of her nature, which made her, in the intoxicating pleasures of that evening, forget that such a being as Frederic Harrington existed; and now, when she did think of him, it was only to draw a comparison to his disadvantage, with the accomplished stranger.

The Hussar Officer had attended to no female but her during the whole time he remained there; and those attentions were pointed and unremitting: the polished elegance of his manners, his fine martial form, his interesting foreign accent, which rather embellished the graces of his speech than destroyed them, made an impression on Mary, which, whatever soft sentiment she might have before felt for Harrington, seemed new to her bosom and more delightful.

Lady Caroline observing, as she seated herself in a retired seat, the evident perturbation she was in, kindly led her from the company, and gave her some refreshment in a small anti-room, which appeared to revive her. Mrs. Kennedy joined them: "You have too much sensibility, my dear girl," said that lady, as she presented her *vinaigrette* to Mary; "the gentlemen are only both flushed with champaign, they are convinced of it themselves, and have only retired from the company, which they knew they were unfit for: to-morrow, be assured, they will be more cool, and think nothing of it. Pray, do you know them, that you are so alarmed?"—"Oh! no, madam, I assure you," said Mary, with that uncommon energy which made the penetrating Mrs. Kennedy rather suspect that she did: but she added, "Come, come, we are all so happy; do not spoil the mirth and good order of the evening by such uncommon agitation about strangers; your father is not present, and your uncle is anxious about you: rally, and recover spirits."

"Good heavens!" said Lady Caroline, "why surely, child, the sparring of two men half intoxicated cannot have affected you in this manner: you say you know nothing of them, no more do I; and if they choose to take a pop at each other, what is that to you or me?"

Mary felt shocked at the unfeeling manner in which this lady of high fashion expressed herself; and she felt a renewed detestation of the manners of the age, which had so depraved a mind, in which she had just before seen, in the kind behaviour shewn to herself, an instance of the most tender attention and kindness. She re-entered the ball-room; but its wild and exuberant gaiety now seemed only to give her disgust; she could not again join in its festivities, but went and seated herself by her uncle. "Where is my father?" said she to him. "Gone," said Ralph, with a degree of blunt ill-humour, which shewed he was far from finding himself at home in this chequered midnight scene, "gone, if possible, to prevent murder!"

"Merciful heaven! my dear uncle," said the terrified girl, "explain yourself."

"Why, gone to prevent, if he can find them," replied Ralph, "those two *gingerbread* dressed, *belaced* figures, who represented officers, from destroying one another, if he can."

A ray of comfort now darted across the breast of Mary: she found from farther enquiry, that her father had followed them out; and she knew not the headstrong obstinacy of impetuous young men of fashion, but judged only from her own feelings,

that her father, in the mild and sweet accents of true religious language, would be able to speak persuasion and conviction to their minds, how heinous is the sin of committing deliberate murder, because enduring contradiction, or for differing in opinion.

Mary joined no more in the festive amusement of the night: Margaret, under the persuasive influence of her friar, was so well converted by him, as to consent to elope with him that very evening: the Turk and his shepherdess had long been missing, but with that no one troubled themselves; though Ralph had wondered for some time what could have become of his niece Margaret, whom he brought in his own hand to the parsonage, habited as a shepherdess: but Margaret was continually hopping about the room, in her pilgrim's disguise, and imitating Lady Isabella as well as she could, and which passed off very well with the unsuspecting multitude, who thought only that Lady Isabella was endeavouring to disguise *herself*.

Now tables, covered with every home and exotic rarity, and that in the most costly profusion, were elegantly laid out in different rooms; and various parties retired to supper at various times: Sir Charles Sefton and Lady Isabella Emerson were supposed to be in one of them: Ralph asked for his other niece, as he led Mary towards a supper-room; but he was commanded silence by the friar, who told him, he entirely destroyed the effect of the entertainment; for no one was to take cognizance of another as an acquaintance, till the whole company unmasked. Ralph, however, saw that the Rector had deceived him and his brother; for many took no supper, and refused to unmask at all; amongst whom was the pretended Lady Isabella, who walked with the friar round the tables, watching the opportunity of escaping, but who stayed enjoying the idea of how well she deceived her *rustic* uncle and the rest of the company; her vanity not a little flattered, that she should be taken for the elegantly formed Isabella.

Ralph seated himself beside his now unmasked and lovely flower-girl: the attending *beaux* thronged behind the chair of the blushing Mary, all emulous of administering to her wants at this hour of refreshment.

A necromancer, however, who had in the course of the evening told every one wonders, and the most wonderful intelligence for a fine lady to hear her *faults*, drove away the flutterers with his magic wand, and insisted solely on attending upon the charming Miss Marsham.

During supper, though Mary could not feel void of anxiety, nor though her spirits were not in any degree elevated, yet she experienced a kind of calm tranquillity, and a gentle and quiet languor succeeded to the agitation she had lately experienced.

Suddenly a note was brought, addressed to Sir Edward Harrington; but Sir Edward Harrington could not be found: another came to her uncle Ralph, and she read, as he held it to her, the following heart-rending words: "A fatal accident has happened, which renders it improper for my family to remain any longer at this unfortunate masked-ball: bring home my girls immediately: find out, if you can, Sir Edward Harrington, and bring him also with you.

EDWARD MARSHAM."

The necromancer was at the side-board when the note arrived: as he returned to the table with a glass of *lemonade* for Mary, he heard the emphatic enquiry of Ralph—for God's sake, to tell him, any one that could, which was Sir Edward Harrington; which

intreaty was answered by little else than peals of laughter at his energetic manner. "I am he," said the necromancer, throwing off his mask, and discovering his benign and handsome countenance. "God of heaven!" exclaimed he, on perusing his own billet, while the pallid hue which overspread his visage alarmed even the gayest of the fashionable throng. "Haste," added he, "dear Mr. Marsham, let us haste to the farm." But when Ralph turned to lead away Mary, she had fallen, unperceived, in the confusion this last scene gave rise to, from her seat to the floor, apparently lifeless.

Margaret, whose natural affections had not yet deserted her, whose deluded, though still innocent mind was not yet become that receptacle of depravity which Sir Charles Sefton and the intriguing Lady Isabella wished it should be, flew to her breathless sister, pressed her to her warm bosom, and to the general surprise, she sobbing exclaimed, "Oh! my sister, my sister, my beloved Mary, never, never can I leave you; look up, dear girl."

"Your sister!" said Ralph, as he administered some volatiles to Mary, and which caused her to open her eyes, "your sister! Do not I see Lady Isabella before me? and yet it is like the voice of Peggy."—"No, no, dear uncle," said she, though much vexed at the detestable name he always called her by, "Lady Isabella and I changed dresses;" and snatching off her mask, and throwing it from her with a degree of shame and vexation, she added, "as soon as my sister is able to move, let me accompany you home."

Sir Charles bit his lips with rage, cursed the sex in his heart, tore off his mask, and tossed down a copious bumper of burgundy.

And now amazement was painted on the countenances of the Rector and his lady: they had laughed at the surprise the discovery of Margaret's changed disguise had excited, and with which change they were acquainted before; but now the fatal *presentiment* of what had really happened, flashed conviction on their minds, that Lady Isabella had eloped with Major Raymond! for it was very long since any one had seen the shepherdess and the Turk, and they were no where to be found.

Lady Isabella's woman was ordered in, that she might be interrogated; but she was missing also: the lady's valuable jewels were likewise gone.

Sir Charles was in a state of disappointed vanity, bordering on distraction; which the Rector and his lady imagined proceeded from violent affection, and hoped it would be followed by a resolution to pursue the fugitives: but Sir Charles was resolved on no such thing; and the next morning, he very politely took his leave of the parsonage, nor troubled himself any more about Margaret, as she was an object he thought by no means worthy for him to attempt scaling her windows for, or to take the trouble of pursuing in various disguises; neither was this swain of St. James's-street at all inclined to those romantic adventures.

Mary, with her uncle, her sister, and Sir Edward Harrington, who preserved a solemn silence, only broken by agonised sighs, were conveyed home in the Rector's barouche: the afflicting and strange events of the evening, to which was added a considerable loss at the gaming-table, to Lady Caroline, entirely destroyed the gaiety of the scene, and the disappointed parties soon returned to their different homes.

Sir Edward and Ralph, on their arrival at the farm-house, immediately followed a servant up stairs. Mary, led by her sister, went, without scarce knowing where her feet carried her, to the common parlour; where the first object that presented itself to her sight,

was the Hussar Officer's jacket streaming with blood! Sickening at the sight, she sank, weeping, on her sister's bosom, who, equally affected at the sanguinary habit, was unable to afford her any consolation.

The poor girls sat in that pitiable situation for a few moments, when they were joined by their father: taking an hand of each, he said, in a voice almost unintelligible from sorrow, "Who was so unguarded, my dear ones, as to suffer you to enter this apartment? Retire to your chamber; these hours of dissipation require repose: and, oh! may this be the last time that my family are seen partakers of such midnight festivals! and which has proved so fatal to one of fashion's splendid votaries."

"Oh! tell us, my dear father," said Mary, "tell us what has happened? something dreadful, I am sure, to him who wore that habit," added she, pointing to the late glittering ornaments of the jacket, and which were now obscured by the crimson drops of life.

"Prepare your mind, my good girl," said he, "to meet every affliction sent by the Almighty, with fortitude and firmness! I am not ignorant of the partiality mutually felt by the nephew of Sir Edward Harrington and you for each other: he informed me of it before his departure; it was too quick and premature on *your* part, and impetuous and ill-judged on *his*: you are destined to move in an humble sphere; and now, heaven has doomed you to think no more of him as an inhabitant of this world: oh! my daughter, he who appeared in that dress, was Mr. Harrington!"

"How was that possible, sir?" said Mary; and now she felt that she loved no one but Frederic, whatever transitory predilection had shot across her heart: she felt shocked at the state of the Hussar, but she felt convinced in her own mind that her father was mistaken, as she heard that the expedition was to sail that morning; and she was sure it would be impossible for him to obtain leave to quit his regiment.

"Go," said Edward, "quietly to rest, and to-morrow I will inform you of all: I hasten to my dying charge! Sir Edward and I will sit up with him the remainder of the night, and wait the arrival of a surgeon of the first eminence from London, though I am sure he can do no more for him, since our friend, Mr. Alberry, assures me it is impossible for him to recover."

"Oh! then he yet lives," said Margaret, "and there may be hope."

"He lives," said Edward, "but it is scarcely probable he will live out to-morrow; the wound, dangerous in itself, is rendered yet more so from the apparent impossibility of extracting the ball. We talk too long; I again repeat my commands, that you both retire to rest. To-morrow I shall need your assistance, if the amiable young man should be alive; for I know, my girls, you are both excellent nurses. Go then, and reflect how much it behoves us to recruit our own strength, that we may exert it in the service of our fellow-creatures, who require our assistance: offer up the prayers of innocence, that our friend may bear his anguish patiently, and implore consolation for his afflicted relatives, and those to whom he was dear, who may survive him." Margaret hung down her head, and trembled at what she thought the penetrating look of her father, when she felt how artfully she had been acting, and how little *she* deserved the appellation of *innocent*: while Mary, with an heavy heart, but yet hoping it could not be *her* Frederic, only a relation of the Harringtons', who was reckoned extremely like him in person, retired to her chamber, but was very far from finding there repose; while a conflict of contending thoughts and sentiments, consisting partly of remorse, partly of disappointment, and once a little

portion of thankfulness that she *had* been so *disappointed*, kept Margaret from closing her eyes, as her aching head sought rest on her pillow.

## CHAP. XIII.

## AN EXPLANATION.

Oh! that men should put an enemy in their mouths,  
to steal away their brains!

SHAKESPEARE.

A wise physician, skill'd our wounds to heal,  
Is more than armies to the public weal.

POPE'S HOMER.

IT was, indeed, but too true, that it was Frederic Harrington who now lay, to all appearance, in the agonies of death, at Mr. Marsham's farm-house. The desire of again seeing his beloved Mary once more before he sailed, the letter from his uncle, concerning the fatal masquerade, made him resolve to gratify, if possible.

To approach her in disguise, to assure himself of her constancy and affection towards him, urged this impetuous young man, whose passions and predilections were all hasty, and in the extreme, to make this rash attempt; and in order to effect his purpose, he requested to pass the day and sleep on shore.

The wind was unfavourable, and appeared likely to continue so; and as the commander in chief of the expedition was not expected to arrive till the third day after, his too indulgent commanding officer granted him the favour he requested.

Frederic Harrington had formerly contracted a friendship with a German officer of rank, and who happened to be quartered near the place of embarkation; and to avoid all the delays of procuring a habit, Harrington borrowed a complete equipment from him, which he knew would sufficiently disguise and ensure him from all suspicion; and taking post-horses, he stopped not till he arrived at an inn, a few miles distant from Eglantine; where he halted to equip and refresh himself.

As he was passing to the chamber to which he meant to change his dress, he saw the servant of a general officer with whom he was well acquainted, passing with some hurry to another apartment, while the well-known voice of the General struck his ear as he said, "Well, bring my things, that I may dress *immediately*; for if the only pair of horses, as they tell you, *are* engaged, by heaven, I must *walk* to the masquerade; for go I will."

Frederic was fearful of being known, yet he wished to oblige a friend; and therefore sent a billet to this effect:

"A gentleman who is going to Lady Caroline Leslie's masked-ball, has engaged the only horses left: very urgent reasons render him desirous of being concealed! If General Rainham will pardon the writer of this note waiting on him in a mask, he will feel himself happy to accommodate General R. with a seat in his chaise."

The General, who had also his private reasons for wishing to be concealed, who went only from curiosity, and to say he had been at a masquerade given by an ecclesiastic, a very rare *divertissement* at the houses of our clergy, since the days of the famous

Cardinal Wolsey, gladly accepted the offer, and returned for answer, “that he hoped to be favoured with the same indulgence of being equally an incognito from the shield of a mask to his polite escort.”

The winning Harrington soon made his haughty companion desirous of continuing the fellowship through the evening, and they seldom quitted each other, except in those moments when Frederic offered his homage to the idol of his fond regards; and it was not long before he found out the unobtruding Mary, amongst a crowd of fashionable insensibles and awkward imitators amongst the girls of fortune in the country.

In time, the perverse Frederic, well skilled in the knowledge of the female world, perceived the interest he had excited; and that interest he discovered was not felt for Frederic Harrington, but for one apparently a stranger and a foreigner! and Frederic began to be jealous of *himself*! For though he proved his own irresistibility, yet as Mary had no idea that it was really him, he fancied he plainly saw an inconstancy in her nature, which though he felt himself more in love with her than ever, made him shudder; for he had resolved, nor did he yet feel inclined to change his resolution, to make Mary his own, by the indissoluble ties of marriage.

The champaign at the side-board was exquisite; the General and he did ample credit to it: the heat of the room made them insensible of the *quantity* their thirst caused them to quaff; and the fatigue of Harrington’s journey, with the little sustenance he had taken, made the wine operate in that degree, which though not amounting to intoxication, yet shewed its heating effects in captious irascibility.

Not choosing to mix more than he could avoid with the company, the General was the person on whom he vented his ill-humour, and the altercation before mentioned took place, and which had been often previously debated by these two very contending parties in the St. James’s coffee-house, and in which Harrington knew he\* was correct in his information. General Rainham, however, equally convinced in his own mind, that *he* was right, and being equally flushed with wine, went out immediately with Frederic; and their travelling pistols being loaded, they retired to a meadow, belonging to Mr. Marsham, just as the

“Grey dawn began to dapple the east.”

Edward followed as quick as possible, but he was too late to prevent the fatal *rencontre*, and arrived only in time to see the Hussar fall, bleeding, with an heavy groan.

The combatants had not yet unmasked. The General took off his, and said, as his reason returned with the horrid effects of the dispute, “O God! who is it that I have killed?”

Edward uncovered the face of Frederic, but not yet, from the partial light of the opening morning, being able to distinguish his features, said, “Alas! sir, I know not; but whoever *you* are, fly, while flight is in your power; preserve your own life: and may length of years be given you for deep repentance, that you have shortened those of another!”

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\**Historique.*

\**Historique.*

\**Historique.*

General Rainham, however, in all the uncurbed agony of grief, refused to abscond, until he had first brought a surgeon to this unhappy victim of fashionable punctilio.

Mr. Alberry, a man of humanity and whose secrecy might be relied on, was the *chief*, and almost the *only* practitioner in the village: he instantly obeyed the summons, and pronounced the wound to be fatal, and the utter impossibility of the patient surviving it many hours; and again exhorting, and then not in vain, the General to ensure his safety by flight.

Mr. Alberry, with the assistance of Edward Marsham, bore the unfortunate Frederic Harrington to the farm-house, where soon the agonized sight of Edward was convinced he saw in the wounded young man, the nephew of his brother Charles's best benefactor; and indeed the senses of Frederic not being yet fled, soon made him inform, in broken sentences, the anxious Curate who he was, and who, notwithstanding the bodily anguish he endured, yet ardently enquired which way was the wind? and bitterly sighed, at the idea of not being able to join his regiment.

The famous village surgeon and apothecary, Mr. Alberry, was a man of a warm and benevolent heart; and had his medical skill been proportionate to the excellent qualities of that seat of feeling, he would have been the first in his profession.

By practising in the Marshams' family from their infancy, he was a competent judge of their constitutions; he therefore never mistook complaints, which were in general very slight, and the volume of Buchan which lay in his parlour-window, always furnished him with proper remedies for the young people\*. Two chirological operations, which he had performed, served to establish his fame, beyond a possibility of doubt, in the village; one was the amputation of a leg, the first he had performed, without the assistance of, or consultation with another surgeon: and though his lopping off that useful member happened to be premature, yet, as no one knew any thing about that, and the patient being a fine young man of three-and-twenty, possessed of an Herculean strength of constitution, the wonderful operation was spoken of with great admiration of the doctor's talents, all through the village and its environs. The next was on his own infant son, who had the misfortune to be born with a hare-lip: parental anxiety called forth all his energies, all his watchfulness: after he had closed it and fastened down the sides with the finest needles, he sat whole nights waking, with the child on his knees, to lull it to sleep, and prevent its cries from breaking the fragile and delicate closure; convinced that the care, patience, and anxiety of a parent alone, could keep the eyes from being closed in sleep for many succeeding nights.

The boy, cured of this defect, grew uncommonly handsome; and the fame of Mr. Alberry spread far and wide: what served to establish it more firmly with the Marshams, was his certain prognostics of Mrs. Edward Marsham's early death and consumptive habits, long before her friends had imagined her health to be in any way declining: not that the lady was at all consumptive, though naturally delicate; and a severe labour with her youngest daughter had been the sole cause of her demise in the bloom of her life.

This, however, made him a *croaking* doctor; and if he had not all the *skill*, he had a great deal of the *art* of his profession: he always appeared to apprehend his patients to be in imminent danger; and of which he found the good effects: if the sick person died, his judgment was undoubted; if he recovered, the greater were his medical powers.

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A ball he had never extracted in his life, and he was afraid now to venture: at any rate, he really felt assured in his own mind that the present patient must die from the effects of his wound alone, and therefore he would not attempt the extraction, but declared it was impossible that it *could* be extracted.

Sir Edward Harrington, however, instantly dispatched with all speed a message to one of the most eminent surgeons in London, and who had always attended his family, to hasten to Eglantine immediately.

After the above account of Mr. Alberry, the reader will, no doubt, entertain some hopes of Frederic Harrington's recovery; the wound in his shoulder was certainly a very bad one, but he was not *mortally* wounded, though the violent agitation of his mind, and the fatigue he had undergone, combined to bring on a fever, which would inevitably prove dangerous, without the strictest care and attention.

The agonies of Sir Edward's mind may be felt, but can neither be described, nor even conceived, except by those who might chance to be placed in a similar situation: the wind had changed, the commandant had joined, and the expedition had sailed! The accident which had happened to his nephew, prevented him, not only from distinguishing himself in the field of honour, but it would fix a stain on his military character, which, if he recovered, could never be thoroughly obliterated, from his being absent at such a momentous crisis, merely to enjoy the pleasures of a private masquerade; for he had yet to learn the state of his nephew's heart with regard to Mary; and even had he then known it, the impetuosity of impulsive feeling, and the want of government in the passions of his nephew, would have caused this truly parental uncle to be only the more offended at his conduct: but added to this, his wounded honour, was the bitterly afflicting idea of the danger of that life, in which his own might be said to be bound up. He was too ready, from his own anxious fears, to believe the ill report made by Mr. Alberry, and the dreadful idea that his Frederic would be snatched from him for ever, excluded all inclination for food or rest, till the arrival of the skilful and worthy Dr. Ch—dl—r from London.

This dispenser of the healing art, possesses, with the most unrivalled medical and chirurgical abilities, the most feeling and gentle heart; his manners are a sweet compound of mildness and tenderness, and his soothing and kindness equally restore the diseased to health, with his excellent prescriptions: he always urges, and alas! how few, like him, make it a matter of real importance—how requisite it is, that the *mind* should be at ease, to keep the *body* in continued sanity. His polite and gentle manners ameliorate the situation of the sick person at each of his visits. Accept, worthiest of thy profession, accept the humble and grateful tribute of praise offered to thee, by the author of this essay, who, for sixteen years since the time she first and last sought thy healing aid for a slow and undermining fever, has enjoyed an almost uninterrupted series of pure and regular health, that first of all earthly blessings. Unswayed by sordid interest, and only alive to the welfare of his fellow-creatures, this excellent man often refuses the golden fee, and visits only as the generous friend! His fortune is large, and he employs it in doing good: what pity that such a man should be childless!

All the present inmates of the farm-house rejoiced at his arrival; for he soon imparted hope, in regard to the wound, and extracted the ball without difficulty; but still expressed anxiety about the fever of his patient, which he could tell, by many incoherent

sentences that Frederic uttered during his deliriums, had been chiefly heightened by mental agitation. Mr. C—— therefore, told all who attended him, that to make his mind easy and tranquil, must be their most important care; and that they must grant him every indulgence his feelings might require: and observing, after a few visits, the smiling satisfaction of his patient, at the approach of Mary, and how readily and gratefully he took all that her hand administered, he requested that she might be his chief attendant.

If Frederic had never loved before, the tenderness of his Mary's attentions to him, the pallid hue of her anxious and interesting countenance, would have fixed him her captive. Sir Edward, yet unsuspecting of their mutual attachment, blessed her, as a ministering and health-dispensing angel: nor was the compassionate Margaret, in these kind instances, much less an object of his admiration.

The delicate-minded Dr. Ch—dl—r, often affected to consult with the country apothecary, about the state of the wounded Frederic, that his feelings might not be hurt, and gave him in private, in the sweetest and gentlest manner, many friendly hints of advice, which the good heart of Alberry felt peculiarly grateful for. Dr. C—— let him have also all the merit he could, in the increasing amendment of the patient: thus, though Alberry acknowledged every where, that none but a surgeon of the most consummate skill and courage would have dared to have been so desperate as to have extracted the ball, which was one of those remedies he was not fond of, namely, *kill or cure*; and indeed, his medicines (for Dr. C—— ordered them all from his shop) had done wonders, in saving a man who stood on the very threshold of the grave!—thus the medical fame of Mr. Alberry was established at Eglantine on surer grounds than ever.

## CHAP. XIV.

## WEDDINGS.

These violent delights have violent ends,  
 And in their triumph die; the sweetest honey  
 Is loathsome, in its own deliciousness, and  
 In the taste, confounds the appetite: therefore  
 Love moderately; long love doth so;  
 Too swift arrives as tardy, as too slow.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHILE these events were passing at Eglantine, Lady Isabella Emerson and Major Raymond were so far advanced on their northern journey, that it was easily conceived all attempts to pursue them would be vain; and it was *equally* vain to urge, in the most strenuous manner, Sir Charles Sefton, whose large fortune could support the expence of extraordinary speed in the pursuit, to follow and prevent this ill-placed marriage; in vain they told him that it was only the rash haste of their sister's temper, in some jealous *pique*, and that they were sure she loved no one but their dear Sir Charles Sefton: no, Sir Charles assured them, with much *sang-froid*, that since Lady Isabella had evinced her affection for another, and had made use of himself only as a tool to accomplish her purpose, no power on earth should compel him to wed such a woman, and he was resolved to think no more of her. He then hastened to quit the acquaintance of the Leslies as fast as possible, though if he ever after met them in parties of fashion, he has always affected to be very glad to see them, and deplore the misfortune of not meeting them oftener; and even Lady Isabella he could have seen with all the *nonchalance* of a man of the world, as if she never had been in idea the mistress of his once most *ardent* affections.

Mr. Leslie made a violent bustle, and a show of pursuit; but which ended in a quick return, and a declaration that they had taken a different *route*, and that now it was impossible to trace them.

The village had ample food for conversation, at all the tea and whist parties in the vicinity: Lady Wringham, her husband, and those she could trust, said she always thought Lady Isabella a proud, *forward puss*; though in some companies she would, like Mrs. Candour, draw up her head, and "say nothing." But at *every* party was canvassed over Lady Isabella Emerson's elopement, and Mr. Harrington's duel, with they wondered who! Various were their conjectures of the unknown person, who had taken himself off, no one could tell whither: no doubt but the Curate knew who he was that wounded Mr. Harrington; only he was always so cautious of mentioning names: but the Curate did *not* know; and the truly honourable Frederic Harrington would tell no one; no, not even his uncle.

The scandal also of having a masquerade at a *clergyman's*, was inveighed against; and that most by those who had most enjoyed the entertainment. Lady Caroline, having no one *now* to *pidgeon*, passed her hours of discontented leisure in acrimonious speeches and remarks to Mrs. Kennedy; which though that lady found convenient to bear with for a

time, so that she might be able to take a journey in the barouche in style, and free of expence, yet she resolved, when they removed from Eglantine, to *remove herself* to where she might be treated with a little more politeness. The Rector again talked nonsense to Lucy Ringwood, for Mary Marsham was inaccessible. Fashionable cards of enquiry and condolence arrived every day from the parsonage to Sir Edward Harrington; and in a few days, the Honourable and Reverend Theodore Leslie left the care of the living to his worthy Curate: before those few days were expired, Major Raymond received the hand of his beautiful and dashing Isabella.

They hastened back as fast as post-horses could carry them, to Mr. Leslie's rectory near London, to throw themselves on the mercy of Lady Isabella's relations: *she* was received with forgiveness, and some portion of kindness; but the Rector and his lady peremptorily refused to see Major Raymond. "Pay me, then, the residue of my fortune, sir," said the spirited lady, "which I suffered, when I became of age, to lie in your hands; the Major and myself were *both* of age when we married, and you cannot withhold it from me: nothing but the tedious delays of the commons in granting licences, and my being so persecuted with that odious lover of your choosing, the detestable, or as he thinks himself *delectable*, Sir Charles Sefton, forced me away; otherwise I need not have taken a fatiguing and expensive journey, but have been married at home; but I liked the frolic of it, and was made a wife also by the church of England as I returned from Scotland, the honest clerk giving me away, and his daughter making her mark, poor girl, as a witness, because she could not write her name. So now, my good brother and sister, you have the whole history of Isabella Emerson's marriage, now Lady Isabella Raymond. All I have now to add, is, that I expect prompt payment of the remainder of my fortune; it will support me for a little while, as the most dashing officer's wife in Raymond's regiment: after that, let come what will; a short life and a merry one, is my maxim; and when life is no longer a scene of pleasure, but, on the contrary, replete only with trouble and pecuniary difficulties, it is easily laid down." She then, with much haughty indignation, wished them a good morning, telling the Rector to leave the money for her with her banker; for in whatever house her Raymond was not allowed to accompany her, never would she enter again.

More thunderstruck at her hasty demand, than at that independent manner, to which they had been long accustomed, the Reverend Theodore Leslie and his lady regarded each other: the fortune, they knew, must be paid, and they had taken the fraternal freedom of borrowing, without asking the possessor, two or three thousand pounds! What must they do? They agreed, after some little consultation, to see Raymond; put a good face on the matter; ascribe their anger to the haste only of the moment; give them a couple of thousands for the present, and tell them the remainder should be forthcoming in a very short time.

But Lady Isabella, once offended, did not so easily forgive; and, with a degree of mortifying condescension to her sister and brother-in-law, informed them, by letter, she could wait a few months for the remainder, if they would order her three thousand pounds immediately, and without again seeing them, or even mentioning husband to them, she accompanied him to join his regiment, still quartered within a few miles of Eglantine.

Major Raymond, as has been said before, was young, handsome, and, *pour le moment*, could be very insinuating; but his mind was weak, vain, and wavering; with an

understanding too shallow to continue long the man, according to Lady Isabella's taste, who, in an husband, certainly looked for a being superior to herself; and no one, but such a being, could make her endure a state she had always from her heart despised, that of a wife.—A rash moment of *pique* against Frederic Harrington, the wish to be rid entirely of the persecutions of her friends, in regard to Sir Charles Sefton, who became every day more and more odious to her, particularly since his attachment to Margaret, urged her to fly to marriage with a man whose person she liked, and whom she admired for the present, for those mental qualities she thought him possessed of, but which consisted only in sentimental imitations learnt by rote, and all the acquired accomplishments of Raymond were the mere flash of the moment, and soon worn out. Though, to answer her own purpose, Lady Isabella had encouraged Sir Charles in his designs against Margaret, yet it so shewed to her the depravity of his heart, to pursue such an intrigue, while he was on the point, as he thought, of leading herself to the altar, and argued such a want of feeling and principle, that though her own mind was far from correct, yet it was too great to ally itself to such a compound of fashionable licentiousness.

Major Raymond belonged to a regiment in which there were but very few married men; and the officers' wives were women of remarkably correct and exemplary manners, not very young, and by no means handsome. Major Raymond waited with ardour and impatience, when he could shew off his dashing and beautiful wife; and with a very small fortune, very little more than his military pay, and his wife's three thousand pounds that he had just received from Mr. Leslie's banker, he commenced living at the rate of five thousand a year.

He obtained on credit a most elegant barouche, and with his captivating partner, joined the regiment in high style, took a magnificent house and gardens, and furnished his side-board with massy plate, on the same precarious certainty of paying for it *when he could*.

Nothing could exceed the splendour of his establishment, nor the expensive and fashionable *parure* of her Ladyship: nothing was spoken of but the prodigious fortune of Lady Isabella Raymond, her beauty and her elegance; but she soon perceived that her Raymond was not the man formed by love and nature to make *her* happy; she hated the state she had embraced; and in a few weeks, Major Raymond perceived, notwithstanding the playful variety of her attractions, that her beauty was become familiar to him, and no longer new; he shuddered at the prospect of her expence, and perceived already he had contracted enormous debts through her means, which he should never be able to pay.

In the mean time, she fled to a series of dissipation of the most extravagant kind, to banish every species of thought, if possible, from her mind, and which dissipation was so incorrect, that it bordered on licentiousness; yet such was the fascination of *her* manners, and such her splendour and expence, that she met with many who imitated her, more who censured her, and not one who could applaud a conduct which appeared to set all decorum, all morality and religion at defiance: for Lady Isabella, as a wife, was infinitely more conspicuous, and apparently indecorous, than in her single state.

Leaving Major Raymond to the felicity of his wedded situation, it is time to revert to the wounded Frederic: hourly did he amend and promise again to bless the fond hopes of those by whom he was beloved, with his speedy recovery: but as his health increased,

so the ever uncurbed affections of Frederic increased towards Mary, and the unchecked ardour of his desire to be indissolubly united to such sweetness and amiability.

He dreaded, however, to make known the state of his heart to his uncle: for he knew, that though Sir Edward despised all haughtiness and improper pride, yet that he was very averse to unsuitable marriages; and also, that he was, like COELEBS, though not for himself, but for this his dear nephew, in continual "search of a wife," who should add *birth* and *fortune* to accomplishments and virtue.

The agitation of Frederic's mind, with the secret buried in his bosom, of his love to Mary, and eager to disclose itself, brought on a fresh attack of his fever; and, on the calling in again of Dr. C——, his anxious relative and friends found his life despaired of by that skilful physician.

Frederic intreated, with a firmness which surprised his uncle, (for though he never doubted his courage, yet he well knew, that *firmness* was not the leading virtue in the mind of his nephew,) that the Doctor would not conceal from him, if he thought there were the least symptoms of danger in his case. Edward Marsham, with christian preparation only in view, seconded the patient's request.

"Yes, worthiest of men," said Frederic, feebly grasping his hand, "I wish to die in the sacred communion of the church; but I have also other motives which impel me to be thus earnest with this excellent physician."

Dr. Ch—dl—r, in terms the most tender and delicate, though contrary to his always received opinion, of kindly keeping up the spirits of his patients to the last, by a flattery the most laudable on the part of a *physician*, told him there certainly *was* apparent danger.

Frederic, then turning to his uncle, said, "I have, my dear sir, an independent fortune, and I wish to make my will." His uncle acquiesced in the mournful, though proper proposal; but scarcely had he dispatched his orders for the village attorney to attend, when Frederic said, "Now, sir, I will not die with a secret in my bosom, which has been some time concealed there from you, which now greatly oppresses and agitates my mind; and ere I quit this life, I entreat that Mary Marsham may survive me only as my widow, (until she shall please to bestow her hand elsewhere); and that I may call her mine, by marriage, before I die."

Amazement sat on the countenance of Sir Edward, for he well knew that his nephew had always an abundant share of pride; and besides, he had felt almost certain that he was deeply enamoured of Lady Isabella Emerson, and that the report of her marriage with Major Raymond, which had then reached Eglantine, had increased his fever: for the immediate and present news of the success of our expedition against Flushing had been kept from him, lest the anguish of disappointment and regret at being absent on the glorious occasion, might have endangered and retarded his convalescence. The tremor, however, of Mary, her blushes, and the perfect state in which were the senses of his nephew, spite of the ardency of his fever, and the severity of his indisposition, convinced Sir Edward that this predilection had taken place for some time, though totally unsuspected by *him*.

The request of a dying man was sacred; instant consent was given; and leading the weeping Mary to the bed-side, Sir Edward joined their hands, and said, "Be blest, my children! and, oh! may HE, to whom all things are possible, restore you, my beloved

Frederic, to life, that ye may long be happily united by the sweet bonds of mutual affection!" He then acted the part of a father to Mary, and requested the worthy curate, Edward Marsham, to bind them in that state, which nought but death can separate; and the ring which had united *him* to the mother of Mary, was now put on the finger of her daughter, who had the sad prospect before her, of being a widow on the day she was made a bride!

After the arrival of the lawyer, Frederic bequeathed all his remaining fortune to his lovely wife, except a few trifling legacies to her family and his uncle: and much exhausted with the conflicting scenes of the day, sank back on his pillow, and giving a deep sigh, faintly exclaimed, "I shall now die most happy!"

Mary gave a shriek, and fainted in the arms of Sir Edward, who, from his own grief and agitation, was scarcely able to afford her his support. "Be not thus alarmed," said the worthy doctor, "he is not yet gone; it is, perhaps, a crisis in his disorder, which, instead of hastening his demise, may, with care and the most delicate caution, restore him to life: leave him alone with me, and suffer him not to experience the least agitation of the mind and spirits; if you remain here, that agitation will be so violent, that I cannot answer for his life another hour.

An indescribable terror had seized the mind of Mary during the performance of the solemn ceremony; nor did it entirely proceed from the mournful idea of her being only wedded to the man she loved, as he lay at the point of death; no, a fatal presage seemed to speak conviction to her sinking heart, that should it please the Almighty to work almost a miracle in her favour, by restoring him to life, she should never know happiness in an union with Frederic Harrington. Benevolent and good as was his uncle, Sir Edward, she yet could see a reluctant pride seated on his brow as he gave her away; and though, with its awe-inspiring circumstances, the event particularly required seriousness, yet the gravity of her father's countenance was not only tinged with the grief he must naturally feel at such a moment, but it was replete with a high degree of vexation and inquietude. Such was the marriage of the interesting Mary, and, too fatally for her future peace, was verified by her present predictions.

To the great joy of Sir Edward, the disorder of his nephew, after an alarming crisis, took a favourable turn: youth, a naturally excellent constitution, and having the first and ardent wish of his heart fully satisfied, his recovery was as rapid as it was astonishing.

His youthful bride blamed her fears, imputed them only to nerves, perhaps debilitated by anxious watchings, and now began to think, in spite of a coolness and gravity on the part of Sir Edward, which sometimes a little disconcerted her, that no happiness on earth was equal to hers, in thus being so soon, and so unexpectedly united to the object of her first and only love. Frederic, for the present, felt rapture unfeigned; riches, titles, honours, all were despised, all seemed poor when he pressed his Mary to his bosom; and in those fond moments, he had no other wish than to dwell with her for ever, amongst the rural scenes of pastoral life; and he *then* felt, that he could, without a sigh, resign all the gay scenes of fashion and elegance, to which he was once so devoted, and in which he had generally taken not only a shining, but a conspicuous part.

His uncle purchased, and presented it to Mrs. Harrington, an elegant cottage near her uncle's farm, till the health of Frederic should be perfectly re-established: but she

could not forbear remarking, in spite of all her happiness, that Sir Edward never expressed a wish, when her husband's recovery should be complete, to see her in London the ensuing winter; and that when he took his leave, his parting with her uncle and father was cold and distant; while he formally took *her* hand, and just raised it to his lips; an action which appeared to her feeling mind to have more in it of politeness than cordiality.

Her heart was full; the tears mounted to her eyes, but they were soon succeeded by smiles, and utterly chased away by the tender embrace of her Frederic, as he fondly wiped them off. Alas! the short hours of bliss are fleeting as the celerity of an arrow, while the chalice of sorrow, which we are often compelled to empty to the very dregs, is deep as its draught is bitter! and oh! how frequently is it replenished!

When Sir Edward Harrington thought his nephew was lost to him for ever, how anxious was his every wish, not only to meet, but to prevent those of his beloved Frederic!

When that much loved nephew was out of danger, he thought only of his wounded honour; his having been superseded in his regiment, for absence without leave; having no share in the glorious achievements of his countrymen;—and all for the sake of a little country-girl, whose want of fortune and lack of high connexions, made her by no means a fit wife for the future Sir Frederic Harrington, whose title was as ancient as the order of nobility to which he belonged, and whose alliances were of the first in the kingdom. MR. HARRINGTON, who had been

“The very glass of fashion, the observ'd  
“Of all observers;”—————

who had shone in the drawing-room, and glittered in all the splendid scenes of the great and gay; and who held a distinguished rank in the world, by his birth, fortune, and expectations, must there introduce an obscure country wife, who, it was true, in the village where she was born, brought up, and resided, was the paragon of all whom she might come in competition with; and who, in the friendly parties of the Leslies, where he had seen her, and where his nephew *unfortunately* had been first charmed with her, and whence all restraint was banished, had known how to conduct herself with that unobtruding ease which rendered her *there* an interesting and a charming guest: but then she only excited admiration as a very superior kind of girl, for one entirely brought up in the country! But what accomplishments could she boast to entitle her to be the wife of his Frederic? Sir Edward had never heard her sing; he knew not that she was possessed of a seraphic voice; but he was sure she did not know one note of music, she knew not even how to beat, with graceful *attitudes*, the *tambourine*; she could not draw a common landscape, much less designs for *Egyptian* mausoleums, or *Grecian* statues; neither could she speak French, Italian, nor one word of *German*: in short, she did not possess one of those parts of education so requisite for the wife of a man of high fashion, to have at least a smattering of; for it was not needful for the wife of Frederic Harrington to know how to make his shirts; and he had not a doubt but that she would be rustic enough to let out the secret, that she knew how to *spin*!—shocking!—

Such were the reflections of Sir Edward Harrington on the marriage of his nephew; and such are the prejudices of high birth, even in the best of minds. The great

and high-born are like a distinct class of beings from their inferiors; may they ever continue so; for we know it is impossible that all men can be born equal; but let them not spurn at an union with exemplary merit, especially where there *can* be no degradation in the alliance, nor prefer the frivolous and empty accomplishments of changeful fashion, to the more solid endowments of the mind.

Nothing, we believe, is more hard to eradicate than family pride: the excellent, the worthy Sir Edward Harrington, was not without an abundant share; and moving only among those of his own sphere, he was weak enough to think those accomplishments *essential* in the education of a lady, which are merely *ornamental*.

He knew not half the natural abilities, or indeed the acquirements of his lovely niece; nor reflected how young and ductile she was, and how easily she might be taught some of those futile accomplishments on which fashion sets so high a value. At the parsonage, where she knew the well-taught and naturally intelligent Lady Isabella Emerson made all the attainments of education seem poor, when displayed by another in her presence; Mary then, with her own natural humility, concealed the *few* which *she* possessed.

She could not play, it is true, either on the *harp*, *piano-forte*, or *tambourine*; but she drew with taste, and from nature: her father had made her an excellent *French* scholar, though she knew not Italian or German; and with her uncle Charles and her sister, when at home, she frequently conversed in French, that they might by practice improve each other; but as she was a proficient in the language, more grammatically by books than she shone in it by fluency of speech, this acquirement was also unknown to strangers.

Sir Edward Harrington had seen her at her own dwelling, in a sphere the most humble and domestic; tending the couch of his sick nephew, with all the indefatigable care and tenderness of a nurse: he would joyfully have given three thousand pounds with Mary, to have made some worthy Essex farmer happy in such a wife; but he felt very far from satisfied in seeing her become his own niece!

An unjust and illiberal idea shot across his mind and added to his prejudice: he revolved over many circumstances, all perverted to his falsely-conceived opinion; and he suffered himself to imbibe the thought, that the father and uncles of this artless girl had laid plans to effect an union between her and his nephew. Oh! cruel suspicion, how often thou shewest thy meanness, by not suffering the tongue to utter what thy pernicious poison implanteth within the breast; how deep are the injuries that are inflicted by thee on the innocent! for, oft-times, by the silence thou imposest, thou takest only firmer root in the mind; and the suspected never find an opportunity of pleading their defence.

## CHAP. XV.

A FATAL ACCIDENT AND AN UNEXPECTED  
EVENT.

Say, what can ease thy present grief,  
 Can former joys afford relief?  
 Those former joys, remember'd still,  
 The more augment the recent ill:  
 What woes from *mortal* ills accrue!  
 And what from *natural* ensue!  
 Disease and casualty attend  
 Our footsteps, to the journey's end.

COOPER's *Poetical Blossoms*.

MR. HARRINGTON was, within a few weeks after the departure of his uncle, established in all honey-moon happiness, at his wife's cottage *ornée*. Margaret, with no one adventure, or prospect of any thing of the kind, (for she had given up the expectation of Sir Charles coming about the farm in various disguises, and had strictly examined the features of every masculine-looking female gleaner in vain,) now passed the unchequered *routine* of her dreary hours in tears, spleen, and ill-humour, and was but a poor substitute for her sister in the management of household affairs.

The reign of romantic solitude was past, and she had no more delicious romances from Lady Isabella, to cast their sweet illusive principles over her gloomy hours. She again had recourse to the library, but her taste had become too vitiated to find entertainment in the domestic novels of a RICHARDSON, or a MISS BURNEY: the new publications, teeming with scandalous anecdotes of known characters\*, under fictitious names, were, as yet, unexplored by her; and if they had been, could not be either entertaining or interesting, as the parties were unknown to her; neither had they found their way to the receptacle of novels, from whence she drew the chief sources of her leisure amusements.

Again she essayed the charms of old romance and legendary tales: very, very eventful had been the scenes she had witnessed within the last two months of her life; but yet they had nothing in them which could remind her of towers, the dungeons of ancient castles, or hitherto-undiscovered parchments found amongst mouldering ruins; and she read over a few pages of these once-dearly-cherished works, and turned from them in disgust; while she deemed herself too good an historian to re-peruse *historic* romances, which, though doubtful facts were enveloped in thick clouds of fiction, she fancied were all literally true.\*

But, one evening, the poor, despised, and almost forgotten Phelim O'Gurphy awakened her late sleeping lethargies to the marvellous and romantic. He was sitting on a bench, under a window at which she sat reclining in pensive mood; when the voice, and

\*Particularly the libellous trash of Eth—g—on, the author of "A WINTER IN DUBLIN," &c.

\*This may with propriety be termed *Historique*, since every one must acknowledge that it is *true*.

in particular, the words of Phelim, addressed to his fellow-servant, arrested all her attention: "Botheration; cannot you be after understanding me? why your head is as thick as *mush*! I tell you over and over again, for the *first* time, as I did *before*, that every mother's son in Ireland, that has his name beginning win an *O* or a *Mac*, are all come from the *kings* of Ireland!"

Margaret now began to think that she had not been wrong in the first ideas she had formed of the nobility of Phelim, especially when she heard his indignation at the rude laugh he had extorted by this assertion from the English clown, and who said to the Hibernian, "*Soa*, you would fain make *un* believe, that you *bees* the son of a king! *by goles*, and you'd make a *rum* sort of a prince!"

"Arrah! and why not?" said Phelim, in great wrath; "I'd have you to know, that I was born to as good a *property* as any lad in Ireland; but he who *owned it*, would never let my poor mother have so much as a potatoe belonging to it; and, to be sure, my mother, was not she an O'Hagglety, and my own father an O'Gurphy? and every body in Tipperary knows the O'Haggleties is a good a family as ever tasted potatoes and buttermilk: but now I will be after telling you all about it: my uncle O'Hagglety, my mother's own brother, he married a woman of the name of Mac-Alister; and och, to be sure, was not she a pretty nut to crack under the devil's tooth?"—"I *do'ant* know," says the clown, "any thing about *she*."—"Aye, by my soul, but I do," continued O'Gurphy. "Well, my dear honey, what does *she* do, but claim a relationship! saying, she was the *fifth* cousin to our *seventh* cousin, who enjoyed the <sup>\*</sup>property till it should come to our turn to have it: he *was* a Mac-Alister; but I believe *her* name, if she had *spake* truth, had no Mac to it, but it was *Mulcalister*; she, och, *the devil burn her*, has got the best part of the property now, because of her name, and being the *fifth* instead of the *seventh* cousin: so poor Phelim is obliged to work for his living. Arrah, and what should I have done, if I had not found such a good master? Here's God bless him, and long life to him! By the holy St. Patrick, and you've emptied the mug while I have been talking to you!"

Margaret had heard enough; she rose and walked from the window; while her reflections crowded one after the other in quick succession: "Ah!" thought she, "I knew I could not be mistaken in my ideas of his former grandeur; he is higher even than I thought: I imagined him only to have been a nobleman, but I find him in reality a prince! descended from the most ancient kings of Ireland! Oh! false Sir Charles, perhaps I shall one day triumph over you, when the wicked usurper, Lady *Mulcalister* will be obliged to deliver up the immense riches and extensive domains, which she now withholds from this lovely youth, their rightful lord!"

After that moment, which had convinced her of Phelim's dignity, she never requested him to perform any menial office; though, from the time she had imagined him, according to Mrs. Kennedy's predictions, a very low fellow, she had not only behaved to him with haughtiness and contempt, but had always called upon him to do every species of drudgery about the house, and the good-nature and diligence with which he had obeyed her commands she now construed into proofs of his extreme love towards her.

She actually shed tears at her former cruelty, and would willingly have waited on him herself, if shame had not deterred her: his assiduity, however, when he has seen her

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\*The lower class of Irish are all uncommonly fond of claiming relationship, and talking of their *property*, though often only in the clouds.

perhaps at the pump, filling a pitcher of water for herself, and which has made him run eagerly to fill it for her, she was sure proceeded from the patient ardour of his affections, and she regarded Phelim O’Gurphy with more admiration than ever.

Happy in the ideal possession of the heart of this hero in disguise, she again applied her solitary hours to reading, but the ghosts, the witches, the spacious corridors, mouldering castles and dungeons, since the pig-stye adventure, had lost their delusive charms.

In her father’s library was the excellent novel of GIL BLAS; she there found the affecting history of a young cavalier, disguised as a gardener, on the estate of him who was married to his wife, while he, the former husband, had been reported to have been slain in battle. The interesting romance of ZAÏDE also, and some other Turkish tales, shewed her how frequent were such transformations; her romantic mind told her how probable were such adventures, and Phelim, therefore, was again re-instated in her heart’s opinion, on firmer grounds than ever.

Mr. Marsham had gone that day, when she had heard Phelim relate the grandeur of his descent, to dine with some members of a fox-chase society, and this annual dinner generally kept him to a late hour. Margaret and her father had dined *tête-à-tête*, and in the evening walked over to the cottage, to see the new-married couple. Frederic Harrington left his home, only to take a few very quiet morning airings at a gentle pace, in his post-chaise, on account of his yet unhealed wound; and he still continued in a delicate state of health, though gaining strength every day.

He was, as yet, delighted with his charming Mary; but as his health amended, he began to feel a sameness in his way of life, which convinced him he could never endure such a monotony, however agreeable, to continue always: and though with eagerness he had once expressed his wishes that his Mary should have a music-master, and other masters to teach her a few polite accomplishments, that he might shew her off the ensuing winter in town to advantage; yet, a faint emotion of surprise, and almost self-reproof, sometimes, though not often, arose in his mind, to think that he should have been so very infatuated, as to make a girl *his* wife, who could not play with spirit at every genteel game at cards; could not, he was sure, delight in the charming midnight squeeze of a crowded London rout, nor be quite at home in the gay and splendid scenes of continual and confirmed dissipation.

These symptoms of regret were very faint indeed; and, as has been remarked before, very seldom arose in his breast; but that they *did* arise, is certain: and when Mary, at such moments, delighted at the thoughts of learning music, has expressed that delight, and asked when she was to begin? he has said, “Well, stay till we get to London; though I do really think you are too old to learn now.” Then his sudden return of fondness, as he regarded the varying attractions of her animated and intelligent countenance, the sweetness of her bewitching smile, and reflected on the excellency of her heart and disposition, he has quickly thought within himself, Oh! such an angelic being must confer honour on any situation; and then impulsively catching her to his bosom, he has said, “Your sweet voice, my charming girl, depend upon it, shall be quickly cultivated, that you may know how to sing to music, when any one may accompany you, and with proper expression.”

Edward Marsham, as yet, perceived no change in the mutual happiness of the young people: it was indeed too early a day for him to imbibe such an idea, and Mary had really suffered no diminution of her felicity; for at present her Frederic was all tenderness, politeness, and attention.

Margaret longed for such a state of bliss as she saw her sister enjoy; and yet Margaret, with all her folly, could not associate Phelim O’Gurphy in those ideas.

She had passed, as well as her father, a delightful evening, and Edward went home completely happy in the felicity of his children. Frederic revered and loved his father-in-law, and the pleasure his society ever afforded to this in many other respects wavering young man, always rendered him doubly kind to his dear Mary: and the worthy Curate, joyful in the conjugal bliss of his dearest daughter, walked home in fervent gratitude to heaven, his heart overflowing with satisfaction, and his eye glistening with the tear of thankfulness to the Supreme Dispenser of good.

Edward and his daughter had not long been at home, when, as they were expressing their surprise at the lateness of the hour, and that Ralph had not yet returned, both saying almost at the same time, “I knew he would not be early, but I never knew him so late before;” a loud ringing at the front gate rather alarmed them, for it was always the custom of Ralph to take his horse round to the stable-yard, and come in himself at the door which led to the back part of the house: Phelim, however, who had sat up for him, went quickly to the gate, and *as* quickly returned, with a countenance as pale as death, and scarcely able to articulate, “Oh! sir, for the love of J——s come! oh! my poor master!”

Margaret, not knowing what she did, and now feeling, for the first time, that she really *loved* her *rustic* uncle, rushed with her father to the front garden; there a most piteous sight presented itself to their horror-struck eyes, two men were bearing in their arms the almost lifeless and bleeding remains of Mr. Ralph Marsham! for his collar-bone was broken in two places, his arm also broken, and his body almost dashed to pieces.

The strides of death were too rapid and hasty for any medical art to arrest; speech returned no more, though sense did not seem utterly fled, for he essayed to lift his unbroken arm, and his finger appeared to point, and his eye to glance towards an old *escritoire*, which stood in his bedroom, and in a few minutes after he was laid on his bed, he resigned his spirit into the hands of his Creator.

Had the action of pointing to an old worm-eaten *escritoire* been performed at any other moment, what food for adventure would it not have been to Margaret! But wholly absorbed in the agonising scene before them, she sank, bitterly weeping, on her poor uncle’s shattered body, and soon, in a fainting fit, was carried senseless out of the chamber.

The two men who had borne in his body were next attended to; one appeared the perfect gentleman, though dressed in the equalising *costume* of a modern protector of the *noble* art of pugilism; and he explained to the Reverend Mr. Marsham the dreadful catastrophe. In going down an hill, the horse of Mr. Ralph Marsham had started at a cow which was grazing in a neighbouring meadow: the hill being very steep, and Mr. Marsham knowing that the horse had always been accustomed to start at black cattle, made him turn the creature round; in turning, he went too close to the side of the

declivity, and fell from a perpendicular height of several feet, with the whole weight of the horse falling upon him.

The gentleman who had been supping at an house in the vicinity, was walking home, accompanied by his servant, and they witnessed all the horror of the fatal accident, without having it in their power to prevent it: the horse had fled, and they bore the miserably lacerated man home between them. From a direction they found on a letter in his pocket, and which they had made out by the light of the moon, they discovered the dwelling of the unhappy man, and conveyed him to his sorrowing survivors.

Edward intreated to know to whom he was obliged for this mournful, yet friendly office; and found the gentleman was a man of immense fortune who resided chiefly in London, a Mr. Davenport.

He was then on a visit with his lady, in the country; and this Mrs. Davenport was formerly a Miss Maddison, who, though some years younger than the late Mrs. Edward Marsham, had been her most particular friend. Mr. Davenport promised to call on Edward before he quitted the country, which he expected would be very soon, and wishing him a good-night, Edward repaired to the chamber of his departed brother, to weep over his shattered remains.

In the morning, he recollected the escritoire, and taking the keys of the deceased, he there found his will; but what particularly excited his astonishment, and added to his affliction, on account of poor Margaret, to whom he now found he had nothing to bequeathe, was the following clause in Ralph's last will and testament:

“And, whereas, in my days of early youth and indiscretion, I particularly attached myself to a young woman of the name of Jane Matthews, of the parish of St. John's, in the village of Frelingham, in the county of Suffolk, and by whom I had a son; I therefore give and bequeath to this my natural child, Matthew Marsham, excepting one hundred pounds sterling to each of my nieces, all my personal property and furniture, together with the farm, and farm-land of Eglantine; which said farm was left to me by my late father Joseph Marsham, to be entirely at my future disposal, as his will shall certify.—Jane Matthews has now been dead some years; my son Matthew Marsham was brought up to the chirurgical profession, and was appointed surgeon to one of his Majesty's West-India corps; and has been returned about two years to England: his agents, Messrs.——— and ——, will certify whether he is living, and where he may be found.”

Poor Edward was left now with his sixty pounds per annum, which he received for his cure, and his share of a small life-annuity, with his brothers, made his annual income little more than eighty pounds: he lifted his eyes to heaven, in humble submission to the decrees of Providence, while they streamed with the mingled tears of regret, at the loss of his worthy brother, and at the idea of his daughter's indigence.

He immediately dispatched a letter to the rightful heir; and a visit of condolence from Mr. and Mrs. Davenport, put a period, for the present, to his mournful reflections.

## CHAP. XVI.

## A NEW CHARACTER.

Why do we pluck all the flowers in Spring? Winter is niggardly with flowers, and the few that do spring up, smell but faintly. Therefore these few should be planted early, and raised with care.

KOTZEBUE.

MRS. DAVENPORT advanced with much polite sweetness to meet the embrace of her worthy clerical friend; and hearing from him, during the course of her visit, of the state in which Mr. Marsham had left his affairs, she requested to have the happiness of taking Miss Marsham to town with her the ensuing week; offered her her protection, and promised, in every respect, to consider her, and treat her, as her own child.

Mrs. Davenport had no children; the offer was too advantageous for the Curate to refuse, and he joyfully acquiesced in the warmly-expressed wishes of such disinterested benevolence: he had known Emily Maddison a most charming and unassuming girl; generosity of disposition amounted almost, in her, to a fault; but it was an amiable one, and Edward now rejoiced that she had married a man, whose immense fortune, and their having been married eleven years without any prospect of a family, rendered that profuse liberality no longer a fault, but rather a virtue.

Edward Marsham had yet to learn, that Emily Maddison, and the dashing Mrs. Davenport, were two very distinct characters; she had married a man of immense riches, and a very slave to fashion. The gay scenes of London, to which he hastily introduced his beautiful bride in the winter he had wedded her, took a speedy and rooted effect, in a mind naturally weak; her unassuming character easily degenerated into a total want of proper self-opinion; and she was hurried onwards, only as the stream of fashionable customs and manners might carry her. The few virtues of her mind were quickly swallowed up in the vortex of dissipation; and though at first she loved her husband, who was certainly very handsome, and two years younger than herself, yet, in less than one twelvemonth, she cared so little about him, that he became perfectly indifferent to her: while the flutterers of the day breathed soft nonsense and new compliments in her ear, her husband's ardour cooled towards her, and the fops of fashion were preferred for their continued assiduity. Mr. Davenport soon began to feel that the highest satisfaction he derived from his married state, was the repeated remarks of his wife being the handsomest and best-dressed woman in the whole circle of fashion.

Mrs. Davenport was once, not only beautiful, she was also in an high degree fascinating: yet the various scenes of dissipation in which she was engaged, with the lateness of the hours she kept, soon destroyed her charms, and in eight years she scarce shewed the reliques of what she *had* been; every inventive art was essayed towards the restoration of a beauty once solely indebted to nature, and with some success on a face yet lovely, and more hurt by the vigils of fashion than by years.

It is true she might have been the *very young* mother of Margaret, but she looked as young as she did; and observing no prospect of rivalry in such a girl, her natural good-nature, which seldom or ever deserted her, suggested the kind idea of taking her home, as a cherished *protégée*: the word *daughter*, for a girl of seventeen, though only by adoption, would have terrified her from performing the beneficent action.

\*It was now some years since her husband and she had made the accommodating agreement between themselves, to let each other act, in every respect, as should best please them individually: they were both lively and good-humoured, they were both *gentlefolks*, and there was no acrimony or *vulgar quarrels* between them. Mr. Davenport had his *chère amie* in private lodgings, without any concealment from his wife, or experiencing the smallest degree of disagreeable jealousy or *uncomfortable* expostulation on *her* part: while Mrs. Davenport, who was naturally much more the dupe of her vanity than of a roving disposition, was as eager to make conquests, and afford hope to the unprincipled train of libertines who followed her, as any single coquette, whose chief delight may be in the *number* of her admirers.

But Mrs. Davenport, though her heart was warm by its natural generosity, had much more of the English frigidity than the Italian *amoroso* in her composition.

At the latter end of the ensuing week, after Mrs. Davenport had paid her visit to the farm-house, Margaret was conveyed by her and her husband, in an elegant carriage and four, to their magnificent house in Grosvenor-square: she had seen, it is true, an high degree of taste and splendour at the parsonage, but here, all that the most refined luxury could invent, or opulence bestow, presented itself to charm her eyes and delude her warm imagination.

She was immediately put in possession of a beautifully decorated dressing-room and bed-chamber, which, with all her native sweetness and polish of manners, Mrs. Davenport desired her, while she gave her at the same time a kind embrace, to consider her own.

Margaret had been put into very handsome mourning for her uncle, at Mrs. Davenport's expence: she was now in a fine black cloth riding-habit, and being in sables, her dress she knew would be soon adjusted for their seven o'clock dinner, and throwing off her hat, she sat down on a superb sofa-bed, to admire all around her, and feast her eyes with the beauty of that apartment, which she had been told to consider as her own.

The beautifully devised little fire-screens, the emigrant bellows, and the portable book-cases, all shewed the opulence of their possessors, and the elaborate skill of the artist; they were not only tasteful trifles, they were costly; of the most expensive materials, and of the choicest and most difficult to be obtained foreign wood that could be purchased.

It was autumn, the weather was warm, and the half-open windows wafted with every breath of air the ravishing fragrance of the exotic plants, which were placed on small stands on each side a long pier-glass, in which Margaret did not fail to take a frequent survey of her form and dress from head to foot. All the distilled perfumes of English flowers, with that of the Eastern rose, she found in beautiful little bottles, in the recesses of her handsome and modern constructed dressing-table.

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\**Historique.*

She took down a book or two, in order to see of what her little library consisted. The trifling productions of the day formed the chief part; among which, she found some works of Mrs. Kennedy's, and having often perused *them* before, she took down various others, to see if she could find any similar to those works formerly lent her by Lady Isabella Raymond; but this library consisted a good deal of trials for modern *indiscretions*, and some loose novels in the French language, such as *Le Sofa*, *Les Aventures d'un jeun Turc*, and a few more by the *unrestrained* writers which have flourished since the revolution: there were also a few English poems, where morality was quite unheeded, their subjects addressed only to the senses, while their language breathed a mixture of tenderness, delicacy, and sentiment, all calculated to warm the imagination, and turn the principles of virtue from their pure and genuine source. Some of these beautiful hanging shelves teemed with scandalous publications, not *very* new; such as the *Rising Sun*, *The Noble Cornutos*, *The Piccadilly Ambulator*, and *The Epics of the Ton*.

The clock striking six, made her start up and think of beginning her toilette for dinner, especially, too, as Mademoiselle Minette, the French attendant of Mrs. Davenport, came to request her to accept her assistance.

Margaret rose and curtsied to one whom she really thought was a modern fine lady, and evidently much her superior in outward appearance, address and *undress*—for her shoulders and bosom were literally bare, as were her arms, from the wrist to a small strap, called a sleeve, and all the other covering of her arms were a very handsome pair of bracelets: her dark hair was elegantly dressed, and fastened up with a gilt coronet comb; what little there was of her gown, was of a fine pink muslin; her cheeks were highly rouged, while her whole air had all that effrontery of a woman of high fashion, who sets the opinion of others at an independent defiance.

She advanced, however, with that mingled ease and politeness of manner which French women alone possess, to offer her assistance: Margaret, with much *naïveté*, said, "Oh! madam, I cannot think of troubling *you*, and besides, I am generally accustomed entirely to dress myself."—

"But, *ma chère demoiselle*, *c'est mon occupation*," said the lively Minette, "I am but the *soubrette* of Madame Davenport, and I should have done me the honour of waiting on you sooner, but that madame could not be pleased with the way I had arranged her hair; and she has had it altered five time; and, *à la fin*, I have had to comb it all out, and put on a *chevelure*!"—"What is that?" said Margaret, who, though ashamed of her former mistake, in conceiving the chambermaid to be a lady of fashion, yet her curiosity could not rest till she knew what Mrs. Davenport had put on her head; and not being very conversant in modern French, she had not heard the term.

"*Ah! Mon Dieu!*" replied Mademoiselle, "you know not—I believe, indeed, you call it *vig*, but madame would faint at the word." Margaret now thought she saw that the sly Minette appeared to laugh at her rustic ignorance; and she resolved in future to observe in silence, and be less inquisitive; she therefore coolly said, "I shall not want any assistance from you to-day, so leave me; for perhaps Mrs. Davenport may want you."—"Eh! *non, je vous assure*," said Minette, "*mais attendez!* Madame expect to-night one gentleman she love *ver* much, so she tell me to bring number of apologies to you, because she wish me to make her very much amiable; and she say, to-morrow, if she has time, she will see for one *fille* to wait *exprés* upon you."

Margaret's yet uncontaminated heart, could not help overflowing at the repeated instances of Mrs. Davenport's kindness; but Minette appeared astonished at this English refinement of sensibility, and said, "*Eh! mon Dieu, vous pleurez, donc? tenez*—I have some *rouge* in my bosom, *la voilà!* put it on your cheeks, you are so pale."—"No, I am very well," said Margaret, "therefore, leave me now; I had rather be alone."—"Mais donc, mademoiselle, *mettez en,*" said the soubrette: "*Non, non,*" said Margaret, "*Je vous dis.*"—"Eh! donc, *mettez un petit peu de ça,*" said the persevering Minette. "No, I tell you," said Margaret, half angry, "I desire you will go, I want no assistance, and you only hinder me from dressing." Minette shrugged her shoulders and retired.

Margaret had now heard there was to be company in the evening, and she felt much surprised that there should be any gentleman that Mrs. Davenport, *a married woman*, "loved very much;" but, she thought, of course, it must be some near relation, some cousin, it might be; or perhaps, as she had been so particular about her dress, some odd kind of uncle, whom she was desirous of pleasing; but then again, she recollected that many of the French novels she had perused did not exclude lovers because a woman was married; quite the contrary; but then, O dear, Mrs. Davenport was so different, she was too good, she was sure; and Mr. Davenport was too handsome for his wife to love any other man.

However, there was to be company, and *gentlemen* were expected; and Margaret was not yet judicious enough to know how to dress herself; and the elegant crape frock, trimmed with bugles, which Mrs. Davenport had purchased for her to appear in at the Argyle Rooms or the Pantheon, she took out to wear on this evening; after having adorned her hair, which never curled well, and which was now rather deranged by her journey, with a jet diadem.

She had never, since her days of infancy, worn a frock; and now she found all her efforts in vain, to dress herself without assistance; particularly from the breadth of her back, and a want of pliancy in her arms, which made her unable to button it. The clock struck seven, it chimed a quarter after, but she was yet no forwarder; and applying herself to the bell, she rang with all her might, but no one answered; again, and again she rang, after waiting several minutes between each pull which she gave the bell-rope.

It was half-past seven, and dinner had not yet been announced: five gentlemen and two ladies had arrived to a friendly dinner; and, in the many pretty things these gentlemen were uttering to her, Mrs. Davenport forgot that such a person as her dear *protégée* was in the house; while she was not handsome enough for Mr. Davenport to think at all about her; who, never much at his ease in the company of modest women, drawled out a few civil speeches to the lady and her daughter, who composed the female part of his guests. At length a servant came to say the dinner was served up; and an eager contention took place for the hand of the brilliant hostess, in which, however, the nearest to her succeeded in obtaining; and they all descended to the dining-parlour, without once giving a thought to poor Margaret, who, in her first effort to ring the bell, had broken the *cordon*, and therefore not one servant had heard it ring. At length one of the footmen in waiting, said, in a low voice, to his mistress, "I fancy, madam, no one has informed Miss Marsham that the dinner is ready." Mrs. Davenport now seemed ready to expire with laughter, and turning to the gentleman who was seated next to her, she said, "Well, was there ever such a creature as I am? Do you know, I brought a little girl out of the country with me for a

companion, yesterday, and we arrived only here this morning, from Ingatestone, at which place we slept last night, and I do assure you I had quite forgot she was in the house! Mr. Davenport, why did not you think of Miss Marsham? Order," continued she, turning to the footman, "Mademoiselle Minette to go up to her immediately; and if she is already engaged with her, send up one of the maids to Miss Marsham's dressing-room, and beg her to come down,—tell her we have half dined."

Mr. Davenport replied, turning his looks chiefly towards the company, — "Why, really, Emily, had you brought home a young lady of seventeen, any thing tolerable in her person, I perhaps *might* have thought about her; but I assure you, my dear friends, she has picked out such an ugly little devil, that strangers might imagine my wife was vulgar enough to be jealous of me."

Mademoiselle Minette, however, hastily buttoned Margaret's frock, and down she went: but though Margaret looked far from well, and though mourning was by no means becoming to one, whose naturally good skin had been discoloured into duskiness by the small-pox, yet the flurry she had experienced, had imparted a very pretty glow to her cheeks; and the depreciation of her person by Mr. Davenport was infinitely to her advantage, for the company was prepared to see a fright.

She was not, however, embarrassed by the bold *looks* of a set of fashionable men; for they regarded her with a cold indifference, and their eyes instantly reverted to the good things which were set before them.

This was a *friendly* party: Mrs. Davenport was dressed more in a style of voluptuous coquetry, than in any degree of splendour; but Margaret, whose sight was rather short, thought some other lady had taken the head of the table, and she looked for her benefactress in vain; for Mrs. Davenport had tucked up her beautiful light-brown hair under a wig almost black; till presently, her well-known voice made Margaret turn towards her, and she easily discovered her, by her peculiar and bewitching smile. "Mercy on me, child," exclaimed she, "how you are drawn out. O dear, you must not dress so, when we have only a family dinner at home."

The servants soon began to discover that Miss Marsham could be nothing more than an *humble friend*; they therefore forgot to change her plate: she had to call several times for a glass of water or porter; and not one gentleman had yet asked her to take a glass of wine, till Mrs. Davenport said to her husband, "Henry, I hope you take care of Miss Marsham!" He then coldly asked her, if she chose to take any wine? but calling on another lady to join them, he forgot to fill poor Margaret's glass from the decanter which stood next him, and the cloth was removed before she had half finished her dinner, and she had the prospect before her of starving in the midst of plenty.

After dinner, Mrs. Davenport said, "Do, my dear child, help me to one of those apricots which stand near you: what's your name? Margaret, I think, is not it? It is very ugly."—"My name, ma'am," replied Margaret, "is *Margaritta*."—"Well, that *is* something rather more tolerable."

A new jargon of fashionable slang then took place, quite inexplicable to the silent Margaret, with a confused kind of dissertation on various public places, which *she* had never been at in her life; and various parties were proposed to the company, but *she* was not included in the invitation. Mrs. Benworth and her daughter sat opposite to Margaret,

and frequently spoke together in a low voice, as they looked towards her, which added to the unpleasantness of her situation.

Mrs. Benworth had been a very fine woman, was a widow, and dearly loved the attentions, and highly estimated the adulation of the opposite sex, though not quite in so innocent a way as Mrs. Davenport; for the mind and ideas of Mrs. Benworth were coarse: though she was always accustomed by birth and fortune, to move in the first circles, and her education having been excellent, her gross defects were only perceptible to those who had known her long.

Miss Benworth was a sly-looking, silent girl, and observed a most mortifying *sang-froid* and distance towards those who sought her notice, especially if she thought them any way her inferiors. Margaret perceiving her a young person, much about the same age with herself, and dressed neat and plain, and the materials of her dress far from costly, thought her some unassuming girl, humble, perhaps, as herself in life; and she smiled at her when she saw her look towards her: but the young lady immediately took off her eyes, without any change in her saturnine countenance, and either applied herself to her dinner or whispered her mother.

When the ladies, about nine o'clock, withdrew to the drawing-room, Mrs. Davenport was deeply engaged, apart, with Mrs. Benworth and her daughter. Margaret was entirely deserted, and left to her own reflections; which so reverted back to the farm at Eglantine, to her father, to her happy, happy sister, and poor Phelim O'Gurphy, that with much difficulty she repressed the tears from starting to her eyes.

Miss Benworth at length rose, and went up to her; asked her if she could play or sing? and gave an audible "Oh! heavens!" when she answered in the negative.

Miss Benworth then addressed Mrs. Davenport, with, "You know, I consider myself at home here, and therefore I will go and shut myself up alone in your music-room, and practise the air of '*Just like Love!*'"—"Do, my darling!" replied Mrs. Davenport.

Now, though the flinty-looking cold-hearted Miss Benworth would have caused the little genial deity to have fled away in disgust, yet she affected to be in raptures at this charming air, which she contrived to sing *scientifically*; but that is not the kind of singing which can touch the heart: O divine Camoens! could thy love-fraught spirit descend to earth, and hear thy breathings of nature and pure passion thus profaned; how wouldst thou despise the wretched beings, who never knew in any degree the flame that animated thy bosom, and which, felt by thee in all its ardency, at length consumed thee, and snapt the fine chord asunder which bound thy soaring spirit to mortality!

\*Miss Benworth played well; but she sang the pathetic air of "*Here's a health to those far away!*" without one single emotion (though she had a brother who expired in the field of honour), and with as much ease and indifference as she would have performed a Scotch reel or an Irish jig.

After the departure of this unfeeling *amateur*, Mrs. Davenport threw herself on the sofa, by Mrs. Benworth, and began a confidential conversation, in a very low voice; but of which Margaret could make out the following sentences:



## CHAP. XVII.

## CHANGES AT EGLANTINE.

Man is but man, inconstant still and various;  
 There's no to-morrow in him like to-day:  
 Perhaps, the atoms floating in his brain  
 Make him think honestly the present hour;  
 The next, a crowd of base inglorious thoughts  
 May mount aloft.

DRYDEN.

ALMOST immediately after the summons he had received, repaired to the farmhouse the son and heir of the late Mr. Marsham. Though his person was somewhat below the middle stature, yet it was graceful and well-proportioned; and if ever countenance was capable of inspiring interest, by its intelligence and its sweet glow of benevolence, such did Matthew Marsham possess, in a degree the most conspicuous. The mingled emotions of sensibility and gratitude now moistened his eyes with a tear; which he quickly wiped away, fearful of observation, and the being accused of hypocrisy, in expressing his regret to the memory of a father whom he had never seen since his days of infancy.

"I fear, sir," said he, addressing the Reverend Edward Marsham, "that I shall make but a very bad farmer; however, my generous father's bequest will render me independent of my present profession, which I embraced more from necessity than choice."

"But in which it is evident," said Edward, "you had great skill, for it is very seldom so young a man should be entrusted with the charge of a regiment, which, I am informed, you obtained\* some years ago."

"Yes, sir," said Matthew, "I had the honour to gain both the applause and friendship of the medical board; but my health was so impaired by the destructive climate I found myself obliged to quit, that I found it absolutely requisite to its preservation, to give up my surgeoncy in the regiment, and repair to England: with what little money I have saved, I hoped, by practising my profession in my native country, to have obtained in a few years a comfortable independency."

Some other desultory conversation then took place, and Edward was delighted with the good sense and acquired literature of his nephew; who, after a pause, with a sweet air of humility, advanced towards him, and respectfully took his hand.—"May I presume, sir," said he, "on this the commencement of our acquaintance, to request a favour of you, which, though to me it is of magnitude, can by you be easily performed: it is, that you would never quit me; but hold the same place in this habitation, as you did with my generous father. Oh! sir, suffer me not to find that I enter here as the illegitimate destroyer of your rights, usurping, in a manner, the dwelling of your ancestors; as one who chases you from your long-accustomed home, to seek another! Consider, I intreat of you, oh! yet consider all *my* servants as your *own*: and do not make me miserable, by refusing this humble request."

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\**Historique.*

“Be assured,” replied Edward, “I feel all the value of your generous proposal; but I estimate more the *intrinsic* value of possessing and taking to my heart a relation like yourself: my eldest daughter is married to a man of rank and fortune; who, on the opening of my late brother’s will, insisted that I should hereafter make his house my home; my promise is therefore given, and I hope,” added he, with a smile, “that you will people these numerous apartments better than your father did, and that it will be no longer “Bachelor’s Hall.”

Though the countenance of the interesting Matthew had become rather pallid from his long sojournment in the unhealthy climate of St. Lucia, yet now a deep crimson mantled over it, and the ill-represt sigh which heaved his bosom, discovered the secret to Edward, that love had already planted his arrows in the heart of his nephew.

After this unlooked-for relative had been announced in the will of her uncle, and whom, when he presented himself, no one could help loving, Mary had felt herself happy that it was in *her* power to afford her revered and much-loved parent a comfortable asylum: the instant offer of her Frederic to that effect had delighted her beyond measure, and she even promised herself that yet better days awaited all her family than any they had heretofore experienced: she knew how dearly her father loved her; she knew how happy he would be when always in her society; and the ease and elegance in which she lived in her rural residence would ensure him many comforts which he had never known at the farm. Her sister was amply provided for: she was the *protégée* of a woman, not only possessed of an immense fortune, but of a sweet temper and an excellent heart—*she* would *never*, endowed with these two *last* valuable gifts, forsake her; of that, this affectionate sister felt assured. It was true, she herself had experienced some change in the temper and manners of Mr. Harrington, but that she might naturally expect; she was not to imagine an *husband* would be always a *lover*!

Thus argued the inexperienced Mary, who, though she endeavoured to be cheerful and contented, could not make the last reflection without a tear: she tried to persuade herself that it was only the effect of her low spirits on the recent death of her uncle Ralph; oh! no,—they had been just highly elated by news from her favourite and happy uncle Charles; who had described in glowing colours the success of the British arms at Flushing: and she had rejoiced at, and blessed a protecting Providence, that this her dear uncle was safe and unhurt, beloved and favoured by all his superior officers. Poor Mary! she banished the thought from her mind, that her Frederic was not the same as formerly, yet it *would* intrude, and it *would* bring the little crystal trembler to her eye.

She endeavoured to drive it away with the thoughts of her sister’s promised happiness; but her sister was neither happy nor safe under Mrs. Davenport’s protection; who, though she took her *as her own*, did not mean to leave her a shilling! such an idea had never entered her head.

Mrs. Davenport had often that much-abused epithet bestowed upon her, of possessing an excellent heart; but it was in her neither the seat of feeling or affection, and her mind, if mind she had any, was swayed only by the dictates of fashion, or the customs and opinions of those higher in rank than herself.

But this Mary knew not, and in the contemplation of her sister’s good fortune, her thoughts again reverted to her father, and she cheerfully tripped up stairs to the

apartments allotted to him; and her filial affection, aided by her natural taste, embellished his dressing-room with various articles and devices of modern elegance.

Frederic Harrington began, already, to pant for change; the fatal accident that had happened, the close mourning of his wife, and her near affinity to the deceased, would render it quite contrary to the rules of established *etiquette*, for her to make her public appearance for two or three months at least: what a delightful opportunity for him to take an unrestrained swing of fashionable pleasure! It is true he was in deep mourning also, but the late Mr. Marsham was only allied to him by marriage: he could very well urge that change of air and scene was absolutely requisite to the recovery of his health: he meant therefore to be very attentive and polite to the present owner of Eglantine farm; whose medical skill was much thought of, and to whom Frederic meant to impart the idea of how very much he felt the want of a more salubrious air.

The morning of that day, in which Mr. Marsham meant to take up his abode at Mr. Harrington's cottage *ornée*, he walked out with his nephew, to whom he began to feel himself very much attached, to pay a few morning visits: Edward, to return those of kind condolence he had received from his neighbours, and a few others of ceremony, to introduce Mr. Matthew Marsham to their notice.

Lady Wringham had sent a verbal message, by her servant, on the news of Mr. Ralph Marsham's sudden death, with her offers of *sarvice* to the family.

Mr. Marsham therefore called at Sir John's, but heard the voice of her ladyship at the top of the stairs, saying, "Not at home, I told you, blockhead! (addressing the servant, who had previously told the Curate his lady *was* at home); and, as she retreated to her dressing-room, they plainly heard her utter something about, "Such a *clergyman* indeed! encouraging his brother's *bastards!*"

They then hastened to the cottage of that charming old lady, Mrs. Susanna Bradbury, and were by her and her lovely niece greeted with unfeigned politeness and cordiality; but it needed but a very small portion of penetration to discover that it was not the *first* interview between Matthew Marsham and Lucy Ringwood.

Elated and happy, Matthew accompanied his uncle home; but as they walked along, seldom answered him to the purpose, except it was to acquiesce in Mrs. Susan Bradbury's being the most delightful old woman ever seen; though it was plain enough to perceive, that not the *old* woman, but the *young* one was the object of Matthew's attention; for towards Mrs. Susan he had scarcely ever looked during the whole of their visit, and no one ever found themselves able to make a *short* one to Mrs. Susanna.

The poor faithful Irish servant, Phelim O'Gurphy, could not endure the sight of this *misbegotten* intruder, as he called him, at the farm; and took care always to be out of the way, if Mr. Matthew Marsham wanted his services. Edward was surprised on this day of his intended departure for his daughter's cottage, to see the poor fellow enter his chamber, crying and sobbing, as if his heart would break; "Och!" said he, "and is poor Phelim come to see this day? When the brother of my late dear master, and the same mother's son with himself, should go out of his own lawful dwelling, to make room for an unlawful child! and perhaps his mother might be no better than old Peg Plunkett of Dublin."

"If you wish to preserve my favour and friendship," said Edward, gravely, "I insist upon it, that I never hear you utter a word of disrespect against the mother of that

excellent young man, who I am sure will make one of the kindest of masters to you all, while you behave well.”—“Och! but I am sure,” said Phelim, “and he’ll never be *my* master.”—“Know when you are well off,” said Edward, “and do not, be a ridiculous folly, and misplaced zeal towards me, throw yourself out of a situation, in which I am certain you will be truly comfortable.”—“No, no, sir, there is no comfort left for poor Phelim, unless you consent to keep him for your own servant.”

“That is impossible, my good lad, I never, since I have been in my brother’s house, kept a servant of my own; and I am sure I shall not now.”—“Och! sir,” urged the yet weeping O’Gurphy, “I want no wages, I have saved a little bit of money since I lived with your own dear brother,—I want nothing of you, but for the love of J——s, sir, pray let me go with you. I cannot, I cannot stay about the farm when you have left it.”

“But, my good fellow,” said Edward, much affected, “I cannot take you to Mr. Harrington’s, their house is full of servants; and what would my son and daughter think, if I, who will want, in their establishment, for no attention, of any kind whatever, should be so whimsical as to incumber them with *my own servant*?”

“Sir,” said the persevering Phelim, “will your honour give me leave to *spake* one word to Mr. Harrington *alone*, by *mine own self*?”—“By no means, you will for ever offend me, if you do; make yourself easy and contented: your present master will soon render you so, if it is not your own fault.”—“The devil set fire to me, if ever he shall be a master of mine!”—“Fie on you, Phelim,” said Edward, scarce able to keep his countenance, “let me hear no swearing, of any kind;” but finding his son-in-law was below, he hastened down stairs. Phelim followed, and almost began the renowned howl of his country, crying out, “Och, and can you be after leaving me, now?”—“What is the matter, my dear sir,” said Harrington, “are you inflicting *corporeal* as well as spiritual chastisement on your servant?”—“No, neither,” said Edward, “but I cannot get rid of him; I believe he will throw me down stairs:” for Phelim had fastened himself to the skirts of Mr. Marsham’s coat; who was at length compelled to explain this ludicrous scene to Mr. Harrington, whose heart, naturally good, ever alive to, and actuated by good-nature, and ever ready to appreciate the genuine feelings of honesty and attachment, insisted that the faithful Hibernian should be retained at the cottage as the Reverend Mr. Marsham’s servant.

The affliction of Phelim was now succeeded by joy as tumultuous as it was unfeigned: and so often did he quaff the *nectarous* fluid of strong, home-brewed ale, to the health of his master, and the long-life and happiness of the noble Mr. Harrington and his beautiful lady, that Phelim, when he accompanied the Reverend Edward Marsham to the cottage, was completely intoxicated.

As he followed his master along a very wide path-way, which, however, was not *sufficiently* wide, for the space he took, by his frequent reeling from one side to the other, they met, as they walked in this guise, Sir John and Lady Wringham taking an evening walk. “I declare,” said she, as loud as she could, “if there *isn’t some* parsons who *deserves* to have their gowns stripped over their ears; first they *encourages filthy bastardy*, and next drunkenness: do but look at that nasty, Irish fellow, as *drunk as a sow*; and I dare say the master is not much better.”

Edward heard her, in all the silence of contempt; for he was happy to find that his attendant, brimful of joy, as well as of liquor, was too absorbed in the reveries, which the

delightful accomplishment of his wishes had suffered to float in his muddled brain; else, no doubt, but the “sprig, of shilleghlah,” which he grasped, would, in his present maddened state of mind, had he heard her ladyship, been applied to the *little* support, on which she leaned her weighty arm; in spite of his baronetage, or all the boasted wealth and honours of the past, present, and future race of the Wringhams.

Edward knew that all lectureship, in the present state of his servant, would be not only useless, but misunderstood; he therefore requested his son-in-law to order *his* servant to put him to bed, and reserved his own wise and mild exhortations till the morrow.

In a few days, Mr. Harrington became extremely intimate with the late Mr. Marsham’s acknowledged son: his views, it is true, at first, were somewhat selfish, as he wished to render Matthew his vehicle, to obtain an emancipation, for a short period, from the fetters of *matrimonial sameness!*

But never did Frederic feel more gratification, than in his acquaintance with this amiable young man: how unlike the tumultuous and momentary friendship he had formed with the Leslies? and yet Harrington, though a virtuous esteem seemed taking firm root in his bosom for one possessed of sense, manly refinement, with excellence of heart and understanding; and though the wavering Frederic was in full and undisputed possession of all the warm and uncontaminated affection of a virtuous mind, enshrined in a form the most captivating and lovely; yet, ah! that form, which he pressed to his bosom, the virtues, the attractions he daily and hourly witnessed, were, alas! only those of A WIFE!

His newly-acquired and much-esteemed friend was a country neighbour, who resided very near to him, and whom he could see at all times; so he could the wife of his fondest choice, and the reverend parent whom he loved and honoured: the sigh of discontent then often escaped him, and wafted with it, his wishes for the pleasures of the gay world; and he languished to take his accustomed round in the scenes of fashionable dissipation. Oh! how little prized are pure and tranquil pleasures, by the high-born and thoughtless votaries of wealth and splendour! Oh! wayward man, how eager art thou to rush on to thine own ruin, and to implant in thy breast the bitter, lasting, but *unavailing* thorns of remorse!

Frederic Harrington took care not to say the true cause of his wishing for a change of scene; but told Mr. Matthew Marsham that he had been always so accustomed to autumnal sea-bathings, at the different watering-places, that he really felt this custom had become an absolute requisite towards the preservation of his health. Matthew could urge nothing against what appeared so reasonable and what he had always found, in the course of his profession, extremely sanative: he therefore readily acquiesced.

Mary expected that her Frederic would have been solicitous of her accompanying him; but she soon found her mistake, by his telling her he should be only absent for a very short period; and that he was happy to leave her father with her, to alleviate and shorten her hours of solitude; that, by the time he returned, she would have enlivened the deep gloom of her sables, and they would then make their appearance in London. Mary heard in silence, and but ill-represt her tears; her bosom heaved with the agitation of stifled sorrow, and her cheek turned pale: for as Mr. Harrington had fixed on Cromer, in Norfolk, for his bathing-place, she thought, although it had become, in some degree, a fashionable resort, yet it might be made, to those who wished it to be so, a very retired

residence; and her *sables* had only furnished an excuse for her husband to depart without her.

When Charles Marsham quitted the farm-house, Mary had experienced a cruel agony of heart, and she then thought that such an extent of affliction she could never feel again: but how much more keen did she feel this separation! when she wept, for she could not help weeping on the bosom of a beloved husband, and saw him depart from her, not only with dry eyes, but with a visible emotion of pleasure, which he knew not how to conceal; for Frederic Harrington, with all his faults, had no dissimulation about him.

Those who have heard the dead sound of an hearse, as it carried from the door the last remains of a friend, dearly and tenderly beloved, can only form to themselves what were the feelings of this affectionate wife, as she heard the wheels of her Frederic's post-chaise drive from the cottage-gate; for not an hearse departing in all its still pomp of sable woe, could more sink the heart with the leaded weight of grief, than the swift and rattling sound of Harrington's travelling carriage did that of his Mary, at the moment of his departure.

Ashamed that her father should witness her tears, she hastened to her chamber; and locking herself in, gave way to the indulgence of a sorrow she at length blamed herself for, and could not help almost thinking ridiculous: she dressed herself, and assumed what cheerfulness she could at dinner, till her father drank the health of Mr. Harrington, as they were taking their dessert. He gently chid her for being so childish, as not being able to bear her husband out of her sight, whose intended stay was but for a very short period, and who had promised to write to her by every post.

"We are capricious beings, my love," added Edward, "too apt to undervalue the blessing, which is always in our undisputed possession. Let Mr. Harrington always find you a kind, obliging and grateful wife; welcome him, ever, with cheerfulness: but if you shew yourself *too* fond of him, depend upon it, such is the ingratitude of our sex, that his love for you will *decrease* in proportion as he observes the *increase* of that excessive fondness in you; for, by a visible anxiety to keep him always in your sight, you will make him only particularly desirous of being out of it, and shewing himself oft in company, where he would rather, perhaps, you did not make a part."

Mary, though she could not restrain her tears, and which this last sentence of her father had caused to stream afresh, yet promised, and secretly resolved to keep the promise, of adopting that line of conduct, which he had marked out for her. The next day her heart was comforted by a most kind and affectionate letter from her Frederic; the succeeding ones made her equally happy; she perceived no diminution of his tenderness, and, wrapped up in fancied security of his unaltered love, she grew gay and cheerful, and passed her easy hours in the society of the friends she valued and esteemed.

Lucy Ringwood, the companion of her earliest years, was dear to her, as a sister; but she could not accept Mary's invitation of remaining with her during the absence of Mr. Harrington, as she could not leave her beloved aunt alone; but a day seldom past, in which these three friends did not mutually visit each other: on those occasions, when Mrs. Susanna Bradbury was of the party, Lucy generally stole from them for about an hour or more, which filled the minds of the two ladies with various surmises; though neither spake her thoughts to the other.

Edward, more and more delighted with his nephew, often left the female trio to converse, not *always* on the requisite arrangement of dress and fashion, but often on those slight, mental accomplishments, which are peculiarly adapted to their sex, and in which the masculine understanding, however great its superiority, sometimes finds itself, in brilliancy and quickness of idea, outdone.

On those occasions, Edward repaired to the farm; and one day he found his, generally, sprightly nephew in a *serious*, and indeed a *melting* mood; for his humid eyes rested on a packet of papers which lay before him: these, he said, he had been just developing the contents of, and presenting the packet to the Curate, he desired him to take it home with him, and peruse it at his leisure.

END OF VOL. II.