

'The fatigue would be too much for my sister, a great deal too much, I assure you, my dear Mrs Rushworth. Ten miles there, and ten back, you know. You must excuse my sister on this occasion, and accept of our two dear girls and myself without her. Sotherton is the only place that could give her a *wish* to go so far, but it cannot be, indeed. She will have a companion in Fanny Price, you know, so it will all do very well; and as for Edmund, as he is not here to speak for himself, I will answer for his being most happy to join the party. He can go on horseback, you know.'

Mrs Rushworth being obliged to yield to Lady Bertram's staying at home, could only be sorry. 'The loss of her ladyship's company would be a great drawback, and she should have been extremely happy to have seen the young lady too, Miss Price, who had never been at Sotherton yet, and it was a pity she should not see the place.'

'You are very kind, you are all kindness, my dear madam,' cried Mrs Norris; 'but as to Fanny, she will have opportunities in plenty of seeing Sotherton. She has time enough before her; and her going now is quite out of the question. Lady Bertram could not possibly spare her.'

'Oh no! I cannot do without Fanny.'

Mrs Rushworth proceeded next, under the conviction that everybody must be wanting to see Sotherton, to include Miss Crawford in the invitation; and though Mrs Grant, who had not been at the trouble of visiting Mrs Rushworth, on her coming into the neighbourhood, civilly declined it on her own account, she was glad to secure any pleasure for her sister; and Mary, properly pressed and persuaded, was not long in accepting her share of the civility. Mr Rushworth came back from the Parsonage successful; and Edmund made his appearance just in time to learn what had been settled for Wednesday, to attend Mrs Rushworth to her carriage, and walk half-way down the park with the two other ladies.

On his return to the breakfast-room, he found Mrs Norris trying to make up her mind as to whether Miss Crawford's being of the party were desirable or not, or whether her brother's barouche would not be full without her. The Miss Bertrams laughed at the idea, assuring her that the barouche would hold four perfectly well, independent of the box, on which *one* might go with him.

'But why is it necessary,' said Edmund, 'that Crawford's carriage, or his *only*, should be employed? Why is no use to be made of my mother's chaise? I could

not, when the scheme was first mentioned the other day, understand why a visit from the family were not to be made in the carriage of the family.'

'What!' cried Julia: 'go boxed up three in a postchaise in this weather, when we may have seats in a barouche! No, my dear Edmund, that will not quite do.'

'Besides,' said Maria, 'I know that Mr Crawford depends upon taking us. After what passed at first, he would claim it as a promise.'

'And, my dear Edmund,' added Mrs Norris, 'taking out *two* carriages when *one* will do, would be trouble for nothing; and, between ourselves, coachman is not very fond of the roads between this and Sotherton: he always complains bitterly of the narrow lanes scratching his carriage, and you know one should not like to have dear Sir Thomas, when he comes home, find all the varnish scratched off.'

'That would not be a very handsome reason for using Mr Crawford's,' said Maria; 'but the truth is, that Wilcox is a stupid old fellow, and does not know how to drive. I will answer for it that we shall find no inconvenience from narrow roads on Wednesday.'

'There is no hardship, I suppose, nothing unpleasant,' said Edmund, 'in going on the barouche box.'

'Unpleasant!' cried Maria: 'oh dear! I believe it would be generally thought the favourite seat. There can be no comparison as to one's view of the country. Probably Miss Crawford will choose the barouche-box herself.'

'There can be no objection, then, to Fanny's going with you; there can be no doubt of your having room for her.'

'Fanny?' repeated Mrs Norris; 'my dear Edmund, there is no idea of her going with us. She stays with her aunt. I told Mrs Rushworth so. She is not expected.'

'You can have no reason, I imagine, madam,' said he, addressing his mother, 'for wishing Fanny *not* to be of the party, but as it relates to yourself, to your own comfort. If you could do without her, you would not wish to keep her at home?'

'To be sure not, but I *cannot* do without her.'

'You can, if I stay at home with you, as I mean to do.'

There was a general cry out at this. 'Yes,' he continued, 'there is no necessity for my going, and I mean to stay at home. Fanny has a great desire to see

Sotherton. I know she wishes it very much. She has not often a gratification of the kind, and I am sure, ma'am, you would be glad to give her the pleasure now?'

'Oh yes! very glad, if your aunt sees no objection.'

Mrs Norris was very ready with the only objection which could remain—their having positively assured Mrs Rushworth that Fanny could not go, and the very strange appearance there would consequently be in taking her, which seemed to her a difficulty quite impossible to be got over. It must have the strangest appearance! It would be something so very unceremonious, so bordering on disrespect for Mrs Rushworth, whose own manners were such a pattern of good-breeding and attention, that she really did not feel equal to it. Mrs Norris had no affection for Fanny, and no wish of procuring her pleasure at any time; but her opposition to Edmund *now*, arose more from partiality for her own scheme, because it *was* her own, than from anything else. She felt that she had arranged everything extremely well, and that any alteration must be for the worse. When Edmund, therefore, told her in reply, as he did when she would give him the hearing, that she need not distress herself on Mrs Rushworth's account, because he had taken the opportunity, as he walked with her through the hall, of mentioning Miss Price as one who would probably be of the party, and had directly received a very sufficient invitation for his cousin, Mrs Norris was too much vexed to submit with a very good grace, and would only say, 'Very well, very well, just as you chuse, settle it your own way, I am sure I do not care about it.'

'It seems very odd,' said Maria, 'that you should be staying at home instead of Fanny.'

'I am sure she ought to be very much obliged to you,' added Julia, hastily leaving the room as she spoke, from a consciousness that she ought to offer to stay at home herself.

'Fanny will feel quite as grateful as the occasion requires,' was Edmund's only reply, and the subject dropt.

Fanny's gratitude, when she heard the plan, was, in fact, much greater than her pleasure. She felt Edmund's kindness with all, and more than all, the sensibility which he, unsuspecting of her fond attachment, could be aware of; but that he should forego any enjoyment on her account gave her pain, and her own satisfaction in seeing Sotherton would be nothing without him.

## Chapter VIII



FANNY's rides recommenced the very next day; and as it was a pleasant fresh-feeling morning, less hot than the weather had lately been, Edmund trusted that her losses, both of health and pleasure, would be soon made good. While she was gone Mr Rushworth arrived, escorting his mother, who came to be civil and to shew her civility especially, in urging the execution of the plan for visiting Sotherton, which had been started a fortnight before, and which, in consequence of her subsequent absence from home, had since lain dormant. Mrs Norris and her nieces were all well pleased with its revival, and an early day was named and agreed to, provided Mr Crawford should be disengaged: the young ladies did not forget that stipulation, and though Mrs Norris would willingly have answered for his being so, they would neither authorise the liberty nor run the risk; and at last, on a hint from Miss Bertram, Mr Rushworth discovered that the properest thing to be done was for him to walk down to the Parsonage directly, and call on Mr Crawford, and inquire whether Wednesday would suit him or not.

Before his return Mrs Grant and Miss Crawford came in. Having been out some time, and taken a different route to the house, they had not met him. Comfortable hopes, however, were given that he would find Mr Crawford at home. The Sotherton scheme was mentioned of course. It was hardly possible, indeed, that anything else should be talked of, for Mrs Norris was in high spirits about it; and Mrs Rushworth, a well-meaning, civil, prosing, pompous woman, who thought nothing of consequence, but as it related to her own and her son's concerns, had not yet given over pressing Lady Bertram to be of the party. Lady Bertram constantly declined it; but her placid manner of refusal made Mrs Rushworth still think she wished to come, till Mrs Norris's more numerous words and louder tone convinced her of the truth.

'I am afraid it was, indeed,' said the more candid Lady Bertram, who had overheard her; 'I am very much afraid she caught the headache there, for the heat was enough to kill anybody. It was as much as I could bear myself. Sitting and calling to Pug, and trying to keep him from the flower-beds, was almost too much for me.'

Edmund said no more to either lady; but going quietly to another table, on which the supper-tray yet remained, brought a glass of Madeira to Fanny, and obliged her to drink the greater part. She wished to be able to decline it; but the tears, which a variety of feelings created, made it easier to swallow than to speak.

Vexed as Edmund was with his mother and aunt, he was still more angry with himself. His own forgetfulness of her was worse than anything which they had done. Nothing of this would have happened had she been properly considered; but she had been left four days together without any choice of companions or exercise, and without any excuse for avoiding whatever her unreasonable aunts might require. He was ashamed to think that for four days together she had not had the power of riding, and very seriously resolved, however unwilling he must be to check a pleasure of Miss Crawford's, that it should never happen again.

Fanny went to bed with her heart as full as on the first evening of her arrival at the Park. The state of her spirits had probably had its share in her indisposition; for she had been feeling neglected, and been struggling against discontent and envy for some days past. As she leant on the sofa, to which she had retreated that she might not be seen, the pain of her mind had been much beyond that in her head; and the sudden change which Edmund's kindness had then occasioned, made her hardly know how to support herself.

The next meeting of the two Mansfield families produced another alteration in the plan, and one that was admitted with general approbation. Mrs Grant offered herself as companion for the day to Lady Bertram in lieu of her son, and Dr Grant was to join them at dinner. Lady Bertram was very well pleased to have it so, and the young ladies were in spirits again. Even Edmund was very thankful for an arrangement which restored him to his share of the party; and Mrs Norris thought it an excellent plan, and had it at her tongue's end, and was on the point of proposing it, when Mrs Grant spoke.

Wednesday was fine, and soon after breakfast the barouche arrived, Mr Crawford driving his sisters; and as everybody was ready, there was nothing to be done but for Mrs Grant to alight and the others to take their places. The place of all places, the envied seat, the post of honour, was unappropriated. To whose happy lot was it to fall? While each of the Miss Bertrams were meditating how best, and with the most appearance of obliging the others, to secure it, the matter was settled by Mrs Grant's saying, as she stepped from the carriage, 'As there are five of you, it will be better that one should sit with Henry; and as you were saying lately that you wished you could drive, Julia, I think this will be a good opportunity for you to take a lesson.'

Happy Julia! Unhappy Maria! The former was on the barouche-box in a moment, the latter took her seat within, in gloom and mortification; and the carriage drove off amid the good wishes of the two remaining ladies, and the barking of Pug in his mistress's arms.

Their road was through a pleasant country; and Fanny, whose rides had never been extensive, was soon beyond her knowledge, and was very happy in observing all that was new, and admiring all that was pretty. She was not often invited to join in the conversation of the others, nor did she desire it. Her own thoughts and reflections were habitually her best companions; and, in observing the appearance of the country, the bearings of the roads, the difference of soil, the state of the harvest, the cottages, the cattle, the children, she found entertainment that could only have been heightened by having Edmund to speak to of what she felt. That was the only point of resemblance between her and the lady who sat by her: in everything but a value for Edmund, Miss Crawford was very unlike her. She had none of Fanny's delicacy of taste, of mind, of feeling; she saw Nature, inanimate Nature, with little observation; her attention was all for men and women, her talents for the light and lively.

In looking back after Edmund, however, when there was any stretch of road behind them, or when he gained on them in ascending a considerable hill, they were united, and a 'there he is' broke at the same moment from them both, more than once.

For the first seven miles Miss Bertram had very little real comfort: her prospect always ended in Mr Crawford and her sister sitting side by side, full of conversation and merriment; and to see only his expressive profile as he turned with a smile to Julia, or to catch the laugh of the other, was a perpetual source of irritation, which her own sense of propriety could but just smooth over. When Julia looked back, it was with a countenance of delight, and whenever she spoke to them, it was in the highest spirits: 'her view of the country was charming, she wished they could all see it,' etc.; but her only offer of exchange was addressed to Miss Crawford, as they gained the summit of a long hill, and was not more inviting than this: 'Here is a fine burst of country. I wish you had my seat, but I dare say you will not take it, let me press you ever so much;' and Miss Crawford could hardly answer before they were moving again at a good pace.

When they came within the influence of Sotherton associations, it was better for Miss Bertram, who might be said to have two strings to her bow. She had Rushworth feelings, and Crawford feelings, and in the vicinity of Sotherton the former had considerable effect. Mr Rushworth's consequence was hers. She could not tell Miss Crawford that 'those woods belonged to Sotherton,' she could not carelessly observe that 'she believed that it was now all Mr Rushworth's property on each side of the road,' without elation of heart; and it was a pleasure to increase with their approach to the capital freehold mansion, and ancient manorial residence of the family, with all its rights of court-leet and court-baron.

'Now we shall have no more rough road, Miss Crawford; our difficulties are over. The rest of the way is such as it ought to be. Mr Rushworth has made it since he succeeded to the estate. Here begins the village. Those cottages are really a disgrace. The church spire is reckoned remarkably handsome. I am glad the church is not so close to the great house as often happens in old places. The annoyance of the bells must be terrible. There is the parsonage: a tidy-looking house, and I understand the clergyman and his wife are very decent people. Those are almshouses, built by some of the family. To the right

'What!' cried Edmund; 'has she been walking as well as cutting roses; walking across the hot park to your house, and doing it twice, ma'am? No wonder her head aches.'

Mrs Norris was talking to Julia, and did not hear.

'I was afraid it would be too much for her,' said Lady Bertram; 'but when the roses were gathered, your aunt wished to have them, and then you know they must be taken home.'

'But were there roses enough to oblige her to go twice?'

'No; but they were to be put into the spare room to dry; and, unluckily, Fanny forgot to lock the door of the room and bring away the key, so she was obliged to go again.'

Edmund got up and walked about the room, saying, 'And could nobody be employed on such an errand but Fanny? Upon my word, ma'am, it has been a very ill-managed business.'

'I am sure I do not know how it was to have been done better,' cried Mrs Norris, unable to be longer deaf; 'unless I had gone myself, indeed; but I cannot be in two places at once; and I was talking to Mr Green at that very time about your mother's dairymaid, by *her* desire, and had promised John Groom to write to Mrs Jefferies about his son, and the poor fellow was waiting for me half an hour. I think nobody can justly accuse me of sparing myself upon any occasion, but really I cannot do everything at once. And as for Fanny's just stepping down to my house for me—it is not much above a quarter of a mile—I cannot think I was unreasonable to ask it. How often do I pace it three times a day, early and late, ay, and in all weathers too, and say nothing about it?'

'I wish Fanny had half your strength, ma'am.'

'If Fanny would be more regular in her exercise, she would not be knocked up so soon. She has not been out on horseback now this long while, and I am persuaded that, when she does not ride, she ought to walk. If she had been riding before, I should not have asked it of her. But I thought it would rather do her good after being stooping among the roses; for there is nothing so refreshing as a walk after a fatigue of that kind; and though the sun was strong, it was not so very hot. Between ourselves, Edmund,' nodding significantly at his mother, 'it was cutting the roses, and dawdling about in the flower-garden, that did the mischief.'

is all the new calico, that was bought last week, not touched yet. I am sure I almost broke my back by cutting it out. You should learn to think of other people; and, take my word for it, it is a shocking trick for a young person to be always lolling upon a sofa.'

Before half this was said, Fanny was returned to her seat at the table, and had taken up her work again; and Julia, who was in high good-humour, from the pleasures of the day, did her the justice of exclaiming, 'I must say, ma'am, that Fanny is as little upon the sofa as anybody in the house.'

'Fanny,' said Edmund, after looking at her attentively, 'I am sure you have the headache.'

She could not deny it, but said it was not very bad.

'I can hardly believe you,' he replied; 'I know your looks too well. How long have you had it?'

'Since a little before dinner. It is nothing but the heat.'

'Did you go out in the heat?'

'Go out! to be sure she did,' said Mrs Norris: 'would you have her stay within such a fine day as this? Were not we *all* out? Even your mother was out to-day for above an hour.'

'Yes, indeed, Edmund,' added her ladyship, who had been thoroughly awakened by Mrs Norris's sharp reprimand to Fanny; 'I was out above an hour. I sat three-quarters of an hour in the flower-garden, while Fanny cut the roses; and very pleasant it was, I assure you, but very hot. It was shady enough in the alcove, but I declare I quite dreaded the coming home again.'

'Fanny has been cutting roses, has she?'

'Yes, and I am afraid they will be the last this year. Poor thing! *She* found it hot enough; but they were so full-blown that one could not wait.'

'There was no help for it, certainly,' rejoined Mrs Norris, in a rather softened voice; 'but I question whether her headache might not be caught *then*, sister. There is nothing so likely to give it as standing and scooping in a hot sun; but I dare say it will be well to-morrow. Suppose you let her have your aromatic vinegar; I always forget to have mine filled.'

'She has got it,' said Lady Bertram; 'she has had it ever since she came back from your house the second time.'

is the steward's house; he is a very respectable man. Now we are coming to the lodge-gates; but we have nearly a mile through the park still. It is not ugly, you see, at this end; there is some fine timber, but the situation of the house is dreadful. We go down hill to it for half a mile, and it is a pity, for it would not be an ill-looking place if it had a better approach.'

Miss Crawford was not slow to admire; she pretty well guessed Miss Bertram's feelings, and made it a point of honour to promote her enjoyment to the utmost. Mrs Norris was all delight and volubility; and even Fanny had something to say in admiration, and might be heard with complacency. Her eye was eagerly taking in everything within her reach; and after being at some pains to get a view of the house, and observing that 'it was a sort of building which she could not look at but with respect,' she added, 'Now, where is the avenue? The house fronts the east, I perceive. The avenue, therefore, must be at the back of it. Mr Rushworth talked of the west front.'

'Yes, it is exactly behind the house; begins at a little distance, and ascends for half a mile to the extremity of the grounds. You may see something of it here—something of the more distant trees. It is oak entirely.'

Miss Bertram could now speak with decided information of what she had known nothing about when Mr Rushworth had asked her opinion; and her spirits were in as happy a flutter as vanity and pride could furnish, when they drove up to the spacious stone steps before the principal entrance.

enjoyed again in the evening discussion. A successful scheme of this sort generally brings on another; and the having been to Mansfield Common disposed them all for going somewhere else the day after. There were many other views to be shewn; and though the weather was hot, there were shady lanes wherever they wanted to go. A young party is always provided with a shady lane. Four fine mornings successively were spent in this manner, in shewing the Crawfords the country, and doing the honours of its finest spots. Everything answered; it was all gaiety and good-humour, the heat only supplying inconvenience enough to be talked of with pleasure—till the fourth day, when the happiness of one of the party was exceedingly clouded. Miss Bertram was the one. Edmund and Julia were invited to dine at the Parsonage, and *she* was excluded. It was meant and done by Mrs Grant, with perfect good-humour, on Mr Rushworth's account, who was partly expected at the Park that day; but it was felt as a very grievous injury, and her good manners were severely taxed to conceal her vexation and anger till she reached home. As Mr Rushworth did *not* come, the injury was increased, and she had not even the relief of shewing her power over him; she could only be sullen to her mother, aunt, and cousin, and throw as great a gloom as possible over their dinner and dessert.

Between ten and eleven Edmund and Julia walked into the drawing-room, fresh with the evening air, glowing and cheerful, the very reverse of what they found in the three ladies sitting there, for Maria would scarcely raise her eyes from her book, and Lady Bertram was half-asleep; and even Mrs Norris, discomposed by her niece's ill-humour, and having asked one or two questions about the dinner, which were not immediately attended to, seemed almost determined to say no more. For a few minutes the brother and sister were too eager in their praise of the night and their remarks on the stars, to think beyond themselves; but when the first pause came, Edmund, looking around, said, 'But where is Fanny? Is she gone to bed?'

'No, not that I know of,' replied Mrs Norris; 'she was here a moment ago.' Her own gentle voice speaking from the other end of the room, which was a very long one, told them that she was on the sofa. Mrs Norris began scolding. 'That is a very foolish trick, Fanny, to be idling away all the evening upon a sofa. Why cannot you come and sit here, and employ yourself as *we* do? If you have no work of your own, I can supply you from the poor basket. There

the park; her feelings of discomfort not lightened by seeing, as she looked back, that the others were walking down the hill together to the village; nor did her attendant do her much good by his comments on Miss Crawford's great cleverness as a horse-woman, which he had been watching with an interest almost equal to her own.

'It is a pleasure to see a lady with such a good heart for riding!' said he. 'I never see one sit a horse better. She did not seem to have a thought of fear. Very different from you, miss, when you first began, six years ago come next Easter. Lord bless you! how you did tremble when Sir Thomas first had you put on!'

In the drawing-room Miss Crawford was also celebrated. Her merit in being gifted by Nature with strength and courage was fully appreciated by the Miss Bertrams; her delight in riding was like their own; her early excellence in it was like their own, and they had great pleasure in praising it.

'I was sure she would ride well,' said Julia; 'she has the make for it. Her figure is as neat as her brother's.'

'Yes,' added Maria, 'and her spirits are as good, and she has the same energy of character. I cannot but think that good horsemanship has a great deal to do with the mind.'

When they parted at night Edmund asked Fanny whether she meant to ride the next day.


'No, I do not know—not if you want the mare,' was her answer.

'I do not want her at all for myself,' said he; 'but whenever you are next inclined to stay at home, I think Miss Crawford would be glad to have her a longer time—for a whole morning, in short. She has a great desire to get as far as Mansfield Common: Mrs Grant has been telling her of its fine views, and I have no doubt of her being perfectly equal to it. But any morning will do for this. She would be extremely sorry to interfere with you. It would be very wrong if she did. *She* rides only for pleasure; *you* for health.'

'I shall not ride to-morrow, certainly,' said Fanny; 'I have been out very often lately, and would rather stay at home. You know I am strong enough now to walk very well.'

Edmund looked pleased, which must be Fanny's comfort, and the ride to Mansfield Common took place the next morning: the party included all the young people but herself, and was much enjoyed at the time, and doubly

## Chapter IX

R Rushworth was at the door to receive his fair lady; and the whole party were welcomed by him with due attention. In the drawing-room they were met with equal cordiality by the mother, and Miss Bertram had all the distinction with each that she could wish. After the business of arriving was over, it was first necessary to eat, and the doors were thrown open to admit them through one or two intermediate rooms into the appointed dining-parlour, where a collation was prepared with abundance and elegance. Much was said, and much was ate, and all went well. The particular object of the day was then considered. How would Mr Crawford like, in what manner would he chuse, to take a survey of the grounds? Mr Rushworth mentioned his curicle. Mr Crawford suggested the greater desirableness of some carriage which might convey more than two. 'To be depriving themselves of the advantage of other eyes and other judgments, might be an evil even beyond the loss of present pleasure.'

Mrs Rushworth proposed that the chaise should be taken also; but this was scarcely received as an amendment: the young ladies neither smiled nor spoke. Her next proposition, of shewing the house to such of them as had not been there before, was more acceptable, for Miss Bertram was pleased to have its size displayed, and all were glad to be doing something.

The whole party rose accordingly, and under Mrs Rushworth's guidance were shewn through a number of rooms, all lofty, and many large, and amply furnished in the taste of fifty years back, with shining floors, solid mahogany, rich damask, marble, gilding, and carving, each handsome in its way. Of pictures there were abundance, and some few good, but the larger part were family portraits, no longer anything to anybody but Mrs Rushworth, who had been at great pains to learn all that the housekeeper could teach, and was now almost equally well qualified to shew the house. On the present occasion

she addressed herself chiefly to Miss Crawford and Fanny, but there was no comparison in the willingness of their attention; for Miss Crawford, who had seen scores of great houses, and cared for none of them, had only the appearance of civilly listening, while Fanny, to whom everything was almost as interesting as it was new, attended with unaffected earnestness to all that Mrs Rushworth could relate of the family in former times, its rise and grandeur, regal visits and loyal efforts, delighted to connect anything with history already known, or warm her imagination with scenes of the past.

The situation of the house excluded the possibility of much prospect from any of the rooms; and while Fanny and some of the others were attending Mrs Rushworth, Henry Crawford was looking grave and shaking his head at the windows. Every room on the west front looked across a lawn to the beginning of the avenue immediately beyond tall iron palisades and gates.

Having visited many more rooms than could be supposed to be of any other use than to contribute to the window-tax, and find employment for housemaids, 'Now,' said Mrs Rushworth, 'we are coming to the chapel, which properly we ought to enter from above, and look down upon; but as we are quite among friends, I will take you in this way, if you will excuse me.'

They entered. Fanny's imagination had prepared her for something grander than a mere spacious, oblong room, fitted up for the purpose of devotion: with nothing more striking or more solemn than the profusion of mahogany, and the crimson velvet cushions appearing over the ledge of the family gallery above. 'I am disappointed,' said she, in a low voice, to Edmund. 'This is not my idea of a chapel. There is nothing awful here, nothing melancholy, nothing grand. Here are no aisles, no arches, no inscriptions, no banners. No banners, cousin, to be "blown by the night wind of heaven." No signs that a "Scottish monarch sleeps below."'

'You forget, Fanny, how lately all this has been built, and for how confined a purpose, compared with the old chapels of castles and monasteries. It was only for the private use of the family. They have been buried, I suppose, in the parish church. *There* you must look for the banners and the achievements.'

'It was foolish of me not to think of all that; but I am disappointed.'

Mrs Rushworth began her relation. 'This chapel was fitted up as you see it, in James the Second's time. Before that period, as I understand, the pews were only wainscot; and there is some reason to think that the linings and

the eye could not reach. She must not wonder at all this; what could be more natural than that Edmund should be making himself useful, and proving his good-nature by any one? She could not but think, indeed, that Mr Crawford might as well have saved him the trouble; that it would have been particularly proper and becoming in a brother to have done it himself; but Mr Crawford, with all his boasted good-nature, and all his coachmanship, probably knew nothing of the matter, and had no active kindness in comparison of Edmund. She began to think it rather hard upon the mare to have such double duty; if she were forgotten, the poor mare should be remembered.

Her feelings for one and the other were soon a little tranquillised by seeing the party in the meadow disperse, and Miss Crawford still on horseback, but attended by Edmund on foot, pass through a gate into the lane, and so into the park, and make towards the spot where she stood. She began then to be afraid of appearing rude and impatient; and walked to meet them with a great anxiety to avoid the suspicion.

'My dear Miss Price,' said Miss Crawford, as soon as she was at all within hearing, 'I am come to make my own apologies for keeping you waiting; but I have nothing in the world to say for myself—I knew it was very late, and that I was behaving extremely ill; and therefore, if you please, you must forgive me. Selfishness must always be forgiven, you know, because there is no hope of a cure.'

Fanny's answer was extremely civil, and Edmund added his conviction that she could be in no hurry. 'For there is more than time enough for my cousin to ride twice as far as she ever goes,' said he, 'and you have been promoting her comfort by preventing her from setting off half an hour sooner: clouds are now coming up, and she will not suffer from the heat as she would have done then. I wish *you* may not be fatigued by so much exercise. I wish you had saved yourself this walk home.'

'No part of it fatigues me but getting off this horse, I assure you,' said she, as she sprang down with his help; 'I am very strong. Nothing ever fatigues me but doing what I do not like. Miss Price, I give way to you with a very bad grace; but I sincerely hope you will have a pleasant ride, and that I may have nothing but good to hear of this dear, delightful, beautiful animal.'

The old coachman, who had been waiting about with his own horse, now joining them, Fanny was lifted on hers, and they set off across another part of



exercise by it. The mare was only to be taken down to the Parsonage half an hour before her ride were to begin; and Fanny, on its being first proposed, so far from feeling slighted, was almost over-powered with gratitude that he should be asking her leave for it.

Miss Crawford made her first essay with great credit to herself, and no inconvenience to Fanny. Edmund, who had taken down the mare and presided at the whole, returned with it in excellent time, before either Fanny or the steady old coachman, who always attended her when she rode without her cousins, were ready to set forward. The second day's trial was not so guiltless. Miss Crawford's enjoyment of riding was such that she did not know how to leave off. Active and fearless, and though rather small, strongly made, she seemed formed for a horsewoman; and to the pure genuine pleasure of the exercise, something was probably added in Edmund's attendance and instructions, and something more in the conviction of very much surpassing her sex in general by her early progress, to make her unwilling to dismount. Fanny was ready and waiting, and Mrs Norris was beginning to scold her for not being gone, and still no horse was announced, no Edmund appeared. To avoid her aunt, and look for him, she went out.

The houses, though scarcely half a mile apart, were not within sight of each other; but, by walking fifty yards from the hall door, she could look down the park, and command a view of the Parsonage and all its demesnes, gently rising beyond the village road; and in Dr Grant's meadow she immediately saw the group—Edmund and Miss Crawford both on horse-back, riding side by side, Dr and Mrs Grant, and Mr Crawford, with two or three grooms, standing about and looking on. A happy party it appeared to her, all interested in one object: cheerful beyond a doubt, for the sound of merriment ascended even to her. It was a sound which did not make *her* cheerful; she wondered that Edmund should forget her, and felt a pang. She could not turn her eyes from the meadow; she could not help watching all that passed. At first Miss Crawford and her companion made the circuit of the field, which was not small, at a foot's pace; then, at *her* apparent suggestion, they rose into a canter; and to Fanny's timid nature it was most astonishing to see how well she sat. After a few minutes they stopped entirely. Edmund was close to her; he was speaking to her; he was evidently directing her management of the bridle; he had hold of her hand; she saw it, or the imagination supplied what

cushions of the pulpit and family seat were only purple cloth; but this is not quite certain. It is a handsome chapel, and was formerly in constant use both morning and evening. Prayers were always read in it by the domestic chaplain, within the memory of many; but the late Mr Rushworth left it off.

'Every generation has its improvements,' said Miss Crawford, with a smile, to Edmund.

Mrs Rushworth was gone to repeat her lesson to Mr Crawford; and Edmund, Fanny, and Miss Crawford remained in a cluster together.

'It is a pity,' cried Fanny, 'that the custom should have been discontinued. It was a valuable part of former times. There is something in a chapel and chaplain so much in character with a great house, with one's ideas of what such a household should be! A whole family assembling regularly for the purpose of prayer is fine!'

'Very fine indeed,' said Miss Crawford, laughing. 'It must do the heads of the family a great deal of good to force all the poor housemaids and footmen to leave business and pleasure, and say their prayers here twice a day, while they are inventing excuses themselves for staying away.'

'*That* is hardly Fanny's idea of a family assembling,' said Edmund. 'If the master and mistress do *not* attend themselves, there must be more harm than good in the custom.'

'At any rate, it is safer to leave people to their own devices on such subjects. Everybody likes to go their own way—to chuse their own time and manner of devotion. The obligation of attendance, the formality, the restraint, the length of time—altogether it is a formidable thing, and what nobody likes; and if the good people who used to kneel and gape in that gallery could have foreseen that the time would ever come when men and women might lie another ten minutes in bed, when they woke with a headache, without danger of reprobation, because chapel was missed, they would have jumped with joy and envy. Cannot you imagine with what unwilling feelings the former belles of the house of Rushworth did many a time repair to this chapel? The young Mrs Eleanors and Mrs Bridgets—starched up into seeming piety, but with heads full of something very different—especially if the poor chaplain were not worth looking at—and, in those days, I fancy parsons were very inferior even to what they are now.'

For a few moments she was unanswered. Fanny coloured and looked at Edmund, but felt too angry for speech; and he needed a little recollection before he could say, 'Your lively mind can hardly be serious even on serious subjects. You have given us an amusing sketch, and human nature cannot say it was not so. We must all feel *at times* the difficulty of fixing our thoughts as we could wish; but if you are supposing it a frequent thing, that is to say, a weakness grown into a habit from neglect, what could be expected from the *private* devotions of such persons? Do you think the minds which are suffered, which are indulged in wanderings in a chapel, would be more collected in a closet?'

'Yes, very likely. They would have two chances at least in their favour. There would be less to distract the attention from without, and it would not be tried so long.'

'The mind which does not struggle against itself under *one* circumstance, would find objects to distract it in the *other*, I believe; and the influence of the place and of example may often rouse better feelings than are begun with. The greater length of the service, however, I admit to be sometimes too hard a stretch upon the mind. One wishes it were not so; but I have not yet left Oxford long enough to forget what chapel prayers are.'

While this was passing, the rest of the party being scattered about the chapel, Julia called Mr Crawford's attention to her sister, by saying, 'Do look at Mr Rushworth and Maria, standing side by side, exactly as if the ceremony were going to be performed. Have not they completely the air of it?'

Mr Crawford smiled his acquiescence, and stepping forward to Maria, said, in a voice which she only could hear, 'I do not like to see Miss Bertram so near the altar.'

Starting, the lady instinctively moved a step or two, but recovering herself in a moment, affected to laugh, and asked him, in a tone not much louder, 'If he would give her away?'

'I am afraid I should do it very awkwardly,' was his reply, with a look of meaning.

Julia, joining them at the moment, carried on the joke. 'Upon my word, it is really a pity that it should not take place directly, if we had but a proper licence, for here we are altogether, and nothing in the world could be more snug and pleasant.' And she talked and laughed about it

it was all in harmony; and as everything will turn to account when love is once set going, even the sandwich tray, and Dr Grant doing the honours of it, were worth looking at. Without studying the business, however, or knowing what he was about, Edmund was beginning, at the end of a week of such intercourse, to be a good deal in love; and to the credit of the lady it may be added that, without his being a man of the world or an elder brother, without any of the arts of flattery or the gaieties of small talk, he began to be agreeable to her. She felt it to be so, though she had not foreseen, and could hardly understand it; for he was not pleasant by any common rule: he talked no nonsense; he paid no compliments; his opinions were unbending, his attentions tranquil and simple. There was a charm, perhaps, in his sincerity, his steadiness, his integrity, which Miss Crawford might be equal to feel, though not equal to discuss with herself. She did not think very much about it, however: he pleased her for the present; she liked to have him near her; it was enough.

Fanny could not wonder that Edmund was at the Parsonage every morning; she would gladly have been there too, might she have gone in uninvited and unnoticed, to hear the harp; neither could she wonder that, when the evening stroll was over, and the two families parted again, he should think it right to attend Mrs Grant and her sister to their home, while Mr Crawford was devoted to the ladies of the Park; but she thought it a very bad exchange; and if Edmund were not there to mix the wine and water for her, would rather go without it than not. She was a little surprised that he could spend so many hours with Miss Crawford, and not see more of the sort of fault which he had already observed, and of which *she* was almost always reminded by a something of the same nature whenever she was in her company; but so it was. Edmund was fond of speaking to her of Miss Crawford, but he seemed to think it enough that the Admiral had since been spared; and she scrupled to point out her own remarks to him, lest it should appear like ill-nature. The first actual pain which Miss Crawford occasioned her was the consequence of an inclination to learn to ride, which the former caught, soon after her being settled at Mansfield, from the example of the young ladies at the Park, and which, when Edmund's acquaintance with her increased, led to his encouraging the wish, and the offer of his own quiet mare for the purpose of her first attempts, as the best fitted for a beginner that either stable could furnish. No pain, no injury, however, was designed by him to his cousin in this offer: *she* was not to lose a day's