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TALES AND NOVELS, VOL. V

MANOEUVRING; ALMERIA; AND VIVIAN. (TALES OF FASHIONABLE LIFE.)

BY

MARIA EDGEWORTH

IN TEN VOLUMES. WITH ENGRAVINGS ON STEEL.

1857.

MANOEUVRING.

CHAPTER I.

"And gave her words, where oily Flatt'ry lays
The pleasing colours of the art of praise."--PARNELL.

NOTE FROM MRS. BEAUMONT TO MISS WALSINGHAM.

"I am more grieved than I can express, my dearest Miss Walsingham, by a cruel *_contre-temps_*, which must prevent my indulging myself in the long-promised and long-expected pleasure of being at your *_fCete de famille_* on Tuesday, to celebrate your dear father's birthday. I trust, however, to your conciliating goodness, my kind young friend, to represent my distress properly to Mr. Walsingham. Make him sensible, I conjure you, that my *_heart_* is with you all, and assure him that this is no common apology. Indeed, I never employ such artifices with my friends: to them, and to you in particular, my dear, I always speak with perfect frankness and candour. Amelia, with whom, *_entre nous_*, you are more a favourite than ever, is so much vexed and mortified by this disappointment, that I see I shall not be restored to favour till I can fix a day for going to you: yet when that may be, circumstances, which I should not feel myself quite justified in mentioning, will not permit me to decide.

"Kindest regards and affectionate remembrances to all your dear circle.--Any news of the young captain? Any hopes of his return from sea?

"Ever with perfect truth, my dearest Miss Walsingham's sincere friend,

"EUGENIA BEAUMONT.

"P.S.--Private--read to yourself.

"To be candid with you, my dear young friend, my secret reason for

denying myself the pleasure of Tuesday's fete is, that I have just heard that there is a shocking chicken-pox in the village near you; and I confess it is one of my weaknesses to dread even the bare rumour of such a thing, on account of my Amelia: but I should not wish to have this mentioned in your house, because you must be sensible your father would think it an idle womanish fear; and you know how anxious I am for his esteem.

"Burn this, I beseech you----

"Upon second thoughts, I believe it will be best to tell the truth, and the whole truth, to your father, if you should see that nothing else will do----In short, I write in haste, and must trust now, as ever, entirely to your discretion."

"Well, my dear," said Mr. Walsingham to his daughter, as the young lady sat at the breakfast table looking over this note, "how long do you mean to sit the picture of The Delicate Embarrassment? To relieve you as far as in me lies, let me assure you that I shall not ask to see this note of Mrs. Beaumont's, which as usual seems to contain some mighty mystery."

"No great mystery; only----"

"Only--some minikin mystery?" said Mr. Walsingham. "Yes, 'Elle est politique pour des choux et des raves_.'--This charming widow Beaumont is _manoeuvrer_[1] We can't well make an English word of it. The species, thank Heaven! is not so numerous yet in England as to require a generic name. The description, however, has been touched by one of our poets:

'Julia's a manager: she's born for rule,
And knows her wiser husband is a fool.
For her own breakfast she'll project a scheme,
Nor take her tea without a stratagem.'

Even from the time when Mrs. Beaumont was a girl of sixteen I remember her manoeuvring to gain a husband, and then manoeuvring to manage him, which she did with triumphant address."

"What sort of a man was Colonel Beaumont?"

"An excellent man; an open-hearted soldier, of the strictest honour and integrity."

"Then is it not much in Mrs. Beaumont's favour, that she enjoyed the confidence of such a man, and that he left her guardian to his son and daughter?"

"If he had lived with her long enough to become acquainted with her real character, what you say, my dear, would be unanswerable. But Colonel Beaumont died a few years after his marriage, and during those few years

he was chiefly with his regiment."

"You will, however, allow," said Miss Walsingham, "that since his death Mrs. Beaumont has justified his confidence.--Has she not been a good guardian, and an affectionate mother?"

"Why--as a guardian, I think she has allowed her son too much liberty, and too much money. I have heard that young Beaumont has lost a considerable sum at Newmarket, I grant you that Mrs. Beaumont is an affectionate mother, and I am convinced that she is extremely anxious to advance the worldly interests of her children; still I cannot, my dear, agree with you, that she is a good mother. In the whole course of the education of her son and daughter, she has pursued a system of artifice. Whatever she wanted them to learn, or to do, or to leave undone, some stratagem, sentimental or scenic, was employed; somebody was to hint to some other body to act upon Amelia to make her do so and so. Nothing--that is, nothing like truth, ever came directly from the mother: there were always whisperings and mysteries, and 'Don't say that before Amelia!' and 'I would not have this told to Edward,' because it might make him like something that she did not wish that he should like, and that she had her reasons for not letting him know that she did not wish him to like. There was always some truth to be concealed for some mighty good purpose; and things and persons were to be represented in false lights, to produce on some particular occasion some partial effect. All this succeeded admirably in detail, and for the management of helpless, ignorant, credulous childhood. But mark the consequences of this system: children grow up, and cannot always see, hear, and understand, just as their mothers please. They will go into the world; they will mix with others; their eyes will be opened; they will see through the whole system of artifice by which their childhood was so cleverly managed; and then, confidence in the parent must be destroyed for ever."

Miss Walsingham acknowledged the truth of what her father said; but she observed that this was a common error in education, which had the sanction of high authority in its favour; even the eloquent Rousseau, and the elegant and ingenious Madame de Genlis. "And it is certain," continued Miss Walsingham, "that Mrs. Beaumont has not made her children artful; both Amelia and Mr. Beaumont are remarkably open, sincere, honourable characters. Mr. Beaumont, indeed, carries his sincerity almost to a fault: he is too blunt, perhaps, in his manner;--and Amelia, though she is of such a timid, gentle temper, and so much afraid of giving pain, has always courage enough to speak the truth, even in circumstances where it is most difficult. So at least you must allow, my dear father, that Mrs. Beaumont has made her children sincere."

"I am sorry, my dear, to seem uncharitable; but I must observe, that sometimes the very faults of parents produce a tendency to opposite virtues in their children: for the children suffer by the consequences of these faults, and detecting, despise, and resolve to avoid them. As to Amelia and Mr. Beaumont, their acquaintance with our family has been no unfavourable circumstance in their education. They saw amongst us the advantages of sincerity: they became attached to you, and to my

excellent ward Captain Walsingham; he obtained strong power over young Beaumont's mind, and used it to the best purposes. Your friendship for Amelia was, I think, equally advantageous to her: as you are nearly of the same age, you had opportunities of winning her confidence; and your stronger mind fortified hers, and inspired her timid character with the courage necessary to be sincere."

"Well," persisted Miss Walsingham, "though Mrs. Beaumont may have used a little *_finesse_* towards her children in trifles, yet in matters of consequence, I do think that she has no interest but theirs; and her affection for them will make her lay aside all art, when their happiness is at stake."

Mr. Walsingham shook his head.--"And do you then really believe, my dear Marianne, that Mrs. Beaumont would consider any thing, for instance, in the marriage of her son and daughter, but fortune, and what the world calls *_connexion and establishments_*?"

"Certainly I cannot think that these are Mrs. Beaumont's first objects; because we are people but of small fortune, and yet she prefers us to many of large estates and higher station."

"You should say, she professes to prefer us," replied Mr. Walsingham. "And do you really believe her to be sincere? Now, there is my ward, Captain Walsingham, for whom she pretends to have such a regard, do you think that Mrs. Beaumont wishes her daughter should marry him?"

"I do, indeed; but Mrs. Beaumont must speak cautiously on that subject; this is prudence, not dissimulation: for you know that my cousin Walsingham never declared his attachment to Miss Beaumont; on the contrary, he always took the most scrupulous pains to conceal it from her, because he had not fortune enough to marry, and he was too honourable to attempt, or even to wish, to engage the affections of one to whom he had no prospect of being united."

"He is a noble fellow!" exclaimed Mr. Walsingham. "There is no sacrifice of pleasure or interest he would hesitate to make to his duty. For his friends there is no exertion, no endurance, no forbearance, of which he has not shown himself capable. For his country----All I ask from Heaven for him is, opportunity to serve his country. Whether circumstances, whether success, will ever prove his merits to the world, I cannot foretell; but I shall always glory in him as my ward, my relation, my friend."

"Mrs. Beaumont speaks of him just as you do," said Miss Walsingham.

"Speaks, but not thinks," said Mr. Walsingham. "No, no! Captain Walsingham is not the man she desires for a son-in-law. She wants to marry Amelia to Sir John Hunter."

"To Sir John Hunter!"

"Yes, to Sir John Hunter, a being without literature, without morals,

without even youth, to plead in his favour. He is nearly forty years old, old enough to be Amelia's father; yet this is the man whom Mrs. Beaumont prefers for the husband of her beloved daughter, because he is heir presumptive to a great estate, and has the chance of a reversionary earldom.--And this is your modern good mother."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Miss Walsingham, "you do Mrs. Beaumont injustice; I assure you she despises Sir John Hunter as much as we do."

"Yet observe the court she has paid to the whole family of the Hunters."

"Yes, but that has been merely from regard to the late Lady Hunter, who was her particular friend."

"_Particular friend!_ a vamped-up, sentimental conversation reason."

"But I assure you," persisted Miss Walsingham, "that I know Mrs. Beaumont's mind better than you do, father, at least on this subject."

"You! a girl of eighteen, pretend to know a manoeuvrer of her age!"

"Only let me tell you my reasons.--It was but last week that Mrs. Beaumont told me that she did not wish to encourage Sir John Hunter, and that she should be perfectly happy if she could see Amelia united to such a man as Captain Walsingham."

"Such a man as Captain Walsingham! nicely guarded expression!"

"But you have not heard all yet.--Mrs. Beaumont anxiously inquired from me whether he had made any prize-money, whether there was any chance of his returning soon; and she added, with particular emphasis, 'You don't know how much I wish it! You don't know what a favourite he is of mine!'"

"That last, I will lay any wager," cried Mr. Walsingham, "she said in a whisper, and in a corner."

"Yes, but she could not do otherwise, for Amelia was present. Mrs. Beaumont took me aside."

"Aside; ay, ay, but take care, I advise you, of her asides, and her whisperings, and her cornerings, and her inuendoes, and semiconfidences, lest your own happiness, my dear, unsuspecting, enthusiastic daughter, should be the sacrifice."

Miss Walsingham now stood perfectly silent, in embarrassed and breathless anxiety.

"I see," continued her father, "that Mrs. Beaumont, for whose mighty genius one intrigue at a time is not sufficient, wants also to persuade you, my dear, that she wishes to have you for a daughter-in-law: and yet all the time she is doing every thing she can to make her son marry that fool, Miss Hunter, merely because she has two hundred thousand

pounds fortune."

"There I can assure you that you are mistaken," said Miss Walsingham; "Mrs. Beaumont dreads that her son should marry Miss Hunter. Mrs. Beaumont thinks her as silly as you do, and complained to me of her having no taste for literature, or for any thing, but dress, and trifling conversation."

"I wonder, then, that Mrs. Beaumont selects her continually for her companion."

"She thinks Miss Hunter the most insipid companion in the world; but I dare not tell you, lest you should laugh at me again, that it was for the sake of the late Lady Hunter that Mrs. Beaumont was so kind to the daughter; and now Miss Hunter is so fond of her, and so grateful, that, as Mrs. Beaumont says, it would be cruelty to shake her off."

"Mighty plausible! But the truth of all this, begging Mrs. Beaumont's pardon, I doubt; I will not call it a falsehood, but I may be permitted to call it a *Beaumont*. Time will show: and in the mean time, my dear daughter, be on your guard against Mrs. Beaumont's art, and against your own credulity. The momentary pain I give my friends by speaking the plain truth, I have always found overbalanced by the pleasure and advantage of mutual confidence. Our domestic happiness has arisen chiefly from our habits of openness and sincerity. Our whole souls are laid open; there is no management, no *'_intrigue de cabinet_'*, no *'_esprit de la ligue_'*."

Mr. Walsingham now left the room; and Miss Walsingham, absorbed in reflections more interesting to her than even the defence of Mrs. Beaumont, went out to walk. Her father's house was situated in a beautiful part of Devonshire, near the sea-shore, in the neighbourhood of Plymouth; and as Miss Walsingham was walking on the beach, she saw an old fisherman mooring his boat to the projecting stump of a tree. His figure was so picturesque, that she stopped to sketch it; and as she was drawing, a woman came from the cottage near the shore to ask the fisherman what luck he had had. "A fine turbot," says he, "and a john-doree."

"Then away with them this minute to Beaumont Park," said the woman; "for here's Madam Beaumont's man, Martin, called *_in a flustrum_* while you was away, to say madam must have the nicest of our fish, whatsoever it might be, and a john-doree, if it could be had for love or money, for Tuesday."--Here the woman, perceiving Miss Walsingham, dropped a curtsy. "Your humble servant, Miss Walsingham," said the woman.

"On Tuesday?" said Miss Walsingham: "are you sure that Mrs. Beaumont bespoke the fish for Tuesday?"

"Oh, *_sartin_* sure, miss; for Martin mentioned, moreover, what he had heard talk in the servants' hall, that there is to be a very *_pettiklar_* old gentleman, as rich! as rich! as rich can be! from foreign parts, and a great friend of the colonel that's dead; and he--that is, the old

pettiklar gentleman--is to be down all the way from Lon'on to dine at the park on Tuesday for _sartin_: so, husband, away with the john-doree and the turbot, while they be fresh."

"But why," thought Miss Walsingham, "did not Mrs. Beaumont tell us the plain truth, if this is the truth?"

CHAPTER II.

"Young Hermes next, a close contriving god,
Her brows encircled with his serpent rod;
Then plots and fair excuses fill her brain,
And views of breaking am'rous vows for gain."

The information which Mrs. Beaumont's man, Martin, had learned from the servants' hall, and had communicated to the fisherman's wife, was more correct, and had been less amplified, embellished, misunderstood, or misrepresented, than is usually found to be the case with pieces of news which are so heard and so repeated. It was true that Mrs. Beaumont expected to see on Tuesday an old gentleman, a Mr. Palmer, who had been a friend of her husband's; he had lately returned from Jamaica, where he had made a large fortune. It is true, also, that this old gentleman was _a little particular_, but not precisely in the sense in which the fisherman's wife understood the phrase; he was not particularly fond of john-dorees and turbots, but he was particularly fond of making his fellow-creatures happy; particularly generous, particularly open and honest in his nature, abhorring all artifice himself, and unsuspecting of it in others. He was unacquainted with Mrs. Beaumont's character, as he had been for many years in the West Indies, and he knew her only from her letters, in which she appeared every thing that was candid and amiable. His great friendship for her deceased husband also inclined him to like her. Colonel Beaumont had appointed him one of the guardians of his children, but Mr. Palmer, being absent from England, had declined to act: he was also trustee to Mrs. Beaumont's marriage-settlement, and she had represented that it was necessary he should be present at the settlement of her family affairs upon her son's coming of age; an event which was to take place in a few days. The urgent representations of Mrs. Beaumont, and the anxious desire she expressed to see Mr. Palmer, had at last prevailed with the good old gentleman to journey down to Beaumont Park, though he was a valetudinarian, and though he was obliged, he said, to return to Jamaica with the West India fleet, which was expected to sail in ten days; so that he announced positively that he could stay but a week at Beaumont Park with his good friends and relations.

He was related but distantly to the Beaumonts, and he stood in precisely the same degree of relationship to the Walsinghams. He had no other relations, and his fortune was completely at his own disposal. On this fortune our cunning widow had speculated long and deeply, though in fact

there was no occasion for art: it was Mr. Palmer's intention to leave his large fortune to the Beaumonts; or to divide it between the Beaumont and Walsingham families; and had she been sincere in her professed desire of a complete union by a double marriage between the representatives of the families, her favourite object would have been, in either case, equally secure. Here was a plain, easy road to her object; but it was too direct for Mrs. Beaumont. With all her abilities, she could never comprehend the axiom that a right line is the shortest possible line between any two points:--an axiom equally true in morals and in mathematics. No, the serpentine line was, in her opinion, not only the most beautiful, but the most expeditious, safe, and convenient.

She had formed a triple scheme of such intricacy, that it is necessary distinctly to state the argument of her plot, lest the action should be too complicated to be easily developed.

She had, in the first place, a design of engrossing the whole of Mr. Palmer's fortune for her own family; and for this purpose she determined to prevent Mr. Palmer from becoming acquainted with his other relations, the Walsinghams, to whom she had always had a secret dislike, because they were of remarkably open, sincere characters. As Mr. Palmer proposed to stay but a week in the country, this scheme of preventing their meeting seemed feasible.

In the second place, Mrs. Beaumont wished to marry her daughter to Sir John Hunter, because Sir John was heir expectant to a large estate, called the Wigram estate, and because there was in his family a certain reversionary title, the earldom of Puckeridge, which would devolve to Sir John after the death of a near relation.

In the third place, Mrs. Beaumont wished to marry her own son to Miss Hunter, who was Sir John's sister by a second marriage, and above twenty years younger than he was: this lady was preferred to Miss Walsingham for a daughter-in-law, for the reasons which Mr. Walsingham had given; because she possessed an independent fortune of two hundred thousand pounds, and because she was so childish and silly that Mrs. Beaumont thought she could always manage her easily, and by this means retain power over her son. Miss Hunter was very pretty, and Mrs. Beaumont had observed that her son had sometimes been struck with her beauty sufficiently to give hopes that, by proper management, he might be diverted from his serious, sober preference of Miss Walsingham.

Mrs. Beaumont foresaw many difficulties in the execution of these plans. She knew that Amelia liked Captain Walsingham, and that Captain Walsingham was attached to her, though he had never declared his love: and she dreaded that Captain Walsingham, who was at this time at sea, should return, just whilst Mr. Palmer was with her; because she was well aware that the captain was a kind of man Mr. Palmer would infinitely prefer to Sir John Hunter. Indeed, she had been secretly informed that Mr. Palmer hated every one who had a title; therefore she could not, whilst he was with her, openly encourage Sir John Hunter in his addresses to Amelia. To conciliate these seemingly incompatible schemes, she determined---But let our heroine speak for herself.

"My dearest Miss Hunter," said she, "now we are by ourselves, let me open my mind to you; I have been watching for an opportunity these two days, but so hurried as I have been!--Where's Amelia?"

"Out walking, ma'am. She told me you begged her to walk to get rid of her head-ache; and that she might look well to-day, as Mr. Palmer is to come. I would not go with her, because you whispered to me at breakfast that you had something very particular to say to me."

"But you did not give that as a reason, I hope! Surely you didn't tell Amelia that I had something particular to say to you?"

"Oh, no, ma'am; I told her that I had something to do about my dress--and so I had--my new hat to try on."

"True, my love; quite right; for you know I wouldn't have her suspect that we had any thing to say to each other that we didn't wish her to hear, especially as it is about herself."

"Herself!--Oh, is it?" said Miss Hunter, in a tone of disappointment.

"And about you, too, my darling. Be assured I have no daughter I love better, or ever shall. With such a son as I have, and such a daughter-in-law as I hope and trust I shall have ere long, I shall think myself the most fortunate of mothers."

Silly Miss Hunter's face brightened up again. "But now, my love," continued Mrs. Beaumont, taking her hand, leading her to a window, and speaking very low, though no one else was in the room, "before we talk any more of what is nearest my heart, I must get you to write a note for me to your brother, directly, for there is a circumstance I forgot--thoughtless creature that I am! but indeed, I never can think when I feel much. Some people are always so collected and prudent. But I have none of that!--Heigho! Well, my dear, you must supply my deficiencies. You will write and tell Sir John, that in my agitation when he made his proposal for my Amelia, of which I so frankly approved, I omitted to warn him, that no hint must be given that I do any thing more than permit him to address my daughter upon an equal footing with any other gentleman who might address her. Stay, my dear; you don't understand me, I see. In short, to be candid with you--old Mr. Palmer is coming to-day, you know. Now, my dear, you must be aware that it is of the greatest consequence to the interests of my family, of which I hope you always consider yourself (for I have always considered you) as forming a part, and a very distinguished part--I say, my darling, that we must consider that it is our interest in all things to please and humour this good old gentleman. He will be with us but for a week, you know. Well, the point is this. I have been informed from undoubted authority, people who were about him at the time, and knew, that the reason he quarrelled with that nephew of his, who died two years ago, was the young man's having accepted a baronetage: and at that time old Palmer swore, that no sprig of quality--those were the very words--should ever inherit a shilling of his money. Such a ridiculous

whim! But these London merchants, who make great fortunes from nothing, are apt to have their little eccentricities; and then, they have so much pride in their own way, and so much self-will and mercantile downrightness in their manners, that there's no managing them but by humouring their fancies. I'm convinced, if Mr. Palmer suspected that I even wished Amelia to marry Sir John, he would never leave any of us a farthing, and it would all go to the Walsinghams. So, my dear, do you explain to your brother, that though I have not the least objection to his coming here whilst Mr. Palmer is with us, he must not take umbrage at any seeming coldness in my manner. He knows my heart, I trust; at least, you do, my Albina. And even if I should be obliged to receive or to go to see the Walsinghams, which, by-the-bye, I have taken means to prevent; but if it should happen that they were to hear of Palmer's being with us, and come, and Sir John should meet them, he must not be surprised or jealous at my speaking in the highest terms of Captain Walsingham. This I shall be obliged to do as a blind before Mr. Palmer. I must make him believe that I prefer a commoner for my son-in-law, or we are all undone with him. You know it is my son's interest, and yours, as well as your brother's and Amelia's, that I consider. So explain all this to him, my dear; you will explain it so much better, and make it so much more palpable to your brother than I could."

"Dear Mrs. Beaumont, how can you think so? You who write so well, and such long letters about every thing, and so quick! But goodness! I shall never get it all into a letter I'm afraid, and before Mr. Palmer comes, and then it will soon be dressing-time! La! I could say it all to John in five minutes: what a pity he is not here to-day!"

"Well, my love, then suppose you were to go to him; as you so prudently remark, things of this sort are always so much easier and better said than written. And now I look at my watch, I see you cannot have time to write a long letter, and to dress. So I believe, though I shall grieve to lose you, I must consent to your going for this one day to your brother's. My carriage and Williamson shall attend you," said Mrs. Beaumont, ringing the bell to order the carriage; "but remember you promise me now to come back, positively, to-morrow, or next day at farthest, if I should not be able to send the carriage again to-morrow. I would not, upon any account, have you away, if it can possibly be helped, whilst Mr. Palmer is here, considering you as I do [The carriage to the door directly, and Williamson to attend Miss Hunter]--considering you as I do, my dearest Albina, quite as my own daughter."

"Oh, my dearest Mrs. Beaumont, you are so kind!" said the poor girl, whom Mrs. Beaumont could always thus easily _pay with words_.

The carriage came to the door with such prompt obedience to Mrs. Beaumont's summons, that one of a more reflecting or calculating nature than Miss Hunter might have suspected that it had been ordered to be in readiness to carry her away this morning.

"Fare ye well, my own Albina! be sure you don't stay long from us," said Mrs. Beaumont, accompanying her to the hall-door. "A thousand kind things to everybody, and your brother in particular. But, my dear Miss

Hunter, one word more," said she, following to the carriage door, and whispering: "there's another thing that I must trust to your management and cleverness;--I mentioned that Mr. Palmer was to know nothing of _the approbation_ of Sir John's suit."

"Oh, yes, yes, ma'am, I understand perfectly."

"But stay, my love; you must understand, too, that it is to be quite a secret between ourselves, not to be mentioned to my son even; for you know he is sudden in his temper, and warm and quite in the Walsingham interest, and there's no knowing what might be the consequence if it were to be let out imprudently, and Sir John and Edward both so high-spirited. One can't be too cautious, my dear, to prevent mischief between gentlemen. So caution your brother to leave it to me to break it, and bring things about with Edward and Amelia,"--[stopping Miss Hunter again as she made a second effort to get into the carriage,]--
"You comprehend, my dear, that Amelia is not in the secret yet--so not a word from your brother to her about _my approbation!_--that would ruin all. I trust to his honour; and besides--" drawing the young lady back for the third whisper.--Miss Hunter stood suspended with one foot in air, and the other on the step; the coachman, impatient to be off, manoeuvred to make his horses restless, whilst at the same time he cried aloud--"So! so! Prancer--stand still, Peacock; stand still, sir!"

Miss Hunter jumped down on terra firma. "Those horses frighten me so for you, my dear!" said Mrs. Beaumont. "Martin, stand at their heads. My dear child, I won't detain you, for you'll be late. I had only to say, that--oh! that I trust implicitly to your brother's honour; but, besides this, it will not be amiss for you to hint, as you know you can delicately--_delicately_, you understand--that it is for his interest to leave me to manage every thing. Yet none of this is to be said _as if from me_--pray don't let it come from me. Say it all from yourself. Don't let my name be mentioned at all. Don't commit me, you understand?"

"Perfectly, perfectly, ma'am: one kiss, dear Mrs. Beaumont, and adieu. Is my dressing-box in? Tell him to drive fast, for I hate going slow. Dearest Mrs. Beaumont, good bye. I feel as if I were going for an age, though it is only for one day."

"Dear, affectionate girl! I love _heart_--Good bye--Drive fast, as Miss Hunter desires you."

Our fair politician, well satisfied with the understanding of her confidante, which never comprehended more than met the ear, and secure in a *chargé d'affaires*, whose powers it was never necessary to limit, stood on the steps before the house-door, deep in reverie, for some minutes after the carriage had driven away, till she was roused by seeing her son returning from his morning's ride.

"Will you hear a Spanish lady,
How she woo'd an English man?
Garments gay as rich as may be,
Deck'd with jewels, she had on."

THE SPANISH LADY'S LOVE.

Percy's Reliques of Ancient Poetry

Mr. Beaumont had just been at a neighbouring farm-house, where there lived one of Mr. Walsingham's tenants; a man of the name of Birch, a respectable farmer, who was originally from Ireland, and whose son was at sea with Captain Walsingham. The captain had taken young Birch under his particular care, at Mr. Walsingham's request.

Birch's parents had this day received a letter from their son, which in the joy and pride of their hearts they showed to Mr. Beaumont, who was in the habit of calling at their house to inquire if they had heard any news of their son, or of Captain Walsingham. Mr. Beaumont liked to read Birch's letters, because they were written with characteristic simplicity and affection, and somewhat in the Irish idiom, which this young sailor's English education had not made him entirely forget.

LETTER FROM BIRCH TO HIS PARENTS.

"H.M.S. l'Ambuscade.

"HONOURED PARENTS,

"I write this from sea, lat. N. 44.15--long. W. 9.45--wind N.N.E.--to let you know you will not see me so soon as I said in my last, of the 16th. Yesterday, P.M. two o'clock, some despatches were brought to my good captain, by the Pickle sloop, which will to-morrow, wind and weather permitting, alter our destination. What the nature of them is I cannot impart to you, for it has not transpired beyond the lieutenants; but whatever I do under the orders of my good captain, I am satisfied and confident all is for the best. For my own share, I long for an opportunity of fighting the French, and of showing the captain _what is in me_, and that the pains he has took to make a gentleman, and an honour to his majesty's service, of me, is not thrown away. Had he been my own father, or brother, he could not be better, or _done more_. God willing, I will never disgrace his principles, for it would be my ambition to be like him in every respect; and he says, if I behave myself as I ought, I shall soon be a lieutenant; and a lieutenant in his majesty's navy is as good a gentleman as any in England, and has a right (tell my sister Kitty) to hand the first woman in Lon'on out of her carriage, if he pleases, and if she pleases.

"Now we talk of ladies, and as please God we shall soon be in action, and may not have another opportunity of writing to you this great while, for there is talk of our sailing southward with the fleet to bring the French and Spaniards to action, I think it best to send you all the news

I have in this letter. But pray bid Kate, with my love, mind this, that not a word of the following is to take wind for her life, on account of my not knowing if it might be agreeable, or how it might affect my good captain, and others that shall be nameless. You must know then that when we were at ----, where we were stationed six weeks and two days, waiting for the winds, and one cause or other, we used to employ ourselves, I and my captain, taking soundings (which I can't more particularly explain the nature of to you, especially in a letter); for he always took me out to attend him in preference to any other; and after he had completed his soundings, and had no farther use for me in that job, I asked him leave to go near the same place in the evening to fish, which my good captain consented to (as he always does to what (duty done) can gratify me), provided I was in my ship by ten. Now you must know that there are convents in this country (which you have often heard of, Kitty, no doubt), being damnable places, where young _Catholic_ women are shut up unmarried, often, it is to be reasonably supposed, against their wills. And there is a convent in one of the suburbs which has a high back wall to the garden of it that comes down near the strand; and it was under this wall we two used to sound, and that afterwards I used to be fishing. And one evening, when I was not thinking of any such thing, there comes over the wall a huge nosegay of flowers, with a stone in it, that made me jump. And this for three evenings running the same way, about the same hour; till at last one evening as I was looking up at the wall, as I had now learned to do about the time the nosegays were thrown over, I saw coming down a stone tied to a string, and to the stone a letter, the words of which I can't particularly take upon me to recollect, because I gave up the paper to my captain, who desired it of me, and took no copy; but the sense was, that in that convent there was shut up a lady, the daughter of an English gentleman by a Spanish wife, both her parents being dead, and her Spanish relations and father-confessor (or catholic priest of a man), not wishing she should get to England, where she might be what she had a right to be by birth, at least by her father's side (a _protestant_), shut her up since she was a child. And that there was a relative of hers in England, who with a wicked lawyer or attorney had got possession of her estate, and made every body believe she was dead. And so, it being seven years and more since she was heard of, she is what is called dead in law, which sort of death however won't signify, if she appears again. Wherefore the letter goes on to say, she would be particularly glad to make her escape, and get over to old England. But she confesses that she is neither young nor handsome, and may-be never may be rich; therefore, that whoever helps her must do it for the sake of doing good and nothing else; for though she would pay all expenses handsomely, she could not promise more. And that she knew the danger of the undertaking to be great; greater for them that would carry her off even than for herself. That she knows, however, that British sailors are brave as they are generous (this part of the letter was very well indited, and went straight to my heart the minute ever I read it); and she wished it could be in the power of Captain Walsingham to take her under his immediate protection, and that she had taken measures so as she could escape over the wall of the garden if he would have a boat in readiness to carry her to his ship; and at the same hour next evening the stone should be let down as usual, and he might fasten his answer to it, which would be drawn up in due

course. Concluding all this with, 'That she would not go at all unless Captain Walsingham came for her himself (certifying himself to be himself, I suppose), for she knew him to be a gentleman by reputation, and she should be safe under his protection, and so would her secret, she was confident, at all events.' This was the entire and sum total of the letter. So when I had read to the end, and looked for the postscript and all, I found for my pains that the lady mistook me for my captain, or would not have written or thrown the nosegays. So I took the letter to my captain; and what he answered, and how it was settled (by signals, I suppose) between them after, it was not for me to inquire. Not a word more was said by him to me or I to him on the topic, till the very night we were to sail for England. It was then that our captain took me aside, and he says, 'Birch, will you assist me? I ask this not as your captain, so you are at liberty to do as you please. Will you help me to rescue this lady, who seems to be unjustly detained, and to carry her back safe to her country and her friends?' I told him I would do that or any thing else he bid me, confident he would never ask me to do a wrong thing; and as to the lady, I should be proud to help to carry her off to old England and her lawful friends, only I thought (if I might be so bold) it was a pity she was not young and handsome, for his sake. At that he smiled, and only said, 'Perhaps it was best for him as it was.' Then he settled about the boat, and who were to go, and when. It was twelve o'clock striking by the great town clock when we were under the walls of the convent, as appointed. And all was hush and silent as the grave for our very lives. For it was a matter of life or death, I promise you, and we all knew as much, and the sailors had a dread of the Inquisition upon them that was beyond all terrible! So we watched and waited, and waited and watched so long, that we thought something must have gone wrong, or that all was found out, and the captain could not delay the ship's sailing; and he struck his repeater, and it was within a quarter of one, and he said, 'It is too late; we must put back.' Just then, I, that was watching with the lantern in my hand, gave notice, and first there comes down a white bundle, fastened to the stone and cord. Then the captain and I fixed the ladder of ropes, and down came the lady, as well as ever she went up, and not a word but away with her: the captain had her in a trice in our boat, safe and snug, and off we put, rowing for the bare life, all silent as ever. I think I hear the striking of our oars and the plashing of the water this minute, which we would have gladly silenced, but could not any way in nature. But none heard it, or at least took any notice against us. I can give you no idea of the terror which the lady manifested when the boat stood out to sea, at the slightest squall of wind, or the least agitation of the waves; for besides being naturally cowardly, as all or most women are for the first time at sea, here was a poor soul who had been watching, and may be fasting, and worn out mind and body with the terror of perfecting her escape from the convent, where she had been immured all her life, and as helpless as a child. So it was wonderful she went through it as well as she did and without screaming, which should be an example to Kate and others. Glad enough even we men were when we reached the ship. There was, at that time, a silence on board you could have heard a pin drop, all being in perfect readiness for getting under way, the sails ready for dropping, and officers and sailors waiting in the greatest expectation of our boat's return. Our boat passed swiftly alongside, and

great beyond belief was the astonishment of all at seeing a woman veiled, hoisted out, and in, and ushered below, half fainting. I never felt more comfortable in my life than when we found her and ourselves safe aboard l'Ambuscade. The anchor was instantly weighed, all sail made, and the ship stood out to sea. To the lady the captain gave up his cabin: double sentries were placed, and as the captain ordered, every precaution that could shield her character in such suspicious circumstances were enforced with the utmost punctilio. I cannot describe, nor can you even conceive, Kate, the degree of curiosity shown about her; all striving to get a sight of her when she first went down, and most zealous they were to bring lights; but that would not do, for they could not see her for her veil. Yet through all we could make out that she was a fine figure of a woman at any rate, and something more than ordinary, from the air she had with her. The next day when she was sitting on deck the wind by times would blow aside her veil so as to give us glimpses of her face; when, to our surprise, and I am sure to the captain's satisfaction, we found she was beyond all contradiction young and handsome. And moreover I have reason to believe she has fine jewels with her, besides a ring from her own finger, which with a very pretty action she put on his, that next day on deck, as I noticed, when nobody was minding. So that no doubt she is as much richer as she is handsomer than she made believe, contrary to the ways of other women, which is in her favour and my good captain's; for from what I can judge, after all he has done for her, she has no dislike nor objection to him.

"I have not time to add any thing more, but my love to Kitty, and Nancy, and Tom, and Mary, and little Bess; and, honoured parents, wishing you good health as I am in, thank God, at this present,

"I am your dutiful and loving son,

"JOHN BIRCH.

"P.S. I open my letter to tell you we are going southward immediately, all in high spirits, as there is hopes of meeting the French and Spaniards. We have just hoisted the nun-lady on board an English packet. God send her and this letter safe to England."

* * * * *

Mr. Beaumont might perhaps have been amused by this romantic story, and by the style in which it was told, if he had not been alarmed by the hint at the conclusion of the letter, that the lady was not indifferent to her deliverer. Now Mr. Beaumont earnestly wished that his friend Captain Walsingham might become his brother-in-law; and he began to have fears about this Spanish lady, with her gratitude, her rings, and the advantages of the great interest her misfortunes and helpless condition would excite, together with the vast temptations to fall in love that might occur during the course of a voyage. Had he taken notice of the postscript, his mind would have been somewhat relieved. On this subject Mr. Beaumont pondered all the way that he rode home, and on this subject he was still meditating when he saw his mother standing on the steps, where we left her when Miss Hunter's carriage drove away.

CHAPTER IV.

"I shall in all my best obey you, madam."

HAMLET.

"Did you meet Miss Hunter, my dear son?" said she.

"Yes, ma'am, I just passed the carriage in the avenue: she is going home, is not she?" said he, rather in a tone of satisfaction.

"Ah, poor thing! yes," said Mrs. Beaumont, in a most pathetic tone: "ah, poor thing!"

"Why, ma'am, what has happened to her? What's the matter?"

"Matter? Oh, nothing!--Did I say that any thing was the matter? Don't speak so loud," whispered she: "your groom heard every word we said; stay till he is out of hearing, and then we can talk."

"I don't care if all the world hears what I say," cried Mr. Beaumont hastily: but, as if suppressing his rising indignation, he, with a milder look and tone, added, "I cannot conceive, my dear mother, why you are always so afraid of being overheard."

"Servants, my dear, make such mischief, you know, by misunderstanding and misrepresenting every thing they hear; and they repeat things so oddly, and raise such strange reports!"

"True--very true indeed, ma'am," said Mr. Beaumont. "You are quite right, and I beg pardon for being so hasty--I wish you could teach me a little of your patience and prudence."

"Prudence! ah! my dear Edward, 'tis only time and sad experience of the world can teach that to people of our open tempers. I was at your age ten times more imprudent and unsuspecting than you are."

"Were you, ma'am?--But I don't think I am unsuspecting. I was when I was a boy--I wish we could continue children always in some things. I hate suspicion in any body--but more than in any one else, I hate it in myself. And yet--"

Mr. Beaumont hesitated, and his mother instantly went on with a fluent panegyric upon the hereditary unsuspectingness of his temper.

"But, madam, were you not saying something to me about Miss Hunter?"

"Was I?--Oh, I was merely going to say, that I was sorry you did not know she was going this morning, that you might have taken leave of her,

poor thing!"

"Take leave of her! ma'am: I bowed to her, and wished her a good morning, when I met her just now, and she told me she was only going to the hall for a day. Surely no greater leave-taking was requisite, when I am to see the lady again to-morrow, I presume."

"That is not quite so certain as she thinks, poor soul! I told her I would send for her again to-morrow, just to keep up her spirits at leaving me. Walk this way, Edward, under the shade of the trees, for I am dead with the heat; and you, too, look so hot! I say I am not so sure that it would be prudent to have her here so much, especially whilst Mr. Palmer is with us, you know--" Mrs. Beaumont paused, as if waiting for an assent, or a dissent, or a leading hint how to proceed: but her son persisting in perverse silence, she was forced to repeat, "You know, Edward, my dear, you know?"

"I don't know, indeed, ma'am."

"You don't know!"

"Faith, not I, ma'am. I don't know, for the soul of me, what Mr. Palmer's coming has to do with Miss Hunter's going. There's room enough in the house, I suppose, for each of them, and all of us to play our parts. As to the rest, the young lady's coming or going is quite a matter of indifference to me, except, of course, as far as politeness and hospitality go. But all that I leave to you, who do the honours for me so well."

Mrs. Beaumont's ideas were utterly thrown out of their order by this speech, no part of which was exactly what she wished or expected: not that any of the sentiments it contained or suggested were new to her; but she was not prepared to meet them thus clothed in distinct words, and in such a compact form. She had drawn up her forces for battle in an order which this unexpectedly decisive movement of the enemy discomfited; and a less able tactician might have been, in these circumstances, not only embarrassed, but utterly defeated: yet, however unprepared for this sudden shock, with admirable generalship our female Hannibal, falling back in the centre, admitted him to advance impetuous and triumphant, till she had him completely surrounded.

"My being of age in a few days," continued Mr. Beaumont, "will not make any difference, surely; I depend upon it, that you will always invite whomever you like to this house, of which I hope, my dear mother, you will always do me the favour to be the mistress--till I marry, at least. For my wife's feelings," added he, smiling, "I can't engage, before I have her."

"And before we know who she is to be," said Mrs. Beaumont, carelessly. "Time enough, as you say, to think of that. Besides, there are few women in the world, I know scarcely one, with whom, in the relation of mother and daughter-in-law, I should wish to live. But wherever I live, my dear son, as long as I have a house, I hope you will always do me the justice

and the pleasure to consider yourself as its master. Heaven knows I shall never give any other man a right to dispute with you the sovereignty of my castle, or my cottage, whichever it may be. As to the rest," pursued Mrs. Beaumont, "you cannot marry against my wishes, my dear Edward; for your wishes on this, as on all other subjects, will ever govern mine."

Her son kissed her hand with warm gratitude.

"You will not, I hope, think that I seek to prolong my regency, or to assume undue power or influence in affairs," continued Mrs. Beaumont, "if I hint to you in general terms what I think may contribute to your happiness. You must afterwards decide for yourself; and are now, as you have ever been, master, to do as you please."

"Too much--too much. I have had too much liberty, and have too little acquired the habit of commanding my will and my passions by my reason. Of this I am sensible. My excellent friend, Captain Walsingham, told me, some years ago, that this was the fault of my character, and he charged me to watch over myself; and so I have; but not so strictly, I fear, as if he had watched along with me.----Well, ma'am, you were going to give me some advice; I am all attention."

"My dear son, Captain Walsingham showed his judgment more, perhaps, in pointing out causes than effects. The weakness of a fond mother, I am sensible, did indulge you in childhood, and, perhaps, more imprudently in youth, with an unlimited liberty to judge and act for yourself. Your mother's system of education came, alas! more from her heart than her head. Captain Walsingham himself cannot be more sensible of my errors than I am."

"Captain Walsingham, believe me, mother, never mentioned this in reproach to you. He is not a man to teach a son to see his mother's errors--if she had any. He always spoke of you with the greatest respect. And since I must, at my own expense, do him justice, it was, I well remember, upon some occasion where I spoke too hastily, and insisted upon my will in opposition to yours, madam, that Captain Walsingham took me aside, and represented to me the fault into which my want of command over myself had betrayed me. This he did so forcibly, that I have never from that hour to this (I flatter myself) on any material occasion, forgotten the impression he made on my mind. But, madam, I interrupt you: you were going to give me your advice about--"

"No, no--no advice--no advice; you are, in my opinion, fully adequate to the direction of your own conduct. I was merely going to suggest, that, since you have not been accustomed to control from a mother, and since you have, thank Heaven! a high spirit, that would sooner break than bend, it must be essential to your happiness to have a wife of a compliant, gentle temper; not fond of disputing the right, or attached to her own opinions; not one who would be tenacious of rule, and unseasonably inflexible."

"Unseasonably inflexible! Undoubtedly, ma'am. Yet I should despise a

mean-spirited wife."

"I am sure you would. But compliance that proceeds from affection, you know, can never deserve to be called mean-spirited--nor would it so appear to you. I am persuaded that there is a degree of fondness, of affection, enthusiastic affection, which disposes the temper always to a certain softness and yieldingness, which, I conceive, would be peculiarly attractive to you, and essential to your happiness: in short, I know your temper could not bear contradiction."

"Oh, indeed, ma'am, you are quite mistaken."

"Quite mistaken! and at the very moment he reddens with anger, because I contradict, even in the softest, gentlest manner in my power, his opinion of himself!"

"You don't understand me, indeed, you don't understand me," said Mr. Beaumont, beating with his whip the leaves of a bush which was near him. "Either you don't understand me, or I don't understand you. I am much more able to bear contradiction than you think I am, provided it be direct. But I do not love--what I am doing at this instant," added he, smiling--"I don't love beating about the bush."

"Look there now!--Strange creatures you men are! So like he looks to his poor father, who used to tell me that he loved to be contradicted, and yet who would not, I am sure, have lived three days with any woman who had ventured to contradict him directly. Whatever influence I obtained in his heart, and whatever happiness we enjoyed in our union, I attribute to my trusting to my observations on his character rather than to his own account of himself. Therefore I may be permitted to claim some judgment of what would suit your hereditary temper."

"Certainly, ma'am, certainly. But to come to the point at once, may I ask this plain question--Do you, by these reflections, mean to allude to any particular persons? Is there any woman in the world you at this instant would wish me to marry?"

"Yes--Miss Walsingham."

Mr. Beaumont started with joyful surprise, when his mother thus immediately pronounced the very name he wished to hear.

"You surprise and delight me, my dear mother!"

"Surprise!--How can that be?--Surely you must know my high opinion of Miss Walsingham. But----"

"But--you added _but_----"

"There is no woman who may not be taxed with a _but_--yet it is not for her friend to lower her merit. My only objection to her is--I shall infallibly affront you, if I name it."

"Name it! name it! You will not affront me."

"My only objection to her then is, her superiority. She is so superior, that, forgive me, I don't know any man, yourself not excepted, who is at all her equal."

"I think precisely as you do, and rejoice."

"Rejoice? why there I cannot sympathize with you. I own, as a mother, I should feel a little--a little mortified to see my son not the superior; and when the comparison is to be daily and hourly made, and to last for life, and all the world to see it as well as myself. I own I have a mother's vanity. I should wish to see my son always what he has hitherto been--the superior, and master in his own house."

Mr. Beaumont made no reply to these insinuations, but walked on in silence; and his mother, unable to determine precisely whether the vexation apparent in his countenance proceeded from disapprobation of her observations, or from their working the effect she desired upon his pride, warily waited till he should betray some decisive symptom of his feelings. But she waited in vain--he was resolved not to speak.

"There is not a woman upon earth I should wish so much to have as a daughter-in-law, a companion, and a friend, as Miss Walsingham. You must be convinced," resumed Mrs. Beaumont, "so far as I am concerned, it is the most desirable thing in the world. But I should think it my duty to put my own feelings and wishes out of the question, and to make myself prefer whomsoever, all things considered, my judgment tells me would make you the happiest."

"And whom would your judgment prefer, madam?"

"Why--I am not at liberty to tell--unless I could explain all my reasons. Indeed, I know not what to say."

"Dear madam, explain all your reasons, or we shall never understand one another, and never come to an end of these half explanations."

Here they were interrupted by seeing Mr. Twigg, a courtly clergyman, coming towards them. Beaumont was obliged to endure his tiresome flattery upon the beauties of Beaumont Park, and upon the judicious improvements that were making, had been made, and would, no doubt, be very soon made. Mrs. Beaumont, at last, relieved his or her own impatience by commissioning Mr. Twigg to walk round the improvements by himself. By himself she insisted it should be, that she might have his unbiassed judgment upon the two lines which had been marked for the new belt or screen; and he was also to decide whether they should call it a belt or a screen.--Honoured with this commission, he struck off into the walk to which Mrs. Beaumont pointed, and began his solitary progress.

Mr. Beaumont then urged his mother to go on with her explanation. Mrs. Beaumont thought that she could not hazard much by flattering the vanity

of a man on that subject on which perhaps it is most easily flattered; therefore, after sufficient delicacy of circumlocution, she informed her son that there was a young lady who was actually dying for love of him; whose extreme fondness would make her live but in him; and who, besides having a natural ductility of character, and softness of temper, was perfectly free from any formidable superiority of intellect, and had the most exalted opinion of his capacity, as well as of his character and accomplishments; in short, such an enthusiastic adoration, as would induce that belief in the infallibility of a husband, which must secure to him the fullest enjoyment of domestic peace, power, and pre-eminence.

Mr. Beaumont seemed less moved than his mother had calculated that the vanity of man must be, by such a declaration--discovery it could not be called. "If I am to take all this seriously, madam," replied he, laughing, "and if, *_au pied de la lettre_* my vanity is to believe that this damsel is dying for love; yet, still I have so little chivalry in my nature, that I cannot understand how it would add to my happiness to sacrifice myself to save her life. That I am well suited to her, I am as willing as vanity can make me to believe; but how is it to be proved that the lady is suited to me?"

"My dear, these things do not admit of logical proof."

"Well--moral, sentimental, or any kind of proof you please."

"Have you no pity? and is not pity akin to love?"

"Akin! Oh, yes, ma'am, it is akin; but for that very reason it may not be a friend--relations, you know, in these days, are as often enemies as friends."

"Vile pun! far-fetched quibble!--provoking boy!--But I see you are not in a humour to be serious, so I will take another time to talk to you of this affair."

"Now or never, ma'am, for mercy's sake!"

"Mercy's sake! you who show none--Ah! this is the way with you men; all this is play to you, but death to us."

"Death! dear ma'am; ladies, you know as well as I do, don't die of love in these days--you would not make a fool of your son."

"I could not; nor could any other woman--that is clear: but amongst us, I am afraid we have, undesignedly indeed, but irremediably, made a fool of this poor confiding girl."

"But, ma'am, in whom did she confide? not in me, I'll swear. I have nothing to reproach myself with, thank God!--My conscience is clear; I have been as ungallant as possible. I have been as cruel as my nature would permit. I am sure no one can charge me with giving false promises--I scarcely speak--nor false hopes, for I scarcely look at the young lady."

"So, then, you know who the young lady in question is?"

"Perhaps I ought not to pretend to know."

"That would be useless affectation, alas! for I fear many know, and have seen, and heard, much more than you have--or I either."

Here Mrs. Beaumont observed that her son's colour changed, and that he suddenly grew serious: aware that she had now touched upon the right chord, she struck it again "with a master's hand and prophet's fire." She declared that all the world took it for granted that Miss Hunter was to be married to Mr. Beaumont; that it was talked of every where; that she was asked continually by her correspondents, when the marriage was to take place?--in confirmation of which assertion, she produced bundles of letters from her pockets, from Mrs. and Miss, and from Lady This, and Lady That.

"Nay," continued she, "if it were confined even to the circle of one's private friends and acquaintance, I should not so much mind it, for one might contradict, and have it contradicted, and one might send the poor thing away to some watering-place, and the report might die away, as reports do--sometimes. But all that sort of thing it is too late to think of now--for the thing is public! quite public! got into the newspapers! Here's a paragraph I cut out this very morning from my paper, lest the poor girl should see it. The other day, I believe you saw it yourself, there was something of the same sort. 'We hear that, as soon as he comes of age, Mr. Beaumont, of Beaumont Park, is to lead to the altar of Hymen, Miss Hunter, sister to Sir John Hunter, of Devonshire.' Well,--after you left the room, Albina took up the paper you had been reading; and when she saw this paragraph, I thought she would have dropped. I did not know what to do. Whatever I could say, you know, would only make it worse. I tried to turn it off, and talked of twenty things; but it would not do--no, no, it is too serious for that: well, though I believe she would rather have put her hand in the fire, she had the courage to speak to me about it herself."

"And what did she say, ma'am?" inquired Mr. Beaumont, eagerly.

"Poor simple creature! she had but one idea--that you had seen it! that she would not for the world you had read it. What would you think of her--she should never be able to meet you again--What could she do? It must be contradicted--somebody must contradict it. Then she worried me to have it contradicted in the papers. I told her I did not well know how that could be done, and urged that it would be much more prudent not to fix attention upon the parties by more paragraphs. But she was _not_ in a state to think of prudence;--_no_. What would you think was the only idea in her mind?--If I would not write, she would write that minute herself, and sign her name. This, and a thousand wild things, she said, till I was forced to be quite angry, and to tell her she must be governed by those who had more discretion than herself. Then she was so subdued, so ashamed--really my heart bled for her, even whilst I scolded her. But it is quite necessary to be harsh with her; for she has no more

foresight, nor art, nor command of herself sometimes, than a child of five years old. I assure you, I was rejoiced to get her away before Mr. Palmer came, for a new eye coming into a family sees so much one wouldn't wish to be seen. You know it would be terrible to have the poor young creature _commit_ and expose herself to a stranger so early in life. Indeed, as it is, I am persuaded no one will ever think of marrying her, if you do not.----In worldly prudence--but of that she has not an atom--in worldly prudence she might do better, or as well, certainly; for her fortune will be very considerable. Sir John means to add to it, when he gets the Wigram estate; and the old uncle, Wigram, can't live for ever. But poor Albina, I dare swear, does not know what fortune she is to have, nor what you have. Love! love! all for love!--and all in vain. She is certainly very much to be pitied."

Longer might Mrs. Beaumont have continued in monologue, without danger of interruption from her son, who stood resolved to hear the utmost sum of all that she should say on the subject. Never interrupting her, he only filled certain pauses, that seemed expectant of reply, with the phrases--"I am very sorry, indeed, ma'am"--and, "Really, ma'am, it is out of my power to help it." But Mrs. Beaumont observed that the latter phrase had been omitted as she proceeded--and "_I am very sorry indeed, ma'am,_" he repeated less as words of course, and more and more as if they came from the heart. Having so far, successfully, as she thought, worked upon her son's good-nature, and seeing her daughter through the trees coming towards them, she abruptly exclaimed, "Promise me, at all events, dearest Edward, I conjure you; promise me that you will not make proposals _any where else_, without letting me know of it beforehand,--and give me time," joining her hands in a supplicating attitude, "give me but a few weeks, to prepare my poor little Albina for this sad, sad stroke!"

"I promise you, madam, that I will not, directly or indirectly, make an offer of my hand or heart to any woman, without previously letting you know my determination. And as for a few weeks, more or less--my mother, surely, need not supplicate, but simply let me know her wishes--even without her reasons, they would have been sufficient with me. Do I satisfy you now, madam?"

"More than satisfy--as you ever do, ever will, my dear son."

"But you will require no more on this subject--I must be left master of myself."

"Indubitably--certainly--master of yourself--most certainly--of course."

Mr. Beaumont was going to add something beginning with, "It is better, at once, to tell you, that I can never--" But Mrs. Beaumont stopped him with, "Hush! my dear, hush! not a word more, for here is Amelia, and I cannot talk on this subject before her, you know.----My beloved Amelia, how languid you look! I fear that, to please me, you have taken too long a walk; and Mr. Palmer won't see you in your best looks, after all.--What note is that you have in your hand?"

"A note from Miss Walsingham, mamma."

"Oh! the chickenpox! take care! letters, notes, every thing may convey the infection," cried Mrs. Beaumont, snatching the paper. "How could dearest Miss Walsingham be so giddy as to answer my note, after what I said in my postscript!--How did this note come?"

"By the little postboy, mamma; I met him at the porter's lodge."

"But what is all this strange thing?" said Mrs. Beaumont, after having read the note twice over.--It contained a certificate from the parish minister and churchwardens, apothecary, and surgeon, bearing witness, one and all, that there was no individual, man, woman, or child, in the parish, or within three miles of Walsingham House, who was even under any suspicion of having the chickenpox.

"My father desires me to send Mrs. Beaumont the enclosed _clean bill of health_--by which she will find that we need be no longer subject to quarantine; and, unless some other reasons prevent our having the pleasure of seeing her, we may hope soon that she will favour us with her long promised visit.

"Yours, sincerely,

"MARIANNE WALSHINGHAM."

"I am delighted," said Mrs. Beaumont, "to find it was a false report, and that we shall not be kept, the Lord knows how long, away from the dear Walsinghams."

"Then we can go to them to-morrow, can't we, mamma? And I will write, and say so, shall I?" said Amelia.

"No need to write, my dear; if we promise for any particular day, and are not able to go, that seems unkind, and is taken ill, you see. And as Mr. Palmer is coming, we can't leave him."

"But he will go with us surely," said Mr. Beaumont. "The Walsinghams are as much his relations as we are; and if he comes two hundred miles to see us, he will, surely, go seven to see them."

"True," said Mrs. Beaumont; "but it is civil and kind to leave him to fix his own day, poor old gentleman. After so long a journey, we must allow him some rest. Consider, he can't go galloping about as you do, dear Edward."

"But," said Amelia, "as the Walsinghams know he is to be in the country, they will of course come to see him immediately."

"How do they know he is to be in the country?"

"I thought--I took it for granted, you told them so, mamma, when you

wrote about not going to Walsingham House, on Mr. Walsingham's birthday."

"No, my dear; I was so full of the chickenpox, and terror about you, I could think of nothing else."

"Thank you, dear mother--but now that is out of the question, I had best write a line by the return of the postboy, to say, that Mr. Palmer is to be here to-day, and that he stays only one week."

"Certainly! love--but let me write about it, for I have particular reasons. And, my dear, now we are by ourselves, let me caution you not to mention that Mr. Palmer can stay but one week: in the first place it is uncivil to him, for we are not sure of it, and it is like driving him away; and in the next place, there are reasons I can't explain to you, that know so little of the world, my dear Amelia--but, in general, it is always foolish to mention things."

"Always foolish to mention things!" cried Mr. Beaumont, smiling.

"Of this sort, I mean," said Mrs. Beaumont, a little disconcerted.

"Of what sort?" persisted her son.

"Hush! my dear; here's the postboy and the ass."

"Any letters, my good little boy? Any letters for me?"

"I has, madam, a many for the house. I does not know for who--the bag will tell," said the boy, unstrapping the bag from his shoulders.

"Give it to me, then," said Mrs. Beaumont: "I am anxious for letters always." She was peculiarly anxious now to open the post-bag, to put a stop to a conversation which did not please her. Whilst seated on a rustic seat, under a spreading beech, our heroine, with her accustomed looks of mystery, examined the seals of her numerous and important letters, to ascertain whether they had been opened at the post-office, or whether their folds might have been pervious to any prying eye. Her son tore the covers off the newspapers; and, as he unfolded one, Amelia leaned upon his shoulder, and whispered softly, "Any news of the fleet, brother?"

Mrs. Beaumont, than whom Fine-ear himself had not quicker auditory nerves, especially for indiscreet whispers, looked up from her letters, and examined, unperceived, the countenance of Amelia, who was searching with eagerness the columns of the paper. As Mr. Beaumont turned over the leaf, Amelia looked up, and, seeing her mother's eyes fixed upon her, coloured; and from want of presence of mind to invent any thing better to say, asked if her mother wished to have the papers?

"No," said Mrs. Beaumont, coldly, "not I, Amelia; I am not such a politician as you are grown."

Amelia withdrew her attention, or at least her eyes, from the paper, and had recourse to the beech-tree, the beautiful foliage of which she studied with profound attention.

"God bless me! here's news! news of the fleet!" cried Beaumont, turning suddenly to his sister; and then recollecting himself, to his mother.

"Ma'am, they say there has been a great engagement between the French and Spaniards, and the English--particulars not known yet: but, they say, ten sail of the French line are taken, and four Spaniards blown up, and six Spanish men-of-war disabled, and a treasure-ship taken. Walsingham must have been in the engagement--My horse!--I'll gallop over this minute, and know from the Walsinghams if they have seen the papers, and if there's any thing more about it in their papers."

"Gallop! my dearest Edward," said his mother, standing in his path; "but you don't consider Mr. Palmer--"

"Damn Mr. Palmer! I beg your pardon, mother--I mean no harm to the old gentleman--friend of my father's--great respect for him--I'll be back by dinner-time, back ready to receive him--he can't be here till six--only five by me, now! Ma'am, I shall have more than time to dress, too, cool as a cucumber, ready to receive the good old fellow."

"In one short hour, my dear!--seven miles to Walsingham House, and seven back again, and all the time you will waste there, and to dress too--only consider!"

"I do consider, ma'am; and have considered every thing in the world. My horse will carry me there and back in fifty minutes, easily, and five to spare, I'll be bound. I sha'n't light--so where's the paper? I'm off."

"Well--order your horse, and leave me the paper, at least, while he is getting ready. Ride by this way, and you will find us here--where is this famous paragraph?"

Beaumont drew the paper crumpled from the pocket into which he had thrust it--ran off for his horse, and quickly returned mounted. "Give me the paper, good friends!--I'm off."

"Away, then, my dear; since you will heat yourself for nothing. But only let me point out to you," said she, holding the paper fast whilst she held it up to him, "that this whole report rests on no authority whatever; not a word of it in the gazette; not a line from the admiralty; no official account; no bulletin; no credit given to the rumour at Lloyd's; stocks the same.--And how did the news come? Not even the news-writer pretends it came through any the least respectable channel. A frigate in latitude the Lord knows what! saw a fleet in a fog --might be Spanish--might be French--might be English--spoke another frigate some days afterwards, who heard firing: well--firing says nothing. But the frigate turns this firing into an engagement, and a victory; and presently communicates the news to a collier, and the collier tells another collier, and so it goes up the Thames, to some wonder-maker, standing agape for a paragraph, to secure a dinner. To the

press the news goes, just as our paper is coming out; and to be sure we shall have a contradiction and an apology in our next."

"Well, ma'am; but I will ask Mr. Walsingham what he thinks, and show him the paper."

"Do, if you like it, my dear; I never control you; but don't overheat yourself for nothing. What can Mr. Walsingham, or all the Walsinghams in the world, tell more than we can? and as to showing him the paper, you know he takes the same paper. But don't let me detain you.--Amelia, who is that coming through the gate? Mr. Palmer's servant, I protest!"

"Well; it can't be, I see!" said Beaumont, dismounting.

"Take away your master's horse--quick--quick!--Amelia, my love, to dress! I must have you ready to receive your godfather's blessing. Consider, Mr. Palmer was your father's earliest friend; and besides, he is a relation, though distant; and it is always a good and prudent thing to keep up relationships. Many a fine estate has come from very distant relations most unexpectedly. And even independently of all relationships, when friendships are properly cultivated, there's no knowing to what they may lead;--not that I look to any thing of that sort here. But before you see Mr. Palmer, just as we are walking home, and quite to ourselves, let me give you some leading hints about this old gentleman's character, which I have gathered, no matter how, for your advantage, my dear children. He is a humourist, and must not be opposed in any of his oddities: he is used to be waited upon, and attended to, as all these men are who have lived in the West Indies. A *bon vivant*, of course. Edward, produce your best wines--the pilau and currie, and all that, leave to me. I had special notice of his love for a John-doree, and a John-doree I have for him. But now I am going to give you the master-key to his heart. Like all men who have made great fortunes, he loves to feel continually the importance his wealth confers; he loves to feel that wealth does every thing; is superior to every thing--to birth and titles especially: it is his pride to think himself, though a commoner, far above any man who condescends to take a title. He hates persons of quality; therefore, whilst he is here, not a word in favour of any titled person. Forget the whole house of peers--send them all to Coventry--all to Coventry, remember.--And, now you have the key to his heart, go and dress, to be ready for him."

Having thus given her private instructions, and advanced her secret plans, Mrs. Beaumont repaired to her toilet, well satisfied with her morning's work.

CHAPTER V.

"Chi mi fa piu carezze che non sole;
O m'ha ingannato, o ingannar me vuole."

"By St. George, there's nothing like Old England for comfort!" cried Mr. Palmer, settling himself in his arm-chair in the evening; "nothing after all in any part of the known world, like Old England for comfort. Why, madam, there's not another people in the universe that have in any of their languages a name even for comfort. The French have been forced to borrow it; but now they have got it, they don't know how to use it, nor even how to pronounce it, poor devils! Well, there's nothing like Old England for comfort."

"Ah! nothing like Old England for comfort!" echoed Mrs. Beaumont, in a sentimental tone, though at that instant her thoughts were far distant from her words; for this declaration of his love for Old England alarmed her with the notion that he might change his mind about returning immediately to Jamaica, and that he might take root again and flourish for years to come in his native soil--perhaps in her neighbourhood, to the bane of all her favourite projects. What would become of her scheme of marrying Amelia to the baronet, and her son to the docile Albina? What would become of the scheme of preventing him from being acquainted with the Walsinghams? For a week it might be practicable to keep them asunder by policising, but this could never be effected if he were to settle, or even to make any long stay, in the country. The Walsinghams would be affronted, and then what would become of their interest in the county? Her son could not be returned without that. And, worse than all the rest, Mr. Palmer might take a fancy to see these Walsinghams, who were as nearly related to him as the Beaumonts; and seeing, he might prefer, and preferring, he might possibly leave half, nay, perhaps the whole, of his large fortune to them,--and thus all her hopes and projects might at once be frustrated. Little aware of the long and perplexing trains of ideas, which his honest ejaculation in favour of his native country had raised, Mr. Palmer went on with his own comfortable thoughts.

"And of all the comforts our native land affords, I know of none so grateful to the heart," continued he, "as good friends, which are to be found nowhere else in such perfection. A man at my time of life misses many an old friend on his return to his native country; but then he sees them still in their representatives, and loves them again in their children. Mr. Beaumont looked at me at that instant, so like his father--he is the image of what my friend was, when I first knew him."

"I am rejoiced you see the likeness," said Mrs. Beaumont. "Amelia, my dear, pour out the coffee."

"And Miss Beaumont, too, has just his expression of countenance, which surprises me more, in her delicate features. Upon my word, I have reason to be proud of my god-daughter, as far as appearances go; and with English women, appearances, fair as they may be, seldom are even so good as the truth. There's her father's smile again for me--young lady, if that smile deceives, there's no truth in woman."

"Do not you find our coffee here very bad, compared with what you have been used to abroad?" said Mrs. Beaumont.

"I do rejoice to find myself here quiet in the country," continued Mr. Palmer, without hearing the lady's question; "nothing after all like a good old English family, where every thing speaks plenty and hospitality, without waste or ostentation; and where you are received with a hearty welcome, without compliments; and let do just as you please, without form, and without being persecuted by politeness."

This was the image of an English country family impressed early upon the good old gentleman's imagination, which had remained there fresh and unchanged since the days of his youth; and he now took it for granted that he should see it realized in the family of his late friend.

"I was afraid," resumed Mrs. Beaumont, "that after being so long accustomed to a West-Indian life, you would find many things unpleasant to your feelings here. But you are so kind, so accommodating. Is it really possible that you have not, since your return to England, experienced any uncomfortable sensations, suffered any serious injury to your health, my dear sir, from the damps and chills of our climate?"

"Why, now I think of it, I have--I have a cough," said Mr. Palmer, coughing.

Mrs. Beaumont officiously shut the window.

"I do acknowledge that England is not quite so superior to all other countries in her climate as in every thing else: yet I don't 'damn the climate like a lord.' At my time of life, a man must expect to be a valetudinarian, and it would be unjust to blame one's native climate for that. But a man of seventy-five must live where he can, not where he will; and Dr. Y---- tells me that I can live nowhere but in the West Indies."

"Oh, sir, never mind Dr. Y----," exclaimed young Beaumont: "live with us in England. Many Englishmen live to a great age surely, let people say what they will of the climate."

"But, perhaps, brother," interposed Amelia, "those who, like Mr. Palmer, have lived much in a warm climate, might find a return to a cold country dangerous; and we should consider what is best for him, not merely what is most agreeable to ourselves."

"True, my dearest Amelia," said Mrs. Beaumont; "and to be sure, Dr. Y---- is one of our most skilful physicians. I could not be so rash or so selfish as to set my private wishes, or my private opinion, in opposition to Dr. Y----'s advice; but surely, my dear sir, you won't let one physician, however eminent, send you away from us all, and banish you again from England? We have a very clever physician here, Dr. Wheeler, in whom I have the greatest confidence. In my own case, I confess, I should prefer his judgment to any of the London fashionable physicians, who are so fine and so hurried, that they can't take time to study one's particular constitution, and hear all one has to say to them. Now that is Wheeler's great excellence--and I should so like to

hear his opinion. I am sure, if he gives it against me, I will not say a word more: if he decide for Jamaica, I may be vexed, but I should make it a point of conscience to submit, and not to urge my good friend to stay in England at his own peril. Happy they who can live where they please, and whose fortune puts it in their power to purchase any climate, and to combine the comforts and luxuries of all countries!"

Nothing more was said upon the subject: Mrs. Beaumont turned the conversation to the different luxuries of the West and East Indies. Mr. Palmer, fatigued by his journey, retired early to rest, little dreaming that his kind hostess waked, whilst he slept, for the purpose of preparing a physician to give a proper opinion upon his case. Mrs. Beaumont left a note to her favourite Dr. Wheeler, to be sent very early in the morning. As if by accident, the doctor dropped in at breakfast time, and Mrs. Beaumont declared that it was the luckiest chance imaginable, that he should happen to call just when she was wishing to see him. When the question in debate was stated to him, he, with becoming gravity of countenance and suavity of manner, entered into a discussion upon the effect of hot and cold climates upon the solids and fluids, and nervous system in general; then upon English constitutions in particular; and, lastly, upon *idiosyncrasies*.

This last word cost Mr. Palmer half his breakfast: on hearing it he turned down his cup with a profound sigh, and pushed his plate from him; indications which did not escape the physician's demure eye. Gaining confidence from the weakness of the patient, Dr. Wheeler now boldly pronounced, that, in his opinion, any gentleman who, after having habituated himself long to a hot climate, as Jamaica, for instance, should come late in life to reside in a colder climate, as England, for example, must run very great hazard indeed--nay, he could almost venture to predict, would fall a victim to the sudden tension of the lax fibres.

Though a man of sound good sense in most things, Mr. Palmer's weakness was, on medical subjects, as great as his ignorance; his superstitious faith in physicians was as implicit as either Dr. Wheeler or Mrs. Beaumont could desire.

"Then," said Mr. Palmer, with a sigh still deeper than the first--for the first was for himself, and the second for his country--"then England, Old England! farewell for ever! All my judges pronounce sentence of transportation upon me!"

Mr. Beaumont and Amelia, in eager and persuasive tones of remonstrance and expostulation, at once addressed the doctor, to obtain a mitigation or suspension of his sentence. Dr. Wheeler, albeit unused to the imperative mood, reiterated his *dictum*. Though little accustomed to hold his opinion against the arguments or the wishes of the rich and fair, he, upon this occasion, stood his ground against Miss and Mr. Beaumont wonderfully well for nearly five minutes; till, to his utter perplexity and dismay, he saw Mrs. Beaumont appear amongst his assailants.

"Well, I said I would submit, and not say a word, if Dr. Wheeler was

against me," she began; "but I cannot sit by silent: I must protest against this cruel, cruel decree, so contrary too to what I hoped and expected would be Dr. Wheeler's opinion."

Poor Dr. Wheeler twinkled and seemed as if he would have rubbed his eyes, not sure whether he was awake or in a dream. In his perplexity, he apprehended that he had misunderstood Mrs. Beaumont's note, and he now prepared to make his way round again through the solids and the fluids, and the whole nervous system, till, by favour of _idiosyncrasy_, he hoped to get out of his difficulty, and to allow Mr. Palmer to remain on British ground. Mrs. Beaumont's face, in spite of her powers of simulation, lengthened and lengthened, and darkened and darkened, as he proceeded in his recantation; but, when the exception to the general axiom was fairly made out, and a clear permit to remain in England granted, by such high medical authority, she forced a smile, and joined loudly in the general congratulations. Whilst her son was triumphing and shaking hands with Mr. Palmer, she slipped down stairs after Dr. Wheeler.

"Ah, doctor! What have you done! Ruined me! ruined me! Didn't you read my note? Didn't you _understand_ it?--I thought a word to the wise was enough."

"Why!--then it was as I understood it at first? So I thought; but then I fancied I must be mistaken afterwards; for when I expected support, my dear madam, you opposed my opinion in favour of Jamaica more warmly than any one, and what was I to think?"

"To think! Oh, my dear doctor, you might have guessed that was only a sham opposition."

"But, my dear ma'am," cried Dr. Wheeler, who, though the mildest of men, was now worked up to something like indignation, "my dear ma'am--sham upon sham is too much for any man!"

The doctor went down stairs murmuring. Thus, by excess of hypocrisy, our heroine disgusted even her own adherents, in which she has the honour to resemble some of the most wily politicians famous in English history. But she was too wise ever to let any one who could serve or injure her go discontented out of her presence.

"My dear, good Dr. Wheeler, I never saw you angry before. Come, come," cried Mrs. Beaumont, sliding a _douceur_ into his hand, "friends must not be vexed for trifles; it was only a mistake _de part et d'autre_, and you'll return here to-morrow, in your way home, and breakfast with us; and now we understand one another. And," added she, in a whisper, "we can talk over things, and have your cool judgment best, when only you, and I, and Mr. Palmer, are present. You comprehend."

Those who practise many manoeuvres, and carry on many intrigues at the same time, have this advantage, that if one fails, the success of another compensates for the disappointment. However she might have been vexed by this slight _contre-temps_ with Dr. Wheeler, Mrs. Beaumont had

ample compensation of different sorts this day; some due to her own exertions, some owing to accident. Her own exertions prevented her dear Albina Hunter from returning; for Mrs. Beaumont never sent the promised carriage--only a note of apology--a nail had run into one of the coach-horse's feet. To accident she owed that the Walsinghams were not at home when her son galloped over to see them the next morning, and to inquire what news from Captain Walsingham. That day's paper also brought a contradiction of the report of the engagement and victory; so that Mrs. Beaumont's apprehensions on this subject were allayed; and she had no doubt that, by proper management, with a sufficient number of notes and messages, misunderstandings, lame horses, and crossings upon the road, she might actually get through the week without letting the Walsinghams see Mr. Palmer; or at least without more than a _vis_, or a morning visit, from which no great danger could be apprehended. "Few, indeed, have so much character," thought she, "or so much dexterity in showing it, as to make a dangerous impression in the course of a formal morning visit."

CHAPTER VI.

"Ah! c'est mentir tant soit peu; j'en conviens;
C'est un grand mal--mais il produit un bien."

VOLTAIRE.

The third day went off still more successfully. Dr. Wheeler called at breakfast, frightened Mr. Palmer out of his senses about his health, and convinced him that his life depended upon his immediate return to the climate of Jamaica:--so this point was decided.

Mrs. Beaumont, calculating justly that the Walsinghams would return Mr. Beaumont's visit, and come to pay their respects to Mr. Palmer this morning, settled, as soon as breakfast was over, a plan of operations which should keep Mr. Palmer out till dinner-time. He must see the charming drive which her son had made round his improvements; and she must have the pleasure of showing it to him herself; and she assured him that he might trust to her driving.

So into Mrs. Beaumont's garden-chair he got; and when she had him fairly prisoner, she carried him far away from all danger of intruding visitors. It may readily be supposed that our heroine made good use of the five or six hours' leisure for manoeuvring which she thus secured.

So frank and cordial was this simple-hearted old man, any one but Mrs. Beaumont would have thought that with him no manoeuvring was necessary; that she need only to have trusted to his friendship and generosity, and have directly told him her wishes. He was so prepossessed in her favour, as being the widow of his friend, that he was almost incapable of suspecting her of any unhandsome conduct; besides, having had little converse with modern ladies, his imagination was so prepossessed with

the old-fashioned picture of a respectable widow lady and guardian mother, that he took it for granted Mrs. Beaumont was just like one of the good matrons of former times, like Lady Bountiful, or Lady Lizard; and, as such, he spoke to her of her family concerns, in all the openness of a heart which knew no guile.

"Now, my good Mistress Beaumont, you must look upon me just as my friend the colonel would have done; as a man, who has your family interests at heart just as much as if I were one of yourselves. And let me in to all your little affairs, and trust me with all your little plans, and let us talk over things together, and settle how every thing can be done for the best for the young people. You know, I have no relations in the world but your family and the Walsinghams, of whom, by-the-bye, I know nothing. No one living has any claim upon me: I can leave or give my own just as I please; and you and yours are, of course, my first objects--and for the how, and the what, and the when, I must consult you; and only beg you to keep it in mind, that I would as soon give as bequeath, and rather; for as to what a man leaves to his friends, he can only have the satisfaction of thinking that they will be the better for him after he is dead and gone, which is but cold comfort; but what he gives he has the warm comfort of seeing them enjoy whilst he is alive with them."

"Such a generous sentiment!" exclaimed Mrs. Beaumont, "and so unlike persons in general who have large fortunes at their disposal! I feel so much obliged, so excessively--"

"Not at all, not at all, not at all--no more of that, no more of that, my good lady. The colonel and I were friends; so there can be no obligation between us, nor thanks, nor speeches. But, just as if you were talking to yourself, tell me your mind. And if there are any little embarrassments that the son may want to clear off on coming of age; or if there's any thing wanting to your jointure, my dear madam; or if there should be any marriages in the wind, where a few thousands, more or less, might be the making or the breaking of a heart;--let me hear about it all: and do me the justice to let me have the pleasure of making the young folks, and the old folks too, happy their own way; for I have no notion of insisting on all people being happy my way--no, no! I've too much English liberty in me for that; and I'm sure, you, my good lady, are as great a foe as I am to all family managements and mysteries, where the old don't know what the young do, nor the young what the old think. No, no--that's all nonsense and French convent work--nothing like a good old English family. So, my dear Mistress Beaumont, out with it all, and make me one of yourselves, free of the family from this minute. Here's my hand and heart upon it--an old friend may presume so far."

This frankness would have opened any heart except Mrs. Beaumont's; but it is the misfortune of artful people that they cannot believe others to be artless: either they think simplicity of character folly; or else they suspect that openness is only affected, as a bait to draw them into snares. Our heroine balanced for a moment between these two notions. She could not believe Mr. Palmer to be an absolute fool--no; his having made

such a large fortune forbid that thought. Then he must have thrown himself thus open merely to _try her_, and to come at the knowledge of debts and embarrassments, which, if brought to light, would lower his opinion of the prudence of the family.

"My excellent friend, to be candid with you," she began, "there is no need of your generosity at present, to relieve my son from any embarrassments; for I know that he has no debts whatever. And I am confident he will make my jointure every thing, and more than every thing, I could desire. And, as to marriages, my Amelia is so young, there's time enough to consider."

"True, true; and she does well to take time to consider. But though I don't understand these matters much, she looks mightily like the notion I have of a girl that's a little bit in love."

"In love! Oh, my dear sir! you don't say so--in love?"

"Why, I suppose I should not say _in love_; there's some other way of expressing it come into fashion since my time, no doubt. And even then, I know that was not to be said of a young lady, till signing and sealing day; but it popped out, and I can't get it back again, so you must even let it pass. And what harm? for you know, madam, without love, what would become of the world?--though I was jilted once and away, I acknowledge--but forgive and forget. I don't like the girl a whit the worse for being a little bit tender-hearted. For I'm morally certain, even from the little I have heard her say, and from the way she has been brought up, and from her being her father's daughter, and her mother's, madam, she could not fix her affections on any one that would not do honour to her choice, or--which is only saying the same thing in other words--that you and I should not approve."

"Ah! there's the thing!" said Mrs. Beaumont, sighing.

"Why now I took it into my head from a blush I saw this morning, though how I came to notice it, I don't know; for to my recollection I have not noticed a girl's blushing before these twenty years--but, to be sure, here I have as near an interest, almost, as if she were my own daughter--I say, from the blush I saw this morning, when young Beaumont was talking of the gallop he had taken to inquire about Captain Walsingham, I took it into my head that he was the happy man."

"Oh! my dear sir, he never made any proposals for Amelia." That was strictly true. "Nor, I am sure, ever thought of it, as far as ever I heard."

The saving clause of "_as far as ever I heard_" prevented this last assertion from coming under that description of falsehoods denominated downright lies.

"Indeed, how could he?" pursued Mrs. Beaumont, "for you know he is no match for Amelia; he has nothing in the world but his commission. No; there never was any proposal from that quarter; and, of course, it is

impossible my daughter could think of a man who has no thoughts of her."

"You know best, my good madam; I merely spoke at random. I'm the worst guesser in the world, especially on these matters: what people tell me, I know; and neither more nor less."

Mrs. Beaumont rejoiced in the simplicity of her companion. "Then, my good friend, it is but fair to tell you," said she, "that Amelia has an admirer."

"A lover, hey! Who?"

"Ah, there's the misfortune; it is a thing I never can consent to."

"Ha! then now it is out! There's the reason the girl blushes, and is so absent at times."

A plan now occurred to Mrs. Beaumont's scheming imagination which she thought the master-piece of policy. She determined to account for whatever symptoms of embarrassment Mr. Palmer might observe in her daughter, by attributing them to a thwarted attachment for Sir John Hunter; and Mrs. Beaumont resolved to make a merit to Mr. Palmer of opposing this match because the lover was a baronet, and she thought that Mr. Palmer would be pleased by her showing an aversion to the thoughts of her daughter's marrying _a sprig of quality_. This ingenious method of paying her court to her open-hearted friend, at the expense equally of truth and of her daughter, she executed with her usual address.

"Well, I'm heartily glad, my dear good madam, to find that you have the same prejudices against sprigs of quality that I have. One good commoner is worth a million of them to my mind. So I told a puppy of a nephew of mine, who would go and buy a baronetage, forsooth--disinherited him! but he is dead, poor puppy."

"Poor young man! But this is all new to me," said Mrs. Beaumont, with well-feigned surprise.

"But did not you know, my dear madam, that I had a nephew, and that he is dead?"

"Oh, yes; but not the particulars."

"No; the particulars I never talk of--not to the poor dog's credit. It's well he's dead, for if he had lived, I am afraid I should have forgiven him. No, no, I never would. But there is no use in thinking any more of that. What were we saying? Oh, about your Amelia--our Amelia, let me call her. If she is so much attached, poor thing, to this man, though he is a baronet, which I own is against him to my fancy, yet it is to be presumed he has good qualities to balance that, since she values him; and young people must be young, and have their little foolish prepossessions for title, and so forth. To be sure, I should have thought my friend's daughter above that, of such a good family as she

is, and with such good sense as she inherits too. But we have all our foibles, I suppose. And since it is so with Amelia, why do let me see this baronet-swain of hers, and let me try what good I can find out in him, and let me bring myself, if I can, over my prejudices. And then you, my dear madam, so good and kind a mother as you are, will make an effort too on your part; for we must see the girl happy, if it is not out of all sense and reason. And if the man be worthy of her, it is not his fault that he is a sprig of quality; and we must forgive and forget, and give our consent, my dear Mrs. Beaumont."

"And would you ever give your consent to her marrying Sir John Hunter?" cried Mrs. Beaumont, breathless with amazement, and for a moment thrown off her guard so as to speak quite naturally. The sudden difference in her tone and manner struck even her unsuspecting companion, and he attributed it to displeasure at this last hint.

"Why, my very dear good friend's wife, forgive me," said he, "for this interference, and for, as it seems, opposing your opinion about your daughter's marriage, which no man has a right to do--but if you ask me plump whether I could forgive her for marrying Sir John Hunter, I answer, for I can speak nothing but the truth, I would, if he is a worthy man."

"I thought," said Mrs. Beaumont, astonished, "you disinherited your own nephew, because he took a baronet's title against your will."

"Bless you! no, my dear madam--that did displease me, to be sure--but that was the least cause of displeasure I had. I let the world fancy and say what they would, rather than bring faults to light.--But no more about that."

"But did not you take an oath that you would never leave a shilling of your fortune to any _sprig of quality?_"

"Never! my dearest madam! never," cried Mr. Palmer, laughing. "Never was such a gander. See what oaths people put into one's mouth."

"And what lies the world tells," said Mrs. Beaumont.

"And believes," said Mr. Palmer, with a sly smile.

The surprise that Mrs. Beaumont felt was mixed with a strange and rapid confusion of other sentiments, regret for having wasted such a quantity of contrivance and manoeuvring against an imaginary difficulty. All this arose from her too easy belief of _secret underhand information_.

Through the maze of artifice in which she had involved affairs, she now, with some difficulty, perceived that plain truth would have served her purpose better. But regret for the past was not in the least mixed with any thing like remorse or penitence; on the contrary, she instantly began to consider how she could best profit by her own wrong. She thought she saw two of her favourite objects almost within her reach, Mr. Palmer's fortune, and the future title for her daughter: no

obstacle seemed likely to oppose the accomplishment of her wishes, except Amelia's own inclinations: these she thought she could readily prevail upon her to give up; for she knew that her daughter was both of a timid and of an affectionate temper; that she had never in any instance withstood, or even disputed, her maternal authority; and that dread of her displeasure had often proved sufficient to make Amelia suppress or sacrifice her own feelings. Combining all these reflections with her wonted rapidity, Mrs. Beaumont determined what her play should now be. She saw, or thought she saw, that she ought, either by gentle or strong means, to lure or intimidate Amelia to her purpose; and that, while she carried on this part of the plot with her daughter in private, she should appear to Mr. Palmer to yield to his persuasions by degrees, to make the young people happy their own way, and to be persuaded reluctantly out of her aversion to *sprigs of quality*. To be sure, it would be necessary to give fresh explanations and instructions to Sir John Hunter, through his sister, with the new parts that he and she were to act in this domestic drama. As soon as Mrs. Beaumont returned from her airing, therefore, she retired to her own apartment, and wrote a note of explanation, with a proper proportion of sentiment and *verbiage*, to her dear Albina, begging to see her and Sir John Hunter the very next day. The horse, which had been lamed by the nail, now, of course, had recovered; and it was found by Mrs. Beaumont that she had been misinformed, and that he had been lamed only by sudden cramp. Any excuse she knew would be sufficient, in the present state of affairs, to the young lady, who was more ready to be deceived than even our heroine was disposed to deceive. Indeed, as Machiavel says, "as there are people willing to cheat, there will always be those who are ready to be cheated."

CHAPTER VII.

"Vous m'enchantez, mais vous m'Øpouvantez;
Ces pieges-làsont-ils bien ajustØs?
Craignez vous point de vous laisser surprendre
Dans les filets que vos mains savent tendre?"

VOLTAIRE.

To prepare Amelia to receive Sir John Hunter *properly* was Mrs. Beaumont's next attempt; for as she had represented to Mr. Palmer that her daughter was attached to Sir John, it was necessary that her manner should in some degree accord with this representation, that at least it should not exhibit any symptoms of disapprobation or dislike: whatever coldness or reserve might appear, it would be easy to attribute to bashfulness and dread of Mr. Palmer's observation. When Amelia was undressing at night, her mother went into her room; and, having dismissed the maid, threw herself into an arm-chair, and exclaimed, half-yawning, "How tired I am!--No wonder, such a long airing as we took to-day. But, my dear Amelia, I could not sleep to-night without telling you how glad I am to find that you are such a favourite with

Mr. Palmer."

"I am glad he likes me," said Amelia; "I am sure I like him. What a benevolent, excellent man he seems to be!"

"Excellent, excellent--the best creature in the world!--And so interested about you! and so anxious that you should be well and soon established; almost as anxious about it as I am myself."

"He is very good--and you are very good, mamma; but there is no occasion that I should be soon established, as it is called--is there?"

"That is the regular answer, you know, in these cases, from every young lady that ever was born, in or out of a book within the memory of man. But we will suppose all that to be said prettily on your part, and answered properly on mine: so give me leave to go on to something more to the purpose; and don't look so alarmed, my love. You know, I am not a hurrying person; you shall take your own time, and every thing shall be done as you like, and the whole shall be kept amongst ourselves entirely; for nothing is so disadvantageous and distressing to a young woman as to have these things talked of in the world long before they take place."

"But, ma'am!--Surely there is no marriage determined upon for me, without my even knowing it."

"Determined upon!--Oh dear, no, my darling. You shall decide every thing for yourself."

"Thank you, mother; now you are kind indeed."

"Indubitably, my dearest Amelia, I would not decide on any thing without consulting you: for I have the greatest dependence on your prudence and judgment. With a silly romantic girl, who had no discretion, I should certainly think it my duty to do otherwise; and if I saw my daughter following headlong some idle fancy of fifteen, I should interpose my authority at once, and say, It must not be. But I know my Amelia so well, that I am confident she will judge as prudently for herself as I could for her; and indeed, I am persuaded that our opinions will be now, as they almost always are, my sweet girl, the same."

"I hope so mamma--but---"

"Well, well, I'll allow a maidenly but--and you will allow that Sir John Hunter shall be the man at last."

"Oh, mamma, that can never be," said Amelia, with much earnestness.

"Never--A young lady's never, Amelia, I will allow too. Don't interrupt me, my dear--but give me leave to tell you again, that you shall have your own time--Mr. Palmer has given his consent and approbation."

"Consent and approbation!" cried Amelia. "And is it come to this? without even consulting me! And is this the way I am left to judge for myself?--Oh, mother! mother! what will become of me?"

Amelia, who had long had experience that it was vain for her to attempt to counteract or oppose any scheme that her mother had planned, sat down at this instant in despair: but even from despair she took courage; and, rising suddenly, exclaimed, "I never can or will marry Sir John Hunter--for I love another person--mother, you know I do--and I will speak truth, and abide by it, let the consequences be what they may."

"Well, my dear, don't speak so loud, at all events; for though it may be very proper to speak the truth, it is not necessary that the whole universe should hear it. You speak of another attachment--is it possible that you allude to Captain Walsingham? But Captain Walsingham has never proposed for you, nor even given you any reason to think he would; or if he has, he must have deceived me in the grossest manner."

"He is incapable of deceiving any body," said Amelia. "He never gave me any reason to think he would propose for me; nor ever made the slightest attempt to engage my affections. You saw his conduct: it was always uniform. He is incapable of any double or underhand practices."

"In the warmth of your eulogium on Captain Walsingham, you seem, Amelia, to forget that you reflect, in the most severe manner, upon yourself: for what woman, what young woman especially, who has either delicacy, pride, or prudence, can avow that she loves a man, who has never given, even by her own statement of the matter, the slightest reason to believe that he thinks of her?"

Amelia stood abashed, and for some instants incapable of reply: but at last, approaching her mother, and hiding her face, as she hung over her shoulder, she said, in a low and timid voice, "It was only to my mother--I thought that could not be wrong--and when it was to prevent a greater wrong, the engaging myself to another person."

"Engaging yourself, my foolish child! but did I not tell you that you should have your own time?"

"But no time, mother, will do."

"Try, my dear love; that is all I ask of you; and this you cannot, in duty, in kindness, in prudence, or with decency, refuse me."

"Cannot I?"

"Indeed you cannot. So say not a word more that can lessen the high opinion I have of you; but show me that you have a becoming sense of your own and of female dignity, and that you are not the poor, mean-spirited creature, to pine for a man who disdains you."

"Disdain! I never saw any disdain. On the contrary, though he never gave me reason to think so, I cannot help fancying----"

"That he likes you--and yet he never proposed for you! Do not believe it--a man may coquet as well as a woman, and often more; but till he makes his proposal, never, if you have any value for your own happiness or dignity, fancy for a moment that he loves you."

"But he cannot marry, because he is so poor."

"True--and if so, what stronger argument can be brought against your thinking of him?"

"I do not think of him--I endeavour not to think of him."

"That is my own girl! Depend upon it, he thinks not of you. He is all in his profession--prefers it to every woman upon earth. I have heard him say he would not give it up for any consideration. All for glory, you see; nothing for love."

Amelia sighed. Her mother rose, and kissing her, said, as if she took every thing she wished for granted, "So, my Amelia, I am glad to see you reasonable, and ready to show a spirit that becomes you--Sir John Hunter breakfasts here to-morrow."

"But," said Amelia, detaining her mother, who would have left the room, "I cannot encourage Sir John Hunter, for I do not esteem him; therefore I am sure I can never love him."

"You cannot encourage Sir John Hunter, Amelia?" replied Mrs. Beaumont. "It is extraordinary that this should appear to you an impossibility the very moment the gentleman proposes for you. It was not always so. Allow me to remind you of a ball last year, where you and I met both Sir John Hunter and Captain Walsingham; as I remember, you gave all your attention that evening to Sir John."

"Oh, mother, I am ashamed of that evening--I regret it more than any evening of my life. I did wrong, very wrong; and bitterly have I suffered for it, as people always do, sooner or later, by deceit. I was afraid that you should see my real feelings; and, to conceal them, I, for the first and last time of my life, acted like a coquette. But if you recollect, dear mother, the very next day I confessed the truth to you. My friend, Miss Walsingham, urged me to have the courage to be sincere."

"Miss Walsingham! On every occasion I find the secret influence of these Walsinghams operating in my family," cried Mrs. Beaumont, from a sudden impulse of anger, which threw her off her guard.

"Surely their influence has always been beneficial to us all. To me, Miss Walsingham's friendship has been of the greatest service."

"Yes; by secretly encouraging you, against your mother's approbation, in a ridiculous passion for a man who neither can nor will marry you."

"Far from encouraging me, madam, in any thing contrary to your wishes--and far from wishing to do any thing secretly, Miss Walsingham never spoke to me on this subject but once; and that was to advise me strongly not to conceal the truth from you, and not to make use of any artifices or manoeuvres."

"Possibly, very possibly; but I presume you could conduct yourself properly without Miss Walsingham's interference or advice."

"I thought, mamma, you liked Miss Walsingham particularly, and that you wished I should cultivate her friendship."

"Certainly; I admire Miss Walsingham extremely, and wish to be on the best terms with the family; but I will never permit any one to interfere between me and my children. We should have gone on better without advisers."

"I am sure her advice and friendship have preserved me from many faults, but never led me into any. I might, from timidity, and from fear of your superior address and abilities, have become insincere and artful; but she has given me strength of mind enough to bear the present evil, and to dare at all hazards to speak the truth."

"But, my dearest Amelia," said Mrs. Beaumont, softening her tone, "why so warm? What object can your mother have but your good? Can any Miss Walsingham, or any other friend upon earth, have your interest so much at heart as I have? Why am I so anxious, if it is not from love to you?"

Amelia was touched by her mother's looks and words of affection, and acknowledged that she had spoken with too much warmth.

Mrs. Beaumont thought she could make advantage of this moment.

"Then, my beloved child, if you are convinced of my affection for you, show at least some confidence in me in return: show some disposition to oblige me. Here is a match I approve; here is an establishment every way suitable."

"But why, mamma, must I be married?" interrupted Amelia. "I will not think, at least I will try not to think, of any one of whom you do not approve; but I cannot marry any other man while I feel such a partiality for--. So, dear mother, pray do not let Sir John Hunter come here any more on my account. It is not necessary that I should marry."

"It is necessary, however," said Mrs. Beaumont, withdrawing her hand haughtily, and darting a look of contempt and anger upon her daughter, "it is necessary, however, that I should be mistress in my own house, and that I should invite here whomever I please. And it is necessary that you should receive them without airs, and with politeness. On this, observe, I insist, and will be obeyed."

Mrs. Beaumont would receive no reply, but left the room seemingly in great displeasure: but even half her anger was affected, to intimidate

this gentle girl.

Sir John Hunter and his sister arrived to breakfast. Mrs. Beaumont played her part admirably; so that she seemed to Mr. Palmer only to be enduring Sir John from consideration for her daughter, and from compliance with Mr. Palmer's own request that she would try what could be done to make the young people happy; yet she, with infinite address, _drew Sir John out_, and dexterously turned every thing he said into what she thought would please Mr. Palmer, though all the time she seemed to be misunderstanding or confuting him. Mr. Palmer's attention, which was generally fixed exclusively on one object at a time, had ample occupation in studying Sir John, whom he examined, for Amelia's sake, with all the honest penetration which he possessed. Towards Amelia herself he scarcely ever looked; for, without any refinement of delicacy, he had sufficient feeling and sense to avoid what he thought would embarrass a young lady. Amelia's silence and reserve appeared to him, therefore, as her politic mother had foreseen, just what was natural and proper. He had been told that she was attached to Sir John Hunter; and the idea of doubting the truth of what Mrs. Beaumont had asserted could not enter his confiding mind,

In the mean time, our heroine, to whom the conduct of a double intrigue was by no means embarrassing, did not neglect the affairs of her dear Albina: she had found time before breakfast, as she met Miss Hunter getting out of her carriage, to make herself sure that her notes of explanation had been understood; and she now, by a multitude of scarcely perceptible inuendoes, and seemingly suppressed looks of pity, contrived to carry on the representation she had made to her son of this damsel's helpless and lovelorn state. Indeed, the young lady appeared as much in love as could have been desired for stage effect, and rather more than was necessary for propriety. All Mrs. Beaumont's art, therefore, was exerted to throw a veil of becoming delicacy over what might have been too glaring, by hiding half to improve the whole. Where there was any want of management on the part of her young coadjutrix, she, with exquisite skill, made advantage even of these errors by look? and sighs, that implied almost as emphatically as words could have said to her son--"You see what I told you is too true. The simple creature has not art enough to conceal her passion. She is undone in the eyes of the world, if you do not confirm what report has said."

This she left to work its natural effect upon the vanity of man. And in the midst of these multiplied manoeuvres, Mrs. Beaumont sat with ease and unconcern, sometimes talking to one, sometimes to another; so that a stranger would have thought her a party uninterested in all that was going forward, and might have wondered at her blindness or indifference.

But, alas! notwithstanding her utmost art, she failed this day in turning and twisting Sir John Hunter's conversation and character so as to make them agreeable to Mr. Palmer. This she knew by his retiring at an early hour at night, as he sometimes did when company was not agreeable to him. His age gave him this privilege. Mrs. Beaumont followed, to inquire if he would not wish to _take something_ before he went to rest.

"By St. George, Madam Beaumont, you are right," said Mr. Palmer, "you are right, in not liking this baronet. I'm tired of him--sick of him--can't like him!--sorry for it, since Amelia likes him. But what can a daughter of Colonel Beaumont find in this man to be pleased with? He is a baronet, to be sure, but that is all. Tell me, my good madam, what it is the girl likes in him?"

Mrs. Beaumont could only answer by an equivocal smile, and a shrug, that seemed to say--there's no accounting for these things.

"But, my dear madam," pursued Mr. Palmer, "the man is neither handsome nor young: he is old enough for her father, though he gives himself the airs of a youngster; and his manners are--I can allow for fashionable manners. But, madam, it is his character I don't like--selfish--cold--designing--not a generous thought, not a good feeling about him. You are right, madam, quite right. In all his conversation such meanness, and even in what he means for wit, such a contempt of what is fair and honourable! Now that fellow does not believe that such a thing as virtue or patriotism, honour or friendship, exists. The jackanapes!--and as for love! why, madam, I'm convinced he is no more in love with the girl than I am, nor so much, ma'am, nor half so much!--does not feel her merit, does not value her accomplishments, does not Madam! madam! he is thinking of nothing but himself, and her fortune--fortune! fortune! fortune! that's all. The man's a miser. Madam, they that know no better fancy that there are none but old misers; but I can tell them there are young misers, and middle-aged misers, and misers of all ages. They say such a man can't be a miser, because he is a spendthrift; but, madam, you know a man can be both--yes, and that's what many of your young men of fashion are, and what, I'll engage, this fellow is. And can Amelia like him? my poor child! and does she think he loves her? my poor, poor child! how can she be so blind? but love is always blind, they say. I've a great mind to take her to task, and ask her, between ourselves, what it is she likes in her baronet."

"Oh, my dear sir! she would sink to the centre of the earth if you were to speak. For Heaven's sake, don't take her to task, foolish as she is; besides, she would be so angry with me for telling you."

"Angry? the gipsy! Am not I her godfather and her guardian? though I could not act, because I was abroad, yet her guardian I was left by her father, and love her too as well as I should a daughter of her father's--and she to have secrets, and mysteries! that would be worse than all the rest, for mysteries are what I abhor. Madam, wherever there are secrets and mysteries in a family, take my word for it, there is somethings wrong."

"True, my dear sir; but Amelia has no idea of mysteries or art. I only meant that young girls, you know, will be ashamed on these occasions, and we must make allowances. So do not speak to her, I conjure you."

"Well, madam, you are her mother, and must know best. I have only her interest at heart: but I won't speak to her, since it will so distress

her. But what shall be done about this lover? You are quite right about him, and I have not a word more to say."

"But I declare I think you judge him too harshly. Though I am not inclined to be his friend, yet I must do him the justice to say, he has more good qualities than you allow, or rather than you have seen yet. He is passionately fond of Amelia. Oh, there you're wrong, quite wrong; he is passionately in love, whatever he may pretend to the contrary."

"Pretend! and why should the puppy pretend not to be in love?"

"Pride, pride and fashion. Young men are so governed by fashion, and so afraid of ridicule. There's a set of _fashionables_ now, with whom love is a _bore, _you know."

"I know! no, indeed, I know no such thing," said Mr. Palmer. "But this I know, that I hate pretences of all sorts; and if the man is in love, I should, for my part, like him the better for showing it."

"So he will, when you know him a little better. You are quite a stranger, and he is bashful."

"Bashful! Never saw so confident a man in any country."

"But he is shy under all that."

"Under! But I don't like characters where every thing is under something different from what appears at top."

"Well, take a day or two more to study him. Though I am his enemy, I must deal fairly by him, for poor Amelia's sake."

"You are a good mother, madam, an indulgent mother, and I honour and love you for it. I'll follow your example, and bear with this spendthrift-miser-coxcomb sprig of quality for a day or two more, and try to like him, for Amelia's sake. But, if he's not worthy of her, he sha'n't have her, by St. George, he shall not--shall he, madam?"

"Oh, no, no; good night, my good sir."

What the manoeuvres of the next day might have effected, and how far Sir John Hunter profited by the new instructions which were given to him in consequence of this conversation, can never be accurately ascertained, because the whole united plan of operations was disturbed by a new and unforeseen event.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Un volto senza senno,
Un petto senza core, un cor senz' alma,

Un' alma senza fede."

GUARINI.

"Here's glorious news of Captain Walsingham!" cried young Beaumont; "I always knew he would distinguish himself if he had an opportunity; and, thank God! he has had as fine an opportunity as heart could wish. Here, mother! here, Mr. Palmer, is an account of it in this day's paper! and here is a letter from himself, which Mr. Walsingham has just sent me."

"Oh, give me the letter," cried Mrs. Beaumont, with affected eagerness.

"Let me have the paper, then," cried Mr. Palmer. "Where are my spectacles?"

"Are there any letters for me?" said Sir John Hunter. "Did my newspapers come? Albina, I desired that they should be forwarded here. Mrs. Beaumont, can you tell me any thing of my papers?"

"Dear Amelia, how interesting your brother looks when he is pleased!" Albina whispered, quite loud enough to be heard.

"A most gallant action, by St. George!" exclaimed Mr. Palmer. "These are the things that keep up the honour of the British navy, and the glory of Britain."

"This Spanish ship that Captain Walsingham captured the day after the engagement is likely to turn out a valuable prize, too," said Mrs. Beaumont. "I am vastly glad to find this by his letter, for the money will be useful to him, he wanted it so much. He does not say how much his share will come to, does he, Edward?"

"No, ma'am: you see he writes in a great hurry, and he has only time, as he says, to mention the needful."

"And is not the money the needful?" said Sir John Hunter, with a splenetic smile.

"With Walsingham it is only a secondary consideration," replied Beaumont; "honour is Captain Walsingham's first object. I dare say he has never yet calculated what his prize-money will be."

"Right, right!" reiterated Mr. Palmer; "then he is the right sort. Long may it be before our naval officers think more of prize-money than of glory! Long may it be before our honest tars turn into calculating pirates!"

"They never will or can whilst they have such officers as Captain Walsingham," said Beaumont.

"By St. George, he seems to be a fine fellow, and you a warm friend," said Mr. Palmer. "Ay, ay, the colonel's own son. But why have I never

seen any of these Walsinghams since I came to the country? Are they ashamed of being related to me, because I am a merchant?"

"More likely they are too proud to pay court to you because you are so rich," said Mr. Beaumont. "But they did come to see you, sir,--the morning you were out so late, mother, you know."

"Oh, ay, true--how unfortunate!"

"But have not we horses? have not we carriages? have not we legs?" said Mr. Palmer. "I'll go and see these Walsinghams to-morrow, please God I live so long: for I am proud of my relationship to this young hero; and I won't be cast off by good people, let them be as proud as they will--that's their fault--but I will not stand on idle ceremony: so, my good Mistress Beaumont, we will all go in a body, and storm their castle to-morrow morning."

"An admirable plan! I like it of all things!" said Mrs. Beaumont. "How few, even in youth, are so active and enthusiastic as our good friend! But, my dear Mr. Palmer--"

"But I wish I could see the captain himself. Is there any chance of his coming home?"

"Home! yes," said Beaumont: "did you not read his letter, sir? here it is; he will be at home directly. He says, 'perhaps a few hours after this letter reaches you, you'll see me.'"

"See him! Odds my life, I'm glad of it. And you, my little Amelia," said Mr. Palmer, tapping her shoulders as she stood with her back to him reading the newspaper; "and you, my little silent one, not one word have I heard from you all this time. Does not some spark of your father's spirit kindle within you on hearing of this heroic relation of ours?"

"Luckily for the ladies, sir," said Sir John Hunter, coming up, as he thought, to the lady's assistance--"luckily for young ladies, sir, they are not called upon to be heroes; and it would be luckier still for us men, if they never set themselves up for heroines--Ha! ha! ha! Miss Beaumont," continued he, "the shower is over; I'll order the horses out, that we may have our ride." Sir John left the room, evidently pleased with his own wit.

"Amelia, my love," said Mrs. Beaumont, who drew up also to give assistance at this critical juncture, "go, this moment, and write a note to your friend Miss Walsingham, to say that we shall all be with them early to-morrow: I will send a servant directly, that we may be sure to meet with them at home this time; you'll find pen, ink, and paper in my dressing-room, love."

Mrs. Beaumont drew Amelia's arm within hers, and, dictating kindest messages for the Walsinghams, led her out of the room. Having thus successfully covered her daughter's retreat, our skilful manoeuvrer returned, all self-complacent, to the company. And next, to please the

warm-hearted Mr. Palmer, she seemed to sympathize in his patriotic enthusiasm for the British navy: she pronounced a panegyric on the _young hero,_ Captain Walsingham, which made the good old man rub his hands with exultation, and which irradiated with joy the countenance of her son. But, alas! Mrs. Beaumont's endeavours to please, or rather to dupe all parties, could not, even with her consummate address, always succeed: though she had an excellent memory, and great presence of mind, with peculiar quickness both of eye and ear, yet she could not always register, arrange, and recollect all that was necessary for the various parts she undertook to act. Scarcely had she finished her eulogium on Captain Walsingham, when, to her dismay, she saw close behind her Sir John Hunter, who had entered the room without her perceiving it. He said not one word; but his clouded brow showed his suspicions, and his extreme displeasure.

"Mrs. Beaumont," said he, after some minutes' silence, "I find I must have the honour of wishing you a good morning, for I have an indispensable engagement at home to dinner to-day."

"I thought, Sir John, you and Amelia were going to ride?"

"Ma'am, Miss Beaumont does not choose to ride--she told me, so this instant as I passed her on the stairs. Oh! don't disturb her, I beg--she is writing to Miss Walsingham--I have the honour to wish you a good morning, ma'am."

"Well, if you are determined to go, let me say three words to you in the music-room, Sir John: though," added she, in a whisper intended to be heard by Mr. Palmer, "I know you do not look upon me as your friend, yet depend upon it I shall treat you and all the world with perfect candour."

Sir John, though sulky, could not avoid following the lady; and as soon as she had shut all the doors and double-doors of the music-room, she exclaimed, "It is always best to speak openly to one's friends. Now, my dear Sir John Hunter, how can you be so childish as to take ill of me what I really was forced to say, for _your_ interest, about Captain Walsingham, to Mr. Palmer? You know old Palmer is the oddest, most self-willed man imaginable! humour and please him I must, the few days he is with me. You know he goes on Tuesday--that's decided--Dr. Wheeler has seen him, has talked to him about his health, and it is absolutely necessary that he should return to the West Indies. Then he is perfectly determined to leave all he has to Amelia."

"Yes, ma'am; but how am I sure of being the better for that?" interrupted Sir John, whose decided selfishness was a match for Mrs. Beaumont's address, because it went without scruple or ceremony straight to his object; "for, ma'am, you can't think I'm such a fool as not to see that Mr. Palmer wishes me at the devil. Miss Beaumont gives me no encouragement; and you, ma'am, I know, are too good a politician to offend Mr. Palmer: so, if he declares in favour of this young _hero,_ Captain Walsingham, I may quit the field."

"But you don't consider that Mr. Palmer's young hero has never made any proposal for Amelia."

"Pshaw! ma'am--but I know, as well as you do, that he likes her, and propose he will for her now that he has money."

"Granting that; you forget that all this takes time, and that Palmer will be gone to the West Indies before they can bring out their proposal; and as soon as he is gone, and has left his will, as he means to do, with me, you and I have the game in our own hands. It is very extraordinary to me that you do not seem to understand my play, though I explained the whole to Albina; and I thought she had made you comprehend the necessity for my seeming, for this one week, to be less your friend than I could wish, because of your title, and that odd whim of Palmer, you know: but I am sure we understand one another now."

"Excuse me," said the invincible Sir John: "I confess, Mrs. Beaumont, you have so much more abilities, and finesse, and all that sort of thing, than I have, that I cannot help being afraid of--of not understanding the business rightly. In business there is nothing like understanding one another, and going on sure grounds. There has been so much going backwards and forwards, and explanations and manoeuvres, that I am not clear how it is; nor do I feel secure even that I have the honour of your approbation."

"What! not when I have assured you of it, Sir John, in the most unequivocal manner?"

It was singular that the only person to whom in this affair Mrs. Beaumont spoke the real truth should not believe her. Sir John Hunter continued obstinately suspicious and incredulous. He had just heard that his uncle Wigram, his rich uncle Wigram, was taken ill, and not likely to recover. This intelligence had also reached Mrs. Beaumont, and she was anxious to secure the baronet and the Wigram fortune for her daughter; but nothing she could say seemed to satisfy him that she was not double-dealing. At last, to prove to him her sincerity, she gave him what he required, and what alone, he said, could make his mind easy, could bring him to make up his mind--a written assurance of her approbation of his addresses to Amelia. With this he was content; "for," said he, "what is written remains, and there can be no misunderstandings in future, or changing of minds."

It was agreed between these confidential friends, that Sir John should depart, as it were, displeased; and she begged that he would not return till Mr. Palmer should have left the country.

Now there was a numerous tribe of hangers-on, who were in the habit of frequenting Beaumont Park, whom Mrs. Beaumont loved to see at her house; because, besides making her feel her own importance, they were frequently useful to carry on the subordinate parts of her perpetual manoeuvres. Among these secondary personages who attended Mrs. Beaumont abroad to increase her consequence in the eyes of common spectators, and who at home filled the stage, and added to the bustle and effect, her

chief favourites were Mr. Twigg (the same gentleman who was deputed to decide upon the belt or the screen) and Captain Lightbody. Mr. Twigg was the most, elegant flatterer of the two, but Captain Lightbody was the most assured, and upon the whole made his way the best. He was a handsome man, had a good address, could tell a good story, sing a good song, and _make things go off_ well, when there was company; so that he was a prodigious assistance to the mistress of the house. Then he danced with the young ladies when they had no other partners; he mounted guard regularly beside the piano-forte, or the harp, when the ladies were playing; and at dinner it was always the etiquette for him to sit beside Miss Beaumont, or Miss Hunter, when the gentlemen guests were not such as Mrs. Beaumont thought entitled to that honour, or such as she deemed _safe_ companions. These arrangements imply that Captain Lightbody thought himself in Mrs. Beaumont's confidence: and so he was to a certain degree, just enough to flatter him into doing her high or low behests. Whenever she had a report to circulate, or to contradict, Captain Lightbody was put in play; and no man could be better calculated for this purpose, both from his love of talking, and of locomotion. He galloped about from place to place, and from one great house to another; knew all the lords and ladies, and generals and colonels, and brigade-majors and aides-de-camp, in the land. Could any mortal be better qualified to fetch and carry news for Mrs. Beaumont? Besides news, it was his office to carry compliments, and to speed the intercourse, not perhaps from soul to soul, but from house to house, which is necessary in a visiting country to keep up the character of an agreeable neighbour. Did Mrs. Beaumont forget to send a card of invitation, or neglect to return a visit, Lightbody was to set it to rights for her, Lightbody, the ready bearer of pretty notes, the maker always, the fabricator sometimes, of the civilest speeches imaginable. This expert speechifier, this ever idle, ever busy scamperer, our heroine dispatched to engage a neighbouring family to pay her a morning visit the next day, just about the time which was fixed for her going to see the Walsinghams. The usual caution was given. "Pray, Lightbody, do not let my name be used; do not let me be mentioned; but take it upon yourself, and say, as if from yourself, that you have reason to believe I take it ill that they have not been here lately. And then you can mention the hour that would be most convenient. But let me have nothing to do with it. I must not appear in it on any account."

In consequence of Captain Lightbody's faithful execution of his secret instructions, a barouche full of morning visitors drove to the door, just at the time when Mrs. Beaumont had proposed to set out for Walsingham House. Mrs. Beaumont, with a well-dissembled look of vexation, exclaimed, as she looked out of the window at the carriage, "How provoking! Who can these people be? I hope Martin will say I am not at home. Ring--ring, Amelia. Oh, it's too late, they have seen me! and Martin, stupid creature! has let them in."

Mr. Palmer was much discomfited, and grew more and more impatient when these troublesome visitors protracted their stay, and proposed a walk to see some improvements in the grounds.

"But, my good Mistress Beaumont," said he, "you know we are engaged

to our cousin Walsingham this morning; and if you will give me leave, I will go on before you with Mr. Beaumont, and we can say what detains you,"

Disconcerted by this simple determination of this straight-forward, plain-spoken old gentleman, Mrs. Beaumont saw that farther delay on her part would be not only inefficacious, but dangerous. She now was eager to be relieved from the difficulties which she had herself contrived. She would not, for any consideration, have trusted Mr. Palmer to pay this visit without her: therefore, by an able counter-movement, she extricated herself not only without loss, but with advantage, from this perilous situation. She made a handsome apology to her visitors for being obliged to run away from them. "She would leave Amelia to have the pleasure of showing them the grounds."

Mrs. Beaumont was irresistible in her arrangements. Amelia, disappointed and afraid to show how deeply she felt the disappointment, was obliged to stay to do the honours of Beaumont Park, whilst her mother drove off rejoicing in half the success, at least, of her stratagem; but even as a politician she used upon every occasion too much artifice. It was said of Cardinal Mazarin, he is a great politician, but in all his politics there is one capital defect--"C'est qu'il veut toujours tromper."

"How tiresome those people were! I thought we never should have got away from them," said Mrs. Beaumont. "What possessed them to come this morning, and to pay such a horrid long visit? Besides, those Duttons, at all times, are the most stupid creatures upon the face of the earth; I cannot endure them; so awkward and ill-bred too! and yet of a good family--who could think it? They are people one must see, but they are absolutely insufferable."

"Insufferable!" said Mr. Palmer; "why, my good madam, then you have the patience of a martyr; for you suffered them so patiently, that I never should have guessed you suffered at all. I protest I thought they were friends and favourites of yours, and that you were very glad to see them."

"Well, well, 'tis the way of the world," continued Mr. Palmer; "this sort of--what do you call it? double-dealing about visitors, goes on every where, Madam Beaumont. But how do I know, that when I go away, you may not be as glad to get rid of me as you were to get away from these Duttons?" added he, in a tone of forced jocularly. "How do I know, but that the minute my back is turned, you may not begin to take me to pieces in my turn, and say, 'That old Palmer! he was the most tiresome, humoursome, strange, old-fashioned fellow; I thought we should never have got rid of him?'"

"My dear, dear sir, how can you speak in such a manner?" cried Mrs. Beaumont, who had made several vain attempts to interrupt this speech. "You, who are our best friend! is it possible you could suspect? Is there no difference to be made between friends and common acquaintance?"

"I am sure I hope there is," said Mr. Palmer, smiling.

There was something so near the truth in Mr. Palmer's raillery, that Mrs. Beaumont could not take it with as much easy unconcern as the occasion required, especially in the presence of her son, who maintained a provoking silence. Unhappy indeed are those, who cannot, in such moments of distress, in their own families, and in their nearest connexions, find any relief from their embarrassments, and who look round in vain for one to be _responsible_ for their sincerity. Mrs. Beaumont sat uneasy and almost disconcerted. Mr. Palmer felt for his snuff-box, his usual consolation; but it was not in his pocket: he had left it on his table. Now Mrs. Beaumont was relieved, for she had something to do, and something to say with her wonted politeness: in spite of all remonstrance from Mr. Palmer, her man Martin was sent back for the snuff-box; and conjectures about his finding it, and his being able to overtake them before they arrived at Walsingham house, supplied conversation for a mile or two.

"Here's Martin coming back full gallop, I vow," said Miss Hunter, who could also talk on this topic.

"Come, come, my good lady," said Mr. Palmer, (taking the moment when the young lady had turned her back as she stretched out of the carriage for the pleasure of seeing Martin gallop)--"Come, come, my good Mrs. Beaumont, shake hands and be friends, and hang the Duttons! I did not mean to vex you by what I said. I am not so polite as I should be, I know, and you perhaps are a little too polite. But that is no great harm, especially in a woman."

Martin and the snuff-box came up at this instant; and all was apparently as well as ever. Yet Mrs. Beaumont, who valued a reputation for sincerity as much as Chartres valued a reputation for honesty, and nearly upon the same principle, was seriously vexed that even this transient light had been let in upon her real character. To such _accidents_ duplicity is continually subject.

CHAPTER IX.

"Led by Simplicity divine,
She pleased, and never tried to shine;
She gave to chance each unschool'd feature,
And left her cause to sense and nature."--MORE.

Arrived at Walsingham Park, they met Miss Walsingham walking at some distance from the house.

"Is Captain Walsingham come?" was the first question asked. "No, but expected every hour."

That he had not actually arrived was a comfortable reprieve to Mrs.

Beaumont. Breathing more freely, and in refreshed spirits, she prepared to alight from her carriage, to walk to the house with Miss Walsingham, as Mr. Palmer proposed. Miss Hunter, who was dressed with uncommon elegance, remonstrated in favour of her delicate slippers: not that she named the real object of her solicitude--no; she had not spent so much time with Mrs. Beaumont, that great mistress of the art of apologizing, without learning at least the inferior practices of the trade. Of course she had all the little common arts of excuse ever ready: and instead of saying that she did not like to walk because she was afraid to spoil her shoes, she protested she was afraid of the heat, and could not walk so far. But Mr. Beaumont had jumped out of the carriage, and Mrs. Beaumont did not wish that he should walk home _tCete-àtCete_ with Miss Walsingham; therefore Miss Hunter's remonstrances were of no avail.

"My love, you, will not be heated, for our walk is through this charming shady grove; and if you are tired, here's my son will give you his arm."

Satisfied with this arrangement, the young lady, thus supported, found it possible to walk. Mr. Palmer walked his own pace, looking round at the beauties of the place, and desiring that nobody might mind him. This was his way, and Mrs. Beaumont never teased him with talking to him, when he did not seem to be in the humour for it. She, who made something of every thing, began to manage the conversation with her other companions during the walk, so as to favour her views upon the several parties. Pursuing her principle, that love is in men's minds generally independent of esteem, and believing that her son might be rendered afraid of the superiority of Miss Walsingham's understanding, Mrs. Beaumont took treacherous pains to _draw her out_. Starting from chance seemingly, as she well knew how, a subject of debate, she went from talking of the late marriage of some neighbouring couple, to discuss a question on which she believed that Miss Walsingham's opinion would differ from that of her son. The point was, whether a wife should or should not have pin-money. Miss Walsingham thought that a wife's accepting it would tend to establish a separate interest between married people. Mr. Beaumont, on the contrary, was of opinion, that a wife's having a separate allowance would prevent disputes. So Miss Hunter thought, of course, for she had been prepared to be precisely of Mr. Beaumont's opinion; but reasons she had none in its support. Indeed, she said with a pretty simper, she thought that women had nothing to do with reason or reasoning; that she thought a woman who really loved _any body_ was always of that person's opinion; and especially in a wife she did not see of what use reasoning and _all that_ could be, except to make a woman contradict, and be odd, and fond of ruling: that for her part she had no pretensions to any understanding, and if she had ever so much, she should be glad, she declared upon her honour, to get rid of it if she could; for what use could it possibly be of to her, when it must be the husband's understanding that must always judge and rule, and a wife ought only to obey, and be always of the opinion of the man of her choice?--Having thus made her profession of folly in broken sentences, with pretty confusion and all-becoming graces, she leaned upon Mr. Beaumont's arm with a bewitching air of languid delicacy, that solicited support. Mrs. Beaumont, suppressing a sigh, which, however, she took care that her son should hear, turned to Miss Walsingham, and, in a

whisper, owned that she could not help loving abilities, and spirit too, even in her own sex. Then she observed aloud, that much might be urged on her side of the question with regard to pin-money; for not only, as Miss Walsingham justly said, it might tend to make a separate interest between husband and wife, but the wife would probably be kept in total ignorance of her husband's affairs; and _that_ in some cases might be very disadvantageous, as some women are more capable, from their superior understanding, of managing every thing than most men, indeed, than any man she could name.

Even under favour of this pretty compliment, which was plainly directed by a glance of Mrs. Beaumont's eye, Miss Walsingham would not accept of this painful pre-eminence. She explained and made it clear, that she had not any ambition to rule or manage.

"That I can readily believe," said Mr. Beaumont; "for I have observed, that it is not always the women who are the most able to decide who are the most ambitious to govern."

This observation either was not heard or was not understood by Miss Hunter, whose whole soul was occupied in settling some fold of her drapery: but Mr. Beaumont's speech had its full effect on Mrs. Beaumont, who bit her lip, and looked reproachfully at her son, as if she thought this an infringement of his promised truce. A moment afterwards she felt the imprudence of her own reproachful look, and was sensible that she would have done better not to have fixed the opinion or feeling in her son's mind by noticing it thus with displeasure. Recovering, herself, for she never was disconcerted for more than half a minute, she passed on with easy grace to discuss the merits of the heroine of some new novel--an historic novel, which gave her opportunity of appealing to Miss Walsingham on some disputed points of history. She dexterously attempted to draw her _well-informed_ young friend into a display of literature which might alarm Mr. Beaumont. His education had in some respects been shamefully neglected; for his mother had calculated that ignorance would ensure dependence. He had endeavoured to supply, at a late period of his education, the defects of its commencement; but he was sensible that he had not supplied all his deficiencies, and he was apt to feel, with painful impatient sensibility, his inferiority, whenever literary subjects were introduced. Miss Walsingham, however, was so perfectly free from all the affectation and vanity of a bel-esprit, that she did not alarm even those who were inferior to her in knowledge; their self-complacency, instead of being depressed by the comparison of their attainments with hers, was insensibly raised, by the perception that notwithstanding these, she could take pleasure in their conversation, could appreciate their good sense or originality of thought, without recurring to the authority of books, or of great names. In fact, her mind had never been overwhelmed by a wasteful torrent of learning. That the stream of literature had passed over, it was apparent only from its fertility. Mrs. Beaumont repented of having drawn her into conversation. Indeed, our heroine had trusted too much to some expressions, which had at times dropped from her son, about _learned ladies_, and certain _conversaziones_. She had concluded that he would never endure literature in a wife; but she now perceived her mistake.

She discerned it too late; and at this moment she was doubly vexed, for she saw Miss Hunter _produce_ herself in most disadvantageous contrast to her rival. In conformity to instructions, which Mrs. Beaumont had secretly given her, not to show too much sense or learning, because gentlemen in general, and in particular Mr. Beaumont, disliked it; this young lady now professed absolute ignorance and incapacity upon all subjects; and meaning to have an air of pretty childish innocence or timidity, really made herself appear quite like a simpleton. At the same time a tinge of ineffectual malice and envy appeared through her ill-feigned humility. She could give no opinion of any book--oh, she would not give any judgment for the whole world! She did not think herself qualified to speak, even if she had read the book, which indeed she had not, for, really, she never read--she was not a _reading lady_.

As Miss Hunter had no portion of Mrs. Beaumont's quick penetration, she did not see the unfavourable impression these words made: certain that she was following exactly her secret instructions, she was confident of being in the right line; so on she went, whilst Mrs. Beaumont sighed in vain; and Miss Walsingham, who now saw and understood her whole play, almost smiled at the comic of the scene.

"O dear, Mrs. Beaumont," continued Miss Hunter, "how can you ever appeal to me about books and those sorts of things, when you know I know nothing about the matter? For mercy's sake, never do so any more, for you know I've no taste for those sorts of things. And besides, I own, even if I could, I should so hate to be thought a blue-stocking--I would not have the least bit of blue in my stockings for the whole world--I'd rather have any other colour, black, white, red, green, yellow, any other colour. So I own I'm not sorry I'm not what they call a genius; for though genius to be sure's a very fascinating sort of thing in gentlemen, yet in women it is not so becoming, I think, especially in ladies: it does very well on the stage, and for artists, and so on; but really now, in company, I think it's an awkward thing, and would make one look so odd! Now, Mr. Beaumont, I must tell you an anecdote--"

"Stop, my dear Miss Hunter, your ear-ring is coming out. Stay! let me clasp it, love!" exclaimed Mrs. Beaumont, determined to stop her in the career of nonsense, by giving her sensations, since she could not give her ideas, a new turn.

"Oh, ma'am! ma'am! Oh! my ear! you are killing me, dearest Mrs. Beaumont! pinching me to death, ma'am!"

"Did I pinch, my dear? It was the hinge of the ear-ring, I suppose."

"I don't know what it was; but here's blood, I declare!"

"My love, I beg you a thousand pardons. How could I be so awkward! But why could not you for one moment hold your little head still?"

Miss Walsingham applied a patch to the wound.

"Such a pretty ear as it is," continued Mrs. Beaumont; "I am sure it was

a pity to hurt it."

"You really did hurt it," said Mr. Beaumont, in a tone of compassion.

"Oh, horridly!" cried Miss Hunter--"and I, that always faint at the sight of blood!"

Afraid that the young lady would again spoil her part in the acting, and lose all the advantages which might result from the combined effect of the pretty ear and of compassion, Mrs. Beaumont endeavoured to take off her attention from the wound, by attacking her ear-rings.

"My love," said she, "don't wear these ear-rings any more, for I assure you there is no possibility of shutting or opening them, without hurting you."

This expedient, however, nearly proved fatal in its consequences. Miss Hunter entered most warmly into the defence of her ear-rings; and appealed to Mr. Beaumont to confirm her decision, that they were the prettiest and best ear-rings in the world. Unluckily, they did not particularly suit his fancy, and the young lady, who had, but half an hour before, professed that she could never be of a different opinion in any thing from that of the man she loved, now pettishly declared that she could not and would not give up her taste. Incensed still more by a bow of submission, but not of conviction, from Mr. Beaumont, she went on regardless of her dearest Mrs. Beaumont's frowns, and vehemently maintained her judgment, quoting, with triumphant volubility, innumerable precedents of ladies, "who had just bought _the very same_ ear-rings, and whose taste she believed nobody would dispute."

Mr. Beaumont had seen enough, now and upon many other occasions, to be convinced that it is not on matters of consequence that ladies are apt to grow most angry; and he stood confirmed in his belief that those who in theory professed to have such a humble opinion of their own abilities that they cannot do or understand any thing useful, are often, in practice, the most prone to insist upon the infallibility of their taste and judgment. Mrs. Beaumont, who saw with one glance of her quick eye what passed at this moment in her son's mind, sighed, and said to herself--"How impossible to manage a fool, who ravel, as fast as one weaves, the web of her fortune!"

Yet though Mrs. Beaumont perceived and acknowledged the impracticability of managing a fool for a single hour, it was one of the favourite objects of her manoeuvres to obtain this very fool for a daughter-in-law, with the hope of governing her for life. So inconsistent are cunning people, even of the best abilities; so ill do they calculate the value of their ultimate objects, however ingeniously they devise their means, or adapt them to their ends.

During this walk Mr. Palmer had taken no part in the conversation; he had seemed engrossed with his own thoughts, or occupied with observing the beauties of the place. Tired with her walk--for Mrs. Beaumont always complained of being fatigued when she was vexed, thus at once concealing

her vexation, and throwing the faults of her mind upon her body--she stretched herself upon a sofa as soon as she reached the house, nor did she recover from her exhausted state till she cast her eyes upon a tamborine, which she knew would afford means of showing Miss Hunter's figure and graces to advantage. Slight as this resource may seem, Mrs. Beaumont well knew that slighter still have often produced great effects. Soon afterward she observed her son smile repeatedly as he read a passage in some book that lay upon the table, and she had the curiosity to take up the book when he turned away. She found that it was Cumberland's Memoirs, and saw the following little poem marked with reiterated lines of approbation:

"Why, Affectation, why this mock grimace?
Go, silly thing, and hide that simp'ring face.
Thy lisping prattle, and thy mincing gait,
All thy false mimic fooleries I hate;
For thou art Folly's counterfeit, and she
Who is right foolish hath the better plea;
Nature's true idiot I prefer to thee.

Why that soft languish? Why that drawling tone?
Art sick, art sleepy? Get thee hence: begone.
I laugh at all thy pretty baby tears,
Those flutt'rings, faintings, and unreal fears.

Can they deceive us? Can such mumm'ries move,
Touch us with pity, or inspire with love?
No, Affectation, vain is all thy art!
Those eyes may wander over ev'ry part;
They'll never find their passage to the heart."

Mrs. Beaumont, the moment she had read these lines, perceived why her son had smiled. The portrait seemed really to have been drawn from Miss Hunter, and the lines were so *àpropos* to the scene which had just passed during the walk, that it was impossible to avoid the application. Mrs. Beaumont shut the book hastily as her dear Albina approached, for she was afraid that the young lady would have known her own picture. So few people, however, even of those much wiser than Miss Hunter, know themselves, that she need not have been alarmed. But she had no longer leisure to devote her thoughts to this subject, for Mr. Walsingham, who had been out riding, had by this time returned; and the moment he entered the room, Mrs. Beaumont's attention was directed to him and to Mr. Palmer. She introduced them to each other, with many expressions of regret that they should not sooner have met.

Characters that are free from artifice immediately coalesce, as metals that are perfectly pure can be readily cemented together. Mr. Palmer and Mr. Walsingham were intimate in half an hour. There was an air of openness and sincerity about Mr. Walsingham; a freedom and directness in his conversation, which delighted Mr. Palmer.

"I am heartily glad we have met at last, my good cousin Walsingham," said he: "very sorry should I have been to have left the country without

becoming acquainted with you: and now I wish your gallant captain was arrived. I am to set off the day after to-morrow, and I am sadly afraid I shall miss seeing him."

Mr. Walsingham said, that as they expected him every hour, he hoped Mr. Palmer would persuade Mrs. Beaumont to spend the day at Walsingham House.

Mrs. Beaumont dared not object. On the contrary, it was now her policy to pretend the fondest friendship for all the Walsingham family: yet, all the time, pursuing her plan of preventing Mr. Palmer from discerning their real characters and superior merit, she managed with great dexterity to keep the conversation as much as possible upon general topics, and tried to prevent Mr. Palmer from being much alone with Mr. Walsingham, for she dreaded their growing intimacy. After dinner, however, when the ladies retired, the gentlemen drew their chairs close together, and had a great deal of conversation on interesting subjects. The most interesting was Captain Walsingham: Mr. Palmer earnestly desired to hear the particulars of his history.

"And from whom," said young Beaumont, turning to Mr. Walsingham, "can he hear them better than from Captain Walsingham's guardian and friend?"

CHAPTER X.

"Yet never seaman more serenely brave
Led Britain's conquering squadrons o'er the wave."

"Friends are not always the best biographers," said Mr. Walsingham; "but I will try to be impartial. My ward's first desire to be a sailor was excited, as he has often since told me, by reading Robinson Crusoe. When he was scarcely thirteen he went out in the Resolute, a frigate, under the command of Captain Campbell. Campbell was an excellent officer, and very strict in all that related to order and discipline. It was his principle and his practice never to forgive _a first offence_; by which the number of second faults was considerably diminished. My ward was not much pleased at first with his captain; but he was afterwards convinced that this strictness was what made a man of him. He was buffeted about, and shown the rough of life; made to work hard, and submit to authority. To reason he was always ready to yield; and by degrees he learned that his first duty as a sailor was implicit obedience. In due time he was made lieutenant: in this situation, his mixed duties of command and obedience were difficult, because his first-lieutenant, the captain's son, was jealous of him.

"Walsingham found it a more difficult task to win the confidence of the son than it had been to earn the friendship of the father. His punctuality in obeying orders, and his respectful manner to the lieutenant, availed but little; for young Campbell still viewed him with

scornful yet with jealous eyes, imagining that he only wanted to show himself the better officer.

"Of the falsehood of these suspicions Walsingham had at last an opportunity of giving unquestionable proof. It happened one day that Lieutenant Campbell, impatient at seeing a sailor doing some work awkwardly on the outside of the vessel, snatched the rope from his hand, and swore he would do it himself. In his hurry, Campbell missed his footing, and fell overboard:--he could not swim. Walsingham had the presence of mind to order the ship to be put about, and plunged instantly into the water to save his rival. With much exertion he reached Campbell, supported him till the boat was lowered down, and got him safe aboard again."

"Just like himself!" cried young Beaumont; "all he ever wanted was opportunity to show his soul."

"The first-lieutenant's jealousy was now changed into gratitude," continued Mr. Walsingham; "and from this time forward, instead of suffering from that petty rivalry by which he used to be obstructed, Walsingham enjoyed the entire confidence of young Campbell. This good understanding between him and his brother officer not only made their every day lives pleasant, but in times of difficulty secured success. For three years that they lived together after this period, and during which time they were ordered to every quarter of the globe, they never had the slightest dispute, either in the busiest or the idlest times. At length, in some engagement with a Dutch ship, the particulars of which I forget, Lieutenant Campbell was mortally wounded: his last words were--'Walsingham, comfort my father.' That was no easy task. Stern as Captain Campbell seemed, the loss of his son was irreparable. He never shed a tear when he was told it was all over, but said, 'God's will be done;' and turning into his cabin, desired to be left alone. Half an hour afterwards he sent for Walsingham, who found him quite calm. 'We must see and do our duty together to the last,' said he.

"He exerted himself strenuously, and to all outward appearance was, as the sailors said, the same man as ever; but Walsingham, who knew him better, saw that his heart was broken, and that he wished for nothing but an honourable death. One morning as he was on deck looking through his glass, he called to Walsingham; 'Your eyes are better than mine,' said he; 'look here, and tell me, do you see yonder sail--she's French? Le Magnanime frigate, if I'm not mistaken.' 'Yes,' said Walsingham, 'I know her by the patch in her main sail.'--'We'll give her something to do,' said Campbell, 'though she's so much our superior. Please God, before the sun's over our heads, you shall have her in tow, Walsingham.' '_We_ shall, I trust,' said Walsingham.--'Perhaps not we; for I own I wish to fall,' said Campbell. 'You are first-lieutenant now; I can't leave my men under better command, and I hope the Admiralty will give you the ship, if you give it to his Majesty.'--Then turning to the sailors, Captain Campbell addressed them with a countenance unusually cheerful; and, after a few words of encouragement, gave orders to clear decks for action. 'Walsingham, you'll see to every thing whilst I step down to write.' He wrote, as it was afterwards found, two letters, both

concerning Walsingham's interests. The frigate with which they had to engage was indeed far superior to them in force; but Campbell trusted to the good order and steadiness as well as to the courage of his men. The action was long and obstinate. Twice the English attempted to board the enemy, and twice were repulsed. The third time, just as Captain Campbell had seized hold of the French colours, which hung in rags over the side of the enemy's ship, he received a wound in his breast, fell back into Walsingham's arms, and almost instantly expired. The event of this day was different from what Campbell had expected, for *_Le Succès_* of fifty guns appeared in sight; and, after a desperate engagement with her, in which Walsingham was severely wounded, and every other officer on board killed or wounded, Walsingham saw that nothing was left but to make a wanton sacrifice of the remainder of his crew, or to strike.

"After a contest of six hours, he struck to *_Le Succès_*. Perfect silence on his deck; a loud and insulting shout from the enemy!

"No sooner had Walsingham struck, than La Force, the captain of *_Le Succès_* hailed him, and ordered him to come in his own boat, and to deliver his sword. Walsingham replied, that 'his sword, so demanded, should never be delivered but with his life.'^[2] The Frenchman did not think proper to persist; but soon after sent his lieutenant on board the *Resolute*, where the men were found at their quarters with lighted matches in their hands, ready to be as good as their word. La Force, the captain of *_Le Succès_*, was a sailor of fortune, who had risen by chance, not merit."

"Ay, ay," interrupted Mr. Palmer, "so I thought; and there was no great merit, or glory either, in a French fifty gun taking an English frigate, after standing a six hours' contest with another ship. Well, my dear sir, what became of poor Walsingham? How did this rascally Frenchman treat his prisoners?"

"Scandalously!" cried Beaumont; "and yet Walsingham is so generous that he will never let me damn the nation, for what he says was only the fault of an individual, who disgraced it."

"Well, let me hear and judge for myself," said Mr. Palmer.

"La Force carried the *Resolute* in triumph into a French port," continued Mr. Walsingham. "Vain of displaying his prisoners, he marched them up the country, under pretence that they would not be safe in a sea-port. Cambrai was the town in which they were confined. Walsingham found the officers of the garrison very civil to him at first; but when they saw that he was not fond of high play, and that he declined being of their parties at billiards and *_vingt-un_*, they grew tired of him; for without these resources they declared they should perish with *_ennui_* in a country town. Even under the penalty of losing all society, Walsingham resisted every temptation to game, and submitted to live with the strictest economy rather than to run in debt."

"But did you never send him any money? Or did not he get your remittances?" said Mr. Palmer.

"My dear sir, by some delays of letters, we did not hear for two months where he was imprisoned."

"And he was reduced to the greatest distress," pursued Beaumont; "for he had shared all he had, to the utmost farthing, with his poor fellow-prisoners."

"Like a true British sailor!" said Mr. Palmer. "Well, sir, I hope he contrived to make his escape?"

"No, for he would not break his parole," said Beaumont,

"His parole! I did not know he was on his parole," said Mr. Palmer. "Then certainly he could not break it."

"He had two tempting opportunities, I can assure you," said Beaumont; "one offered by the commandant's lady, who was not insensible to his merit; the other, by the gratitude of some poor servant, whom he had obliged--Mr. Walsingham can tell you all the particulars."

"No, I need not detail the circumstances; it is enough to tell you, sir, that he withstood the temptations, would not break his parole, and remained four months a prisoner in Cambray. Like the officers of the garrison, he should have drunk or gamed, or else he must have died of vexation, he says, if he had not fortunately had a taste for reading, and luckily procured books from a good old priest's library. At the end of four months the garrison of Cambray was changed; and instead of a set of dissipated officers, there came a well-conducted regiment, under the command of M. de Villars, an elderly officer of sense and discretion."

"An excellent man!" cried Beaumont: "I love him with all my soul, though I never saw him. But I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Mr. Walsingham."

"A prattling hairdresser at Cambray first prepossessed M. de Villars in Walsingham's favour, by relating a number of anecdotes intended to throw abuse and ridicule upon the English captain, to convict him of misanthropy and economy; of having had his hair dressed but twice since he came to Cambray; of never having frequented the society of Madame la Marquise de Marsillac, the late commandant's lady, for more than a fortnight after his arrival, and of having actually been detected in working with his own hand with smiths' and carpenters' tools. Upon the strength of the hairdresser's information, M. de Villars paid the English captain a visit; was pleased by his conversation, and by all that he observed of his conduct and character.

"As M. de Villars was going down stairs, after having spent an evening with Walsingham, a boy of twelve years old, the son of the master of the lodging-house, equipped in a military uniform, stood across the landing-place, as if determined to, stop him. 'Mon petit militaire,' said the commandant, 'do you mean to dispute my passage?' 'Non, mon gØnØral,' said the boy; 'I know my duty too well. But I post myself here

to demand an audience, for I have a secret of importance to communicate.' M. de Villars, smiling at the boy's air of consequence, yet pleased with the steady earnestness of his manner, took him by the hand into an antechamber, and said that he was ready to listen to whatever he had to impart. The boy then told him that he had accidentally overheard a proposal which had been made to facilitate the English captain's escape, and that the captain refused to comply with it, because it was not honourable to break his parole. The boy, who had been struck by the circumstance, and who, besides, was grateful to Walsingham for some little instances of kindness, spoke with much enthusiasm in his favour; and, as M. de Villars afterwards repeated, finished his speech by exclaiming, 'I would give every thing I have in the world, except my sword and my honour, to procure this English captain his liberty.'

"M. de Villars was pleased with the boy's manner, and with the fact which he related; so much so, that he promised, that if Walsingham's liberty could be obtained he would procure it. 'And you, my good little friend, shall, if I succeed,' added he, 'have the pleasure of being the first to tell him the good news.'

"Some days afterwards, the boy burst into Walsingham's room, exclaiming, 'Liberty! liberty! you are at liberty!--He danced and capered with such wild joy, that it was some time before Walsingham could obtain any explanation, or could prevail on him to let him look at a letter which he held in his hand, flourishing it about in triumph. At last he showed that it was an order from M. de Villars, for the release of Captain Walsingham, and of all the English prisoners, belonging to the Resolute, for whom exchanges had been effected. No favour could be granted in a manner more honourable to all the parties concerned. Walsingham arrived in England without any farther difficulties."

"Thank God!" said Mr. Palmer. "Well, now he has touched English ground again, I have some hopes for him. What next?"

"The first thing he did, of course, was to announce his return to the Admiralty. A court-martial was held at Portsmouth; and, fortunately for him, was composed of officers of the highest distinction, so that the first men in his profession became thoroughly acquainted with the circumstances of his conduct. The enthusiasm with which his men bore testimony in his favour was gratifying to his feelings, and the minutes of the evidence were most honourable to him. The court pronounced, that Lieutenant Walsingham had done all that could be effected by the most gallant and judicious officer in the defence of His Majesty's ship Resolute. The ministry who had employed Captain Campbell were no longer in place, and one of the Lords of the Admiralty at this time happened to have had some personal quarrel with him. A few days after the trial, Walsingham was at a public dinner, at which Campbell's character became the subject of conversation. Walsingham was warned, in a whisper, that the first Lord of the Admiralty's private secretary was present, and was advised to be prudent; but Walsingham's prudence was not of that sort which can coolly hear a worthy man's memory damned with faint praise; his prudence was not of that sort which can tamely sit by and

see a friend's reputation in danger. With all the warmth and eloquence of friendship, he spoke in Captain Campbell's defence, and paid a just and energetic tribute of praise to his memory. He spoke, and not a word more was said against Campbell. The politicians looked down upon their plates; and there was a pause of that sort, which sometimes in a company of interested men of the world results from surprise at the imprudent honesty of a good-natured novice. Walsingham, as the company soon afterwards broke up, heard one gentleman say of him to another, as they went away, 'There's a fellow now, who has ruined himself without knowing it, and all for a dead man.' It was not without knowing it: Walsingham was well aware what he hazarded, but he was then, and ever, ready to sacrifice his own interests in the defence of truth and of a friend. For two long years afterwards, Walsingham was, in the technical and elegant phrase, 'left on the shelf, and the door of promotion was shut against him.' _

"Yes, and there he might have remained till now," said Beaumont, "if it had not been for that good Mr. Gaspar, a clerk in one of their offices; a man who, though used to live among courtiers and people hackneyed in the political ways of the world, was a plain, warm-hearted friend, a man of an upright character, who prized integrity and generosity the more because he met with them so seldom. But I beg your pardon, Mr. Walsingham; will you go on and tell Mr. Palmer how and why Gaspar served our friend?"

"One day Walsingham had occasion to go to Mr. Gaspar's office to search for some papers relative to certain charts which he had drawn, and intended to present to the Admiralty. In talking of the soundings of some bay he had taken whilst out with Captain Campbell, he mentioned him, as he always did, with terms of affection and respect. Mr. Gaspar immediately asked, 'Are you, sir, that Lieutenant Walsingham, of the Resolute, who at a public dinner about two years ago made such a disinterested defence of your captain? If it is in my power to serve you, depend upon it I will. Leave your charts with me; I think I may have an opportunity of turning them to your advantage, and that of the service.' Gaspar, who was thoroughly in earnest, took a happy moment to present Walsingham's charts before the Admiralty, just at a time when they were wanted. The Admiralty were glad to employ an officer who had some local information, and they sent him out in the Dreadnought, a thirty-six gun frigate, with Captain Jemmison, to the West Indies."

"And what sort of a man was his new captain?" said Mr. Palmer.

"As unlike his old one as possible," said Beaumont.

"Yes," continued Mr. Walsingham; "in every point, except courage, Captain Jemmison was as complete a contrast as could be imagined to Captain Campbell. Whatever else he might be, Jemmison was certainly a man of undaunted courage."

"That's of course, if he was a captain in the British navy," said Mr. Palmer.

"From his appearance, however, you would never have taken him for a gallant sailor," said Mr. Walsingham: "abhorring the rough, brutal, swearing, grog-drinking, tobacco-chewing, race of sea-officers, the Bens and the Mirvans of former times, Captain Jemmison, resolving, I suppose, to avoid their faults, went into the contrary extreme of refinement and effeminacy. A superlative coxcomb, and an epicure more from fashion than taste, he gloried in descanting, with technical precision, on the merits of dishes and of cooks. His table, even on shipboard, was to be equalled in elegance only by his toilet."

"The puppy!" exclaimed Mr. Palmer. "And how could Captain Walsingham go on with such a coxcomb?"

"Very ill, you may be sure," said Beaumont; "for Walsingham, I'll answer for it, never could conceal or control his feelings of contempt or indignation."

"Yet, as Captain Jemmison's lieutenant, he always behaved with perfect propriety," said Mr. Walsingham, "and bore with his foppery and impertinence with the patience becoming a subordinate officer to his superior. Jemmison could not endure a lieutenant whose character and manners were a continual contrast and reproach to his own, and he disliked him the more because he could never provoke him to any disrespect. Jemmison often replied even to Walsingham's silent contempt; as a French pamphleteer once published a book entitled, *Réponse au Silence de M. de la Motte*. On some points, where duty and principle were concerned, Walsingham, however, could not be silent. There was a lad of the name of Birch on board the Dreadnought, whom Walsingham had taken under his immediate care, and whom he was endeavouring to train up in every good habit. Jemmison, to torment Walsingham, made it his pleasure to counteract him in these endeavours, and continually did all he could to spoil Birch by foolish indulgence. Walsingham's indignation was upon these occasions vehement, and his captain and he came to frequent quarrels. Young Birch, who had sense enough to know which was his true friend, one day threw himself on his knees to beseech his lieutenant not to hazard so much on his account, and solemnly swore that he would never be guilty of the slightest excess or negligence during the remainder of the voyage. The young man was steady to his promise, and by his resolution and temper prevented Walsingham and his captain from coming to a serious rupture. When they arrived at their place of destination, Jamaica, Captain Jemmison went on shore to divert himself, and spent his time in great dissipation at Spanish Town, eating, dressing, dancing, gallanting, and glorying in its being observed by all the ladies that he had nothing of a sea-captain about him. The other officers, encouraged by his precept and example, left the ship; but Walsingham stayed on board, and had severe duty to perform, for he could not allow the crew to go on shore, because they got into riots with the townspeople. Soon after their arrival, and even during the course of their voyage, he had observed among the sailors something like a disposition to mutiny, encouraged probably by the negligence and apparent effeminacy of their captain. Though they knew him to be a man of intrepidity, yet they ridiculed and despised his coxcombry, and his relaxation of discipline gave them hopes of succeeding in their mutinous

schemes. Walsingham strongly and repeatedly represented to Captain Jemmison the danger, and remonstrated with him and the other officers upon the imprudence of leaving the ship at this juncture; but Jemmison, in a prettily rounded period, protested he saw no penumbra of danger, and that till he was called upon by Mars, he owned he preferred the charms of Venus.

"This was vastly elegant; but, nevertheless, it happened one night, when the captain, after having eaten an admirable supper, was paying his court to a Creole lady of Spanish Town, news was brought him, that the crew of the Dreadnought had mutinied, and that Lieutenant Walsingham was killed. One half of the report was true, and the other nearly so. At midnight, after having been exhausted during the preceding week by his vigilance, Walsingham had just thrown himself into his cot, when he was roused by Birch at his cabin-door, crying, 'A mutiny! a mutiny on deck!'--Walsingham seized his drawn cutlass, and ran up the ladder, determined to cut down the ringleader; but just as he reached the top, the sailors shut down the hatchway, which struck his head with such violence, that he fell, stunned, and, to all appearance, dead. Birch contrived, in the midst of the bustle, before he was himself seized by the mutineers, to convey, by signals to shore, news of what had happened. But Captain Jemmison could now be of no use. Before he could take any measures to prevent them, the mutineers weighed anchor, and the Dreadnought, under a brisk breeze, was out of the bay; all the other vessels in the harbour taking it for granted that her captain was on board, and that she was sailing under orders. In the mean time, whilst Walsingham was senseless, the sailors stowed him into his cabin, and set a guard over him. The ringleader, Jefferies, a revengeful villain, who bore malice against him for some just punishment, wanted to murder him, but the rest would not consent. Some would not dip their hands in blood; others pleaded for him, and said that he was never cruel. One man urged, that the lieutenant had been kind to him when he was sick. Another suggested, that it would be well to keep him alive to manage the ship for them, in case of difficulties. Conscious of their ignorance, they acceded to this advice; Jefferies' proposal to murder him was overruled: and it was agreed to keep Walsingham close prisoner till they should need his assistance. He had his timekeeper and log-book locked up with him, which were totally forgotten by these miscreants. Never seaman prayed more fervently for fair weather than Walsingham now did for a storm. At last, one night he heard (and he says it was one of the pleasantest sounds he ever heard in his life) the wind rising. Soon it blew a storm. He heard one of the sailors say--'A stiff gale, Jack!' and another--'An ugly night!' Presently, great noise on deck, and the pumps at work. Every moment he now expected a deputation from the mutineers. The first person he saw was the carpenter, who came in to knock in the dead lights in the cabin windows. The man was surly, and would give no answer to any questions; but Walsingham knew, by the hurry of his work, that the fellow thought there was no time to be lost. Twice, before he could finish what he was about, messages came from _Captain Jefferies,_ to order him to something else. Then a violent crash above from the fall of a mast; and then he heard one cry--'I'll be cursed if I should care, if we did but know where-about we are.' Then all was in such uproar, that no voices could be distinguished. At last his cabin-door unlocked,

and many voices called upon him at once to come upon deck that instant and save the ship. Walsingham absolutely refused to do any thing for them till they returned to their duty, delivered up to him their arms, and their ringleader, Jefferies. At this answer they stood aghast. Some tried entreaties, some threats: all in vain. Walsingham coolly said, he would go to the bottom along with the ship rather than say a word to save them, till they submitted. The storm blew stronger--the danger every moment increasing. One of the mutineers came with a drawn cutlass, another levelled a blunderbuss at Walsingham, swearing to despatch him that instant, if he would not tell them where they were. 'Murder me, and you will be hanged; persist in your mutiny, you'll be drowned,' said Walsingham. 'You'll never make me swerve from my duty--and you know it--you have my answer.' The enraged sailors seized him in their arms, and carried him by force upon deck, where the sight of the danger, and the cries of 'Throw him overboard!--over with him!' only seemed to fortify his resolution. Not a word, not a sign could they get from him. The rudder was now unshipped! At this the sailors' fury turned suddenly upon Jefferies, who between terror and ignorance was utterly incapacitated. They seized, bound, gave him up to Walsingham, returned to their duty; and then, and not till then, Walsingham resumed his command. Walsingham's voice, once more heard, inspired confidence, and with the hopes revived the exertions of the sailors. I am not seaman enough to tell you how the ship was saved; but that it was saved, and saved by Walsingham, is certain. I remember only, that he made the ship manageable by some contrivance, which he substituted in the place of the rudder that had been unshipped. The storm abating, he made for the first port, to repair the ship's damages, intending to return to Jamaica, to deliver her up to her captain; but, from a vessel they spoke at sea, he learned that Jemmison was gone to England in a merchantman. To England then Walsingham prepared to follow."

"And with this rebel crew!" cried Beaumont; "think, Mr. Palmer, what a situation he was in, knowing, as he did, that every rascal of them would sooner go to the devil than go home, where they knew they must be tried for their mutiny."

"Well, sir, well!" said Mr. Palmer. "Did they run away with the ship a second time? or how did he manage?"

He called them all one morning together on deck; and pointing to the place where the gunpowder was kept, he said--'I have means of blowing up the ship. If ever you attempt to mutiny again, the first finger you lay upon me, I blow her up instantly.' They had found him to be a man of resolution. They kept to their duty. Not a symptom of disobedience during the rest of the voyage. In their passage they fell in with an enemy's ship, far superior to them in force. 'There, my lads!' said Walsingham, 'if you have a mind to earn your pardons, there's your best chance. Take her home with you to your captain and your king.' A loud cheer was their answer. They fought like devils to redeem themselves. Walsingham--but without stopping to make his panegyric, I need only tell you, that Walsingham's conduct and intrepidity were this time crowned with success. He took the enemy's ship, and carried it in triumph into Portsmouth. Jemmison was on the platform when they came in; and what a

mortifying sight it was to him, and what a proud hour to Walsingham, you may imagine! Having delivered the Dreadnought and her prize over to his captain, the next thing to be thought of was the trial of the mutineers. All except Jefferies obtained a pardon, in consideration of their return to duty, and their subsequent services. Jefferies was hanged at the yard-arm. The trial of the mutineers brought on, as Jemmison foresaw it must, many animadversions on his own conduct. Powerful connexions, and his friends in place, silenced, as much as possible, the public voice. Jemmison gave excellent dinners, and endeavoured to drown the whole affair in his choice Champagne and _London particular Madeira_; so his health, and success to the British navy, was drunk in bumper toasts."

"Ay, ay, they think to do every thing now in England by dinners, and bumper toasts, and three times three," said Mr. Palmer.

"But it did not do in this instance," said Beaumont, in a tone of exultation: "it did not do."

"No," continued Mr. Walsingham; "though Jemmison's dinners went down vastly well with a party, they did not satisfy the public. The opposition papers grew clamorous, and the business was taken up so strongly, and it raised such a cry against the ministry, that they were obliged to bring Jemmison to a court-martial."

"The puppy! I'm glad of it, with all my soul. And how did he look then?" said Mr. Palmer.

"Vastly like a gentleman; that was all that even his friends could say for him. The person he was most afraid of on the trial was Walsingham. In this apprehension he was confirmed by certain of his friends, who had attempted to sound Walsingham as to the nature of the evidence he intended to give. They all reported, that they could draw nothing out of him, and that he was an impracticable fellow; for his constant answer was, that his evidence should be given in court, and nowhere else."

"Even to his most intimate friends," interrupted Mr. Beaumont, "even to me, who was in the house with him all the time the trial was going on, he did not tell what his evidence would be."

"When the day of trial came," pursued Mr. Walsingham----

"Don't forget Admiral Dashleigh," said Mr. Beaumont.

"No; who can forget him that knows him?" said Walsingham: "a warm, generous friend, open-hearted as he is brave--he came to Captain Walsingham the day before the court-martial was to sit. 'I know, Walsingham, you don't like my cousin Jemmison (said he), nor do I much, for he is a puppy, and I never could like a puppy, related to me or not; be that as it may, you'll do him justice, I'm sure; for though he is a puppy he is a brave fellow--and here, for party purposes, they have raised a cry of his being a coward, and want to shoot him _pour encourager les autres_. What you say will damn or save him; and I have too good an opinion of you to think that any old grudge, though you

might have cause for it, would stand in his way.' Walsingham answered as usual, that his opinion and his evidence would be known on the day of trial. Dashleigh went away very ill-satisfied, and persuaded that Walsingham harboured revenge against his relation. At last, when he was called upon in court, Walsingham's conduct was both just and generous; for though his answers spoke the exact truth, yet he brought forward nothing to the disadvantage of Jemmison, but what truth compelled him to state, and in his captain's favour; on the contrary, he spoke so strongly of his intrepidity, and of the gallant actions which in former instances he had performed in the service, as quite to efface the recollection of his foppery and epicurism, and, as much as possible, to excuse his negligence. Walsingham's evidence absolutely confuted the unjust charge or suspicion of cowardice that had been raised against Jemmison; and made such an impression in his favour, that, instead of being dismissed the service, or even having his ship taken from him, as was expected, Jemmison got off with a reprimand."

"Which I am sure he well deserved," said Mr. Palmer.

"But certainly Walsingham was right not to let him be run down by a popular cry, especially as he had used him ill," said Mr. Beaumont.

"Well, well!--I don't care about the puppy," cried Mr. Palmer; "only go on."

"No sooner was the trial over, and the sentence of the court made known, than Admiral Dashleigh, full of joy, admiration, and gratitude, pushed his way towards Walsingham, and stretching out his hand, exclaimed--'Shake hands, Walsingham, and forgive me, or I can't forgive myself. I suspected you yesterday morning of bearing malice against that coxcomb, who deserved to be laughed at, but not to be shot. By Jove, Walsingham, you're an honest fellow, I find.' 'And have you but just found that out, admiral?' said Walsingham, with a proud smile. 'Harkee, my lad,' said Dashleigh, calling after him, 'remember, I'm _your_ friend, at all events.--Take it as you will, I'll make you mine yet, before I've done with you.' Walsingham knew that at this time Admiral Dashleigh's friends were in power, and that Dashleigh himself had great influence with the Admiralty; and he probably treated the admiral thus haughtily, to show that he had no interested views or hopes. Dashleigh understood this, for he now comprehended Walsingham's character perfectly. Immediately after the trial, Walsingham was made commander, in consequence of his having saved the Dreadnought, and his having taken l'Ambuscade. With this appointment Dashleigh had nothing to do. But he never ceased exerting himself, employing all the interest of his high connexions, and all the personal influence of his great abilities, to have Walsingham made post, and to get him a ship. He succeeded at last; but he never gave the least hint that it was done by his interest; for, he said, he knew that Walsingham had such nice notions, and was such a proud principled fellow, that he would not enjoy his promotion, if he thought he owed it to any thing upon earth but his own merit. So a handsome letter was written by the secretary of the Admiralty to Captain Walsingham, by their lordships' desire, informing him, 'that in consideration of his services and merit, his majesty had been pleased to

make him post-captain, and to appoint him to the command of l'Ambuscade (the prize he took), which would be sent out on the first occasion.' The secretary 'begged leave to add expressions of his private satisfaction on an appointment so likely to be advantageous to the public,' &c. In short, it was all done so properly and so plausibly, that even Walsingham never suspected any secret influence, nor did he find out the part Dashleigh had taken in the business till several months afterwards, when a _discreet_ friend mentioned it by accident."

"I was that discreet friend," said Mr. Beaumont.

"Well, all this is very good, but there's no love in this Story," said Mr. Palmer. "I hope your hero is not too proud to fall in love?"

"Too proud!--We are told, you know, that the greatest hero, in the intervals of war, resigned

'To tender passions all his mighty mind.'"

"Tender passions!--Captain Walsingham is in love, then, hey?" said Mr. Palmer. "And may I ask--Bless me! I shall be very sorry if it is with any body but--may I ask to whom he is attached?"

"That is a question that I am not quite at liberty perhaps to answer," said Mr. Walsingham. "During the interval between his return in the Dreadnought and his being appointed to l'Ambuscade, an interval of about eighteen months, which he spent in the country here with me, he had time to become thoroughly acquainted with a very amiable young lady--"

"A very amiable young lady! and in this neighbourhood?" interrupted Mr. Palmer; "it must be the very person I mean, the very person I wish."

"Do not ask me any more," said Mr. Walsingham; "for my friend never declared his attachment, and I have no right to declare it for him. He was not, at the time I speak of, in circumstances to marry; therefore he honourably concealed, or rather suppressed, his passion, resolving not to attempt to engage the young lady's affections till he should have made a fortune sufficient to support her in her own rank in life."

"Well, now, that's all done, thank Heaven!" cried Palmer: "he has fortune enough now, or we can help him out, you know. This is excellent, excellent!--Come, is it not time for us to go to the ladies? I'm impatient to tell this to Mrs. Beaumont."

"Stay, my good Mr. Palmer," said Mr. Walsingham. "What are you going to do?"

"Let me alone, let me alone--I'll only tell what I guess--depend upon it, I guess right--and it may do a great deal of good to tell it to Mrs. Beaumont, and it will give her a great deal of pleasure--trust me--trust me."

"I do trust _you_--but perhaps you may be mistaken."

"Not at all, not at all, depend upon it; so let me go to her this minute."

"But stop, my dear sir," cried Mr. Beaumont, "stop for another reason; let me beg you to sit down again--I am not clear that Captain Walsingham is not at this instant in love with--perhaps, as it is reported, married to a Spanish lady, whom he has carried off out of a convent at ----, and whom I understand he is bringing home with him."

"Heyday! a Spanish lady!" said Mr. Palmer, returning slowly to his seat with a fallen countenance. "How's this?--By St. George, this is unlucky! But how's this, I say?"

"You did not let us finish our story," said Mr. Beaumont, "or we should have told you."

"Let me hear the end of it now," said Mr. Palmer, sitting down again, and preparing himself with several pinches of snuff. But just at this instant a servant came to say that coffee was ready.

"I will never stir from this spot for coffee or any thing else," said Mr. Palmer, "till I know the history of the Spanish lady."

"Then the shortest and best way I have of telling it to you is, to beg you to read this letter, which contains all I know of the matter," said Mr. Beaumont. "This letter is from young Birch to his parents; we have never heard a syllable directly from Walsingham himself on this subject. Since he reached Lisbon, we have had no letters from him, except that short epistle which brought us an account of his taking the treasure-ship. But we shall see him soon, and know the truth of this story; and hear whether he prefers his Spanish or his English mistress."

"Fore George! I wish this Spanish woman had stayed in her convent," said Mr. Palmer; "I don't like runaway ladies. But let us see what this letter says for her."

The letter is the same that Mr. Beaumont read some time ago, therefore it need not here be inserted. Before Mr. Palmer had finished perusing it, a second message came to say that the ladies waited tea, and that Mrs. Beaumont wished not to be late going home, as there was no moon. Mr. Palmer, nevertheless, finished the letter before he stirred: and then, with a heavy sigh, he rose and said, "I now wish, more than ever, that our captain would come home this night, before I go, and clear up this business. I don't like this Spanish plot, this double intrigue. Ah, dear me!--I shall be obliged to sail--I shall be in Jamaica before the fifth act."

"How expectation loads the wings of time!" exclaimed Mrs. Beaumont, as the gentlemen entered the drawing-room. "Here we have been all day expecting our dear Captain Walsingham, and the time has seemed so long!--The only time I ever found long in this house."

"I should like to know," said Mr. Walsingham, after a bow of due acknowledgment to Mrs. Beaumont for her compliment, "I should like to know whether time appears to pass more slowly to those that hope, or those that fear?"

Mrs. Beaumont handed coffee to Mr. Palmer, without attempting to answer this question.

"To those that hope, I should think," said Mr. Palmer; "for hope long deferred maketh the heart sick; and time, I can answer for it, passes most slowly to those who are sick."

"Slow as the year's dull circle seems to run,
When the brisk minor pants for twenty-one,"

said Mr. Walsingham, smiling, as he looked at young Beaumont. "But I think it is the mixture of fear with hope that makes time appear to pass slowly."

"And is hope ever free from that mixture?" said Miss Walsingham. "Does not hope without fear become certainty, and fear without hope despair? Can hope ever be perfectly free from some mixture of fear?"

"Oh, dear me! yes, to be sure," said Miss Hunter; "for hope's the most opposite thing that ever was to fear; as different as black and white; _for_, surely, every body knows that hope is just the contrary to fear; and when one says, _I hope_, one does not ever mean _I fear_--surely, you know, Mrs. Beaumont?"

"I am the worst metaphysician in the world," said Mrs. Beaumont; "I have not head enough to analyze my heart."

"Nor I neither," said Miss Hunter: "Heigho!" (very audibly.)

"Hark!" cried Mr. Beaumont, "I think I hear a horse galloping. It is he! it is Walsingham!"

Out ran Beaumont, full speed, to meet his friend; whilst, with, more sober joy, Mr. Walsingham waited on the steps, where all the company assembled, Mr. Palmer foremost, with a face full of benevolent pleasure; Mrs. Beaumont congratulating every body, but nobody listening to her; luckily for her, all were too heartily occupied with their own feelings to see how ill her countenance suited her words. The sound of the galloping of the horse ceased for a minute--then recommenced; but before it could be settled whether it was coming nearer or going farther away, Mr. Beaumont returned with a note in his hand.

"Not Walsingham--only Birch--confound him!" said Mr. Beaumont, out of breath. "Confound him, what a race I took, and how disappointed I was when I saw Birch's face; and yet it is no fault of his, poor lad!"

"But why did not he come up to the house? Why did not you let us see him?" said Mr. Walsingham.

"I could not keep him, he was in such a hurry to go home to his father and mother, he would only stop to give this note."

"From Walsingham? Read, quick."

"Plymouth, 5 o'clock, A.M. just landed."

"Dear friends, I cannot have the pleasure of seeing you, as I had hoped to do, this day--I am obliged to go to London instantly on business that must not be delayed--Cannot tell when I can be with you--hope in a few days--Well and happy, and ever yours, H. WALSINGHAM."

All stood silent with looks of disappointment, except Mrs. Beaumont, who reiterated, "What a pity! What a sad pity! What a disappointment! What a terrible disappointment!"

"Business!" said Mr. Beaumont: "curse his business! he should think of his friends first."

"Most likely his business is for his friends," said Miss Walsingham.

"That's right, my dear little defender of the absent," said Mr. Walsingham.

"Business!" repeated Mr. Palmer. "Hum! I like business better than pleasure--I will be patient, if it is really business that keeps him away from us."

"Depend upon it," said Miss Walsingham, "nothing but business can keep him away from us; his pleasure is always at home."

"I am thinking," said Mr. Palmer, drawing Mr. Walsingham aside, "I am thinking whether he has really brought this Spanish lady home with him, and what will become of her--of--him, I mean. I wish I was not going to Jamaica!"

"Then, my dear sir, where is the necessity of your going?"

"My health--my health--the physicians say I cannot live in England."

Mr. Walsingham, who had but little faith in physicians, laughed, and exclaimed, "But, my dear sir, when you see so many men alive in England at this instant, why should you believe in the impossibility of your living even in this pestiferous country?"

Mr. Palmer half smiled, felt for his snuff-box, and then replied, "I am sure I should like to live in England, if my health would let me; but," continued he, his face growing longer, and taking the hypochondriac cast as he pronounced the word, "_but, _Mr. Walsingham, you don't consider that my health is really--really--"

"Really very good, I see," interrupted Mr. Walsingham, "and I am

heartily glad to see it."

"Sir! sir! you do not see it, I assure you. I have a great opinion of your judgment, but as you are not a physician--"

"And because I have not taken out my diploma, you think I can neither see nor understand," interrupted Mr. Walsingham. "But, nevertheless, give me leave to feel your pulse."

"Do you really understand a pulse?" said Mr. Palmer, baring his wrist, and sighing.

"As good a pulse as ever man had," pronounced Mr. Walsingham.

"You don't say so? why the physicians tell me--"

"Never mind what they tell you--if they told you the truth, they'd tell you they want fees."

Mrs. Beaumont, quite startled by the tremendously loud voice in which Mr. Walsingham pronounced the word truth, rose, and rang the bell for her carriage.

"Mr. Palmer," said she, "I am afraid we must run away, for I dread the night air for invalids."

"My good madam, I am at your orders," answered Mr. Palmer, buttoning himself up to the chin.

"Mrs. Beaumont, surely you don't think this gentleman an invalid?" said Mr. Walsingham.

"I only wish he would not think himself such," replied Mrs. Beaumont.

"Ah! my dear friends," said Mr. Palmer, "I really am, I certainly am a sad--sad--"

"Hypochondriac," said Mr. Walsingham. "Pardon me--you are indeed, and every body is afraid to tell you so but myself."

Mrs. Beaumont anxiously looked out of the window to see if her carriage was come to the door.

"Hypochondriac! not in the least, my dear sir," said Mr. Palmer. "If you were to hear what Dr. ---- and Dr. ---- say of my case, and your own Dr. Wheeler here, who has a great reputation too--shall I tell you what he says?"

In a low voice, Mr. Palmer, holding Mr. Walsingham by the button, proceeded to recapitulate some of Dr. Wheeler's prognostics; and at every pause, Mr. Walsingham turned impatiently, so as almost to twist off the detaining button, repeating, in the words of the king of Prussia to his physician, "C'est un âne! C'est un âne! C'est un âne!"--"Pshaw!

I don't understand French," cried Mr. Palmer, angrily. His warmth obliged him to think of unbuttoning his coat, which operation (after stretching his neckcloth to remove an uneasy feeling in his throat) he was commencing, when Mrs. Beaumont graciously stopped his hand.

"The carriage is at the door, my dear sir:--instead of unbuttoning your coat, had not you better put this cambric handkerchief round your throat before we go into the cold air?"

Mr. Palmer put it on, as if in defiance of Mr. Walsingham, and followed Mrs. Beaumont, who led him off in triumph. Before he reached the carriage-door, however, his anger had spent its harmless force; and stopping to shake hands with him, Mr. Palmer said, "My good Mr. Walsingham, I am obliged to you. I am sure you wish me well, and I thank you for speaking so freely; I love honest friends--but as to my being a hypochondriac, believe me, you are mistaken!"

"And as to Dr. Wheeler," said Mrs. Beaumont, as she drew up the glass of the carriage, and as they drove from the door, "Dr. Wheeler certainly does not deserve to be called *un âne*, for he is a man of whose medical judgment I have the highest opinion. Though I am sure I am very candid to acknowledge it in the present case, when his opinion is so much against my wishes, and all our wishes, and must, I fear, deprive us so soon of the company of our dear Mr. Palmer."

"Why, yes, I must go, I must go to Jamaica," said Mr. Palmer in a more determined tone than he had yet spoken on the subject.

Mrs. Beaumont silently rejoiced; and as her son imprudently went on arguing in favour of his own wishes, she leaned back in the carriage, and gave herself up to a pleasing reverie, in which she anticipated the successful completion of all her schemes. Relieved from the apprehension that Captain Walsingham's arrival might disconcert her projects, she was now still further re-assured by Mr. Palmer's resolution to sail immediately. One day more, and she was safe. Let Mr. Palmer but sail without seeing Captain Walsingham, and this was all Mrs. Beaumont asked of fortune; the rest her own genius would obtain. She was so absorbed in thought, that she did not know she was come home, till the carriage stopped at her door. Sometimes, indeed, her reverie had been interrupted by Mr. Palmer's praises of the Walsinghams, and by a conversation which she heard going on about Captain Walsingham's life and adventures: but Captain Walsingham was safe in London; and whilst he was at that distance, she could bear to hear his eulogium. Having lamented that she had been deprived of her dear Amelia all this day, and having arranged her plan of operations for the morrow, Mrs. Beaumont retired to rest. And even in dreams her genius invented fresh expedients, wrote notes of apology, or made speeches of circumvention.

"And now, as oft in some distempered state,
On one nice trick depends the general fate."--POPE.

That old politician, the cardinal of Lorraine, used to say, that "a lie believed but for one hour doth many times in a nation produce effects of seven years' continuance." At this rate what wonderful effects might our heroine have produced, had she practised in public life, instead of confining her genius to family politics! The game seemed now in her own hands. The day, the important day, on which all her accounts with her son were to be settled; the day when Mr. Palmer's will was to be signed, the last day he was to stay in England, arrived. Mr. Beaumont's birthday, his coming of age, was of course hailed with every possible demonstration of joy. The village bells rang, the tenants were invited to a dinner and a dance, and an ox was to be roasted whole; and the preparations for rejoicing were heard all over the house. Mr. Palmer's benevolent heart was ever ready to take a share in the pleasures of his fellow-creatures, especially in the festivities of the lower classes. He appeared this morning in high good humour. Mrs. Beaumont, with a smile on her lips, yet with a brow of care, was considering how she could make pleasure subservient to interest, and how she could get _business_ done in the midst of the amusements of the day. Most auspiciously did her day of business begin by Mr. Palmer's declaring to her that his will was actually made; that with the exception of certain legacies, he had left his whole fortune to her during her life, with remainder to her son and daughter. "By this arrangement," continued he, "I trust I shall ultimately serve my good friends the Walsinghams, as I wish: for though I have not seen as much of that family as I should have been glad to have done, yet the little I have seen convinces me that they are worthy people."

"The most worthy people upon earth. You know I have the greatest regard for them," said Mrs. Beaumont.

"I am really sorry," pursued Mr. Palmer, "that I have not been able to make acquaintance with Captain Walsingham. Mr. Walsingham told me his whole history yesterday, and it has prepossessed me much in his favour."

"He is, indeed, a charming, noble-hearted young hero," said Mrs. Beaumont; "and I regret, as much as you do, that you cannot see him before you leave England."

"However," continued Mr. Palmer, "as I was saying, the Walsinghams will, I trust, be the better sooner or later by me; for I think I foresee that Captain Walsingham, if a certain Spanish lady were out of the question, would propose for Amelia, and would persuade her to give up this foolish fancy of hers for that baronet."

Mrs. Beaumont shook her head, as if she believed this could not possibly be done.

"Well, well, if it can't be, it can't. The girl's inclination must not be controlled. I don't wonder, however, that you are vexed at missing

such a husband for her as young Walsingham. But, my good madam, we must make the best of it--let the girl marry her baronet. I have left a legacy of some thousands to Captain Walsingham, as a token of my esteem for his character; and I am sure, my dear Mrs. Beaumont, his interests are in good hands when I leave them in yours. In the mean time, I wish you, as the representative of my late good friend, Colonel Beaumont, to enjoy all I have during your life."

Mrs. Beaumont poured forth such a profusion of kind and grateful expressions, that Mr. Palmer was quite disconcerted. "No more of this, my dear madam, no more of this. But there was something I was going to say, that has gone out of my head. Oh, it was, that the Walsinghams will, I think, stand a good chance of being the better for me in another way."

"How?"

"Why you have seen so much more of them than I have--don't you, my dear madam, see that Miss Walsingham has made a conquest of your son? I thought I was remarkably slow at seeing these things, and yet I saw it."

"Miss Walsingham is a prodigious favourite of mine. But you know Edward is so young, and men don't like, now-a-days, to marry young," said Mrs. Beaumont.

"Well, let them manage their affairs their own way," said Mr. Palmer; "all I wish upon earth is to see them happy, or rather to hear of their happiness, for I shall not see it you know in Jamaica."

"Alas!" said Mrs. Beaumont, in a most affectionate tone, and with a sigh that seemed to come from her heart; "alas! that is such a melancholy thought."

Mr. Palmer ended the conversation by inquiring whom he had best ask to witness his will. Mrs. Beaumont proposed Captain Lightbody and Dr. Wheeler. The doctor was luckily in the house, for he had been sent for this morning, to see her poor Amelia, who had caught cold yesterday, and had a slight feverish complaint.

This was perfectly true. The anxiety that Amelia had suffered of late--the fear of being forced or ensnared to marry a man she disliked--apprehensions about the Spanish incognita, and at last the certainty that Captain Walsingham would not arrive before Mr. Palmer should have left England, and that consequently the hopes she had formed from this benevolent friend's interference were vain--all these things had overpowered Amelia; she had passed a feverish night, and was really ill. Mrs. Beaumont at any other time would have been much alarmed; for, duplicity out of the question, she was a fond mother: but she now was well contented that her daughter should have a day's confinement to her room, for the sake of keeping her safe out of the way. So leaving poor Amelia to her feverish thoughts, we proceed with the business of the day.

Dr. Wheeler, Captain Lightbody, and Mr. Twigg witnessed the will; it was executed, and a copy of it deposited with Mrs. Beaumont. This was one great point gained. The next object was her jointure. She had employed her convenient tame man[3], Captain Lightbody, humbly to suggest to her son, that some increase of jointure would be proper; and she was now in anxiety to know how these hints, and others which had been made by more remote means, would operate. As she was waiting to see Mr. Lightbody in her dressing-room, to hear the result of his _suggestions_, the door opened.

"Well, Lightbody! come in--what success?"

She stopped short, for it was not Captain Lightbody, it was her son. Without taking any notice of what she said, he advanced towards her, and presented a deed.

"You will do me the favour, mother, to accept of this addition to your jointure," said he. "It was always my intention to do this, the moment it should be in my power; and I had flattered myself that you would not have thought it necessary to suggest to me what I knew I ought to do, or to hint to me your wishes by any intermediate person."

Colouring deeply, for it hurt her conscience to be found out, Mrs. Beaumont was upon the point of disavowing her emissary, but she recollected that the words which she had used when her son was coming into the room might have betrayed her. On the other hand, it was not certain that he had heard them. She hesitated. From the shame of a disavowal, which would have answered no purpose, but to sink her lower in her son's opinion, she was, however, saved by his abrupt sincerity.

"Don't say any thing more about it, dear mother," cried he, "but pardon me the pain I have given you at a time when indeed I wished only to give pleasure. Promise me, that in future you will let me know your wishes directly, and from your own lips."

"Undoubtedly--depend upon it, my dearest son. I am quite overpowered. The fact was, that I could not, however really and urgently necessary it was to me, bring myself to mention with my own lips what, as a direct request from me, I knew you could not and would not refuse, however inconvenient it might be to you to comply. On this account, and on this account only, I wished you not to know my wants from myself, but from an intermediate friend."

"Friend!"--Mr. Beaumont could not help repeating with an emphasis of disdain.

"_Friend_, I only said by courtesy; but I wished you to know my wants from an intermediate person, that you might not feel yourself in any way bound, or called upon, and that the refusal might be implied and tacit, as it were, so that it could lead to no unpleasant feelings between us."

"Ah! my dear mother," said Mr. Beaumont, "I have not your knowledge of the world, or of human nature; but from all I have heard, seen, and

felt, I am convinced that more unpleasant feelings are created in families, by these false delicacies, and managements, and hints, and go-between friends by courtesy, than ever would have been caused by the parties speaking directly to one another, and telling the plain truth about their thoughts and wishes. Forgive me if I speak too plainly at this moment; as we are to live together, I hope, many years, it may spare us many an unhappy hour."

Mrs. Beaumont wiped her eyes. Her son found it difficult to go on, and yet, upon his own principles, it was right to proceed.

"Amelia, ma'am! I find she is ill this morning."

"Yes--poor child!"

"I hope, mother--"

"Since," interrupted Mrs. Beaumont, "my dear son wishes always to hear from me the plain and direct truth, I must tell him, that, as the guardian of his sister, I think myself accountable to no one for my conduct with respect to her; and that I should look upon any interference as an unkind and unjustifiable doubt of my affection for my daughter. Rest satisfied with this assurance, that her happiness is, in all I do, my first object; and as I have told her a thousand times, no force shall be put on her inclinations."

"I have no more to say, no more to ask," said Mr. Beaumont. "This is a distinct, positive declaration, in which I will confide, and, in future, not suffer appearances to alarm me. A mother would not keep the word of promise to the ear, and break it to the hope."

Mrs. Beaumont, feeling herself change countenance, made an attempt to blow her nose, and succeeded in hiding her face with her handkerchief.

"With respect to myself," continued Mr. Beaumont, "I should also say, lest you should be in any doubt concerning my sentiments, that though I have complied with your request to delay for a few weeks--"

"_That_ you need not repeat, my dear," interrupted Mrs. Beaumont. "I understand all that perfectly."

"Then at the end of this month I shall--and, I hope, with your entire approbation, propose for Miss Walsingham."

"Time enough," said Mrs. Beaumont, smiling, and tapping her son playfully on the shoulder, "time enough to talk of that when the end of the month comes. How often have I seen young men like you change their minds, and fall in and out of love in the course of one short month! At any rate," continued Mrs. Beaumont, "let us pass to the order of the day; for we have time enough to settle other matters; but the order of the day--a tiresome one, I confess--is to settle accounts."

"I am ready--"

"So am I."

"Then let us go with the accounts to Mr. Palmer, who is also ready, I am sure."

"But, before we go," said Mrs. Beaumont, whispering, "let us settle what is to be said about the debts--_your_ debts you know. I fancy you'll agree with me, that the less is said about this the better; and that, in short, the best will be to say nothing."

"Why so, madam? Surely you don't think I mean to conceal my debts from our friend Mr. Palmer, at the very moment when I profess to tell him all my affairs, and to settle accounts with him and you, as my guardians!"

"With him? But he has never acted, you know, as one of the guardians; therefore you are not called upon to settle accounts with him."

"Then why, ma'am, did you urge him to come down from London, to be present at the settlement of these accounts?"

"As a compliment, and because I wish him to be present, as your father's friend; but it is by no means essential that he should know every detail."

"I will do whichever you please, ma'am; I will either settle accounts with or without him."

"Oh! _with_ him, that is, in his presence, to be sure."

"Then he must know the whole."

"Why so? Your having contracted such debts will alter his opinion of your prudence and of mine, and may, perhaps, essentially alter--alter--"

"His will? Be it so; that is the worst that can happen. As far as I am concerned, I would rather a thousand times it were so, than deceive him into a better opinion of me than I deserve."

"Nobly said! so like yourself, and like every thing I could wish: but, forgive me, if I did for you, what indeed I would not wish you to do for yourself. I have already told Mr. Palmer that you had no embarrassments; therefore, you cannot, and I am sure would not, unsay what I have said."

Mr. Beaumont stood fixed in astonishment.

"But why, mother, did not you tell him the whole?"

"My dear love, delicacy prevented me. He offered to relieve you from any embarrassments, if you had any; but I, having too much delicacy and pride to let my son put himself under pecuniary obligations, hastily answered, that you had no debts; for there was no other reply to be made, without offending poor Palmer, and hurting his generous feelings,

which I would not do for the universe: and I considered too, that as all Palmer's fortune will come to us in the end--"

"Well, ma'am," interrupted Mr. Beaumont, impatient of all these glosses and excuses, "the plain state of the case is, that I cannot contradict what my mother has said; therefore I will not settle accounts at all with Mr. Palmer."

"And what excuse can I make to him, after sending for him express from London?"

"That I must leave to you, mother."

"And what reason can I give for thus withdrawing our family-confidence from such an old friend, and at the very moment when he is doing so much for us all?"

"That I must leave to you, mother. I withdraw no confidence. I have pretended none--I will break none."

"Good Heavens! was not all I did and said for your interest?"

"Nothing can be for my interest that is not for my honour, and for yours, mother. But let us never go over the business again. Now to the order of the day."

"My dear, dear son," said Mrs. Beaumont, "don't speak so roughly, so cruelly to me."

Suddenly softened, by seeing the tears standing in his mother's eyes, he besought her pardon for the bluntness of his manner, and expressed his entire belief in her affection and zeal for his interests; but, on the main point, that he would not deceive Mr. Palmer, or directly or indirectly assert a falsehood, Mr. Beaumont was immovable. In the midst of her entreaties a message came from Mr. Palmer, to say that he was waiting for the accounts, which Mrs. Beaumont wished to settle. "Well," said she, much perplexed, "well, come down to him--come, for it is impossible for me to find any excuse after sending for him from London; he would think there was something worse than there really is. Stay--I'll go down first, and sound him; and if it won't do without the accounts, do you come when I ring the bell; then all I have for it is to run my chance. Perhaps he may never recollect what passed about your debts, for the dear good old soul has not the best memory in the world; and if he should obstinately remember, why, after all, it's only a bit of false delicacy, and a white lie for a friend and a son, and we can colour it."

Down went Mrs. Beaumont to sound Mr. Palmer; but though much might be expected from her address, yet she found it unequal to the task of convincing this gentleman's plain good sense that it would fatigue him to see those accounts, which he came so many miles on purpose to settle. Perceiving him begin to waken to the suspicion that she had some interest in suppressing the accounts, and hearing him, in an altered

tone, ask, "Madam, is there any mystery in these accounts, that I must not see them?" she instantly rang the bell, and answered, "Oh, none; none in the world; only we thought--that is, I feared it might fatigue you too much, my dear friend, just the day before your journey, and I was unwilling to lose so many hours of your good company; but since you are so very kind--here's my son and the papers."

CHAPTER XII.

"A face untaught to feign; a judging eye,
That darts severe upon a rising lie,
And strikes a blush through frontless flattery."

To the settlement of accounts they sat down in due form; and it so happened, that though this dear good old soul had not the best memory in the world, yet he had an obstinate recollection of every word Mrs. Beaumont had said about her son's having no debts or embarrassments. And great and unmanageable was his astonishment, when the truth came to light. "It is not," said he, turning to Mr. Beaumont, "that I am astonished at your having debts; I am sorry for that, to be sure; but young men are often a little extravagant or so, and I dare say--particularly as you are so candid and make no excuses about it--I dare say you will be more prudent in future, and give up the race-horses as you promise. But--why did not Madam Beaumont tell me the truth? Why make a mystery, when I wanted nothing but to serve my friends? It was not using me well--it was not using yourself well. Madam, madam, I am vexed to the heart, and would not for a thousand pounds--ay, fool as I am, not for ten thousand pounds, this had happened to me from my good friend the colonel's widow--a man that would as soon have cut his hand off. Oh, madam! Madam Beaumont! you have struck me a hard blow at my time of life. Any thing but this I could have borne; but to have one's confidence and old friendships shaken at my time of life!"

Mrs. Beaumont was, in her turn, in unfeigned astonishment; for Mr. Palmer took the matter more seriously, and seemed more hurt by this discovery of a trifling deviation from truth, than she had foreseen, or than she could have conceived to be possible, in a case where neither his interest nor any one of his passions was concerned. It was in vain that she palliated and explained, and talked of delicacy, and generosity, and pride, and maternal feelings, and the feelings of a friend, and all manner of fine and double-refined sentiments; still Mr. Palmer's sturdy plain sense could not be made to comprehend that a falsehood is not a falsehood, or that deceiving a friend is using him well. Her son suffered for her, as his countenance and his painful and abashed silence plainly showed.

"And does not even my son say any thing for me? Is this friendly?" said she, unable to enter into his feelings, and thinking that the part of a friend was to make apologies, right or wrong.--Mr. Palmer shook hands

with Mr. Beaumont, and, without uttering a syllable, they understood one another perfectly. Mr. Beaumont left the room; and Mrs. Beaumont burst into tears. Mr. Palmer, with great good-nature, tried to assuage that shame and compunction which he imagined that she felt. He observed, that, to be sure, she must feel mortified and vexed with herself, but that he was persuaded nothing but some mistaken notion of delicacy could have led her to do what her principles must condemn. Immediately she said all that she saw would please Mr. Palmer; and following the lead of his mind, she at last confirmed him in the opinion, that this was an accidental not an habitual deviation from truth. His confidence in her was broken, but not utterly destroyed.

"As to the debt," resumed Mr. Palmer, "do not let that give you a moment's concern; I will put that out of the question in a few minutes. My share in the cargo of the Anne, which I see is just safely arrived in the Downs, will more than pay this debt. Your son shall enter upon his estate unencumbered. No, no--don't thank me; I won't cheat you of your thanks; it is your son must thank me for this. I do it on his account. I like the young man. There is an ingenuousness, an honourable frankness about him, that I love. Instead of his bond for the money, I shall ask his promise never to have any thing more to do with race-horses or Newmarket; and his promise I shall think as good as if it were his bond. Now I am not throwing money away; I'm not doing an idle ostentatious thing, but one that may, and I hope will, be essentially useful. For, look you here, my good--look here, Mrs. Beaumont: a youth who finds himself encumbered with debt on coming to his estate is apt to think of freeing himself by marrying a fortune instead of a woman; now instead of freeing a man, this fetters him for life: and what sort of a friend must that be, who, if he could prevent it, would let this be done for a few thousand pounds? So I'll go before I take another pinch of snuff, and draw him an order upon the cargo of the Anne, lest I should forget it in the hurry of packing and taking leave, and all those uncomfortable things."

He left Madam Beaumont to her feelings, or her reflections; and, in a few minutes, with an order for the money in his hand, went over the house in search of his young friend. Mr. Beaumont came out of his sister's room on hearing himself called.

"Here," said Mr. Palmer, "is a little business for you to do. Read this order over; see that it is right, and endorse it--mind--and never let me hear one word more about it--only by way of acknowledgment--ask your mother what you are to give me. But don't read it till you are out of my sight--Is Amelia up? Can I see her?"

"Yes; up and in her dressing-room. Do, dear sir, go in and see her, for my mother says she is too feverish to leave her room to-day; but I am sure that it will make her ten times worse to be prevented from seeing you the last day you are with us."

"Does the little gipsy then care so much for me?--that's fair; for I am her friend, and will prove it to her, by giving up my own fancies to hers: so trust me with her, tete-à-tete--young gentleman; go off, if

you please, and do your own business."

Mr. Palmer knocked at Amelia's door, and fancying he heard an answer of admittance, went in.

"Oh, Mr. Palmer, my good Mr. Palmer, is it you?"

"Yes; but you seem not above half to know whether you are glad or sorry to see your good Mr. Palmer; for while you hold out your hand, you turn away your face from me.--Dear, dear! what a burning hand, and how the pulse goes and flutters! What does Dr. Wheeler say to this? I am a bit of a physician myself--let me look at you. What's this? eyes as red as ferret's--begging your eyes' pardon, young lady--What's this about? Come," said he, drawing a chair and sitting down close beside her, "no mysteries--no mysteries--I hate mysteries--besides, we have not time for them. Consider, I go to-morrow, and have all my shirts to pack up: ay, smile, lady, as your father used to do; and open your whole heart to me, as he always did. Consider me as an old friend."

"I do consider you as a sincere, excellent friend," said Amelia; "but--" Amelia knew that she could not explain herself without disobeying, and perhaps betraying, her mother.

"No _buts_, " said Mr. Palmer, taking hold of her hand. "Come, my little Amelia, before you have put that ring on and off your pretty finger fifty times more, tell me whom you would wish to put a ring on this finger for life?"

"Ah! that is the thing _I cannot_ tell you!" said Amelia. "Were I alone concerned, I would tell you every thing; but--ask me no more, I cannot tell you the whole truth."

"Then there's something wrong somewhere or other. Whenever people tell me they cannot speak the truth, I always say, then there's something wrong. Give me leave, Amelia, to ask--"

"Don't question me," said Amelia: "talk to my mother. I don't know how I ought to answer you."

"_Not know how!_ 'Fore George! this is strange! A strange house, where one can't get at the simplest truth without a world of difficulty--mother and daughter all alike; not one of 'em but the son can, for the soul of 'em, give a plain answer to a plain question. _Not know how!_ as if it was a science to tell the truth. Not know how! as if a person could not talk to me, honest old Richard Palmer, without _knowing how!_ as if it was how to baffle a lawyer on a cross-examination--_Not know how_ to answer one's own friend! Ah! this is not the way your father and I used to go on, Miss Beaumont. Nay, nay, don't cry now, or that will finish oversetting the little temper I have left, for I can't bear to see a woman cry, especially a young woman like you; it breaks my heart, old as it is, and fool that I am, that ought to know your sex better by this time than to let a few tears drown my common sense. Well, young lady, be that as it may, since you won't tell me your mind, I must

tell you your mind, for I happen to know it--Yes, I do--your mother bid me spare your delicacy, and I would, but that I have not time; besides, I don't understand, nor see what good is got, but a great deal of mischief, by these cursed new-fashioned delicacies: wherefore, in plain English, I tell you, I don't like Sir John Hunter, and I do like Captain Walsingham; and I did wish you married to Captain Walsingham--you need not start so, for I say _did_--I don't wish it now; for since your heart is set upon Sir John Hunter, God forbid I should want to give Captain Walsingham a wife without a heart. So I have only to add, that notwithstanding my own fancy or judgment, I have done my best to persuade your mother to let you have the man, or the baronet, of your choice. I will go farther: I'll make it a point with her, and bring you both together; for there's no other way, I see, of understanding you; and get a promise of her consent; and then I hope I shall leave you all satisfied, and without any mysteries. And, in the mean time," added Mr. Palmer, taking out of his coat pocket a morocco leather case, and throwing it down on the table before Amelia, "every body should be made happy their own way: there are some diamonds for Lady Hunter, and God bless you."

"Oh, sir, stay!" cried Amelia, rising eagerly; "dear, good Mr. Palmer, keep your diamonds, and leave me your esteem and love."

"That I can't, unless you speak openly to me. It is out of nature. Don't kneel--don't. God bless you! young lady, you have my pity; for indeed," turning and looking at her, "you seem very miserable, and look very sincere."

"If my mother was here!--I _must_ see my mother," exclaimed Amelia.

"Where's the difficulty? I'll go for her this instant," said Mr. Palmer, who was not a man to let a romance trail on to six volumes for want of going six yards; or for want of somebody's coming into a room at the right minute for explanation; or from some of those trivial causes by which adepts contrive to delude us at the very moment of expectation. Whilst Mr. Palmer was going for Mrs. Beaumont, Amelia waited in terrible anxiety. The door was open; and as she looked into the gallery which led to her room, she saw Mr. Palmer and her mother as they came along, talking together. Knowing every symptom of suppressed passion in her mother's countenance, she was quite terrified, by indications which passed unnoticed by Mr. Palmer. As her mother approached, Amelia hid her face in her hands for a moment, but gaining courage from the consciousness of integrity, and from a determination to act openly, she looked up; and, rising with dignity, said, in a gentle but firm voice--"Mother, I hope you will not think that there is any impropriety in my speaking to our friend, Mr. Palmer, with the same openness with which I have always spoken to you?"

"My dear child," interrupted Mrs. Beaumont, embracing Amelia with a sudden change of manner and countenance, "my sweet child, I have tried you to the utmost; forgive me; all your trials now are over, and you must allow me the pleasure of telling our excellent friend, Mr. Palmer, what I know will delight him almost as much as it delights me--that the

choice of Amelia's heart, Mr. Palmer, is worthy of her, just what we all wished."

"Captain Walsingham?" exclaimed Mr. Palmer, with joyful astonishment.

"Sit down, my love," said Mrs. Beaumont, seating Amelia, who, from the surprise at this sudden change in her mother, and from the confusion of feelings which overwhelmed her at this moment, was near fainting: "we are too much for her, I have been too abrupt," continued Mrs. Beaumont: "Open the window, will you, my good sir? and," whispering, "let us not say any more to her at present; you see it won't do."

"I am well, quite well again, now," said Amelia, exerting herself.

"Don't leave, don't forsake me, Mr. Palmer; pray don't go," holding out her hand to Mr. Palmer.

"My dear Amelia," said Mrs. Beaumont, "don't talk, don't exert yourself; pray lie still on the sofa."

"Her colour is come back; she looks like herself again," said Mr. Palmer, seating himself beside her, regardless of Mrs. Beaumont's prohibitory looks. "Since my little Amelia wished me to stay, I'll not go. So, my child--but I won't hurry you--only want one sign of the head to confirm the truth of what your mother has just told me, for nobody can tell what passes in a young lady's heart but herself. So then, it is not that sprig of quality, that selfish spendthrift, that Sir John Hunter, who has your heart--hey?"

"No, no, no," answered Amelia; "I never did, I never could like such a man!"

"Why, I thought not--I thought it was impossible; but--"

Mrs. Beaumont, alarmed beyond conception, suddenly put her hand before Mr. Palmer's mouth, to prevent him from finishing his sentence, and exposing the whole of her shameful duplicity to her daughter.

"Absolutely I must, and do hereby interpose my maternal authority, and forbid all agitating explanations whilst Amelia is in her present state. Dr. Wheeler says she is terribly feverish. Come, Mr. Palmer, I must carry you off by force, and from me you shall have all the explanations and all the satisfaction you can require."

"Well," said Mr. Palmer, "good bye for the present, my little Amelia, my darling little Amelia! I am so delighted to find that Captain Walsingham's the man, and so glad you have no mysteries: be well, be well soon. I am so pleased, so happy, that I am as unruly as a child, and as easily managed. You see, how I let myself be turned out of the room."

"Not turned out, only carried out," said Mrs. Beaumont, who never, even in the most imminent perils, lost her polite presence of mind. Having thus carried off Mr. Palmer, she was in hopes that, in the joyful

confusion of his mind, he would be easily satisfied with any plausible explanation. Therefore she dexterously fixed his attention on the future, and adverted as slightly as possible to the past."

"Now, my good sir, congratulate me," said she, "on the prospect I have of happiness in such a son-in-law as Captain Walsingham, if it be indeed true that Captain Walsingham is really attached to Amelia. But, on the other hand, what shall we do if there is any truth in the story of the Spanish lady? Oh, there's the difficulty! Between hope and fear, I am in such a distracted state at this moment, I hardly know what I say. What shall we do about the Spanish lady?"

"Do, my dear madam! we can do nothing at all in that case: but I will hope the best, and you'll see that he will prove a constant man at last. In the mean time, how was all that about Sir John Hunter, and what are you to do with him?"

"Leave that to me; I will settle all that," cried Mrs. Beaumont.

"But I hope the poor man, though I don't like him, has not been jilted?"

"No, by no means; Amelia's incapable of that. You know she told you just now that she never liked him."

"Ay; but I think, madam, you told me, that she did," said Mr. Palmer, sticking to his point with a decided plainness, which quite disconcerted Mrs. Beaumont.

"It was all a mistake," said she, "quite a mistake; and I am sure you rejoice with me that it was so: and, as to the rest--past blunders, like past misfortunes, are good for nothing but to be forgotten."

Observing that Mr. Palmer looked dissatisfied, Mrs. Beaumont continued apologizing. "I confess you have to all appearance some cause to be angry with me," said she: "but now only hear me. Taking the blame upon myself, let me candidly tell you the whole truth, and all my reasons, foolish perhaps as they were. Captain Walsingham behaved so honourably, and had such command over his feelings, that I, who am really the most credulous creature in the world, was so completely deceived, that I fancied he never had a thought of Amelia, and that he never would think of her; and I own this roused both my pride and my prudence for my daughter; and I certainly thought it my duty, as her mother, to do every thing in my power to discourage in her young and innocent heart a hopeless passion. It was but within these few hours that I have been undeceived by you as to his sentiments. That, of course, made an immediate change, as you have seen, in my measures; for such is my high opinion of the young man, and indeed my desire to be connected with the Walsinghams is so great, that even whilst I am in total ignorance of what the amount or value may be of this prize that he has taken, and even whilst I am in doubt concerning this Spanish incognita, I have not hesitated to declare, perhaps imprudently, to Amelia, as you have just heard, my full approbation of the choice of her heart."

"Hum!--well--hey!--How's this?" said Mr. Palmer to himself, as he tried to believe and to be satisfied with this apology. "Madam," said he aloud to Mrs. Beaumont, "I comprehend that it might not be prudent to encourage Amelia's partiality for Captain Walsingham till you were sure of the young man's sentiments; but, excuse me, I am a very slow, unpractised man in these matters; I don't yet understand why you told _me_ that she was in love with Sir John Hunter?"

Mrs. Beaumont, being _somewhat in the habit of self-contradiction_, was seldom unprovided with a concordance of excuses; but at this unlucky moment she was found unprepared. Hesitating she stood, all subtle as she was, deprived of ready wit, and actually abashed in the presence of a plain good man.

"I candidly confess, my dear sir," said she, apologizing to Mr. Palmer as he walked up and down, "that my delicacy or pride,--call it what you will,--my false pride for my daughter, led me into an error. I could not bring myself to acknowledge to any man, even to you--for you know that it's contrary quite to the principles and pride of our sex--that she felt any partiality for a man who had shown none for her. You must be sensible it was, to say no more, an awkward, mortifying thing; and I was so afraid even of your finding it out, that--forgive me--I did, I candidly acknowledge, fabricate the foolish story of Sir John Hunter. But, believe me, I never seriously thought of her marrying him."

"Fore George! I don't understand one word of it from beginning to end," said Mr. Palmer, speaking aloud to himself.

Regardless of the profusion of words which Mrs. Beaumont continued pouring forth, he seated himself in an arm-chair, and, deep in reverie for some minutes, went on slowly striking his hands together, as he leaned with his arms on his knees. At length he rose, rang the bell, and said to the servant, "Sir, be so obliging as to let my man Crichton know that he need not hurry himself to pack up my clothes, for I shall not go to-morrow."

Struck with consternation at these words, Mrs. Beaumont, nevertheless, commanded the proper expression of joy on the occasion. "Delightful! I must go this instant," cried she, "and be the first to tell this charming news to Amelia and Edward."

"Tell them, then, madam, if you please, that I have gained such a conquest over what Mr. Walsingham calls my hypochondriacism, that I am determined, at whatever risk, to stay another year in Old England, and that I hope to be present at both their weddings."

Mrs. Beaumont's quick exit was at this moment necessary to conceal her dismay. Instead of going to Amelia, she hurried to her own room, locked the door, and sat down to compose her feelings and to collect her thoughts; but scarcely had she been two minutes in her apartment, when a messenger came to summon her to the festive scene in the park. The tenants and villagers were all at dinner, and Mr. Beaumont sent to let her know that they were waiting to drink her health. She was obliged to

go, and to appear all radiant with pleasure. The contrast between their honest mirth and her secret sufferings was great. She escaped as soon as she could from their senseless joy, and again shut herself up in her own room.

This sudden and totally unexpected resolution of Mr. Palmer's so astonished her, that she could scarcely believe she had heard or understood his words rightly. Artful persons may, perhaps, calculate with expertness and accuracy what will, in any given case, be the determinations of the selfish and the interested; but they are liable to frequent mistakes in judging of the open-hearted and the generous: there is no sympathy to guide them, and all their habits tend to mislead them in forming opinions of the direct and sincere. It had never entered into Mrs. Beaumont's imagination that Mr. Palmer would, notwithstanding his belief that he hazarded his life by so doing, defer a whole year returning to Jamaica, merely to secure the happiness of her son and daughter. She plainly saw that he now suspected her dislike to the Walsinghams, and her aversion to the double union with that family: she saw that the slightest circumstance in her conduct, which confirmed his suspicions, would not only utterly ruin her in his opinion, but might induce him to alter that part of his will which left her sole possessor of his fortune during her life. Bad as her affairs were at this moment, she knew that they might still be worse. She recollected the letter of perfect approbation which Sir John Hunter had in his power. She foresaw that he would produce this letter on the first rumour of her favouring another lover for Amelia. She had just declared to Mr. Palmer, that she never seriously thought of Sir John Hunter for her daughter; and, should this letter be brought to light, she must be irremediably convicted of the basest duplicity, and there would be no escape from the shame of falsehood, or rather the disgrace of detection. In this grand difficulty, Mrs. Beaumont was too good a politician to waste time upon any inferior considerations. Instead of allowing herself leisure to reflect that all her present difficulties arose from her habits of insincerity, she, with the true spirit of intrigue, attributed her disappointments to some deficiency of artifice. "Oh!" said she to herself, "why did I write? I should only have spoken to Sir John. How could I be so imprudent as to commit myself by writing? But what can be done to repair this error?"

One web destroyed, she, with indefatigable subtlety, began to weave another. With that promptitude of invention which practice alone can give, she devised a scheme, by which she hoped not only to prevent Sir John Hunter from producing the written proof of her duplicity, but by which she could also secure the reversionary title, and the great Wigram estate. The nature of the scheme shall be unfolded in the next chapter; and it will doubtless procure for Mrs. Beaumont, from all proper judges, a just tribute of admiration. They will allow our heroine to be possessed not only of that address, which is the peculiar glory of female politicians, but also of that masculine quality, which the greatest, wisest, of mankind has pronounced to be the first, second, and third requisite for business--"Boldness--boldness--boldness."

CHAPTER XIII.

"The creature's at her dirty work again."--POPE.

Amongst the infinite petty points of cunning of which that great practical philosopher Bacon has in vain essayed to make out a list, he notes that, "Because it worketh better when any thing seemeth to be gotten from you by question than if you offer it of yourself: you may lay a bait for a question, by showing another visage and countenance than you are wont, to the end to give occasion to the party to ask what the matter is of the change."

"What is the matter, my dearest Mrs. Beaumont? I never saw you look so sad before in all my life," said Miss Hunter, meeting Mrs. Beaumont, who had walked out into the park on purpose to be so met, and in hopes of having the melancholy of her countenance thus observed. It was the more striking, and the more unseasonable, from its contrast with the gay scene in the park. The sound of music was heard, and the dancing had begun, and all was rural festivity: "What is the matter, my dearest Mrs. Beaumont?" repeated Miss Hunter; "at such a time as this to see you look so melancholy!"

"Ah! my love! such a sad change in affairs! But," whispered Mrs. Beaumont, "I cannot explain myself before your companion."

Mr. Lightbody was walking with Miss Hunter: but he was so complaisant, that he was easily despatched on some convenient errand; and then Mrs. Beaumont, with all her wonted delicacy of circumlocution, began to communicate her distress to her young friend.

"You know, my beloved Albina," said she, "it has been my most ardent wish that your brother should be connected with my family by the nearest and dearest ties."

"Yes; that is, married to Amelia," said Miss Hunter. "And has any thing happened to prevent it?"

"Oh, my dear! it is all over! It cannot be--must not be thought of--must not be spoken of any more; Mr. Palmer has been outrageous about it. Such a scene as I have had! and all to no purpose. Amelia has won him over to her party. Only conceive what I felt--she declared, beyond redemption, her preference of Captain Walsingham."

"Before the captain proposed for her! How odd! dear! Suppose he should never propose for her, what a way she will be in after affronting my brother and all! And only think! she gives up the title, and the great Wigram estate, and every thing. Why, my brother says, uncle Wigram can't live three months; and Lord Puckeridge's title, too, will come to my brother, you know; and Amelia might have been Lady Puckeridge. Only think! did you ever know any thing so foolish?"

"Never!" said Mrs. Beaumont; "but you know, my dear, so few girls have the sense you show in taking advice: they all will judge for themselves. But I'm most hurt by Amelia's want of gratitude and delicacy towards _me_," continued Mrs. Beaumont; "only conceive the difficulty and distress in which she has left me about your poor brother. Such a shock as the disappointment will be to him! And he may--though Heaven knows how little I deserve it--he may suspect--for men, when they are vexed and angry, will, you know, suspect even their best friends; he might, I say, suspect me of not being warm in his cause."

"Dear, no! I have always told him how kind you were, and how much you wished the thing; and of all people in the world he can't blame you, dearest Mrs. Beaumont."

At this instant Mrs. Beaumont saw a glimpse of somebody in a bye-path of the shrubbery near them. "Hush! Take care! Who is that lurking there? Some listener! Who can it be?"

Miss Hunter applied her glass to her eye, but could not make out who it was.

"It is Lightbody, I declare," said Mrs. Beaumont. "Softly,--let us not pretend to see him, and watch what he will do. It is of the greatest consequence to me to know whether he is a listener or not; so much as he is about the house."

An irresistible fit of giggling, which seized Miss Hunter at the odd way in which Lightbody walked, prevented Mrs. Beaumont's trial of his curiosity. At the noise which the young lady made, Mr. Lightbody turned his head, and immediately advancing, with his accustomed mixture of effrontery and servility, said, that "he had executed Mrs. Beaumont's commands, and that he had returned in hopes of getting a moment to say a word to her when she was at leisure, about something he had just learned from Mr. Palmer's man Crichton, which it was of consequence she should know without delay."

"Oh, thank you, you best of creatures; but I know all that already."

"You know that Mr. Palmer does not go to-morrow?"

"Yes; and am so rejoiced at it! Do, my dear Lightbody, go to Amelia and my son from me, and tell them that charming news. And after that, pray have the compassion to inquire if the post is not come in yet, and run over the papers, to see if you can find any thing about Walsingham's prize."

Mr. Lightbody obeyed, but not with his usual alacrity. Mrs. Beaumont mused for a moment, and then said, "I do believe he was listening. What could he be doing there?"

"Doing!--Oh, nothing," said Miss Hunter: "he's never doing any thing, you know; and as to listening, he was so far off he could not hear a

word we said: besides, he is such a simple creature, and loves you so!"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Beaumont; "he either did not play me fair, or else he did a job I employed him in this morning so awkwardly, that I never wish to employ him again. He is but a low kind of person, after all; I'll get rid of him: that sort of people always grow tiresome and troublesome after a time, and one must shake them off. But I have not leisure to think of him now--Well, my dear, to go on with what I was saying to you."

Mrs. Beaumont went on talking of her friendship for Sir John Hunter, and of the difficulty of appeasing him; but observing that Miss Hunter listened only with forced attention, she paused to consider what this could mean. Habitually suspicious, like all insincere people, Mrs. Beaumont now began to imagine that there was some plot carrying on against her by Sir John Hunter and Lightbody, and that Miss Hunter was made use of against her. Having a most contemptible opinion of her Albina's understanding, and knowing that her young friend had too little capacity to be able to deceive her, or to invent a plausible excuse impromptu, Mrs. Beaumont turned quick, and exclaimed, "My dear, what could Lightbody be saying to you when I came up?--for I remember he stopped short, and you both looked so guilty."

"Guilty! did I?--Did he?--Dearest Mrs. Beaumont, don't look at me so with your piercing eyes!--Oh! I vow and protest I can't tell you; I won't tell you."

The young lady tittered, and twisted herself into various affected attitudes; then kissing Mrs. Beaumont, and then turning her back with childish playfulness, she cried, "No, I won't tell you; never, never, never!"

"Come, come, my dear, don't trifle; I have really business to do, and am in a hurry."

"Well, don't look at me--never look at me again--promise me that, and I'll tell you. Poor Lightbody--Oh, you're looking at me!--Poor Lightbody was talking to me of somebody, and he laid me a wager--but I can't tell you that--Ah, don't be angry with me, and I will tell, if you'll turn your head quite away!--that I should be married to somebody before the end of this year. Oh, now, don't look at me, dearest, dearest Mrs. Beaumont."

"You dear little simpleton, and was that all?" said Mrs. Beaumont, vexed to have wasted her time upon such folly: "come, be serious now, my dear; if you knew the anxiety I am in at this moment--" But wisely judging that it would be in vain to hope for any portion of the love-sick damsel's attention, until she had confirmed her hopes of being married to somebody before the end of the year, Mrs. Beaumont scrupled not to throw out assurances, in which she had herself no further faith. After what she had heard from her son this morning, she must have been convinced that there was no chance of marrying him to Miss Hunter; she knew indeed positively, that he would soon declare his real attachment,

but she could, she thought, during the interval retain her power over Miss Hunter, and secure her services, by concealing the truth.

"Before I say one word more of my own affairs, let me, my dearest child, assure you, that in the midst of all these disappointments and mortifications about Amelia, I am supported by the hope--by something more than the hope--that I shall see the daughter of my heart happily settled soon: Lightbody does not want penetration, I see. But I am not at liberty to say more. So now, my dear, help me with all your cleverness to consider what I shall do in the difficulties I am in at this moment. Your brother has a letter of mine, approving, and so forth, his addresses to my daughter; now, if he, in the first rashness of his anger, should produce this to Palmer, I'm undone--or to my son, worse and worse! there would be a duel between them infallibly, for Beaumont is so warm on any point of honour--Oh, I dread to think of it, my dear!"

"So do I, I'm sure; but, Lord, I'm the worst person to think in a hurry--But can't you write a letter? for you always know what to say so well--And after all, do you know, I don't think he'll be half so angry or _so disappointed_ as you fancy, for I never thought he was so much in love with Amelia."

"Indeed!"

"I know, if it was not a secret, I could tell you--"

"What? No secrets between us, my darling child."

"Then I can tell you, that just before he proposed for Amelia, he was consulting with me about proposing for Mrs. Dutton."

"Mrs. Dutton, the widow! Mrs. Dutton! How you astonish me!" said Mrs. Beaumont (though she knew this before). "Why she is older than I am."

"Older! yes, a great deal; but then you know my brother is no chicken himself."

"To be sure, compared with you, my dear, he is not young. There's a prodigious difference between you."

"Above twenty years; _for,_ you know, he's by another marriage."

"True; but I can't believe he proposed for Mrs. Dutton."

"Not actually proposed, because I would not let him; for I should have hated to have had such an unfashionable-looking woman for my sister-in-law. I never could have borne to go into public with her, you know: so I plagues my brother out of it; and luckily he found out that her jointure is not half so great as it was said to be."

"I could have told him that. Mrs. Dutton's jointure is nothing nearly so large as mine was, even before the addition to it which my son so handsomely, and indeed unexpectedly, made to it this morning. And did I

tell you, my dear? Mr. Palmer, this day, has been so kind as to leave me all his immense fortune for my own life. But don't mention it, lest it should get round, and make ill-will: the Walsinghams know nothing of it. But to return to your poor brother--if I could any way serve him with Mrs. Dutton?"

"La! he'd never think of her more--and I'm sure I would not have him."

"You dear little saucy creature! indeed I cannot wonder that you don't like the thoughts of Mrs. Dutton for a chaperon in town."

"Oh, horrid! horrid!"

"And yet, would you condemn your poor brother to be an old bachelor, after this disappointment with Amelia?"

"La, ma'am, can't he marry any body but Mrs. Dutton?"

"I wish I could think of any person would suit him. Can you?"

"Oh, I know very well who I think would suit him, and one I like to go into public with of all things."

"Who?"

"And one who has promised to present me at court next winter."

"My dearest child! is it possible that you mean me?"

"I do;--and why not?"

"Why not! My sweet love, do you consider my age?"

"But you look so young."

"To be sure Mrs. Dutton looks older, and is older; but I could not bring myself, especially after being a widow so long, to think of marrying a young man--to be sure, your brother is not what one should call a very young man."

"Dear, no; you don't look above three, or four, or five years older than he does; and in public, and with dress, and rouge, and fashion, and all that, I think it would do vastly well, and nobody would think it odd at all. There's Lady ----, is not she ten years older than Lord ----? and every body says that's nothing, and that she gives the most delightful parties. Oh, I declare, dearest Mrs. Beaumont, you must and shall marry my brother, and that's the only way to make him amends, and prevent mischief between the gentlemen; the only way to settle every thing charmingly--and I shall so like it--and I'm so proud of its being my plan! I vow, I'll go and write to my brother this minute, and--"

"Stay, you dear mad creature; only consider what you are about."

"Consider! I have considered, and I must and will have my own way," said the dear mad creature, struggling with Mrs. Beaumont, who detained her with an earnest hand. "My love," said she, "I positively cannot let you use my name in such a strange way. If your brother or the world should think I had any share in the transaction, it would be so indelicate."

"Indelicate! Dear me, ma'am, but when nobody will know it, how can it be indelicate? and I will not mention your name, and nobody will ever imagine that you knew any thing of my writing; and I shall manage it all my own way; and the plan is all my own: so let me go and write this minute."

"Mercy upon me! what shall I do with this dear headstrong creature!" said Mrs. Beaumont, letting Miss Hunter go, as if exhausted by the struggle she had made to detain her impetuous young friend. Away ran Miss Hunter, sometimes looking back in defiance and laughing, whilst Mrs. Beaumont shook her head at her whenever she looked back, but found it impossible to overtake her, and vain to make further opposition. As Mrs. Beaumont walked slowly homewards, she meditated her own epistle to Sir John Hunter, and arranged her future plan of operations.

If, thought she, Miss Hunter's letter should not succeed, it is only a suggestion of hers, of which I am not supposed to know any thing, and I am only just where I was before. If it does succeed, and if Sir John transfers his addresses to me, I avoid all danger of his anger on account of his disappointment with Amelia; for it must then be his play, to convince me that he is not at all disappointed, and then I shall have leisure to consider whether I shall marry Sir John or not. At all events, I can draw on his courtship as long as I please, till I have by degrees brought Mr. Palmer round to approve of the match.

With these views Mrs. Beaumont wrote an incomparable letter to Sir John Hunter, in which she enveloped her meaning in so many words, and so much sentiment, that it was scarcely possible to comprehend any thing, except, "that she should be glad to see Sir John Hunter the next day, to explain to him a circumstance that had given her, on his account, heartfelt uneasiness." Miss Hunter's letter was carefully revised by Mrs. Beaumont, though she was to know nothing of it; and such was the art with which it was retouched, that, after all proper corrections, nothing appeared but the most childish and imprudent simplicity.

After having despatched these letters, Mrs. Beaumont felt much anxiety about the effect which they might produce; but she was doomed by her own habits of insincerity to have perpetually the irksome task of assuming an appearance contrary to her real feelings. Amelia was better, and Mr. Palmer's determination to stay in England had spread a degree of cheerfulness over the whole family, which had not been felt for some time at Beaumont Park. In this general delight Mrs. Beaumont was compelled seemingly to sympathize: she performed her part so well, that even Dr. Wheeler and Captain Lightbody, who had been behind the scenes, began to believe that the actress was in earnest. Amelia, alas! knew her mother too well to be the dupe even of her most consummate powers of acting. All that Mrs. Beaumont said about her joy, and her hopes that

Captain Walsingham would soon appear and confirm her happy _pre-sentiments_, Amelia heard without daring to believe. She had such an opinion of her mother's address, such a sublime superstitious dread that her mother would, by some inscrutable means, work out her own purposes, that she felt as if she could not escape from these secret machinations. Amelia still apprehended that Sir John Hunter would not be irrevocably dismissed, and that by some turn of artifice she should find herself bound to him. The next morning Sir John Hunter, however, finally relieved her from these apprehensions. After having been closeted for upwards of two hours with Mrs. Beaumont, he begged to speak to Miss Beaumont; and he resigned all pretensions to the honour which he had so long and so ardently aspired to. It was his pride to show that his spirits were not affected by this disappointment: he scarcely indeed exhibited that decent appearance of mortification which is usually expected on such an occasion; but with provoking haughtiness professed himself sincerely obliged to Miss Beaumont for having, _however late in the business_, prevented him, by her candour, from the danger of crossing her inclinations. For this he could scarcely be sufficiently thankful, when he considered how every day showed the consequences of marrying young ladies whose affections were previously engaged. He had only to add, that he hoped the world would see _the thing_ in the same light in which he took it, and that Miss Beaumont might not find herself blamed for breaking off _the matter_, after it had been so publicly reported: that, for his part, he assured her, he would, as far as he was concerned, do his utmost to silence unpleasant observations; and that, as the most effectual means to do this, he conceived, would be to show that he continued on an amicable footing with the family, he should do himself the honour to avail himself of the permission--invitation, indeed--he had just received from Mrs. Beaumont, to continue his visits as usual at Beaumont Park.

To this Amelia could make no objection after the express declaration which he had just made, that he renounced all pretensions to her favour. However keenly she felt the implied reproach of having encouraged Sir John as her admirer, while her affections were previously engaged, and of having shown candour _late_ in this affair, she could not vindicate herself without accusing her mother; therefore she attempted neither excuse nor apology, submitted to let the unfeeling baronet enjoy her confusion, whilst she said, in general terms, she felt obliged by his assurance that she should not be the cause of any quarrel between two families who had hitherto lived in friendship.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Him no soft thoughts, no gratitude could move;
To gold he fled, from beauty and from love!"

DRYDEN.

All that passed in the two hours' conversation between the discarded

baronet and the mother of his late mistress did not transpire; but Mrs. Beaumont said that she had taken infinite pains to reconcile Sir John to his fate, and his subsequent behaviour showed that she had succeeded. His attention towards her also plainly proved that he was not dissatisfied by the part she had acted, or rather by the part that he thought she had acted. Thus all things went on smoothly. Mrs. Beaumont, in confidence, told her friend, Miss Hunter, that Sir John had behaved with the greatest propriety and candour (candour! that hackneyed word); that he had acknowledged that his principal inducement to propose for her daughter had been a desire to be connected with a family for which he had such peculiar regard.

"This, my love," continued Mrs. Beaumont, "was all, you know, that your brother could, with propriety, say on such an occasion; all indeed that I would permit him to say. As to the rest, on Amelia's account, you know, I could not refuse his request to continue his visits in this family on the same footing of friendship as usual."

Whether this was the truth and the whole truth, the mystery that involves all cabinet-councils, and more especially those of female politicians, prevents the cautious historian from presuming to decide. But arguing from general causes, and from the established characters and ruling passions of the parties concerned, we may safely conjecture that the baronet did not at this time make any decisive proposal to the lady, but that he kept himself at liberty to advance or recede, as circumstances should render it expedient. His ruling passion was avarice; and though he had been allured by the hints which his sister had thrown out concerning Mrs. Beaumont's increased jointure, and vast expectancies from Mr. Palmer, yet he was not so rash as to act decisively upon such vague information: he had wisely determined to obtain accurate and positive evidence from Captain Lightbody, who seemed, in this case, to be the common vouchee; but Lightbody happened to be gone out to shoot _flappers_.[4]

Consequently Sir John wisely entrenched himself in general professions of regard to Mrs. Beaumont, and reflections on the happiness of being connected with such a respectable family. Mrs. Beaumont, who understood the whole of the game, now saw that her play must be to take Captain Lightbody again into her confidence.

Ever careful not to commit herself, she employed Miss Hunter to communicate _her own scheme_ to the captain, and to prepare him on the requisite points with proper answers to those inquiries which she foresaw the baronet would make.

"You know, my love," said Mrs. Beaumont, "you can find a proper moment to say all you wish to Lightbody."

"Oh, yes," said Miss Hunter, "I will if I possibly can this day; but it is so difficult to find a good time--"

"At dinner, suppose?" said Mrs. Beaumont.

"At dinner! surely, ma'am, that's an awkward time, is not it, for talking of secrets?"

"The best time in the world, my dear; you know we are to have the Duttons, and the Lord knows whom besides, to-day. And when there's a large company, and every body talking at once, and eating, and drinking, and carving, it is the best time in the world! You may say what you please; your neighbours are all happily engaged, too busy to mind you. Get near fat Mr. Dutton, and behind the screen of his prodigious elbow you will be comfortably recessed from curious impertinents. My dear, the most perfect solitude is not so convenient as one of these great dinners."

Whilst Mrs. Beaumont was demonstrating to Miss Hunter that the most convenient and secure time for a _tCete-àtCete_ is at a large dinner, she happened to look out of the window, near which they were standing, and she saw her son and daughter with Mr. Palmer walking in the park; they sat down under a tree within view of the house.

"Come away from the window, my dear," said Mrs. Beaumont; "they will observe us, and perhaps think we are plotting something. I wonder what they are talking of! Look how earnestly Amelia is stretching out her neck, and Mr. Palmer striking his cane upon the ground. Come back a little, my dear, come back; you can see as well here."

"But I see a gentleman on horseback, galloping. Oh, ma'am, look! he has stopped! he has jumped off his horse! Captain Walsingham it must be!"

"Captain Walsingham it really is!" said Mrs. Beaumont, pressing forward to look out of the window, yet standing so, that she could not be seen from without.

"Dear," said Miss Hunter, "but how delighted Mr. Beaumont seems; and how Mr. Palmer shakes Captain Walsingham's hand, as if he had known him these hundred years! What can make them so glad to see him? Do look at them, ma'am."

"I see it all!" said Mrs. Beaumont, with an involuntary sigh.

"But, dear Mrs. Beaumont," pursued Miss Hunter, "if he has actually come at last to propose for Amelia, don't you think he is doing it in a shabby sort of way? When he has been in London too--and if he has taken such a treasure too, could not he have come down here a little more in style, with some sort of an equipage of his own at least? But now only look at him; would you, if you met him on the road, know him from any common man?"

Another sigh, deep and sincere, was all the answer Mrs. Beaumont made.

"I am sure," continued Miss Hunter, as Mrs. Beaumont drew her away from the window, "I am sure, I think Amelia has not gained much by the change of admirers; for what's a captain of a ship?"

"He ranks with a colonel in the army, to be sure," said Mrs. Beaumont; "but Amelia might have looked much higher. If she does not know her own interest and dignity, that is not my fault."

"If she had such a fortune as I shall have," said Miss Hunter, "she might afford to marry for love, because you know she could make her husband afterwards keep her proper equipages, and take her to town, and go into parliament, and get a title for her too!"

"Very true, my darling," said Mrs. Beaumont, who was at this instant so absent, that she assented without having heard one syllable that her darling said.

"But for Amelia, who has no such great fortune of her own, it is quite another thing, you know, dearest Mrs. Beaumont. Oh, you'll see how she'll repent when she sees you Lady Puckeridge, and herself plain Mrs. Walsingham. And when she sees the figure you'll make in town next winter, and the style my brother will live in--Oh, then she'll see what a difference there is between Sir John Hunter and Captain Walsingham!"

"Very true, indeed, my dear," said Mrs. Beaumont; and this time she did not answer without having heard the assertion. The door opened.

"Captain Walsingham! dare I believe my eyes? And do I see our friend, Captain Walsingham, again at last?"

"At last! Oh, Mrs. Beaumont, you don't know how hard I have worked to get here."

"How kind! But won't you sit down and tell me?"

"No; I can neither sit, nor rest, nor speak, nor think upon any subject but one," said Captain Walsingham.

"That's right," cried Mr. Palmer.

"Mrs. Beaumont--pardon my abruptness," continued Captain Walsingham, "but you see before you a man whose whole happiness is at stake. May I beg a few minutes' conversation with you?"

"This instant," said Mrs. Beaumont, hesitating; but she saw that Mr. Palmer's eye was upon her, so with a smile she complied immediately; and giving her hand graciously to Captain Walsingham, she accompanied him into a little reading-room within the drawing-room.

"May I hope that we are friends?" said Captain Walsingham; "may I hope so, Mrs. Beaumont--may I?"

"Good Heavens! Friends! assuredly; I hope so. I have always had and expressed the highest opinion of you, Captain Walsingham."

"I have had one, and, hitherto, but one opportunity of showing myself, in any degree, deserving of your esteem, madam," said Captain

Walsingham. "When I was in this country some years ago, you must have seen how passionately I was in love with your daughter; but I knew that my circumstances were then such that I could not hope to obtain Miss Beaumont's hand; and you will do me the justice to allow that I behaved with prudence. Of the difficulty of the task I alone can judge."

Mrs. Beaumont declared, that she admired Captain Walsingham's conduct inexpressibly, now that she understood what his feelings and motives had been; but really he had kept his own secret so honourably, that she had not, till within these few days, when it was _let out_ by Mr. Walsingham to Mr. Palmer, had the most distant idea of his being attached to her daughter.

Captain Walsingham was too polite even to _look_ a doubt of the truth of a lady's assertion: he therefore believed, because it was impossible.

Mrs. Beaumont, determining to make her story consistent, repeated nearly what she had said to Mr. Palmer, and went on to confess that she had often, with a mother's pride, perhaps, in her own secret thoughts wondered at the indifference Captain Walsingham showed towards Amelia.

Captain Walsingham was surprised that Mrs. Beaumont's penetration should have been so strangely mistaken; especially as the symptoms of admiration and love must be so well known to a lady who had so many and such passionate admirers.

Mrs. Beaumont smiled, and observed, that Captain Walsingham, though a seaman, had all the address of a courtier, and she acknowledged that she loved address.

"If by address Mrs. Beaumont means politeness, I admire it as much as she does; but I disclaim and despise all that paltry system of artifice, which is sometimes called address. No person of a great mind ever condescends to use _address_ in that sense of the word; not because they cannot, but because they will not."

"Certainly--certainly," said Mrs. Beaumont; "there is nothing I love so much as frankness."

"Then, frankly, Mrs. Beaumont, may I hope for your approbation in addressing Miss Beaumont?"

"Frankly, then, you have my full approbation. This is the very thing I have long secretly wished, as Mr. Palmer can tell you. You have ever been the son-in-law of my choice, though not of my hopes."

Delighted with this frank answer, this full approbation, this assurance that he had always been the son-in-law of her choice, Captain Walsingham poured out his warm heart in joy and gratitude. All suspicions of Mrs. Beaumont were forgotten; for suspicion was unnatural to his mind: though he knew, though he had experience almost from childhood, of her character, yet, at this instant, he thought he had, till now, been always prejudiced, always mistaken. Happy those who can be thus duped by

the warmth of their own hearts! It is a happiness which they who smile in scorn at their credulity can never enjoy.

Wakening a little to the use of his understanding, Captain Walsingham disconcerted Mrs. Beaumont, by suddenly saying, "Then there was not any truth in the report, which I have heard with horror, that you were going to marry Miss Beaumont to Sir John Hunter?"

"Then there was not any truth in the report I heard with horror, that you were going to marry yourself to a Spanish nun?" said Mrs. Beaumont, who had learned from a veteran in public warfare, that the best way to parry an attack is not to defend, but to make an assault.

"My dear Captain Walsingham," added she, with an arch smile, "I really thought you were a man of too much sense, and above all, too much courage, to be terror-struck by every idle report. You should leave such _horrors_ to us weak women--to the visionary mind. Now, I could not blame poor Amelia, if she were to ask, 'Then was there no truth in the report of the Spanish incognita?'--No, no," pursued Mrs. Beaumont, playfully, refusing to hear Captain Walsingham; "not to me, not to _me_, must your defence be made. Appear before your judge, appear before Amelia; I can only recommend you to mercy."

What a charming woman this Mrs. Beaumont would be, if one could feel quite sure of her sincerity, thought Captain Walsingham, as he followed the lady, who, with apparently playful, but really polite grace, thus eluded all further inquiry into her secret manoeuvres.

"Here, my dearest Amelia," cried she, "is a culprit, whom I am bringing to your august tribunal for mercy."

"For justice," said Captain Walsingham.

"Justice! Oh, the pride of the man's heart, and the folly! Who ever talks of justice to a woman? My dear captain, talk of mercy, or cruelty, if you will; we ladies delight in being called cruel, you know, and sometimes are even pleased to be merciful--but to be just, is the last thing we think of: so now for your trial; public or private, Captain Walsingham?"

"Public! as I am innocent."

"Oyes, oyes! all manner of men," cried Mr. Beaumont.

"The Spanish cause coming on!" cried Mr. Palmer: "let me hear it; and let me have a good seat that I may hear--a seat near the judge."

"Oh, you shall be judge, Mr. Palmer," said Amelia; "and here is the best seat for our good judge."

"And you will remember," said Mr. Beaumont, "that it is the duty of a good judge to lean towards the prisoner."

"To lean! No, to sit bolt upright, as I will if I can," said old Mr. Palmer, entering into the pleasantry of the young people as readily as if he had been the youngest man in the company. As he looked round, his good countenance beamed with benevolent pleasure.

"Now, sir captain, be pleased to inform the court what you have done, or mean to do, with a certain Spanish nun, whom, as it is confidently asserted in a letter from one of your own men, you carried off from her nunnery, and did bring, or cause to be brought, with you to England."

"My lord judge, will you do me the favour, or the justice, to order that the letter alluded to may be read in court?"

This was ordered, and done accordingly.

"My lord judge," said Captain Walsingham, "I have nothing to object to the truth of the main points of this story; and considering that it was told by a very young man, and a traveller, it contains but a reasonable share of 'travellers' wonders.' Considering the opportunity and temptation for embellishments afforded by such a romantic tale, less has been added to it by the narrator than the usual progress of strange reports might have prepared me to expect. It is most true, as it has been stated, that I did, by her own desire, carry away from a nunnery, at ---, this lady, who was neither a nun nor a Spanish lady, nor, as I am compelled by my regard to truth to add, young, nor yet handsome. My lord judge, far be it from me to impeach the veracity of the letter-writer. It is admitted by the highest and the lowest authorities, that beauty is a matter of taste, and that for taste there is no standard; it is also notorious, that to a sailor every woman is fair and young, who is not as old as Hecuba, or as ugly as Caifacaratadaddera. I can therefore speak only to my own opinion and judgment. And really, my lord, it grieves me much to spoil the romance, to destroy the effect of a tale, which might in future serve for the foundation of some novel, over which belles and beaux, yet unborn, might weep and wonder: it grieves me much, I say, to be compelled by the severity of this cross-examination to declare the simple truth, that there was no love in the case; that, to the very best of my belief and judgment, the lady was not in love with any body, much less with me."

"As you have admitted, sir," said the judge, "as you have voluntarily stated, that to a sailor every woman is fair and young, who is not as old as Hecuba, or as ugly as that other woman with the unspeakable name, you will be pleased to inform the court how it happened, or how it was possible, that in the course of a long voyage, you could avoid falling in love with the damsel whom you had thus rescued and carried off. Experience shows us, sir, that at land, and, I presume, at sea, proximity is one of the most common causes of love. Now, I understand, she was the only woman you saw for some months; and she had, I think you allow, possession of your cabin, to and from which you had of course constant egress and regress. Sir, human nature is human nature; here is temptation, and opportunity, and circumstantial evidence enough, in our days, to hang a man. What have you to offer in your defence, young man?"

"The plain fact, my lord, is, that instead of three months, I was but three days in the dangerous state of proximity with the Spanish lady. But had it been three months, or three years, there is my defence, my lord," said Captain Walsingham, bowing to Amelia. "At the first _blush_, you allow it, I see, to be powerful; but how powerful, you cannot feel as I do, without having looked, as I have done, into the mind."

"I have looked into the mind as well as you, sir. You have a great deal of assurance, to tell me I cannot feel and judge as well as you can. But, nevertheless, I shall do you justice. I think your defence is sufficient. I believe we must acquit him. But, pray--the plain matter of fact, which I wanted to hear, I have not yet got at. What have you done with this lady? and where is she?"

"She was carried safely to her friends--to her friend, for she has but one friend, that I could find out, an old aunt, who lives in an obscure lodging, in a narrow street, in London."

"And, upon honour, this is all you know about her?" said Mrs. Beaumont.

"All--except that she is in hopes of recovering some property, of which she says she has been unjustly defrauded by some of her relations. After I had paid my respects at the Admiralty, I made it my business to see the lady, and to offer my services; but into her lawsuits, I thank God, it was not my business to inquire, I recommended to her a good honest lawyer, and came here as fast as horses could carry me."

"But was not there some giving of diamonds, and exchanging of rings, one day, upon deck?" said Mrs. Beaumont.

"None," said Captain Walsingham; "that was a mere fable of poor Birch's imagination. I recollect the lady showed me a Spanish motto upon her ring; that is all I can remember about rings.--She had no diamonds, and very few clothes. Now," cried Captain Walsingham, growing a little impatient of the length of his trial, for he had not yet been able to speak for more than an instant to Amelia, "now, I hope, my trial is ended; else its length will be, as in some other cases, the worst of punishments."

"Acquitted! acquitted! honourably acquitted!" said Mr. Palmer.

"Acquitted, acquitted, honourably acquitted by general acclamation," cried Mr. Beaumont.

"Acquitted by a smile from Amelia, worth all our acclamations," said Mrs. Beaumont.

"Captain Walsingham," said Miss Hunter, "did the lady come to England and go to London in a Spanish dress and long waist?"

She spoke, but Captain Walsingham did not hear her important question. She turned to repeat it, but the captain was gone, and Amelia with him.

"Bless me! how quick! how odd!" said Miss Hunter, with a pouting look, which seemed to add--nobody carries me off!

Mr. Beaumont looked duller than was becoming.

Mrs. Beaumont applied herself to adjust the pretty curls of Miss Hunter's hair; and Mr. Palmer, in one of his absent fits, hummed aloud, as he walked up and down the room,

"And it's, Oh! what will become of me?
Oh! what shall I do?
Nobody coming to marry me,
Nobody coming to woo."

CHAPTER XV.

"True love's the gift which God has giv'n
To man alone, beneath the heav'n;
It is the secret sympathy,
The silver link, the silken tie,
Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,
In body and in soul can bind."

Happy love, though the most delightful in reality, is the most uninteresting in description; and lovers are proverbially bad company, except for one another: therefore we shall not intrude on Captain Walsingham and Amelia, nor shall we give a journal of the days of courtship; those days which, by Rousseau, and many people, have been pronounced to be the happiest; by others, the only happy days of existence; and which, by some privileged or prudent few, have been found to be but the prelude to the increasing pleasures of domestic union.

Now that Mr. Beaumont saw his sister and his friend thus gratified in their mutual esteem and affection,--now that he saw all obstacles to their union removed, he became uncontrollably impatient to declare his own attachment to Miss Walsingham.

"My dear mother, I can bear it no longer. Believe me, you are mistaken in the whole romance you have imagined to yourself about Miss Hunter. She is no more in love with me than I am with her. Since you fixed my attention upon her, I have studied the young lady. She is not capable of love: I don't mean that she is not capable of wishing to be married, but that is quite a different affair, which need not give me any peculiar disturbance. My dear mother, find another husband for her, and my life for it, her heart will not break; especially if you give her bales of wedding finery enough to think and talk about for a calendar year.

"You abominably malicious monster of cruelty, I will not smile, nor will I allow you to indulge your humour in this manner at the expense of your

poor victim."

"Victim! never saw a girl look less like a victim, except, indeed, as to her ornaments. I believe it is the etiquette for victims to appear dressed out with garlands, and ribands, and flowers."

"Positively, Edward, I won't allow you to go on in this style;--do you know you seriously hurt and offend me? do you consider that Miss Hunter's mother was my most intimate friend, and this match I have anxiously wished, in consequence of an agreement made between us at your birth and Albina's?"

"Oh, ma'am, those agreements never turned out well, from the time of the Arabian tales to the present moment. And you must pardon me if, after having tried all that reason and patience would do, in vain, I now come to impatience, and a little innocent ridicule. Except by laughing, I have no other way left of convincing you that I never can or will marry this young lady."

"But so pretty a creature! Surely you _have thought_ her pretty."

"Extremely pretty. And I acknowledge that there have been moments when the influence of her--beauty, I can't call it--prettiness, joined to the power of my mother's irresistible address, have almost lapped me in elysium--a fool's paradise. But, thank Heaven and Miss Walsingham! I unlapped myself; and though the sweet airs took my fancy, they never imprisoned my soul."

"Vastly poetical! quite in the blue-stocking style."

"Blue-stocking! Dear mother, that expression is not elegant enough for you. That commonplace taunt is unworthy of my mother," said Mr. Beaumont, warmly, for he was thrown off his guard by the reflection implied on Miss Walsingham. "Ignorant silly women may be allowed to sneer at information and talents in their own sex, and, if they have read them, may talk of *'Les Prøcieuses Ridicules_,'* and *'Les Femmes Savantes_,'* and may borrow from MoliŁre all the wit they want, to support the cause of folly. But from women who are themselves distinguished for talents, such apostasy--but I am speaking to my mother--I forbear."

"Great forbearance to your mother you have shown, in truth," cried Mrs. Beaumont, reddening with genuine anger: "Marry as you please! I have done. Fool that I have been, to devote my life to plans for the happiness and aggrandizement of my children! It is now time I should think of myself. You shall not see me the defeated, deserted, duped, despised mother--the old dowager _permitted_ in the house of which she was once the mistress! No, no, Mr. Beaumont," cried she, rising indignantly, "this shall never, never be."

Touched and astonished by a burst of passion, such as he scarcely had ever before seen from his mother, Mr. Beaumont stopped her as she rose; and taking her hand in the most affectionate manner, "Forgive me, my

dear mother, the hasty words I said just now. I was very much in the wrong. I beg your pardon. Forgive your son."

Mrs. Beaumont struggled to withdraw the hand which her son forcibly detained.

"Be always," continued he, "be always mistress of this house, of me, and mine. The chosen wife of my heart will never torment you, or degrade herself, with paltry struggles for power. Your days shall be happy and honoured: believe me, I speak from my heart."

Mrs. Beaumont looked as if her anger had subsided; yet, as if struggling with unusual feelings, she sat silent. Mr. Beaumont continued, "Your son--who is no sentimentalist, no speech-maker--your son, who has hitherto perhaps been too rough, too harsh--now implores you, by these sincere caresses, by all that is tender and true in nature, to believe in the filial affection of your children. Give us, simply give us your confidence; and our confidence, free and unconstrained, shall be given in return. Then we shall be happy indeed."

Touched, vanquished, Mrs. Beaumont leaned her head on her son, and said, "Then we shall be happy indeed!" The exclamation was sincere: at this moment she thought as she spoke. All her schemes were forgotten: the reversionary title, the Wigram estate--all, all forgotten: miraculous eloquence and power of truth!

"What happiness!" said Mrs. Beaumont: "I ask no other. You are right, my dear son; marry Miss Walsingham, and we have enough, and more than enough, for happiness. You are right; and henceforward we shall have but one mind amongst us."

With true gratitude and joy her son embraced her; and this was the most delightful, perhaps the only really delightful, moment she had felt for years. She was sincere, and at ease. But this touch of nature, strong as it was, operated only for a moment: habit resumed her influence; art regained her pupil and her slave! Captain Lightbody and Miss Hunter came into the room; and with them came low thoughts of plots, and notes, and baronets, and equipages, and a reversionary title, and the Wigram estate. What different ideas of happiness! Her son, in the mean time, had started up, mounted his horse, and had galloped off to realize some of his ideas of felicity, by the immediate offer of his hand to the lady who possessed his whole heart. Cool as policy, just recovered from the danger of imprudent sensibility, could make her, Mrs. Beaumont was now all herself again.

"Have you found much amusement shooting this morning, Lightbody?" said she, carelessly.

"No, ma'am; done nothing--just nothing at all--for I met Sir John in the grounds, and could not leave him. Poor Sir John, ma'am; I tell him we must get him a crook; he is quite turned despairing shepherd. Never saw a man so changed. Upon my soul, he is--seriously now, Mrs. Beaumont, you need not laugh--I always told Sir John that his time of falling in love

would come; and come it has, at last, with a vengeance."

"Oh, nonsense! nonsense, Lightbody! This to me! and of Sir John Hunter!"

Though Mrs. Beaumont called it, and thought it nonsense, yet it flattered her; and though she appeared half offended by flattery so gross, as to seem almost an insult upon her understanding, yet her vanity was secretly gratified, even by feeling that she had dependents who were thus obliged to flatter; and though she despised Captain Lightbody for the meanness, yet he made his court to her successfully, by persisting in all the audacity of adulation. She knew Sir John Hunter too well to believe that he was liable to fall in love with any thing but a fair estate or a fine fortune; yet she was gratified by feeling that she possessed so great a share of those charms which age cannot wither; of that substantial power, to which men do not merely feign in poetical sport to submit, or to which they are slaves only for a honey-moon, but to which they do homage to the latest hour of life, with unabating, with increasing devotion. Besides this sense of pleasure arising from calculation, it may be presumed that, like all other female politicians, our heroine had something of the woman lurking at her heart; something of that feminine vanity, which inclines to believe in the potency of personal charms, even when they are in the wane. Captain Lightbody's asseverations, and the notes Sir John Hunter wrote to his sister, were at last listened to by Mrs. Beaumont with patience, and even with smiles; and, after it had been sufficiently reiterated, that really it was using Sir John Hunter ill not to give him some more decisive answer, when he was so unhappy, so impatient, she at length exclaimed, "Well, Lightbody, tell your friend Sir John, then, since it must be so, I will consult my friends, and see what can be done for him."

"When may I say? for I dare not see Sir John again--positively I dare not meet him--without having some hope to give, something decisive. He says the next time he comes here he must be allowed to make it known to the family that he is Mrs. Beaumont's admirer. So, when may I say?"

"Oh, dearest Mrs. Beaumont," cried Miss Hunter, "say to-morrow."

"To-morrow! impossible!"

"But when?" said Miss Hunter: "only look at my brother's note to me again; you see he is afraid of being cast off at last as he was before about Amelia, if Mr. Palmer should object; and he says this disappointment would be such a very different affair."

"Indeed," said Captain Lightbody, "I, who am in Sir John's confidence, can vouch for that; for I have reason to believe, that--that _the connexion_ was the charm, and that the daughter would not have been thought of. Stop, I was charged not to say this. But _when_ Mrs. Beaumont, to return to my point--"

"Oh! name an early day," cried Miss Hunter, in a fondling tone; "name an early day for my brother's coming; and then, you know, it will be so

nice to have the wedding days fixed for both marriages. And, dearest Mrs. Beaumont, remember I am to be your bride's-maid; and we'll have a magnificent wedding, and I shall be bride's-maid!"

"The dear innocent little creature, how mad she is with spirits! Well, you shall be my bride's-maid, if the thing takes place."

"_If.--If_ to the winds!--Captain Lightbody, tell my brother--No, I'll write myself, and tell him he may come."

"How she distresses me! But she is so affectionate, one does not know how to be angry with her. But, my dear, as to naming the day when he may publicly declare himself, I cannot; for, you know, I have to break the affair to Mr. Palmer, and to my son and daughter, and I must take my own time, and find a happy moment for this; so name a day I cannot; but in general--and it's always safest to use general terms--you may say, _soon_."

This was Mrs. Beaumont's ultimatum. The note was written accordingly, and committed to the care of the confidential captain.

This business of mysterious note-writing, and secret negotiations[5], was peculiarly suited to our heroine's genius and taste. Considering the negotiation to be now in effect brought within view of a happy termination, her ambassador, furnished with her ultimatum, having now actually set out on his ostensible mission of duck-shooting, our fair negotiatrrix prepared to show the usual degree of gratitude towards those who had been the principal instruments of her success. The proper time, she thought, was now arrived, when, having no further occasion for Miss Hunter's services, she might finally undeceive her young friend as to any hopes she might retain of a union with Mr. Beaumont; and she felt that it was now indispensably necessary to disclose the truth, that her son had declared his attachment to Miss Walsingham.

Mrs. Beaumont opened the delicate case with a sigh, which claimed the notice of her young confidante.

"What a deep sigh!" said Miss Hunter, who was perfect, to use a musical term, in her lessons, _pour observer les soupirs_: "What a sigh! I hope it was for my poor brother?"

"Ah, no, my love! for one nearer my heart--for you."

"For me!--dear me!"

"You see before you a mother, all of whose fondest wishes and plans are doomed to be frustrated by her children. Amelia would have her way: I was forced to yield. My son follows her example, insists upon marrying without fortune, or extraordinary beauty, or any of the advantages which I had fondly pointed out in the daughter-in-law of my heart. You turn away from me, my darling! How shall I go on? how shall I tell you all the terrible truth?"

"Oh, ma'am, pray go on; pray tell me all."

"Miss Walsingham; that's all, in one word. These Walsinghams have forced themselves into my family,--fairly outwitted me. I cannot tell you how much, how deeply I am mortified!"

"Thank Heaven! I am not mortified," cried Miss Hunter, throwing back her head with pettish disdain.

Mrs. Beaumont, who had prepared herself for a fainting fit, or at least for a flood of tears, rejoiced to see this turn in the young lady's temper.

"That's right, my own love. How I admire your spirit! This pride becomes you, and is what I expected from your understanding. Set a just value upon yourself, and show it."

"I should set but little value on myself, indeed, if I did not think myself equal to Miss Walsingham; but Mr. Beaumont knows best."

"Not best, I fear," said Mrs. Beaumont; "but, from a child he was ever the most self-willed, uncontrollable being; there was no moving, no persuading him. There was no power, no appeal, my love, I did not try."

"Dear ma'am, I am excessively sorry you did."

"Why, my dear, I could not refrain from doing all I could, not only for my son's sake, but for yours, when I saw your affections, as I feared, so deeply engaged. But your present magnanimity gives me hopes that the shock will not be irrecoverable."

"Irrecoverable! No, really, ma'am. If Mr. Beaumont expects to see me wear the willow for him all my life, his vanity will be mistaken."

"Certainly, my dear," replied Mrs. Beaumont, "you would not be so weak as to wear the willow for any man. A young lady of your fortune should never wear the weeping but the golden willow. Turn your pretty little face again towards me, and smile once more upon me."

Miss Hunter had sat with her face turned from Mrs. Beaumont during the whole of this dialogue--"as if by hiding her face, she could conceal the emotions of her mind from me," thought her penetrating observer.

"Spare me, spare me, dearest Mrs. Beaumont," cried Miss Hunter, hiding her face on the arm of the sofa, and seeming now disposed to pass from the heights of anger to the depths of despair.

Mrs. Beaumont, less hard-hearted than some politicians, who care not who dies or lives, provided they attain their own objects, now listened at least with seeming commiseration to her young friend, who, with intermitting sighs, and in a voice which her position or her sobs rendered scarcely audible, talked of dying, and of never marrying any other man upon the earth.

Not much alarmed, however, by the dying words of young ladies, Mrs. Beaumont confined her attention to the absurdity of the resolution against marriage in general, and at this instant formed a plan of marrying Miss Hunter to one of her nephews instead of her son. She had one unmarried nephew, a young man of good figure and agreeable manners, but with only a younger brother's portion. To him she thought Miss Hunter's large fortune would be highly convenient; and she had reason to believe that his taste in the choice of a wife would be easily governed by her advice, or by his interest. Thus she could, at least, prevent her young friend's affections and fortune from going out of the family. In consequence of this glimpse of a new scheme, our indefatigable politician applied herself to prepare the way for it with her wonted skill. She soothed the lovelorn and pettish damsel with every expression that could gratify pride and rouse high thoughts of revenge. She suggested that instead of making rash vows of celibacy, which would only show forlorn constancy, Miss Hunter should abide by her first spirited declaration, never to wear the willow for any man; and that the best way to assert her own dignity would be to marry as soon as possible. After having given this consolatory advice, Mrs. Beaumont left the young lady's grief to wear itself out. "I know, my love," added she, "a friend of mine who would die for the happiness which my obstinate son does not, it seems, know how to value."

"Who, ma'am?" said Miss Hunter, raising her head: "I'm sure I can't guess whom you can possibly mean--who, ma'am?"

"Ah! my dear, excuse me," said Mrs. Beaumont, "that is a secret I cannot tell you yet. When you are 'fit to hear yourself convinced,' may be, I may obtain leave to tell you your admirer's name. I can assure you, he's a very fashionable and a very agreeable man; a great favourite with our sex, a particular friend of mine, and an officer."

"Lord bless me!" exclaimed Miss Hunter, starting quite up, "an officer! I can't imagine whom you mean! Dear Mrs. Beaumont, whom can you mean?"

Mrs. Beaumont walked towards the door.

"Only tell me one thing, dearest Mrs. Beaumont--did I ever see him?"

Mrs. Beaumont, wisely declining to answer any more questions at present, quitted the room, and left Miss Hunter dying--with curiosity.

The new delight of this fresh project, with the prospect of bringing to a happy termination her negotiation with Sir John Hunter, sustained Mrs. Beaumont's spirits in the midst of the disappointments she experienced respecting the marriages of her son and daughter; and enabled her, with less effort of dissimulation, to take apparently a share in the general joy which now pervaded her family. Her son expressed his felicity with unbounded rapture, when he found his proposal to Miss Walsingham graciously received by the object of his affections, and by all her family: his gratitude to his mother for no longer opposing his wishes gave a tenderness to his manner which would have touched any heart but

that of a politician. Amelia, also, even in the midst of her love for Captain Walsingham, was anxiously intent upon showing dutiful attention to her mother, and upon making her some amends for the pain she had caused her of late. Whenever the brother and sister were together, in all their views of future happiness their mother was one of their principal objects; and these dispositions both Miss Walsingham and Captain Walsingham were earnest to confirm. No young people could have higher ideas than they had of the duty of children towards parents, and of the delight of family confidence and union. In former times, when Mr. Beaumont had been somewhat to blame in the roughness of his sincerity towards his mother, and when he had been disposed to break from her artful restraints, Captain Walsingham, by his conversation, and by his letters, had always used his power and influence to keep him within bounds; and whenever he could do so with truth, to raise Mrs. Beaumont in his opinion. She now appeared in a more advantageous light to her family, and they were more disposed to believe in her sincerity than they had ever been since the credulous days of childhood. The days of love and childhood are perhaps, in good minds, almost equally credulous, or, at least, confiding. Even Mr. Walsingham was won over by the pleasure he felt in the prospect of his daughter's happiness; and good Mr. Palmer was ten times more attentive than ever to Madam Beaumont. In his attention, however, there was something more ceremonious than formerly; it was evident, for he was too honest to conceal his feelings, that his opinion of her was changed, and that his attention was paid to her rather as the widow of his old friend than on her own account. Amelia, who particularly remarked this change, and who feared that it must be severely painful to her mother, tried by every honest art of kindness to reinstate her in his regard. Amelia, however, succeeded only in raising herself in his esteem.

"Do not disturb yourself, my dear young lady," said he to her, one day, "about your mother and me. Things are on their right footing between us, and can never be on any other. She, you see, is quite satisfied."

Mrs. Beaumont, indeed, had not Amelia's quick sensibility with regard to the real affections of her friends, though she was awake to every external mark of attention. She was content, as Mr. Palmer before others always treated her with marked deference, and gave her no reason to apprehend any alteration in his testamentary dispositions. When settlements were talked of for the intended marriages, Mr. Palmer seemed to consider Mrs. Beaumont first in all their consultations, appealed for her opinion, and had ever a most cautious eye upon her interests. This she observed with satisfaction, and she was gratified by the demonstrations of increased regard from her son and daughter, because she thought it would facilitate her projects. She wished that her marriage with Sir John Hunter should appear well to the world; and for this reason she desired that it should seem to be liked by all her family--seem, for as to their real opinions she was indifferent.

Things were in this situation, when Mrs. Beaumont caused herself to be surprised [6] one morning by Mr. Palmer, with a letter in her hand, deep in reverie.

"Oh! my dear Mr. Palmer, is it you?" cried she, starting very naturally;
"I was really so lost in thought--"

Mr. Palmer hoped that he did not disturb her.--"Disturb me! no, my good friend, you are the very person I wished to consult." Her eye glanced again and again upon the letter she held in her hand, but Mr. Palmer seemed provokingly destitute of curiosity; he however took a chair, and his snuff-box, and with a polite but cold manner said he was much honoured by her consulting him, but that of course his judgment could be of little service to a lady of Mrs. Beaumont's understanding.

"Understanding! Ah!" said she, "there are cases where understanding is of no use to women, but quite the contrary."

Mr. Palmer did not contradict the assertion, nor did he assent to it, but waited, with a pinch of snuff arrested in its way, to have the cases specified.

"In love affairs, for instance, we poor women," said Mrs. Beaumont, looking down prettily; but Mr. Palmer afforded no assistance to her bashful hesitation; she was under the necessity of finishing her sentence, or of beginning another, upon a different construction. The latter was most convenient, and she took a new and franker tone:--"Here's a letter from poor Sir John Hunter."

Mr. Palmer still sat bending forward to listen with the most composed deference, but pressed not in the slightest degree upon her confidence by any question or look down towards the letter, or up towards the lady's face, but straightforward looked he, till, quite provoked by his dulness, Mrs. Beaumont took the matter up again, and, in a new tone, said, "To be candid with you, my dear friend, this is a subject on which I feel some awkwardness and reluctance in speaking to you--for of all men breathing, I should in any important action of my life wish for your approbation; and yet, on the present occasion, I fear, and so does Sir John, that you will utterly disapprove of the match,"

She paused again, to be asked--What match? But compelled by her auditor's invincible silence to make out her own case, she proceeded: "You must know, my good sir, that Sir John Hunter is, it seems, unconquerably bent upon a connexion with this family; for being refused by the daughter, he has proposed for the mother!"

"Yes," said Mr. Palmer, bowing.

"I thought you would have been more surprised," said Mrs. Beaumont: "I am glad the first sound of the thing does not, as I was afraid it would, startle or revolt you."

"Startle me, it could not, madam," said Mr. Palmer, "for I have been prepared for it some time past."

"Is it possible? And who could have mentioned it to you--Captain Lightbody?"

"Captain Lightbody!" cried Mr. Palmer, with a sudden flash of indignation: "believe me, madam, I never thought of speaking to Captain Lightbody of your affairs, I am not in the habit of listening to such people."

"But still, he might have spoken."

"No, madam, no; he would not have dared to bring me secret information."

"Honourable! quite honourable! But then, my dear sir, how came you to know the thing?"

"I saw it. You know, madam, those who stand by always see more than the players."

"And do you think my son and daughter, and Captain Walsingham, know it too?"

"I fancy not; for they have not been standers by: they have been deeply engaged themselves."

"That's well--for I wished to have your opinion and advice in the first place, before I hinted it even to them, or any one else living. As I feared the match would not meet your approbation, I told Sir John so, and I gave him only a provisional consent."

"Like the provisional consent of that young Irish lady," said Mr. Palmer, laughing, "who went through the marriage service with her lover, adding at the end of each response, 'provided my father gives his consent.' [7] But, madam, though I am old enough certainly to be your father, yet even if I had the honour to be so in reality, as you are arrived at years of discretion, you know you cannot need my consent."

"But seriously, my excellent friend," cried she, "I never could be happy in marrying against your approbation. And let me, in my own vindication, explain to you the whole of the affair."

Here Mr. Palmer, dreading one of her long explanations, which he knew he should never comprehend, besought her not to invest him with the unbecoming character of her judge. He represented that no vindication was necessary, and that none could be of any use. She however persisted in going through a sentimental defence of her conduct. She assured Mr. Palmer, that she had determined never to marry again; that her inviolable respect for her dear Colonel Beaumont's memory had induced her to persist in this resolution for many years. That motives of delicacy and generosity were what first prevailed with her to listen to Sir John's suit; and that now she consoled and supported herself by the proud reflection, that she was acting as her dear Colonel Beaumont himself, could he know the circumstances and read her heart, would wish and enjoin her to act.

Here a smile seemed to play upon Mr. Palmer's countenance; but the smile

had vanished in an instant, and was followed by a sudden gush of tears, which were as suddenly wiped away; not, however, before they reminded Mrs. Beaumont to spread her handkerchief before her face.

"Perhaps," resumed she, after a decent pause, "perhaps I am doing wrong with the best intentions. Some people think that widows should never, on any account, marry again, and perhaps Mr. Palmer is of this opinion?"

"No, by no means," said Mr. Palmer; "nor was Colonel Beaumont. Often and often he said in his letters to me, that he wished his wife to marry again after he was gone, and to be as happy after his death as she had been during his life. I only hope that your choice may fulfil--may justify--" Mr. Palmer stopped again, something in Shakspeare, about preying on garbage, ran in his head; and, when Mrs. Beaumont went on to some fresh topics of vindication, and earnestly pressed for his _advice_, he broke up the conference by exclaiming, "'Fore Jupiter, madam, we had better say nothing more about the matter; for, after all, what can the wit of man or woman make of it, but that you choose to marry Sir John Hunter, and that nobody in the world has a right to object to it? There is certainly no occasion to use any management with me; and your eloquence is only wasting itself, for I am not so presumptuous, or so unreasonable, as to set myself up for the judge of your actions. You do me honour by consulting me; but as you already know my opinion of the gentleman, I must decline saying any thing further on the subject."

Mrs. Beaumont was left in a painful state of doubt as to the main point, whether Mr. Palmer would or would not alter his will. However, as she was determined that the match should be accomplished, she took advantage of the declaration Mr. Palmer made, that he had no right to object to her following her own inclinations; and she told Sir John Hunter that Mr. Palmer was perfectly satisfied; and that he had indeed relieved her mind from some foolish scruples, by having assured her that it was Colonel Beaumont's particular wish, often expressed in his confidential letters, that his widow should marry again. So far, so good. Then the affair was to be broken to her son and daughter. She begged Mr. Palmer would undertake, for her sake, this delicate task; but he declined it with a frank simplicity.

"Surely, madam," said he, "you can speak without difficulty to your own son and daughter; and I have through life observed, that employing one person to speak to another is almost always hurtful. I should not presume, however, to regulate your conduct, madam, by my observations; I should only give this as a reason for declining the office with which you proposed to honour me."

The lady, compelled to speak for herself to her son and daughter, opened the affair to them with as much delicacy and address as she had used with Mr. Palmer. Their surprise was great; for they had not the most remote idea of her intentions. The result of a tedious conversation of three hours' length was perfectly satisfactory to her, though it would have been to the highest degree painful and mortifying to a woman of more feeling, or one less intent upon _an establishment_, a reversionary

title, and the Wigram estate. How low she sunk in the opinion of her children and her friends was comparatively matter of small consequence to Mrs. Beaumont, provided she could keep fair appearances with the world. Whilst her son and daughter were so much ashamed of her intended marriage, that they would not communicate their sentiments even to each other,--they, with becoming duty, agreed that Mrs. Beaumont was very good in speaking to them on the subject; as she had an uncontrollable right to marry as she thought proper.

Mrs. Beaumont now wrote letters innumerable to her extensive circle of connexions and acquaintance, announcing her approaching nuptials, and inviting them to her wedding. It was settled by Mrs. Beaumont, that the three marriages should _take place_ on the same day. This point she laboured with her usual address, and at last brought the parties concerned to give up their wishes for a private wedding, to gratify her love for show and parade. Nothing now remained but to draw the settlements. Mrs. Beaumont, who piqued herself upon her skill in business, and who thought the sum of wisdom was to excel in cunning, looked over her lawyer's drafts, and suggested many nice emendations, which obtained for her from an attorney the praise of being a vastly clever woman. Sir John was not, on his side, deficient in attention to his own interests. Never was there a pair better matched in this respect; never were two people going to be married more afraid that each should _take the other in_. Sir John, however, pressed forward the business with an eagerness that surprised every body. Mrs. Beaumont again and again examined the settlements, to try to account prudentially for her lover's impatience; but she _saw_ that _all_ was right there on her part, and her self-love at last acquiesced in the belief that Sir John's was now the ardour of a real lover. To the lady's entire satisfaction, the liveries, the equipages, the diamonds, the wedding-clothes were all bought, and the wedding-day approached. Mrs. Beaumont's rich and fashionable connexions and acquaintance all promised to grace her nuptials. Nothing was talked of but the preparations for Mrs. Beaumont and Sir John Hunter's marriage; and so full of business and bustle, and mysteries, and _sentimentalities_, and vanities was she, that she almost forgot that any body was to be married but herself. The marriages of her son and daughter seemed so completely to merge in the importance and splendour of her own, that she merely recollected them as things that were to be done on the same day, as subordinate parts that were to be acted by inferior performers, whilst she should engross the public interest and applause. In the mean time Miss Hunter was engaged, to Mrs. Beaumont's satisfaction and her own, in superintending the wedding-dresses, and in preparing the most elegant dress imaginable for herself, as bride's-maid. Now and then she interrupted these occupations with sighs and fits of pretty sentimental dejection; but Mrs. Beaumont was well convinced that a new lover would soon make her forget her disappointment. The nephew was written to, and invited to spend some time with his aunt, immediately after her marriage; for she determined that Miss Hunter should be her niece, since she could not be her daughter. This secondary intrigue went on delightfully in our heroine's imagination, without interfering with the main business of her own marriage. The day, the long-expected day, that was to crown all her hopes, at length arrived.

CHAPTER XVI.

"On peut être plus fin qu'un autre, mais pas plus fin que tous les autres."--ROCHEFOUCAULT.

The following paragraph[8] extracted from the newspapers of the day, will, doubtless, be acceptable to a large class of readers.

"FASHIONABLE HYMENEALS.

"Yesterday, Sir John Hunter, of Hunter Hall, Devonshire, Bart., led to the hymeneal altar the accomplished Mrs. Beaumont, relict of the late Colonel Beaumont, of Beaumont Park. On the same day her son and daughter were also married--Mr. Beaumont to Miss Walsingham, daughter of E. Walsingham, Esq., of Walsingham House;--and Miss Beaumont to Captain Walsingham of the navy, a near relation of Edward Walsingham, Esq., of Walsingham House.

"These nuptials in the Beaumont family were graced by an overflowing concourse of beauty, nobility, and fashion, comprehending all the relations, connexions, intimate friends, and particular acquaintances of the interesting and popular Mrs. Beaumont. The cavalcade reached from the principal front of the house to the south gate of the park, a distance of three-quarters of a mile. Mrs. Beaumont and her daughter, two lovely brides, in a superb landau, were attired in the most elegant, becoming, fashionable, and costly manner, their dress consisting of the finest lace, over white satin. Mrs. Beaumont's was point lace, and she was also distinguished by a long veil of the most exquisite texture, which added a tempered grace to beauty in its meridian. In the same landau appeared the charming brides'-maids, all in white, of course. Among these, Miss Hunter attracted particular attention, by the felicity of her costume. Her drapery, which was of delicate lace, being happily adapted to show to the greatest advantage the captivating contour of her elegant figure, and ornamented with white silk fringe and tassels, marked every airy motion of her sylph-like form.

"The third bride on this auspicious day was Miss Walsingham, who, with her father and bride's-maids, followed in Mr. Walsingham's carriage. Miss Walsingham, we are informed, was dressed with simple elegance, in the finest produce of the Indian loom; but, as she was in a covered carriage, we could not obtain a full view of her attire. Next to the brides' equipages, followed the bridegrooms'. And chief of these Sir John Hunter sported a splendid barouche. He was dressed in the height of the ton, and his horses deserved particular admiration. After Sir John's barouche came the equipage belonging to Mr. Beaumont, highly finished but plain: in this were the two bridegrooms, Mr. Beaumont and Captain Walsingham, accompanied by Mr. Palmer (the great West-Indian Palmer),

who, we understand, is the intimate friend and relative of the Beaumont family. Then followed, as our correspondent counted, above a hundred carriages of distinction, with a prodigious cavalcade of gentry. The whole was closed by a long line of attendants and domestics. The moment the park gates were opened, groups of young girls of the Beaumont tenantry, habited in white, with knots of ribands, and emblematical devices suited to the occasion, and with baskets of flowers in their hands, began to strew vegetable incense before the brides, especially before Mrs. Beaumont's landau.

'And whilst the priests accuse the bride's delay,
Roses and myrtles still obstruct her way.'

"The crowd, which assembled as they proceeded along the road to the church, and in the churchyard, was such that, however gratefully it evinced the popularity of the amiable parties, it became at last evidently distressing to the principal object of their homage--Mrs. Beaumont, who could not have stood the gaze of public admiration but for the friendly and becoming, yet tantalizing refuge of her veil. Constables were obliged to interfere to clear the path to the church door, and the amiable almost fainting lady was from the arms of her anxious and alarmed bride's-maids lifted out of her landau, and supported into the church and up the aisle with all the marked gallantry of true tenderness, by her happy bridegroom, Sir John Hunter.

"After the ceremony was over, Sir John and Lady Hunter, and the two other new-married couples, returned to Beaumont Park with the court of their friends, where the company partook of an elegant collation. The artless graces and fascinating affability of Lady Hunter won all hearts; and the wit, festive spirits, and politeness of Sir John, attracted universal admiration--not to say envy, of all present. Immediately after the collation, the happy couple set off for their seat at Hunter Hall.

"Mr. Beaumont, and the new Mrs. Beaumont, remained at Beaumont Park. Captain and Mrs. Walsingham repaired to Mr. Walsingham's.

"It is a singular circumstance, communicated to us by the indisputable authority of one of the bride's-maids, that Miss Walsingham, as it was discovered after the ceremony, was actually married with her gown the wrong side outwards. Whether this be an omen announcing good fortune to all the parties concerned, we cannot take upon us to determine; but this much we may safely assert, that never distinguished female in the annals of fashion was married under more favourable auspices than the amiable Lady Hunter. And it is universally acknowledged, that no lady is better suited to be, as in the natural course of things she will soon be, Countess of Puckeridge, and at the head of the great Wigram estate."

* * * * *

So ends our newspaper writer.

Probably this paragraph was sent to the press before the fashionable

hymeneals_ had actually taken place. This may in some measure account for the extraordinary omissions in the narrative. After the three marriages had been solemnized, just when the ceremony was over, and Lady Hunter was preparing to receive the congratulations of the brilliant congregation, she observed that the clergyman, instead of shutting his book, kept it open before him, and looked round as if expecting another bride. Mrs. Beaumont, we should say Lady Hunter, curtsied to him, smiled, and made a sign that the ceremony was finished; but at this instant, to her astonishment, she saw her bride's-maid, Miss Hunter, quit her place, and beheld Captain Lightbody seize her hand, and lead her up towards the altar. Lady Hunter broke through the crowd that was congratulating her, and reaching Miss Hunter, drew her hack forcibly, and whispered, "Are you mad, Miss Hunter? Is this a place, a time for frolic? What are you about?"

"Going to be married, ma'am! following your ladyship's good example," answered her bride's-maid, flippantly,--at the same time springing forward from the detaining grasp, regardless even of the rent she made in her lace dress, she hurried, or was hurried on by Captain Lightbody.

"Captain Lightbody!" cried Lady Hunter; but, answering only with a triumphant bow, he passed on with his bride.

"Heavens! will nobody stop him?" cried Lady Hunter, over-taking them again as they reached the steps. She addressed herself to the clergyman.

"Sir, she is a ward in chancery, and under my protection: they have no licence; their banns have not been published: you cannot, dare not, surely, marry them?"

"Pardon me, Lady Hunter," said Captain Lightbody; "I have shown Mr. Twigg my licence."

"I have seen it--I thought it was with your ladyship's knowledge," replied Mr. Twigg. "I--I cannot object--it would be at my own peril. If there is any lawful impediment, your ladyship will make it at the proper response."

A friend of Captain Lightbody's appeared in readiness to give the young lady away.

"The ceremony must go on, madam," said the clergyman.

"At your peril, sir!" said Lady Hunter. "This young lady, is a ward of chancery, and not of age!"

"I am of age--of age last month," cried the bride.

"Not till next year."

"Of age last month. I have the parish register," said Captain Lightbody. "Go on, sir, if you please."

"Good Heavens! Miss Hunter, can you bear," said Lady Hunter, "to be the

object of this indecent altercation? Retire with me, and only let me speak to you, I conjure you!"

No--the young lady stood her ground, resolute to be a bride.

"If there is any lawful impediment, your ladyship will please to make it at the proper response," said the chaplain. "I am under a necessity of proceeding."

The ceremony went on.

Lady Hunter, in high indignation, retired immediately to the vestry-room with her bridegroom. "At least," cried she, throwing herself upon a seat, "it shall never be said that I countenanced, by my presence, such a scandalous marriage! Oh! Sir John Hunter, why did you not interfere to save your own sister?"

"Save her! Egad, she did not choose to be saved. Who can save a woman that does not choose it? What could I do? Is not she your ladyship's pupil?--he! he! he! But I'll fight the rascal directly, if that will give you any satisfaction."

"And he shall have a lawsuit too for her fortune!" said Lady Hunter; "for she is not of age. I have a memorandum in an old pocket book. Oh! who would have thought such a girl could have duped me so!"

Lady Hunter's exclamations were interrupted by the entrance of her son and daughter, who came to offer what consolation they could. The brilliant congregation poured in a few minutes afterwards, with their mingled congratulations and condolence, eager, above all things, to satisfy their curiosity.

Captain Lightbody, with invincible assurance, came up just as Lady Hunter was getting into her carriage, and besought permission to present his bride to her. But Lady Hunter, turning her back upon him without reply, said to her son, "If Captain Lightbody is going to Beaumont Park, I am not going there."

Mrs. Lightbody, who was now emancipated from all control, and from all sense of propriety, called out from her own carriage, in which she was seated, "That, thank Heaven! she had a house of her own to go to, and that nothing was farther from her thoughts than to interrupt the festivities of Lady Hunter's more mature nuptials."

Delighted with having made this tart answer, Mrs. Lightbody ordered her husband to order her coachman to drive off as fast as possible. The captain, by her particular desire, had taken a house for her at Brighton, the gayest place she could think of. We leave this amiable bride rejoicing in the glory of having duped a lady of Mrs. Beaumont's penetration; and her bridegroom rejoicing still more in the parish register, by the help of which he hoped to obtain full enjoyment of what he knew to be his bride's most valuable possession--her portion, and to defy Lady Hunter's threatened lawsuit.

In the mean time, Lady Hunter, in her point lace and beautiful veil, seated beside her baronet, in his new barouche, endeavoured to forget this interruption of her triumph. She considered, that though Miss Hunter's fortune was lost to her family, yet the title of countess, and the Wigram estate, were secure: this was solid consolation; and recovering her features from their unprecedented discomposure, she forced smiles and looks suitable to the occasion, as she bowed to congratulating passengers.

Arrived at Beaumont Park, she prepared, without appetite, to partake of the elegant collation, and to do the honours with her accustomed grace: she took care to seat Mr. Palmer beside her, that she might show the world on what good terms they were together. She was pleased to see, that though two younger brides sat near her, she engaged by far the largest share of public admiration. They were so fully content and engrossed by their own feelings, that they did not perceive that they were what is called thrown into the shade. All the pride, pomp, and circumstance of these glorious hymeneals appeared to them but as a dream, or as a scene that was acting before them, in which they were not called to take a part. Towards the end of the collation, one of the guests, my Lord Rider, a nobleman who always gave himself the air of being in a prodigious hurry, declared that he was under the necessity of going off, for he expected a person to meet him at his house in town, on some particular business, at an appointed day. His lordship's travelling companion, who was unwilling to quit so prematurely the present scene of festivity, observed that the man of business had engaged to write to his lordship, and that he should at least wait till the post should come in. Lady Hunter politely sent to inquire if any letters had arrived for his lordship; and, in consequence of his impatience, all the letters for the family were brought: Lady Hunter distributed them. There was one for Captain Walsingham, with a Spanish motto on the seal: Lady Hunter, as she gave it to him, whispered to Amelia, "Don't be jealous, my dear, but that, I can tell you, is a letter from his Spanish incognita." Amelia smiled with a look of the most perfect confidence and love. Captain Walsingham immediately opened the letter, and, looking at the signature, said, "It is not from my Spanish incognita,--it is from her aunt; I will read it by and by."

"A fine evasion, indeed!" exclaimed Lady Hunter: "look how coolly he puts it into his pocket! Ah! my credulous Amelia, do you allow him to begin in this manner?" pursued she, in a tone of raillery, yet as if she really suspected something wrong in the letter; "and have you no curiosity, Mrs. Walsingham?"

Amelia declared that she had none; that she was not one of those who think that jealousy is the best proof of love.

"Right, right," said Mr. Palmer; "confidence is the best proof of love; and yours, I'll venture to say, is, and ever will be, well placed."

Captain Walsingham, with a grateful smile, took his letter again out of his pocket, and immediately began to read it in a low voice to Amelia,

Lady Hunter, and Mr. Palmer.

* * * * *

"DEAR SIR,

"Though almost a stranger to you, I should think myself wanting in gratitude if I did not, after all the services you have done my family, write to thank you in my niece's name and in my own: and much I regret that my words will so ill convey to you the sentiments of our hearts. I am an old woman, not well accustomed to use my pen in the way of letter-writing; but can say truly, that whilst I have life I shall be grateful to you. You have restored me to happiness by restoring to me my long-lost niece. It will, I am sure, give you satisfaction to hear, that my niece--"

* * * * *

Captain Walsingham stopped short, with a look which confirmed Lady Hunter in all her suspicions,--which made Mr. Palmer take out his snuff-box,--which startled even Mr. Beaumont; but which did not raise in the mind of Amelia the slightest feeling of doubt or suspicion. She smiled, and looked round at her alarmed friends with a manner which seemed to say, "Can you suppose it possible that there can be any thing wrong?"

"Pray go on, Captain Walsingham," said Lady Hunter, "unless--unless you have particular, very particular reasons."

"I have particular, very particular reasons," said Captain Walsingham; "and since," turning to Amelia, "this confiding lady does not insist upon my going on--"

"Oh!" said Lady Hunter, gaily, snatching the letter, "I am not such a credulous, or, as you call it, confiding lady."

"I beg of your ladyship not to read it," said Captain Walsingham, in an earnest tone.

"You beg of me not to read it, and with that alarmed look--Oh! positively, I must, and will read it."

"Not at present, then, I entreat you!"

"This very instant," cried Lady Hunter, affecting all the imperious vivacity of a young bride, under favour of which she determined to satisfy her malicious curiosity.

"Pray, Lady Hunter, do not read it," repeated Captain Walsingham, laying his hand over the letter. "It is for your own sake," added he, in a low and earnest voice, "it is for your own sake, not mine, that I beg of you to forbear."

Lady Hunter, imagining this to be only a subterfuge, drew the letter from beneath Captain Walsingham's hand, exclaiming, "For my sake! Oh, Captain, that is a charming ruse de guerre, but do not hope that it shall succeed!"

"Oh! mother, believe him, believe him," cried Amelia: "I am sure he tells you the truth, and he speaks for your sake, not for his own."

Amelia interceded in vain.

Mr. Palmer patted Amelia's shoulder fondly, saying, "You are a dear good creature."

"A dear credulous creature!" exclaimed Lady Hunter. She had now undisturbed possession of the letter.

Captain Walsingham stood by with a face of great concern; in which Amelia and Mr. Beaumont, without knowing the cause, seemed to sympathize.

The contest had early attracted the attention of all within hearing or view of her ladyship, and by this time had been pointed out and accounted for in whispers, even to the most remote parts of the room; so that the eyes of almost every individual in the assembly were now fixed upon Lady Hunter. She had scarcely glanced her eye upon the letter, when she turned pale as death, and exclaimed, "He knew it! he knew it!" Then, recollecting herself, she made a struggle to conceal her dismay--the forced smile quivered on her lip,--she fell back in a swoon, and was carried out of the room by her son and daughter. Sir John Hunter was at another table, eating eel-pie, and was the last person present who was made to understand what had happened.

"It is the damned heat of the room, I suppose," said he, "that made her faint;" and swallowing the last morsel on his plate, and settling his collar, he came up to Captain Walsingham. "What's this I hear?--that Lady Hunter has fainted? I hope they have carried her into the air. But where's the letter they say affected her so?"

"In my pocket," said Captain Walsingham, coolly.

"Any thing new in it?" said Sir John, with a sulky, fashionable indifference.

"Nothing new to you, probably, Sir John," said Captain Walsingham, walking away from him in disgust.

"I suppose it was the heat overcame Lady Hunter," continued Sir John, speaking to those who stood near him. "Is any body gone to see how she is now? I wonder if they'll let me in to see her."

With assumed carelessness, but with real embarrassment, the bridegroom went to inquire for his bride.

Good Mr. Palmer went soon afterwards, and knocked softly at the lady's door. "Is poor Lady Hunter any better?"

"Oh! yes; quite well again now," cried Lady Hunter, raising herself from the bed, on which she had been laid; but Mr. Palmer thought, as he saw her through the half-opened door, she still looked a deplorable spectacle, in all her wedding finery. "Quite well again, now: it was nothing in the world but the heat. Amelia, my love, go back to the company, and say so, lest my friends should be uneasy. Thank you, kind Mr. Palmer, for coming to see me: excuse my not being able to let you in now, for I must change my dress. Sir John sends me word his barouche will be at the door in ten minutes, and I have to hurry on my travelling dress. Excuse me."

Mr. Palmer retired, seeing clearly that she wished to avoid any explanation of the real cause of her fainting. In the gallery, leading from her room, he met Captain Walsingham, who was coming to inquire for Lady Hunter.

"Poor woman! do you know the cause of her fainting?" said Captain Walsingham.

"No; and I believe she does not wish me to know it: therefore don't tell it me," said Mr. Palmer.

"It is a secret that must be in the public papers in a few days," said Captain Walsingham. "This lady that I brought over from Lisbon--"

"Well, what can she have to say to Mrs. Beaumont?"

"Nothing to Mrs. Beaumont, but a great deal to Lady Hunter. You may remember that I mentioned to you that some of her relations had contrived to have her kept in that convent abroad, and had spread a report of her death, that the heir-at-law might defraud her of her property, and get and keep possession of a large estate, which fell to him in case of her death. Of further particulars, or even of the name of this estate, I knew nothing till this morning, when that letter from the aunt--here it is--tells me, that the estate to which her niece was entitled is the great Wigram estate, and that old Wigram was the rascally heir-at-law. The lawyer I recommended to the lady was both an honest and a clever fellow; and he represented so forcibly to old Wigram the consequences of his having his fraud brought to light in a court of equity, that he made him soon agree to a private reference. The affair has been compromised, and settled thus:--The possession of the estate is given up, just as it stands, to the rightful owner; and she forbears to call the old sinner to an account for past arrears. She will let him make it out to the world and to his own conscience, if he can, that he bona-fide believed her to be dead."

"So," said Mr. Palmer, "so end Madam Beaumont's hopes of being at the head of the Wigram estate, and so end her hopes of being a countess!--And actually married to this ruined spendthrift!--Now we see the reason he pressed on the match so, and urged her to marry him before

the affair should become public. She is duped, and for life!--poor Madam Beaumont!"

At this moment Lady Hunter came out of her room, after having changed her dress, and repaired her smiles.

"Ready for my journey now," said she, passing by Mr. Palmer quickly. "I must show myself to the world of friends below, and bid them adieu. One word, Captain Walsingham: there's no occasion, you know," whispered she, "to say any thing _below_ of that letter; I really don't believe it."

Too proud to let her mortification be known, Lady Hunter constrained her feelings with all her might. She appeared once more with a pleased countenance in the festive assembly. She received their compliments and congratulations, and invited them, with all the earnestness of friendship, to favour Sir John and her, as soon as possible, with their company at Hunter Hall. The company were now fast departing; carriages came to the door in rapid succession. Lady Hunter went through with admirable grace and variety the sentimental ceremony of taking leave; and when her splendid barouche was at the door, and when she was to bid adieu to her own family, still she acted her part inimitably. In all the becoming mixed smiles and tears of a bride, she was seen embracing by turns her beloved daughter and son, and daughter-in-law and son-in-law, over and over again, in the hall, on the steps; to the last moment contriving to be torn delightfully from the bosom of her family by her impatient bridegroom. Seated beside him in his barouche, she kissed her hand to Mr. Palmer,--smiled: all her family, who stood on the steps, bowed; and Sir John drove away with his prize.

"He's a swindler!" cried Mr. Palmer, "and she is--"

"Amelia's mother," interrupted Captain Walsingham.

"Right," said Mr. Palmer; "but Amelia had a father too,--my excellent friend, Colonel Beaumont,--whom she and her brother resemble in all that is open-hearted and honourable. Well, well! I make no reflections; I hate moral reflections. Every body can think and feel for themselves, I presume. I only say,--Thank Heaven, we've done with _manoeuvring!_"

ALMERIA.

John Hodgkinson was an eminent and wealthy Yorkshire grazier, who had no children of his own, but who had brought up in his family Almeria Turnbull, the daughter of his wife by a former husband, a Mr. Turnbull. Mr. Turnbull had also been a grazier, but had not been successful in the management of his affairs, therefore he could not leave his daughter any fortune; and at the death of her mother, she became

entirely dependent on her father-in-law. Old Hodgkinson was a whimsical man, who, except in eating and drinking, had no inclination to spend any part of the fortune he had made; but, enjoying the consequence which money confers, endeavoured to increase this importance by keeping all his acquaintance in uncertainty, as to what he called his "_testamentary dispositions_." Sometimes he hinted that his step-daughter should be a match for the proudest riband in England; sometimes he declared, that he did not know of what use money could be to a woman, except to make her a prey to a fortune-hunter, and that his girl should not be left in a way to be duped.

As to his daughter's education, that was an affair in which he did not interfere: all that he wished was, that the girl should be kept humble, and have no fine notions put into her head, nor any communication with fine people. He kept company only with men of his own sort; and as he had no taste for any kind of literature, Almeria's time would have hung rather heavy upon her hands, had she been totally confined to his society: but, fortunately for her, there lived in the neighbourhood an elderly gentleman and his daughter, whom her father allowed her to visit. Mr. Elmour was a country gentleman of a moderate fortune, a respectable family, and of a most amiable character: between his daughter Ellen and Miss Turnbull there had subsisted an intimacy from their earliest childhood. The professions of this friendship had hitherto been much the warmest on the part of Almeria; the proofs were, perhaps, the strongest on the side of Ellen. Miss Elmour, as the daughter of a gentleman, whose family had been long settled in the country, was rather _more considered_ than Miss Turnbull, who was the daughter of a grazier, whose money had but lately raised him to the level of gentility. At Mr. Elmour's house Almeria had an opportunity of being in much better company than she could ever have seen at her father's; better company in every respect, but chiefly in the popular, or more properly in the aristocratic sense of the term: her visits had consequently been long and frequent; she appeared to have a peculiar taste for refinement in manners and conversation, and often deplored the want she felt of these at home. She expressed a strong desire to acquire information, and to improve herself in every elegant accomplishment; and Ellen, who was of a character far superior to the little meanness of female competition and jealousy, shared with her friend all the advantages of her situation. Old Hodgkinson never had any books in his house, but such as Almeria borrowed from Mr. Elmour's library. Ellen constantly sent Miss Turnbull all the new publications which her father got from town--she copied for her friend the new music with which she was supplied, showed her every new drawing or print, gave her the advantage of the lessons she received from an excellent drawing master, and let her into those little mysteries of art which masters sometimes sell so dear.

This was done with perfect readiness and simplicity: Ellen never seemed conscious that she was bestowing a favour; but appeared to consider what she did as matters of course, or as the necessary consequences of friendship. She treated her friend at all times, and in all companies, with that uniform attention and equality of manner, which most people profess, and which so few have strength of mind to practise. Almeria

expressed, and probably at this time felt, unbounded gratitude and affection for Ellen; indeed her expressions were sometimes so vehement, that Miss Elmour rallied her for being romantic. Almeria one day declared, that she should wish to pass all the days of her life at Elmour Grove, without seeing any other human creatures but her friend and her friend's father.

"Your imagination deceives you, my dear Almeria," said Ellen, smiling.

"It is my heart, not my imagination, that speaks," said Almeria, laying her hand upon her heart, or upon the place where she fancied her heart ought to be.

"Your understanding will, perhaps, speak a different language by and by, and your heart will not be the worse for it, my good young lady," said old Mr. Elmour.

Almeria persisted even to tears; and it was not till young Mr. Elmour came home, and till she had spent a few weeks in his company, that she began to admit that three was the number sacred to friendship. Frederick Elmour was a man of honour, talents, spirit, and of a decided character: he was extremely fond of his sister, and was prepossessed in favour of every thing and person that she loved. Her intimate friend was consequently interesting to him; and it must be supposed, that Miss Elmour's praises of Almeria were managed more judiciously than eulogiums usually are, by the effect which they produced. Frederick became attached to Miss Turnbull, though he perceived that, in firmness and dignity of character, she was not equal to his sister. This inferiority did not injure her in his opinion, because it was always acknowledged with so much candour and humility by Almeria, who seemed to look up to her friend as to a being of a superior order. This freedom from envy, and this generous enthusiasm, first touched young Mr. Elmour's heart. Next to possessing his sister's virtues and talents, loving them was, in his opinion, the greatest merit. He thought that a person capable of appreciating and admiring Ellen's character, must be desirous of imitating her; and the similarity of their tastes, opinions, and principles, seemed to him the most secure pledge for his future happiness. Miss Turnbull's fortune, whatever it might be, was an object of no great importance to him: his father, though not opulent, was in easy circumstances, and was "willing," he said, "to deprive himself of some luxuries for the sake of his son, whom he would not controul in the choice of a wife--a choice on which he knew, from his own experience, that the happiness of life so much depends."

The benevolent old gentleman had peculiar merit in this conduct; because if he had a weakness in the world, it was a prejudice in favour of what is called good family and birth: it had long been the secret wish of his heart that his only son might marry into a family as ancient as his own. Frederick was fully sensible of the sacrifice that his father made of his pride: but that which he was willing to make of what he called his luxuries, his son's affection and sense of justice forbade him to accept. He could not rob his father of any of the comforts of his declining years, whilst in the full vigour of youth it was in his power,

by his own exertions, to obtain an independent maintenance. He had been bred to the bar; no expense had been spared by his father in his education, no efforts had been omitted by himself. He was now ready to enter on the duties of his profession with ardour, but without presumption.

Our heroine must be pardoned by the most prudent, and admired by the most romantic, for being desperately in love with a youth of such a character and such expectations. Whilst the young lady's passion was growing every hour more lively, her old father was growing every hour more lethargic. He had a superstitious dread of making a will, as if it were a preparation for death, which would hasten the fatal moment. Hodgkinson's friends tried to conquer this prejudice: but it was in vain to reason with a man who had never reasoned during the whole of his life about any thing except bullocks. Old Hodgkinson died--that was a matter of no great consequence to any body--but he died without a will, and that was a matter of some importance to his daughter. After searching in every probable and improbable place, there was, at length, found in his own handwriting a memorandum, the beginning of which was in the first leaf of his cookery-book, and the end in the last leaf of his prayer-book. There was some difficulty in deciphering the memorandum, for it was cross-barred with miscellaneous observations in inks of various colours--red, blue, and green. As it is dangerous to garble law papers, we shall lay the document before the public just as it appeared.

Copy from first leaf of the Cookery-look.

I John Hodgkinson of Vetch-field, East Riding of Yorkshire, Grazier and so forth, not choosing to style myself Gentleman, though entitled so to do, do hereby certify, that when I can find an honest attorney, _it is my_ intention to make my will and to leave--

[_Here the testator's memorandum was interrupted by a receipt in a diminutive female hand, seemingly written some years before_.]

Mrs. Turnbull's recipe, infallible for all aches, bruises, and strains.

Take a handful of these herbs following--Wormwood, Sage, Broom-flowers, Clown's-All-heal, Chickweed, Cumphry, Birch, Groundsell, Agremony, Southernwood, Ribwort, Mary Gould leaves, Bramble, Rosemary, Rue, Eldertops, Camomile, Aly Campaigne-root, half a handful of Red Earthworms, two ounces of Cummins-seeds, Deasy-roots, Columbine, Sweet Marjoram, Dandyion, Devil's bit, six pound of May butter, two pound of Sheep suet, half a pound of Deer suet, a quart of salet oil beat well in y' boiling till the oil be green--Then strain--It will be better if you add a dozen of Swallows, and pound all their Feathers, Gizzards, and Heads before boiling--It will cure all aches--[9]

[_Beneath this valuable recipe, Mr. Hodgkinson's testamentary dispositions continued as follows_.]

All I am worth in the world real or personal--

To Collar a Pig.

Take a young fat pig, and when he is well scalded, cut off his head, then slit him down the back, take out his bones, lay him in a dish of milk and water, and shift him twice a day--for the rest, turn to page 103.

To my step-daughter Almeria, who is now at Elmour Grove in her eighteenth year--

[_Written across the above in red ink_.]

Mem'm--I prophecy this third day of August, that the man from Hull will be here to-morrow with _fresh_ mullets.

And as girls go, I believe a good girl, considering the times--but if she disoblige me by marriage, or otherwise, I hereby revoke the same.

[_Written diagonally in red ink_.]

Mem'm--Weight of the Big Bullock, 90 score, besides offal.

[_The value was so pale it could not be deciphered_.]

And I further intend to except out of my above bequest to my daughter Almeria, the sum of ...

A fine method to make Punch of Valentia dram. v. page 7.

Ten thousand pounds, now in Sir Thomas Stock's my banker's hands as a token of remembrance to John Hodgkinson of Hull, on account of his being my namesake, and, I believe, relation--

* * * * *

[_Continuation in the last leaf of the prayer-book_.]

It is my further intention (whenever I find said honest attorney fit for my will) to leave sundry mourning rings with my hair value (_blank_)--one in particular to Charles Elmour, sen. esquire, and also--

[_Upside down, in red ink_.]

Mem'm--Yorkshire Puddings--Knox says good in my case.

Hodgkinson late
Hannah A Turnbull (my wife)
her prayer book,
born Dec'r 5th, 1700,
died Jan'y 4th, 1760;
leaving only behind her, in this world, Almeria Turnbull
(my step daughter).

Also another mourning ring to Frederick, the son of Charles Elmour, Esq. and ditto to Ellen his daughter, if I have hair enough under my wig.

[_Diagonal in red ink_.]

Mem'm--To know from Dr. Knox by return of post what is good against sleep--in my case--

This is the short of my will--the attorney (when found) will make it long enough.--And I hereby declare, that I will write no other will with my own hand, for man, woman, or child--And that I will and do hereby disinherit any person or persons--male or female--good--bad--or indifferent--who shall take upon them to advise or speak to me about making or writing my will--which is no business of theirs--This my last resolution and memorandum, dated, this 5th of August--reap to-morrow, (glass rising)--1766, and signed with my own hand, same time.

John Hodgkinson, grazier & so forth.

* * * * *

Now it happened, that Mr. Hodgkinson's namesake and relation disdained the ten thousand pounds legacy, and claimed the whole property as heir-at-law. Almeria, who was utterly unacquainted with business, applied to Mr. Elmour in this difficulty, and he had the goodness to undertake the management of her affairs. Frederick engaged to carry on her law-suit, and to plead her cause against this rapacious Mr. Hodgkinson of Hull.--Whilst the suit was pending, Miss Turnbull had an opportunity of seeing something of the ways of the world; for the manners of her Yorkshire acquaintance, of all but Ellen and the Elmours, varied towards her, according to the opinion formed of the probable event of the trial on which her fortune depended. She felt these variations most keenly. In particular, she was provoked by the conduct of Lady Stock, who was at this time _the_ fashionable lady of York: Sir Thomas, her husband, was a great banker; and whenever she condescended to visit her friends in the country, she shone upon them in all the splendour and pride of wealth. Miss Turnbull, immediately after her father's death, went, accompanied by old Mr. Elmour, to Sir Thomas Stock, to settle accounts with him: she was received by his lady as a great heiress, with infinite civility; her visit punctually returned, and an invitation to dinner sent to her and the Elmours with all due expedition. As she seemed to wish to accept of it, her friends agreed to accompany her, though in general they disliked fine dinners; and though they seldom left their retirement to mix in the gaieties of York. Miss Turnbull was received in rather a different manner from what she expected upon this occasion; for between the sending and the accepting of the invitation, Lady Stock had heard that her title to the fortune was disputed, and that many were of an opinion that, instead of having two hundred thousand pounds, she would not have a shilling. Almeria was scarcely noticed, on her entrance, by the lady of the house; she found herself in a formidable circle, where every body seemed to consider her as being out of her place. At dinner she was suffered to go to a side-table. From the moment she entered the house till she left it, Lady

Stock never deigned to speak to her, nor for one instant to recollect that such a person existed. Not even Madame Roland, when she was sent to the second table at the fermier general's, expressed more indignation than Almeria did, at the insolence of this banker's lady. She could think and speak of nothing else, all the time she was going home in the evening to Elmour Grove. Ellen, who had more philosophy than our heroine, did not sympathize in the violence of her indignation: on the contrary, she was surprised that Almeria could feel so much hurt by the slights of a woman, for whom she had neither esteem nor affection, and with whom she was indeed scarcely acquainted.

"But does not her conduct excite your indignation?" said Miss Turnbull.

"No: it rather deserves my contempt. If a friend--if you, for instance, had treated me in such a manner, it would have provoked my anger, I dare say."

"! Oh, how impossible!" cried Almeria. "Such insufferable pride! Such downright rudeness!--She was tolerably civil to you, but me she never noticed: and this sudden change, it seems, Frederick, arises from her doubts of my fortune.--Is not such meanness really astonishing?"

"It would be astonishing, perhaps," replied Frederick, "if we did not see similar instances every day.--Lady Stock, you know, is nothing but a mere woman of the world."

"I hate mere women of the world," cried Almeria.

Ellen observed, that it was not worth while to hate, it was sufficient to avoid them.--Almeria grew warmer in her abhorrence; and Ellen at last expressed, half in jest, half in earnest, some fear, that if Miss Turnbull felt with such exquisite sensibility the neglect of persons of fashion, she might in a different situation be ambitious, or vain of their favour. Almeria was offended, and was very near quarrelling with her friend for harbouring such a mean opinion of her character.

"Do you imagine that I could ever make a friend of such a person as Lady Stock?"

"A friend! far from it. I am very sure that you could not."

"Then how could I be ambitious of her favour? I am desirous only of the favour, esteem, and affection of my friends."

"But people who live in what is called the world, you know, my dear Almeria, desire to have acquaintance as well as friends," said Ellen; "and they value those by their fashion or rank, and by the honour which may be received from their notice in public places."

"Yes, my dear," interrupted Almeria; "though I have never been in London, as you have, I understand all that perfectly well, I assure you; but I only say, that I am certain I should never judge, and that I should never act, in such a manner."

Ellen smiled, and said, "It is difficult to be certain of what we should do in situations in which we have never been placed."--Almeria burst into tears, and her friend could scarcely pacify her by the kindest expressions.

"Observe, my dear Almeria, that I said we, not you: I do not pretend that, till I have been tried, I could be certain of my own strength of mind in new situations: I believe it is from weakness, that people are often so desirous of the notice of persons for whom they have no esteem. If I were forced to live among a certain set of company, I suppose I should, in time, do just as they do; for I confess, that I do not think I could bear every day to be utterly neglected in society, even such as we have been in to-day."

Almeria wondered to hear her friend speak with so little confidence of her own spirit and independence; and vehemently declared that she was certain no change of external circumstances could make any alteration in her sentiments and feelings. Ellen forbore to press the subject farther, although the proofs which Almeria had this day given of her stoicism were not absolutely conclusive.

About a month after this conversation had passed, the suit against Miss Turnbull, to set aside Mr. Hodgkinson's will, was tried at York. The court was crowded at an early hour; for much entertainment was expected, from the oddity of old Hodgkinson's testamentary dispositions: besides, the large amount of the property at stake could not fail to make the cause interesting. Several ladies appeared in the galleries; among the rest, Lady Stock--Miss Elmour was there also, to accompany Almeria--Frederick was one of her counsel; and when it came to his turn to speak, he pleaded her cause with so much eloquence and ability, as to obtain universal approbation. After a trial, which lasted many hours, a verdict was given in Miss Turnbull's favour. An immediate change appeared in the manners of all her acquaintance--they crowded round her with smiles and congratulations; and persons with whom she was scarcely acquainted, or who had, till now, hardly deigned to acknowledge her acquaintance, accosted her with an air of intimacy. Lady Stock, in particular, recovered, upon this occasion, both her sight and speech: she took Almeria's hand most graciously, and went on chattering with the greatest volubility, as they stood at the door of the court-house. Her ladyship's handsome equipage had drawn up, and she offered to carry Miss Turnbull home: Almeria excused herself, but felt ashamed, when she saw the look of contempt which her ladyship bestowed on Mr. Elmour's old coach, which was far behind a number of others, and which could but ill bear a comparison with a new London carriage. Angry with herself for this weakness, our heroine endeavoured to conceal it even from her own mind; and feelings of gratitude to her friends revived in her heart the moment she was out of the sight of her fine acquaintance. She treated Ellen with even more than usual fondness; and her acknowledgments of obligation to her counsel and his father were expressed in the strongest terms. In a few days, there came a pressing invitation from Lady Stock; Mr. Elmour had accounts of Miss Turnbull's to settle with Sir Thomas, and, notwithstanding the air of indifference with which she read the

cards, Almeria was not sorry to accept of the invitation, as she knew that she should be received in a very different manner from that in which she had been treated on her former visit. She laughed, and said, "that she should be entertained by observing the change which a few thousand pounds more or less could produce in Lady Stock's behaviour." Yet, such is the inconsistency or the weakness of human wishes, that the very attentions which our heroine knew were paid merely to her fortune, and not to her merit, flattered her vanity; and she observed, with a strange mixture of pain and pleasure, that there was a marked difference in Lady Stock's manner towards her and the Elmours. When the evening was over, and when she "had leisure to be good," Almeria called herself severely to account for this secret satisfaction, of which she had been conscious from the preference given her over her friends--she accused herself of ingratitude, and endeavoured to recover her own self-complacency by redoubled professions of esteem and affection for those to whom she had so much reason to be attached. But fresh invitations came from Lady Stock, and the course of her thoughts again changed. Ellen declined accompanying her; and Miss Turnbull regretted this exceedingly, because it would be so distressing and awkward for her to go alone."

"Then why do you go at all, my dear?" said Ellen; "you speak as if there were some moral necessity for your visit."

"Moral necessity! oh, no," said Almeria, laughing; "but I really think there is a polite necessity, if you will allow me the expression. Would it not be rude for all of us to refuse, when Lady Stock has made this music party, as she says, entirely on my account--on our account, I mean? for you see she mentions your fondness for music; and if she had not written so remarkably civilly to you, I assure you I would neither go myself, nor think of pressing you to go."

This oratory had no effect upon Ellen: our heroine went alone to the music meeting. The old coach returned to Elmour Grove at night, empty--the servant brought "Lady Stock's compliments, and she would send her carriage home with Miss Turnbull early the next morning." After waiting above an hour and a half beyond their usual time, the family were sitting down to dinner the next day, when Miss Turnbull, in Lady Stock's fine carriage, drove up the avenue--Frederick handed her out of the carriage with more ceremony and less affection than he had ever shown before. Old Mr. Elmour's manner was also more distant, and Ellen's colder. Almeria attempted to apologize, but could not get through her speech--she then tried to laugh at her own awkwardness; but her laugh not being seconded, she sat down to dinner in silence, colouring prodigiously, and totally abashed. Good old Mr. Elmour was the first to relent, and to endeavour, by resuming his usual kind familiarity, to relieve her painful confusion. Ellen's coolness was also dissipated when Miss Turnbull took her aside after dinner, and with tears in her eyes declared, "she was sorry she had not had sufficient strength of mind to resist Lady Stock's importunities to stay all night;--that as to the carriage, it was sent back without her knowledge; and that this morning, though she had three or four times expressed her fears that she should keep her friends at Elmour Grove waiting for dinner, yet Lady Stock

would not understand her hints;" and she declared, "she got away the very instant her ladyship's carriage came to the door." By Ellen's kind interposition, Frederick, whose pride had been most ready to take the alarm at the least appearance of slight to his father and sister, was pacified--he laid aside his ceremony to _Miss Turnbull_; called her "Almeria," as he used to do--and all was well again. With difficulty and blushes, Almeria came out with an after-confession, that she had been so silly as to make half a promise to Lady Stock, of going to her ball, and of spending a few days with her at York, before she left the country.

"But this promise was only conditional," said she: "if you or your father would take it the least ill or unkindly of me, I assure you I will not go--I would rather offend all the Lady Stocks in the world than you, my dearest Ellen, or your father, to whom I am so much obliged."

"Do not talk of obligations," interrupted Ellen; "amongst friends there can be no obligations. I will answer for it that my father will not be offended at your going to this ball; and I assure you I shall not take it unkindly. If you would not think me very proud, I should tell you that I wish for our sakes, as well as your own, that you should see as much of this Lady Stock, and as many _Lady Stocks_, as possible; for I am convinced that, upon _intimate_ acquaintance, we must rise in your opinion."

Almeria protested that she had never for an instant thought of comparing Ellen with Lady Stock. "A friend, a bosom friend, with an acquaintance--an acquaintance of yesterday!--I never thought of making such a comparison."

"That is the very thing of which I complain," said Ellen, smiling: "I beg you will make the comparison, my dear Almeria; and the more opportunities you have of forming your judgment, the better."

Notwithstanding that there was something rather humiliating to Miss Turnbull in the dignified composure with which Ellen now, for the first time in her life, implied her own superiority, Almeria secretly rejoiced that it was at her friend's own request that the visits to her fine acquaintance were repeated. At Lady Stock's ball Miss Turnbull was much _distinguished_, as it is called--Sir Thomas's eldest son was her partner; and though he was not remarkably agreeable, yet his attentions were flattering to her vanity, because the rival belles of York vied for his homage. The delight of being taken notice of in public was new to Almeria, and it quite intoxicated her brain. Six hours' sleep afterwards were not sufficient to sober her completely; as her friends at Elmour Grove perceived the next morning--she neither talked, looked, nor moved like herself, though she was perfectly unconscious that in this delirium of vanity and affectation she was an object of pity and disgust to the man she loved.

Ellen had sufficient good-nature and candour to make allowance for foibles in others from which her own character was totally free; she was clear-sighted to the merits, but not blind to the faults, of her friends; and she resolved to wait patiently till Almeria should return

to herself. Miss Turnbull, in compliance with her friend's advice, took as many opportunities as possible of being with Lady Stock. Her ladyship's company was by no means agreeable to Almeria's natural taste; for her ladyship had neither sense nor knowledge, and her conversation consisted merely of common-place phrases, or the second-hand affectation of fashionable nonsense: yet, though Miss Turnbull felt no actual pleasure in her company, she was vain of being of her parties, and even condescended to repeat some of her sayings, in which there was neither sense nor wit. From having lived much in the London world, her ladyship was acquainted with a prodigious number of names of persons of consequence and quality; and by these our heroine's ears were charmed. Her ladyship's dress was also an object of admiration and imitation, and the York ladies begged patterns of every thing she wore. Almeria consequently thought that no other clothes could be worn with propriety; and she was utterly ashamed of her past self for having lived so long in ignorance, and for having had so bad a taste, as ever to have thought Ellen Elmour a model for imitation.

"Miss Elmour," her ladyship said, "was a very sensible young woman, no doubt; but she could hardly be considered as a model of fashion."

A new standard for estimating merit was raised in Almeria's mind; and her friend, for an instant, sunk before the vast advantage of having the most fashionable mantua-maker and milliner in town. Ashamed of this dereliction of principle, she a few minutes afterwards warmly pronounced a panegyric on Ellen, to which Lady Stock only replied with a vacant, supercilious countenance, "May be so--no doubt--of course--the Elmours are a very respectable family, I'm told--and really more genteel than the country families one sees: but is not it odd, they don't _mix more?_ One seldom meets them in town any where, or at any of the watering-places in summer."

To this charge, Almeria, with blushes, was forced to plead guilty for her friends: she, however, observed, in mitigation, "that when they were in town, what company they did see was always the best, she believed--that she knew, for one person, the Duchess of A---- was a friend of the Elmours, and corresponded with Ellen."

This judicious defence produced an immediate effect upon Lady Stock's countenance; her eyebrows descended from the high arch of contempt: and after a pause, she remarked, "it was strange that they had not accepted of any of the invitations she had lately sent them--she fancied they were, as indeed they had the character of being, very proud people--and very odd."

Almeria denied the pride and the oddity; but observed, "that they were all remarkably fond of _home_."

"Well, my dear Miss Turnbull, that's what I call odd; but I am sure I have nothing to say against all that--it is the fashion now to let every body do as they please: if the Elmours like to bury themselves alive, I'm sure I can't have the smallest objection; I only hope they don't insist upon burying you along with them--I'm going to Harrowgate for a

few days, and I must have you with me, my dear."

Our heroine hesitated. Lady Stock smiled, and said, she saw Miss Turnbull was terribly afraid of these Elmours; that for her part, she was the last person in the world to break through old connexions; but that really some people ought to consider that other people cannot always live as they do; that one style of life was fit for one style of fortune, and one for another; and that it would look very strange to the world, if an heiress with two hundred thousand pounds fortune, who if she produced herself might be in the first circles in town, were to be boxed up at Elmour Grove, and precluded from all advantages and offers that she might of course expect.

To do our heroine justice, she here interrupted Lady Stock with more eagerness than strict politeness admitted, and positively declared that her friends never for one moment wished to confine her at Elmour Grove. "On the contrary," said she, "they urged me to go into company, and to see something of the world, before I--" marry, she was going to say--but paused.

Lady Stock waited for the finishing word; but when it did not come, she went on just as if it had been pronounced. "The Elmours do vastly right and proper to talk to you in this style, for they would be very much blamed in the world if they acted otherwise. You know, young Elmour has his fortune to make--very clever certainly he is, and will rise--no doubt--I'm told--in his profession--but all that is not the same as a ready-made fortune, which an heiress like you has a right to expect. But do not let me annoy you with my reflections. Perhaps there is nothing in the report--I really only repeat what I hear every body say. In what every body says, you know there must be something. I positively think you ought to show, in justice to the Elmours themselves, that you are at liberty, and that they do not want to monopolize you--in this unaccountable sort of way."

To this last argument our heroine yielded, or to this she chose to attribute her yielding. She went to Harrowgate with Lady Stock; and every day and every hour she became more desirous of appearing fashionable. To this one object all her thoughts were directed. Living in public was to her a new life, and she was continually sensible of her dependence upon the opinion of her more experienced companion. She felt the awkwardness of being surrounded by people with whom she was unacquainted. At first, whenever she appeared she imagined that every body was looking at her, or talking about her, and she was in perpetual apprehension that something in her dress or manners should become the subject of criticism or ridicule: but from this fear she was soon relieved, by the conviction that most people were so occupied with themselves as totally to overlook her. Sometimes indeed she heard the whispered question of "Who is that with Lady Stock?" and the mortifying answer, "I do not know." However, when Lady Stock had introduced her to some of her acquaintance as a great heiress, the scene changed, and she found herself treated with much consideration; though still the fashionable belles took sufficient care to make her sensible of her inferiority. She longed to be upon an equal footing with them. Whilst

her mind was in this state, Sir Thomas Stock, one morning, when he was settling some money business with her, observed that she would in another year be of age, and of course would take her affairs into her own hands; but in the mean time it would be necessary to appoint a guardian; and that the choice depended upon herself. She instantly named her friend Mr. Elmour. Sir Thomas insinuated that old Mr. Elmour, though undoubtedly a most unexceptionable character, was not exactly the most eligible person for a guardian to a young lady, whose large fortune entitled her to live in a fashionable style. That if it was Miss Turnbull's intention to fix in the country, Mr. Elmour certainly was upon the spot, and a very fit guardian; but that if she meant to appear, as doubtless she would, in town, she would of course want another conductor.

"To cut the matter short at once, my dear," said Lady Stock, "you must come to town with me next winter, and choose Sir Thomas for your guardian. I'm sure it will give him the greatest pleasure in the world to do any thing in his power--and you will have no difficulties with him; for you see he is not a man to bore you with all manner of advice; in short, he would only be your guardian for form's sake; and that, you know, would be the pleasantest footing imaginable. Come, here is a pen and ink and gilt paper; write to old Elmour this minute, and let me have you all to myself."

Almeria was taken by surprise: she hesitated--all her former professions, all her obligations to the Elmour family, recurred to her mind--her friendship for Ellen--her love, or what she had thought love, for Frederick--she could not decide upon a measure that might offend them, or appear ungrateful; yet her desire of going to town with Lady Stock was ardent, and she knew not how to refuse Sir Thomas's offer without displeasing him. She saw that all future connexion with the Stocks depended on her present determination--she took a middle course, and suggested that she might have two guardians, and then she should be able to avail herself of Sir Thomas's obliging offer without offending her old friends. In consequence of this convenient arrangement, she wrote to Mr. Elmour, enclosing her letter in one to Ellen, in which the embarrassment and weakness of her mind were evident, notwithstanding all her endeavours to conceal them. After a whole page of incomprehensible apologies, for having so long delayed to write to her dearest Ellen; and after professions of the warmest affection, esteem, and gratitude, for her friends at Elmour Grove; she in the fourth page of her epistle opened her real business, by declaring that she should ever, from the conviction she felt of the superiority of Ellen's understanding, follow her judgment, however repugnant it might sometimes be to her inclinations; that she therefore had resolved, in pursuance of Ellen's advice, to take an opportunity of seeing the gay world, and had accepted of an invitation from Lady Stock to spend the winter with her in town--that she had also accepted of Sir Thomas Stock's offer to become one of her guardians, as she thought it best to trouble her good friend Mr. Elmour as little as possible at his advanced age.

In answer to this letter, she received a few lines from Mr. Elmour, requesting to see her before she should go to town: accordingly upon her

return to York, she went to Elmour Grove to take leave of her friends. She was under some anxiety, but resolved to carry it off with that ease, or affectation of ease, which she had learnt during her six weeks' apprenticeship to a fine lady at Harrowgate. She was surprised that no Frederick appeared to greet her arrival; the servant showed her into Mr. Elmour's study. The good old gentleman received her with that proud sort of politeness, which was always the sign, and the only sign, of his being displeased.

"You will excuse me, Miss Turnbull," said he, "for giving you the trouble of coming here; it was my business to have waited on you, but I have been so far unwell lately, that it was not in my power to leave home; and these are papers," continued he, "which I thought it my duty to deliver into your own hands."

Whilst Mr. Elmour was tying up these papers, and writing upon them, Almeria began two sentences with "I hope," and "I am afraid," without in the least knowing what she hoped or feared. She was not yet sufficiently perfect in the part of a fine lady to play it well. Mr. Elmour looked up from his writing with an air of grave attention when she began to speak, but after waiting in vain for an intelligible sentence, he proceeded.

"You have judged very wisely for me, Miss Turnbull, in relieving my declining years from the fatigue of business: no man understands the management or the value of money better than Sir Thomas Stock, and you could not, madam, in this point of view, have chosen a more proper guardian."

Almeria said, "that she hoped Mr. Elmour would always permit her to consider him as her best friend, to whose advice she should have recourse in preference to that of any person upon earth;" recovering her assurance as she went on speaking, and recollecting some of the hints Lady Stock had given her, about the envy and jealousy of the Elmours, and of their scheme of monopolizing her fortune; she added a few commonplace phrases about respectability--gratitude--and great obligations--then gave a glance at Lady Stock's handsome carriage, which was waiting at the door--then asked for Miss Elmour--and hoped she should not be so unfortunate as to miss seeing her before she left the country, as she came on purpose to take leave of her--then looked at her watch:--but all this was said and done with the awkwardness of a novice in the art of giving herself airs. Mr. Elmour, without being in the least irritated by her manner, was all the time considering how he could communicate, with the least possible pain, what he had further to say--"You speak of me, Miss Turnbull, as of one of your guardians, in the letter I had the favour of receiving from you a few days ago," said he; "but you must excuse me for declining that honour. Circumstances have altered materially since I first undertook the management of your affairs, and my future interference, or perhaps even my advice, might not appear as disinterested as formerly."

Miss Turnbull here interrupted him with an exclamation of astonishment, and made many protestations of entire dependence upon his disinterested friendship. He waited with proud patience till she

had finished her eulogium.

"How far the generous extent of your confidence, madam, reaches, or may hereafter reach," said he, "must be tried by others, not by me--nor yet by my son."

Almeria changed colour.

"He has left it to me, madam, to do that for him, which perhaps he feared he might not have sufficient resolution to do for himself--to return to you these letters and this picture; and to assure you that he considers you as entirely at liberty to form any connexion that may be suited to your present views and circumstances."

Mr. Elmour put into her hand a packet of her own letters to Frederick, and a miniature picture of herself, which she had formerly given to her lover. This was an unexpected stroke. His generosity--his firmness of character--the idea of losing him for ever--all rushed upon her mind at once.

Artificial manners vanish the moment the natural passions are touched. Almeria clasped her hands in an agony of grief, and exclaimed, "Is he gone? gone for ever?--I have deserved it!"--The letters and picture fell from her hand, and she sunk back quite overpowered. When she recovered, she found herself in the open air on a seat under Mr. Elmour's study windows, and Ellen beside her.

"Pity, forgive, and advise me, my dear, my best, my only real friend," said Almeria: "never did I want your advice so much as at this moment."

"You shall have it, then, without reserve," said Ellen, "and without fear that it should be attributed to any unworthy motive. I could almost as soon wish for my brother's death as desire to see him united to any woman, let her beauty and accomplishments be what they might, who had a mean or frivolous character, such as could consider money as the greatest good, or dissipation as the prime object of life. I am firmly persuaded, my dear Almeria, that however you may be dazzled by the first view of what is called fashionable life, you will soon see things as they really are, and that you will return to your former tastes and feelings."

"Oh! I am, I am returned to them!" cried Almeria; "I will write directly to Lady Stock and to Sir Thomas, to tell them that I have changed my mind--only prevail upon your father to be my guardian."

"That is out of my power," said Ellen; "and I think that it is much better you should be as you are, left completely at liberty, and entirely independent of us. I advise you, Almeria, to persist in your scheme of spending the ensuing winter in town with Lady Stock--then you will have an opportunity of comparing your own different feelings, and of determining what things are essential to your happiness. If you should find that the triumphs of fashion delight you more than the pleasures of domestic life; pursue them--your fortune will put it in

your power; you will break no engagements; and you will have no reproaches to fear from us. On the contrary, if you find that your happiness depends upon friendship and love, and that the life we formerly led together is that which you prefer, you will return to Elmour Grove, to your friend and your lover, and your choice will not be that of romance, but of reason."

It was with difficulty that Almeria, in her present fit of enthusiasm, could be brought to listen to sober sense and true friendship. Her parting from Ellen and Mr. Elmour cost her many tears, and she returned to her fashionable friend with swollen eyes and a heavy heart. Her sorrow, however, was soon forgotten in the bustle and novelty of a new situation. Upon her arrival in London, fresh trains of ideas were quickly forced upon her mind, which were as dissimilar as possible from those associated with love, friendship, and Elmour Grove. At Sir Thomas Stock's, every thing she saw and heard served to remind, or rather to convince her, of the opulence of the owner of the house. Here every object was estimated, not for its beauty or elegance, but by its costliness. Money was the grand criterion, by which the worth of animate and inanimate objects was alike decided. In this society, the worship of the golden idol was avowed without shame or mystery; and all who did not bow the knee to it were considered as hypocrites or fools. Our heroine, possessed of two hundred thousand pounds, could not fail to have a large share of incense--every thing she said, or looked, was applauded in Sir Thomas Stock's family; and she would have found admiration delightful, if she had not suspected that her fortune alone entitled her to all this applause. This was rather a mortifying reflection. By degrees, however, her delicacy on this subject abated; she learned philosophically to consider her fortune a thing so immediately associated with herself as to form a part of her personal merit. Upon this principle, she soon became vain of her wealth, and she was led to overrate the consequence that riches bestow on their possessor.

In a capital city, such numerous claimants for distinction appear, with beauty, birth, wit, fashion, or wealth to support their pretensions, that the vanity of an individual, however clamorous, is immediately silenced, if not humbled. When Miss Turnbull went into public, she was surprised by the discovery of her own, nay even of Lady Stock's insignificance. At York her ladyship was considered as a personage high as human veneration could look; but in London she was lost in a crowd of fellow-mortals.

It is, perhaps, from this sense of humiliation, that individuals combine together, to obtain by their union that importance and self-complacency, which separately they could never enjoy. Miss Turnbull observed, that a numerous acquaintance was essential to those who lived much in public--that the number of bows and curtsies, and the consequence of the persons by whom they are given or received, is the measure of merit and happiness. Nothing can be more melancholy than most places of public amusement, to those who are strangers to the crowds which fill them.

Few people have such strength of mind as to be indifferent to the opinions of numbers, even considered merely as numbers; hence those

who live in crowds, in fact surrender the power of thinking for themselves, either in trifles or matters of consequence. Our heroine had imagined before she came to town, that Lady Stock moved in the highest circle of fashion; but she soon perceived that many of the people of rank who visited her ladyship, and who partook of her sumptuous entertainments, thought they condescended extremely whilst they paid this homage to wealth.

One night at the Opera, Almeria happened to be seated in the next box to Lady Bradstone, a proud woman of high family, who considered all whose genealogy could not vie in antiquity with her own as upstarts that ought to be kept down. Her ladyship, either not knowing or not caring who was in the next box to her, began to ridicule an entertainment which had been given a few days before by Lady Stock. From her entertainment, the transition was easy to her character, and to that of her whole family. Young Stock was pronounced to have all the purse-proud self-sufficiency of a banker, and all the pertness of a clerk; even his bow seemed as if it came from behind the counter.

Till this moment Almeria had at least permitted, if not encouraged, this gentleman's assiduities; for she had hitherto seen him only in company where he had been admired: his attentions, therefore, had been flattering to her vanity. But things now began to appear in quite a different light: she saw Mr. Stock in the point of view in which Lady Bradstone placed him; and felt that she might be degraded, but could not be elevated, in the ranks of fashion by such an admirer. She began to wish that she was not so intimately connected with a family which was ridiculed for want of taste, and whose wealth, as she now suspected, was their only ticket of admittance into the society of the truly elegant. In the land of fashion, "Alps on Alps arise;" and no sooner has the votary reached the summit of one weary ascent than another appears higher still and more difficult of attainment. Our heroine now became discontented in that situation, which but a few months before had been the grand object of her ambition.

In the mean time, as Mr. Stock had not overheard Lady Bradstone's conversation at the Opera, and as he had a comfortably good opinion of himself, he was sure that he was making a rapid progress in the lady's favour. He had of late seldom heard her mention any of her friends at Elmour Grove; and he was convinced that her romantic attachment to Frederick must have been conquered by his own superior address. Her fortune was fully as agreeable to him as to his money-making father: the only difference between them was, that he loved to squander, and his father to hoard gold. Extravagance frequently produces premature avarice--young Mr. Stock calculated Miss Turnbull's fortune, weighed it against that of every other young lady within the sphere of his attractions, found the balance in her favour by some thousands, made his proposal in form, and could not recover his astonishment, when he found himself in form rejected. Sir Thomas and Lady Stock used all their influence in his favour, but in vain: they concluded that Almeria's passion for Frederick Elmour was the cause of this refusal; and they directed their arguments against the folly of marrying for love. Our heroine was at this time more in danger of the folly of marrying for

fashion: not that she had fixed her fancy upon any man of fashion in particular, but she had formed an exalted idea of the whole species--and she regretted that Frederick was not in that magic circle in which all her hopes of happiness now centred. She wrote kind letters to Miss Elmour, but each letter was written with greater difficulty than the preceding; for she had lost all interest in the occupations which formerly were so delightful. She and Ellen had now few ideas in common; and her epistles dwindled into apologies for long silence--promises of being a better correspondent in future--reasons for breaking these promises--hopes of pardon, &c. Ellen, however, continued steady in her belief that her friend would at last prove worthy of her esteem, and of her brother's love. The rejection of Mr. Stock, which Almeria did not fail to mention, confirmed this favourable opinion.

When that gentleman was at length with some difficulty convinced that our heiress had decided against him, his manners and those of his family changed towards her from the extreme of civility to that of rudeness--they spoke of her as a coquette and a jilt, and a person who gave herself very extraordinary airs. She was vexed, and alarmed--and in her first confusion and distress thought of retreating to her friends at Elmour Grove. She wrote a folio sheet to Ellen, unlike her late apologetic epistles, full of the feelings of her heart, and of a warm invective against fashionable and interested _friends_. After a narrative of her quarrel with the Stocks, she declared that she would immediately quit her London acquaintance and return to her best friend. But the very day after she had despatched this letter she changed her mind, and formed a new idea of a _best friend_.

One morning she went with Lady Stock to a bookseller's, whose shop served as a fashionable _lounge_. Her ladyship valued books, like all other things, in proportion to the money which they cost: she had no taste for literature, but a great fancy for accumulating the most expensive publications, which she displayed ostentatiously as part of the costly furniture of her house. Whilst she was looking over some literary luxuries, rich in all the elegance of hot-press and vellum binding, Lady Bradstone and a party of her friends came into the room. She immediately attracted and engrossed the attention of all present. Lady Stock turned over the leaves of the fine books, and asked their prices; but she had the mortification to perceive that she was an object rather of derision than of admiration to the new comers. None are so easily put out of countenance by airs, as those who are most apt to play them off on their inferiors. Lady Stock bit her lips in evident embarrassment, and the awkwardness of her distress increased the confidence and triumph of her adversary. She had some time before provoked Lady Bradstone by giving a concert in opposition to one of hers, and by engaging, at an enormous expense, a celebrated performer for _her night_: hostilities had thenceforward been renewed at every convenient opportunity, by the contending fair ones. Lady Bradstone now took occasion loudly to lament her extreme poverty; and she put this question to all her party, whether if they had it in their power they should prefer having more money than taste, or more taste than money? They were going to decide _par acclamation_, but her ladyship insisted upon taking each vote separately, because this prolonged the torments of

her rival, who heard the preference of taste to money reiterated half a dozen times over, with the most provoking variety of insulting emphasis. Almeria's sufferings during this scene were far more poignant than those of the person against whom the ridicule was aimed: not that she pitied Lady Stock--no; she would have rejoiced to have seen her humbled to the dust, if she could have escaped all share in her mortification: but as she appeared as her ladyship's acquaintance, she apprehended that she might be mistaken for her friend. An opportunity offered of marking the difference. The bookseller asked Lady Stock if she chose to put her name down in a list of subscribers to a new work. The book, she saw, was to be dedicated to Lady Bradstone--and that was sufficient to decide her against it.

She declared that she never supported such things either by her name or her money; that for her part she was no politician; that she thought female patriots were absurd and odious; and that she was glad none of that description were of her acquaintance.

All this was plainly directed against Lady Bradstone, who was a zealous patriot: her ladyship retorted, by some reflections equally keen, but rather more politely expressed, each party addressing their inuendoes to the bookseller, who afraid to disoblige either the rich or the fashionable, preserved, as much as it was in the power of his muscles, a perfectly neutral countenance. At last, in order to relieve himself from his constraint, he betook himself to count the subscribers, and Miss Turnbull seized this moment to desire that her name might be added to the list. Lady Bradstone's eyes were immediately fixed upon her with complacency--Lady Stock's flashed fire. Regardless of their fire, Almeria coolly added, "Twelve copies, sir, if you please."

"Twelve copies, Miss Turnbull, at a guinea a-piece! Lord bless me, do you know what you are about, my dear?" said Lady Stock.

"Perfectly well," replied our heroine; "I think twelve guineas, or twenty times that sum, would be well bestowed in asserting independence of sentiment, which I understand is the object of this work."

A whisper from Lady Bradstone to one of the shopmen, of "Who is that charming woman?" gave our heroine courage to pronounce these words. Lady Stock in great displeasure walked to her carriage, saying, "You are to consider what you will do with your twelve copies, Miss Turnbull; for I am convinced your guardian will never let such a parcel of inflammatory trash into his house: he admires female patriotism, and _all that sort of thing_, as little as I do."

The rudeness of this speech did not disconcert Almeria; for she was fortified by the consciousness that she had gained her point with Lady Bradstone. This lady piqued herself upon showing her preferences and aversions with equal enthusiasm and _Øclat_. She declared before a large company at dinner, that notwithstanding Miss Turnbull was _nobody_ by birth, she had made herself _somebody_ by spirit; and that for her part, she should, contrary to her general principle, which she confessed was to keep a strong line of demarcation between nobility and mobility, take

a pride in bringing forward merit even in the shape of a Yorkshire grazier's daughter.

Pursuant to this gracious declaration, she empowered a common friend to introduce Miss Turnbull to her, on the first opportunity. When people really wish to become acquainted with each other, opportunities are easily and quickly found. The parties met, to their mutual satisfaction, that very night in the waiting-room of the Opera-house, and conversed more in five minutes than people in town usually converse in five months or years, when it is their wish to keep on a merely civil footing. But this was not the footing on which Miss Turnbull desired to be with Lady Bradstone; she took the utmost pains to please, and succeeded. She owed her success chiefly to the dexterous manner in which she manifested her contempt for her late dear friend Lady Stock. Her having refused an alliance with the family was much in her favour; her ladyship admired her spirit, but little suspected that the contemptuous manner in which she had once been overheard to speak of this _banker's son_ was the real and immediate cause of his rejection. The phrase--"_only_ Stock the banker's son"--decided his fate: so much may be done by the mere emphasis on a single word from fashionable lips! Our heroine managed with considerable address in bringing her quarrel with one friend to a crisis at the moment when another was ready to receive her. An ostensible pretext is never wanting to those who are resolved on war. The book to which Miss Turnbull had subscribed was the pretext upon this occasion: nothing could be more indifferent to her than politics; but Lady Bradstone's party and principles were to be defended at all events. Sir Thomas Stock protested that he might be hurt essentially in the opinion of those for whom he had the highest consideration if a young lady living under his roof, known to be his ward, and probably presumed to be guided by him, should put her name as subscriber to twelve copies of a work patronized by Lady Bradstone. "The mere circumstance of its being dedicated to her ladyship showed what it _must_ be," Sir Thomas observed; and he made it a point with Miss Turnbull that she should withdraw her name from the subscription. This Miss Turnbull absolutely refused. Lady Bradstone was her confidante upon the occasion, and half-a-dozen notes a day passed between them: at length the affair was brought to the long wished-for crisis. Lady Bradstone invited Miss Turnbull to her house, feeling herself, as she said, bound in honour to _bear her out_ in a dispute of which she had been the original occasion. In this lady's society Almeria found the style of dress, manners, and conversation, different from what she had seen at Lady Stock's: she had without difficulty imitated the affectation of Lady Stock, but there was an ease in the decided tone of Lady Bradstone which could not be so easily acquired. Having lived from her infancy in the best company, there was no heterogeneous mixture in her manners; and the consciousness of this gave an habitual air of security to her words, looks, and motions. Lady Stock seemed forced to beg or buy--Lady Bradstone accustomed to command or levy admiration as her rightful tribute. The pride of Lady Bradstone was uniformly resolute, and successful; the insolence of Lady Stock, if it were opposed, became cowardly and ridiculous. Lady Bradstone seemed to have, on all occasions, an instinctive sense of what a person of fashion ought to do; Lady Stock, notwithstanding her bravadoing air, was frequently perplexed, and

anxious, and therefore awkward: she had always recourse to precedents. "Lady P---- said so, or Lady Q---- did so; Lady G---- wore this, or Lady H---- was there, and therefore I am sure it is proper."

On the contrary, Lady Bradstone never quoted authorities, but presumed that she was a precedent for others. The one was eager to follow, the other determined to lead, the fashion.

Our heroine, who was by no means deficient in penetration, and whose whole attention was now given to the study of externals, quickly perceived these shades of difference between her late and her present friend. She remarked, in particular, that she found herself much more at ease in Lady Bradstone's society. Her ladyship's pride was not so offensive as Lady Stock's vanity: secure of her own superiority, Lady Bradstone did not want to measure herself every instant with inferiors. She treated Almeria as her equal in every respect; and in setting her right in points of fashion never seemed to triumph, but to consider her own knowledge as a necessary consequence of the life she had led from her infancy. With a sort of proud generosity, she always considered those whom she honoured with her friendship as thenceforward entitled to all the advantages of her own situation, and to all the respect due to a part of herself. She now always used the word *_we_*, with peculiar emphasis, in speaking of Miss Turnbull and herself. This was a signal perfectly well understood by her acquaintance. Almeria was received every where with the most distinguished attention; and she was delighted, and absolutely intoxicated, with her sudden rise in the world of fashion. She found that her former acquaintance at Lady Stock's were extremely ambitious of claiming an intimacy; but this could not be done. Miss Turnbull had now acquired, by practice, the power of looking at people without seeming to see them, and of forgetting those with whom she was perfectly well acquainted. Her opinion of her own consequence was much raised by the court that was paid to her by several young men of fashion, who thought it expedient to marry two hundred thousand pounds.

How quickly ambition extends her views! Our heroine's highest object had lately been to form an alliance with a man of fashion; she had now three fashionable admirers in her train, but though she was flattered by their attention, she had not the least inclination to decide in favour of any of these candidates. The only young man of her present acquaintance who seemed to be out of the reach of her power was Lord Bradstone; and upon the conquest of his heart, or rather his pride, her fancy was fixed. He had all his mother's family pride, and he had been taught by her to expect an alliance with a daughter of one of the first noble families in England. The possibility of his marrying a grazier's daughter had never entered into his or Lady Bradstone's thoughts: they saw, indeed, every day, examples, among the first nobility, of such matches; but they saw them with contempt. Almeria knew this, and yet she did not despair of success: nor was she wrong in her calculations. Lord Bradstone was fond of high play--his taste for gaming soon reduced him to distress--his guardian was enraged, and absolutely refused to pay his lordship's debts. What was to be done?--He must extricate himself from his difficulties by marrying some rich heiress. Miss Turnbull was the

heiress nearest at hand. Lord Bradstone's pride was compelled to yield to his interest, and he resolved to pay his addresses to the Yorkshire grazier's daughter: but he knew that his mother would be indignant at this idea; and he therefore determined to proceed cautiously, and to assure himself of the young lady's approbation before he should brave his mother's anger.

The winter was now passed, and her ladyship invited Miss Turnbull to accompany her to Cheltenham;--her son was of the party. Our heroine plainly understood his intentions, and her friendship for Lady Bradstone did not prevent her from favouring his views: neither was she deterred by her knowledge of his lordship's taste for play, so ardent was her desire for a coronet. The recollection of Frederick Elmour sometimes crossed her imagination, and struck her heart; but the pang was soon over, and she settled her conscience by the reflection, that she was not, in the least degree, bound in honour to him--he had set her entirely at liberty, and could not complain of her conduct. As to Ellen--every day she determined to write to her, and every day she put it off till to-morrow. At last she was saved the trouble of making and breaking any more resolutions: for one evening, as she was walking with Lady Bradstone and her noble admirer, in the public walk, she met Miss Elmour and her brother.

She accosted Ellen with great eagerness; but it was plain to her friend's discerning eyes that her joy was affected. After repeating several times that she was quite delighted at this unexpected meeting, she ran on with a number of commonplace questions, commencing and concluding with, "When did you come?--How long do you stay?--Where do you lodge?"

"We have been here about a fortnight, and I believe we shall stay about a month longer."

"Indeed!--A month!--So long!--How fortunate!--But where are you?"

"We lodge a little out of the town, on the road to Cirencester."

"How unfortunate!--We are at such a shocking distance!--I'm with Lady Bradstone--a most charming woman!--Whom are you with?"

"With my poor father," said Ellen; "he has been very ill lately, and we came here on his account."

"III!--Old Mr. Elmour!--I'm extremely concerned--but whom have you to attend him?--you should send to town for Dr. Grant--do you know he is the only man now?--the only man Lady Bradstone and I have any dependence on--if I were dying, he is the man I should send for. Do have him for Mr. Elmour, my dear--and don't be alarmed, above all things--you know it's so natural, at your father's age, that he should not be as well as he has been--but I distress you--and detain you."

Our heroine, after running off these unmeaning sentences, passed on, being ashamed to walk with Ellen in public, because Lady Bradstone had

whispered, "_Who is she?_"--Not to be known in the world of fashion is an unpardonable crime, for which no merit can atone. Three days elapsed before Miss Turnbull went to see her friends, notwithstanding her extreme concern for poor Mr. Elmour. Her excuse to her conscience was, that Lady Bradstone's carriage could not sooner be spared. People in a certain rank of life are, or make themselves, slaves to horses and carriages; with every apparent convenience and luxury, they are frequently more dependent than their tradesmen or their servants. There was a time when Almeria would not have been restrained by these imaginary _impossibilities_ from showing kindness to her friends; but that time was now completely past. She was, at present, anxious to avoid having any private conversation with Ellen, because she was ashamed to avow her change of views and sentiments. In the short morning visit which she paid her, Almeria talked of public places, of public characters, of dress and equipages, &c. She inquired, indeed, with a modish air of infinite sensibility, for poor Mr. Elmour; and when she heard that he was confined to his bed, she regretted most excessively that she could not see him; but a few seconds afterwards, with a suitable change of voice and countenance, she made an easy transition to the praise of a new dress of Lady Bradstone's invention. Frederick Elmour came into the room in the midst of the eulogium on her ladyship's taste--she was embarrassed for a moment; but quickly recovering the tone of a fine lady, she spoke to him as if he had never been any thing to her but a common acquaintance. The dignity and firmness of his manner provoked her pride; she wished to coquet with him--she tried to excite his jealousy by talking of Lord Bradstone: but vain were all her airs and inuendoes; they could not extort from him even a sigh. She was somewhat consoled, however, by observing in his sister's countenance the expression, as she thought, of extreme mortification.

A few days after this visit, Miss Turnbull received the following note from Miss Elmour:

"MY DEAR ALMERIA,

"If you still wish that I should treat you as a friend, show me that you do, and you will find my affection unaltered. If, on the contrary, you have decided to pursue a mode of life, or to form connexions which make you ashamed to own any one for a friend who is not a fine lady, let our intimacy be dissolved for ever--it could only be a source of mutual pain. My father is better to-day, and wishes to see you. Will you spend this evening with him and with Your affectionate ELLEN ELMOUR?"

It happened that the very day Miss Turnbull received this note, Lady Bradstone was to have a concert, and Almeria knew that her ladyship would be offended if she were to spend the evening with the Elmours: it was, as she said to herself, _impossible_, therefore, to accept of Ellen's invitation. She called upon her in the course of the morning, to make an apology. She found Ellen beside her father, who was seated in his arm-chair: he looked extremely pale and weak: she was at first shocked at the change she saw in her old friend, and she could not utter the premeditated apology. Ellen took it for granted that she was come, in consequence of her note, to spend the day with her, and she embraced

her with affectionate joy. Her whole countenance changed when our heroine began at last to talk of Lady Bradstone and the concert--Ellen burst into tears.

"My dear child," said Mr. Elmour, putting his hand upon his daughter's, which rested upon the arm of his chair, "I did not expect this weakness from you."

Miss Turnbull, impatient to shorten a scene which she had neither strength of mind to endure nor to prevent, rose to take leave.

"My dear Ellen," said she, in an irresolute tone, "my dearest creature, you must not distress yourself in this way--I must have you keep up your spirits. You confine yourself too much, indeed you do; and you see you are not equal to it. Your father will be better, and he will persuade you to leave him for an hour or two, I am sure, and we must have you amongst us; and I must introduce you to Lady Bradstone--she's a charming woman, I assure you--you would like her of all things, if you knew her. Come--don't let me see you in this way. Really, my dear Ellen, this is so unlike you--I can assure you that, whatever you may think, I love you as well as ever I did, and never shall forget my obligations to all your family; but, you know, a person who lives in the world, as I do, must make such terrible sacrifices of their time--one can't do as one pleases--one's an absolute slave. So you must forgive me, dear Ellen, for bidding you farewell for the present."

Ellen hastily wiped away her tears, and turning to Almeria with an air of dignity, held out her hand to her, and said, "Farewell for ever, Almeria!--May you never feel the want of a sincere and affectionate friend!--May the triumphs of fashion make you amends for all you sacrifice to obtain them!"

Miss Turnbull was abashed and agitated--she hurried out of the room to conceal her confusion, stepped into a carriage with a coronet, drove away, and endeavoured to forget all that had passed. The concert in the evening recalled her usual train of ideas, and she persuaded herself that she had done all, and more than was necessary, in offering to introduce Ellen to Lady Bradstone. "How could she neglect such an offer?"

A few days after the concert, Almeria had the pleasure of being introduced to Lady Bradstone's four daughters--Lady Gabriella, Lady Agnes, Lady Bab, and Lady Kitty. Of the existence of these young ladies Almeria had scarcely heard--they had been educated at a fashionable boarding-school; and their mother was now under the disagreeable necessity of bringing them home to live with her, because the eldest was past seventeen.

Lady Gabriella was a beauty, and determined to be a Grace--but which of the three Graces, she had not yet decided.

Lady Agnes was plain, and resolved to be a wit.

Lady Bab and Lady Kitty were charming hoydens, with all the modern simplicity of fourteen or fifteen in their manners. Lady Bab had a fine long neck, which was always in motion--Lady Kitty had white teeth, and was always laughing;--but it is impossible to characterize them, for they differed in nothing from a thousand other young ladies.

These four sisters agreed in but one point--in considering their mother as their common enemy. Taking it for granted that Miss Turnbull was her friend, she was looked upon by them as being naturally entitled to a share of their distrust and enmity. They found a variety of causes of complaint against our heroine; and if they had been at any loss, their respective waiting-maids would have furnished them with inexhaustible causes of quarrel.

Lady Bradstone could not bear to go with more than four in a coach.--"Why was Miss Turnbull always to have a front seat in the coach, and two of the young ladies to be always left at home on her account?"--"How could Lady Bradstone make such a favourite of a grazier's daughter, and prefer her to her own children as a companion?" &c.

The young ladies never discouraged their attendants from saying all the ill-natured things that they could devise of Miss Turnbull, and they invented a variety of methods of tormenting her. Lady Gabriella found out that Almeria was horridly ugly and awkward; Lady Agnes quizzed her perpetually; and the Ladies Bab and Kitty played upon her innumerable practical jokes. She was astonished to find in high life a degree of vulgarity of which her country companions would have been ashamed: but all such things in high life go under the general term dashing. These young ladies were dashers. Alas! perhaps foreigners and future generations may not know the meaning of the term!

Our heroine's temper was not proof against the trials to which it was hourly exposed: perhaps the consciousness that she was not born to the situation in which she now moved, joined to her extreme anxiety to be thought genteel and fashionable, rendered her peculiarly irritable when her person and manners were attacked by ladies of quality. She endeavoured to conciliate her young enemies by every means in her power, and at length she found a method of pleasing them. They were immoderately fond of baubles, and they had not money enough to gratify this taste. Miss Turnbull at first, with great timidity, begged Lady Gabriella's acceptance of a ring, which seemed particularly to catch her fancy: the facility with which the ring was accepted, and the favourable change it produced, as if by magic, in her ladyship's manners towards our heroine, encouraged her to try similar experiments upon the other sisters. She spared not ear-rings, crosses, brooches, pins, and necklaces; and the young ladies in return began to show her all the friendship which can be purchased by such presents--or by any presents. Even whilst she rejoiced at the change in their behaviour, she could not avoid despising them for the cause to which she knew it must be attributed; nor did she long enjoy even the temporary calm procured by these peace-offerings; for the very same things which propitiated the daughters offended the mother. Lady Bradstone one morning insisted upon

Lady Gabriella's returning a necklace, which she had received from Almeria; and her ladyship informed Miss Turnbull, at the same time, with an air of supreme haughtiness, that "she could not possibly permit _her_ daughters to accept such valuable presents from any but their own relations; that if the Lady Bradstones did not know what became them, it was her duty to teach them propriety."

It was rather late in life to begin to teach, even if they had been inclined to learn. They resented her last lesson, or rather her last act of authority, with acrimony proportioned to the value of the object; and Miss Turnbull was compelled to hear their complaints. Lady Gabriella said, she was convinced that her mother's only reason for making her return the necklace was because she had not one quite so handsome. Lady Agnes, between whom and her mamma there was pending a dispute about a pair of diamond ear-rings, left by her grandmother, observed, that her mother might, if she pleased, call _jealousy, propriety_; but that she must not be surprised if other people used the old vocabulary; that her mamma's pride and vanity were always at war; for that though she was proud enough to see her daughters _show well_ in public, yet she required to have it said that she looked younger than any of them, and that she was infinitely better dressed.

Lady Bab and Lady Kitty did not fail in this favourable moment of general discontent to bring forward their list of grievances; and in the discussion of their rights and wrongs they continually appealed to our heroine, crowding round her whilst she stood silent and embarrassed. Ashamed of them and of herself, she compared the Lady Bradstones with Ellen--she compared the sisters-in-law she was soon to have with the friend she had forsaken. The young ladies mistook the expression of melancholy in Almeria's countenance at this instant, for sympathy in their sorrows; and her silence, for acquiescence in the justice of their complaints. They were reiterating their opinions with something like plebeian loudness of voice, when their mother entered the room. The ease with which her daughters changed their countenances and the subject of conversation, when she entered, might have prevented all suspicion but for the blushes of Almeria, who, though of all the party she was the least guilty, looked by far the most abashed. The necklace which hung from her hand, and on which in the midst of her embarrassment her eyes involuntarily fell, seemed to Lady Bradstone proof positive against her. Her ladyship recollected certain words she had heard as she opened the door, and now applied them without hesitation to herself. Politeness restrained the expression of her anger towards Miss Turnbull, but it burst furiously forth upon her daughters; and our heroine was now as much alarmed by the violence of her future mother-in-law as she had been disgusted by the meanness of her _intended_ sisters. From this day forward, Lady Bradstone's manner changed towards Almeria, who could plainly perceive, by her altered eye, that she had lost her confidence, and that her ladyship considered her as one who was playing a double part, and fomenting dissensions in her family. She thought herself bound, in honour to the daughters, not to make any explanation that could throw the blame upon them; and she bore in painful silence the many oblique reproaches, reflections upon ingratitude, dissimulation, and treachery, which she knew were aimed at her. The consciousness that

she was treating Lady Bradstone with insincerity, in encouraging the addresses of her son, increased Miss Turnbull's embarrassment; she repented having for a moment encouraged his clandestine attachment; and she now urged him in the strongest manner to impart his intentions to his mother. He assured her that she should be obeyed; but his obedience was put off from day to day; and, in the mean time, the more Almeria saw of his family, the more her desire to be connected with them diminished. The affair of the necklace was continually renewed, in some shape or other, and a perpetual succession of petty disputes occurred, in which both parties were in the wrong, and each openly or secretly blamed her for not taking their part. Her mind was so much harassed, that all her natural cheerfulness forsook her; and the being obliged to assume spirits in company, and among people who were not worth the toil of pleasing, became every hour more irksome. The transition from these domestic miseries to public dissipation and gaieties made her still more melancholy.

When she calmly examined her own heart, she perceived that she felt little or no affection for Lord Bradstone, though she had been flattered by his attentions, when the assiduity of a man of rank and fashion was new to her; but now the joys of being a countess began to fade in her imagination. She hesitated--she had not strength of mind sufficient to decide--she was afraid to proceed; yet she had not courage to retract.

Ellen's parting words recurred to her mind--"May you never feel the want of a sincere and affectionate friend! May the triumphs of fashion make you amends for all you sacrifice to obtain them!"--"Alas!" thought she, "Ellen foresaw that I should soon be disgusted with this joyless, heartless intercourse; but how can I recede? how can I disengage myself from this Lord Bradstone, now that I have encouraged his addresses?--Fool that I have been!--Oh! if I could now be advised by that best of friends, who used to assist me in all my difficulties!--But she despises, she has renounced me--she has bid me farewell for ever!"

Notwithstanding this "farewell for ever," there was still at the bottom of Almeria's heart, even whilst she bewailed herself in this manner, a secret hope that Ellen's esteem and friendship might be recovered, and she resolved to make the trial. She was eager to put this idea into execution the moment it occurred to her; and after apologizing to the Lady Bradstones for not, as usual, accompanying them in their morning ride, she set out to walk to Miss Elmour's lodgings. It was a hot day--she walked fast from the hurry and impatience of her mind. The servant who attended her knocked twice at Mr. Elmour's door before any one answered; at last the door was opened by a maid-servant, with a broom in her hand.

"Is Miss Elmour at home?"

"No, sir, she left Cheltenham this morning betimes, and we be getting the house ready for other lodgers."

Almeria was very much disappointed--she looked flushed and fatigued; and the maid said, "Ma'am, if you'll be pleased to rest a while, you're

welcome, I'm sure--and the parlour's cleaned out--be pleased to sit down, ma'am."--Almeria followed, for she was really tired, and glad to accept the good-natured offer. She was shown into the same parlour where she had but a few weeks before taken leave of Ellen. The maid rolled forward the great arm-chair, in which old Mr. Elmour had been seated; and as she moved it, a gold-headed cane fell to the ground.

Almeria's eyes turned upon it directly as it fell; for it was an old friend of hers: many a time she had played with it when she was a child, and for many years she had been accustomed to see it in the hand of a man whom she loved and respected. It brought many pleasing and some painful associations to her mind--for she reflected how ill she had behaved to the owner of it the last time she saw him.

"Ay, ma'am," said the maid, "it is the poor old gentleman's cane, sure enough--it has never been stirred from here, nor his hat and gloves, see, since the day he died."

"Died!--Good Heavens!--Is Mr. Elmour dead?"

"Yes, sure--he died last Tuesday, and was buried yesterday. You'd better drink some of this water, ma'am," said the girl, filling a glass that stood on the table. "Why! dear heart! I would not have mentioned it so sudden in this way, but I thought it could no way hurt you. Why, it never came into my head you could be a friend of the family's, nor more, may be, at the utmost, than an acquaintance, as you never used to call much during his illness."

This was the most cutting reproach, and the innocence with which it was uttered made it still more severe. Almeria burst into tears; and the poor girl, not knowing what to say next, and sorry for all she had said, took up the cane, which had fallen from Almeria's hands, and applied herself to brightening the gold head with great diligence. At this instant there was a double knock at the house-door.

"It's only the young gentleman, ma'am," said the maid, as she went towards the door.

"What young gentleman?" said Almeria, rising from her seat.

"Young Mr. Elmour, ma'am: he did not go away with his sister, but stayed to settle some matters. Oh, they have let him in!"

The maid stood with the parlour-door half open in her hand, not being able to decide in her own fancy whether the lady wished that he should come into the room or stay out; and before either she, or perhaps Almeria, had decided this point, it was settled for them by his walking in. Almeria was standing so as to be hid by the door; and he was so intent upon his own thoughts, that, without perceiving there was any body in the room, he walked straight forward to the table, took up his father's hat and gloves, and gave a deep sigh. He heard his sigh echoed--looked up, and started at the sight of Almeria, but immediately assumed an air of distant and cold respect. He was in deep mourning, and

looked pale, as if he had suffered much. Almeria endeavoured to speak; but could get out only a few words, expressive of _the shock and astonishment_ she had just felt.

"Undoubtedly, madam, you must have been shocked," replied Frederick, in a calm voice; "but you could not have reason to be much astonished. My father's life had been despaired of some time--you must have seen how much he was changed when you were here a few weeks ago." Almeria could make no reply; the tears, in spite of all her efforts to restrain them, rolled down her cheeks: the cold, and almost severe, manner, in which Frederick spoke, and the consciousness that she deserved it, struck her to the heart. He followed her, as she abruptly quitted the room, and in a tone of more kindness, but with the same distant manner, begged to have the honour of attending her home. She bowed her head, to give that assent which her voice could not at this instant utter; and she was involuntarily going to put her arm within his; but, as he did not seem to perceive this motion, she desisted, coloured violently, adjusted the drapery of her gown to give employment to the neglected hand, then walked on with precipitation. Her foot slipped as she was crossing the street; Frederick offered his arm--she could not guess, from the way in which it was presented, whether her former attempt had been perceived or not. This trifle appeared to her a point of the utmost importance; for by this she thought she could decide whether his feelings were really as cold towards her as they appeared, whether he felt love and anger, or contempt and indifference. Whilst she was endeavouring in vain to form her opinion, all the time she leant upon his arm, and walked on in silence, a carriage passed them; Frederick bowed, and his countenance was suddenly illuminated. Almeria turned eagerly to see the cause of the change, and as the carriage drove on she caught a glimpse of a beautiful young lady. A spasm of jealousy seized her heart--she withdrew her arm from Frederick's. The abruptness of the action did not create any emotion in him--his thoughts were absent. In a few minutes he slackened his pace, and turned from the road towards a path across the fields, asking if Miss Turnbull had any objection to going that way to Lady Bradstone's instead of along the dusty road. She made no objection--she thought she perceived that Frederick was preparing to say something of importance to her, and her heart beat violently.

"Miss Turnbull will not, I hope, think what I am going to say impertinent; she may be assured that it proceeds from no motive but the desire to prevent the future unhappiness of one who once honoured my family with her friendship."

"You are too good--I do not deserve that you should be interested in my happiness or unhappiness--I cannot think you impertinent--pray speak freely."

"And quickly," she would have added, if she dared. Without abating any of his reserve from this encouragement, he proceeded precisely in the same tone as before, and with the same steady composure.

"An accidental acquaintance with a friend of my Lord Bradstone's, has put me in possession of what, perhaps, you wish to be a secret, madam,

and what I shall inviolably keep as such."

"I cannot pretend to be ignorant of what you allude to," said Almeria; "but it is more than probable that you may not have heard the exact state of the business; indeed it is impossible that you should, because no one but myself could fully explain my sentiments. In fact they were undecided; I was this very morning going to consult your sister upon that subject."

"You will not suppose that I am going to intrude my counsels upon you, Miss Turnbull; nothing can be farther from my intention: I am merely going to mention a fact to you, of which I apprehend you are ignorant, and of which, as you are circumstanced, no one in your present society, perhaps no one in the world but myself, would choose to apprize you. Forgive me, madam, if I try your patience by this preface: I am very desirous not to wound your feelings more than is necessary."

"Perhaps," said Almeria, with a doubtful smile, "perhaps you are under a mistake, and imagine my feelings to be much more interested than they really are. If you have any thing to communicate to Lord Bradstone's disadvantage, you may mention it to me without hesitation, and without fear of injuring my happiness or his; for, to put you at ease at once, I am come to a determination positively to decline his lordship's addresses."

"This assurance certainly puts me at ease at once," said Frederick. But Almeria observed that he neither expressed by his voice nor countenance any of that joy which she had hoped to inspire by the assurance: on the contrary, he heard it as a determination in which he was personally unconcerned, and in which pure benevolence alone could give him an interest. "This relieves me," continued he, "from all necessity of explaining myself further."

"Nay," said Almeria, "but I must beg you will explain yourself. You do not know but it may be necessary for me to have your antidote ready in case of a relapse."

No change, at least none that betrayed the anxiety of a lover, was visible in Frederick's countenance at this hint of a relapse; but he gravely answered, that, when so urged, he could not forbear to tell her the exact truth, that Lord Bradstone was a ruined man--ruined by gaming--and that he had been so indelicate as to declare to his friend, that his sole object in marrying was money. Our heroine's pride was severely hurt by the last part of this information; but even that did not wound her so keenly as the manner in which Frederick behaved. She saw that he had no remains of affection for her lurking in his heart--she saw that he now acted merely as he declared, from a desire to save from misery one who had formerly honoured his family with her friendship. Stiff, cold words--she endeavoured to talk upon indifferent subjects, but could not--she was somewhat relieved when they reached Lady Bradstone's door, and when Frederick left her. The moment he was gone, however, she ran up stairs to her own apartment, and looked eagerly out of her window to catch the last glimpse of him. Such is the

strange caprice of the human heart, that a lover appears the most valuable at the moment he is lost. Our heroine had felt all her affection for Frederick revive with more than its former force within this last hour; and she thought she now loved with a degree of passion of which she had never before found herself capable. Hope is perhaps inseparable from the existence of the passion of love. She passed alternately from despair to the most flattering delusions: she fancied that Frederick's coldness was affected--that he was acting only from honour--that he wished to leave her at liberty--and that as soon as he knew she was actually disengaged from Lord Bradstone, he would fly to her with all his former eagerness. This notion having once taken possession of her mind, she was impatient in the extreme to settle her affairs with Lord Bradstone. He was not at home--he did not come in till late in the evening. It happened, that the next day Almeria was to be of age; and Lord Bradstone, when he met her in the evening, reminded her of her promise not "to prolong the torments of suspense beyond that period." She asked whether he had, in compliance with her request, communicated the affair to Lady Bradstone? No; but he would as soon as he had reasonable grounds of hope. Miss Turnbull rejoiced that he had disobeyed her injunctions--she said that Lady Bradstone might now be forever spared hearing what would have inevitably excited her indignation. His lordship stared, and could not comprehend our heroine's present meaning. She soon made it intelligible. We forbear to relate all that was said upon the occasion: as it was a disappointment of the purse and not of the heart, his lordship was of course obliged to make a proportional quantity of professions of eternal sorrow and disinterestedness. Almeria, partly to save her own pride the mortification of the repetition, forbore to allude to the confidential speech in which he had explained to _a friend_ his motives for marrying; she hoped that he would soon console himself with some richer heiress, and she rejoiced to be disencumbered of him, and even of his coronet; for in this moment coronets seemed to her but paltry things--so much does the appearance of objects vary according to the medium through which they are viewed!

Better satisfied with herself after this refusal of the earl, and in better spirits than she had been for some months, she flattered herself with the hopes that Frederick would call upon her again before he left Cheltenham; he would then know that Lord Bradstone was no longer her lover.

She fell asleep full of these imaginations--dreamed of Frederick and Elmour Grove--but this was only a dream. The next day--and the next--and the next--passed without her seeing or hearing any thing of Frederick; and the fourth day, as she rode by the house where the Elmours had lodged, she saw put up in the parlour window an advertisement of "_Lodgings to be let_." She was now convinced that Frederick had left Cheltenham--left it without thinking of her or of Lord Bradstone. The young Lady Bradstones observed that she scarcely spoke a word during the remainder of her morning's ride. At night she was attacked with a feverish complaint: the image of the beautiful person whom she had seen in the coach that passed while she was walking with Frederick, was now continually before her eyes. She had made all the inquiries she could,

to find out who that young lady might be; but this point could not be ascertained, because, though she described the lady accurately, she was not equally exact about the description of the carriage. The arms and livery had totally escaped her observation. The different conjectures that had been made by the various people to whom she had applied, and the voices in which their answers were given, ran in her head all this feverish night.

"Perhaps it was Lady Susanna Quin--very likely it was Lady Mary Lowther--very possibly Miss Grant; you know she goes about with old Mrs. Grant in a yellow coach--but there are so many yellow coaches--the arms or the livery would settle the point at once." These words, "the arms and the livery would settle the point at once," she repeated to herself perpetually, though without annexing any ideas to the words. In short, she was very feverish all night; and in the morning, though she endeavoured to rise, she was obliged to lie down again. She was confined to her bed for about a week: Lady Bradstone sent for the best physicians; and the young ladies, in the intervals of dressing and going out, whenever they could remember it, came into Miss Turnbull's room to "hope she found herself better." It was obvious to her that no one person in the house cared a straw about her, and she was oppressed with the sense of being an encumbrance to the whole family. Whilst she was alone she formed many projects for her future life, which she resolved to execute as soon as she should recover. She determined immediately to go down to her own house in the country, and to write to Ellen a recantation of all her fine lady errors. She composed, whilst she lay on her feverish pillow, twenty letters to her former friend, each of them more eloquent and magnanimous than the other: but in proportion as her fever left her, the activity of her imagination abated, and with it her eloquence and magnanimity. Her mind, naturally weak, and now enfeebled by disease, became quite passive, and received and yielded to the impressions made by external circumstances. New trains of ideas, perfectly different from those which had occupied her mind during her fever, and in the days preceding her illness, were excited during her convalescence. She lay listening to, or rather hearing, the conversation of the young Lady Bradstones. They used to come into her room at night, and stay for some time whilst they had their hair curled, and talked over the events of the day--whom they had met--what dresses they had worn--what matches were on the tapis, &c. They happened one night to amuse themselves with reading an old newspaper, in which they came to an account of a splendid masquerade, which had been given the preceding winter in London by a rich heiress.

"Lord! what charming entertainments Miss Turnbull might give if she pleased. Why, do you know, she is richer than this woman," whispered Lady Bab; "and she is of age now, you know. If I were she, I'm sure I'd have a house of my own, and the finest I could get in London. Now such a house as my aunt Pierrepoint's--and servants--and carriages--and I would make myself of some consequence."

This speech was not lost upon our heroine; and the whisper in which it was spoken increased its effect. The next day, as Lady Bab was sitting at the foot of Almeria's bed, she asked for a description of "my aunt

Pierrepoint's house." It was given to her _con amore_, and a character of "my aunt Pierrepoint" was added gratis. "She is the most charming amiable woman in the world--quite a different sort of person from mamma. She has lived all her life about court, and she is connected with all the great people, and a prodigious favourite at court--and she is of such consequence!--You cannot imagine of what consequence she is!"

Lady Gabriella then continued the conversation, by telling Miss Turnbull a great secret, that her aunt Pierrepoint and her mother were not on the best terms in the world: "for mamma's so violent, you know, about politics, and quite on a contrary side to my aunt. Mamma never goes to court; and, between you and me, they say she would not be received. Now that is a shocking thing for us; but the most provoking part of the business is, that mamma won't let my aunt Pierrepoint present us. Why, when she cannot or will not go to the drawing-room herself, what could be more proper, you know, than to let us be presented by Lady Pierrepoint?--Lady Pierrepoint, you know, who is such a prodigious favourite, and knows every thing in the world that's proper at court, and every where: it really is monstrous of mamma! Now if you were in our places, should not you be quite provoked? By-the-bye, you never were presented at court yourself, were you?"

"Never," said Almeria, with a sudden feeling of mortification.

"No, you could not--of course you could not, living with mamma as you do; for I am sure she would quarrel with an angel for just only talking of going to court. Lord! if I was as rich as you, what beautiful birthday dresses I would have!"

These and similar conversations wrought powerfully upon the weak mind of our poor heroine. She rose from her bed after her illness wondering what had become of her passion for Frederick Elmour: certainly she was now able to console herself for his loss, by the hopes of being presented at court, and of being dressed with uncommon splendour. She was surprised at this change in her own mind; but she justified it to herself by the reflection, that it would show an unbecoming want of spirit to retain any remains of regard for one who had treated her with so much coldness and indifference, and who in all probability was attached to another woman. Pride and resentment succeeded to tenderness; and she resolved to show Frederick and Ellen that she could be happy her own way. It is remarkable that her friendship for the sister always increased or decreased with her love for her brother. Ambition, as it has often been observed, is a passion that frequently succeeds to love, though love seldom follows ambition. Almeria, who had now recovered her strength, was one morning sitting in her own room, meditating arrangements for the next winter's campaign, when she was roused by the voices of Lady Bab and Lady Kitty at her room door.

"Miss Turnbull! Miss Turnbull! come! come!--Here's the king and queen and all the royal family, and my aunt Pierrepoint--come quick to our dressing-room windows, or they will be out of sight."

The fair hoydens seized her between them, and dragged her away.

"Mamma says it's horribly vulgar to run to the windows, but never mind that. There's my aunt Pierrepont's coach--is not it handsome?--Oh! everything about her is so handsome!--you know she has lived all her life at court."

The eulogiums of these young ladies, and the sight of Lady Pierrepont's entry in to Cheltenham in the wake of royalty, and the huzzas of the mob, and the curiosity of all ranks who crowded the public walks in the evening, to see the illustrious guest, contributed to raise our heroine's enthusiasm. She was rather surprised afterwards to observe that Lady Pierrepont passed her sister and nieces, on the public walk, without taking the slightest notice of them; her head was turned indeed quite another way when she passed, and she was in smiling conversation with one of her own party.

Lady Gabriella whispered, "My aunt Pierrepont cannot _know_ us now, because we are with mamma."

Miss Turnbull now, for the first time, saw Lady Bradstone in a situation in which she was neglected; this served to accelerate the decline and fall of her ladyship's power over her mind. She began to consider her not as a person by whom she had been brought into notice in the circles of fashion, but as one by whom she was prevented from rising to a higher orbit. Lady Bradstone went to see her sister the day after her arrival, but she was _not at home_. Some days afterwards Lady Pierrepont returned her visit: she came in a sedan chair, because she did not wish that her carriage should be seen standing at Lady Bradstone's door. It was incumbent upon her to take every possible precaution to prevent the suspicion of her being biassed by sisterly affection; her sister and she were unfortunately of such different opinions in politics, and her sister's politics were so much disapproved of, where Lady Pierrepont most wished for approbation, that she could not, consistently with her principles or interest, countenance them, by appearing in public with one so obnoxious.

Miss Turnbull observed, with the most minute attention, every word and gesture of Lady Pierrepont. At first view, her ladyship appeared all smiling ease and affability; but in all her motions, even in those of her face, there was something that resembled a puppet--her very smiles, and the turns of her eyes, seemed to be governed by unseen wires. Upon still closer observation, however, there was reason to suspect that this puppet might be regulated by a mind within, of some sort or other; for it could not only answer questions by a voice of its own, and apparently without being prompted, but moreover it seemed to hesitate, and to take time for thought, before it hazarded any reply. Lady Pierrepont spoke always as if she thought her words would be repeated, and must _lead to consequences_; and there was an air of vast circumspection and mystery about her, which appeared sublime or ridiculous according to the light in which it was considered. To our heroine it appeared sublime. Her ladyship's conversation, if a set of unmeaning phrases be deserving of that name, at length turned upon the concern she felt that it had not been in her power to procure an increase of pension for a certain Mrs.

Vickars. "Such a respectable character!--the widow of a distant relation of the Pierreponts." There was no probability, after all the interest and influence she had used, she said, that Mrs. Vickars could ever be gratified in the line she had attempted; that therefore it was her ladyship's advice to her to look out for some situation of an eligible description, which might relieve her from the distressing apprehension of appearing burdensome or importunate.

As well as her ladyship's meaning could be made out, cleared from the superfluity of words with which it was covered, she wished to get rid of this poor widow, and to fasten her as an humble companion upon any body who would be troubled with _such a respectable character!_ Miss Turnbull foresaw the possibility of obliging her ladyship by means of Mrs.

Vickars: for as she proposed to purchase a house in town, it would be convenient to her to have some companion; and this lady, who was of a certain age, and who had always lived in the best company, would be well suited to serve as her chaperon. To do our heroine justice, considering that she was unpractised in manoeuvring with court ladies, she conducted her scheme with a degree of address worthy of her object. Through the medium of Lady Bab and Lady Gabriella, she opened a correspondence with Lady Pierrepont. Mrs. Vickars was introduced to Miss Turnbull--liked her prodigiously; and Lady Pierrepont was most happy in the prospect of her relation's being so eligibly situated. In proportion as Miss Turnbull advanced in the good graces of Lady Pierrepont, she receded from Lady Bradstone. This lady's indignation, which had been excited against Almeria by her not siding with her against her daughters, now rose to the highest pitch, when she perceived what was going on. No crime could in her eyes be greater than that of seceding from her party. Her violence in party matters was heightened by the desire to contrast herself with her sister Pierrepont's courtly policy. Lady Bradstone, all the time, knew and cared very little about politics, except so far as they afforded her opportunities for the display of spirit and eloquence. She had a fine flow of words, and loved to engage in argument, especially as she had often been told by gentlemen that her enthusiasm became her extremely, and that, even if a man could resist the force of her arguments, he must yield to the fire of her eyes. It happened that Miss Turnbull was present one day when Lady Bradstone had been unusually warm in a political argument, and Lady Pierrepont as cool and guarded as her sister was eager. Almeria was appealed to, and gave judgment in favour of Lady Pierrepont, who happened to be in the right. Regardless of right or wrong, Lady Bradstone became more and more vehement, whilst Lady Pierrepont sat in all the composed superiority of silence, maintaining the most edifying meekness of countenance imaginable, as if it were incumbent on her to be, or at least to seem, penitent for a sister's perversity. She sighed deeply when the _tirade_ was finished, and fixed her eyes upon her beautiful niece Gabriella. Lady Gabriella immediately filled up the pause by declaring that she knew nothing of politics and hoped she never should, for that she did not know of what use they were to women, except to prevent them from going to court.

Lady Bradstone expressed high indignation at perceiving that her daughters thought more of dancing at a birthnight ball than of the good

of the nation.

Mrs. Vickars, who was present, now interposed a word as mediatrix, observing, that it was natural for the young ladies at their age: and Miss Turnbull, catching or imitating something of the tone of Lady Pierrepont, ventured to add, that "it was a pity that Lady Bradstone's daughters did not enjoy all the advantages of their high rank, and that she really wished Lady Bradstone could be prevailed upon to enter into conciliatory measures."

On hearing this speech, Lady Bradstone, no longer able to restrain her anger within the bounds of politeness, exclaimed, "I am not surprised at receiving such advice from you, Miss Turnbull; but I own I am astonished at hearing such sentiments from my daughters. High sentiments are to be expected from high birth."

How Lady Bradstone contrived to make her aristocratic pride of birth agree with her democratic principles, it may be difficult to explain; but fortunately the idea of preserving consistency never disturbed her self-complacency. Besides, to keep her ladyship in countenance, there are so many examples of persons who live as royalists and talk as republicans.

Almeria could not brook the affront implied by Lady Bradstone's last speech; and matters were now brought to a crisis: she resolved not to remain longer in a house where she was exposed to such insults. She was of "age, and, thank Heaven! independent."

Lady Bradstone made no opposition to her determination; but congratulated her upon the prospect of becoming independent."

"I agree with you, Miss Turnbull, in thanking Heaven for making me independent. Independence of mind, of course," added she, "I value above independence of purse."

Whatever vexation our heroine might feel from this speech, and from the perfect indifference with which Lady Bradstone parted from her, was compensated by the belief that she had by her conduct this evening ingratiated herself with Lady Pierrepont. She was confirmed in this opinion by Mrs. Vickars, who said that her ladyship afterwards spoke of Miss Turnbull as a very judicious and safe young person, whom she should not scruple to protect. She was even so condescending as to interest herself about the house in town, which Miss Turnbull talked of purchasing: she knew that a noble friend of hers, who was going on a foreign embassy, had thoughts of parting with his house; and it would certainly suit Miss Turnbull, if she could compass the purchase. Almeria felt herself highly honoured by her ladyship's taking a concern in any of her affairs; and she begged of Mrs. Vickars to say, that "expense was no object to her." She consequently paid a few hundred guineas more than the value of the house, for the honour of Lady Pierrepont's interference. Her ladyship saw into the weakness of our heroine's character, and determined to make advantage of it. It was a maxim of hers, that there is no person so insignificant, but some advantage may

be made of them; and she had acted upon this principle through life, sometimes so as to excite in the minds of the ignorant a high admiration of her affability. It is said, that when Lady Pierrepont was asked why she married, she replied, "To increase my consequence, and strengthen my connexions."

Perhaps this speech was made for her by some malicious wit; but it is certain that she never upon any occasion of her life neglected an opportunity of acting upon this principle. She was anxious with this view to have as many dependents as possible: and she well knew that those who were ambitious of a curtsy from her at the playhouse, or a whisper at the opera, were as effectually her dependents as the mendicants at her door, who are in want of a shilling. The poor may be held in the iron fetters of necessity, but the rich are dragged behind the car of fashion by the golden chains of vanity.

The summer in the life of a fine lady is a season comparatively of so little consequence, that the judicious historian may pass over some months of it without their being missed in the records of time. He hastens to the busy and important season of winter.

Our heroine took possession of her magnificent house in town: and Mrs. Vickars was established as *_arbitratrix elegantiarum_*.

This lady deemed herself a judge in the last appeal of every thing that became a person of fashion; and her claim to infallibility upon those points was established by her being fourth cousin to Lady Pierrepont. Almeria soon discovered in her companion an inordinate love of power, and an irritability of temper, which misfortunes and ill health had increased to such a degree that it required more than the patience of a female Job to live with her upon good terms. Martyrs in the cause of vanity certainly exhibit wonderful, if not admirable, fortitude, in the midst of the absurd and extravagant torments which they inflict upon themselves. Our heroine endured for a whole season, without any outward complaint, but with many an inward groan, the penance which she had imposed upon herself: the extent of it can be comprehended only by those who have been doomed to live with a thoroughly ill-tempered woman. The reward was surely proportioned to the sufferings. Miss Turnbull received a smile, or a nod, or something like a curtsy from Lady Pierrepont, whenever she met her in public; her ladyship's cards were occasionally left at the Yorkshire heiress's door; and she sometimes honoured Miss Turnbull's crowded rooms, by crowding them still more with her august presence. There was further reason to hope, that her ladyship might be induced to present Almeria at court before the next birthday. All these advantages were to be attributed to Mrs. Vickars, for she was the connecting link between two beings of inferior and superior order. We forbear to describe, or even to enumerate, the variety of balls, suppers, dinners, d \o jeun \o s, galas, and masquerades, which Miss Turnbull gave to the fashionable world during this winter. The generous public forget these things the week after they are over; and the consequence they bestow endures no longer than the track of a triumphal chariot.

Our heroine was never fully convinced of this truth till it was

confirmed by her own experience. She found it necessary continually to renew her expensive efforts, to keep herself alive in the memory of her great acquaintance. Towards the time when she expected to be presented at court by Lady Pierrepont, a sudden coolness was apparent in her ladyship's manner; and one morning Almeria was surprised by a note from her, regretting, in the most polite but positive terms, that it would be absolutely out of her power to have the honour of presenting Miss Turnbull at St. James's. In the utmost consternation, Almeria flew for an explanation to Mrs. Vickars. Mrs. Vickars was in a desperate fit of the sullens, which had lasted now upwards of eight-and-forty hours, ever since her advice had not been taken about the placing of certain bronze figures, with antique lamps in their hands, upon the great staircase. It was necessary to bring the lady into a good humour in the first place, by yielding to her uncontrolled dominion over the candelabras. This point being settled, and an unqualified submission in all matters of taste, past, present, or to come, declared or implied on the part of our heroine, Mrs. Vickars on her part promised to set out immediately on an embassy to Lady Pierrepont, to discover the cause of the present discontent. After making sundry ineffectual attempts to see her noble relation, she was at last admitted; and after one hour's private audience, she returned to the anxious Almeria with a countenance lengthened to the utmost stretch of melancholy significance.

"What is the matter, Mrs. Vickars?"

It was long before this question was answered; but after many friendly lamentations, Mrs. Vickars could not help observing, that Miss Turnbull had nobody to blame in this business but herself. This, or any thing else, she was willing to admit, to get at the point, "But what have I done? I dare say it is, as you say, all my own fault--but tell me how?"

"How!--Can you, my dearest Miss Turnbull, forget that you did the most imprudent and really unaccountable thing, that ever woman did?--Lady Pierrepont had it from Stock the banker. Now you must be certainly conscious to what I allude."

Almeria still looked innocent till Mrs. Vickars produced the book dedicated to Lady Bradstone, for twelve copies of which Miss Turnbull had subscribed. Her name was printed among the list of subscribers, and there was no palliating the fact. When her companion saw that she was quite overwhelmed with the sense of this misfortune, she began to hint, that though the evil was great, it was not without remedy; that in her own private opinion, Lady Pierrepont might have passed over the thing, if she had not heard it at a most unlucky moment. The provoking banker mentioned it to her ladyship just after he had disappointed her of certain moneys, for which she was negotiating. From her situation and means of obtaining secret and early intelligence, she had it frequently in her power to make money by selling in or out of the stocks. Such an opportunity at present occurred; and "it was a great pity," Mrs. Vickars observed, "that the want of a little ready money should preclude her from the possibility of profiting by her situation." Miss Turnbull, who was not deficient in quickness of comprehension, upon this hint immediately said, "that her ladyship might command some thousands which

she had in Sir Thomas Stock's bank." Lady Pierrepont the next day found that it would be best to hush up the affair of the subscription to the fatal pamphlet. She said, "that she had with infinite satisfaction ascertained, that the thing had not been noticed in the quarter where she feared it would have created an insuperable prejudice--that there were other Turnbells, as she was happy to understand, in the world, besides Mrs. Vickars's friend; and that as, in the list of subscribers, she was mentioned only as _Miss_ Turnbull, not as Almeria Turnbull, all was safe, and nobody would suspect that a lady presented at court by my Lady Pierrepont could be the same person that subscribed to a book of such a description."

This affair being adjusted, the league was tacitly formed between interest and vanity. Miss Turnbull was presented at court by Lady Pierrepont, and her ladyship bought into the stocks with the Yorkshire heiress's money. The gratification of Almeria's ambition, however, did not complete her happiness. When she was at the summit of the Alps of fashion, she saw how little was to be seen.

Though she liked to have it to say that she was a great deal with Lady Pierrepont, yet the time always passed most heavily in her company; nor was the inferiority of this lady's understanding compensated by an affectionate heart. Her smoothly polished exterior prevented all possibility of obtaining any hold over her. She had the art at once to seem to be intimate with people, and to keep them at the greatest distance; as, in certain optical deceptions, an object which appears close to us, eludes our hand if we attempt to grasp it. Almeria felt the want of that species of unreserved confidence and friendship which she had formerly enjoyed with Ellen. In judging of what will make us happy, we are apt to leave time out of the account; and this leads to most important errors. For a short period we may be amused or gratified by what will fatigue and disgust us if long continued. The first winter that she spent in dissipation she was amused; but winter after winter passed; and the recurrence of the same public diversions, and the same faces, and the same common-place conversation, wearied instead of interesting her. But as the pleasure of novelty declined, the power of habit increased; and she continued the same course of life for six years--six long years! against both her judgment and her feelings, the absolute slave of an imaginary necessity. Thus the silly chicken remains prisoner in a circle of chalk: even when the hand by which it was held down is removed, it feels an imaginary pressure, from which it dares not even attempt to escape.

Almeria, however, was now arrived at an age when she could no longer, with any propriety, be called a chicken: she was seven-and-twenty; and the effect of keeping late hours, and the continual petty irritations to which she had been subject, were sufficiently visible in her countenance. She looked in a morning so faded and haggard, that any one not used to the _wear and tear_ of fashionable faces would have guessed Almeria's age to be seven-and-thirty instead of seven-and-twenty. During her six campaigns in London, she or her fortune had made many conquests; but none of her London captives had ever obtained any power over her affections, and her ambition could not decide upon the pretensions of

her several suitors. Lady Pierrepont, who was her prime adviser, had an interest in keeping her unmarried; because during this time her ladyship employed most advantageously certain moneys, which she had borrowed from our heiress. This female politician made some objection to every proposal; continually repeating, that Miss Turnbull might do better--that she might look higher--that with her pretensions, there could be no doubt that she would have a variety of advantageous offers--and that her play should be to raise her value by rejecting, without hesitation, all pretenders but those of the first distinction. Lady Pierrepont, who usually spoke with all the ambiguity of an oracle, seemed on this subject more than usually mysterious. She dropped half sentences, then checked herself, hinted that she was not at liberty to speak out; but that she had her own private reasons for advising her friend Miss Turnbull not to be precipitate in her choice. Her ladyship's looks said more than her words, and Almeria interpreted them precisely as she wished. There was a certain marquis, whom she sometimes met at Lady Pierrepont's, and whom she would have been pleased to meet more frequently. He was neither young, nor handsome, nor witty, nor wise. What was he then?--He was a marquis--and is not that enough?--Almeria saw that he was looked up to as a person of great influence and importance, and she now had the habit of trusting to the eyes and ears of others. She now considered what people were thought of, not what they really were; and according to this mode of estimation she could not fail to form a high opinion of this exalted personage. He paid her distinguished, but not decisive attention; and perhaps the uncertainty in which she was kept as to his views increased her interest upon the subject. There was always some obstacle, which seemed to prevent him from declaring himself:--at one time he was suddenly obliged to go ambassador to some foreign court; he went, and stayed a year; at his return he was immersed in politics, and deplored his hard fate in terms which Almeria thought it was impossible not to construe favourably to her wishes. She thought she was upon the point of becoming a marchioness, when his lordship was again sent into what he called banishment. Lady Pierrepont had constantly letters from him, however; passages from which she from time to time read to Almeria, in whose weak mind this kept alive an indistinct hope, for which she had no rational foundation. She was confirmed in her belief that the marquis had serious thoughts of her, by the opinion of Mrs. Vickars, who she thought was in the secret, and who certainly would not speak decidedly without sufficient reason. Indeed, nothing but the pleasure she received from Mrs. Vickars's favourable prognostics upon this subject could have in any degree balanced the pain she daily endured from this lady's fretful temper. Almeria submitted to her domineering humour, and continued to propitiate her with petty sacrifices, more from fear than love--from fear that her adverse influence might be fatal to her present scheme of aggrandizement. Weak minds are subject to this apprehension of control from secret causes utterly inadequate to their supposed effects; and thus they put their destiny into the hands of persons who could not otherwise obtain influence over their fate.

The time at length arrived when our heroine was to be confirmed in her expectations, or wakened from her state of self-delusion. The marquis returned from abroad, and Lady Pierrepont wrote a note more

mysteriously worded than usual, signifying that she "wished to have a conference with Miss Turnbull on a subject of some importance; and begged to know at what hour in the morning she might be secure of the pleasure of finding her at home." Almeria named her hour, and waited for its arrival with no small impatience. Lady Pierrepont's thundering knock at the door was heard; her ladyship was shown up stairs; and she entered the room with a countenance that seemed to promise well. She precluded with many flattering phrases--declared that ever since she had been first acquainted with Miss Turnbull at Cheltenham, she had always considered her with sentiments of esteem, of which she had since given indeed the most convincing proofs, by accepting of obligations from her.

"Obligations!" exclaimed Almeria, with an air of polite astonishment.

"Yes, my dear Miss Turnbull," continued her ladyship, with still more polite humility, "I am under obligations to you assuredly. Things of a pecuniary nature ought not to be named, I confess, in the same sentence with friendship; yet for the sake of one's family it is, whilst we remain in this world, the duty of every one to pay a certain degree of attention to such points; and a person who has, like me, advantages of situation and connexions, would not be justifiable in neglecting, under due limitations, to make use of them."

Miss Turnbull readily assented to these guarded truisms, but wondered to what all this was to lead.

"The money which you have had the goodness to trust in my hands," continued her ladyship, "has, without in the least impoverishing, or, I hope, _inconveniencing_ you, been of the most material advantage to me."

Almeria comprehended that her ladyship referred to her speculations in the stocks, and she congratulated her upon her success; and added assurances, that for her own part she had not been in the slightest degree _inconvenienced_. Whilst Miss Turnbull uttered these assurances, however, she was not sorry to see Lady Pierrepont take out of her pocket-book bank notes to the amount of her debt; for in plain truth, the interest of this loan had never been punctually paid; and Almeria had often regretted that she had placed so much of her fortune out of her own power. "Let me now return these to you with a thousand thanks," said her ladyship. "Indeed, my niece Gabriella has more reason even than I have to thank you; for you must know, my dear Miss Turnbull, that all my speculations have been for her. From the time that she came to live with me, I was determined that she should be properly established; and you must be sensible that, for a young lady's establishment in our days, money is as essential as beauty. La belle Gabrielle is now provided for as she ought to be, and of course the consequence will be a suitable alliance." Miss Turnbull expressed her satisfaction at finding that her money had been instrumental in attaining so happy a purpose, and presumed to ask if her ladyship had any immediate alliance in view.

"It is a secret as yet; but I have no secrets for you, my dear Miss Turnbull: indeed, I came here this morning by our dear Gabriella's particular desire to communicate it to you. I flatter myself you will

approve of her choice--our favourite marquis."

Almeria was so much astonished and shocked by these words, that she turned as pale as if she were going to faint. "Our favourite marquis!" she repeated in a faltering voice; "I thought----"

The fear of becoming ridiculous restrained her anger, and she paused.--"You thought, perhaps," resumed the perfectly-composed Lady Pierrepont, "you thought, perhaps, my dear, that there was too great a disparity of age between Gabriella and the marquis."

"Oh! no."

"Why, that is an objection, I confess; at least it would be to some young ladies: but as Gabriella is satisfied, we may waive that."

"Oh! yes, certainly."

"One cannot help being interested for him; he is such a respectable character--and so much in love! It would really surprise you, my dear; for you know he was a man, one would have imagined, so much immersed in politics--I protest I never had a suspicion of his having a thought of Gabriella, till the proposal was absolutely made."

"I am sure I never suspected the marquis's attachment to Lady Gabriella," said Miss Turnbull: "on the contrary--"

"On the contrary," pursued Lady Pierrepont, "he paid her always, as I remember, less attention than to twenty others, who were indifferent to him."

The struggle was still violent in our heroine's mind between rage and the dread of exposing herself to ridicule. Lady Pierrepont saw this, and coolly held her in this dilemma.

"Now," continued her ladyship, "men are such unaccountable creatures, one never can understand them. Do you know, my dear Miss Turnbull, I had, till his lordship explained himself unequivocally to me, a notion that he was in love with you."

"Really!" said our heroine, forcing a laugh.

"Did your friend Mrs. Vickars never tell you so?"

"Yes, she did--frequently."

"Both of us mistaken, you see, my dear. Mortifying! to find one's judgment so fallible. I tell the marquis, he might absolutely have been privately married to Gabriella without my finding him out--it is so easy now, the easiest thing in the world, to impose upon me. Well, I must bid you adieu for the present, my dear Miss Turnbull--you may imagine I have a world of business on my hands."

With the utmost appearance of cordiality Lady Pierrepont shook our heroine's receding hand; and, without seeming to notice the painful emotions visible in Almeria's countenance, departed smiling, and perfectly composed.

The moment that her ladyship had left the room, our heroine retired to her own apartment, and hastily bolted the door to prevent the intrusion of Mrs. Vickars, whose curiosity and condolence, whether real or affected, she was not in a humour to endure. She walked up and down the room in great agitation, by turns angry with Lady Pierrepont, with the marquis, with Lady Gabriella, with Mrs. Vickars, and with herself. After her anger had spent itself, the sorrowful certainty that it was unavailing remained; the disappointment was irremediable, and her mortification was the more poignant, because she had no human being to sympathize in her feelings, no one to whom she could complain.

"So this is fashionable friendship!" said she to herself. "This is the end of all Lady Pierrepont's and Lady Gabriella's professions of regard for me!--Fool that I have been, to become their dupe!--With my eyes open I saw nothing that was going forward, though now I can recollect a thousand and a thousand circumstances, by which I might have been undeceived. But I trusted implicitly--idiot that I was!--to the friendship of this treacherous, unfeeling courtier. Once I had a friend, to whom I might trust implicitly--I never, never, shall find her equal."

A transient recollection of former times crossed her mind--but those times could not be recalled; and the present pressed upon her most forcibly. Frustrated in all her ambitious schemes, she was sensible that all that now remained for her was to conceal her disappointment, and to avoid the contempt to which she would be exposed in the world, if it were whispered that Miss Turnbull had fancied that the Marquis of ---- was in love with her, whilst he was all the while paying his addresses to Lady Gabriella Bradstone. This powerful fear of ridicule conquered, or suppressed, all other feelings. With all the resolution she could assume, Almeria went to Mrs. Vickars, and congratulated her upon the happy event which was soon likely to take place in her family: she even constrained herself so far, as, without expressing either suspicion or resentment, to hear her companion disclaim all knowledge of the affair, and declare that she had, that morning, for the first time, heard of it from Lady Pierrepont, with a degree of astonishment from which she had not yet recovered.

In a few weeks afterwards Lady Gabriella's marriage took place. Our heroine's mortification was much increased by the splendour in which the bride appeared, and by the great share of the public attention which the fair marchioness seemed for some days to engross. Miss Turnbull was weary of hearing the praises of her equipages and dress; and the dissimulation she was continually obliged to practise towards Mrs. Vickars became intolerable. Nothing but a pretext for quarrelling with this lady was wanting to Almeria, and nothing but an excuse for leaving Almeria was now desired by Mrs. Vickars, who had received an invitation from the marchioness, which she was impatient to accept. The ladies one morning after breakfast fell into a dispute upon the comparative merits

of blue and green. It was not to all appearance a very dangerous subject, but in certain situations every subject becomes dangerous.

"This riband is a beautiful blue," said Miss Turnbull.

"I confess I do not think so," said Mrs. Vickars; "it is a very unbecoming shade of blue."

"Unbecoming!--I have been told by twenty people, that it is remarkably becoming to me. Mrs. Ingoldsby told me yesterday, that she never saw so beautiful a blue."

"Mrs. Ingoldsby's taste is not infallible, I imagine," said Mrs. Vickars, with a contemptuous smile.

"It may not be infallible," replied our heroine, "but it is at least as much to be relied upon as other people's."

"I am sure I do not pretend to compare my taste to Mrs. Ingoldsby's; but I may be permitted to have an opinion of my own, I hope: and in my opinion it is a frightful blue, and shockingly unbecoming. And at all events I like green infinitely better than blue; and I beseech you, Miss Turnbull, not to wear this hideous riband."

"I am sure I don't pretend to set my taste in competition with Mrs. Vickars's, but I must confess I cannot think this a frightful blue, or shockingly unbecoming; nor can I agree with any body in preferring green to blue; and for once I shall take the liberty of following my own fancy."

"For once!--I am sorry I ever presumed to offer an opinion upon this or any other subject to Miss Turnbull--I shall be more cautious in future; but I candidly own I did think I might prefer green to blue without giving offence."

"It gives me no offence, I assure you, Mrs. Vickars, that you should prefer green to blue; I am not so ridiculous. But people who cannot bear to be contradicted themselves are always apt to fancy that others have the same strange sort of domineering temper."

"People who can bear nothing but flattery, Miss Turnbull, should have such a friend as Mrs. Ingoldsby, who would swear that blue is green, and black white, I make no doubt," said Mrs. Vickars; "for my part, I am sorry I cannot get rid of my troublesome sincerity."

"Sincerity! Sincerity!--To do you justice, Mrs. Vickars, whatever I may have felt about trifles, in affairs of importance I have never found your _sincerity_ troublesome."

The ironical accent upon the word _sincerity_ sufficiently marked Miss Turnbull's meaning.

The irritable temper of Mrs. Vickars put it out of her power to act a

part with that "exquisite dissimulation," for which some of her sex have been celebrated by the judicious Davila. Thrown off her guard by the last sarcastic insinuation, Mrs. Vickars burst into an angry defence of her own sincerity with respect to the affair of the marquis and Lady Gabriella. Almeria observed, that this "defence was quite unnecessary, as she had not made any accusation; and these apologies could be prompted only by Mrs. Vickars's own tenderness of conscience." Mrs. Vickars replied with increasing acrimony. She said, that her "conduct needed no apologies, and that she should not stoop to make any, to soothe the disappointed ambition of any person whatever." Reproach succeeded reproach--sarcasm produced sarcasm--till at last Mrs. Vickars declared, that after what had passed it was impossible she should remain another day in Miss Turnbull's house. This declaration was heard by Almeria with undisguised satisfaction. The next day Mrs. Vickars accepted of an invitation from the marchioness; and our heroine afterwards protested that she was as much rejoiced to be freed from the encumbrance of such a companion as Sinbad the sailor was to get rid of the old man of the sea, who fastened himself upon his shoulders with such remorseless tenacity.

She resolved to be more cautious in choice of her next companion. There were many candidates for the honour of supplying the place of Mrs. Vickars; amongst these was Mrs. Ingoldsby, a lady who was perfect mistress of the whole art of flattery, by means of which she had so far ingratiated herself with Miss Turnbull, that she felt secure of a preference over all competitors. Almeria had indeed almost decided in her favour, when she received a note from a Mrs. Wynne, an old lady with whom she had formerly been acquainted in Yorkshire, and who, being just come to town, was eager to renew her intimacy with Miss Turnbull. She was a woman of an excellent heart, and absolutely incapable of suspecting that others could be less frank or friendly than herself. She was sometimes led into mistakes by this undistinguishing benevolence; for she imagined that all which appeared wrong would prove right, if properly understood; that there must be some good reason for every thing that seemed to be bad; that every instance of unkindness or insolence was undesigned; and that every quarrel was only a misunderstanding. Possessed by this good-natured kind of wrong-headedness, she frequently did the most provoking, by way of doing the most obliging things imaginable.

Upon this principle she would place contending parties by surprise in the very situation which of all others they most wished to avoid, and then give the signal for a pitched battle, by begging the enemies would shake hands with one another. Now she had heard it reported in Yorkshire that there was some coolness between the Elmours and Miss Turnbull; but she was morally certain there could be no truth in this report, for a variety of the very best reasons in the world.

"In the first place," argued Mrs. Wynne, "to my certain knowledge, Miss Turnbull was, from her infancy, always the greatest favourite at Elmour Grove, the pupil of the good old gentleman, and the intimate friend of the daughter. During that odd Hodgkinson's lifetime, Almeria was always with Miss Ellen Elmour, who treated her quite like a sister. I am sure I

remember, as if it was yesterday, her introducing Miss Turnbull to me, and the affectionate way in which she spoke of her--and I particularly recollect hearing Almeria Turnbull, amongst other grateful things, say, that she should wish to live and die with her friends at Elmour Grove. Then she had stronger reasons afterwards for being attached to them--you know it was Mr. Frederick Elmour who gained her large fortune for her. I was in the court-house in York the very day the cause was decided, and I never heard a man speak with more energy and eloquence than Frederick Elmour did in her defence. It was plain, indeed, that the eloquence came from his heart--as to the law part of the business, I know my nephew, who understands those things, said it was a very nice question, and that if her cause had not been managed as ably as it was, she would not have gained her fortune. Now of course this was a thing that never could be forgotten. I own, I expected that there would have been a match between Miss Turnbull and Mr. Elmour; but Sir Thomas Stock, her guardian, took her away from us, and Mr. Elmour fell in love with another lady. But all this time Miss Turnbull has never married, though she has been so much in the great world, and from her large fortune must have had so many offers. I heard it said yesterday, that she had refused Sir Thomas Stock's eldest son, and my Lord Bradstone, and some others; now it is plain she would not marry merely for money or title. My nephew, who is so amiable and sensible, is just the man for her, and he had used to admire her very much in former times, when he met her at Elmour Grove." Mrs. Wynne hinted her wishes to her nephew, but he seemed not much inclined towards Miss Turnbull, "because," said he, "though Frederick and his sister never uttered a syllable to her disadvantage, I cannot, from circumstances, help imagining, that she has not behaved well to them; and besides, after five or six years spent in the great world, and in all the dissipation in which she has lived, her disposition cannot probably be the same as it was when I knew her in the country."

Mrs. Wynne could not, with her good-natured eyes, see the force of any of these objections, and she was determined to convince her nephew of their futility. With this view she formed a scheme which was to be kept a profound secret from the parties concerned, till the moment when it should be ripe for execution. She heard that Miss Turnbull was in want of a companion; and she knew that Mrs. Henry Elmour, a very amiable young widow, distantly related to the Elmour family, and who had formerly been a friend of Almeria's, was at this moment in great distress. She had no doubt that Miss Turnbull would be delighted with an opportunity of serving any one connected with a family to whom she owed such obligations. Mrs. Wynne fancied that this would be the finest occasion imaginable to prove to her nephew, that, notwithstanding Almeria had lately lived so much in the fashionable world, she had the same grateful heart as formerly.

Eager to come to this demonstration, Mrs. Wynne wrote immediately to the distressed widow, begging her to come to town with all possible expedition; "for I have found, or at least I am morally sure of finding, the most charming situation your heart can desire. I say no more, that I may not deprive you of the pleasure of the surprise."

The same day that she sent this letter to the post, she despatched the

following note to Almeria:

'MY DEAR MISS TURNBULL,

"I am too well persuaded of the goodness of your heart to fear that you should think my present interference impertinent. We used to be very good friends in Yorkshire, and I am sure shall be just the same in London; therefore I write without ceremony, as friends should. I called upon you twice, but found you were, unluckily, not at home. Now I have a matter very near my heart to speak to you about, that perhaps will turn out as much to your satisfaction as to mine. I cannot express myself so well as I could wish in writing, but am sure you will not repent your kindness, if you will do us the honour of dining with us in a family way on Friday next; and in the mean time, let me beg you will not decide your choice of a companion. I cannot be more explicit, lest (as I have said once before to-day) I should deprive you of the pleasure of the surprise. Dear madam, forgive this freedom in one who most sincerely wishes you well (as Friday will prove). My nephew, Henry Wynne (whom you may remember a great admirer of yours), desires his best respects; and with every good wish I remain, Dear Miss Turnbull's

"Affectionate humble servant,

"M. WYNNE."

This letter at first surprised our heroine, and afterwards afforded subject for much ridicule to Mrs. Ingoldsby, to whom Almeria showed it. She laughed at the odd freedom of the Yorkshire dame, at the old-fashioned plainness of the style--parenthesis within parenthesis--at last concluding with respects and best wishes, and remaining dear Miss Turnbull's humble servant. She opined, however, upon the third perusal of the letter, that Mrs. Wynne was anxious to present her nephew to Miss Turnbull, and that this was the real meaning of her curious note--that probably she wished to surprise her with the sight of some Yorkshire damsel, who had formed the reasonable expectation, that because Miss Turnbull had done her the honour to notice her ages ago in the country, she was to be her companion in town. Mrs. Ingoldsby further observed, that Mrs. Wynne, though she had not practised at court, was no bad politician in thus attempting to recommend a companion to Miss Turnbull, who would, of course, be entirely in her nephew's interests. Almeria's vanity was indirectly flattered by these insinuations, which tended to prove her vast consequence, in being thus the object of plots and counterplots; and she the more readily believed this, from the experience she had had of Lady Pierrepont's manoeuvres. "It is really a dreadful thing," said she, "to be a great heiress. One must be so circumspect--so much upon one's guard with all the world. But poor Mrs. Wynne shows her cards so plainly, one must be an idiot not to guess her whole play."

To "mistake reverse of wrong for right" is one of the most common errors in the conduct of life. Our heroine being sensible that she had been ridiculously credulous in her dealings with Lady Pierrepont, was now

inclined to be preposterously suspicious. She determined with her next admirer to pursue a system diametrically opposite to that which she had followed with the marquis; she had shown him attractive complaisance; she was now prepared to display the repulsive haughtiness becoming the representative of two hundred thousand pounds: she had completely adopted Lady Pierrepont's maxim. _That a lady should marry to increase her consequence and strengthen her connexions_. Her former ideas, that love and esteem were necessary to happiness in a union for life, seemed obsolete and romantic; and the good qualities of her admirers, though they were always to be mentioned as the ostensible reasons for her choice, were never in reality to influence her decision.

To stoop at once from a marquis to a private gentleman would be terrible; yet that private gentleman was worthy of some little consideration, not because he was, as Almeria remembered, a man of excellent sense, temper, and character, but because he had a clear estate of eight thousand pounds a-year, and was next heir to an earldom.

Miss Turnbull cannot properly be called a female fortune-hunter; but, to coin a new name for our heroine, which may be useful to designate a numerous class of her contemporaries, she was decidedly a female _title-hunter_.

She accepted of the invitation to dinner, and, accompanied by a proper supporter in Mrs. Ingoldsby, went to Mrs. Wynne's, dressed in the utmost extravagance of the mode, blazing in all the glory of diamonds, in hopes of striking admiration even unto awe upon the hearts of all beholders. Though she had been expressly invited to a _family party_, she considered that only as an humble country phrase to excuse, beforehand, any deficiency of magnificence. She had no doubt that the finest entertainment, and the finest company, Mrs. Wynne could procure or collect, would be prepared for her reception. She was somewhat surprised, especially as she came fashionably late, to find in the drawing-room only old Mrs. Wynne, her nephew, and a lady, who, from her dress and modest appearance, was evidently _nobody_. Miss Turnbull swept by her, though she had a disagreeable recollection of having somewhere seen this figure in a former state of existence. Mrs. Wynne, good soul! did not believe in wilful blindness, and she therefore said, with provoking simplicity, "Miss Turnbull, this is your good friend, Mrs. Henry Elmour--poor thing! she is sadly altered in her looks since you saw her, a gay rosy lass at Elmour Grove! But though her looks are changed, her heart, I can answer for it, is just the same as ever; and she remembers you with all the affection you could desire. She would not be like any other of her name, indeed, if she did otherwise. The Elmours were all so fond of you!"

The name of Elmour, instead of having that irresistible charm, which Mrs. Wynne expected, over Almeria's heart, produced a directly contrary effect. It recalled many associations that were painful to her pride; she was vexed to perceive that obligations and intimacies which she had forgotten, or which she wished to forget, were remembered so obstinately by others. All this passed in her mind whilst Mrs. Wynne was speaking. With a look of ill-humoured surprise, Almeria half rose from her seat,

and, as Mrs. Henry Elmour was presented to her, uttered some phrases in an unintelligible voice, and then sunk back again on the sofa. Mrs. Wynne made room for the widow between her and Miss Turnbull--Mr. Wynne kept aloof--a dead silence ensued--and Miss Turnbull, seeing that in her present position there was nothing else to be done, condescended to hope that all Mrs. Henry Elmour's friends in Yorkshire were well when she left them. Mrs. Wynne's countenance brightened up, and she now addressed her conversation to Mrs. Ingoldsby, in order to leave the pair, whom she had destined to be friends, at perfect liberty to talk over "old times."

Mrs. Henry Elmour naturally spoke of the happy days which they had spent together at Elmour Grove; but Miss Turnbull was so much occupied in clasping one of her diamond bracelets, that half of what was said to her seemed not to be heard, and the other half to create no interest. She looked up, when she had at length adjusted her bracelet, and with an insipid smile (learnt from Lady Pierrepont) seemed to beg pardon for her fit of absence. The unfortunate Mrs. Elmour recommenced all she had said; but though Miss Turnbull's eyes were at this time directed towards the widow's face, they wandered over her features with such insolent examination, that she was totally abashed. Having gained her point, our heroine now looked round as the door opened, in expectation of the entrance of some persons who might be worthy of her attention; but, lo! it was only a servant, who announced that dinner was served. Miss Turnbull's surprise could be equalled only by her indignation, when she found that it was literally to a family party she was invited. "Miss Turnbull," said Mrs. Wynne, as they were sitting down to dinner, "I have been much disappointed in not having the company of some friends of yours, who I expected would dine with us to-day; but they will be with us, I hope, to-night--they were unluckily engaged to dine with the Duchess of A----."

Miss Turnbull vouchsafed to appear interested, when the name of a duchess was mentioned; but her countenance again changed to an expression of almost angry vexation, when Mrs. Wynne explained, that these friends were Mr. and Mrs. Elmour, and Mr. Charles Wynne and his lady. "Miss Ellen Elmour, you know: she was----"--"Very true, I saw her marriage in the papers, I remember, some time ago," replied Miss Turnbull; "a year, if I'm not mistaken."

"Two years ago, madam," said Mrs. Wynne.

"Was it two?--I dare say it might--you know it is so impossible to keep a register of deaths and marriages in one's head. Pray, are you at all acquainted, Mrs. Wynne, with the Duchess of A----? She was always a prodigious friend of the Elmours, as I remember. How is that?--Are they any way related, I wonder?"

"Yes; they are now related by marriage," said Mr. Wynne; "Mrs. Elmour is a niece of the duchess."

"Indeed!"

"She is a charming woman," said Mr. Wynne; "so beautiful and yet so

unaffected--so sensible, yet so unassuming."

"Pray," interrupted Mrs. Ingoldsby, "has not her grace conversaciones, or reading parties, or something in that style every week?--She is quite a learned lady, I understand. There was always something odd about her, and I cannot help being afraid of her."

"I assure you," said Mrs. Wynne, "that there is nothing odd or strange about the Duchess of A----. She has always the most agreeable society that London can afford."

Miss Turnbull and Mrs. Ingoldsby interchanged looks of affected contempt: but Mr. Wynne added, "Her grace has, you know, a taste for literature and for the arts; and the most celebrated literary characters, as well as those who have distinguished themselves in active life, assemble at her house, where they can enjoy the most agreeable conversation--that in which a knowledge of books and of the world is happily blended."

"And as to being afraid of her grace," resumed Mrs. Wynne, "that is quite impossible; she has such affable, engaging manners. I am sure, even I am not in the least afraid of her."

"But you know," said Miss Turnbull, with a malicious look of mock humility, "there is a difference between you and me.--I would not meet her grace for the world, for I am persuaded I should not be able to articulate a syllable in her classical presence--I have not been used to that style of company, by any means. I assure you I should be, as Mrs. Ingoldsby says, horribly afraid of your witty duchess."

"She has none of the airs of a wit, believe me," said Mrs. Wynne, growing more and more earnest; "and if you will not believe me, ask your friend Ellen."

"Oh, excuse me, I beseech; I shall ask no questions--I only beg leave to keep myself well when I am well. The Elmours who are so clever, and have such merit and so on, are all vastly better suited to her grace than I am."

No contradiction ensued--our heroine was mortified beyond the power of concealment.

After dinner, when the ladies retired, Mrs. Wynne, though somewhat alarmed and puzzled by Miss Turnbull's behaviour, summoned all the resolution which benevolence could inspire, and resolved at once to come to the point with our heroine. She flattered herself that all in Miss Turnbull that appeared inauspicious to her hopes was only _her manner,_ that sort of manner which people, who live much in high life, catch and practise, without meaning to give themselves airs, or to humble their neighbours.

Many persons will perhaps think good Mrs. Wynne almost an idiot: but she was a woman of abilities; and if she did not exert them in discovering

with promptitude the follies of others, she enjoyed much happiness in her benevolent scepticism. This evening, however, she was doomed to be absolutely convinced, against her will, that she had formed too favourable an opinion of one of her fellow-creatures.

She was eager to explain herself to Almeria before Ellen and Mr. Frederick Elmour should arrive; she therefore took her aside, and began without any preface:--"My dear Miss Turnbull, here is a charming opportunity for you to do a kind, and generous, and grateful action. This poor Mrs. Henry Elmour!--She has told you how she has been reduced to distress without any imprudence of hers. Now you could not, I am sure, prove the goodness of your own heart better to your friends (who will be here in half an hour) than by showing kindness to this unfortunate widow. I cannot presume to say more than that I think she would make a most agreeable companion to an amiable, sensible young lady--and you have not decided your choice, have you?"

"Pardon me, I have decided, beyond a possibility of retracting," replied Miss Turnbull, haughtily.

"I am very sorry," said Mrs. Wynne, with an expression of real concern in her countenance. "I have been very imprudent."

"Really I am infinitely distressed that it is out of my power to oblige her; but the lady who is with me now, Mrs. Ingoldsby, has a prior claim."

Prior claim!--prior to that of the Elmour family! thought Mrs. Wynne.

The decisive manner in which Miss Turnbull spoke precluded all further hope.

"Well, I did think it would have been such a pleasure to Miss Turnbull to meet Mrs. Henry Elmour, and all her old friends the Elmours here to-day; and I fancied, that if there had been any little coolness or misunderstanding, it would quite have passed off, and that I should have had the joy of seeing you all shake hands--I thought it would have been such an agreeable surprise to you to see all the Elmour family, and Ellen's charming little girl, and Mr. Frederick Elmour's boy!"

A more disagreeable surprise could scarcely have been imagined for our heroine. She informed Mrs. Wynne, coldly, that there was not the slightest quarrel between her and any of the Elmours; and that therefore there was no necessity, or possible occasion, for any shaking of hands or reconciliation scenes: that undoubtedly the style of life she had been thrown into had entirely separated her from her Yorkshire acquaintance; and time had dissolved the sort of intimacy that neighbourhood had created: that she should always, notwithstanding, be most particularly happy to meet any of the Elmour family; though, from her situation, it was a good fortune she had not often enjoyed, nor indeed could in future expect: but that she wished it to be understood, and repeated, that she always in all companies properly acknowledged the obligations she had to Mr. Frederick Elmour as a lawyer. Her cause, she

believed, was the first in which he had distinguished himself; and she was rejoiced to find that he had since risen so rapidly in his profession.--As to Miss Ellen Elmour, she was a very charming, sensible young woman, no doubt; and Miss Turnbull assured Mrs. Wynne she was delighted to hear she was so suitably married in point of understanding and temper, and all that sort of thing--and besides, to a gentleman of a reasonable fortune, which she was happy to hear Mr. Charles Wynne possessed.

Here she was interrupted in her speech--the door opened, and the Duchess of A----, Mr. and Mrs. Elmour, and Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wynne, were announced. Our heroine was not prepared for the sight of the duchess; and her grace's appearance made her receive her old friends in a manner very different from that in which she had determined to meet them. Practised as she was, she stood irresolute and awkward, whilst Ellen, with easy, graceful kindness, accosted her, and immediately introduced her to the Duchess of A----. As Mr. Frederick Elmour approached, and as his beautiful wife was presented to Miss Turnbull, not all her efforts could conceal the mortification she endured, whilst she pronounced that she was vastly happy--quite delighted--that all this was really such an agreeable and unexpected surprise to her--for she did not even know any of her Yorkshire friends were in town.

Mrs. Ingoldsby came up to her assistance. Miss Turnbull rallied her spirits, and determined to make her stand upon the exclusive ground of fashion. Those who comprehend the rights of the privileged orders of fashion are aware that even a commoner, who is in a certain set, is far superior to a duchess who is not supposed to move in that magic circle, Almeria, upon this principle, began to talk to the duchess of some of her acquaintance, who were of the highest ton; and then affectedly checked herself, and begged pardon, and looked surprised at Mrs. Ingoldsby, when she found that her grace was not acquainted with them. Much as Miss Turnbull had reason to complain of Lady Pierrepont and the young bride the marchioness, she now thought that their names would do her honour; and she scrupled not to speak of them as her best friends, and as the most amiable creatures existing.--Such is the meanness and insufficiency of vanity!

"Poor Lady Pierrepont," said the Duchess of A----: "with her independent fortune, what could tempt her to enslave herself, as she has done, to a court life?"

"Her ladyship finds herself suited to her situation, I believe," said Miss Turnbull. "Lady Pierrepont is certainly formed, more than most people I know, to succeed and shine in a court; and she is in favour, and in power, and in fashion."

"Does it follow of course that she is happy?" said Ellen.

"Oh! happy--of course; I suppose so."

"No doubt," said Mrs. Ingoldsby; "she has every reason to be happy: has not she just made her niece marchioness?"

Miss Turnbull repeated "_Happy!_" to be sure Lady Pierrepont is happy, if any body in the world is happy."--A short sigh escaped from our heroine.

Ellen heard the sigh, and attended to it more than to her words; she looked upon her with compassion, and endeavoured to change the conversation.

"We spend this winter in town; and as I think I know your _real_ tastes, Almeria," said she, taking Almeria's hand, "we must have the pleasure of introducing you to some of her grace's literary friends, who will, I am sure, please and suit you particularly."

Mr. Frederick Elmour, who now really pitied Almeria, though in his pity there was a strong mixture of contempt, joined his sister in her kindness, and named and described some of the people whom he thought she would be most desirous of knowing. The names struck Miss Turnbull's ears, for they were the names of persons distinguished in the fashionable as well as in the literary world; and she was dismayed and mortified by the discovery that her _country friends_ had by some means, incomprehensible to her, gained distinction and intimacy in society where she had merely admission; she was vexed beyond expression when she found that _the Elmours_ were superior to her even on her own ground. At this instant Mrs. Wynne, with her usual simplicity, asked Mrs. Elmour and Ellen why they had not brought their charming children with them; adding, "You are, my dears, without exception, the two happiest mothers and wives I am acquainted with. And after all, what happiness is there equal to domestic happiness?--Oh! my dear Miss Turnbull, trust me, though I am a silly old woman, there's nothing like it--and friends at court are not like friends at home--and all the Lady Pierreponts that ever were or ever will be born, are not, as you'll find when you come to try them, like one of these plain good Ellens and Elmours."

The address, simple as it was, came so home to Almeria's experience, and so many recollections rushed at once upon her memory, that all her factitious character of a fine lady gave way to natural feeling, and suddenly she burst into tears.

"Good heavens! my dear Miss Turnbull," cried Mrs. Ingoldsby, "what is the matter?--Are not you well?--Salts! salts!--the heat of the room!--Poor thing!--she has such weak nerves.--Mr. Elmour, may I trouble you to ring the bell for our carriage? Miss Turnbull has such sensibility! This meeting, so unexpected, with so many old friends, has quite overcome her."

Miss Turnbull, recalled to herself by Mrs. Ingoldsby's voice, repeated the request to have her carriage immediately, and departed with Mrs. Ingoldsby as soon as she possibly could, utterly abashed and mortified; mortified most at not having been able to conceal her mortification. Incapable absolutely of articulating, she left Mrs. Ingoldsby to cover her retreat, as well as she could, with weak nerves and sensibility.

Even the charitable Mrs. Wynne was now heard to acknowledge that she could neither approve of Miss Turnbull's conduct, nor frame any apology for it. She confessed that it looked very like what she of all things detested most--_ingratitude_. Her nephew, who had been a cool observant spectator of this evening's performance, was glad that his aunt's mind was now decided by Almeria's conduct. He exclaimed that he would not marry such a woman, if her portion were to be the mines of Peru.

Thus Miss Turnbull lost all chance of the esteem and affection of another man of sense and temper, who might even at this late period of her life have recalled her from the follies of dissipation, and rendered her permanently happy.

And now that our heroine must have lost all power of interesting the reader, now that the pity even of the most indulgent must be utterly sunk in contempt, we shall take our leave of her, resigning her to that misery which she had been long preparing for herself. It is sufficient to say, that after this period she had some offers from men of fashion of ruined fortunes; but these she rejected, still fancying that with her wealth she could not fail to make a splendid match. So she went on coquetting; and coquetting, rejecting and rejecting, till at length she arrived at an age when she could reject no longer. She ceased to be an object to matrimonial adventurers, but to these succeeded a swarm of female legacy-hunters. Among the most distinguished was her companion, Mrs. Ingoldsby, whose character she soon discovered to be artful and selfish in the extreme. This lady's flattery, therefore, lost all its power to charm, but yet it became necessary to Almeria; and even when she knew that she was duped, she could not part with Mrs. Ingoldsby, because it was not in her power to supply the place of a flatterer with a _friend_.--A friend! that first blessing of life, cannot be bought--it must be deserved.

Miss, or as she must now be called, _Mrs_. Almeria Turnbull, is still alive--probably at this moment haunting some place of public amusement, or stationary at the card-table. Wherever she may be, she is despised and discontented; one example more amongst thousands, that wealth cannot purchase, or fashion bestow, real happiness.

"See how the world its veterans rewards--
youth of folly, an old age of cards!"

Edgeworth's-Town, 1802.

VIVIAN.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

Miss Edgeworth's general views, in these stories, are explained in the preface to the first volume. I cannot, however, omit repeating, that public favour has not yet rendered her so presumptuous as to offer hasty effusions to her readers, but that she takes a longer time to revise what she writes than the severe ancients required for the highest species of moral fiction.

Vivian exposes one of the most common defects of mankind. To be "infirm of purpose" is to be at the mercy of the artful or at the disposal of accident. Look round, and count the numbers who have, within your own knowledge, failed from want of firmness.

An excellent and wise mother gave the following advice with her dying breath: "My son, learn early how to say, No!"--This precept gave the first idea of the story of Vivian.

THE ABSENTEE is not intended as a censure upon those whose duties, and employments, and superior talents, lead them to the capital; but to warn the thoughtless and the unoccupied from seeking distinction by frivolous imitation of fashion and ruinous waste of fortune.

A country gentleman, or even a nobleman, who does not sit in parliament, may be as usefully and as honourably employed in Yorkshire, Mid Lothian, or Ireland, as at a club-house or an assembly in London.

Irish agents are here described as of two different species. That there have been bad and oppressive Irish agents, many great landed English proprietors have felt; that there are well-informed, just, and honourable Irish agents, every-day experience can testify.

MADAME DE FLEURY points out some of the means which may be employed by the rich for the real advantage of the poor. This story shows that sowing gold does not always produce a golden harvest; but that knowledge and virtue, when early implanted in the human breast, seldom fail to make ample returns of prudence and felicity.

EMILIE DE COULANGES exposes a fault into which the good and generous are liable to fall.

Great sacrifices and great benefits cannot frequently be made or conferred by private individuals; but, every day, kindness and attention to the common feelings of others is within the power, and may be the practice, of every age, and sex, and station. Common faults are reproved by all writers on morality; but there are errors and defects that require to be treated in a lighter manner, and that come, with propriety, within the province of essayists and of writers for the stage.

R. L. EDGEWORTH. _May_, 1812.

CHAPTER I.

"To see the best, and yet the worse pursue."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Vivian, "that you, Russell, my friend, my best friend, can tell me that this line is the motto of my character!--'To see the best, and yet the worse pursue.--Then you must think me either a villain or a madman."

"No," replied Russell, calmly; "I think you only weak."

"Weak--but you must think me an absolute fool."

"No, not a fool; the weakness of which I accuse you is not a weakness of the understanding. I find no fault either with the logical or the mathematical part of your understanding. It is not erroneous in either of the two great points in which Bacon says that most men's minds be deficient in--the power of judging of consequences, or in the power of estimating the comparative value of objects."

"Well," cried Vivian, impatiently, "but I don't want to hear just now what Bacon says--but what you think. Tell me all the faults of my character."

"All!--unconscionable!--after the fatigue of this long day's journey," said Russell, laughing.

These two friends were, at this time, travelling from Oxford to Vivian Hall (in ----shire), the superb seat of the Vivian family, to which Vivian was heir. Mr. Russell, though he was but a few years older than Vivian, had been his tutor at college; and by an uncommon transition, had, from his tutor, become his intimate friend.

After a pause, Vivian resumed, "Now I think of it, Russell, you are to blame, if I have any faults. Don't you say, that every thing is to be done by education? And are not you--though by much too young, and infinitely too handsome, for a philosopher--are not you my guide, philosopher, and friend?"

"But I have had the honour to be your guide, philosopher, and friend, only for these three years," said Russell. "I believe in the rational, but not in the magical, power of education. How could I do, or undo, in three years, the work of the preceding seventeen?"

"Then, if you won't let me blame you, I must blame my mother."

"Your mother!--I had always understood that she had paid particular attention to your early education, and all the world says that Lady Mary Vivian, though a woman of fashion, is remarkably well-informed and domestic; and, judging from those of her letters which you have shown

me, I should think that, for once, what all the world says is right."

"What all the world says is right, and yet I am not wrong:--my mother is a very clever woman, and most affectionate, and she certainly paid particular attention to my early education; but her attention was too particular, her care was too great. You know I was an only son--then I lost my father when I was an infant; and a woman, let her be ever so sensible, cannot well educate an only son, without some manly assistance; the fonder she is of the son the worse, even if her fondness is not foolish fondness--it makes her over-anxious--it makes her do too much. My mother took too much, a great deal too much, care of me; she over-educated, over-instructed, over-dosed me with premature lessons of prudence: she was so afraid that I should ever do a foolish thing, or not say a wise one, that she prompted my every word, and guided my every action. So I grew up, seeing with her eyes, hearing with her ears, and judging with her understanding, till, at length, it was found out that I had not eyes, ears, or understanding of my own. When I was between twelve and thirteen, my mother began to think that I was not sufficiently manly for my age, and that there was something too yielding and undecided in my character. Seized with a panic, my mother, to make a man of me at once, sent me to ---- school. There I was, with all convenient expedition, made ashamed of every thing good I had learned at home; and there I learned every thing bad, and nothing good, that could be learned at school. I was inferior in Latin and Greek; and this was a deficiency I could not make up without more labour than I had courage to undertake. I was superior in general literature, but this was of little value amongst my competitors, and therefore I despised it; and, overpowered by numbers and by ridicule, I was, of course, led into all sorts of folly, by mere mauvaise honte. Had I been in the habit of exercising my own judgment, or had my resolution been strengthened by degrees; had I, in short, been prepared for a school, I might, perhaps, have acquired, by a public education, a manly, independent spirit. If I had even been wholly bred up in a public school, I might have been forced, as others were, by early and fair competition, to exercise my own powers, and by my own experience in that microcosm, as it has been called, I might have formed some rules of conduct, some manliness of character, and might have made, at least, a good schoolboy. Half home-bred, and half school-bred, from want of proper preparation, one half of my education totally destroyed the other. From school, of course, I went to college, and at college, of course, I should have become one of the worst species of college lads, and should have had no chance, in my whole future life, of being any thing but a dissipated fool of fashion, one of the Four-in-Hand Club, or the Barouche Club, or the Tandem Club, or the Defiance Club, had not I, by the greatest good fortune, met with such a friend as you, and, by still greater good fortune, found you out for myself; for if my mother had recommended you to me, I should have considered you only as a college tutor; I should never have discovered half your real merit; I doubt whether I should have even seen that you are young and handsome: so prejudiced should I have been with the preconceived notion of a college tutor, that I am not certain whether I should have found out that you are a gentleman as well born and well bred as myself; but, be that as it may, I am positive that I never should have made you my companion and friend; I should never

have thrown open my whole soul to you, as I have done; nor could you ever have obtained such wondrous power as you possess over my mind, if you had been recommended to me by my mother."

"I am sorry," said Russell, smiling, "that, after so many wise reflections, and so many fine compliments, you end by proving to me that my wondrous power is founded on your wondrous weakness. I am mortified to find that your esteem and friendship for me depended so much upon my not having had the honour of your mother's recommendation; and have not I reason to fear, that now, when I have a chance of becoming acquainted with Lady Mary Vivian, and, perhaps, a chance of her thinking me a fit companion and friend for her son, I must lose his regard and confidence, because I shall labour under the insuperable objection of an affectionate mother's approbation?"

"No, no," said Vivian; "my wilful folly does not go quite so far as that. So that I maintain the privilege of choosing my friends for myself, I shall always be pleased and proud to find my mother approve my choice."

After a few moments' pause, Vivian added, "You misunderstand, quite misunderstand me, if you think that I am not fond of my mother. I respect and love her with all my soul:--I should be a most ungrateful wretch if I did not. I did very wrong to speak as I did just now, of any little errors she may have made in my education; but, believe me, I would not have said so much to any one living but yourself, nor to you, but in strict confidence; and, after all, I don't know whether I ought not to lay the blame of my faults on my masters more than on my poor mother."

"Lay the blame where we will," said Russell, "remember, that the punishment will rest on ourselves. We may, with as much philosophic justice as possible, throw the blame of our faults on our parents and preceptors, and on the early mismanagement of our minds; yet, after we have made out our case in the abstract, to the perfect satisfaction of a jury of metaphysicians, when we come to overt actions, all our judges, learned and unlearned, are so awed, by the ancient precedents and practice of society, and by the obsolete law of common sense, that they finish by pronouncing against us the barbarous sentence, that every man must suffer for his own faults."

"I hope I shall be able to bear it, my lord,' as the English sailor said when the judge----But look out there! Let down that glass on your side of the carriage!" cried Vivian, starting forward. "There's Vivian Hall!"

"That fine old castle?" said Russell, looking out of the window.

"No; but farther off to the left, don't you see amongst the trees that house with wings?"

"Ha! quite a new, modern house: I had always fancied that Vivian Hall was an old pile of building."

"So it was, till my father threw down the old hall, and built this new house."

"And a very handsome one it is.--Is it as good within as without?"

"Quite, I think; but I'll leave you to judge for yourself.--Are not those fine old trees in the park?"

From this time till the travellers arrived at Vivian Hall, their conversation turned upon trees, and avenues, and serpentine approaches, and alterations that Vivian intended to make, when he should be of age, and master of this fine place; and he now wanted but a twelvemonth of being at legal years of discretion. When they arrived at the hall, Lady Mary Vivian showed much affectionate joy at the sight of her son, and received Mr. Russell with such easy politeness that he was prepossessed at first in her favour. To this charm of well-bred manners was united the appearance of sincerity and warmth of feeling. In her conversation there was a mixture of excellent sense and general literature with the frivolities of the fashionable world, and the anecdotes of the day in certain high circles, of which she seemed to talk more from habit than taste, and to annex importance more from the compulsion of external circumstances than from choice. But her son,--her son was the great object of all her thoughts, serious or frivolous. She was delighted by the improvements she saw in his understanding and character; by the taste and talents he displayed, both for fine literature and for solid information: this flattered her hope that he would both shine as a polished gentleman and make a figure in public life. To his friend Russell she attributed these happy improvements; and, though he was not a tutor of her own original selection, yet her pride, on this occasion, yielded to gratitude, and she graciously declared, that she could not feel jealous of the pre-eminent power he had obtained over her son, when she saw the admirable use he made of this influence. Vivian, like all candid and generous persons, being peculiarly touched by candour and generosity in others, felt his affection for his mother rapidly increased by this conduct; nor did his enthusiasm for his friend in the least abate, in consequence of the high approbation with which she honoured him, nor even in consequence of her ladyship's frequent and rather injudicious expressions of her hopes, that her son would always preserve and show himself worthy of such a friend.

He joined in his mother's entreaties to Russell to prolong his visit; and as her ladyship declared she thought it of essential consequence to her son's interest and future happiness, that he should, at this turn of his life, have such a companion, Russell consented to remain with him some time longer. All parties were thus pleased with each other, and remained united by one common interest about the same objects, during several weeks of a delightful summer. But, alas! this family harmony, and this accord of reason and will, between the mother and son, were not of longer duration. As usual, there were faults on both sides.

Lady Mary Vivian, whose hopes of her son's distinguishing himself by his

abilities had been much exalted since his last return from Oxford, had indulged herself in pleasing anticipations of the time when he should make his appearance in the fashionable and in the political world. She foresaw the respect that would be paid to her, on his account, both by senators and by matrons; by ministers, who might want to gain a rising orator's vote, and by mothers, who might wish to make an excellent match for their daughters: not only by all mothers who had daughters to marry, but by all daughters who had hearts or hands to dispose of, Lady Mary felt secure of having her society courted. Now, she had rather extravagant expectations for her son: she expected him to marry, so as to secure domestic happiness, and, at the same time, to have fashion, and beauty, and rank, and high connexions, and every amiable quality in a wife. This vision of a future daughter-in-law continually occupied her ladyship's imagination. Already, with maternal _Alnascharism_, she had, in her reveries, thrown back her head with disdain, as she repulsed the family advances of some wealthy but low-born heiress, or as she rejected the alliance of some of the new nobility. Already she had arranged the very words of her answers to these, and determined the degrees and shades of her intimacies with those; already had she settled

"To whom to nod, whom take into her coach,
Whom honour with her hand;"

when one morning, as she sat at work, absorbed in one of these reveries, she was so far "rapt into future times," that, without perceiving that any body was present, she began to speak her thoughts, and said aloud to herself, "As if my son could possibly think of her!"

Her son, who was opposite to her, lying on a sofa, reading, or seeming to read, started up, and putting down his book, exclaimed, in a voice which showed at once that he was conscious of thinking of some particular person, and determined to persist in the thought, "As if your son could possibly think of her!----Of whom, ma'am?"

"What's the matter, child? Are you mad?"

"Not in the least, ma'am; but you said----"

"What!" cried Lady Mary, looking round; "What did I say, that has occasioned so much disturbance?--I was not conscious of saying any thing. My dear Selina," continued her ladyship, appealing to a young lady, who sat very intent upon some drawing beside her, "my dear Selina, you must have heard; what did I say?"

The young lady looked embarrassed; and the colour which spread over her face, brought a sudden suspicion into Lady Mary's mind: her eye darted back upon her son--the suspicion, the fear was confirmed; and she grew instantly pale, silent, and breathless, in the attitude in which she was struck with this panic. The young lady's blush and embarrassment had a very different effect on Vivian; joy suddenly sparkled in his eyes, and illumined his whole countenance, for this was the first instant he had ever felt any hope of having obtained an interest in her heart. He was too much transported at this moment to think either of

prudence or of his mother; and, when he recollected himself, he was too little practised in dissimulation to repair his indiscretion. Something he did attempt to say, and blundered, and laughed at his blunder; and when his mother looked up at him, in serious silence, he only begged pardon for his folly, confessed he believed he was mad, and, turning away abruptly, left the room, exclaiming that he wondered where Russell had been all the morning, and that he must go and look for him. A long silence ensued between Vivian's mother and the young lady, who were left alone together. Lady Mary first broke the silence, and, in a constrained tone, asked, as she took up the newspaper, "Whether Miss Sidney had found any news?"

"I don't know, ma'am," answered Miss Sidney, in a voice scarcely articulate.

"I should have imagined there must be some news from the continent: but you did not find any, I think you say, Miss Sidney;" continued Lady Mary, with haughty, averted eyes. After turning over the pages of the paper, without knowing one word it contained, she laid it down, and rose to leave the room. Miss Sidney rose at the same time.

"Lady Mary, one instant; my dear Lady Mary."

Lady Mary turned, and saw Selina's supplicating eyes full of tears; but her ladyship, still retaining her severity of manner, coldly said, "Does Miss Sidney desire that I should stay?--Does Miss Sidney wish to speak to me?"

"I do--as soon as I can," said Selina in a faltering voice; but, raising her eyes, and perceiving the contemptuous expression of Lady Mary's countenance, her own instantly changed. With the firm tone of conscious innocence, she repeated, "I do wish to speak to your ladyship, if you will hear me with your usual candour; I do not expect or solicit your usual indulgence."

"Miss Sidney," replied Lady Mary, "before you say more, it becomes me to point out to you, that the moment is past for confidence between us two; and that in no moment could I wish to hear from any person, much less from one whom I had considered as my friend, confessions, extorted by circumstances, degrading and unavailing."

"Your ladyship need not be apprehensive of hearing from me any degrading confessions," said Miss Sidney; "I have none to make: and since, without any just cause, without any cause for suspicion, but what a blush, perhaps, or a moment's embarrassment of manner may have created, you think it becomes you to point out to me that the moment for confidence between us is past, I can only lament my mistake in having believed that it ever existed."

Lady Mary's countenance and manner totally changed. The pride of rank yielded before the pride of virtue; and perhaps the hope that she had really no cause for suspicion at once restored her affection for her young friend. "Let us understand one another, my dear Selina," said she;

"if I said a hasty or a harsh word, forgive it. You know my affection for you, and my real confidence; in actions, not in words, I have shown it.--In thought, as well as in actions, my confidence in you has been entire; for, _upon my word,_ and you know this is not an asseveration I lightly use, _upon my word,_ till that unfortunate moment, a suspicion of you never crossed my imagination. The proof--if there could need any proof to you of what I assert--the proof is, the delight I take in your society, the urgent manner in which I have so frequently, this summer, begged your company from your mother. You know this would have not only been the height of insincerity, but of folly and madness, if I had not felt a reliance upon you that made me consider it as an absolute impossibility that you could ever disappoint my friendship."

"I thank your ladyship," said Selina, softened by the kind tone in which Lady Mary now spoke, yet still retaining some reserve of manner; "I thank your ladyship for all your kindness--it has flattered me much--touched me deeply--commanded my gratitude, and influenced my conduct uniformly--I can and do entirely forgive the injustice of a moment; and I now bid you adieu, my dear Lady Mary, with the conviction that, if we were never to meet again, I should always hold that place in your esteem and affection with which you have honoured me, and which, if it be not too proud an expression, I hope I have deserved----Won't you bid me farewell?"

The tears gushed from Lady Mary's eyes. "My dear, charming, and prudent Selina, I understand you perfectly--and I thank you: it grieves me to part with you--but I believe you are right--I believe there is no other safety--no other remedy. How, indeed, could I expect that my son could see and hear you--live in the house with you, and become intimately acquainted with such a character as yours, without danger! I have been very imprudent, unaccountably imprudent, to expose him to such a temptation; but I hope, I trust, that your prudence will repair, in time, the effects of my rashness--and again and again I thank you, my dear young friend--but, perhaps it might be still better that you should not leave us abruptly. Still better than your absence, I think, would be the conviction you might impress on his mind of the impossibility of his hopes: if you were to stay a day or two, and convince him by your indifference that----" "Excuse me, that is what I cannot undertake," said Selina, blushing, and conscious of blushing. Lady Mary was too polite and too delicate to seem to observe her confusion, but, embracing her, said--"If we must part, then take with you my highest esteem, affection, and gratitude; and this much let me add, that my most sanguine expectations for my son's happiness would be realized, if amongst the women to whom family interests must restrict his choice, he could meet with one of half your merit, and half your attractions."

"_Amongst the women to whom family interests must restrict his choice_," repeated Selina to herself many times, as she journeyed homewards; and she pondered much upon the meaning of this phrase. Vivian was sole heir to a very large property, without encumbrances of any kind; what, therefore, was the necessity that restricted his choice? The imaginary necessity of ambition, which confined him to a certain circle of fashionable, or _highly connected_ people. Selina Sidney, though she was

not rich, was of a very good gentleman's family; her father had been a colonel in the British army: during his life, Mrs. Sidney had been in the habit of living a great deal in what is called _the world,_ and in the best company; and though, since his death, she had lived in retirement, Miss Sidney had received an education which put her upon a footing with young ladies of the highest accomplishments and refinement in the kingdom. With every solid and amiable quality, she had all those external advantages of appearance and manner which Lady Mary Vivian valued most highly. Selina, who was convinced that Lady Mary appreciated her character, and was peculiarly fond of her company and conversation, could not but feel surprise, mixed with some indignation, perhaps with a little resentment, when she perceived that her ladyship's prejudices and ambition made her act so completely in contradiction to her better judgment, to her professions, and to her feelings of affection. Whatever Miss Sidney thought upon this subject, however, she determined to continue to avoid seeing Vivian any more--an excellent resolution, in which we leave her, and return to her lover.

A walk with Russell had brought him back in the full determination of avowing his attachment sincerely to his mother, and of speaking to her ladyship in the most respectful manner; but, when he found that Miss Sidney was gone, anger and disappointment made him at once forget his prudence, and his intended respect; he declared, in the most passionate terms, his love for Selina Sidney, and his irrevocable determination to pursue her, to the end of time and space, in spite of all opposition whatsoever from any person whatever. His mother, who was prepared for a scene of this sort, though not for one of this violence, had sufficient command of temper to sustain it properly; her command of temper was, indeed, a little assisted by the hope that this passion would be transitory in proportion to its vehemence, much by the confidence she had in Miss Sidney's _honour_, and in her absence: Lady Mary, therefore, calmly disclaimed having had any part in persuading Miss Sidney to that measure which had so much enraged her lover; but her ladyship avowed, that though it had not been necessary for her to suggest the measure, she highly approved of it, and admired now, as she had ever admired, that young lady's prudent and noble conduct.

Softened by the only thing that could, at this moment, soften him--praise of his mistress--Vivian, in a most affectionate manner, assured his mother that it was her warm eulogiums of Miss Sidney which had first turned his attention to the perfections of her character; and he now inquired what possible objections she could make to his choice. With the generous enthusiasm of his disposition, heightened by all the eloquence of love, he pleaded, that his fortune was surely sufficient to put him above mercenary considerations in the choice of a wife; that in every point, except this one of _money_, Selina Sidney was, in his own mother's opinion, superior to every other woman she could name, or wish for, as a daughter-in-law.

"But my tastes are not to blind me to your interests," said Lady Mary; "you are entitled to look for rank and high connexion. You are the representative of an ancient family, have talents to make a figure in public; and, in short, prejudice or not, I confess it is one of the

first wishes of my heart that you should marry into a noble family, or at least into one that shall strengthen your political interest, as well as secure your domestic happiness."

Vivian, of course, cursed ambition, as all men do whilst they are in love. His arguments and his eloquence in favour of a private station, and of the joys of learned leisure, a competence, and domestic bliss, were worthy of the most renowned of ancient or modern philosophers. Russell was appealed to with much eagerness, both by mother and son, during their debates. He frankly declared to Lady Mary, that he thought her son perfectly right in all he now urged, and especially in his opinion of Miss Sidney; "but at the same time," added Russell, "I apprehend that he speaks, at this moment, more from passion than from reason; and I fear that, in the course of a few months, he might, perhaps, entirely change his mind: therefore, I think your ladyship is prudent in refusing, during the minority of your son, your consent to a hasty union, of which he might afterwards repent, and thus render both himself and a most amiable woman miserable."

Russell, after having given his opinion with the utmost freedom, when it was required by Lady Mary, assured her that he should no farther interfere; and he trusted his present sincerity would be the best pledge to her of his future discretion and honour. This equitable judgment and sincerity of Russell's at first displeased both parties, but in time operated upon the reason of both; not, however, before contests had gone on long and loud between the mother and son--not before a great deal of nonsense had been talked on both sides. People of the best abilities often talk the most nonsense where their passions are concerned, because then the whole of their ingenuity is exercised to find arguments in favour of their folly. They are not, like fools, content to say, This is my will; but they pique themselves on giving reasons for their will; and their reasons are the reasons of madmen, excellent upon false premises. It happened here, as in most family quarrels, that the disputants did not allow sufficiently for the prejudices and errors incident to their different ages. The mother would not allow for the romantic notions of the son, nor could the son endure the worldly views of the mother. The son, who had as yet no experience of the transitory nature of the passion of love, thought his mother unfeeling and barbarous, for opposing him on the point where the whole happiness of his life was concerned; the mother, who had seen the decline and fall of so many everlasting loves, considered him only as a person in a fever; and thought she prevented him, by her calmness, from doing that which he would repent when he should regain his sober senses. Without detailing the daily disputes which now arose, it will be sufficient to mark the result.

Vivian's love had been silent, tranquil, and not seemingly of any great consequence, till it was opposed; but, from the instant that an obstacle intervened, it gathered strength and force, and it presently rose rapidly, with prodigious uproar, threatening to burst all bounds, and to destroy every thing that stopped its course. Lady Mary was now inclined to try what effect lessening the opposition might produce. To do her justice, she was also moved to this by some nobler motives than fear;

or, at least, her fears were not of a selfish kind: she dreaded that her son's health and permanent happiness might be injured by this violent passion; she was apprehensive of becoming an object of his aversion; of utterly losing his confidence, and all power over his mind; but, chiefly, her generous temper was moved and won by Selina Sidney's admirable conduct. During the whole time that Vivian used every means to see her, to write to her, and to convince her of the fervour of his love, though he won all her friends over to his interests, though she heard his praises from morning till night from all who surrounded her, and though her own heart, perhaps, pleaded more powerfully than all the rest in his favour; yet she never, for one instant, gave him the slightest encouragement. Lady Mary's esteem and affection were so much increased by these strong proofs of friendship and honour, that her prejudices yielded; and she at length declared, that if her son continued, till he was of age, to feel the same attachment for this amiable girl, she would give her consent to their union. But this, she added, she promised only on one condition--that her son should abstain from all attempts, in the interval, to see or correspond with Miss Sidney, and that he should set out immediately to travel with Mr. Russell. Transported with love, and joy, and victory, Vivian promised every thing that was required of him, embraced his mother, and set out upon his travels.

"Allow," said he triumphantly to Russell, as the chaise drove from the door, "allow, my good friend, that you were mistaken, in your fears of the weakness of my character, and of the yielding facility of my temper. You see how firm I have been--you see what battle I have made--you see how I have _stood out_."

"I never doubted," said Russell, "your love of your own free will--I never doubted your fear of being governed, especially by your mother; but you do not expect that I should allow this to be a proof of strength of character."

"What! do you suppose I act from love of my own free will merely?--Do you call my love for Selina Sidney weakness?--Oh! take care, Russell; for if once I find you pleading my mother's cause against your conscience----"

"You will never find me pleading any cause against my conscience. I have told your mother, as I have told you, my opinion of Miss Sidney--my firm opinion--that she is peculiarly calculated to make the happiness of your life, provided you continue to love her."

"Provided!--Oh!" cried Vivian, laughing, "spare your musty provisoes, my dear philosopher! Would not any one think, now, you were an old man of ninety? If this is all you have to fear, I am happy indeed."

"At present," said Russell, calmly, "I have no fear, as I have just told your mother, but that you should change your mind before you are of age."

Vivian grew quite indignant at this suggestion. "You are angry with me,"

said Russell, "and so was your mother: she was angry because I said, I _feared,_ instead of I _hoped,_ you would change your mind. Both parties are angry with me for my sincerity."

"Sincerity!--no; but I am angry with you for your absurd suspicions of my constancy."

"If they are absurd, you need not be angry," said Russell; "I shall be well pleased to see their absurdity demonstrated."

"Then I can demonstrate it this moment."

"Pardon me; not this moment; you must take time into the account. I make no doubt but that, at this moment, you are heartily in love with Miss Sidney; but the thing to be proved is, that your passion will not decline in force, in proportion as it meets with less resistance. If it does, you will acknowledge that it was more a love of your own free will than a love of your mistress that has actuated you, which was the thing to be proved."

"Hateful Q.E.D.!" cried Vivian; "you shall see the contrary, and, at least, I will triumph over you."

If Russell had ever used art in his management of Vivian's mind, he might have been suspected of using it in favour of Miss Sidney at this instant; for this prophecy of Vivian's inconstancy was the most likely means to prevent its accomplishment. Frequently, in the course of their tour, when Vivian was in any situation where his constancy was tempted, he recollected Russell's prediction, and was proud to remind him how much he had been mistaken. In short, the destined time for their return home arrived--Vivian presented himself before his mother, and claimed her promise. She was somewhat surprised, and a little disappointed, by our hero's constancy; but she could not retract her word; and, since her compliance was now unavoidable, she was determined that it should be gracious. She wrote to Selina, therefore, with great kindness, saying, that whatever views of other connexions she might formerly have had for her son, she had now relinquished them, convinced, by the constancy of her son's attachment, and by the merit of its object, that his own choice would most effectually ensure his happiness, and that of all his friends. Her ladyship added expressions of her regard and esteem, and of the pleasure she felt in the thoughts of finding in her daughter-in-law a friend and companion, whose society was peculiarly agreeable to her taste and suited to her character. This letter entirely dissipated Selina's scruples of conscience; Vivian's love and merit, all his good and all his agreeable qualities, had now full and unproved power to work upon her tender heart. His generous, open temper, his candour, his warm attachment to his friends, his cultivated understanding, his brilliant talents, his easy, well-bred, agreeable manners, all heightened in their power to please by the charm of love, justified, even in the eyes of the aged and prudent, the passion he inspired. Selina became extremely attached to him; and she loved with the delightful belief that there was not, in the mind of her lover, the seed of a single vice which threatened danger to his virtues or to their

mutual happiness. With his usual candour, he had laid open his whole character to her, as far as he knew it himself; and had warned her of that vacillation of temper, that easiness to be led, which Russell had pointed out as a dangerous fault in his disposition. But of this propensity Selina had seen no symptoms; on the contrary, the steadiness of her lover in his attachment to her--the only point on which she had yet seen him tried--decided her to trust to the persuasive voice of love and hope, and to believe that Russell's friendship had in this instance, been too harsh or too timorous in its forebodings.

Nothing now delayed the marriage of Vivian and Selina but certain legal rites, which were to be performed on his coming of age, and before marriage settlements could be drawn;--and the parties were doomed to wait for the arrival of some trustee who was with his regiment abroad. All these delays Vivian of course cursed: but, upon the whole, they were borne by him with heroic patience, and by Selina with all the tranquillity of confiding love, happy in the present, and not too anxious for the future.

CHAPTER II.

"My dear Russell," said Vivian, "love shall not make me forget friendship; before I marry, I must see you provided for. Believe me, this was the first--one of the first pleasures I promised myself, in becoming master of a good fortune. Other thoughts, I confess, have put it out of my head; so now let me tell you at once. I hate paltry surprises with my friends: I have, you know--or rather, probably, you do not know, for you are the most disinterested fellow upon earth--I have an excellent living in my gift; it shall be yours; consider it as such from this moment. If I knew a more deserving man, I would give it to him, upon my honour; so you can't refuse me. The incumbent can't live long; he is an old, very old, infirm man; you'll have the living in a year or two, and, in the mean time, stay with me. I ask it as a favour from a friend, and you see how much I want a friend of your firm character; and I hope you see, also, how much I can value, in others, the qualities in which I am myself deficient."

Russell was much pleased and touched by Vivian's generous gratitude, and by the delicacy, as well as kindness of the manner in which he made this offer; but Russell could not consistently with his feelings or his principles live in a state of dependent idleness, waiting for a rich living and the death of an old incumbent. He told Vivian that he had too much affection for him, and too much respect for himself, ever to run the hazard of sinking from the rank of an independent friend. After rallying him, without effect, on his pride, Vivian acknowledged that he was forced to admire him the more for his spirit. Lady Mary, too, who was a great and sincere admirer of independence of character, warmly applauded Mr. Russell, and recommended him, in the highest terms, to a nobleman in the neighbourhood, who happened to be in want of a preceptor

for his only son. This nobleman was Lord Glistonbury; his lordship was eager to engage a person of Russell's reputation for talents; so the affair was quickly arranged, and Lady Mary Vivian and her son went to pay a morning visit at Glistonbury Castle, on purpose to accompany Russell on his first introduction to the family. As they approached the castle, Vivian was struck with its venerable Gothic appearance; he had not had a near view of it for some years, and he looked at it with new eyes. Formerly he had seen it only as a picturesque ornament to the country; but now that he was himself possessor of an estate in the vicinity, he considered Glistonbury Castle as a point of comparison which rendered him dissatisfied with his own mansion. As he drove up the avenue, and beheld the towers, turrets, battlements, and massive entrance, his mother, who was a woman of taste, strengthened, by her exclamations on the beauty of Gothic architecture, the wish that was rising in his mind to convert his modern house into an _ancient_ castle: she could not help sighing whilst she reflected that, if her son's affections had not been engaged, he might perhaps have obtained the heart and hand of one of the fair daughters of this castle. Lady Mary went no farther, even in her inmost thoughts. Incapable of double-dealing, she resolved never even to let her son know what her wishes had been with respect to a connexion with the Glistonbury family. But the very reserve and _discretion_ with which her ladyship spoke--a reserve unusual with her, and unsuited to the natural warmth of her manner and temper--might have betrayed her to an acute and cool observer. Vivian, however, at this instant, was too much intent upon castle-building to admit any other ideas.

When the carriage drove under the great gateway and stopped, Vivian exclaimed, "What a fine old castle! how surprised Selina Sidney would be, how delighted, to see my house metamorphosed into such a castle!"

"It is a magnificent castle, indeed!" said Lady Mary, with a sigh: "I think there are the Lady Lidhursts on the terrace; and here comes my Lord Glistonbury with his son."

"My pupil?" said Russell; "I hope the youth is such as I can become attached to. Life would be wretched indeed without attachment--of some sort or other. But I must not expect," added he, "to find a second time a friend in a pupil; and such a friend!"

Sentiment, or the expression of the tenderness he felt for his friends, was so unusual from Russell, that it had double effect; and Vivian was so much struck by it, that he could scarcely collect his thoughts in time to speak to Lord Glistonbury, who came to receive his guests, attended by three _hangers on_ of the family--a chaplain, a captain, and a young lawyer. His lordship was scarcely past the meridian of life; yet, in spite of his gay and debonair manner, he looked old, as if he were paying for the libertinism of his youth by premature decrepitude. His countenance announced pretensions to ability; his easy and affable address, and the facility with which he expressed himself, gained him credit at first for much more understanding than he really possessed. There was a plausibility in all he said; but, if it were examined, there was nothing in it but nonsense. Some of his expressions appeared

brilliant; some of his sentiments just; but there was a want of consistency, a want of a pervading mind in his conversation, which to good judges betrayed the truth, that all his opinions were adopted, not formed; all his maxims commonplace; his wit mere repetition; his sense merely tact. After proper thanks and compliments to Lady Mary and Mr. Vivian, for securing for him such a treasure as Mr. Russell, he introduced Lord Lidhurst, a sickly, bashful boy of fourteen, to his new governor, with polite expressions of unbounded confidence, and a rapid enunciation of undefined and contradictory expectations.

"Mr. Russell will, I am perfectly persuaded, make Lidhurst every thing we can desire," said his lordship; "an honour to his country, an ornament to his family. It is my decided opinion that man is but a bundle of habits; and it's my maxim, that education is second nature--first, indeed, in many cases. For, except that I am staggered about original genius, I own I conceive with Hartley, that early impressions and associations are all in all: his vibrations and vibratiuncles are quite satisfactory. But what I particularly wish for Lidhurst, sir, is, that he should be trained as soon as possible into a statesman. Mr. Vivian, I presume you mean to follow up public business, and no doubt will make a figure. So I prophesy; and I am used to these things. And from Lidhurst, too, under similar tuition, I may with reason expect miracles--'hope to hear him thundering in the house of commons in a few years--'confess 'am not quite so impatient to have the young dog in the house of incurables; for you know he could not be there without being in my shoes, which I have not done with yet--ha! ha! ha!----Each in his turn, my boy! In the mean time, Lady Mary, shall we join the ladies yonder, on the terrace? Lady Glistonbury walks so slow, that she will be seven hours in coming to us; so we had best go to her ladyship: if the mountain won't go to Mahomet--you know, of course, what follows."

On their way to the terrace, Lord Glistonbury, who always heard himself speak with singular complacency, continued to give his ideas on education; sometimes appealing to Mr. Russell, sometimes happy to catch the eye of Lady Mary.

"Now, my idea for Lidhurst is simply this:--that he should know every thing that is in all the best books in the library, but yet that he should be the farthest possible from a book-worm--that he should never, except in a set speech in the house, have the air of having opened a book in his life--mother-wit for me!--in most cases--and that easy style of originality, which shows the true gentleman. As to morals--Lidhurst, walk on, my boy--as to morals, I confess I couldn't bear to see any thing of the Joseph Surface about him. A youth of spirit must, you know, Mr. Vivian--excuse me, Lady Mary, this is--an aside--be something of a latitudinarian to keep in the fashion: not that I mean to say so exactly to Lidhurst--no, no--on the contrary, Mr. Russell, it is our cue, as well as this reverend gentleman's," looking back at the chaplain, who bowed assent before he knew to what, "it is our cue, as well as this reverend gentleman's, to preach prudence, and temperance, and all the cardinal virtues."

"_Cardinal_ virtues! very good, faith! my lord," said the lawyer, looking at the clergyman.

"_Temperance!_" repeated the chaplain, winking at the officer; "upon my soul, my lord, that's too bad."

"_Prudence!_" repeated the captain; "that's too clean a cut at poor Wicksted, my lord."

Before his lordship had time to preach any more prudence, they arrived within bowing distance of the ladies, who had, indeed, advanced at a very slow rate. Vivian was not acquainted with any of the ladies of the Glistonbury family; for they had, till this summer, resided at another of their country seats, in a distant county. His mother had often met them at parties in town.

Lady Glistonbury was a thin, stiffened, flattened figure--she was accompanied by two other female forms, one old, the other young; not each a different grace, but alike all three in angularity, and in a cold haughtiness of mien. After reconnoitring with their glasses the party of gentlemen, these ladies quickened their step; and Lady Glistonbury, making her countenance as affable as it was in its nature to be, exclaimed, "My dear Lady Mary Vivian! have I the pleasure to see your ladyship?--They told me it was only visitors to my lord."

Mr. Vivian had then the honour of being introduced to her ladyship, to her eldest daughter, Lady Sarah Lidhurst, and to Miss Strictland, the governess. By all of these ladies he was most graciously received; but poor Russell was not so fortunate; nothing could be more cold and repulsive than their reception of him. This did not make Lady Sarah appear very agreeable to Vivian; he thought her, at this first view, one of the least attractive young women he had ever beheld.

"Where is my Julia?" inquired Lord Glistonbury. "Ah! there she goes yonder, all life and spirits."

Vivian looked as his lordship directed his eye, and saw, at the farthest end of the terrace, a young girl of about fifteen, running very fast, with a hoop, which she was keeping up with great dexterity for the amusement of a little boy who was with her. The governess no sooner saw this than she went in pursuit of her young ladyship, calling after her, in various tones and phrases of reprehension, in French, Italian, and English; and asking whether this was a becoming employment for a young lady of her age and rank. Heedless of these reproaches, Lady Julia still ran on, away from her governess, "to chase the rolling circle's speed," down the slope of the terrace; thither Miss Strictland dared not pursue, but contented herself with standing on the brink, reiterating her remonstrances. At length the hoop fell, and the young lady returned, not to her governess, but, running lightly up the slope of the terrace, to her surprise, she came full in view of the company before she was aware that any strangers were there. Her straw hat being at the back of her head, Lady Glistonbury, with an indignant look, pulled it forwards.

"What a beautiful colour! what a sweet countenance Lady Julia has!" whispered Lady Mary Vivian to Lord Glistonbury: at the same time she could not refrain from glancing her eyes towards her son, to see what effect was produced upon him. Vivian's eyes met hers; and this single look of his mother's revealed to him all that she had, in her great prudence, resolved to conceal. He smiled at her, and then at Russell, as much as to say, "Surely there can be no comparison between such a child as this and Selina Sidney!"

A few minutes afterwards, in consequence of a sign from Lady Glistonbury, Julia disappeared with her governess; and the moment was unnoticed by Vivian, who was then, as his mother observed, looking up at one of the turrets of the old castle. All its inhabitants were at this time uninteresting to him, except so far as they regarded his friend Russell; but the castle itself absorbed his attention. Lord Glistonbury, charmed to see how he was struck by it, offered to show him over every part of the edifice; an offer which he and Lady Mary gladly accepted. Lady Glistonbury excused herself, professing to be unable to sustain the fatigue: she deputed her eldest daughter to attend Lady Mary in her stead; and this was the only circumstance which diminished the pleasure to Vivian, for he was obliged to show due courtesy to this stiff taciturn damsel at every turn, whilst he was intent upon seeing the architecture of the castle, and the views from the windows of the towers and loop-holes of the galleries; all which Lady Sarah pointed out with a cold, ceremonious civility, and a formal exactness of proceeding, which enraged Vivian's enthusiastic temper. The visit ended: he railed half the time he was going home against their fair, or, as he called her, their petrified guide; then, full of the Gothic beauties of Glistonbury, he determined, as soon as possible, to turn his own modern house into a castle. The very next morning he had an architect to view it, and to examine its capabilities. It happened that, about this time, several of the noblemen and gentry, in the county in which Vivian resided, had been seized with this rage for turning comfortable houses into uninhabitable castles. And, however perverse or impracticable this retrograde movement in architecture might seem, there were always at hand professional projectors, to convince gentlemen that nothing was so feasible. Provided always that gentlemen approve their estimates as well as their plans, they undertake to carry buildings back, in a trice, two, or three, or half a dozen centuries, as may be required, to make them Gothic or Saracenic, and to "add every grace that time alone can give." A few days after Vivian had been at Glistonbury Castle, when Lord Glistonbury came to return the visit, Russell, who accompanied his lordship, found his friend encompassed with plans and elevations.

"Surely, my dear Vivian," said he, seizing the first moment he could speak to him, "you are not going to spoil this excellent house? It is completely finished, in handsome modern architecture, perfectly comfortable and convenient, light, airy, large enough, warm rooms, well distributed, with ample means of getting at each apartment; and if you set about to new-model and transform it into a castle, you must, I see, by your plan, alter the proportions of almost every room, and spoil the comfort of the whole; turn square to round, and round again to square; and, worse than all, turn light to darkness--only for the sake of having

what is called a castle, but what has not, in fact, any thing of the grandeur or solid magnificence of a real ancient edifice. These modern baby-house miniatures of castles, which gentlemen ruin themselves to build, are, after all, the most paltry, absurd things imaginable."

To this Vivian was, after some dispute, forced to agree; but he said, "that his should not be a baby-house; that he would go to any expense to make it really magnificent."

"As magnificent, I suppose, as Glistonbury Castle?"

"If possible:--that is, I confess, the object of my emulation."

"Ah!" said Russell, shaking his head, "these are the objects of emulation, for which country gentlemen often ruin themselves; barter their independence and real respectability; reduce themselves to distress and disgrace: these are the objects for which they sell either their estates or their country; become placemen or beggars; and end either in the liberties of the King's Bench, or the slaveries of St. James's."

"Impossible for me! you know my public principles," said Vivian: "and you know that I think the life of an independent country gentleman the most respectable of all others--you know my principles."

"I know your facility," said Russell: "if you begin by sacrificing thus to your taste, do you think you will not end by sacrificing to your interest?"

"Never! never!" cried Vivian.

"Then you imagine that a strong temptation will not act where a weak one has been found irresistible."

"Of this I am certain," said Vivian: "I could never be brought to sell my country, or to forfeit my honour."

"Perhaps not," said Russell: "you might, in your utmost need, have another alternative; you might forfeit your love; you might give up Selina Sidney, and marry for money--all for the sake of a castle!"

Struck by this speech, Vivian exclaimed, "I would give up a thousand castles rather than run such a hazard!"

"Let us then coolly calculate," said Russell. "What would the castle cost you?"

The expense, even by the estimates of the architects, which, in the execution, are usually doubled, was enormous, such as Vivian acknowledged was unsuited even to his ample fortune. His fortune, though considerable, was so entailed, that he would, if he exceeded his income, be soon reduced to difficulties for ready money. But then his mother had several thousands in the stocks, which she was ready to lend him to

forward this castle-building. It was a project which pleased her taste, and gratified her aristocratic notions.

Vivian assured his friend at parting, that his reason was convinced: that he would not yield to the whims of taste, and that he would prudently give up his folly. So he determined; and he abided by his determination till he heard numbers speak on the other side of the question. With Vivian, those who spoke last frequently seemed to speak best; and, in general, the number of voices overpowered the weight of argument. By the persuasions of his mother, the example of his neighbours, and the urgency of architects and men of taste who got about him soon afterwards, he was convinced that there was no living without a castle, and that the expense would be _next to nothing at all.

Convinced_, we should not say; for he yielded, against his conviction, from mere want of power to resist reiterated solicitations. He had no other motive; for the enthusiasm raised by the view of Glistonbury Castle had passed away: he plainly saw, what Russell had pointed out to him, that he should spoil the inside of his house for the sake of the outside; and, for his own part, he preferred comfort to show. It was not, therefore, to please his own taste that he ran into this imprudent expense, but merely to gratify the taste of others.

Now the bustle of building began, and workmen swarmed round his house; the foundations sank, the scaffolds rose; and many times did Vivian sigh and repent, when he saw how much was to be undone before any thing could be done; when he found his house dismantled, saw the good ceilings and elegant cornices knocked to pieces, saw the light domes and modern sashes give way; all taken out to be replaced, at profuse expense, by a clumsy imitation of Gothic; how often did he sigh and calculate, when he saw the tribes of workmen file off as their dinner bell rang! how often did he bless himself, when he beheld the huge beams of timber dragged into his yards, and the solid masses of stone brought from a quarry at an enormous distance!--Vivian perceived that the expense would be treble the estimate; and said, that if the thing were to be done again, he would never consent to it; but now, as Lady Mary observed, it was too late to repent; and it was, at any rate, best to go on and finish it with spirit--since it was impossible (nobody knew why) to stop. He hurried on the workmen with impatience; for he was anxious to have the roof and some apartments in his castle finished before his marriage. The dilatoriness of the lawyers, and the want of the trustee, who had not yet arrived in England, were no longer complained of so grievously by the lover. Russell, one day, as he saw Vivian overlooking his workmen, and urging them to expedition, smiled, and asked whether the impatience of an architect or of a lover was now predominant in his mind. Vivian, rather offended by the question, replied, that his eagerness to finish this part of his castle arose from his desire to give an agreeable surprise to his bride; and he declared that his passion for Selina was as ardent, at this moment, as it had ever been; but that it was impossible to make lawyers move faster than their accustomed pace; and that Miss Sidney was too secure of his affection, and he too well convinced of hers, to feel that sort of anxiety, which persons who had less confidence in each other might experience in similar circumstances. This was all very true, and very reasonable; but Russell could not help

perceiving that Vivian's language and tone were somewhat altered since the time when he was ready to brave heaven and earth to marry his mistress, without license or consent of friends, without the possibility of waiting a few months till he was of age. In fact, though Vivian would not allow it, this consent of friends, this ceasing of opposition, this security and tranquillity of happiness, had considerably changed the appearance, at least, of his love. Lady Mary perceived it, with a resolution to say nothing, and see how it would end. Selina did not perceive it for some time; for she was of a most unsuspecting temper; and her confidence in Vivian was equal to the fondness of her love. She began to think, indeed, that the lawyers were provokingly slow; and when Vivian did not blame them as much as he used to do, she only thought that he understood business better than she did--besides, the necessary trustee was not come--and, in short, the last thing that occurred to her mind was to blame Vivian.

The trustee at length arrived, and the castle was almost in the wished-for state of forwardness, when a new cause of delay arose--a county election: but how this election was brought on, and how it was conducted, it is necessary to record. It happened that a relation of Vivian's was appointed to a new seventy-four gun ship, of which he came to take the command at Yarmouth, which was within a few miles of him. Vivian recollected that Russell had often expressed a desire to go on board a man-of-war. Vivian, therefore, after having appointed a day for their going, went to Glistonbury to invite Russell: his pupil, Lord Lidhurst, begged to be permitted to accompany them: and Lady Julia, the moment she heard of this new seventy-four gun ship, was, as her governess expressed it, wild to be of the party. Indeed, any thing that had the name of a party of pleasure, and that promised a transient relief from the tedious monotony in which her days passed; any thing that gave a chance of even a few hours' release from the bondage in which she was held between the restraints of the most rigid of governesses and the proudest of mothers, appeared delightful to this lively and childish girl. She persecuted her governess with entreaties, till at last she made Miss Strickland go with her petition to Lady Glistonbury; whilst, in the mean time, Lady Julia overwhelmed her father with caresses, till he consented; and with much difficulty, prevailed upon Lady Glistonbury to give her permission for the young ladies to go with their governess, their brother, their father, and Lady Mary Vivian, on this excursion. The invitation was now extended to all the company then at the castle; including the representative of the county, who, being just threatened with a fit of the gout, brought on by hard drinking at the last election, expressed some reluctance to going with this party on the water. But this gentleman was now paying his humble devoirs to the Lady Sarah Lidhurst; and it was represented to him, by all who understood the ground, that he would give mortal offence if he did not go; so it was ruled, that, hot or cold, gout or no gout, he must appear in the Lady Sarah's train: he submitted to this perilous necessity in the most gallant manner. The day proved tolerably fine--Vivian had an elegant entertainment provided for the company, under a marquee pitched on the shore--they _embarked_ in a pleasure-boat--Lady Sarah was very sick, and her admirer very cold; but Lady Julia was in extasies at every thing she saw and felt--she feared

nothing, found nothing inconvenient--was charmed to be drawn so easily from the boat up the high side of the ship--charmed to find herself on deck--charmed to see the sails, the ropes, the rigging, the waves, the sea, the sun, the clouds, the sailors, the cook dressing dinner--all, all indiscriminately charmed her; and, like a school-girl broke loose, she ran about, wild with spirits, asking questions, some sensible, some silly; laughing at her own folly, flying from this side to that, from one end of the ship to the other, down the ladders and up again; whilst Mr. Russell, who was deputed to take care of her, could scarcely keep up with her: Lord Glistonbury stood by, holding his sides and laughing aloud: Miss Strictland, quite disabled by the smell of the ship, was lying on a bed in the state cabin; and Lady Sarah, all the time shaded by an umbrella held by her shivering admirer, sat, as if chained upright in her chair of state, upon deck, scorning her sister's childish levity, and proving herself, with all due propriety, incapable of being moved to surprise or admiration by any object on land or sea.

Lady Mary Vivian, while she observed with a quick eye all that passed, and read her son's thoughts, was fully persuaded that neither of the Lady Lidhursts would be likely to suit his taste, even if his affections were disengaged: the one was too childish, the other too stiff. "Yet their birth and connexions, and their consequence in the county," thought Lady Mary, "would have made their alliance highly desirable." Every body seemed weary at the close of this day's entertainment, except Lady Julia, who _kept it up_ with indefatigable gaiety, and could hardly believe that it was time to go home, when the boat was announced to row them to shore: heedless, and absolutely dizzy with talking and laughing, her ladyship, escaping from the assistance of sailors and gentlemen, made a false step in getting into the boat, and, falling over, would have sunk for ever, but for Mr. Russell's presence of mind. He seized her with a strong grasp, and saved her. The fright sobered her completely; and she sat wrapped in great-coats, as silent, as tractable, and as wet as possible, during the remainder of the way to shore. The screams, the ejaculations, the reprimands from Miss Strictland; the questions, the reflections, to which this incident led, may possibly be conceived, but cannot be enumerated.

This event, however alarming at the moment, had no serious consequence; for Lady Julia caught neither fever nor cold, though Miss Strictland was morally certain her ladyship would have one or the other; indeed she insinuated, that her ladyship deserved to have both. Lady Sarah's poor shivering knight of the shire, however, did not escape so well. Obligated to row home, in a damp evening, without his great-coat, which he had been forced to offer to Lady Julia, in a pleasure-boat, when he should have been in flannels or in bed, he had "cause to rue the boating of that day." His usual panacea of the gout did not come as expected, _to set him up again_. The cold he caught this day killed him. Lady Sarah Lidhurst was precisely as sorry as decorum required. But the bustle of a new election was soon to obliterate the memory of the old member, in the minds of his numerous friends. Lord Glistonbury, and several other voices in the county, called upon Vivian to stand on the independent interest. There was to be a contest: for a government candidate declared himself at the same moment that application was made to Vivian. The

expense of a contested election alarmed both Vivian and his mother. Gratified as she was by the honour of this offer, yet she had the prudence to advise her son rather to go into parliament as representative for a borough than to hazard the expense of a contest for the county. Miss Sidney, also, whom he consulted upon this occasion, supported his mother's prudent advice, in the most earnest manner; and Vivian was inclined to follow this counsel, till Lord Glistonbury came one morning to plead the contrary side of the question: he assured Vivian, that from his experience of the county, he was morally certain they should carry it without trouble, and with no expense _worth mentioning_. These were only general phrases, to be sure, not arguments; but these, joined to her ambition to see her son member for the county, at length overpowered Lady Mary's better judgment: her urgent entreaties were now joined to those of Lord Glistonbury, and of many loud-tongued electioneers, who proved to Vivian, by every thing but calculation, that he must be returned if he would but stand--if he would only declare himself. Russell and his own prudence strongly counselled him to resist these clamorous importunities; the two preceding candidates, whose fortunes had been nearly as good as his, had been ruined by the contests. Vivian was very young, but just of age; and Russell observed, "that it would be better for him to see something more of the world, before he should embark in politics, and plunge into public business." "True," said Vivian; "but Mr. Pitt was only three-and-twenty when he was minister of England. I am not ambitious; but I should certainly like to distinguish myself, if I could; and whilst I feel in youth the glow of patriotism, why should I not serve my country?"

"Serve it and welcome," said Russell: "but don't begin by ruining yourself by a contested election; or else, whatever glow of patriotism you may feel, it will be out of your power to be an honest member of parliament. If you must go into parliament immediately for the good of your country, go in as member for some borough, which will not ruin you."

"But the committee of our friends will be so disappointed if I decline; and my mother, who has now set her heart upon it, and Lord Glistonbury, and Mr. C----, and Mr. G----, and Mr. D----, who are such zealous friends, and who urge me so much----"

"Judge for yourself," said Russell, "and don't let any persons who happen to be near you persuade you to see with their eyes, and decide with their wishes. Zealous friends, indeed!--because they love to make themselves of consequence, by bawling and scampering about at an election!--And you would let such people draw you on, to ruin yourself."

"I will show you that they shall not," cried Vivian, seizing a sheet of paper, and sitting down immediately to write the copy of a circular letter to his friends, informing them, with many thanks, that he declined to stand for the county. Russell eagerly wrote copies of this letter, which Vivian declared should be sent early the next morning. But no sooner was Russell out of sight than Lady Mary Vivian resumed her arguments in favour of commencing his canvass immediately, and before his friends should cool. When she saw the letters that he had been

writing, she was excessively indignant; and, by a torrent of female and maternal eloquence, he was absolutely overwhelmed. Auxiliaries poured in to her ladyship on all sides; horsemen after horsemen, freeholders of all degrees, now flocked to the house, hearing that Mr. Vivian had thoughts of standing for the county. They were unanimously loud in their assurances of success. Old and new copies of poll books were produced, and the different interests of the county counted and recounted, balanced and counterbalanced, again and again, by each person, after his own fashion: and it was proved to Mr. Vivian, _in black and white, and as plain as figures could make it_, that he had the game in his own hands; and that, if he would but declare himself, the other candidate would, the very next day, they would be bound for it, decline the contest. Vivian had a clear head, and a competent knowledge of arithmetic; he saw the fallacies and inaccuracies in their modes of computation; he saw, upon examining the books, that the state of the county interests was very different from what they pretended or believed; and he was convinced that the opposite candidate would not decline: but after Vivian had stated these reasons ten times, and his mother and his electioneering partisans had reiterated their assertions twenty times, he yielded, merely because they had said twice as much as he had, and because, poor easy man! he had not power to resist continuity of solicitation.

He declared himself candidate for the county; and was soon immersed in all the toil, trouble, vexation, and expense, of a contested election. Of course, his marriage was now to be postponed till the election should be over. Love and county politics have little affinity. What the evils of a contested election are can be fully known only to those by whom they have been personally experienced. The contest was bitter. The Glistonbury interest was the strongest which supported Vivian: Lord Glistonbury and _his lordship's friends_ were warm in his cause. Not that they had any particular regard for Vivian; but he was to be _their member_, opposed to the court candidate, whom his lordship was anxious to keep out of the county. Lord Glistonbury had once been a strong friend to government, and was thought a confirmed courtier, especially as he had been brought up in high aristocratic notions; but he had made it his great object to turn his earldom into a marquisate; and government having delayed or refused to gratify him in this point, he quitted them with disgust, and set up his standard amongst the opposition. He was now loud and zealous on every occasion that could, as he said, _annoy_ government; and merely because he could not be a marquis, he became a patriot. Mistaken, abused name! how glorious in its original, how despicable in its debased signification!--Lord Glistonbury's exertions were indefatigable.

Vivian felt much gratitude for this apparently disinterested friendship; and, during a few weeks, whilst this canvass was going on, he formed a degree of intimacy with the Glistonbury family, which, in any other circumstances, could scarcely have been brought about during months or years. An election, in England, seems, for the time, to level all distinctions, not only of rank, but even of pride: Lady Glistonbury herself, at this season, found it necessary to relax from her usual rigidity.--There was an extraordinary freedom of egress and regress; and

the haughty code of Glistonbury lay dormant. Vivian, of course, was the centre of all interest; and, whenever he appeared, every individual of the family was eager to inquire, "What news?--What news?--How do things go on to-day?--How will the election turn out?--Have you written to Mr. Such-a-one?--Have you been to Mr. Such-a-one's?--I'll write a note for you--I'll copy a letter."--There was one common cause--Miss Strickland even deigned to assist Mr. Vivian, and to try her awkward hand to forward his canvass, for it was to support the Glistonbury interest; and "there was no impropriety could attach to the thing." Russell's extreme anxiety made Vivian call more frequently even than it was necessary at the castle, to quiet his apprehensions, and to assure him that things were going on well. Young Lord Lidhurst, who was really good-natured, and over whose mind Russell began to gain some ascendancy, used to stand upon the watch for Vivian's appearance, and would run up the back stairs to Russell's apartment, to give him notice of it, and to be the first to tell the news. Lady Sarah--the icy lady Sarah herself--began to thaw; and every day, in the same phrase, she condescended to say to Mr. Vivian, that she "hoped the poll was going on as well as could be expected." It was, of course, reported, that Vivian was to succeed the late representative of the county in all its honours. In eight days he was confidently given to Lady Sarah by the generous public; and the day of their nuptials was positively fixed. As the lady was, even by the account of her friends, two or three years older than Mr. Vivian, and four or five years older by her looks, and as she was peculiarly unsuited to his taste, he heard the report without the slightest apprehension for his own constancy to Selina. He laughed at the idea, as an excellent joke, when it was first mentioned to him by Russell. Lord Glistonbury's manners, however, and the cordial familiarity with which he treated Vivian, gave every day increasing credit to the report. "If he were his son, my lord could not be more anxious about Mr. Vivian," said one of the plain-spoken freeholders, in the presence of the Lady Lidhursts.--Lady Sarah pursed up her mouth, and threw back her head; but Lady Julia, archly looking at her sister, smiled. The vivacity of Lady Julia's manner did not appear excessive during this election time, when all the world seemed mad; on the contrary, there was, in her utmost freedom and raillery, that air of good-breeding and politeness, in which vulgar mirth and liberty are always deficient. Vivian began to think that she was become less childish, and that there was something of a mixture of womanish timidity in her appearance, which rendered her infinitely more attractive. One evening, in particular, when her father having sent her for her morning's work, she returned with a basket full of the Vivian cockade, which she had made with her own delicate hands, Vivian thought she looked "very pretty:" her father desired her to give them to the person for whom they were intended, and she presented them to Mr. Russell, saying, "They are for your friend, sir."--Vivian thought she looked "very graceful."--Lady Mary Vivian suppressed half a sigh, and thought she kept the whole of her mind to herself. These happy days of canvassing, and this freedom of election, could not last for ever. After polling the county to the last freeholder, the contest was at length decided, and Vivian was declared duly elected. He was chaired, and he scattered money with a lavish hand, as he passed over the heads of the huzzaing populace; and he had all the honours of an election: the horses were taken from his carriage, and he was drawn by men, who were

soon afterwards so much intoxicated, that they retained no vestige of rationality. Not only the inferior, but the superior rank of electors, as usual upon such occasions, thought proper to do honour to their choice, and to their powers of judgment, by drinking their member's health at the expense of their own, till they could neither see, hear, nor understand. Our hero was not by any means fond of drinking, but he could not refuse to do as others did; and Lord Glistonbury swore, that now he had found out that Vivian could be such a pleasant companion over a bottle, he should never listen to his excuses in future.

A few days after this election, parliament met for the dispatch of business; and as some important question was to come on, all the members were summoned, by a peremptory call of the house. Vivian was obliged to go to town immediately, and compelled to defer his marriage. He regretted being thus hurried away from Selina; and with a thousand tender and passionate expressions, assured her, that the moment his attendance on public business could be spared, he should hasten to the country to claim his promised happiness. The castle would be finished by the time the session was over; the lawyers would also have completed their settlements; and Vivian said he should make every other necessary preparation whilst he was in town: therefore he urged Selina now to fix the time for their marriage, and to let it be the first week of the recess of parliament. But Miss Sidney, who had great delicacy of feeling and dignity of character, thought that Vivian had of late shown some symptoms of decreased affection, and that he had betrayed signs of unsteadiness of character. In the whole affair of the castle-building and of the election, he had evidently been led by others instead of following his own conviction:--she wisely dreaded that he might, in more important actions, yield his judgment to others; and then what security could she have for his principles? He might, perhaps, be led into all sorts of fashionable dissipation and vice. Besides these fears, she considered that Vivian was the possessor of a large fortune; that his mother had with difficulty consented to this match; that he was very young, had seen but little of the world, and might, perhaps, in future, repent of having made, thus early in life, a love match. She therefore absolutely refused to let him now bind himself to her by any fresh promises. She desired that he should consider himself as perfectly at liberty, and released from all engagement to her. It was evident, however, from the manner in which she spoke that she wished to restore her lover's liberty for his sake only; and that her own feelings, however they might be suppressed, were unchanged. Vivian was touched and charmed by her delicacy and generosity: in the fervour of his feelings he swore that his affections could never change; and he believed what he swore. Lady Mary Vivian was struck, also, with Miss Sidney's conduct at parting; and she acknowledged that it was impossible to show at once more tenderness and dignity. No one, however, not even Vivian, knew how much pain this separation gave Selina. Her good sense and prudence told her indeed, that it was best, both for her happiness and Vivian's, that he should see something more of the world, and that she should have some farther proof of the steadiness of his attachment, before she should unite herself with him irrevocably: but whilst she endeavoured to fortify her mind with these reflections, love inspired many painful fears; and, though she never

repented having set him free from his promises and engagements, she trembled for the consequences of his being thus at liberty, in such scenes of temptation as a London life would present.

CHAPTER III.

When our hero arrived in London, and when he was first introduced into fashionable society, his thoughts were so intent upon Selina Sidney, that he was in no danger of plunging into dissipation. He was surprised at the eagerness with which some young men pursued frivolous pleasures: he was still more astonished at seeing the apathy in which others of his own age were sunk, and the listless insignificance in which they lounged away their lives.

The call of the house, which brought Vivian to town, brought Lord Glistonbury also to attend his duty in the house of peers: with his lordship's family came Mr. Russell, whom Vivian went to see, as soon and as often as he could. Russell heard, with satisfaction, the indignant eloquence with which his friend spoke; and only wished that these sentiments might last, and that fashion might never lead him to imitate or to tolerate fools, whom he now despised.

"In the mean time, tell me how you go on yourself," said Vivian; "how do you like your situation here, and your pupil, and all the Glistonbury family? Let me behind the scenes at once; for, you know, I see them only on the stage."

Russell replied, in general terms, that he had hopes Lord Lidhurst would turn out well, and that therefore he was satisfied with his situation; but avoided entering into particulars, because he was a confidential person in the family. He thought that a preceptor and a physician were, in some respects, bound, by a similar species of honour, to speak cautiously of the maladies of their patients, or the faults of their pupils. Admitted into the secrets of families, they should never make use of the confidence reposed in them, to the disadvantage of any by whom they are trusted. Russell's strictly honourable reserve upon this occasion was rather provoking to Vivian, who, to all his questions, could obtain only the dry answer of--"Judge for yourself."--The nature of a town life, and the sort of intercourse which capital cities afford, put this very little in Vivian's power. The obligations he was under to Lord Glistonbury for assistance at the election made him anxious to show his lordship respect and attention; and the sort of intimacy which that election had brought on was, to a certain degree, kept up in town. Lady Mary Vivian was constantly one at Lady Glistonbury's card parties; and Vivian was frequently at his lordship's dinners. Considering the coldness and formality of Lady Glistonbury's manners, she was particularly attentive to Lady Mary Vivian; and our hero was continually an attendant upon the ladies of the Glistonbury family to all public places. This was by no means disagreeable to him, as they were persons

of _high consideration_; and they were sure of drawing into their circle the very best company. Lady Mary Vivian observed that it was a great advantage to her son to have such a house as Lord Glistonbury's open to him, to go to whenever he pleased. Besides the advantage to his morals, her ladyship was by no means insensible to the gratification her pride received from her son's living in such high company. The report which had been raised in the country during the election, that Mr. Vivian was going to be married to Lady Sarah Lidhurst, now began to circulate in town. This was not surprising, since a young man in London, of any fortune or notoriety, can hardly dance three or four times successively with the same young lady, cannot even sit beside her, and converse with her in public half a dozen times, without its being reported that he is going to be married to her. Of this, Vivian, during his noviciate in town, was not perhaps sufficiently aware: he was soon surprised at being asked, by almost every one he met, when his marriage with Lady Sarah Lidhurst was to take place. At first he contented himself with laughing at these questions, and declaring that there was no truth in the report: but his asseverations were not to be believed; they were attributed to motives of discretion: he was told by his companions, that he kept his own counsel very well; but they all knew _the thing was to be_: he was congratulated upon his good fortune in making such an excellent match; for though, as they said, he would have but little money with Lady Sarah, yet the connexion was so great, that he was the luckiest fellow upon earth. The degree of importance which the report gave him among the young men of his acquaintance, and the envy he excited, amused and gratified his vanity. The sort of conversation he was now in the constant habit of hearing, both from young and old, in all companies, about the marriages of people in the fashionable world, where fortune, and rank, and _connexion_, were always the first things spoken of or considered, began insensibly to influence Vivian's mode of speaking, if not of judging. Before he mixed in this society, he knew perfectly well that these were the principles by which _people of the world_ are guided; but whilst he had believed this only on hearsay, it had not appeared to him so entirely true and so important as when he saw and heard it himself. The effect of the opinions of a set of fine people, now he was actually in their society, and whilst all other society was excluded from his perception, was very different from what he had imagined it might be, when he was in the country or at college. To do our hero justice, however, he was sensible of this _aberration_ in his own mind, he had sense enough to perceive from what causes it arose, and steadiness sufficient to adhere to the judgements he had previously and deliberately formed. He did not in material points change his opinion of his mistress; he thought her far, far superior to all he saw and heard amongst the belles who were most admired in the fashionable world; but, at the same time, he began to agree with his mother's former wish, that Selina, added to all other merits, had the advantage of high birth and connexions, or at least, of belonging to a certain class of high company. He determined that, as soon as she should be his wife, he would have her introduced to the very _first society_ in town: he pleased his imagination with anticipating the change that would be made in her appearance, by the addition of certain elegancies of the mode: he delighted in thinking of the sensation she would produce, and the respect that would be paid to her as Mrs. Vivian, surrounded as he would

take care that she should be, with all those external signs of wealth and fashion, which command immediate and universal homage from the great and little world.

One day, when Vivian was absorbed in these pleasing reveries, Russell startled him with this question: "When are you to be married to Lady Sarah Lidhurst?"

"From you such a question!" said Vivian.

"Why not from me? It is a question that every body asks of me, because I am your intimate friend; and I should really be obliged to you, if you would furnish me with an answer, that may give me an air of a little more consequence than that which I have at present, being forced to answer, 'I don't know.'"

"You don't know! but why do not you answer, 'Never!' as I do," said Vivian, "to all the fools who ask me the same question?"

"Because they say that is your answer, and only _a come off_."

"I can't help it--Is it my fault if they won't believe the truth?"

"Why, people are apt to trust to appearances in these cases; and if appearances are contrary to your assertions, you should not wonder that you are not believed."

"Well, time will show them their mistake!" said Vivian.--But I don't know what appearances you mean.--What appearances are against me?--I never in my life saw a woman I was less disposed to like--whom it would be more impossible for me to love--than Lady Sarah Lidhurst; and I am sure I never gave her, or any of her family, the least reason to imagine I had a thought of her."

"Very likely; yet you are at Lord Glistonbury's continually, and you attend her ladyship to all public places. Is this the way, do you think, to put a stop to the report that has been raised?"

"I care not whether it stops or goes on," said Vivian.--"How!--Don't I know it is false?--That's enough for me."

"It may embarrass you yet," said Russell.

"Good Heavens!--Can you, who know me so well, Russell, fancy me so weak as to be embarrassed by such a report? Look--I would rather put this hand into that fire and let it be burned off, than offer it to Lady Sarah Lidhurst."

"Very likely.--I don't doubt you think so," said Russell.

"And I would do so," said Vivian.

"Possibly.--Yet you might be embarrassed nevertheless, if you found that

you had raised expectations which you could not fulfil; and if you found yourself accused of having jilted this lady, if all her friends were to say you had used her very ill.--I know your nature, Vivian; these things would disquiet you very much: and is it not better to prevent them?"

"But neither Lady Sarah nor her friends blame me: I see no signs in the family of any of the thoughts or feelings you suppose."

"Ladies--especially young and fashionable ladies--do not always show their thoughts or feelings," said Russell.

"Lady Sarah Lidhurst has no thoughts or feelings," said Vivian, "any more than an automaton. I'll answer for her--I am sure I can do her the justice to proclaim, that she has always, from the first moment I saw her till this instant, conducted herself towards me with the same petrified and petrifying propriety."

"I do not know what _petrified propriety_ exactly means," said Russell: "but let it mean what it may, it is nothing to the present purpose; for the question is not about the propriety of Lady Sarah Lidhurst's conduct, but of yours. Now, allowing you to call her ladyship a petrification, or an automaton, or by whatever other name you please, still, I apprehend, that she is in reality a human creature, and a woman; and I conceive it is the duty of a man of honour or honesty not to deceive her."

"I would not deceive her, or any woman living, upon any account," said Vivian. "But how is it possible I can deceive her, when I tell you I never said a word about love or gallantry, or any thing like it, to her in my life?"

"But you know language is conventional, especially in gallantry," said Russell.

"True; but I'll swear the language of my looks has been unequivocal, if that is what you mean."

"Not exactly: there are certain signs by which the world JUDGES in these cases--if a gentleman is seen often with the same lady in public."

"Absurd, troublesome, ridiculous signs, which would put a stop to all society; which would prevent a man from conversing with a woman, either in public or private; and must absolutely preclude one sex from obtaining any real knowledge of the characters and dispositions of the other."

"I admit all you say--I feel the truth of it--I wish this were changed in society; it is a great inconvenience, a real evil," said Russell: "but an individual cannot alter a custom; and, as you have not, by your own account, any particular interest in becoming more intimately acquainted with the character and disposition of Lady Sarah Lidhurst, you will do well not to expose yourself to any inconvenience on her account, by neglecting common received forms and opinions."

"Well! well!--say no more about it," said Vivian, impatiently; "spare me all farther logic and morality upon this subject, and I'll do what you please--only tell me what you would have me do."

"Gradually withdraw yourself for some time from this house, and the report will die away of itself."

"Withdraw myself!--that would be very hard upon me!" cried Vivian; "for this house is the most agreeable house in town to me;--because you live in it, in the first place; and then, though the women are as stiff as pokers, one is always sure of meeting all the pleasant and clever men at Glistonbury's good dinner. Let me tell you, good dinners, and good company, and good conversation, and good music, make altogether a very pleasant house, which I should be confoundedly sorry to be forced to give up."

"I don't doubt it," said Russell; "but we must often give up more even than this for the sake of acting with consistency and honour; we must sacrifice the less to the greater good; and it is on these occasions that people show strength or weakness of mind."

Vivian felt the justice of his friend's observations--resolved to follow his advice--and to withdraw himself gradually from the Glistonbury circle. He had not, however, steadiness enough to persist in this resolution; one engagement linked on another; and he would soon, probably, have relapsed into his habit of being continually of their parties, if accident had not for a time suspended this intimacy, by leading him into another, which seemed to him still more attractive.

Among the men of talents and political consequence whom he met at Lord Glistonbury's was Mr. Wharton, whose conversation particularly pleased Vivian, and who now courted his acquaintance with an eagerness which was peculiarly flattering. Vivian knew him only as a man of great abilities; with his real character he was not acquainted. Wharton had prepossessing manners, and wit sufficient whenever he pleased to make the worse appear the better reason. In private or in public debate he had at his command, and could condescend to employ, all sorts of arms, and every possible mode of annoyance, from the most powerful artillery of logic to the lowest squib of humour. He was as little nice in the company he kept as in the style of his conversation. Frequently associating with fools, and willing even to be thought one, he made alternately his sport and advantage of the weakness and follies of mankind. Wharton was philosophically, politically, and fashionably profligate. After having ruined his private fortune by unbounded extravagance, he lived on--nobody knew how--in careless profusion. In public life he made a distinguished figure; and seemed, therefore, to think himself raised above the necessity of practising any of the minor virtues of economy, prudence, or justice, which common people find essential to their well-being in society. Far from attempting to conceal, he gloried in his faults; for he knew full well, that as long as he had the voice of numbers with him, he could bully, or laugh, or shame plain reason and rigid principle out of countenance. It was his

grand art to represent good sense as stupidity, and virtue as hypocrisy. Hypocrisy was, in his opinion, the only vice which merited the brand of infamy; and from this he took sufficient care to prove, or at least to proclaim, himself free. Even whilst he offended against the decencies of life, there seemed to be something frank and graceful in his manner of throwing aside all disguise. There appeared an air of superior liberality in his avowing himself to be governed by that absolute selfishness, which other men strive to conceal even from their own hearts. He dexterously led his acquaintance to infer that he would prove as much better than his professions, as other people are often found to be worse than theirs. Where he wished to please, it was scarcely possible to escape the fascination of his manner; nor did he neglect any mode of courting popularity. He knew that a good table is necessary to attract even men of wit; and he made it a point to have the very best cook, and the very best wines. He paid his cook, and his cook was the only person he did pay, in ready money. His wine-merchant he paid in words--an art in which he was a professed and yet a successful adept, as hundreds of living witnesses were ready to attest. But though Wharton could cajole, he could not attach his fellow-creatures--he had a party, but no friend. With this distribution of things he was perfectly satisfied; for he considered men only as beings who were to be worked to his purposes; and he declared that, provided he had power over their interests and their humours, he cared not what became of their hearts. It was his policy to enlist young men of talents or fortune under his banners; and consequently Vivian was an object worthy of his attention. Such was the disorder of Wharton's affairs, that either ready money or political power was necessary to his existence. Our hero could, at the same time, supply his extravagance and increase his consequence. Wharton thought that he could borrow money from Vivian, and that he might command his vote in parliament; but, to the accomplishment of these schemes, there were two obstacles--Vivian was attached to an amiable woman, and was possessed of an estimable friend. Wharton had become acquainted with Russell at Lord Glistonbury's; and, in many arguments which they had held on public affairs, had discovered that Russell was not a man who ever preferred the expedient to the right, nor one who could be bullied or laughed out of his principles. He saw also that Russell's influence over Vivian was so great, that it supplied him with that strength of mind in which Vivian was naturally deficient; and, if our hero should marry such a woman as Miss Sidney, Wharton foresaw that he should have no chance of succeeding in his designs; therefore his first objects were, to detach Vivian from his friend Russell and from Selina. One morning he called upon Vivian with a party of his friends, and found him writing.

"Poetry!" cried Wharton, carelessly looking at what he had been writing, "poetry, I protest!--Ay, I know this poor fellow's in love; and every man who is in love is a poet, 'with a woeful ditty to his mistress's eyebrow.' Pray what colour may Miss Sidney's eyebrows be?--she is really a pretty girl--I think I remember seeing her at some races.--Why does she never come to town?--But of course she is not to blame for that, but her fortune I suppose.--Marrying a girl without a fortune is a serious thing in these expensive days; but you have fortune

enough for both yourself and your wife, so you may do as you please. Well, I thank God, I have no fortune! If I had been a young man of fortune I should have been the most unhappy rascal upon earth, for I should have always suspected that every woman liked me for my wealth--I should have had no pleasure in the smiles of an angel--angels, or their mothers, are so venal now-a-days, and so fond of the pomps and vanities of this wicked world!"

"I hope," said Vivian, laughing, "you don't include the whole sex in your satire."

"No--there are exceptions--and every man has his angel of an exception, as every woman has her star:--it is well for weak women when these stars of theirs don't lead them astray; and well for weak men when these angel exceptions before marriage don't turn out very women or devils afterwards. But why do I say all this? because I am a suspicious scoundrel--I know and can't help it. If other fellows of my standing in this wicked world would but speak the truth, however, they would show as much suspicion and more than I do. Bad as I am, and such as I am, you see, and have the whole of me--nobody can say Wharton's a hypocrite; that's some comfort. But, seriously, Vivian, I don't mean to laugh at love and angels--I can just remember the time when I felt all your sort of romance--but that is in the preterpluperfect tense with me--completely past--ambition is no bad cure for love. My head is, at this present moment, so full of this new bill that we are bringing into parliament, that Cupid might empty his quiver upon me in vain.--Look! here is an impenetrable shield!" added he, wrapping round him a thick printed copy of an act of parliament. "Come, Vivian, you must come along with us to the house,

'And, mix'd with men, a man you must appear.'"

Vivian felt much ashamed of having been detected in writing a sonnet, especially as it afforded Wharton such a fine subject for raillery. He accompanied the party to the House of Commons, where Wharton made a brilliant speech. It gained universal applause. Vivian sympathized in the general enthusiasm of admiration for Wharton's talents, accepted an invitation to sup with him, and was charmed by his convivial powers. From this day, he grew every hour more intimate with Wharton.

"I can enjoy," thought Vivian, "the pleasure of his society without being influenced by his libertine example."

Lady Mary Vivian saw the rise and progress of this intimacy, and was not insensible to its danger; yet she was gratified by seeing her son distinguished by a man of Wharton's political consequence; and she satisfied her conscience by saying, "He will bring my son forward in public life; and, as to the rest, Charles has too good principles ever to follow his example in private life."

Wharton had too much address to alarm Vivian's moral prejudices on a first acquaintance. He contented himself with ridiculing only the exaggeration of any of the virtues, still affecting to believe in

virtue, and to love it, wherever it could be found genuine. By the success of his first petty attacks, he learned the power that ridicule had over our hero's mind; and he did not fail to make use of it continually. After having, as he perceived, succeeded in making Vivian ashamed of his sonnet to Selina, and of appearing as a romantic lover, he doubted not but in time he should make true love itself ridiculous; and Wharton thought it was now the moment to hazard another stroke, and to commence his attack against friendship.

"Vivian, my good fellow! why do you let yourself be ruled by that modern stoic in the form of Lord Lidhurst's tutor? I never saw any of these cold moralists who were real, warm-hearted, good friends. I have a notion I see more of Russell's play in the house where he has got than he thinks I do; and I can form a shrewd guess why he was so zealous in warning you of the report about Lady Sarah Lidhurst--he had his own snug reasons for wanting you away--Oh, trust me for scenting out self-interest, through all the doublings and windings of your cunning moralist!"

Reddening with indignation at this attack upon his friend, Vivian warmly replied, that Mr. Wharton ought to restrain his wit where the feelings of friendship and the character of a man of honour were concerned; that he did not, in the least, comprehend his insinuations with regard to Russell; but that, for his own part, he had such firm reliance upon his friend's attachment and integrity, that he was at any time ready to pledge his own honour for Russell's, and to answer for it with his life.

"Spare your heroics, my dear Vivian!" cried Wharton, laughing; "for we are not in the days of Pylades and Orestes;--yet, upon my soul, instead of being as angry with you as you are with me, at this instant I like you a thousand times the better for your enthusiastic credulity. For my part, I have, ever since I lived in the world and put away childish things, regretted that charming instinct of credulity, which experience so fatally counteracts. I envy you, my dear boy!--as to the rest, you know Russell's merits better than I do: I'll take him henceforward upon trust from you."

"Thus Wharton, finding that he was upon dangerous ground, made a timely retreat: the playful manner and open countenance with which he now spoke, and the quick transition that he made to other subjects of conversation, prevented Vivian from suspecting that any settled design had been formed to detach him from Russell. From this time forward, Wharton forbore raillery on love and friendship; and, far from seeming desirous of interfering in Vivian's private concerns, appeared quite absorbed in politics. Avowing, as he did, that he was guided solely by his interest in public life, he laughed at Vivian for professing more generous principles.

"I know," cried Wharton, "how to make use of a fine word, and to round a fine sentence, as well as the best of you; but what a simpleton he must be who is cheated by his own sophistry!--An artist, an enthusiastic artist, who is generally half a madman, might fall in love with a statue of his own making; but you never heard of a coiner, did you, who was

cheated by his own bad shilling? Patriotism and loyalty are counterfeit coin; I can't be taken in by them at my time of day."

Vivian could not forbear to smile at the drollery and wit with which this profligate defended his want of integrity; yet he sometimes seriously and warmly asserted his own principles. Upon these occasions, Wharton either overpowered him by a fine flow of words, or else listened with the most flattering air of admiration, and silenced him by compliments to his eloquence. Vivian thought that he was quite secure of his own firmness; but the contagion of bad example sometimes affects the mind imperceptibly; as certain noxious atmospheres steal upon the senses, and excite the most agreeable sensations, while they secretly destroy the principles of health and life. A day was fixed when a question of importance was to come on in the House of Commons. Wharton was extremely anxious to have Vivian's vote. Vivian, according to the parliamentary phrase, *had not made up his mind* on the subject. A heap of pamphlets on the question lay uncut upon his table. Every morning he resolved to read them, that he might form his judgment, and vote according to his unbiassed opinion; but every morning he was interrupted by some of the fashionable idlers whom his facility of temper had indulged in the habit of haunting him daily. "Oh, Vivian! we are going to such and such a place, and you *must* come with us!" was a mode of persuasion which he could not resist.

"If I don't do as they do," thought he, "I shall be quite unfashionable. Russell may say what he pleases, but it is necessary to yield to one's companions in trifles.

'Whoever would be pleased and please,
Must do what others do with ease.'

This couplet, which had been repeated to him by Wharton, recurred to him continually; and thus Wharton, by slight means, in which he seemed to have no interest or design, prepared Vivian for his purposes, by working gradually on the easiness of his disposition. He always argued, that it could not possibly signify what he did with an hour or two of his day, till at last Vivian found that he had no hours of his own, that his whole time was at the disposal of others; and now that he really wanted leisure to consider an important question,--when his credit, as a member of the senate, and as a man just entering political life, depended on this decision,--he literally could not command time to read over the necessary documents. So the appointed day arrived before Vivian's opinion was formed; and, from mere want of time to decide for himself, he voted as Wharton desired. Another and another political question came on; the same causes operated, and the same consequences ensued. Wharton managed with great address, so as to prevent him from feeling that he gave up his freewill. Before Vivian was aware of it, whilst he thought that he was perfectly independent of all parties, public opinion had enrolled him amongst Wharton's partisans. Of this Russell was the first to give him warning. Russell heard of it amongst the political leaders who met at Lord Glistonbury's dinners; and, knowing the danger there is of a young man's *committing* himself on certain points, he, with the eagerness of a true friend,

wrote immediately to put Vivian upon his guard:--

"My Dear Vivian,

"I am just going into the country with Lord Lidhurst, and perhaps may not return for some time. I cannot leave you without putting you on your guard, once more, against Mr. Wharton. I understand that you are thought to be one of his party, and that he countenances the report. Take care that you are not bound hand and foot, before you know where you are.

"Your sincere friend,

"H. Russell."

With the natural frankness of his disposition, Vivian immediately spoke to Wharton upon the subject.

"What! people say that you are one of my party, do they?" said Wharton: "I never heard this before, but I am heartily glad to hear it. You are in for it now, Vivian: you are one of us; and with us you must stand or fall."

"Excuse me there!" cried Vivian; "I am not of any party; and am determined to keep myself independent."

"Do you remember the honest Quaker's answer to the man of no party?" said Wharton.

"No."

"I think it was about the year '40, when party disputes about Whig and Tory ran high--but no matter what year, it will do for any time. A gentleman of undeviating integrity, an independent man, just such a man as Mr. Vivian, offered himself candidate for a town in the east, west, north, or south of England--no matter where, it will do for any place; and the first person whose vote he solicited was a Quaker, who asked him whether he was a Whig or Tory?--'Neither. I am an independent, moderate man; and when the members of administration are right, I will vote with them--when wrong, against them.' 'And be these really thy principles?' quoth the Quaker; 'then a vote of mine thou shalt never have. Thou seest my door, it leadeth into the street; the right hand side of which is for the Tory, the left for the Whigs; and for a cold-blooded moderate man, like thee, there is the kennel, and into it thou wilt be jostled, for thou beest not decided enough for any other situation."

"But why should the moderate man be condemned to the kennel?" said Vivian. "Was there no middle to your Quaker's road? A stout man cannot be EASILY jostled into the kennel."

"Pshaw! pshaw!" said Wharton: "jesting out of the question, a man is nothing in public life, or worse than nothing, a trimmer, unless HE JOINS a party, and unless he abides by it, too."

"As long as the party is in the right, I presume, you mean," said Vivian.

"Right or wrong!" cried Wharton, "a man must abide by his party. No power, and no popularity, trust me, without it!--Better stride on the greasy heads of the mob than be trampled under their dirtier feet. An armed neutrality may be a good thing, but an unarmed neutrality is fit only for fools. Besides, in Russell's grand style, I can bring down the ancients upon you, and tell you that when the commonwealth is in danger he cannot be a good man who sides with neither party."

"If it be so necessary to join a party, and if, after once joining it, I must abide by it, right or wrong, for life," said Vivian, "it behoves me to consider well, before I commit myself; and, before I go into the ranks, I must see good reason to confide, not only in the abilities, but in the integrity and public virtue of my leader."

"Public virtue! sounds fresh from college," said Wharton; "I would as soon, and sooner, hear a schoolboy read his theme as hear a man begin to prose about public virtue--especially a member of parliament. Keep that phrase, my dear Vivian, till some of the treasury bench come to court you; then look superb, like a French tragic actor, swelling out your chest, and throwing the head over the left shoulder--thus--exclaim, 'Public virtue forbid!--practise! practise!--for if you do it well, it may be worth a loud huzza to you yet; or better still, a snug place or pension. But stay till you're asked--stay till you're asked--that's the etiquette; never till then let me hear public virtue come out of your lips, else you'll raise suspicion of your virtue, and lower your price. What would you think of a pretty actress who began to talk to you of her reputation before you put it in any danger? Oh, Vivian! my honest fellow! unless you would make me think you no better than thousands that have gone before you, never let me hear from your lips again, till the proper time, the hypocritical state phrase--public virtue."

"I had always, till now, understood that it was possible to be a patriot without being a hypocrite," replied Vivian; "I always understood that Mr. Wharton was a patriot."

"A very fair sarcasm on me," said Wharton, laughing. "But you know, I'm a sad dog; never set myself up for a pattern man.--Come! let's home to dinner, and a truce with politics and morality. I find, Vivian, you're a sturdy fellow, and must have your own way; no bending, no leading you, I see. Well! it is a good thing to have so much strength of mind: I envy you."

It must be recorded to the credit of our hero, that in defiance of Wharton's raillery, he talked, and--oh! still more wonderful!--thought of public virtue, during nearly half of his first session in parliament. But, alas! whilst his political principles thus withstood the force of ridicule, temptation soon presented itself to Vivian in a new shape, and in a form so seducing, as to draw his attention totally away from politics, and to put his private, if not his public, honour, in the most imminent peril.

CHAPTER IV.

One morning, as Vivian was walking with Mr. Wharton up Bond-street, they were met by a party of fashionable loungers, one of whom asked whether Mrs. Wharton was not come to town yet.

"Mrs. Wharton!" said Vivian, with an air of surprise.

"Yes, she came to town this morning," said Wharton, carelessly; then laughing, as he turned to look at Vivian, "Vivian, my good fellow! what smites you with such surprise? Did not you know I was married?"

"I suppose I must have heard it; but I really forgot it," said Vivian.

"There you had the advantage of me," said Wharton, still laughing. "But if you never heard of Mrs. Wharton before, keep your own secret; for I can tell you she would never forgive you, though I might. Put a good face on the matter, at any rate; and swear you've heard so much of her, that you were dying to see her. Some of these gentlemen, who have nothing else to do, will introduce you whenever you please."

"And cannot I," said Vivian, "have the honour of your introduction?"

"Mine! the worst you could possibly have. The honour, as you are pleased to call it, would be no favour, I assure you. The honour!--honour of a husband's introduction! What a novice you are, or would make me believe you to be! But, seriously, I am engaged to-day at Glistonbury's: so, good morning to you."

Accustomed to hear Wharton talk in the freest manner of women and marriage in general, and scarcely having heard him mention his own wife, Vivian had, as he said, absolutely forgotten that Wharton was a married man. When he was introduced to Mrs. Wharton, he was still more surprised at her husband's indifference; for he beheld a lady in all the radiance of beauty, and all the elegance of fashion: he was so much dazzled by her charms, that he had not immediately power or inclination to examine what her understanding or disposition might be; and he could only repeat to himself, "How is it possible that Wharton can be indifferent to such a beautiful creature!"

Incapable of feeling any of what he, called the romance of love, the passion, of course, had always been with Mr. Wharton of a very transient nature. Tired of his wife's person, he showed his indifference without scruple or ceremony. Notorious and glorying in his gallantries, he was often heard to declare, that no price was too high to be paid for beauty, except a man's liberty; but that was a sacrifice which he would never make to any woman, especially to a wife. Marriage vows and custom-house oaths he classed in the same order of technical

forms,--nowise binding on the conscience of any but fools and dupes. Whilst the husband went on in this manner, the wife satisfied herself by indulgence in her strongest passions--the passion for dress and public admiration. Childishly eager to set the fashion in trifles, she spent unconscionable sums on her pretty person; and devoted all her days, or rather all her nights, to public amusements. So insatiable and restless is the passion for admiration, that she was never happy for half an hour together, at any place of public amusement, unless she fixed the gaze of numbers. The first winter after her marriage she enjoyed the prerogatives of a fashionable beauty; but the reign of fashion is more transient even than the bloom of beauty. Mrs. Wharton's beauty soon grew familiar, and faded in the public eye; some newer face was this season the mode. Mrs. Wharton appeared twice at the opera in the most elegant and becoming dresses; but no one followed her lead. Mortified and utterly dejected, she felt, with the keenest anguish, the first symptoms of the decline of public admiration. It was just at this period, when she was miserably in want of the consolations of flattery, that Vivian's acquaintance with her commenced. Gratified by the sort of delighted surprise which she saw in his countenance the first moment he beheld her, seeing that he was an agreeable man, and knowing that he was a man of fortune and family, she took pains to please him by all the common arts of coquetry. But his vanity was proof against these: the weakness of the lady's understanding and the frivolity of her character were, for some weeks, sufficient antidotes against all the power of her personal charms; so much so, that at this period he often compared, or rather contrasted, Mrs. Wharton and Selina, and blessed his happy fate. He wrote to his friend Russell soon after he was introduced to this celebrated beauty, and drew a strong and just parallel between the characters of these two ladies: he concluded with saying, "Notwithstanding your well-founded dread of the volatility of my character, you will not, I hope, my dear Russell, do me the injustice to apprehend that I am in any danger from the charms of Mrs. Wharton."

Vivian wrote with perfect sincerity; he believed it to be impossible that he could ever become attached to such a woman as Mrs. Wharton, even if she had not been married, and the wife of his friend. So, in all the security of conscious contempt, he went every day to wait upon her, or rather to meet agreeable company at her house,--a house in which all that was fashionable and dissipated assembled; where beauty, and talents, and rank, met and mingled; and where political or other arrangements prevented the host and hostess from scrupulously excluding some whose characters were not free from suspicion. Lady Mary Vivian never went to Mrs. Wharton's; but she acknowledged that she knew many ladies of unblemished reputation who thought it no impropriety to visit there; and Mrs. Wharton's own character she knew was hitherto unimpeached. "She is, indeed, a woman of a cold, selfish temper," said Lady Mary; "not likely to be led into danger by the tender passion, or by any of the delusions of the imagination."

Vivian agreed with his mother in this opinion, and went on paying his devoirs to her every day. It was the fashion of the times, and peculiarly the mode of this house, for the gentlemen to pay exclusive attention to matrons. Few of the young men seemed to think it worth

while to speak to an unmarried woman in any company; and the few who might be inclined to it were, as they declared, deterred by the danger: for either the young ladies themselves, or their mothers, immediately formed expectations and schemes of drawing them into matrimony--the grand object of the ladies' wishes and of the gentlemen's fears. The men said they could not speak to an unmarried woman, or even dance with her more than twice, without its being reported that they were going to be married; and then the friends and relatives of the young ladies pretended to think them injured and ill-treated, if these reports were not realized. Our hero had some slight experience of the truth of these complaints in his own case with the Lady Sarah Lidhurst: he willingly took the rest upon trust--believed all the exaggerations of his companions--and began to think it prudent and necessary to follow their example, and to confine his attentions to married women. Many irresistible reasons concurred to make Mrs. Wharton the most convenient and proper person to whom he could pay this sort of homage: besides, she seemed to fall to his share by lot and necessity; for, at Wharton's house, every other lady and every other gentleman being engaged in gallantry, play, or politics, Mrs. Wharton must have been utterly neglected if Vivian had not paid her some attention. Common politeness absolutely required it; the attention became a matter of course, and was habitually expected. Still he had not the slightest design of going beyond the line of modern politeness; but, in certain circumstances, people go wrong a great way before they are aware that they have gone a single step. It was presently repeated to Mr. Vivian, by some of Mrs. Wharton's confidantes, in whispers, and under the solemn promise of secrecy, that he certainly was a prodigious favourite of hers. He laughed, and affected to disbelieve the insinuation: it made its impression, however; and he was secretly flattered by the idea of being a prodigious favourite with such a beautiful young creature. In some moments he saw her with eyes of compassion, pitying her for the neglect with which she was treated by her husband: he began to attribute much of her apparent frivolity, and many of her faults, more to the want of a guide and a friend than to a deficiency of understanding or to defects of character. Mrs. Wharton had just sufficient sense to be cunning--this implies but a very small portion: she perceived the advantage which she gained by thus working upon Vivian's vanity and upon his compassion. She continued her operations, without being violently interested in their success; for she had at first only a general wish to attract his attention, because he was a fashionable young man.

One morning when he called upon Wharton to accompany him to the House of Commons, he found Mrs. Wharton in tears, her husband walking up and down the room in evident ill-humour. He stopped speaking when Vivian entered; and Mrs. Wharton endeavoured, or seemed to endeavour, to conceal her emotion. She began to play on her harp; and Wharton, addressing himself to Vivian, talked of the politics of the day. There was some incoherence in the conversation; for Vivian's attention was distracted by the air that Mrs. Wharton was playing, of which he was passionately fond.

"There's no possibility of doing any thing while there is such a cursed noise in the room!" cried Wharton. "Here I have the heads of this bill to draw up--I cannot endure to have music wherever I go--"

He snatched up his papers and retired to an adjoining apartment, begging that Vivian would wait one quarter of an hour for him.--Mrs. Wharton's tears flowed afresh, and she looked beautiful in tears.

"You see--you see, Mr. Vivian--and I am ashamed you should see--how I am treated.--I am, indeed, the most unfortunate creature upon the face of the earth; and nobody in this world has the least compassion for me!"

Vivian's countenance contradicted this last assertion most positively.--Mrs. Wharton understood this; and her attitude of despondency was the most graceful imaginable.

"My dear Mrs. Wharton"--(it was the first time our hero had ever called her "his dear Mrs. Wharton;" but it was only a platonic dear)--"you take trifles much too seriously--Wharton was hurried by business--a moment's impatience must be forgiven."

"A moment!" replied Mrs. Wharton, casting up to heaven her beautiful eyes--"Oh! Mr. Vivian, how little do you know of him!--I am the most miserable creature that ever existed; but there is not a man upon earth to whom I would say so except yourself."

Vivian could not help feeling some gratitude for this distinction; and, as he leaned over her harp with an air of unusual interest, he said he hoped that he should ever prove himself worthy of her esteem and confidence.

At this instant Wharton interrupted the conversation, by passing hastily through the room.--"Come, Vivian," said he; "we shall be very late at the house."

"We shall see you again of course at dinner," said Mrs. Wharton to Vivian in a low voice. Our hero replied by an assenting bow.

Five minutes afterwards he repented that he had accepted the invitation, because he foresaw that he should resume a conversation which was at once interesting and embarrassing. He felt that it was not right to become the depository of this lady's complaints against her husband; yet he had been moved by her tears, and the idea that he was _the only man in the world_ to whom she would open her heart upon such a delicate subject, interested him irresistibly in her favour. He returned in the evening, and was flattered by observing, that amongst the crowd of company by which she was surrounded he was instantly distinguished. He was perfectly persuaded of the innocence of her intentions; and, as he was attached to another woman, he fancied that he could become the friend of the beautiful Mrs. Wharton without danger. The first time he had an opportunity of speaking to her in private, he expressed this idea in the manner that he thought the most delicately flattering to her self-complacency. Mrs. Wharton seemed to be perfectly satisfied with this conduct; and declared, that unless she had been certain that he was not a man of gallantry, she should never have placed any confidence in his friendship.

"I consider you," said she, "quite as a married man:--by-the-bye, when are you to be married, and what sort of a person is Miss Sidney?--I am told she is excessively handsome, and amiable, and sensible.--What a happy creature she is!--just going to be united to the man she loves!" Here the lady gave a profound sigh; and Vivian had an opportunity of observing that she had the longest dark eyelashes that he had ever seen.

"I was married," continued she, "before I knew what I was about. You know Mr. Wharton can be so charming when he pleases--and then he was so much in love with me, and swore he would shoot himself if I would not have him--and all that sort of thing.--I protest I was terrified; and I was quite a child, you know. I had been out but six weeks, and I thought I was in love with him. That was because I did not know what love was--_then_--;--besides, he hurried and teased me to such a degree!--After all, I'm convinced I married him more out of compassion than any thing else; and now you see how he treats me!--most barbarously and tyrannically!--But I would not give the least hint of this to any man living but yourself. I conjure you to keep my secret--and--pity me!--that is all I ask--pity me sometimes, when your thoughts are not absorbed in a happier manner."

Vivian's generosity was piqued: he could not be so selfish as to be engrossed exclusively by his own felicity. He thought that delicacy should induce him to forbear expatiating upon Selina's virtues and accomplishments, or upon his passion. He carried this delicacy so far, that sometimes for a fortnight or three weeks he never mentioned her name. He could not but observe that Mrs. Wharton did not like him the less for this species of sacrifice. It may be observed, that Mrs. Wharton managed her attack upon Vivian with more art than could be expected from so silly a woman; but we must consider that all her faculties were concentrated on one object; so that she seemed to have an instinct for coquetry. The most silly animals in the creation, from the insect tribe upwards, show, on some occasions, where their interests are immediately concerned, a degree of sagacity and ingenuity, which, compared with their usual imbecility, appears absolutely wonderful. The opinion which Vivian had early formed of the weakness of this lady's understanding prevented him from being on his guard against her artifices: he could not conceive it possible that he should be duped by a person so obviously his inferior. With a woman of talents and knowledge, he might have been suspicious; but there was nothing in Mrs. Wharton to alarm his pride or to awaken his fears: he fancied that he could extricate himself in a moment, and with the slightest effort, from any snares which she could contrive; and, under this persuasion, he neglected to make even that slight effort, and thus continued from hour to hour in voluntary captivity.

Insensibly Vivian became more interested for Mrs. Wharton; and, at the same time, submitted with increased facility to the influence of her husband. It was necessary that he should have some excuse to the world, and yet more to his own conscience, for being so constantly at Wharton's. The pleasure he took in Wharton's conversation was still a sort of involuntary excuse to himself for his intimacy with the lady.

"Wharton's wit more than Mrs. Wharton's beauty," thought he, "is the attraction that draws me here--I am full as ready to be of his parties as of hers; and this is the best proof that all is as it should be."

Wharton's parties were not always such as Vivian would have chosen; but he was pressed on, without power of resistance. For instance, one night Wharton was going with Lord Pontipool and a set of dissipated young men, to the house of a lady who made herself fashionable by keeping a faro-bank.

"Vivian, you'll come along with us?" said Wharton. "Come, we must have you--unless you are more happily engaged."

His eye glanced with a mixture of contempt and jealousy upon his wife. Mrs. Wharton's alarmed and imploring countenance at the same moment seemed to say, "For Heaven's sake, go with him, or I am undone." In such circumstances it was impossible for Vivian to say no: he followed immediately; acting, as he thought, from a principle of honour and generosity. Wharton was not a man to give up the advantage which he had gained. Every day he showed more capricious jealousy of his wife, though he, at the same time, expressed the most entire confidence in the honour of his friend. Vivian still thought he could not do too much to convince him that his confidence was not misplaced; and thus, to protect Mrs. Wharton from suspicion, he yielded to all her husband's wishes. Vivian now felt frequently ashamed of his conduct, but always proud of his motives; and, with ingenious sophistry, he justified to himself the worst actions, by pleading that he did them with the best intentions.

CHAPTER V.

By this time Lady Mary Vivian began to hear hints of her son's attachment to Mrs. Wharton; and, much alarmed, she repented having encouraged him to form a political or fashionable intimacy with the Whartons. Suddenly awakened to the perception of the danger, Lady Mary was too vehement in her terror. She spoke with so much warmth and indignation, that there was little chance of her counsels being of use.

"But, my dear madam, it is only a platonic attachment," argued Vivian, when his mother represented to him that the world talked loudly of his intimacy with Mrs. Wharton.

"A platonic attachment!--Fashionable, dangerous sophistry!" said Lady Mary.

"Why so, ma'am?" said her son, warmly; "and why should we mind what the world says? The world is so fond of scandal, that a man and woman cannot have any degree of friendship for one another without a hue and cry being immediately raised--and all the prudes and coquettes join at once in believing, or pretending to believe, that there must be something

wrong. No wonder such a pretty woman as Mrs. Wharton cannot escape envy, and, of course, censure; but her conduct can defy the utmost malice of her enemies."

"I hope so," said Lady Mary; "and, at all events, I am not one of them. I know and care very little about Mrs. Wharton, whom I have always been accustomed to consider as a frivolous, silly woman; but what I wish to say, though I fear I have lost your confidence, and that my advice will not--"

"Frivolous! silly!" interrupted Vivian; "believe me, my dear mother, you and half the world are, and have been, under a great mistake about her understanding and character."

"Her forming a platonic friendship with a young man is no great proof of her sense or of her virtue," said Lady Mary. "The danger of platonic attachments, I thought, had been sufficiently understood. Pray, my dear Charles, never let me hear more from you of platonic with married women."

"I won't use the expression, ma'am, if you have any objection to it," said Vivian; "but, mother, you wish me to live in the most fashionable company, and yet you desire me not to live as they live, and talk as they talk: now, that is next to impossible. Pardon me, but I should not have thought," added he, laughing, "that you, who like most things that are fashionable, would object to _platonic_."

"Object to them!--I despise, detest, abhor them! _Platonics_ have been the ruin of more women, the destruction of the peace of more families, than open profligacy ever could have accomplished. Many a married woman, who would have started with horror at the idea of beginning an intrigue, has been drawn in to admit of a platonic attachment. And many a man, who would as soon have thought of committing murder as of seducing his friend's wife, has allowed himself to commence a platonic attachment; and how these end, all the world knows."

Struck by these words, Vivian suddenly quitted his air of raillery, and became serious. Had his mother stopped there, and left the rest to his good sense and awakened perception of danger, all would have been well; but she was ever prone to say too much; and, in her ardour to prove herself to be in the right, forgot that people are apt to be shocked, by having it pointed out that they are utterly in the wrong.

"Indeed, the very word platonic," pursued she, "is considered, by those who have seen any thing of life, as the mere watchword of knaves or dupes; of those who deceive, or of those who wish to be deceived."

"Be assured, ma'am," said Vivian, "that Mrs. Wharton is not one of those who wish either to deceive or to be deceived; and, as to myself, I hope I am as far from any danger of being a dupe as of being a knave. My connexion with Mrs. Wharton is perfectly innocent; it is justified by the example of hundreds and thousands every day in the fashionable world; and I should do her and myself great injustice, if I broke off

our intimacy suddenly, as if I acknowledged that it was improper."

"And what can be more improper? since you force me to speak plainly," cried Lady Mary; "what can be more improper than such an intimacy, especially in your circumstances?"

"My circumstances! What circumstances, ma'am?"

"Have you forgotten Miss Sidney?"

"By no means, ma'am," said Vivian, colouring deeply; "Mrs. Wharton is well apprized, and was, from the first moment of our friendship, clearly informed of my---engagements with Miss Sidney."

"And how do they agree with your attachment to Mrs. Wharton?"

"Perfectly well, ma'am--Mrs. Wharton understands all that perfectly well, ma'am."

"And Miss Sidney! do you think she will understand it?--and is it not extraordinary that I should think more of her feelings than you do?"

At these questions Vivian became so angry, that he was incapable of listening farther to reason, or to the best advice, even from a mother, for whom he had the highest respect. The mother and son parted with feelings of mutual dissatisfaction.

Vivian, from that spirit of opposition so often seen in weak characters, went immediately from his mother's _lecture_ to a party at Mrs. Wharton's. Lady Mary, in the mean time, sat down to write to Miss Sidney. Whatever reluctance she had originally felt to her son's marriage with this young lady, it must be repeated, to her ladyship's credit, that Selina's honourable and disinterested conduct had won her entire approbation. She wrote, therefore, in the strongest terms to press the immediate conclusion of that match, which she now considered as the only chance of securing her son's morals and happiness. Her letter concluded with these words:--"I shall expect you in town directly. Do not, my dear, let any idle scruples prevent you from coming to my house. Consider that my happiness, your own, and my son's, depend upon your compliance. I am persuaded, that the moment he sees you, the moment you exert your power over him, he will be himself again. But, believe me, I know the young men of the present day better than you do: their constancy is not proof against absence. If he lose the habit of seeing and conversing with you, I cannot answer for the rest.--Adieu! I am so much harassed by my own thoughts, and by the reports I hear, that I scarcely know what I write. Pray come immediately, my dear Selina, that I may talk to you of many subjects on which I don't like to trust myself to write. My feelings have been too long repressed.--I must unburden my heart to you. _You_ only can console and assist me; and, independently of all other considerations, you owe to my friendship for you, Selina, not to refuse this first request I ever made you.--Farewell! I shall expect to see you as soon as possible.

"Yours, &c.

"MARY VIVIAN."

"_St. James's-street_."

In this letter, Lady Mary Vivian had not explained the nature of her son's danger, or of her fears for him. Motives of delicacy had prevented her from explicitly telling Miss Sidney her suspicions that Vivian was attached to a married woman. "Selina," said her ladyship to herself, "must, probably, have heard the report from Mr. G----, who is so often at her mother's; therefore, there can be no necessity for my saying any more than I have done. She will understand my hints."

Unfortunately, however, Miss Sidney did not comprehend, or in the least suspect, the most material part of the truth; she understood simply, from Lady Mary's letter, that Vivian's affections wavered, and she imagined that he was, perhaps, on the point of making matrimonial proposals for some fashionable belle, probably for one of the Lady Lidhursts; but the idea of his becoming attached to a married woman never entered her thoughts. Many motives conspired to incline Selina to accept of the invitation. The certainty that Lady Mary would be highly offended by a refusal; the hint, that her influence over Vivian would operate immediately, and in all its force, if he were to see and converse with her; and that, on the contrary, absence might extinguish his passion for ever; curiosity to learn precisely the nature of the reports, which his mother had heard to his disadvantage; but, above all, a fond wish to be nearer to the man she loved, and to have daily opportunities of seeing him, prompted Selina to comply with Lady Mary's request. On the contrary, good sense and delicacy represented, that she had released Vivian from all promises, all engagements; that, at parting, she had professed to leave him perfectly at liberty: that it would, therefore, be as indelicate as imprudent to make such an attempt to reclaim his inconstant heart. She had told him, that she desired to have proof of the steadiness, both of his character and of his attachment, before she could consent to marry him. From this decision she could not, she would not, recede. She had the fortitude to persist in this resolution. She wrote to Lady Mary Vivian in the kindest, but, at the same time, in the most decided terms, declining the tempting invitation.

It happened that Vivian was with his mother at the moment when Selina's answer arrived. In the firm belief that such a pressing invitation as she had sent, to a person in Selina's circumstances and of Selina's temper, could not be refused, her ladyship had made it a point with her son to dine together with her this day; and she had been talking to him, in the most eloquent but imprudent manner, of the contrast between the characters of Mrs. Wharton and Miss Sidney. He protested that his esteem and love for Miss Sidney were unabated; yet, when his mother told him that he would, perhaps, in a few minutes see his Selina, he changed colour, grew embarrassed and melancholy, and thus by his looks effectually contradicted his words. He was roused from his reverie by the arrival of Selina's letter. His mother's disappointment and anger

were expressed in the strongest terms, when she found that Selina declined her invitation; but such are the quick and seemingly perverse turns of the human heart, Vivian grew warm in Selina's defence the moment that his mother became angry with her: he read her letter with tender emotion, for he saw through the whole of it, the strength, as well as the delicacy of her attachment. All that his mother's praises had failed to effect, was immediately accomplished by this letter; and he, who but an instant before dreaded to meet Selina, now that she refused to come, was seized with a strong desire to see her; his impatience was so great, that he would willingly have set out that instant for the country. Men of such characters as Vivian's are peculiarly jealous of their free will; and, precisely because they know that they are easily led, they resist, in affairs of the heart especially, the slightest appearance of control.

Lady Mary was delighted to hear her son declare his resolution to leave town the next morning, and to see Miss Sidney as soon as possible; but she could not forbear reproaching him for not doing what she wanted precisely in the manner in which she had planned that it should be done.

"I see, my dear Charles," cried she, "that even when you do right, I must not flatter myself that it is owing to any influence of mine. Give my compliments to Miss Sidney, and assure her that I shall in future forbear to injure her in your opinion by my interference, or even by expressing my approbation of her character. My anger, it is obvious, has served her better than my kindness; and therefore she has no reason to regret that my affection has been lessened, as I confess it has been, by her late conduct."

The next morning, when Vivian was prepared to leave town, he called upon Wharton, to settle with him about some political, business which was to be transacted in his absence. Wharton was not at home--Vivian knew that it would be best to avoid seeing Mrs. Wharton; but he was afraid that she would be offended, and he could not help _sacrificing a few minutes to politeness_. The lady was alone; apparently very languid, and charmingly melancholy. Before Vivian could explain himself, she poured forth, in silly phrases, but in a voice that made even nonsense please, a rariety of reproaches for his having absented himself for such a length of time.--"Positively, she would keep him prisoner, now that she had him safe once more." To be kept prisoner by a fair lady was so flattering, that it was full an hour before he could prevail upon himself to assert his liberty--the fear of giving pain, indeed, influenced him still more than vanity. At last, when Mrs. Wharton spoke of her engagements for the evening, and seemed to take it for granted that he would be of her party, he summoned resolution sufficient--Oh! wonderful effort of courage!--to tell her, that he was under a necessity of leaving town immediately.

"Going, I presume, to--"

"To the country," said Vivian, firmly.

"To the country!----No, no, no; say at once, to Selina!--Tell me the

worst in one word!"

Astonished beyond measure, Vivian had not power to move. The lady fell back on the sofa in violent hysterics. Our hero trembled lest any of her servants should come in, or lest her husband should at his return find her in this condition, and discover the cause. He endeavoured in vain to soothe and compose the weeping fair one; he could not have the barbarity to leave her in this state. By sweet degrees she recovered her recollection--was in the most lovely confusion--asked where she was, and what was going to happen. Vivian had not the rashness to run the risk of a second fit of hysterics; he gave up all thoughts of his journey for this day, and the lady recovered her spirits in the most flattering manner. Vivian intended to postpone his journey only for a single day; but, after he had yielded one point, he found that there was no receding. He was now persuaded that Mrs. Wharton was miserable; that she would never forgive herself for having betrayed the state of her heart. His self-love pleaded powerfully in her favour: he considered that her husband treated her with mortifying neglect, and provoked the spirit of retaliation by his gallantries. Vivian fancied that Mrs. Wharton's attachment to him might render her wretched, but would never make her criminal. With sophisticated delicacy he veiled his own motives; and, instead of following the plain dictates of reason, he involved his understanding in that species of sentimental casuistry which confounds all principles of right and wrong. But the dread that he felt lest Wharton should discover what was going on might have sufficiently convinced him that he was not acting honourably. The suspicions which Mr. Wharton formerly showed of his wife seemed now to be completely lulled asleep; and he gave Vivian continually such proofs of confidence as stung him to the soul. By an absurd, but not an uncommon error of self-love, Vivian was induced to believe, that a man who professed to cheat mankind in general behaved towards him in particular with strict honour, and even with unparalleled generosity. Honesty was too vulgar a virtue for Wharton; but honour, the aristocratic, exclusive virtue of a gentleman, he laid claim to in the highest tone. The very frankness with which Wharton avowed his libertine principles with respect to women, convinced Vivian that he had not the slightest suspicion that these could be immediately applied to the ruin of his own wife.

"How can you, my dear Wharton, talk in this manner?" said Vivian once, when he had been speaking with great freedom.

"But it is better," added he, with a sigh, "to speak than to act like a villain."

"Villain!" repeated Wharton, with a sarcastic laugh; "you are grown quite ridiculous, Vivian: I protest, I don't understand you. Women now-a-days are surely able, if not willing enough, to take care of themselves; and villains, though they were very common in the time of Miss Clarissa Harlowe, and of all the tragedy queens of the last century, are not to be heard of in these days. Any strange tales of those male monsters called seducers could gain credit during the ages of ignorance and credulity; but now, the enlightened world cannot be imposed upon by such miracles; and a gentleman may be a man of

gallantry--nay, even a lady may be a woman of gallantry--without being hooted out of society as a _monster_; at all events, the blame is, as it should be, equally divided between the parties concerned; and if modern lovers quarrel, they do not die of grief, but settle their differences in a court of law, where a spinster may have her compensation for a breach of contract of marriage; a father or a husband their damages for the loss of the company, affection, solace, services, &c., as the case may be, of his wife or daughter. All this is perfectly well understood; and the terrors of law are quite sufficient, without the terrors of sentiment. If a man punish himself, or let himself be punished, twice for the same offence, once by his conscience, and once by his king and his country, he is a fool; and, moreover, acts contrary to the spirit of the British law, which sayeth--see Blackstone and others--that no man shall be punished twice for the same offence.--Suffer your risible muscles to relax, I beseech you, Vivian; and do not affect a presbyterian rigidity, which becomes your face as ill as your age."

"I affect nothing--certainly I do not affect presbyterian rigidity," cried Vivian, laughing. "But, after all, Wharton, if you had a daughter or a sister, what would you think of any man, your friend for instance, who should attempt--"

"To cut your speech short at once," interrupted Wharton, "I should not think at all about the matter; I should blow his brains out, of course; and afterwards, probably, blow out my own. But treachery from a friend--from a man of honour--is a thing of which I can hardly form an idea. Where I give my confidence, I give it without any paltry mental reservation--I could not suspect a friend."

Vivian suffered, at this instant, all the agony which a generous mind, conscious of guilt, could endure. He thought that the confusion of his mind must be visible in his countenance--his embarrassment was so great that he could not utter a word. Wharton did not seem to perceive his companion's agitation, but passed on carelessly to other subjects of conversation; and at length completely relieved Vivian from fear of immediate detection, by asking a favour from him--a pecuniary favour.

"All is safe--Mrs. Wharton, at least, is safe, thank Heaven!" thought Vivian. "Had her husband the slightest suspicion, he never would condescend to accept of any favour from me."

With eagerness, and almost with tears of gratitude, Vivian pressed upon Wharton the money which he _condescended_ to borrow--it was no inconsiderable sum.

"Wharton!" cried he, "you sometimes talk freely--too freely; but you are, I am convinced, the most open-hearted, unsuspecting, generous fellow upon earth--you deserve a better friend than I am."

Unable any longer to suppress or conceal the emotions which struggled in his heart, he broke away abruptly, hurried home, shut himself up in his own apartment, and sat down immediately to write to Mrs. Wharton. The idea that Mrs. Wharton loved him in preference to all the fashionable

coxcombs and wits by whom she was surrounded had insensibly raised our hero's opinion of her understanding so much, that he now imagined that the world laboured under a prejudice against her abilities. He gave himself credit for having discovered that this beauty was not a fool; and he now spoke and wrote to her as if she had been a woman of sense. With eloquence which might have moved a woman of genius, with delicacy that might have touched a woman of feeling, he conjured her to fortify his honourable resolutions; and thus, whilst it was yet time, to secure her happiness and his own. "Instead of writing this letter," added he in a postscript, "I ought, perhaps, to fly from you for ever; but that would show a want of confidence in you and in myself; and, besides, upon the most mature reflection, I think it best to stay, and wait upon you to-morrow as usual, lest, by my precipitation, I should excite suspicion in Wharton's mind."

The weak apprehension that Mrs. Wharton should betray herself by another fit of hysterics, if he should leave town, and if his departure should be suddenly announced to her by her husband, or by some common acquaintance, induced him to delay a few days longer, that he might prepare her mind by degrees, and convince her of the necessity for their absolute separation. When he had finished his letter to Mrs. Wharton, he was sufficiently well pleased with himself to venture to write to Miss Sidney. His letters to her had of late been short and constrained; but this was written with the full flow of affection. He was now in hopes that he should extricate himself honourably from his difficulties, and that he might at last claim his reward from Selina.

CHAPTER VI.

After he had despatched his two letters, he became excessively anxious to receive Mrs. Wharton's answer. By trifling but unavoidable accidents, it was delayed a few hours. At last it arrived; Vivian tore it open, and read with surprise these words:

"Your letter is just what I wished, and makes me the happiest of women--that is, if you are sincere--which, after all you've said, I can't doubt. I am so hurried by visitors, and annoyed, that I cannot write more; but shall have time to talk to-night at the opera."

At the opera Mrs. Wharton appeared in high spirits, and was dressed with more than usual elegance. It was observed that she had never been seen to look so beautiful. There was something in her manner that puzzled Vivian extremely; this extraordinary gaiety was not what he had reason to expect. "Is it possible," thought he, "that this woman is a mere coquette, who has been amusing herself at my expense all this time, and can now break off all connexion with me without a moment's regret?" Vivian's pride was piqued: though he wished to part from the lady, he could not bear that this parting should evidently cost her nothing. He was mortified beyond expression by the idea that he had been duped.

After the opera was over, whilst Mrs. Wharton was waiting for her carriage, he had an opportunity of speaking to her without being overheard.

"I am happy," said he, with a constrained voice, "I am extremely happy to see you, madam, in such charming spirits to-night."

"But are not you a strange man to look so grave?" cried Mrs. Wharton. "I vow, I don't know what to make of you! But I believe you want to quarrel for the pleasure of making it up again. Now that won't do. By-the-bye, I have a quarrel with you, sir.--How came you to sign your name to that foolish stuff you wrote me yesterday? Never do so any more, I charge you, for fear of accidents. But what's the matter now?--You are a strange mortal!--Are you going to die upon the spot?--What is the matter?"

"My letter to you was not signed, I believe," said Vivian, in an altered voice.

"Indeed it was," said Mrs. Wharton. "It was signed Charles Vivian at full length. But why are you in such tremors about it? I only mentioned it to put you on your guard in future.--I've burnt the letter--people always get themselves into scrapes if they don't burn love-letters--as I've often heard Mr. Wharton say," added she, laughing.

To his unspeakable consternation, Vivian now discovered that he had sent the letter intended for Selina to Mrs. Wharton; and that which was designed for Mrs. Wharton he had directed to Miss Sidney. Vivian was so lost in thought, that the cry of "_Mrs. Wharton's carriage stops the way!"_ was vociferated many times before he recovered sufficient presence of mind to hand the lady out of the house. He went home immediately, that he might reflect upon what was best to be done. His servant presently gave him a letter which a messenger had just brought from the country. The packet was from Selina.

"Enclosed, I return the letter which I received from you this morning. I read the first three lines of it before I perceived that it could not be intended for me--I went no farther.--I cannot help knowing for whom it was designed; but you may be assured that your secret shall be kept inviolably.--You have no reproaches to fear from me.--This is the last letter I shall ever write to you.--Leave it to me to explain my own conduct to my mother and to yours; if they think me capricious, I can bear it. I shall tell them that my sentiments are totally changed: I am sure I can say so with perfect truth.--Oh, Vivian, it is you who are to be pitied; every thing may be endured except remorse. Would to Heaven, I could save you from the reproaches of your own heart!--Adieu!

"SELINA SIDNEY."

The feelings of Vivian's mind, on reading this letter, cannot be described. Admiration, love, tenderness, remorse, successively seized upon his heart. Incapable of any distinct reflection, he threw himself upon his bed, and closed his eyes, endeavouring to compose himself to

sleep, that he might forget his existence. But, motionless as he lay, the tumult of his mind continued unabated. His pulse beat high; and before morning he was in a fever. The dread that his mother should come to attend him, and to inquire into the cause of his illness, increased his agitation:--she came. Her kindness and anxiety were fresh torments to her unhappy son. Bitterly did he reproach himself as the cause of misery to those he loved and esteemed most in the world. He became delirious; and, whilst he was in this state, he repeated Mrs. Wharton's name sometimes in terms of endearment, sometimes in accents of execration. His mother's suspicions of his intrigue were confirmed by many expressions which burst from him, and which were thought by his attendants to be merely the ravings of fever. Lady Mary had, at this crisis, the prudence to conceal her doubts, and to keep every body, as much as possible, out of her son's apartment. In a few days his fever subsided, and he recovered to the clear recollection of all that had passed previously to his illness. He almost wished to be again delirious. The first time he was left alone, he rose from his bed, unlocked his bureau, and seized Selina's letter, which he read again and again, studying each line and word, as if he could draw from them every time a new meaning.

"She read but three lines of my letter," said he to himself; "then she only guesses that I have an intrigue with Mrs. Wharton, without knowing that in this very letter I used my utmost influence to recall Mrs. Wharton to--herself."

The belief that Selina thought worse of him than he deserved was some consolation to Vivian. He was resolved to recover her esteem: he determined to break off all connexion with Mrs. Wharton; and, full of this intention, he was impatient till the physicians permitted him to go abroad. When he was at last free from their dominion, had escaped from his chamber, and had just gained the staircase, he was stopped by his mother.

"Charles," said she, "before you quit me again, it is my duty to say a few words to you upon a subject of some importance."

Lady Mary led the way to her dressing-room with a dignified air; Vivian followed with a mixture of pride and alarm in his manner. From the bare idea of a maternal lecture his mind revolted: he imagined that she was going to repeat the remonstrance which she had formerly made against his intimacy with Mrs. Wharton, and against platonic in general; but he had not the least apprehension that she had discovered the whole truth: he was, therefore, both surprised and shocked, when she spoke to him in the following manner:

"The libertinism of the age in which we live has so far loosened all the bonds of society, and all the ties of nature, that I doubt not but a mother's anxiety for the morals of her son--her only son--the son over whose education she has watched from his infancy, may appear, even in his eyes, a fit subject for ridicule. I am well aware that my solicitude and my counsels have long been irksome to him, I have lost his affections by a steady adherence to my duty; but I shall persevere with

the less reluctance, since the dread of my displeasure, or the hope of my approbation, cannot now touch his sensibility. During your illness, you have betrayed a secret--you have reason to start with horror. Is it possible that a son of mine, with the principles which I have endeavoured to instil into his mind, should become so far depraved? Do I live to hear, from his own lips, that he is the seducer of a married woman--and that woman the wife of his friend?"

Vivian walked up and down the room in great agony: his mother continued, with increased severity of manner, "I say nothing of your dissimulation with me, nor of all your *_platonic_* subterfuges--I know that, with a man of intrigue, falsehood is deemed a virtue. I shall not condescend to inquire farther into your guilty secrets--I now think myself fortunate in having no place in your confidence. But I here declare to you, in the most solemn manner, that I never will see you again until all connexion between you and Mrs. Wharton is utterly dissolved. I do not advise--I COMMAND, and must be obeyed--or I cast you off for ever."

Lady Mary left the room as she uttered these words. Her son was deeply struck with his mother's eloquence: he knew she was right, yet his pride was wounded by the peremptory severity of her manner--his remorse and his good resolutions gave place to anger. The more he felt himself in the wrong, the less he could bear to be reproached by the voice of authority. Even because his mother *_commanded_* him to give up all connexion with Mrs. Wharton, he was inclined to disobey--he could not bear to seem to do right merely in compliance to her will. He went to visit Mrs. Wharton in a very different temper from that in which, half an hour before this conference with his mother, he had resolved to see the lady. Mrs. Wharton knew how to take advantage both of the weakness of his character and of the generosity of his temper. She fell into transports of grief when she found that Lady Mary Vivian and Miss Sidney were in possession of her secret. It was in vain that Vivian assured her that it would be kept inviolably; she persisted in repeating, "that her reputation was lost; that she had sacrificed every thing for a man who would, at last, desert her in the most treacherous and barbarous manner, leaving her at the mercy of her husband, the most profligate, hard-hearted tyrant upon earth. As to her being reconciled to him," she declared, "*_that_* was totally out of the question; his behaviour to her was such, that she could not live with him, even if her heart were not fatally prepossessed in favour of another." Her passions seemed wrought to the highest pitch. With all the eloquence of beauty in distress, she appealed to Vivian as her only friend; she threw herself entirely upon his protection; she vowed that she could not, would not, remain another day in the same house with Mr. Wharton; that her destiny, her existence, were at Vivian's mercy. Vivian had not sufficient fortitude to support this scene. He stood irresolute. The present temptation prevailed over his better resolutions. He was actually persuaded by this woman, whom he did not love, whom he could not esteem, to carry her off to the continent--whilst, at the very time, he admired, esteemed, and loved another. The plan of the elopement was formed and settled in a few minutes;--on Mrs. Wharton's part, apparently with all the hurry of passion; on Vivian's with all the confusion of despair. The same carriage, the very same horses, that had been ordered to carry our hero

to his beloved Selina, conveyed him and Mrs. Wharton the first stage of their flight towards the continent. The next morning the following paragraph appeared in the newspapers:--

"Yesterday, the beautiful and fashionable Mrs. W----, whose marriage we announced last year to the celebrated Mr. W----, eloped from his house in St. James's-street, in company with C---- V----, member for ----shire. This catastrophe has caused the greatest _sensation_ and astonishment in the circles of fashion; for the lady in question had always, till this fatal step, preserved the most unblemished reputation; and Mr. and Mrs. W---- were considered as models of conjugal felicity. The injured husband was attending his public duty in the House of Commons; and, as we are credibly informed, was, with patriotic ardour, speaking in his country's cause, when this unfortunate event, which for ever bereaves him of domestic happiness, took place. What must increase the poignancy of his feelings upon the occasion remains to be stated--that the seducer was his intimate friend, a young man, whom he had raised into notice in public life, and whom he had, with all that warmth and confidence of heart for which he is remarkable, introduced into his house, and trusted with his beloved wife. Mr. W---- is, we hear, in pursuit of the fugitives."

CHAPTER VII.

In the modern fashionable code of honour, when a man has seduced or carried off his friend's wife, the next thing he has to do is to fight the man whom he has injured and betrayed. By thus appealing to the ordeal of the duel, he may not only clear himself from guilt; but, if it be done with proper spirit, he may acquire celebrity and glory in the annals of gallantry, and in the eyes of the fair and innocent. In our hero's place, most men of fashion would have triumphed in the notoriety of his offence, and would have rejoiced in an opportunity of offering the husband the satisfaction of a gentleman. But, unfortunately for Vivian, he had not yet suited his principles to his practice: he had acted like a man of fashion; but, alas! he still thought and felt like a man of virtue--as the following letter will show.

"TO THE REV. HENRY RUSSELL.

"Indignant as you will be, Russell, at all you hear of me, you cannot be more shocked than I am myself. I do not write to palliate or apologize--my conduct admits of no defence--I shall attempt none, private or public--I have written to my lawyer to give directions that no sort of defence shall be set up on my part, when the affair comes into Doctors' Commons--as it shortly will; for I understand that poor Wharton has commenced a prosecution. As to damages he has only to name them--any thing within the compass of my fortune he may command. Would to God that money could make him amends! But he is too generous, too noble a fellow--profligate as he is in some things, how incapable would

he be of acting as basely as I have done! There is not, perhaps, at this moment, a human being who has so high an opinion of the man I have injured as I have myself:--he did not love his wife--but that is no excuse for me--his honour is as much wounded as if I had robbed him of her during the time he loved her most fondly:--he once doted upon her, and would have loved her again, when he was tired of his gallantries; and they might then have lived together as happily as ever, if I had not been--. What was I?--What am I?--Not a villain--or I should glory in what I have done--but the weakest of human beings--and how true it is, Russell, that 'all wickedness is weakness!'

"I understand that W----, wherever he goes, calls me a coward, as well as a scoundrel; and says that I have kept out of the way to avoid fighting him. He is mistaken. It is true, I had the utmost dread of having his life to answer for--and nothing should have provoked me to fire upon him;--but I had determined how to act--I would have met him, and have stood his fire. I should not be sorry, at present, to be put out of the world; and would rather fall by his hand than by any other. But since this is out of the question, and that things have taken another turn, I have only to live, as long as it shall please God, a life of remorse--and, at least, to try to make the unfortunate woman who has thrown herself upon my protection as happy as I can.

"If you have any remaining regard for a pupil who has so disgraced you, do me one favour--Go to Miss Sidney, and give her what comfort you can. Say nothing _for me_, or _of me_, but that I wish her to forget me as soon as possible. She discarded me from her heart when she first discovered this intrigue--before this last fatal step. Still I had hopes of recovering her esteem and affection; for I had resolved--But no matter what I resolved--all my resolutions failed; and now I am utterly unworthy of her love. This, and all that is good and happy in life, all the fair hopes and virtuous promises of my youth, I must give up. Early as it is in my day, my sun has set. I truly desire that she should forget me; for you know I am bound in honour--Honour! How dare I use the word? I am bound, after the divorce, to marry the woman I have seduced. Oh, Russell! what a wife for your friend!--What a daughter-in-law for my poor mother, after all her care of my education--all her affection--all her pride in me!--It will break her heart! Mine will not break. I shall drag on, perhaps, to a miserable old age. I am of too feeble a nature to feel these things as strong minds would--as you will for me; but do not blame yourself for my faults. All that man could do for me, you did. This must be some consolation to you, my dear and excellent friend! May I still call you friend?--or have I no friend left upon earth?

"C. VIVIAN."

From this letter some idea may be formed of what this unhappy man suffered at this period of his life, from "the reflections of a mind not used to its own reproaches." The view of the future was as dreadful as the retrospect of the past. His thoughts continually dwelt upon the public trial which was preparing--before him he saw all its disgraceful circumstances. Then the horror of marrying, of passing his whole future existence with a woman whom he could not esteem or trust! These last

were secret subjects of anxiety and anguish, the more intensely felt, because he could not speak of them to any human being. Such as Mrs. Wharton was, she was to be his wife; and he was called upon to defend her against reproach and insult,--if possible, from contempt. During the course of six weeks, which they spent together in exile at Brussels, Vivian became so altered in his appearance, that his most intimate friends could scarcely have known him; his worst enemies, if he had had any, could not have desired the prolongation of his sufferings.

One evening, as he was sitting alone in his hotel, ruminating bitter thoughts, a letter was brought to him from Mr. Russell; the first he had received since he left England. Every one, who has been absent from his friends in a foreign country, must know the sort of emotion which the bare sight of a letter from _home_ excites; but, in Vivian's circumstances, abandoned as he felt himself, and deserving to be abandoned by his best friends, the sight of a letter from Russell so struck him, that he gazed upon the direction for some minutes, almost without power or wish to open it. At last he opened, and read, "Return to your country, your friends, and yourself, Vivian! Your day is not yet over! Your sun is not yet set!--Resume your energy--recover your self-confidence--carry your good resolutions into effect--and you may yet be an honour to your family, a delight to your fond mother, and the pride of your friend Russell. Your remorse has been poignant and sincere; let it be salutary and permanent in its consequences: this is the repentance which religion requires. The part of a man of sense and virtue is to make his past errors of use to his future conduct. Whilst I had nothing to say that could give you pleasure, I forbore to answer your letter; I forbore to overwhelm a mind sinking under remorse. My sacred duty is to waken the sinner to repentance, not to shut the gates of mercy on the penitent. Now, I can relieve your mind from part of the load by which it has been justly oppressed. You know that nothing can palliate your conduct in an intrigue with a married woman--from this I had hoped your moral and religious education would have preserved you. But of the premeditated guilt of deceiving the husband, and laying a plan to seduce the wife, I never suspected you; and I may now tell you, that you have not betrayed Mr. Wharton; he has betrayed you. You have not seduced Mrs. Wharton; you have been seduced by her. You are not bound to marry her--Wharton cannot obtain a divorce--he dare not bring the affair to trial; if he does, he is undone. There has been collusion between the parties. The proof of this you will find in the enclosed paper, which will be sworn to, in due legal form, whenever it is necessary. Even when you see them, you will scarcely believe these 'damning proofs' of Wharton's baseness. But I always knew, I always told you, that this pretence to honour and candour, frankness and friendship, with this avowed contempt of all principle and all virtue, could not be safe, could not be sincere, would not _stand the test_.--No--nothing should make me trust to the private honour of a man so corrupt in public life as Mr. Wharton. A man who sells his conscience for his interest will sell it for his pleasure. A man who will betray his country will betray his friend. It is in vain to palter with our conscience: there are not two honours--two honesties. How I rejoice at this moment, in the reflection that your character, as a public man, is yet untarnished You have still this great advantage:--feel its value. Return, and

distinguish yourself among your countrymen: distinguish yourself by integrity still more than by talents. A certain degree of talents is now cheap in England: integrity is what we want--true patriotism, true public spirit, noble ambition not that vile scramble for places and pensions, which some men call ambition; not that bawling, brawling, _Thersites_ character, which other men call public spirit; not that marketable commodity with which Wharton, and such as he, cheat popular opinion for a season;--but that fair virtue which will endure, and abide by its cause to the last; which, in place or out, shall be the same; which, successful or unsuccessful, shall sustain the possessor's character through all changes of party; which, whilst he lives, shall command respect from even the most profligate of his contemporaries; upon which, when he is dying, he may reflect with satisfaction; which, after his death, shall be the consolation of his friends, and the glory of his country. All this is yet in your power, Vivian.--Come, then, and fulfil the promise of your early years! Come, and restore to your mother a son worthy of her!--Come, and surpass the hopes of your true friend,

"H. RUSSELL."

The rapid succession of feelings with which Vivian read this letter can scarcely be imagined. The paper it enclosed was from a former waiting-maid of Mrs. Wharton's; a woman who was expected to be the principal evidence on Mr. Wharton's side. She had been his mistress; one of those innumerable mistresses, to whom he had, of course, addressed his transferable promises of eternal constancy. She too, of course, had believed the vow, in spite of all experience and probability; and while she pardoned his infidelities to her mistress, &c. all which she deemed _very natural for a gentleman like him_, yet she was astonished and outrageous when she found him faithless to her own charms. In a fit of jealousy she flew to Mr. Russell, whom she knew to be Vivian's friend; and, to revenge herself on Wharton, revealed the secrets which she had in her power; put into Russell's hands the proofs of collusion between Mr. Wharton and his wife; and took malicious pains to substantiate her evidence, to a lawyer's full satisfaction; knowing that she might prevent the possibility of a divorce, and that she should thus punish her perjured inconstant in the most sensible manner, by at once depriving him of twenty thousand pounds damages, and by chaining him again to a wife whom he abhorred.

The same post which brought Vivian this woman's deposition and Russell's letter brought Mrs. Wharton notice that the whole plan of collusion was discovered: she was therefore prepared for Vivian's reproaches, and received the first burst of his astonishment and indignation with a studied Magdalen expression of countenance: then she attempted a silly apology, laying all the blame on her husband, and vowing that she had acted under terror, and that her life would not have been safe in his hands if she had not implicitly obeyed and executed his horrid plans. She wept and kneeled in vain. Finding Vivian immovable in his purpose to return immediately to England, she suddenly rose from her knees, and, all beautiful as she was, looked in Vivian's eyes like a fiend, whilst, with an unnatural smile, she said to him, "You see, fool as I am thought to be, I have been too clever for _some people_; and I can tell Mr.

Wharton that I have been too clever for him too. His heart is set upon a divorce; but he can't have it. He can't marry Miss P----, nor yet her fortune, nor ever shall! I shall remain at Brussels--I have friends here--and friends who were my friends before I was forced to give my hand to Mr. Wharton, or my smiles to you, sir!--people who will not tease me with talking of remorse and repentance, and such ungallant, ungentlemanlike stuff; nor sit bewailing themselves, like a country parson, instead of dashing out with me here in a fashionable style, as a man of any spirit would have done. But you!--you're neither good nor bad; and no woman will ever love you, nor ever did. Now you know my whole mind."

"Would to Heaven I had known it sooner!" said Vivian. "No--I rejoice that I did not sooner know, and that I never could have suspected, such depravity!--under such a form, too."

Mrs. Wharton's eye glanced with satisfaction upon the large mirror opposite to her. Vivian left her in utter disgust and horror. "Drive on!" cried he, as he threw himself into the chaise that was to carry him away; "Faster! faster!"

The words, "and no woman will ever love you, nor ever, did," rung upon Vivian's ear. "There she is mistaken, thank Heaven!" said he to himself: yet the words still dwelt upon his mind, and gave him exquisite pain. Upon looking again at Russell's letter, he observed that Selina Sidney's name was never mentioned; that she was neither directly nor indirectly alluded to in the whole letter. What omen to draw from this he could not divine. Again he read it; and all that Russell said of public life, and his exhortations to him to come and distinguish himself in public and in the political world, struck him in a new light. It seemed as if Russell was sensible that, there were no farther hopes of Selina, and that therefore he tried to turn Vivian's mind from love to ambition. Fourteen times he read over this letter before he reached England; but he could not discover from it any thing as to the point on which his heart was most interested. He reached London in this, uncertainty.

"Put me out of suspense, my best friend," cried he, the moment he saw Russell: "tell me, is Selina living?"

"Yes--she has been very ill, but is now recovered--quite recovered, and with your mother, who is grown fonder of her than ever she was."

"Selina alive! well! and with my mother!--and may I--I don't mean may I _now_,--but may I _ever_ hope?--Believe me, I feel myself capable of any exertions, any forbearance, to obtain her forgiveness--to merit--May I ever hope for it?--Speak!"

Russell assured him that he need not dread Miss Sidney's resentment, for that she felt none; she had expressed pity more than anger--that she had taken pains to sooth his mother; and had expressed sincere satisfaction on hearing of his _release_ from his unworthy bondage, and at his return home to his friends.

The tone in which Russell spoke, and the seriousness and embarrassment of his manner, alarmed Vivian inexpressibly. He stood silent, and dared not ask farther explanation for some minutes.--At length he broke silence, and conjured his friend to go immediately to Miss Sidney and his mother, and to request permission for him to see them both in each other's presence. Russell said, that if Vivian insisted, he would comply with his request; but that he advised him not to attempt to see Miss Sidney at present; not till he had been some time in London--till he had given some earnest of the steadiness of his conduct--till he had appeared again, and distinguished himself in public life. "This might raise you again in her esteem; and," continued Russell, "you must be aware that her love depends on her esteem--at least, that the one cannot exist without the other."

"Will you deliver a letter to her from me?" said Vivian. "If you think I had better not attempt to see her yet, you will deliver a letter for me?"

After some hesitation, or rather some deliberation, Russell answered, in a constrained voice, "I will deliver your letter, if you insist upon it."

Vivian wrote:--Russell undertook to deliver the letter, though with evident reluctance. In the mean time Vivian went to see his mother, whom he longed, yet dreaded to meet. Her manner was not now severe and haughty, as when she last addressed him; but mild and benign: she held out her hand to him, and said, "Thank God! my son is restored to me, and to himself!"

She could say no more; but embraced him tenderly. Russell had shown Lady Mary that her son had been the dupe of a preconcerted scheme to work upon his passions. She deplored his weakness, but she had been touched by his sufferings; and was persuaded that his remorse would guard him against future errors. Therefore not a word or look of reproach escaped from her. When he spoke of Selina, Lady Mary, with great animation of countenance and warmth of eulogium, declared, that it was the first wish of her heart to see her son married to a woman of such a noble character and angelic temper; "_but_" added her ladyship, her manner changing suddenly, as she pronounced the word _but_--before she could explain the _but_, Russell came into the room, and told Vivian that Miss Sidney desired to see him. Vivian heard the words with joy; but his joy was checked by the great gravity and embarrassment of his friend's countenance, and by a sigh of ill omen from his mother. Eager to relieve his suspense, he hastened to Selina, who, as Russell told him, was in Lady Mary's dressing-room--the room in which he had first declared his passion for her. Hope and fear alternately seized him--fear prevailed the moment that he beheld Selina. Not that any strong displeasure appeared in her countenance--no, it was mild and placid; but it was changed towards him, and its very serenity was alarming. Whilst she welcomed him to his native country and to his friends, and while she expressed hopes for his future happiness, all hope forsook him, and, in broken sentences, he attempted to stammer out some answer; then, throwing himself into a chair, he exclaimed, "I see all future happiness

is lost for me--and I deserve it!"

"Do not reproach yourself," said Selina in a sweet voice; but the voice, though sweet, was so altered to him, that it threw him into despair. "It is my wish, not to inflict, but to spare you pain. I have, therefore, desired to see you as soon as possible, that you might not form false expectations."

"Then you no longer love me, Selina? Now, after all I have suffered, you have the cruelty to tell me so? And you, who could form my character to every thing that is good and honourable; you, who alone could restore me to myself--you reject, you cast me from you for ever?"

"I have suffered much," said Selina, in a trembling voice, "since we parted."

Vivian's eye quickly ran over her face and whole form as she spoke these words; and he saw, indeed, traces of sickness and suffering: with the idea of his power over her affections, his hopes revived; he seized the feeble hand, which lay motionless; but she withdrew it decidedly, and his hopes again forsook him, when she gently raised her head, and continued to speak, "I have suffered much since we parted, Mr. Vivian; and I hope you will spare me unnecessary and useless pain in this interview: painful to a certain degree it must be to both of us; for I cannot, even now that all feelings of passion have subsided, and that the possibility of my being united to you is past, tell you so, with all the composure which I had expected to do; nor with all the firmness of voice and manner which is necessary, perhaps, to convince you of the truth, and to restore your mind to itself."

"The possibility of my being united to you is past!--Why?" interrupted Vivian, incapable of understanding or listening to any thing else, till this question was answered.

"Do not force me to what may seem like cruel reproach; but let it suffice for me to say, that my sentiments have been so much altered by a _year's experience_, that it is impossible for me ever to become your wife. My love was founded on esteem. I had, indeed, always fears of the instability of your character; therefore, I put your resolution to the proof: the event has proved to me that my fears were but too just. I speak with difficulty; for I cannot easily give you so much pain as I know that I am inflicting at this moment. But," resumed she, in a more resolute tone, "it is absolutely necessary for your future peace of mind, as well as for my own, that I should convince you I am sincere, perfectly sincere, at this moment; that I know my own heart; that my determination has not been hastily formed, and cannot be altered. The deliberate manner in which I now speak to you will, I hope, persuade you of this truth. And if I have hesitated, or showed any agitation in this interview, attribute it to its real cause--the weakness of my health; feebleness of body, not of mind."

She rose to leave the room; but Vivian detained her, beseeching her, with all the eloquence of passion in despair, to hear him but for one

moment; whilst he urged that there was no probability of his ever relapsing into errors from which he had suffered so much; that now his character was formed by adversity; and that such was the power which Selina possessed over his heart, that a union with her would, at this crisis, decide his fate; that her steadiness would give stability to his resolutions; and that his gratitude would so increase his affection, that he should have the strongest possible motives to make her a good husband; that when he was happy in domestic life, he should feel every energy of his mind revive; that he should exert all his powers to distinguish himself, and to justify the choice of the woman he adored,

In spite of the word *adored*, which has usually such power to confound female judgment, Selina perceived that all he said was merely a repetition of his former arguments, of which experience had proved the insufficiency. She was aware that, if before marriage his resolution and constancy had not been able to support the trial, it would be folly or madness to marry him with the vague hope that she might reform his character. She therefore continued steady to her resolution; and as she found that Vivian's disappointment was greater than she had expected, she immediately withdrew from his mother's house. The next morning, when Vivian came to breakfast, after having spent a sleepless night, planning new arguments or new intreaties in favour of his love, he found that Miss Sidney was gone. His mother and his friend Russell joined in representing to him that it would be useless to follow her, that it would only give himself and Selina unavailing pain. Vivian felt this stroke severely. His mind was, as it were, adrift again. After the first violence of his feelings had spent itself, and when he sunk into that kind of apathy which is the consequence of exhausted passion, his friend Russell endeavoured to excite him to honourable ambition. Vivian caught the idea, that if he distinguished himself in public life, and if he there displayed any steadiness of character, he might win back Selina's esteem and affection. Fired with this hope, he immediately turned his whole mind to the object; applied with indefatigable ardour, day and night, to make himself master of the subjects likely to be discussed in the ensuing session of parliament. At length his application and his energy were crowned with success. On a question of considerable political importance, which he had carefully considered, he made an excellent speech; a speech which directly made him of consequence in the house; which, in the language of the newspapers, "was received with unbounded applause, was distinguished for strength of argument, lucid order, and a happy choice of expression." But what encouraged our hero more than newspaper puffs or party panegyrics was the approbation of his friend Russell. Russell never praised violently; but a few words, or even a look of satisfaction from him, went farther than the most exaggerated eulogiums from others. Vivian pursued his course for some time with honour and increasing reputation. There was one man who never joined in any of the compliments paid to the rising orator; there was one man who always spoke of him with contempt, who pronounced that "Vivian would never go far in politics--that it was not in him--that he was too soft--*que c'Ûtoit bâir sur de la boue, que de compter sur lui*." This depreciator and enemy of Vivian was the man who, but a few months before, had been his political *proneur* and unblushing flatterer, Mr. Wharton. Exasperated by the consciousness of his own

detected baseness, and provoked still more by his being frustrated in all his schemes, Wharton now practised every art that a malicious and unprincipled wit could devise to lower the opinion of Vivian's talents, and to prevent his obtaining either power or celebrity. Our hero was stimulated by this conduct to fresh exertions. So far Wharton's enmity was of service to him; but it was of disservice, by changing, in some measure, the purity of the motives from which he acted. With love and honourable ambition now mixed hatred, thoughts of vengeance, views of vulgar vanity and interest: he thought more of contradicting Mr. Wharton's prophecies than of fulfilling his own ideas of what was fair and right. He was anxious to prove, that he could "go far" in politics, that it was in him, that he was not too soft, and that it was not building on mud to depend on him." These indefinite expressions operated powerfully and perniciously on his imagination. To prove that Wharton was mistaken in his prognostics, it was necessary to our hero to obtain the price and stamp of talents--it was essential to gain political power; and this could not be attained without joining a party. Vivian joined the party then in opposition. Wharton and he, though both in opposition, of course, after what had passed, could never meet in any private company; nor had they any communication in public, though on the same side of the question: their enmity was so great, that not only the business of the nation, but even the interests of their party, were often impeded by their quarrels. In the midst of these disputes, Vivian insensibly adopted more and more of the language and principles of the public men with whom he daily associated. He began to hear and talk of compensations and jobs, as they did; and to consider all measures proved to be necessary for the support of his party as expedient, if not absolutely right. His country could not be saved, unless he and his friends could obtain the management of affairs; and no men, he found, could gain parliamentary influence, or raise themselves into political power, without acting as a body. Then, of course, all subordinate points of right were to be sacrificed to the great good of promoting the views of the party. Still, however, his patriotism was upon the whole pure; he had no personal views of interest, no desire even to be in place, independently of a wish to promote the good of his country. Secret overtures were, about this time, made to him by government; and inquiries were made if there was any thing which could gratify him, or by which he could be induced to lay aside his opposition, and to assist in supporting their measures. Many compliments to his talents and eloquence, and all the usual commonplaces, about the expediency and propriety of strengthening the hands of government, were, of course, added. Something specific was at length mentioned: it was intimated, that as he was of an ancient family, it might gratify him that his mother should be made a baroness in her own right. The offer was declined, and the temptation was firmly withstood by our hero; his credit was now at its acme with his own coadjutors. Lady Mary whispered the circumstance, as a state secret, to all her acquaintance; and Russell took care that Miss Sidney should hear of it.

Vivian was now cited as an incorruptible patriot. Wharton's malice, and even his wit, was almost silenced; yet he was heard to say, amidst the din of applause, "This is only the first offer; he is in the right to make a show of resistance: he will coquet for a time, and keep

philandering on till he suits himself, and then he'll jilt us, you'll see."

Such speeches, though they reached Vivian's ear by the kind officiousness of friends, were never made by Mr. Wharton so directly that he could take hold of them; and Russell strenuously advised him not to seek occasion to quarrel with a man who evidently desired only to raise his own reputation by making Vivian angry, getting him in the wrong, and forcing him into an imprudent duel.

"Let your actions continue to contradict his words, and they can never injure you," said Russell.

For some time Vivian adhered to his friend's advice, and he proudly felt the superiority of principle and character. But, alas! there was one defence that his patriotism wanted--economy. Whilst he was thus active in the public cause, and exulting in his disinterestedness, his private affairs were getting into terrible disorder. The expense of building his castle had increased beyond all his calculations--the expense of his election--the money he had lost at play whilst he was in Wharton's society--the sums he had lent to Wharton--the money he had spent abroad--all these accumulated brought him to great difficulties: for though his estate was considerable, yet it was so settled and tied up that he could neither sell nor mortgage. His creditors became clamorous--he had no means of satisfying or quieting them: an execution was actually sent down to his castle, just as it was finished. Lady Mary Vivian was in the greatest alarm and distress: she had no means of extricating her son. As to his fashionable friends--no hopes from such extravagant and selfish beings. What was to be done? At this critical moment, the offers from _a certain quarter_ were renewed in another, and, as it seemed, a more acceptable form--a pension was proffered instead of a title; and it was promised that the business should be so managed, and the pension so held in another name, that nothing of the transaction should transpire; and that his seceding from opposition should be made to appear a change of sentiments from conviction, not from interested motives. Vivian's honourable feelings revolted from these offers, and abhorred these subterfuges; but distress--pecuniary distress! he had never before felt its pressure; he had never till now felt how powerful, how compulsory it is over even generous and high-spirited souls. Whilst Vivian was thus oppressed with difficulties, which his imprudence had brought upon him; whilst his mind was struggling with opposing motives, he was, most fortunately for his political integrity, relieved, partly by accident, and partly by friendship. It happened that the incumbent of the rich living, of which Vivian had the presentation, was dying just at this time; and Russell, instead of claiming the living which Vivian had promised to him, relinquished all pretensions to it, and insisted upon his friend's disposing of his right of presentation. The sum which this enabled Vivian to raise was fully sufficient to satisfy the execution which had been laid on his castle; and the less clamorous creditors were content to be paid by instalments, annually, from his income. Thus he was saved for the present; and he formed the most prudent resolves for the future. He was most sincerely grateful to his disinterested friend. The full

extent of the sacrifice which Russell made him was not, however, known at this time, nor for some years afterwards.

But, without anticipation, let us proceed with our story. Amongst those fashionable and political friends with whom our hero had, since his return to England, renewed his connexion, was my Lord Glistonbury. His lordship, far from thinking the worse of him for *his affair* with Mrs. Wharton, spoke of it in modish *slang*, as "a new and fine feather in his cap;" and he congratulated Vivian upon his having "carried off the prize without paying the price." Vivian's success as a parliamentary orator had still further endeared him to his lordship, who failed not to repeat, that he had always prophesied Vivian would make a capital figure in public life; that Vivian was his member, &c. At the recess, Lord Glistonbury insisted upon carrying Vivian down to spend the holidays with him at Glistonbury Castle.

"You must come, Vivian: so make your fellow put your worldly goods into my barouche, which is at the door; and we are to have a great party at Glistonbury, and private theatricals, and the devil knows what; and you must see my little Julia act, and I must introduce you to *the Rosamunda*. Come, come! you can't refuse me!--Why, you have only a bachelor's castle of your own to go to; and that's a dismal sort of business, compared with what I have *in petto* for you--'the feast of reason, and the flow of soul,' in the first style, I assure you. You must know, I always--even in the midst of the wildest of my wild oats--had a taste for the belles-lettres, and philosophy, and the muses, and the *literati*, and so forth--always a touch of the Mecaenas about me.--And now my boy's growing up, it's more particularly proper to bring these sort of people about him; for, you know, clever men who have a reputation can sound a flourish of trumpets advantageously before 'a Grecian youth of talents rare' makes his appearance on the stage of the great world--Ha! hey!--Is not this what one may call prudence?--Ha!--Good to have a father who knows something of life, and of books too, hey? Then, for my daughters, too--daughter, I mean; for Lady Sarah's Lady Glistonbury's child: her ladyship and Miss Strictland have manufactured her after their own taste and fashion; and I've nothing to say to that--But my little Julia--Ah, I've got a different sort of governess about her these few months past--not without family battles, you may guess. But when Jupiter gives the nod, you know, even Juno, stately as she is, must bend. So I have my Rosamunda for my little Julia--who, by-the-bye, is no longer my *little* Julia, but a prodigious fine woman, as you shall see. But, all this time, is your fellow putting your things up? No!--Hey? how? Oh, I understand your long face of hesitation--you have not seen the ladies since the Wharton affair, and you don't know how they might look.--Never fear! Lady Glistonbury shall do as I please, and look as I please. Besides, *entre nous*, I know she hates the Whartons; so that her morality will have a loophole to creep out of; and you'll be safe and snug, whilst all the blame will be thrown on them--Hey!--Oh, I understand things--pique myself on investigating the human heart. Come, we have not a moment to lose; and you'll have your friend Russell, too--Come, come! to have and to hold, as the lawyers say--"

Seizing Vivian's arm, Lord Glistonbury carried him off before he had half understood all his lordship had poured forth so rapidly; and before he had decided whether he wished or not to accept of this invitation.

CHAPTER VIII.

On his way to Glistonbury Castle, Vivian had full leisure to repent of having accepted of this invitation, recollecting, as he did, all the former reports about himself and Lady Sarah Lidhurst. He determined, therefore, that his visit should be as short as possible; and the chief pleasure he promised himself was the society of his friend Russell.

On his arrival at the castle, he was told that Mr. Russell was out riding; and that every body else was in the theatre at a rehearsal, except Lady Glistonbury, the Lady Sarah, and Miss Strictland. He found these three ladies sitting in form in the great deserted drawing-room, each looking like a copy of the other, and all as if they were deploring the degeneracy of the times. Vivian approached with due awe; but, to his great surprise and relief, at his approach their countenances exhibited some signs of life. Lord Glistonbury presented him on his return from abroad: Lady Glistonbury's features relaxed to a smile, though she seemed immediately to repent of it, and to feel it incumbent upon her to maintain her rigidity of mien. Whilst she, and of course Miss Strictland and the Lady Sarah, were thus embarrassed between the necessity of reprobating the sin, and the desire of pleasing the sinner, Lord Glistonbury ran on with one of his speeches, of borrowed sense and original nonsense, and then would have carried him off to the rehearsal, but Lady Glistonbury called Vivian back, begging, in her formal manner, "that her lord would do her the favour to leave Mr. Vivian with her for a few minutes, as it was so long since she had the pleasure of seeing him at Glistonbury." Vivian returned with as good a grace as he could; and, to find means of breaking the embarrassing silence that ensued, took up a book which lay upon the table, "Toplady's Sermons"--no hope of assistance from that: he had recourse to another--equally unlucky, "Wesley's Diary:" another--"The Pilgrim's Progress." He went no farther; but, looking up, he perceived that the Lady Sarah was motioned by her august mother to leave the room. Vivian had again recourse to "Toplady."

"Very unfashionable books, Mr. Vivian," said Miss Strictland, bridling and smiling as in scorn.

"Very unfashionable books!" repeated Lady Glistonbury, with the same inflection of voice, and the same bridling and smiling. "Very different," continued her ladyship, "very different from what you have been accustomed to see on some ladies' tables, no doubt, Mr. Vivian! Without mentioning names, or alluding to transactions that ought to be buried in eternal oblivion, and that are so very distressing to your friends here to think of, sir, give me leave to ask, Mr. Vivian, whether it be true what I have heard, that the prosecution, and every thing

relative to it, is entirely given up?"

"Entirely, madam."

"Then," said Lady Glistonbury, glancing her eye at Miss Strictland, "_we_ may welcome Mr. Vivian with safe consciences to Glistonbury; and since the affair will never become public, and since Lady Sarah knows none of the improper particulars; and since she may, and, from her education, naturally will, class all such things under the head of impossibilities and false reports, of which people, in our rank of life especially, are subject every hour to hear so many; there cannot, as I am persuaded you will agree with me in thinking, Miss Strictland, be any impropriety in our and Lady Sarah's receiving Mr. Vivian again on the same footing as formerly."

Miss Strictland bowed her formal assent: Vivian bowed, because he saw that a bow was expected from him; and then he pondered on what might be meant by the words, _on the same footing as formerly_; and he had just framed a clause explanatory and restrictive of the same, when he was interrupted by the sound of laughter, and of numerous, loud, and mingled voices, coming along the gallery that led to the drawing-room. As if these were signals for her departure, and as if she dreaded the intrusion and contamination of the revel rout, Lady Glistonbury arose, looked at her watch, pronounced her belief that it was full time for her to go to dress, and retired through a Venetian door, followed by Miss Strictland, repeating the same belief, and bearing her ladyship's tapestry work: her steps quickened as the door at the opposite end of the room opened; and, curtsying (an unnecessary apology to Mr. Vivian) as she passed, she left him _to himself_. And now,

"He sees a train profusely gay,
Come pranking o'er the place."

Some were dressed for comic, some for tragic characters; but all seemed equally gay, and talked equally fast. There had been a dressed rehearsal of "The Fair Penitent," and of "The Romp;" and all the spectators and all the actors were giving and receiving exuberant compliments. Vivian knew many of the party,--some of them bel-esprits, some fashionable amateurs; all pretenders to notoriety, either as judges or performers. In the midst of this motley group, there was one figure who stood receiving and expecting universal homage: she was dressed as "The Fair Penitent;" but her affected vivacity of gesture and countenance was in striking contrast to her tragic attire; and Vivian could hardly forbear smiling at the _minauderies_ with which she listened and talked to the gentlemen round her; now languishing, now coquetting; rolling her eyes, and throwing herself into a succession of studied attitudes, dealing repartees to this side and to that; and, in short, making the greatest possible exhibition both of her person and her mind.

"Don't you know her? Did you never see her before?--No! you've been out of England; but you've heard of her, certainly?--_Rosamunda_,"
--whispered Lord Glistonbury to Vivian.

"And who is Rosamunda?" said Vivian; "an actress."

"Actress!--Hush!--Bless you! no--but the famous poetess. Is it possible that you hav'n't read the poems of Rosamunda?--They were in every body's hands a few months ago; but you were abroad--better engaged, or as well, hey? But, as I was going to tell you, that's the reason she's called _The Rosamunda_--I gave her the name, for I patronized her from the first. Her real name is Bateman; and Lady Glistonbury and her set call her Miss Bateman still, but nobody else. She's an amazing clever woman, I assure you--more genius than any of 'em since the time of Rousseau!--Devil of a salary!--and devil of a battle I had to fight with some of my friends before I could fix her here; but I was determined I would follow my own ideas in Julia's education. Lady Glistonbury had her way and her routine with Lady Sarah; and it's all very well, vastly well--

'Virtue for her too painful an endeavour,
Content to dwell in decencies for ever.'

You know the sort of thing! Yes, yes; but I was not content to have my Julia lost among the _mediocres_, as I call them: so I took her out of Miss Strictland's hands; and the Rosamunda's her governess."

"Her governess!" repeated Vivian, with uncontrollable astonishment;
"Lady Julia Lidhurst's governess!"

"Yes, you may well be surprised," pursued Lord Glistonbury, mistaking the cause of the surprise: "no one in England could have done it but myself; she refused innumerable applications,--immense offers; and, after all, you know, she does not appear as governess _titrøe_--only as a friend of the family, who directs Lady Julia Lidhurst's literary talents. Oh, you understand, a man of the world knows how to manage these things--sacrifices always to the vanity of the sex, or the pride, as the case may be, I never mind names, but things, as the metaphysicians say--distinguish betwixt essentials and accidents--sound philosophy that, hey? And, thank Heaven! a gentleman or a nobleman need not apologize in these days for talking of philosophy before ladies, even if any body overheard us, which, as it happens, I believe nobody does. So let me, now that _you know your Paris_, introduce you to 'The Rosamunda.'--Mr. Vivian--the Rosamunda. Rosamunda--Mr. Vivian."

After Vivian had for a few minutes acted audience, very little to his own satisfaction, he was relieved by Lord Glistonbury's exclaiming, "But Julia! where's Julia all this time?"

Rosamunda looked round, with the air of one interrupted by a frivolous question which requires no answer; but some one less exalted, and more attentive to the common forms of civility, told his lordship that Lady Julia was in the gallery with her brother. Lord Glistonbury hurried Vivian into the gallery. He was struck the moment he met Lady Julia with the great change and improvement in her appearance. Instead of the childish girl he had formerly seen flying about, full only of the frolic of the present moment, he now saw a fine graceful woman with a striking

countenance that indicated both genius and sensibility. She was talking to her brother with so much eagerness, that she did not see Vivian come into the gallery; and, as he walked on towards the farther end, where she was standing, he had time to admire her.

"A fine girl, faith! though she is my daughter," whispered Lord Glistonbury; "and would you believe that she is only sixteen?"

"Only sixteen!"

"Ay: and stay till you talk to her--stay till you hear her--you will be more surprised. Such genius! such eloquence! She's my own girl. Well, Julia, my darling!" cried he, raising his voice, "in the clouds, as usual?"

Lady Julia started--but it was a natural, not a theatric start--colouring at the consciousness of her own absence of mind. She came forward with a manner that apologized better than words could do, and she received Mr. Vivian so courteously, and with such ingenuous pleasure in her countenance, that he began to rejoice in having accepted the invitation to Glistonbury; at the same instant, he recollected a look which his mother had given him when he first saw Lady Julia on the terrace of the castle.

"Well, what was she saying to you, Lidhurst? hey! my boy?"

"We were arguing, sir."

"Arguing! Ay, ay, she's the devil for that!--words at will!--'Persuasive words, and more persuasive sighs!' Ah, woman! woman for ever! always talking us out of our senses! and which of the best of us would not wish it to be so? 'Oh! let me, let me be deceived!' is the cream of philosophy, epicurean and stoic--at least, that's my creed. But to the point: what was it about that she was holding forth so charmingly--a book or a lover? A book, I'll wager: she's such a romantic little fool, and so unlike other women: leaves all her admirers there in the drawing-room, and stays out here, talking over musty books with her brother. But come, what was the point? I will have it argued again before me--Let's see the book."

Lord Lidhurst pointed out a speech in "The Fair Penitent," and said that they had been debating about the manner in which it should be recited. Lord Glistonbury called upon his daughter to repeat it: she showed a slight degree of unaffected timidity at first; but when her father stamped and bid her let him see no vulgar bashfulness, she obeyed--recited charmingly--and, when urged by a little opposition from her brother, grew warm in defence of her own opinion--displayed in its support such sensibility, with such a flow of eloquence, accompanied with such animated and graceful, yet natural gesture, that Vivian was transported with sudden admiration. He was astonished at this early development of feeling and intellect; and if, in the midst of his delight, he felt some latent disapprobation of this display of talent from so young a woman, yet he quickly justified her to himself, by

saying that he was not a stranger; that he had formerly been received by her family on a footing of intimacy. Then he observed farther, in her vindication, that there was not the slightest affectation or coquetry in any of her words or motions; that she spoke with this eagerness not to gain admiration, but because she was carried away by her enthusiasm, and, thoughtless of herself, was eager only to persuade and to make her opinions prevail. Such was the enchantment of her eloquence and her beauty, that after a quarter of an hour spent in her company, our hero did not know whether to wish that she had more sedateness and reserve, or to rejoice that she was so animated and natural. Before he could decide this point, his friend Russell returned from riding. After the first greetings were over, Russell drew him aside, and asked, "Pray, my dear Vivian, what brings you here?"

"Lord Glistonbury--to whom I had not time to say no, he talked so fast. But, after all, why should I say no? I am a free man--a discarded lover. I am absolutely convinced that Selina Sidney's refusal will never be retracted; my mother, I know, is of that opinion. You suggested, that if I distinguished myself in public life, and showed steadiness, I might recover her esteem and affection; but I see no chance of it. My mother showed me her last letter--no hopes from that--so I think it would be madness, or folly, to waste my time, and wear out my feelings, in pursuit of a woman, who, however amiable, is lost to me."

"Of that you are the best judge," said Russell, gravely. "I am far from wishing--from urging you to waste your time. Lady Mary Vivian must know more of Miss Sidney, and be better able to judge of the state of her heart than I can be. It would not be the part of a friend to excite you to persevere in a pursuit that would end in disappointment; but this much, before we quit the subject for ever, I feel it my duty to say--that I think Miss Sidney the woman of all others the best suited to your character, the most deserving of your love, the most calculated to make you exquisitely and permanently happy."

"All that's very true," said Vivian, impatiently; "but, since I can't have her, why make me miserable about her?"

"Am I to understand," resumed Russell, after a long pause, "am I to understand that, now you have regained your freedom, you come here with the settled purpose of espousing the Lady Sarah Lidhurst?"

"Heaven forbid!" cried Vivian, starting back.

"Then I am to go over again, on this subject, with indefatigable patience and in due logical order, all the arguments, moral, prudential, and conventional, which I had the labour of laying before you about a twelvemonth ago."

"Save yourself the trouble, my dear friend!" said Vivian; "I shall set all that upon a right footing immediately, by speaking of the report at once to some of the family. I was going to _rise to explain_ this morning, when I was with Lady Glastonbury; but I felt a sort of delicacy--it was an awkward time--and at that moment somebody came into

the room."

"Ay," said Russell, "you are just like the hero of a novel, stopped from saying what he ought to say by somebody's coming into the room.--Awkward time! Take care you don't sacrifice yourself at last to these _awkwardnesses_ and this sort of _delicacies_. I have still my fears that you will get into difficulties about Lady Sarah."

Vivian could not help laughing at what he called his friend's absurd fears.

"If you are determined, my dear Russell, at all events to fear for me, I'll suggest to you a more reasonable cause of dread. Suppose I should fall desperately in love with Lady Julia!--I assure you there's some danger of that. She is really very handsome and very graceful; uncommonly clever and eloquent--as to the rest, you know her--what is she?"

"All that you have said, and more. She might be made any thing--every thing; an ornament to her sex--an honour to her country--were she under the guidance of persons fit to direct great powers and a noble character; but yet I cannot, Vivian, as your friend, recommend her to you as a wife."

"I am not thinking of her as a wife," said Vivian: "I have not had time to think of her at all yet. But you said, just now, that in good hands she might be made every thing that is good and great. Why not by a husband, instead of a governess? and would not you call mine _good hands_?"

"Good, but not steady--not at all the husband fit to guide such a woman. He must be a man not only of superior sense, but of superior strength of mind."

Vivian was piqued by this remark, and proceeded to compare the fitness of his character to _such_ a character as Lady Julia's. Every moment he showed more curiosity to hear further particulars of her disposition; of the different characters of her governesses, and of all her relations; but Russell refused to say more. He had told him what he was called upon, as his friend, to reveal; he left the rest to Vivian's own observation and judgment. Vivian set himself to work to observe and judge with all his might.

He soon perceived that all Russell had told him of the mismanagement of Lady Julia's education was true. In this house there were two parties, each in extremes, and each with their systems and practice carried to the utmost excess. The partisans of the old and the new school were here to be seen at daggers-drawing. Lady Glastonbury, abhorrent of what she termed modern philosophy, and classing under that name almost all science and literature, especially all attempts to cultivate the understanding of women, had, with the assistance of her _double_, Miss Strictland, brought up Lady Sarah in all the ignorance and all the rigidity of the most obsolete of the old school; she had made Lady Sarah

precisely like herself; with virtue, stiff, dogmatical, and repulsive; with religion, gloomy and puritanical; with manners, cold and automatic. In the course of eighteen years, whilst Lady Glistonbury went on, like clock-work, the same round, punctual to the letter but unfeeling of the spirit of her duties, she contrived, even by the wearisome method of her _minuted_ diary of education, to make her house odious to her husband. Some task, or master, or hour of lesson, continually, and immitigably plagued him: he went abroad for amusement, and found dissipation. Thus, by her unaccommodating temper, and the obstinacy of her manifold virtues, she succeeded in alienating the affections of her husband. In despair he one day exclaimed,

"Ah que de vertus vous me faites hair;"

and, repelled by virtue in this ungracious form, he flew to more attractive vice. Finding that he could not have any comfort or solace in the society of his wife, he sought consolation in the company of a mistress. Lady Glistonbury had, in the mean time, her consolation in being a pattern-wife; and in hearing that at card-tables it was universally said, that Lord Glistonbury was the worst of husbands, and that her ladyship was extremely to be pitied. In process of time, Lord Glistonbury was driven to his home again by the united torments of a virago mistress and the gout. It was at this period that he formed the notion of being at once a political leader and a Mecaenas; and it was at this period that he became acquainted with both his daughters, and determined that his Julia should never resemble the Lady Sarah. He saw his own genius in Julia; and he resolved, as he said, to give her fair play, and to make her one of the wonders of the age. After some months' counteraction and altercation, Lord Glistonbury, with a high hand, took _his_ daughter from under the control of Miss Strickland; and, in spite of all the representations, prophecies, and denunciations of her mother, consigned Julia to the care of a governess after his own heart--a Miss Bateman; or, as he called her, _The Rosamunda_. From the moment this lady was introduced into the family there was an irreconcilable breach between the husband and wife. Lady Glistonbury was perfectly in the right in her dread of such a governess as Miss Bateman for her daughter. Her ladyship was only partially and accidentally right: right in point of fact, but wrong in the general principle; for she objected to Miss Bateman, as being of the class of literary women; to her real faults, her inordinate love of admiration, and romantic imprudence, Lady Glistonbury did not object, because she did not at first know them; and when she did, she considered them but as necessary consequences of the _cultivation and enlargement of Miss Bateman's understanding_. "No wonder!" her ladyship would say; "I knew it must be so; I knew it could not be otherwise. All those clever women, as they are called, are the same. This _comes_ of literature and literary ladies."

Thus moralizing in private with Miss Strickland and her own small party, Lady Glistonbury appeared silent and passive before her husband and his adherents. After prophesying how it all must end in the ruin of her daughter Julia, she declared that she would never speak on this subject again: she showed herself ready, with maternal resignation, and in

silent obduracy, to witness the completion of the sacrifice of her devoted child.

Lord Glistonbury was quite satisfied with having silenced opposition. His new governess, established in her office, and with full and unlimited powers, went on triumphant and careless of her charge; she thought of little but displaying her own talents in company. The castle was consequently filled with crowds of amateurs; novels and plays were the order of the day; and a theatre was fitted up, all in open defiance of poor Lady Glistonbury. The daughter commenced her new course of education by being taught to laugh at her mother's prejudices. Such was the state of affairs when Vivian commenced his observations; and all this secret history he learnt by scraps, and hints, and inuendoes, from very particular friends of both parties--friends who were not troubled with any of Mr. Russell's scruples or discretion.

Vivian's attention was now fixed upon Lady Julia; he observed with satisfaction, that, notwithstanding her governess's example and excitement, Lady Julia did not show any exorbitant desire for general admiration; and that her manners were free from coquetry and affectation: she seemed rather to disdain the flattery, and to avoid both the homage and the company of men who were her inferiors in mental qualifications; she addressed her conversation principally to Vivian and his friend Russell; with them, indeed, she conversed a great deal, with much eagerness and enthusiasm, expressing all her opinions without disguise, and showing on most occasions more imagination than reason, and more feeling than judgment. Vivian perceived that it was soon suspected by many of their observers, and especially by Lady Glistonbury and the Lady Sarah, that Julia had a design upon his heart; but he plainly discerned that she had no design whatever to captivate him; and that though she gave him so large a share of her company, it was without thinking of him as a lover: he saw that she conversed with him and Mr. Russell, preferably to others, because they spoke on subjects which interested her more; and because they drew out her brother, of whom she was very fond. Her being capable, at so early an age, to appreciate Russell's character and talents; her preferring his solid sense and his plain sincerity to the brilliancy, the *_fashion_*, and even the gallantry of all the men whom her father had now collected round her, appeared to Vivian the most unequivocal proof of the superiority of her understanding and of the goodness of her disposition. On various occasions, he marked with delight the deference she paid to his friend's opinion, and the readiness with which she listened to reason from him--albeit unused and averse from reason in general. Impatient as she was of control, and confident, both in her own powers and in her instinctive moral sense (about which, by-the-by, she talked a great deal of eloquent nonsense), yet a word or a look from Mr. Russell would reclaim her in her highest flights. Soon after Vivian commenced his observations upon this interesting subject, he saw an instance of what Russell had told him of the ease with which Lady Julia might be guided by a man of sense and strength of mind.

The tragedy of "The Fair Penitent," Calista by Miss Bateman, was represented with vast applause to a brilliant audience at the

Glistonbury theatre. The same play was to be reacted a week afterwards to a fresh audience--it was proposed that Vivian should play Lothario, and that Lady Julia should play Calista: Miss Bateman saw no objection to this proposal: Lord Glistonbury might, perhaps, have had the parental prudence to object to his daughter's appearing in public at her age, in such a character, before a mixed audience: but, unfortunately, Lady Glistonbury bursting from her silence at this critical moment, said so much, and in such a prosing and puritanical manner, not only against her daughter's acting in this play, and in these circumstances, but against all _stage plays_, playwrights, actors, and actresses whatsoever, denouncing and anathematizing them all indiscriminately; that immediately Lord Glistonbury laughed--Miss Bateman took fire--and it became a trial of power between the contending parties. Lady Julia, who had but lately escaped from the irksomeness of her mother's injudicious and minute control, dreaded, above all things, to be again subjected to her and Miss Strickland; therefore, without considering the real propriety or impropriety of the point in question, without examining whether Miss Bateman was right or wrong in the licence she had granted, Lady Julia supported her opinion warmly; and, with all her eloquence, at once asserted her own liberty, and defended the cause of the theatre in general. She had heard Mr. Russell once speak of the utility of a well-regulated public stage; of the influence of good theatric representations in forming the taste and rousing the soul to virtue: he had shown her Marmontel's celebrated letter to Rousseau on this subject; consequently, she thought she knew what his opinion must be on the present occasion: therefore she spoke with more than her usual confidence and enthusiasm. Her eloquence and her abilities transported her father and most of her auditors, Vivian among the rest, with astonishment and admiration: she enjoyed, at this moment, what the French call *_un grand succÈs_*; but, in the midst of the buzz of applause, Vivian observed that her eye turned anxiously upon Russell, who stood silent, and with a disapproving countenance.

"I am sure your friend, Mr. Russell, is displeas'd at this instant--and with me.--I must know why.--Let us ask him.--Do bring him here."

Immediately she disengag'd herself from all her admirers, and, making room for Mr. Russell beside her, wait'd, as she said, to hear from him *_ses vØritØs_*. Russell would have declin'd speaking, but her ladyship appeal'd earnestly and urgently for his opinion, saying, "Who will speak the truth to me if you will not? On whose judgment can I rely if not on yours?--You direct my brother's mind to every thing that is wise and good; direct mine: I am as desirous to do right as he can be: and you will find me--self-will'd and volatile, as I know you think me--you will find me a docile pupil. Then tell me frankly--did I, just now, speak too much or too warmly? I thought I was speaking your sentiments, and that I *_must_* be right. But perhaps it was not right for a woman, or so young a woman as I am, to support even just opinions so resolutely. And yet is it a crime to be young?--And is the honour of maintaining truth to be monopoliz'd by age?--No, surely; for Mr. Russell himself has not that claim to stand forth, as he so often does, in its defence. If you think that I ought not to act Calista; if you think that I had better not appear on the stage at all, only say so!--All I ask is your opinion; the

advantage of your judgment. And you see, Mr. Vivian, how difficult it is to obtain it!--But his friend, probably, never felt this difficulty!"

With a degree of sober composure, which almost provoked Vivian, Mr. Russell answered this animated lady. And with a sincerity which, though politely shown, Vivian thought severe and almost cruel, Russell acknowledged that her ladyship had anticipated some, but not all of his objections. He represented that she had failed in becoming respect to her mother, in thus publicly attacking and opposing her opinions, even supposing them to be ill-founded; and declared that, as to the case in discussion, he was entirely of Lady Glistonbury's opinion, that it would be unfit and injurious to a young lady to exhibit herself, even on a private stage, in the character in which it had been proposed that Lady Julia should appear.

Whilst Russell spoke, Vivian was charmed with the manner in which Lady Julia listened: he thought her countenance enchantingly beautiful, alternately softened as it was by the expression of genuine humility, and radiant with candour and gratitude. She made no reply, but immediately went to her mother; and, in the most engaging manner acknowledged that she had been wrong, and declared that she was convinced it would be improper for her to act the character she had proposed. With that cold haughtiness of mien, the most repulsive to a warm and generous mind, the mother turned to her daughter, and said that, for her part, she had no faith in sudden conversions, and starts of good conduct made little impression upon her; that, as far as she was herself concerned, she forgave, as in charity it became her, all the undutiful insolence with which she had been treated; that, as to the rest, she was glad to find, for Lady Julia's own sake, that she had given up her strange, and, as she must say, _scandalous_ intentions. "However," added Lady Glistonbury, "I am not so sanguine as to consider this as any thing but a respite from ruin; I am not so credulous as to believe in sudden reformations; nor, despicable as you and my lord do me the honour to think my understanding--am I to be made the dupe of a little deceitful fondling!"

Julia withdrew her arms, which she had thrown round her mother; and Miss Strickland, after breaking her netting silk with a jerk of indignation, observed, that, for her part, she wondered young ladies should go to consult their brother's tutor, instead of more suitable, and, perhaps, as competent advisers. Lady Julia, now indignant, turned away, and was withdrawing from before the triumvirate, when Lady Sarah, who had sat looking, even more stiff and constrained than usual, suddenly broke from her stony state, and, springing forward, exclaimed, "Stay, Julia!--Stay, my dear sister!--Oh, Miss Strickland! do my sister justice!--When Julia is so candid, so eager to do right, intercede for her with my mother!"

"First, may I presume to ask," said Miss Strickland, drawing herself up with starch malice; "first, may I presume to ask, whether Mr. Vivian, upon this occasion, declined to act Lothario?"

"Miss Strickland, you do not do my sister justice!" cried Lady Sarah: "Miss Strickland, you are wrong--very wrong!"

Miss Strickland, for a moment struck dumb with astonishment, opening her eyes as far as they could open, stared at Lady Sarah, and, after a pause, exclaimed, "Lady Sarah! I protest I never saw any thing that surprised me so much in my whole life!----Wrong!--very wrong!--I?----My Lady Glistonbury, I trust your ladyship----"

Lady Glistonbury, at this instant, showed, by a little involuntary shake of her head, that she was inwardly perturbed: Lady Sarah, throwing herself upon her knees before her mother, exclaimed, "Oh, madam!--mother! forgive me if I failed in respect to Miss Strickland!----But, my sister! my sister----!"

"Rise, Sarah, rise!" said Lady Glistonbury; "that is not a fit attitude!--And you are wrong, very wrong, to fail in respect to Miss Strickland, my second self, Sarah. Lady Julia Lidhurst, it is you who are the cause of this--the only failure of duty your sister ever was guilty of towards me in the whole course of her life--I beg of you to withdraw, and leave me my daughter Sarah."

"At least, I have found a sister, and when I most wanted it," said Lady Julia. "I always suspected you loved me, but I never knew how much till this moment," added she, turning to embrace her sister; but Lady Sarah had now resumed her stony appearance, and, standing motionless, received her sister's embrace without sign of life or feeling.

"Lady Julia Lidhurst," said Miss Strickland, "you humble yourself in vain: I think your mother, my Lady Glistonbury, requested of you to leave your sister, Lady Sarah, to us, and to her duty."

"Duty!" repeated Lady Julia, her eyes flashing indignation: "Is this what you call _duty_?--Never will I humble myself before you again--I _will_ leave you--I do leave you--now and for ever--DUTY!"

She withdrew:--and thus was lost one of the fairest occasions of confirming a young and candid mind in prudent and excellent dispositions. After humbling herself in vain before a mother, this poor young lady was now to withstand a father's reproaches; and, after the inexorable Miss Strickland, she was to encounter the exasperated Miss Bateman. Whether the Gorgon terrors of one governess, or the fury passions of the other, were most formidable, it was difficult to decide. Miss Bateman had written an epilogue for Lady Julia to recite in the character of Calista; and, with the combined irritability of authoress and governess, she was enraged at the idea of her pupil's declining to repeat these favourite lines. Lord Glistonbury cared not for the lines; but, considering his own authority to be impeached by his daughter's resistance, he treated _his Julia_ as a traitor to his cause, and a rebel to his party.

But Lady Julia was resolute in declining to play Calista; and Vivian admired the spirit and steadiness of her resistance to the solicitations and the flattery with which she was assailed by the numerous hangers-on of the family, and by the amateurs assembled at Glistonbury. Russell,

who knew the warmth of her temper, however, dreaded that she should pass the bounds of propriety in the contest with her father and her governess; and he almost repented having given any advice upon the subject. The contest happily terminated in Lord Glistonbury's having a violent fit of the gout, which, as the newspapers informed the public, "ended for the season the Christmas hospitalities and theatrical festivities at Glistonbury Castle!"

Whilst his lordship suffered this fit of torture, his daughter Julia attended him with so much patience and affection, that he forgave her for not being willing to be Calista; and, upon his recovery, he announced to Miss Bateman that it was his will and pleasure that his daughter Julia should do as she liked on this point, but that he desired it to be understood that this was no concession to Lady Glistonbury's prejudices, but an act of his own pure grace.

To celebrate his recovery, his lordship determined to give a ball; and Miss Bateman persuaded him to make it a fancy ball. In this family, unfortunately, every occurrence, even every proposal of amusement, became a subject of dispute and a source of misery. Lady Glistonbury, as soon as her lord announced his intention of giving this fancy ball, declined taking the direction of an entertainment which approached, she said, too near to the nature of a masquerade to meet her ideas of propriety. Lord Glistonbury laughed, and tried the powers of ridicule and wit:

"But on th'impassive ice the lightnings play'd."

The lady's cool obstinacy was fully a match for her lord's petulance: to all he could urge, she repeated, "that such entertainments did not meet her ideas of propriety." Her ladyship, Lady Sarah, and Miss Strickland, consequently declared it to be their resolution, "to appear in their own proper characters, and their own proper dresses, and no others."

These three rigid seceders excepted, all the world at Glistonbury Castle, and within its sphere of attraction, were occupied with preparations for this ball. Miss Bateman was quite in her element, flattered and flattering, consulting and consulted, in the midst of novels, plays, and poetry, prints, and pictures, searching for appropriate characters and dresses. This preceptress seemed to think and to expect that others should deem her office of governess merely a subordinate part of her business: she considered her having accepted of the superintendence of the education of Lady Julia Lidhurst as a prodigious condescension on her part, and a derogation from her rank and pretensions in the literary and fashionable world; a peculiar and sentimental favour to Lord Glistonbury, of which his lordship was bound in honour to show his sense, by treating her as a member of his family, not only with distinguished politeness, but by deferring to her opinion in all things, so as to prove to her satisfaction that she was considered only as a friend, and not at all as a governess. Thus she was raised as much above that station in the family in which she could be useful, as governesses in other houses have been sometimes depressed below their proper rank. Upon this, as upon all occasions, Miss Bateman

was the first person to be thought of--her character and her dress were the primary points to be determined; and they were points of no easy decision, she having proposed for herself no less than five characters--the fair Rosamond, Joan of Arc, Cleopatra, Sigismunda, and Circe. After minute consideration of the dresses, which, at a fancy ball, were to constitute these characters, fair Rosamond was rejected, "because the old English dress muffled up the person too much; Joan of Arc would find her armour inconvenient for dancing; Cleopatra's diadem and royal purple would certainly be truly becoming, but then her regal length of train was as inadmissible in a dancing-dress as Joan of Arc's armour." Between Sigismunda and Circe, Miss Bateman's choice long vibrated. The Spanish and the Grecian costume had each its claims on her favour: for she was assured they both became her remarkably. Vivian was admitted to the consultation: he was informed that there must be both a Circe and a Sigismunda; and that Lady Julia was to take whichever of the two characters Miss Bateman declined. Pending the deliberation, Lady Julia whispered to Vivian, "For mercy's sake! contrive that I may not be doomed to be Circe; for Circe is no better than Calista."

Vivian was charmed with her ladyship's delicacy and discretion; he immediately decided her governess, by pointing out the beautiful head-dress of Flaxman's Circe, and observing that Miss Bateman's hair (which was a wig) might easily be arranged, so as to produce the same effect. Lady Julia rewarded Vivian for this able and successful manoeuvre by one of her sweetest smiles. Her smiles had now powerful influence over his heart. He rebelled against Russell's advice, to take more time to consider how far his character was suited to hers: he was conscious, indeed, that it would be more prudent to wait a little longer before he should declare his passion, as Lady Julia was so very young and enthusiastic, and as her education had been so ill managed; but he argued that the worse her education, and the more imprudent the people about her, the greater was her merit in conducting herself with discretion, and in trying to restrain her natural enthusiasm. Russell acknowledged this, and gave all due praise to Lady Julia; yet still he represented that Vivian had been acquainted with her so short time that he could not be a competent judge of her temper and disposition, even if his judgment were cool; but it was evident that his passions were now engaged warmly in her favour. All that Russell urged for delay so far operated, however, upon Vivian, that he adopted a half measure, and determined to try what chance he might have of pleasing her before he should either declare his love to her ladyship, or make his proposal to her father. A favourable opportunity soon occurred. On the day appointed for the fancy ball, the young Lord Lidhurst, who was to be Tancred, was taken ill of a feverish complaint: he was of a very weakly constitution, and his friends were much alarmed by his frequent indispositions. His physicians ordered quiet; he was confined to his own apartment; and another Tancred was of course to be sought for: Vivian ventured to offer to assume the character; and his manner, when he made this proposal to his fair Sigismunda, though it was intended to be merely polite and gallant, was so much agitated, that she now, for the first time, seemed to perceive the state of his heart. Colouring high, her ladyship answered, with hesitation unusual to her, "that she believed--she fancied--that is, she understood from her brother--that he had deputed

Mr. Russell to represent Tancred in his place."

Vivian was not displeased by this answer: the change of colour and evident embarrassment appeared to him favourable omens; and he thought that whether the embarrassment arose from unwillingness to let any man but her brother's tutor, a man domesticated in the family, appear as her Tancred, or whether she was afraid of offending Mr. Russell, by changing the arrangement her brother had made; in either case Vivian felt ready, though a man in love, to approve of her motives. As to the rest, he was certain that Russell would decline the part assigned him; and, as Vivian expected, Russell came in a few minutes to resign his pretensions, or rather to state that though Lord Lidhurst had proposed it, he had never thought of accepting the honour; and that he should, in all probability, not appear at the ball, because he was anxious to stay as much as possible with Lord Lidhurst, whose indisposition increased instead of abating. Lord Glistonbury, after this explanation, came in high spirits, and with much satisfaction in his countenance and manner, said he was happy to hear that his Sigismunda was to have Mr. Vivian for her Tancred. So far all was prosperous to our hero's hopes.

But when he saw Lady Julia again, which was not till dinner time, he perceived an unfavourable alteration in her manner; not the timidity or embarrassment of a girl who is uncertain whether she is or is not pleased, or whether she should or should not appear to be pleased by the first approaches of a new lover; but there was in her manner a decided haughtiness, and an unusual air of displeasure and reserve. Though he sat beside her, and though in general her delightful conversation had been addressed either to him or Mr. Russell, they were now both deprived of this honour; whatever she said, and all she said, was unlike herself, was directed to persons opposite to her, even to the captain, the lawyer, and the family parasites, whose existence she commonly seemed to forget. She ate as well as spoke in a hurried manner, and as if in defiance of her feelings. Whilst the courses were changing, she turned towards Mr. Vivian, and after a rapid examining glance at his countenance, she said, in a low voice--"You must think me, Mr. Vivian, very unreasonable and whimsical, but I have given up all thoughts of being Sigismunda. Will you oblige me so far as not to appear in the dress of Tancred to-night? You will thus spare me all farther difficulty. You know my mother and sister have declared their determination not to wear any fancy dress; and though my father is anxious that I should, I believe it may be best that, in this instance, I follow my own judgment.--May I expect that you will oblige me?"

Vivian declared his entire submission to her ladyship's judgment: and he now was delighted to be able to forgive her for all seeming caprice; because he thought he saw an amiable motive for her conduct--the wish not to displease her mother, and not to excite the jealousy of her sister.

The hour when the ball was to commence arrived; the room filled with company; and Vivian, who flattered himself with the pleasure of dancing all night with Lady Julia, as the price of his prompt obedience, looked round the room in search of his expected partner, but he searched in

vain. He looked to the door at every new entrance--no Lady Julia appeared. Circe, indeed, was every where to be seen and heard, and an uglier Circe never touched this earth; but she looked happily confident in the power of her charms. Whilst she was intent upon fascinating Vivian, he was impatiently waiting for a moment's intermission of her volubility, that he might ask what had become of Lady Julia.

"Lady Julia?--She's somewhere in the room, I suppose.--Oh! no: I remember, she told me she would go and sit a quarter of an hour with her brother. She will soon make her appearance, I suppose; but I am so angry with her for disappointing us all, and you in particular, by changing her mind about Sigismunda!--Such a capital Tancred as you would have made! and now you are no character at all! But then, you are only on a par with certain ladies. Comfort yourself with the great Pope's (I fear too true) reflection, that

'Most women have no characters at all.'

Miss Bateman's eye glanced insolently, as she spoke, upon Lady Glistonbury's trio, who passed by at this instant, all without fancy dresses. Vivian shocked by this ill-breeding towards the mistress of the house, offered his arm immediately to Lady Glistonbury, and conducted her with Lady Sarah and Miss Strictland to their proper places, where, having seated themselves, each in the same attitude precisely, they looked more like martyrs prepared for endurance, than like persons in a ball-room. Vivian stayed to speak a few words to Lady Glistonbury, and was just going away, when her ladyship, addressing him with more than her usual formality, said, "Mr. Vivian, I see, has not adopted the fashion of the day; and as he is the only gentleman present, whose fancy dress does not proclaim him engaged to some partner equally _fanciful_, I cannot but wish that my daughter, Lady Sarah, should, if she dance at all to-night, dance with a gentleman in his own proper character."

Vivian, thus called upon, felt compelled to ask the honour of Lady Sarah's hand; but he flattered himself, that after the first dance he should have done his duty, and that he should be at liberty by the time Julia should make her appearance. But, to his great disappointment, Mr. Russell, who came in just as he had finished the first two dances, informed him that Lady Julia was determined not to appear at the ball, but to stay with her brother, who wished for her company. So poor Vivian found himself doomed to be Lady Sarah's partner for the remainder of the night. It happened that, as he was handing her ladyship to supper, in passing through an antechamber where some of the neighbours of inferior rank had been permitted to assemble to see _the show_, he heard one farmer's wife say to another, "Who _beas_ that there, that's handing of Lady Sarah?"--They were detained a little by the crowd, so that he had time to hear the whole answer.--"Don't you know?" was the answer. "That there gentleman is Mr. Vivian of the new castle, that is to be married to her directly, and that's what he's come here for; for they've been engaged to one another ever since the time o' the election."

This speech disturbed our hero's mind considerably; for it awakened a train of reflections which he had wilfully left dormant. Will it, can it

be believed, that after all his friend Russell's exhortations, after his own wise resolutions, he had never yet made any of those explanatory speeches he had intended?

"Positively," said he to himself, "this report shall not prevail four-and-twenty hours longer. I will propose for Lady Julia Lidhurst before I sleep. Russell, to be sure, advises me not to be precipitate--to take more time to study her disposition; but I am acquainted with her sufficiently;" (he should have said, I am in love with her sufficiently;) "and really now, I am bound in honour immediately to declare myself--it is the best possible way of putting a stop to a report which will be ultimately injurious to Lady Sarah."

Thus Vivian made his past irresolution an excuse for his present precipitation, flattering himself, as men often do when they are yielding to the impulse of their passions, that they are submitting to the dictates of reason. At six o'clock in the morning the company dispersed. Lord Glistonbury and Vivian were the last in the ball-room. His lordship began some raillery upon our hero's having declined appearing as Tancred, and upon his having devoted himself all night to Lady Sarah. Vivian seized the moment to explain his real feelings, and he made his proposal for Lady Julia. It was received with warm approbation by the father, who seemed to rejoice the more in this proposal, because he knew that it would disappoint and mortify Lady Glistonbury. The interests of his hatred seemed, indeed, to occupy his lordship more than the interests of Vivian's love; but politeness threw a decent veil over these feelings; and, after saying all that could be expected of the satisfaction it must be to a father to see his daughter united to a man of Mr. Vivian's family, fortune, talents, and great respectability; and after having given, incidentally and parenthetically, his opinions, not only concerning matrimony, but concerning all other affairs of human life, he wished his future son-in-law a very good night, and left him to repose. But no rest could Vivian take--he waited with impatience, that made every hour appear at least two, for the time when he was again to meet Lady Julia. He saw her at breakfast; but he perceived by her countenance that she as yet knew nothing of his proposal. After breakfast Lord Glistonbury said, "Come with me, my little Julia! it is a long time since I've had a walk and a talk with you." His lordship paced up and down the terrace, conversing earnestly with her for some time: he then went on to some labourers, who were cutting down a tree at the farther end of the avenue. Vivian hastened out to meet Lady Julia, who, after standing deep in thought for some moments, seemed returning towards the castle.

CHAPTER IX.

"Mr. Vivian, I trust that I am not deficient in maidenly modesty," said Lady Julia, "when it is not incompatible with what I deem a higher virtue--sincerity. Now and ever, frankness is, and shall be, my only

policy. The confidence I am about to repose in you, sir, is the strongest proof of my esteem, and of the gratitude I feel for your attachment.--My heart is no longer in my power to bestow. It is--young as I am, I dare to pronounce the words--irrevocably fixed upon one who will do honour to my choice. Your proposal was made to my father--Why was it not made to me?--Men--all men but one--treat women as puppets, and then wonder that they are not rational creatures!--Forgive me this too just reproach. But, as I was going to say, your proposal has thrown me into great difficulties--the greater because my father warmly approves of it. I have a strong affection for him; and, perhaps, a year or two ago, I should, in the ignorance in which I was dogmatically brought up, have thought it my duty to submit implicitly to parental authority, and to receive a husband from the hands of a father, without consulting either my own heart or my own judgment. But, since my mind has been more enlightened, and has opened to higher views of the dignity of my sex, and higher hopes of happiness, my ideas of duty have altered; and, I trust, I have sufficient courage to support my own idea of the rights of my sex, and my firm conviction of what is just and becoming."

Vivian was again going to say something; but, whether against or in favour of the rights of the sex, he had not clearly decided; when her ladyship saved him the trouble, by proceeding with the train of her ideas.

"My sincerity towards my father will, perhaps, cost me dear; but I cannot repent of it. As soon as I knew the state of my own heart--which was not till very lately--which was not, indeed, till you gave me reason to think you seriously liked me--I openly told my father all I knew of my own heart. Would you believe it?--I am sure I should not, unless I had seen and felt it--my father, who, you know, professes the most liberal opinions possible; my father, who, in conversation is 'All for love, and the world well lost;' my father, who let Miss Bateman put the Heloise into my hands, was astonished, shocked, indignant, at his own daughter's confession, I should say, assertion of her preference of a man of high merit, who wants only the advantages, if they be advantages, of rank and fortune.

"Mr. Vivian," continued she, "may I hope that now, when you must be convinced of the inefficacy of any attempt either to win or to control my affections, you will have the generosity to spare me all unnecessary contest with my father? It must render him more averse from the only union that can make his daughter happy; and it may ruin the fortunes of--the first, in my opinion, of human beings. I will request another favour from you--and let my willingness to be obliged by you convince you that I appreciate your character--I request that you will not only keep secret all that I have said to you; but that, if accident, or your own penetration, should hereafter discover to you the object of my affection, you will refrain from making any use of that discovery to my disadvantage. You see how entirely I have thrown myself on your honour and generosity."

Vivian assured her that the appeal was powerful with him; and that, by mastering his own passions, and sacrificing his feelings to hers, he

would endeavour to show his strong desire to secure, at all events, her happiness.

"You are truly generous, Mr. Vivian, to listen to me with indulgence, to wish for my happiness, whilst I have been wounding your feelings. But, without any impeachment of your sincerity, or yet of your sensibility, let me say, that yours will be only a transient disappointment. Your acquaintance with me is but of yesterday, and the slight impression made on your mind will soon be effaced; but upon my mind there has been time to grave a deep, a first character of love, that never, whilst memory holds her seat, can be erased.--I believe," said Julia, checking herself, whilst a sudden blush overspread her countenance--"I am afraid that I have said too much, too much for a woman. The fault of my character, I know, I have been told, is the want of what is called RESERVE."

Blushing still more deeply as she pronounced these last words, the colour darting up to her temples, spreading over her neck, and making its way to the very tips of her fingers, "Now I have done worse," cried she, covering her face with her hands. But the next moment, resuming, or trying to resume her self-possession, she said, "It is time that I should retire, now that I have revealed my whole heart to you. It has, perhaps, been imprudently opened; but for that, your generosity, sir, is to blame. Had you shown more selfishness, I should assuredly have exerted more prudence, and have treated you with less confidence."

Lady Julia quitted him, and Vivian remained in a species of amaze, from which he could not immediately recover. Her frankness, her magnanimity, her enthusiastic sensibility, her eloquent beauty, had altogether exalted, to the highest ecstasy, his love and admiration. Then he walked about, beating his breast in despair at the thought of her affections being irrecoverably engaged,--next quarrelled with the boldness of the confession, the assertion of her love--then decided, that, with all her shining qualities and noble dispositions, she was not exactly the woman a man should desire for a wife: there was something too rash, too romantic about her; there was in her character, as she herself had said, and as Russell had remarked, too little reserve. Something like jealousy and distrust of his friend arose in Vivian's mind: "What!" said he to himself, "and is Russell my rival? and has he been all this time in secret my rival? Is it possible that Russell has been practising upon the affections of this innocent young creature--confided to him too? All this time, whilst he has been cautioning me against her charms, beseeching me not to propose for her precipitately, is it possible that he wanted only to get, to keep the start of me?--No--impossible! utterly impossible! If all the circumstances, all the evidence upon earth conspired, I would not believe it."

Resolved not to do injustice, even in his inmost soul, to his friend, our hero repelled all suspicion of Russell, by reflecting on his long and tried integrity, and on the warmth and fidelity of his friendship. In this temper he was crossing the castle-yard to go to Russell's apartment, when he was met and stopped by one of the domesticated friends of the family, Mr. Mainwaring, the young lawyer: he was in the

confidence of Lord Glistonbury, and, proud to show it, he let Mr. Vivian know that he was apprised of the proposal that had been made, and congratulated him, and all the parties concerned, on the prospect of such an agreeable connexion. Vivian was quite unprepared to speak to any one, much less to a lawyer, upon this subject; he had not even thought of the means of obeying Lady Julia, by withdrawing his suit; therefore, with a mixture of vexation and embarrassment in his manner, he answered in commonplace phrases, meant to convey no precise meaning, and endeavoured to disengage himself from his companion; but the lawyer, who had fastened upon him, linking his arm in Vivian's, continued to walk him up and down under the great gateway, saying that he had a word or two of importance for his private ear. This man had taken much pains to insinuate himself into Vivian's favour, by the most obsequious and officious attentions: though his flattery had at first been disgusting, yet, by persevering in his show of civility, he had at length inclined Vivian to think that he was too harsh in his first judgment, and to believe that, "after all, Mainwaring was a good friendly fellow, though his manner was against him."

Mr. Mainwaring, with many professions of regard for Vivian, and with sundry premisings that he hazarded himself by the communication, took the liberty of hinting, that he guessed, from Mr. Vivian's manner this morning, that obstacles had arisen on the part of a young lady who should be nameless; and he should make bold to add that, in his private opinion, the said obstacles would never be removed whilst _a certain person_ remained in the castle, and whilst the young lady alluded to was allowed to spend so much of her time studying with her brother when well, or nursing him when sick. Mr. Mainwaring declared that he was perfectly astonished at Lord Glistonbury's blindness or imprudence in keeping this person in the house, after the hints his lordship had received, and after all the proofs that must or may have fallen within his cognizance, of the arts of seduction that had been employed. Here Vivian interrupted Mr. Mainwaring, to beg that he would not keep him longer in suspense by _inuendoes_, but that he would name distinctly the object of his suspicions. This, however, Mr. Mainwaring begged to be excused from doing: he would only shake his head and smile, and leave people to their own sagacity and penetration. Vivian warmly answered, that, if Mr. Mainwaring meant Mr. Russell, he was well assured that Mr. Mainwaring was utterly mistaken in attributing to him any but the most honourable conduct.

Mr. Mainwaring smiled, and shook his head--smiled again, and sighed, and hoped Mr. Vivian was right, and observed that time would show; and that, at all events, he trusted Mr. Vivian would keep profoundly secret the hint which his friendship had, indiscreetly perhaps, hazarded.

Scarcely had Mr. Mainwaring retired, when Captain Pickering met and seized upon Vivian, led to the same subject, and gave similar hints, that Russell was the happy rival who had secretly made himself master of Lady Julia's heart. Vivian, though much astonished, finding that these gentlemen agreed in their discoveries or their suspicions, still defended his friend Russell, and strongly protested that he would be responsible for his honour with his life, if it were necessary. The

captain shrugged his shoulders, said it was none of his business, that, as Mr. Vivian _took it up so warmly,_ he should let it drop; for it was by no means his intention to get into a quarrel with Mr. Vivian, for whom he had a particular regard. This said, with all the frankness of a soldier, Captain Pickering withdrew, adding, as the clergyman passed at this instant, "There's a man who could tell you more than any of us, if he would, but _snug's_ the word with Wicksted."

Vivian, in great anxiety and much curiosity, appealed to Mr. Wicksted: he protested that he knew nothing, suspected nothing, at least could venture to say nothing; for these were very delicate family matters, and every gentleman should, on these occasions, make it a principle to see with his own eyes. Gradually, however, Mr. Wicksted let out his opinion, and implied infinitely more than Captain Pickering or Mr. Mainwaring had asserted. Vivian still maintained, in the warmest terms, that it was impossible his friend Russell should be to blame. Mr. Wicksted simply pronounced the word _friend_ with a peculiar emphasis, and, with an incredulous smile, left him to his reflections. Those reflections were painful; for, though he defended Russell from the attacks of others, yet he had not sufficient firmness of mind completely to resist the suggestions of suspicion and jealousy, particularly when they had been corroborated by so many concurring testimonies. He had no longer the courage to go immediately to Russell, to tell him of his proposal for Lady Julia, or to speak to him of any of his secret feelings; but, turning away from the staircase that led to his friend's apartment, he determined to observe Russell with his own eyes, before he should decide upon the truth or falsehood of the accusations which had been brought against him. Alas! Vivian was no longer in a condition to observe with his own eyes; his imagination was so perturbed, that he could neither see nor hear any thing as it really was. When he next saw Russell and Lady Julia together, he wondered at his blindness in not having sooner perceived their mutual attachment: notwithstanding that Lady Julia had now the strongest motives to suppress every indication of her passion, symptoms of it broke out continually, the more violent, perhaps, from her endeavours to conceal them. He knew that she was passionately in love with Russell; and that Russell should not have perceived what every other man, even every indifferent spectator, had discovered, appeared incredible. Russell's calm manner and entire self-possession sometimes provoked Vivian, and sometimes quelled his suspicions; sometimes he looked upon this calmness as the extreme of art, sometimes as a proof of innocence, which could not be counterfeit. At one moment he was so much struck with Russell's friendly countenance, that, quite ashamed of his suspicions, he was upon the point of speaking openly to him; but, unfortunately, these intentions were frustrated by some slight obstacle. At length Miss Strickland, who had lately been very courteous to Mr. Vivian, took an opportunity of drawing him into one of the recessed windows; where, with infinite difficulty in bringing herself to speak on such a subject, after inconceivable bridlings of the head, and contortions of every muscle of her neck, she insinuated to him her fears, that my Lord Glistonbury's confidence had been very ill placed in Lord Lidhurst's tutor: she was aware that Mr. Russell had the honour of Mr. Vivian's friendship, but nothing could prevent her from speaking, where she felt it to be so much her duty; and that, as from the

unfortunate circumstances in the family she had no longer any influence over Lady Julia Lidhurst, nor any chance of being listened to on such a subject with patience by Lord Glistonbury, she thought the best course she could take was to apply to Mr. Russell's friend, who might possibly, by his interference, prevent the utter disgrace and ruin of one branch of a noble family.

Miss Strickland, in all she said, hinted not at Vivian's attachment to Lady Julia, and gave him no reason to believe that she was apprised of his having proposed for her ladyship: she spoke with much moderation and candour; attributed all Lady Julia's errors to the imprudence of her new governess, Miss Bateman. Miss Strickland now showed a desire not to make, but to prevent mischief; even the circumlocutions and stiffness of her habitual prudery did not, on this occasion, seem unseasonable; therefore what she suggested made a great impression on Vivian. He still, however, defended Russell, and assured Miss Strickland that, from the long experience he had himself had of his friend's honour, he was convinced that no temptation could shake his integrity. Miss Strickland had formed her opinion on this point, she said, and it would be in vain to argue against it. Every new assertion; the belief of each new person who spoke to him on the subject; the combination, the coincidence of all their opinions, wrought his mind to such a height of jealousy, that he was now absolutely incapable of using his reason. He went in search of Russell, but in no fit mood to speak to him as he ought. He looked for him in his own, in Lord Lidhurst's apartment, in every sitting-room in the castle; but Mr. Russell was not to be found: at last Lady Sarah's maid, who heard him inquiring for Mr. Russell from the servants, told him, "she fancied that if he took the trouble to go to the west walk, he might find Mr. Russell, as that was a favourite walk of his." Vivian hurried thither, with a secret expectation of finding Lady Julia with him--there they both were in earnest conversation: as he approached, the trees concealed him from view; and Vivian heard his own name repeated. "Stop!" cried he, advancing: "let me not overhear your secrets--I am not a traitor to my friends!"

As he spoke, his eyes fixed with an expression of concentrated rage upon Russell. Terrified by Vivian's sudden appearance and strange address, and still more by the fierce look he cast on Russell, Lady Julia started and uttered a faint scream. With astonishment, but without losing his self-command, Russell advanced towards Vivian, saying, "You are out of your senses, my dear friend!--I will not listen to you in your present humour. Take a turn or two with me to cool yourself. The anger of a friend should always be allowed three minutes' grace, at least," added Russell, smiling, and endeavouring to draw Vivian away: but Vivian stood immovable; Russell's calmness, instead of bringing him to his senses, only increased his anger; to his distempered imagination this coolness seemed perfidious dissimulation.

"You cannot deceive me longer, Mr. Russell, by all your art!" cried he. "Though I am the last to open my eyes, I have opened them. Why did you pretend to be my counsellor and friend, when you were my rival?--when you knew that you were my successful rival?----Yes, start and affect astonishment! Yes--look, if you can, with innocent surprise upon that

lady!--Say that you have not betrayed her father's confidence!--say, that you have not practised upon her unguarded heart!--say, that you do not know that she loves you to distraction!"

"Oh! Mr. Vivian, what have you done?" cried Lady Julia: she could say no more, but fell senseless on the ground. Vivian's anger was at once sobered by this sight.

"What have I done!" repeated he, as they raised her from the ground. "Wretch! dishonourable villain that I am! I have betrayed her secret--But I thought every body knew it!----Is it possible that you did not know it, Russell?"

Russell made no reply, but ran to the river which was near them for some water--Vivian was incapable of affording any assistance, or even of forming a distinct idea. As soon as Lady Julia returned to her senses, Russell withdrew; Vivian threw himself on his knees before her, and said something about the violence of his passion--his sorrow--and her forgiveness. "Mr. Vivian," said Lady Julia, turning to him with a mixture of despair and dignity in her manner, "do not kneel to me; do not make use of any commonplace phrases--I cannot, at this moment, forgive you--you have done me an irreparable injury. I confided a secret to you--a secret known to no human being but my father and yourself--you have revealed it, and to whom?--Sooner would I have had it proclaimed to the whole world than to ----; for what is the opinion of the whole world to me, compared to his?--Sir, you have done me, indeed, an irremediable injury!--I trusted to your honour--your discretion--and you have betrayed, sacrificed me."

"Vile suspicions!" cried Vivian, striking his forehead: "how could I listen to them for a moment!"

"Suspicious of Mr. Russell!" cried Julia, with a look of high indignation--"Suspicious of your noble-minded friend!--What wickedness, or what weakness!"

"Weakness!--miserable weakness!--the sudden effect of jealousy; and could you know, Lady Julia, by what means, by what arts, my mind was worked up to this insanity!"

"I cannot listen to this now, Mr. Vivian," interrupted Lady Julia: "my thoughts cannot fix upon such things--I cannot go back to the past--what is done cannot be undone--what has been said cannot be unsaid.--You cannot recall your words--they were heard--they were understood. I beg you to leave me, sir, that I may have leisure to think--if possible, to consider what yet remains for me to do. I have no friend--none, none willing or capable of advising me! I begged of you to leave me, sir."

Vivian could not, at this moment, decide whether he ought or ought not to tell Lady Julia that her secret was known, or at least suspected, by many individuals of the family.

"There's a servant on the terrace who seems to be looking for us," said

Vivian; "I had something of consequence to say--but this man--"

"My lady, Miss Bateman desired me to let you know, my lady, that there is the Lady Playdels, and the colonel, and Sir James, in the drawing-room, just come;--and she begs, my lady, you will be pleased to come to them; for Miss Bateman's waiting for you, my lady, to repeat the verses, she bid me say, my lady."

"Go to them, Mr. Vivian; I cannot go."

"My lady," persisted the footman, "my lord himself begged you to come; and he and all the gentlemen have been looking for you every where."

"Return to my father, then, and say that I am coming immediately."

"Forced into company!" thought Lady Julia, as she walked slowly towards the house; "compelled to appear calm and gay, when my heart is--what a life of dissimulation! How unworthy of me, formed, as I was once pronounced to be, for every thing that is good and great!--But I am no longer mistress of myself--no soul left but for one object. Why did I not better guard my heart?--No!--rather, why can I not follow its dictates, and at once avow and justify its choice?"

Vivian interrupted Lady Julia's reverie by pointing out to her, as they passed along the terrace, a group of heads, in one of the back windows of the castle, that seemed to be watching them very earnestly. Miss Strictland's face was foremost; half her body was out of the window; and as she drew back, they heard her say--"It is not he!--It is not he!--"As they passed another front of the castle, another party seemed to be upon the watch at a staircase window;--the lawyer, the captain, the clergyman's heads appeared for a moment, and vanished.

"They seem all to be upon the watch for us," said Vivian.

"Meanness!" cried Lady Julia. "To watch or to be watched, I know not which is most degrading; but I cannot think they are watching us."

"My dear Lady Julia!--yet let me call you dear this once--my hopes are gone!--even for your forgiveness I have no right to hope--but let me do you one piece of service--let me put your open temper on its guard. You flatter yourself that the secret you confided to me is not known to any body living but to your father--I have reason to believe that it is suspected, if not positively known, by several other persons in this castle."

"Impossible!"

"I am certain, too certain, of what I say."

Lady Julia made a sudden stop; and, after a pause, exclaimed--

"Then farewell hope! and, with hope, farewell fear!"

"My lady, my lord sent me again, for my lord's very impatient for you, my lady," said the same footman, returning. Lord Glistonbury met them in the hall.--"Why, Julia! where have you been all this time?" he began, in an imperious tone; but seeing Mr. Vivian, his brow grew smooth and his voice good-humoured instantly.--"Ha!--So! so!--Hey! well!--All right! all right!--Good girl! good girl!--Time for every thing--Hey! Mr. Vivian?--'Que la solitude est charmante!' as Voltaire says--Beg pardon for sending for you; but interruption, you know, prevents
tCÉtes-àtCÉtes on the stage from growing tiresome; and the stage, they say, holds the mirror up to nature. But there's no nature now left to hold the mirror up to, except in a few odd instances, as in my Julia here!--Where so fast, my blushing darling?"

"I thought you wished, sir, that I should go to Lady Playdel and Sir James."

"Ay, ay, I sent for you to repeat those charming verses for them that I could not clearly remember.--Go up! go up!--We'll follow you!--We have a word or two to say about something--that's nothing to you."

Lord Glistonbury kept Vivian for a full hour in a state of considerable embarrassment, talking to him of Lady Julia, implying that she was favourably disposed towards him, but that she had a little pride, that might make her affect the contrary at first. Then came a disquisition on pride, with quotations and commonplaces;--then an eulogium, by his lordship, on his lordship's own knowledge of the human heart, and more especially of that "moving toyshop," the female heart; then anecdotes illustrative, comprising the gallantries of thirty years in various ranks of life, with suitable bon-mots and embellishments;--then a little French sentiment, by way of moral, with some philosophical axioms, to show that, though he had led such a gay life, he had been a deep thinker, and that, though nobody could have thought that he had had time for reading, his genius had supplied him, he could not himself really tell how, with what other people with the study of years could not master:--all which Vivian was compelled to hear, whilst he was the whole time impatient to get away, that he might search for Mr. Russell, with whom he was anxious to have an explanation. But, at last, when Lord Glistonbury set him free, he was not nearer to his object. Mr. Russell, he found upon inquiry, had not returned to the castle, nor did he return to dinner; he sent word that he was engaged to dine with a party of gentlemen at a literary club, in a country town nine miles distant. Vivian spent the greatest part of the evening in Lord Lidhurst's apartment, expecting Russell's return; but it grew so late, that Lord Lidhurst, who was still indisposed, went to bed; and when Vivian quitted his lordship, he met Russell's servant in the gallery, who said his master had been come in an hour ago: "but, sir," added the man, "my master won't let you see him, I am sure; for he would not let me in, and he said, that, if you asked for him, I was to answer, that he could not see you to-night."--Vivian knocked in vain at Russell's door; he could not gain admission; so he went reluctantly to bed, determined to rise very early, that he might see his friend as soon as possible, obtain his forgiveness for the past, and ask his advice for the future.

CHAPTER X.

Suspense, curiosity, love, jealousy, remorse, any one of which is enough to keep a person awake all night, by turns agitated poor Vivian so violently, that for several hours he could not close his eyes; but at last, when quite exhausted, he fell into a profound sleep. The first image that came before his mind, when he awoke in the morning, was that of Lady Julia; his next recollection was of Russell.

"Is Mr. Russell up yet?" said Vivian to his servant, who was bringing in his boots.

"Up, sir! Oh, yes, hours ago!--He was off at daybreak!"

"Off!" cried Vivian, starting up in his bed; "off!--Where is he gone?"

"I can't say, sir. Yes, indeed, sir, I heard Mr. Russell's man say, that his master was going post to the north, to some old uncle that was taken ill, which he heard about at dinner from some of those gentlemen where he dined yesterday; but I can't say positively. But here's a letter he left for you with me."

"A letter!--Give it me!--Why didn't you give it me sooner?"

"Why really, sir, you lay so sound, I didn't care to waken you; and I was up so late myself, too, last night."

"Leave me now; I'll ring when I want you."

"TO C. VIVIAN, ESQ.

"I would not see you, after what passed yesterday, because I feared that I should not speak to you with temper. Lest you should misinterpret any thing I have formerly said, I must now solemnly assure you, that I never had the slightest suspicion of the secret you revealed to me till the moment when it was betrayed by your indiscretion. Still I can scarcely credit what appears to me so improbable; but, even under this uncertainty, I think it my duty to leave this family. Had the slightest idea of what you suggested ever crossed my imagination, I should then have acted as I do now. I say this, not to justify myself, but to convince you, that what I formerly hinted about reserve of manners and prudence was merely a general reflection.

"For my own part, I seem to act HEROICALLY; but I must disclaim that applause to which I am not entitled. All powerful as the temptation must appear to you, dangerous as it must have been, in other circumstances, to me, I cannot claim any merit for resisting its influence. My safety I owe neither to my own prudence or fortitude. I must now, Vivian, impart

to you a secret which you are at liberty to confide where and when you think necessary--my heart is, and has long been, engaged. Whilst you were attached to Miss Sidney, I endeavoured to subdue my love for her; and every symptom of it was, I hope and believe, suppressed. This declaration cannot now give you any pain; except so far as it may, perhaps, excite in your mind some remorse for having unwarrantably, unworthily, and weakly, suffered yourself to feel suspicions of a true friend. Well as I know the infirmity of your character, and willing as I have always been to make allowance for a fault which I thought time and experience would correct, I was not prepared for this last stroke; I never thought your weakness of mind would have shown itself in suspicion of your best, your long-tried friend.--But I am at last convinced that your mind is not strong enough for confidence and friendship. I pity, but I see that I can no longer serve; and I feel that I can no longer esteem you. Farewell! Vivian. May you find a friend, who will supply to you the place of H. RUSSELL."

Vivian knew Russell's character too well to flatter himself that the latter part of this letter was written in anger that would quickly subside; from the tone of the letter he felt that Russell was deeply offended. In the whole course of his life he had depended on Russell's friendship as a solid blessing, of which he could never be deprived by any change of circumstances--by any possible chance in human affairs; and now to have lost such a friend by his own folly, by his own weakness, was a misfortune of which he could hardly believe the reality. At the same moment, too, he learned how nobly Russell had behaved towards him, in the most trying situation in which the human heart can be placed. Russell's love for Selina Sidney, Vivian had never till this instant suspected. "What force, what command of mind!--What magnanimity!--What a generous friend he has ever been to me!--and I--"

Poor Vivian, always sinning and always penitent, was so much absorbed by sorrow for the loss of Russell's friendship, that he could not for some time think even of the interests of his love, or consider the advantage which he might derive from the absence of his rival, and from that rival's explicit declaration, that his affections were irrevocably engaged. By degrees these ideas rose clearly to Vivian's view; his hopes revived. Lady Julia would see the absolute impossibility of Russell's returning, or of his accepting her affection; her good sense, her pride, would in time subdue this hopeless passion; and Vivian was generous enough, or sufficiently in love, to feel that the value of her heart would not be diminished, but rather increased in his opinion, by the sensibility she had shown to the talents and virtues of his friend. _His friend_, Vivian ventured now to call him; for with the hopes of love, the hopes of friendship rose.

"All may yet be well!" said he to himself. "Russell will forgive me when he hears how I was worked upon by those parasites and prudish busybodies, who infused their vile suspicions into my mind. Weak as it is, I never will allow that it is incapable of confidence or of friendship!--No! Russell will retract that harsh sentence. When he is happy, as I am sure I ardently hope he will be, in Selina's love, he will restore me to his favour. Without his friendship, I could not be

satisfied with myself, or happy in the full accomplishment of all my other fondest hopes."

By the time that hope had thus revived and renovated our hero's soul; by the time that his views of things had totally changed, and that the colour of his future destiny had turned from black to white--from all gloom to all sunshine; the minute-hand of the clock had moved with unfeeling regularity, or, in plain unmeasured prose, it was now eleven o'clock, and three times Vivian had been warned that breakfast was ready. When he entered the room, the first thing he heard, as usual, was Miss Bateman's voice, who was declaiming upon some sentimental point, in all "the high sublime of deep absurd." Vivian, little interested in this display, and joining neither in the open flattery nor in the secret ridicule with which the gentlemen wits and amateurs listened to the Rosamunda, looked round for Lady Julia. "She breakfasts in her own room this morning," whispered Lord Glistonbury, before Vivian had even pronounced her ladyship's name.

"So!" said Mr. Pickering, "we have lost Mr. Russell this morning!"

"Yes," said Lord Glistonbury, "he was forced to hurry away to the north, I find, to an old sick uncle."

"Lord Lidhurst, I'm afraid, will break his heart for want of him," cried the lawyer, in a tone that might either pass for earnest or irony, according to the fancy of the interpreter.

"Lord Lidhurst, did you say?"--cried the captain: "are you sure you meant Lord Lidhurst? I don't apprehend that a young nobleman ever broke his heart after his tutor. But I was going to remark----"

What farther the captain was going to remark can never be known to the world; for Lord Glistonbury so startled him by the loud and rather angry tone in which he called for the cream, which _stood_ with the captain, that all his few ideas were put to flight. Mr. Pickering, who noticed Lord Glistonbury's displeasure, now resumed the conversation about Mr. Russell in a new tone; and the lawyer and he joined in a eulogy upon that gentleman. Lord Glistonbury said not a word, but looked embarrassed. Miss Strickland cleared her throat several times, and looked infinitely more rigid and mysterious than usual. Lady Glistonbury and Lady Sarah, ditto--ditto. Almost every body, except such visitors as were strangers at the castle, perceived that there was something extraordinary going on in the family; and the gloom and constraint spread so, that, towards the close of breakfast, nothing was uttered, by prudent people, but awkward sentences about the weather--the wind--and the likelihood of there being a mail from the continent. Still through all this, regardless and unknowing of it all, the Rosamunda talked on, happily abstracted, egotistically secured from the pains of sympathy or of curiosity by the all-sufficient power of vanity. Even her patron, Lord Glistonbury, was at last provoked and disgusted. He was heard, under his breath, to pronounce a contemptuous _Pshaw!_ and, as he rose from the breakfast table he whispered to Vivian, "There's a woman, now, who thinks of nothing living but herself!--All talk! talk!--I begin

to be weary of her.----Gentlemen," continued his lordship, "I've letters to write this morning.----You'll ride--you'll walk--you're for the billiard-room, I suppose.----Mr. Vivian, I shall find you in my study, I hope, an hour hence; but first I have a little business to settle." With evident embarrassment Lord Glistonbury retired. Lady Glistonbury, Lady Sarah, and Miss Strickland, each sighed; then, with looks of intelligence, rose and retired. The company separated soon afterwards; and went to ride, to walk, or to the billiard-room, and Vivian to the study, to wait there for Lord Glistonbury, and to meditate upon what might be the nature of his lordship's business. As Vivian crossed the gallery, the door of Lady Glistonbury's dressing-room opened, and was shut again instantaneously by Miss Strickland; but not before he saw Lady Julia kneeling at her father's feet, whilst Lady Glistonbury and Lady Sarah were standing like statues, on each side of his lordship. Vivian waited a full hour afterwards in tedious suspense in the study. At last he heard doors open and footsteps, and he judged that the family council had broken up; he laid down a book, of which he had read the same page over six times, without any one of the words it contained having conveyed a single idea to his mind. Lord Glistonbury came in, with papers and parchments in his hands.

"Mr. Vivian, I am afraid you have been waiting for me--have a thousand pardons to ask--I really could not come any sooner--I wished to speak to you--Won't you sit down?--We had better sit down quietly--there's no sort of hurry."

His lordship, however, seemed to be in great agitation-of spirits; and Vivian was convinced that his mind must be interested in an extraordinary manner, because he did not, as was his usual practice, digress to fifty impertinent episodes before he came to the point. He only blew his nose sundry times; and then at once said, "I wish to speak to you, Mr. Vivian, about the proposal you did me the honour to make for my daughter Julia. Difficulties have occurred on our side--very extraordinary difficulties--Julia, I understand, has hinted to you, sir, the nature of those difficulties.--Oh, Mr. Vivian," said Lord Glistonbury, suddenly quitting the constrained voice in which he spoke, and giving way to his natural feelings, "you are a man of honour and feeling, and a father may trust you!----Here's my girl--a charming girl she is; but knowing nothing of the world--self-willed, romantic, open-hearted, imprudent beyond conception; do not listen to any of the foolish things she says to you. You are a man of sense, you love her, and you are every way suited to her; it is the first wish of my heart--I tell you frankly--to see her your wife: then do not let her childish folly persuade you that her affections are engaged--don't listen to any such stuff. We all know what the first loves of a girl of sixteen must be--But it's our fault--my fault, my fault, since they will have it so. I care not whose fault it is; but we have had very improper people about her--very!--very!--But all may be well yet, if you, sir, will be steady, and save her--save her from herself. I would farther suggest----"

Lord Glistonbury was going on, probably, to have weakened by amplification the effect of what he had said, when Lady Julia entered

the room; and, advancing with dignified determination of manner, said, "I have your commands, father, that I should see Mr. Vivian again:--I obey."

"That is right--that is my darling Julia; I always knew she would justify my high opinion of her." Lord Glistonbury attempted to draw her towards him fondly; but, with an unaltered manner, that seemed as if she suppressed strong emotion, she answered, "I do not deserve your caresses, father; do not oppress me with praise that I cannot merit: I wish to speak to Mr. Vivian without control and without witness."

Lord Glistonbury rose; and growing red and almost inarticulate with anger, exclaimed, "Remember, Julia! remember, Lady Julia Lidhurst! that if you say what you said you would say, and what I said you should not say--I--Lord Glistonbury, your father--I, as well as all the rest of your family, utterly disclaim and cast you off for ever!--You'll be a thing without fortune--without friends--without a name--without a being in the world--Lady Julia Lidhurst!"

"I am well aware of that," replied Lady Julia, growing quite pale, yet without changing the determination of her countenance, or abating any thing from the dignity of her manner: "I am well aware, that on what I am about to do depends my having, or my ceasing from this moment to have, fortune, friends, and a father."

Lord Glistonbury stood still for a moment--fixed his eyes upon her as if he would have read her soul; but, without seeking to elude his inquiry, her countenance seemed to offer itself to his penetration.

"By Heaven, there is no understanding this girl!" cried his lordship. "Mr. Vivian, I trust her to your honour--to your knowledge of the world--to your good sense;--in short, sir, to your love and constancy."

"And I, sir," said Lady Julia, turning to Vivian, after her father had left the room, and looking at Vivian so as to stop him short as he approached, and to disconcert him in the commencement of a passionate speech; "and I, too, sir, trust to your honour, whilst I deprecate your love. Imprudent as I was in the first confidence I reposed in you, and much as I have suffered by your rashness, I now stand determined to reveal to you another yet more important, yet more humiliating secret--You owe me no gratitude, sir!--I am compelled, by the circumstances in which I am placed, either to deceive or to trust you. I must either become your wife, and deceive you most treacherously; or I must trust you entirely, and tell you why it would be shameful that I should become your wife--shameful to me and to you."

"To me!--Impossible!" cried Vivian, bursting into some passionate expressions of love and admiration.

"Listen to me, sir; and do not make any of those rash professions, of which you will soon repent. You think you are speaking to the same Lady Julia you saw yesterday--No!--you are speaking to a very different person--a few hours have made a terrible change. You see before you,

sir, one who has been, till this day, the darling and pride of her father; who has lived in the lap of luxury; who has been flattered, admired, by almost all who approached her; who had fortune, and rank, and fair prospects in life, and youth, and spirits, and all the pride of prosperity; who had, I believe, good dispositions, perhaps some talents, and, I may say, a generous heart; who might have been,--but that is all over--no matter what she might have been--she is

'A tale for ev'ry prating she.'

Fallen!--fallen! fallen under the feet of those who worshipped her!--fallen below the contempt of the contemptible!--Worse! worse! fallen in her own opinion--never to rise again."

Lady Julia's voice failed, and she was forced to pause. She sunk upon a seat, and hid her face--for some moments she neither saw nor heard; but at last, raising her head, she perceived Vivian.

"You are in amazement, sir! and I see you pity me; but let me beg of you to restrain your feelings--my own are as much as I can bear. O that I could recall a few hours of my existence! But I have not yet been able to tell you what has passed. My father, my friends, wish to conceal it from you: but, whatever I have done, however low I have sunk, I will not deceive, nor be an accomplice in deceit. From my own lips you shall hear all. This morning at daybreak, not being able to sleep, and having some suspicion that Mr. Russell would leave the castle, I rose, and whilst I was dressing, I heard the trampling of horses in the court. I looked out of my window, and saw Mr. Russell's man saddling his master's horse. I heard Mr. Russell, a moment afterwards, order the servant to take the horses to the great gate on the north road, and wait for him there, as he intended to walk through the park. I thought these were the last words I should ever hear him speak.--Love took possession of me--I stole softly down the little staircase that leads from my turret to one of the back doors, and got out of the castle, as I thought, unobserved: I hurried on, and waited in the great oak wood, through which I knew Mr. Russell would pass. When I saw him coming nearer and nearer to me, I would have given the world to have been in my own room again--I hid myself among the trees--yet, when he walked on in reverie without noticing me, taking me probably for one of the servants, I could not bear to think that this was the last moment I should ever see him, and I exclaimed--I know not what; but I know that at the sound of my voice Mr. Russell started, and never can I forget the look--Spare me the rest! --No!--I will not spare myself--I offered my heart, my hand,--and they were rejected!--In my madness I told him I regarded neither wealth, nor rank, nor friends, nor--That I would rather live with him in obscurity than be the greatest princess upon earth--I said this and more--and I was rejected--And even at this moment, instead of the vindictive passions which are said to fill the soul of a woman scorned, I feel admiration for your noble friend: I have not done him justice; I cannot repeat his words, or describe his manner. He persuaded, by his eloquence compelled, me to return to this castle. He took from me all hope; he destroyed by one word all my illusions--he told me that he loves another. He has left me to despair, to disgrace; and yet I love, esteem,

and admire him, above all human beings! Admire one who despises me!--Is it possible? I know not, but it is so--I have more to tell you, sir!--As I returned to the castle, I was watched by Miss Strickland. How she knew all that had passed, I cannot divine; perhaps it was by means of some spy who followed me, and whom I did not perceive: for I neither saw nor heard any thing but my passion. Miss Strickland communicated her discovery immediately to my father. I have been these last two hours before a family tribunal. My mother, with a coldness a thousand times worse than my poor father's rage, says, that I have only accomplished her prophecies; that she always knew and told my father that I should be a disgrace to my family. But no reproaches are equal to my own; I stand self-condemned. I feel like one awakened from a dream. A few words!--a single look from Mr. Russell!--how they have altered all my views, all my thoughts! Two hours' reflection--Two hours, did I say?--whole years--a whole existence--have passed to me in the last two hours: I am a different creature. But it is too late--too late!--Self-esteem is gone!--happiness is over for me in this world."

"Happiness over for you!" exclaimed Vivian in a tone expressive of the deep interest he felt for her; "Self-esteem gone!--No! Lady Julia; do not blame yourself so severely for what has passed! Blame the circumstances in which you have been placed; above all, blame me--blame my folly--my madness; your secret never would have been known, if I had not--"

"I thank you," interrupted Lady Julia, rising from her seat; "but no consolation can be of any avail. It neither consoles nor justifies me that others have been to blame."

"Permit me, at least," pursued Vivian. "to speak of my own sentiments for one moment. Permit me to say, Lady Julia, that the confidence with which you have just honoured me, instead of diminishing my attachment, has so raised my admiration for your candour and magnanimity, that no obstacles shall vanquish my constancy. I will wait respectfully, and, if I can, patiently, till time shall have effaced from your mind these painful impressions; I shall neither ask nor accept of the interference or influence of your father, nor of any of your friends; I shall rely solely on the operation of your own excellent understanding, and shall hope for my reward from your noble heart."

"You do not think it possible," said Lady Julia, looking at Vivian with dignified determination, "you do not think it possible, after all that has passed, after all that I have told you, that I could so far degrade myself or you, as to entertain any thoughts of becoming your wife? Farewell! Mr. Vivian.----You will not see me again. I shall obtain permission to retire, and live with a relation in a distant part of the country; where I shall no more be seen or heard of. My fortune will, I hope, be of use to my sister.----My poor father!--I pity him; he loves me: he loses his daughter for ever; worse than loses her! My mother, too--I pity her! for, though she does not love me, she will suffer for me; she will suffer more than my father, by the disgrace that would be brought upon my family, if ever the secret should be publicly known. My brother!--Oh, my beloved brother! he knows nothing yet of all this!--But

why do I grieve you with my agony of mind? Forget that Lady Julia Lidhurst ever existed!--I wish you that happiness which I can never enjoy--I wish you may deserve and win a heart capable of feeling real love!--Adieu!"

CHAPTER XI.

Convinced that all farther pursuit of Lady Julia Lidhurst would be vain, that it could tend only to increase her difficulties and his mortification, Vivian saw that the best thing he could possibly do was to leave Glistonbury. Thus he should relieve the whole family from the embarrassment of his presence; and, by immediate change of scene and of occupation, he had the best chance of recovering from his own disappointment. If Lady Julia was to quit the castle, he could have no inducement to stay; if her ladyship remained, his continuing in her society would be still more dangerous to his happiness. Besides, he felt offended with Lord Glistonbury, who evidently had wished to conceal from him the truth; and, without considering what was just or honourable, had endeavoured to secure, at all events, an establishment for his daughter, and a connexion for his family. To the weight of these reasons must be added a desire to see Mr. Russell, and to effect a reconciliation with him. The accumulated force of all these motives had power to overcome Vivian's habitual indecision: his servant was surprised by an order to have every thing ready for his journey to town immediately. Whilst his man prepared to obey, or at least to meditate upon the cause of this unusually decided order, our hero went in quest of Lord Glistonbury, to pay his compliments to his lordship previous to his departure. His lordship was in his daughter Julia's dressing-room, and could not be seen; but presently he came to Vivian in great hurry and distress of mind.

"A sad stroke upon us, Mr. Vivian!--a sad stroke upon us all--but most upon me; for she was the child of my expectations--I hear she has told you every thing--you, also, have been very ill-used--Never was astonishment equal to mine when I heard Miss Strickland's story. I need not caution you, Mr. Vivian, as to secrecy; you are a man of honour, and you see the peace of our whole family is at stake. The girl is going to a relation of ours in Devonshire.--Sha'n't stay here--sha'n't stay here--Disgrace to my family--She who was my pride--and, after all, says she will never marry.--Very well!--very well!--I shall never see her again, that I am determined upon.--I told her, that if she did not behave with common sense and propriety, in her last interview with you, I would give her up--and so I will, and so I do.--The whole is Lady Glistonbury's fault--she never managed her rightly when she was a child. Oh! I should put you on your guard in one particular--Miss Bateman knows nothing of what has happened--I wish Miss Strickland knew as little--I hate her. What business had she to play the spy upon my daughter? She does well to be a prude, for she is as ugly as sin. But we are in her power. She is to go to-morrow with Julia to Devonshire. It

will make a quarrel between me and Miss Bateman--no matter for that; for now, the sooner we get rid of that Rosamunda, too, the better--she talks me dead, and will let no one talk but herself. And, between you and me, all this could not have happened, if she had looked after her charge properly.--Not but what I think Miss Strickland was still less fit to guide a girl of Julia's genius and disposition. All was done wrong at first, and I always said so to Lady Glistonbury. But, if the secret can be kept--and _that_ depends on you, my dear friend--after six months' or a twelve-month's _rustication_ with our poor parson in the country, you will see how tamed and docile the girl will come back to us. This is my scheme; but nobody shall know my whole mind but you--I shall tell her I will never see her again; and that will pacify Lady Glistonbury, and frighten Julia into submission. She says she'll never marry.--Stuff! Stuff!--You don't believe her!--What man who has seen any thing of the world ever believes such stuff?"

Vivian's servant came into the room to ask his master some question about horses.

"Going!--where? Going!--when? Going!--how?" cried Lord Glistonbury, as soon as the servant withdrew. "Surely, you are not going to leave us, Mr. Vivian?"

Vivian explained his reasons--Lord Glistonbury would not allow them any weight, entreated and insisted that he should stay at least a few days longer; for his going "just at this moment would seem quite like a break up in the family, and would be the most unfriendly and cruel thing imaginable." Why Lord Glistonbury so earnestly pressed his stay, perhaps even his lordship himself did not exactly know; for, with all the air of being a person of infinite address and depth of design, his lordship was in reality childishly inconsistent; what the French call *_inconsØquent_*. On any subject, great or small, where he once took it into his head, or, as he called it, *_made it a point_*, that a thing should be so or so, he was as peremptory, or, where he could not be peremptory, as anxious, as if it were a matter of life and death. In his views there was no perspective, no keeping--all objects appeared of equal magnitude; and even now, when it might be conceived that his whole mind was intent upon a great family misfortune, he, in the course of a few minutes, became as eager about a mere trifle as if he had nothing else in the world to think of. From the earnestness with which Lord Glistonbury urged him to stay a few days, at least one day longer, Vivian was induced to believe that it must be a matter of real consequence to his lordship--"And, in his present state of distress, I cannot refuse such a request," thought Vivian. He yielded, therefore, to these solicitations, and consented to stay a few days longer; though he knew the prolonging his visit would be, in every respect, disagreeable.

At dinner Lord Glistonbury announced to the company that the physician had advised change of air immediately for Lord Lidhurst; and that, in consequence, his son would set out early the next morning for Devonshire--that his daughter Julia wished to go with her brother, and that Miss Strickland would accompany them. Lord Glistonbury apologized for his daughter's absence, "preparations for her journey so suddenly

decided upon," &c. Lady Glistonbury and Lady Sarah looked terribly grim whilst all this was saying; but the gravity and stiffness of their demeanour did not appear any thing extraordinary to the greater part of the company, who had no idea of what was going forward. The lawyer, the captain, and the chaplain, however, interchanged significant looks; and many times, during the course of the evening, they made attempts to draw out Vivian's thoughts, but they found him impenetrable. There was an underplot of a quarrel between Miss Strickland and Miss Bateman, to which Vivian paid little attention; nor was he affected, in the slightest degree, by the Rosamunda's declaration to Lord Glistonbury, that she must leave his family, since she found that Miss Strickland had a larger share than herself of his lordship's confidence, and was, for what reason she could not divine, to have the honour of accompanying Lady Julia into Devonshire. Vivian perceived these quarrels, and heard the frivolous conversation of the company at Glistonbury Castle without interest, and with a sort of astonishment at the small motives by which others were agitated, whilst his whole soul was engrossed by love and pity for Lady Julia. In vain he hoped for another opportunity of seeing and speaking to her. She never appeared. The next morning he rose at daybreak that he might have the chance of seeing her: he begged Miss Strickland to entreat her ladyship would allow him to say a few words before she set out; but Miss Strickland replied, that she was assured the request would be vain; and he thought he perceived that Miss Strickland, though she affected to lament Lady Julia's blindness to her own interests and contumacy, in opposing her father's wishes, was, in reality, glad that she persisted in her own determination. Lord Lidhurst, on account of the weak state of his health, was kept in ignorance of every thing that could agitate him; and, when Vivian took leave of him, the poor young man left many messages of kindness and gratitude for Mr. Russell.

"I am sorry that he was obliged to leave me; for, ill or well, there is no human being, I will not except any one but my sister Julia, whom I should so much wish to have with me. Tell him so; and tell him--be sure you remember my very words, for perhaps I shall never see him again--tell him, that, living or dying, I shall feel grateful to him. He has given me tastes and principles very different from those I had when he came into this house. Even in sickness, I feel almost every hour the advantage of my present love for literature. If I should live and recover, I hope I shall do him some credit; and I trust my family will join in my gratitude. Julia, my dear sister! why do you weep so bitterly?--If I had seen you come into the room, I would not have spoken of my health."

Lord Glistonbury came up to tell them that Miss Strickland was ready. "Mr. Vivian," cried his lordship, "will you hand Julia into the carriage?--Julia, Mr. Vivian is offering you his services."

Vivian, as he attended Lady Julia, had so much respect for her feelings, that, though he had been waiting with extreme impatience for an opportunity _to say a few words_, yet now he would not speak, but handed her along the gallery, down the staircase, and across the great hall, in profound silence. She seemed sensible of this forbearance; and, turning

to him at a moment when they could not be overheard, said, "It was not from unkindness, Mr. Vivian, I refused to see you again, but to convince you that my mind is determined--if you have any thing to say, I am ready to hear it."

"Is there nothing to be hoped from time?" said Vivian. "Your father, I know, has hopes that----All I ask is, that you will not make any rash resolutions."

"I make none; but I tell you, for your own sake, not to cherish any vain hope. My father does not know my mind sufficiently, therefore he may deceive you; but I will not.----I thought, after the manner in which I spoke to you yesterday, you would have had too much strength of mind to have rendered this repetition of my sentiments necessary.----Attach yourself elsewhere as soon as you can.--I sincerely wish your happiness. Miss Strictland is waiting.--Farewell!"

She hurried forward to the carriage; and, when she was gone, Vivian repented that he had seen her again, as it had only given them both additional and fruitless pain.

What passed during some succeeding days at Glistonbury Castle he scarcely knew; no trace remained in his mind of anything but the confused noise of people, who had been talking, laughing, and diverting themselves in a manner that seemed to him incomprehensible. He exerted himself, however, so far as to write to Russell, to implore his forgiveness, and to solicit a return of his friendship, which, in his present state of unhappiness, was more necessary to him than ever. When he had finished and despatched this letter, he sunk again into a sort of reckless state, without hope or determination, as to his future life. He could not decide whether he should go to his mother immediately on leaving Glistonbury, or to Mr. Russell, or (which he knew was the best course he could pursue) attend his duty in parliament, and, by plunging at once into public business, change the course of his thoughts, and force his mind to resume its energy. After altering his determination twenty times, after giving at least a dozen contradictory orders about his journey, his servant at last had his ultimatum, for London--the carriage to be at the door at ten o'clock the next morning. Every thing was ready at the appointed hour. Breakfast over, Vivian waited only to pay his compliments to Lady Glistonbury, who had breakfasted in her own apartment. Lady Sarah, with a manner as formal as usual, rose from the breakfast-table, and said she would let her mother know that Mr. Vivian was going. Vivian waited half an hour--an hour--two hours. Lady Glistonbury did not appear, nor did Lady Sarah return. The company had dispersed after the first half-hour. Lord Glistonbury began to believe that the ladies did not mean to make their appearance. At length a message came from Lady Glistonbury.--"Lady Glistonbury's compliments to Mr. Vivian--her ladyship was concerned that it was out of her power to have the pleasure of seeing Mr. Vivian, as she was too much indisposed to leave her room.--She and Lady Sarah wished him a very good journey."

Vivian went up to his room for his gloves, which he missed at the moment when he was going. Whilst he was opening the empty drawers one after

another, in search of his gloves, and, at the same time, calling his servant to find them, he heard a loud scream from an adjoining apartment. He listened again--all was silent; and he supposed that what he had heard was not a scream: but, at that moment, Lady Sarah's maid flung open his door, and, running in with out-stretched arms, threw herself at Vivian's feet. Her sobs and tears prevented his understanding one syllable she said. At last she articulated intelligibly, "Oh, sir!--don't be so cruel to go--my lady!--my poor lady! If you go, it will kill Lady Sarah!"

"Kill Lady Sarah?--Why I saw her in perfect health this morning at breakfast!"

"Dear, dear sir! you know nothing of the matter!" said the maid, rising, and shutting the door: "you don't know what a way she has been in ever since the talk of your going--fits upon fits every night, and my lady, her mother, and I up holding her--and none in the house knowing it but ourselves. Very well at breakfast! Lord help us! sir. How little you know of what she has suffered! Lord have mercy upon me! I would not be a lady to be so much in love, and left so, for any thing in the whole world. And my Lady Sarah keeps every thing so to herself;--if it was not for these fits they would never have knowed she cared no more for you than a stone."

"And, probably you are quite mistaken," said Vivian; "and that I have nothing to do with the young lady's illness. If she has fits, I am very sorry for it; but I can't possibly----Certainly, you are quite mistaken!"

"Lord, sir!--mistaken! As if I could be mistaken, when I know my lady as well as I know myself! Why, sir, I know from the time of the election, when you was given to her by all the country--and to be sure when we all thought it would be a match directly--and the Lord knows what put it off!--I say, from that time, her heart was set upon you. Though she never said a word to me, or any one, I knew how it was, through all her coldness--And to be sure, when you was in Lon'on so much with us, all the town said, as all the country did afore, that to be sure it was to be a match--But then that sad affair, with that artfullest of women, that took you off from all that was good, and away, the Lord knows where, to foreign parts!--Well! to be sure, I never shall forget the day you come back again to us!--and the night of the ball!--and you dancing with my lady, and all so happy; then, to be sure, all were sarten it was to be immediately----And now to go and break my poor lady's heart at the last--Oh, sir, sir! if you could but see her, it would touch a heart of marble!"

Vivian's astonishment and dismay were so great, that he suffered the girl, who was an unpractised creature, to go on speaking without interruption: the warmth of affection with which she spoke of her lady, also, surprised him: for, till this instant, he had no idea that any one could love Lady Sarah Lidhurst; and the accounts she gave of the lady's sufferings not only touched his compassion, but worked upon his vanity. "This cold, proud young lady that never loved none before, to think," as

her maid said, "that she should come to such a pass, as to be in fits about him. And it was her belief that Lady Sarah never would recover it, if he went away out of the castle this day."

The ringing of a bell had repeatedly been heard, whilst Lady Sarah's maid was speaking; it now rang violently, and her name was called vehemently from the adjoining apartment. "I must go, I _must_ go!--Oh, sir! one day, for mercy's sake! stay one day longer!"

Vivian, though he had been moved by this girl's representations, was determined to effect his retreat whilst it was yet in his power; therefore he ran down stairs, and had gained the hall, where he was shaking hands with Lord Glistonbury, when my Lady Glistonbury's own woman came in a great hurry to say, that her lady, finding herself a little better now, and able to see Mr. Vivian, begged he would be so good as to walk up to her dressing-room.

Vivian, with a heavy heart and slow steps, obeyed; there was no refusing, no evading such a request. He summoned all his resolution, at the same time saying to himself, as he followed his conductor along the gallery, "It is impossible that I can ever be drawn in to marry Lady Sarah.--This is a concerted plan, and I shall not be so weak as to be the dupe of so gross an artifice."

Lady Glistonbury's maid showed him into her lady's dressing-room and retired. Lady Glistonbury was seated, and, without speaking, pointed to a chair which was set opposite to her. "So! a preparation for a scene," thought Vivian. He bowed, but, still keeping his hat in his hand, did not sit down:--he was extremely happy to hear, that her ladyship found herself something better--much honoured by her permitting him to pay his respects, and to offer his grateful acknowledgments to her ladyship before his departure from Glistonbury.

Her ladyship, still without speaking, pointed to the chair. Vivian sat down, and looked as if he had "screwed his courage to the sticking place." Lady Glistonbury had sometimes a little nervous trembling of her head, which was the only symptom of internal agitation that was ever observable in her; it was now increased to a degree which Vivian had never before seen.

"Are you in haste, sir, to be gone?" said Lady Glistonbury.

"Not if her ladyship had any commands for him; but otherwise, he had intended, if possible, to reach town that night."

"I shall not delay you many minutes, Mr. Vivian," said her ladyship.

"You need not be under apprehension that Lady Glistonbury should seek to detain you longer than your own inclinations induce you to stay; it is, therefore, unnecessary to insult her with any appearance of haste or impatience."

Vivian instantly laid down his hat, and protested that he was not in the slightest degree impatient: he should be very ungrateful, as well as

very ill-bred, if, after the most hospitable manner in which he had been received and entertained at Glistonbury Castle, he could be in haste to quit it. He was entirely at her ladyship's orders.

Lady Glistonbury bowed formally--was again silent--the trembling of her head very great--the rest of her form motionless.

"I have sent for you, Mr. Vivian," said she, "that I might, before you leave this castle, set you right on a subject which much concerns me. From the representations of a foolish country girl, a maid-servant of my daughter, Lady Sarah Lidhurst, which I have just discovered she has made to you, I had reason to fear that you might leave Glistonbury with very false notions----"

A cry was heard at this moment from the inner apartment, which made Vivian start; but Lady Glistonbury, without noticing it, went on speaking.

"With notions very injurious to my daughter Sarah; who, if I know any thing of her, would rather, if it were so ordained, go out of this world, than condescend to any thing unbecoming her sex, her education, and her family."

Vivian, struck with respect and compassion for the mother, who spoke to him in this manner, was now convinced that there had been no concerted plan to work upon his mind, that the maid had spoken without the knowledge of her lady; and the more proudly solicitous Lady Glistonbury showed herself to remove what she called the false impression from his mind, the more he was persuaded that the girl had spoken the truth. He was much embarrassed between his good-nature and his dread of becoming a sacrifice to his humanity.

He replied in general terms to Lady Glistonbury, that he had the highest respect for Lady Sarah Lidhurst, and that no opinion injurious to her could be entertained by him.

"Respect she must command from all," said Lady Glistonbury; "_that_ it is out of any man's power to refuse her: as to the rest, she leaves you, and I leave you, sir, to your own conscience."

Lady Glistonbury rose, and so did Vivian. He hoped that neither her ladyship nor Lady Sarah had any cause----He hesitated; the words, _to reproach, to complain, to be displeased_, all came to his lips; but each seemed improper; and, none other being at hand to convey his meaning, he could not finish his sentence: so he began another upon a new construction, with "I should be much concerned if, in addition to all my other causes of regret in leaving Glistonbury Castle, I felt that I had incurred Lady Glistonbury's or Lady Sarah's displea--disapprobation."

"As to that, sir," said Lady Glistonbury, "I cannot but have my own opinion of your conduct; and you can scarcely expect, I apprehend, that a mother, such as I am, should not feel some disapprobation of conduct, which has----Sir, I beg I may not detain you--I have the honour to wish

you a good journey and much happiness."

An attendant came from an inner apartment with a message! from Lady Sarah, who was worse, and wished to see her mother--"Immediately!--tell her, immediately!"

The servant returned with the answer. Vivian was retiring, but he came back, for he saw at that moment a convulsive motion contract Lady Glistonbury's face: she made an effort to walk; but if Vivian had not supported her instantly, she must have fallen. She endeavoured to disengage herself from his assistance, and again attempted to walk.

"For God's sake, lean upon me, madam!" said Vivian, much alarmed. With his assistance, she reached the door of the inner room: summoning all the returning powers of life, she then withdrew her arm from his, and pointing back to the door at which Vivian entered, she said, "That is your way, sir."

"Pardon me--I cannot go--I cannot leave you at this moment," said Vivian.

"This is my daughter's apartment, sir," said Lady Glistonbury, stopping, and standing still and fixed. Some of the attendants within, hearing her ladyship's voice, opened the door; Lady Glistonbury made an effort to prevent it, but in vain: the chamber was darkened, but as the door opened, the wind from an open window blew back the curtain, and some light fell upon a canopy bed, where Lady Sarah lay motionless, her eyes closed, and pale as death; one attendant chafing her temples, another rubbing her feet: she looked up just after the door opened, and, raising her head, she saw Vivian--a gleam of joy illumined her countenance, and coloured her cheek.

"Sir," repeated Lady Glistonbury, "this is my daughter's----"

She could articulate no more. She fell across the threshold, struck with palsy. Her daughter sprang from the bed, and, with Vivian's assistance, raised and carried Lady Glistonbury to an arm-chair near the open window, drew back the curtain, begged Vivian to go to her father, and instantly to despatch a messenger for medical assistance. Vivian sent his own servant, who had his horse ready at the door, and he bid the man go as fast as he could.

"Then you don't leave Glistonbury to-day, sir?" said the servant.

"Do as I order you--Where's Lord Glistonbury?"

His lordship, with the newspapers and letters open in his hand, came up--but they dropped on hearing the intelligence that Vivian communicated. His lordship was naturally humane and good-natured; and the shock was greater, perhaps, to him, from the sort of enmity in which he lived with Lady Glistonbury.

"I dread to go up stairs," said he. "For God's sake, Vivian, don't leave

me in this distress!--do order your carriage away!----Put up Mr. Vivian's carriage."

Lady Sarah's maid came to tell them that Lady Glistonbury had recovered her speech, and that she had asked, "if Mr. Vivian was gone?"

"Do come up with me," cried Lord Glistonbury, "and she will see you are not gone."

"Here's my lord and Mr. Vivian, my lady," said the girl.

Then, turning to Lady Glistonbury's woman, she added, in a loud whisper, "Mr. Vivian won't go to-day."

Lady Sarah gave her maid some commission, which took her out of the room. Lady Sarah, no longer the formal, cold, slow personage whom Vivian detested, now seemed to him, and not only seemed but was, quite a different being, inspired with energy, and quickness, and presence of mind: she forgot herself, and her illness, and her prudery, and her love, and every other consideration, in the sense of her mother's danger. Lady Glistonbury had but imperfectly recovered her recollection. At one moment she smiled on Vivian, and tried to stretch out her hand to him, as she saw him standing beside Lady Sarah. But when he approached Lady Glistonbury, and spoke to her, she seemed to have some painful recollection, and, looking round the room, expressed surprise and uneasiness at his being there. Vivian retired; and Lord Glistonbury, who was crying like a child, followed, saying, "Take me out with you-- Dr. G---- ought to be here before now--I'll send for another physician!--Very shocking--very shocking--at Lady Glistonbury's time of life, too--for she is not an old woman by any means. Lady Glistonbury is eighteen months younger than I am!--Nobody knows how soon it may be their turn!--It's very shocking!--If I had known she was ill, I would have had advice for her sooner. She is very patient--too patient--a great deal too patient. She never will complain--never tells what she feels, body or mind--at least never tells me; but that may be my fault in some measure. Should be very sorry Lady Glistonbury went out of the world with things as they are now between us. Hope to God she will get over this attack!--Hey! Mr. Vivian?"

Vivian said whatever he could to fortify this hope, and was glad to see Lord Glistonbury show feelings of this sort. The physician arrived, and confirmed these hopes by his favourable prognostics. In the course of the day and night her face, which had been contracted, resumed its natural appearance; she recovered the use of her arm: a certain difficulty of articulation, and thickness of speech, with what the physician called hallucination of mind, and a general feebleness of body, were all the apparent consequences of this stroke. She was not herself sensible of the nature of the attack, or clear in her ideas of any thing that had passed immediately previous to it. She had only an imperfect recollection of her daughter's illness, and of some hurry about Mr. Vivian's going away. She was, however, well enough to go into her dressing-room, where Vivian went to pay his respects to her, with Lord Glistonbury. By unremitting exertions, and unusual cheerfulness,

Lady Sarah succeeded in quieting her mother's confused apprehensions on her account. When out of Lady Glistonbury's hearing, all the attendants and the physicians repeatedly expressed fear that Lady Sarah would over-fatigue and injure herself by this extraordinary energy; but her powers of body and mind seemed to rise with the necessity for exertion; and, on this great occasion, she suddenly discovered a warmth and strength of character, of which few had ever before discerned even the slightest symptoms.

"Who would have expected this from Sarah?" whispered Lord Glistonbury to Vivian. "Why, her sister did not do more for me when I was ill! I always knew she loved her mother, but I thought it was in a quiet, commonplace way--Who knows but she loves me too?--or might--" She came into the room at this moment--"Sarah, my dear," said his lordship, "where are my letters and yesterday's papers, which I never read?--I'll see if there be any thing in them that can interest your mother."

Lord Glistonbury opened the papers, and the first article of public news was, "a dissolution of parliament confidently expected to take place immediately." This must put an end to Vivian's scheme of going to town to attend his duty in parliament. "But, may be, it is only newspaper information." It was confirmed by all Lord Glistonbury and Vivian's private letters. A letter from his mother, which Vivian now for the first moment had time to peruse, mentioned the dissolution of parliament as certain; she named her authority, which could not be doubted; and, in consequence, she had sent down supplies of wine for an election; and she said that she would "be immediately at Castle Vivian, to keep open house and open heart for her son. Though not furnished," she observed, "the castle would suit the better all the purposes of an election; and she should not feel any inconvenience, for her own part, let the accommodations be what they might."

Lord Glistonbury directly proposed and insisted upon Lady Mary Vivian's making Glistonbury her head-quarters. Vivian objected: Lady Glistonbury's illness was an ostensible and, he hoped, would be a sufficient excuse for declining the invitation. But Lord Glistonbury persisted: "Lady Glistonbury, he was sure, would wish it--nothing would be more agreeable to her." His lordship's looks appealed to Lady Sarah, but Lady Sarah was silent; and, when her father positively required her opinion, by adding, "Hey! Sarah?" she rather discouraged than pressed the invitation. She said, that though she was persuaded her mother would, if she were well, be happy to have the pleasure of seeing Lady Mary Vivian; yet she could not, in her mother's present situation, venture to decide how far her health might be able to stand any election bustle.

Lady Sarah said this with a very calm voice, but blushed extremely as she spoke; and, for the first time, Vivian thought her not absolutely plain; and, for the first time, he thought even the formality and deliberate coolness of her manner were not disagreeable. He liked her more, at this moment, than he had ever imagined it possible he could like Lady Sarah Lidhurst; but he liked her chiefly because she did not press him into her service, but rather forwarded his earnest wish to get

away from Glistonbury.

Lord Glistonbury appealed to the physician, and asked whether company and amusement were not "the best things possible for his patient? Lady Glistonbury should not be left alone, surely! Her mind should be interested and amused; and an election would be a fortunate circumstance just at present!"

The physician qualified the assent which his lordship's peremptory tone seemed to demand, by saying, "that certainly moderate amusement, and whatever interested without agitating her ladyship, would be salutary." His lordship then declared that he would leave it to Lady Glistonbury herself to decide: quitting the end of the room where they were holding their consultation, he approached her ladyship to explain the matter. But Lady Sarah stopped him, beseeching so earnestly that no appeal might be made to her mother, that Vivian was quite moved; and he settled the business at once to general satisfaction, by declaring that, though neither he nor Lady Mary Vivian could think of intruding as inmates at present, yet that they should, as soon as Lady Glistonbury's health would permit, be as much at Glistonbury Castle as possible; and that the short distance from his house would make it, he hoped, not inconvenient to his lordship for all election business. Lord Glistonbury acceded, and Lady Sarah appeared gratefully satisfied. His lordship, who always took the task of explanation upon himself, now read the paragraph about the dissolution aloud to Lady Glistonbury; informed her, that Lady Mary Vivian was coming immediately to the country; and that they should hope to see Lady Mary and Mr. Vivian almost every day, though he could not prevail upon them to take up their abode during the election at Glistonbury. Lady Glistonbury listened, and tried, and seemed to understand--bowed to Mr. Vivian and smiled, and said she remembered he was often at Glistonbury during the last election--that she was happy to hear she should have the pleasure to see Lady Mary Vivian--that some people disliked _election times_, but for her part she did not, when she was strong. Indeed, the last election she recollected with particular pleasure--she was happy that Lord Glistonbury's interest was of service to Mr. Vivian. Then "she hoped his canvass _to-day_ had been successful?"--and asked some questions that showed her mind had become confused, and that she was confounding the past with the present. Lady Sarah and Mr. Vivian said a few words to set her right--she looked first at one, and then at the other, listening, and then said--"I understand--God bless you both." Vivian took up his hat, and looked out of the window, to see if his carriage was at the door.

"Mr. Vivian wishes you a good morning, madam," said Lady Sarah: "he is going to Castle Vivian, to get things ready for Lady Mary's arrival."

"I wish you health and happiness, sir," said Lady Glistonbury, attempting to rise, whilst some painful reminiscence altered her countenance.

"Pray do not stir, don't disturb yourself, Lady Glistonbury. I shall pay my respects to your ladyship again as soon as possible."

"And pray bring me good news of the election, and how the poll stands to-morrow, Mr. Vivian," added her ladyship, as he left the room.

CHAPTER XII.

Vivian, who had felt oppressed and almost enslaved by his compassion, breathed more freely when he at last found himself in his carriage, driving away from Glistonbury. His own castle, and the preparations for his mother's arrival, and for the expected canvass, occupied him so much for the ensuing days, that he had scarcely time to think of Lady Julia or of Lady Sarah, of Russell or Selina: he could neither reflect on the past, nor anticipate the future; the present, the vulgar present, full of upholsterers, and paper-hangers, and butlers, and grooms, and tenants, and freeholders, and parasites, pressed upon his attention with importunate claims. The dissolution of parliament took place. Lady Mary Vivian arrived almost as soon as the newspaper that brought this intelligence: with her came a new set of thoughts, all centering in the notion of her son's consequence in the world, and of his happiness--ideas which were too firmly associated in her mind ever to be separated. She said that she had regretted his having made such a long stay in the country during the last session, because he had missed opportunities of distinguishing himself farther in parliament. The preceding session her ladyship had received gratifying compliments on her son's talents, and on the figure he had already made in public life; she felt her self-love as well as her affection interested in his continuing his political career with spirit and success. "As to the present election," she observed, "there could be little doubt that he would be re-elected with the assistance of the Glistonbury interest; and," added her ladyship, smiling significantly, "I fancy your interest is pretty strong in that quarter. The world has given you by turns to Lady Julia and Lady Sarah Lidhurst; and I am asked continually which of the Lady Lidhursts you are in love with. One of these ladies certainly must be my daughter-in-law; pray, if you know, empower me to say which." Lady Mary Vivian spoke but half in earnest, till the extraordinary commotion her words created in her son, convinced her that the report had not, now at least, been mistaken.

"Next to Miss Selina Sidney," continued Lady Mary, "who, after her positive and long persisted-in refusal, is quite out of the question, I have, my dear son, always wished to see you married to one of the Lady Lidhursts; and, of course, Lady Julia's talents, and beauty, and youth----"

Vivian interrupted and hastily told his mother that Lady Julia Lidhurst was as much out of the question as Miss Sidney could be; for that he had offered himself, and had been refused; and that he had every reason to believe that the determination of his second mistress against him would be at least as absolute and unconquerable as that of his first. His mother was in amazement. That her son could be refused by Lady Julia

Lidhurst appeared a moral and political impossibility, especially when the desire for a connexion between the families had been so obvious on the side of the Glistonburys. What could be the meaning of this? Lady Julia was perhaps under an error, and fancied he was some way engaged to Miss Sidney; "or, perhaps," said Lady Mary, who had a ready wit for the invention of delicate distresses, "perhaps there is some difficulty about the eldest sister, Lady Sarah; for you know the first winter you were given to her.--Ay, that must be the case. I will go to Glistonbury to-morrow, and I will have Lady Julia to myself for five minutes: I think I have some penetration, and I will know the truth."

Lady Mary was again surprised, by hearing from her son that Lady Julia was not at Glistonbury--that she was gone with her brother into Devonshire. So there was a dead silence for some minutes, succeeded by an exclamation from Lady Mary, "There is some grand secret here--I must know it!" Her ladyship forthwith commenced a close and able cross-examination, which Vivian stopped at last by declaring that he was not at liberty to speak upon the subject: he knew, he said, that his mother was of too honourable and generous a temper to press him farther. His mother was perfectly honourable, but at the same time extremely curious; and though she continually repeated, "I will not ask you another question--I would not upon any account lead you to say a syllable that could betray any confidence reposed in you, my dear son;" yet she indulged herself in a variety of ingenious conjectures: "I know it is so;" or, "I am sure that I have guessed now, but I don't ask you to tell me.--You do right to deny it."--Amongst the variety of her conjectures, Lady Mary did not find out the truth; she was prepossessed by the idea that Russell was attached to Selina Sidney--a secret which her own penetration had discovered whilst her son was abroad with Mrs. Wharton, and which she thought no mortal living knew but herself. Pre-occupied with this notion, Russell was now omitted in all her combinations. His having quitted Glistonbury did not create any suspicion of the real cause of his sudden departure, because there was a sufficient reason for his going to the north to see his sick relation; and Lady Mary was too good a philosopher to assign two causes for the same event, when she had found one that was adequate to the production of the effect. She therefore quietly settled it in her imagination, that Lady Julia Lidhurst was going to be married immediately to a certain young nobleman, who had been lately at Glistonbury whilst they were acting plays. The next day she went with Vivian to Glistonbury Castle; for, waiving all the ceremonials of visiting, she was anxious to see poor Lady Glistonbury, of whose illness she had been apprised, in general terms, by her son. An impulse of curiosity, mixed perhaps with motives of regard for her good friend Lady Glistonbury, hastened this visit. They found Lady Glistonbury much better; she looked nearly as well as she had done before this stroke; and she had now recovered her memory, and the full use of her understanding. Vivian observed, that she and Lady Sarah were both convinced, by Lady Mary Vivian's curiosity, that he had given no hint of any thing which they did not wish to be known: and the pleasurable consciousness of his integrity disposed him to be pleased with them. Lord Glistonbury, on his side, was convinced that Vivian had behaved honourably with respect to his daughter Julia; so all parties were well satisfied with each other. His lordship

answered Lady Mary Vivian's inquiries after his son and his daughter Julia by saying, that Miss Strickland had just returned to Glistonbury with rather more favourable accounts of Lord Lidhurst's health, and that Julia and he were now at his brother the Bishop of ----'s. Between this brother and my Lord Glistonbury there had never been any great intimacy, their characters and their politics being very different. The moment Lady Mary Vivian heard Lord Glistonbury pronounce, with such unusual cordiality, the words, "my brother the bishop," she recollected that the bishop had a very amiable, accomplished, and remarkably handsome son; so she arranged directly in her imagination that this was the person to whom Lady Julia was engaged. Being now thoroughly convinced that this last conjecture was just, she thought no more about Lady Julia's affairs; but turned her attention to Lady Sarah, whose cold and guarded manners, however, resisted her utmost penetration. Disappointed in all her attempts to lead to sentiment or love, the conversation at last ran wholly upon the approaching election, upon the canvass, and the strength of the various interests of the county; on all which subjects Lady Sarah showed surprisingly exact information. Presently Lord Glistonbury took Vivian with him to his study to examine some poll-book, and then put into his hands a letter from Lady Julia Lidhurst, which had been enclosed in one to himself.

"I told you that I intended to _rusticate_ Julia," said his lordship, "with a poor parson and his wife--relations, distant relations of ours in Devonshire; but this plan has been defeated by my foolish good brother the bishop. On their journey they passed close by his palace; I charged Miss Strickland to be incog.; but they stayed to rest in the town, for Lidhurst was fatigued; and some of the bishop's people found them out, and the bishop sent for them, and at last came himself. He was so sorry for Lidhurst's illness, and, as Miss Strickland says, so much charmed with Julia, whom he had not seen since she was a child, that he absolutely took possession of them; and Julia has made her party good with him, for he writes me word he cannot part with her; that I must allow her to remain with him; and that they will take all possible care of Lyndhurst's health. I believe I must yield this point to the bishop; for altogether it looks better that Julia should be at the palace than at the parsonage; and, though my poor brother has not the knowledge of the world one could wish, or that is necessary to bring this romantic girl back to reason, yet--But I keep you from reading your letter, and I see you are impatient--Hey?--very natural!--but, I am afraid, all in vain--I'll leave you in peace. At any rate," added Lord Glistonbury, "you know I have always stood your firm friend in this business; and you know I'm discreet."

Vivian never felt so grateful for any instance of his lordship's friendship and discretion as for that which he gave at this moment, by quitting the room, and leaving him in peace to read his letter.

"Before you open this letter, you will have heard, probably, that my uncle, the Bishop of ----, has taken me under his protection. I cannot sufficiently regret that I was not a few years, a few months, sooner, blessed with such a Mentor. I never, till now, knew how much power kindness has to touch the mind in the moment of distress; nor did I ever, till now, feel how deeply the eloquence of true piety sinks into the heart. This excellent friend will, I hope, in time restore me to my better self. From the abstraction, the selfishness of passion, I think I am already somewhat recovered. After being wholly absorbed by one sentiment, I begin to feel again the influence of other motives, and to waken to the returning sense of social duty. Among the first objects to which, in recovering from this trance, or this fever of the soul, I have power to turn my attention, your happiness, sir, next to that of my own nearest relations, I find interests me most. After giving you this assurance, I trust you will believe that, to insure the felicity, or even to restore the health and preserve the life of any relation or friend I have upon earth, I should not think myself justified in attempting to influence your mind to any thing which I did not sincerely and firmly believe would be for your permanent advantage as well as for theirs. Under the solemn faith of this declaration, I hope that you will listen to me with patience and confidence. From all that I have myself seen, and from all that I have heard of your character, I am convinced that your wife should be a woman of a disposition precisely opposite, in many respects, to mine. Your character is liable to vary, according to the situations in which you are placed; and is subject to sudden but transient impressions from external circumstances. You have hitherto had a friend who has regulated the fluctuations of your passions; now that he is separated from you, how much will you feel the loss of his cool and steady judgment! Should you not, therefore, in that bosom friend, a wife, look for a certain firmness and stability of character, capable of resisting, rather than disposed to yield, to sudden impulse; a character, not of enthusiasm, but of duty; a mind, which, instead of increasing, by example and sympathy, any defects of your own--pardon the expression--should correct or compensate these by opposite qualities? And supposing that, with such sobriety and strength of character as I have described, there should be connected a certain slowness, formality, and coldness of manner, which might not at first be attractive to a man of your vivacity, let not this repel you: when once you have learned to consider this manner as the concomitant and indication of qualities essential to your happiness, it would, I am persuaded, become agreeable to you; especially as, on nearer observation, you would soon discover that, beneath that external coldness, under all that snow and ice, there is an accumulated and concentrated warmth of affection.

"Of this, sir, you must lately have seen an example in my own family. At the moment when my poor mother was struck with palsy, you saw my sister's energy; and her character, probably, then appeared to you in a new point of view. From this burst of latent affection for a parent, you may form some idea what the power of the passion of love would be in her soul; some idea, I say; for I am persuaded that none but those who know her as well as I do can form an adequate notion of the strength of attachment of which she is capable.

"You will be surprised, perhaps, sir, to hear me reason so coolly for others on a subject where I have acted so rashly for myself; and you may feel no inclination to listen to the advice of one who has shown so little prudence in her own affairs: therefore, having stated my reasons, and suggested my conclusions, I leave you to apply them as you think proper; and I shall only add, that the accomplishment of my wishes, on this subject, would give me peculiar satisfaction. It would relieve my mind from part of a weight of self-reproach. I have made both my parents unhappy. I have reason to fear that the shock my mother received, by my means, contributed much to her late illness. An event that would restore my whole family to happiness must, therefore, be to me the most desirable upon earth. I should feel immediate relief and delight, even in the hope of contributing to it by any influence I can have over your mind. And, independently of the pleasure and pride I should feel in securing my sister's happiness and yours, I should enjoy true satisfaction, sir, in that intimate friendship with you, which only the ties of such near relationship could permit or justify. You will accept of this assurance, instead of the trite and insulting, because unmeaning or unsafe, offer of friendship, which ladies sometimes make to those who have been their lovers.

"JULIA LIDHURST.

"---- Palace:"

At the first reading of this letter, Vivian felt nothing but a renewal of regret for having lost all chance of obtaining the affections of the person by whom it was written: on a second perusal, he was moved by the earnest expression of her wishes for his happiness; and the desire to gratify her, on a point on which she was so anxious, influenced him much more than any of her arguments. Whatever good sense the letter contained was lost upon him; but all the sentiment operated with full force, yet not with sufficient power to conquer the repugnance he still felt to Lady Sarah's person and manners. Lord Glistonbury made no inquiries concerning the contents of his daughter Julia's letter; but, as far as politeness would permit, he examined Vivian's countenance when he returned to the drawing-room. Lady Glistonbury's manner was as calm as usual; but the slight shake of her head was a sufficient indication of her internal feelings. Lady Sarah looked pale, but so perfectly composed, that Vivian was convinced she, at least, knew nothing of her sister's letter. So great indeed was the outward composure, and so immovable was Lady Sarah, that it provoked Lady Mary past endurance; and as they drove home in the evening, she exclaimed, "I never saw such a young woman as Lady Sarah Lidhurst! She is a stick, a stone, a statue--she has completely satisfied my mind on one point. I own that when I found Lady Julia was out of the question, I did begin to think and wish that Lady Sarah might be my daughter-in-law, because she has really been so carefully brought up, and the connexion with the Glistonbury family is so desirable: then I had a notion, before I saw her this morning, that the girl liked you, and might be really capable of attachment; but now, indeed, I am convinced of the folly of that

notion. She has no feeling--none upon earth--scarcely common sense! She thinks of nothing but how she holds her elbows. The formality and importance with which she went on cutting off ends of worsted from that frightful tapestry work, whilst I talked of you, quite put me out of all manner of patience. She has no feeling--none upon earth!"

"Oh, ma'am," said Vivian, "you do her injustice: she certainly has feeling--for her mother."

"Ay, for her mother, may be! a kind of mechanical affection!"

"But, ma'am, if you had seen her at the time that her mother was struck with palsy!"

Much to his own surprise, Vivian found himself engaged in a defence, and almost in an eulogium upon Lady Sarah; but the injustice of his mother's attack, on this point, was, he knew, so great, that he could not join in Lady Mary's invective.

"Why, my dear Charles!" said she, "do you recollect, on this very road, as we were returning from Glistonbury Castle, this time two years, you called Lady Sarah a petrification?"

"Yes, ma'am; because I did not know her then."

"Well, my dear, I must have time to analyze her more carefully, and I suppose I shall discover, as you have done, that she is not a petrification. So, then, Lady Sarah really is to be the woman after all. I am content, but I absolutely cannot pretend to like her--I like the connexion, however; and the rest is your affair.--You haven't proposed yet?"

"Bless me! no, ma'am! God forbid! How fast your imagination goes, my dear mother!--Is there no difference between saying, that a woman is not a petrification, and being in love with her?"

"In love! I never said a word about being in love--I know that's impossible--I asked only if you had proposed for her?"

"Dear ma'am, no!"

Lady Mary expressed her satisfaction; and, perhaps, the injustice with which she continued, for some days, to asperse Lady Sarah Lidhurst, as being unfeeling, served her more, in Vivian's opinion, than any other mode in which she could have spoken of her ladyship. Still he felt glad that he had not yet proposed. He had not courage either to recede or advance; circumstances went on, and carried him along with them, without bringing him to any decision. The business of the election proceeded; every day Lord Glistonbury was with him, or he was at Glistonbury Castle; every hour he saw more plainly the expectations that were formed: sometimes he felt that he was inevitably doomed to fulfil these, and at other times he cherished the hope that Lady Julia would soon return home, and that, by some fortunate revolution, she might yet be

his. He had not now the advantage of Russell's firmness to support him in this emergency. Russell's answer to his letter was so coolly determined, and he so absolutely declined interfering farther in his affairs, that Vivian saw no hopes of regaining his friendship, or of benefiting by his counsels. Thus was Vivian in all the helplessness and all the horrors of indecision, when an event took place, which materially changed the face of affairs in the Glistonbury family. Just at the time when the accounts of his health were the most favourable, and when his friends were deceived by the most sanguine hopes of his recovery, Lord Lidhurst died. His mother was the only person in the family who was prepared for this catastrophe: they dreaded to communicate the intelligence to her, lest it should bring on another attack of her dreadful malady; but to their astonishment, she heard it with calm resignation,--said she had long foreseen this calamity, and that she submitted to the will of Heaven. After pity for the parents who lost this amiable and promising young man, heir to this large fortune and to this splendid title, people began to consider what change would be made in the condition of the rest of the family. The Lady Lidhursts, from _being very small fortunes_, became heiresses to a large estate. The earldom of Glistonbury was to devolve to a nephew of Lord Glistonbury, in case the Lady Lidhursts should not marry, or should not have heirs male; but, in case they should marry, the title was to go to the first son. All these circumstances were of course soon known and talked of in the neighbourhood; and many congratulated Vivian upon the great accession of fortune, and upon the high expectations of the lady to whom they supposed him engaged.

On the first visit which Vivian and his mother paid after the death of Lord Lidhurst at Glistonbury Castle, they found there a young man very handsome, but of a dark, reserved countenance, whose physiognomy and manner immediately prepossessed them against him; on his part, he seemed to eye them with suspicion, and to be particularly uneasy whenever Vivian either mentioned the election or approached Lady Sarah. This young man was Mr. Lidhurst, Lord Glistonbury's nephew and heir-at-law. It was obvious, almost at first sight, that the uncle disliked the nephew; but it was not so easy to perceive that the nephew despised the uncle. Mr. Lidhurst, though young, was an excellent politician; and his feelings were always regulated by his interests. He had more abilities than Lord Glistonbury, less vanity, but infinitely more ambition. In Lord Glistonbury, ambition was rather affected, as an air suited to his rank, and proper to increase his consequence: Mr. Lidhurst's was an earnest, inordinate ambition, yet it was cold, silent, and calculating; his pride preyed upon him inwardly, but it never hurried him into saying or doing an extravagant thing. Those who were not actuated solely by ambition, he always looked upon as fools, and those who were, he considered, in general, as knaves: the one he marked as dupes, the other as rivals. He had been at the Bishop of ----'s, during Lord Lidhurst's illness, and at the time of his death. Ever since Lady Julia's arrival at the bishop's, he had foreseen the probability of this event, and had, in consequence of the long-sightedness of his views, endeavoured to make himself agreeable to her. He found this impossible; but was, however, easily consoled by hearing that she had resolved never to marry; he only hoped that she would keep her resolution; and he was now at Glistonbury

Castle, in the determination to propose for his other cousin, Lady Sarah, who would, perhaps, equally well secure to him his objects.

"Well! my dear Vivian," said Lord Glistonbury, drawing him aside, "how d'ye relish my nephew, Marmaduke Lidhurst? Need not be afraid to speak the truth, for I tell you at once that he is no particular favourite here; not *en bonne odeur*; but that's only between you and me. He thinks that I don't know that he considers me as a shallow fellow, because I haven't my head crammed with a parcel of statistical tables, all the fiscal and financiering stuff which he has at his calculating fingers' ends; but I trust that I am almost as good a politician as he is, and I'm free to believe, have rather more knowledge of the world--

'In men, not books, experienced was my lord'--

Hey? Hey, Vivian? and can see through him with half an eye, I can tell him.--Wants to get Lady Sarah--Yes, yes; but never came near us till we lost my poor boy--he won't win Lady Sarah either, or I'm much mistaken. Did you observe how jealous he was of you?--Right!--right!--he has penetration!--Stay, stay! you don't know Marmaduke yet--don't know half his schemes. How his brow clouded when we were talking of the election! I must hint to you, he has been sounding me upon that matter; he has a great mind to stand for this county--talks of starting at the first day of the poll. I told him it could not do, as I was engaged to you. He answered, that of course was only a conditional promise, in case none of my own relations stood. I fought shy, and he pressed confoundedly.--Gad! he would put me in a very awkward predicament, if he was really to stand! for you know what the world would say, if they saw me opposing my own nephew, a rising young man, and not for a relation either; and Marmaduke Lidhurst is just your deep fellow to plan such a thing and execute it, not caring at what or whose expense. I can tell him, however, I am not a man to be bullied out of my interest, or to be outwitted either.--Stand firm, Vivian, my good friend, and I'll stand by you; depend on me!--I only wish----" Here his lordship paused. "But I cannot say more to you now; for here is my precious heir-at-law coming to break up the confederacy. I'll ride over and see you to-morrow;--now, let us all be mute before Marmaduke, our master politician, as becomes us--Hey! Vivian? Hey?"

Notwithstanding this sort of jealousy of Marmaduke, and the bravadoing style in which Lord Glistonbury spoke of him, he spoke to him in a very different manner: it was apparent to Vivian that his lordship was under some awe of his nephew, and that, whilst he cherished this secret dislike, he dreaded coming to any open rupture with a man who was, as his lordship apprehended, so well able to make his own party good in the world. When Marmaduke did emerge from that depth of thought in which he generally seemed to be sunk, and when he did condescend to converse, or rather to speak, his theme was always of persons in power, or his sarcasms against those who never would obtain it; from any one thing he asserted, it could never be proved, but, from all he said, it might be inferred, that he valued human qualities and talents merely as they could, or could not, obtain a price in the political market. The power of speaking in public, as it is a means in England of acquiring all

other species of power, he deemed the first of Heaven's gifts; and successful parliamentary speakers were the only persons of whom he expressed admiration. As Vivian had spoken, and had been listened to in the House of Commons, he was in this respect an object of Marmaduke Lidhurst's envy; but this envy was mitigated by contempt for our hero's want of perseverance in ambition.

"There is that Mr. Vivian of yours," said he to his uncle, whilst Vivian was gone to talk to the ladies--"you'll find he will be but a woman's man, after all!--Heavens! with his fluency in public, what I would have done by this time of day! This poor fellow has no consistency of ambition--no great views--no reach of mind. Put him in for a borough, and he would be just as well content as if he carried the county. You'll see he will, after another session or two, cut out, and retire without a pension, and settle down into a mere honest country gentleman. He would be no connexion to increase the consequence of your family. Lady Sarah Lidhurst would be quite lost with such a nobody! Her ladyship, I am convinced, has too much discrimination, and values herself too highly, to make such a _missy_ match."

Lord Glistonbury coughed, and cleared his throat, and blew his nose, and seemed to suffer extremely, but chiefly under the repression of his usual loquacity. Nothing could be at once a greater proof of his respect for his nephew's abilities, and of his lordship's dislike to him, than this unnatural silence. Mr. Lidhurst's compliments on Lady Sarah's discrimination seemed, however, to be premature, and unmerited; for, during the course of this day, she treated all the vast efforts of her cousin Marmaduke's gallantry with haughty neglect, and showed, what she had never before suffered to be visible in her manner, a marked preference for Mr. Vivian's conversation. The sort of emulation which Mr. Lidhurst's rivalship produced increased the value of the object; she, for whom there was a contention, immediately became a prize. Vivian was both provoked and amused by the alternate contempt and jealousy which Mr. Lidhurst betrayed; this gentleman's desire to keep him out of the Glistonbury family, and to supplant him in Lady Sarah's favour, piqued him to prove his influence, and determined him to maintain his ground. Insensibly, Vivian's attentions to the lady became more vivacious; and he was vain of showing the ease, taste, and elegance of his gallantry; and he was flattered by the idea, that all the spectators perceived both its superiority and its success. Lady Sarah, whose manners had much improved since the departure of Miss Strictland, was so much embellished by our hero's attentions, that he thought her quite charming. He had been prepared to expect fire under the ice, but he was agreeably surprised by this sudden spring of flowers from beneath the snow. The carriage was at the door in the evening, and had waited half an hour, before he was aware that it was time to depart.

"You are right, my dear son!" Lady Mary began, the moment they were seated in the carriage; "you are quite right, and I was quite wrong, about Lady Sarah Lidhurst: she has feeling, indeed--strong, generous feeling--and she shows it at the proper time: a fine, decided character! Her manners, to-day, so easy, and her countenance so animated, really she looked quite handsome, and I think her a charming woman.--What

changes love can make!--Well, now I am satisfied: this is what I always wished--connexion, family, fortune, every thing; and the very sort of character you require in a wife,--the very person, of all others, that is suited to you!"

"If she were but a little more like her sister--or Selina Sidney _even!_" said Vivian, with a sigh.

"That very word _even_--your saying like Selina Sidney _even_--shows that you have not much cause for sighing: for you see how quickly the mere fancy in these matters changes--and you may love Lady Sarah presently, as much as you loved _even_ Lady Julia."

"Impossible! ma'am."

"Impossible! Why, my dear Charles, you astonish me! for you cannot but see the views and expectations of all the family, and of the young lady herself; and your attentions to-day were such as could bear but one construction."

"Were they, ma'am? I was not aware of that at the time--that is, I did not mean to engage myself--Good Heavens! surely I am not engaged?--You know a man is not bound, like a woman, by a few foolish words; compliments and gallantry are not such serious things with us men. Men never consider themselves engaged to a woman till they make an absolute proposal."

"I know that is a common maxim with young men of the present day, but I consider it as dishonourable and base; and very sorry should I be to see it adopted by my son!" cried Lady Mary indignantly. "Ask your friend Mr. Russell's opinion on this point: he long ago told you--I know he did--that if you had not serious thoughts of Lady Sarah Lidhurst, you would do very wrong, after all the reports that have gone abroad, to continue your intimacy with the Glistonburys, and thus to deceive her and her whole family--I only appeal to Mr. Russell;--will you ask your friend Russell's opinion?"

Vivian sighed again deeply for the loss of his friend Russell; but as he could not, without touching upon Lady Julia's affairs, explain the cause of the coolness between him and his friend, he answered only, "that an appeal to Mr. Russell was unnecessary when he had his mother's opinion." Lady Mary's wish for the Glistonbury _connexion_ fortified her morality at this moment, and she replied, "Then my decided opinion is, that it would be an immoral and dishonourable action to break such a tacit engagement as this, which you have voluntarily contracted, and which you absolutely could not break without destroying the peace and happiness of a whole family. Even that cold Lady Glistonbury grew quite warm to-day; and you must see the cause.--And in Lady Glistonbury's state of health, who could answer for the consequences of any disappointment about her favourite daughter, just after the loss of her son, too?"

"No more, mother, for Heaven's sake! I see it all--I feel it all--I must marry Lady Sarah, then.--By what fatality am I doomed, am I

forced to marry a woman whom I cannot love, whose person and manners are peculiarly disagreeable to me, and when I'm half in love with another woman!"

"That would be a shocking thing, indeed," said Lady Mary, retracting, and alarmed; for now another train of associations was awakened, and she judged not by her worldly, but by her romantic system.--"I am sure I would not, upon any account, urge you to act against your feelings. I would not be responsible for such a marriage, if you are really in love with her sister, and if Lady Sarah's person and manners are peculiarly and absolutely disagreeable to you. I should do a very wicked action--should destroy my son's happiness and morals, perhaps, by insisting on such a marriage--Heaven forbid!" (A silence of a mile and a half long ensued.) "But, Charles, after all I saw to-day, how can I believe that Lady Sarah is so disagreeable to you?"

"Ma'am, she happened not to be absolutely disagreeable to me to-day."

"Oh! well! then she may not happen to be disagreeable to you to-morrow, or the next day, or ever again!--And, as to the fancy for her sister, when all hope is over, you know love soon dies of itself."

So ended the conversation.--The next morning, at an unusual hour, Lord Glistonbury made his appearance at Castle Vivian, with an air of great vexation and embarrassment: he endeavoured to speak of trivial topics; but, one after another, these subjects dropped. Then Lady Mary, who saw that he was anxious to speak to her son, soon took occasion to withdraw, not without feeling some curiosity, and forming many conjectures, as to the object his lordship might have in view in this conference.

Lord Glistonbury's countenance exhibited, in quick alternation, a look of absolute determination and of utter indecision. At length, with abrupt effort, he said, "Vivian, have you seen the papers to-day?"

"The newspapers?--yes!--no!--They are on the table--I did not look at them--Is there any thing extraordinary?"

"Yes, faith!--extraordinary, very extraordinary!--But it is not here--it is not there--this is not the right paper--it is not in your paper. That's extraordinary, too"--(then feeling in both pockets)--"I was a fool not to bring it with me--May be I have it--Yes, here it is!--Not public news, but private."

Vivian was all expectation, for he imagined that something about Lady Julia was coming. Lord Glistonbury, who, in his commerce with public men, had learned the art of paying in words, to gain time when in danger of a bankruptcy of ideas, went on, stringing sentences together, without much meaning, whilst he was collecting his thoughts and studying the countenance of his auditor.

"You recollect my suggestions the last time I had the honour of speaking to you on a particular subject. I confess, Mr. Lidhurst's conduct does not meet my ideas of propriety; but other persons are free to form what

judgment they think fit upon the occasion. I shall submit the matter to you, Mr. Vivian, feeling myself called upon to come forward immediately to explain it to your satisfaction; and I do not fear to commit myself, by stating at once my sentiments, and the light in which it strikes me; for there must be some decision shown, somehow or other, and on some side or other.----Decision is all in all in public business, as the great Bacon or somebody says--and nobody knows that better than Marmaduke."

Here his lordship grew warm, and quitting his parliamentary cant, assumed his familiar style.

"Gad! he has stolen a march upon us--out-generalled us--but, in my private opinion, not in the handsomest style possible--Hey, Vivian?--Hey?"

"My dear lord, I have not heard the fact yet," said Vivian.

"Oh! the fact is simply--Look here, he has without my encouragement or concurrence--and, indeed, as he very well knew, contrary to my approbation and wishes--gone, and declared himself candidate for this county; and here's his fine flourishing, patriotic, damned advertisement in the paper--'To the gentlemen, clergy, and freeholders of the county.'----Gad! how it startled me this morning! When I first saw it I rubbed my eyes, and could hardly believe it was Marmaduke. Though I pique myself on knowing a man's style at the first line, yet I could not have believed it was his, unless I had seen his name at full length in these great abominable characters--'John Marmaduke Lidhurst.'--'Glastonbury Castle!' too--as if I had countenanced the thing, or had promised my support; when he knew, that but yesterday I was arguing the point with him in my study, and told him I was engaged to you. Such an ungentlemanlike trick!--for you know it reduces me to the dilemma of supporting a man who is only my friend, against my nearest relation by blood, which, of course, would have an odd and awkward appearance in the eyes of the world!"

Vivian expressed much concern for his lordship's difficulties; but observed that the world would be very unjust if it blamed him, and he was sure his lordship had too much decision of character.

"But, independently of the world," interrupted his lordship, "even in our own family, amongst all the Lidhursts and their remotest connexions, there would be quite a league formed against me; and these family quarrels are ugly affairs; for though our feudal times are done away, party clanship has succeeded to feudal clanship; and we chiefs of parties must keep our followers in good humour, or we are nothing _in the field_--I should say _in the house_--Ha! ha! ha!----I laugh, but it is a very serious business; for Marmaduke Lidhurst would be, in private or public, an impracticable enemy. Marmaduke's a fellow capable of inextinguishable hatred; and he is everywhere, and knows every body, of all the clubs, a rising young man, who is listened to, and who would make his story credited. And then, with one's nephew, one can't settle these things in _an honourable way_--these family quarrels must be

arranged amicably, not honourably; and that's the difficulty: the laws of honour are dead letters in these cases, and the laws of the land do not reach these niceties of feeling.----But of the most important fact you are still to be apprised."

"Indeed!" cried Vivian.

"Yes, you have not yet heard Marmaduke's master-stroke of policy!"

"No!--What is it, my lord?--I am all attention--pray explain it to me."

"But there's the delicacy--there's the difficulty!--No, no, no.--Upon my soul, I cannot name it!" cried Lord Glistonbury. "It revolts my feelings--all my feelings--as a man, as a gentleman, as a father. Upon my honour, as a peer, I would speak if I could; but, for the soul of me, I cannot."

"You know, my dear lord," said Vivian, "there can be no delicacies or difficulties with me; your lordship has done me the honour to live always on such a footing of intimacy with me, that surely there is not any thing you cannot say to me!"

"Why, that's true," said Lord Glistonbury, quitting his affected air of distress, and endeavouring to throw off his real feeling of embarrassment: "you are right, my dear Vivian! we are certainly upon terms of such intimacy, that I ought not to be so scrupulous. But there are certain things, a well-born, well-bred man--in short, it would look so like--But, in fact, I am driven to the wall, and I must defend myself as well as I can against this nephew of mine--I know it will look like the most horrible thing upon earth, like what I would rather be decapitated than do--I know it will look, absolutely, as if I came here to ask you to marry my daughter,--which, you know, is a thing no gentleman could have the most remotely in his contemplation; but, since I am so pressed, I must tell you the exact truth, and explain to you, however difficult, Marmaduke's master-stroke----he has proposed for Lady Sarah; and has had the assurance to ask me whether there is or is not any truth in certain reports which he is pleased to affirm have gone abroad--Heaven knows how or why!----And he urges me--the deep dog! for his cousin's sake, to contradict those reports, in the only effectual manner, by a temporary cessation of the intimate intercourse between Castle Vivian and Glistonbury Castle, whilst Lady Sarah remains unmarried; or, if our master politician would speak plainly, till he has married her himself.----At any rate, I have spoken frankly, Vivian, hey? you'll allow; and I am entitled both to a candid interpretation of my motives, and to equal frankness of reply."

Whilst his lordship had been speaking, compassion, gratitude, vanity, rivalry, honour, Lady Mary Vivian's conversation, Lady Julia's letter, then again the connexion, the earldom in future, the present triumph or disappointment about the election, the insolent intrusion of Mr. Lidhurst, the cruelty of abandoning a lady who was in love with him, the dishonour, the impossibility of receding after certain reports; all these ideas, in rapid succession, pressed on Vivian's mind: and his

decision was in consequence of the feelings and of the embarrassment of the moment. His reply to Lord Glistonbury was a proposal for Lady Sarah, followed by as many gallant protestations as his presence of mind could furnish. He did not very well know what he said, nor did Lord Glistonbury scrupulously examine whether he had the air and accent of a true lover, nor did his lordship inquire what had become of Vivian's late love for Lady Julia; but, quite content that the object should be altered, the desire the same, he relieved Vivian by exclaiming, "Come, come, all this sort of thing Lady Sarah herself must hear; and I've a notion--but I can keep a secret. You'll return with me directly to Glistonbury. Lady Glistonbury will be delighted to see you; and I shall be delighted to see Marmaduke's face, when I tell him you have actually proposed for Sarah--for now I must tell you all. Our politician calculated upon the probability that you would not decide, you see, to make a proposal at once, that would justify me to the world in supporting my son-in-law against my nephew. As to the choice of the son-in-law, Sarah settles that part of the business herself, you know; for, when two proposals are made, both almost equally advantageous, in the common acceptance of the word, I am too good a father not to leave the decision to my daughter. So you see we understand one another perfectly, and will make Marmaduke, too, understand us perfectly, contrary to his calculations, hey, hey?----Mr. Politician, your advertisement must be withdrawn, I opine, in the next paper--hey, Vivian? my dear Vivian!"

With similar loquacity, Lord Glistonbury continued, in the fulness of his heart, all the way they went together to Glistonbury Castle; which was agreeable to Vivian, at least by saving him from all necessity of speaking.

"So!" said Vivian to himself, "the die is cast, and I have actually proposed for Lady Sarah Lidhurst!--Who would have expected this two years ago?--I would not have believed it, if it had been foretold to me even two months ago. But it is a very--a very suitable match, and it will please the friends of both parties; and Lady Sarah is certainly very estimable, and capable of very strong attachment; and I like her, that is, I liked her yesterday very much--I really like her."

Upon those mixed motives, between convenience and affection, from which, Dr. Johnson says, most people marry, our hero commenced his courtship of the Lady Sarah Lidhurst. As the minds of both parties on the subject are pretty well known to our readers, it would be cruel to fatigue them with a protracted description of the formalities of courtship. It is sufficient to say, that my Lord Glistonbury had the satisfaction of seeing his nephew disappointed.

CHAPTER XIV.

"And the marriage was solemnized with much pomp and magnificence, and

every demonstration of joy."

Novelists and novel readers are usually satisfied when they arrive at this happy catastrophe; their interest and curiosity seldom go any farther: but, in real life, marriage is but the beginning of domestic happiness or misery.

Soon after the celebration of Vivian's nuptials, an event happened which interrupted all the festivities at Glistonbury, and which changed the bridal pomp to mourning. Lady Glistonbury, who had been much fatigued by the multitude of wedding-visits she was obliged to receive and return, had another stroke of the palsy, which, in a few hours, terminated fatally. Thus, the very event which Vivian had dreaded, as the probable consequence of his refusal to marry her daughter, was, in fact, accelerated by the full accomplishment of her wishes. After the loss of her mother, Lady Sarah Vivian's whole soul seemed to be engrossed by fondness for her husband. In public, and to all eyes but Vivian's, her ladyship seemed much the same person as formerly: but, in private, the affection she expressed for him was so great, that he frequently asked himself whether this could be the same woman, who, to the rest of the world, and in every other part of her life, appeared so cold and inanimate. On a very few occasions her character, before her marriage, had, "when much enforced, given out a hasty spark, and straight was cold again;" but now she permitted the steady flame to burn without restraint. Duty and passion had now the same object. Before marriage, her attachment had been suppressed, even at the hazard of her life; she had no idea that the private demonstrations of unbounded love from a married woman to her husband could be either blameable or dangerous: she believed it to be her duty to love her husband as much as she possibly could.--Was not he her husband? She had been taught that she should neither read, speak, nor think of love; and she had been so far too much restricted on this subject, that, absolutely ignorant and unconscious even of her danger, she now pursued her own course without chart or compass. Her injudicious tenderness soon imposed such restraint upon her husband, as scarcely any lover, much less any husband, could have patiently endured. She would hardly ever suffer him to leave her. Whenever he went out of the house, she exacted from him a promise that he would be back again at a certain hour; and if he were even a few minutes later than his appointment, he had to sustain her fond reproaches. Even though he stayed at home all day, she was uneasy if he quitted the room where she sat; and he, who by this time understood, through all her exterior calmness, the symptoms of her internal agitation, saw by her countenance that she was wretched if he seemed interested in the conversation of any other person, especially of any other woman.

One day when Vivian, after spending the morning tEte-àtEte with Lady Sarah, signified to her his intention of dining abroad, she repeated her fond request that he would be sure to come home early, and that he would tell her at what o'clock exactly she might expect to see him again. He named an hour at hazard, to free himself from her importunate anxiety; but he could not help saying, "Pshaw!" as he ran down stairs; an exclamation which fortunately reached only the ears of a groom, who was

thinking of nothing but the tops of his own boots. Vivian happened to meet some agreeable people where he dined: he was much pressed to stay to supper; he yielded to entreaty, but he had the good-natured attention to send home his servant, to beg that Lady Sarah and his mother would not sit up for him. When he returned, he found all the family in bed except Lady Sarah, who was sitting up waiting for him, with her watch in her hand. The moment he appeared, she assailed him with tender reproaches, to which he answered, "But why would you sit up when I begged you would not, my dear Lady Sarah?"

She replied by a continuity of fond reproach; and among other things she said, but without believing it to be true, "Ah! I am sure you would have been happier if you had married my sister Julia, or _that_ Miss Sidney!"

Vivian sighed deeply; but the next instant, conscious that he had sighed, and afraid of giving his wife pain, he endeavoured to turn the course of her thoughts to some other subject. In vain. Poor Lady Sarah said no more, but felt this exquisitely, and with permanent anguish. Thus her imprudence reverted upon herself, and she suffered in proportion to her pride and to her fondness. By such slight circumstances is the human heart alienated from love! Struggling to be free, the restive little deity ruffles and impairs his plumage, and seldom recovers a disposition to tranquillity. Vivian's good-nature had induced him for some time to submit to restraint; but if, instead of weakly yielding to the fond importunity of his wife--if, instead of tolerating the insipidity of her conversation and the narrowness of her views, he had with real energy employed her capacity upon suitable objects, he might have made her attachment the solace of his life. Whoever possesses the heart of a woman, who has common powers of intellect, may improve her understanding in twelve months more than could all the masters, and lectures, and courses of philosophy, and abridgments, and _documenting_ in the universe. But Vivian had not sufficient resolution for such an undertaking: he thought only of avoiding to give or to feel present pain; and the consequences were, that the evils he dreaded every day increased.

Vivian's mother saw the progress of conjugal discontent with anguish and remorse.

"Alas!" said she to herself, "I was much to blame for pressing this match. My son told me he could never love Lady Sarah Lidhurst. It would have been better far to have broken off a marriage at the church-door than to have forced the completion of such an ill-assorted union. My poor son married chiefly from a principle of honour; his duty and respect for my opinion had also great weight in his decision; and I have sacrificed his happiness to my desire that he should make what the world calls a splendid alliance. I am the cause of all his misery; and Heaven only knows where all this will end!"

In her paroxysm of self-reproach, and her eagerness to _set things to rights_ between her daughter-in-law and her son, she only made matters worse. She spoke with all the warmth and frankness of her own character to Lady Sarah, beseeching her to speak with equal openness, and to

explain the cause of the _alteration_ in Vivian.

"I do not know what you mean, madam, by alteration in Mr. Vivian!"

"Is not there some disagreement between you, my dear?"

"There is no disagreement whatever, madam, as far as I know, between Mr. Vivian and me--we agree perfectly," said Lady Sarah.

"Well, the _misunderstanding_!"

"I do not know of any _misunderstanding_, madam. Mr. Vivian and I understand one another perfectly."

"The _coolness_, then--Oh! what word shall I use!--Surely, my dear Lady Sarah, there is some _coolness_--something wrong?"

"I am sure, madam, I do not complain of any coolness on Mr. Vivian's part. Am I to understand that he complains to your ladyship of any thing wrong on mine? If he does, I shall think it my duty, when he points out the particulars, to make any alteration he may desire in my conduct and manners."

"Complain!--My son!--He makes no _complaints_, my dear. You misunderstand me. My son does not complain that any thing is wrong on your part."

"Then, madam, if no complaints are made on either side, all is as it should be, I presume, at present; and if in future I should fail in any point of duty, I shall hold myself obliged to your ladyship if you will then act as my monitor."

Hopeless of penetrating Lady Sarah's sevenfold fence of pride, the mother flew to her son, to try what could be done with his open and generous mind. He expressed a most earnest and sincere wish to make his wife happy. Conscious that he had given her exquisite pain, he endeavoured to make atonement by the sacrifices which he thought would be most grateful to her. He refrained often from company and conversation that was agreeable to him, and would resign himself for hours to her society. It was fortunate for Lady Julia Lidhurst that, by continuing with her good uncle the bishop, she did not see the consequences of the union which she had so strenuously advised. The advice of friends is often highly useful to prevent an imprudent match; but it seldom happens that marriages turn out happily which have been made from the opinion of others rather than from the judgment and inclinations of the parties concerned; for, let the general reasons on which the advice is grounded be ever so sensible, it is scarcely possible that the adviser can take in all the little circumstances of taste and temper, upon which so much of the happiness or misery of domestic life depends. Besides, people are much more apt to repent of having been guided by the judgment of another than of having followed their own; and this is most likely to be the case with the weakest minds. Strong minds can decide for themselves, not by the opinions but

by the reasons that are laid before them: weak minds are influenced merely by opinions; and never, either before or after their decision, are firm in abiding by the preponderating reasons.

No letters, no intelligence from home, except a malicious hint now and then from her cousin Marmaduke, which she did not credit, gave her reason to suspect that the pair whom she had contributed to unite were not perfectly happy. So Lady Julia exulted in the success of her past counsels, and indulged her generous romantic disposition in schemes for forwarding a union between Russell and Selina, determining to divide her fortune amongst the children of her friends. She concluded one of her letters to Lady Sarah Vivian about this time with these words:--

"Could I but see _one other person_,--whom I must not name, rewarded for his virtues, as you are, by happy love, I should die content, and would write on my tomb:--

'Je ne fus point heureux, mais j'ai fait leur bonheur.'" [10]

Far removed from all romance and all generosity of sentiment, Lord Glistonbury, in the mean time, went on very comfortably, without observing any thing that passed in his family. Whatever uneasiness obtruded upon his attention he attributed to one cause, anxiety relative to the question on which his present thoughts were exclusively fixed, viz. whether Lady Sarah's first child would be a boy or a girl. "Heaven grant a boy!" said his lordship; "for then, you know, there's an end of Marmaduke as heir-at-law!" Whenever his lordship saw a cloud on the brows of Lady Mary, of Lady Sarah, or of Vivian, he had one infallible charm for dispelling melancholy;--he stepped up close to the patient, and whispered, "It will be a boy!--My life upon it, it will be a boy!" Sometimes it happened that this universal remedy, applied at random, made the patient start or smile; and then his lordship never failed to add, with a nod of great sagacity, "Ah! you didn't know I knew what you were thinking of!--Well! well! you'll see we shall cut out Marmaduke yet."

With this hope of cutting out Marmaduke, Lord Glistonbury went on very happily, and every day grew fonder of the son-in-law, who was the enemy of his heir-at-law, or whom he considered as such. The easiness of Vivian's temper was peculiarly agreeable to his lordship, who enjoyed the daily pleasure of governing a man of talents which were far superior to his own. This easiness of temper in our hero was much increased by the want of motive and stimulus. He thought that he had now lost his chance of happiness; he cared little for the more or less pain of each succeeding day; and so passive was his listlessness, that to a superficial observer, like Lord Glistonbury, it looked like the good-nature of perfect content.--Poor Vivian!--In this wreck of his happiness, one saving chance, however, yet remained. He had still a public character; he was conscious of, having preserved unblemished integrity as a member of the senate; and this integrity, still more than his oratorical talents, raised him far above most of his competitors, and preserved him not only in the opinion of others, but

in his own. When parliament met, he went to town, took a very handsome house for Lady Sarah, determining to do all he could to oblige and please the wife whom he could not love. Lady Sarah had complete power, at home and abroad, of her time and her expenses: her dress, her equipages, her servants, her whole establishment, were above Vivian's fortune, and equal to her ladyship's birth and rank. She was mistress of every thing but of his heart. The less he liked her, the more he endeavoured to compensate for this involuntary fault, by allowing her that absolute dominion, and that external splendour, which he thought would gratify, and perhaps fill her mind. As for himself, he took refuge in the House of Commons. There he forgot for a time domestic uneasiness, and was truly animated by what so many affect--zeal for the good of his country. He was proud to recollect, that the profligate Wharton had failed in the attempt to laugh him out of his public virtue; he was proud that Wharton's prophecies of his apostasy had never been accomplished; that, as a public character at least, he had fulfilled the promise of his early youth, and was still worthy of himself, and of that friend whom he had lost. He clung to this idea, as to the only hope left him in life.

One night, in a debate on some question of importance, he made an excellent speech, which was particularly well received by the house, because it came from one who had an unblemished character. When Vivian went into the coffee-room to refresh himself, after he had done speaking, several of his acquaintance crowded round him, complimenting him upon his success--he broke from them all! for he saw, advancing towards him with a smile of approbation, the friend on whose approbation he set a higher value than he did even on the applauses of the house--the friend whose lost affection he had so long and so bitterly regretted. Russell stretched out his hand--Vivian eagerly seized it; and, before they had either of them spoken one word, they both understood each other perfectly, and their reconciliation was completely effected.

"Yes," said Russell, as they walked out arm in arm together, "yes, it is fit that I should forget all private resentment, in the pride and pleasure I feel, not merely in your public success, but in your public virtue. Talents, even the rare talent of oratory, you know, I hold cheap in comparison with that which is so far more rare, as well as more valuable--political integrity. The abhorrence and contempt of political profligacy, which you have just expressed, as a member of the senate, and the consistent conduct by which you have supported your principles, are worthy of you; and, allow me to say, of your education."

Vivian felt exalted in his own opinion by such praise, and by these the warmest expressions he had ever received of Russell's regard. He forgot even his domestic uneasiness; and this day, the first for many months he had spent happily, he passed with his friend. They supped together, and related mutually all that happened since their parting. Russell told Vivian that he had lately been agreeably surprised by the gift of a valuable living from the Bishop of ---, Lady Julia Lidhurst's uncle; that the bishop, whom he had till then never seen, had written to him in the handsomest manner, saying that he knew the obligations his family

owed to Mr. Russell; that it had been the dying request of his nephew, Lord Lidhurst, that some token of the family esteem and gratitude should be offered to him, to whom they owed so much; but the bishop added, that neither family gratitude nor private friendship could have induced him to bestow church preferments upon any but the person whose character best entitled him to such a distinction and such a trust.

This letter, as Vivian observed, was well calculated to satisfy Russell's conscience and his delicacy. The conversation next turned upon Lady Julia Lidhurst. Russell was not aware that Vivian knew more of her attachment to him than what had been discovered the day before he left Glistonbury; and Vivian could not help admiring the honourable and delicate manner in which his friend spoke of her, without any air of mystery, and with the greatest respect. He told Vivian he had heard that proposals had been lately made to her ladyship by a gentleman of great talents and of high character; but that she had positively declined his addresses, and had repeated her declaration that she would never marry. Her good uncle left her, on this point, entirely at liberty, and did not mention the proposal to Lord Glistonbury, lest she should be exposed to any fresh difficulties. Russell expressed much satisfaction at this part of the bishop's conduct, as being not only the most kind, but the most judicious, and the most likely to dispose his niece to change her determination. He repeated his opinion that, united to a man of sense and strength of mind, she would make a charming and excellent wife. Vivian agreed with him; yet observed, that he was convinced she would never marry--There he paused.--Could Lady Julia herself have overheard the conversation which afterwards passed between these two gentlemen, one of whom she had loved and the other of whom she had refused, not a word would have hurt her feelings: on the contrary, she would have been raised in her own opinion, and gratified by the strong interest they both showed for her happiness. They regretted only that a young woman of such talents, and of such a fine, generous disposition, had been so injudiciously educated.

"And now, my dear Russell," cried Vivian, "that we have finished the chapter of Lady Julia, let us talk of Miss Sidney."--Russell's change of countenance showed that it was not quite so easy for him to talk upon this subject.--To spare him the effort, Vivian resumed, "As you are a rich man now, my dear Russell, you will certainly marry; and I know," added he, smiling, "that Miss Sidney will be your wife. If ever man deserved such a prize, you do; and I shall be the first to wish you joy."

"Stay, my good friend," interrupted Russell; "your kindness for me, and your imagination, are too quick in this anticipation of my happiness."--Russell then told him, that he never had declared his attachment to Selina till Vivian's marriage had put an end to all probability of rivalship with his friend. She had expressed high esteem for Russell, but had told him, that she had suffered so much from a first unfortunate attachment, that she felt averse from any new engagements.

"Shall I assure you, as you assured me just now with regard to Lady

Julia," said Vivian, "that Miss Sidney will he prevailed upon to alter her determination; and shall I add, that, though I should like Lady Julia the less, I should like Selina the better, for changing her mind?"--He went on, generously expressing sincere hopes, that his friend might obtain Selina Sidney's affections, and might enjoy that domestic happiness, which--Vivian was going to say, which he had himself forfeited; but checking this regret, he only said--"that domestic happiness, which I consider as the summit of human felicity, and which no man can deserve better than you do, my dear Russell."

Russell easily guessed that poor Vivian had not attained this summit of human felicity by his own marriage, but never adverted to any of the conversations they had held about Lady Sarah Lidhurst; never recalled any of Vivian's vehement declarations concerning the absolute impossibility of his making such a match; never evinced the least surprise at his marriage; nor inquired how he had conquered his passion for Lady Julia. With friendly forgetfulness, he seemed to have totally obliterated from his mind all that it could do no good to remember. Vivian was sensible of this delicacy, and grateful for it; but to imitate Russell's reserve and silence upon certain subjects required a force, a forbearance of which he was not capable. At first he had determined not to say one word to Russell of domestic uneasiness; but they had not been many hours together before Vivian poured forth all his complaints, and confessed how bitterly he repented his marriage: he declared that he had been persuaded, by the united efforts of her family and of his mother, against his own judgment, or, at least, against his taste and inclinations, to marry Lady Sarah.

"By whatever persuasions, or by whatever motives, your choice was decided," interrupted Russell, "reflect that it is decided for life; therefore abide by it, and justify it. Above all, make yourself happy with the means which are yet in your power, instead of wasting your mind in unavailing regret. You are united to a woman who has every estimable quality, as you candidly acknowledge: there are some particulars in which she does not please your taste; but withdraw your attention from these, and you will be happy with a wife who is so firmly attached to you. Consider, besides, that--romance apart--love, though a delightful passion, is not the only resource which a man of sense, virtue, and activity may find for happiness. Your public duties, your success, and your reputation as a public character, will--"

Russell was interrupted in this consolatory and invigorating speech, by the entrance of a servant of Lord Glistonbury's, who brought a note from his lordship to Mr. Vivian, requesting to see him as soon as he could make it convenient to come to Glistonbury House, as his lordship wanted to speak to him on particular business of the greatest importance. Vivian was provoked by being thus summoned away from his friend, to attend to one of what he called Lord Glistonbury's _important mysteries about nothing_. Russell was engaged to go into the country the ensuing day, to take possession of his new living; but he promised that he would see him again soon; and, with this hope, the two friends parted.

Vivian went to Lord Glistonbury's: he found his lordship in his study.

"Where have you been, Vivian?" exclaimed he: "I have sent messenger after messenger to look for you, half over the town: I thought you were to have dined with us, but you ran away, and nobody could tell where, or with whom; and we have been waiting for you at our cabinet council here with the utmost impatience."--Vivian answered, that he had unexpectedly met with his friend Russell; and was proceeding to tell his lordship how handsomely the Bishop of---had provided for his friend; but Lord Glistonbury, like many other great men, having the habit of forgetting all the services of those from whom they have nothing more to expect, cut short Vivian's narration, by exclaiming, "True, true! well, well! that's all over now--Certainly, _that_ Russell did his duty by my poor son; and acted as he ought to do--in all things; and I'm glad to hear my brother has given him a good living; and I hope, as you say, he will soon be married--so best--so best, you know, Vivian, for reasons of our own--Well! well! I'm glad he is provided for--not but what that living would have been of essential service, if it had been reserved for a friend of mine--but my brother the bishop never can enter into any political views--might as well not have a brother a bishop--But, however, Mr. Russell's a friend of yours--I am not regretting--not so rude to you to regret---on the contrary, rejoice, particularly as Mr. Russell is a man of so much merit--But all that's over now; and I want to talk to you upon quite another matter. You know I have always said I should, sooner or later, succeed in my grand object, hey, Vivian?"

"Your lordship's grand object?--I am not sure that I know it."

"Oh, surely, you know my grand object. You my son-in-law, and forget my grand object?--The marquisate, you know; the marquisate, the marquisate! Did not I always tell you that I would make government, sooner or later, change my earldom into a marquisate? Well! the thing is done--that is, as good as done; they have sent to treat with me upon my own terms."

"I give you joy, my dear lord!" said Vivian.

"Joy!--to be sure you do, my sober sir:--one would think you had no concern or interest in the business. Joy! to be sure you give me joy; but, I can tell you, you must give me something more than joy--you must give me support."

"How he looks!" continued Lord Glistonbury, "as if he did not know what is meant by support. Vivian, did you never hear of parliamentary support?"

"I hope, my dear lord," replied Vivian, gravely, "that you have not entered into any engagements, or made any promises for me, which I cannot have it in my power to perform."

Lord Glistonbury hesitated in some confusion; and then, forcing a look of effrontery, in an assured tone, replied, "No. I have not made any engagements or promises for you which you cannot perform, Vivian, I am clear; nor any which I have not a right to expect my son-in-law will confirm with alacrity."

"What have you engaged?--what have you promised for me, my lord?" said Vivian, earnestly.

"Only, my dear boy," said Lord Glistonbury, assuming a facetious tone, "only that you will be always one of us--And are not you one of us?--my son-in-law?--the deuce is in it if he is not one of us!--In short, you know, to be serious, a party must go together, that is, a family party must go together; and, if a ministry do my business, of course I do theirs. If I have my marquisate, they have my votes."

"But not my vote--pardon me, my lord--my vote cannot be bartered in this manner."

"But, you know, Mr. Vivian, you know it is for your interest as much as for mine; for, you know, the marquisate will probably descend, in due course of time, to your son. So your interest is full as much concerned as mine; and besides, let me tell you, I have not forgotten your immediate interest: I have stipulated that you should have the valuable place which Mr. C---- was to have had."

All that Russell had said of public virtue was fresh in our hero's mind. "I thank you, my dear lord," said he; "for I am sure this was kindly intended; but I am not one of those persons, who in public affairs think only of their private interest--I am not thinking of my interest. But if a man maintains certain public measures one day, and the next, for valuable consideration, supports diametrically opposite opinions and measures, he will lose, and deserve to lose, all reputation for integrity."

"Integrity! political integrity!" said Lord Glistonbury; "fine words, which mean nothing. Behind the scenes, as we are now, Vivian, what use can there be in talking in that strain?--Between you and me, you know this is all nonsense. For who, of any party, now thinks, really and truly, of any thing but getting power or keeping it? Power, you know, stands for the measure of talent; and every thing else worth having is included in that word power. I speak plainly. And as honour is merely an affair of opinion, and opinion, again, an affair of numbers, and as there are numbers enough to keep one in countenance in these things; really, my dear Vivian, it is quite childish, quite boyish, smells of the lamp. To declaim about political integrity, and all that, is not the language of a man who knows any thing of business--any thing of the world.--But why do I say all this?" cried Lord Glistonbury, checking himself and assuming an air of more reserved displeasure.--Mr. Vivian certainly knows all this as well as I do; I know how my nephew Marmaduke, who, with all his faults, is no fool, would interpret your present language: he would say, as I have often heard him say, that political integrity is only a civil put off."

"Political integrity only a civil put off!" repeated Vivian, with unfeigned astonishment. When he formerly heard similar sentiments from the avowed profligate and hackneyed politician Mr. Wharton, he was shocked; but to hear them repeated, as being coolly laid down by so young a man as Mr. Lidhurst, excited so much disgust and contempt in

Vivian's mind, that he could hardly refrain from saying more than either prudence or politeness could justify.

"Now I am free to confess," pursued Lord Glistonbury, "that I should think it more candid and manly, and, I will add, more friendly, and more the natural, open conduct of a son-in-law to a father-in-law, instead of talking of political integrity, to have said, at once, I cannot oblige you in this instance."

"Surely, my lord, you cannot be in earnest?" said Vivian.

"I tell you, sir, I am in earnest," cried his lordship, turning suddenly in a rage, as he walked up and down the room; "I say, it would have been more candid, more manly, more every thing,--and much more like a son-in-law--much!--much!--I am sure, if I had known as much as I do now, sir, you never should have been my son-in-law--never! never!--seen Lady Sarah in her grave first!--I would!--I would!--yes, sir--I would!--And you are the last person upon earth I should have expected it from. But I have a nephew--I have a nephew, and now I know the difference. No man can distinguish his friends till he tries them."

Vivian in vain endeavoured to appease Lord Glistonbury by assurances that he would do any thing in his power to oblige him, except what he himself considered as dishonourable: his lordship reiterated, with divers passionate ejaculations, that if Vivian would not oblige him in this point, on which he had set his heart--where the great object of his life was at stake--he could never believe he had any regard for him; and that in short, it must come to an open rupture between them, for that he should never consider him more as his son. Having uttered this denunciation as distinctly as passion would permit, Lord Glistonbury retired to rest.

Vivian went immediately to his mother, to tell her what had passed, and he felt almost secure of her approbation; but though she praised him for his generous spirit of independence, yet it was evident the hopes that the title of marquis might descend to a grandson of her own weighed more with her than any patriotic considerations. She declared, that indeed she would not, for any title, or any thing upon earth, have her son act dishonourably; but what was asked of him, as far as she could understand, was only such a change of party, such compliances, as every public man in his place would make: and though she would not have him, like some she could name, a corrupt tool of government, yet, on the other hand, it was folly to expect that he alone could do any thing against the general tide of corruption--that it would be madness in him to sacrifice himself entirely, without the slightest possibility of doing any good to his country.

Vivian interrupted her, to represent that, if each public man argued in this manner, nothing could ever be accomplished for the public good: that, on the contrary, if every man hoped that something might be done, even by his individual exertion, and if he determined to sacrifice a portion of his private interest in the attempt, perhaps much might be effected.

"Very likely!" Lady Mary said. She confessed she knew little of politics: so from argument she went to persuasion and entreaties. She conjured him not to quarrel with the Glistonburys, and not to provoke Lord Glistonbury's displeasure. "I see all that artful Marmaduke's schemes," said she: "he knows his uncle's pertinacious temper; and he hopes that your notions of patriotism will prevent you from yielding on a point, on which his uncle has set his heart. Marmaduke will know how to take advantage of all this, believe me!"

Vivian was shaken in his resolution by his mother's entreaties--by the idea of all the family quarrels that would ensue, and of all the difficulties in which he might be involved, if he persisted in his generous determination.

"My dear son," resumed she, "it would be absolute madness to refuse the place that is now offered you: only consider the situation of your affairs--consider, I beseech you, the distress you will be in by and by, if you reject this offer--recollect the immense demands upon you; recollect that heap of bills for the election, and for the buildings, and all the poor workmen about the castle! and that coachmaker too! and remember, the purchase money of the house in town must be paid in three months. And the only possible means by which you can get out of debt, is by accepting this place, which would put you at ease at once, and enable you to continue in the style of life to which you have of late been accustomed."

"As to that, I could alter my style of life--I would do any thing," cried Vivian, "to pay my debts and preserve my independence. I will alter my mode of living, and retrench decidedly and vigorously."

"Well, my dear son, I admire your spirit, and, if you can do this, it will certainly be best; but I fear that when it comes to the trial, you will not be able to persevere."

"I shall--I shall! Believe me, mother, I have resolution enough for this--you do me injustice," said Vivian.

"No, my dear Charles, I do you justice; for I do not doubt your resolution, as far as your own privations are concerned; but, consider your wife--consider Lady Sarah--consider the luxury in which she has always been accustomed to live, and the high sphere in which her relations move! How her pride would be hurt by their looking down upon her! I have no doubt Lady Sarah would do her duty, and make any sacrifices for her husband; and if you were--I must now speak plainly--if you were passionately fond of her--an all-for-love husband--you could, with honour and propriety, accept of such sacrifices; but what would retirement be _to_ poor Lady Sarah, and _with_ Lady Sarah?"

Vivian told his mother that he would take a night to reconsider the matter coolly; and, satisfied with having gained so much, she suffered him to go home. As he was quitting his own dressing-room, he paused, to

consider whether he should consult his wife, who was, as yet, in ignorance of the whole transaction, and who knew nothing of the deranged state of his affairs. He did her the justice to believe that she would be willing to live with him in retirement, and to forego all the luxuries and pride of her rank, for the sake of her duty and of her love. He was convinced that, in any opposition between her father's interests and her husband's honour, she would strongly abide by her husband. He recollected all Lady Julia had said of the advantage that her sister's firmness of mind might be in steadying his vacillating temper in any moment of trial. Here was the first _great occasion_, since his marriage, where his wife's strength of mind could be of essential service to him: yet he hesitated whether he should avail himself of this advantage; and every moment, as he approached nearer to her apartment, he hesitated more and more; He did not, in the first place, like to humble himself so far as to ask her counsel; then he had not courage to confess those debts and embarrassments which he had hitherto concealed. All that his mother had suggested about the indelicacy of requiring or accepting great sacrifices from a woman whom, though he esteemed, he could not love--the horror of retirement with such a companion--the long years _tOte-àtOte_--all these ideas combined, but chiefly the apprehension of the immediate present pain of speaking to her on a disagreeable subject, and of being obliged to hear her speak with that formal deliberation which he detested; added to this, the dread of her surprise, if not of her reproaches, when all his affairs should be revealed, operated so irresistibly upon his weakness, that he decided on the common resource--concealment. His hand was upon the lock of his chamber-door, and he turned it cautiously and softly, lest, in entering his apartment, he should waken Lady Sarah: but she was not asleep.

"What can have kept you so late, Mr. Vivian?" said she.

"Business, my dear," answered he, with some embarrassment.

"May I ask what sort of business?"

"Oh!--only--political business."

"Political business!" She looked earnestly at her husband; but, as if repressing her curiosity, she afterwards added, "our sex have nothing to do with politics," and, turning away from the light, she composed herself to sleep.

"Very true, my dear," replied Vivian--not a word more did he say: content with this evasion of the difficulty, he thus, by his weakness, deprived himself of the real advantage of his wife's strength of mind. Whilst Lady Sarah, in total ignorance of the distress of her husband, slept in peace, he lay awake, revolving painful thoughts in the silence of the night. All that his mother had said about the pecuniary difficulties to which they must soon be reduced recurred with fresh force; the ideas of the unpaid election bills, all the masons', carpenters', painters', glaziers', and upholsterers' bills, with "thousands yet unnamed behind," rose, in dreadful array, before him, and

the enthusiasm of his patriotism was appalled. With feverish reiteration, he ran over and over, in his mind, the same circle of difficulties, continually returning to the question, "Then what can be done?" Bitterly did he this night regret the foolish expenses into which he had early in life been led. If it were to do over again, he certainly would not turn his house into a castle; if he had foreseen how much the expense would surpass the estimates, assuredly nothing could have tempted him to such extravagance. The architect, the masons, the workmen, one and all, were knaves; but, one and all, they must be paid. Then what could he do?--And the debts incurred by the contested elections!--contested elections are cursed things, when the bills come to be paid; but, cursed or not, they must be paid. Then what could he do?--The distress in which he should involve his generous mother--the sacrifices he should require from his wife--the family quarrels--all that Lady Sarah would suffer from them--the situation of his wife. Then what could he do?--He MUST submit to Lord Glistonbury, and take the place that was offered to him.

Vivian sighed--and turned in his bed--and sighed--and thought--and turned--and sighed again--and the last sigh of expiring patriotism escaped him!----To this end, to this miserable end, must all patriotism come, which is not supported by the seemingly inferior virtues of prudence and economy.

Poor Vivian endeavoured to comfort himself by the reflection that he should not act from merely mercenary considerations, but that he was compelled to yield to the solicitations of his mother and of his father-in-law; that he was forced to sacrifice his own public opinions to secure domestic peace, and to prevent the distress of his mother, the misery, and perhaps danger, of his wife and child. Dereliction of principle, in these circumstances, was something like an amiable, a pardonable weakness. And then, see it in what light you will, as Lord Glistonbury observed, "there are so many who will keep a patriot in countenance now-a-days, for merely changing sides in politics. A man is not even thought to be a man of talents till he gets something by his talents. The bargain he makes--the price he gains--is, in most people's estimation, the value of the public man."

All this Vivian said to himself to quiet his conscience; and all this, he knew, would be abundantly satisfactory to the generality of people with whom he associated; therefore, from them he could fear neither reproach nor contempt: but he could not bear even to think of Russell--he felt all the pangs of remorse, and agony of shame, as the idea of such a friend came into his mind. Again he turned in his bed, and groaned aloud--so loud, that Lady Sarah wakened, and, starting up, asked what was the matter; but receiving no answer, she imagined that she had been in a dream, or that her husband had spoken in his sleep. He groaned no more, nor did he even sigh: but fatigued with thinking and with feeling, he at last fell into a sort of slumber, which lasted till it was time to rise. Before Vivian was dressed, Lord Glistonbury called upon him--he went into his dressing-room. His lordship came with his best address, and most courteous face of persuasion; he held out his hand, in a frank and cordial manner, as he entered, begging his dear

son's pardon for the warmth and want of temper, he was free to confess, he had shown last night; but he was persuaded, he said, that Vivian knew his sincere regard for him, and convinced that, in short, they should never _essentially_ differ: so that he was determined to come to talk the matter over with him when they were both cool; and that he felt assured that Vivian, after a night's reflection, would always act so as to justify his preference of his son-in-law to his nephew, hey, Vivian?--Lord Glistonbury paused for an answer--Vivian cut himself as he was shaving, and was glad of a moment's reprieve; instead of answering, he only exclaimed, "Cursed razor! cut myself!--My lord, won't you sit down? will you do me the honour to--"

Lord Glistonbury seated himself; and, in regular order, with his tiresome parade of expletives, went through all the arguments that could be adduced to prove the expediency of Vivian's taking this place, and assisting him, as he had taken it for granted his son-in-law would, on such an occasion. The letters of the great and little men who had negotiated the business of the marquisate were then produced, and an account given of all that had passed _in confidence_; and Lord Glistonbury finished by saying that the affair was absolutely concluded, he having passed his word and pledged his honour for Vivian; that he would not have spoken or acted for him if he had not felt that he was, when acting for his son-in-law, in fact acting for himself--his second self; that there had been no time to wait, no possibility of consulting Vivian; that the whole plan was suggested yesterday, in two hours after the house broke up, and was arranged in the evening; that search and inquiries had been made every where for Vivian; but, as he could not be found, Lord Glistonbury said he had ventured to decide for him, and, as he hoped, for his interest and for that of the family; and the thing, now done, could not be undone: his lordship's word was sacred, and could not be retracted.

Vivian, in a feeble, irresolute tone, asked if there was no possibility of his being allowed to decline the place that was offered him, and suggested that he could take a middle course; to avoid voting against his lordship's wishes, he could, and he believed that he would, accept of the Chiltern Hundreds, and go out of parliament for the session.

Lord Glistonbury remonstrated against what he termed the madness of the scheme.

"A man like you, my dear Vivian, who have distinguished yourself so much already in opposition, who will distinguish yourself so much more hereafter in place and in power----"

"No," said Vivian, rising as he finished shaving himself; "no, my lord, I shall never more distinguish myself, if I abandon the principles I believe to be just and true. What eloquence I have--if I have any--has arisen from my being in earnest: I shall speak ill--I shall not be able to speak at all--when I get up against my conscience."

"Oh!" said Lord Glistonbury, laughing, "your romantic patriotism may be very nice in its feelings; but, believe me, it will not deprive you of

the use of your speech. Look at every one of the fine orators of our times, and name me one, if you can, who has not spoken, and spoken equally well, on both sides of the house; ay, and on both sides of most political questions. Come, come, you'll find you will get on quite as well as they got on before you, hey?"

"You will find that I shall be of no use to you--that I shall be a dead weight on your hands."

"You a dead weight! you, who are formed to be--now, really, without flattery--you know there's no occasion for flattery between you and me--to be the soul, and, in time, the head of a party----Stay!--I know all you are going to say, but give me leave to judge--You know there's my own nephew, a very clever young man, no doubt, he is allowed to be; and yet, you see, I make no comparison between you. I assure you I am a judge in these matters, and you see the house has confirmed my judgment; and, what is more--for I can keep nothing from you--if it won't make you too vain, and make you set too high a price upon yourself, which will be very troublesome in the present case; but, I say, be that as it may, I will frankly own to you, that I believe you have been of essential service in procuring me this great favourite object of my life, the marquisate."

"I, my lord! impossible!--for I never took the slightest step toward procuring it."

"Pardon me, you took the most effectual step, without knowing it, perhaps. You spoke so well in opposition, that you made it the interest of ministry to _muzzle you_; and there was no way so effectual of getting at you as through me, I being your father-in-law and you my heir. You don't see the secret concatenation of these things with a glance as I do, who have been used to them so long. And there was no way of coming to the point with me without the marquisate--that was my _sine qua non_; and you see I gained my point--by your means, chiefly, I am free to allow--though Marmaduke would gladly persuade me it was by his negotiating. But I do you justice; I did you justice, too, in more than words, when I stipulated for that place for you, which, in fact, I knew you could not go on much longer without. So, my dear Vivian, all this explained to our mutual satisfaction, we have nothing more to do but to shake hands upon it and go down stairs; for I have engaged myself and Secretary----to breakfast with you, and he has _full powers_, and is to carry back our _capitulation_--and," continued Lord Glistonbury, looking out of the window, "here's our friend's carriage."

"Oh, my lord, it is not yet too late!" cried Vivian; "it may yet be arranged otherwise. Is there no way--no possibility----"

A loud knock at the house door.

"I wish to Heaven, my lord!----"

"So do I wish to Heaven, with all my soul, that you would finish this nonsense, my dear Vivian, and come down to breakfast. Come, come,

come!--Hey, hey, hey!--This is absolutely too ridiculous, and I must go, if you don't. Only consider a political breakfast of this nature!"

Lord Glistonbury hurried down stairs--reluctantly, and with a heavy heart and repugnant conscience, Vivian followed. At this instant, he wished for Russell, to prevent what he knew would be the consequence of this interview. But Russell was absent--the keeper of his conscience, the supporter of his resolution, was not at hand. Woe to him who is not the keeper of his own conscience--the supporter of his own resolution! The result of this political breakfast was just what every reader, who knows the world but half as well as Lord Glistonbury knew it, has probably long since anticipated. The capitulation of the patriots of the Glistonbury band, with Vivian at their head, was settled. Lord Glistonbury lost no character by this transaction, for he had none to lose--he was quite at his ease, or quite callous. But Vivian bartered, for a paltry _accommodation_ of his pecuniary difficulties, a reputation which stood high in the public opinion--which was invaluable in his own--which was his last stake of happiness. He knew this--he felt it with all the anguish of exquisite but USELESS sensibility.

Lord Glistonbury and his new friend, Secretary ----, who was a man of wit as well as a politician, rallied Vivian upon his gravity and upon his evident depression of spirits.

"Really, my dear Vivian," cried Lord Glistonbury, "my patience is now exhausted, and I must not let you expose yourself here, before our friend, as a novice--Hey! hey!--Why, will you never open your eyes, and see the world as it is! Why! what!--Did you never read the fable of the dog and his master's meat?--Well! it is come to that now in England; and he is a foolish dog, indeed, who, when he can't save the meat, won't secure his share--hey?"

His lordship and the secretary laughed in concert.

"Look, how Vivian preserves his solemnity!" continued Lord Glistonbury; "and he really looks as if he was surprised at us. My dear Vivian, it requires all my knowledge of your _bonne foi_ to believe that you are in earnest, and not acting the part of a patriot of _older_ times."

"Oh!" cried the secretary, with a facetious air, "Mr. Vivian assuredly knows, as well as we do, that--

'A patriot is a fool in ev'ry age,
Whom all lord chamberlains allow the stage.'

But off the stage we lay aside heroics, or how should we ever get on?--Did you hear, my lord," continued the secretary, turning to Lord Glistonbury, "that there is another blue riband fallen in to us by the death of Lord G----?"

"I had a great regard for poor Lord G----. Many applications, I suppose, for the vacant riband?"

From the vacant riband they went on to talk over this man's pension and the other man's job; and considered who was to get such and such a place when such and such a person should resign or succeed to something better. Then all the miserable mysteries of ministerial craft were unveiled to Vivian's eyes. He had read, he had heard, he had believed, that public affairs were conducted in this manner; but he had never, till now, actually seen it: he was really novice enough still to feel surprise at finding that, after all the fine professions made on all sides, the main, the only object of these politicians, was to keep their own, or to get into the places of others. Vivian felt every moment his disgust and his melancholy increase. "And it is with these people I have consented to act! And am I to be hurried along by this stream of corruption to infamy and oblivion! Then Russell--"

Vivian resolved to retract the engagement he had just made with Lord Glistonbury and the secretary, and he waited only for a pause in their conversation to explain himself. But, before any pause occurred, more company came in,--the secretary hurried away, saying to Vivian, who would have stopped him at the door, "Oh, my dear sir, every thing is settled now, and you must be with us in the house to-night--and you will find the whole business will go on as smoothly as possible, if gentlemen will but act together, and strengthen the hands of government. I beg pardon for breaking away--but so many people are waiting for me--and any thing further we can settle when we meet in the house."

Lord Glistonbury also refused to listen to farther explanations--said that all was settled, and that it was impossible to make any recantations.

CHAPTER XV.

The hour of going to the House of Commons at length arrived; Lord Glistonbury saw that Vivian was so much out of spirits, and in such confusion of mind, that he began to fear that our hero's own account of himself was just, and that he would not be able to command ideas, or even words, when he was to speak in opposition to what he called his principles and his conscience. "This son of mine, instead of being our great Apollo, will be a dead weight on our hands, unless we can contrive to raise his spirits."

So, to raise his spirits, Lord Glistonbury accompanied him to the coffee-room of the house, and insisted upon his taking some refreshment before he should attempt to speak. His lordship _fortified_ him with bumper after bumper, till at last Vivian came up to the speaking point. He took his seat in his new place in the house, and, endeavouring to brave away the sense of shame, rose to speak. Notwithstanding the assistance of the wine, and the example of Mr. Marmaduke Lidhurst, who spoke before him with undaunted assurance, Vivian could scarcely get on with a hesitating, confused, inconsistent speech, uttered in so low and

indistinct a voice, that the reporters in the gallery complained that they could not catch this honourable member's meaning, or that his words did not reach them. Conscious of his failure, and still more conscious of its cause, he retired again to the coffee-room as soon as he had finished speaking, and again Lord Glistonbury plied him with wine, saying that he would find he would _do very well in reply_ presently. It happened that Lord Glistonbury was called away--Vivian remained. Mr. Wharton, with a party of his friends, entered the coffee-room. Wharton seemed much heated both with wine and anger--he was talking eagerly to the gentlemen with him, and he pronounced the words, "Infamous conduct!--Shabby!--Paltry fellow!" so loud, that all the coffee-room turned to listen. Colonel S----, a gentleman who was one of Wharton's party, but who had a good opinion of Vivian, at this moment took him by the arm, and, drawing him aside, whispered, in confidence, that he was persuaded there had been some _mistake_ in the arrangements, which, as it was reported, Lord Glistonbury had just made with the ministry, for that Mr. Wharton and many of his lordship's former party, complained of having been shamefully deserted. "And to break our word and honour to our party, is a thing no gentleman _can_ do. Wharton had a direct promise from his lordship, that he never would _come in_ till he should _come in_ along with him. And now it is confidently said, that Lord Glistonbury has made his bargain for his own marquisate, and provided only for himself, his nephew, and his son-in-law."

Thrown into the utmost consternation by the idea of this double forfeiture of honour, this breach both of public and private faith, Vivian, after thanking Colonel S---- for his friendly manner of communicating this information, and declaring that the transaction was totally unknown to him, begged that the colonel would do him the favour and the justice to be present when he should require an explanation from Lord Glistonbury. To this Colonel S---- consented, and they hastened in search of his lordship: his lordship was not to be found; but Mr. Marmaduke Lidhurst was, however, in the coffee-room, and upon Vivian's referring to him, he could not deny the truth of the charge, though he used all his powers of circumlocution to evade giving a direct answer. The shame, the indignation, that rapidly succeeded to each other in Vivian's countenance, sufficiently convinced Colonel S---- that he had no share in the _private_ part of this disgraceful transaction; and he very handsomely assured Vivian, that he would set the matter in its true point of view with his friends. Marmaduke soon found a pretence to withdraw--some member was speaking in the house, whom he must hear, he said, and away he went.

At this moment Mr. Wharton, who was walking down the room with his friends, passed by Vivian, and, as he passed, said,

"That _private vices are public benefits_, we all know; but that public vices are private benefits, some of us, alas! have yet to learn. But I'd have that little, whiffling, _most noble and puissant prince_ expectant, his majesty's _right trusty and entirely beloved cousin_ elect, know, that plain Bob Wharton is not a man to be duped and deserted with impunity."

"Whom does he mean?--What does he mean?" whispered some of the bystanders. "What prince is he talking of?--Which of the princes?"

"Oh! none of the princes," replied another. "You know _most noble and puissant prince_ is the title of a marquis, and _our right trusty and entirely beloved cousin_, the style in which the king writes to him."

"But who is this marquis expectant?"

"Don't you know?--Lord Glistonbury."

"But some of his lordship's friends ought to take it up, surely."

"Hush!--his son-in-law will hear you."

"Where?"

"There--don't look!"

Vivian was, with reason, so much exasperated by the treacherous duplicity of Lord Glistonbury's conduct, that he was ill inclined to undertake his lordship's defence, and determined to leave it to himself, or to his nephew; yet the whispers operated not a little upon his weakness. Wharton, who was walking with his set up and down the room, again came within Vivian's hearing, and, as he passed, exclaimed, "_Public vice!_ and _public virtue!_ precious, well-matched pair!"

"Who is _public vice_, and who is _public virtue_?" said one of Wharton's companions.

"Don't you know?" replied Wharton: "the heir-at-law and the son-in-law."

On hearing this speech, Vivian, who knew that he was one of the persons to whom it alluded, started forward to demand an explanation from Wharton: but Colonel S---- held him back. "You are not called upon, by any means, to take notice of this," said the colonel: "Wharton did not address himself to you, and though he might mean what he said for you, yet he speaks under a false impression; and besides, he is not quite sober. Leave it to me, and I will settle it all to your satisfaction before to-morrow." Vivian listened unwillingly and uneasily to the friendly counsel: he was more hurt than he had ever before felt himself by any of Wharton's sarcasms, because there was now in them a mixture of truth; and a man seldom feels more irritable than when he is conscious that he is partly to blame, and apprehensive that others will think him more blameable than he really is. His irritability was increased by the whispers he had heard, and the looks he now perceived among the bystanders: the voice, the opinion of numbers, the fear of what others would think or say, operated against his better judgment.

"Come," said Colonel S----, "let us go and see what they are doing in the house."

Vivian refused to stir, saying that it would be leaving the field to

Wharton. Wharton at this instant repassed; and still running the changes, with half-intoxicated wit, upon the same ideas, reiterated, "_Public vice!--We all knew where _that_ would end in these days--in public honours; but none of you would believe me, when I told you where _public virtue_ would end--in private treachery!"

"That's neat!--that's strong!--faith, that's home!" whispered some one.

"Mr. Wharton!" cried Vivian, going up to him, "I could not help hearing what you said just now--did you intend it for me?"

"You heard it, it seems, sir, and that is sufficient," replied Wharton, in an insolent tone: "as to what I meant, I presume it is pretty evident; but, if you think it requires any explanation, I am as ready to give as you can be to ask it."

"The sooner the better, then, sir," said Vivian. The two gentlemen walked away together, whilst the spectators exclaimed, "Very spirited indeed!--very right!--very proper!--Vivian could do no less than call him out. But, after all, what was the quarrel about? Which of them was to blame?"

Long before these points were settled, the challenge was given and accepted. Colonel S---, who followed Vivian and Wharton, endeavoured to set things to rights, by explaining that Vivian had been deceived by Lord Glistonbury, and kept totally in the dark respecting the negotiation for the marquisate. But Wharton, aware that by _taking up the matter immediately in such a spirited way_ he should do himself infinite honour with his party, and with that majority of the world who think that the greatest merit of a man is to stand to be shot at, was not at all willing to listen to these representations. Colonel S--- declared that, were he in Mr. Wharton's place, he should, without hesitation, make an apology to Mr. Vivian, and publicly acknowledge that what he said in the coffee-room was spoken under a false impression, which a plain statement of facts had totally removed: but Wharton disdained all terms of accommodation; his policy, pride, and desire of revenge, all conspired to produce that air of insolent determination to fight, which, with some people, would obtain the glorious name of COURAGE. By this sort of courage can men of the most base and profligate characters often put themselves in a moment upon an equal footing with men of principle and virtue!

It was settled that Mr. Wharton and Vivian should meet, at eight o'clock the next morning, in a field near town. Colonel S--- consented to be Vivian's second. Russell was not yet returned--not expected till ten the next day.

Left to his cool reflection, Vivian thought with horror of the misery into which the event of this duel might involve all with whom he was connected, and all who were attached to him. The affair was of course to be kept a secret from all at Glistonbury House, where Vivian was engaged to dine with a large ministerial party. He went home to dress, hoping to have a quarter of an hour to himself; but, on entering his

own dressing-room, he, to his surprise and mortification, found his wife seated there, waiting for him with a face of anxious expectation; a case of newly-set diamonds on a table beside her. "I thought you were at your father's, my dear: are you not to be at Glistonbury House to-day?" said Vivian.

"No," replied Lady Sarah. "Surely, Mr. Vivian, you know that my father gives a political dinner, and I suppose you are to be there?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Vivian; "I did not know what I was saying--I am to be there, and must dress (looking at his watch), for I have no time to spare."

"Be that as it may, I must intrude upon your time for a few minutes," said Lady Sarah.

Vivian stood impatiently attentive, whilst Lady Sarah seemed to find it difficult to begin some speech which she had prepared.

"Women, I know, have nothing to do with politics," she began in a constrained voice; but, suddenly quitting her air and tone of constraint, she started up and exclaimed, "Oh, my dear, _dear_ husband! what have you done?--No, no, I cannot, will not believe it, till I hear it from your OWN lips!"

"What is the matter, my dear Lady Sarah?--You astonish and almost alarm me!" said Vivian, endeavouring to preserve composure of countenance.

"I will not--Heaven forbid that I should alarm you as I have been alarmed!" said Lady Sarah, commanding her voice again to a tone of tranquillity. "I ought, and, if I were not weak, should be convinced that there is no reason for alarm. There has been some mistake, no doubt; and I have been to blame for listening to idle reports. Let me, however, state the facts. Half an hour ago, I was at Gray's the jeweller's, to call for my poor mother's diamonds, which, you know, he has reset---"

"Yes--Well!"

"And whilst I was in the shop, a party of gentlemen came in, all of them unknown to me, and, of course, I was equally unknown to them; for they began to speak of you in a manner in which none knowing me could venture in my presence. They said--I cannot bear to repeat or to think of what they said--you cannot have bartered your public reputation for a marquise for my father!--You cannot have done that which is dishonourable--you cannot have deserted your party for a paltry place for yourself!--You turn pale.--I wish, if it pleased God, that I was this moment in my grave!"

"Heaven forbid, my dear Lady Sarah!" cried Vivian, forcing a smile, and endeavouring to speak in a tone of raillery. "Why should you wish to be in your grave, because your husband has just got a good warm place? Live! live!" said he, raising her powerless hand; "for consider--as I

did--and this consideration was of no small weight with me--consider, my dear Sarah, how much better you will live for it!"

"And you did consider me? And that did weigh with you?"

"--Oh, this is what I dreaded most!" cried Lady Sarah.--"When will you know my real character? When will you have confidence in your wife, sir? When will you know the power, the unconquered, unconquerable power of her affection for you?"

Vivian, much struck by the strength of her expression as she uttered these words, was a moment silent in astonishment; and then could only, in an incoherent manner, protest, that he did know--that he had always done justice to her character--that he believed in her affection--and had the greatest confidence in its power.

"No, sir, no!--Do not say that which I cannot credit!--You have not confidence in the power of my affection, or you would never have done this thing to save me pain. What pain can be so great to me as the thought of my husband's reputation suffering abasement?--Do you think that, in comparison with this, I, your wife, could put the loss of a service of plate, or house in town, or equipage, or servants, or such baubles as these?" added she, her eyes glancing upon the diamonds; then, snatching them up, "Take them, take them!" cried she; "they were my mother's; and if her spirit could look down from heaven upon us she would approve my offer--she would command your acceptance. Then here on my knees I conjure you, my beloved husband, take them--sell them--sell plate, furniture, house, equipage, sell every thing rather than your honour!"

"It is sold," said Vivian, in a voice of despair.

"Redeem it, redeem it at any price!" cried Lady Sarah. "No! I will kneel here at your feet--you shall not raise me--till I have obtained this promise, this justice to me, to yourself!"

"It is too late," said Vivian, writhing in agony.

"Never too late," cried Lady Sarah. "Give up the place.--Never too late!--Give up the place--write this moment, and all will be well; for your honour will be saved, and the rest is as nothing in my eyes!"

"High-minded woman!" cried Vivian: "why did not I hear you sooner? Why did not I avail myself of your strength of soul?"

"Use it now--hear me now--let us waste no time in words--here is a pen and ink--write, my dearest husband! and be yourself again."

"You waste the energy of your mind on me," cried Vivian, breaking from Lady Sarah, and striking his forehead violently; "I am not worthy of such attachment! It is done--it cannot be undone: I am a weak, ruined, dishonoured wretch!--I tell you, it CANNOT be undone!"

Lady Sarah rose, and stood in despair. Then, looking up to heaven, she was silent for some moments. After which, approaching her husband, she said, in an altered, calm voice, "Since it cannot be undone, I will urge you no more. But, whether in glory or in shame, you are secure that your wife will abide by you."

Vivian embraced her with a tenderness which he had never before felt. "Excellent woman! in justice to myself, I must tell you," cried he, "that I was deceived into this situation. I CAN say no more!"

At this moment a servant knocked at the door, bringing a message from Lord Glistonbury, to say that all the company were assembled, and that dinner waited for Mr. Vivian.

"You are not in a fit state to go. Shall I send an apology to my father?"

"Oh, no! I must go," cried Vivian, starting up, "I must go, or it will be thought--or it will be suspected--I can't explain it to you, my dear; but I must go--I must _appear_ to-day, and in spirits too, if possible."

He hurried away. A servant delivered to Lady Sarah a number of notes and cards. The notes were notes of congratulation, from many of her acquaintance, upon the report in circulation, that her father was immediately to be a marquis. The cards were from people who were to be at her assembly that night. This was one of _her nights_, which were usually crowded. Lady Sarah's first wish was to write apologies, and to say that she was not well enough to see company; but, recollecting that her husband had said, "he must _appear_, and in spirits, too, if possible," she thought that it might be more for their interest, and according to his wishes, that she should see company, and that no appearance of dejection should be discerned in his wife. She prepared herself accordingly, and, with a heavy heart, walked through her splendid apartments, to see whether the decorations had been properly executed.

In the mean time Vivian dined at Lord Glistonbury's, with a large ministerial party. As soon as he could, after dinner, Vivian got away; and Lord Glistonbury attributed his retiring early to the awkwardness he might feel in the company of men whom he had, till now, so violently opposed. This his lordship thought a foolish _young man's feeling_, which would soon wear away. Vivian returned home, anxious to escape from crowds, and to have some hours of leisure to pass alone; but, the moment he entered his own house, he saw the great staircase lined with roses and orange-trees; he found the rooms lighted up and prepared for company; and Lady Sarah dressed, for the first time, in all her mother's diamonds.

"Good Heavens!--Do you see company to-night?" cried he.

"Yes; for I thought, my dear, that you would wish it."

"I wish it!--Oh! if you knew how I wish to be alone!"

"Then, as no one is yet come, I can still shut my doors, and order them to say that I am not well enough to see company--I am sure it is true. Shall I?"

"No, my dear, it is too late," said Vivian: "I am afraid it is impossible for you to do that."

"Not impossible, if you wish it."

"Well, do as you please."

"Which is most for your interest? I have no other pleasure."

"You are too good to me, and I fear I shall never have it in my power to show you any gratitude----"

"But decide which is best to be done, my dear," said Lady Sarah.

"Why, my dear, I believe you judged rightly--see your friends, and make the best of it: but I can appear only for a moment; I have business of consequence--letters--papers--that must be finished to-night; and I must go now to my study."

"You shall not be interrupted," said Lady Sarah: "I will exert myself as much as possible."

A tremendous knock at the door.--Vivian passed through the saloon, and gained his study, where, after remaining for some time in painful reflection, he was roused by hearing the clock strike twelve. He recollected that he had several arrangements to make in his affairs this night; and that it was incumbent on him to sign and execute a will, which had been for some time in his possession, with certain blanks not yet filled up. His wife was, by his marriage settlements, amply provided for; but he inserted in his will some clauses which he thought would add to her peculiar comfort, and took care to word them so that his respect and esteem should be known hereafter to all the world; and that, if he died, he should leave her the consolation of knowing that his last feelings for her were those of gratitude and affection. To his mother he left all that was in his power to contribute to the ease of her declining years--often obliged to pause whilst he wrote, overcome by the thoughts of what her grief would be if he died. He left his friend Russell _in remainder_, to a considerable part of his estate; and he was just adding the bequest of certain books, which they had read together in his better days, when the door of the study suddenly opened, and his mother entered.

"What is all this?" cried she: "immersed in papers at such a time as this!"

"I so hate crowded assemblies," said Vivian, huddling his papers together, and advancing to meet his mother.

"So do I," said Lady Mary; "but I have been waiting with exemplary patience where I was stationed by Lady Sarah, at the card-table, every instant expecting your arrival, that I might have a few minutes' conversation with you, and inquire how matters went on at the house, and congratulate----"

Before she had finished the word *_congratulate_*, she stopped short; for she had, by this time, a full view of her son's countenance: and she knew that countenance so well, that it was impossible to disguise it so as to deceive her maternal penetration.

"My dear son!" said she, "something is going wrong: I conjure you, tell me what is the matter!"--Her eye glanced upon the parchments, and she saw that it was a will. Vivian forced a laugh; and asked her if she had the weakness some people felt, of disliking to see a will, or of fancying that a man was going to die if he made his will. Then, to quiet her apprehensions, and to put a stop to her farther inquiries, he threw aside his papers, and returned with her to the company, where he exerted himself to appear as gay as the occasion required. Lord Glistonbury, who had called in for a few moments, was now playing the great man, as well as his total want of dignity of mind and manners would permit; he was answering, in whispers, questions about his marquisate, and sustaining with all his might his new part of the friend of government. Every thing conspired to strike Vivian with melancholy--yet he constrained himself so far, that his *_charming spirits_* delighted all who were uninterested in observing any but the external signs of gaiety; but his mother saw that his vivacity was forced. She made inquiries from all the gentlemen of her acquaintance about what had passed the preceding day both at the House of Commons, and to-day at the dinner at Lord Glistonbury's: but those who had been at Lord Glistonbury's dinner assured her that every thing had been as amicable as could be; and his ministerial friends said that every thing had gone on as smoothly as possible at the house: of what had passed between Mr. Wharton and Vivian in the coffee-room *_nobody could_* give her an account. Baffled, but not satisfied, the anxious mother sent to the hotel where Mr. Russell lodged, to inquire whether he was returned to town, and to beg to see him immediately. From him, she thought, she should learn the truth; or, by his influence over her son, she hoped that, if there was any danger of a quarrel, it might be in time prevented. Her servant, however, brought word that Mr. Russell was not expected from the country till ten o'clock the next morning; but that her note would be given to him directly on his arrival. She applied herself next to the study of her daughter's countenance, whilst she asked two or three questions, calculated to discover whether Lady Sarah was under any anxiety about Vivian. But though Lady Sarah's countenance exhibited not the slightest variation under this trial, yet this tranquillity was by no means decisively satisfactory; because, whatever might be her internal agitation, she knew that Lady Sarah *_could_* maintain the same countenance. Lady Sarah, who plainly discerned her mother's anxious curiosity, thought it her duty to keep her husband's secrets; and, imagining that she knew the whole truth, was not farther alarmed by these hints, nor did they lead her to suspect the real state of the case.

Lady Mary was at length tolerably well satisfied, by a conversation with her son; during the course of which she settled in her imagination that he had only been inserting in his will a bequest to his friend Russell; and that the depression of his spirits arose from the struggle he had had in determining to vote against his patriotic ideas. She rose to depart; and Vivian, as he conducted her down stairs, and put her into her carriage, could scarcely repress his feelings; and he took so tender a leave of her, that all her apprehensions revived; but there was a cry of "_Lady--somebody's_ carriage!" and Lady Mary's coachman drove on immediately, without giving her time for one word more. After his mother's departure, Vivian, instead of returning to the company, went to his study, and took this opportunity of finishing his will; but as the servants were all in attendance at supper he could not get any body to witness it; and for this he was obliged to wait till a very late hour, when all the company at last departed. The rattle of carriages at length died away; and when all was silence, just as he was about to ring for his witnesses, he heard Lady Sarah's step coming along the corridor towards the study: he went out immediately to meet her, drew her arm within his affectionately, and took two or three turns with her, up and down the empty saloon, whilst a servant was extinguishing the lights. Vivian's mind was so full that he could not speak; and he was scarcely conscious that he had not spoken, till Lady Sarah broke the silence by asking if he had finished his business.

"No, my dear, I have more to do yet; but you will oblige me if you will go to rest--you must be fatigued--mind and body."

"_You_ seem fatigued almost to death," said Lady Sarah: "and cannot you finish the remainder of your business as well to-morrow?"

"No," replied Vivian; "it must be finished before to-morrow. I am bound in duty to finish it before to-morrow."

"If it is a point of duty, I have no more to say," replied Lady Sarah; "but," continued she, in a tone of proud humility, "but if I might so far intrude upon your confidence, as to inquire----"

"Make no inquiries, my dear; for I cannot answer any, even of yours," said Vivian. "And let me beg of you to go to rest; my mind will then be more at ease. I cannot command my thoughts whilst I am anxious about you; and I am anxious--more anxious than ever I was in my life--about you at this moment. You will oblige me if you will go to rest."

"I CANNOT rest, but I will leave you, since you desire it--I have no idle curiosity--Good night!"

"Good night! and thank you once more, my excellent wife, for all your kindness."

"There cannot be a better woman!" said Vivian to himself as she retired. "Why have I not loved her as she deserved to be loved? If I live, I will do my utmost to make her happy--if I live, I will yet repair all. And, if I die, she will have but little reason to deplore

the loss of such a husband."

Vivian now executed his will--wrote several letters of business--burnt letters and arranged papers--regretted that Russell, who was to be his executor, was not near him--made many bitter reflections on the past, many good resolutions for the future, in case he should survive; then, overpowered with fatigue of mind, slept for some time, and was awakened by the clock striking seven. By eight o'clock he was at the place appointed--Mr. Wharton appeared a few minutes afterwards. Their seconds having measured out the distance, they took their ground. As Vivian had given the challenge, Wharton had the first fire. He fired--Vivian staggered some paces back, fired his pistol into the air, and fell. The seconds ran to his assistance, and raised him from the ground. The bullet had entered his chest. He stretched out his hand to Mr. Wharton in token of forgiveness, and, as soon as he could speak, desired the seconds to remember that it was he who gave the challenge, and that he thought he deserved to bear the blame of the quarrel. Wharton, callous as he was, seemed struck with pity and remorse: he asked what friends Vivian would wish to have apprised of his situation. A surgeon was in attendance. Vivian, faint from loss of blood, just pronounced Russell's name, and the name of the hotel where he was to be found, adding "_nobody else_." Wharton rode off, undertaking to find Mr. Russell; and Vivian was carried into a little public-house, by the orders of the surgeon, who thought that he could not bear the motion of a carriage. Wharton met Mr. Russell, who was coming from town. He had come to London earlier than he had intended, and, in consequence of Lady Mary Vivian's note, which he had received immediately on his arrival, had made such inquiries as convinced him that her apprehensions were just; and having discovered the place where the parties were to meet, he had hastened thither, in hopes of preventing the fatal event. The moment he saw Mr. Wharton he knew that he was too late. Without asking any other question than, "Is Vivian alive?" he pressed forwards. The surgeon, who was the next person he saw, gave him no hopes of his friend's recovery, but said he might last till night, or linger perhaps for a day or two. Vivian had by this time recovered his senses and his speech; but when Russell entered the room where he lay, he was so much struck by the grief in his countenance that he could not recollect any one of the many things he had to say. Russell, the firm Russell, was now quite overcome.

"Yes, my dear friend," said Vivian; "this is the end of all your care--of all your hopes of me!--Oh, my poor, poor mother! What will become of her! Where can we find consolation for her!--You and Selina Sidney! You know how fond my mother was of her--how fond she was of my mother--till I, the cause of evil to all my friends, separated them. You must reunite them. You must repair all. This hope--this hope of your happiness, my beloved friend, will soothe my last moments!----How much happier Selina will be with you than----"

Russell sobbed aloud.--"Yes, yield to your feelings, for I know how strong they are," said Vivian: "you, that have always felt more for me than I have ever felt for myself! But it is well for you that my life ends; for I have never been any thing but a torment and a disgrace to you!--And yet I had good dispositions!--but there is no time for regret

about myself; I have others to think of, better worth thinking of."

Vivian called for pen, ink, and paper, had himself raised in his bed, and supported, whilst he wrote to Selina, and to his mother.

"Do not stop me," cried he to Russell; "it is the only act of friendship--the only thing I can do in this world now with pleasure, and let me do it."

His notes contained nearly what he had just said to Russell--he put them open into his friend's hand; then, good-natured to the last, Vivian took up his pen again, with no small difficulty, and wrote a few affectionate words to his wife. "She _well_ deserves this from me," said he. "Be a friend to her, Russell--when I am gone, she will, I know, want consolation," After Russell had assured him that he would do all he desired, Vivian said, "I believe there is no one else in the world who will regret my death, except, perhaps, Lady Julia Lidhurst. How generous she was to forgive me!--Tell her, I remembered it when I was dying!--Weakness, weakness of mind!--the cause of all my errors!----Oh, Russell! how well you knew me from the first!--But all is over now!--My experience can be of no use to me--Every thing swims before my eyes.----One comfort is, I have not the blood of a fellow-creature to answer for. My greatest error was making that profligate man my friend--he was my ruin. I little thought, a few years ago, that I should die by his hand--but I forgive him, as I hope to be forgiven myself! Is the clergyman who was sent for come?--My dear Russell, this would be too severe a task for you.--He is come? Then let me see him."

Vivian was left for some time to his private devotions. The clergyman afterwards summoned Russell to return:--he found his friend calmed and resigned. Vivian stretched out his hand--thanked him once more--and expired!

"Oh! worthy of a better fate!" thought Russell.--"With such a heart!--With such talents!--And so young!--With only one fault of character!--Oh, my friend! is it all over?--and all in vain?"

Vivian's mother and widow arrived just at this moment; and Russell and Lord Glistonbury, who followed breathless, could not stop them from entering the apartment. The mother's grief bordered on distraction; but it found relief in tears and cries. Lady Sarah shed no tear, and uttered no exclamation; but advancing, insensible of all opposition, to the bed on which her dead husband lay, tried whether there was any pulse, any breath left; then knelt down beside him in silent devotion. Lord Glistonbury, striking his forehead continually, and striding up and down the room, repeated, "I killed him!--I killed him!--I was the cause of his death!--My victim!--My victim!--But take her away!--Take _her_ away--I cannot.--For mercy's sake, force her away, Mr. Russell!"

"There is no need of force," said Lady Sarah, rising, as her father approached; "I am going to leave my husband for ever."----Then, turning to Mr. Russell, she inquired if his friend had left any message or letter for her--desired to see the letter--retired with it--still

without shedding a tear--a few hours afterwards was taken ill, and, before night, was delivered of a dead son.

Lady Sarah survived, but has never since appeared in what is called the WORLD.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] It is to be regretted that a word, used in the days of Charles II. and still intelligible in our times, should have become obsolete; *viz.* the feminine for *intriguer*--an *intriguess*. See the Life of Lord Keeper North, whose biographer, in speaking of Lord Keeper Bridgeman, says, "And what was worst of all, his family was no way fit for that place (of Chancellor), his lady being a most violent INTRIGUESS in business."

Had Mr. Walsingham lived in Ireland, even there he might have found in the dialect of the lower Irish both a substantive and a verb, which would have expressed his idea. The editor once described an individual of the Beaumont species to an Irish labourer, and asked what he would call such a person--"I'd call her a policizer--I would say she was fond of policizing."

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[3] This reminds us of an expression of Charles the Second--"It is very strange, that every one of my friends keeps a *tame knave*"--_Note by the Editor_.

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[5] _Note by the Editor_--It is much to be regretted that the original papers belonging to this correspondence, including all the notes and letters, which Mrs. Beaumont either wrote herself, or those, still more important, which she caused to be written by her confidential amanuensis, which would doubtless form all together a body *of domestic diplomacy equally curious and useful*, are irrecoverably lost to the world. After the most diligent search, the Editor is compelled to rest under the persuasion that they must all have been collected and committed to the flames by the too great prudence of the principal party concerned. Had they been trusted to the discretion of a *friend*, the public would, doubtless, long since have been favoured with the whole.

[6] See Bacon on Cunning.

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"Malheureux! le trØpas est donc ton seule asile!
Ah! dans la tombe, au moins, repose enfin tranquille!
Ce beau lac, ces flots purs, ces fleurs, ces gazons frais,
Ces pâes peupliers, tout t'invite à la paix.
Respire, donc, enfin, de tes tristes chimères.
Vois accourir vers toi les Øpoux, et les mères.
Contemple les amans, qui viennent chaque jour,
Verser sur ton tombeau les larmes de l'amour!
Vois ce groupe d'enfans, se jouant sous l'ombrage,
Qui de leur libertØ viennent te rendre hommage;
Et dis, en contemplant ce spectacle enchanteur,
_Je ne fus point heureux, mais j'ai fait leur bonheur."

Ill-fated mortal! doom'd, alas! to find
The grave sole refuge from thy restless mind.
This turf, these flow'rs, this lake, this silent wave,
These poplars pale, that murmur o'er your grave,
Invite repose.--Enjoy the tranquil shore,
Where vain chimeras shall torment no more.
See to thy tomb the wife and mother fly,
And pour their sorrows where thy ashes lie!
Here the fond youth, and here the blushing maid,
Whisper their loves to thy congenial shade;
And grateful children smiling through their tears,
Bless the loved champion of their youthful years:
Then cry, triumphant, from thy honour'd grave--
Joyless I lived, but joy to others gave.

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