

SUBSTANCE AND SHADOW;

OR, THE

*FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTERS OF BRIGHTON.*

A Patchwork Story.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF LIGHT AND SHADE; EVERSFIELD ABBEY;

BANKS OF THE WYE; AUNT AND NIECE, &c. &c.

The first in native dignity surpass'd—  
Artless and unadorn'd she pleas'd the more;

The other dame seem'd e'en of fairer hue,  
Fat bold her mien, unguarded mov'd her eye.

VOL. I.

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## SUBSTANCE AND SHADOW.

### CHAP. I.

\_\_\_\_\_ The sea,  
Various and vast, sublime in all its forms,  
When lull'd by zephyrs, or when rous'd by storms.

I see them not! the storm alone I hear!

CRABBE'S BOROUGH.

IT was in the autumn of 17—, the day had been very hot and sultry, and the sun had set amongst heavy and portentous clouds, thunder muttered at a distance, and the melancholy notes of the sea-birds, as they wheeled in hasty circuits round the rocks, indicated the near approach of a storm; the gay throng who had so lately crowded on the Steine at Brighton, now hastened to their temporary homes, or to their evening parties, all but a few stragglers, who were still on the beach, and who seemed to watch the storm, some with abstracted, some with anxious eyes. Two females were accidentally standing near each other, and steadily contemplating the scene; the wind was rapidly rising, and howled responsively to the turbulent billows; though the sun had set, there was light sufficient to distinguish objects accurately, and the whole expanse of water became at intervals brilliantly illuminated by the vivid lightning which played on its surface. One of the ladies appeared about twenty-six years of age, her features were interesting, and her countenance had a mingled expression of softness, sensibility, and discernment, which instantaneously impressed the beholder with an idea of feeling and good sense; she was habited in a genteel but plain style; and intently watching the approach of the storm, she scarcely perceived that she had a companion, though they were gradually getting nearer to each other, and almost to the water's edge. The other lady was scarcely twenty; her form was strikingly elegant, and it was fully displayed by her dress, which was fanciful; with one arm she held the corner of a long azure scarf, which flitted in the wind; her dark hair streamed about her shoulders in unstudied negligence; she had no covering on her head; and, as if in fearful contemplation of the elements, she would frequently clasp her hands together, or waive them in the air, as with an emotion, which, however, appeared the natural movement of her mind, she cried —“Grand! awfully sublime! oh, what sight was ever equal to this! this is tremendously magnificent! don't you think so?” and she clasped the hand of her next neighbour with vehement earnestness, as the liquid lightning which illuminated the scene was momentarily succeeded by a loud peal of thunder.

The countenance of the speaker, as she made the interrogatory, seemed to have caught some of the ethereal brightness of the passing lightning; all enthusiastic admiration, she still held the arm of the person whom she had addressed—“It is indeed a fearful storm,” said she, “and I am standing here with no little anxiety, for the fate of a poor couple, who went out in a boat this afternoon; the man is a fisher, who maintains himself by means of his little boat, and I have frequently witnessed the patient docility with which his wife has followed him in this arduous and dangerous employ. I happened to observe them as they embarked; they have been gone a

much longer time than is their custom, and I have heard the fishermen on the beach expressing their apprehensions; it is impossible to put off a boat to their assistance, and—”

At this moment the voice of the speaker was entirely lost in a heavy and tremendous peal of thunder; it was instantaneously succeeded by rain, which fell in sheets. Hastily loosing her arm from the grasp of the stranger, Mrs. Elwyn, (for so we shall call her) moved towards the town, saying—“We can do no good by staying here; I think we had better seek our respective habitations.”

“There is something which suits the frame of my mind in this scene,” replied the lady, her dark hair streaming in the torrent which poured on her defenceless head; “I never witnessed such an imposing spectacle before—adieu!” and spreading her right hand on her breast, as if to retain her scarf, with the other she supported herself against the wall, which was washed by the sea, and looked like the genius of the ocean, risen from her watery bed, and invoking the storm. Surprise at the extraordinary manner and strange appearance of this unknown, was quelled in the benevolent bosom of Mrs. Elwyn, by her solicitude for the fate of the poor fishers; and as she sat in her room, still seeing the vivid lightning, still hearing the lengthened peals of thunder, the raging billows, and the roaring wind, she put up a fervent petition for the safety of the honest pair, who, though far removed from her sphere of life, and of whose names she was in ignorance, she yet considered as her fellow-creatures, and equally the care of an almighty and an all-wise Being!

## CHAP. II.

Happy he sail'd, and great the care she took,  
That he should softly sleep, and smartly look;  
White was his better linen, and his check  
Was made more trim than any on the deck.

CRABBE'S BOROUGH.

THE storm of the night was succeeded by a calm morning; the sun smiled, as if in mockery of the devastation of the tempest; houses were nearly unroofed—boats were drifted from their moorings—vessels were loosened from their anchors, their rigging and sails shattered and dismantled—the bathing-machines had felt the fury of the contending elements, and were moved from their stations; and though the spirit of the tempest was quelled, yet old ocean was not so soon appeased, but heaved and foamed, as if with labouring sobs it would have told the dismal history of the storm.

The Steine exhibited a busy and bustling scene; fishermen were hasting to see that their nets and tackling were safe—sailors were busy in righting their ships—the bathing-women were preparing their machines. Mrs. Elwyn was the first female of genteel appearance who ventured forth; she hurried to the beach; alas! the fate of the poor objects of her solicitous commiseration was decided; their boat had been drifted to the shore, without oars, shattered, and a wreck, and with every returning wave the bodies of its owners were fearfully expected.

A deep sigh issued from Mrs. Elwyn's bosom, as she turned from the beach; she had no spirits to lengthen her walk, but with dull and languid step she returned to her lodgings.—“How buoyant with hope, how vigorous in health, how elastic in spirits, did those poor creatures embark on the treacherous ocean but yesterday!” sighed she; “ignorant, frail, and short-sighted beings that we are! how soon are hope, health, and spirits immersed for ever in a cold and watery grave! no, not for ever!” and her step became firmer; “hope and immortal health *for ever* bloom in paradise. Oh, God of mercy and of love! into thy haven of eternal rest receive these ship-wrecked mariners.”

Anxious to know something further relative to this unfortunate couple, Mrs. Elwyn soon obtained a direction to their late residence; it was a neat but humble cabin, near the seaside, about a mile from the town. A woman, between fifty and sixty years of age, was sitting by a fire, and rocking a cradle, which contained two sleeping infants. Mrs. Elwyn spoke to the woman in a voice of eager inquiry—“Whose are these children?”

“Oh, madam! what, you have not heard then that these two dear babies have lost both father and mother since yesternoon; poor babies, worse luck for 'em!”

Mrs. Elwyn's eyes filled with tears—“Poor infants!” cried she, as she hung over them.

“Aye, poor things,” returned the old woman; “I little thought when Kitty Ellis sent for me yesterday, to take care of 'em, that I should never see them more; and here I tossed up a bit of supper for James and she, and I put it all in order, and I waited, and waited, and between every clap of thunder I listened for James's whistle, for he was a main man for singing and whistling on shore; but law bless us all, I could hear nothing for the roaring of the waves. 'twas past twelve o'clock before I lighted the candle; I saw a winding-sheet in it within two minutes, and that I know'd to be a baddish sort of a sign; I could have lain a good wager that I should never see 'em more, after my eyes lighted on that ugly sight—oh, 'twas a sure token!”

“Are you a relation of these poor babes?” asked Mrs. Elwyn, still looking with compassion into the cradle.

“Oh dear, no, madam,” said the old woman, “in all the *varsal* world, these babies have now no kin or kindred but God. The parish must see to ‘em now, and I be only waiting for one of the overseers to come along, to know what ‘tis best to do; for ‘tisn’t to be supposed, or expected, as I can leave my own business to attend to they for nothing, you know, madam, though I love ‘em ever so.”

“Was the poor fisherman born in this place?”

“Law, to be sure, madam, he was, in this very house too, for aught I know to the contrary; his father followed the same calling as this James; he came from Worthing, I have heard tell, and so he married, and got this boy; and when father and mother died, why James he must be marrying too belike, and so he took up with Kitty; Kitty was a love-child, as was laid at somebody’s door here in Brighton. Folks *did* say that the saddle was put on the right horse’s back; howsomdever this child was sent to the parish—the great lord or squire, or what he was, set off; and Kitty was a decent sort of girl enough, considering her breeding up, with nobody to care for her, or after her, as it were; and so the long and the short of the matter was, that she was glad enough to marry with James Ellis. Poor girl, she had not been put to bed of these two babies more than six weeks, and such a young thing ‘twas, and looking so delicate, for she was but about of seventeen years old; and I said to her yesterday—‘Kitty,’ says I, ‘‘tis early times, child, for you to venture into the water and the wet.’ ‘Molly,’ says she, ‘James has been all alone with nobody but his own self a longful time, and I am very hearty now,’ says she; ‘you mind the dear babies, and I’ll take care of myself;’ and then she suckled ‘em, she did, and she kissed ‘em both *three* times—yes, I have minded since as ‘twas *three* times; and she flinged a net over her shoulder, and a basket upon her arm, and away she went.”

Many were the conflicting emotions which disturbed the peaceful breast of Mrs. Elwyn, as she listened to this recital; she wished to do something for the benefit of these poor orphans; but she was accustomed to reflect before she made a decision; and careful of not betraying her secret wishes to the old woman, she remained in silent meditation, when the door of the cottage was opened, and the stranger, whom she had seen on the beach the preceding evening, dressed in the same fanciful manner, with the addition of a long white veil, which, covering her head, descended in floating drapery almost to the ground, entered the house, and throwing herself on her knees at the side of the cradle, bent over it, and, as if careless of being observed, gave way to the most tumultuous emotions and affecting exclamations; she called them “poor forlorn innocents! helpless interesting orphans! tenders blossoms of misfortune! early victims of sorrow!” and that her feelings were in unison with her expressions was obvious, as the large tears fell in torrents from her lovely eyes.

“Do you know this lady?” whispered Mrs. Elwyn to the old woman, and retiring to the further end of the cottage.

“No, I never *seed* she in my whole life before,” answered the dame; and then pointing, with a look of significancy, to her forehead, she said—“but law, any body can see with half an eye what ‘tis as is the matter with she.”

Mrs. Elwyn did not think exactly with her informant; she allowed that there was something surprisingly eccentric about the stranger, but she knew that *romance* and *enthusiasm* were the leading features of the day, and that those feelings were nurtured and indulged, at the hazard of running counter to all the forms and usages of society, and the *good old way* in which she had been taught to walk.

One of the babes awakening from its slumber, and unconsciously stretching out its feeble arms, the lady started up, and catching it to her bosom, cried—"And shall you implore in vain? no, helpless being, here shall you have your shelter ever!"

"Law, madam, do not please to take up the child; may be as she'll hurt your fine clothes," said the old woman.

The lady looked with silent contempt at the cautioner, and turning towards Mrs. Elwyn, she said—"Should I not be worse than a barbarian not to claim her as my own? *you* who *first* called forth my feelings for the fate of the poor *lost* ones, tell me?"

"This is a case of pitiable distress, and no common interest," answered Mrs. Elwyn, "and I think some means may be adopted to preserve these infants from a parish workhouse."

The stranger almost shrieked at the name of workhouse, and held the child yet closer to her bosom.

Several persons, attracted by compassion or curiosity, on hearing the event of the preceding night, now gathered round the cottage, to make inquiries, and to look at the twin-sisters. The lady still held the babe, unmindful of the observations of the surrounding spectators, and by turns apostrophized, caressed, and bathed it with her tears.

A subscription was readily made to secure the attendance of the old woman, and to prevent the infants from being taken immediately to the poor-house; but the stranger started up, and putting five guineas into the hand of the old woman, she said—"I do not *yield* my treasure; she clings to me for protection, and she shall have it!" and hastily quitting the house with the infant in her arms, with sylph-like swiftness she moved along the shore.

"Who is she?" was the general inquiry; no one could answer it.

"She seems to have a *particular* interest in *that* child," said a sagacious virgin of fifty; "else why not have taken *both*?"

"They are equal objects of pity, certainly," said Mrs. Elwyn, her kind heart yearning towards the remaining babe.

"She must be *followed*," said a gentleman, who was in the habit of acting as a country justice; "for she must give proper security to the parish for the maintenance of the child."

"No, no, it wouldn't do for her to become troublesome to the parish *hereafter*," said a man who kept a lodging-house on the Steine, and who did not like the idea of an increase in the poor-rates. "The chances are ten to one against its *living*, if 'twas sent to the workhouse *now*. No, no, the parish must have security;" and off he strided after the lovely enthusiast.

"And now then we shall know who she is," said a maiden gentlewoman, lineally descended from mother Eve.

"She has been here a week; she discharged the servants who came with her, and has hired others, it seems; but she always walks about alone, and at all times, and at all seasons; and then she dresses so queerly; oh, there is certainly something vastly odd about her!"

As if by general consent, the company now moved off, except Mrs. Elwyn, who still cast a lingering look towards the sleeping infant; the unfeeling speech of the lodging-house man had pierced her heart, and as she quitted the cottage, she said—"Do not suffer that child to go to the workhouse till you hear again from me; in the mean time, try to get a wet-nurse for it, and for your care and attention I will reward you. Here is my address," putting a card into the hand of the old woman, who, curtsying to the ground, was almost overwhelmed by the strange occurrences of the morning, and began to think it was a lucky chance for the twins that their parents had met with a watery grave.

### CHAP. III.

—She, frail offspring of an April morn,  
Poor helpless passenger from love to scorn.  
MISS AIKIN.

LEFT an orphan at an early age, the care of Clara Elwyn had devolved to a paternal uncle; his wife was a worthy woman, who zealously fulfilled the part of a mother and an instructress; and the ductile mind of her niece was early imbued with the principles of religion and virtue; her uncle was equally careful of her pecuniary interests; and at the age of twenty-one she became the nominal mistress of two thousands per annum; we say *nominal* mistress, because it had long been designed for her cousin, Henry Elwyn, by her *prudent* uncle. Miss Elwyn had nothing to object to this arrangement; she had from infancy associated with Henry Elwyn; it was highly natural for her uncle to covet such an alliance for his only son, and to retain so large a fortune in the family.

The Elwyn estates were entailed, and in case she had died before she came of age, or in the event of her forming another connexion, and dying without children, her cousin Henry would have inherited them; and under these considerations, she almost felt it an act of justice to fulfil her uncle's wishes. There was not an individual in the world whom she preferred to Harry Elwyn, and he had always treated her with affectionate regard.

Clara had lived in retirement with her uncle and aunt, and had seen little of mankind; her uncle had been averse to her entering into the gay world (as it is called); and cheerful and contented in disposition, fond of intellectual pursuits, and feminine avocations, she was well contented to remain with them. Yet she had a heart eminently formed to partake in all the delights of relative intercourse and domestic happiness; and she frequently wished, as the period approached when she had engaged to give her hand to Elwyn, that he were more stationary under his father's roof, but for the last twelve months his absences had been very frequent, and much protracted. Clara allowed it was natural for a young man, in the zenith of life, and blessed with every thing which could make that life appear enchanting, to be fond of mixed circles, of excursions to the metropolis, and of (what are termed) the pleasures of society; but if his *heart* were in the country, would he not feel a tasteless apathy in the pursuit, and hasten with more avidity, and double animation, to his affianced bride? This was not the case, and those conversations which immediately preceded their marriage, and which might have been supposed to have contained much confidential communication, much cheerful anticipation, and many schemes of youthful ardour, were constrained and confused on the part of Elwyn, and ill calculated to diffuse serenity and confidence on the part of his cousin; yet she blamed herself for remarking his behaviour; she fancied that she had suffered her imagination to take the lead, and that she was too romantic and too fastidious in expecting such unlimited and such unrestrained attention. The happiness of her uncle and of her aunt depended on her union with their son; her uncle had never had more than a younger brother's fortune, and his generous disposition had prevented him from providing for his son according to his wishes; it became then her *duty* to give her hand to her cousin, and she hoped that this union would secure their mutual happiness.

The cousins were united, and the strictest propriety and civility marked the conduct of Mr. Elwyn towards his lady.

During the first eighteen months subsequent to their marriage, the time of the youthful bride was almost exclusively devoted to the parents of her husband; at the end of that period they had both paid the debt of nature; and though the melancholy scenes she had witnessed had tinged the countenance of Mrs. Elwyn with a pensive expression, yet the consciousness of having performed her duty afforded her much comfort; her cares and her attentions would from henceforth entirely devolve on her husband; and she looked with a sanguine eye through a long perspective of domestic happiness, which, through the favour of Heaven, she hoped to enjoy. Alas! she was doomed, like millions who had gone before her, to experience the vanity of human wishes! and yet to common observers, what was there wanting to felicity?

The house to which, on the demise of Elwyn's parents, he removed with his wife, was built on her paternal estate, and situated in one of the pleasantest, the richest, and the most populous parts of Gloucestershire. The mansion was spacious, commodious, and elegant; the Elwyn family had for centuries been held in general respect; hence the neighbourhood united in shewing attention and civility to our young couple, who moved in that rank of life, which, while it lifted them above the vulgar herd, enabled them to keep in the happy sphere of social enjoyment, and did not set them apart from their fellow men, in the solitary gloom of superior eminence. It was the very sphere where Mrs. Elwyn was peculiarly calculated to shine; and as the unassuming equal, and the kind and unostentatious benefactress, she was soon estimated according to her worth.

The discernment and anxious scrutiny of Clara too soon enabled her to perceive, that where she would have sought the fond confiding friend, she found the cold and heartless husband. Nothing could be more obliging or more attentive than the manner and behaviour of Elwyn, yet nothing could be farther removed from that connubial tenderness, which is better felt than described. In any plan of benefiting the tenantry or the poor, which the active mind of Clara suggested, his instant concurrence was obtained; but it seemed as if he took no share in it, as if his heart entered into no scheme of hers; and frequently was her generous, her disinterested spirit, mortified by the seeming implication which his manner conveyed, that it was *her* fortune, and she had a right to dispose of it without his voice.

"Ah," thought Clara, "why not *ours*? Oh Elwyn, Elwyn, you know not how the very existence of Clara was blended with that of thine, when she became a wife! *I* can have no divided interest!"

Mrs. Elwyn had a great mind, and though endued with much sensibility, yet that softer feeling of her nature had been corrected and restrained by a proper sense of religion. The most undeviating, the most uncomplaining sweetness, marked her whole deportment towards her husband; his smile of formal complaisance was always answered by one of affection from her, his courteous speech returned warm from the heart; if he seemed melancholy, she tried every art to enliven him, without appearing to have noticed it; if she failed, and he retired (which was not unusual) to the solitude of his library, she forbore to intrude upon his privacy; but by immediate and active employment, tried to dissipate her own unpleasant retrospections and anticipations. When Elwyn received letters, she never seemed anxious to gain a knowledge of their contents; if he pleaded business and quitted home, she never asked the nature of it, but anxiously awaited his return, and received him with smiles, which often shone through tears, bright as the crystal showers of April.

If we should say that Mrs. Elwyn had no painful curiosity on the subject of Elwyn's strange and mysterious reserves, we should be accused (and with great justice too) of drawing an Utopian character; that she *had* was certain; but gloomy suspicion never gained an interest in her



pure and liberal mind. She remembered Harry Elwyn when a boy, gay, ingenuous, and open; she saw and lamented the change, and willing to divine the cause, and after the minutest scrutiny, unable to lay any fault to her own charge, in her conduct and deportment towards a husband whom she loved (in the midst of all his reserves, of all his concealments), with warm affection, she at length resolved it into his anxiety for a family, and in consequence her own wishes of becoming a parent were doubly sanguine.

Poor Clara forgot (or *tried* to forget) that the gloomy reserve of Elwyn had taken place prior to his marriage, and that when he led her to the hymeneal altar a blooming blushing bride, his countenance had exhibited more of the character of a devoted victim than of a triumphant bridegroom; but the bloom of Clara's cheek was faded, the roundness of her form was wasted, she had no prospect of presenting her husband with an instant cement of affection, and her health evidently declined.

In compliance with the advice of her physician, she had for several successive summers journeyed to the sea; Mr. Elwyn had been eager for the adoption of this plan, had been strenuous in persuading her to go, but he had invariably pleaded business; and after escorting her, with great attention and care, to some watering-place, and seen her settled in lodgings, he had quitted her.

Mrs. Elwyn's letters to her husband during these (on her part) forced separations, had been written in a style of confidential freedom; she had no reserves with him, and she communicated all she saw, and all she thought; and having a lively imagination, and being gifted with a facility of expression, her letters were calculated to give pleasure and satisfaction even to an indifferent reader; by Mr. Elwyn they were regularly *answered*.

In his manner of addressing his wife, there appeared a mixture of respectful politeness and gallantry; in answer to her communications, he always told her of the journeys he had been taking; but of the people whom he had seen, and of the incidents which had taken place, he was wholly silent.

The knowledge of acting in conformity with principle, duty, and religion, will support the mind when every earthly hope fails; but human nature will ebb, and recoil back on itself, in sustaining such a conflict as that which had so long torn the mind of Mrs. Elwyn.

She now almost despaired of ever possessing her husband's confidence, or of experiencing that connubial happiness on which her early visions fondly floated; and she now turned towards the idea of a child, whose infantile caresses might fill the void in her heart, and brighten her future days with the pure enjoyment of maternal tenderness; but this wish had been denied to her; and in worse health than she had ever known, she had sought Brighthelmstone for the fourth summer, when we introduced her to our readers, standing on the beach, and so anxiously feeling for two fellow-beings whom she knew to be in danger.

## CHAP. IV.

Careless and cold, he views the beauteous mind,  
For virtue, bliss, *eternity* design'd.

MISS AIKIN.

RETURNING from the cottage so recently inhabited by the poor fisherman to her own lodgings, Mrs. Elwyn revolved over the idea of taking the remaining orphan under her protection. Surely it would be an act of benevolence, and pleasing to the Most High; at the same time that it would afford the supremest gratification to her own heart; her fortune was amply sufficient to enable her to follow the dictates of her generosity; but she did not consider it as her own; she had never considered or used it as such, since she had become a wife; and she sat down to ask her husband's sanction and concurrence, ere she ventured a step further in the business.

"Alas!" sighed the tearful Clara, "the worst of it is, this will be a mere form; I shall receive from Elwyn a tame concurrence; he will sanction every wish, he will conform to every proposition that I shall make; I never yet could be assured that I got the assent of his judgment, or the concurrence of his heart."

After simply, but affectingly detailing the direful tempest of the preceding night, and naturally blending with it a description of her own feelings, at learning the untimely and disastrous fate of the young couple, for whom she had been so painfully interested, she recounted her visit to the cabin which contained the hapless little orphans, together with the immediate adoption of one of them by the strange lady. She thus continued—"My dear Elwyn will have guessed my wishes by the length of this detail, yet while I fearlessly avow them, I await his decision. I confess it would be to me a most grateful office to become the protectress of this poor babe, and, in some sort, to be to her a parent. Yet, mistake me not; I do not mean to adopt her into your family, or foolishly to squander your fortune; if I take her under my care, I will do my duty by *her*, and forget not what I owe to *myself*. If Providence blesses my endeavours, and she turns out a tractable and well-disposed child, I may have the satisfaction of introducing a useful member to society. Pray tell me, my dear husband, what you think of my plan; for be assured, that my enthusiasm in the cause of this desolate babe would all be quelled, were you to start the shadow of an objection, while it would glow with double fervour if it met with your approval."

Such was part of the letter, which was thus answered by Mr. Elwyn:—

Elwyn Hall, August 10.

"MY DEAR MADAM,

"I am hurt that you should think it necessary to apply for my assent, in following the pure dictates of your benevolent heart. Never have I yet opposed your wishes, and in this case, *surely* I must be the most unfeeling of men to start an objection. You have an ample fortune, and in permitting me to share it with you, I hope you will never find that I wish to lay any embargo on your liberal spirit. On the present occasion, we seem to be actuated by similar feelings; for, strange as it may appear, just at the moment when I had the favour of your letter, I was meditating an address to you on the subject of a little stranger, whom I am about to ask your permission to introduce to Elwyn Hall. Many persons in my situation would hesitate to ask such

a boon, but I have too long experienced the disinterestedness of my dear friend, to hesitate on the present occasion. My friend Belford is dead, and a boy of about six years of age pleads for my protection. I cannot resist the appeal, and our mutual feelings must be our mutual excuse, for the introduction of our respective *protégées*. Our circle will be enlarged by their appearance amongst us, and our enjoyments will be enlarged also. Whether we call them children of our adoption, or by whatever name they may be distinguished, yet if they grow round our hearts, and become part of our very selves, who shall condemn us, or term it squandering a fortune to let them share it with us? Be assured, my dearest madam, that I shall receive great satisfaction in seeing you return to the Hall, accompanied by your little foundling; and, feeling assured of your permission for so doing, I shall appear to greet your arrival with Harry Belford in my hand.

“With most cordial wishes for the entire re-establishment of your valuable health, believe me to remain, with unfeigned regard,

“Your much obliged friend,  
“HENRY ELWYN.”

Several combining emotions were felt by Mrs. Elwyn as she perused this letter; the usual constrained style of her husband was evident, till he came to the part of it which concerned the two children; here the warmth of his natural disposition had forcibly intruded itself, and she could not help fancying that she perceived, in the ardour of his expressions, the mortification which he still felt at not having a son of his own; and to his disappointment in this respect, she in part attributed his eager adoption of the child of his friend.

“Thus are even our trials and bitter disappointments productive of good,” thought Mrs. Elwyn; “had Mr. Elwyn had a son of his own, he might have steeled his heart to the claims of friendship; in receiving the innocent endearments of my own offspring, I might have been impervious to the call of humanity.”

Belford was a name that Mrs. Elwyn had never remembered to have heard, as that of a friend of her husband’s, or of the Elwyn family; but with regard to his own friendships, Elwyn had been uniformly reserved towards her; and it would almost have been a subject of surprise had she known the name of Belford, as she was a stranger to that of all his distant acquaintances.

Mrs. Elwyn answered her husband’s letter, in that prompt and ready manner which instantaneously proved to him that Master Belford would from henceforth have two friends at the Hall; and having procured a wet-nurse for her little *protégée*, Mrs. Elwyn employed herself, during the remaining period of her stay at Brighton, in providing clothes of more decent appearance than those she had hitherto worn, for the babe, previous to her introduction to Mr. Elwyn.

In the mean time, she had learnt that the strange lady, on being followed to her lodgings by the parish officers, with an inquiry concerning what she meant to do with the infant which she had taken away, had declared her intention of providing and educating it wholly at her own expence; and being asked to give her address, and a reference, in order to certify to the parish that the child would not become chargeable thereafter, she had ordered them to call again in the morning, promising at that time to give them every necessary information; but when the morning came, and the overseers attended according to the lady’s appointment, they were informed, that together with the infant and a female servant, whom she had hired to attend it, she had left Brighton the preceding evening in a chaise and four.

The certain expence of following her, and the possibility of a vain pursuit, when opposed to the uncertainty of the child’s being returned on the parish, as such pains had been taken to

carry her off, appeased the minds of the parish officers; but not so the busy tongue of curiosity and scandal; various were the surmises and the conjectures in circulation with regard to the fair unknown, whose extravagant appearance, extraordinary behaviour, and mysterious departure, were not in the course of daily events; in general it was supposed, that her inheritance of a large fortune depended upon her having a child within a limited period; and that having no prospect of producing one herself, she had determined on obtaining one by surreptitious means, and to introduce it into the world as her own.

There seemed in this case a shadow of reason in her conduct; but Mrs. Elwyn, who had seen her eccentric appearance and extravagant demeanour, previous to the fate of the poor fishers, believed that she had some motive for concealing her name and family; and that an inquiry into these had hurried her from Brighton; while in protecting the child, she had merely followed an impulse of feeling; and as in the latter case she had herself been actuated by a similar motive, she was very much inclined to extenuate the conduct of the young lady, and to hope that she was unfortunate, rather than culpable.

That she had money at command was evident; during the few days she had remained at Brighton, her liberality was the constant theme; and her total ignorance, or disregard of the value of money, proved that she had been born in a very exalted sphere of life, or that she had been educated without the remotest reference to that knowledge of prudence and calculation, which is so necessary in the common occurrences of life. Elegant accomplishments and high-flown sentiments may be resorted to like *court dresses*, and worn on *gala days*; but in the *wardrobe of education* there should be lain in a large stock of those *plain suits* of *homebred* knowledge, which will be wanted for *every-day* use, and almost *constant* wear.

## CHAP. V.

So virtue blooms, brought forth amid the storms  
Of chill adversity. KIRKE WHITE.

AT the appointed time Mrs. Elwyn returned to the Hall, accompanied by her little *élève*. Mr. Elwyn appeared at the door, leading a beautiful boy of six years of age. Mrs. Elwyn's warm reception of his little favourite seemed to have paved the way for her husband's cordial notice of hers; indeed, there seemed more freedom and *heart* in his reception of herself, than she had been accustomed to meet with for many a day; and indulging in the most pleasurable emotions, the yet sanguine Clara hailed the present moment as the harbinger of many happy years.

Mary Ellis was consigned to the care of a cottager's wife, in the village of Norton, about half a mile from Elwyn Hall; Mrs. Elwyn contented herself with paying her a daily visit, careful of not suffering Mr. Elwyn to suspect her of an eccentric and romantic fondness for the little orphan.

Harry Belford was the inmate of the Hall, and the constant companion of herself, or of Mr. Elwyn; that gentleman's fondness for him appeared to increase every day; and in his long walks, which he had been heretofore accustomed to take alone, Harry ran at his side; and even in his hours of periodical retirement, the pleading voice of Harry Belford was not unnoticed at the library door. Of a quick capacity, and lively manners, the boy could not fail of gaining general favour.

Mrs. Elwyn delighted in instructing him, and in marking the opening faculties of his mind; and while she contemplated his dark and expressive eyes, and marked the roseate colour as it mantled on his cheeks, she frequently fancied (and at these moments she seemed to love the boy more fondly) that she could trace a likeness of her Elwyn, as he was in the halcyon days of infancy.

The name of Belford, as the father of Harry, had never been mentioned by Mr. Elwyn since his lady had returned to the Hall; Mrs. Elwyn had kept an invariable silence on the subject; she never sought to gratify an insignificant curiosity, at the hazard of tormenting her husband with questions which he might not approve; if he thought it necessary to be more communicative, she judged that he would have been so; and if his reserve was occasioned by his doubts of her being worthy of his confidence, it would rather strengthen them, and lessen his opinion of her, were she to betray an eager desire to be admitted into it.

As an exemplary wife, we could almost venture to pronounce that Mrs. Elwyn had not an equal; but such a character as we have portrayed would not be imitated by the ladies of the present era; they would all unite in calling her a tame, a meek fool; and each of them would be tempted separately to declare—"that the behaviour of such a brute as Elwyn was absolutely not to be borne!" In such a case, they would have recourse to numberless *modern* methods of shewing their spirit; they would relate the tale of injury to female friendly confidants; they would have let their *male* acquaintance peruse it in the *soft liquid* of their melting eyes; and if *they* ventured to advise retaliation and revenge—[But see further of this in the every-day anecdotes of modern married pairs.]

We will return to Mrs. Elwyn, who, trying to palliate what she would have wished to change in her husband, and *dwelling* on a great deal that she *still* saw to admire, diverted her mind, by the conscientious discharge of her new duties, (duties which she had voluntarily taken

upon herself), and who felt a *living principle* within, as the original impulse, and the unerring guide of all her actions.

Gossips there are, and gossips there have been, in all ages of the world, and in all parts of the habitable globe, but the gossip of a country village has been proverbial time out of mind; and the whole village of Norton did not contain *one* female who was *dumb*!

The goodness, the meek carriage, and the humility of Mrs. Elwyn, had gained her the universal suffrage; but where we cannot find any thing to condemn, it may be sometimes pleasant to *pity*; for human nature is human nature, and if there be no perfect happiness, or perfect goodness, how should there be perfect charity? The sagacious spinsters nodded their heads to the garrulous old wives, as they canvassed over the affairs of the neighbourhood.

“Poor Mrs. Elwyn, ‘tis a great pity!”

“Yes, she is a very good woman, very good indeed, very good to the poor. She is really laying up *her* treasure in heaven!”

“Ah, poor soul! she has lain it out to little purpose here, take *my* word for it; she is quite broken-hearted, sinking with trouble, though she never complains; and yet, before I would have let *my* husband bring home his base-born brats under my own nose, and he too that I gave up such a handsome fortune to—oh ladies, ‘tis shameful, shameful work! ‘tis not forbearance, ‘tis not, indeed; I cannot call it forbearance—it shows no spirit, no conduct—it scarcely shows any affection for the husband; for jealousy, say what you will, must exist where there is any love.”

“And the boy, you tell me, is the image of Mr. Elwyn?”

“Oh law, yes! the very counterpart of the father, the same sly look with his eyes, as I remember well, when he came down a child to visit his uncle here at the Hall. These family matches are sad things; they never do turn out well, that’s very certain.”

“But the girl who is nursing at Sarah Cooke’s, whose is that?”

“Oh, that is *Mrs.* Elwyn’s pet, it seems.”

“Heaven only knows, ma’am; there are two stories about *that* too; it will all come out in time, I dare say; but they tell me Mrs. Elwyn is very fond of it.”

“Ma’am, I assure you she *dotes* upon it. Mrs. Elwyn went much earlier to Brighton this year than she did the last.”

“Did she, ma’am? I was not at Norton last summer.”

“Oh dear, yes! she did not go till August *then*—now she went in June.”

Unsuspecting and unassuming, Mrs. Elwyn pursued the “even tenor of her way.”

Master Belford was at the proper time placed by his guardian at an eligible school near the metropolis; Mr. Elwyn always attended him there, and went himself to fetch him at the vacations, at each return to the Hall. The young gentleman seemed to rise in estimation and in consequence; the servants observing the increasing fondness of their master, and the sweet compliance of their mistress, treated him with most respectful deference and attention. A poney was kept for his exclusive use, a servant was given up to attend him during each vacation, and every thing was prepared for him, which could minister to his pleasures or his gratification. He was a fine youth, and high in health and spirits; and under the protection of such indulgent friends, it would have been surprising if he had not appeared in an attractive light. His improvements kept pace with the ardent wishes of his benefactor; and while he made great progress in his scholastic education, the accomplishments of the gentleman were not overlooked.

Mrs. Elwyn saw the increasing fondness of her husband for Harry Belford with no jealous eye; she loved the youth with much sincerity; and if *she* was doomed never to be the object of Elwyn’s warmest affection, she did not grudge it to this child of his adoption. Her

cares, in the mean time, had never relaxed towards her own favourite; for if she felt a partiality for one of the children, it was surely towards the little girl, whom she had probably saved from a life of painful servitude, if not of infamy.

When she was taken from the nurse, Mrs. Elwyn had brought her to the Hall, and had scrupulously endeavoured to instruct her in her duty, as an accountable and an immortal being, and to infuse such knowledge into her youthful mind as would be useful to her in her journey through life, and be calculated to smooth her passage to the tomb.

The little orphan was of a most tender and affectionate disposition, passionately attached to her “mama Elwyn” (as that lady suffered herself to be called), and scrupulously observant of all her advice and her instructions.

Mrs. Elwyn looked upon the fortune which she inherited as only lent to her for a season, for the trial of her own faith, and for the use of her fellow-beings; and she was careful of unnecessarily wasting it, because she knew that had she died unmarried or childless, it must have devolved to her husband and to his heirs; she considered it as *his* now; and though she knew that he would, in his accustomed easy manner, acquiesce to any proposition she should make, with regard to a provision for Mary Ellis, yet it was not her wish to leave her more than a moderate provision.

“If I would make her a reasonable and a rational being,” thought she, “rational and reasonable ideas must be implanted in her mind. Happiness is not the certain accompaniment of riches;” here a half-checked sigh proved that she felt what she uttered; “a decent competence, a useful stock of knowledge, a cultivated understanding, without fastidious refinement of taste, and a grateful, a thankful heart, lifting itself towards heaven—*these* are the blessings I shall covet for my little Mary.”

## CHAP. VI.

\_\_\_\_\_ In admonition warm,  
Oft did he caution the too thoughtless tribes  
Against each sin that easily besets  
The heart; and oft, more anxious than their guardians,  
Taught the surrounding innocents, who lov'd  
His friendly smile, the lesson to be good.  
POLWHELE.

MARY Ellis had attained the age of eight years, when she accompanied her protectress to Clifton; Mrs. Elwyn now left home on a yearly excursion, from custom rather than from an idea of experiencing any benefit.

The sea air had been pronounced too keen for her the preceding summer, and in compliance with medical advice, enforced by the persuasions of her husband, she now visited Clifton; her frame was fragile, and her health delicate, yet she had no alarming symptoms; in fact, mental anxiety and disappointment had long been struggling with a naturally good constitution, and as yet they had not wholly undermined it.

Fond of having her little child about her person, in an hundred ways she contrived to make her feel herself useful, and to imagine herself of consequence in the tiny offices of gratitude which she could perform; thus a stimulus was given to her exertions, and a motive to her endeavours. Mary Ellis had been told that her parents were dead, but of her infantile history she knew no more, except that on her "dear mama Elwyn" the care of her had fallen. Mrs. Elwyn had a great aversion to all appearance of mystery or concealment, and probably this aversion had daily been gaining ground, from observing the cheerless and, as it were, studious reserve, which Elwyn had ever practised towards her, and which had clouded all her days. She had long determined to make Mary Ellis fully acquainted with her birth and situation, *not* to give her a more enlarged idea of her obligations to herself, but to dilate her mind with gratitude to the Supreme Being, and to teach her that *He* who could thus raise up a protector to the *fatherless* would never forsake those who trusted in him.

From the most trivial incidents lasting impressions are frequently made; Mrs. Elwyn was urged to the communication of Mary's little story, by the circumstance which we are going to relate.

It was a fine Sunday evening in summer, and having accompanied her protectress to the church at Clifton twice in the course of the day, Mary was rather surprised to hear the carriage ordered for an airing, as Sunday was usually kept in the *old fashioned* manner by Mrs. Elwyn; and while she devoted herself to the duties of religion, her domestics had rest, and her cattle also.

The evening was delightfully pleasant, the breeze, as they were driven across the down, was cool and refreshing, after the intense heat of the day; they turned out into a public road to which Mary was a stranger, and presently were attracted by the sound of a bell, from a plain edifice which stood in a rural lane, at a short distance from the road; thither they bent their course. There was something peculiarly impressive in the scene; the sun was fast diverging towards the western hills, but its saffron glow threw an illumination on this house of prayer; the simplicity of the building, its neat and unobtrusive spire, the silver-toned bell, the retiredness of the situation, which seemed particularly calculated to inspire pure and holy thoughts to the mind,



and to impress on the soul a true relish for devotion; the neat but ancient style of architecture of the dwelling-house, which was attached to the chapel; the picturesque scenery of the adjoining country, a gurgling rivulet, which gently, pensively, meandered through meadows, which were clothed in summer's loveliest green, and which, newly mown, sent their refreshing fragrance on the evening breeze, all conspired to impress the imagination and the fancy with the most tranquil and the most soothing feelings; and with placid serenity in her countenance, Mrs. Elwyn alighted from her chariot, and entered the chapel, leading her beloved child. The eyes of that quickly apprehensive child were wandering from side to side as they passed through the body of the chapel, and were conducted by a respectable-looking matron to a pew near the pulpit, which was set apart for the accommodation of the ladies. The clergyman got into the desk, the chapel was filled, the solemn but soft-toned organ was struck, and looking towards the gallery, Mary saw on each side of the instrument fifteen girls stand up, and neatly clothed in gowns of green, with modest round-eared caps, lift up with one accord their youthful voices in the evening hymn of praise. Mary felt her heart glow with delight as she listened to this infantile and harmonious choir; she looked with inquiring eyes towards her protectress, who directed her by an answering look to the duties of the place, for now the public service was begun.

The clergyman who preached had chosen a most appropriate text—"Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." He made an affecting but judicious appeal to his hearers for the female orphans whose cause he pleaded; he pointed out the dangers to which children, and particularly female children, were exposed, when bereft of their parents; he showed them the incalculable advantages of early religious instruction, and he reminded them that the Saviour of the World did not think it beneath his glory to descend from the highest heavens, and attend to the lisping petitions of babes and sucklings; he spoke with fervor and with energy, for he felt the cause which he had taken in hand; he knew the depravity and the frailty of human nature, and the dangers to which the *best* instructed are exposed in their journey through the world; and in affording an asylum for infant females, a nursery of virtue and piety, he judged that there could not be a species of charity more beneficial to the world, or more pleasing to the Almighty. Towards the conclusion of the discourse, he turned towards the female orphans, ere he began to address them; (as if by intuition) they all rose from their seats, and fixing their modest eyes in attentive respect upon the preacher, his address was most wisely adapted to their comprehension. He pointed out to them the particular mercies of heaven, which they had experienced in having friends raised up to them, when they were deprived of their natural ones; he explained to them the nature of their obligations to the patrons of that beneficent institution, who had not only shielded their persons from want, extended to them food and raiment, and a dwelling-place, but who had cared for their souls, who had given them the means of becoming the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven; he besought them never to forfeit their right or title to that high distinction, but to join with him in praying for their temporal benefactors, and in beseeching their Heavenly One still to supply them with the means of grace, and with the hope of glory;" and then, in a short but solemn prayer, he ended.

Again the organ sounded, again the children lifted up their voices in praise, and Mary's eyes were suffused in tears, as Mrs. Elwyn turned towards her. It was with proud satisfaction that she watched her trembling fingers, as hastily they emptied her little morocco purse of its contents, when the plate came near her, while the crimsoning hue which overspread her countenance announced the unusual perturbation of her bosom. Mrs. Elwyn had, however, anticipated this in part, and on the preceding day had filled her purse.

When they were reseated in the carriage, Mary Ellis would have sunk on her knees at the feet of Mrs. Elwyn, but was raised to her bosom, and tenderly folded to it.

"I am an orphan too!" cried Mary; "oh why, why must I not kneel and thank you? oh, dear, dear mama Elwyn, only think what that gentleman told those little girls! I might have been brought up wicked—I might have sworn—I might have stolen—I might have never known my duty to God Almighty, if *you* had not taught me! oh, why may I not kneel and thank you?"

"Only kneel to that God who moved my heart in your favour, my best Mary," said Mrs. Elwyn, deeply affected at witnessing the virtuous emotions of her child.

"But how came you to take *me*, to take Mary Ellis? there were plenty, *plenty* of other little orphan girls, you know; and *then* you could not tell that I should love you the best of all."

"Compose yourself, my good girl, and I will tell you all about it. Accident introduced me to your acquaintance, so it would be called by those who are not accustomed to look for the presiding influence of God in all sublunary things."

"I am quite composed and good now," said Mary; "but you must let me hold your hand all the time you are telling it."

Mrs. Elwyn kissed the pudsey hand which pressed hers, and faithfully recounted to Mary the fatal catastrophe which had attended her parents, and the history of her visit to their cottage.

Tears rolled over the roseate cheeks of the artless child, as she listened to the dreadful fate of her parents, but her eyes brightened through them, when she heard she had a sister; and while almost devouring Mrs. Elwyn's hands with kisses, she forgot not to bless the other good lady for taking her sister, and naturally asked her name, and where she lived. Here Mrs. Elwyn was at a loss; she had frequently made inquiries concerning the strange lady, but hitherto without success; and she tried to quiet the mind of Mary, by telling her that her sister had got a friend as well as herself, and that the same God cared for them both; but this assurance did not entirely set the heart of Mary at ease, (not though it came from her benefactress); for the first time, a feeling of relative affection had been raised in her breast, and she ever after retained an anxious interest for the fate of her sister; breaking from a reverie of a few moments, Mary said—"There are male as well as female orphans, an't there, Mrs. Elwyn?"

"Certainly, my love."

"Poor Harry Belford, he is an orphan too; he has no father, no mother—has he, ma'am?"

The question was an awkward one; Mrs. Elwyn felt the colour revisit her pallid cheeks; her lip quivered; at length she answered—"To Mr. Elwyn's goodness Harry Belford is indebted—he has supplied to him the place of his natural—of his parents."

"And I think," cried Mary, "I shall love Harry Belford a great, *great* deal more than I ever did, now I know he is an orphan like myself; and Mr. Elwyn too, how good it was of him! But were Harry's father and mother drowned too, ma'am?"

Mrs. Elwyn was again confused; she answered she did not know; and then, as if recalling her words, she said—"No."

"No, no," said Mary, shaking her head, "it was only poor Mary's father and mother that were drowned. Oh, I shall never see the sea again without thinking of my poor parents; and my dear *good* mama Elwyn, if *you* had not taken their child, *she* might have been drowned too, you know, before this time; for who would have looked after her, to see that she did not come to any harm?"

## CHAP. VII.

Forward and frolic glee was there,  
The will to do, the soul to dare,  
The sparkling glance, soon blown to live,  
Of hasty love, or head forgive.

SCOTT'S LADY OF THE LAKE.

WE will pass over the infantile years of Mary Ellis, and our readers shall behold her a fine girl of sixteen, firmly fixed in the affections of her patroness, by her good conduct, grateful disposition, and pleasing demeanour; she was not eminently beautiful, but her countenance was very expressive; and her dimpling mouth and glistening eyes displayed the alternate emotions of a bosom which was a stranger to disguise; her understanding was good, and her discrimination superior to her years; she had great quickness and delicacy of feeling, and an innate sense of feminine propriety; she was respectful and obliging in her behaviour towards Mr. Elwyn, and scrupulously attentive to him, because she knew it was her duty, and because she saw it was pleasing to Mrs. Elwyn; but for her loved, her honoured benefactress, her affection could scarcely be restrained within the bounds of moderation; she believed her the most perfect of human beings; and while she beheld her as a model, she was almost in danger of worshipping her as an idol, so strong a hold had the grateful sense of obligation obtained on her youthful heart.

Harry Belford had just attained the age of twenty-one, and returned to the Hall from Oxford, where his arrival was distinguished by as much hilarity as if he had been the lineal heir of the house of Elwyn; indeed, he had been long looked upon as the future possessor of its honours by every body; and though Mr. Elwyn had never expressed himself directly in this respect, yet by acquiescing in the general notice and deference which was paid to him, he seemed covertly to have acknowledged it.

Harry Belford had been told that he was the son of Mr. Elwyn's dearest friend; he felt that Mr. Elwyn had been the *best* of friends to him, and his conduct displayed towards him the respect and affection of a son; his must have been a hard heart if it had not softened towards Mrs. Elwyn; but Harry's was *not* a hard heart; and whilst he loved Mrs. Elwyn for her goodness to himself, he revered those superior virtues, and that exemplary and undeviating rectitude, which seemed to have lifted her above her sex, and even above that secret sorrow, which had attacked, without conquering, her elevated mind.

As a playful child, and an interesting and innocent girl, he had always been on the most friendly and familiar terms with Mary Ellis.

At his last return from College, she had been absent with Mrs. Elwyn, on one of that lady's yearly excursions, and hence his surprise at seeing her shot up into the interesting and lovely young woman, from the lively laughing girl, was forcibly impressed on his features; while Mary observed, with satisfaction, that his manners and appearance had received their last polish, and that he was quite the well-bred gentleman, without having lost the natural ingenuousness which marked his boyish days.

Every character has some leading traits, and those which were discoverable in Belford's, to the penetrating eye of Mrs. Elwyn, were impetuosity of temper, and no little idea of self-consequence; he felt that he would never be guilty of a base or unworthy action, and this feeling raised him in his own estimation, and taught him to expect and to covet the world's applause;

while the indulgence with which he had been reared, and the respect and deference with which he had been invariably treated, were not calculated to lessen it; and the ardent and impetuous emotions of his mind, though at present they only added energy to his opinions, and gave to his expressions a tincture of enthusiasm, not disagreeable in so young a man, were likely to break out with resistless violence, if he should experience any mortifications, or have to struggle with any disappointments. To the overweening indulgence of Mr. Elwyn, his lady attributed these failings as in part originating.

Belford had been told that his birth was respectable; no *humble* notions had been infused into his mind, from the consciousness of inferior origin.

With the knowledge of her early misfortunes, on the contrary, humility had been happily blended in the character of Mary Ellis; and while Harry Belford received all the good things of this life, with *gratitude* indeed, but with a gratified self-complacency, as if he had them of *right*, Mary Ellis felt them all as unlooked-for unmerited *gifts*, which were not hers to *claim*, but which, while they were thankfully received, were fresh calls upon her meekness and her humility.

It was naturally supposed by the neighbourhood that a family compact would again be formed, and that the fortune of the Elwyn family would be centered in the two favourites. The idea had struck Mrs. Elwyn, and more particularly since the last return of Belford, when she had remarked the evident pleasure with which he viewed her Mary, and the pains he took, by his easy and confidential freedom, to rid her conversation of that respectful timidity by which it was marked in her behaviour towards him. Mrs. Elwyn had also seen the surprise and satisfaction which seemed to overspread the countenance of Belford, at perceiving Mary's quick apprehension of subjects on which he conversed, and that intellectual knowledge which, while it had been stored in her mind, had been prevented from making any display, by the just principles which had been implanted with it, and the modesty of her disposition, and which now unfolded itself very charily, and was *drawn* from its confinement, rather than protruded into notice.

The prospect of such a connexion would not have been displeasing to Mrs. Elwyn; all cares, all fears for her child would be at an end, in insuring her the protection of a man of honour, and the heir of Mr. Elwyn; but could she ensure his affection? was she not herself a living, a melancholy witness of the instability of human happiness—of the fallibility of all human schemes for its accomplishment? In the youth of Harry Elwyn, she had appeared to be as much the object of *his* preference as Mary Ellis now seemed that of Harry Belford's; the one had abated—had vanished without a cause, a reason, a conjecture—it had been transient, dazzling as the watery sunbeam of a winter's day—the other might only be the offspring of early intimacy, operating on an ardent temper, and a mind which opened itself to the influence of every pleasurable emotion, and tried to communicate some portion of its own happiness to all who came within its sphere.

In the present state of Belford's feelings, Mrs. Elwyn had no doubt of his eagerly entering into an engagement with her *protégée*, were it to be suggested to him in the slightest manner by his benefactor; but she had known too much of the mutability of the youthful heart to wish to put his constancy to the trial.

With regard to Mary Ellis she was perfectly easy; her sense of her inferior origin, and her humble idea of her own deserts, prevented her from indulging any aspiring thoughts, (for such she would have esteemed them, had she suffered them to be lifted towards Mr. Belford), by permitting her to behave towards Harry as she had ever done, without checking her simple and candid manners, by conjectures or cautions, which were not likely to be of any beneficial result.

Mrs. Elwyn judged that she was pursuing a right line of conduct, yet she could not avoid feeling a secret and warm satisfaction, when any instance of Belford's partiality and regard for Mary met her observation; but she saw that these were wholly disregarded by her husband, who was ardently and exclusively attached to Belford, while the engaging manners and modest gentleness of Mary Ellis appeared to be entirely unobserved; and while he treated her with civility, it was of so indifferent a kind, that Mary herself could not fail to remark it, and her lovely cheek was often suffused with crimson, at receiving some fresh instance of his inattention to, or entire forgetfulness of herself.

How few females of the present era could bear the idea of being overlooked! this was calculated to stimulate Mary Ellis, by additional attention and exertions, to deserve more notice in future; but this constant exercise of her humility and display of her amiable disposition, endeared her yet more to Mrs. Elwyn, who, though she had long ceased to feel her husband's indifference towards herself as acutely as she once did, yet could not help attributing to him great blindness, if not insensibility, in not opening his heart to the engaging qualities and pleading claims of her Mary.

Mr. Elwyn was of late become inert and inactive; the pleasures of the table seemed to be obtaining a dangerous hold on his senses; he got very corpulent, took little exercise, and seldom appeared to be roused from a state of lethargic indolence, except by the appearance of Henry Belford at the Hall, after some occasional absence.

Sacredly concealing in the depths of her own heart her painful observation of the faults and weaknesses of her husband, Mrs. Elwyn invariably attributed to disorder and to indisposition every renewed instance of his indifference; but the "silent sorrow" thus hidden from the world preyed on her vitals; and once again, in compliance with the advice of her physician, and the affectionate pleadings of Mary Ellis, she consented to leave home, and to visit Cheltenham, to try the efficacy of the waters at that place, for the complaint which her medical adviser had pronounced to be "an affection of the liver;" had he named it "*an affection of the heart*," his judgment would have been unquestionable.

It now gave some prospect of relief to Mrs. Elwyn to leave home, and to be released for a short period from the contemplation of her once-loved Elwyn, in his present enfeebled and degraded state; to see his fine mental faculties—to see his energies destroyed—to contemplate that form, bloated and distended by corporeal indulgencies, which had once rivalled with the statue of the far-famed Belvidere Apollo, for a model of manly grace—to behold all the gifts of fortune slighted, and not to be able to account in the remotest way for the dire cause which led to this fearful, this appalling change—no wonder that the still acutely susceptible mind of Clara felt a temporary alleviation of its misery, in a change of scene, and a removal from the object of her ill-requited affection.

The attention of Mary Ellis to her protectress was all that the fondest love and the most *active* gratitude could inspire; without officiously obtruding on the invalid, she sedulously watched the opportunity of stealing her (as it were) away from melancholy contemplation; and varied her methods and her sources of amusement, as the occasion required.

As a nurse, Mary had successfully profited by the useful instructions which Mrs. Elwyn had imparted to her; and her quiet, yet steady and uniform performance of the duties of a sick chamber, while it proved the feeling benevolence of her heart, at the same exhibited much presence of mind and great self-controul; for though tenderly, apprehensively anxious for the event of this illness, Mary did not, by her saddened countenance and agitated manner, give a hint to her suffering friend of those tears, which often in the silence and the solitude of the night,

when “all the world seemed hushed to rest,” had sent her streaming eyes and piously clasped hands towards the throne of Heaven, in prayers for Mrs. Elwyn; but in moments of reason and reflection, Mary Ellis acknowledged, that nothing but the extreme of selfishness could impel her to offer up a petition for the prolongation of that life, which, it was evident, was become of no value to the possessor. “And yet,” thought this grateful *protégée*, “by precept, by example, by active usefulness, by patient suffering, by pious resignation, of how much benefit to others has that life been! and how should I have abused the mercies of the Almighty, I that have daily, hourly, been a witness of her virtues, and her meek submission, if I had not in some part learned to imitate her prompt obedience to the will of Heaven!”

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## CHAP. VIII.

Her mien all swimming in delight,  
Her beauties half reveal'd to sight.

### MOORE'S FABLES.

HARRY Belford was not at the Hall when Mrs. Elwyn quitted it for Cheltenham, but from the weekly letters which she wrote to Mr. Elwyn, and which were in general carelessly thrown on the library-table, he gathered that her health did not mend; and Mr. Elwyn always yielding to any proposition of his favourite, Harry rode down to Cheltenham to pay Mrs. Elwyn a visit.

The invalid was in her apartment when Belford arrived; Mary Ellis was sitting at work, and in melancholy rumination on Mrs. Elwyn's evident increase of illness.

She received him with smiles of genuine satisfaction—"Mr. Belford," said she, as she rose from her chair, and met his extended hand, "this is *very* good of you, but perhaps—" and her countenance flushed with hope, "perhaps you are not *unaccompanied?*"

Belford understood the half inquiry conveyed in the last word, and hastily said—"I came down with my servant only; and now tell me, my dear Mary, how is our friend?"

Mary shook her head (while tears started to her eyes), and as if that melancholy motion had been sufficient, she eagerly desired Belford not to appear too much shocked at the alteration which he would witness in Mrs. Elwyn. "It is not that I fear to alarm *her*," continued Mary; "my beloved benefactress fears not death; to *her* it presents no appalling terrors; she knows, Mr. Belford, that 'there the weary will be at rest;' but it is for *my* sake, for *our* sakes, that I speak; if she sees, from our countenances, that we judge her case to be past remedy, *may* she not slacken in her efforts—*may* she not slight the means which are still essayed for her recovery—*may* she not—" and now the tears would rush from her eyes, "may she not disregard any further assistance, and thus accelerate the bitter moment of trial to us?"

"I will do all that I can," said Belford, in an hurried tone; but his manly brow was overcast, his voice was impeded, as Mrs. Elwyn entered the room, and his hand trembled as she held out her pallid, her almost transparent one to him.

It was now that Belford first observed the self-command and calm resolution of Mary Ellis—of her strong sensibility she had the moment before evinced unquestionable proofs, yet with tranquillized feelings she now addressed both himself and Mrs. Elwyn; and gently, and almost as if by enchantment, led the conversation to indifferent and agreeable subjects.

"Is it the difference of nature, of constitution, or of education," thought Belford, "while every emotion of my breast rages and wars with resistless impetuosity, this gentle, this delicate girl, though tenderly alive to every soft emotion, has yet the power of saying—'peace, be still,' and in a moment all is quiet as the 'pure translucent lake,' while my ruffled soul continues turbulent as the unquiet and buffeting wave on the tempestuous ocean?"

Mrs. Elwyn was much pleased at the appearance of Belford at Cheltenham, and more so on Mary's account than on her own. She knew that Mary Ellis was exhibited to greater advantage in her present situation, and in the performance of her present duties, than if surrounded by a mixed and fashionable society.

Mary's education had made her a useful rather than an ornamental character; by the side of a belle of fashion, she would have dwindled into a mere awkward and unpolished girl; for *that* understanding, which but cautiously and timidly unfolded itself to the emboldening approval of

friendly attention, would have shrunk back with chilling apprehension from a competition with unblushing effrontery and modern pertinacity.

Harry Belford appeared to be fully aware of Mary Ellis's attractive and endearing qualities, and while sedulously courted by the gay world at Cheltenham, and received, wherever he appeared, as the heir of Mr. Elwyn, the coveted partner of all the beauties at the balls, and their favoured beau in their promenades on the walk, he yet retired frequently from the follies of fashion to the contemplation of all that was patient and pious in Mrs. Elwyn—to the contemplation of all that was lovely, and worthy *of being* loved, in the form of the artless and unassuming Mary.

But *human nature* has its ebbs and flows, and Harry Belford was by no means a *perfect* character; he had formed a pretty good estimate of his own attractions and advantages, and his vanity was much flattered at the evident marks of partiality and attention, which were awarded to him wherever and whenever he appeared. As a friend, as the companion of his youth, as an adviser, as the gentle soother of his cares, he would have singled Mary Ellis from the world, but the captivating Lauretta Montgomery was a far greater object of attraction in public, and gave much more eclat to his taste.

Miss Montgomery was the beauty of Cheltenham; she was lately arrived from the east with her mother, lady Lauretta Montgomery.

Report, like an "*avant courier*," had preceded these ladies to Cheltenham; it was said that they had travelled one thousand, two thousand, three thousand, and four thousand miles *overland* from India, for the story gained a thousand miles at every time it was narrated, (and promised to exceed the sand on the seashore in number, if these exaggerating details were continued). In the same ratio, the camels which composed their train were fifty, sixty, seventy, and eighty; the size of their oriental pearls was distended till they *almost* got to the egg of the ostrich: but as a *bulse* of diamonds sounded well for a *Nabobess*, the exact quantity contained in a bulse was increased *only* in the same proportion with the rest of the eastern importation.

Miss Montgomery's person was cast in the mould of symmetry, and every embellishment of dress (or rather its *rejection*, as far as it could be done without quite overstepping the bounds of decency) assisted in displaying every fine-turned limb to the greatest advantage; her features were schooled in the arts of attraction; and if she did not always say a thing worth listening to, yet the pearly whiteness of her teeth, and the ruby richness of her mouth, gave interest to the most trifling remark; but she could converse on all the fashionable topics of the day—she could descant on the fashionable publications—quote from the "*Lay of the Last Minstrel*"—warble the amorous effusions of Moore—speak of sentiment and sensibility with any German novelist—like Niboe, almost "dissolve in tears," and instantaneously transform herself into all that was gay and lively, as she sprang into the "frolic dance;" while presently she seemed to sink into all the lassitude, the languor, and the inertia of Ottoman voluptuousness.

All the advantages of education which could be procured in the east had been eagerly sought for the fair Lauretta, and the last *finish* had been put to every accomplishment, the last touch to every grace, since her arrival in England; and she now broke forth from the east like the sun, to dazzle and astonish all beholders.

Lady Lauretta Montgomery was passed the bloom of youth, and even the maturity of her charms appeared to have been hastily chaced away by the despoiling hand of sickness. The torrid zone had given the tinge of yellow to her cheek, but her dark eyes yet flashed with fire as she spoke, and the animation of her manner was peculiarly striking. In her expressions, and even in her action, there was something so different from the rest of the world, that she naturally



attracted observation; and if reclining almost at full length on a sofa, like an ancient figure at the foot of a family tomb in a country church), enveloped in her shawl of camel's hair, in the midst of a crowded ball-room, such behaviour was excused, nay even admired, on the plea of its being "*foreign*," "*quite Asiatic*," "*perfectly nouvelle*."

In Lady Lauretta's language, she adopted all the flowery figures of eastern poesy; but as these could not be easily woven into the trivial occurrences of the passing moment, she did not condescend to notice *them*, unless she shrouded them in metaphor and sublimity.

In her addresses to Miss Montgomery she used every appellative of tenderness, and redundantly expressed affection, which she had gleaned from the copious sources of oriental phraseology. All her ideas, all her sentiments, seemed sublimated from every thing that was terrestrial; and while the impassioned voice of the *mother* was thus pouring forth the warm effusions of the heart, the enchanting smiles of the *daughter*, as she silently received them, formed a picture, which, from its *singularity*, was calculated to interest; and the unabashed and unconstrained manner with which the young lady heard these tender addresses, while they gave her in some eyes a double charm, and showed the *sweet simplicity* and *consciousness* of her *supreme attractions*, had quite a contrary effect on others, who traced in her behaviour the very acme of indulged and overweening vanity; and who scrupled not to aver, that under the appearance of "*naïf*" simplicity, much art and much duplicity lay concealed. To *this* number Belford did *not* belong; *he* saw in Lauretta Montgomery all that the highest refinement could wish for; as a model of fashionable elegance, to *him* there appeared a nameless *grace* in her every action, an indescribable charm in her every word; when she spoke, he seemed bound as if by a spell of enchantment—when she danced, he seemed drawn into a magic circle of delight—when she *sang*, and accompanied the finely-modulated trill of her voice with her harp, as if "*lapped in Elysium*," he was all ear; his mind seemed in a rapturous tumult in her presence; and when he quitted her, he was agitated with impetuous passion, till he repaired to Mrs. Elwyn's; and *there* he contemplated the modest and placid Mary Ellis, who, "*like the mild green of the soul*," seemed to refresh his senses, and to compose his mind, after those brilliant corruscations, which, while they dazzled, had filled him with perturbation.

Alike alive to the calls of pride as of vanity, the thought of marrying Mary Ellis had never entered the imagination of Belford; indeed, the idea of marrying at all had never been seriously reflected on; but he daily felt more flattered at the marked distinction of Miss Montgomery; and when he was joked on the subject, though he affected to disclaim it, yet his self-exultation was pretty evident.

It was not likely that either Mrs. Elwyn or her *protégée* should hear of Belford's flirtation with Miss Montgomery; they saw no one but himself, (for Mrs. Elwyn was unable to quit the house, and Mary never left her); and though Lauretta Montgomery was the all-engrossing subject of his thoughts, when he reached Mrs. Elwyn's door, he found her image very soon put to flight, while witnessing the patient suffering of Mrs. Elwyn, and the gentle attentions of Mary.

Amiable, charming, sensible, and dignified as was Mrs. Elwyn, Belford still saw that she would not *comprehend* the characters of the Montgomerys by description, and that any attempt to give it might be dangerous, lest in portraying their *unique* graces of conversation and manner, eccentricity might be supposed to form a part.

It was only those who knew them, who had *personally* conversed with them, who could properly appreciate their indescribable and countless attractions. Exemplary in her conduct and deportment, there was a regular and systematic rule of right in every *word* as well as action of Mrs. Elwyn. *She* had been educated in the sterling principles of rectitude, which *used* to be

implanted with the first rudiments of female education, in the good old times. The natural ingenuousness of youth was *then* chastened by proper and maidenly reserve, and politeness of behaviour inculcated by those enforcing rules, which, if they gave *rather too much* formality to the manner, and imposed a *little* too much restraint on the conversation, were yet deemed by our grandmothers as the proper bulwark of female modesty and virtue; by their *grandchildren* *this* mode of education would have been termed “the reign of *terror*,” and to say the truth, it must be allowed, that there is nothing *terrifying* in the *forms* or the *ceremonies* practised by the gay belles of *this* century; though frequently the most *terrific* consequences have ensued to the unshackled laxity of modern manners.

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## CHAP. IX.

With smiles and adulation bland.

MOORE'S FABLES.

BELFORD had always felt an unaccountable repugnance to speak of the Montgomerys in the presence of Mrs. Elwyn, and that pride which was gratified at the distinguished notice bestowed on him by persons so high in rank and in notoriety as were these ladies, seemed to slumber in the society of the invalid and her interesting young attendant; but it "raged and reigned without controul" when he quitted *them*; and the look of gratified and conscious exultation with which he looked around him, when receiving some proofs of Miss Montgomery's or her mother's marked attention, would have evinced to any one who had been prepared for the scrutiny, that self-consequence and pride were the ruling traits of his character; but sailing down the stream of pleasure, while every thing is propitious to the wishes, there is in the ardent and sanguine temperament of youth so buoyant and so bright an expression of felicity, that, dazzled by the exterior, we are apt to give it credit for more amiability, and for more perfection, than falls to the lot of human nature.

The pleasing address, the fine person, the agreeable conversation, and the fair prospects of Belford, were alone viewed by the multitude; and in *his* turn he was as much extolled by the young ladies and their mamas, as Miss Montgomery had been by the beaux.

The flattery of the world—its artificial manners—its affectation of interest for our persons—its approbation of our sentiments—its warm expressions of regard and admiration, which are merely words of course, and lip deep—used to all people on all occasions, are calculated to do incredible mischief to the minds of youth, more especially to those who, like Belford, have their prominent foibles encouraged by this mode of behaviour; and who, unpractised in the varnished arts of insincerity and dissimulation, are well disposed to lend a ready ear to every thing which feeds their vanity.

It was at an elegant ball and supper given by lady Laurretta Montgomery to about an hundred of the most fashionable people at that period in Cheltenham, that Harry Belford seemed absolutely lifted above himself, by the marked distinction with which he was treated by the interesting mistress of the revels and her enchanting daughter.

As lady Laurretta's behaviour gave the tone to her guests, Belford seemed the universal object of applause and attraction. If *he* spoke, his speech was retailed as a *jeu d'esprit* to lady Laurretta, as she rested on an Ottoman couch of rose-coloured satin at the head of the room. If a young lady was heard to say something indicative of her admiration, with much avidity Miss Montgomery had it repeated to her; and the bewitching smile with which she instantaneously turned towards Belford, as if to observe whether he had noticed it, while it gave to every one an opportunity of making their own remarks, was calculated to fill the breast of Belford with the most ecstatic delight.

The ball had been opened by the fair Laurretta and himself on that evening; never had she looked more lovely; and the bird of paradise, as it waved its feathery plumage on her head, seemed to point her out as one of the fabled houris, which had been described by Mahomet to his impassioned followers, as an inhabitant of that favoured land.

She danced that night in a style which surpassed every thing which had been seen; and Belford, who was not deficient in this accomplishment, felt inspired with emulation as he looked at his bewitching partner, and never had moved more gracefully, or looked more irresistibly.

All rapture, all delight, all enchantment, he led the beauteous fair one to the supper-room, where all the luxuries of European elegance and Asiatic splendour seemed combined to make out an entertainment for the admiring guests. No longer could he restrain his emotions, but bending his head to the not unwilling ear of the fair Lauretta, while he played with the ivory fan, which he had sportively taken from her, he poured forth a strain of admiration, and fond protestation of adoration and attachment, with all the sanguine and ardent impetuosity of his nature.

The bewitching maid, while she half looked down, yet betrayed no symptoms of uneasiness; and while fondly expecting from this gentle softness some confession of reciprocal tenderness, and pleading for it with a degree of impassioned earnestness, which made him forgetful of every thing beside. Lauretta turned her melting eyes towards him; her coral lips were severed, as she seemed beginning to speak: all eye, all ear, Belford sat in mute and throbbing expectation, when, feeling a gentle tap on his shoulder, he hastily turned round, though not much pleased at the interruption, when he met the face of his own servant, who respectfully putting a note into his hand, said—"The servants here, sir, all being engaged, I thought it better to find you out and deliver it myself, for fear of any delay."

The hand of Belford trembled, for as he took the note, he recognised the hand-writing of Mary Ellis: with a slight inclination of the head, Miss Montgomery gave the permission for perusal, which he seemed to have asked, though he had not uttered a word; and with the most painful emotion he read the following words:—

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I am sorry to break in upon your festivities, but a change so much for the worse has taken place in our beloved friend, within the last two hours, that it is necessary Mr. Elwyn should immediately be apprized of it.

MARY ELLIS."

Lauretta Montgomery was vanished from the imagination of Belford—the enchanted supper, the ball, the sparkling decorations, were fled—he was already in the street, and in a few seconds at Mrs. Elwyn's door.

In the parlour he was met by the gentle Mary; in a subdued but articulate voice, yet trembling with apprehensive affection, she informed him, that in the middle of the night, Mrs. Elwyn had been seized with an alarming fit of coughing, and that in consequence she had broken a blood-vessel, from which the most alarming consequences were to be apprehended.—"She is now easy," said Mary, "and, thank Heaven, for the *present* we have nothing to dread; but how soon the hemorrhage may return, alas! we cannot say—she must be kept perfectly quiet. Ah, Mr. Belford, she looks like an expiring saint!" cried Mary, breaking out into a passionate flood of tears. "She would not suffer me at first to send for you, with her usual goodness, unwilling to shorten the enjoyment of others."

"Enjoyment!" repeated Belford, with a bitter expression of countenance, and putting his hand to his forehead, "enjoyment! and *that* while my *dearest* friends were *suffering*!"

"But sensible," continued Mary, "of her imminent danger, and anxious to see Mr. Elwyn *once* again," here Mary's voice was lost, and she turned from Belford, and hid her face in her

handkerchief.—“But I forgot myself,” said she; “no time must be lost—our beloved Mrs. Elwyn desires to see you for one moment—she thinks *you* will write to Mr. Elwyn.”

“Write!” hastily repeated Belford, “I will go, instantly go—no messenger could go so quickly as I shall, Mary, guided by duty and affection.”

“Thank you, *bless* you, Mr. Belford,” said Mary, catching his hand, and pressing it with fervor to her lips; she knew not what she did, but the artless action was *felt*—it was remembered by Belford—it afforded him an instance of the intuitive gratitude of her nature, of the enthusiasm of her affection for her protectress, which was never erased from his mind.

“*You*,” said Mary, “can tell Mr. Elwyn how *very* ill my dear benefactress is—it is not a *very* long journey for him to take—besides *you* will accompany him back; and—and—” Mary felt that she was putting persuasives for Mr. Elwyn to undertake the journey into the mouth of Belford—alas!! her foreboding mind had told her they would be necessary; but she tried to believe otherwise, and only adding—“He will come, he cannot but come,” she led the way to Mrs. Elwyn’s apartments, and gently moved on tiptoe; thus delicately, by her example, teaching Belford to do the same.

Mrs. Elwyn’s pallid countenance could scarcely be distinguished from the white pillow on which it rested. Belford approached the bed; she received him with a faint smile; and as he reverently bent his head, and pressed his lips to the hand which, extended on the counterpane, she did not seem to have strength to hold out, Mrs. Elwyn feebly whispered—“Tell Mr. Elwyn it will give me comfort to behold him once more, and bid him lose no time.”

“Mr. Belford says he will go himself, my dearest mama,” said Mary, in a gentle whisper.

The pleased expression of Mrs. Elwyn’s eye, as she turned it on Belford, conveyed the warmest satisfaction to his heart. Again he bent upon her hand, and exchanging a kind look of adieu with Mary Ellis, he quitted the apartment.

With the utmost speed Belford changed his ball trappings for a travelling suit, and mounting his own horse, thinking it would carry him more swiftly than he could be conveyed in a chaise, he set off for Elwyn Hall.

The rapid haste with which he moved along seemed to preclude his mind from much reflection; yet, strange as it may seem, the image of Lauretta Montgomery was chased away by the dying form of Mrs. Elwyn, and tearful eye of Mary Ellis; and when he glanced at the festive scene which had so recently entranced his senses, it was with something of self-reproach, for he dwelt on the more recent and affecting one to which he had been summoned.

As the *ignis fatuus* dazzles and misleads the traveller, by its playful and versatile brilliancy, and as the mild influence of the chaste orb of night, as it pursues its steady track, gives him both content and resolution on the way, so did the benign form of Mary Ellis appear to Belford; and each wish of his soul seemed now to be turned towards the amelioration of her situation, and in hasting back to Mrs. Elwyn, with that comfort which a husband’s presence alone could give.

Mr. Elwyn was just taking his afternoon’s nap (after a plentiful meal) when Belford entered; he had given orders not to be disturbed, but the servants knew that there was always an exception in favour of their young master; neither were they mistaken; Mr. Elwyn roused himself with some appearance of pleasure, as he said—“Henry Belford, my dear boy, where did you come from? sit down—I am delighted to see you—and now you are come home to stay, I hope?”

“A very short time, my dear sir,” answered Belford, respectfully taking the hand of his patron; “but I am going to take you back with me to Cheltenham; Mrs. Elwyn wishes for your company, and I know you will not deny us.”

A “pshaw” half broke from Mr. Elwyn as Belford named his wife; but, as if recollecting himself, he made a cold inquiry after her health.

Belford then unreservedly acquainted him with the precarious state in which she lay, and which had been the occasion of his sudden return; and after having waited for some moments for Mr. Elwyn to speak, but without effect, he again addressed him, and urged the wishes of Mrs. Elwyn, saying—“I ordered the travelling chaise as I came in, for if we do not set off instantly, I *fear* we can hardly expect to see her alive.”

Mr. Elwyn trembled all over, but his silence was taken for consent by Belford, who was hastily quitting him, to see that his orders had been followed up, when Mr. Elwyn said—“Stop, Harry—come hither; stop, Harry—I cannot go.”

“*Not go*, my dearest sir?” said Belford; “not go! to afford the last earthly consolation to the amiable, the suffering, the *dying* Mrs. Elwyn?”

Elwyn shuddered, and putting both his hands before his face, he said—“No, I *cannot* go—I *cannot* behold Clara in her last moments.”

“Ah, my beloved, my honoured benefactor, say not so!” cried Belford; “it is a scene calculated to give peace and comfort to *all* her friends. The greatness of Mrs. Elwyn’s mind never shone more conspicuously than during this her long and trying illness, and as she gets nearer to the closing scene of her pilgrimage—(“Pilgrimage!” repeated Mr. Elwyn in a hollow whisper, while a sigh issued from the bottom of his heart)—her patience, her fortitude, and her faith, seem to be gaining strength as her bodily faculties decay. Believe me, my dear sir, such a contemplation has in it something, which, though it cannot be expressed, yet seems to afford us consolation, even in the midst of our affliction. We must regret her for *ourselves*—but for *her*, she seems already to have a foretaste of the happiness prepared for her; and but that she still fondly clings to attachments closely rivetted to her affectionate and benevolent heart—to *you*, her husband—to the child of her bounty—and to *me*, the happy object of your goodness, she seems already an inhabitant of that world to which she is going. The only earthly wish that now remains is *once* more to see her husband—and *surely* it will not, *cannot* be denied to her!”—and Belford grasped the hand of Mr. Elwyn, and looked in his face with a beseeching expression.

The countenance of Mr. Elwyn was no longer hid by his hands, but he seemed to look on vacancy rather than on the animated pleader, who was in an attitude which might almost be called kneeling before him.

“Pray—pray sir, do not deny me,” cried Belford, “do not now deny your *own* Harry Belford this *one* request—a request which for your *own* sake you ought to accede to, as well as for that of the dear sufferer.”

“I *cannot* go,” said Mr. Elwyn, “have I not said so?—Harry, torture me no longer; tell poor Clara—tell her—I do not know what I would say,” said he, pausing, and leaning on the mantle-piece.

“No!” said Belford, “you cannot frame a message that will excuse your attendance—I know, I feel you cannot—and you *will* accompany me.”

“Never!” said Mr. Elwyn; “I am ill—I am unhinged both in mind and body—I am not equal to the exertion—you see I am not; tell her so—say that I am indisposed, dear Harry,” said he, with some appearance of eagerness, as if happy to have hit on any thing which might wear the semblance of a reasonable excuse.

“But will you not be worse, my dear sir, if you thus give way to an imaginary imbecility? believe me, my *honoured* Mr. Elwyn,” and Belford spoke with the warmth of virtue, “there can be no danger to be apprehended from that *exertion* which is the offspring of duty and affection.

Pray, *pray* do not be angry with your Harry Belford, if he ventures to suggest to you that you will have more to dread from the pangs of self-upbraiding, should you remain here, than could possibly await you in taking this journey."

"Self-upbraiding! what do you mean, Harry?" asked Mr. Elwyn, with quickness; "are *you* then become my inquisitor and my judge? does my own—does—do *you*, Harry, condemn me?"

"Condemn you—God forbid!" cried Belford with emotion, his heart overflowing with gratitude to his patron, yet at the same moment throbbing with agonizing emotions at the idea of returning to Cheltenham unaccompanied—"God forbid, my dear Mr. Elwyn!" repeated he with fervor; "but in return for the countless obligations you have heaped on me, I would try, if possible, to prevent you from experiencing one moment of self-reproach."

Mr. Elwyn was softened towards his favourite, but he still persisted in declaring his inability to take the journey; and Belford, who believed the idea to proceed wholly from his habitual indulgence and supineness, while he lamented that long course of intemperance which had produced such imbecility and timid apprehension, saw that nothing which he could urge had power to persuade him to the contrary.

In the utmost mortification and distress, as he pictured the sad consequences which might too probably ensue to Mrs. Elwyn, when she should see him arrive without her husband, he left the room, and tried to compose the tumult of his agitated mind, in pacing with hurried steps the spacious hall; but suddenly recollecting that every moment was precious, and that while he yet lingered Mrs. Elwyn might be breathing her last, he returned to the dining-room. Rising from his seat, Mr. Elwyn poured him out a large bumper of Madeira, (having during this little interim fortified his *own* courage *not* to take the journey, but *more resolutely* to withstand the intreaties of Belford, with two or three glasses)—"Come, Harry, take a glass of wine; it will do you good."

Belford declined the invitation, saying—"That having eaten nothing for the day, he was afraid to venture."

Mr. Elwyn instantly pulled the bell, saying—"Good God!! why did you not say so before? why would you not order something? Harry, my dear Harry; you know you are master here; every thing I have is yours. Why did you wait to be asked?"

"Alas!" answered Belford, "I have had no time to bestow a thought on myself; and even now I scarcely dare take advantage of your kindness; but if you will say that *after* I have taken some refreshment, I shall have *your* company on the way"——

"I have told you, Harry," said Mr. Elwyn, "that I *cannot* go;" and he spoke with more peevishness than he had ever used to his favourite. "You would not ask me, if you—if you knew how I felt."

"But am not I a proud, a living instance," asked Belford, "that selfishness does not form a part of Mr. Elwyn's character, and to evade a temporary inconvenience, would he run the hazard of purchasing to himself a lasting subject of regret?"

"Urge me no more, imprudent boy; if you will persist, you drive me to distraction."

The look of agonizing suffering which Mr. Elwyn's countenance exhibited, as he said these words, appalled and confounded his hearer; he said no more, but hastily snatching a few mouthfuls of refreshment from a tray which a servant had put on the table, he looked at his benefactor with an expression of mingled duty and compassion, as he drank the glass of wine which he had poured out for him, and grasping his hand with emotion, (while Mr. Elwyn threw himself back in a chair, and turned his face from his gaze), he caught up his hat, and left the room; the chaise which he had ordered was at the door, and, without further delay, he sprang into it, and was driven off.

## CHAP. X.

She, frail offspring of an April morn,  
Poor helpless passenger from love to scorn;  
While dimpled youth her sprightly cheek adorns,  
Blooms a sweet rose, a rose amid the thorns;  
A few short hours, with faded charms, to earth  
She sinks, and leaves no vestige of her birth.

MISS AIKIN.

THE morning which dawned upon the sick-bed of Mrs. Elwyn, soon after Belford had quitted the room, brought with it some amelioration to the griefs of the watchful Mary, as she saw her beloved protectress gently resign herself to the influence of sleep.

After enjoying two hours of tranquil slumber, Mrs. Elwyn awoke calm and refreshed, free from pain, though much weakened by her recent violent attack. Sensible that she had not long to live, her eyes seemed to fix themselves on the darling object of her affection, and her heart to overflow in love towards her.—“My best child,” said she, tenderly holding her hand, “come nearer to me, and let me seize the last opportunity which may be allowed me, of making known to you my wishes, with regard to your future destination.”

Mary bent her lovely mournful countenance towards her dearest friend; she softly pressed her warm lips on her cold moist forehead, and in an attitude of pious attention, and holding in her breath, as though she would not lose a syllable, she listened to that maternal advice, which she resolved to make the sacred rule of her conduct, and which might be truly said to be engraven on her heart.

Mrs. Elwyn did not conceal from Mary that she did not entertain very sanguine expectations of seeing her husband; he had never visited her *bed of sickness*, and her *bed of death* was not likely to be a scene which would be contemplated by him; yet, to have assured him in person, that never in thought, word, or deed, had she swerved from her allegiance to her early love—to have bestowed upon him her last prayers—to have communicated personally to him her wishes concerning Mary Ellis, would have afforded her the most heartfelt satisfaction; but as she feared that it was likely to be denied her, she had addressed a letter to him, in an hour of comparative convalescence, and she now informed her weeping auditor of its contents.

Mrs. Elwyn still felt the most tender and affectionate interest in her husband's happiness; by the natural goodness of her own nature she judged of his; and though his neglect and indifference had been closely folded in the deepest recesses of her heart, yet she suspected that they would be conjured up by the “busy meddling memory,” and that when she was gone for ever, Mr. Elwyn might feel regret and compunction; she therefore had urged in her letter to himself, and also in her advice to Mary Ellis, her continuing to reside at Elwyn Hall, till the period when her virtues should have fixed the affections of some worthy being, who might make her his willing partner for life.—“You know Mr. Elwyn's turn of mind, my beloved girl, his peculiarities, and the different shades of his temper—you will not break in on his retirement by officiousness—you will not disturb his period of abstraction by ill timed loquacity—your gentle and unassuming manners have particularly calculated you to be an inmate in his family; and your quiet and regular method of pursuing your active avocations, while they cannot offend the most fastidious, will always afford you self-satisfaction in their discharge; besides, where could I point



out for you a more eligible asylum, than under that roof which has been your shelter from infancy, and under the immediate protection of my husband?"

"But without you, without you!"—sighed out Mary.

"Mary, we must not dare to murmur at the dispensations of the All-Wise. I have had a long time of suffering."

Mrs. Elwyn paused, and Mary once more essayed to resume her fortitude, from which she had been instantaneously bereft, as the idea forcibly presented itself to her imagination, of the solitary gloom of Elwyn Hall, when bereft of its mistress.

Mrs. Elwyn proceeded—"I have already told you, my dear child, that in the provision which I have requested Mr. Elwyn to make for you, I have removed you from an affluent rank of life, while I have guarded you from the distresses allied to poverty. If four thousand pounds would not make my Mary happy, double, nay treble that sum would fail; and the man who would not take Mary Ellis with four thousand pounds, would not deserve her."

"Enough, enough!" whispered Mary; "*enough* for *me*; what do *I* merit—what do *I* deserve—what ought *I* to expect? a poor orphan—a foundling; I owe my *life* to you. Oh, my dear madam, where might poor Mary Ellis have been at this moment, if *you* had not preserved her?"

"Compose yourself, dear Mary; for *my* sake, compose yourself. My fortune would at my death have been unalienably Mr. Elwyn's, had I never become his wife." Mrs. Elwyn sighed and paused—"I do believe, that if I were to desire him to give you the half of it, he would scrupulously, nay promptly fulfil my last request; but I have perhaps been more delicate in my expenditure, from knowing the liberality of disposition which has always distinguished Harry Elwyn."

After some more affectionate instructions on the subject of Mary's future conduct, Mrs. Elwyn proceeded as follows:—"A few words more I must add, my dearest Mary, on a topic which, perhaps, you have not yet considered; it is with regard to your settling in marriage. I do not guard you against forming a connexion with the profligate, the irreligious, or the undeserving; I feel that your good sense, and your good principles, will preserve you from such an unhappy fate; but I would shield you from the bitter pangs of ill-requited affection—I would guard you from the weakness of your own heart—I would earnestly beseech you not to accept the hand of any man, till you have in some measure proved his constancy—till you are *assured* that your affection is reciprocal. Duty, gratitude, transient partiality, many feelings may, I fear, be mistaken for that exclusive attachment which *ought* to subsist to render the married state a happy one. I am not pleading for the existence of that all-engrossing passion which, alas! is to be found only in the enthusiasm of youth, and in the pages of romance, but for that steady and reasonable affection, which is calculated to ripen into mutual confidence and esteem, and to smooth and gild the passage to the tomb."

Insensibly, as if portraying from having experienced the painful reverse in her own case, Mrs. Elwyn grew more energetic, but more affected as she concluded the last sentence, till exhausted by the exertion, she was obliged to fall back on her pillow.

Much impressed with the feeling and goodness of heart which Belford had evinced in his late visit to Cheltenham, his attention to herself, his brotherly kindness towards Mary, together with the prompt manner in which he had met the summons from the scene of festive pleasures, and had commenced a hasty and solitary journey, Mrs. Elwyn felt a latent hope arise in her mind, of his becoming, at no very distant period, the protector and husband of her Mary. In desiring that she might remain an inhabitant at the Hall, she knew that she was giving him an opportunity of seeing her in the fairest and most interesting light; and she thought it was highly probable, that

the generous and ardent temper of Belford might be taken captive by so much excellence, notwithstanding that his natural pride, and his self-consequence, might at first have revolted from the idea; but remembering her own unhappy case, and fearing that the fatal error into which her husband had fallen, (for of selfish or of interested views, in forming a connexion with herself, she had never accused Harry Elwyn), she had been thus particular in warning her youthful *protégée*.

Although Mrs. Elwyn tried to conceal the disappointment which she experienced, on seeing Belford return unaccompanied by Mr. Elwyn, yet it wounded her soul—her faithful heart; to be denied a last look of the beloved object, for whom she had sacrificed all her earthly prospects, and all her earthly happiness, was painfully, acutely felt, even when her entire resignation to the will of Heaven, and the fortitude with which she contemplated her approaching dissolution, might, in some measure, have been supposed to have blunted these sensations.—But

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,  
Some pious drop the closing eye requires;  
Even from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,  
Even in our ashes live the wonted fires.

The constant and the faithful heart of virtuous woman, clings with its last sigh to the object of early and pure attachment; of this nature was the attachment of Mrs. Elwyn; it had upborne itself in the midst of coldness, estrangement, and neglect, and it did not *reproach* Mr. Elwyn for this last instance of unkindness; for every jarring, every warring sentiment; was extirpated from her pious breast; and in the arms of her beloved Mary Ellis she resigned her last breath, while beseeching Heaven to shower down its blessings on the heads of Mr. Elwyn, on her child, and on Harry Belford, who, overcome with grief, knelt at the foot of the bed, (and clasped his hands in speechless but pious earnestness, lifting up his eyes to Heaven, as if to witness the sacredness of his promise), as the expiring saint, pointing to Mary Ellis, besought *his* care of her.

Such scenes as these have truly been said to better the heart. In the contemplation of the latter end of such a woman, the soul seems purified from all selfish, from all gross feelings.

Belford lifted up a fervent aspiration for such an happy exit to himself; and while he took the hand of Mary, in order to speak words of comfort, he approached her with the respect and veneration with which he would have addressed a ministering angel, for such had she appeared to him.

Poor Mary *could* not be comforted—"I weep, dear Mr. Belford," said she, "but it is for myself I weep; leave me, leave me now—let me give way to my feelings for a few hours—I shall then be better—I will then try to frame my mind to some degree of composure."

Belford pressed her hand in silence, and retired to acquaint Mr. Elwyn with the melancholy event which had taken place, and to give the necessary orders, and make arrangements for the removal of the body to Elwyn Hall.

## CHAP. XI.

Do foul misdeeds of former times,  
Wring with remorse thy guilty breast,  
And ghosts of unforgiven crimes,  
Murder thy rest.

Lash'd by the furies of the mind,  
From wrath and vengeance wouldst thou flee?

MONTGOMERY.

WE will not weary our readers with a minute detail of these cheerless scenes; suffice it to observe, that Mary Ellis and Belford preceded the hearse which contained the remains of their lamented friend, in a mourning chariot, the servants following in a coach.

By the express desire of Mr. Elwyn, the melancholy procession did not rest at the Hall, but proceeded immediately to the parish church. As they slowly passed through the village of Norton, and the heavy bell of death first struck on the ear of Mary, she leant back in the carriage, all her fortitude seemed to forsake her at the sound, and the consoling and encouraging voice of her companion was scarcely heard in this excess of grief; but the chaise stopt at the church-yard-gate, and through that walk, where her kind protectress had often leant on *her* youthful arm, it was now poor Mary's turn to be supported by Belford. The servants of the Hall, the tenantry, and the sorrowing peasants, lined the way, and sighs and tears only broke on the silence. Mr. Elwyn was missing; he had signified to Belford that he was unable to witness the scene; and as he had made *that* an excuse where his presence might have given comfort, Belford did not wish to tax his feelings on the present occasion.

Mary Ellis seemed as if she had lost all that the world contained worth living for, when the corse was interred in the family vault of the Elwyns; but she remembered that she was now going to meet Mr. Elwyn, and that she must endeavour to put in practice some of that advice with respect to her future conduct, which had been given her by one whom it had hitherto been her delight to obey.

The manly soul of Belford sympathized with the lovely girl, but he tried, by his steady manner, to infuse some portion of resolution into her.

Mary had always feared Mr. Elwyn, because she had always perceived that she was not beloved by him, and this feeling had added to her natural reserve in his presence; *now* it seemed as if her imagination was conjuring up his recent neglect of her beloved protectress, more painfully to distress her; and she trembled from head to foot, as Belford almost lifted her from the chaise, and assisted her across the hall to the library, where Mr. Elwyn was sitting by the fire.

The windows were already closed, and candles were lighted, though it was yet early in the afternoon, and the sun had not reached the end of his daily career; but the idea of seeing the funeral procession, as it passed through the long avenue which led from the Hall to the village church, (and which had been the accustomed burial-path time immemorial), was insupportable to Mr. Elwyn, who would also, had it been possible, have stopt all entrance to his ears, when the bell announced to him the expected approach of the procession. Alas! it would have seemed as if he had wilfully closed the avenues of his heart, to give force and bitterness to the complicated emotions of his anguished and tortured spirit.

A large folding screen concealed Mary Ellis from the view of Mr. Elwyn; with something like a forcible action, she withdrew her arm from the supporting one of Belford, and while she impelled him forwards, she yet lingered behind the screen, putting her hand to her panting side, as if to acquire resolution.

“My dear sir, how are you?” asked Belford.

“Harry, my dear fellow, my dearest boy, are you come? is it past—is it all over? how glad I am to see you!”

Mr. Elwyn’s voice seemed obstructed, his words were hurried.

Mary now advanced, but her pallid cheeks, her tearful eyes, her agitated frame, as she tottered towards Mr. Elwyn, all spoke a language too intelligible to him; he started, and as she would have taken his hand, he turned from her, and burst into tears.

“It is too much, Henry,” said he; “it is too much—I can’t bear it. Harry, take her away, if you will not have me die before you. I cannot bear to look at her.”

Poor Mary heard no more; she sunk fainting on the floor, and was borne out of the room by the kind and generous Belford, who, hastily giving her to the care of the housekeeper, returned to his benefactor.

Belford saw, and deeply lamented, that weakness and imbecility of mind which had so fatally usurped the place of every manly sentiment in the character of Mr. Elwyn, and he resolved to seize the present opportunity of making known the last wishes and intentions of Mrs. Elwyn with regard to Mary Ellis.

He must have wanted discernment and observation, if he had not always noticed the indifference with which Mr. Elwyn had treated this gentle girl; but he had, at the same time, felt his indulgence to himself, and had seen that this had been an all-engrossing preference.

Mrs. Elwyn’s capacious heart had taken an interest in *his* welfare, as well as in that of Mary; but dreadful would be the fate of this poor girl, if in losing her kind and affectionate protectress, she should find herself not only an object of indifference, but almost of disgust and aversion to *him*, who was to supply to her the place of all she had lost.

Painful as the duty was, and conscious that the subject was a most ungrateful one to the mind of Mr. Elwyn, yet Belford did not falter in the task he had deputed to himself; he went through a cursory review of the patience, the resignation, and the fortitude which Mrs. Elwyn had evinced on her deathbed, and entered into a minute detail of her wishes, with regard to the future destination of Mary, as expressed to him, and through him to be communicated to Mr. Elwyn.

As Belford spoke, Mr. Elwyn exhibited evident symptoms of uneasiness.

When he mentioned the sum which Mrs. Elwyn had requested him to bestow on Mary Ellis, (and which she had likewise specified in a short address, which she had written to her husband)—“*Four* thousand pounds!” repeated Mr. Elwyn; “poor Clara! always modest—always considerate—always fearful of overstepping the bounds of justice—always setting limits to thy noble liberality of spirit. *If* thou hadst said ten, twenty, thirty, it should have been hers.”

“I know it would,” said Belford, his bright eyes sparkling; “but Mary Ellis, if I rightly estimate her turn of mind, would not have felt happier for the addition.”

“*I could* have wished,” said Mr. Elwyn, “that she might have been allowed to fix her residence any where but here.”

“And why, my dear sir?” asked Belford with eagerness; “why should such a wish arise in your breast? I am conscious that it was on your account, more than on that of Miss Ellis, that our departed friend recommended her residence here.”

“On *my* account, Harry?”

“Yes, sir, on *your* account. Mrs. Elwyn knew, that in the soothing delicacy, in the *devotedness* of female attention, there is something which is denied to our rougher sex; bereft of *her* society, of *her* converse, of *her* fond, of *her* attentive cares, who would cheer—who would enliven—who would administer to you—who but this good girl? who, trained up in the principles and practice of her revered friend, will feel it the pride and the glory of her life, to be in the remotest degree instrumental to your comfort.”

“Well, well, she may stay—she *is* to stay—Clara commanded it,” said Mr. Elwyn, with some degree of peevishness.

“And you will *bless* her for it,” said Belford, with much warmth; “*without* female society, what should the best of us become? and now that death has deprived you of her—”

“No more—no more, Harry; not a word more, if you love me,” said Mr. Elwyn, starting from his seat.

“Forgive me, my best friend,” said Belford, “for thus cruelly reminding you of the extent of your loss. Alas!” continued he, with a deep-drawn sigh, “we *all* feel it to be irreparable.”

Mr. Elwyn walked to the other end of the room, he clasped his hands in agony, he almost groaned as he said—“Harry, Harry Belford, I believe I shall go distracted!”

Belford was awed into silence by the unaccountable emotion of Mr. Elwyn; for it seemed unaccountable to him, that a man, who could feel so acutely, and who exhibited such undissembled marks of sorrow at the death of his wife, should yet have treated her with such cold and cutting neglect during her life, and have cruelly refused her last—her dying request.

Belford was at this period new to the emotions of the human heart, he had never before witnessed the “compunctious visitings of conscience.”

Mary Ellis soon recovered her sense and recollection; but it was some time ere she ventured again to obtrude herself into the presence of Mr. Elwyn; she might have absented herself entirely, and not have feared that an inquiry would have been made after her from the master of the mansion, (so wholly insignificant did she seem in his estimation); but when he happened to cast his eyes accidentally on her grief-worn countenance, immediately were they withdrawn, for it seemed as if the alteration he there witnessed always carried a pang to his heart.

At these moments the kindness and consideration of Belford were deeply felt by our amiable orphan; he strenuously endeavoured to divert his patron’s mind to another subject; and he never drew his attention towards her, unless when a gleam of cheerfulness overspread her features, or some degree of gaiety was perceptible in her conversation. In the most trifling instances, he discovered a scrupulous care of wounding her delicacy, or embarrassing her feelings.

The first time that she made one of the dinner-party, he saw the diffidence with which she entered; he saw the painful recollections which threatened to overcome her, on seeing the head of that table vacant, which used to be graced by one, whose refined sense and comprehensive mind had been the soul of the repast. He marked the irresolute step with which she seemed to linger, as if waiting for Mr. Elwyn to tell her where to place herself; with that promptness of decision, which, when accompanied by judgment, is of incalculable advantage in our journey through life, Belford took her hand, and seating her where from infancy she had been seen, (near the loved mistress of the mansion, as he said—“I will take this office on *myself*,” he sat down at the head of the table; thus sparing Mary Ellis from the hazard of displeasing Mr. Elwyn by doing wrong, and preventing the mutual embarrassment, which would have naturally ensued, had her diffident

eyes constantly met those of Mr. Elwyn, (when they were lifted from her plate), and had he beheld in them (as he usually *seemed* to do) the silent accusers of his conduct.

Mary Ellis, with an activity of mind which she had ever been accustomed by her benefactress to prize, and to encourage, as the first of human blessings, resumed those occupations and employments in which she had been used to pass her time; and though she seemed to have lost the stimulus to all her exertions, the master-spring of all her actions, in losing this dear friend, yet that friend had given her too right a notion of the duties of a Christian, for her to suffer herself to sink into supineness and despondency.

In being still permitted to inspect the village school, which Mrs. Elwyn had founded; in being still permitted to assist those poor cottagers, who had been used to be benefited by that dear friend's bounty; and in visiting, as heretofore, the sick and disabled children of industry, she felt that she was pursuing that course which had been marked out for her. While in cultivating those flowers which Mrs. Elwyn had most admired; in rearing, in fostering those plants which she had beheld with an eye of pleasure, the most grateful, the most *sacred* feelings of solitary satisfaction seemed to infuse themselves into the mind of our youthful orphan; and often, in the fulness of her heart, would she piously recollect the many mercies and blessings which were yet retained to her.

She had a respectable protector in Mr. Elwyn—a home of comfort under his roof—a kind, a considerate friend in Harry Belford; and that kindness, that consideration, that affection, had shone forth tenfold since the demise of her first friend; and if her society could in any shape, could in the most trifling way, be useful to Mr. Elwyn, how delightful would be the idea of returning some *small* part of that obligation which she owed to his protection! and how pleasing must such conduct be to the sanctified spirit of Mrs. Elwyn, were it permitted her, from the regions of blessedness, to take notice of those whom she had once valued *below*!

We shall be accused of drawing our heroine (as is usual with all novelists) a *creature of perfection*, though it must be allowed, that the two words *thus* joined are a contradiction in terms; but our design is to shew the practical advantages of a judicious education, and the stability and the strength of mind which may be derived from an early knowledge of religion, and an *exercise* of its duties, even by a weak and timid female.

Mary Ellis was attractive in person, but to those *only* who were accustomed to look for natural beauties; she had great diffidence in her manner, and very little enthusiasm in her *expressions*; neither had she much romance in her composition; yet her feelings were by nature acute, and her heart alive to every painful and pleasurable emotion.

With the death of Mrs. Elwyn, the wish of one day discovering her sister seemed to have taken a firmer hold on the mind of Mary; and, perhaps, the idea was not, at this time, without its beneficial effects, as it, in some measure, diverted her thoughts, and turned them into another current. Hope flushed her animated features at the prospect of being known—of being restored to this long-lost sister; she would retrace the circumstances of her infant days, and dwell on the description of the lady who had taken her sister away, as given her by Mrs. Elwyn; but naturally prone to extenuate, and willing to encourage cheerful ideas in the breast of her child, the *hopes*, and not the *fears*, which that eccentric and mysterious female's protection might have been likely to have produced, were alone displayed to Mary; for Mrs. Elwyn had long given up all idea of hearing of the fate of the other orphan.

In being restored to her sister—in having a relative claim on one human being, there was something so approximate to the disposition of our heroine, that she could not help believing that she should one day see it realized; and in the bright tints in which youth is used to deck a

favourite perspective, she expected to be pressed to the arms, and received into the heart of all that was amiable, good, and virtuous.

In contradiction to what we have remarked above, this idea may be called enthusiastic, and breathing the true spirit of romance; but we would rather have it called the ardent glow of sisterly affection.

From reveries of this kind Mary frequently roused herself, acknowledged the improbability of having her wishes realized, and by more sedulous attention to her pursuits, she endeavoured to be thoroughly content with such things as were granted to her, and not to waste her time in shadowy visions, when substantial blessings were within her reach.

Mr. Elwyn had retained all the domestics of his late lady, and from the old housekeeper to the kitchen-maid, there was not one of them who did not respect and love the gentle Mary.

Since the death of Mrs. Elwyn, no ladies had visited at the Hall; Mary Ellis not being recognised as its mistress by Mr. Elwyn, her name being seldom mentioned by him, her having taken no consequence upon her since her return, (but on the contrary, appearing to conduct herself with greater humility than she had done before), her disappearance when any gentlemen had called at the Hall, and her continuing to sit at the side of the table, (all which particulars had been scrupulously inquired into by the decorous females of Norton), had determined it against her.

“In the *best* of days, Elwyn Hall had not been a very *gay* house to visit at; there was something very odd, and very unaccountable, certainly, about Mr. Elwyn.”

There existed no *law*, however, against brothers, and fathers, and uncles, and sons, and twelfth *male* cousins, inviting Mr. Belford to all the parties in the vicinity; so it was finally decided, *nem. con.* that Miss Ellis was *not* to be taken notice of—she was nothing—*nobody*; and *if* her origin *should* ever be discovered, in all probability, they might have to *hug* themselves on this prudential resolve.

Poor Mary Ellis never having conceived herself to be *anybody*, was not surprised at receiving no civilities from those ladies who used to be so attentive to her when they visited Mrs. Elwyn. Mrs. Elwyn was gone, and she had not an idea of meriting a shadow of distinction on her own account. From how many mortifications—from how many slights is a truly humble mind shielded!

## CHAP. XII.

The passions are the chief destroyers of our peace; the storms and tempests of the moral world (to extirpate them is impossible, if it were desirable); but to regulate them by habitual care, is not so difficult, and is certainly worth all our attention.

KNOX.

THE spirits of Mr. Elwyn seemed in some measure to have recovered from their temporary depression; he was as partially indulgent as ever to his favourite, yet of late there had been something particular in his manner when they were left *tête-à-tête*; frequently had Mr. Elwyn called off Belford's attention from the book he was reading, and had begun to address him with an air of extraordinary seriousness, when Belford having put himself into an attitude of profound and respectful attention, instantaneously the resolve of Mr. Elwyn seemed to be changed, and pointing to him to continue his studies, he had resumed his seat, and his usual air of abstraction.

More than once had he started from his chair, and as if on the point of communicating something of great moment, had placed himself close to the ear of his expecting auditor, and scarcely had he uttered a sentence, ere his whole soul seemed to recoil from the purposed communication; and Belford had again been left to conjecture what undiscovered secret thus troubled the spirit of his patron.

Mrs. Elwyn had now been a month dead, and Mr. Elwyn had one afternoon been more than usually quick in taking his wine. Mary Ellis had long quitted the dining-room, and on the servants appearing with candles, Mr. Elwyn said—"No, take them away, we will ring when we want them."—His spirits fortified by wine, and shrouded from the piercing gaze of Belford by the tempered light, he drew nearer to the fire, and pointing to him, said—"Come nearer, Harry."

Belford obeyed in silence.

"We have been very dull of late; will you take a journey with me?"

"Certainly," said Belford; "it will give me great pleasure to attend you, my dear sir, as I flatter myself that the change will be very beneficial to your health and spirits."

"I *flatter* myself too, perhaps," replied Elwyn; "but I *think* it will. Harry, I think you do not remember your mother?"

The question startled Belford; he had never before heard Mr. Elwyn mention the name of either of his parents; he had always understood that they had died when he was an infant; he looked at Mr. Elwyn, as if to know whether he heard aright; that gentleman, however, proceeded with the hurried articulation which a person may be supposed to use, who wants to get over a painful recital.

"She must be very anxious to see you, I am sure—I mean to take you to see your mother."

"To see my mother!" repeated Belford; "to see my mother!" and seizing his patron's hand, as if fearing that his senses were quitting him, he said—"My dearest sir, recollect yourself a moment; your Harry Belford is the child of your bounty—he is an orphan—deprived of both his parents."



"No, no; not so, Harry," answered Mr. Elwyn, pressing his hand with impulsive tenderness; "your mother lives! your—you shall see her, my dear boy—you shall be held to the heart of your mother."

"Almighty God! *what* is it you tell me?" cried Belford; "oh, pray sir, I conjure you, deceive me not—but say, where is this dear—this long-estranged parent? Oh, take me to her—lead me to her—and fear not, that while I evince my duty to *her*, my *affection* towards yourself can ever know diminution."

"I hope not, I trust not, Harry," said Mr. Elwyn, pressing his outspread hand upon his heaving breast; "but hear me, hear me out, and interrupt me not.—It is now something more than two-and-twenty years ago since your father, a young unthinking man, of good family and expectations, by accident saw your mother. She was then in the bloom of fifteen, and never did the eye light on a lovelier object; she was pure as an angel—simple as an infant—guileless as a dove; in comparison of your father's, her situation in life was humble—she was an orphan, and under the protecting care of a brother, who, with the scanty stipend annexed to a village cure, sheltered his sister from want, and secured her comfort, while he shielded her from insult. This clergyman had been a college acquaintance of your father's, and while making a little pleasurable tour, he happened to light on this humble residence of innocence and piety. He saw—he *loved* the angel girl I have described."

Belford started from his seat, and clasping his hands furiously together, he cried out, with all the fatal impetuosity which characterized his disposition—"Oh, say not that he seduced her—say not, I charge you, say not that a villain triumphed over her fall—oh, say not, for God's sake, say not, that your Harry Belford is the child of shame!" and then he fell back in his chair, as if entirely overpowered by the oppressive weight of his feelings.

Elwyn trembled as he sat—"No, no!" cried he; "oh, hear me, hear me out; Harry, hear me say, from *that* guilt your father was spared—he *married* her—the ceremony was solemnized in the parish church of which her brother was the pastor."

"My father was a man of honour!" said Belford, in a tone of the most proud emotion; "thanks, thanks be to Heaven, I am not an *illegitimate child*!"

"In *that* instance," said Mr. Elwyn; "in *this* instance—oh, what was I saying? hear me out, for mercy's sake, Harry—do not interrupt me. I have said that your father had good expectations, but his were only reversionary prospects; and your grandfather having impaired his paternal fortune, naturally wished to *secure* one to his son, by an advantageous matrimonial alliance. An engagement of this kind had been entered into with a young lady, a relative of the family; the passive consent of the young man had been gained previous to his seeing your mother. But *then*, what had the prudential maxims of his father to oppose to such an all-engrossing passion as his? his marriage was kept secret—his frequent absences from home were not inquired into by his indulgent parents—neither by the easy object of *their* choice. Harry, let no one say he can withstand temptation till he has met the trial. In his early years, had the book of his succeeding life been opened to him, your father, like Hazael, would have said—'Is thy servant a dog to do this thing?' To his first faulty conduct, to his clandestine and concealed marriage, ensued the long catalogue of his crimes."—Belford started—"He *dared* not confess his marriage to his father—neither to the lady to whom he had been plighted; for while the former looked forward to his speedy and certain advancement, the latter credulously believed *herself* the object of his fondest love. Your father had been nurtured on the lap of ease and luxury; he had imbibed ideas of expense and profusion, but ill according with the connexion he had formed; bred to no profession—used to little exertion, he had no means of maintaining his wife. Ah! why

seek to extenuate—why dwell for a moment on this ungrateful, this piercing subject? The clergyman, the brother of your mother, died of a contagious fever, which he had taken in administering the last solemn offices of religion to a sick parishioner. The time drew near when your father was expected to unite himself with the other lady—he succeeded in deceiving the unsophisticated mind of his wife—she believed what *he* told her, that the marriage being solemnized before she was of age, was consequently illegal, and that it had been otherwise informal. With her brother she had lost her only adviser, her only relative; and passively relinquishing her boy to the sole care of his father, she silently sought the asylum which *he* had prepared for her.”

“Dear suffering angel!” ejaculated Belford.

“Your father then resigned himself to the wishes of his family, and married the lady they had chosen for him.”

“Married! married did you say—married?” groaned out Belford; “married? and was this vil——” the word was but half-uttered—“and was *this* my father?”

He strode about the room in agony; then walking up to Mr. Elwyn, whose emotion was but too evident, as he witnessed the tumultuous anguish of Belford’s jarring feelings—“Oh sir, tell me—tell me—where—when—*how* did he die?” and then falling back, with fearfully uplifted hands, as if he expected to hear that he had been his own executioner.

“He lives, my son!” cried Mr. Elwyn, sinking on his knees before him; “he lives! behold him here—Harry, behold your father!”

“My father?—Mr. Elwyn—my benefactor—my friend!” cried Belford, throwing his arms round him, tenderly embracing him, and lifting him upon his seat—“Oh, my father!” then suddenly recollecting the virtues and the injuries of the deceased Mrs. Elwyn, of the amiable friend, of the irreproachable protectress of Mary Ellis, he retreated to another part of the room, and burst into tears.

A long explanation ensued to this affecting discovery.

The ardent and impetuous disposition of Belford impelled him to seek his mother immediately, and he eagerly demanded Mr. Elwyn’s promise for setting out on the journey the following morning.

Yes, he should be introduced—he should be known to this lovely, this much-injured parent—no longer would she mourn in solitude and sorrow the disappointment of her early prospects—her estrangement from her child; she would be restored to the arms of her husband—she would appear to the world in her real character—she would acknowledge her son, her *legitimate* son; from henceforth, he should bear the name of his father; he should be known—he should be received as the lineal heir of Mr. Elwyn.

These were bright prospects, well calculated to sooth the high spirit, and to blow the latent pride of Belford into a flame; but quickly were his sensations changed, for when, with the most undissembled satisfaction, he expressed himself on the subject of his mother’s restoration to fame, and to a highly respectable situation in society, he was stopped by the piercing groan of his father.—“Alas! my poor Harry, in vindicating the honour of your injured mother, would you pass sentence on that of your father?”

The question was unanswerable—Belford felt it through his whole frame, which thrilled with horror; yet, starting up, he cried—“Oh, tell me what you would do? would you introduce a son to a parent, and still let that parent behold in him the child of her degradation and infamy? Oh, why, why was this fatal discovery made to me, if still——”

“Harry, have patience; have a little command over your feelings, and hear me.”

Belford was recalled to recollection, and his countenance again assumed that air of respectful consideration with which he had been always used to regard Mr. Elwyn.

"It has long been my determination," said Mr. Elwyn, "to bring your mother to the Hall as its mistress; the declining health of—of poor Clara had prepared me for the event, and determined me as to my future conduct—my injury to *her* had been irreparable. I had no alternative, but to let her die in ignorance of my guilty conduct; but fearful that the sight of her sufferings might bereave me of my self-command, I refused—I could not consent to her—to go—you know what I would say, Harry. In declaring myself the husband of your mother, I am fulfilling an act of duty towards you. *You* must have no doubts on the subject—I will shew you the marriage certificate, and from henceforth you shall not only *feel* yourself my son, but you shall be called by the name of Elwyn." The eyes of Belford were involuntarily lighted by added brilliancy, as he heard these latter words—"This, for *your* sake, my child; but to carry some appearance of propriety to the world, I shall again unite myself, and that publicly, to your mother."

"But why?" asked Belford, with quickness, "why, if the first marriage be legal, why the necessity of a second? will not such a proceeding appear to establish the criminality of the former connexion? shall I not still *appear* the child of infamy?"

"And would you have me throw myself at once upon the world the thing I am—a cool decided villain? Shall I acknowledge the dissimulation which for a long term of years I practised on a woman, whose virtues, whose talents, whose greatness, whose undeviating goodness, were seen, were known to all? shall I hold myself up to view an object of universal abhorrence and scorn? and shall that heart, which long has borne the barbed arrow, at length burst with agony?"

"Oh, no—no, my father, my friend! pity, pardon me!" cried Belford; "but overwhelmed by a contrariety of new, of overpowering emotions, I know not what I say, nor scarcely what I think."

"Had the much-abused Clara any relative to whom I could make restitution for the injuries I heaped upon her," continued Mr. Elwyn, "I would with joy, with satisfaction, relinquish that fortune for which I sacrificed my principles, for which I bartered my integrity, but which never contributed to my happiness. She had no friend, no relative but myself; and I, how did *I* abuse the sacred trust?" Mr. Elwyn paused, and then resumed as follows:—"Your mother, I have said, believed our marriage informal; and consequently, now that I am at liberty to make another choice, she will feel herself restored to fame and character. In her retirement she has assumed the name of Belford, and has passed for a widow—you *are* her son; and if I suffer you to take my name, on bringing your parent to the Hall, the world may conjecture what it pleases—you will know the truth; and at *my* death, it then may be discovered. Oh, spare, spare me only till *then*, Harry!" and Mr. Elwyn, with clasped hands, looked beseechingly at his son.

Belford was deeply affected, and returning an answer of mingled respect and feeling, he besought Mr. Elwyn to let him retire, and endeavour to tranquillize his mind; but alas! a most difficult task still awaited Belford; Mr. Elwyn commissioned him to prepare Mary Ellis for the reception of the new mistress of the Hall.—"Take an opportunity of doing so this evening, Harry," said Mr. Elwyn; "I shall retire to the library; explain as much to her—say what you think fit. For this cause it was that I could have wished her deceased friend had not recommended her residence here."

"Why—why, my dear sir?" asked Belford, with his accustomed ardour; "will not the society—will not the converse of my *amiable mother*, such as you have portrayed her to me—will not these be of invaluable benefit to the gentle Mary? will not my *mother* soon learn to

estimate the mild retiring graces of her character? and when the awkwardness of the first introduction is over, will it not be a mutual benefit? and, in the reciprocal interchange of good offices, will not their comforts be augmented—their happiness improved?”

“I hope so,” answered Elwyn, as he motioned towards the door.

Belford understood his meaning, and left the room; but he took his hat in the hall, and walked for some time in the avenue leading to the house, ere he could attain resolution to seek Mary Ellis.

Good Heavens! what a recital had he just heard! and how did he pity, accuse, extenuate, lament, and mourn by turns, as he thought of his mother, of his father, and of the excellent, the much-injured woman, who had so long usurped the place of another—unconsciously, innocently usurped it! To tell the child of *her* benevolence of the base, the deceitful conduct of the man she had called her husband—of her nearest relative, while that child’s soft eyes were yet moistened with tears for her death—and to tell her that this man was *his* own father—oh, dreadful, heart-piercing idea! “No, it cannot—cannot be,” said Belford, “I cannot teach the gentle girl to *hate me*—to despise my father; what then shall I dare acknowledge, or rather ask—what shall I *dare* conceal? Dissimulation, what pangs dost thou inflict upon an open and ingenuous mind!”

Belford saw, and deeply lamented the fatal weakness of his father’s character; he had *courage* to confess a part, but not the *whole* of his nefarious conduct to the world; he still feared its condemnation, although he had voluntarily defied a higher and more dread tribunal; and though, by involving his former connexion with Mrs. Belford in mystery, he would most assuredly affix an imputation on her character, and hold up his son to the world in a “questionable shape,” yet he still pertinaciously adhered to this half-deceptive and half-repentant conduct, and selfishly shrouded his own guilt, though conscious that his only refuge consisted in the apparent culpability of the innocent mother of his son.—“Let me not dwell on this subject,” thought Belford; “oh, let me cautiously scan a parent’s faults!”

### CHAP. XIII.

“Oh, fate unjust,  
Of womankind,” she cried.

SOUTHEY.

BELFORD knew where to find Mary Ellis. In a little apartment, which had been fitted up by her benefactress for her use, and which had been the daily, almost the hourly scene of her early instructions, and which now exhibited, in the books, the pictures, the furniture, and in an hundred inanimate objects, memorials of her kind care and of her tender affection; to this little sanctuary Mary retired, with all the reverential fondness which may be supposed to fill the soul of the devotee when visiting the shrine of his tutelar saint. Here she again seemed to hear the voice of her beloved Mrs. Elwyn; it spoke to her in every article which surrounded her; and here, as if she was still conscious of being beheld, and being approved by her, she delighted in pursuing those studies, and those occupations which she had more particularly recommended.

A gentle tap at the door was answered by the soft voice of Mary; and looking round to see the intruder, she hastily rose on seeing it was Mr. Belford.

“I am not come to disturb you, Mary,” said he; “sit down;” but his hand trembled as he took hers to reseate her. “I want to say a great deal to you, so you must give me a cup of tea *tête-a-tête* to-night, for Mr. Elwyn has desired not to be interrupted: we are both going on a journey to-morrow, and he has some business to settle.”

“Both going?” repeated Mary; “this journey is sudden—is it not, Mr. Belford?”

“Yes, it is,” answered he; and he grew more confused as he endeavoured to proceed.

“I am glad Mr. Elwyn has summoned resolution to leave home,” said Mary; “he will be the better for the change; this place must every moment remind us of her who is for ever gone. There is no accounting,” continued she, “for the different effects such a remembrance produces on different dispositions. To Mr. Elwyn it evidently conveys the most distressing sensations; but for myself, believe me, when I say it gives me a feeling which, though I cannot describe it, I would not be divested of for worlds.”

Mary spoke with more than usual animation; the recent scenes in which they had been joint partners, and the amiable light in which Belford had appeared, had insensibly divested her manner of all that timidity and reserve which she used to feel in expressing her sentiments to him. Since the death of her protectress, he had been her only friend and confidant.

“Some cloud hangs on your brow, Mr. Belford,” said Mary; “tell me, do I not guess aright? have you not been reviewing the scene in which we both took a melancholy part on this day month? even now, I seem to hear the solemn bell, which told us all our earthly duties were ended.”

“Yes, I well recollect that it was on this day month that we returned to the Hall,” answered Belford, with a sigh; “but, Mary, I am come to tell you of an important event, of a circumstance which has just been made known to me—I have found a parent.” Mary Ellis started; she fixed her eyes on his agitated countenance. “Yes, Mary, I am going with Mr. Elwyn to be introduced to my mother.”

“Your mother?” asked Mary; “and have *you* a mother living? Oh, happy, happy Belford! and have *you* then found what I have just lost for ever? But tell me,” continued Mary, who did

not suffer selfish regrets to take place of the undissembled satisfaction which she felt in Belford's recovery of a parent, "tell me, why have you been kept thus long in ignorance of her existence? I always thought *you* were an orphan like myself; and Mrs. Elwyn thought so—surely Mrs. Elwyn thought so?" and she seemed to ask the question of Belford.

"I *hope* she thought so!" hastily cried he; but checking his emotions, he said—"Mr. Elwyn, you know, has hitherto supplied the place of both my parents to me; but *now* he kindly—now he is going to make me known to my mother; she has lived in retirement for many years. My father was—my father was well known to my—to Mr. Elwyn; my mother is to return with us to the Hall. Say, Mary, will you not love her? will you not esteem her? will you not respect my mother?"

"Yes," said Mary with warmth, "I owe you many, many obligations, Mr. Belford; you have been uniformly kind, attentive, and affectionate to me; and now that—now that the mistress of this house is no longer here, Mary Ellis will do her utmost to make it comfortable to Mrs. Belford, to evince her respect for your mother."

"Generous good girl!" said Belford, pressing her hand; "and even if you should see her appear in *another* character—if you should find that by doing so the happiness of Mr. Elwyn was augmented—oh, Mary, if he should introduce her as his wife—"

Mary withdrew her hand.—"So soon, so *very* soon forgotten!" said she, casting her eyes round the room, as if she were calling every article within it to witness to the truth, the tenderness, and the virtues of her beloved Mrs. Elwyn. "Do I, *can* I understand you, Mr. Belford?—have I heard aright? and is it *you* who have said it? and is it—*must* it be true?"

Mary took out her handkerchief; she read the answer of Belford in his countenance, and she gave vent to those gushing tears which forced their way. This moment appeared to her the most afflictive one which she had ever known. She felt a sensation of indignation rise in her gentle bosom towards Mr. Elwyn—of disgust towards the woman who could so soon consent to fill the place vacated by her excellent friend. But she was Belford's *mother*; and Belford himself seemed unable to add a syllable in extenuation of this indecorous haste; for he sat the image of mute melancholy, leaning his head on his hand, as he listened to her piercing sighs.

"And when—and how—and where did Mr. Elwyn?—oh, Mr. Belford!" cried Mary, "tell me *all* you would *have* me know?"

"Dearest Mary," said Belford, "the sight of your distress tortures my inmost soul; only within the last hour have these circumstances been known to me, but if there is *truth* in *man*, I must believe that I am the son of a *virtuous* woman. It seems," continued Belford, with that confusion which must ever attend a voluntary deception in a candid breast—"it appears," continued he, "that Mr. Elwyn has long known my mother."

"And *loved* her!" added Mary; "ah, I *now* see it as it *was*; without a previous attachment, could Mrs. Elwyn's virtues have been slighted, overlooked—could *she* have been beheld with such cold, such cutting indifference? oh, Mr. Belford, forgive me if I offend."

"Mary, you cannot offend!" cried Belford, with warmth; "in the natural expressions of your grateful and ingenuous mind, can I discern any thing which I do not applaud and admire? believe me, dear Mary, that not for his *own* mother would Belford plead if he thought her unworthy—if he thought her conduct had been faulty; the fostered *protégée* of Mrs. Elwyn shall never become the associate of vice or imprudence. Mr. Elwyn has assured me that my mother's conduct has been spotless, and that *I* am the *legitimate son* of my parents; he acknowledges that he long has loved my mother—he represents her as a model of all that is lovely and attractive in

woman; and if my mother consents to gild the evening of my benefactor's days—oh, Mary, shall we not mutually rejoice in his happiness?"

"We ought—I ought," said Mary, "I hope I *shall*—but taken so unawares—this *very* evening—such an unlooked for, such an unexpected change! my spirits too having been much depressed of late—you must excuse me, Mr. Belford, if I say not all I ought; but at your return I hope you shall have no cause to condemn me."

"Never can I condemn *you*," cried Belford; "but severely do I *now* condemn myself for thus distressing you; and yet some preparation was required—some explanation was necessary."

"Indeed there was," answered she; "and I will sedulously employ the period of your absence, in bringing every unruly emotion into subjection."

"And I," cried Belford, with enthusiasm, "will employ mine in preparing my mother to love and to esteem you."

Belford then entered into a more particular description of his feelings of delightful anticipation, at the expected introduction to his mother, in the hope of diverting the channel of her thoughts. With his accustomed rapid energy, he depicted his mother as she had been represented to him by Mr. Elwyn; but while sitting with Mary Ellis before him, and portraying all that was amiable, gentle, domestic, and retiring in the female character, our readers may be apt to suspect him of painting from the page that thus lay open to his view, rather than from one which he had never studied.

Of a temper which peculiarly qualified her to share in the pleasurable emotions of others, because it was so entirely divested of egotism and selfishness, Mary entered with generous ardour into the sanguine emotions of delight which Belford expressed; and she did not endeavour to lower, or to detract from those high ideas of perfection and pre-eminence with which his radiant fancy had encircled the form of this maternal relative.

He unfolded to her Mr. Elwyn's intention of giving him *his* family name; and as Mr. Elwyn was going to marry the parent, and her son had long been the son of his fond adoption, Mary thought this design was very natural.

The doubts and suggestions which were likely to have arisen, even in a mind of simplicity like that of Mary Ellis, were entirely dispelled by the solemn seriousness of manner which Belford had assumed, when he had told her that Mr. Elwyn had assured him of his parent's honour.

That Mrs. Belford must have loved Mr. Elwyn previous to the decease of his wife, was evident, else how could her sudden acceptance of him be accounted for?—"At any rate," thought Mary, "there must be indelicacy of sentiment, or defalcation of principle." This sudden haste seemed inconsistent with that extreme solitude, that rigid privacy, in which Belford had decorated the picture of his amiable recluse, and which he had really understood to have been her situation from Mr. Elwyn.

We shall probably tire our readers with the minuteness of our relations, but we have wished to give them a proper insight into the meek and attractive qualities of Mary Ellis; and we have not performed our part, if we have not taught them to look with *more* partial eyes on Belford during the last month, that he has been the consoler, the friend, and the encourager of our youthful orphan, *than when* they saw him dazzling in manly beauty, and decorated with all the attractive graces, pouring out a strain of animated and rapturous admiration into the ear of Lauretta Montgomery.

Some characters shine in retirement; alas! the world presents a wide scene of temptation to the ardent, the self-willed, and the impetuous. How necessary is discipline—what miseries are avoided by the judicious controul of these otherwise unruly emotions!

Mr. Elwyn and Harry (by which name we shall henceforth call him, as that of Belford must be dropped in compliance with the wishes of the former) lost no time in setting out on their journey; to have beheld their different countenances, it might have been imagined that the expectant bridegroom had been the son rather than the father, so full of animated and sparkling expectation were the fine features of the former; while the once equally handsome ones of the latter were so blunted by a constant and hacknied course of dissimulation, so bloated by intemperance, that they exhibited scarcely a trait of human intellect or animation.

That Mr. Elwyn had told the *truth*, and nothing *but* the truth to Henry, was certain; but he had not told the *whole truth*.

As we dare not put off our readers with a cramped or garbled detail, we must ask their patience and attention, while we take a cursory review of those transactions and events, which had finally led to that journey which our travellers had now undertaken; but for this explanation we must refer them to the second volume.

END OF VOL. I.



SUBSTANCE AND SHADOW;  
OR, THE  
*FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTERS OF BRIGHTON.*

A Patchwork Story.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF LIGHT AND SHADE; EVERSFIELD ABBEY;

BANKS OF THE WYE; AUNT AND NIECE, &c. &c.

The first in native dignity surpass'd-  
Artless and unadorn'd she pleas'd the more;

The other dame seem'd e'en of fairer hue,  
Fat bold her mien, unguarded mov'd her eye.

VOL. II.

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## SUBSTANCE AND SHADOW.

### CHAP. I.

\_\_\_\_\_ Ever was he seen  
A faithful pastor! POLWHELL

THOUGH Mr. Elwyn had received from nature a good understanding, yet he had not been gifted with much strength of mind; his father's indulgence had not permitted him to discern this weakness in his son's character; and under little parental discipline or mental controul, encouraged in pursuing every thing which he liked; and while he kept within the bounds of propriety, receiving no check in his pleasures, it is not surprising that he fell into those errors which embittered his future life. His heart was rightly formed, his temper was good, his morals were not vicious; but neglecting to fortify his own imbecility with the firm rock of religion, he shrunk appalled from every thing which opposed his wishes; and unaided by the stability of principle, or the consolations of piety, he sacrificed every virtuous sentiment, and ultimately became the voluntary victim of vice! How frequently are the words of sacred writ realized before us! how often do we see "the sins of the parents visited on their children!"

The extravagance of Elwyn's father, the profusion which in the days of youth had impaired and hurt *his* fortune, and which he had not *then* considered as an injury to his son, was brought to his reflection and his conscience at the decline of life, when avarice not unfrequently takes place of the opposite quality in the human breast.

The peculiar situation, the extreme youth, the relative affinity of the orphan heiress, and the reversionary claim of his son, all pointed her out to the doating father as the *person* destined to repair his errors; and Henry's first lesson from his father had his cousin Clara for its object. Of an inactive disposition, nurtured in luxury, and addicted to its enjoyments, nothing appeared more congenial to the wishes of Henry; and Clara's partial eyes soon viewed her cousin in the light which her uncle desired. Her kind and judicious aunt, who loved this amiable girl with an affection equal to that which she felt for her son, was pleased at the prospect of the happiness of these two beloved objects centering in one another; and hoped that while the fortune of Clara might add to Henry's opportunities of doing good, his affection and gratitude would ensure her felicity.

Henry Elwyn went through the usual routine of education at a public school, and afterwards at college, with credit, though not with distinction; his easy good-nature and inoffensiveness of manners, made him generally liked; and as no spark of emulation existed in his character, he never excited envy or jealousy.

With the flattering prospects which were before him, his father did not hesitate to supply him with the means of gratifying every wish that he formed; he soon perceived that his inclination did not lead him towards his cousin Clara, although she was eminently gifted, both in person and manners, to rivet the heart which should once acknowledge her influence; but Mr. Elwyn's notions on this score were by no means romantic; and he concluded, that when Henry had taken his fill of the world and its pleasures, he should see him sit down soberly and contentedly with his cousin, a married man.

Henry Elwyn had a perfect appreciation of the character of Clara; and while he saw it so entirely disinterested, so free from selfishness, while he observed her gentleness and humility, at

the same time that her superiority in intellect, in judgment, and discrimination, was painfully pressed upon him by the bright light of truth, he was uneasy and awed in her presence; a humiliating, a degrading feeling oppressed him; his own interested and mercenary views, in seeking to form a connexion with her, were forcibly presented to his mind, by the suggestions of his yet *unseared* conscience; but he had neither resolution to oppose himself to the wishes of his father, nor strength of mind to bear the privations to which a limited income would subject him; neither did he possess the application and stability requisite to embark in a genteel profession, and to secure, by his own meritorious exertions, those indulgencies which he had been accustomed to consider as the necessities of life.

Seeing Clara Elwyn as *he* saw her, thinking so differently from her, yet at the same moment admiring the virtue which he dared not imitate (and which he was about to act in direct contradiction to), while she was to become the sacrifice, is it wonderful that Elwyn's absences from home became more frequent, as the period fixed upon for his marriage drew nearer?

At college he had been acquainted with Edward Harley, a young man of slender hopes and narrow fortune. The easiness of access, and unassuming manner by which Elwyn's character was marked, had given this humbler son of fortune courage to approach him, for modesty and diffidence were his characteristic traits; and hope blighted ere it had budded in him, by the consciousness of his forlorn situation, and the isolation of his prospects. With the death of his parents he had lost every thing on which he had leaned, and in his turn he now saw himself the only stay of his lovely sister.

The parents of Harley had moved in an inferior situation; but having the advantage of a classical free-school in the town where they lived, they naturally wished to obtain an education for their son, which might so essentially benefit him, when they could do it free of expence to themselves; and accordingly he was entered on the foundation, and obtained such credit with the master for his assiduous application and general good conduct, that he was one of the youths who prosecuted his studies afterwards at Oxford, on the same endowment, by succeeding to a scholarship annexed to it.

With a sense of inferiority, and no soothing ideas derived from a consciousness of his own merit, Harley felt much gratified when he found that Mr. Elwyn received him with a good-humour and ease, which was seldom evinced by his fellow-collegians; he was grateful for that sufferance, which had been so seldom his lot to meet with; and his advice and opinions on the subject of Elwyn's studies (opinions which had been derived from close reading and application), had more than once been of use to that idle and unstable young man, who had thus gathered the fruits which another had ripened.

The humility and natural modesty of Harley gave Elwyn no fear of his assuming on this superiority of knowledge; on the contrary, he became more respectful in his behaviour, and wore the air of the obliged, rather than that of him who had been conferring obligations.

With the usual tenor of Elwyn's disposition, he would probably have forgotten his college friend intirely, if accident had not once more presented him before him.

Having spent some weeks amongst a set of choice companions at Southampton, he was returning towards Gloucestershire by a circuitous way (the party having separated), and being almost overcome with lassitude and ennui with his first day's exercise, at the close of evening he sauntered, rather than rode, through a picturesque and lovely village, situated in a romantic and luxuriantly-wooded valley; he mechanically checked his horse as he saw a person approaching him, and inquired the name of the place. As he to whom he had addressed himself answered "Beech Grove," their eyes met; their voices had previously and reciprocally rang in their ears.

Elwyn sprang from the saddle, and with friendly hand met the hand of Edward Harley. He readily yielded to the wish of the village pastor, and any place being at that period preferable to home in his estimation, he consented to pass a few days in this lovely retirement. The servant was directed by Harley to lead the horses to the parsonage, and Elwyn, taking his friend's arm, they crossed the church-yard by a nearer way.

"This is a sweet situation," said Elwyn.

"Yes," replied Harley, stopping, looking round him with enthusiasm, and lifting up his eyes towards heaven, as if in thankful gratitude; "I am happy!"

"It is a good living, I conclude," said Elwyn, "for this is a rich tract of country. I heartily give you joy, Harley; how long have you had it? I never heard of your preferment."

"The living is a good one, I believe," answered Harley, with carelessness; "I do not know what it may be worth; I leave that to my rector; I am only his curate, on sixty pounds per annum, and think myself well paid for being made happy."

"Sixty pounds per annum—a curacy—and happiness!" *Here* was a lesson for Elwyn; but it was an incomprehensible one to him. "How is it possible that you can live, Harley, on such a paltry pittance?"

"You shall see," answered the young clergyman. "Ah, my dear Mr. Elwyn, I often think how just are the words of a poet whom I always admire (because his simple and natural descriptions cannot fail of touching the heart alive to rural beauties, and rural manners)—

'Man wants but little here below,  
Nor wants that little long.'

As he repeated the last line, he pronounced it in a low and tremulous cadence, as if, with a prescient eye, he had seen that the limits of his own destiny were nearly closed.

"You are an enthusiast, Harley," said Elwyn.

"I would teach you to become one too, if you would look with me 'through nature, up to nature's God,'" answered Harley. "Look, Mr. Elwyn, can any thing be more beautiful than this scene? Behold the setting sun gilding our village spire; observe those finely-spreading beeches, which form a grove beyond it (and which gives the place its name); listen to the little choristers of these sylvan scenes, as they are chaunting their evening orisons; see those 'laughing meads,' so beautifully studded over with sheep; listen to the lowing herd; and look but just beyond the church-yard wall, and see the innocent children intent on rustic pastimes; even the river, as it glides through the vale below, conveys a sound sonorous to my ear, and in low murmurs speaks of happiness."

Elwyn had been used to seek happiness in far different scenes, and different objects; and although *perchance* he never found her, he could almost have laughed outright in the face of his friend; but he thought it inhuman to break the spell of his enchantment, and walked on, unconscious that ere a few hours were passed, he himself should feel as much entranced.

A green door from the church-yard wall opened upon a grassy terrace; and the whitened parsonage, a small but neat habitation, was in their view, the beams of the setting sun gilding its casement windows.

"I dwell with Simplicity," said Edward, as he opened the door on the terrace.

Elwyn preceded his friend, the door not being sufficiently large to admit them both at once—"And even Simplicity has her snares," cried Elwyn, laughing on perceiving himself

suddenly enveloped by a large net, which had been thrown over his whole person, by some one who had lain in ambush behind a large rose-bush, which grew at the side of the door-way.

Edward laughed; a stifled laugh was also heard from the place of concealment. Harley motioning his friend to keep silence, dragged the criminal to light, in the form of a blooming dimpled Hebe, who, on perceiving her brother at liberty, and a stranger enveloped by the net, sprang from his retaining hold, and with the agile swiftness of a young fawn, bounded over the grassy terrace, and ran into the house.

“Who is it that has thus fairly caught me in her toils?—who is this lovely Atalanta, Harley?” asked Elwyn.—

“If such thy haunts, Simplicity,  
Oh, lovely maid! *I’ll* dwell with thee.”

“This dear girl is my sister,” answered Harley; “and a more unsophisticated creature there exists not upon earth. For *her* there cannot be a more desirable situation than this; her mind has had little cultivation, for till I was settled myself, I could not have her with me; and she was brought up amongst those whose ‘ignorance was bliss.’ She is of an age when impressions are easily made; her temper is affectionate and chearful; she is the very spring of my existence, for her vivacity enlivens my rather too sombre disposition. She is very grateful to me for any instructions which I give her; I mean to cultivate her mind sufficiently to teach her to enjoy the comforts of life, without giving it too much refinement or fastidiousness. I hope she will turn out a good girl.”

“Why seek to alter what is in itself so charming? Can you, by cultivation, add to the pure simplicity of the native snowdrop?”

“No,” said Harley; “the works of God are perfect; but there is a sully—a stain—a *human taint*, for which principle, discipline, and wholesome counsel, are necessary.”

“You talk like the *divine*, I perceive,” said Elwyn, with something sarcastic in his manner.

“Rather say the Christian, my good sir,” replied Harley.

Elwyn was soon ushered into the sitting-room of the parsonage, and to the bewitching girl, who in timid and blushing confusion apologized for her unintentional rudeness, saying, that “Edward had told her to wait for him in the garden, and that he would come and assist her in covering a cherry-tree with a net; but that he had lingered so long, that she was quite tired, and to revenge herself, she had, on hearing approaching steps in the church-yard, hid herself behind the rose-bush, and instantaneously enveloped the person of him who first set his foot on the terrace, concluding that it must be her brother, and that he had been detained, and was accompanied (as was frequently the case) by the parish clerk.”

The apology was received with delight; and the next morning saw Elwyn divested from ennui and lassitude, and assisting the smiling Ellen in protecting her cherries from the dangerous truants of the grove.

Every day, and all day long, Elwyn was at the side of Ellen Harley; he was taken captive by the fascination of her artless beauties; he felt no sensation of inequality here, as in the presence of his cousin Clara; he did not now hesitate, ere he made a remark, to know if it was well timed or appropriate.

Ellen seemed to approve every thing which he uttered, and to laugh at a jest, even where no jest was intended; her remarks might be called trifling and unimportant, to those who are

accustomed to weigh and examine every sentence ere they granted a cold assent; but Elwyn must have been a *cynic* and an *insensate* not to have listened, when they came in such sweet tones to his ear, and were accompanied by such bewitching smiles and artless innocence of expression.

Harley did not at first observe the dangerous situation in which he had placed his friend and sister; and when at length he did discover it, the warm entreaties, the fond professions of that friend—the silent pleadings of that sister’s looks, triumphed over the rectitude of his principles, and he consented to their mutual wish, and joined their hands.

Here was a dereliction from the path of duty, which ill assorted with the otherwise undeviating tenor of our village pastor’s conduct; but who shall say, if thus tempted, he might not thus have erred? For *himself*, for his own advancement, Harley would have steadily refused every prospect which had been held out to him, if it must have been accompanied with the slightest deviation from the line of duty; but to secure a protector to his beloved Ellen—to forward her happiness—to place it beyond the frail tenure on which his own existence hung (for his delicate constitution seemed daily to predict an early dissolution)—to place her in so eligible a situation, surely he might, without dishonour to himself, consent to the entreaties of Elwyn, and conceal the marriage, till he should have gained his father’s approbation.

Harley tried to reconcile his own conduct to his principles; but it was only when he was witnessing the happiness of the fond pair whom “Love had joined,” that he could feel intirely free from self-upbraidings.

Elwyn had never hinted to his deceived friend his prior engagement to Miss Elwyn; and had merely urged, as a reason for a clandestine marriage, his own impetuous wishes, and the cruel and *unnecessary* suspense in which he should wear away the hours of absence, till he should have settled the formal preliminaries with his father, for the *ceremonious* celebration of that event on which his happiness depended, and of which, when it should have taken place, he was assured of obtaining the consent of his indulgent parent. Passion gave Elwyn rhetoric and animation unknown to him before; and Harley, as we have seen, was softened to his wishes.

It was at Elwyn’s first return home from Beech Grove, that Harley was seized with an illness that proved fatal to him; a few days terminated his existence; and the simple Ellen was not alive to his danger in time to send for her husband, otherwise it is probable that in witnessing the last moments of Harley, his mind might have been happily impressed, and he might have pursued a different course to that which he unfortunately took.

Elwyn’s return home had been triumphantly hailed by his father; his affairs had lately become more and more embarrassed; and his son’s numerous calls upon his purse had not a little contributed to bring them into their present awkward state; he pressed Henry to a speedy marriage with his cousin; Elwyn hesitated; but irresolutely forbore to acquaint his father with the insuperable obstacle which he had himself created to the union.

While in a state of doubt as to what conduct to pursue, fearing to incur his father’s everlasting displeasure—fearing to wound his cousin’s peace of mind, but, most of all, fearing to relinquish those pleasures and those luxuries on which he had hitherto revelled, even to satiety, he received a letter from his Ellen; it implored him to come to her immediately; it was couched in terms of distress and affliction, which Elwyn, who knew the tenderness of her brother’s affection, could well reconcile to this her sudden loss of him. He lost no time in obeying the summons; and in removing this artless and simple girl from the retirement of Beech Grove, to an asylum which he provided for her, in a village near the metropolis, here she assumed the name of Belford, at his request; and here, a very few months afterwards, he succeeded in making her believe that the ceremony of their marriage had not been legally solemnized between them, and

that she was not his wife; and that though this had proceeded from an oversight in her brother, yet that his character would severely suffer in the eyes of the world, were it ever brought to light; and, finally, that finding his father inflexible to all his intreaties, and resolutely bent on casting him off without a shilling, should he act in opposition to his will, in a moment of desperation he had united himself to a lady of *his* selection, and had thus rendered himself miserable for ever.

Poor Ellen had nothing to oppose to this intelligence, but sighs and tears; she had lost him who would have assisted her with his counsel, and strengthened her weak and ductile mind by his advice. Her poor bark was now put on ocean's tide, without rudder or pilot. She credulously, *fondly* believed Elwyn's vows of eternal love, and fancied, because he *told* her so, that he had been more unfortunate than faulty. He called all the powers above to witness to his solemn asseverations of making her his wife, whenever it should please death to take his present lady; he forgot not to hint at the apparent delicacy of her constitution; and he gave ample proofs of the comforts which *her* fortune would enable him to bestow on his Ellen.

That Ellen still listened to the "voice of the charmer," whom she had first known in the Beech Woods of Hampshire; and while she yielded up her child to his care, she had not resolution to order the father to discontinue his visits to herself, but through a term of twenty years, received him as her guest, at his occasional absences from Elwyn Hall; and, during that period, received her maintenance at his hands, and still lived on the idea of taking Mrs. Elwyn's station at a future day, and becoming the mistress of Elwyn Hall.

## CHAP. II.

No more at dawning morn I rise,  
And sun myself in Clara's eyes.

SCOTT'S LADY OF THE LAKE

HARLEY'S description of his sister had been perfectly just; her mind was like a sheet of blank paper.

When Elwyn made his appearance at Beech Grove, Harley, but newly settled in his parsonage, had scarcely began the labour of cultivation; *Elwyn* never thought of it; his love for Ellen (if we may call it by that name) had nothing intellectual in its nature; and, as we have seen in his behaviour towards the hapless Clara, in the pursuits of a refined and discriminating mind, there was nothing congenial to his taste. If, after an absence of some months, Ellen received him with her wonted smiles and caresses, he was well pleased; and even when the dimpled season of blooming youth was past, and the tint of fairest,  *freshest* beauty had departed from the cheek of Ellen, he yet retained his first preference, and listened to her prattle, with none of that uneasiness and tedium which attended a *tête-à-tête* conversation with Mrs. Elwyn.

A young female, living in seclusion, in a village near the metropolis, under the sanction of a married name, yet seeing her nominal husband only at stated periods, and then under mysterious circumstances (as during his visits to Feltham he was never accompanied by a servant), could not fail of drawing forth some remarks amongst the neighbours; nobody thought of *visiting* Mrs. Belford; indeed she was generally beheld as a woman of more than suspicious character.

Left to herself, with no resources, no taste for study, no wish for improvement, and entirely confined to the society of her two maid-servants, is it wonderful if the understanding of Ellen, never very brilliant, daily became more limited and more "mediocre;" her conversation imperceptibly assumed the style of common-place and hacknied sentences, an hundred times reiterated in the course of the twenty-four hours, and in questions which the gossiping tribe of female domestics are in general well inclined to answer. The affairs of the whole village were canvassed by Mrs. Belford and her two damsels; the Chandler's-shop was the mart of intelligence; and no sooner was it there procured, than it was conveyed by these prompt messengers to their mistress, who sat in her parlour, from morning till night, cutting out patchwork, and listening to the news of Sally and Betty.

That beauty which at fifteen had been dazzling, and which had owed much of its attraction to sparkling youth, to ruddy health, and to a swan-like skin, had, during the lapse of twenty years, lost almost every trace of what had most distinguished it; the colour on her cheek had gradually faded; her skin had assumed a deadened hue of sickliness; and even her actions and movements, no longer seen as those of a lively romp of fifteen on the grassy terrace of Beech Grove, but cooped up in a little parlour, had at once an air ungraceful and uncouth.

There was no mischief, no malice, in the composition of Ellen; she asked for intelligence merely to say something, and to have answers; her mind was as devoid of vicious as virtuous propensities; she might really be said to vegetate rather than to live, except when Mr. Elwyn appeared at Feltham; for *then* she became unusually animated, though from being unused to see him, and during his absence shut out from the rest of the world, her manners insensibly wore an air of constrained respect while she conversed with him; and though still very fond of him, and



always hoping that the time would arrive when she should be mistress of Elwyn Hall, and in her "own rightful place," as she called it, yet she not unfrequently found it a little relief to retire awhile from Mr. Elwyn; and while he was taking his afternoon's nap, assembling Sally and Betty, she would exhibit to their admiring eyes the "*lovely presents*" he had brought her.

The informality of her marriage, Ellen had always considered as her misfortune rather than her fault; it had never occurred to her, that on making the discovery, it was her immediate duty to break off all further intercourse with Elwyn, and to consider him in future only as the husband of another. She never thought of Mrs. Elwyn but as an interloper between herself and happiness; she never thought of Elwyn's father but as a cruel tyrant, who had forced his son into a marriage which he abhorred; in fact, she *thought* only as Elwyn would have her, and all his representations she *literally* believed; but never, even in those moments when the artless endearments of Ellen had called forth all the fervour of Elwyn's love, never had he breathed a syllable which could be construed into disrespect for Clara. There was in her goodness, her virtues, and her understanding, something so superior, and so imposing, that he scrupulously veiled her from the observation and the discussion of the simple Ellen, with much of that sacred caution with which a superstitious devotee would shroud the relics of a favourite saint from each unholy touch.

It is more than probable, that had no impediments arisen to Elwyn's connexion with Ellen (and had he introduced her as his wife, with the approbation and sanction of his father), that he would long since have repented of his youthful choice, and have turned from her with apathy, if not disgust; but being obliged to visit her clandestinely, always received with smiles, and parted from with tears, and charges of a quick return, there was an attraction in the intercourse which gave some interest, the interest of *variety* at least, to his otherwise inactive mind.

Of late years, when the beauty of Ellen had visibly faded, and when the health of Mrs. Elwyn had daily declined, without being entirely undermined; when he had seen her nobly, cheerfully struggling with sufferings, both bodily and mental, under which most women would immediately have sank; when he had seen her eye, though divested of its primeval lustre, still faintly beaming with a softened expression as it turned towards him, he had more frequently quitted home to fly from his own thoughts, and from the reproaches of conscience, than for the pleasure of seeing his once-adored Ellen; with her, his feelings were blunted and obtuse; he resigned himself to a vacuity of mind, and a lethargy of intellect: but this was almost impossible in the presence of the injured Clara; the momentary, yet inartificial display of her good sense, her patience, and, most of all, her piety; the discrimination which enabled her at the first survey to distinguish between the sophistry of false sentiment, and sterling and immutable truth; her rectitude of conduct, her innate humility, her strict manner of judging her *own* conduct, and the lenity which she observed with regard to that of others, all wounded him to the quick; and while he acknowledged the majesty of Virtue, he trembled before her shrine, and fled from her all-imposing power.

Never had a man ventured greater lengths to secure happiness than had Elwyn; never had any man wandered further from the mark. Those pleasures, and those luxuries, for which he had bartered so much, palled, without gratifying his senses. That rank in life which he had attained by his marriage with his cousin, he could not enjoy, for an accusing angel, in the form of Clara, was always pointing out his aggravated crime; and even in the retreat of Ellen, while lavishly heaping upon her those gewgaws which were so flatteringly received, he often turned his own condemner, and asked himself by what right, either of honesty or honour, he *thus* disposed of the fortune of Clara?

A prospect of relief presented itself to Elwyn in the form of his son; his easy and softened nature longed to have him near him; we have seen how he succeeded in gratifying this wish, and the engrossing fondness with which he regarded him. The love which he once felt for the mother, seemed now transferred to her child; and Elwyn's visits to Ellen had, from thenceforth, been passed in portraying the engaging charms, and the promising talents, of this incomparable boy.

Ellen's feelings were not very quick, or her maternal anxieties very acute, but her vanity was flattered at hearing she had such an all-accomplished son, and she listened to Elwyn's accounts of "Mr. Henry," as she always respectfully termed him, with an interest which she had never taken in any one subject, save in the praises of her own beauty, which had stolen on her youthful imagination in the luxuriant groves of Hampshire. The monotony of her life—the mechanical movement of her fingers, in cutting triangles, squares, and octagons for patch-work, the daily retailers of the village gossip, from the *retail* shop, were now likely to fade, "like the baseless fabric of a vision, and leave not a wreck (though perchance many a *shred*) behind."

Mrs. Elwyn was dead. Ellen received the intelligence with joy; she was told to expect a visit from her husband.

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### CHAP. III.

The glass revers'd, by magic power of spleen,  
A wrinkled idiot now the fair is seen.

MISS AIKEN.

ALWAYS enthusiastic, always impelled by his feelings, impatient of controul, unused to disappointment, apt to be taken by outward appearances, and tremblingly alive to the censures and the plaudits of the world, with more impetuosity in his disposition than augured well either for his happiness or his principles, we may conceive the perturbation of Henry Elwyn as he drew near the habitation of his mother. A thousand interesting and affecting traits of their first interview had been flitting before his heated imagination; he had supported this fainting, this *already* adored parent, as, overcome by emotion, she had vainly endeavoured to strain her child to her maternal bosom; he had knelt at her feet, and been raised to her arms, while the warm tears of affection had watered his face; he had heard the soft and mellifluous tones in which she had bestowed her blessing.

Mr. Elwyn, on the contrary, had relapsed into his usual solitary and abstracted mood, which seemed to proceed rather from a suspension of mental action, than from intense rumination; but to the eager—the earnest—the oft-repeated inquiries of his companion, he at length answered, “That the habitation which contained her who was henceforward to be known as Mrs. Elwyn was in sight;” and they were soon driven up to the door.

The heart of Henry panted; his whole frame was agitated, as he assisted his father in descending from the carriage. Mr. Elwyn preceded him into the house, where, at the parlour door, he was met by—was it possible?—could this be his mother?—could this be the lovely, the bewitching Ellen Harley? Dressed in a showy and vulgar-printed linen, with more of deep rose-coloured ribbon on her cap than would have been thought sufficient by the bar-maid of a country inn, she stood before her astonished—her wonder-struck son; and as she received the kiss of Mr. Elwyn, with coolness, but with a sort of respectful acquiescence, she turned towards her son, who was utterly motionless; all his high-wrought feelings were flown at the first glance; it seemed as if the revulsion had destroyed all animation—all sensation; he was fixed as a statue.

“Ellen, do you not speak to our son?” asked Mr. Elwyn.

“Oh! certainly, sir,” said Mrs. Elwyn, taking his hand. “How do you do, sir? I am very glad to see you—how dye do, Mr. Henry?—I hope I see you well, sir?—Dear me! only but to think what a fine stout young gentleman he has grown!—very so indeed—very much so!”

Henry bent his head on the hand of his mother; he touched, but did not press it with his lips; but the touch seemed to recall him to some sense of his situation. He remembered that she was his *mother*; but he turned to the window to conceal the tear which trickled down his manly cheek, while Mrs. Elwyn addressed to her husband reiterated questions of “And when did you leave home, sir?”—“You had pleasant weather—very much so”—“The roads are very good now, I suppose?”—“Pleasant travelling, I dare say”—“I thought you would be here to dinner—I was saying so this morning to Betty.”

What an utter dispersion of all the romance, the sentiment, and the enthusiasm of Henry, had this short specimen of his mother’s conversation occasioned! He could not bear the excess of disappointment, the cruel mortification which he had experienced. On pretence of looking at the

garden, he stole out of the room; but he there gave way to the agony of his mind.—“And had the happiness of Clara Elwyn, that superior, that almost perfect creature, been sacrificed for such a coarse, such an underbred woman as this? Was this indeed the parent for whom he had bespoken the love and the respect, the attention and the deference of Mary Ellis—Mary Ellis, who had been accustomed to the refined conversation, the elegant manners, to the fervid affection of her beloved protectress, who had caught from her bright example all that was excellent and praiseworthy, and whose quick discrimination would enable her instantaneously to perceive, that there existed neither feeling, sentiment, or refinement, in the person who was to supply her place?—And the world,” cried he, “what will the *world* say of *Harry Belford’s* mother? will they not, from her appearance—from her language, deduce *all* that is lowering to my pride and my feelings?—Shall I not be daily wounded through her?—Shall I not be ashamed of *her* whom I ought to honour and to revere? Oh! Mr. Elwyn, into what a cruel predicament has your blind, your infatuated passion placed your offspring in! Rather would he have remained for ever in ignorance of his birth, than be thus oppressed by the weight of degrading feelings!—A father, still keeping himself concealed—I shall only be pointed at as the *illegitimate* child of *her* who has usurped the place of Mrs. Elwyn. The proud—the courted—the hitherto *happy* Harry Belford, will now be doomed to hear the voice of ridicule and sarcasm levelled at his mother!—He will—no!—he *will not!*” cried he, answering himself, with that furious expression of quickly rousing spirit, which he was not in the habit of controuling, or submitting to the dictates of reason, “No! The being who *dares* to cast an insinuation on *my* mother, shall find a way to the heart of her son with his sword, or shall atone for the insult with his own life-blood!”

This *heroic* and *magnanimous* resolve, seemed, in some measure, to have appeased the boiling fervour of his soul, and he walked himself into a more temperate frame of mind, and was lowered to something more like *animal heat*, ere he returned to his father and mother.

“If such thy haunts, Simplicity,  
Oh, lovely maid! I’ll live with thee.”

Such had been the words which Mr. Elwyn had used two-and-twenty years ago, on first seeing Ellen Harley; had he made use of them at *this* period, to the person who sat on the opposite side of the fire, they would have been laughed at as a burlesque. Associating only with minds of the lowest order for such a length of time, can it be thought unnatural that the simple taste of Ellen should have been perverted and tortured?—that the native graces which were hers in extreme youth, should have fled with mature years, and that awkward and forced attempts at gentility and politeness should have usurped their place?

Mr. Elwyn had seen the gradual change without noticing it; he still beheld the traces of that beauty which had once charmed him; and in proportion as Ellen’s loveliness and attractive simplicity had vanished, so had his acuteness of perception been blunted, and his understanding and discernment been clouded.

In recounting his own history to his son, the emotions which were raised in his mind had carried him back to that period when he had felt with ardour, and admired with enthusiasm; and he had, unfortunately, described things that *had* been in such glowing colours, that Henry Elwyn had foolishly and fondly imagined they *still* were.

Called to be a witness of Mr. Elwyn’s second union with his mother, it required all Henry’s resolution to support him through the scene; he felt that this union would place *him* in a very questionable light to the world; but the heart-piercing entreaty of his father, as he had knelt

at his feet at Elwyn Hall, and had besought him to spare his character from infamy while he lived, was not forgotten—and he witnessed the ceremony.

Mrs. Elwyn appeared wholly unembarrassed, and to have no unpleasant retrospections with respect to the former ceremony; she had no tremours, or fears, although she was still taught to believe that her son had no legal claim to the fortune of his father; but this was such an old matter, that it was no longer a subject to employ her mind.—“Mr. Henry was a very fine sensible young man, very much so indeed—and a great favourite with Mr. Elwyn—a very great favourite indeed—She was now going to be taken home—and to be the mistress of Elwyn Hall—and she must conduct herself like a prudent lady—and be very affable—and very genteel—and speak well of every body—and show the world that she had not one bit of pride.”

Henry could not determine on accompanying his father and mother back to the Hall, he therefore urged a wish of staying to partake a few of the pleasures of the metropolis; and Mr. Elwyn, always indulgent, consented, while his *sagacious* lady observed, “That it was very natural, very much so indeed, for so young and fine a gentleman as Mr. Henry, to wish to show himself a little, and to take a little recreation in the season of youth; but,” she added, “that she should expect him again soon, for she should greatly feel his loss—very so!”

Mary Ellis meanwhile had been sedulously endeavouring to prepare herself for the reception of the new mistress of Elwyn Hall; she was assured that she could never behold a *second* Mrs. Elwyn, who could, in *her* estimation, equal the first; she could not reconcile the idea of strict propriety and so hasty a marriage; she allowed a great deal for the high tone of Henry’s feelings, at the idea of being introduced to this parent; and much of his glowing colouring she attributed to the enthusiastic heat of his imagination; Mary expected, therefore, neither a perfect, nor an angelic, but a human being.

## CHAP. IV.

Some prudes of rigid kind forbore to call  
On the kind females' favourites at the Hall.

CRABBE.

ALTHOUGH Mary Ellis would have tried to check every rebellious feeling on the approach of Mrs. Elwyn, in conformance with her well-grounded principles of duty and religion, yet another motive was in co-operation with these, a motive which was more powerful than she herself suspected.

The being in the whole world who now professed to feel for her any portion of regard or affection, was Henry; it was *his* mother whom she was to receive, and she felt something gratifying and soothing to her self-love, in the idea of receiving her in a way which he would approve and applaud. How then was she mortified and humbled when she saw Mr. and Mrs. Elwyn return, but unaccompanied by Henry! how greatly did she feel the want of his encouraging, his approving eye, as she first approached Mrs. Elwyn! how was she astonished at the unpolished, yet unconfused manner of that lady! how was she wounded by the cold abstraction which still marked the deportment of Mr. Elwyn, who neither assisting the awkward curiosity of his wife, or the trembling diffidence of Mary, seemed as perfectly shrouded in his own reflections, or in vacant listlessness, as if he had already been shut up, and reclining in the great chair in his library!—"Had not Henry sent a letter?—a word? had he not breathed a hint to account for his absence?—had he not thought it *possible* that she might stand in need of support—of encouragement?" These were some of the heart-aching inquiries which passed in quick succession before Mary; but she had no time for reflection.

The new mistress of the Hall, eager to view her new possessions, proud of her "brief authority," and anxious to gratify a silly curiosity, almost inundated her with questions, and almost deprived her of breath; for running from room to room, she was touching and admiring every thing she saw, asking the cost of each article, and the names and uses of many, declaring, "It was all very pretty, beautiful, and elegant, very so indeed."

Her manner, so totally different to what Mary had been accustomed, her person, her appearance, her behaviour, all so entirely the reverse of her expectations, she could scarcely restrain her feelings; she felt worried, teased, almost irritated, by the constant volubility which assailed her, and she longed to creep into some quiet corner, where she might relieve her full heart by a plentiful shower of tears; but Mrs. Elwyn held her by the arm, and while she went on with "pray, Miss, what is this?" and "dear Miss, do tell me what is that?" and "was this the *last* Mrs. Elwyn's doing?" and "is that the *last* Mrs. Elwyn's work?" a negative, an affirmative, or an answer of "I do not know," fell in rapid succession from her lips.

The drawing-room, hung with portraits of the Elwyn family, afforded a wide field for declamation; the names of each venerable personage, long since numbered with the dead, were called over. A predecessor of the family, who had been eminent in the law, and had risen to the dignity of a judge, was an object of marked respect.

"I shall know the judge again by his wig, you see," said the wise lady; "very fine—very fine indeed!—how much it must have cost him, when he had it new! And the divine, Miss Mary, I shall remember by his band and gown; so there you see, I have found out two of the family already—there's the judge, you know, and the doctor."

Mary scarcely attended, for her heart was palpitating; she saw Mrs. Elwyn tripping on to the portrait of her beloved, her lamented protectress—a portrait which she had been in the habit of contemplating daily for the last month, which she had *never* viewed without emotion. The likeness was striking; the serious yet placid expression of Clara's features, had been preserved by the happy pencil of Romney; and the delicacy of that countenance, which had been the index of a truly delicate and refined mind, had almost sanctified the touch of the painter, and had spread over it an air of something more than mortal—at least so Mary thought, and so she delighted to behold it.

It had been taken in the days of youth and hilarity, when a gay vista of delight had apparently opened to the view of Clara; it had been taken previous to her marriage with her cousin; but the pensive prescient expression of her soft blue eye, as the lifted lid was turned towards heaven, seemed, even then, to intimate that she must look beyond this nether world for happiness.

"And who is this here lady?—who is she?—more modern, I perceive, by the frame.—Who is this lady, Miss?" asked Mrs. Elwyn.

"This is the portrait of Mrs. Elwyn, madam."

"Of the *last* Mrs. Elwyn?"

"Yes, ma'am, it is."

"Dear me—dear me! only to think—I am quite surprised. Why I had taken it into my head that she was a great beauty. Law bless me! this picture could never have been at all like her, if she was. Was it thought a likeness, Miss What-do-you-call-em?"

"Oh it is a great—a striking likeness!" answered Mary.

"Well, for my part, if ever I was more surprised in all my born days—Law, bless me! how formal she looks! and so thin—and so spare—and then no fine colour in the cheeks, and the eyes no roundness in them—Well, commend *me* to *such* a beauty as that; for my part, *I* see no beauty there—do you, Miss?"

"Yes, ma'am, I see a great deal," said Mary, as she moved mechanically on to the next picture.

"And so that was the *last* Mrs. Elwyn?" said the lady; "so that was the *beauty* I have heard so much of?" muttering in an under tone to herself, and casting a lingering look at the picture, as she followed Mary to the next.

Bitter were the feelings which struggled in the affectionate bosom of poor Mary, at such an indelicate survey of the object of her admiration; her heart would have been too full to have named the next portrait, but Mrs. Elwyn saved her the trouble. "Ah! there he is indeed!—there he is to the very life!—there's Mr. Elwyn to a T!—Ah, he wore that very coloured coat when he first saw me in Hampshire! and that was the way he dressed his hair too!—See Miss, how nice he looks—how much of a gentleman!—oh, very so indeed! that picture *should* have been mine by right. Well, there is no crying over spilt milk; better late than never. To be sure what a handsome man he was in those days! and Mr. Henry, my son, Miss, he is a very fine young man, don't you think so? but he does not come up to his—to Mr. Elwyn, do you think he does, Miss?"

"Not knowing Mr. Elwyn at the period you speak of, madam, I cannot be a judge," answered Mary, who seeing that Mrs. Elwyn meant to be civil, and that her coarse remarks were entirely the result of ignorance, earnestly endeavoured to acquire resolution, and to behave with composure.

"No, that is very true, as you observe, you can't be a judge, Miss—what is it? I always forget your name; but I believe you are never *called* Elwyn."

"No, ma'am, my name is Ellis."

"Ah, so it is—I remember now, Mr. Elwyn told me all about it—and Mr. Henry too; Mr. Henry spoke very handsome of you, very so indeed; and I promised to be very kind to you, and I dare say we shall be very good friends."

"I hope so, ma'am."

"Do you understand patchwork, Miss?"

"I do not know that I do, ma'am."

"Oh you will very soon learn, I dare say, and you shall help me; I make no doubt but when I come to tumble over Mrs. Elwyn's old hoards, I shall find a good many odd bits of one sort or another; and we will set to, and I dare say between us, shall make some very pretty quilts, for I waste nothing; the least bit that is can be joined to another, you know; and if I did not *bring* a fortune to Mr. Elwyn," and she gave a sneering toss of the head towards Mrs. Elwyn's unconscious resemblance, "I will *save* one."

The meek figure on the canvas seemed to preach patience and piety to her beloved child, as she threw an almost imploring look towards it; while Mrs. Elwyn, seizing her by the arm, cried, "Come, Miss, what shall we see next? 'tis all very well worth seeing, I'm sure, and very grand, and very pretty."

It has been remarked, and that not unfrequently, that the minor trials of life, those every-day occurrences which are constantly operating on the temper, and harassing the mind, are more difficult to surmount, and contribute, in a greater degree, to the perfections of the human character, than those striking events, which, by calling forth a sudden display of resolution, are frequently a mere flash in the pan (if we may be allowed the expression), and attended with no beneficial result.

It had been the zealous labour of the deceased Mrs. Elwyn to lay the ground-work of Mary's character on a stable foundation; this *foundation* enabled her to bear with patience her present trials; the habit of *retrospection* had been cultivated for a beneficial purpose; when she met with any thing unpleasant, she recollected how much more unpleasant had been the situation from which her benefactress had rescued her; when her delicacy was wounded, and her sensibility hurt by the ignorance and the coarseness of Mrs. Elwyn, she recalled the long period of happiness which she had enjoyed under the indulgent eye, and the sensitive kindness of her beloved protectress; when she was wearied with the silly remarks, and weak garrulity of her present companion, she recollected with gratitude the many hours of refined enjoyment which she had spent in the improving converse of her last; and thus by looking backwards gratefully to past days of unmerited happiness, and forwards with humble hope to a never-ending period of felicity, and to a reunion with her departed friend, "in the realms of light and love," she tried, by retrospection and anticipation, to lose the painful sense of the present.

Full of her own importance, Mrs. Elwyn always appeared in a complete bustle, and was never weary of making arrangements and alterations in the domestic economy at the Hall, which may be easily guessed to have turned out alterations rather than improvements; for the well-digested plans of Clara, and the soundness of her judgment, the steadiness with which she had issued her orders, the benefits which had been derived from their adoption, had been seen through a long term of years, during which period the Elwyn fortune had flourished under her management—the domestics had smiled as they had grown old in her service, and the whole neighbourhood had felt the effects of her discriminating bounty.

The present lady's mind was as contracted as her understanding; she was as ignorant of the necessary expences of a genteel establishment, as she was of the necessary forms of genteel



life; by attempting to be *prudent*, as she called it, she became parsimonious, in matters where the saving or the expenditure was of little consequence; and by a *partial* investigation, things of greater moment were in danger of being lavished without a thought. She delighted in rattling her keys, and calling herself her *own housekeeper*; while the faithful domestic who had retained that station under the auspices of the judicious Clara, and who was well qualified, both by practice and principle, to perform the office, was still retained in the family, in a sort of *nondescript* situation, and received the wages of a housekeeper, for the most part to sew together patches of *nondescript* shapes, for *nondescript* purposes; while the self-installed housekeeper was always searching in her pocket for the keys which she had lost, sending for the smiths to repair the locks which she had hampered, and turning the whole house into confusion, by neglecting to put things in their original places, or purposely seeking out new ones, in order to hide them from the domestics; and as her memory, amidst this multiplicity of business, was not very tenacious, there was often a hue and cry for some indispensable article of the table, which the lady of the mansion had put out of sight; fancying that every thing she did was very wise, she was never weary of recapitulating her exertions; and the repast was generally enlivened by a petty detail of the most minute occurrences of the morning.

Mr. Elwyn scarcely ever appeared to listen, so it was the part of the patient Mary to *seem* an attentive hearer.

Mrs. Elwyn appeared at the parish church of Norton in all due form as a bride. Three or four of the villagers formed a squad to pay their respects; and “she was so affable, so obliging, and so civil,” that they were from that moment on an intimate footing at the Hall. Mrs. Elwyn pronounced them *all* in one breath to be “very genteel, and very sensible, and very polite,” because they came *finely* dressed, talked of the weather, admired the Hall, and smiled assent, as soon as she had opened her lips.

The families who had been accustomed to keep up a friendly intercourse with Clara, and who were *really* well-bred and well-informed, still kept aloof, not liking the “questionable shape” in which this lady *so soon* appeared at the Hall, and not relishing the idea of having their lamented neighbour so soon superseded; but in the gossip of the attorney’s wife, in the flattery of an apothecary’s widow, who had a grown-up daughter to dispose of, and in the assistance of a maiden gentlewoman in making patches, Mrs. Elwyn had nothing more to desire. She said, that “really the village of Norton afforded the most agreeable society, very so indeed—very genteel ladies all; and *how* pleasant that Miss Lawson should be so extremely fond of patchwork!”

These under-bred females, who would have feared to approach the ear of the dignified Clara with a tale of scandal, with broad compliments, or with offers of assisting her in her refined pursuits and occupations, could easily fathom the depth of the present lady’s understanding; and while neither abashed by her superior elegance, or awed by her superior virtue, they were loud in their plaudits and admiration, and extolled her as “a being without a grain of pride or consequence,” and talked of “now feeling themselves at *ease* at the Hall,” which they “must say, never *could* have been the case in the last lady’s time.” So pleasant do we find it to *censure* those whose characters are beyond our imitation—so pleasant is it to *applaud* those who rise only to our own level—in fact, so grateful is it to extol ourselves.

Although Mrs. Elwyn had never made a direct communication to Mary of her early history and her former marriage, yet her frequent allusions to it were so plain, and her hints were so broad, that within a very few days after her arrival at the Hall, she had nothing to learn on the subject; and added to her other unpleasant feelings, she had the bitter regret of knowing, that while she had been one of the *most* amiable, her late friend had also been one of the most injured

of women. Her natural diffidence and restraint in the presence of Mr. Elwyn, was encreased into something like aversion from this knowledge, and it required all her fortitude, it exercised all her patience, to be commonly cheerful before him.—“Henry Elwyn neither came or wrote; *he* was partaking in all the pleasures of the gay world, mixing, with careless avidity, in all its amusements, unmindful of the companion of his early days, alike indifferent to her weal or woe.”

Such were sometimes the bitter ruminations of Mary Ellis; at others, her disinterested spirit rejoiced that he was spared from the many mortifications which would have assailed his proud heart, in witnessing the vulgarity and coarseness of his mother.

In fact, as we have before observed, Henry had fled away from the contemplation; he could not bear the idea of beholding the contrast which she would form to the late Mrs. Elwyn; he thought with commiseration of Mary Ellis, and knew the trials which she must necessarily encounter; but he left her to brave them alone; and in the mad pursuit of pleasure, he sought to bury the remembrance of the first mortification which had ever assailed him; but it returned when the fevered pulse prevented his tranquil slumber; it pursued him when he came fatigued and enervated from the midnight party; he then felt that even pleasure had its alloy—that dissipation had its intervals of ennui; and in those moments the image of the gentle, the soul-consoling Mary, like a benignant angel, flitted before his imagination, and he would ask himself whether the mad tumult of revelry, and all its meretricious allurements, could, by a rational creature, be one moment preferred to the sober and placid conversation of that much-esteemed girl?

It was one day that his head aching from the noise and nonsense of the foregoing night's *pleasure*, his heart reproaching for “time mispent, and talents mis-applied;” his exhausted purse reminding him that he could not stay much longer in the metropolis, without making another application to Mr. Elwyn to recruit it; and his conscience telling him, that though such an application would be attended to, yet that his duty required his return to the Hall, when he knew that his father had long expected him there—it was on *this* day that he determined to quit town in the succeeding morning; and full of the magnanimous resolve, he mentioned it to a friend who came to call on him at that moment.

“Ah, I see how it is,” said Mr. Fitzallan, who had a great turn for raillery, and who was loth to lose a companion whom he found so pleasant, “you are going to rusticate—the gallant gay Lothario, the dashing Harry Elwyn is now to disappear; he is going to the pastoral haunts, to the sylvan scenes of Elwyn; the treasured object of his affection there ‘wastes her sweetness in the desert air;’ he sees the charming form of Mary Ellis; he falls in with the designs of the first Mrs. Elwyn; he is taken captive by her sweet simplicity—her sparkling beauty; *she* becomes the *fortunate* foundling; *he* becomes a benedict—a married man; and then—why then the curtain drops—the scene closes—Farewell, Harry,” said Fitzallan, holding out his hand, in a tone half mournful, half bantering.

Henry reddened; Fitzallan had laid an emphasis on the words “fortunate foundling;” his heart, his rebellious heart, revolted from the idea of forming such a connexion, for was he not the son, the *legitimate* son of his patron?—was he not the *lineal* heir of the Elwyns? All the beauty, all the virtues of Mary Ellis, were forgotten in this thought, and he proudly, warmly averred that such an idea had never entered his imagination.

Fitzallan smiled at his warmth; the two friends dined together; and heated with wine, and buoyant in spirits, they went to the opera. It was the *last* evening of Henry Elwyn's stay in town; he thought the house had never looked so splendid; the dancers had never before pleased him so much; the first song was enchanting; the ballet was ecstatic. In a transport of delight, he turned

his head to address Fitzallan, when he saw two ladies near him, and his eye rested on the bewitching countenance of Lauretta Montgomery.

The chasm which had elapsed since he had last seen her was forgotten; instantaneously he was transported back to the enchanted supper-table at Cheltenham; he again remembered the honied smile which was playing on her lips; the eager anxiety with which he had waited for words, which were to render him the most blest of human beings.

Lady Lauretta was with her daughter; and her rank being well understood, he should now have an opportunity of showing the sarcastic Fitzallan, that an higher object than a “fortunate foundling” claimed the regard and the attentions of Henry Elwyn. Eagerly he advanced to lady Lauretta, who, with her accustomed ease, and in her usual figurative manner of speaking, told him that she “thought he had vanished for ever from the regions of the earth.”

“But now that I have lighted on a celestial hemisphere,” replied Henry, gaily, “oh, give me welcome!” and he turned towards Lauretta, who affected to be constrained and distant, yet seemed at the same time to be overwhelmed by embarrassing consciousness, as her eyes dropt before his ardent gaze.

The evening passed rapidly; Henry accounted for his hasty flight from Cheltenham; he talked of the pain which he had suffered in the idea of so abrupt a desertion, and of the strange appearance which his conduct must have worn to the lovely Miss Montgomery, and the amiable lady Lauretta.

The young lady still adopted something of reserve and diffidence in her manner; her mamma was flowery and metaphorical; both ladies, however, contrived to make him understand that they were to leave town in the morning, but neither of them seemed inclined to tell him to what spot they meant to bend their course. How tantalizing—how—how provokingly mortifying was this! had he then found the charming Lauretta only to lose her again? could he have no opportunity of renewing his suit?—of hearing that delightful avowal which she was once on the point of making to him? He eagerly assisted the ladies to their carriage, and passionately pressing the hand of Lauretta, he asked her to admit him in the morning, prior to her departure; smiling she gave him her address; and returning with Fitzallan to the tavern where they had dined, the morning dawned on them while toasting to the health of the beauteous Lauretta Montgomery, in bumpers of sparkling champagne.

Fitzallan congratulated his friend on his conquest, and declared, that under the mask of bashfulness, under the semblance of wounded pride, and apparent displeasure at his long desertion, he could perceive that the heart of Lauretta was firmly his.

The natural vanity of Henry inclined him to believe it; every succeeding glass of the exhilarating liquor strengthened him in this opinion, and he returned home in most elevated spirits. Elwyn Hall and the humble Mary Ellis were entirely put to flight; he thought not of his journey; his head was full of champagne, his heart of Lauretta Montgomery; he thought only of pursuing her wherever she might go. To feverish and disturbed dreams, succeeded some hours of deep sleep, and Henry awoke at a later hour than he had fixed to appear before the object of his admiration. Hastily dressing himself, he lost not a minute in going to the house where Miss Montgomery had directed him; alas! he was doomed to experience the severest rebuff, for on making his inquiries, he was answered that both the ladies had been gone for nearly an hour. His first idea was that of instant pursuit, but the person of the house could afford him no clue as to the way which the travellers had taken; all he could learn was, that they had left town, and that they were gone into the country; and not in the best of tempers with Lauretta Montgomery, neither with himself, he retraced his footsteps to his own lodgings, with rather a slower pace than

he had set out. Fitzallan soon joined him, and laughed at his fallen and altered countenance; it was too sore a subject for raillery; and to avoid the bantering of his friend, to dissipate his own thoughts, and not knowing what else to do, Elwyn actually did make a desperate effort, and left London that afternoon.

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## CHAP. V.

But from these dames I turn, and as before,  
What suits not with my humour, hurry o'er.

PARTENOPEX DE BLOIX.

ON the evening of the following day, Henry Elwyn reached the Hall. He felt no little degree of perturbation as he thought of the changes which had taken place since he had last been there; he felt awkward at the idea of meeting Mary Ellis, for he had certainly been strangely neglectful of her; "she was a good girl, and must have met with some unpleasant trials since he had quitted her;" he feared to look in her countenance for her opinion of his mother; but in his usual precipitate manner he entered the house, and not letting the servant announce him, he preceded him into the drawing-room. Mrs. Elwyn was there, seated in high giggle, over a card-table, with Mrs. Buxton (the wife of an attorney), and Mrs. and Miss Lumley, the apothecary's widow and daughter, previously mentioned as being residents at Norton, while Miss Lawson, with great apparent consequence, was arranging patches at a little work-table; and Mary Ellis, with meek complacency, received the work from her hands, and mechanically followed the directions given her; her taper fingers dexterously plying the needle, while her truant thoughts were reverting to times that were past, and to the recollection of more pleasant hours.

Mrs. Elwyn had just picked up the odd trick, and declared "it was very extraordinary—very much so indeed, with *her* hand, for she did not think to have made three tricks for her part, hadn't the cards played so monstrous lucky," when she rose astonished from her seat, to make a proper curtsy to a gentleman, and to receive him with due politeness, not at the first moment recognising who it was; but when she did, she cried out, "Oh! bless and preserve us all, if here isn't Mr. Henry himself!—who should have thought of seeing you, sir?—quite a stranger—very so indeed!"

In the mean time, all the ladies were put into some little trepidation. Mrs. Lumley pointed to her daughter to hold up, while the young lady, throwing something between a *toss* and a *fling* towards her mother, pretended to be deeply intent in adjusting the *apology* for a tucker, which covered about half an inch, and left a *wide expanse* without a shade. Mrs. Buxton shuffled the cards with much dexterity, preparatory to her adversary's next deal; and Miss Lawson, perceiving that Henry having shaken hands with his mother, had now approached the trembling sempstress, added yet more business and consequence to her air, as she now contrived, and now cut out. Mary Ellis had indeed been surprised at seeing Elwyn enter; but it was an agreeable surprise; his return gave her great pleasure, and she received him with one of those good-humoured smiles, which always found the way to his heart; and at this moment Lauretta Montgomery was, in her turn, forgotten.

"And what, in the name of fortune, are you about here, Mary?" asked he, taking up a handful of the patches which Miss Lawson had just assorted, and throwing them into a mingled heap.

"Oh! my dear sir, for Heaven's sake take care what you do!" cried Miss Lawson, "you will absolutely ruin me!"

Henry begged ten thousand pardons, assured Miss Lawson his intentions were quite harmless; and asking for Mr. Elwyn, and promising Mrs. Elwyn to return to tea, he left the room.

Henry was perfectly acquainted with the faces of the females who were thus snugly associated with his mother, but was rather surprised, and not much gratified, at seeing their apparent intimacy.

Miss Lawson laughed very much, and joked with Mary on the mischief which had been done to her labours, and declared that she should make the “naughty boy set all the patches in order again himself.”

Mrs. Elwyn was asking the ladies all round the table “whether they did not think Mr. Henry a very fine young man, and very much grown?” and when she put the question to Miss Lumley, her mother answered, rather quickly, for her, “Oh, poor girl, she is so shy, Mrs. Elwyn, that I do suppose *she* would not have found out whether he had come into the room upon his head or his heels.”

“Oh dear me! what then, I suppose Miss Lumley is very shy—very so indeed. Well now, do *you* know I should never have thought it,” said Mrs. Elwyn, while, as if to *prove*, or to *disprove* to the correctness of her mother’s statement, Miss Lumley strode, with no very feminine or timid air, to the glass, saying, as she twisted and twirled, and *tried* to turn an obstinate lock, “The deuce is in my hair, I *do* really believe, for it never will sit as I would have it.”

“Miss Lumley, when you have settled *your curl*, we should be glad if you would lead,” said Mrs. Buxton.

“I am coming in a minute,” said the *shy creature*.

Miss Lawson was between thirty and forty years of age; she had passed through life with successive and continued hopes of marriage, which had not yet been accomplished; but even now she had not relinquished them, as she was frequently heard to say, that from thirty-five to forty-five in the life of woman, was the most fascinating period, and that any woman who had a tolerable figure and address, might *then* do what she pleased with the other sex.

Now Miss Lawson’s figure was *scarcely* tolerable; but her *address* (assurance would perhaps be as good a term) made up for it. She had the art of expressing herself with fluency, and had caught by *ear* a few of the opinions, and some of the phrases and sentiments of those persons with whom she had occasionally mixed; ingenious enough in work, ready in conversation, falling in with the habits of her superiors, and flattering them by sliding into their opinions, she had mingled in society, and readily accepted invitations which had been given, from the mixed and various motives of good-nature, policy, convenience, family connexion, &c. &c. Her real knowledge was very superficial; her mind was by no means cultivated, neither her manners refined; but by great plausibility of manner, and quoting the words of others, she passed for an agreeable woman with those who did not perceive that her conversation was not all of a piece; that the high flown was often joined to something below par; that her encomiums were exaggerated beyond all the bounds of common sense, or the properties of language; and that she would break into the same rapture on seeing a coloured ribbon, as on seeing a first-rate man of war full rigged and sailed, and call both “beautiful!” If she disliked the shape of a bonnet, she might probably have called it “awfully vulgar!” and have expressed her approbation of the grand ruin of Tintern Abbey (like another lady whom we have been told of), by calling it “a very genteel place.” Positive and superlative were the only degrees of comparison which Miss Lawson used; with her *inferiors* she was *positive*, or with those whom she deemed her equals; with her *superiors* she dealt solely in superlatives; and her notes of admiration were thicker than we find them in some modern publications. She knew every person mentioned in conversation, and was *intimately* acquainted with *those* who were distinguished by rank, wealth, or talent. If an

original idea was started, "it was very singular, but she had been thinking to herself at *that moment*;" if any thing was to be explained to her, she understood it before the explanation was began; if any thing to be related, she had heard it some time since, but did not think it right to mention it, or was charged to secrecy; and then she knew the very best way to work this, and the very best method to make that—oh she was the very crack of the village, and certainly called a most agreeable charming creature by all who knew her.

That familiarity which is naturally attached to such self-important characters, had nothing attractive in it to Mary Ellis; her own character was so widely different, that, like the retiring mimosa, she felt herself recoil from an intimacy with Miss Lawson; but that lady was not easily daunted, and "my dear," and "Mary," and "love," were the usual appellations of regard with which she addressed her; while to Mrs. Elwyn she answered, "exactly so," "perfectly correct," "indeed it is," "oh surely, my dear ma'am," "I perfectly coincide with you." And could such marked respect and approbation do otherwise than please Mrs. Elwyn, who, elevated to a height which rendered her weak head rather dizzy, required a little encouragement to enable her to sit steadily? And the marked air of deference with which Miss Lawson waited for her decision on the combination of a patch, was a very gratifying appeal to the judgment of this good lady; while Miss Lawson was often thrown into a "*luminous crisis*" when the patch was formed, and was never weary of reiterating, "oh, beautiful! charming! simply elegant! what an agreeable diversity!—what a combination of light and shade!—see how elegantly these colours are diversified!—well, this must be the very mirror of the graces—I call this the very marrow of patchwork; here's a delicate combination—now you must look at it, my dearest Mary; is it not sweet?"

Mary would perhaps have thought the *marrow* an awkward combination; but Miss Lawson's raptures were unbroken, and gave no time for comment on the side of her hearers, neither for consideration on her own. Without any decided view, it was the fixed rule of Miss Lawson to endeavour to attract the particular notice of every man she met, and perceiving that Henry Elwyn had regarded Mary with the partiality, and addressed her with the unstudied familiarity of an old acquaintance, she pretended to be more intimate with her, and more partial to her, than she had ever yet been; and drawing her chair close to hers, she waited, with no little degree of impatience, for the re-appearance of the beau.

He returned as he promised to the tea-table, having left Mr. Elwyn to his accustomed afternoon's nap; but disgusted with the girlish frivolity of Miss Lawson, and hurt at seeing the familiar association of his mother with such a party, his pride was too much wounded to render him a very agreeable acquisition to their society; and he threw himself into a chair at a distance from the circle, and scarcely uttered a voluntary word.

Mrs. Elwyn was the first to remark his silence. "Why, Mr. Henry, what is the matter, sir? I believe you have left your heart behind you now. Why, sir, you are very grave and solid—very so indeed; fatigued with your journey, sir, I suppose?"

"No, ma'am," answered Elwyn, gravely.

"Come, ladies, can't you tell us something a little entertaining?—can't you help us to a little news to entertain Mr. Henry?—So, sir, we have got new neighbours, I find."

"Have we, ma'am?" answered Elwyn, with an indifferent air.

"Oh yes, sir" said Mrs. Buxton, who now found a theme on which she could expatiate. "Salcombe Lodge is taken at last; well, I never thought as Mr. Morland would have got his price; but these Indians you see do not mind money any more than dirt."

"I suppose not—I suppose not," said Mrs. Elwyn.

“What is the gentleman called that has taken it?” said Mrs. Lumley; “I never can recollect his name.”

“Oh, general Halifax,” said Miss Lawson; “he is well known; he lived in the East a great while, and has an immense fortune.”

“A very sensible man, I dare say,” said Mrs. Elwyn.

“At any rate he is an extreme fascinating one,” said Miss Lawson, affecting a half sigh; “and he is very—*very* handsome, I can assure you, Sophia,” turning towards Miss Lumley.

“You know him, I suppose, Miss Lawson?” said the literal Mrs. Elwyn.

“Not absolutely *acquainted*, my dear madam; but from my intimate knowledge of governor Purbeck and lady Elizabeth, and of colonel Vetton and Mrs. —, and of half a hundred more of the great people that came from the East, I seem to claim a sort of intimacy with the Halifaxes already; indeed, the general and myself now do every thing but speak; we exchange very—what I call friendly looks, and I will venture to say, he knows me very well by report; we look at one another, as much as to say, ‘we *are* to be acquainted.’ The Lodge family will be a most agreeable acquisition.”

“Mrs. Halifax never stirs out, I am told,” said Mrs. Buxton.

“A very great invalid, I dare say,” said Mrs. Elwyn.

“I don’t know as to that,” said Mrs. Lumley; “they say she can eat, and drink, and sleep.”

“But law, mamma, they say her face is as yellow as an orange.”

“And her back almost as *round*,” said Miss Lawson, in an under voice, which was meant to be perfectly distinguishable to Henry Elwyn.

“A very agreeable, sensible lady, I dare say,” said Mrs. Elwyn.

“I have been told she had a great fortune,” said Mrs. Lumley.

“She *looks* as if she had,” said Miss Sophia.

“She is considerably older than Halifax,” said Miss Lawson; “I understand she was a mustee, or a creole, or something, and the rich widow of a nabob, and that she was in ill-health when the general married her; but she has held out some years already, it seems.”

“And if she eats, and drinks, and sleeps, though her face *may* be the colour of an orange, she may hold out some years longer,” said Mrs. Buxton.

“And I suppose they have a great many servants, and live very genteel, and all that,” said Mrs. Elwyn.

“Princely, princely!” replied Miss Lawson; “oh, I assure you Halifax has all that about him. These East Indians know how to live; I *must* know, for I have been a great deal amongst them;” then followed a long account of the general’s equipage, retinue, and establishment, which was garnished by the remarks of the different hearers and relaters.

Mrs. Elwyn declared her intention of visiting at the Lodge, a declaration with which Henry was not much pleased, for he did not like the idea of her exposing herself to the ridicule, or the modest Mary to the unqualified admiration of an ostentatious and voluptuous East Indian.

“Wait a little till you hear something about them, madam, till you find whether they are worth your notice,” said Elwyn.

“Oh, I dare say they are very sensible good kind of people, and you see Miss Lawson *does* know something about them; and you find they live very genteel, and keep several carriages.”

“Oh, they live in good style,” said Miss Lawson, “certainly, very good style; but, as Mr. Henry Elwyn justly observes, circumspection ought to be used in making an acquaintance; indeed I was going to make the same remark myself.”



Miss Lawson had thus contrived in a moment to slide into the *inferred* sentiments of Henry Elwyn, and to be of the same opinion with him; she fancied that *he* was particular in his notions on these points, but it could not do *her* the least harm to adopt this peculiarity for the time being; and she therefore most gravely added, that connexions were much easier made than shaken off.

Mary had penetration enough to remark the inconsistency of this lady's sentiments, and her instantaneous change of tone; she threw rather an arch, though it was a momentary glance, towards Henry; he understood it; and gratified at this sly appeal, and amused with Miss Lawson's variability, he said—"We must not be fastidious; there is something ill-natured and suspicious in withholding our friendship from a family, till we have pryed about to discover the family tree, and the whole line of their genealogy, and all the secret anecdotes of their ancestors."

"Exactly so," cried Miss Lawson; "I was just going to make the same observation."

"A very sensible remark, Mr. Henry," said Mrs. Elwyn; "don't you think so, ladies?—very so indeed."

"Intimacies with strangers have frequently been productive of unpleasant consequences," pursued Henry.

"How very just is that!" said Miss Lawson; "my dear sir, we agree exactly."

"We cannot *disagree* madam," said Henry, with a half bow, while the manner in which he spoke raised a smile on the countenance of Mary.

Henry Elwyn was not sorry when the party adjourned; Mrs. Elwyn then retreated in great apparent bustle, to issue orders respecting the family arrangements. Mr. Elwyn was still in his elbow chair, in the library, and was not to be disturbed; Mary Ellis had stolen out of the room when the party were dispersing; Henry now sought her in the accustomed apartment, and there he found her. She was leaning her head on her hand, in a pensive posture, but started on seeing him, and welcomed him in her accustomed manner.

"Mary," cried he, and the eager impetuosity of his manner proved the deep interest which he took in the question, "dearest Mary, tell me, are you comfortable? are you happy?"

"Why would you ask the question, Mr. Henry?—why should you doubt it?"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake! do not *you* learn to *Mr.* Henry me too. I heard, Mary, that—that—the manners of my—the different society—indeed, Mary, I think you cannot *like* the society of these village gossips."

"I am not fastidious—I have no *right* to be so," answered Mary; "Mrs. Elwyn derives amusement from their company; she is very kind and obliging to me, and I should be very culpable, very presumptuous, if I were to adopt sentiments which were inimical to hers, on such trifling and insignificant matters."

Henry saw the good sense and the delicacy of mind which had led Mary thus obliquely to praise his mother, at the very moment when he longed, yet dreaded, to ask her opinion of her; he snatched her hand to his eyes, saying—"Amiable, interesting girl, I don't know any one like you!"

Mary was surprised at his warmth; his approbation gave her pleasure; she had merely uttered the genuine sentiments of her heart; for great as was the difference between the last and the present Mrs. Elwyn, yet as the present lady treated her with kindness and good-nature, she was too candid not to acknowledge it to her son, and too considerate not to wish that she might amuse herself in the manner which best suited her taste and inclination.

"Teach me some of your forbearance—your sweetness—your magnanimity, Mary," cried Elwyn.

"We must try to teach ourselves in these points," said Mary; "and I feel myself so very unskilful, and so great a novice, that I dare not attempt to teach another."

"How can you bear the silly and low tittle-tattle of the circle in which I just now found you?"

"We must not be fastidious, you know," said Mary, smiling; "I think these were your own words to Miss Lawson."

"If any one has a right to be so, it is you," returned Elwyn, with animation, "for who are so eminently calculated to enjoy the pleasures of a refined intercourse, of rational intelligent conversation——"

"Me!" interrupted Mary, "me! consider what you are saying, Harry; have *I* a right to be fastidious? consider—consider for a moment, what *was* Mary Ellis?—in what station was *she* found by her esteemed protectress, and say, if you dare, that she has a right to choose companions and society for those so much above her. Oh, Harry, you forget yourself—you forget me!"

Henry *had* forgotten himself; overcome by the contemplation of the mild graces, the unobtrusive virtues of Mary, he had nearly given utterance to the warm admiration with which his heart was overflowing; but *she* had recalled him to recollection; he remembered the sarcastic conversation of Fitzallan; he remembered the ridicule attached to his manner, when talking to him of this fortunate foundling; a sudden change took place in his manner, a sudden revulsion in his feelings; he reddened—he coloured—he bit his lips—he turned away from Mary, and, after a minute's silence, he said—"Have you seen this general Halifax?"

"Never," answered she.

"Seriously," said he, "for to you, Mary, I speak my *real* unqualified sentiments, I think some caution should always be used in forming intimacies with strangers. My mother has lived so long in retirement, that she may be called quite a novice in the world; and Mr. Elwyn has so habituated himself to ease and inactivity, that he scarcely exercises his understanding, unless he is obliged to it. I believe, for once, *I* must assume the office of mentor, and give my cautions with the *imposing air* of worldly wisdom."

The entrance of Mrs. Elwyn put an end to the *tête-à-tête*.

For a female, and a *young* female, Mary Ellis had a very small share of vanity; yet she could not help feeling gratified at the marked approbation which her conduct and sentiments had drawn forth from Henry Elwyn. His return to the Hall gave her undissembled satisfaction, for he had been the companion of her infancy; he had participated in her pleasures, and had feelingly sympathized in her sorrows, without indulging any romantic visions, or giving the reins to a too sanguine imagination. She thought his regard seemed heightened, rather than diminished by his late absence.

Mrs. Elwyn appeared very good-humoured to her; the wishes of her son seemed to give the law to her conduct, and his opinion to be the bias of her judgment. The indulgent fondness of Mr. Elwyn for Henry knew no bounds.

"Life," thought Mary, "would still be invaluable, were it to be spent in contributing to the happiness, to the welfare of Harry Elwyn." But she suffered not herself to dwell on this idea; she recalled her wandering thoughts, and she lost not the present good in vain anticipations.

The first three or four days of Elwyn's return were passed in the domestic circle; he watched Mary Ellis in her occupations, admired the undeviating sweetness with which she

attended to the trifling and querrulous repetitions of his mother, and the unwearied patience with which she assisted her in her favourite employment. The tranquil serenity of the one formed a fine contrast to the bustling and hurrying importance of the other; and though the insignificancy and weakness of his mother's character was thus displayed to his view, yet it ceased to wound him as acutely as before, for he could turn with delighted admiration to the contemplation of Mary *Ellis*.

Mr. Elwyn seemed to have made peace with his conscience in the performance of his promise. Ellen was the mistress of Elwyn Hall; his son was now called by his own name; and, having exerted himself thus far, he relapsed into his usual indolence; and, save when he took his daily food, or his accustomed potations, or when he smiled on Henry, or was teased by frequent repetition to answer some question of Mrs. Elwyn's, he seemed as totally abstracted from all passing occurrences, as if his faculties had been entranced in sleep.

This total imbecility, this inert torpidity, gave Henry the deepest concern; he had ever felt the liveliest gratitude towards Mr. Elwyn, he *now* respected him as a father—respected him notwithstanding the flagrant errors of his conduct, and would willingly have drawn a veil over *them* for ever. The unfortunate and guilty habit of intemperate enjoyment, which had originated in an unquiet conscience, had now taken too firm a hold to be shaken off. Henry observed the daily inroads which it was making on his corporeal as well as his mental faculties; he saw, he lamented, but he was unable to prevent it. Mrs. Elwyn was not so clear-sighted; her perceptions were not quick, neither were her feelings painfully acute; she often talked of what Mr. Elwyn *had* been; what he *was*, appeared only to strike her as the natural change from the meridian to the decline of life: had she seen her husband staggering riotously into the room, she would probably have called him “a little merry;” but when taking his accustomed naps, or sitting in stupid reverie, she never imagined that he could be otherwise than perfectly sober, though his faculties were then as completely besotted, as if he had been exhilarated to the point which she would have termed “a little merry.”

## CHAP. VI.

So sung the sirens as of yore  
Upon the false Ausonian shore

MOORE.

AFTER the dissipation and confusion of the metropolis, the quiet calm of the Hall was not unpleasant to Elwyn; but accustomed to use a great deal of exercise when in the country, he frequently mounted his horse, and going out unattended in the morning, returned only when the shades of evening were closing around him.

It was from one of these absences, that Mary remarked the unusual animation of his manner at his return; with great vivacity he rallied on the sedentary occupation which engaged so much of her time, and assured her that no modern woman thought of taking a needle in her hand.

"How would all my patches be sewn together, if that were to be the case here? answer me that question, Mr. Henry?"

But Mr. Henry was not in the humour for answering questions, particularly from his mother; for having snatched up Mary's scissars from the table, he was most expertly amusing himself in cutting Mrs. Elwyn's prettiest *patches* into *shreds*.

"Why, dear me—bless us all—only to think how mischievous you are this evening!" cried Mrs. Elwyn; "law bless me, Mr. Henry, only to see what you *have* been about! you have cut up my two best patches, the very ones which *I ordained* for the middle of the quilt."

"There you see the folly of *predestinating* a patch, ma'am," answered he, with careless levity, cutting on, and humming an Italian song. "Do *you* sing Italian, Mary?"

Mary lifted her eyes; they seemed to ask him whether he had not forgotten himself.

"Ah, true, I think you never learnt Italian—what delightful strains!"

"I do not hear them," said Mrs. Elwyn.

"I hear them even now," said Henry, "that is, in my *mind's ear*, madam."

"I understand nothing at all about it," said Mrs. Elwyn; "but I think you seem very funny and comical to-night, Mr. Henry—I wonder where you have been?"

Mary Ellis thought him neither funny nor comical; she perceived by his flushed countenance and inflamed eyelids, that he had taken more wine than he ought to have done; and as *she* conceived the gaiety of his manner to originate from this cause, it had a very opposite effect upon hers; she felt graver, and more inclined to be silent than usual; and she could scarcely command her feelings to answer the raillery with which he incessantly assailed her. Evidently he had been in company, and hearing music; whose then were the delightful strains which had made such an impression on his fancy? Mary longed to know; she had never before felt so curious about a matter of such little moment; but she did not indulge her curiosity by asking one question. In an oblique way, Mrs. Elwyn asked fifty, such as, "Where can you have been, I wonder?" and "I should like to know what you have seen that has made you so merry?" but Henry did not satisfy her, and Mary was left to conjecture.

The following morning Henry Elwyn was absent from the breakfast-table; this was an unusual circumstance; many inquiries were made; the answer was, that he had been gone out on horseback above an hour.

"Very extraordinary, very so indeed," said Mrs. Elwyn.

The Italian strains were now in the *mind's ear* of Mary; had they not been warbled from the lips of Beauty? She half sighed as she handed the cream to Mr. Elwyn instead of the sugar; but soon recollecting herself, she recovered her accustomed self-possession.

"Well now, my dear Miss Mary," said Mrs. Elwyn, "I have ordered the carriage, and you and I will take *our* ride now unknown to Mr. Henry; we'll puzzle *him* this time. This general What-is-it, and his lady, must think it very un-genteel and unpolite in me, you see, who are what you may call the *head* person here (and she bridled with no little assumption of consequence), if I do not call upon them; from all accounts they are very sensible genteel people; so, as I was telling Mr. Elwyn, we will go this very morning."

"This morning, ma'am!" repeated Mary, "had you not better—had you not——"

"Oh, no—I had better nothing at all," said the lady, with a decisive air; "*I* go this very morning; Mr. Elwyn is not very well, he says, to go with me, so I shall make your apologies to the general, my dear," turning to him, "in a *very* genteel manner, and say you will take the very first opportunity of waiting on him—that will be polite; and so, Miss Ellis, you will be ready to go with me at twelve; 'tis but an hour's ride, and then we shall get there at one—and smarten yourself up, for I assure you *I* shall make a point of shewing myself as Mrs. Elwyn."

"Aye, do, do, Ellen," said Mr. Elwyn, as he put a piece of buttered muffin into his mouth; "if Harry had been here, he might have gone with you."

"Why, very true, so he might indeed, sir—he might indeed; but you see he did not seem much inclined to visit these strangers; he does not seem to like these foreigners somehow; but, for *my* part, 'tis nothing to me at all; I would as leave go to see twenty of 'em as I would one; I should behave all the same—very civil and genteel to them all, and conduct myself as your wife should, my dear; I should show 'em I know how to behave."

It was not often that Mary Ellis felt herself inclined to oppose the wishes of those around her, but on this occasion, she would gladly have been excused from attending Mrs. Elwyn. Her repugnance to the visit arose entirely from having heard Henry Elwyn express his sentiments on the subject; it was plain that he wished to use caution, and to make inquiries, before an intercourse was began with the new family; would he not think his mother foolish and imprudent, thus to seize the hour of his absence to make the visit?—would he not think that *she* disregarded his opinion, and slighted his advice? but the decisive tone of Mrs. Elwyn, and the quiet concurrence of her husband, had given Mary no alternative but an open refusal; and as this would have been departing from the rule of conduct she had prescribed to herself, as indeed it would have done no good (for Mrs. Elwyn would then have gone alone), she sedulously tried to conceal her mortification, and to attend that lady with an appearance of cheerfulness: but, alas! it required some resolution to approach Mrs. Elwyn, who, seeking on this occasion to show her own consequence, had so ill-assorted her dress, and so ill chosen her colours, that she was far more like some farcical character in an entertainment, than any thing in *common*, much less *genteel* life. An elegant sarsnet pelisse, shot with green (which had been made for the poor Clara, but which she had not lived to put on), was put over a yellow silk gown, and a large crimson scarf shawl, which, thrown over a person of an elegant shape and air, would have given grace and relief by its folded drapery, was so huddled and bundled on, that it quite disfigured her; a light blue silk bonnet (of the *truest* blue generally seen at elections), well ribboned and crimped, was placed on her head; and neither a short nor a long, but a *full* and highly-stiffened veil, spread out like an umbrella, and dilated with every waving breeze.

The sight of the pelisse alone would have overcome poor Mary, for it would have recalled a thousand fond and painfully affecting images to her memory; but the confusion of colours, and of covering, was so great, that she did not immediately recognise it.

“Well, now I am ready, Miss Mary, and very smart, an’t I?—this pelisse, you see, fits me to a nicety; so the last Mrs. Elwyn must have been my exact size and shape. I had no occasion for my shawl, it being quite warm to-day; but it is a very handsome one, and I thought it would be an hundred pities not to show it; and how d’ye like my new blue bonnet? I think it mighty becoming, and very genteel—very so indeed; and this here *real* lace veil, being so nicely starched, you see, sets away from my face; I don’t like any thing mopping and *hoodling*, and covering up my face, for I am not ashamed of *my face*, Miss Mary; Mr. Elwyn used to call it a very pretty face.”

The coach was at the door, and in the act of getting in, Mrs. Elwyn said—“as you drive through Norton, stop at Miss Lawson’s.” The coachman drove off. “Miss Lawson will like very well to go with us, I dare say,” continued Mrs. Elwyn; “it will be but good-humoured to give her a lift, you see; you know *she* has no carriage, and ’tis not always fine weather for walking; she’s a very nice agreeable lady, and I am sure very polite to me—she’ll be an agreeable acquisition to our party—very so indeed; and knowing, as she says, so many of these here Indians, from east to west, she’ll be quite free and ready with them.”

If Mary’s wish had been consulted, she would not have particularly desired Miss Lawson to be of the party; but it was not for her to make exceptions; Mrs. Elwyn had a right to do as she pleased.

The coach presently arrived at Norton, and Miss Lawson was soon equipped, and showed her sense of the obligation conferred on her by Mrs. Elwyn, in the exulting kiss of the hand with which she saluted the Lumleys and Mrs. Buxton, as she rolled by their respective doors.

“And where is Mr. Henry Elwyn, my love?” asked Miss Lawson, with a meaning air, as she addressed Mary; “how comes he not to attend us on this occasion?”

“Why Mr. Henry is gone out, you see, and we do not know where,” said Mrs. Elwyn.

“I wonder *you* do not know, Miss Ellis,” said Miss Lawson, laying a stress on the monosyllable *you*; “I thought he told *you* every thing.”

“But you find he does not,” answered Mary, rather laconically.

“Why should you think he did, Miss Lawson?” asked Mrs. Elwyn.

“Because it is natural, my dear madam, and because every body can see with half an eye that Mr. Henry—well, well, I will say no more; perhaps I may confuse the dear girl,” and she took Mary’s hand, with an air of fond consideration.

“I do not think Miss Mary would have been at all confused if you had said on, for there is nothing at all of *that kind*,” said Mrs. Elwyn, in a graver tone than usual; “*my son* Mr. Henry is, to be sure, a very fine genteel young man, and every body can see as well as you, Miss Lawson, that go where he will, all over the world, he has only to *ask* and to *have*.”

A painful feeling oppressed the heart of Mary; unconsciously she let down the glass, and leant her head out of the window.

“Oh yes, that is very apparent,” replied Miss Lawson, who instantaneously caught the tone of Mrs. Elwyn; “I declare, for my own part, I don’t know a more truly fascinating young man; and then, my dear madam, when we consider his great advantages in other respects, he may make a connexion any where.”

“That is what I have just said,” said Mrs. Elwyn; “and I dare say he will—I dare say he will.”

“The men know their own value now,” said Miss Lawson, again addressing herself to Mary; but Mary’s head was still averted.

“Mr. Henry is very particular—very nice,” said his mother, “very so indeed; perhaps he is a little too much so.”

“My dear madam, surely this is erring on the right side.”

“May be it is,” said Mrs. Elwyn; “but now about these gentlefolks at Salcombe Lodge; you see he did not seem much to approve of my going; but I was determined, if only for curiosity sake, to go, and to show myself as Mrs. Elwyn, of Elwyn Hall.”

“Very laudable, very proper, very praiseworthy, surely,” said Miss Lawson. “Why, Miss Ellis, you are much engaged in looking out at the prospect.”

“This lawn always strikes me as being very pretty,” said Mary.

“And the house stands well,” said Miss Lawson; “Morland was at an immense expence in raising this villa; I always said he would overshoot the mark; however, it seems that he has got a good tenant now, and I dare say a good price.”

Through a bold sweep, the coach now stopped at the entrance of the Lodge; an universal agitation pervaded the frame of Mary as the step was let down; a maccaroni footman stood at the portico kicking his heels, and whistling a tune with great nonchalance, as he watched the party descending from the carriage; he scarcely replied to Mrs. Elwyn’s question of whether the general and Mrs. Halifax were at home, but with as indifferent an air as he had worn at the door, he crossed the hall, and by his actions, gave the ladies to understand that they might follow him. He opened the door of a large breakfast-room; Venetian windows, even with the ground, were adorned with light verandas, which were filled with plants, while the most costly and choicest exotics were ranged within the windows, and perfumed the room with their fragrance; two large and superb gilt Indian screens excluded the upper part of the room from view; the man walked within them, but turning back, said, in a low tone of voice—“Whom am I to announce?”

“Mrs. Elwyn, of Elwyn Hall,” replied the lady, with no little degree of self-consequence, “Miss Lawson, and Miss Ellis.”

An exclamation of surprise was heard from behind the screen, and the next moment our agitated Mary found herself within the magic circle, and, could it be possible!—yes, the first object her eyes encountered was Henry Elwyn!

A sumptuous and elegant *dejeuné* was placed on a large table, and a party was formed round it, in the manner which we shall describe: near the head of the table, on a Turkish settee, reclined an elegant female, whose careless attitude and fashionable undress, were calculated to display the fine symmetry of her gracefully-proportioned form; a very well-looking and graceful man was presenting her a cup of tea: on the other side of the table, and almost close to a fire of no common size, sat a little homely and deformed woman, of saffron-coloured hue, who looked old enough to be the mother of the whole company; she seemed very busy in taking care of herself, and neither looked upwards, or turned to the right or the left to make observations; yet at her right hand, lounging on the corner of a young lady’s chair, with one arm thrown carelessly round its back, was Henry Elwyn; his eyes were bent on her bewitching countenance with speaking admiration, as she turned around and spoke to him with a smile of blandishment. A lady was pouring out the tea at the bottom of the table, with modest and unimportant air; she was not strikingly handsome, and the first bloom of youth was passed; and conceiving by her employment, and by her being the only female who rose from her seat, that she must be the lady

of the house, Mrs. Elwyn advanced to her with a low curtsy, saying—"Mrs. Halifax, I presume—I hope I have the pleasure of seeing you quite well, madam?"

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will."



At the first sound of his mother's voice, Henry Elwyn started, confused and confounded.

"What did she say?" asked the little old woman of the tea-maker, while the gentleman who had been the attendant of the fair recliner, advanced with the air of a man who knew and practised the laws of politeness, and gracefully bowed to the strangers.

Mrs. Elwyn, lifting up her hands and eyes in astonishment, now exclaimed—"Why bless us all, if there isn't Mr. Henry! why only to think of it! In the name of fortune, how came *you* here, sir?"

Henry scarcely answered, for the young lady pulling him by the arm, said, in no very low whisper, "Do you know them?—they are very queer-looking people—who are they?—do tell me who they are?"

Henry assumed some resolution, and with a tolerable degree of composure, now introduced his mother (as Mrs. Elwyn), Miss Lawson, and Mary Ellis, to the little lady (who was no *less* a personage than Mrs. Halifax), to the gentleman, who was the master of the house, and to the reclining lady and her fair daughter, whom our readers will, ere this, have recognised for lady Lauretta and Miss Montgomery: Miss Letsom, the tea-maker, was not left unnoticed in this introduction; and, as if seeing and pitying the evident embarrassment of Mary Ellis, that lady placed a chair for her, and very civilly offered her a cup of tea, which Mary as civilly refused, without daring to raise her eyes, without daring to cast a glance at Henry Elwyn.

There was a great deal of the courtly address and the suavity of polite life in general Halifax—there was nothing of it in his lady; she regarded Mrs. Elwyn and the party with as little complaisance as curiosity, and seemed to leave her husband and Miss Letsom to do all the civilities for her.

The general advanced to Mrs. Elwyn, thanked her for the honour of her visit, and placing a chair for her close to his wife, he said—"You had better get pretty near to Mrs. Halifax, that she may enjoy your conversation, madam; unfortunately she is a little deaf."

Mrs. Elwyn bustled on, with no little consequence, to the place allotted for her, making Mr. Elwyn's apologies for not having called at the same time with herself, adding—"Had he known that Mr. Henry was making you a visit, sir, he would, I dare say, have sent you this message by him."

"Mr. Henry Elwyn stole a march upon us," said Miss Lawson; "that was not very fair," turning on him one of her most agreeable smiles.

"By the merest accident," said Henry, "I yesterday discovered that my amiable friends, lady Lauretta and Miss Montgomery, were here on a visit to Mrs. Halifax; and the general (bowing to him) was so polite and so pressing, that I could not resist the temptation of taking advantage of his permission, and repeating my visit at an early hour this morning."

"We languished for your presence, Elwyn," said lady Lauretta, "for it appeared an age since we had separated."

"I'm sure, Mr. Henry, you ought to be much obliged to that good lady for her kind compliments," said Mrs. Elwyn; then raising her voice rather shrilly in the ear of Mrs. Halifax, she said—"I hope you like your new situation, ma'am? it is very pretty, and very tasty, and all very nice, and very handsome, I'm sure, very so indeed—I say I hope you like England, ma'am?"

Mrs. Halifax laconically answered, "Indifferently."

"I hope we shall be very good neighbours, ma'am, and sociable and friendly together."

"I seldom go out," said Mrs. Halifax. "Child," addressing Miss Letsom, "what *can* you have you been about? there is not the smallest taste of tea in the cup you have given me."

Miss Lawson meanwhile had got the ear of the general, who, through politeness, was obliged to attend, though the reiterated yawnings of lady Lauretta showed that she considered such attention a very great bore; Miss Lawson, however, expatiated on the refined delights of elegant retirement, and on the enjoyments of the metropolis, in the same breath; at one moment she was in India, and the next in England; her volubility exceeded its usual bounds, for she was willing to make a particular impression on the Montgomerys and on the general, and to show them that she was better bred, and better informed, than her “dear Mrs. Elwyn,” and that she was not so full of awkwardness and confusion as her “interesting Mary.”

“Lauretta, child of my affection!” said lady Lauretta, “Elwyn is expiring for harmony—do strike the harp in praise of Bragela.”

“Aye, pray do indulge us,” said Miss Lawson, turning with a familiar air to Lauretta.

“Go to the upper window,” said lady Lauretta, “and let thy floating sounds come trembling o’er mine ear!”

Lauretta gave her hand to Henry Elwyn, who led her beyond the screen. They were no longer seen by the company; but the voice of Miss Montgomery, as it ran through all the trills and turnings of scientific melody, was heard, and the brilliancy of her execution, though not *seen*, was audibly acknowledged.

“Very fine, very fine indeed, madam,” said Mrs. Elwyn, addressing herself at the conclusion of the first song to Mrs. Halifax.

“It is exquisite!” said Miss Lawson, “astonishing!—oh, what heavenly strains! I hope they have not altogether ceased,” looking pleasantly at lady Lauretta, as though she meant through *her* interest to ask for a repetition of them; but lady Lauretta did not notice the appeal, and the performance ended. The performer seemed to be engaged in an interesting conversation with her companion, which their lowered voices, and the obstruction of the screen, prevented from being distinguishable to the rest of the company.

“Very pretty, madam, very so indeed,” said Mrs. Elwyn, addressing Mrs. Halifax.

Mrs. Halifax turned round with a laconic “What?”

“I say music is very pretty, ma’am, very so indeed.”

“Yes, to those who can hear it,” said Mrs. Halifax; “for *my* part, I don’t hear a single note *now*—’tis all in the *piano*—too much in the *piano* for me.”

“Music, it is plain, is not Mrs. Halifax’s *forte*,” said the general.

“Very good, very good indeed,” said Miss Lawson; “oh, what a delightful resource! in hearing *such* sounds, one can forget all that is past, present, and to come!”

Mary Ellis had never sat in more painful restraint than during the foregoing scene; her astonishment on finding Harry Elwyn at Salcombe Lodge—the mortification and embarrassment which his reddening countenance had displayed at their entrance—the easy indifference of lady Lauretta’s manner—the abrupt rudeness of Mrs. Halifax—the fashionable *politesse* of her husband—and the assured ease of Miss Montgomery, all contributed to intimidate her, and to add to her natural diffidence; a thousand lowering and vexatious ideas obtruded themselves on her mind; and she thought Mrs. Elwyn was more tiresome, more silly, more underbred, than she had ever known her, and that she would never conclude her visit.

“I don’t know that I ever saw that sort of music in my life,” said Mrs. Elwyn; “with your permission, ma’am, I will go and look at it.”

“I don’t know what you say,” said Mrs. Halifax; but seeing Mrs. Elwyn rise from her seat, she said—“if you are going, good morning to you.”

Mrs. Elwyn had already moved some paces, but catching the words of Mrs. Halifax, she hastily turned round to say she was not going, when her crimson shawl, entangling itself in one of the burnished ornaments of the screen (and the lady pulling to extricate it with no little force), it fell with a tremendous noise on the floor.

"Heavenly powers! is my Lauretta, is my beautiful Lauretta hurt?" cried lady Lauretta, for the first time raising herself from the couch.

"No, dearest, sweetest mamma!" cried Lauretta, while Elwyn, assisted by Mary, had raised the screen.

"Do not trouble yourselves," said the general; "we'll order it to be put back; it is quite warm enough; and then we shall be able to *see* Miss Montgomery, as well as *hear* her."

"I beg a thousand pardons indeed, sir," said Mrs. Elwyn; "I did not go to do it; it is all the fault of my shawl, and only see how I have torn it—my spick and span new shawl too!—real *India*, sir," shewing it to the general, "which you, who have been used to them, no doubt observed before."

"What *is* all this about?" asked Mrs. Halifax; "what are they putting back the screen for? we are not going to *dance*; we shall all be froze to death."

"I am expiring with heat," said lady Lauretta.

"It is very warm, as your ladyship observed," said Miss Lawson; then seizing the vacated seat of Mrs. Elwyn, she thought it proper to say something to the lady of the house, and said—"I dare say you feel yourself very chilly, ma'am? ours is a cold climate."

"Well, young lady," said Mrs. Elwyn, once more advancing to the harp, "I hope I did not frighten you much? and I hope, Mr. Henry—I hope, sir, I don't interrupt you?"

"Oh, by no means," said Lauretta, laughing.

"Well," continued Mrs. Elwyn, handling the instrument, touching all the gilded parts, and smoothing down the strings with her fingers, "this is very fine, and very grand, very so indeed; this is worth seeing—I say, Mr. Henry, this *is* worth seeing; a very pretty sight, very much so indeed—and cost a good deal, I suppose; now, pray, what might such a thing cost?"

"I don't know," said Lauretta, carelessly.

"No, no, I suppose not," said Mrs. Elwyn; "but your mamma does—I dare say my lady does?"

"Alas! alas! I acknowledge my utter ignorance," said lady Lauretta, shaking her head, "for of what importance is the *cost* of such an article, in comparison to its intrinsic worth? oh, play me something more—for pity's sake play on, loveliest of lovelies! for it will sooth my quivering frame, which has not ceased to vibrate from the recent paroxysm of terror caused by the fall of that tremendous veil."

Lauretta touched the chords of the harp.

"Oh, it steals over my soul, like the sweet south wind upon a bank of violets!" said lady Lauretta.

Suddenly stopping, Miss Montgomery said—"But that young lady *can* play; *she* must give us a song now;" and turning to Henry, she added—"You must ask Miss Ellis to play."

"No, no," answered Elwyn, with quickness, "go on, pray go on—I beseech you go on—I will not be cheated thus—*she* cannot play—she does not know a note—pray, pray—I intreat you continue."

Lauretta *did* continue; she warbled an Italian air, the very air which Henry had been humming the preceding evening. It evinced the power of her voice, and the facility of her execution.

Mary felt the crimson rise to her cheek when Miss Montgomery had asked *her* to play; she was about to confess her total ignorance of the accomplishment, but the crimson retreated from her cheek; it returned with warm tides to her throbbing aching heart, as she heard the mortifying, the hasty manner in which Henry Elwyn had answered for her, as she marked the eager, the impatient earnestness with which he had urged the lovely Lauretta to proceed.

The song at length finished, amidst the thanks of Mrs. Elwyn, the passionate encomiums of Henry, and the loud plaudits of Miss Lawson, who was also got near Miss Montgomery, declaring the harp was always her favourite instrument, &c. &c.

“Well, Mr. Henry,” said Mrs. Elwyn, “and now will you attend us home? it is time for us to take our leave.”

“Oh, no, no; he must not go.”

“You must not quit us to-day, Elwyn,” said lady Lauretta and general Halifax in a breath.

Henry bowed, with the gratified air of a man who put no constraint on his inclinations in remaining; and Mrs. Elwyn sailed round to make her parting congees, and severally to give her invitations to all the party. To Mrs. Halifax she first addressed herself; her repelling “What?” obliged Mrs. Elwyn to repeat what she had before said in a yet louder key.

“I don’t know that *I* shall stir out of the house while I stay in the country; the general is to do as he pleases,” answered the lady, in a very ungracious tone.

Lady Lauretta made a slight inclination of her head, saying—“We must get our friend Elwyn to shew us the way.” Miss Montgomery smiled. Miss Letsom, “seldom went out:” but general Halifax was more diffuse. He said—“that he had no notion of standing upon ceremony in the country; that he should take the earliest opportunity for calling on Mrs. Elwyn; and that he felt highly indebted to Mrs. Elwyn for the obliging favour she had now conferred on Mrs. Halifax.”

The gentlemen attended them to the door; and the general, having assisted Mrs. Elwyn and Miss Lawson into the coach, Henry held out his hand to Mary; but as if she had not observed him, she sprang unassisted into the carriage, and returning the parting bow of general Halifax, it drove away.

## CHAP. VII.

Shall envy then torment your breast?

MOORE.

BOTH Mrs. Elwyn and Miss Lawson immediately broke forth—"Very genteel sensible people, very much so indeed."

"General Halifax, what an insinuating man!"

"Mrs. Halifax, poor lady, a very great invalid, you see."

"Lady Laurretta, what a fascinating creature!—Miss Montgomery, how lovely!"

"And that Miss Letsom, a very civil-behaved lady."

"Oh! my dear Mrs. Elwyn, one and all of them; they are certainly most charming people! and as to Mr. Henry Elwyn—well, *I say* nothing; but I think it requires very little discernment. Well, ma'am, what say you? I do not wonder that *he* finds them quite magnetic: but, my dear Mary, how very grave you are! don't you think Miss Montgomery the loveliest of the lovelies, as her sweet engaging mamma beautifully termed her?"

"I think her very pretty," said Mary.

"Pretty!" repeated Miss Lawson, "nay, my dear Mary, she is beautiful!—she is angelic!—she has a most elegant figure!—her countenance is surely enchanting!—and, if I am not mistaken, Mr. Henry Elwyn thinks so."

"Mr. Henry seems a great favourite with them all, a very great one indeed," said Mrs. Elwyn, drawing up with no little appearance of satisfaction; "and don't wonder at it, for he is really a very fine young man, very so indeed; he will make many hearts ache, I dare say; I only hope he won't throw himself away in a hurry, you see, but take time to look about him."

"Oh, there is little fear of that, ma'am," answered Miss Lawson, "for men know their own value. What should you think of Miss Montgomery for a wife for him?"

"Oh, I *could* have no objection, I am sure, not in the least, to such a genteel young lady as she is—and her mother, a lady of title too! people, you see, Miss Lawson, of very great fashion!"

Mary Ellis was glad when they were returned to the Hall; and released from the talkativeness of her companions, she repaired to her own room. She felt angry with Henry Elwyn, out of temper with herself, out of love with the whole world; she had seldom given way to such unprofitable—to such useless ruminations; she thought of Laurretta Montgomery; the dying strains of her voice yet trilled on her ear; she regretted her own want of musical instruction; she almost accused her departed friend of neglect, in not having taught her this accomplishment. Tears, bitter tears of mortification, of vexation, trickled down her cheeks; but not long were they suffered to flow from these feelings by our virtuous Mary; they were changed into those of self-accusation and penitence; she severely reproached herself for indulging such wayward emotions; she remembered what she was, and how superior, how infinitely superior to any thing which she could have expected, had been her instructions and her acquirements; she reverted to the sentiments of her beloved protectress on this very subject. She had often said—"I prefer the wildly sweet and untaught voice of my Mary, when singing a simple English ballad, or lifting up itself in pious devotion in the evening hymn, to all the affected trillings of the Italian school. I should injure the sweet simplicity I admire, by giving her partial and superficial instruction; and, unless she were to discover an extraordinary genius for music, and an extraordinary capacity in learning, I should think that I was voluntarily trifling with a large portion of her invaluable time."—"How just, how proper were these notions!" thought Mary; "to

*me, to me* how utterly useless would such an acquisition have been! for Miss Montgomery, for *her*—” Mary was again relapsing, for a fresh accession of tears started to her eyes—“Oh, may she be as amiable as she is accomplished!” thought she, “may she be as virtuous as she is beautiful! for does it not appear that she is destined to be the wife of Henry Elwyn, and will it not make Mary Ellis happy to know that he is so?”

This morning had made an entire change in the hopes, in the wishes, in the thoughts of Mary, for though scarcely known to herself, the affectionate manner of Henry towards her since the decease of her first friend, had strengthened the partiality with which she had beheld him from infancy; he had been all the world to her of late, the only being who had felt, who had professed an interest for her; and there was something so isolated and so forlorn in the idea of his making a connexion, which would entirely estrange him, which would render him wholly indifferent to her happiness—“No, *not* indifferent to my happiness,” thought Mary; “why should I suspect it? for shall not *I* feel as anxiously interested for him, though married—though far removed—though separated for ever from me, as though he were still here—as though I daily saw him?”

In taking his usual ride on the morning preceding the one we have been mentioning, Henry Elwyn had encountered a party who attracted his attention. A gentleman was driving a landaulet; an elegant-looking female sat by his side on the box, while another, no less elegant, reclined in the open vehicle; two outriders followed. Supposing that these were a party from Salcombe Lodge, he was riding on with a slight bow, when an exclamation of surprise from the lady on the box almost entranced him with pleasure, for he saw his adorable Lauretta Montgomery; an introduction instantly took place between the gentlemen; and to the mutual surprise expressed by the ladies and Henry on finding their vicinity to each other, he was given to understand, that, till that moment, they had not the remotest idea that they were so near to Elwyn Hall.

Elwyn gently chid Lauretta for leaving London; she pretended to have waited for him till she had imagined he must have forgotten the appointment; but mutual forgiveness was soon extended; general Halifax insisted on his accompanying them to Salcombe Lodge, to spend the day “*en famille*,” and from this visit we have seen his return, and have remarked the unusual exhilaration of his spirits.

Having given his sentiments with regard to visiting the Halifax family, in so very direct a manner on a preceding occasion, and having acted now in such direct opposition to them, Henry thought his conduct would wear a very inconsistent appearance to Mary Ellis; and, strange as it may appear, he had seldom done any thing foolish, imprudent, or inconsistent, but he had mentally asked himself what Mary Ellis would have thought of it?

Thus, in the midst of his impetuosity, his versatility, and his pride, this lord of the creation always had a reference to the *better* judgment of an humble and unambitious female. “Besides,” thought Elwyn, “it would take so much time to give a description of the Montgomerys, his mother would overwhelm him with questions, she would be so eager to introduce herself, he should feel mortified and humiliated at her uncouth manners, and awkward attempts at civility,” in fact, he did not choose to mention *where* he had been, though he was too much elated by the bewitching smiles of Lauretta, and the wine he had taken, not to make it very evident that he had made a very pleasant visit; and setting off the following morning to repeat it, he was discovered in the manner we have related.

Independent of the particular attraction which he found in contemplating the fascinating countenance of Lauretta, Salcombe Lodge was a most pleasant lounge for such a young man as

Elwyn. The general was very agreeable, very well bred, and very fond of company; his table was excellent, and ease was the characteristic of the house. The deafness and taciturnity of Mrs. Halifax were no check to the conversation or the relaxation of the guests, for perceiving that they did not operate upon the host, and that, except as to the forms of politeness, he seemed to consider her as a cypher, they took the tone of their behaviour from him, and amused themselves as they liked, without the remotest reference to her.

The whole village of Norton was in commotion upon the very unexpected intelligence which was now brought home by Miss Lawson from Salcombe Lodge, and which she circulated with great avidity, namely, that "Mr. Henry Elwyn was paying his addresses to Miss Montgomery, who was a charming interesting girl, and formed for him; whose mother, lady Lauretta Montgomery, decidedly the most elegant creature in the world, doated on him, &c. &c. &c."

All the world might, on this subject, have thought with Miss Lawson; it was evident that Henry Elwyn paid the most particular attention to Lauretta; it was as evident that his attentions were well received; but as yet, though he had made many protestations of love, and vows of eternal constancy, he had not, in direct terms, proposed himself as a husband. Elwyn felt a strange repugnance at the idea of being a married man; he doated, passionately doated on Lauretta. The thoughts of beholding her the wife of another, would have driven him to distraction; his intentions were certainly serious, his views were honourable, and the connexion would be advantageous.

The morning when Lauretta quitted London, when she quitted it without his seeing her, when he thought she had purposely eluded his pursuit, that morning he would unhesitatingly have made her his wife, to have secured her to himself; but now that she was within his reach, that he daily contemplated her charms, and basked in the sunshine of her smiles, he was contented to while away the sportive hours of present enjoyment, without eagerly pressing for an union, though it would make the fair Lauretta his for ever.

The visit of Mrs. Elwyn was returned by the visiting part of the Lodge family, namely, the general, lady Lauretta and her daughter; and from that day a brisk intercourse was maintained between the two houses.

Mr. Elwyn was very polite in his reception of the strangers; always an admirer of beauty, he viewed the lovely Lauretta with evident marks of approbation: during the first interview, he exerted himself sufficiently to throw off some of his usual lethargic manner; but this could not last; and the master of the Hall, and the mistress of the Lodge, were *mutes* in every party, except as to the functions of eating and drinking, and then it must be allowed that they both sustained active parts.

It was in vain that Mary Ellis tried to view Miss Montgomery and her ladyship in a favourable light; fain would she have joined in the encomiums which Mrs. Elwyn and Miss Lawson were never weary of lavishing upon them; she frequently chid herself; she frequently asked whether it was not prejudice, caprice, or envy, which prevented her from distinguishing their excellencies as clearly as other people, and perhaps she would unhesitatingly have given sentence against herself, if she had not referred (as she delighted to do on every occasion) to the sentiments of her lost friend—"Would she have approved the eccentric manners of lady Lauretta Montgomery?—Who could doubt the tenderness, the affection of Mrs. Elwyn for herself?—had it not equalled, if not exceeded, that of the most affectionate parent, and yet had *she* ever lavished on her those empassioned, those romantic epithets, which, poured out as they were at all times, and in all companies, seemed to render their sincerity very doubtful?—The studied, yet

apparently careless attitudes of lady Lauretta too, the loose costume of her dress, were these in conformity with her situation? with that of a dignified and virtuous widow?—Did the entire devotion of general Halifax (his neglect of his wife, his attention to her), did her sufferance of his attention render him a character which Mrs. Elwyn would have esteemed?” Mary could answer here undoubtingly in the negative. “And Miss Montgomery, could such an ambition for display, such an unbounded desire for admiration, such taste for coquetry, such a familiarity with every man with whom she conversed, such a contempt for domestic occupation, such an eager ear for flattery, could these have been thought in cononance with the rules of virtue, modesty, and retiredness, which Mrs. Elwyn had been used to term the best acquisitions of a young female? here also Mary could answer by the same monosyllable; and feeling as she did for Henry Elwyn the most partial regard, admiring his virtues, while she saw and lamented his faults (faults which had their origin in the early indulgence of Mr. Elwyn, and which had been strengthened by the natural bias of his own disposition), she grieved at the idea of his forming a connexion, which had, in her estimation, little prospect of affording him permanent happiness.

From frequently revolving on this subject, and not having learnt the art of concealment, Mary Ellis, at each succeeding interview, grew more reserved and constrained in the presence of lady Lauretta and Miss Montgomery; the latter observed it; and imagining that Mary was jealous of the attentions of Henry Elwyn towards her, she always contrived to engross them entirely when Mary was present; more than once, the expression of Elwyn’s countenance had given Lauretta a momentary feel of uneasiness, for when she had uttered an equivocal expression, or given an unusual license to her *gaité de cœur*, she had seen the instantaneous turn of his eye cast towards Mary, as if to observe whether such sentiments and such sprightliness met with her approbation. To make that low-born girl an umpire of her conduct, was not to be borne; and Lauretta, under the mask of levity and good-humour, had often contrived to make Mary appear in an awkward light before Henry Elwyn, while in his absence, a cutting expression, or a malicious sarcasm, taught our poor orphan to remember the vast disparity between herself and the granddaughter of the earl of Levensdale; yet, perhaps there was not much to boast of but the high-sounding name in this alliance to nobility.

In early life, lady Lauretta had formed a clandestine connexion with a young Scotchman, of the name of Montgomery. Her ladyship had a small independence; her husband not a shilling. The maledictions of the earl pursued the young couple; they embarked for India; Montgomery got into a military capacity in that country, and died in a year or two previous to the appearance of his widow at Cheltenham.

Lady Lauretta returned in the suite of general and Mrs. Halifax, and her imposing air and manner completely eclipsed her companion; and as we have seen, lady Lauretta’s camels, lady Lauretta’s retinue, and lady Lauretta’s jewels, had made a considerable noise, and had preceded her to Cheltenham.

With general Halifax lady Lauretta had long been on the most intimate terms; having a large fortune, he was coming to enjoy it in England, and to revel in Asiatic splendour on British shores. Lady Lauretta’s finances were very limited; her manner of living had been very extravagant; her taste for expence had been boundless; and her disregard of every prudential maxim had kept her husband poor, and she had been obliged for pecuniary assistance to general Halifax: but on arriving in England, she found that a great change had taken place in her affairs; her father was dead, and, dying without male issue, the title was extinct. His anger at her disobedience had continued to his dying hour, and he had made a distant relative the sole heir of his property. A maiden sister of lord Levensdale’s, however, feeling a compassion for her *grand-*



*niece*, had bequeathed lady Lauretta an annuity during the life of her daughter; but in the event of her ladyship's surviving her daughter, this annuity was to drop off also to the heir of lord Levensdale.

Montgomery's family had been low, but he had risen to the rank of a colonel; and the meanness of her father's origin was wholly forgotten by the fair Lauretta, who thought only of her maternal GRAND-father, the earl of Levensdale.

Mary could almost laugh at the entire change which Miss Lawson's manner had undergone towards her; it was no longer "dear Mary," and "interesting girl," but "child," and "Miss Ellis;" she was now frequently overlooked, while Miss Montgomery was appealed to on all occasions; and even the flattery and obsequiousness of Miss Lawson appeared grateful to the ear of Lauretta. To Mrs. Elwyn, Miss Lawson was still the most civil of the civil, for she would adopt her sentiments to all parties with whom it was her interest to accord; but the opinions of such an insignificant *know-nothing* girl as Mary Ellis, were not worth inquiring into; and Mary's would not have been very *pleasing* to her, could she have looked into her bosom, at the moment when she had detected the sly and mischievous manner in which she had joined Lauretta in ridiculing some silly remarks of Mrs. Elwyn's, and when her own encouragement had been the origin of its utterance.

Miss Lawson was now a daily visitor at Salcombe Lodge; she racked the whole vicinity for delicacies for Mrs. Halifax; she admired the graceful attitudes of lady Lauretta, and diverted the attention of Mrs. Halifax when the general appeared to be admiring them also; and she did not intrude with her usual volubility on the *têtes-à-tête* of Lauretta with Elwyn. Mrs. Halifax said—"She was a civil young woman enough," which was going much further than she usually did; lady Lauretta languished out that "She had discernment;" and the general called "Lawson a kind, considerate creature;" Lauretta said—"She was very good-natured;" and Miss Letsom was silent, because she was never to think (much less speak) but when applied to.

Elated with her intimacy, and the firm footing which she had established for herself in this "princely mansion," as she called the Lodge, Miss Lawson could scarcely tell whether she moved on her head or her heels, as she daily perambulated from the Lodge to the Hall, or the Hall to the Lodge.

The Lumleys and Mrs. Buxton now seldom saw her, except when they met to play cards at the Hall; for though Mrs. Elwyn liked the family at Salcombe Lodge very much indeed, and thought them all very charming sensible people, yet she thought the Norton coterie very charming also, and enjoyed a rubber of whist in an evening with them, and hearing their gossips, *rather* more than the Eastern ease and the Eastern metaphors of lady Lauretta, and the Italian airs and Italian graces of her daughter. Mrs. Elwyn felt *grand* and *fine* with one party, but *snug* and *comfortable* with the other; and however she might fancy that she liked grandeur and finery, yet the simple Ellen Harley was only at home in common life, and with the common amusements of common minds.

## CHAP. VIII.

Here nought but candour reigns, indulgent ease,  
Good-natured lounging, sauntering up and down.  
THOMSON'S CASTLE OF INDOLENCE.

THINGS continued in this situation some weeks, and no incident had occurred worth relating. The summer was rapidly passing by, and the weather was delightfully pleasant.

One evening Mary was returning from a walk which she had been taking to the village of Norton, in order to visit some poor pensioners of her late friend, who were still happy objects of *her* attention, and whom she sedulously tried to prevent from feeling the extent of their loss; at the entrance of the park she was overtaken by a gentleman on horseback, who was attended by a servant; on passing Mary, he checked his horse, looked at her for an instant, and then said in a tone of surprise—"If I am not greatly mistaken, I have the pleasure of seeing Miss Montgomery?"

Mary turned her countenance upon him, a countenance which, glowing with exercise, had never looked to more advantage than at this moment, and answered—"Indeed, sir, you *are* greatly mistaken; my name is not Montgomery."

"Ten thousand pardons!" exclaimed the gentleman; "I never was more deceived. But now, madam, will you have the goodness to inform me if Harry Elwyn is at home?"

Mary answered that he was at a house in the vicinity, but would be at home in the evening: the stranger thanked her, and rode on; and on her entering the house, she found him sitting with Mrs. Elwyn, and was by her introduced to him with—"Miss Mary, this gentleman is an intimate friend of Mr. Henry's. This, you see, is Mr. Fitzallan—you have heard of him often; and this, Mr. Fitzallan, is Miss Mary—this is Miss Mary Ellis, sir."

Fitzallan bowed, and again asked pardon for his recent mistake. "It is evident," said he, "that there must be a very great likeness, for I never saw Miss Montgomery but once, and had not the remotest idea of her being in this neighbourhood; but when I addressed you, I could have sworn that I was speaking to that lady."

"We were never thought alike before, I believe," said Mary, blushing.

"Never," said Mrs. Elwyn; "but you see likenesses strike people differently; for my part, I don't see it; Miss Montgomery, sir, is a very beautiful young lady—very pretty—very so indeed; for that matter, Miss Mary is *very well*—yes, she is *very well*."

"No matter, madam, I still retain my opinion; the two ladies are certainly extremely alike as to height and figure; that must be evident to every one; the *expression* of the countenance may differ, and I think Miss Ellis is thinner than Miss Montgomery; but surely the features are very similar?"

"Well, sir, you will have it so I see," said Mrs. Elwyn; "we'll tell Mr. Henry about it when he comes home; he will laugh, I dare say—yes, we will tell him about it."

Fitzallan had promised to pay Henry a visit, without specifying the time; and being at this period free from any engagement, he had not thought it necessary to apprize him of his intention. Henry Elwyn was rejoiced to see him; he had great pleasure in his conversation and society; the presence of Fitzallan seemed to infuse general life into the circle; he was animated, cheerful, and well-informed, well-looking, and well-bred, the only son of a baronet, and heir to a large fortune.

Lauretta's attractions were all displayed; she ran for him through all her sweet smiles; she trilled through all her witching airs; and *Elwyn* almost accused her of coquetry—of lightness, when he saw and heard her; but again he recollected the undeviating sweetness of her manners, which was displayed to every one who came within the vortex of its benign influence; and he remembered that if asked to sing, her right hand must forget its cunning, if she did not sing melodiously. "Skilled in the mazes of her sex's art," Lauretta delighted in raising the jealous fears of Henry:—"what right had *he* to assume any authority over her conduct, when he had not yet made her a direct offer of his hand?—might not the attentions of Mr. Fitzallan facilitate this desirable event?"

The attentions of Mr. Fitzallan, however, were not particular; he did not mean, nay more, he did not wish them to be so; his manner towards Lauretta might often be translated into oblique raillery, and implied sarcasm, rather than pointed compliment, or expressed admiration; but Lauretta possessed a pleasant mode of translating, with respect to herself, and had a consciousness of manner about her, which made the most trivial and unimportant nothings addressed to her by a beau, appear of interesting moment.

Two days after the arrival of Fitzallan at the Hall, an invitation to dinner was received from Salcombe Lodge, and accepted with due consequence by Mrs. Elwyn. Mary was included in the invitation, and she dared not refuse, though she would much rather have staid at home.

Mr. Elwyn exerted himself to appear on this occasion, for Miss Lawson had whispered that the general had a turtle just arrived from London; and the idea of this savoury viand, and of the old Madeira (which had *three times* doubled the Cape), with which it would be qualified, acted as a stimulus to his epicurean imagination.

Miss Lawson was now become an *indispensable* at Salcombe Lodge; therefore, as Henry and his friend Fitzallan chose to walk, she got a lift in the coach from Mrs. Elwyn: as they passed through the village, and the carriage overtaking Mrs. and Miss Lumley, who were walking to the same place, Miss Lawson loudly vociferated from the window as she passed them—"An't you broiled to death?" and having asked the question, she very consequentially drew in her head, and left her friends to *walk* and *broil* without troubling herself for the answer.

The ladies at the Lodge were already assembled in the drawing-room, lady Lauretta reclining negligently with her back towards Mrs. Halifax, who, taking her pinch of snuff, seemed as perfectly easy in her way, as was her elegant visitor in hers. Lauretta was reading at a window, on a low seat, her feet extended on an ottoman, when the party made their entrance; she partly raised her eyes from the book, partly bent her head, and then resumed her studies; while Miss Letsom, who was engaged at her netting, rose from her seat, very obligingly saw the company accommodated, and, by her quiet attentions, tried to make up for the deficiency of those around her.

"We are very early, I believe, ma'am?" said Mrs. Elwyn, having bustled through her compliments, and now thinking it right to address the mistress of the house—"But you know, as I said to you, Mr. Elwyn, sir, said I, it is better to be too early than too late; Mistress Halifax will be ready for us—and so you are, you see, ma'am."

"I believe I am deafer than ever," said Mrs. Halifax, half applying her silver trumpet to her ear, yet with so indifferent an air, as if she had said—"No matter whether I hear it or not."

Mrs. Elwyn, however, was of a contrary opinion, for she very leisurely repeated her speech verbatim, in a louder key. Lady Lauretta shrunk back, as if her nerves were quite wounded by the sound; and Miss Letsom, perceiving that her ladyship's uneasiness, and the cause of it, were both observed by Mary, tried to engage her in *conversation*. The circle was

presently enlarged by the entrance of the Lumleys and Mr. Munden; while Miss Lawson was renewing her questions to these ladies concerning their broiling walk, Mr. Munden introduced himself to the party.

He was a bachelor of some fortune in the neighbourhood; a blunt man of fifty years of age, who assumed to himself the privilege of saying what he liked, and living as he pleased; and who fancied that nobody had a right to take umbrage at any thing he said, let him be as rude as he pleased; he had some good qualities, but with so many particularities, it cannot be supposed that he was a general favourite: he was very uncertain with regard to his habits; sometimes he visited frequently, sometimes he shut himself up entirely; if he saw any thing he disliked in any house where he visited, he quitted it abruptly, and without giving any reason for his conduct; he was very partial to the late Mrs. Elwyn, but after her death he had never called at the Hall.

There was an unoffending good-nature about Mr. Elwyn, which seemed to bespeak forbearance; and as he cordially, though silently, held out his hand to Mr. Munden, he checked the *sarcastic* compliment of congratulation which was about to issue from his lips; and surveying his countenance, he said—"How in the world is it?—you are got much fatter, Elwyn; yet, hang me if I think you look the better for it." Then entirely passing over Mrs. Elwyn, he came to Mary Ellis, and chucking her under the chin—"Why, child," said he, "*you* are shrunk into a skeleton?" then pinching her cheek, he said—"Where is the rosy colour which I used to see here?" The action and the inquiry were both calculated to bring it back to its wonted station. Mary recollected when she had last seen Mr. Munden; tears were starting to her eyes; he moved off, and addressing lady Lauretta, said—"Pray is not your ladyship afraid of losing the use of your limbs, by always keeping them up in this manner? Upon my conscience, I believe you lay in this very attitude the last time I saw you, and that was a fortnight ago."

"And shall be there the *next*, in all human probability," said lady Lauretta, languidly; "I have no energy, no elasticity left."

"And never will, if you do not exert yourself," said Mr. Munden; "my life for it, if you would get up early of a morning, walk a couple of miles before breakfast, and set yourself about some employment, you would soon look, move, and *sit*, like a rational being."

Lady Lauretta closed her eyes, to show her utter inattention.

"I am afraid the young gentlemen will make you wait, ma'am," said Mrs. Elwyn, applying herself to Mrs. Halifax's auricular assistant.

"What do you say?" asked the lady; "oh, I understand you now; the general and your son are together; I did not comprehend you at first."

"Mrs. Elwyn did not speak of *your* young man, it seems, but of two who are coming from the Hall," said Mr. Munden, in a key which again threw all the nerves of lady Lauretta into disorder.

"Oh, I believe I had forgot; I think there is another besides, a Mr. Fitz—Fitz-something, I am sure I forget what."

"Here comes the general, I'm sure," said Miss Lawson, "for I smell the otto of roses."

"Arabian gales are not more sweet!" said lady Lauretta, in a low voice.

The general entered, unfolding his newly-scented handkerchief of finest cambric. He paid his compliments to all his guests, in a most pleasing and courtier-like manner; just touched (or pretended to touch) the tip of his wife's finger, as he passed her, with an "How are you, my love?" and then, not seeing a chair near him, he carelessly threw himself on the arm of the sofa which supported lady Lauretta.

“Order dinner to be served when it is ready,” said Mrs. Halifax to Miss Letsom.

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“You forget our two beaux, my dearest love,” said the general.

“Do as you are bid, child,” said Mrs. Halifax, and Miss Letsom obeyed.

“Oh, the gentlemen will be here in a minute,” said Miss Lawson.

“I dare say they will, I dare say they will,” said Mrs. Elwyn.

Miss Montgomery was still sitting with her book in her hand, and her back to the open window, which was even with the ground; sometimes she adjusted a stray lock, sometimes her eyes fell on the book: at the moment when Mrs. Elwyn spoke, the eyes of another also fell on the book, and these lines were audibly repeated:—

“And ne’er did Grecian chisel trace  
A nymph, a naiad, or a grace,  
Of finer form, or lovelier face!”

The three lines were spoken with emphasis, and distinctly heard, *before* the “Oh! Mr. Fitzallan, how could you frighten me so?” by Miss Montgomery, was answered by the responsive scream of lady Laurretta, as she saw the start of her child.

The truant beaux walked into the window, and followed Laurretta, who hastening to her mother, cried—“My angel, beautiful mamma! say have I alarmed you?”

“No, child of my heart! best beloved of my soul! for ‘shouldst thou sit upon my head and eyes, I shall rejoice, for thou art gentle\*!’”

“Hang me though if I should rejoice at any such thing,” said Mr. Munden.

“E’en the slight harebell rais’d its head.  
Elastic from her airy tread,”

said Fitzallan.

“Ah, that is all very well in poetry,” said Mr. Munden, “because poetry is a fiction altogether.”

“And lady Laurretta Montgomery was speaking in blank verse, and that is poetry too, you know, sir,” said Miss Lawson.

“And poetry, they say, madam, is prose run mad,” said Munden.

“Mamma generally speaks in blank verse,” said Laurretta.

“It suits the redundancy of her imagination,” said the general, in a low voice.

“Then, ma’am,” said Mr. Munden, “as I acknowledge myself to be a prosing old fellow, will you be so good when you address *me*, to try to speak in prose, and then perhaps I may have some chance of understanding you.”

“Lord! Mr. Munden,” said Miss Lumley, “I do believe you thought lady Laurretta asked *you* to sit upon her head.”

“Oh, by no means,” said Munden; “but in general company, the conversation should, I think, be adapted to general comprehension; I do not understand the tropes and figures of Eastern metaphor, for my part.”

“But if you will have the goodness to follow me,” said the general, “I hope we shall see something which we shall *all* of us be able to understand;” and he took the hand of lady Laurretta to lead her to the dining-room. The guests followed in order; and, according to the established custom of the house, general Halifax took the head of the table, lady Laurretta gracing his right

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\* Bahar Danush.

hand. Mrs. Halifax took her wonted station at the side; and Miss Letsom, quietly occupied in carving for, and assisting the company, filled the bottom seat.

The dinner passed as dinners usually do; little conversation that could be so termed, much unmeaning politeness, much apparent satisfaction, and much approbation of the good things, to which the lady of the house did as much honour as any of the guests. Fitzallan and Henry Elwyn were placed, one on each side of Laretta; they shared her smiles between them; and she was almost exclusively the object of their attention. It was in vain that Miss Lumley lounged herself into various attitudes, and tried to copy Miss Montgomery in every variation; the clumsy heaviness of her form could not borrow the airy flexibility of her model; and what might charm in the one, could not fail of disgusting in the other.

Miss Lawson finding that she was not doomed to be the first in request with the beaux, adopted another plan, and endeavoured to be the first in favour with the belles; she was most assiduously attentive to lady Laretta, declared and vowed (upon her honour too) that "poor Mrs. Halifax ate nothing;" and as to her "dear Miss Montgomery, she looked so wicked, that there was positively no bearing of her."

The Lumleys and Mary, even Mrs. Elwyn, were now excused from her attentions, and escaped her remarks, for they were insignificant beings in comparison of the trio at Salcombe Lodge (Miss Letsom, it seems, being left entirely out of the calculations of others, was not *reckoned* upon by Miss Lawson); now and then, indeed, valuing herself upon her superior knowledge, she would ask Mrs. Lumley if she ever saw such a dish as that before? and whether she liked another? and once she reminded Miss Lumley, "that her long walk had made her look quite jaded."

Glances of mortification and ill-concealed contempt were exchanged between the mother and daughter, and they seemed as plainly to say, as words could have made it appear, "Take care, Miss Lawson, or perhaps you may be cut out at our next whist-party."

Next to Miss Letsom, and at the bottom of the table, Mary Ellis tried to feel herself at ease, and to console herself, for the utter disregard of the rest of the company, in her good-natured civility.

The behaviour of this lady naturally excited her admiration, while she seemed too insignificant to be noticed by any individual, except in the way of a question or command; she saw that *every* individual had a portion of her attention and civility; and that the obligingness of her behaviour had nothing in it affected or overstrained, but seemed naturally to proceed from the goodness of her disposition. There was no assumption in her manner; there was nothing striking in her appearance; she scarcely ventured on a remark; her answers were generally confined to monosyllables; she obeyed the orders of Mrs. Halifax with prompt cheerfulness, and bore her peevish chidings with undeviating patience. "How would such conduct have been admired by my ever-lamented protectress!" thought Mary; "how would she have applauded such an utter forgetfulness of self!" While mentally making this remark, her soft eyes were fixed on the countenance of Miss Letsom, as if she would discover whether it was to fortitude or to insensibility, to servile dependence or to genuine humility, that she was to impute her behaviour; but the transient flush which illumined her care-worn countenance, as Mrs. Halifax said, in a discordant key—"Letsom, why, child, you must be asleep, I think; you *know* I never eat the part you have sent me," proved that her feelings were not dead; and the sweetness with which she addressed herself to Mary, evinced that she was equally humble to all, and that she could be obliging to those who were powerless as herself, and from whom no return was to be expected.

Mary Ellis was prone to behold every human being in a favourable light; she felt a sympathy for

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Miss Letsom; she fancied that there was a similarity in their situations, and she felt a kindred spark of emulation glow within her breast, as she hoped to conduct herself with equal forbearance and propriety; but, ah! the truant heart, the truant eyes of Mary frequently wandered towards that part of the table where, in all the *pride of conquest*, Henry Elwyn sat, and where, in all the *pride of conscious beauty*, Lauretta listened to his conversation: in respect to herself, the utter disregard, the almost contemptuous neglect of Miss Montgomery, did not give her the smallest uneasiness; but was it not plain, that a woman who could act with insolence to her own sex, who could reserve her smiles and her agreeable qualities exclusively for the other, was it not plain that such a woman was not formed either with a mind or temper calculated for domestic happiness? But the sanguine, the enthusiastic Henry, saw in her perfection's self; he basked in her smiles, he lived only in her presence; and it was not in the *power* of Mary Ellis, it was scarcely in her *wish* to break the charm.

When the ladies returned to the drawing-room, lady Lauretta resumed her usual situation; Mrs. Halifax was assisted by Miss Letsom to her armed chair, where having had a pillow placed at her back, and taken two pinches of snuff, she very leisurely composed herself for her afternoon's nap, saying—"Pray, good people, entertain yourselves;" and the good people endeavoured to do as they were bidden.

Mrs. Elwyn proposed a walk round the gardens; Lauretta affected not to hear; and Miss Lawson, choosing at this juncture to pay her court to her, affected also to be equally deaf. The Lumleys, however, did not think it decorous to be deaf to the proposition; and Miss Letsom, looking at Mrs. Halifax, and seeing by her "sealed eyelids," that she might be spared, offered her arm to Mary Ellis, and followed Mrs. Elwyn and the Lumleys. The door was scarcely closed, ere Lauretta said—"Who is that poor girl whom the Elwyns hawk about?"

"Oh," answered Miss Lawson, "she is a *protégée* of the *last* Mrs. Elwyn's."

"And has she descended to the present, with the old clothes, and the bed-patches of her predecessor?"

Miss Lawson laughed and said—"How wicked you are!"

"Oh, not at all; but one is sick of seeing the *various* wardrobes, of hearing of the *motley* patches, and looking at that *stationary* countenance, that immoveable form!"

"I have heard Miss Ellis thought pretty," said Miss Lawson.

"Pretty?—impossible! she has no action—no manner—no grace; has she, my beautiful mamma?"

"Star of the east! I have never let my eyes light on her countenance; thy presence so completely engrosses my whole of vision, that it has no vacancy for other objects."

"My dearest, sweetest mamma!" said Lauretta, clasping her hands and kissing the forehead of lady Lauretta.

"My angel girl!" whispered her ladyship.

"What relation is this Miss Ellis to the Elwyns?" asked Lauretta.

"Ellis," repeated lady Lauretta, and she half raised her head from the sofa.

"Ellis is the name by which she is *known*," said the voluble Miss Lawson, glad to have interested lady Lauretta, and delighted at being able to gratify the curiosity of her "angel girl," even though she decorated the story with a few additions which had not truth for their basis.

The story which Mrs. Elwyn *told* of her adopting a child, whose parents were drowned at sea during a storm at Brighton, was animadverted upon by the narrator, and she put the question to her hearers, whether it was likely that Mrs. Elwyn would have consented to separate the *twin* sisters, whether it was *probable* that another lady should have started up at the same moment to

adopt the other, and that Mrs. Elwyn should never be able to discover her name, or to get any clue by which to trace her.—“With *Mr.* Elwyn,” continued Miss Lawson, “the story passed current; he had *his* reasons for not minutely investigating at *that* period, for then it was that he first introduced his son to the Hall; we all know *his* story, poor man; all the world have made their comments upon it; and while he has quietly borne the odium of *that* world, Mrs. Elwyn was cried up as a prodigy, extolled as an angel, and her adoption of this *motherless* child was applauded as a sterling and disinterested act of charity—Had Mr. Elwyn’s heart been *read*, I believe—but he was an easy, quiet mortal.”

“I dare say it was her *own* child,” said Laretta.

“Mrs. Elwyn certainly repeated her visit to Brighton *earlier than usual* that summer, and staid *later*; altogether it was a most unaccountable history,” said Miss Lawson. “I was not at home when the *infant* was first introduced, but I confess, that I have always been one of the *unbelievers*, though at Norton, at *that* time, one should have been thought *worse* than an infidel to have *doubted* the story, or the kidnapping of the other bantling. Mrs. Elwyn had *bought* herself a name; but I am always inclined to judge from probabilities, rather than possibilities.”

Lady Laretta smiled—“Such an incident,” said she, “would have been more likely to have happened under the romantic influence of our eastern region, than in your colder climate.”

“Certainly,” said Miss Lawson; “your ladyship sees I am persuaded how entirely fabulous the whole story must have been. In order to wind up the catastrophe, and to render the finale complete, these *twin* heroines ought to meet again—be recognised by one another as sisters.”

“And be *twin* stars of perfection!” said Laretta, with a laugh.

“What a brilliant, what a lively imagination you have got!” said Miss Lawson.

“Have I?” asked Laretta, with an air of would-be innocent simplicity, which was meant to conceal the feelings of gratified vanity.

“At one time, and during the *last* Mrs. Elwyn’s life, a match was talked of between Mr. Henry Elwyn and Mary Ellis.”

“That *would* have been ridiculous enough,” said Laretta, biting her lips.

“I confess I did not *then* think it *probable*, for Henry Elwyn ought to have looked higher—*now*—” and the retreating eyes of Laretta conveyed the implication better than Miss Lawson could have done it by concluding the sentence.

## CHAP. IX.

“For still my heart regards thy weal,  
Warmly, as it was wont to do.”

IN the mean time, Mary Ellis and Miss Letsom had got very sociable; Mary found Miss Letsom very sensible, well informed, and well behaved; but the natural diffidence of her manner had been so encreased by her situation, that time was required to develop her character; and it was in retirement, and in private conversation like the present, that she was best seen and best known.

The virtues and the graces of our Mary, too, like those of her companion, blossomed in the shade; she had talents for conversation, but it was conversation where she could be free from restraint, where she felt assured that the sentiments which she uttered would be received with forbearance and consideration; she felt chilled and silenced by the harsh manner of Mrs. Halifax, by the rude *nonchalance* of Lauretta; but her heart expanded itself with modest warmth to meet the encouraging kindness of Miss Letsom. It was seldom that Mary had passed so pleasant an hour; but while pleased in each other's society, they neither of them forgot the attention due to Mrs. Elwyn, or to the Lumleys.

Freed from the shackles of a circle to which she was unaccustomed, Mrs. Elwyn frisked about the gardens like a child escaped from school; she admired every thing she saw, “declared that Miss Montgomery was a most lovely, beautiful creature! very so indeed;” asked each of the ladies over and over again, whether they did not think so too? and *more* than hinted that her partiality for Mr. Henry was very apparent.

Mrs. Lumley found herself necessitated to agree with Mrs. Elwyn, yet silently wondered at *Mr. Henry's* taste, as she looked with the partiality of a mother at the bold unmeaning stare of her tall daughter's prominent eyes; and Miss was mentally *vowing* that she had been a great fool, to expose herself to such a scorching walk, to sit in buckram, to be entirely overlooked by the men, and to finish with such a stupid saunter round the garden. She felt that she had forcibly realized the words of the preacher; and that the day which had dawned in vanity, was likely to close in vexation of spirit.

Miss Letsom looked apprehensively at her watch two or three times during the last quarter of an hour; she knew the probable duration of Mrs. Halifax's nap, and that *she* should be in instant requisition on her first opening her eyes; that lady was in the act of doing so when they entered the room, and said, in an hurried tone—“Now, Letsom, you may ring; I am ready for my coffee.”

“We have had a pleasant walk, ma'am, very so indeed,” said Mrs. Elwyn, applying her voice to the ear of Mrs. Halifax; but she had not the art (though she had the wish) of rendering it intelligible to that lady.

“Yes, yes,” answered she, “I have had a pleasant nap enough; I suspect you have been doing the same; its very natural; after making a good dinner, it refreshes one almost as much as a pinch of snuff,” leisurely applying her finger and thumb to the snuff-box.—“Come, Letsom, make haste with the coffee, child.”

Tea and coffee were both brought; and while the room was lighting up with almost innumerable lights, Mary gently slid to the tea-table, and assisted Miss Letsom.

Breaking from Miss Lawson, with whom, till this moment, she had been deeply engaged, Miss Montgomery walked to her harp, and leaning over it, she seemed to be invoking the spirit

of harmony. Lights were placed on each side of the instrument, and she appeared as if going to strike the trembling strings, when the door opened, and the gentlemen entered. Lauretta's back was towards it, and it did not suit the *rapt tenor of her soul* to look with "vulgar ken" to see who entered. With slow and heavy step, came Mr. Elwyn; he placed himself near the tea-table; then entered Mr. Munden; he was followed by the others. Mr. Munden stole towards Miss Montgomery, and placing one of his hands on each of her shoulders, he said—"I did not know that you were acquainted with this instrument." Lauretta started, and frowningly turned round, as if she was not used to so rough a salute. Mr. Munden started also, as he said—"Pon honour, madam, I ask your pardon; I wouldn't have alarmed you for all the world, for we all were witnesses of *your* nervousness (as they call it) this morning; but I declare to you, that I took you for that silent little girl, that I now see is snugly sitting at the corner of the tea-table." Lauretta half turned away, a great deal more disconcerted at the mistake than the apology; a contemptuous silence was all the notice she took of his speech. "Whew, whew!" said Mr. Munden, "hang me if I do not think there is a great likeness between those two young ones—what say you, ma'am?" turning to Mrs. Elwyn.

"I have heard the remark made before, sir," said Mrs. Elwyn; "Mr. Fitzallan remarked it."

"Oh then it seems it is quite an old story," said Lauretta, colouring.

"How perfectly ridiculous!" said Miss Lawson, in a whisper, and addressing herself to Lauretta. "Come, were you not going to witch us with your charming melody?—perfection's self!" for taking the cue from lady Lauretta, and having grown into considerable importance with herself, during her confidential communication in the afternoon, Miss Lawson now thought it incumbent upon her to be orientally rhapsodic when addressing herself to Lauretta.

"It appears there may be *twin stars* of perfection," said Lauretta, sarcastically, and *almost* pointingly. "You know I made that remark before. And so *you* thought *me* like Miss—Miss—I forget her name—I always *do* forget her name," continued Lauretta, addressing Fitzallan, and applying, as if to be helped out in the name by Miss Lawson.

"Ellis," said Miss Lawson.

"Ellis—aye, so it is."

"Ellis," repeated Mrs. Elwyn, "you see, is something like Elwyn, but not quite; both syllables are not the same, but both names begin with an E and an L."

"Yes, I certainly thought there was a likeness when I first had the pleasure of seeing Miss Ellis," answered Fitzallan.

Henry Elwyn was tired of the discussion; he did not wish it to be continued; he saw that it did not please Lauretta, that it confused Mary Ellis (though he had leaned on the back of her chair as if to screen her from observation), and that if pursued, his mother would still further expose herself; so hastily walking towards the harp, he said, addressing himself to Lauretta—"Why tantalize us with assuming this attitude? we are all ear."

"Say rather all *eye*," said Lauretta, with cutting severity, and colouring as she darted an angry glance towards the chair where sat Mary Ellis, and where Elwyn had been leaning while he sipped his coffee.

This little trait of feminine jealousy was calculated to gratify the vanity of such a man as Elwyn; his sober judgment might have condemned it, but his judgment was not sober; he seized the fair hand of Lauretta, and pressed it to his lips, as he asked her—"Why she was so cruel?" He placed the music-book before her, and was opening to a favourite song; half playfully, half fretfully, she resisted his entreaties. In the scuffle, one of the wax-lights fell on the lap of Lauretta; her dress of lightest, finest muslin, was in flames! she uttered a piercing scream, and

flew towards the sofa with the rapidity of lightning; with almost equal rapidity she was followed by Henry and by Mary, but not till the screamings of lady Laurretta were added to those of her daughter; and the flames were communicated from Laurretta's dress to the recumbent drapery of her ladyship. Elwyn eagerly tried to extinguish them by wrapping the skirts of his coat round Laurretta, while Mary, with great presence of mind, snatching up a shawl of camel's hair, folded it round the writhing form of her mother. All was confusion, hurry, and apprehension. Mrs. Halifax kept crying out—"What are you all about there? are you determined to burn down the house; I'm frightened out of my senses."

The general not attending to his lady, eagerly crowded round her guests; the flames were happily extinguished; and, more frightened than hurt, lady Laurretta was conveyed to her apartment by the general and Fitzallan. Laurretta was following her "dear angel mamma," and still screaming from unappeased terror as she leant on the arm of Mary, and was about to receive the eagerly-proffered assistance of Henry on the other side, when Mary perceiving that his hand was scorched, instantaneously relinquished the care of Laurretta, as she caught his arm, and cried out—"Henry, dear Henry, are *you* not hurt?"

The sudden inquiry, the earnest, yet tender tone in which it was made, the natural action which had accompanied it, spoke volumes to the heart of Elwyn; he saw for one moment *only* Mary Ellis; he remembered only Mary Ellis, the gentle companion of his early days; he answered—"No, Mary, dearest Mary, it is nothing—a mere trifle—do not alarm yourself."

Overpowered by the sudden revulsion of her feelings, overpowered by her exertions, overpowered by the kind address of Henry, abashed and confused at having had so many witnesses of her behaviour, Mary was only recalled to herself by the lengthened screams of Laurretta; again she offered her arm, but she now found herself superseded by Miss Lawson; and Fitzallan having re-entered, had usurped the place which Elwyn would have taken.

"You are a very good girl," said Mr. Munden, tapping the cheek of Mary; "you see the advantage of a little strength of mind and self-possession—screaming and inaction are equally futile; it is promptitude and decision which can alone be effective, in a situation like that which has recently occurred—You had a good instructress, my girl."

"I had the *best*, sir," whispered Mary, while tears rushed to her eyes.

Mr. Elwyn, roused to some appearance of animation in the idea of Henry having met with an hurt, insisted on having the coach ordered immediately, and on his taking a seat in it; Mrs. Elwyn was of his opinion, but said—"She did not know what to say about Miss Lawson, who was a civil obliging lady as could be met with."

Henry begged he might be allowed to walk home, assuring his father that he had received no material hurt; but he was overruled; and Mrs. Elwyn said, that—"If he was to go out in the evening air, he would *most* likely get an inflammation to his hand, a mortification must then *certainly* ensue, and *perhaps* it might not stop there."

Mrs. Lumley remarked that it was a beautiful evening, and may be *now* Miss Lawson would have no dislike to a walk, as there was no *fear of a broil*.

During the ride home, Henry Elwyn was unusually silent and thoughtful, yet he answered the inquiries which were made to him from time to time concerning his hand, with the utmost good-nature.

Initiated in the arts of healing by her beloved friend, Mary was followed by Elwyn into her own little apartment, and there, while attended by Mrs. Elwyn, who declared, that "it made her shudder to look at it," she made use of those applications which had been found beneficial in such cases, and, with gentle caution, bound up his scorched hand; while admiring her readiness,

her activity, and her humanity, Elwyn looked at her with eyes of speaking admiration, and thanked her with all the warmth of gratitude.

Under the care of Mary, her patient soon mended; by her advice, he wore his hand in a sling; and this gave him an additional interest in the eyes of the fair Laretta, especially when she reflected that his hurt was acquired in her service.

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## CHAP. X.

“But near thee I can never stay,  
My heart would soon again be there!”

THE story of the fire had really been *blazed* abroad; Mary Ellis’s natural emotion on seeing that her earliest friend had been hurt, was almost construed into a declaration of love. Miss Lawson, who was not deficient in discernment, had easily perceived that under the affectation of considering her as an insignificant low-born girl, Miss Montgomery literally beheld and feared Mary Ellis as a formidable rival; she had seen with what avidity the story of her mysterious origin was received by this young lady, and that it had even the power of partly raising lady Lauretta from her recumbent attitude, who had *almost* given it her attention.

To make herself pleasing to those ladies, who were now greater in her estimation than those at Elwyn Hall, was the first wish of Miss Lawson; she had nothing to alledge against her “dear Mary,” her lately “sweet Mary Ellis,” only that there was a certain coldness and reserve in her manners, which totally precluded her from imagining that she was beheld with the same reciprocity of sentiment as that she had affected to feel for her; and only that let her “sweet Mary” owe her origin to whom she would, decidedly she could not boast of an earl for her grandfather—of a lady Lauretta for her “beautiful mamma!”

To such frivolous motives, the wish of gaining the favour of the Montgomerys, and desire of being reckoned of importance by them, must we trace the eagerness with which Miss Lawson recounted all that she had heard, and all that she had *surmised* relative to Mary Ellis. When she had once felt her ground, she could proceed with security; the likeness between Lauretta and Mary, which certainly must be striking, as it had been generally remarked, was not received with satisfaction either by the mother or daughter; and Miss Lawson *knew* (from frequent and agonizing experience) that the burning of her gown was nothing in comparison to the burnings of envy and jealousy, as she assisted in supporting the lovely form of “her charming Lauretta” to her apartment.

Without directly making a confession of her wounded feelings, Lauretta covertly acknowledged all that Miss Lawson understood by implication; and the “affected heroism and self-command of Mary Ellis” was ridiculed; “her forward declaration of tender interest for Elwyn,” was as loudly contemned, “an interest which any woman of true delicacy would have been careful how she displayed, *even for her husband*, much less for one whose whole thoughts and hopes were centered in another.”

Lauretta sighed; perhaps her sigh was a doubting one; at length she ventured to say—“I wonder if the Elwyns—the old folks I mean—I wonder if they see the fondness of this girl for Elwyn.”

“Mr. Elwyn, you know, is, poor man, next to a muscle, my dear Miss Montgomery, in regard to every thing but the mere animal functions of eating and drinking.”

“And Mrs. Elwyn, having low vulgar notions herself,” interposed Lauretta, “may possibly——”

“Oh no! she could not possibly approve such a connexion for *Mr. Henry*; if she has not seen the girl’s striking partiality *yet*, she *shall* see it; I shall think it my *duty* to inform her, knowing, as I do—that is, believing—that is, suspecting that the late Mrs. Elwyn’s *orphan*—you understand me—I really think, my dearest Miss Montgomery, star of the east, as the dear lady

Lauretta sublimely calls you, I really think I ought in conscience to tell Mrs. Elwyn, that she may caution, that she may guard Miss Ellis against the sad prospect of an unrequited passion, for that every wish of Henry Elwyn's heart is centered in the fair Lauretta."

"Do you *think* so?" asked Lauretta, with an air meant to be incredulous.

"Nay, dearest Miss Montgomery, I could *swear* it!"

Having now sufficient subject matter for animadversion, with the consciousness that the further she proceeded the firmer she rivetted her intimacy with the Montgomerys, Miss Lawson prevailed on the whole village of Norton to believe that Miss Ellis was dying for love of Mr. Henry Elwyn (for though a young lady may look, feel, and talk, as if in redundant health, yet she is always accused of being *dying for love*, as soon as she is suspected of a partiality for one of the other sex).

It was some time before Miss Lawson could make Mrs. Elwyn understand that there was any thing to be afraid of in the cure which Miss Ellis was performing on the scorched hand of Henry Elwyn; hints, inuendoes, and surmises, were scarcely understood by that good lady; though rather against her prescribed mode in such cases, Miss Lawson was obliged to be more explanatory, as she perceived that Mrs. Elwyn grew harder of comprehension; she perceived too, that the "interesting Lauretta" was full of doubts and fears, although she concealed them from every eye but hers; and that Henry Elwyn was not so undeviating in his attendance at the Lodge as before the accident, and, in fact, that she should "really be only doing her duty, in putting *poor* Mrs. Elwyn on her guard;" so with this most conscientious and friendly motive, she went to the Hall, and pretending once more to be deeply engaged in the disposition of patches, she began her most anxious and friendly inquiries after Mr. Henry Elwyn, and "wished that in having one hurt cured, he might not get another."

At a loss to understand the meaning of this wish, Miss Lawson was reduced to an explanation: she said, that—"Where a partiality was so very apparent on *one* side, and where such frequent opportunities were afforded of displaying it, a return was in the nature of things to be expected; and to be sure, Mr. Henry Elwyn was so very obliging to every body, and so very insinuating in his manners, that *any* woman with a little vanity," (here she looked rather consciously, and fixed her eyes on a patch) "and not absolutely hideous in her person," (here she glanced her eyes towards the glass which stood between the piers) "any woman," continued she, "with a *little* vanity, might easily fancy herself the object of his particular regard: for *my* part, I declare I never saw any thing in his behaviour towards Miss Ellis which he may not have used towards me—but we are all apt to think and believe what we hope; and if the mysteriousness of her birth was set aside, and he really *should* come to like her——"

"No, no," said Mrs. Elwyn, rising from her seat, and in her hurry letting her scissars fall off her lap on the floor, "no, no, Miss Lawson, Mr. Henry Elwyn must look a good deal higher; he must look a great deal higher, Miss Lawson," and she tossed her head with an air of consequence. "Miss Mary is very well in her way, very well in her way—poor thing, she can help nothing at all of it; but Mr. Elwyn, but *my* son, I assure you, Miss Lawson, he has only to choose or refuse."

"So I say, my dear ma'am," returned Miss Lawson, "that is exactly what I say; why there is Mr. Henry Elwyn, said I, the most elegant and handsome young man in this part of the world——"

"Or in *any* part of the world," interposed his mother; for the vanity which had once superseded every other idea in the contemplation of *her own* personal charms, had now devolved to her son; and to have *his* beauty praised was at once her pride and her delight.



"Now is it likely," continued Miss Lawson, "that *such* a man will throw himself away in such an unheard-of manner, especially when there are those who are his equals in every respect—allied to quality?"

"Ah, I guess who you mean," said Mrs. Elwyn; "leave me alone for a guess—and I dare say it will be a match—I think it will, Miss Lawson."

"And as to poor Mary," said Miss Lawson, "she must wear the willow."

"Indeed she is a very comfortable well-behaved young girl," said Mrs. Elwyn, "I can't say but what she is—and so you say she is in love with Mr. Henry?"

"Oh, ma'am, for mercy's sake don't say it—don't breathe a hint of the kind. I only said that it was observed, that it was remarked, that it was partly suspected, that her evident interest the other night at Salcombe Lodge, when she imagined that Mr. Henry Elwyn was burnt—oh, for my own part, I think Mary Ellis a sweetly-interesting girl; and if the *last* Mrs. Elwyn had told the truth at first, and not put her on the world in such a 'questionable shape——"

"I don't at all wonder at her being partial to Mr. Henry, he is a very nice young man," said Mrs. Elwyn; "but, however, *that* will never be, Miss Lawson."

"My dearest madam, I know it; I only thought that where opportunities of being together so frequent, and where the tenderness on one side is so apparent, gratitude, feeling, sympathy, might induce—you understand me, I dare say you understand me?"

"Oh, perfectly," said Mrs. Elwyn; "but I'm sure Mr. Elwyn would not approve of it, any more than myself—however, it shall be my care—"

"Ah, there it is; my dear Mrs. Elwyn, I do not presume to dictate to you—I know our sentiments are generally in unison—I know that opposition in such cases is generally productive of contrary effects to those which are wished; and if Mr. Henry Elwyn was to be told that you disliked the idea of such a connexion, Heaven knows but he might, for the first time, think of it."

"Oh, I shall not say a syllable about it; I know he has a partiality elsewhere," nodding significantly: "as to poor Miss Mary, she is not at all to be blamed; you know if she loves him, she cannot help it; but I will be watchful and careful, Miss Lawson, and act with prudence; I always act with prudence, you see—you see the care of a young woman is a great charge; if I can help it, she shall have no opportunity of being alone with him; for the future, I must attend to the doctoring of the hand—I am sure I have enough to do, what with one thing and the other; but I do not mind it—I don't mind having my hands full of business—I like to be doing; there's these patches, I need not sew one of them, if I had not got a mind, for I have maids enough that can work for me, and I might sit up with my hands before me all day long, if I liked it; but I'm very active and observing, Miss Lawson, very so indeed. To be sure, after all that *you* have told me about Miss Mary's being the child of the last Mrs. Elwyn—"

"Oh, my dear madam, pardon me there, I did not tell you; give me leave to set you right; I only said, merely by way of a hint, that it had been suggested by such and such persons, that the circumstance of a certain person's going to Brighton at those periods, looked rather mysterious, and that it led to a supposition of such and such events having taken place."

"And I dare say they did too," said Mrs. Elwyn; "notwithstanding that I have heard so much of that certain person's goodness and virtue, you see I found out who you meant."

"Your quickness of comprehension has often struck me with astonishment, as I was saying but this very morning to dear lady Lauretta, and my charming and amiable young friend her daughter; never shall I forget the sweetly penetrating look which the dear Lauretta gave me when she asked 'whether I had seen Mr. Henry Elwyn?'"

Miss Lawson returned to Salcombe Lodge, better pleased with the success of her visit than she had herself expected to have been; for as notwithstanding Mrs. Elwyn's quickness of comprehension, she had no method of making her comprehend but by *speaking out* (as it is called), and as in this said speaking out there was great danger of committing herself, if she was not speaking *truth*, she had some few difficulties in her way, which she contrived to smooth over, as we have partly seen, by calling back her words, and amending her evidence. Miss Lawson, as we have had occasion previously to observe, *had* discernment; she saw that the impetuous nature and proud spirit of Henry Elwyn would take fire at the slightest imputation which should be attached to the character of Mary Ellis, whom he regarded with a *fraternal* affection, if it could not be called by a tenderer name; she saw too that his spirit would instantly resist itself against the interference of maternal authority, or even of maternal advice, with regard to his choice of a wife; and Miss Lawson was heartily glad to have her communications finally sealed, with a promise of silence and secrecy, but at the same time, of *strict observation* on the behaviour of the parties.

To those who are unacquainted with such characters as Miss Lawson, her taking so much trouble to so little purpose may appear very much exaggerated and very unnatural; but where there is an inordinate desire of raising our own consequence, and of gaining the favour of those who move in a superior station, no pains are spared for the accomplishment; and, in the present case, there was an additional motive, in the modest charms and unobtrusive virtues of Mary Ellis. To have seen these raised to the situation which they merited, would have been to see all the envious and rebellious passions roused in the breast of Miss Lawson. She could see Mr. Henry Elwyn married to Lauretta Montgomery, because she had a right to expect as good, if not a better connexion; but to see him lift a low-born orphan to his own sphere, and to be left in the distance herself, such a contemplation was insupportable.

Mrs. Elwyn had promised that she would be silent on the subject of Miss Lawson's conversation to the parties concerned; she kept her word; but in this poor lady's character there was so little delicacy, and so little depth, that her suspicions were open to the most casual observers; she followed Mary Ellis about whenever Henry Elwyn was in the house; she sedulously attended when Mary was using her applications to his hand; and then her excuses were so shallow, and her real motives so obvious, that poor Mary trembled with confusion and mortification at her coarse remarks; while Elwyn, though hurt at his mother's inuendoes, could scarcely help feeling some degree of satisfaction (such is the innate vanity of that lordly creature man) in attributing the embarrassment of the modest girl to the cause which his mother had *more* than hinted.

There was a sensitive timidity about Mary Ellis, which rendered her peculiarly susceptible of painful emotions; with regard to Henry Elwyn, she would have acknowledged her affection for him to the whole world; her most sanguine wishes were breathed for his happiness, and these wishes were entirely disinterested; but to be suspected of an attachment for him, which was to assume the name of love—to be suspected of nourishing an unrequited passion, this wounded her delicacy—this hurt her maidenly reserve—this probed her to the quick, and this made her *appear* the very thing she would not be; for though she had a strong mind, and an excellent understanding, she was so open and ingenuous in all her actions, and in the expression of her sentiments, so truly feminine and so truly modest, that she could not help feeling much mortification in finding herself a particular object of observation; and on such an account to disclaim it, would be almost to acknowledge it, as she had never heard Mrs. Elwyn give it utterance; but to be followed about, be looked at wherever she came, to observe the sly whisper

of Mrs. Elwyn, and the more sly wink of Miss Lawson, to see the latter lady place *herself*, with an air of sedulous caution, in the seat next Henry Elwyn, all this was most mortifying and humiliating; and the *suspensions* of those around her were converted into *certainities*, when they perceived the evident confusion with which she answered the most common address of Henry Elwyn; a more painful situation, independent of any serious distress, can scarcely be imagined, especially when we add that she had more than once caught the pitying glance of Henry Elwyn as he had observed her emotion, and that she had met the animating scrutiny of Fitzallan's eye. Publicity was soon given to Miss Lawson's report; Elwyn was joked on the subject of his conquests; and though he disclaimed them, with the gay air which a young man of his stamp well knows how to assume, yet in his heart he felt flattered and gratified.

Fitzallan had not been an unobserving spectator of all that was going on; and returning with Henry from one of their walks to Salcombe Lodge, he jokingly said—"For pity's sake, tell me, Elwyn, what are you going to do with these girls?"

"What girls?" asked Henry.

"Why that frivolous evasion of my question?" said Fitzallan; "you know that I mean Lauretta Montgomery and Mary Ellis—you know that they both *love* you, and you know not which to choose."

"Then you tell me what I do *not* know myself," answered Henry, laughingly.

"This Mary Ellis is a sweet girl," said Fitzallan, "and spite of what I once said concerning a *fortunate foundling*, I think the *man* would be *fortunate* who could make that *foundling* his; a man would have nothing to fear in uniting himself to such a woman; there is a steadiness about her which disarms censure; there is a gentleness which disarms anger; there is a softness which attracts affection."

"She is a good girl," said Henry, with warmth, "an excellent girl! she was educated by the first of women, and her conduct is the best commentary on the character of her protectress; she would ensure the happiness of her husband."

"And why not ensure that of my friend?" asked Fitzallan.

"And can *you* ask?—you who have seen—you who have heard—who have listened to the syren Lauretta?"

"Harry Elwyn," said Fitzallan, "spite of my rattle and my raillery, believe me when I tell you, that I have a serious regard for you; the question now seems to be whether you will choose a woman who will be your solace, your companion, your friend, your consoler, or one who will be your pride, your pleasure, your ambition? There is something dazzling, radiant, and imposing, in the elegant form, in the manner, in the grace of Lauretta: there is something mild, modest, placid, almost heavenly, in Mary Ellis."

"I never thought of Mary Ellis as a wife; I love her with sincerity; I would do any thing to promote her happiness; but consider, Fitzallan (and the proudly rebellious blood glowed in his cheek as he spoke), consider her low origin—consider the obscurity of her birth."

"That is of very little consequence, except in the eyes of the world," returned Fitzallan, "and such a woman would be *all* the world to you."

"While such a woman as Lauretta Montgomery would be able to give her husband eclat in the eyes of the whole world."

"Ah, my friend, I see which way you bear—I see which side the scale turns; but beware, Elwyn, beware lest you barter the *Substance* for the *Shadow*."

"I have no intention of marrying at all," said Elwyn.

“Then you are acting very wrong—*ungenerously* by Mary Ellis, as every day you stay near her may encrease her partiality (though, if I judge her rightly, she has strength of mind and resolution to bear her up against the tenderness of her heart); *cruelly* are you acting by Miss Montgomery, for she thinks you have serious intentions—her mother thinks so too. Can you resolve to relinquish Laretta?”

Elwyn paused a moment, then laying his hand on his heart with emotion—“No,” said he, “I cannot resolve to do that.”

“However you may decide, my dear fellow,” said Fitzallan, with warmth, “you have my sincere wishes for your happiness. I am about to quit you to-morrow; when *next* we meet——”

“Aye, when next we meet, my fate may be *decided*,” said Elwyn.

The lively pleasantry and sensible remarks of Mr. Fitzallan, had forcibly impelled the esteem of the family at the Hall. Mrs. Elwyn thanked him for his “very good company, and hoped he would soon repeat his visit;” Mr. Elwyn shook him cordially by the hand; and Mary held out hers with unaffected freedom as she bade him adieu; he pressed it with fervour, and hurried away, followed by the good wishes of his friend, who, to dissipate the ennui which was occasioned by the separation, hurried to Salcombe Lodge. Laretta was alone, all softness, all smiles; Fitzallan was not there to share them with him, they were exclusively his own; securely seated in her heart, he feared no rival, he dreaded no alteration in her sentiments, till she mentioned her mother’s intention of quitting the Lodge the following day, and trying the air of Malvern. “The general kindly attends us there, and afterwards we shall probably proceed alone; but to *what* place we shall bend our course, is yet uncertain.”

The intelligence was received as Laretta expected it would have been; Elwyn besought, entreated to be the “*compagnon du voyage*.”

Malvern was a public place; Laretta could not deny the request; general Halifax was quite pleased at the arrangement; lady Laretta said—“The presence of Elwyn would give a *charm* to the party, which it otherwise would have wanted;” and the pleased and gratified Elwyn hastened to the Hall to make preparations for the journey.

The next morning he took a respectful leave of his father, and a good-humoured one of his mother; but as he approached Mary, with “Well, my little doctress, Heaven bless and preserve you!” an undefinable emotion agitated his frame; like electricity he seemed to communicate it to Mary. The colour fled from her cheek—her lips quivered—her hand trembled as it felt the pressure of his lips.

Henry left the house; Mary retired to her apartment—she gave way to her feelings—she burst into tears. A fearful presentiment filled her bosom; she seemed to be forsaken by her only friend, to be once again an isolated and forlorn orphan. She anticipated trials and sufferings for herself; she did not anticipate *felicity* for Harry Elwyn—“Impetuous, headstrong, self-willed,” cried she, “his passions suffered to master his reason and his judgment, how likely is he to make a shipwreck of his happiness for ever!—Forbid it, Heaven!—forbid—preserve—and bless him!”

END OF VOL. II.

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SUBSTANCE AND SHADOW;

OR, THE

*FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTERS OF BRIGHTON.*

A Patchwork Story.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF LIGHT AND SHADE; EVERSFIELD ABBEY;

BANKS OF THE WYE; AUNT AND NIECE, &c. &c.

The first in native dignity surpass'd—  
Artless and unadorn'd she pleas'd the more;

The other dame seem'd e'en of fairer hue,  
But bold her mien, unguarded mov'd her eye.

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## SUBSTANCE AND SHADOW.

### CHAP. I.

Dear friend! so pleasant didst thou make those days,  
That in my heart, long as my heart shall beat,  
Minutest recollections still will live,  
Still be the source of joy. SOUTHEY.

AT the departure of Henry, Mary returned to her usual occupations; it was by activity and employment that she endeavoured to dissipate the uneasy thoughts which oppressed her mind, but spite of herself they would recur; and she frequently revolved over the probable consequences which would ensue to his union with Lauretta Montgomery: her partial regard for Henry Elwyn did not blind her to his faults; she saw—she knew them all—she saw that his senses were dazzled by the brilliant display of Lauretta's attractions, that the pride and the ambition of his nature were both gratified in the knowledge of her partiality for him; but when his imagination was sobered, and his enthusiasm was cooled, would he find in her the domestic companion, calculated to sooth his impetuosity of disposition, who would oppose gentleness to his irascibility, who would oppose steadiness to his instability? in his serious and reflecting moments, could he think that lady Lauretta Montgomery was fitted for educating her daughter to fill the station of a virtuous matron? her romantic fervour of expression, her effeminate and affected languor, were not these directly opposite to *that* precedent which a mother ought to set before her child? for was not the whole strain of her deportment and conversation calculated to impress her with the highest notions of personal attractions, while all the sober train of solid and substantial endowments were forgotten? The behaviour, too, of lady Lauretta towards general Halifax (though it might approach the very climax of Platonism and sentimentality) bordered very closely, in the idea of the modest Mary, on all that was immoral and indecorous; and her ladyship's total neglect and disregard of the woman whose guest she was, and at whose hands she was consequently receiving favours, proved her lamentable failure in that feeling, and that benevolence, about which she could talk so fluently and so figuratively.

"The *shadow* of these amiable propensities may glide before her imagination," thought Mary; "but surely she knows nothing of their *substance*; had she one spark of true benevolence, she would minister to the misfortune of Mrs. Halifax, she would attentively try to alleviate it, and not ungenerously take advantage of it, by engrossing the whole attention of her husband; and is Elwyn *blind* to all this? his perception, his discernment, are usually not defective; is it possible that he cannot see it? or is it possible that I see it through a prejudiced medium?" and then would she take herself to task, and try to discover, whether to malice, envy, or uncharitableness, she could impute her opinions on this subject; and rigid as Mary was ever inclined to be in judging herself (except that her partiality for Henry Elwyn, and her warm interest for his happiness, might incline her to see things in a stronger light than others, if they bore a reference to him), she could here stand acquitted to her own heart—a heart which, though tenderly attached to the object of its ruminations, would have throbbed with pleasure at witnessing his *happiness*, even with Lauretta Montgomery, could she have imagined that Lauretta Montgomery could have promoted it.

Mary felt herself in a very awkward predicament; to advise with Henry would have been at once her pleasure and her wish; but she had seen, with the most painful emotions of wounded delicacy and humbled pride (we mean *that pride* of modesty which is a “pearl of prize in beauty’s crown”), that *he* had taken up the idea which had gone abroad (and which Mrs. Elwyn had foolishly strengthened by her *coarse cautions* and *obvious inuendoes*), of her attachment to himself.—“Ah!” cried Mary, and the crimson dyed her face at the moment when she sighed out the words—“Ah! why is a pure and disinterested attachment so incomprehensible? why is it so uncommon? it is,” said she, after a pause, and answering herself, “it is because selfishness is a leading trait of the human character; it is that the gratification of every whim, of every caprice, is attended to, while the subjugation of self is entirely forgotten; and yet, as my dear Mrs. Elwyn used to ask me, is there any thing more seriously, more strongly enforced in that rule of life, which ought to be the Christian’s study?”

The foolish and teasing repetitions of Mrs. Elwyn, and the heavy and inert stupidity of her husband, were both sustained with patient and exemplary sweetness by Mary; when she found a sensation of irritability rise in her mind as she viewed the uniformity of the patches, and as she heard the same remark a fiftieth time repeated in a morning, she remembered that God had thought fit to place her in that situation; that she had been rescued probably from a life of penury and guilt by her lamented protectress; and while she ministered to the imbecility of Mr. Elwyn, and endeavoured to infuse some portion of animation into his sunk and dormant mind, she felt a soothing, a gratifying reward in the reflection, that by such conduct she was evincing her grateful remembrance of the maternal affection with which she had been regarded by his wife; for that such conduct would have been sure to have gained her approbation and her favour (had she been permitted to witness it), did not admit a doubt.

So passed the first week of Henry’s absence, unvaried by incident, unenlivened by conversation; the monotony of the Hall was unbroken; when one day Mrs. Elwyn said—“Suppose now, as you have no objection to a walk, Miss Mary, that you were to go over to Salcombe Lodge this afternoon, just to make my inquiries and compliments (in a polite, genteel way you see) after Mrs. Halifax; she would take it kind—very so indeed; I would order the coach myself, and go along with you, but only I want to finish these here corner patches, for when these are done, the worst part of it will be over—you like a walk, I know—a walk is very healthy for young people—when I was your age, I frisked, and jumped, and bounced about—didn’t I, Mr. Elwyn—didn’t I, sir? and the cherry net, you know, my dear—don’t you mind how I caught somebody in the cherry net?—Mr. Elwyn, my dear, I say, don’t you remember how I caught you in my net?—Mr. Elwyn, don’t you hear me? pray, sir, don’t you remember when I caught you in the net? do speak, sir!” getting up from her seat, and giving him a shake by the shoulder.

“Yes, yes,” said Elwyn, half sighing, and pouring out a glass of wine, “yes, yes, I was taken in the toils.”

“Oh! I thought nothing any toil then; I was as brisk as a bee, and as gay as a lark, and such a colour in my cheeks, they were as red as a carnation—didn’t you use to admire my colour, my dear Mr. Elwyn?—sir— I ask you, hadn’t I a sweet colour—wasn’t I a beautiful creature?—speak now, Mr. Elwyn;” and again she shook him by the shoulder; “now wasn’t I very pretty when you fell in love with me?”

“Yes, yes, Ellen, very true.”

Satisfied with having drawn this acknowledgment from her sleepy partner, Mrs. Elwyn, after a little more detail, a little more circumlocution, and a little more animadversion, on her extraordinary youthful beauty, dispatched Mary to inquire after the health of Mrs. Halifax. Mary

was not displeased at the embassy; she liked Miss Letsom very much, and had some hopes of finding her disengaged, as she guessed that ere she could reach the Lodge, Mrs. Halifax would have resigned herself to the influence of her afternoon's nap; so making all possible speed, and crossing the fields by a much nearer way than the road, she soon arrived.

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## CHAP. II.

My days were days of fear, my hours of rest  
Were, like a tyrant's slumber, sullen looks,  
Eyes turn'd on me, and whispers meant to meet  
My ear. SOUTHEY.

IT was just as Mary had expected—Miss Letsom received her alone, and with smiles—"I am particularly glad to see you at this time," said she; "for now I am enjoying the only hour which I can call my own."

"Yours must be an irksome life," said Mary.

"I don't know that I ought to call it so," replied Miss Letsom; "my avocations and occupations here are so perfectly independent of mind, and my body is so frequently *mechanically* engaged, that I can often amuse myself with reflections on a variety of subjects, which are wholly irrelevant to my employment; this, I believe, may be in some respects a bad habit; I rather think it gives me an abstracted air, and makes me appear '*distract*' and embarrassed, when I would wish to be otherwise; but I thought I took it up from a good motive (at least I hope it was not a culpable one); it was to secure my peace of mind."

"It *was* a good one, most assuredly," said Mary; "and I earnestly hope that it has succeeded."

"It has, in part," returned she; "the story of my situation, I will not call it of my *life*, is very short; perhaps I shall be trespassing upon your good nature if I were to relate it to you?"

"Not in the least," answered Mary, with warmth; "I shall rejoice if you will give it to me—I shall consider it as a proof of your friendship."

"You shall have a proof both of my friendship and of my confidence," said Miss Letsom; then looking cautiously round the room, as if to be sure that no other ear could profit by the communication, she said—"I will confide to *you* the secret of my *birth*—I am the *niece* of Mrs. Halifax."

"Her niece! is it possible?" asked Mary, starting with surprise.

"Yes, it is possible," answered Miss Letsom, smiling; "it is more than possible, for it is the fact: my grandfather was a clergyman, who died unbeneficed and insolvent, leaving a widow and two girls behind him: my mother staid with her remaining sorrowing parent, while her sister joyfully accepted an offer that was made her of accompanying a family who were going to India, and left her relatives and her country, to tempt untried friends on untried shores: at the age of seventeen, the defects of her shape were scarcely visible; and, with the ruddy hue of health on her countenance, immediately on her landing, she attracted the notice of an old and wealthy nabob; this speculation she thought a good one, and her friends heard from her no more: meantime my mother attentively administered to the wants of a declining and broken-hearted parent; not eminent for beauty, and without the recommendation of money, she had lived to the age of twenty, without attracting the particular regard of the other sex, when death taking from her her only friend and solace, she found herself thrown upon the world, a distressed and isolated orphan: my grandmother's maintenance had been derived from an annuity which had ceased with her life; thus the prospect of extreme indigence was added to the other sources of regret which filled my mother's bosom: it was at this juncture that a gentleman of the name of Letsom came to reside in our native village, which was situated on the extreme verge of Cumberland;

amongst the wild and picturesque scenery of this country, Mr. Letsom delighted to roam; he was a half-pay officer, and passed the meridian of life, a widower of broken heart and broken fortunes, the illegitimate son of a nobleman, who, giving him a commission in the army, thought he had made for him a sufficient provision; and, strange as it may appear, the knowledge of his origin was at once the source of pride and shame to my father; he did not like to associate with those above him; he felt a haughty contempt for those beneath him; and he shunned all society, because his tone and look of superiority naturally drew invidious inquiries, and mortification and humiliation were sure to succeed; frequently in his solitary rambles he encountered my mother; the deep mourning which she wore, and the look of sadness which was seated on her pallid countenance, at length raised his curiosity; he heard the history of her misfortunes; he introduced himself to her; they met, and walked together; and while the streaming eyes of the one portrayed all a parent's sufferings and all a parent's love, the agitated voice of the other was heard lamenting his broken prospects, his father's cruelty, and his widowed love! like Desdemona, my mother pitied, and, like Othello, my father loved her that she pitied him—they were married; and the most exemplary of daughters became the wife, the nurse, and even the domestic of her husband! grateful to him for an asylum, neither fastidious with respect to the nature of her employments, nor chary in engaging in them, my mother took the whole business of their little cottage on herself; and always remembering that her husband's origin was superior to her own, although his birth had happened under disgraceful circumstances, she duly and daily administered to his wants, to his comforts, and even to his caprices, not grudging the most unwearied pains of the most indefatigable attention, but on the contrary, taking a pride and a pleasure in doing every thing for him, and seeing him enjoy that leisure which she called his 'inheritance;' indeed it might be called his only one; idleness to him who have been used to the active bustle of a soldier's life, solitude to him who had been accustomed to nurse the feelings of discontent, and contracted circumstances to him who had high and lavish notions, these all contributed to embitter the temper, and to sour the spirit of my father. My mother did not know what she had undertaken when she became his wife, but most nobly did she sustain her part—the querulous complainings of her husband were heard with meek forbearance, his peevish murmurings with patient fortitude, his whimsical caprices were passed over; and she taught me, by the influence of her example, in some measure to emulate her virtues.—I was a child of quick comprehension, and of active intellect; my father fancied me a prodigy, and declared that he would himself become my instructor; my mother was pleased with this plan; she thought that it would interest his mind, and she said, that 'if Mr. Letsom would *condescend* so much, she made no doubt but that her Maria's progress would keep pace with his wishes.' Irregular in his instruction, sometimes imposing tasks upon me which were impossible for me to learn, at others letting me remain unoccupied for days together; now chiding me with severity, now indulging me with dangerous fondness; not thoroughly grounding me in my studies, nor pursuing any systematic plan—my father soon found that he had imposed on himself a task which he was unequal to; but finding that my youthful imagination was early taken captive by the witcheries of poetry and the charms of eloquence, and being himself an enthusiastic admirer of the fine flights of genius, he pronounced me one already in embryo, and always argued, that 'I should one day make a figure;' my dear mother thought that Mr. Letsom *must know* best, and she dared not breathe a word that seemed to militate against his allowed superiority of judgment; but she sedulously tried to impress upon my youthful mind the dangers which are ever attendant on a too sanguine disposition, and the benefits derivable from genuine humility. I listened to my father, but I listened to my mother also; and while I caught some of the ideas, and much of the

irritability of the former, I hope I derived some benefit from the mild virtues and the wholesome counsels of the latter. Blind and insensate must I have been, a being without feeling, and without soul, could I have witnessed the cheerful assiduity with which she attended my father in his last long illness, and not have felt an emulative spark glowing in my breast; incessantly did she attend to his complainings, unremittingly did she administer to his necessities, sweetly did she sooth his pains, and patiently did she endure his chidings—he died! the being, who had been the impulse of my mother’s existence, who had been her sole care, who had engrossed her whole time for the last twenty years, was now no more! she felt a vacuum, which her child could not supply. By my duteous attentions, I tried to reconcile her to her loss; but it had been the whole business of her life to *bestow*, not to *receive* attentions; my cares, my anxious solitudes, reminded her of the grateful satisfaction which she had felt in similar duties; life was a blank; the whole creation a dreary “boundless waste;” like a nurse pining after a petted child, she drooped, she sank, and in twelve months she followed her husband to the tomb—a rare instance of that faithfulness, that devotedness in woman, which will sometimes flourish in the most ungenial soil.

“Behold me then, my dear Miss Ellis, like my hapless mother, thrown desolate and friendless on the world, and at nearly the same age, for I had just passed my twentieth birthday. I had high and somewhat singular notions of independence, which I inherited from my father; from him, likewise, very sensitive feelings, and much warmth of temper; timidity, activity of spirit, and some small stock of patience, descended to me from my other parent; without indulging those extravagant ideas of my genius, which my father had frequently sounded in my ears, I fancied that I could manage to support myself decently and honourably by my pen; I had a taste for the rudely-sublime scenery which I saw around me, and descriptive poetry, if drawn from nature, and with the pencil of truth, must, I thought, come home to the tastes and the feelings of all readers; but without interest, without a *name*, without a recommendation, I soon found that it was an Herculean labour to get a bookseller to read my poem, so I was forced to lock it up, *with all its beauties*, and set myself, with renewed courage and renewed perseverance, to the fabrication of a novel. Productions of this kind were, I knew, in general request; every body read them, therefore I should be sure of a purchaser. I have naturally a little turn for satire—ah! Miss Ellis, you look doubtingly; but believe me, it has been no easy matter to mould these tell-tale features into one unvaried sameness of expression, to teach this tongue one

uniform and passive tale. I had seen little of the world certainly, but I had been an observer of the general manners, sentiments, and opinions of those persons with whom I had occasionally mixed and conversed: though I had resided in a remote part of England, yet the universal taste for the romantic beauties of nature (or the universal *profession* of such a taste) had drawn numerous individuals to our neighbourhood, who had afforded me an opportunity of studying the human character; and the romantic and eccentric manners of some, the air of mystery and concealment which had been worn by others, the follies of fashion, as exhibited in these remote wilds, and contrasted to the rude simplicity and almost savage boorishness of the native peasantry, all these afforded scope to one who had any talent for description, and who should be equal to the task; so I thought, and I essayed the trial; I did not attempt at fine flights or bold invention; my portraits were from nature alone; and as there were no terrific images, no improbable adventures, no northern galleries, no ‘peopled palaces,’ no dying sounds of nightly music, nor clanking chains at the dead hour of midnight, I had *very* little chance of success with one class of readers, namely, the devourers of *ghosts* and *goblins*; while those who were fond of the highly-wrought, glowing colouring pictures of the *imagination* and the *heart*, were equally disappointed: my book was thrown by with apathy and disgust, and doomed to eternal oblivion—not so the poor authoress;

my occupation had been suspected, and suspicions were soon substantiated into facts; and from that moment I was stared at, as though I had not belonged or appertained to the human species. *If* I know my own heart, not a feeling had actuated it in the prosecution of my labours, which could have militated against that great law of the Christian's code, 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you;' neither malice, rancour, or envy, had ever guided my pen; but it was impossible to convince the world of this; every character in my book had the name of some person in the neighbourhood affixed to it; and though the characters and names were changed about by every reader, according to his or *her* fancy (and as frequently as theameleon varies its hue), yet each was sure to make an *individual* application, though each might be different. If I happened to come into company, a general screw up of the person, a general whisper of 'here comes the authoress!' set the whole room in commotion, and a strict examination of my whole form, of every feature in my countenance, and of every article in my dress, was my invariable reception; if I was silent, I was supposed to be lying in wait to hear some eccentric remark, or to discover some odd turn of character, in order to *note* it in my book; if I was chatty, 'there was no bearing me, I was got so insufferably conceited and opinionated since I had commenced authoress;' though Heaven knew there was nothing to boast of, either in the *merit of the work*, or in the *rapidity of the sale*, to make me so; then it was found out that 'I had always been singular and odd, and been suspected of having a little twist about me;' and by general consent, I seemed to be shunned and avoided, as a person with whom it was dangerous to associate.

"I had no objection to solitude or to retirement; but to be utterly excluded from all social converse, to be shunned as a criminal, and to be dreaded as a censor, when I was free from guilt as from malice, and when I had only exerted my humble abilities with the hope of earning a decent and an honest maintenance—all these cut me to the quick; all my prospects seemed blighted in the bud; my energies were stagnated, my spirits drooped, my feelings had received a sore wound, all my self-confidence was lost, and I resigned myself, inert and desponding, to the most gloomy and painful reflections.

It was at this period that I received a message from a lady (who was just come for the second summer to inhabit a marine cottage which bordered one of our lakes,) desiring me to come to her; I had seen and frequently remarked this lady the preceding summer, but knew nothing of her, and had never been in her company; she had a bold, dashing air, and a handsome countenance; she was about the meridian of life, and was generally spoken of as a fashionable woman: 'Who knows,' thought I, and again the glow of hope lighted in my cheek, 'who knows, this lady may discern some merit in my productions, though others cannot; and if I should be so fortunate as to gain her patronage, I may still be able to bear myself up against the malicious shafts of ill-nature and detraction.'

"Lady Sawbridge was seated on a sofa; a book, which was turned down, lay on the table before her—'Miss Letsom, my lady,' said the footman, who ushered me in.—'I have sent for you, child,' said her ladyship, 'to return you my thanks, for the *amiable portrait* which you have taken of me in this *unique production*; the *likeness* is a very striking one certainly; but, may I beg to know, if it be not an *impervious* secret, by what means you became so *accurately* acquainted with my birth, parentage and education, and the most minute incidents of my life?' I was at a loss to comprehend her meaning, till she put a volume of my own novel into my hand, and I saw it opened to the character of a lady, who, to say the truth, was not drawn as the most amiable being in creation. Utterly confounded, I was at first at a loss for a reply, but the dark and bold eyes of lady Sawbridge were fixed upon my agitated countenance, and recollecting that my silence would be interpreted into an indirect acknowledgement of the intention with which she had

charged me, with all the spirit I could muster, I answered, 'I will not affect to misunderstand your ladyship, neither will I deny that I am the author of the trifling work which you have put into my hands; the errors of the *head* will be excused by a candid and liberal reader; for *other* errors, there can, there ought to be no excuse, and if I were guilty of them, I should stand condemned at this moment: may I ask, without being accused of presumption or assurance, how your ladyship came to imagine, that in portraying this lady, I meant to depict you?'—'Oh! it is very obvious, child, to the whole world,' answered lady Sawbridge, with affected carelessness; 'but, thank God, it cannot injure me.'—'I *thank* God,' answered I with fervour, 'that I *know* it cannot—how is it possible that such an idea could have gone abroad? it is too ridiculous to be thought of seriously for one moment: at the time I wrote the pages which have excited your ladyship's attention, I had never heard your name, neither did I know that you were in existence.'—'Miss Letsom,' interrupted she, 'you would try to persuade me out of my seven senses—is not this me? have you not taken me off here? is not this me whom you allude to, as 'mixing with the gay world, and entering with avidity into all its dissipations?' is not sir James Sawbridge represented here as a 'tame and easy husband?' and have you not talked in terms, that cannot be misunderstood, of my little arrangement with lord——that is, have you not pointed out a *particular character* in your marquis of Borrowdale?'—'Believe me, lady Sawbridge,' answered I, 'when I aver, on the word of a woman of veracity and of principle, that I am quite ignorant what nobleman you allude to'—'Oh! nonsense, nonsense, child, talk to those who know no better—look here,' snatching the book out of my hand, and hastily turning over the pages, and then reading with much emphatic earnestness, 'Borrowdale was handsome, insinuating, and well bred—a dangerous guest;' and here again, 'skilled in the arts of flattery, and elegant in his conversation; what a contrast did this young nobleman afford to his plain and unpolished host!' can any thing be more striking?'—'Till now,' answered I, with some spirit, 'it has failed to *strike me*; but your ladyship has taught me to consider that it *does* bear some resemblance to the private history with which you are making me acquainted.'—'I am surprised at your insolence,' cried she, reddening, rising from her sofa, and pulling the bell, 'yes, Miss, I am surprised at your impertinent and bold denial of your designs, when, as if to make it legible to the capacity of a chambermaid, you have even depicted the colour of my cap—the very cap which I wore the first time I made my entrance at the marine cottage—the cap which I invented—which I brought into fashion—every domestic in my house could swear to me.'

"Roused to a retort at seeing the fury of her countenance, and at hearing the insolence of her expressions, I answered, with tolerable nonchalance, 'Your ladyship must excuse me, but till this moment I had no idea that the cap fitted you.'—'Show this young woman the door,' cried she, almost foaming with passion. I made a slight curtsey, and quitted the marine cottage, mortified that the hopes with which I had entered were destroyed, but my conscience entirely at ease with respect to her ladyship's accusations—and yet, my dear Miss Ellis, the idea of being thought capable of such a design was not calculated to give much ease to my irritable nerves; often did I forswear the beggarly trade of authorship, and as often recur to it again, when I recollected that any thing was preferable to eating the bread of dependence—servitude, I then thought I should have preferred, servitude in a menial capacity, to the life which I now led: but if I do not tire you, I will conclude my little narrative; it is not often that I have an opportunity of talking so long, and you find I am determined to make use of it."

"Believe me," replied Mary, "when I tell you that I am much interested in your relation."

"You are very good," said Miss Letsom, pressing her hand, "if I did not think you were, you would not find me so communicative."

### CHAP. III.

I learnt to bound my wishes here. SOUTHEY.

“ONE day,” said Miss Letsom, continuing her story, “I was called from my sad ruminations to a lady, who was waiting in my little parlour to see me; on my entrance I saw a stranger, plain in her person, and showy in her attire; her manners were affected, and her whole air displayed much conceit and self-consequence; taking my hand at my entrance, and lisping at every word she spoke, she said, ‘*Amable geel!* sweet child of genius and of talent, accept my thanks!’ and she put a bank-note into my hands; I looked at it with surprise, and felt even more confused than when lady Sawbridge put my own book there; but I said, returning it again, ‘There must be some mistake, madam—you will excuse me—you cannot be indebted to me—I am wholly a stranger to your person.’—‘Oh no! no indeed, my *dee geel*, you are not—*sooly* you forget—look, look at me again—*now* don’t you recognise your own Zulima? my *dee geel*, I am Miss Marlow, I am the very creature whom you pourtrayed as the heroine of your last tale—every incident of it the very same as my own life—the birth—the beauty—the graces—the virtues—you have flattered me a little, sweet *geel*—a little—*little* bit—and the *denouement* too, for,’ whispering in my ear, with affected modesty, ‘Clarford has not declared himself yet.’

“I began to think my visitor deranged; for, could I look at the being before me, and believe that, in her sober senses, she could fancy herself the heroine of a novel, an heroine whom I had certainly depicted as all that was lovely, and worthy of being beloved in woman? ‘My dear madam,’ said I, ‘my Zulima was entirely an imaginary character—I had not the least idea that—’—‘Don’t say another word, my *dee geel*,’ said she, ‘don’t say a word about it—take this little bit of paper, and I will send you the fellow to it, when Clarford has declared himself; and you shall write two more volumes—yes, two more volumes, and entitle them, ‘Zulima in her married State!’ Of course I was inclined to laugh, when this vain and eccentric being left me; I recollected the fable of ‘The Painter, who pleased every body, and who pleased nobody;’ but I could not make up my mind so as to pocket the *douceur* of Miss Marlow; I felt that I had not deserved it from her, as she was the very last woman whom I should have singled out for my heroine, though I feared that if I were to copy from what I saw, I might be in danger of drawing affectation and Miss Marlow in the same page, when I attempted a new work: with a civil note, in which I acknowledged my grateful sense of her intended favour, I returned her present. The spirit of independence was still ardent in my bosom, and I preferred earning a scanty maintenance by my own exertions, to accepting favours from those whom I could not respect.

“I was one morning taking a solitary ramble, when I was accosted by a third lady, of a quite different appearance from the other two, and one who bore the character of an amiable and worthy woman; she had resided some years in the neighbourhood, and frequent instances of her benevolence and kind-heartedness had fallen under my own observation; she approached me with an air of civility, and an aspect of kindness—‘Miss Letsom,’ said she, ‘I have lately been much amused with reading a publication of yours.’ I felt embarrassed, and my blushes proclaimed the detected authoress. ‘Do not be ashamed,’ said she, ‘of a work which does no discredit to your abilities; I do not blame you for concealing your name; perhaps it may be as well, all things considered; our acquaintances do not like to be lashed *openly*; *plain truths* must not be spoken at all times, though it is impossible to view the ridiculous follies of those with whom we mix, without giving them an oblique stroke—you find it so, I dare say, my love?’ and

she looked as if she expected me to answer.—‘I do not comprehend your meaning, madam,’ answered I, gravely; ‘general folly and general turpitude call for the author’s lash, and this may be done openly, and with honest courage; but to aim an oblique shaft, in order to wound the breast of an acquaintance, is neither the part of the moralist or the Christian.’—‘You take me too seriously,’ said Mrs. Bannister; ‘if we see marking traits of folly and eccentricity in an individual, is it possible not to make them the objects of our ridicule? believe me, those kind of productions which mean ‘more than meet the ear,’ are far more likely to gain the tide of popular favour than those humdrum and prosing periods which fail to interest or to strike; real characters are sure to be snatched at with avidity; and if you would gain a *name*, you must follow my hint.’ I was silent: Mrs. Bannister’s sentiments were so wholly inimical to mine, so wholly different to what I had expected of hers, that I stood mute with astonishment—‘Now there is lady Sawbridge,’ continued she; ‘I declare I would give you something handsome myself, as a stimulus, if you would produce a pretty strong likeness of her in your next work; her shameless effrontery, her bold and daring manner, and the high tone which she still assumes in all places, and in all companies, notwithstanding her known infamy, deserve to be taken off; do not spare, my dear Miss Letsom; get every anecdote you can procure of her past life; insert them as a sort of episode to your main story; it will lengthen it amazingly, it will give zest to the reader, and it will afford a nice contrast to the character of your heroine, who, like all other heroines, I conclude, will be a piece of perfection; but, whatever you do, pray do not fail to make the likeness of lady Sawbridge apparent; make it plain to every reader, I beseech you, and, lest it should not be sufficiently obvious, call her lady S——. Do this, my dear girl, and I will promise you to take fifty copies.’—‘If you were to take five hundred, madam,’ answered I, with emotion, ‘I would not be guilty of so base an action: to gratify the private pique of an individual, shall I wickedly pry into the faults of a fellow-being, and hold them up to the scorn and odium of the world? those faults are known only to her own heart and to her God; may they be owned by *her* with humble penitence! may they be heard by *Him* with mercy and forgiveness!’ I turned away as I uttered these words; the passion of lady Sawbridge, the vanity of Miss Marlow, were nothing—in my estimation they were amiable characters, when compared to Mrs. Bannister; I could not look at her again—what an insult she had offered me!—I felt her hand upon my shoulder ere I had proceeded many paces—I heard her soft voice, as she said, ‘Stay one moment;’ I looked back—her eyes were filled with tears; ‘forgive me, dear Miss Letsom,’ cried she ‘forgive me the severe trial which I have inflicted on you, and believe me, when I add, that these tears proceed from admiration of your sentiments—yes,’ said she, ‘unqualified admiration! I will confess to you, that my ardent wish to be of service to you was checked by my prejudice against the generality of females of your turn; I knew that abilities of the kind which you possess were in some hands most dangerous weapons; I was told that you exerted yours alike on friend or foe, and that you were feared and shunned, instead of being loved and sought; there was something, however, in the retiredness of your manners, and the modesty of your appearance, which would not permit me to give implicit credence to all I heard advanced on this subject, and I determined to seek an opportunity of sounding and discovering your sentiments; the event has been what I hoped and expected; and now behold me your sincere friend, your zealous champion, and say what shall I do to serve you?’—‘Ah, madam!’ cried I, overcome by her affecting address, ‘say, *what*, indeed! In trying to be independent of the world, I have drawn down all its odium on my defenceless head. Heaven knows that I never protruded myself as an author, to gratify any feelings of ambition or of vanity; how lamentably should I have suffered for my folly, had this been the case, for I have met with nothing but contumely and

mortification! From my father I inherited a high spirit—a spirit which taught me to rely on my own exertions, rather than on the favours of others. I acutely feel that the choice which my disposition pointed out in the pursuit of independence, was a most unwise and unproductive one. ‘The post of honour is a private station,’ says the poet; how infinitely just the remark, when applied to our sex! How my name was first discovered as an authoress, is entirely unknown to me; but ever since have I been carped at, contemned, scorned, and hunted down, as if I were indeed a *social pest*! the world is weary of me, and I am weary of the world.’—‘Say not so,’ cried Mrs. Bannister, taking my hand with the most endearing kindness; ‘pursue the track you have chalked out; be assured of the approbation of your own heart.’—‘That is not enough for me,’ cried I, with a melancholy shake of the head; ‘I must not be *suspected* of such base, such culpable designs—I cannot bear to be the victim of malice—I must seek some other method, free from reproach, from detraction, and from slander, by which to get my bread.’—‘And where in this world of failing shall such a place be found?’ asked Mrs. Bannister.—‘No matter,’ said I; ‘I must essay the trial; I will unlearn all I have been learning, I will desert all in which I have delighted, I will burn my papers, I will throw aside my pen, I will divest myself of all relish for mental occupation, I will be as mechanical, as methodical, as fairly metamorphosed in the whole tenour of my life, as even my *enemies* could wish me.’

“Mrs. Bannister saw the bitter asperity with which I spoke; she did not rebuke me, for she pitied the wounded state of my feelings: she left me with a promise of trying to procure me some situation, which might at once secure me from want, and from those malicious censures, which I was too powerless to resist.

“Mrs. Bannister departed for London in a few weeks after our conversation; she was not unmindful of my interests; a friend of hers was introduced to Mrs. Halifax, on her return from India; the nearly total deafness of this lady rendered it necessary for her to have a companion, and, through the medium of Mrs. Bannister, I was applied to, to undertake the office. Ah! Miss Ellis, my heart fluttered in my bosom; a feeling of affinity, of relative affection, was its impulsive movement.

“A year or two previous to the demise of my dear mother, she had accidentally been informed of her sister’s second marriage with a gentleman of the name of Halifax; to have been an humble dependent, a hanger-on to a stranger, would have severely wounded my pride and mortified my spirit; but to contribute to the ease and happiness of my nearest relative, there was something gratifying in the idea, and there was something which soothed the romantic turn of my disposition, in keeping Mrs. Halifax in ignorance of my claim to her notice; for I should perform that from a principle of duty and singleness of heart, which she might otherwise have imputed to interested or mercenary motives.

“Mrs. Bannister knew nothing of my connexions; I believe she was rather surprised that I so readily acceded to this proposal, and that, without an objection, I consented to accept the very narrow stipend which Mrs. Halifax offered. Satisfied at having gained a respectable asylum, and feeling a pleased consciousness at the idea of its being my natural one, I determined that no difficulties, no unpleasanties, should make me quit it.

“I found Mrs. Halifax more ungracious, more captious, and more impatient, than I could have imagined she would have been; but the knowledge of our relationship enabled me to bear with her much better than I expected: the careless inattention, yet mock civility of her husband, was a stimulus to me; I really felt for her infirmity; it called for the forbearance and pity of every one; and while I steadily endeavoured to fulfil all the duties of my station, I as steadily determined that neither by word, by look, or action, would I betray that literary taste, which had



once been my *bane*, but which is now become my *antidote*—yes; now I find the flights of my imagination, and my former pursuits, are a great resource to me, and fill up those parts of my time which would otherwise be miserably vacant. When Mrs. Halifax is unusually petulant and tiresome, I sit at her side, with my work in my hand, and while thus *notably* engaged, I am, perhaps, planning an *heroic poem*; and when some of her high-bred guests have been treating me with marked rudeness, I have, perhaps, been all the while engaged in arranging a little essay on *true* politeness. But oh, my stars!” cried she, “how I have been prating! you will not call it true politeness for me thus to have engrossed all the conversation, and then to run away—but I hear Mrs. Halifax’s bell; and *you* must be my excuse for her being obliged to have recourse to it; for she usually expects to see me at her side when she awakes.” Mary rose to take her leave—“Indeed,” said Miss Letsom, “I have behaved very shamefully—I wanted very much to have talked to you upon another subject; but you see how it is—when we begin to talk of *ourselves*, we know not where or when to stop; at this time,” said she, “I have the only hour which I can call my own—will you come again to-morrow? say you will—I hear the bell again—pray say you will.”

“With pleasure,” answered Mary, as she pressed the hand of her hastily-retreating friend. Miss Letsom’s story had at once excited her pity, surprise, and admiration: it was the custom of Mary Ellis to derive some profit to herself from most passing occurrences—“If I was not born with the genius or the abilities of Miss Letsom,” thought she, “I have been spared from its mortifications and its penalties; and if *she* can so cheerfully bear the querulous peevishness of Mrs. Halifax, if she can patiently pursue one unvaried routine of mechanical occupation, how happy ought *I* to think myself—how much more pleasant is my situation—how grateful ought I to be to a merciful Providence, who has shielded me from contempt and contumely!”

#### CHAP. IV.

Alas! his friends, tho' pitying, still declin'd

The mediatorial task.

POLWHELE.

THE two succeeding days Mr. Elwyn was much indisposed, and Mary Ellis would not leave him to keep her engagement with Miss Letsom: on the third day, however, he appeared better, and she again sallied forth towards Salcombe Lodge; but, ere she had proceeded far, she was met by Mr. Munden—"Where are you going so fast?" asked he, "and all alone too! plague take it, what are all the young men thinking of? in my youthful days, it was not much the fashion to let a fair damsel take a solitary walk—come now, tell me all about it; how is the *old* squire, and where is the *young* one?"

Mary knew Mr. Munden, and was accustomed to his abrupt manner; she answered, that "Mr. Elwyn was better, and that Henry was gone on an excursion of pleasure with general Halifax and the Montgomerys."

"When, where?" cried Mr. Munden, "pleasure indeed! may it turn out a pleasurable excursion, that's all the harm I wish him—come, come, walk on, and I'll walk with you a bit. And so the old deaf trumpet-woman is left at home? I tell you what it is, Mary Ellis, I was fairly sickened of that whole party the last time I was there; and if they were to stay in the country till *Doomsday*, I believe I should never go near them again. How Harry Elwyn, who really does not want for discernment on most subjects, how *he* can suffer his *fool's noddle* to be so worked upon by those affected trumpery fandango women, is to me astonishing! There's that bombastic mock sentimental lady Lauretta calling out every minute; and then again directly, 'light of my eyes,' and *shade* of my *nose*, and such cursed nonsensical jargon, it is enough to sicken any body; and all of it is meant to draw the attention of the company upon her *affection*, and her daughter's *beauty* forsooth! not a breath do I believe of the one, for all that; and as to the other, why you, my little homespun girl, have *all* the beauty of this Lauretta, without her d—d art and affectation; she has tried all in her power to get away Harry Elwyn from you."

"From me!" interposed Mary, in a tone of surprise, and burning blushes dyed her cheeks; "indeed, Mr. Munden——"

"Well, and indeed, Miss Mary," said he, putting his hand before her mouth, "I don't want you to interrupt me. If this Lauretta succeeds, Elwyn will be bound to curse his stars, and may as well hang or drown at once, if he marries that silly creature, and forsakes the girl that seemed set apart for him, by circumstances, by education, and by the care and affection of one, whose judgment he ought to have respected and followed." Mary looked down; she felt confused and affected; a tear moistened the eyelid of Mr. Munden—he paused a moment—"Hang me," said he, "if I can bear to go to Elwyn Hall now; I pity poor Elwyn—he is a lost man—lost to censure—to shame—to feeling—to respectability—but to see that fiddle-de-dee two-penny simpleton of a woman sitting in the seat of Clara, and fancying too that she is equal to her in dignity and importance! I don't *blame* her; but she is in a perfect fool's paradise; but if I cannot bear to look at it, it is my own fault if I go near them, that's all—And this general Halifax—excellent generalship, faith!—he leaves old madam at home, dozing in her easy-chair, and off he marches, to take care of the favourite sultana. One would think he thought the old woman was blind as well as deaf; but if Harry Elwyn makes the daughter of lady Lauretta his wife—I say,

Mary, *if* he does,” and Mr. Munden struck his stick with much emphatic earnestness on the ground, “*if* he does, he deserves every thing that may happen to him.”

“The advice of a man of your experience,” said Mary——

“Nonsense, nonsense,” cried Munden, interrupting her, “these hoity-toity young fellows will not hear any body or any thing which shall oppose their own inclinations; they have a mighty high opinion of their own judgment, and their own penetration; but as to reason or argument, they must be entirely set aside; and, by and-by, when they are out of their dream, they will rub their eyes, and staring blankly round them, cry out, ‘Dear me! who could have thought it? Lord, how I have been deceived!’ and who will pity them then, I should like to know? they may ‘go to the d——l and shake themselves,’ for aught that any body will care.”

“I remember *somebody* who frequently used to chide you for using such improper expressions,” said Mary.

“And *I* remember somebody, whose chidings were attended to, my little saucy girl,” answered he, “*because her* practice was always in conformity with her precepts—ah, Mary, Mary! we shall neither of us see her like again.” Tears now rolled down the cheeks of the grateful *protégée*, and they proved her perfect accordance with this sentiment. “I am an old hard-hearted coward,” said Munden, snatching her hand, “thus to distress a female—and one that I love too—yes, Mary! I love thee for the sake of poor Clara. God will bless you, I hope, my dear child; but if Harry Elwyn forsakes thee, he deserves to be hanged; if he forsakes thee for that jointed baby, he will have his punishment; but keep up your spirits—keep up *your* spirits—don’t let him triumph over your peace of mind—don’t let him see that you mind it—don’t afford him that gratification, for God’s sake, don’t.”

“Believe me, sir,” answered Mary, “there is no occasion for these cautions; I see the kindness of your motive, I acknowledge it with gratitude; but *indeed* I have never been so foolish or so *vain* as to suppose that Mr. Henry Elwyn——”

“Nonsense, nonsense,” said Munden; “I neither want to bring you to a confession or a denial; I dare say you are a good girl enough, as times go, and better than most, or my poor friend Clara would not have loved you; and I think Harry Elwyn would be better off with you than with that silly doll—however, as he brews, so may he bake. Well, fare you well—good-bye—I can’t go any further with you now; for though I have no objection to a *Seville orange*, when my stomach requires a *strong bitter*, yet I find no manner of fun in bawling till my voice is hoarse, and my lungs are expended, to be answered with a peevish ‘What?’ or a flat ‘No.’ I should pity the old woman from my soul though, and I might endeavour to make her hear what a complete tool her husband makes of her, only that she seems quite unconcerned about it, and eats, and drinks, and sleeps; hers is the conquest of *matter* over *mind*, I believe, and faith, in her situation, it is, perhaps, the wisest plan she can pursue—well, good-bye!” and off Mr. Munden stumped, leaving Mary not a little embarrassed; for though accustomed to his abruptness, and his plump manner of delivering his opinions, she felt mortified at observing that general credence had been given to the report of her attachment to Henry Elwyn, and that if a marriage should take place between him and Lauretta, she should find herself an object of general curiosity and observation. To disclaim such an attachment would be of no avail; she felt that it would not be true; she had only to show, by her conduct and sentiments, that she could rejoice in the happiness of Henry Elwyn, were his destiny entirely unconnected from her own.

Waiting a few moments to compose her countenance, and to recall her scattered thoughts, ere she entered the house, Mary was soon met by her expecting friend.

"I was fearful," said Miss Letsom, "that Mr. Elwyn might be still too ill for you to leave him, and am half-ashamed to say how impatient and anxious I was beginning to get; I perceive," continued she, "that I have not yet acquired that conquest over my feelings with which I had flattered myself; however, my ardent wish of seeing you, originated partly in the interest I take in the happiness of a friend of yours."

"Of whom do you speak?" asked Mary, in a tone of anxiety.

"Of Mr. Henry Elwyn," answered Miss Letsom.

Taken off her guard, Mary asked with quickness—"Say, tell me, what of him?"

"Nothing," answered Miss Letsom, mildly, and without appearing to notice her emotion. "A fortnight has nearly elapsed since the departure of the general and of our guests, yet Mrs. Halifax has not had a single line from her husband; he is never used to write frequently; but I believe my aunt feels this entire neglect, though she does not acknowledge it; for within the last two or three days, she has become more fretful and more petulant than I have ever known her; but imputing it to this cause, it does not operate on my nerves, or my temper, as you might imagine: but I will not relapse into egotism, though it seems as if I were again determined to be chief speaker; but not knowing how soon Mrs. Halifax may ring for me, I am impatient to say all I wish. You must perceive, my dear young friend, that I talk to you with the most undisguised confidence; the character I fill, in our family-parties, is that of silence and insignificance; yet, though I am mute, I am not always unobserving: there is something in the open character, and ardent spirit of Mr. Henry Elwyn, which forcibly attracted my notice; indeed I fear a snare is laid for him—indeed I believe that lady Lauretta and her daughter have a design upon him."

"If you mean that he is likely to become the husband of Miss Montgomery," said Mary, "I believe his own wishes have outstepped any designs which those ladies could have had."

"That he has fallen in with their designs is obvious; but I do suspect, and call me not uncharitable for so doing, that these ladies have a deeper scheme than they dare avow," continued Miss Letsom. "If it was the *affection* of Lauretta for Mr. Elwyn, if it was this which was her instigator, I should pity her weakness, and perhaps be inclined to befriend it; but I have every reason to believe, that had any other man, with as good expectations, taken the bait, he would have been just as particular an object of regard."

"I suspect that Henry owes something to his being the acknowledged heir of Mr. Elwyn," said Mary.

"More than you are aware of," returned Miss Letsom. "Lauretta has from her mother imbibed most boundless notions of expence; lady Lauretta, I fancy, cannot spare her much; and though general Halifax can minister to the extravagancies of the one, yet he would perhaps find that the mother and daughter were too heavy a tax even upon his purse; for I have been told, that a great part of my aunt's property proceeds from a life-annuity, and that at her death, it will revert to the nearest relatives of her first husband. I have been sometimes amused in watching the hopes and fears with which lady Lauretta and Miss Montgomery have been actuated, as the attentions of Mr. Elwyn have been renewed or slackened; I *know*, from conversations (which, from being supposed unintelligible to me, were carried on in my hearing), that this house was taken by general Halifax, merely from its contiguity to Elwyn Hall, although they made it appear that their first meeting with Mr. Henry Elwyn was so purely accidental; I know too that when he had left them so suddenly at Cheltenham, that both ladies began to suspect his having eluded them entirely."

"Why adopt so much art—so much duplicity?" asked Mary.

"These questions I cannot answer, except by giving you my conjectures over again," said Miss Letsom; "at any rate, I *know* that the journey to Malvern was undertaken suddenly, and from my observations, I concluded that you were in part the cause of it."

"Me?" asked Mary; "how is that possible?"

"There is a little teasing feeling called *jealousy*, my love," said Miss Letsom, "which not unfrequently springs up in the female bosom. Mr. Elwyn had certainly not been here as often—you were *always* at the Hall."

"Oh dear! I don't think *I* had any thing to do with it; indeed, Miss Letsom, I could not."

"Pray, my dear Mary, excuse me, but I am sure you had—I am sure both ladies were afraid of you; when your likeness to Lauretta was remarked, it always appeared to excite the apprehensions of her ladyship; she feared, and justly feared, that Mr. Henry Elwyn would begin to draw comparisons; and the sudden journey to Malvern was planned entirely from this idea: now they have got him to themselves—and now—yes, *now*, my dear Miss Ellis, it is the part of a true friend to warn him of his danger."

"And will you do it?" asked Mary, with anxious earnestness, "kind, good Miss Letsom, will you do it?"

"Me?" asked Miss Letsom; "no, my love, that would be *too* ridiculous; Mr. Henry Elwyn has never observed or noticed me, but merely as that mechanical automaton which I wish to appear at the bottom of general Halifax's table: were *I* to come forwards to give *him* advice and caution, he would very naturally suspect my motive, reject the one, and despise the other; I could only bring suspicions, where he would require proofs; and he would naturally conclude, that I must be actuated by base and unworthy motives. I have more than once thought of giving him an anonymous warning, but that would not be attended to by one of his open and impetuous disposition; he would treat it with the silent contempt which he would conclude it merited, and perhaps might accuse an innocent person of being the author of it, and I might thus be calling down odium on the head of another; neither of these plans would be of service; but you, Miss Ellis, who have been bred up with him on terms of intimacy, you, who have been the confidante of his youth, you may still be said to have the *first* place in his heart."

A faint sickness came over Mary, her colour fled her cheek, she put her hand upon Miss Letsom's, as she said—"And what would he think of *me*? no, dear Miss Letsom, *I* cannot do it; oh! much, *much* more than what you have just suggested will be imputed to *me*—I shall be despised—I shall be contemned—I shall be degraded! *dear* as is the happiness of Henry Elwyn to my peace of mind, yet I cannot consent to barter my own dignity, even in *appearance*, by such conduct: and what could I advance," cried she, after a pause, "presumptions only—the presumptions of another too, whose name must be concealed—ah, dear friend! presumptions are not proofs; already has the busy meddling world made free with my poor name; and shall I myself assist the natural vanity of Elwyn, in teaching *him* the same belief? alas! I cannot."

"For worlds would I not have distressed you thus," said Miss Letsom, taking her hand; "forgive me, dear Miss Ellis."

"Forgive you!" sighed Mary; "the kind interest you take in my happiness, and in the happiness of my best friend, Harry Elwyn, demands my warmest gratitude: we must leave him to himself, my dear Miss Letsom; he is a proud mortal, and has high notions of his own discernment, and of his own superiority; his feelings are quick, and his temper enthusiastic; and, at this moment, I dare say he would quarrel with the whole world, if but an hint were breathed against this idol of his imagination."

“May she continue such!” said Miss Letsom. The bell of Mrs. Halifax now sounded with violence; and pressing her lips to the hand of Mary, and saying, “come again soon,” Miss Letsom hastily ran off.

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## CHAP. V.

Whisper the solemn warning in mine ear,  
That I may bid my weeping friends good-bye.

KIRKE WHITE.

“THUS am I doomed,” thought Mary, as she pursued her melancholy walk home, “thus am I doomed to be tormented with a thousand anxieties on the subject of Henry Elwyn, to have the fears and the suspicions of others added to my own; and yet I cannot, dare not breathe them to the object of them; yet surely it would be the part of true friendship to warn him of his danger; true friendship would despise every selfish motive; what would my dear, my lost protectress have done, had she received the communication of Miss Letsom? would *she* not have cautioned, would *she* not have reasoned, would *she* not have advised with him, and shall I, from weak and feminine fears, shall I shrink from the task? if the happiness of another is in question, shall I be daunted by any selfish scruples of delicacy, from doing my duty?”

Mary had nearly brought herself to the resolution of essaying an ungrateful task, and of writing to Henry Elwyn, when a little way from the house she met Mrs. Elwyn, who quite diverted the current of her thoughts; for, running towards her, and, at the same time, clasping both hands together, she cried—“Here’s a sad story—here’s a sad story indeed, Miss Mary! only think of it! Mr. Elwyn, poor man, is fallen into a fit, and is like one dead; I can get neither speech nor sound from him; I have sent for the doctor, and now I was come after you.”

Mary was very much alarmed, and hurrying on as fast as she could, she said, “Dear madam, where is he?”

“Oh! I have had him put into bed, and in the orange room; for you see, Miss Mary, there’s no knowing what *may* happen; ’tis all, you see, in the hands of God, and *if* his time is come, so it must be—but I thought the new patchwork bed, as it never *has* been used, you see, why ’twas a pity to do so now—as well not, you see, Miss Mary; and when the men were carrying him, why the orange room was only a few stairs further.”

Mary scarcely heard this *prudent* speech, but hastily ran to the apartment, where, stretched on the bed, lay Mr. Elwyn, to all appearance bereft of life; the old housekeeper was standing by his side, and vainly endeavouring to restore him to animation: Mary put her hand upon his heart; she felt it beat—“He lives!” whispered she; “if Mr. Leonard were but come to open a vein, all might be well again.”

While Mary chafed his temples, and assisted the housekeeper in rubbing his hands and feet, Mrs. Elwyn walked about the room, saying—“What a stout heart you must have, Miss Mary! I cannot go near him—I cannot bear to look at him—and to think what he once was—oh! he will be a very great loss—a very great loss indeed—to the bench of justices—he is in the commission, you know, Miss Mary—he is a magistrate—and then to the servants—oh, he will be a very great loss indeed—a loss to the whole country! And *I* shall be a widow—yes, I shall be an inconsolable widow—oh! dear me, dear me!—the changes and chances of this mortal life—but ’tis all as it pleases God—all entirely. If his time *is* come, we cannot help it: does he move now, Miss Mary? well, to be sure, you *have* a stout heart!”

While Mrs. Elwyn was walking about, and praising the stout-heartedness of Mary, *she* was mentally returning thanks to that merciful Providence, who had spared poor Clara from this affecting sight, and she was inwardly beseeching for an extension of his mercy towards the

unhappy being before her, who neither, by his life or conduct, had evinced a proper sense of those rich bounties which had been so plentifully showered down upon his head.

Mr. Leonard at length arrived; having surveyed his patient with a countenance which did not infuse any sanguine hopes into the breast of Mary, he immediately pulled out a lancet—"You said so—if you didn't say so, Miss Mary," said Mrs. Elwyn; "law, mercy help us! I cannot look that way for the whole world; the very sight of poor dear Mr. Elwyn's blood would make me faint away."

"Pray God *we* may have a sight of it," said the old housekeeper, (whose name was Scot), "or it will be all over," as she came forward with a bason and napkins.

"What some hearts are made of, I can't imagine for my part," said Mrs. Elwyn.

"Thank God, he breathes again!" cried Mary, with fervour.

"He does," said Mr. Leonard, "and he will revive soon; but there is great danger of a relapse."

"Should not Henry Elwyn be sent for?" asked Mary.

"Certainly," replied Mr. Leonard; "for," added he, "there is no doubt of this seizure being of the apoplectic kind; and in Mr. Elwyn's present state, from his corpulent habit, and his late lethargic indisposition, I confess I should not be at all surprised if —"

Mary waited to hear no further; she left the room, and writing a line to Henry, she instantly dispatched a messenger with it, ordering him to change horses at each stage, and not to stop till he reached Malvern.—"Who knows," thought Mary, as she wrote the letter, "the death of my dear, *dear* Mrs. Elwyn once tore Harry Elwyn from this alluring Lauretta; may not the illness of his father once more break the spell—may not all my recent fears on this subject be speedily dissipated?"

Mary returned to the sick-chamber—Mr. Elwyn had spoke—and though he still lay in an almost motionless state, it was plain that his torpid powers were restored to some degree of action.

"Do you think he will die now, Miss Mary?" asked Mrs. Elwyn, in a loud whisper.

"On the contrary, at present," answered Mary, "I think there seems every chance of his amendment."

"Well now, that is very wonderful—quite a miracle indeed—that bleeding I believe was a good thing, for all I could not bear to look at it—well then, Miss Mary, if you will just stay here, and see that all's going on as it should do, why I'll just go a bit below, and see how the maidens are going on with their sewing; so then every thing will be minded, you see; I'll stay just to cut out a few patches, for you see, I suppose we shall both of us be sitting here, and we may be as well doing of a little work, as sitting with our hands before us, looking upon one another."

"*What some hearts are made of, I can't imagine, for my part,*" said the attentive Scot, as she saw Mrs. Elwyn leave the room, and as she watched the quick heavings of her master's breath. Mr. Elwyn continued in this state during the whole of the night; he dozed at intervals; but when he awoke, he lay as still as if in a slumber, and it was only by the opening of his vacant eye that his awakening was discovered—he took the medicines administered to him by the assiduous hand of Mary Ellis, who never quitted him; but he seemed ignorant from whom he received them.

Mr. Leonard had been very candid in saying, that he thought the next attack would carry him off; and as Mary judged of the feelings of Henry Elwyn by her own, every hour that wore away without his appearance was passed in the most fearful anxiety.



The distance from Malvern to the Hall was only thirty miles—"Surely, surely," thought Mary, "Henry would not willingly have retarded his journey."

The last gleams of the setting sun were faintly illuminating the window of the sick man's apartment, when Henry entered it; his manner was agitated, his air disordered; he hastily approached the bed; Mary was bending over the almost lifeless form of Mr. Elwyn; one arm supported the pillow on which reclined his head; she was gently wiping his melting forehead with a handkerchief; the partial light, admitted by the opening of the curtain, fell on her countenance; it wore the celestial expression of a ministering angel. Pale, extended, his features changed and livid, Mr. Elwyn seemed expiring—what a sight was this for Henry! he remembered the indulgent kindness—the more than paternal affection of his early benefactor—his friend—his father! he remembered a similar scene; there too he remembered Mary Ellis—her hasty summons had *then* called him to the bed of death—he remembered *every* thing which he would have forgotten—he pressed his quivering lip to the coldly-moistened hand of his father—he burst into tears—he gave way to the agony of conflicting emotions; his eyes met those of Mary Ellis, beaming with tender compassion; he turned from her, and hiding his face in the counterpane, his convulsive sobs were audible.

"Take care, take care, Mr. Henry," said Mrs. Elwyn, now approaching the bed; "you will disturb Mr. Elwyn, sir, and that will be a great pity, a very great pity indeed—see how quiet and how composed I am—nothing moves me—nothing at all—I am quite myself—always calm and collected—very so indeed."

A faint groan from the invalid seemed to recall Henry's self-possession—"Harry! is Harry here?" said he, as he feebly (and for the first time voluntarily) spoke.

"Here, here, dear sir, here is your own Harry Elwyn," said Henry, as he hastily rose and took his father's hand.

"And who is this?" asked he, feeling the soft hand of Mary on his forehead.

"'Tis Mary Ellis, sir," answered she.

"Your nurse—your kind, your gentle friend," added Henry.

"Aye, a good girl—a good girl! Clara used to say so," said he; "Harry, *you* must reward her."

Henry's whole frame shook; his eyes were bent on the ground. Mrs. Elwyn now thought it her turn to be noticed—"How d'ye do, Mr. Elwyn? how d'ye find yourself by this time, my dear?"

"Ellen!" said he, "you are here, are you?"

"To be sure, sir, here am I; do you think I would leave you, my dear?"

"Harry, Harry! give me your hand, Harry," said Mr. Elwyn, "give it me—and yours—and yours," added he, eagerly catching that of Mary; with a convulsive grasp he held them both; he rose himself in the bed, and casting up his eyes, he said, "Oh! remember not my *old* sins, but have mercy upon me—oh! remember not the sins and offences of my youth;" and in the fervour of that petition he resigned his breath.

Mary was the first who perceived that his spirit was for ever fled; and, while gently withdrawing herself from the inanimate corpse, she piously, but mentally reiterated the dying petition of the poor departed; she contrasted, in her mind's eye, the difference between his last sickness, and that of the resigned and collected Clara. A ray of light had indeed seemed to break in upon Mr. Elwyn's benighted soul, at the moment of dissolving nature—"Oh! why—why was it not extended to him sooner?" it was a fearful, an awful subject—she dared not pursue it.

Her attention was now called to the living—with hysteric screams, Mrs. Elwyn was wringing her hands, and saying—“He is gone—he is dead—I am an inconsolable widow—yes, now I’m a widow indeed! a miserable woman—very so indeed!—what will become of me? oh! Mr. Henry, my best friend is gone.”

“You have still a friend left, my dear madam,” said Elwyn, as, overcome with real grief, he took the hand of his mother, and fervently pressed it to his lips.

Henry had a very feeling heart; he had loved Mr. Elwyn, from the moment when he first awoke to recollection—his indulgence, his kindness, his fond partiality, had gained him a warm interest in his grateful breast; and though duty and principle would have taught him to love and to respect his *father*, yet when that affinity had been made known to him, there were so many circumstances to lessen his character in the estimation of his son, that he still clung to the idea of his *early benefactor*, rather than to the *parent* of his *ripened* years.

It was in *this* character that he now seemed to lament him; all the instances of his indulgent love came fresh before his memory; his faults were forgotten; and he gave way to the most unqualified sorrow: taking the hand of Mary, he sighed, but could not articulate; but he seemed to give his mother to her care; and then breaking from them both, he locked himself into his own apartment.

Mrs. Elwyn’s was that kind of sorrow which seems likely to evaporate in words; she made incessant bemoanings, called herself “the most unhappy of women, the most miserable creature in the whole world, very so indeed, a most inconsolable widow!” then would wonder who had got the will, and “whether Mr. Henry would like it to be read before the funeral or after?” said, “she supposed crowds and crowds of people would attend the corpse to the grave, as Mr. Elwyn was a man of such fortune, and so very much respected—and then the mourning for the servants—that, you see, Miss Mary, will cost a great deal—men and maidens, *all* of them in black—oh! I am to be sure the most miserable woman in the world!—I *am* a mournful widow now—very so indeed—and then I must order the beef to be stuck with rosemary at the funeral, for that, you see, is always the custom, and I must think of every thing—oh dear—oh dear, I am a miserable woman indeed!”

## CHAP. VI.

His feeling tear, that trinkled at the sobs  
of funeral woe. POLWHELE.

WE shall pass over the few days which intervened between the death of Mr. Elwyn and his interment; Henry gave himself up to the indulgence of that grief, which an impetuosity of disposition, never checked in its ebullitions, rendered very violent; he suffered acutely; and it was in vain that the gentle and reasonable Mary essayed to give him comfort, for he would not hear reason; he refused to be comforted; he continued to seclude himself from the family; and only that daily dispatches with letters were sent to and from Malvern, he would scarcely have been heard of as an inmate of the Hall.

In conjunction with the old butler and housekeeper, Mary arranged every thing for the funeral (for though Mrs. Elwyn talked a great deal of her *orders*, and the great bustle it was to her, yet she busied herself about things which she did not understand, and generally bred confusion, instead of *order*, when she interfered).

Out of respect to the memory of the deceased, Mary determined to attend the mournful ceremony with Henry; *he* had supported her with his presence during the last painful funeral; it was now her turn to support him; and to her encouraging look, to her steady seriousness of manner, Henry was indebted, for conducting himself with tolerable composure.

After the ceremony, the whole family were convened in the drawing-room of Elwyn Hall, and the confidential lawyer of Mr. Elwyn prepared to read the will.

Mr. Munden (who, with several of the surrounding gentry, had attended the funeral) was desired by Mr. Sargent (the lawyer) to be present at this scene. Mrs. Elwyn, dressed in her weeds, sat down with an air of consequence, and with very little semblance of delicacy, though she frequently told Mr. Munden, "that she was the most miserable of women!" While Henry Elwyn looked with fearful anxiety on Mr. Sargent, he also looked with an air of watchful solicitude towards Mary Ellis; "*if* his father had done justice to the fame of his mother, if he had declared the legitimacy of his son, would not the deep injuries of Clara become glaringly conspicuous? would not the ardently-attached Mary feel them in her inmost soul?"

Mary Ellis had nothing to expect; she had nothing to hope or to fear for herself; her dear lost friend had made a sufficient provision for her; she had never wished its augmentation; and she well knew that Mr. Elwyn would never have thought of doing it.

All eyes were fixed on Mr. Sargent; he broke the seals, and then opened two small papers, which were placed immediately within the envelope; the first he read was a certificate of the marriage of Henry Elwyn and Ellen Harley, with dates and proper attestations; the second was the copy of the register of the birth of Henry Elwyn, the son of that marriage. Henry Elwyn rose from his seat; his chest seemed to expand; he stood erect in the room; as if by an involuntary and intuitive motion, all the domestics made an obeisance to their lineal lord.

Mrs. Elwyn drew herself up with an air of importance, as if to show that *she* was brought out as conspicuously as her son by this discovery.

Mary Ellis caught the back of Mr. Munden's chair, to save herself from falling; she had long *suspected*, she had even *known* the secret of Henry's birth; but this public declaration of it—this public acknowledgement of the injuries which had been heaped upon the poor Clara—"Oh!" thought she, "can I ever regret her more? can I ever be sorry that she was taken from the

evil to come—that she was spared from an explanation like this?” Her whole countenance betrayed the working emotions of her heart; her tottering limbs refused their office; Henry caught her in his arms, and placed her on a sofa, for she refused to retire; and having desired that her indisposition might not interrupt the business which had drawn them together, and Mrs. Elwyn having “wondered what should thus have overcome Miss Mary, who was *always* so stout-hearted,” and Mr. Munden having frowned on her, instead of answering, Mr. Sargent proceeded——

After a few legacies to the servants, Mr. Elwyn had bequeathed the whole of his property to his son, charging the estates with a jointure of four hundred *per annum* to Mrs. Elwyn. Mr. Munden was appointed the trustee for the widow. Mary’s legacy, which was bequeathed to her by her late benefactress, was specifically mentioned; and Henry Elwyn was charged to pay her the yearly interest of it, till she should become of age, or was married.

Mrs. Elwyn was not pleased; her countenance lowered—“What, not leave *me* the Hall for my life!” said she. “Oh, I am a most miserable woman! very so indeed!”

“The Hall *is* yours, for your life, my dear madam,” said Henry, respectfully taking her hand, “and all, and every thing you wish.”

She did not receive this generous speech with her usual cordiality, but answered—“It certainly *ought* to have been mine by will.”

Henry turned immediately from her, and thanked Mr. Munden for his friendly attendance.

Munden shook him cordially by the hand, as he turned a commiserating glance on Mary; and, in a whisper, but which was loud enough to reach her ear, said—“Elwyn, whatever you do, be a friend to that poor girl; in your kindness to her, show your sense of the injuries which your father—well—well—let it pass now.”

“My friendship for you, dearest Mary,” said Elwyn, approaching her, and taking her hand, “can cease but with my existence; a regard for Mary Ellis was infused into my heart with its first feeling; look on me as your guardian—your friend—your brother!” his voice fell as he uttered the last word, and he let the hand which he had taken drop resistless on her lap.

“When—when?” cried Munden, as the word ‘brother’ faintly reached his ear.

Elwyn recovered himself from his momentary embarrassment, and addressing the domestics, in that tone of conciliating freedom which finds its way to all hearts, he thanked them for their past kindnesses, while ignorant of his claim to them; he told them that he would endeavour to make their lives as comfortable as they had been; and that he hoped they should all grow grey-headed together; he then told them to consider Mrs. Elwyn (pointing to his mother) as their mistress, and to treat her with the utmost respect and attention.

When the company were dispersed, Elwyn again sought Mary—“I have some necessary matters to arrange, during the remainder of this day,” said he; “to-morrow I shall leave the Hall, perhaps for some time; I shall see you before I go; but, lest another opportunity should not offer, I avail myself of the present, to ask you to continue here, and to be still the companion of my mother?”

Mary hesitated—she did not like to refuse any request of Henry Elwyn; at such a moment, it would be cruel and unfeeling to do it; and as he was appointed her guardian by the will of his father, perhaps she had no right to do so; but she painfully felt that the society of Mrs. Elwyn could afford her no gratification, and she scarcely knew that Mrs. Elwyn would herself wish her to remain; these ideas ran through her mind, while the asking eyes of Henry were still fixed on her face. Henry Elwyn was pleading for his mother! a refusal was impossible; she

answered—"While I think my society is acceptable, or that I am useful to Mrs. Elwyn, I will not quit her."

"You are a noble, generous girl—acceptable *I* should think it must always be—*useful*, my dear Mary, I am confident you must be to my poor mother, who, bred up with contracted ideas, and confined notions, she has no idea of her own deficiencies—your forbearance, your sufferance with her, has often called forth my surprise, and will ever demand my warmest gratitude. My dear Mary, I speak to you with the greatest unreserve; I know that my mother is not fit to live alone—from the time of her acquaintance with my——" (he could not utter the word *father*, for his eye at that moment caught the portrait of Clara)—"From the era of her acquaintance with Mr. Elwyn until a very recent period, she was entirely shut up from the world. She is now in a new situation, for independence is entirely new to her; and I consider her as helpless, and as inexperienced a being, as an infant who had just escaped from its leading-strings, and is first trying its emancipated limbs—Do not leave her, my dear friend—do not quit *our mother*:" the plural *our* called up a blush of crimson in the cheek of Mary; its shadow seemed to glow over the manly countenance of Elwyn, as he added, "Do not leave her, my dearest sister," and with these words he quitted the room.

The appellative sister had again recalled Mary's thoughts to a subject, from which they had been diverted by recent occurrences; it was the part of a sister, of a tender, of an apprehensive sister, to give advice to her fraternal relative—to warn him of his danger; she had not forgotten one syllable of Miss Letsom's conversation; neither had she forgotten the determination, which she had nearly made, of *writing* her *sisterly* cautions to Henry Elwyn; he was now under the same roof with her; there was no occasion for writing—she could speak to him; it was now become necessary that she should do so, for did he not talk of leaving the Hall the next day, and for some time? and was it not more than probable that he was going to join the party whom he had quitted? was he not now become independent? master of a noble patrimony—had any human being a right to controul his actions? these were serious questions—but ah! how could the sensitive, the conscious Mary Ellis, approach Henry Elwyn on such a subject, and at such a time? might he not impute to her a motive, very lowering to her character, if she were to investigate his sentiments concerning Laurretta? would not her cautions wear the hue of jealousy? would not his vanity lead him to deduce every reason but the right one for her interference? and would not her confusion and her embarrassment make her appear before him like a convicted culprit? and yet to suffer him to go, without one hint, one friendly hint—would this be generous or proper?

## CHAP. VII.

“Away, away, my early dream,  
Remembrance never must awake.”

THUS canvassing the matter over and over again in her own mind, without coming to any fixed determination, Mary passed the whole of the night: at the breakfast-table she found Miss Lawson, who had come “on the wings of friendship to see her *dear, suffering Mrs. Elwyn*, and to console her for her *irreparable* loss!” how much was the inexperienced Mary astonished at the renewed civility of this good lady towards herself! for she could not be aware that the circumstance of her having appeared, the preceding morning, with Henry Elwyn, as one of the mourners at his father’s funeral, and the mutual good understanding which had been remarked to have subsisted between them, had already been circulated through the village of Norton, and that *she* was again set down for the wife of Mr. Elwyn.

Miss Lawson was more scrupulous than an Eastern devotee in bowing to the rising sun; getting up to place a chair for Mary near the fire, she desired that she would permit *her* to officiate for her at the breakfast-table, adding—“I know, my amiable friend, that you must be quite exhausted—and how is Mr. Elwyn to-day? poor man, how I felt for him yesterday! though I am told that he looked most charmingly graceful and interesting—and you, my dear Mary, you—why, they say *you* looked like a little heroine! they may tell me what they will of their Laurettas, and Eastern manners, and the *Italian School*, but give me plain English, Mary, and the school of nature.”

“I thought Miss Montgomery had been a great favourite with you,” said Mrs. Elwyn; “I really thought so indeed, Miss Lawson.”

“A favourite, ma’am! I don’t know what you mean by a favourite—yes, a favourite—certainly, I believe—that is—I admired *at* her—there is, certainly, as Mr. Henry Elwyn (Mr. Elwyn, I mean), there is, certainly, as Mr. Elwyn has been heard to say, a good deal of dash and speciousness about them; but as Mr. Elwyn said to a particular friend of mine, in confidence—‘Where,’ said he, ‘is the sterling one? what are lady Lauretta and Miss Montgomery?’ asked he again, ‘spectacle, mere spectacle!’”

The breakfast-room at Elwyn Hall was hung with tapestry; it opened into the library by a private door; Miss Lawson did not hear the soft opening of that door, but Mary Ellis did, and almost enjoyed her confusion, as she looked up, and saw the form of Henry Elwyn standing in the doorway, habited in mourning, his eyes fixed upon her face; she started—affectedly screamed, to hide her confusion, and cried—“Good Heavens! Mr. Elwyn, how could you frighten me so? I really thought you were a ghost.”

“*Spectacle*, mere spectacle, Miss Lawson,” said Elwyn, with some degree of severity; “but pray go on; do not let me interrupt you; were you not good enough to entertain these ladies with some opinions of mine?”

Elwyn took a chair next to Mary, and began his breakfast with a serious air; the disconcerted Miss Lawson could not recover herself; her hands trembled as she attempted to pour out the tea; she could not face Elwyn; but snatching up her tippet, and saying—“She believed she should not get the better of her fright for the day, and that she should fancy a ghost was pursuing her wherever she went,” she flung out of the room.

"Law, bless my heart! Mr. Henry, sir, you have certainly terrified Miss Lawson out of her senses!—hadn't you better go after her, Miss Mary, and see what is become of her?"

"No—for Heaven's sake, sit still!" said Elwyn; "if I have terrified her into a little shame of falshood, I have done her a vast deal of good; however, I am glad she is gone, at any rate, for I wanted to speak to you both on a subject of importance. You love your son, my dear madam; and you, my dear Mary, you love your brother," and he took a hand of each—he stopped, and looked confused—he looked down—Mary's breath was held in, in trembling expectation of his next address.—"You both wish my happiness?" said he.

"Certainly, sir, to be sure we do, very much indeed," said Mrs. Elwyn.

"Fervently!" sighed out Mary; for she perceived that Elwyn waited for an answer.

"Then congratulate me upon it," said he, "for it is *secured*—I am married!—Lauretta Montgomery is my wife."

Did Mary Ellis hear aright? did she *really* hear those words? she hastily withdrew her hand from Elwyn's; she retreated a few paces from him; her whole frame felt paralysed; she tried to speak, but something swelled at her throat—the words died on her tongue—she walked to a window, and burst into tears.

"Married!" said Mrs. Elwyn, "you married, Mr. Henry! and to Miss Montgomery! well, sir, I wish you joy with all my heart; and *my* son married to the daughter of a lady too!—but dear me, Mr. Henry, wont she want to come and to live here? and *then*, you see, *I* shan't be mistress—oh! sad doings—sad doings!—*I am* a miserable woman now, I am an inconsolable woman indeed!—when Mr. Elwyn went, I lost my best friend—I thought how 'twou'd be!" and Mrs. Elwyn relapsed into one of her hysterical moanings.

"Be calm, my dear madam," cried Henry; "assure yourself that it will never be the wish of my Lauretta, that it will never be *my* wish, to dispossess you of this place.—Mrs. Henry Elwyn will always make it her study to pay you every proper attention."

"Well, well, that is very handsomely said of you, indeed, Mr. Henry—but when did all this take place, sir? when did it happen? how very comical!—very so indeed!—very comical! and you only to tell us of it this very minute!—why, Mr. Henry, are you sure you an't dreaming?"

"From such a pleasing dream, oh, let me never wake!" cried Henry, with proud emotion.

Mary remarked the warmth of his expression; her heart, her affectionate heart, rejoiced in his happiness, and it chimed with his in this wish; she gathered courage with the enthusiasm of her feelings, as advancing towards him once more, and extending her hand with the genuine freedom of her nature, she said, "Allow something, dearest Henry, to the surprise of your intelligence, which almost overcame me, but believe me that I shall ardently pray for the continuance of your felicity."

"Thank you—thank you!" said he, gratefully kissing her proffered hand; "thank you, and *bless* you!"

"But, Mr. Henry, how was it, sir—a *wedding* and a *burying* together, sir, how was that? do you think it will be lucky, Mr. Henry?—when was it, sir?—I hope it won't be unlucky!"

"Not ominous, I hope and trust, my dearest madam," said Elwyn; "but certainly I should not have chosen the day which *closed* on my father's existence to dawn on my marriage; but at the moment when the express arrived, I was tortured with a thousand fearful presentiments—I knew not the period of my detention here—lady Lauretta Montgomery seemed undecided, and somewhat reserved, in regard to her stay at Malvern, and also as to the place where she should afterwards bend her course.—I could not get her promise of returning to Salcombe Lodge—once

I had been separated from my Laretta, and had been in danger of losing her for ever; such an idea was not to be borne again—Mary, *you* are acquainted with my impetuosity, you know my warmth of disposition, you can imagine my distracted state—I pleaded—I knelt—I entreated—general Halifax was kind enough to stand my friend, and previous to my setting out for this place, I received from his hands my amiable, my lovely bride.”

“Law bless me, how very extraordinary! why, Mr. Henry, it is really quite a history, sir—quite a history indeed! and where do you mean to live?”

“At present, madam, I know nothing,” answered he; “do not suppose that all my ideas were engrossed on this subject; having once secured my Laretta beyond the reach of fate, I turned with anxious tenderness towards my suffering father: you know the melancholy scene which followed—you saw that even the prospect of unalloyed happiness with Laretta, could not sooth a breast, which mourned with grateful affection over its first and earliest friend.”

“Yes, yes, you were very much affected—very so indeed!—and so we were all of us; for that matter, I’m sure, for my part, *I* am the most miserable creature in the world—but how extraordinary and comical is all this that you have been telling me!—Miss Lawson, you see, was very much mistaken—for I dare say, Mr. Henry, you never said a word, that she said you did, to that particular friend of hers?”

“You may not only dare *say* it, but dare *swear* it, my dear madam; do you think that I would hear a syllable, which was breathed by *another*, against the *elected of my soul*? then do you think I would basely traduce her myself?”

“No, no, sir, it was not mighty likely, to be sure—but how Miss Lawson *will* stare when she hears it!”

After a little general conversation, and having given his mother directions, and unlimited power over the establishment at the Hall, which he desired her to keep up in every respect as it had been during the lifetime of his father, and after recommending her and Mary Ellis mutually to the care of each other, Elwyn took an affectionate leave of them both, and quitted the Hall.

Mrs. Elwyn seemed to lose a great deal of her sorrows, in finding herself sustaining a situation of greater consequence than she had previous to Mr. Elwyn’s death; for as she constantly remarked to Mary, “now all the charge lies upon me, Miss Mary—you see I am now both master and mistress—a great charge upon one head, very so indeed, especially where there are both men-servants and maids to direct, and to look after—not but what they all *seem* to be very respectable, and very civil, and very well behaved, and very sober—but yet a *head-piece* is required—I say, Miss Mary—nothing at all is to be done without a head-piece.”

Mary Ellis did not give way to unavailing repinings, or to fruitless wishes; Henry Elwyn had now decided his own fate; she could only hope that it would turn out propitiously; she felt great comfort in reflecting, that her indecision had been of no consequence, for had she given her cautions to Henry, they would have been too late, her conversation with Miss Letsom having taken place only on the evening previous to Elwyn’s marriage; had it been possible for her to have delayed it by her advice, and thus have given him time for reflection, she would have severely blamed her own irresolution; but, under the existing circumstances, she was much rejoiced that she had not breathed a hint on the subject: she wrote immediately to Miss Letsom, and informed her of the confession which Elwyn had made, previous to his departure; and in answer, that lady joined her wishes with those of her friend, for the happiness of the new-married pair, and hoped that time would prove the injustice of her surmises with regard to the Montgomerys.



"If lady Laurretta's fortune is limited," thought Mary, after reading Miss Letsom's letter, "it was natural enough for her to be anxious for her daughter to secure such an eligible alliance as that of Elwyn's; *he* has enough to satisfy the profuse desires even of Laurretta, supposing them to be as profuse as Miss Letsom believes them; Laurretta must be void of the common feelings of humanity, if she be not affectionate and grateful to such a man as Elwyn; and lady Laurretta *cannot* be culpable in her conduct, with regard to general Halifax, else Henry Elwyn would *never* have made her daughter his wife."

On the whole, Mary was inclined to hope that Miss Letsom, without intending to do so, might have exaggerated the disagreeable features of this party; "Her own principles are so very correct," thought she, "her own conduct so strictly uniform, that she might be led to view any thing through a prejudiced medium, which should a little diverge from her own straight rule of right."

At any rate, it was for Mary's peace of mind to hope that this was the case—while believing Henry Elwyn happy, *she* felt so; if he were the contrary, she knew that she should experience great uneasiness of mind.

The coterie began to assemble as usual at Elwyn Hall, and the whist-table again made its appearance; it was not thought *decorous* for the "new-made widow" to *join in* the rubber; so, while the Lumleys, Mrs. Buxton, and Miss Lawson, were the active parties, she looked on, made her remarks on the progress of the game, and cut out patches.

All the ladies were astonished at the mildly-placid look of Mary Ellis.

Miss Lumley "thought that if she had been used so, she would have let all the world know that she was not to be trampled upon with impunity;" while Miss Lawson "never *did* think there was much feeling in Mary Ellis—a good sort of a *humdrum bide-at-home* girl;" she made no doubt "but there was more *sentiment*, more *soul*, more *refinement*, in the little finger of sweet Laurretta, than there was in the whole body of Mary Ellis."

Miss Ellis, meantime, cared very little for the remarks of Miss Lawson; she had the approbation of her own heart; and by a steady performance of the duties of her station, and a firm reliance on the mercy of a good and an all-wise Providence, who she considered as the supreme disposer of all human events, she endeavoured to secure its continuance. Mary's disposition was neither that of indolence or supineness—she did not *forget* disappointments as soon as they were passed, but by active exertion she endeavoured to divert her mind from the contemplation of them; when the weather would permit, she frequently strolled over to Salcombe Lodge, though, as the days shortened, and as Miss Letsom had only one disengaged hour, she found becoming impracticable; and the friends determined on exchanging notes, when they were no longer able to have interviews.

Scarcely any weather prevented Mary from fulfilling her allotted engagements in the village of Norton; and while the poor blessed her approaching and her departing steps, lisping infants could number her amongst their benefactors, for through her exertions they were brought up "in the nurture and the fear of the Lord." It is thus that a well-regulated and a virtuous mind can bear itself up against what the *world* calls *trouble* and disappointment—it was thus that Mary Ellis practised the precepts of her lamented friend.

General Halifax had not returned to the Lodge; and the peevishness and irritability of his forsaken lady was almost more than her unfortunate niece could support; she had a long winter before her, and she almost regretted that she had forsaken the wilds of Cumberland, and the trade of authorship, for peevish discontent, and ungracious petulance.

## CHAP. VIII.

Accomplish'd only in defects.

MOORE.

OUR new-married pair (with their *mamma* and her *faithful friend*) had worn away the honeymoon at Cheltenham, and had for some weeks been gone to Bath: delighted in the possession of his fascinating Lauretta, and flattered at the buz of admiration which followed her charms whenever and wherever she appeared, Elwyn treated her with the most unbounded indulgence, and his purse was ever open to supply all her extravagancies; and Lauretta was always in smiles, because she had always *her own way*. At their house in Bath, lady Lauretta was the guest of her daughter; and without having received any *particularly* pressing invitation from Elwyn, general Halifax made up the quartetto with the greatest *nonchalance*. At Bath, Elwyn ascertained what he had previously suspected at Cheltenham, namely, that general Halifax was addicted to high play; Elwyn had no right to interfere in these matters, for, perhaps, he was himself in the habit of betting higher than was prudent; but he remarked, that the frequent absences of general Halifax were not suffered to pass with that habitual inattention with which lady Lauretta appeared to regard every other passing occurrence. Though the eyes of the infatuated lover had been completely hood-winked, yet those of the secure husband became rather more clear-sighted; and when general Halifax talked of returning for a short time to Salcombe Lodge, and Elwyn heard lady Lauretta propose to leave her *daughter*, in order to accompany him thither, he took the first opportunity of conversing with his Lauretta, in terms of confiding friendship—"For worlds, my love," said he, "would I not breathe a hint which should wound the unsullied delicacy of your respected mother; but her ignorance of our customs renders her conduct open to the censures of an envious and a carping world; her friendship for general Halifax is not understood; the charms of lady Lauretta Montgomery, still undiminished, are seen and allowed by all—do, my dearest Lauretta, prevail on your mother to give up her intention, and to remain under our roof during the general's visit to his wife."

"Oh! indeed, Elwyn, I cannot say a word on the subject; my mamma never contradicted me in her life; and I dare say she has set her heart on going, or else she would not have proposed, and I dare say she could not bear a disappointment; I am sure *I* could not, when I had set my heart on any thing."

"Now you jest, my love; for you well know that the heart of your mother seldom diverges her from *this* sweet object of attraction," and he tenderly kissed her cheek—"Come, tell me that you will persuade her."

"I shall not tell you any such thing; I dare not disoblige my mamma; and besides, I dare say that she would not remain with us when the general had left us—she would find it mighty flat—and why should she indeed? you know I am married now, and cannot expect to have her always living with me."

"But you *wish* it, Lauretta, and *I* wish it too; surely your mother cannot find a more eligible or a more desirable situation?"

"Every woman, when she is married, likes to be her own mistress, I believe; mamma is welcome to come as often as she likes."

"*Welcome*, Lauretta?"

"Yes, very welcome, Elwyn; but if she is inclined to take this little jaunt with the general, who has any right to *prevent* her?"

"No one has any *right*, certainly; but I confess to you, my Lauretta, that I have the *wish*, for the reasons which I have given you."

"And I have told you that I choose to have nothing to do in the business—so *that* is ended," answered Lauretta, with more asperity in her manner than Elwyn had ever seen her use.

A feeling of mortified pride struggled in his bosom; with difficulty he smothered his emotions; and turning towards her, he said—"Come, come, I have found out a way of settling this matter," willing to bring back the smiles to her bewitching countenance, "and that without any interference on your part; I really want to take a trip to Elwyn Hall; my mother will take it very kind of you to pay her an early visit; we may travel *en suite*, and make quite a sociable thing of it; you shall go with me to my mother; and lady Lauretta can be the guest of Mrs. Halifax, if she prefers it."

"What! go back to that horrid dull place in the winter?" asked Lauretta, in a tone and with a look of the greatest dismay, "and leave all the dear delights of Bath—cruel, cruel Elwyn!" and she burst into tears. "It is thus then that you already shew me that you are my *husband*."

"Forgive me, dearest Lauretta," said he, "I meant not to distress you; I know that the country is not very enticing at this season of the year; but I had flattered myself, that in the society of your happy and grateful Elwyn, you would not have found it wholly insupportable for a short time, especially as I must otherwise leave you alone."

This half reproof, though couched in the gentlest terms, was not unremarked by Lauretta; pouting her lip as she turned from him, she said—"And how long do you mean to stay there?"

"Only a few days, my love," answered he.

"Well, I don't know," said Lauretta, "I must consider of it;" then turning to him with an air of childish and playful coquetry, as she took down a diamond tiara from the mantle-piece, she said, "look at this; did you ever see any thing more beautifully brilliant? now, look at it again on my head—Riviere swears the lowest farthing must be five hundred guineas—don't you think it must be dear?"

As Elwyn admired the polished brow which it surmounted, he could not think it dear—a compromise seemed to be made, and the first matrimonial *jangle* was settled—Elwyn paid five hundred guineas for the tiara, and Lauretta consented to leave Bath, and to *bury* herself for a few days at Elwyn Hall.

When Mrs. Elwyn was informed of the approach of her guests, she was "quite overcome with the idea of receiving them in a *proper manner*;" she hurried all over the house, and put every thing out of its place, that she might have it all in order; and having countermanded her directions to the old butler as frequently as she had given them, till she had quite bewildered his faculties, she left him in a pet, saying, "Timothy was worth twenty of him;" and calling Timothy into the butler's room, she told him that "she believed old Joseph was doating, for he did not remember *one single* thing she had said to him; and so, Timothy, I am now going to make *you* sensible."

Timothy had not lived a great while in the family; he was a young man of a smirking air, and a dapper look; and as from time to time Mrs. Elwyn remarked to him, that "without a head nothing was to be done in a family," he answered—"Very true indeed, ma'am, and with so much upon yours, I really *wonders* how you *keeps* it upon your shoulders."

"No bad remark that," thought Mrs. Elwyn, drawing her head back, as if to feel that it was still safe in its place: "well then, Timothy, you mind all I have said to you, every single word of it, you see, and see that you have it all right, for else, you see, *I* shall suffer, for *all* the

responsibility is *mine*; this it is to be without a master—nobody to advise—nobody to direct but myself.”

Mary Ellis did not interfere in these arduous arrangements, being well assured that notwithstanding her complaints of the irksomeness of it, Mrs. Elwyn liked the bustle into which she put herself, as there was not the least occasion for her exertions, her domestics being very equal to perform the offices they filled; but Timothy was become the right-hand of his mistress; and though his official capacity in the house was under the butler, yet she put him in every department in turn; he was dispatched to the housemaid, to see that the sheets were aired; he was sent to the larder, to inspect the provisions, and to the garden, to forestall the gardener, in the decorations for the table. Mrs. Elwyn even spread out her patches for the approbation of Timothy, as she formerly used to do to her two maid-servants.

Many sly nods and winks were already seen round the servants’-hall; and when the parlour-bell rang after dinner, Timothy was sure to skip off, and to be followed by the laugh of his companions.

Mary Ellis had forgotten all the contemptuous airs of Lauretta Montgomery, in her goodwill towards the wife of Henry Elwyn, and she determined to exert herself, by every means in her power, to evince her disinterested and pure regard for him, in her attentions to his lady.

The travellers did not arrive till a late hour of the evening; fatigued with her journey, Lauretta scarcely spoke a word, after declaring—“that travelling in winter was a horrid bore.” She then kicked off her shoes, and put her feet upon the fender, turning her back completely on Mrs. Elwyn and on Mary. Soon after, she desired Elwyn to ring the bell for her abigail, “as she must go to bed.”

Mrs. Elwyn got up with great officious consequence, to precede her to her apartment, and Mary offered to follow; without noticing the civility of either, she took the arm of her servant, who stood at the door, and walked languidly up the stairs, Mrs. Elwyn tripping on before, to see that all was right, and Mary following, because she would not appear to notice her rude inattention to herself, and because she did not at this moment wish for a *tête-à-tête* with Elwyn; he had left the room when she returned to it, and she saw him no more for that night.

The next day, having kept the breakfast waiting much beyond its usual hour, Lauretta at length sent to desire that she might have hers in her chamber.

Elwyn had been up some time, and walking about the grounds, and talking to his steward; his countenance expressed mortification when he saw that Lauretta was absent from the breakfast-table; but he talked with cheerful freedom on indifferent subjects. Mary sustained her part very well. Elwyn mentioned his having engaged to take a ride with the steward to one of the adjoining estates, which had just fallen into hand, and which was the immediate cause of his present visit to the Hall; and having finished his repast, rose from his seat, on seeing his horse brought to the door.

Mrs. Elwyn and Mary followed him, and were standing to see him mount, when a sash was thrown up of the window of Lauretta’s room, and putting out her head, with her hair hanging dishevelled on her shoulders, she cried out—“Elwyn, where are you going to?”

“Oh, good morning to you,” cried he, with a careless air; “I am glad to see you are at last awake, my love.”

“I ask you, whence you are going, Mr. Elwyn?” repeated she.

“I am going to take a long ride on business.”

“And leave me here, all alone, to be killed with the *ennui* and vapours! indeed, Elwyn, it is very, very unkind of you to bring me to this *frightful* place, and then to leave me all alone.”

"You forget, Lauretta, that my mother and Miss Ellis are both here, and will be very happy if you will give them your society."

"I thought how it would be," said Lauretta, holding her handkerchief to her eyes, "I thought that you were coming here for your *own* pleasure—I know I should be miserable and wretched, to be shut up here amongst rooks and owls—I said so when I left Bath—you know I told you so."

Mary Ellis could not look at Henry Elwyn; she knew that he was putting a great restraint on himself, in not giving way to the ebullitions of passion; Mrs. Elwyn, however, said—"Mr. Henry, you had better go up to the poor lady, and try to comfort her; tell her there is nothing to be afraid of here; and tell her, that we will do all in our power to make it pleasant and comfortable—pray tell her so, sir."

Half ashamed at his condescension in thus going to sooth this childish ill-humour, Henry took the advice of his mother, and went up stairs; after remaining half an hour, he came down again, and without speaking, mounted his horse, and rode off.

In another half hour, Lauretta made her entrance into the room where Mrs. Elwyn and Mary were sitting at work; to the kind inquiries of Mrs. Elwyn, as "to how she liked her apartment, and the *new* patchwork bed, which had never been slept in before?" she answered—"Then I am *confident* it has not been slept in *now* by me—oh, ma'am! it was horrid—it dazzled my eyes, and confounded my senses—for Heaven's sake, keep it to frighten the birds from your fruit, or give it to some merry Andrew, some motley fool, to shew off in at one of your country wakes; but in *mercy*, never put any human being to *sleep* under it again—I have nothing but angles, right angles, circles, and semi-circles, squares and octagons, floating before my eyes—my whole visual faculties are disordered."

"I am very *sorry*," said Mrs. Elwyn, as she rose from her seat, and walked across the room with a discomposed air, which proclaimed that she *was very angry*, "I am very sorry; I *really* thought I was paying you a proper compliment, as Mr. Henry's wife, in putting you into what I think the best bed in the house—however, I suppose I was wrong—yes, I suppose I was wrong—the orange room, you see, I did not think would be so well—however, you shall move to that—yes, you shall move to that—though that bed has never been lain upon since the death of poor dear Mr. Elwyn—he was a great loss, a very great loss indeed!—I have no friend to stand by me now;" and she took out her handkerchief to conceal the tears, which were as much produced by the affront which was put upon her new patchwork bed, as by the remembrance of her husband—"I have lost my best friend," continued she; "a weak woman like me is in want of a friend to stand by her; but now *all* is lost—and as to my new patchwork bed, why, you see, Miss Mary, we have only been making *scarecrows*!"

"Dear ma'am," said Lauretta, "my nerves are quite hurt at the sight of your distress; what can have produced it? surely I have not been unfortunate enough to have been the cause of it?—pray don't disturb yourself on my account; I am the easiest creature in the world; I have already ordered the carriage, and am going to my dear mamma—I always feel perfectly at home at Salcombe Lodge; Mrs. Halifax is so easy, she never puts herself out of her way for any body; I am sure *you* will be much more at home without me; you can then pursue your *eternal* sewing, and your *dexterous* companion can assist you—I dare say I shall look in on you now and then—I shall be always sure of finding you well employed—I think the carriage is now driving round, so good morning to you—good day, good day."

"Why, law bless us and preserve us, you are not going off in such a hurry as this comes to?" said Mrs. Elwyn; "do stay a bit, if only till Mr. Henry comes—what will he think of it?"

“Pray stay till the return of Mr. Elwyn,” interposed Mary.

“Oh, ma’am, don’t alarm yourself on *his* account,” said Laretta; “I informed him of my intention just now—having paid my duty in *due form* to *his* mother, surely my own sweet, dear mamma has now a claim upon me.”

The carriage was really in waiting. Mrs. Aubrey (the abigail of Mrs. Elwyn), was waiting with her packages and bandboxes in the hall; so, very coolly stepping into the carriage, Laretta kissed her hand as it moved off.

“Great cry and little wool!” said Mrs. Elwyn. “I have taken a good deal of trouble for nothing it seems—a very short visit really—but if Mr. Henry’s lady did not find herself happy, why, so be it.”

Mary thought so too; and did not envy the sweet mamma her capricious and peevish companion.

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## CHAP. IX.

### Arrogant of sole dominion. MOORE.

HENRY Elwyn had married a woman whose whole existence depended on her being the object of admiration, and in the enjoyment of the pleasures of the world; spoiled by early indulgence, her mind was enervated and weakened; her temper was more wayward than that of a petted infant, who is but just recovering from a dangerous illness; the accomplishments on which she had rested, as her chief means of attack, in taking the hearts of men, had been acquired with this view only, and had been the stimulus to that application, which had not been exerted in one really praise-worthy or beneficial pursuit: confidence in her own beauty and attractions, an impatience of the slightest contradiction, an affectation of infantile helplessness, were the marking traits of her character; her whole ideas and wishes were centered in self; her own charms—her own enjoyments—her own tastes—her own caprices, were the objects of her contemplation—of her pursuit—of her aim—of her gratification; she thought not of the feelings of others; she cared not whom she offended of her own sex, provided she gained the homage of the other; and her insolence and peevishness was extended towards all those who did not fall in with her humour, flatter her vanity, or minister to her enjoyments.

On her setting out from Bath, she had determined to make herself so disagreeable a companion, as not to make Elwyn wish to bring her into the country again; it was now that she must exert her power if she meant to ensure it—"Mary Ellis had always been the object of her inveterate dislike; she had merely *suffered* her, while she could not help it; but now that she was become her own mistress, she might do as she pleased, and act as she pleased, and not stay with people who were disagreeable to her, and punish herself, while she was not pleasing them."

These were the words with which she had concluded her speech when Elwyn had quitted her; in vain had he besought her to remain at the Hall, and to continue his mother's guest, during the short time which he meant to remain in the country. She flatly refused; "she declared that her head already ached with the worrying questions of Mrs. Elwyn; it might be very well for *him*, she was *his* mother, and he could make allowances; but she would go to her own dear, sweet mamma, and the charming general, who was one of the most polite, the most complaisant, and most engaging men in the world."

"After having so directly given my sentiments on this subject," thought Elwyn, "previous to my leaving Bath, is it possible that Lauretta can mean purposely to provoke me by this language?" he half began to think that he had been a fool to throw away five hundred guineas in a diamond tiara, for it had not purchased the good humour of his wife; he mounted his horse in no enviable state of mind.

The idea of his being deceived in the character of the woman whom he had chosen for his wife, was insupportable to one of his proud and unsubdued spirit; he had only to put the best face upon the matter which was in his power—"it was natural that she should feel uncomfortable at knowing herself so near lady Lauretta, without being under the same roof;" at least, thus he must make it appear to his mother and to Mary Ellis—as he thought of the latter, he sighed involuntarily; and as he recollected her correct conduct, and the justness of her sentiments, he believed that he should have matter to impose upon her, by making the "worse appear the better reason," though her good-nature would, he was sure, incline her to make every extenuation for his Lauretta's conduct: he rode back to the Hall ere he went to Salcombe Lodge, and offered

every apology in his power for the conduct of his wife; he soon smoothed away the frowns from his mother's brow, by his conciliating manner; she promised him to call at the Lodge the next morning; and Mary, who always felt too insignificant in her own estimation, to take umbrage at any rudeness which was offered to her, very readily agreed to be of the party.

Mrs. Halifax had been displeased at her husband's long absence, and when at length he returned, accompanied by lady Lauretta Montgomery, she did not think it at all incumbent upon her to put herself out of her way, in order to shew any civility to a guest who never paid her the least attention. She had for some time made a sitting-apartment of the dressing-room which adjoined her bed-chamber, and she did not move out of it to pay her compliments to lady Lauretta.

"Ease," the general always made a point of saying, "was the characteristic of every house which he inhabited, and likewise of Asiatic manners."

Lady Lauretta stationed herself, with her accustomed *nonchalance*, without even asking after Mrs. Halifax; and the general, when he paid his first visit of polite inquiry, desired Mrs. Halifax to make herself *perfectly easy* and comfortable, for *he* would shew every civility to *their* engaging guest; and at the same time he returned his grateful thanks to Miss Letsom, for the *devotedness* of *her attention* to his amiable wife."

Miss Letsom knew perfectly how far she might estimate the lip-deep professions of the general; she understood an hint for her *continuance*, as the companion of Mrs. Halifax, to be conveyed in this apparent compliment; and she was rejoiced at being spared from mixing in a party which was very uncongenial to her taste.

The very *easy* arrangements of Salcombe Lodge did not please Henry Elwyn; *he* did not feel at *all* easy at finding himself the constrained guest of a man whose behaviour he condemned; his respect for lady Lauretta was considerably lessened, for though he did not imagine that there was any thing directly *culpable* in her conduct, yet it was not what he would have wished in the mother of his wife; with these impressions on his mind, he felt very impatient to get away, and thus met the inclinations of Lauretta, who was also very anxious to do so.

Lady Lauretta, on the contrary, "declared that there was something in the tranquil solitude of Salcombe Lodge, which she found very refreshing, and soothing to her soul, and that as her *dear friend* did not mean to leave it so soon, she should remain to be his companion, and to console him by her presence, during the tedious confinement of Mrs. Halifax."

Such a bold avowal, in any woman but lady Lauretta Montgomery, would have called forth the most unqualified expression of his sentiments from Elwyn; but he stifled them as well as he could in the present instance, and began to think that the sooner he separated Lauretta from her mother, the better, and that if they were to meet but seldom, the more beneficial would it be to the daughter, and to his own peace of mind.

In the mean time, Mrs. Elwyn and Mary had paid their promised visit. Lauretta received them with her accustomed careless *sang froid*, and did not appear to think any further apology requisite for following her own inclinations, and acting as she thought proper.

"To be sure," thought Mrs. Elwyn, "Mr. Henry has married a beauty, and her mother's a real lady with a title, and all that; but somehow, I think, if he had chosen Miss Mary, she would have suited *me* full as well—only, to be sure, *that* would not have done, because of what Miss Lawson told me about the last Mrs. Elwyn, and that comical journey to Brighton."

Miss Lawson was very early in paying her compliments to her "enchanted Mrs. Elwyn and fascinating mamma!"



"How rejoiced am I," said she, "to find you filling that station which you *ornament* and adorn!—I always said you were born for Henry Elwyn."

Lauretta no longer wanted Miss Lawson; she answered these fine speeches with great conciseness, and asked her "how she could think of fatiguing herself by taking such a long *tramp* in the cold?" adding, "you used, I remember, to ask for a *lift* in Mrs. Elwyn's old leathern conveyancy, which *she* calls a *coach*."

From Mary Ellis, such a speech would have called forth all the indignation and resentment of Miss Lawson; but "every body must put up with the whimsical humour of such an angelic creature as Lauretta;" so with what *she* meant for an expressive look of sentimental tenderness, Miss Lawson said—"She should have thought *no* walk long, no weather cold, when she had the cheering prospect in perspective, of seeing so beloved a friend!"

"Oh dear, you are vastly polite!" returned Lauretta; "I had no *notion* that we were so intimate; but '*ma chere amie, excuse moi*,' I cannot return the visit—I make it a principle to return *no* visits to the *country families*; and if I once break through the rule which I have set down, I shall be fatigued to death, and not able to stir out, when I get back to dear, delightful Bath."

"What then, am I to see no more of you?" asked the mortified Miss Lawson (who had enjoyed the idea of having paid her compliments *before* the Lumleys, and of their seeing the elegant landau of Mrs. Elwyn stopping the next morning at her door); "what, am I doomed only to have this transient view?" asked she in an affectedly sorrowful tone.

"Don't look so shocking, for Heaven's sake!" said Lauretta; "I protest you remind me of Mrs. Buxton; and I never could bear to look at any thing that was *ugly* in all my life."

Mrs. Buxton was the plainest woman in the neighbourhood, or she would not have been singled out for this comparison.

Miss Lawson saw that the tables were completely turned, so she turned her back upon her "*charming young friend*," in her *heart* calling her the most capricious and insolent of human beings.

During the few days which Mrs. Henry Elwyn remained at Salcombe Lodge, she was, or pretended to be indisposed; Henry's enthusiastic fondness was all awake, at the voice of her complaint; he reproached himself for urging her to accompany him into Gloucestershire; to indisposition he now attributed her apparent ill-humour, and he hurried over his business, in order to get back to Bath, with all the apprehensive eagerness of his disposition.

The morning previous to his departure, he breakfasted at Elwyn Hall, and conversed with his mother and with Mary, in his wonted pleasant and familiar manner—"My Lauretta's health is delicate," said he, in answer to his mother's inquiries; "the air of the country is, I believe, too keen for her; I think we shall winter in Bath—let me hear from you, my dear madam," said he, rising, "and if any thing should occur, in which I can be instrumental to your comfort, though in the remotest way, pray do not hesitate to inform me; and you also, my dear Mary," said he, "remember I am your *guardian* now—always apply to *me*, as you would to an affectionate brother; and be assured, that I shall feel flattered at every additional instance of your confidence—I would ask you to come and see us at Bath, but that I would not rob my mother of her only companion."

"Ah!" interrupted Mrs. Elwyn, "'tis very true, sir, very true indeed, I have lost my *best* friend."

"But still you have two faithful ones remaining, my dear madam," said Elwyn.

“Ah, Mr. Henry! I say, a woman who loses a good husband loses every thing;” and she put her handkerchief to her eyes.

Elwyn hastily shook the hand of his mother, and pressing Mary’s to his lip, he put a paper into it, and immediately quitted the room, saying—“Health and happiness attend you both!”

For some moments Mary continued motionless, and standing with vacant eye in the apartment he had quitted, when perceiving that Mrs. Elwyn had also disappeared, she opened the paper which Elwyn had given her; it enclosed a bank bill for two hundred pounds, with these lines from Elwyn—

“Your delicate spirit, my dear friend, might scruple to apply to me, for that which is your due. I enclose the first year’s interest of your fortune; I have dated it from the day on which I commenced my stewardship; it will always be my proudest hope to merit the title of your brother and your friend,

“HENRY ELWYN.”

The tears streamed down the cheeks of Mary, at this proof of Henry’s kindness; she fervently wished his happiness, though, alas! her discernment had recently given her many painful presentiments of the contrary. Elwyn had forestalled her wants; but she would not hurt his generous spirit by returning the note; she should now have it in her power to be more liberal to her poor friends in the village; and what better prospect of amusement had she, for a blank and dreary winter, than by thus turning her thoughts to the alleviation of the wants of others?

## CHAP. X.

THE Elwyns left Salcombe Lodge; the general and lady Lauretta remained only a few days after them, and then set off for London—"And there let them go, in God's name, if they choose it," said Mrs. Halifax, talking more openly than Miss Letsom had ever heard her before; "the general chose to *bring* me here in the first place, and here I'll stay—I am sure I did not want to *come*, but now I *am* here, I won't go again to please him—I can't keep moving about, for my part—he talks of the expence indeed of keeping up this house and establishment—I do not mind it, and why should he? my own fortune is equal to it; he spends his how he likes, and with *whom* he likes, and I don't see why I *am* to save for him; so he leaves me to myself, and lets me live and die my own way, I am contented."

With the most unwearied patience, Miss Letsom bore the complaining fretfulness of her aunt; she had the inward consolation of knowing that she was performing her duty, in attending on her nearest relative; and when she thought that were she to relinquish the situation, it would in all probability be occupied by some unprincipled and unfeeling mercenary, she resolved never voluntarily to forsake the post, which appeared to have been pointed out to her by the finger of Providence.

The situation of two young women, who were so near each other, so formed for the enjoyment of each other's society, and impressed with a mutual regard, was very peculiar.

Mrs. Halifax never suffered Miss Letsom's attendance to relax, except at the hour (when, as we have previously stated) she took her afternoon's nap; and at this dark hour in the cold and cheerless month of December, even Mary's courage sunk at the idea of taking so long a walk; so she contented herself with good wishes and kind messages, and spent the long unbroken evenings in the monotonous society of Mrs. Elwyn, who daily made her complaints of the loss of "her best friend," and who, as winter approached, had suffered the most ridiculous terrors to take possession of her weak mind; she declared it "was her firm belief that somebody walked the house at night; and when Mary tried to argue her out of such a foolish idea, she grew angry, and said, "things might be made a jest of, by those who knew no better; but there were others that had heard *strange* noises, as well as herself; there were *others* that could not rest in their beds at night, though Miss Ellis might make a joke of it, and try to disprove it."

"My dear madam," said Mary, "I do not joke—I only wish to quiet your mind, and to calm your fears—your horrors are weak—and——"

"No, Miss Mary, I am *not* weak—but I am sure I am a most miserable woman thus to have lost my *only* friend!—That this house is haunted, I am very certain," continued she; "all the night long I hear strange noises—very so indeed—and I am not the only one."

Mary saw that argument was useless; she talked on the subject, however, to the housekeeper, and desired her to tell the rest of the servants, that it was very improper to intimidate their mistress, and to confirm her in her fears by telling their own.

"Indeed, my dear Miss Ellis," said the honest domestic, "I do not think that one of us—of the *old set*, I mean, would think of alarming Mrs. Elwyn—ah! I am sure, if any of us saw a ghost, I should be likely to be the person, for often and often do I walk into my late lady's room, and look around me, and almost *wish* to see her back again—ah! dear Miss Ellis, *she* was a loss to all—to every one of us—*she* was an injured angel—and let them say as they will, but my poor master never once held up his head again from the day when *she* died; she was an angel while she lived on earth, and now she is one in heaven."

The grateful heart of Mary overflowed at her eyes, while she delightedly listened to the honest fervour of praise, which this good creature bestowed on her departed mistress.

Mrs. Elwyn still continued to complain of her desolate and deserted state, though there were no apparent symptoms of the unhappiness which she talked so much about; and with the blessings of health, with all the luxuries of life around her, and with the means of extending her usefulness in benefiting her fellow-creatures, Mary could not help considering her as an ingrate to that Providence who had so plentifully showered down his bounties upon her head.

There was something mysterious, and very unaccountable, in the behaviour of Mrs. Elwyn; though she unceasingly lamented her watchful frights, yet she would not be prevailed upon to let a servant, or to suffer Mary Ellis to sleep in her room; and though she talked of the dreariness and gloom of the house, yet she was frequently walking about the retired part of the offices of an evening; and though the shades of night were fast closing round her, refused to let Mary accompany her.

The work which used to be her only pleasure, and her most sedulous employ, was now forsaken—she had not forgotten the affront which her daughter-in-law had put upon the *new bed*; and when Mary proposed to her to resume her former amusement, and offered to assist her, her answer was—“*No*, Miss Mary, what’s the use of taking so much trouble to frighten the *birds*, and to dress a merry Andrew?—’twill only be laughed at, after all.”

The evening coterie, which used to be so *delightful*, was now very seldom convened at the Hall.

Pitying the unsettled state of Mrs. Elwyn, and the distaste which she evinced to every occupation, Mary Ellis wished her to invite the ladies more frequently, hoping that their company would amuse her; but Mrs. Elwyn had generally an excuse—sometimes “the weather was too bad to ask them to come out;” when Mary proposed sending the coach to fetch them, she was more than once answered, “that the servants might take cold, and that they had feelings as well as others.”

Mary was very uneasy at this evident change in Mrs. Elwyn, not on her own account, because she was more at liberty to pursue her amusements and occupations than she had ever been, but because she thought it a melancholy spectacle to see any human being without a resource or an employment, because she had been told that idleness could rarely be indulged at any period of life, without being productive of ill effects, and because her benevolent disposition could not let her see the unsettled and fidgeting temper, which deranged and disordered the whole family, without feeling much regret—“Surely,” thought Mary, “this constant uneasiness must proceed from disordered nerves; and if such are the effects which are already produced on her weak mind, by the foolish fears which she entertains, what may be the consequence?”

Yet while Mary sometimes asked herself the foregoing question, and while her goodness and humanity, and her regard for Henry Elwyn, led her to do every thing in her power to make Mrs. Elwyn more tranquil, she could not, on sober reflection, impute to *unhappiness* or to *real dejection*, the strange and singular behaviour which she lamented; on the contrary, at times Mrs. Elwyn appeared to be in very high spirits; and though Mary suspected that these might be in part forced, as she observed that they generally rose during the hour of dinner, and that then she would frequently recount, with great apparent glee, the romping feats of her girlish days, and relate the story of the cherry-net, with no little merriment, while Timothy was standing behind her chair, and old Joseph retained his position at the sideboard, yet there was something in their inequality which was quite as alarming as total depression; for when, on the cloth being removed, and the servants withdrawn, Mary tried to keep up the ball of conversation, and in *her*

turn to entertain, by innocent pleasantry, or cheerful remark, the absent look, and the altered tone of Mrs. Elwyn, forcibly proclaimed to her mortified companion, that supineness and inanity had succeeded to her transient exhilaration.

To write to Henry Elwyn, on the subject of his mother's altered manner, would only be to causelessly alarm him; for Mary had nothing to alledge, which ought to raise any serious fears in him, either with regard to her health or peace of mind—"It is only," thought Mary, "one who is shut up, as I am, from day to day, with Mrs. Elwyn, whom the changes in her behaviour and her conduct would strike, and perhaps I give the subject more seriousness than it deserves."

We have hitherto never represented our Mary as a *heroine*, because she is of too retired a character to stand forth in the lists with the protruding heroines of modern days; but if to see the man whom she loved married to another, if to regulate her affection for him by those rules prescribed by principle and religion, if to sustain her cheerfulness in a situation which would have severely tried the temper of half her sex, if to continue her exertions for the use of those around her, independent of self, or self-interest, if to refer every thing to the Supreme Disposer of all human events, yet not to slacken in her endeavours, or to falter in her duty, from such a reference, if *these* can entitle her to the designation of a Christian, we desire no other *title*, no other *heroine* for our tale, for she has gained the best meed which can be allotted to her here below.

## CHAP. XI.

I do remember when I was a child,  
How my young heart, a stranger then to care,  
With transport leapt upon this holiday,  
As o'er the house, all gay with evergreens,  
From friend to friend with eager speed I ran,  
Bidding a merry Christmas to them all;  
Those years are past, their pleasures, and their pains.

SOUTHEY.

THE season of Christmas was arrived, but it was neither a season of festivity or hilarity to Mary Ellis; on the contrary, the most depressing and painful retrospections took possession of her mind; she recalled those halcyon days of peace and happiness, when it had been her delightful employment to be the almoner of her departed friend, and when her little hands were laden with the gifts which the benevolence of that friend bestowed on all around her.

Mr. Elwyn had given orders to his steward to distribute a sum of money to the suffering poor; Mary had been consulted in the distribution; but she felt that the remembrance of *her* who once gave a charm to every scene, and who now, "deep in the grave, a mouldering victim lay," had impressed her heart with melancholy, even at those moments when it used to throb with pleasure, and she seemed spontaneously to cry out—"How much more blessed is it to give than to receive!" but not relaxing in her duty, because it no longer gave her unmixed delight, and not relinquishing her active exertions, because the enthusiasm of her spirit was damped, Mary still continued to employ her time to some purpose; and going to visit a poor family one morning in a severe frost, a sudden thaw came on before she returned home, and the next day she was too much indisposed to quit her room; a slight fever hung about her for several days; her whole frame became enervated and languid; and her spirits sunk in consequence.

The old housekeeper was unwearied in her attentions, and in using every means for her speedy restoration to health; grateful and quiescent, Mary acceded to every thing that she proposed; and she did not regret that Mrs. Elwyn was not much in her sick chamber; for the worrying manner, and incessant volubility of that good lady, were not calculated to sooth the weak mind of an invalid; and Mary felt particularly disposed to quietness and tranquillity, for the slightest noise affected her nerves, and agitated her whole frame.

It was more than a week before Mary found herself sufficiently recovered to leave her room; the housekeeper had prepared her breakfast about nine o'clock; and Mary, never accustoming herself to have any assistance in dressing, had put on her clothes, and about twelve descended, with tottering and uncertain steps, to the parlour, where Mrs. Elwyn usually sat; she found it empty, however, and there were no symptoms of its having been occupied that morning; it felt cold and chill; there was no fire in the grate; she rang the bell, but no one appeared to the summons; a strange confusion and noise seemed to pervade the house; at intervals she heard the loud and coarse laugh of some of the under-servants; she tried to walk to Mrs. Scot's room, but her feet refused to perform their office; her temples throbbed violently; she held by one of the pillars, as she would have endeavoured to cross it, but she would have fallen to the ground, if at that moment she had not been held by the sustaining arm of Elwyn, who opened the hall-door in

extreme agitation, and hastily throwing off his hat, sprang towards her: he was followed by Mr. Munden.

"Something has happened!" cried Mary, in a voice impeded by weakness and emotion, observing the wild air of Elwyn.

"Yes, I know it—I know it *all*!" cried he, in a tone of passionate vehemence; "I am disgraced—the name of Elwyn is disgraced!—it is allied to infamy!—Infamous!—infamous woman!" and he smote his hand against his forehead, in an agony of passion.

"Good Heavens! Henry, dearest Henry, what are you saying? what do you tell me? what do I hear?" cried the trembling Mary.

"Do you not know?" asked he; "I thought you knew it—I thought you told me something had happened—are you not acquainted with my shame—my dishonour—the eternal degradation of——"

"You will frighten her out of her senses, Henry," said Mr. Munden; "I am sure you will."

"Oh! I have been very, *very* ill," said Mary; "I have seen nobody, I have heard nothing—I am very weak *now*—but I can bear it—I can bear it—compose yourself, Harry, and tell me all!"

Mr. Munden led her back into the parlour, and seated her on a sofa.

"You have been too violent," said he; "Harry, you have almost frightened her to death!"

"I am frantic—I am mad, I believe," said Elwyn, walking about the room in an agony; "I know not what I do, or what I say."

"Why, you are making a bad matter worse, by your passion and your vehemence—do pull the bell, and order something for this poor girl."

With the same violence of manner, Elwyn now had recourse to the bell, and laid the string on the carpet: the old housekeeper and butler both appeared at the door together; Mrs. Scot lifted up her hands and eyes—"What a day is this with us all!" said she; "I declare I do not know what I do, or what I say—oh that I should have ever lived to see it!" while old Joseph, hanging down his venerable head, seemed afraid to lift up his eyes; he seemed afraid to look at his young master, lest that look should tell him of his disgrace.

"Give her something to take," said Munden, pointing to Mary; "and do you light a fire, and give us some breakfast," said he to the butler; "Harry Elwyn has travelled all night; and though a cursed Jezebel has lighted up a flame within him, yet a little *fire without* would do him no harm."

"Have you indeed travelled all night, Henry?" asked Mary, in a tone of anxiety. "Where is Mrs. Elwyn?" said she, addressing the housekeeper; "I don't think she knows of her son's arrival, or she would have been here to welcome him."

Mrs. Scot turned away her head.

"When, when?" cried Mr. Munden; "curse——" he stopped.

The old butler left the room.

"My mother!" cried Elwyn—"my mother!—Oh, Mary, Mary! I have no mother! I forswear her—I condemn her—I abhor her—I cast her off for ever! I consign her to eternal infamy and shame! she has disgraced me—she has disgraced herself—she has fixed an indelible stain upon her sex—upon her name—upon the name of Elwyn!—she has—oh, torture—madness—distraction!—I cannot—cannot speak the words; she has married——" he threw himself down, he writhed on the carpet, he ground his teeth together, he gave way to all the frenzied fury of passion.

"Silly, passionate, mad-headed boy!" cried Munden, "you are killing this poor thing as fast as you possibly can."

Elwyn was recalled to himself; his eye with hasty glance was turned on the almost convulsed countenance of Mary; he ran towards her—he fell on his knees at her feet—he hid his face in her lap—he sobbed aloud.

Mary joined her tears with those of Elwyn; they fell in soft showers upon his burning head; she felt herself relieved by them; a terrible weight had been removed from her mind, as Elwyn had avowed that his *mother* was the cause of his present distress; the apprehensive, the affectionate heart of Mary had trembled, lest another, lest a *nearer* sorrow might have driven him into this wild paroxysm of passion—“This is all strange, incomprehensible to me!” said she; “your arrival, and the absence of——”

“How long have you been ill, child?” asked Munden, bluntly interrupting her.

“I have been confined to my room more than nine days,” said Mary.

“And during this time, it seems, this *nine days* wonder has been brought about.”

“What can you allude to, sir?” asked Mary: “I am still in the dark.”

“What a poor, unsuspecting little creature you must have been!” said he; “why surely you are more blind than a beetle!—all the country have seen it for the last month—all the gossips in the country have talked of it for the last two months—I heard it at last, but too late for my friend Harry here to prevent it—I dispatched an express to him at Bath—he came off without a moment’s delay; but he was just two hours behind the time; for as we passed through the village, the bells informed us that the knot was tied, and that Mr. Timothy Piff had just received the hand of——”

“Don’t, for God’s sake, don’t speak it!” cried Elwyn, putting his hand before the mouth of Munden. “Mary knows—Mary hears—Mary understands *all* now—oh, Mary, Mary, pity me!”

Mary had awoke as from a dream, while Mr. Munden had been speaking—a thousand incidents, a thousand circumstances, which had previously seemed strange and unaccountable, were now explained; she wondered at her own stupidity, she blamed her dulness of perception, she lamented that she had not seen, that she had not prevented it—“Oh, Henry!” cried she, holding out her hand to him, “could I have a suspicion, could I have an idea of such a mortifying event as this?”

“Impossible!” answered he; “*you* could not have an idea of the kind—could delicacy, could purity, like yours, have imagined that such a degrading, such a——”

“Whew, whew!” said Mr. Munden; “*now* you are set off again—*Done is done*—your part as guardian to this young lady is now to consider what *she* is to be done with, and mine as trustee or *guardian*, if you please, of the *old* one, is to see that this Mr. Timothy Ticklepitcher has not got the management of her income.”

“You must go back to Bath with me, Mary,” said Elwyn.

“Oh! no, no!” cried Mary, with eagerness, “that is quite impossible!”

“And why is it impossible?” asked Elwyn, with some reproach in his manner. “Lauretta will, I am sure, be very happy—that is, I am sure—under my roof—under the roof of your *brother*, Mary, you must find a proper protection.”

“And why not remain here?” asked Mary.

“Remain here!” repeated Henry “what! to be subservient to the insolence and vulgarity of a low-born menial? What were the last accents of an expiring saint? to whom did she turn her closing eyes? for whom did they entreat? Oh, Mary, Mary! were you not then given to my charge, and shall I ever relinquish it?”



"Indeed, indeed!" returned Mary, "you are very kind, you are very good; but I must remain in the country; I am weak in health, I am *weaker* in spirits; I am not fit to become the guest of Mrs. Elwyn; I cannot consent to become an intruder on your domestic comfort."

Elwyn sighed, his lips quivered, his eyes were hastily turned from Mary, though the moment before they had been fixed upon her in pleading earnestness—"Pray, pray let me remain in the country!" said she, "any sequestered spot, any little retired nook."

"Whew, whew!" again cried Mr. Munden; "come, come, my good girl, take heart, and believe a rough fellow, who speaks all he thinks—I see you want change of air, and change of scene—you have done all you could, and you have borne up as long as you could; but at your time of life society is necessary—go to Bath, I say—you want to see a little of the world."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Mary, "I have already seen enough of it."

"Poh, poh, enough indeed! I tell you, child, you have seen nothing of it—you are but just out of your egg-shell—you have seen nothing of it—you know nothing of it—go to Bath, you must—and you shall—what! will you remain here, and bring your own name into scandal with that old madam Patchwork's? why, child, if you were to live with them, all the world will swear you were privy to the whole business of their love intrigue, and the healer is always thought as bad as the stealer—no, no, we will have no more *sequestrations*, or by-and-by we shall have the old butler hobbling off to church with you; besides, my little chicken, you are not of age; my friend Harry is constituted your guardian by the will of his father, and he has a right to dispose of you as he chooses."

"I know it, I know it, sir," said Mary; "but surely he will not constrain me to go against my inclinations?"

Mary could not but remember the marked rudeness which had always accompanied Lauretta's behaviour towards herself; she remembered it, without retaining a shadow of ill-will towards her; but she was determined never voluntarily to become her guest; and *heroine* as Mary was become over the early prepossessions of her heart, yet she felt that the roof of Henry Elwyn was the last under which she ought to reside; besides, the whole tenor of Lauretta's behaviour and conversation was so entirely at variance with her own sentiments, that she felt it would be utterly impossible for her to experience any comfort in her society; as she said the words—"Surely he will not constrain me to go against my inclinations?" the mortified air of Elwyn proclaimed his inward sentiments, as he turned from her.

Munden stood for some moments in silent observation before Mary, his head resting on the cane which he still held in his hand; at length, looking up at her with an approving smile, while he cordially shook her by the hand—"I believe," said he, "you are a good girl; nay, I think you are a girl of ten thousand—Hear me, Harry—I say, hear me, Harry Elwyn, and don't look so cursed glum—I am quite of your opinion as to Mary's going to Bath—I say so, and I think so; but remember I do not say, neither do I think, that your house will be the best place for her—you have a wife of your own, you know, one of your own choosing, and all that, and to say the truth (though I have never been married myself, and therefore do not speak from my own experience), yet I have always thought a third person must be d—nably in the way: now, for instance, suppose that such an *odd* accident should occur, as a *little bit* of a matrimonial squabble, I should like to know which side this poor thing is to take?"

"You are pleased to jest, sir," said Henry, in a grave, and somewhat haughty tone.

"Oh yes, *I am* jesting; I thought I premised that I meant it for a *jest*," returned Munden; "however, to cut the matter short at once, hear *my* proposition—I have a sister now at Bath, a good buxom widow, but with *too* much pride to find a *Timothy* to her mind; she is a very good-

tempered creature, and will be very well pleased to have such a companion—go to her, my dear Mary, go to her; take up your quarters with Mrs. Ripley for the present; and if she does not thank me for my introduction, my name's not Humphrey Munden, that's all."

Under the blunt, and apparent uncouthness of Mr. Munden's manner, Mary discerned the delicacy of this arrangement; and though she might feel it awkward to appear before a stranger, yet she did not think it right to decline this proposal also, and to appear ungratefully averse to every plan that was offered to her consideration.

Elwyn seemed hurt that she acceded to Mr. Munden's offer rather than to his; but Mary did not appear to notice it; she could not explain her reasons, and she had the approbation of her own heart, to support her in the determination which she had made.

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## CHAP. XII.

Here youth's free spirit, innocently gay,  
Enjoy'd the most that innocence can give.  
SHENSTONE.

THOUGH Mary had been occupied by mental inquietude, she could not but feel that her corporeal frame was at present ill fitted to undertake a journey; and when Elwyn and Mr. Munden talked of her setting out on that day, she desired them to consider, that "she had but recently arisen from a severe illness."

"We know, we consider all that," said Elwyn; "you shall go as slowly, you shall go by as short stages as you wish, you shall receive every attention, you shall receive every care; but I cannot consent to your remaining here, to be subject to the painful humiliation of an introduction to the object of my mother's degrading choice."

"And when does Mrs.—when does she return?" asked Mary, tremblingly.

"This very evening," replied Elwyn; "it seems, that on her departure this morning, she informed the servants that she was going out for the *day only* on particular business, and that she should return again in the evening. To you, my good sir," added Elwyn, addressing himself to Munden, "to you I refer the painful task of talking to this foolish woman—I am by no means equal to it—I am sure if I were to come in contact with this fellow (whom I dare not call her husband), that I should forget every thing due to myself; for her—for her, whom I still *ought* to remember as my mother—what respect—what affection can exist in this breast? Never, never can I voluntarily behold her more—Tell her so, Mr. Munden—through you, if you will condescend to undertake the office, shall she receive her jointure regularly; I told her this house should be hers as long as she chose to remain in it; I will not forfeit my word: as the *widow* of my father, at my own expence I retained her former establishment about her; but I think I shall be disgracing myself, if I were to keep a retinue for Mr. Timothy Piff—let him have the arrangement of his own household: *you* must arrange every thing for *me*, my very good friend: I cannot expect, I cannot wish that the old and faithful servants of the Elwyn family should remain here *now*; but let them not depart with empty hands; see that they have the comfortable means of subsistence—I do not wish them to barter their principles, or to forego their sense of right, by remaining in a servitude which would affix a stigma on their name; but in relinquishing it, they must not suffer any pecuniary inconveniences, which would affix a stigma on mine."

"Harry, you are a noble fellow," said Mr. Munden. "Why did you ever consent to give up this house to that silly woman? Why did you not come and sit down amongst us yourself? Why did you not come and live among your tenants, and, by your presence, cheer the hearts of your poor neighbours? Why did you not come, and once more bring the name of Elwyn into repute? If you had done this, and something else, that I could mention, these doors would have opened to me much oftener than they have of late—Ah, Harry, Harry Elwyn, you have not acted like a sensible man!"

Elwyn walked to and fro the room in extreme agitation.

"The young men of the present day," continued Munden, talking to Mary, "have taken a strange aversion to those places where their grandfathers and their great-grandfathers were born, lived, and died contented—the country is too *dull* for them—they must live in the world forsooth; and what does the world afford them in exchange for all that they relinquish for it?—

Tell me, Harry Elwyn," turning to him, "if *one* solid advantage will accrue to you, in the long run, from having forsaken this your paternal inheritance? for as to giving it up to your mother, that was all romantic nonsense; and you see what a fine return she has made to you already! a little snug house in a village, where she could have gossiped with the women, and Timothy could have junketted with the men, would have been much better suited to them both."

"My Lauretta does not like the country," said Elwyn, "and I could not put a constraint."

"Whew, whew!" interrupted Munden; "like, indeed!—I say like! a good wife will *like* what her husband approves—Here's one," said he, pinching the pale cheek of Mary, which was presently suffused by the richest crimson; "had you got her for your wife, my life for it, *she* would not have said nay, if you had proposed to live in the country."

Elwyn's countenance became flushed, he struggled with himself, he seemed to bridle his passion, as he answered—"Excuse me, sir; I did not say that my Lauretta refused to reside here—I never proposed it to her—for my mother——"

"Aye, aye, she was willing to get all she could, and to keep all she could—and so no matter, for *done is done*."

Mary now retired, in order to make the necessary preparations for her journey. The old housekeeper attended her; and while her hands were busily employed, her tongue was not idle. Mary was obliged to be a spectator and a hearer only; her weak frame was unfit to take any part in the packing, and her tongue refused its office, though her heart was full: while apparently listening to Mrs. Scot, who was giving her a long account of all the suspicions, and all the surmises which had filled her mind with regard to her mistress, "and which (as she had feared to divulge them) had disturbed her rest by night, and all her comfort by day;" and while she accounted for the noises which Mrs. Elwyn and Timothy *only* had heard, by supposing, that after the family were in bed, they held their nocturnal meetings, and that in order to elude suspicion, they had thought it politic to intimidate the rest of the family with these imputed terrors; while Mary seemed to be attending to this garrulous old domestic, she was engrossed by various new and conflicting emotions; she was now going to leave a spot, endeared to her by a thousand local and affecting recollections; she was going to leave the dear scenes where she had wandered with her beloved friend; the paths where, in childhood, she had strayed with Henry Elwyn.

These scenes were now to be relinquished by the only being who regarded them with partiality; the unhallowed mirth of the vulgar domestic, raised to a level with his mistress, would now break the silence of those embowering shades, which were once sacred to the purest and the most refined contemplations; where the virtuous and suffering Clara, "once the lov'd mistress of the sylvan scene," poured out the sorrows of her heart in the depths of solitude, and sought consolation from that rich fount where only it could be found. Dear to the breast of unsophisticated nature, are retrospections like these; dear are the haunts of our infancy, dear are the spots which were visited in our childhood; much dearer do they seem, much closer do they twine round the heart and the imagination, at the moment when we are about to quit them—and perhaps for ever.

The weak state of Mary's health, and the severity of the weather, both operated as preventions, otherwise she would have felt a romantic satisfaction in taking a last look of the woods, the groves, the fields, the lawns which she loved, though now despoiled of their foliage, and robbed of their verdure, and fain would she have taken an affectionate leave of those humble cottagers who had been the daily objects of her attention; but to the kindness and the activity of Mrs. Scot *they* were referred; and that good woman, while she held the purse which Mary deposited in her hands for the precious trust, and while tears of genuine and unaffected sorrow

filled her eyes, besought her young lady to take it back again, assuring her that the liberality of the young squire would amply provide for her poor friends—"and what can *I* do better than attend to them, and coddle them up, and doctor for them as usual?" said Scot; "I shall go from hence, *you* may be sure, and I shall take some little cottage about the village, just to pop my head into, and there I can remain, till my dearest Miss Mary wants me—when *she* pleases to demand my services, I am ready at a moment, and I will live and die with her."

Mary caught the hand of Scot (filled with gratitude at this proof of affection), and pressing it warmly to her bosom, she said—"How grateful ought I to be to a good God, for such kind-hearted affection!—dear, good Scot! I cannot arrange any thing at present; I am not my own mistress; but who knows whether it may not indeed be permitted us to live and die together?"

In about an hour, Elwyn sent to inform Mary that he was ready to set out. Scarcely knowing what she did, she attended the summons.

A table was laid with refreshments, and observing her agitated manner, and pallid countenance, Mr. Munden poured out a glass of wine, and held it to her lips—"Drink this, my dear girl," said he, "and may Heaven preserve and keep you!"

Mary tasted it, and endeavouring to acquire resolution, she took a biscuit, which Elwyn at the same moment offered her.

Every thing was ready for their departure; a chaise was at the door, and standing at it, and equipped for a journey, Mary saw the housemaid Susan, who had generally attended upon her in the lifetime of her benefactress, and whom Henry, with delicate and refined attention, insisted on her taking as a servant. Mary had nothing to object to this arrangement; she looked, but could not speak her grateful acquiescence; she felt that her present weak health required an attendant, and she felt the propriety of having a third person of their party.

The carriage drove off, followed by the prayers and good wishes of the domestics; and Mr. Munden soberly reseated himself in the parlour, and taking a book, said, "he was determined to stay and pay his compliments to the new married couple."

The journey of our travellers was performed by slow stages; Mary was too weak in spirits, and in health, to be a talkative, or a lively companion; Henry treated her with the most respectful, yet affectionate kindness; he anticipated her wants, and did every thing in his power to prevent her from feeling fatigue or inconvenience; but he was silent and dispirited—his pride, his unconquered pride of heart, had received a mortifying stab, in the disgraceful conduct of his mother; he had never aimed at any conquest over this besetting sin of his soul; he had indulged it, without attending to the dictates of reason or of propriety; for had Harry Elwyn seriously asked himself what he had to be *proud* of, and had the answer been given with *candour*, on what foundation could he have built, for the indulgence of the sentiment? he had been educated and fondled by Mr. Elwyn—true; but his birth had been shrouded in mystery; he had been looked on as the illegitimate child of his benefactor; he had been supposed to have owed his origin to the *guilt* of his parents—was this a situation to be *proud* of?

Only one little month after the death of a virtuous, an exemplary wife, Mr. Elwyn had brought home *another* to the Hall; she had been introduced too as the *mother* of Henry; the world recognised her as such—and could the pride of her *son* receive any addition in the questionable light in which she was viewed? With the death of his father, the legitimacy of his birth was ascertained; but could a thinking and a virtuous child *pride* himself in the obloquy which *that* discovery attached to the name of his parent? and could all the sophistry of this engrossing failing teach him to sink the remembrance of lady Laretta Montgomery's disgraceful connexion with general Halifax, in *her* high-sounding name, and imposing title? In the recent imprudence of

his mother, there was nothing to extenuate, there was nothing to soften, but there was every thing to *lower* the *pride* of human nature, and to teach it that wholesome, that beneficial knowledge, that “*pride* was not made for man!” but the high spirit of Henry Elwyn still resisted itself against conviction; he could be sullen—he could be vindictive—he could be furious—but he could not be *humble*.

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### CHAP. XIII.

Here languid Beauty kept her pale-fac'd court,  
Bevies of dainty dames, of high degree,  
From every quarter, hither made resort.

THOMSON'S *Castle of Indolence*.

A MESSENGER had preceded our travellers, in order to apprise Mrs. Ripley of the approach of her visitor; it was late in the evening ere they entered Bath, and Elwyn ordered the carriage to be driven immediately to the house of that lady, in Gay-street.

Fatigued with the journey, agitated at the idea of encountering a stranger, and of coming, an unbidden guest, to take up her abode under her roof, Mary's suffocating emotions prevented her from thanking Elwyn, as she wished to have done, for his friendly and kind attentions.

As he assisted her from the carriage, he pressed the hand he held with fervour to his lips, saying—"God bless you, my dear Mary, and speedily restore you to your wonted enjoyment of health! I have no doubt of your finding this an eligible asylum for the present; but as you are not to be stationary here, turn over any plan in your mind, to which your wishes may point, and assure yourself," added he, with a smile, "that it will meet with the concurrence of *your guardian*, as he is well assured that prudence and propriety are always admitted to your counsels: and yet," added he, and the smile was vanished, and a sigh struggled to be heard, though he still assumed a gaiety of manner, "and yet I shrewdly suspect that *any* plan which you may now lay will speedily be frustrated; for blind and insensible must be the whole race of beaux, if your modest and endearing graces and virtues are not seen and felt, as soon as you are known, and if this hand is not coveted by many."

"That is very improbable," said Mary.

"The contrary would be improbable," returned Henry; "but however you may decide, whenever, *wherever* you bestow this precious treasure, may that happiness which you deserve be yours without alloy! may *he* on whom you bestow it be worthy of the invaluable boon!" and hastily turning from the door, and leaving her to be ushered into a parlour by the servant, he jumped again into the chaise, and ordered to be driven to his own house in Great Pulteney-street.

Mary's eyes were filled with tears when the door opened, and Mrs. Ripley entered the room; she advanced towards her with the most unaffected freedom, and taking her hand, said—"Miss Ellis, I am very glad to see you, and hope you do not feel much inconvenience from your journey; I am much obliged to Humphrey, for providing me with so nice a companion, and hope I shall be able to make Bath agreeable to you. I always think ceremony the very bane of sociability, therefore you are to do as you please in every respect; I thought you would perhaps prefer retiring to your chamber, to the formality of a company supper and a stiff *tête-à-tête*; your room is prepared, and I shall not take it at all amiss to be left: you have been an invalid, I find; you look rather delicate still."

Reassured by the kind familiarity of this address, all restraint was immediately removed from the manner of Mary—with grateful thanks she accepted Mrs. Ripley's offer of retiring; and conducted to her chamber by her hospitable hostess, she was there left to the care of her maid; and having taken a glass of negus, soon felt the refreshing influence of balmy sleep.

Mrs. Ripley, though some years younger than her brother, Mr. Munden, was yet passed the meridian of life; she had been early left a widow; and, having a good jointure, good health,

good spirits, and no family, she lived half the year in Bath, where she had a house, and the other six months she passed in different places, either in visiting her friends, or in scenes of public resort. Mrs. Ripley was a good-natured, cheerful woman; she was contented to take the world as she found it; she was a pleased participater in all the goods which it offered to her acceptance; and her sensibility was not so acute, as to make her susceptible to many of those minor evils which disturb the peace of a more fastidious portion of society: she adopted for herself some certain rules of action, which she scrupulously maintained, such as the following—she never went but to *one* amusement in one evening; her stake at whist was always limited to half-a-crown; she never made a bet; she never attended a *card-party* of a Sunday; she never accepted an invitation to a rout, after the twenty-fifth of March, or before the twenty-ninth of September: thus she had a settled system in her pursuit of pleasure, which gave her the character of regularity and prudence, in a place where party succeeds to party, and one scene of amusement to another; and morning frequently dawns on the devotees of fashion, as they are returning from the *play*, the *party*, and the *private-ball*, while the thundering knocks of their footmen, or their chairmen, alarm their more sober neighbours.

Mrs. Ripley did not read, for this substantial reason—that she had no time; for her time was completely filled up by the stated avocations of the day; she knew how every hour was to be employed; and without appearing to be the least hurried, or to feel the least fatigue, she went through the four-and-twenty hours, with as much mechanical precision as the elegant little clock which stood upon the chimney piece in her breakfast-parlour. At nine she arose, at ten she breakfasted; from that hour till one she spent in answering letters—writing cards of thanks—of inquiry—of acceptance—or of invitation; from one till four she paid or received morning visits, or passed in shopping; from four till five she was at the toilet; at five she dined; and if she had no company, she looked over the cards which had been left for her during the morning, in order to arrange her plan of action for the ensuing day; and at seven or eight, according to the *formality* or *informality*, the *dress* or the *undress* of the party, she performed her evening's engagement; at eleven she returned home, and was always in bed (unless she was detained at a late private ball or supper) before midnight; on Sunday, she always went to church in the morning, and invariably to the Crescent or to the Pump-room afterwards; while there were a certain part of her female acquaintance (invalids, who never went to parties, and for whom Sunday was consequently the only open day—decayed gentlewomen, who were glad of a comfortable dinner, or professional people whom she had been desired to notice), that were glad to make a circle round her well-spread board on this day, and who tried, by their cheerful conversation, to evince their sense of the attention. Mrs. Ripley never invited any fortune-hunting men, or any of questionable character, to those friendly parties; and for decorum, circumspection, and regularity, no widow lady in Bath stood higher in the estimation of the public—the old liked her, because she was attentive to them; the young, because she was good-natured and cheerful; the fashionable, because she dressed well, and looked smart; the unfashionable, because she did not gamble, or leave off *all* her petticoats.

Mary Ellis could not have gone to any lady, under whose protection she would have been sure of more universal suffrage; for Mrs. Ripley had *no* enemies—she had no spirit of competition or rivalry, hence she was not an object of envy; and if the question was asked—“Do you know Mrs. Ripley?” the answer was generally returned—“Oh yes, to be sure I do—what a charming, good-humoured creature she is!”

Though much renovated by a comfortable night's repose, yet Mary did not feel herself well enough to join Mrs. Ripley, either in her morning's round of visits, or in her evening's



engagements; and when she heard these called over at the breakfast-table, she pleaded her inability.

“Oh! don’t trouble to make any apology about it,” said Mrs. Ripley; “you shall stay at home as long as you like, and till you are quite well; I shall be always glad to have you with me, but I shall never be offended if you are not; and till you are quite recovered, I think the more cautious you are, the better; I will not act so much in the ceremonious way as to offer to stay at home with you; that would be putting myself quite out of my track, and I should not know how to get right again, for my hands are quite full, and every day brings its own business; and if I do not quit scores, I shall get over head and ears in debt. Yesterday was one of my stay-at-home mornings; in consequence, I had a great many visitors; and if I do not return them to-day, only think how they will be increased upon me by to-morrow!”

“I am quite pleased that you treat me in this manner, my dear madam,” said Mary; “I should never be able to reconcile myself to the intrusion, if it were not for the kind and easy reception which you give me.”

“Don’t say a word about it,” said Mrs. Ripley; “I am always happy to oblige Humphrey, independent of every other consideration, for he is a good creature, though not fit for a Bath beau; but in this instance, I suspect that I am obliging myself, and I almost wish that I could enjoy a little more of your society this morning—but you see how it is,” pointing to the pile of visiting-tickets which lay before her; “these must all be left in *propria persona*, at least I must be the bearer of them, though in all probability I shall not be let into one of the houses.”

“In that case, could not your footman spare you the trouble?” asked Mary.

“Why, my dear Miss Ellis, one would think that you had lived in Bath all your life—you are really quite dashy in your ideas—that is the very tip-top of ton—No—I never will come into that absurd plan—now I am ready to make my *entrée*, if my friends are at home, and *choose* to admit me, in the other case I *could* not see them—no, I will always be *rational* in my amusements.”

“But surely there must be a great fatigue in having to return visit for visit, in this formal manner.”

“Not the least, my dear, when once a regular method is established. These little bits of paper,” taking up one of the cards, “may be considered as the very cement of fashionable society; they are of the utmost possible use in maintaining an uninterrupted and social intercourse with our friends; many, very many ladies of my *intimate* acquaintance, I have not spoken to for the whole winter, though I may have visited *them*, and they may have visited me once a-week, or a fortnight at furthest—perhaps I may have met them accidentally of an evening, seated in a part of a room where it has been utterly impossible to get to them; and our familiar nods have evinced to one another that our intimacy is as undiminished as it had been the preceding winter, though our personal intercourse has been unavoidably suspended.”

“You must have so much to attend to—so much upon your mind,” said Mary.

“No, my dear girl, it is brought by me into so regular a routine, that I assure you I am never the least perplexed; put me out of my way, send me to two or three parties of a-night, to balls first, and suppers after, to *Sunday* card-meetings, and evening *breakfasts*, and I should be out of my head, and soon have my senses bewildered; I could not bear the dissipated lives of the fashionable world. I take things moderately and soberly—I *use*, but not *abuse*—some people never tire, never weary in the pursuit of pleasure—but pleasure would cease to be pleasure to me, if I could not follow it in my own methodical and strait-forward manner—I must now answer some of these notes.”

"Can I assist you, ma'am?" asked Mary; "you cannot oblige me more than by making me useful."

"No, my dear, I thank you, I am entirely independent—it is no trouble to me; for this is as much the business of the morning as my breakfast—but I had like to have forgotten to ask if you like reading?"

"Very much," answered Mary.

"Then I will order George to go to a library and subscribe, that you may get some books."

"Don't put yourself to that unnecessary trouble, on my account, I entreat you, ma'am," said Mary.

"Oh, my dear, the trouble is none."

"But any from your own library."

"I have *no* library, my dear child—I have no *time* for reading, and consequently, a library would be useless to me—mere lumber. At Mr. Ripley's death, I sold off all my books, except my Bible and Prayer-book, Hoyle on Whist, and Blair's Sermons (as I always make a point of reading a sermon on Sundays, if I can't go to church), and a Guide to the Watering-places, for *that* is necessary to take with me on my summer excursions—now this is *literally* my library; it would be down-right folly in me to talk of books which I have not, and which, if I had, I should not read—I dare say there are many pretty things to be got at the libraries—I hear people talking about books frequently; but as I do not read myself, I remember nothing about them; however, when I meet with some of my reading acquaintances, I will get them to set down a few titles for me; but George shall ask Mr. — to recommend something for to-day."

From this specimen of Mrs. Ripley, our readers will be as well acquainted with her, as if they had been her inmate for a month; she was perfectly easy, unaffected, and good-humoured; but the little niceties of sentiment and feeling, the traits of genuine sensibility, the resources of mental cultivation, the discriminating eye of taste, the vitality of religion, none of those were hers.

Grateful to Heaven, and thankful to Mr. Munden, for having placed her in a respectable asylum, Mary felt very much relieved when Mrs. Ripley sallied forth on her morning's duty, and she was left to pursue her own amusements; her enfeebled frame, and the late agitation of her spirits, both required rest, and she was happy at being freed from any troublesome intruders; but with all the apprehensive anxiety of a mind which was still feeble and tremulous from illness, she fancied every knock at the door was the knock of Mrs. Elwyn, who, though she almost dreaded to see, she yet expected to call upon her; but that lady did not make her appearance; and though spared from the unpleasant sensations which must inevitably have ensued, from an interview with a person who had always evinced such insolent superiority over her, yet she grieved to think that Henry Elwyn's wife was of such a stamp, and that he should have united himself to a woman so wholly opposite to himself in every generous quality.

In the course of the morning, Elwyn called at the door with a message of inquiry, and being told that Mrs. Ripley was out, and that Miss Ellis was tolerably well, he merely left his compliments, and did not ask admittance.

Mary was pleased at this delicate behaviour; for though Elwyn was her guardian, he was yet a very young man for that office; the world in the country had already joined their names more than once; the world at Bath might do the same; and if Mrs. Elwyn refused to notice her, the particular regards of her husband might be viewed with the eye of suspicion.

Such were some of the ruminations of Mary, during the absence of Mrs. Ripley; but in order to show her sense of that lady's attention, she began to peruse the books, and spent two

hours very pleasantly: Mr. —— had been judicious in the selections, and she derived both amusement and instruction from the employment.

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## CHAP. XIV.

Enchanting, as if aught so sweet  
Ne'er faded. Do thy daughters wear the weeds  
Of calm domestic peace, and wedded love?  
BOWLES.

WHEN Henry Elwyn had turned from the door of Mrs. Ripley, having there in safety deposited his fair ward, he was much affected at the separation: Mary Ellis had entered into all the humiliating feelings which had wounded him, as he contemplated the disgraceful conduct of his mother; she had sympathized in his distress; she had tried to sooth his perturbed soul; the warm interest which he still took in the happiness of the gentle girl with whom he had been bred up in habits of early intimacy; the ravages which her recent illness had made upon her delicate frame, and something, perhaps, nearly allied to compunction, as he took a retrospect of the past—all these had combined to give much pathos and seriousness to his parting address; but his sanguine spirit again sprang with elastic anticipation towards his lovely, and still fondly-beloved Lauretta; the little female foibles which he had noticed in her were forgotten, in the idea of once more folding her to his breast; after this forced, this painful absence, she should be the sweet soother of his cares, the repository of his sorrows; to her he should reveal the mortifying, the distressing recollections which still unmanned him; when a mother's frailty, a mother's imprudence, called the indignant blush into his cheek, Lauretta should speak peace to his wounded soul; she would feel for him; the soft accents of affection from her lips would be a cordial balm to his heart.

The messenger who had preceded Elwyn to Bath, to apprize Mrs. Ripley of the approach of her guest, had also been ordered to inform Mrs. Elwyn when she might expect her husband.

Elwyn did not wait to be announced; he ran up immediately into the drawing-room, but it was deserted; the fire was scarcely alive in the grate, and cast a melancholy light over the apartment; the candles were placed on the table, but were not lighted. Elwyn rang the bell; a servant appeared—"Is your mistress unwell? is she gone to bed?" asked he, in a tone of hurried agitation.

"Oh, no, sir," replied the man; "my mistress is very well indeed, sir—never saw her better—she left her compliments for you, sir, when she went out, and bid me tell you, sir, that she went first to the play, sir, and then to lady Sawbridge's ball and supper; she said she supposed they should keep it up late, sir: she desired, sir, if you came home in time, that you would follow her to my lady Sawbridge's, as your name was in the card."

"Not to-night," thought Elwyn. "Light the candles, and leave me," said he aloud; he folded his arms across, and leant his head on the mantle-piece—"Would Mary Ellis have been absent at such a time?" asked he, mentally; the question was a dangerous one—he did not pursue it, but he felt all the rebellious passions of his nature struggling in his breast: "is it thus," cried he, "that Lauretta can enjoy herself in my absence? she *knew* the recent shock which I had felt—she knew that I was coming—she *expected* me to-night—Does she not love me then?—has Harry Elwyn lavished his fondness, and bartered his liberty, to one who *loves* him not?" he walked round the room in a distempered agony of mind, which baffles description—"Impossible!" said he, pausing, and the natural vanity of his disposition again triumphant, "Impossible!—did I not view the delight (a delight which female coyness vainly tried to hide) which sparkled in her eyes, which glowed in her dear cheek, when we accidentally met at

Salcombe? and did I not view the distress, the tender sensibility, the fearful apprehension, which overcame her, which subdued reserve and timidity, when the express reached me at Malvern, when a separation was about to take place between us? but when all doubt was changed to certainty, and she was mine for ever—oh, Lauretta! dearest, sweetest Lauretta! why art thou absent?”

Elwyn took a seat—he tried to read—the book was dull—the style uninteresting—the story spiritless—he thought of going to lady Sawbridge’s; but he cast his eyes in the glass, and seeing the disordered state of his dress, he gave up the idea; for he was too much fatigued to engage in the duties of the toilet that night.

The servant reappeared, to ask if his master chose supper?

“Aye, you may bring some in,” answered Elwyn, scarcely knowing what he said. He ate a mouthful of cold chicken, and he hastily swallowed several glasses of Madeira; his spirits rose in consequence—he could not remain in the house—he knew that several of his acquaintances were assembled at —— house, and that at this hour they were deeply engaged at play; dress would be inconsequential there; it was more easy to amuse himself for an hour in looking at them, than in undergoing all the parade of dress, and attending to the imposing laws of etiquette. He went out, and was soon welcomed by the party at —— house, who received this voluntary visit with the highest satisfaction.

At first, Elwyn resisted all entreaties to engage in the amusement; but the turbulent state of his mind did not exactly tally with the character of a calm and disengaged spectator; insensibly he became interested in the scene he was contemplating; he betted highly; the enthusiasm of his spirits rose with success; he betted again; he doubled the former sum—he lost! and, fatigued and exhausted, he returned home at five in the morning, dissatisfied with himself, and ready to throw the blame of his ill fortune on Lauretta, whose absence from home had been the original cause of this imprudent visit.

To his inquiry concerning Mrs. Elwyn, he was answered that “she had been returned home an hour, that she had expressed great surprise at not having seen him at lady Sawbridge’s, and that she had gone to bed immediately.”

“Poor Lauretta!” thought Henry, and immediately his feelings were brought into their wonted channel; “hurt, no doubt, at this seeming neglect of thee; thy tenderness wounded at my not following thee to lady Sawbridge’s; at my absence, when thou hadst expected me to hail thy return with eager fondness, thou hast retired to the privacy of thine own apartment, to the solitude of thine own chamber, to hide the overflowings of thy feeling heart, to pour them out upon thy pillow.”

With cautious and gentle steps Elwyn entered the chamber of his wife, certain of finding her awake, and ready to chide his absence; he approached the bed; those eyes, which he had portrayed as beaming with tenderness upon him (while they were yet moistened by the tears of apprehensive affection), tears which would upbraid him for his long delay, tears which would reproach him more than words, tears which he should kiss away, *those* eyes were closed in sleep—in sleep sound and undisturbed! no traces of tears were seen on her cheek, no signs of anxiety were perceptible on her tranquil countenance—“It would be cruel to awaken her,” thought Elwyn, as he gazed upon her; and fearing lest the light of the candle should fall on her face, he set it down on the dressing-table. There, strewn in confusion, lay the ornaments of his lovely wife, there lay the diamond tiara which had adorned her hair, the strings of pearls which had graced her neck and arms; the disorder which was there apparent, proved that overcome by fatigue, she had hastened to bed, without even allowing her abigail time to put her trappings

aside. There was something very mortifying in this thought, yet it would recur, and force itself upon the mind of Elwyn. The speaking witnesses of Laretta's insensate indifference seemed to lie before him, in the discarded decorations of her beauty; he did not stay to analyse his own sentiments, but snatching up the candle, he retired to the next room; he felt a malicious kind of satisfaction, in the idea of Laretta's surprise and mortification when she should awake in the morning, and find that her apartment had not been occupied by her husband.

Elwyn threw himself upon a bed, but his slumbers were neither unbroken or tranquil—"distempered visions of the night" stole over his perturbed imagination, and disturbed his soul; he lay until a late hour, and awoke with an aching head, and a feverish pulse.

He arose—his first inquiry was for Laretta; she had not yet rang her bell; he sent to ask after her health, and to let her know that he was ready for breakfast; the answer she returned him was that "she was very lazy, but that she would try to get up."

Elwyn went into the drawing-room, and throwing himself upon the sofa, by the time he took up a book, and held it in his hand, turning over the leaves without reading, for nearly an hour, when the door opened, and in a loose wrapping-gown, and a dishabille which evidently proved that she had not been long at her toilet, Laretta entered, and rubbing her eyes, and saying—"Elwyn, you naughty man, how could you be so cruel? you awoke me out of the sweetest sleep in the world."

"My dearest love," replied Elwyn, tenderly pressing her to his breast, "I thought you would not be sorry to come to me after an absence of four days—oh, Laretta! a cruel absence has it been to me! much, much has your Elwyn suffered—and much has he longed for the solace of your society."

"It was plain you *longed* very much for it," said Laretta, with an air half-jesting, half-chiding, "by your not following me to lady Sawbridge's, when I expressly left a message to desire that you would."

"My love, I was harassed in mind and body," replied Elwyn, "and ill suited for a scene of gaiety."

"But you went out somewhere," said Laretta, "and you were out when I returned home, Mr. Elwyn," in an accusing tone; "may I ask whither your fatigue impelled you?"

"Alas!" thought Elwyn, "it was *you*, Laretta, that impelled me;" but he tried to parry her question; for though Laretta might not chide him, his heart recoiled from the painful confession. Henry Elwyn dared not avow that he had spent the night at a gaming-table; and thus ever is it with novices in vice—they blush to own—they are ashamed to acknowledge their *first* transgression, when the acknowledgement might, perhaps, prevent a repetition of the fault—the temptation recurs a second time, the first offence still undiscovered, still shrouded in secrecy—it is repeated, and by degrees the fearful sinner becomes the open and bold offender, with feelings callous, with conscience seared—"I did not go where I enjoyed myself," said Elwyn, with a languid sigh.

"You tell *me* so," replied Laretta, sarcastically.

"I had much to unhinge, much to unman me," returned he; "ah, Laretta! judge of my sensations, when I found I came too late to save my mother from disgrace! yes, I have cast off my only remaining parent—I have cast her off for ever!"

"And what is there in that?" asked Laretta, with the utmost *nonchalance*; "nothing to make you look so solemn, Elwyn—it is rather a comic than a tragic tale—Mrs. Elwyn cast you off, and has chosen a companion more suited to her taste—Lord bless you! leave all the world to be happy in their own way, and don't trouble about it."

"And can you really talk with so much coolness on a subject which so nearly affects me?" asked Elwyn.

"I really see nothing at all to make a fuss about," answered Laretta; "these things are done every day; I dare say your mother is extremely happy with Timothy for her husband, and her friend Miss Mary for her sempstress."

"Laretta," said Elwyn, with seriousness, "do not class those names together; do you think I suffered Mary Ellis to remain at the Hall? do you think I would expose purity, delicacy like hers, to the gross familiarity of such a man as the one whom my mother has chosen?"

"Bless me, what harm could he do her?" said Laretta; "he would be too much taken up in attending to his old lady, to have time to spare to the young one; and, by-the-bye, I believe, Elwyn, if we were to trace things to their sources, we should find that this Miss Mary Ellis has no great right to be fastidious, and that *she*, of all people, need not turn up her nose at Mr. Timothy Piff."

"No right! fastidious! turn up her nose! Timothy Piff! Laretta, do I really hear you? Are you speaking of Mary Ellis, the humblest, the most virtuous of human beings?"

"And pray," asked Laretta, nettled at the warm approbation in which her husband spoke of Mary Ellis, who had always been the particular object of her aversion and contempt, "and pray, sir, will you suffer me to ask what asylum you may, in your wisdom, have selected for the *humblest* and the most *virtuous* of human beings?"

"That of respectability, madam," said Elwyn; "I brought Miss Ellis with me to Bath, and have placed her under the protection of Mrs. Ripley in Gay-street, a lady who mixes in polite society, whose conduct is marked by prudence and propriety, whose sanction is sufficient introduction, as she is well known here, and who is the sister of Mr. Munden, our old friend and neighbour, through whose kind interference his sister's countenance was bespoken for my ward."

"Brought her to this place!—brought her to Bath!—heavens and earth! what *could* induce you to do so ill-judged a thing?" cried Laretta.

"I am utterly at a loss to know why it was ill-judged," replied Henry, with steady coolness; "as guardian of Mary Ellis, it is my *duty* to promote her happiness; her merits and attractions entitle her to an advantageous establishment; here she will have opportunities of being seen, and of being known, which she could not have had in the country; and though the imprudence of my misguided parent has affixed an indelible stigma upon *her* character, and planted a thorn in this breast, yet eventually it may be beneficial to my lovely and interesting ward."

"Lovely and interesting!" repeated Laretta, passion rising in her flushed cheek; "this is most extraordinary!—your nocturnal, your mysterious visit is now accounted for, Mr. Elwyn; guardian to this perfect being, you assume the office by night, as well as day, it seems, and watch even her slumbers."

"Ridiculous accusation!" cried Elwyn; "you do not believe it yourself, Laretta, though for the sake of peevishness you choose to say it."

"But I do believe it, and I *will* believe it," said Laretta, in a querulously impatient tone; "I do believe it, I say—I know it—I know you do every thing you can to teaze and torment me.—My dear, sweet, good mamma never said a word to hurt me in her whole life—no, she did not, Mr. Elwyn;" and Laretta flung herself on a chair, and whimpered like an infant.

It will perhaps occur to our readers, as it did to Elwyn, that though lady Laretta spared the rod, she had spoiled the child; but he merely walked to the window, and looked out for some minutes with a *would-be* careless air, and apparently regardless of the reiterated sobbings of

Lauretta: at length, turning hastily round, and walking towards her, and seizing both her hands, he said—"Lauretta, dearest Lauretta, you *know* that I love you to distraction, you know that on yourself the whole tenderness of this heart is lavished—for God's sake take care what you do! do not let mere female caprice and idle spleen get the dominion over you; do not let them stand between you and happiness—I am hasty—I am impetuous—but you have it in your power to make me what you like—oh, do not raise those tumultuous throes of agony in my bosom, which cannot be allayed!—oh, do not let me for one moment think that you *sport* with my feelings—that you can take a malicious pleasure in torturing me; for *that* moment," and his eye flashed rapid fire, the whole fire of his countenance changed, and his voice was raised almost to a frenzied pitch, "*that* moment would show Henry Elwyn that he had been *deceived*—that Lauretta Montgomery acted the *dissembler's* part, when she *said* she loved him."

Lauretta was intimidated by the violence of his manner—"I am sure I cannot think what this is all about, for my part," said she. "Oh, my dear mamma——"

"Lauretta," interrupted Elwyn, with more calmness in his manner, "hear me—no more of this—this continual reference to your mother is at once childish and ungenerous—are you not a rational and an accountable being? you have chosen a companion for your life—I am that person; if you object to any thing in my conduct, my sentiments, or my behaviour, ingenuously tell me so; but do not thus, by inference, invoke lady Lauretta to come and witness against me—rather, *much* rather rejoice that she is at a distance—that you, her child, are spared from hearing the unpleasant remarks which are passed upon her extraordinary conduct."

Lauretta was silenced; she had never before heard Elwyn speak so openly on the subject of her mother's intimacy with general Halifax; she felt that she could urge nothing which would extenuate it; she looked humbled and convinced.

Elwyn saw her look, and in a moment felt it; his proud spirit was appeased and softened; he reproached himself for giving the slightest shadow of uneasiness to so lovely, so charming a being—he folded her in his arms, he imprinted the warm kiss of reconciliation on her lips, and they breakfasted together in perfect harmony. Mary Ellis's name seemed to be avoided by mutual consent, though Elwyn would fain have learnt whether Lauretta intended to call upon her, hoping that she would do so, and not liking to propose it to her—but nothing was further from Lauretta's intention; it never occurred to her that it was proper; and as it was not pleasant, as it did not meet her own wishes, it never entered her head: she pursued her daily routine of amusement with unslackened avidity, and Elwyn contented himself with a mere inquiry after Mary Ellis.

END OF VOL. III.



SUBSTANCE AND SHADOW;  
OR, THE  
*FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTERS OF BRIGHTON.*

A Patchwork Story.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF LIGHT AND SHADE; EVERSFIELD ABBEY;

BANKS OF THE WYE; AUNT AND NIECE, &c. &c.

The first in native dignity surpass'd—  
Artless and unadorn'd she pleas'd the more;  
— — — — —  
The other dame seem'd e'en of fairer hue,  
But bold her mien, unguarded mov'd her eye.

VOL. IV.

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## SUBSTANCE AND SHADOW.

### CHAP. I.

“And no two birds upon the farm  
E’er prated with more joy than they.”

THREE days of quiet seclusion were beneficial to the health and spirits of Mary. Mrs. Ripley had kept to her word; she did not worry her with entreaties to go out, nor with apologies for leaving her to herself; in this respect *only* she seemed not to be considered, for in every thing which was requisite to her ease and comfort, Mrs. Ripley was mindful; and grateful for the friendliness of her reception, and willing to exert herself to appear so, Mary now declared that she was in a convalescent state, and offered to accompany her protectress to the evening’s party.

“Stay at home one night longer, my dear,” said Mrs. Ripley; “to-morrow I attend the concert, and there you shall make your *debut*; no amusement is less fatiguing; you have only to get a seat, and you may there be as quietly engaged with your own reflections as if you were at home; the cramming and squeezing of a rout might be too much for you at first, and a ball might be tantalizing, as perhaps you would not like to sit still; yet I believe you are scarcely strong enough to dance: but why did I see that arch smile on your countenance, when I said you might be quietly engaged at your own reflections in the concert-room? I begin to suspect that you were laughing at me.”

“I confess I smiled at observing that you never once took the music into the account,” said Mary.

“I never do, my dear; I have no taste for music; nay, I confess to you that I am not fond of it.”

“Dear ma’am, you surprise me!” said Mary; “then suffer me to ask why you attend the concerts?”

“I shall surprise you more, Miss Ellis, if I add, that I firmly believe half those who attend them are of my opinion, though they are not candid enough to avow it: this is the age of harmony, and those who do not profess to like music, are thought ‘fit for treason, stratagems, and spoils.’ You know there are *professors* in all sciences; but observe, no sooner will one of the long pieces of music begin to-morrow night, no sooner will the first chord be struck, than, with one consent, all the company will begin to talk—it would seem as if they were *then* called upon to break the spell of harmony, that they were then to begin their attack, and to wage war with music. A concert is to me a very dull thing, but I never say so, because I hate to be particular; I always try to act, to look, and to speak, like other people; and I cry ‘charming,’ and ‘beautiful,’ at proper places, and clap with my fan, when I see others do the same. I have a very particular reason for going to-morrow evening: the concert is for the benefit of a public charity, and it would be thought very singular in *me* to stay away—it would look niggardly, and I hate to be counted mean or shabby.”

“But if you were to send your benefaction to the charity?” said Mary.

“That would not answer the end, my dear, for were I to *swear* that I had done it, I would not be believed; besides, I do not like to go out of the beaten track; every body would be asking where Mrs. Ripley was?—one would have seen me out in the morning—another would have lost

a crown to me the preceding evening; and then—‘how a woman of Mrs. Ripley’s prudence, and Mrs. Ripley’s regular mode of conduct, can answer it to her *conscience* for staying away from a charitable concert, is to *me* a matter of wonder and astonishment:’ this would be the language, my dear; I should be pointed at, and become a marked character:—no, no; I must go, and do a little penance, and undergo a little mortification, by sitting up like a mute at a funeral, in order to show myself.”

“Hard are the impositions of the world; a heavy tax is laid on those who live within its vortex,” said Mary.

“Not at all, my love,” replied Mrs. Ripley; “I am so used to all these things, that it is quite a matter of course; two charity concerts in the winter I look for, as naturally as for a fast-day before Lent; all Bath will be there, and it would not do for Mrs. Ripley to exclude herself.”

Mary listened to these sentiments without being a convert to them—“Mrs. Ripley lives indeed to the world,” thought she; “and without the motives by which its gay idols are usually actuated, she aspires neither at notoriety or eclat; her sole aim is to observe its laws, and to have respect unto its ceremonies—vain and futile labour! which thus engrosses every thought and every action of her life, and which she pursues with such persevering earnestness; for all that the world has to offer, neither to secure its applause, or to avert its ridicule, would I be thus chained down to the overbearing despot!”

The reflections of Mary were interrupted by a letter which was brought to her by the postman; the direction was evidently a female one, but the unformed hand, the uneven and cramped characters, proved that the writer was not practised in the employment; she broke the seal with some curiosity; it was dated from Elwyn Hall, and ran as follows:—

“MY DEAR MISS MARY,

“I take up my pen just to write a few lines to you, and to tell you I am very well, and very happy, and that I hope you are so likewise. I am not affronted that you went away from me, for I suppose you acted by Mr. Henry’s advice; but I was very much surprised, very so indeed; but he need not be afraid, I assure you, for indeed, Miss Mary, Mr. Timothy Piff is a very civil behaved young man, very so indeed, and clever and apprehensive; I thought him so, you may be sure, else I should not do as I have done; and sure, Miss Mary, you must allow that I was come to an age to chuse for myself, and to please myself; and Mr. Henry, he did not ask *my* consent; he married that Miss Lauretta all in private; and sure if he did not say any thing to me, I had no occasion to ask his consent; not that I believe I should ever have thought of Mr. Timothy, but only that when I first cast my eyes upon him, in his full suit of mourning, which he wore for poor dear Mr. Elwyn, he somehow put me in mind of his master, and certainly is rather like him about the chin and the mouth; he did put one in mind of poor Mr. Elwyn, very so indeed, for tears gushed to my eyes. Mr. Henry is very angry, I find; well, I can’t help it; he went away from me; he was no companion to his mother; I had lost my best friend; and as to the *new* Mrs. Elwyn, why you know, Miss Mary, my patchwork bed was ‘only fit to scare the crows:’ *she* must have a strange taste, I think, very so indeed, *such* a taste that I cannot well forget it; now, Mr. Timothy says he thinks all my patchwork is very beautiful, and very handsome indeed, and this he told me before I married him; so there now you see is the difference of tastes, Miss Mary. Well, I am not angry with you, Miss Mary, for may be, you would as soon have staid here as have gone to the sister of that comical and cross Mr. Munden; he was here when we came home, and he talked so odd, and was so full of jokes and earnest, that I hardly knew what to be at; and to be sure, poor Mr. Timothy was ready to creep into a corner, but law bless me! he had done nothing to be

ashamed of. A queer wedding it turned out, to be sure, for all the servants, it seems, envious no doubt at Mr. Timothy's advancement, chose to leave me, that was so good a mistress to 'em all, and this is the reward of my good-nature, and my bemeaning myself, as I always did, amongst 'em, without one bit of pride—well, let 'em go further, they may fare worse, that's all I can say; Mr. Timothy was very well pleased at their going; now we keep only a couple of maids, and a man as he knew, and could recommend, and we find 'em quite enough; for we shall go out very little, and when I want the carriage, why Mr. Timothy can drive me himself. Miss Mary, I bear no ill will to you, and I hope you are better, and that you will excuse all blots and blunders. Mr. Piff desires his compliments. I remain your very humble servant, and sincere friend,

“ELLEN PIFF.”

Mary had scarcely decyphered this curious epistle, when a servant put another letter into her hand; she recognised the writing of Henry Elwyn in the envelope, which ran thus:—

“MY DEAR MARY,

“I know you will be interested in the contents of our good friend Munden's letter. I fear the credulous and foolish being, whom I have the misfortune of calling mother, will soon have cause to mourn her imprudent conduct. I preferred sending you the letter, to calling, because, as I have not the pleasure of knowing Mrs. Ripley, the verbal communication would have been repugnant to my feelings. Believe me always, dear Mary, your firmly-attached friend,

“HENRY ELWYN.”

Mr. Munden's letter followed:—

“DEAR HARRY,

“I kept my station, as I told you I should, and with a book and a blazing fire, I awaited the return of Mr. and Mrs. Piff; at length their carriage drove up, and the foolish titter of madam assailed my ear as she came into the hall; she walked directly into the parlour where I was sitting, holding by the arm of Timothy. I wish I could give you an idea of the crest-fallen look of this exulting bridegroom—when I got up from my chair, and saluted the bride with—‘Madam, I wish you much joy,’ and a low bow, he loosened himself from his new incumbrance, but found it a hard matter to stand by himself; my lady curtsied, and bridled, and tossed, and did not know what to be at; Mr. Piff seemed to be leaving the room, and to be leaving her to hear me out—‘Not so fast, if you please, Mr. Timothy Piff,’ said I, and the foolish ninnyhammer returned, with that air of servile and hacknied obeisance with which he had been used to await the commands of his master. I entered upon my business at once, and told them, that you permitted them to remain at the Hall, and all that; but I informed Mr. Piff, that he must arrange his own establishment, for that his *equals* I found did not chuse to become his servants—‘As they please, sir, as they please,’ said he, shuffling, as if he still felt for the napkin under his arm; ‘Mrs. Piff and I shall make ourselves very agreeable to every thing.’—‘Very true, very proper, Mr. Piff, very much so indeed, sir,’ said his complimentary spouse. She stumbled out something about you, Harry, and about your not having consulted her, and about the desertion of your little ward; but I took *that* all upon myself—‘Faith, madam,’ said I, ‘in the topseyturvy confusion of this house, it might have been hard work for any one to keep in their proper place,

so I thought it was best to send the girl under the care of my sister, who never stirs out of the beaten track, nor gets out of the perpendicular, but carries her dish even, go where she will.’—‘Well, just as you please, sir.’—‘It seems to have been *just* as *you* pleased, madam,’ answered I; so, giving Mr. Timothy to understand, in downright English, that Mrs. Piff would receive her jointure of five hundred *per annum* in quarterly payments at my hands, and that it behoved him to conduct himself with respect and attention towards her, as to her he must look for his maintenance, and having specified a few other things which I thought necessary, I bade adieu to the happy pair. I have since been making some inquiries into the character of this hopeful Timothy, and find that amongst his fellows he was always considered cross and selfish, very mean-spirited, crouching to his superiors, though a very tyrant where he could domineer and exert a little *brief authority*. What a fine old fool this mother of yours has been! before the honeymoon has elapsed, she will repent her bargain. Call me a croaking old bachelor; but so I mean to continue; while I see so much headstrong folly in one sex, so much weak credulity in the other, I mean to keep clear, if I can. I suppose this Mary Ellis, who really appears one of a thousand, I suppose she goes on soft and smoothly with madam Ripley; only let her keep quiet, and follow the lead of the other, and not traverse her schemes, nor alter her plan for the next day, and the day after, and so on to that day month, and she may jog on as quietly in the Bath round, as any horse in a mill; Mrs. Ripley will never draw her aside; and to *this* girl her *perseverance in pleasure* will do no harm, for I take it that the turn of her mind is above par.

“God bless you, dear Elwyn! Deuce take me, if I can think of one syllable time enough to say to your *fine* lady, who always overlooks blunt and homespun

“HUMPHREY MUNDEN.”

“P.S. I will send my love to Mary Ellis. I have not forgiven you for giving up that respectable old mansion to Piff; what, in God’s name, will he do with it? five hundred a year can’t maintain it properly, though he ought not to have reckoned on one-fifth of that sum; and, in God’s name, who will go to visit him? fine parlour company will never be seen in those rooms, where that girl’s friend, and every body’s friend, poor Clara—but no matter, for I have already prosed to the end of my paper.”

Amidst the unpleasant ideas which Mr. Munden’s description of Timothy Piff had called up in the mind of Mary, though there was something pleasing and consolatory to her heart, in the knowledge of possessing the regard and good opinion of this worthy man, yet she could have wished that he had restrained the bluntness of his manner, and not so obviously expressed his meaning with regard to Lauretta—“The quick apprehension of Henry,” thought she, “will instantly perceive that Mrs. Elwyn is not looked upon with so indulgent an eye by his friend as is Mary Ellis; this will wound his pride and his sensibility; I wish that Mr. Munden had withheld his pen—I wish that he had not mentioned my name. Mrs. Piff’s letter is characteristic; she is a weak and foolish woman—she means no harm; but she is vain and credulous—she is now likely to grow wiser from experience. It would be no comfort to Henry to see the letter of his mother; he could derive no satisfaction from it; on the contrary, he would find every unpleasant feeling recurring with the perusal—he must not read it.”

## CHAP. II.

“Their only labour was to kill the time,  
And labour dire it is, and weary woe.”

DISMISSING these subjects as much as possible from her mind, Mary arrayed herself in decent simplicity, and with a cheerful countenance, and the hue of rosy health returning to her cheek, she was ready to attend Mrs. Ripley to the concert—“I go tolerably early,” said that lady; “I hate to be particular; some people I believe carry their dinners in their pockets (their ridicules, I should say—I forgot that pockets were exploded), because they *will* have front seats; and others make a point of coming in when the room is crowded, and when the silence observed during a solo song of some favourite singer is considered a propitious moment for drawing on them the notice of the whole room; for my part, I have not patience for the first, or assurance for the last; I dislike singularity, and therefore I go time enough to get a seat near enough to the orchestra, in order to be able to hear what’s going on, if I like it.”

Mary agreed with Mrs. Ripley in thinking this middle course the best, and they got to the concert-room at the time they wished, and were pleasantly seated, very near the front of the orchestra.

The bench which they fixed on had vacancies only for two—“You are to go outside,” said Mrs. Ripley; “it is the custom for the *young ladies* to sit at the ends of the seats; they are then seen by the beaux as they lounge up the room.”

“Oh,” cried Mary, whose modest nature recoiled at the idea of placing herself purposely to be looked at, “if you please, madam, I would rather sit inside.”

“Oh, but indeed you must not,” answered her friend; “I assure you it is not the custom; and I never do any thing which may look particular, or different from other people.”

Mary acquiesced in silence; and was much amused at seeing the company enter, and in watching the gradual filling of the room; she had once attended a Bath concert with her beloved protectress, but she was then too young to make many remarks, and most of the present performers she had not heard. Mary was *really* fond of music, though she did not talk so much about it as many who were less sensible of its soothing and bewitching powers, and she anticipated much sublime delight from some of the choruses of the immortal Handel, and one or two of his chastely-pathetic songs, which she saw announced in the bill which she held in her hand; to Italian music she was not so partial; she did not understand the language, and her simple ear was not alive to its scientific beauties.

Mrs. Ripley amused herself with telling Mary the names of different persons as they passed in rotation up the room, with pointing out *particular* characters, and with curtsying to her own regular acquaintances, till the music began, when she was *mute* attention, whispering Mary—“You remember what I told you yesterday; I always make a point of *seeming* attentive; you shall hear me talk again, when this act is over; but if you should see me nodding, have the goodness to step upon my foot; it would not do to fall asleep—that would be too particular.”

Mary was much pleased; even in a long concerto, she found beauties, for the subject was pretty, and the variations were not complicated; but when, after a full and rich chorus of sacred melody, the “quelled thunder died upon the ear,” and Mrs. — stood up with a voice and manner which did justice at once to the pathos, simplicity, and tender sweetness of “Farewell, ye limpid streams,” the full hear of Mary overflowed, and she became *particular*, for tears of

tender, yet pensive, pleasure gushed from her eyes: luckily Mrs. Ripley did not observe her, but another did, for a loud laugh assailed her ear at the moment when she was wrapped in harmonious trance, and turning about, she saw Mrs. Elwyn; Lauretta's eyes were fixed upon her, and the sarcastic look which accompanied the scornful toss of her head, as she scarcely deigned to notice the modest inclination of Mary's, proved that she had been at once the object of her observation and her mirth.

Lauretta would have leant on a gentleman's arm as she tried to walk up the crowded room, but finding it impracticable, she hastily relinquished it, saying—"Do, for Heaven's sake, put a chair near the orchestra; I should be suffocated were I to try to get amongst this cram."

The gentleman, who was a stranger to Mary, looked smiling obedience to the all-imposing commands of this sovereign lady; never did a smile more happily show two severed rows of pearl; the figure, the air, the manner of this beau, was that of a perfect Adonis; the care with which his flaxen hair was parted on his brow, the delicate carmine on his cheek, the nicely-disposed cravat, the elegant and sparkling broche which fastened his shirt, even the patch on his chin, was levelled at the ladies: warding off the crowd on either side of him with his huge opera hat, he moved with tip-top caution along; all the belles eyed him as he passed, many a fine eye languished to catch a glance of his, for the elegant, the charming, the *beautiful* Narcissus Finlater was the *beauty* of the present season.

With a half-languid, half-careless air, Lauretta let him precede her, and then catching the arm of another gentleman, who followed close behind her, she said, "do lend me your assistance; I have sent Finlater on to get me a seat."

This gentleman, directed by the laugh of Lauretta, had followed the object of her rude observation; his eyes had fixed on the softened countenance of Mary, and they appeared to be rivetted upon it. Mary did not observe him, for she had been too much confused by the repulsive *hauteur* of Lauretta to venture another look towards her party; but Fitzallan, for he it was who followed Mrs. Elwyn, now caught her by the hand as he passed, saying—"Is it possible that I see Miss Ellis? this is an unexpected, an unhoped-for happiness."

"You are very good in thus recognising me," said Mary, with that air of freedom which the natural and ingenuous manner of Fitzallan called for.

"Pray make way," said Lauretta, in a tone of impatience, which evinced that Fitzallan's friendly notice of Mary Ellis did not contribute to her satisfaction, "I cannot stir a step."

Fitzallan did make way, and other dashing belles, followed by splashing beaux, whom Mary did not know, seemed to follow as of the same party; in the rear came Henry Elwyn, escorting a fine bold-looking female, whose widely uncovered neck and shoulders displayed nothing delicate or attractive—"This is the deuce of a squeeze," said the lady, in a loud and coarse tone of voice; "I shall not be cool again to-night."

"You will have more room towards the orchestra," said Elwyn; "I think Mrs. Elwyn has already got a seat."

Elwyn did not see Mary; he moved on a few paces, and having procured a chair for his companion, she observed him addressed by Fitzallan; a look of pleased surprise illumined his countenance; and putting his arm through his friend's, they both walked immediately towards Mary; lucky was it for her that the first act was closed, as it was not *particular* to talk.

Both Elwyn and Fitzallan were introduced by her to Mrs. Ripley, and their conversation, lively, sensible, and well-bred, impressed that lady in their favour.

The easy manner in which Mary addressed Elwyn, the tone of modest and unembarrassed familiarity in which she answered him, were observed by Fitzallan with the most undissembled

satisfaction; and when, after chatting a few minutes, Elwyn returned to the party he had quitted, Fitzallan remained stationary at the side of Mary, and leaning on the end of her seat, and amusing both ladies with his animated remarks.

"Who is the lady whom Mr. Elwyn escorted up the room?" asked Mary.

"Why, you amaze me by the question," replied Fitzallan; "I thought *every* body knew her."

"But I am *nobody*," said Mary, smiling.

"And this lady, whom you will allow to be *somebody*," said he, "is lady Sawbridge."

"Lady Sawbridge!" repeated Mary, Miss Letsom's anecdote of that lady recurring to her memory.

"Lady Sawbridge," said Mrs. Ripley, "has made herself very *particular*; she was much talked of in the lifetime of sir James, with lord Overton."

"My dear madam, we must not be *too* particular," said Fitzallan; "we must not look back; lady Sawbridge is now a rich and an unincumbered widow—lord Overton is married, and no lady is more followed in Bath."

"I do not follow her," said Mrs. Ripley, "because I think her a *particular* character; as far as I can, I make it one of my rules not to get acquainted with particular characters, or with particular-looking people; I no more like to have it said Mrs. Ripley was intimate with such a lady, after her *faux-pas* with lord such a one, than I would be pleased to have it asked me who that comical looking creature was that I chaperoned to a ball? I know a lady who really likes to get acquainted with oddities of all sorts, and all kinds; her routs always look to me like the Bath hospital, for I have seen the lame, the halt, and the blind there; and as to the conversation, it has resembled nothing but 'confusion worse confounded,' for she does not mind whether her guests come from east or west, from north and south, so they *come* to her; of divorced wives, and faithless husbands, Doctors' Commons could not produce a better assemblage; and as to her lean authors, and half-starved poets, she appears to have had the whole range of Grub-street."

"A charming mixture," said Fitzallan, laughing.

"A very *particular* one, I think," said Mrs. Ripley; "your people of genius, as they are called, are in general such odd out-of-the-way looking beings, that I always endeavour to keep clear of them."

"Really, my dear madam," returned Fitzallan, "in this place, and with this large exclusion, your acquaintance must be very limited."

"By no means," said Mrs. Ripley, "as Miss Ellis here can testify, by my engagements, and by the knocks at my door of a morning; no, no, I jog on very gently, with regular beings, who dress, play cards, and look, and speak, and move, like other people."

"Pardon me," said Fitzallan, "if I suggest that yours must be a flat collection; and I think would forcibly remind one of the three hundred and sixty-five wax-work figures at Mrs. Wright's, who all came at a birth, *as the story goes*, and were all called John and Mary."

"I will give you leave to laugh at me," answered Mrs. Ripley, who was a good-humoured woman, "so that you do not call me eccentric, or particular; and I will give you an invitation to one of my routs, and you shall view my Johns and Marys."

"If all of them are like the one I see at this moment," said Fitzallan, with animation, "I should never tire of the charming prospect."

"Well, that is very politely and promptly said, is it not, Miss Ellis?" said Mrs. Ripley.

"And, besides," added Fitzallan, "under this obliging invitation, I find a great deal conveyed; remember, that I am not to understand myself as *lame*, or *halt*, or *blind*—neither a



lean author, or an half-starved poet—a man of *gallantry*; or a *man of genius*,” and he bowed with an air of mock gratitude to Mrs. Ripley.

“I believe we must go into the tea-room, if we wish to get any tea,” said that lady; “and if I stay, perhaps you will make me recant my opinions; your *genius* seems to have a design that way.” Mrs. Ripley moved on, not displeased at having a *beau*, who was not *particularly* ill-looking, for her escort.

They easily procured a disengaged tea-table; and while Mary was amused by the lively rattle of Fitzallan, and Mrs. Ripley was preparing their beverage, amongst the crowd who passed in review before them was Mrs. Elwyn and her party; she was still escorted by the *beautiful* Mr. Finlater: Elwyn had relinquished the care of lady Sawbridge to another beau of the party, and followed close to Lauretta; with great *nonchalance*, Mrs. Elwyn tapped Fitzallan upon the shoulder with her fan, and in no very pleasant tone of voice, said—“You seem to have forsaken your party, sir.”

“Here is my apology,” said Fitzallan, pointing towards Mary, with easy gaiety; “I left you doubly guarded, and in attending to the ward of my friend, I considered myself to be obliging him.”

“And yourself at the same time, I suspect,” said Elwyn, as he good-humouredly shook the hand of Mary as he passed along.

“Who is that young lady?” asked Mr. Finlater, applying the glass to his eye, which was suspended from his neck by a wide black ribbon.

“Can you ask?” said lady Sawbridge; “surely, Narcissus, you *must* be blind; can you not *see* that she is a relative of Mrs. Elwyn?—and are you not deaf likewise, for you have just been told that Mr. Elwyn is her guardian?—and the likeness is so very apparent——”

“Very apparent, without doubt,” said Mrs. Elwyn, biting her lips, and trying to conceal her mortification by going on, but the crowd at that moment prevented her; turning to Mr. Finlater, she said—“*You* perceive this striking likeness, no doubt?”

“No, on my sacred honour,” said Finlater; “but, pardon me, if I think that Mr. Elwyn is *trying* to discover it.”

“Oh, *he* discovered it long ago,” said Lauretta, in a tone which was understood by Elwyn.

He gave a parting bow to Mary and to Fitzallan, and as he proceeded slowly on, his lingering look seemed to betray the pleasure which he would have felt in still remaining.

“How is it that Mrs. Elwyn is not more sociable with you?” asked Fitzallan.

“That question I cannot answer,” said Mary, colouring.

“Situated as you are,” said Mrs. Ripley, “it would be the most natural thing in the world for her to be on an intimate footing with you; and it would be proper and decorous, and it certainly looks *particular* not to be so.”

“Your guardian would wish it,” said Fitzallan, looking at Mary with that searching earnestness which would have read her inmost soul; but he found nothing there which “angels might not hear, and virgins tell.”

“The friendship and regard of Henry Elwyn,” said she, “I reckon amongst the greatest blessings of my life; you know, Mr. Fitzallan, and Mrs. Ripley also knows, that to the extraordinary kindness and benevolence of the deceased Mrs. Elwyn, I am indebted for every thing; but on the present lady I have no claims; she knows little of me——”

“And less she is inclined to know, it seems,” said Mrs. Ripley, interrupting her; “it would do her no harm, methinks, to pay you a little civility; but perhaps that is a coin which is not current with her; for my own part, I am not sorry for it; on my own account, I don’t wish to lose

your company, for I am sure I find you very accommodating, and agreeable, and steady, and all that; and if Mrs. Elwyn took it into her head to be polite, I must come in for a little of it; and lady Lauretta Montgomery, I have been told, is a very particular character, and has made herself much talked of, both with regard to her airs of romance, and also for her fondness for that East-India general (Halifax); I am told she lives with him now; perhaps by-and-bye, the daughter may do something or another altogether as odd, and then I am sure I shall be glad that I did not know her."

"I trust not," said Mary; "I believe she is very much attached to her husband; and her little errors have their origin in the indulgence and overweening fondness with which her mother brought her up; these will be corrected by experience."

"Well, well, it is all very proper and very pretty in you to say what you can in her extenuation, as she is your guardian's wife, and so on; I really should like well enough to be acquainted with *him*; my brother Humphrey is mighty partial to him, and speaks very much in his favour; and then too, as guardian of my visitor and inmate, it would be all very well to see him now and then; but as I do not know his wife, his visiting alone would have a *particular* look, and certainly would not be quite the thing."

Nothing *particular* occurred during the remainder of the evening; the two ladies were seen into their chairs by the pleasant Fitzallan; and, with the exception of the transient mortification which the scornful behaviour of Mrs. Elwyn had raised in the breast of Mary, she returned home well pleased with the evening's entertainment.

Fitzallan took an early advantage of the permission which Mrs. Ripley had given him, of paying his respects to her, and going at an unfashionable hour, he found both ladies at home; from that period he became a constant visitor in Gay-street, and the invariable attendant on Mrs. Ripley and Mary when they appeared in public; he was amused by the *even tenor* with which the former pursued the *business of pleasure*, and he was pleased and interested in the sensible and modest conversation of her young companion.

### CHAP. III.

Sir, if your drift I rightly scan,  
You'd hint a beau were not a man.

SHENSTONE.

WITH much liveliness, and a sportive imagination, Frederic Fitzallan possessed sound principles and undeviating integrity. His father, sir John Fitzallan, had run the career of fashionable life, and fashionable indulgences, to the injury of his fortune, his constitution, and his peace of mind; at the age of forty, he thought of replenishing his exhausted purse, of patching up his shattered frame, of soothing his upbraiding conscience, and becoming a married man.

A lady was soon found, who, yielding to the ambition of her parents, consented to be led to the altar by a man to whom she was indifferent; she gained a title, and she found an early grave, leaving one son, an infant, in the cradle.

Sincerely attached to his youthful wife, her death overwhelmed sir John Fitzallan in affliction, and affliction was salutary to his soul; hitherto, his "compunctious visitings of conscience" had been transient, and soon passed off with the return of health and spirits, or with the replenishment of his purse; and when he was able to pursue his enjoyments, he had contrived to banish all tormenting regrets; but *now*, he looked inward on himself, he seriously asked whether he had lived to one rational purpose, and what account he could render for perverted talents, and mis-spent time? and he looked back on the mercy of that God who had continued him in the world—who had given him *time* for repentance and amendment of life, while he had cropt that lovely flower, which was fitted for an early tomb—her memory, her sacred, her virtuous, her sainted memory, he loved to contemplate; he remembered the filial obedience which made her yield her reluctant hand to him—he remembered the angelic sweetness with which she tried to *show* that she was happy—he remembered the patient sufferance which she manifested when stretched on the couch of pain, and the unclouded faith with which she faced the king of terrors.

Such retrospections were mournful, yet beneficial; sir John Fitzallan became an altered character; he now devoted his time to the care and education of his son; he resided wholly in the country; and in beneficence to those around him, and in acts of devotion and of sincere and genuine repentance, he tried to "acquaint himself with God, and be at peace;" that God, whom he sought with sincerity, seemed to hear his petitions, and to behold him with an eye of mercy.

Frederic Fitzallan grew up all that his father's most sanguine wishes could have hoped; and while, as he advanced towards manhood, his cheerful and happy disposition led him to partake in the pleasures that were offered to his acceptance with the avidity of a youthful mind, his principles were uncorrupted, his morals unperturbed. Sir John Fitzallan had purchased experience from his early errors; these had partly arisen from the indiscriminate indulgence of his parents; he adopted the happy, the golden mean in his conduct towards Frederic; and by restraining him properly, and indulging him judiciously, he preserved him from those rocks and precipices so dangerous to misguided youth.

There was something in the sanguine and enthusiastic manner and the agreeable qualities of Henry Elwyn, which had irresistibly drawn the regards of Frederic Fitzallan; and, as we have seen, he paid him a visit in Gloucestershire. *There* Fitzallan also had seen another object which had interested him: dazzled and confounded by the bright display of Lauretta Montgomery's

charms, there was a peculiar pleasure in turning from them to the contemplation of the retiring and softened graces of Mary Ellis; Fitzallan felt deeply interested in her happiness, for he believed that it depended on his friend; he believed that her youthful affections were centered in Elwyn; and he grieved at the wreck of peace which must ensue, when she should awaken from her early dream of peace and safety, when she should behold the truant heart of Henry plighting its vows to another, when she should see herself deserted, lonely, and forlorn.

Such was the picture which often presented itself to the fervid imagination of Fitzallan—"The tender mind, the delicate frame of this gentle girl, cannot bear the shock," thought he; "like a bent lily, she will droop her head, and sink into the earth, the artless victim of hopeless, of unrequited love."

In all these reflections, Fitzallan imagined that pity, and only pity, was his inspirer; and actuated, as he thought, by this motive, prior to his leaving Elwyn Hall, as our readers may remember, he conversed with his friend on the subject; and with much of that friend's enthusiasm, he described the attractions and the gentle virtues of Mary Ellis, as they appeared to him, and opposed them to those of her more resplendant rival: we need not recapitulate, as we are all well aware of the result.

The events of Mr. Elwyn's death, and of his son's marriage, had both been communicated to Fitzallan at the same time, and when his filial duties were all demanded for his father, who was suffering from a tedious and painful illness; but even in this period of duteous anxiety, Fitzallan heaved a sigh towards that tender maid "whom Henry left forlorn," and fervently prayed that her happiness might not suffer from what he imagined the wreck of her earliest hopes.

When sir John Fitzallan was sufficiently recovered to bear the journey, his medical attendants advised him to try the Bath waters; and he came down to that city, attended by his son: in the pump-room, the first morning after his arrival, Fitzallan had met Elwyn; and, mutually pleased at this unexpected meeting, the former had accepted his friend's invitation to dine, and to accompany the party to the concert in the evening.

Dressed for conquest, in all the pride of youthful beauty, Fitzallan now again saw the lovely Lauretta; as he looked at her, the softer, the milder countenance of her likeness, Mary Ellis, recurred to his imagination; but placed at the right hand of the hostess, Mr. Finlater on the other, and Elwyn engaged in doing the honours to his guests, it would not be gallant to ask Mrs. Elwyn a question which should prove his recollection of another lady, while sitting in her all-imposing presence, *that* other contemned and scorned by her; neither would it be friendly to call up her remembrance to the mind of Elwyn, as perhaps it might be accompanied by some unpleasant attendants.

Fitzallan attended his friends to the concert; who can speak his surprise on seeing Mary Ellis?—who can speak the pleasure with which, on his return to her with Henry Elwyn, he perceived the easy unembarrassed manner with which she answered his address, and the tone of familiarity, yet modest confidence, in which she spoke to him?—Pity was now succeeded by unqualified admiration in the breast of Fitzallan; the ingenuous and artless tones in which Mary Ellis afterwards tried to palliate the rude and insolent impertinence of Mrs. Elwyn, had raised this sentiment to its height; and while he thought Lauretta the most envious, the most narrow-minded, and the most selfish of women, he was inclined to raise his ideas of Mary Ellis to something very much above the common class of created beings.

Fitzallan was very candid and unreserved; he continued to visit on an intimate footing at the Elwyns; and as his thoughts were frequently reverting towards Mary Ellis, and as he was

very often in her society, it was natural for him to mention her name in the course of conversation, and he invariably did so in terms of approbation and respect.

Mrs. Elwyn could scarcely rein in her indignation at these instances of his partiality for Mary; the narrowness of her disposition made her envious of every other female, and of Mary Ellis in particular, whose unfortunate likeness to herself, and whose being beheld with regard by Henry Elwyn, had excited her hatred and aversion. She was never easy if she did not possess the exclusive regard and attention of every one who approached her: this rage for universal conquest and profound homage was just as violent now as it had been prior to her marriage; and though indifference towards her husband might have been supposed to be taking place of affection, by those who observed the pains which she took to attract the attentions of other men, yet to hear Elwyn bestow any thing like an eulogium on another female, to have seen him show a kindness to *Mary Ellis*, would have been to see the lovely features of Lauretta overspread with mortification and jealous ire.

Narcissus Finlater was her devoted slave, as far as his devotion could be abstracted from his own *sweet person*; Mrs. Elwyn was decidedly the very prettiest woman that had appeared for *the season*—*he was the beauty of the ladies*, and as he could not flirt with all the *girls* who were *dying for him*, why they might look on and *die*; it would perhaps be *safer* for him to attach himself to Mrs. Elwyn; she was a newly-married woman, and to be understood to have a *tenderness* for her, would give him great *eclat*; and there was so much trouble in following *up* the single ones, that he would rather send half a score of *them* to the Bristol Hot Wells, and keep his station by Mrs. Elwyn, thus destroying all their hopes.

But though the foolish and coxcomical attentions, and the flimsy flattery, of Finlater was very acceptable to the greedy palate of Mrs. Elwyn, and though his constant attentions to her in public were very smilingly received, yet she could not be easy, when she saw Fitzallan a guest at her table, and a visitor at her house, and heard him have the effrontery to praise a low-born and insignificant chit in her hearing. Sir John Fitzallan was in ill health; at the death of his father, Frederic would succeed to a large fortune, and to a title—*lady Fitzallan!*—oh! all ye powers of female mischief and malice, combine to prevent Mary Ellis from being raised to such an height! a height beyond herself—a height which perhaps she might have attained, had she not previously taken Elwyn in her toils: something must be thought of, something must be achieved, and *that* too quickly; for already the Bath world had called it a *done* thing, already she heard Fitzallan rallied upon his predilection, and already he appeared covertly to acknowledge it.

While Lauretta was thus suffering the baleful passion of envy to make wide inroads on her peace of mind, her husband was exerting his utmost resolution and all his fortitude to stifle its first suggestions; his proud spirit dared scarcely yet acknowledge that he had mistaken the path to happiness, but the daily display of Lauretta's character too forcibly proclaimed it; tasteless apathy, almost disgust, had ensued to that fervid admiration with which he had once regarded her; and his impetuous nature was ill calculated to bear the weight of that tyrannic sway by which she would have held *his* every look and action in servile bondage, while at the same time she exercised the most unlicensed freedom for herself.

A bitter emotion, such as Harry Elwyn had never felt, had never known before, seemed to pervade his soul, when he thought of Mary Ellis and of Fitzallan; hastily did he turn from the bright perspective of felicity which seemed to open before *them*; he wished, yes, he was sure that he wished their happiness, yet he did not *think* that Mary Ellis could so soon—"What then," cried he, "am I such a wretch?—would I keep *her* a hopeless, a solitary being, unconnected and

unattached?—have I ever had reason to suspect her of a more tender attachment towards me than what our respective situations authorised—and did I ever hope, did I ever wish——”

Elwyn could not pursue such reflections; and we are *loth* to confess, that having once found easy entrance there, he frequently rushed from them, and from himself, to —— House; *there* was he welcomely received; and in the mad intoxication of successful play, or the fermentation of spirit produced by the contrary transition of fortune, he spent many of those hours which were passed by his thoughtless wife at the scenes of public amusement, under the close escort of Narcissus Finlater, and in the society of his sister, lady Sawbridge; no longer the enraptured, the confiding husband, he resisted the inquiries of Laretta, in that tone of decided refusal, which even intimidated *her* from being too inquisitive as to his private engagements.

While all the Bath world, and even the prudent Mrs. Ripley, had given Mr. Fitzallan to Mary Ellis, she only had no suspicion of the kind; the genuine humility, which had, under the happy instructions of her beloved protectress, formed a component part in her character, preserved her from the indulgence of an idea which she would have considered as absurd and extravagant. She always remembered what she *was*, and the disparity which existed between her origin and that of almost every individual with whom she conversed; she felt particularly obliged to Mr. Fitzallan for his kind notice; she supposed that the natural goodness of his disposition induced him to bestow it, from having observed the wounding neglect of Mrs. Elwyn's manner, and the consequent distance which had been adopted by her guardian; this kind attention gave her confidence in herself; she was grateful to Fitzallan, she felt pleasure in his society, she was amused and instructed by his chearful and enlightened conversation.

Fitzallan had an opportunity of seeing *her* divested of that restraint and embarrassment, which her knowledge of the general opinion, or of his private sentiments, would have certainly produced. In the present enfeebled and precarious state of his father's health, demanding, as he did, the utmost attention of his son, Fitzallan could not form an immediate plan for changing his situation; but to secure an interest in the pure heart of Mary Ellis, was now become his most sanguine wish; and he set about it, not in the usual and hacknied way of flattery and compliment, and in the language and with the air of a lover, but he sought to make himself agreeable to her by manly confidence, by the honest display of his sentiments and opinions, and by a respectful mode of behaviour. This conduct combined with the unconscious modesty of Mary to hush all suspicion in her breast.

We do not pretend to recount all the routs, and the plays, and the balls, which Mary Ellis visited with Mrs. Ripley; neither one-tenth part of those to which the blooming Laretta was led by the *sweet* Mr. Finlater and his sister: the description of such scenes and such parties has been read and *reread*, described and *redescribed*, till there is nothing left for us; and our book is more a history of feelings and of sentiments, than of incidents and adventures.

Miss Lawson now made her appearance at Bath, as the companion of a second-hand dowager of the name of Onfield; and can it be believed?—yes, for it was a fact—Laretta extended to her the hand of amity; and Miss Lawson stooped to *kiss* that hand which but so lately *smote* her.

The first evening on which Miss Lawson made her appearance, she attended, with her friend Mrs. Onfield, a party to which Mrs. Ripley and Mary had been previously invited; all joy, all ecstasy, at seeing her “dear Mary,” the voluble Lawson hastily approached her, and in all the rapid professions, of which she was so extremely diffuse, *expressed* her *delight* at the unexpected meeting—*lamented* “sweet Ellis's” leaving the Hall without having given her an opportunity of bidding her adieu—*pathetically* mourned the misguided conduct of poor Mrs. Piff—*mournfully*

predicted that she would suffer for her folly—*indignantly* spoke of the already-discovered tyrannical and miserly disposition of her husband—*sorrowfully* bewailed the sad state of Mrs. Halifax, who was fast going to the grave—*sentimentally* glanced at amiable Miss Letsom's *daily* death—*angrily* reprobated general Halifax's neglect of his lady, and the shocking publicity of his connexion with lady Lauretta—*prophetically* descanted on the sad consequences which must ensue to the extravagant dissipation of her daughter—and *presciently* mourned over the ill-starred fate of dear interesting Elwyn—and almost *passionately* depicted his rude neglect of her beloved and interesting young friend.

Mary was not surprised at this torrent of declamation, because she had been accustomed to it, and knew pretty well how much of it she might credit; she answered Miss Lawson with her usual modest civility, but took care not to touch upon any of the *numerous* points on which she had enlarged so freely.

Two evenings subsequent to this interview, Mary again saw this lady, but in public, and in the party of Mrs. Elwyn; she saw her leaning on the arm of the "extravagant" and "dissipated" Lauretta; and can it be wondered if her "dear Mary" was suffered to pass and *repass* in the crowd, *unseen*, unnoticed? Mary had been inured to the ague-like transitions of this lady, and was as little mortified with the *cold* fit, as she had been exhilarated by the *hot*.

If there was a human being for whom Elwyn had an utter contempt, it was Miss Lawson; Lauretta had frequently heard him express his dislike of her cringing and time-serving character; but Lauretta was now emerged from the controul of her husband; his opinions had ceased to have any weight with her, if they came in contact with her own pleasures or her own designs; and with the civility which is ever due from the master of the house to his guests, Elwyn was constrained to treat Miss Lawson, whom with surprise he saw at his table, by *him* at least, an uninvited guest; to express his disapprobation to Lauretta, would be to call forth those childish whimperings and those fretful bewailings which ever ensued to the gentlest expostulations; her present situation, which was calculated to excite all the tender interest of such a heart as his, and his ardent wishes for a child who might perpetuate the name of which he was so proud, restrained him from giving his opinion. Lauretta's intimacy with lady Sawbridge had not pleased him; he had noticed it to her; but the wonted paroxysms had followed, of tears, upbraidings, and sullen waywardness; she had asked him if he meant to take from her every thing and every body whom she loved? he had made her forsake her dear, her *dearest*, her *good* mamma already; and now, because that he saw she liked lady Sawbridge, he wanted her to relinquish her acquaintance; but she knew what it was, and if lady Sawbridge had not got a *brother*, her intimacy would not have been thought improper.

"No, Lauretta," cried Elwyn, with some asperity, and all his proud superiority glowing in his reddening countenance, "he must be a wretch indeed, a *low contemptible* wretch, who can for a moment feel a rival in that shallow, brainless coxcomb."

Lauretta pouted; she did not like to hear the pretty Mr. Finlater called names; but she could not take his part openly, though she determined from that hour, that if her husband did not feel a *rival* in Finlater, she would make him feel his power of teasing and of disturbing him whenever she chose.

After this conversation, our readers will have seen that it was not from Elwyn's subjection to Lauretta that he kept silence on the subject of Miss Lawson, but because he knew his representations would be fruitless, and that his humanity inclined him to spare Lauretta from any agitation at the present period. But, *must* we say it? the empire of Lauretta daily slackened in his heart; he now beheld, with a sort of cool indifference, behaviour which would lately have

created in him the most lively uneasiness; and when his sickened fancy, his disappointed hopes, his faded prospects, all conspired to raise a tumult in his soul, when he turned with retrospective eye, and saw the tender placid figure of Mary Ellis, like the *shadow* of departed joys, he would start from the momentary, the dangerous contemplation, and fancy that he had attained a victory over himself when he resorted to —— House; alas! *that* victory could only be perfected by applying for assistance where only it is to be found, but where it is seldom sought by men of the fashionable world.

If Lauretta insulted Miss Lawson in the country, what could be her motive for courting her in Bath? is the natural inquiry of our readers: is there a more engrossing, a more busy passion than envy? if it once gets possession of the female breast, is it not a fell usurper? To break the spell by which Fitzallan was bound to Mary Ellis, to prevent her from rising to a situation which *she* had not attained, had been the fixed determination of Mrs. Elwyn, from the moment in which she had believed that there was a probability of the kind; but to blacken the character of Mary Ellis with her husband, would not do; Fitzallan and Elwyn were on the most intimate terms; they had an implicit reliance on each other's honour. The circumstance of Mary Ellis's adoption by her protectress, had excited the interest, rather than chilled the predilection of Fitzallan; his chivalric spirit liked the idea of defending the orphan; and the conscience-stricken one of his father might perhaps weakly yield his concurrence to the wishes of a son on whom he *weakly* doated. Vainly racking her brain for an expedient that might be feasible for her adoption, and which might at the same time prove a serious obstacle to Mary's elevation, Lauretta accidentally met with Miss Lawson: to make up for her late rudeness, would, she knew, be an easy matter with the *placable* Lawson; but doubly, trebly did she do so, by singling her out as the object of her marked attention at the well-thronged ball, and by leaning and lounging on her willing arm during the whole of the night.

Miss Lawson had never before been so delightfully happy; she saw that her *charming friend* was the object of universal attention; and as her sparkling brilliants emitted some faint rays of their splendour on the hitherto-finselled brow of Miss Lawson, so, in the multitude of charming things which were said to Mrs. Elwyn, she came in for some *small* portion, as being the *favoured friend* of the *fairest fair*; and if there was any thing of *substance* in the professions which were made to Mrs. Elwyn, surely the *shadow* must devolve on the gratified Lawson.

Lauretta was not without a sufficient portion of art; her object, in thus noticing Miss Lawson, was to get her to detail, in the hearing of Fitzallan, the story concerning the mystery of Mary's birth, and her adoption by the benevolent Clara, which the mischievous spleen of the ladies of Norton had surmised, and which the invidious spirit of Miss Lawson had tried to stamp with authenticity. If Lauretta herself were to relate it, Elwyn might fathom *her* motives, he might sift them to the bottom, and his indignation would be poured upon her; but Miss Lawson, with an air of confidence and secresy, should be the *warning friend* of Fitzallan, *she* should be the guardian genius which should interpose and save him from forming so disgraceful a connexion; the poverty of Mary Ellis's pretended parents, the obscurity of her origin, might be thought of no moment, when weighed in the balance with her matchless excellencies; but would the *scrupulous*, the *fastidious* Mr. Fitzallan, ally himself to the child of *shame*, to the illicit offspring of a woman, who palmed herself upon the world as a creature of perfection? would he like to call *her* wife, who never knew a father? and would he not fear to see in every hoary-headed libertine who approached him, the *man* to whom his peerless Mary owed the *infamy* of her existence?

This was *strong* language, and such language, such *searching* questions must probe the breast of Fitzallan; while the jealous spirit of Henry Elwyn, which would be roused at the slightest stigma



which should attach to the name of a woman whose memory he had almost deified, must be conjured up to deter Fitzallan from breathing a hint on the subject in his presence.

Miss Lawson was well tutored; she played her part to admiration. Mrs. Elwyn was not *direct* in her confidence, even to her dear Lawson, but inuendoes and hints were well understood, and the motive of Laretta was evidently apparent to her active coadjutor—active, because a similar spirit impelled her, for our readers need scarcely to be reminded, that the modest attractions of Mary, when likely to draw the serious admiration of the other sex, had long ago drawn on her the envy of the *delectable* Lawson.

An opportunity was not long wanting; with the *profuse* expressions of feeling, sympathy, and humanity, which are always to be received with *doubt* when they are poured forth in such abundance, Miss Lawson gained the private ear of Frederic, and there her tale unfolded. It harrowed up his soul—even though his better reason refused to give it credence, he was too prudent and too wary to commit himself to his *curious* informant, by giving her his sentiments on the subject of her communication, or by unfolding his secret wishes relative to Mary Ellis. To Miss Lawson he seemed to deport himself as one who had merely been listening to an extraordinary relation, in which he was not interested; and the self-satisfied agent returned to her employer, and avowed her belief in Mr. Fitzallan's perfect indifference to the heroine of the little tale which she had invented.

Laretta could not be of the same opinion; however, Fitzallan had now had a warning; if he fell into the snare with his eyes open, he must abide the consequence.

The increased illness of sir John Fitzallan demanded the assiduous attention of his son; and as he had previously determined to make some inquiry into the foundation which existed for Miss Lawson's narration, ere he hazarded an avowal to Mary Ellis, which might put it out of his power to retract, he was not sorry to be at present debarred from those opportunities of daily intercourse, which he was well aware would encrease his passion, and render it more difficult to conquer. To the child of honest parents, to the orphan daughter of virtuous poverty, his father would have no objection; and for his own part, he should greatly prefer raising the gentle Mary to a situation, which she would grace by her merits, to carrying off the high prize of fashion or of title, which often came within his grasp; in *obscurity* there was nothing which he dreaded—but mystery and infamy, his feelings revolted at the bare idea: how could he frame his words, how could he approach his father, and ask his countenance, his paternal sanction to such a connexion?—"I will fairly investigate the matter," thought Fitzallan; "surmises, conjectures, and suspicions, shall not interpose between me and happiness; I must have *proofs* of the guilt and depravity of my Mary's parents, for numberless, *countless* are the *proofs* of her goodness and her virtues."

#### CHAP. IV.

Constant occupation, perpetual engagement in the active scenes of life, continued and unwearied attention to the important duties of his station, form at once the happiness of man, and the test of his obedience.

BREWSTER.

THE unconscious object of all these plans and all these ruminations, was meanwhile pursuing the “even tenor of her way” in modest meekness; but, spite of her natural disposition to be pleased, and to repress all fastidiousness of taste, Mary Ellis could not but feel that Mrs. Ripley’s life was not the life for her: the constant round of insipid amusement, the constant repetition of vapid conversation, and of pursuits in which the mind had no share, and which contributed to no good purpose, was not at all congenial to her taste, nor in unison with those principles of usefulness and of beneficial activity which had been firmly grounded with the first rudiments of education by her departed friend: with no little solicitude she looked forward to the period when Mrs. Ripley should leave Bath; as she was immediately going to visit some friends, their separation must naturally take place at that time; and any cottage in the country, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of her own pursuits, the uninterrupted disposition of her own time, was preferable, in her sober estimation, to the haunts of the world, and the shackling sameness of fashionable life: but with the *cottage*, the idea of Elwyn Hall was invariably annexed in her idea; could she but procure a little retreat in *that* vicinity, she might have the faithful Scot for her friend and her housekeeper; she might retain the attached Susan for her attendant; again might she wander amongst the woods and lawns she loved so well—again might she retrace the paths which Clara had trod—again would her beatified spirit seem to hover over her, as she extended the assistance which was still within her power to the humbler objects of *her* care and of *her* discriminating bounty.

Henry Elwyn had told Mary to prepare some plan for his acceptance, and surely *such* a plan would meet with it. The occasional enjoyment of Miss Letsom’s conversation was amongst its greatest desideratums; and it would be no objection to Mary that she should be contiguous to Mrs. Piff; for her universal benevolence led her to be anxious for the welfare of this poor inoffensive woman, independent of her near connexion to Henry Elwyn; she could be on terms of civility and kindness with *her*, without being on an intimate footing at the Hall, or subjecting herself to a familiar intercourse with her husband; and surely even Elwyn would see nothing objectionable in this; rather would he thank her for this attention to his mother.

The pleasure which Mary had found in the society of Miss Letsom, and the interest which she had felt in the history of her early misfortunes and the singularity of her present situation, were not put to flight; when new scenes and new characters flitted before her eyes, her attachments were more stable and more constant. Soon after her arrival in Bath, she had written that lady a long and communicative epistle; with Miss Letsom she had no reserves; and having lamented the imprudence of Mrs. Piff, which had made her acceptance of Mrs. Ripley’s protection almost a matter of necessity, she proceeded to give an account of things as they presented themselves to her observation, but without “setting down aught in malice,” though we *dare* not say without extenuation; she cursorily passed over the disregard of Mrs. Elwyn, and while she softened it down, and imputed her rude behaviour to youth, to inexperience, and to

thoughtlessness, she bore ample testimony to the respectful deportment of her husband, and that friendly interest in her happiness which had evinced itself in actions, but did not lose itself in words. For the kind notice and pleasing attention of Mr. Fitzallan, she also expressed her gratitude—"To receive his notice," continued she, "while I daily see him courted by the titled, the wealthy, and the beautiful, is very flattering, for the obscure and humble foundling, Mary Ellis, has no claim upon it; but *his* mind is superior to all factitious advantages; and I firmly believe, that he feels a pleasure in noticing me, because he sees that it is not the way of the world to pay attention to those from whom no *eclat* can be derived. Oh, Miss Letsom, novice as I confessedly am in all the (may I not call them) follies of fashion, judge my astonishment, on hearing lady Sawbridge announced at a private and select party! I started—but your description, faithfully given, was faithfully remembered by me—'the meridian of life, the bold dashing air, the handsome countenance'—I could not be mistaken; it was the inhabitant of the marine cottage whom I saw: no woman seems more admired in this place—no woman receives more universal suffrage. Sir James Sawbridge is dead, it seems, and has left her a fine fortune, which she knows how to spend like a princess; and though *every body* talks of her *affair* with lord —— as openly as she did to you, and though *every body* wonders that sir James Sawbridge did not procure a divorce, which was in his power, yet *every body* goes to her balls and suppers, *every body* is glad to have a name on her visiting list, and *she* is glad to see *every body's* name there. Mrs. Elwyn seems to have selected this lady for her most intimate companion, and they seem to exist only when together—surely Henry Elwyn cannot know her former history, surely he cannot be indifferent to the characters of those with whom his Lauretta associates? I should fill a volume, were I to descant on all the contradictions and the inconsistencies which strike my unaccustomed eye—I frequently turn from the contemplation with rather more disgust than I wish to indulge—for believe me, dear Miss Letsom, when I declare that I would not knowingly cherish a splenetical or a cynical disposition; *if* I know myself, I am more fitted for society than seclusion, and my enjoyments are always enhanced, if they are shared with others; but Mrs. Ripley's society is *not* society; all subjects, not merely of rationality, but even of trifling and amusement, are swallowed up by the card-table; and cards being the settled purpose for which the company meet, and being expressly *mentioned* in their invitation, is it not natural, that when drawn into the magic circle of action, the attack should commence, and that the combatants should pursue it with unceasing avidity? But though you may be inclined to think that I have learnt to be rather too severe in my strictures than becomes my age, my inexperience, or my situation, believe me when I tell you, that my full heart is very grateful to that good Providence who has poured his benefits upon me; and that, in numbering these, I do not *undervalue* the comfort and security of being under the care of Mrs. Ripley, whose character stands high in the estimation of all persons for prudence and respectability: she is extremely kind to me, and very easy in her manners; I feel quite divested of restraint in her company; yet, I will confess it to you, that I cast a longing eye towards the shades of Elwyn; and that frequently, when drawing a bright perspective of quiet peaceful days in that much-loved vicinity, the figure of *Miss Letsom* starts fresh as life upon the foreground of the picture; more than once has it seemed to point at the difference of our respective situations, and while it has portrayed the sad, the trying monotony of her tedious and never-ending duties, I have felt the wholesome reproof, and sought to stop the progress of my castle-building anticipations, in the certainty of present comfort. Let me now stop the progress of my pen, if I would not tire my friend, after assuring her that I feel for her the sincerest regard, and take the liveliest interest in her happiness."

Although it was soon after Mary Ellis's arrival in Bath that she had written to Miss Letsom, a considerable time elapsed, and she received no answer; she began to imagine that she was wholly forgotten by her; for surely the most assiduous attention on her aunt would enable her to spare *one* half hour to the calls of friendship? Mary was wounded and mortified at this seeming neglect; her plans of enjoyment in the environs of Elwyn were clouded by the idea of Miss Letsom's silence; what prospect could she have of maintaining a personal intercourse with a woman who had not found time to write one line in a period of nearly two months? At length, however, Mary Ellis received a letter, which fully accounted for her silence; it ran thus:—

“MY DEAR MARY,

“You must ere this have accused me of great neglect and ingratitude, in not sooner noticing your kind and affectionate letter; but it reached me when every moment of my time was engaged in an attendance on my poor aunt. The mourning emblems which accompany this letter, will shew you that these painful duties are over; Mrs. Halifax has for ever closed her eyes on this earthly scene; she is no more—her last illness was slow, but certain in its progress. I was aware that her symptoms were serious, and in an early stage of the disorder, I communicated my suspicions to Mr. Leonard; he told me that I was not mistaken; for though he could not ascertain the period, yet dissolution must eventually succeed to her present attack: this information, my dear young friend, was not calculated to make me relax in my attendance, or to falter in my exertions—I determined, by the most undeviating attentions, to try to sooth the couch of pain, and to smooth the pillow of death. I considered the relation in which I stood to the poor sufferer as an imposing claim on me for every thing which I could bestow; yet I thought it incumbent on me to acquaint general Halifax with the illness of his lady, and to propose to the invalid to send for him; she would not hear me on the subject—‘I want not to see *him*,’ said she, ‘and he does not wish to see *me*; he has estranged himself from me—that lady Lauretta engrosses all his attention; I do not want to see him—I do not want even to upbraid him, for I am rightly served; I have only reaped the fruits of my own imprudence; I see things *now* as they are—I can no longer deceive myself; general Halifax can no longer deceive *me*. More than thirty years ago, I married a man whom I did not love—money was the tempting bait; lured by ambition, I left my native country, my friends, *my mother*, and crossed the seas. I soon secured a wealthy prize—let my fate be a warning to all adventuring girls; I enjoyed no happiness or peace of mind; my husband was old when I married him—but years rolled on, and he *lived*; oh think, what must have been the sad state of *that* mind, which *saw* him live with secret discontent! I did not like to nurse him; his infirmities were the subject of my ridicule—I thought it beneath me to practise the domestic duties, and I frequently left him, when stretched on a sickbed, to make one in any party of amusement which should offer itself to my acceptance. He died—and I was liberated. My vanity inclined me to believe those professions of regard, which were directed merely to my purse; the handsome person and insinuating manners of Halifax interested me; I listened to his vows of eternal love and constancy; and though I retained some part of my handsome jointure for my own exclusive use, yet there was enough remaining to make him accept my hand with transport. But happiness was now gone further from me than before; a violent fever brought me to the verge of the grave; and though I at length recovered, yet my person was so altered, so reduced, and the hue of my complexion so completely changed, that I scarcely dared look at myself, while I had nearly lost the faculty of hearing. The attentions of Halifax were confined to the common-place politeness which shewed itself before witnesses; in private, he was careless

and negligent; while on the wife of his friend Montgomery were lavished all those insinuating gallantries, which, in the days of courtship (and in those days *only*), had devolved on me. I did not then view things in the light in which they are presented to me at this moment; I grew peevish and fretful; you, child, must have observed how this disposition has grown upon me, how disagreeable it has made me to others, how uncomfortable to myself; but in *myself* my whole thoughts were centered; I fancied that the weak state of my health required my whole attention, and that my comforts ought to be the exclusive study of all who approached me; I did not remember how frequently I had accused poor Mr. Manning of selfishness, how frequently I had laughed at *his* infirmities—but this was retribution!—even in *this* world there is retribution!—but it is only within these few days past that such thoughts have struck me.’

“Affected by the manner of my poor aunt, and pitying the sad state of her perturbed and self-accusing mind, I did every thing in my power to give her comfort and consolation; and was much pleased at finding that she shewed no aversion to talking on religious subjects. What a deep impression have these conversations made on my mind! and how thankful, how grateful, how *truly* grateful am I to that good God, who guided me here, who afforded me the sacred, the *pious* pleasure of awakening the mind of my nearest relative to the great truths of his Gospel!

“Although Mrs. Halifax had expressly told me that she by no means wished to see the general, yet I thought it my duty, from time to time, to communicate to him the progress of her disorder; he answered me with regularity and politeness, lamented the illness of ‘poor Mrs. H.’ and *requested* me to continue to favour him with my obliging communications.

“You will not wonder, my dear Mary, that while engaged in the arduous duty of confirming the faith, and speaking peace to the soul, of this conscience-stricken sufferer—you will not wonder that I scrupled to allot the least portion of my time to another, even though that other was one for whom I retained a warm regard, as assuredly I do for you; but, had I addressed you in this trying and anxious period, I *could* have written you merely in a cursory manner, and your benevolent heart would have been eager to have heard further.

“A few days previous to the dissolution of Mrs. Halifax, she expressed great anxiety to see Mr. Sargent; he was closeted in her chamber some time; when he quitted her, she seemed more composed and cheerful, and taking my hand in a more affectionate manner than I had ever remarked in her before, she said—‘Child, I have done what I could;’ I did not understand her meaning, but it was soon explained to me. From this hour, the disorder of Mrs. Halifax made rapid strides; her bodily sufferings were very great, and at times her mind seemed lost and bewildered. General Halifax was, I conclude, at length impelled by the calls of decency; he arrived at the Lodge when his wife was nearly expiring; a deathbed was not a contemplation which he would willingly have encountered; he did not approach the sufferer, but started back as if affrighted and appalled, as his eye scarcely glanced upon her livid countenance. She did not see him; an accession of strength and self-possession seemed to reanimate the dying—‘Letsom,’ said she, addressing me, ‘receive my thanks for all your kindness and attention; from my *nearest relation* I could not have *demand*ed it—on *you* I had no claim. I have done something for you, child, a little—would to Heaven I had the power of doing more! but I have a *niece*—though unknown to me her place of residence, or her name, yet I *believe* a daughter of my only sister now exists; between you and her I have bequeathed a little sum, which Mr. Sargent tells me I have a legal right to dispose of; I do not rob my husband of it; he knew not that it was mine, and surely he will not grudge to my nearest relative, and to my *best* friend, these trifling memorials of my regard.’ I naturally looked towards general Halifax, but he seemed afraid to venture near the bed. ‘Could I have beheld my niece before I died,’ continued Mrs. Halifax, ‘could I have

evinced to *her* that she was not *quite* forgotten, it would have afforded me great satisfaction, but that must be denied me, for I know not where to find her.'

"At this moment I was taken off my guard—the period of my self-imposed silence seemed to be ended; my heart throbbed violently at my side—my emotions nearly subdued me, as throwing myself upon my knees at the side of the bed, and pressing my lips upon her hand, I sobbed out—'Behold your *niece*—behold the daughter of your sister; I am the child of ——'—'You, you are my niece?—oh! speak louder—speak louder, tell me so again—tell me that I hear aright—and is it indeed my *niece* who has thus attended, watched, and *prayed* for me?—and art thou my *very* niece?—oh! speak again—pray, pray tell me so again?' I repeated the words, I related the accident by which I became acquainted with her situation; I told her, as succinctly as I could, my reasons for changing my name: she embraced, she blessed me.

"Mr. Leonard was in the room at the time; he besought me to compose my agitated spirits; I did so, for I feared for the effect which might be produced on my dying aunt. Never did I see greater terror expressed than on the countenance of general Halifax—never did I see it so completely divested of that *genuine* compunction which 'maketh the heart better.'

"Again I approached Mrs. Halifax; and while I addressed her, for the first time, by the endearing name of aunt, I asked if she would not like to see her husband, and mentioned his being arrived—'No, no,' said she; 'his presence can do me no good; I forgive him—I wish him well; but tell him,' said she, with emphatic earnestness, 'as he values the forgiveness of a dying woman, as he would find peace in *his* last moments, let him by no means attempt depriving this poor child of the small sum which I have bequeathed to her; it was produced from the sale of my jewels, which were presented me by Mr. Manning when I married him—oh! I bartered *much* to gain them! little did I then think that they would be turned to so profitable an account.'

"Mr. Sargent now spoke to general Halifax; and after a moment of irresolution, he advanced with hurried steps towards the bed, and scarcely glancing towards his expiring wife, he said—'I promise you, that Miss Letsom shall securely retain the sum you have bequeathed her.'—'I am satisfied,' said Mrs. Halifax; she sunk on the pillow, and spoke no more.

"My feelings had been severely tried in the scenes which I had gone through; and enfeebled by agitation, and exertion of mind and body, three days have gone by, and I could not attain resolution to write to you.

"General Halifax returned to London on the decease of his wife; the melancholy spectacle of a funeral would have been too much for his fine feelings; and I have been left alone to the contemplation of skulls and coffins, epitaphs and worms—but not wholly to this, dearest Mary; a sensation of pensive satisfaction steals over my mind, as I reflect upon my late conduct; and a sensation of *security* in the attainment of a genteel competency, for which I have neither bartered my principles or sullied my character. I derive indescribable satisfaction from these reflections, and am sometimes erecting a pretty little edifice of enjoyment and contentment, where the *picture* of Mary Ellis stands linked arm-in-arm with mine on the *foreground*; what say you, my dear girl, shall it be realized? will your prudent and vigilant guardian think me a competent chaperone for his ward? will he think the seclusion of this place too entire a seclusion for youth and loveliness? we will not forswear the world, we will not make vows of celibacy; but we will make our own terms with it (with the world, I mean), and use it in our own way: the generous bequest of Mrs. Halifax amounts to four thousand pounds; she had bequeathed the half of this sum to me as her *companion*, the other half to me as her *niece*.

‘Oh, (Mary), will you come with me,  
Nor sigh to leave the flaunting town?’

Make your determination, dear friend, without referring to *my* pleasures or my enjoyments; but if you really *wish* for a place where you may do as you like, and a companion who will let you do as you like, I can tell you where you may find both: a neat cottage, of a parlour, a kitchen, a garden, a trim little garden, is now vacant, by the death of old Mrs. Parker; I *need* not tell you that it stands near Elwyn park-gate; faithful Mrs. Scot would be so happy to serve *you*, and I should be so happy to rid my brain of all the petty troubles of housekeeping items, dittos, and *per contras*, and using my pen and ink for *other* purposes; once again should I mount my Pegasus, and give way to my *sublime flights*, for they seem to crowd much thicker on me from their late dispersion, remember I do not insist on your mounting my high-flowing steed; ‘here shall meek Charity reside,’ and *here* shall I watch, approve, and poetize her actions; and we will have some sober realities, and some domestic avocations, as well as fairy dreams, and mental enjoyments. Behold the enthusiastic spirit which has impelled me on, till I have nearly got to the limits of my paper; I can scarcely steal one line to tell you, that report has it that poor Mrs. Piff already rues her choice—and that I am always your sincerely attached friend,

“MARIA LETSOM.”

## CHAP. V.

Of feeling void, and void of mind, void of the all-  
subduing look of soul, the emanation of Divinity.

KLOPSTOCK.

REPROACHING herself for having accused Miss Letsom of neglect, sympathizing in her late distressing feelings, rejoicing in her liberation and the comfortable provision which her aunt had made for her, Mary felt as eager, and almost as sanguine, as her friend, to put in execution the pleasant plan which they mutually seemed to have suggested, and she found it almost difficult to rein in her impatience, so as not to appear to be ungrateful to Mrs. Ripley for her kindness. It was with emotions of the most pleased and the most pious thankfulness that Mary observed how the dispensations of Providence had been working for her good; when she had first thought of retirement, and of the occasional enjoyment of Miss Letsom's society, could such a prospect, could such a plan as the present have occurred to her most sanguine hopes? She was eager to have the concurrence of Elwyn, though she was well aware that he would enter no protest against it; with him she had no reserves, and she thought he would gain a more perfect insight of her friend's character (in which, if there *gleamed* a few author-like eccentricities, there *blazed* some brilliant virtues) by reading her letters, than he could from any description which she could give him; she therefore enclosed it in an envelope, in which she explained to him the intimacy which had taken place between herself and Miss Letsom, and which had been followed by an early proof of the confidence of the latter; but that while Miss Letsom chose that her relationship to Mrs. Halifax should remain a secret, she had thought it a breach of friendship to mention it even to him. Mary did not scruple to avow that her heart was very much in Miss Letsom's plan, and that it entertained no fears of her guardian's concurrence.

Not very frequently did Mr. and Mrs. Elwyn sit down to a *tête-à-tête* meal, and the sober enjoyment of each other's society; Elwyn had no pleasure in the conversation of a woman who was never pleased but when petted and indulged; he found that he had wholly mistaken her character, and that the affection which she had felt for him had long since evaporated; whether it had ever existed, was a matter of doubt, for *what* opinion could any man have of a wife who seemed to take every opportunity of teasing and tormenting him—who hearing him express his contempt of Narcissus Finlater, was for ever praising him in his presence, and inviting him to attend her—and who knowing his aversion to Miss Lawson, had instantly fastened upon her on her coming to Bath, and seemed to select her for her bosom companion? The indignant, the irascible spirit of Henry Elwyn, was still unsubdued, and if he restrained its ebullitions, it was with the utmost difficulty; and frequently he chafed his passion, and *tried* to smother it, because he would not let Lauretta have the little triumph of perceiving that she hurt him, because he would not *appear* to notice the attentions of a silly coxcomb whom he despised. To the *mother* of Lauretta, Elwyn dared not apply for redress; *she* was living, with unblushing and shameless effrontery, a life of *guilt* (though she might try to call it Platonism and friendship), the companion of a married man; she *could* not rebuke her daughter, she would *see* nothing to rebuke, for her unlimited and blind indulgence had been that daughter's bane—it had unfitted her for a wife, it had kept her in ignorance of the duties of her station, almost of the duties of a reasonable being. To Fitzallan should he unburthen his full heart? no: Fitzallan had seen, had warned him of his danger—Fitzallan had pointed to a better, a firmer path; he had disregarded



his advice, and *now* he *dared* not tell him he lamented it. He *dared* not turn to Mary Ellis; an host of never-to-be-forgotten circumstances prevented him—an host of tumultuous, of opposing, of rebellious feelings restrained him. Where then could he fly to rid himself of the oppressive sensations of disappointed happiness?—alas! where they were not obliterated, where they were not stifled, but where action seemed to draw his mind from contemplation, but where the temporary interest which he felt was *sure* to be succeeded by lassitude and wretchedness, where he hurt his fortune, and impaired his health. Though not become an absolute votary, yet he was now become a constant frequenter of the gaming-table; his haggard countenance and altered appearance would have called forth the inquiry of apprehensive affection; but Laretta's inquiry of *curiosity* had not been gratified, and she sought no further. She found it no easy matter to supply the numerous demands which were made on her purse, and she saw, with much ill humour, that she was frequently obliged to repeat her applications, ere she could get Elwyn to replenish it.

Lady Sawbridge, Miss Lawson, and Finlater, were seated round the table after dinner, when the letter of Mary was presented to Elwyn; he recognized the writing, and without asking permission of the company, he hastily broke it open; his surprise and emotion as he read were visibly expressed on his countenance.

"You seem to have got a letter from an interesting correspondent," said lady Sawbridge.

"I agree with your ladyship in that opinion," said Miss Lawson.

"At any rate, *we* are not to be favoured with particulars, it seems," said Laretta.

"Don't pry into secrets of state," said Finlater.

"Now only see, Mr. Finlater," continued Laretta, "what an odd unaccountable husband I am blest with; but if he will not tell us about that letter, he shall not hear the conundrum which Mr. Finlater asked me this morning—now shall he, Finlater? and I assure you, Elwyn, it is an extreme good one."

"Oh, you are an agreeable bewitching flatterer," said Finlater, as he took out an ivory toothpick-case, and adjusted a stray lock by the glass in its lid.

"Narcissus deals in conundrums and charades," said lady Sawbridge.

Elwyn put the letter into his pocket.

"I *must* give you the conundrum, if it be only to tease you," said Laretta.

"A very *kind* reason certainly," said Elwyn; "but query whether it will have the effect designed."

"Finlater's question was *this*," continued she, "Why should Mr. Elwyn have been an *old* man, rather than a *young* one?" now you must all guess, for I assure you it is very deep."

Elwyn made rather a sarcastic inclination of his head.

"Lady Sawbridge, you must say what your answer would be?"

"Oh, I should say, because he has the gravity of an old man," answered her ladyship.

"No, that is not it; and that would not do, because many *old* men are gay enough; there's general Halifax; I am sure he is fifteen or twenty years older than Elwyn, yet in his manners he is fifteen or twenty years younger—isn't he, Lawson? but how will *you* answer the question?"

"Why should Mr. Elwyn have been an *old* man rather than a *young* one?" repeated Miss Lawson, with an air of intent study; "because he has already attained the *wisdom* of age; surely *that* must be the answer."

"Not at all like it," said Laretta: "now we *must* have Elwyn's answer—he shall tell us himself, 'Why he ought to have been an *old* man?' shan't he, Finlater?"

"Because he would have been nearer the end of his existence," said Elwyn, in that hasty and irritable tone which proved that his temper had been tried to the utmost.

"What a misanthropic answer!" said lady Sawbridge.

"Barbarous, barbarous!" said the charming Narcissus.

"And not the least like the *real* one," said Lauretta. "Well, good people, now you all give it up, I suppose: 'Why should Mr. Elwyn have been an old man, rather than a young one?' observe, that is the question; and now for the answer—*because* he *should* have been *man-aged*. Now, is it not an excellent good one? Finlater, you shall set it down in my memorandum-book, for fear I should forget it," and she threw him over a pocket-book and pencil from the bag which was suspended from the arm of her chair.

The eyes of all the party seemed to be turned upon Elwyn, and he thought not without some degree of ridicule; he sat upon thorns, but he felt that it was unworthy of a man of sense to notice such insignificant behaviour; he tried to laugh off his chagrin, and to hide his wounded feelings under the semblance of raillery—"Well," said he, "now Lauretta, I will give you a piece of news, which I have just learnt—the death of Mrs. Halifax."

"Of Mrs. Halifax!" repeated Lauretta, "oh, I am *so* glad!" and she clasped her hands in an ecstasy; "I am so glad, you have no idea."

"Lauretta!" said Elwyn, in a severe tone.

"Now, only behold the *aged man*, though, alack-a-day poor me! *not* the *managed*; is it not natural to rejoice? why, Mr. Finlater, Mrs. Halifax was old, and ugly, and cross, and deaf, and disagreeable."

"Oh, I am sure she has most wisely taken herself off," said Finlater, shrugging his shoulders.

"And 'Richard is *himself* again,' said lady Sawbridge, giving what is called a *knowing look* at Miss Lawson.

"The dear general is such a nice agreeable creature," said Lauretta, "and he has been tormented long enough with that tedious ugly old woman, I am sure."

"But the *ugly* old woman had a good jointure, I believe, Mrs. Elwyn," said her husband, who found it impossible to restrain himself.

"What will now become of that poor know-nothing young woman who lived with Mrs. Halifax, I wonder?" said Miss Lawson, in an affectedly-humane tone.

"Oh, aye, there was some automaton thing, I remember, that walked about the house, pulled the bell, poured out the tea, and *carved* for the company; she must get another situation, I suppose," said Lauretta, "for I am sure the dear general cannot want her."

"It is a letter from that *automaton* thing which I have been reading," said Elwyn, in a firm and severe tone of voice; "she proves to have been the *niece* of Mrs. Halifax; she attended her from motives of duty and humanity; she did not discover her relative claim on her aunt, till that aunt had made a disposition of her property—indeed, not until she lay on her deathbed; but she is rewarded for her long and duteous attendance, by the gratifying plaudits of her own heart, and Mrs. Halifax has bequeathed to her a comfortable provision."

"Well, if I *ever* heard so ridiculous or so romantic a story!" said Mrs. Elwyn; "now is it at all probable that she should be the niece of Mrs. Halifax, and that she should not know it? if relations start up like mushrooms from every dunghill, in this manner, perhaps you, Elwyn, may some day bring me home a cousin, or a brother, or a *sister*, that I never knew before; really he adopts quite a quixotic spirit and tone, when talking of this new-found dulcinea."

"The age of chivalry is *not* past," said Finlater.

"I always pitied Miss Letsom," said Miss Lawson; "there was something in her cast of countenance which was interesting, and above the *canaille*."

"Because the *canaille* know *something*," said Elwyn.

"Exactly so," said theameleon Lawson; but she could not get any attention from Elwyn, court it as she would, for he beheld her with the most sovereign contempt.

Although Henry Elwyn had been much hurt at perceiving the unfeeling exultation which Lauretta expressed on hearing of the death of Mrs. Halifax, yet he concluded that her satisfaction had arisen from the idea of her mother's now becoming the wife of the general, and thus regaining the situation in society, which she had nearly forfeited by her improper attachment to a married man. Elwyn allowed a great deal for the pleasure which might naturally ensue to such a prospect in the breast of her daughter; he was pleased at it himself, for though he had resolved that he would never suffer Lauretta to visit her mother while she maintained her disgraceful intimacy with general Halifax, yet he should not wish to estrange her from visiting her as his wife; he had seen enough of the lack of morality of the fashionable world, to know that lady Lauretta Montgomery would be completely whitewashed, as soon as she should become lady Lauretta Halifax, and that in her turn she might then be as much courted and as much followed as lady Sawbridge now confessedly was.

He dared scarcely acknowledge to himself that he felt *pleasure* in perceiving Mary Ellis's earnest wish of leaving Bath; that Fitzallan loved her, he was certain; perhaps he had made a declaration of his passion—perhaps, too, as the present state of sir John Fitzallan's health precluded his son from quitting him, Mary Ellis might judge it proper to reside in privacy, and *such* a proof of prudence and affection would no doubt be highly gratifying to her lover. Elwyn felt an invincible repugnance to speaking on this subject to his friend; he *hoped* he did not envy him his prospect of happiness, but it would open soon enough to *his* melancholy vision, without forestalling it by fruitless inquiry.

His answer to Mary Ellis's letter was penned in that generous strain, which had always actuated the spirit of Henry Elwyn, when it was not fettered by passion, or embittered by mortification; he congratulated her on Miss Letsom's nobly-earned independence, and bestowed a warm compliment on her disinterested conduct; he bade her consider the cottage at the park as hers and her friend's, as long as they chose to occupy it, singly or together, and said that he would immediately write to his steward, Simpson, and order every thing to be properly arranged for their reception: he slightly, but with evident marks of feeling, touched upon the subject of his mother, and delicately hinted that the attentions which Mary bestowed upon her, if she could bestow any without exposing herself to unpleasant feelings, would be gratefully acknowledged by him.

Mary was highly gratified with this letter; she immediately wrote to Miss Letsom, and agreed to join her in a fortnight, which was the period when Mrs. Ripley proposed leaving Bath.

Fitzallan heard her intention, without endeavouring to dissuade her from it; he could not at present quit his father, to make the inquiries which were so near his heart; he *scarcely* knew that he had made himself an interest in that of the gentle Mary, and he dared not ask the question; his sense of honour forbade him; it determined that the language of *friendship* only must be adopted towards her, till the cruel insinuations of Miss Lawson were controverted or authenticated. The leave which he took of our heroine was impressively affecting—"Forget me not, dearest Miss Ellis," said he, "forget me not, I beseech you; in the whole world, you have not a sincerer friend, nor one who is more warmly interested in your happiness: you know the duties which engage me, you know that my whole time is at present devoted to them; but if a period, a

happy period of leisure should arrive, will my amiable young friend receive me—will she admit me in her rural retreat—will she extend to me the hand of amity—will she, oh! will she feel any portion of the pleasure with which this heart will glow in the renewal of our intimacy?”

“Indeed,” replied Mary, withdrawing the hand which he had taken, and confused and affected by the earnestness of his manner, “indeed, Mr. Fitzallan, I should be very unworthy of your kind notice, did I not feel a grateful sense of it; you have contributed very much to my enjoyments during my residence in this place.”

“Oh that I might *always* contribute to them!” said Fitzallan, with impassioned fervour, as he tore himself from her, and hurried out of the house.

Mrs. Ripley declared she was very sorry to part with her agreeable inmate—“You have been very accommodating and very regular, I’m sure,” said she, “and I shall thank Humphrey for his introduction of you. I shall always be glad to see you when I am here; you know my time of coming, and if you are unmarried next winter, I shall depend upon seeing you; indeed, I did think that Mr. Fitzallan would have made you proposals before you quitted Bath; nay (perceiving Mary’s confusion), perhaps he *may* have done so—but remember, I ask no questions, though certainly his conduct to you was a little *particular*.”

“My dear madam, you must suffer me to say, that Mr. Fitzallan has not made me *any* proposals; and whatever you may have thought, I assure you, neither his behaviour or his conversation have ever gone beyond the bounds of friendship.”

“But friendship with woman, you know, is sister to love, my dear,” said Mrs. Ripley, laughing; “however, I ask no questions; you have conducted yourself just as I could have wished, I am sure, and that is saying a great deal for a young lady who has been three months in Bath.”

Elwyn had sent to let Mary know he would see her before she set off in the morning. Mrs. Ripley made it *a point* never to get up before her accustomed hour, and as the chaise had been ordered at eight, Mary took leave of her overnight. Elwyn had been informed at what time she meant to go, but his nocturnal vigils had made him heavy in the morning; he did not appear, and she was not sorry to be spared from an interview which could have given her no pleasure; she knew that he was not happy, and with this knowledge was added that of the hopelessness of his case, for unless he could subdue his own passionate and impetuous feelings, or prevail upon Lauretta to adopt a rational and conciliating mode of behaviour, there was no chance of an amelioration in his situation.

## CHAP. VI.

O'erhung

With all the varied charms of bush and tree."

WE will not describe an uninteresting journey, in which Mary Ellis met with no accident worth relating, especially as we have *some* idea that her Bath visit will not have answered our readers' expectations—"Not one adventure," say they, "not even an incident to enliven the monotonous scene—not *one* lover to give a glow to the picture." We must again remind them, that our intention in framing this humble work has been to describe the sentiments, the feelings, and the opinions of our characters; and that if in the general run of these there is not much to raise wonder, to excite interest, or to attract admiration, "their stars are more in fault than they."

At the door of the park cottage, Mary was hailed by her expecting, her delighted friends; and while the enthusiastic Miss Letsom threw her arms round her neck, and wept upon her bosom, the honest Scot caught hold of her hand, as if determined to retain a part of her dear young lady to herself, and almost smothered it with kisses.

A group of children, the innocent objects of Mary's kind attentions, were in waiting to see the chaise drive up; and no sooner did it come in sight, than, running off with the swiftness of mountain kids, they disappeared, and the next moment the merry village bells rang round.

Mary could not suppress her emotions at this proof of grateful affection from her poor neighbours; she entered the cottage, and burst into tears. But these were soon dispersed; she looked around her—all was the work of magic—"This Mrs. Parker's cottage?" said she, "surely I am in fairy-land!"

"Oh, what a pigmy palace of enchantment have we here!" cried the delighted Miss Letsom.

"And all *your* doing," said Mary; "oh, what taste, yet what simplicity, what neatness!"

"No, my love, not *my* doing," said Miss Letsom; "guess again."

"Oh, you must not spend time in guess-work," said Scot; "it is all my young master's planning, and ordering, and chusing; and the steward has overlooked it, and I have helped to put up the furniture, and Miss Letsom was not let to come near it herself till yesterday: oh, but now look here, Miss Mary——"

"Aye, look here," said Miss Letsom, leading her up stairs into a sweet little sitting-room, which looked into Elwyn park.

"This Mrs. Parker's? impossible!" again repeated Mary, as she glanced her eyes round the room, as she saw the well-chosen library, which was ranged on shelves, which were affixed in small recesses on each side of the fire-place, as she trod on the green baize, with which all the floors were neatly covered, as she looked at the subdued and clean grey of the walls.

"No, this is *not* Mrs. Parker's," said Mrs. Scot, with smiling exultation; "but it is Miss Ellis's and Miss Letsom's; and all the planning, and ordering, and chusing of my young master."

"Oh, what a noble spirit is here displayed!" cried Mary, and a sigh of pensive retrospection escaped her bosom. "I wish," continued she, after a pause, "I wish he had not done it."

"Don't wish nothing at all about it, my dear Miss Ellis," said Mrs. Scot; "I dare to say he found more pleasure in going to the shops, and in buying these things, and in scheming this agreeable surprise, than in all the balls he has been at since he went to Bath."

"I believe it indeed, my good Scot," said Mary.

"And do but think, now, Miss Ellis, if that dear angel in heaven, my good mistress, was permitted to see him, do but think, if she would not have blest him."

Mary once more gave way to her tears; and in the multitude of her overflowing sensations at this hour, she forgot not to offer up her fervent thanks to the Giver of all Good for the comforts, the pleasures, which were now within her reach.

The little establishment of our two friends was soon arranged: Scot was to be purveyor, housekeeper, and steward—Susan was to be the active attendant; within the house, Elwyn had left nothing for its possessors to do, but the garden; which was merely a piece of ground railed off from the park, and which the late tenant had sadly neglected, was a spot which, under the auspices of Mary, who delighted in the amusement, would soon be converted into a Paradise of sweets.

After an evening spent in the most unreserved and gratifying converse by our two friends, and in a minute detail of all the wonders of Bath by Susan, and the *miraculous transformation* of the park house by Mrs. Scot, the female household were convened together by Miss Letsom (who acted as the mistress, being several years older than Mary, and having assumed the character of her *chaperon*), and having joined in the last duties of the day, they retired, with thankful hearts and contented minds, to press their snow-white pillows. Miss Letsom and Mary had separate apartments; their two domestics were lodged together.

Mary awoke in the morning refreshed and happy; the birds were already straining their little throats in carols to the early spring. She opened the casement of her chamber; what a feel of freshness had the air, in comparison with that which she had just been respiring! and what a renovation was taking place in that diversified and interesting landscape which she had quitted when despoiled of all its verdure, stripped of its foliage, and suffering under the iron gripe of sterile winter! but "kind nature the embryo blossom had saved," every bud seemed bursting forth anew, and gave fair promise of rich and abundant beauty.

The grateful heart of Mary was impatient to impart the sensations of pleasure which she had felt on entering her new residence, to Henry Elwyn, and to offer him her warm thanks for such a pleasing proof of his friendship and regard; but she considered that it would be proper that she should first visit Mrs. Piff, because he would naturally expect to hear something concerning her. After taking her breakfast, therefore, she immediately crossed the park towards the Hall.

"Aye, aye, much good may it do you," said Mrs. Scot, as she watched her from the door; "I suppose she will see you, though I hear it isn't many that she *will* see, or that she is *let* to see, I don't know *which* of it is the right, for my part."

Elwyn Hall was about a mile from the park house; the road to it was that which had been almost daily trodden by Mary, when she had attended her beloved protectress, and stolen poor Clara from *herself* by her infantile gambols, or when she had gone on errands of kindness and of mercy to the villagers who resided just beyond it. Every sound which reached her ears was natural to them, and was associated with many tender recollections on her memory; the cawing of the rooks, as they were assembling in black troops, and busily engaged, as it appeared, in consultations concerning their intended habitations, was not uninteresting to her; affecting localities rushed upon her mind, and almost subdued her; her departed friend had once been a severe sufferer at this season of the year, and her youthful heart had then felt its prescient warnings of the event which at length took place. As she approached near to the Hall, she became perplexed and embarrassed at the idea of encountering Mr. Piff; how could she reconcile herself to the address of familiarity from the man whom she had been accustomed to see behind

her chair?—and how could she receive it with coolness, when she recollected that Henry Elwyn's mother had chosen him for her husband? The hall-door was open; Mary's gentle rap was answered by a dirty girl, whose pretty face did not compensate for her slatternly appearance: to Mary's inquiry of whether Mrs. Piff was at home? she was answered—"Oh yes, she *be* at home;" and the way was led to the breakfast-parlour, where Mr. Piff was sitting by the fire; his person, never very handsome, was not improved since Mary had last seen it; and his unbuttoned knees, his tumbled hair, his coloured handkerchief carelessly wrapped, but not tied, round his throat, did not add to the beauty of his contour; he started with some surprise on seeing Mary, and said—"Oh, 'tis *you*, is it, Miss? how do you do? I hope I sees you well?"

"Pretty well, I thank you;" said she; "how is Mrs. Piff?"

"Oh, Miss, she is mighty well and bonny; I thought as how you must have met her in the hall, for she's but just gone out of the room. I'll ring the bell," pulling it; "though, now I think *on't*, I may as well give her a call myself," and he went out of the room, calling all the way "my dear, my *missess*, my Mrs. Piff, here's somebody come."

Mrs. Piff did not immediately attend the summons, however, and Mary had an opportunity of looking round the room, and of observing evident marks of inattention and slovenliness: a dirty bespattered pair of Mr. Piff's boots lay in one corner; pipes and tobacco, and a jug, were placed on one of the tables, which still retained the marks of glasses and spilled liquor, which had been left there overnight; several panes of the glass in the windows were broken; the grate, which had used to *shine* under the directing attentions of Mrs. Scot, now appeared to be bronzed; the carpet was dirty and littered; the chairs were scattered confusedly about. At length Mrs. Piff made her appearance, tying on her apron, pulling in her cap at the ears, and smoothing her handkerchief—"Well," said she, "you have somehow caught me in a fine mess, a sad pickle indeed; and so, how do you do, Miss Mary? Look, my dear," said she to Mr. Piff, who followed her into the room, "what sad disorder every thing is in, very so indeed; can't you just put back the chairs a bit, Mr. Piff, and settle things a little to rights? it is good to be doing, isn't it, Miss Mary? you remember I always used to keep myself employed; the fire is nearly out, not that I know it is cold, but Mr. Piff was rather chilly this morning," and she began to stir the fire, and to sweep up the hearth.

Piff seemed to loiter about, as if he did not mean to leave the ladies to themselves.

"I am come to stay in this neighbourhood again," said Mary.

"Are you so indeed, Miss Mary? where are you come to then?"

"Didn't I tell you, my dear, that Miss Ellis, and tother *Miss*, was a-coming to the Park house along here? but you are so *deaf*."

"Oh, very so indeed, Mr. Piff," answered his lady.—"Well, Miss Mary, I am glad to see you, very glad indeed, and I hope you'll come often; I hope you'll come to see me, if only for old acquaintance-sake, you know."

"I hope you will come and see me," said Mary.

"Mrs. Piff, *she* goes out very little indeed," said her husband; "she likes best to stay at home, don't you, my dear *missess*? and perhaps when folks be a little *advanced*, a little *onward*, or so, you understand me, Miss, why perhaps so best; but Mrs. Piff is very well, and very hearty, and as brisk as a bee, ben't you, my dear?"

"Oh, very much so indeed, sir," returned his wife.

"I hope you are well off in servants?" said Mary, "and that you have got those who are attentive and diligent?"

"Why, have you *heard* any thing?" asked Mrs. Piff, with quickness; but starting, and seeming to recollect herself, she cast a frightened sort of look towards her husband, and said—"Oh, yes indeed, very much so, very much so indeed."

"If they were *not*," said Mr. Piff, in no very gentle tone, "I should *soon* send them a-going."

"Oh yes, that's what you would, my dear," said his lady; "but Nanny *is* a very attentive decent girl, isn't she, Mr. Piff?"

"Yes, yes, for aught I knows" returned he.

"And so Mr. Henry is still in Bath, I suppose, and his lady," said Mrs. Piff; "not a single line have I had from my son; well, just as he chuses; I bear him no ill-will, none in the world."

"You go on with your favourite employment, I suppose?" inquired Mary, willing to change the subject.

"A little, Miss Mary, a little."

"A good deal, I think," said Piff, "for I'm sure I often sees you at it."

"Oh yes, often at it, often at it indeed," said she.

Mary saw that Mr. Piff would not give her an opportunity of speaking to Mrs. Piff but in his presence, and that he would scarcely suffer his wife to answer any question which she asked her; so, promising to call often, she rose to take her leave.

Mrs. Piff followed her to the door, and her husband stepping before her to open it, she seized the hand of Mary, and gave it a sudden and emphatic pressure; startled at the action, Mary looked in her face, and thought she saw her eyes filling with tears; but Mr. Piff turned round at the moment, and she said—"My love to Mr. Henry when you write; tell him I am very happy, very much so indeed; say that Mr. Piff makes a most excellent husband, very much so, don't you, Mr. Piff?"

"I *tries* at it," said he.

"I am glad to see you well," said Mary. "Mr. Piff, good morning to you."

As the heavy door closed on its creaking hinges, and its reverberating echoes resounded through the spacious old mansion, Mary could not help thinking that she had given up a helpless prisoner to the controul of a harsh and savage keeper; she found, on her return home, that this was the general opinion. Mrs. Elwyn's social disposition was well known, but she had resisted all the overtures which had been made to her by the second-hand gentry, and had never been visible when they had called: those who knew Mrs. Piff were well aware that this did not proceed from any fastidiousness of taste, or from any humiliating feelings with respect to the connexion she had formed, for her sensibilities were not so acute; and hence her behaviour was referred to the *will* of her lord and master, who was said to be fond of enjoying the society of his own companions; and whether at the village ale-house, or at Elwyn Hall, the same party always met, and the same amusements of *smoaking*, drinking, and playing at All-Fours, consumed the live-long night.

The niggardliness too of this quondam footman was a universal topic with the old servants, who had quitted the family on his assumption of dignity, and who were naturally curious in making inquiries concerning his proceedings; the drudge of a girl who had been seen by Mary, and another, who was usually drest smarter than her mistress, and suspected to be the favourite of her master (as she was one of his procuring), these, and a scout of a boy, with unshod heels, and ragged pole, who ran on errands, and worked in the garden, made up the establishment at Elwyn Hall.



This was a subject on which Mary could not enlarge in her letter to Elwyn, but she did not endeavour to palliate; and spite of herself, and notwithstanding her natural benevolence led her to pity the unfortunate Mrs. Piff, it was easy to perceive that her regrets were excited at seeing the once-respectable, the still-venerable Elwyn Hall, disgraced by having such an occupier as Mr. Piff; with these feelings were naturally blended the expressions of sacred satisfaction which had arisen in her full heart, at receiving those simple proofs of regard from the poor neighbours of the Hall, which evinced that former kindnesses were still remembered. Her letter concluded with the most cordial and unaffected expressions of gratitude and thankfulness for his generous and attentive friendship; and she offered up her warmest wishes for his happiness, and also for that of Mrs. Elwyn.

Mr. Munden soon stumped over to call upon the two ladies—"Well," said he, taking Mary's hand, and looking round the room, "and how long will this last? a fine hoity-toity scheme of love in a maze, of groves, and birds, and fields, and streams—two shepherdesses, without sheep or shepherds; well, well, and so you mean to stay, I suppose, till *Mr. Suitable* appears?"

Mary blushed, for at the moment Fitzallan's parting words came across her mind; she always endeavoured to repel these suggestions of "busy meddling memory," but she had found them very officious since she quitted Bath: without giving way to any visionary or romantic ideas, she thought she might reasonably and safely hope to see Fitzallan again; and she felt that in such a meeting she should experience no common satisfaction.

"Well, I don't know what you are all at, or what mother Ripley was at, for my part, that she did not get you a husband in Bath," said Munden, "but I believe the devil has got possession of every body. As to that poor fool yonder, at the Hall, she is boxed up safe enough, I believe; and though she looks as miserable and as lean as a half-starved cat already, she is not suffered to cry mew; the gardens, the house, all of it is going to ruin; I have had two or three *tustles* already with Tim Piff; he can't afford to keep it in order, and so forth—and the *repairs* must come out of Elwyn's purse, I suppose; and, by what I hear, timber marked—leases granted—shake-about work, shake-about work, I fear," holding up his hand, and imitating the shake of a dice-box. "Well, well, the world is turned topsy-turvy—I've long thought so, and said so, and I suppose it never will get into the old way again; but nobody listens to me—I only prate to the winds, and to two pert minxes who are just ready to burst out a-laughing in my face."

Miss Letsom soon fell in with the odd humour of Mr. Munden, and his friendly visits became very chearful breaks on the retirement of the friends; but he was not their only guest; drawn by curiosity, the Lumleys, Mrs. Buxton, and others of the villagers, who had been used to assemble at Mrs. Piff's teatable, came to peep about the cottage, and to peer about the cottagers; while several families in a superior station, who had kept aloof from Elwyn Hall since the death of the elegant Clara, and who had been cautious of visiting the new family at Salcombe Lodge, were not tardy in showing attention to two young persons, whose prudent conduct, in peculiar and trying situations, had not been untold or unexplained by their rough but zealous champion, Mr. Munden.

Mary Ellis had a taste for society; her temper was naturally chearful; and though she did not shine in large parties, yet, in a small circle, the ingenuousness of her sentiments, and the *naivette* in which she delivered them, rendered her very interesting and pleasing; while the more lively and brilliant imagination of Miss Letsom, no longer shackled by a fear of discovering itself, or by painful feelings of humiliation, shone forth with redoubled lustre, like the sun after a transient cloud; if a sudden turn of thought struck her fancy, she might now hazard it, without being deemed censorious, sarcastic, or impertinent—a weight seemed removed from her mind,

all care from her heart; her person improved in proportion with her spirits, and her eyes, which had hitherto looked sunken and depressed, were now by turns dancing with arch vivacity, or filling with thankful sensibility; and frequently, with romantic enthusiasm, she would exclaim—"Oh, Liberty, dear Liberty, how do I prize thee!—the captive is now free!—unshackled is my mind, and light as air seem all the movements of my soul!" and then, with all the playfulness of fancy, which seemed to emit itself the more frequently from having been so long repressed, she would seize the hand of Mary, and sing "together let us range the fields." In these moments of her almost *transported* happiness, as Mary's eyes were fixed on her once suffering, but *now* exhilarated countenance, she would mentally, *piously* hope, that the errors of Mrs. Halifax might be cancelled, by the overflowing happiness which her deathbed restitution had bestowed on her niece.

As we shrewdly suspect that we have already worn our readers' patience threadbare by our prolix *narrations* of *nothing*, we will not unnecessarily tamper with it, but desire them to fancy the beautiful and fresh months of spring stealing away at the Park house in the manner we have described, "blessing and blest." *Some* alloys there must always be to human happiness; of this Mary Ellis had been fully aware, since her mind first opened to perception; the interest which she still took in the welfare of her early friend and guardian was one of these: public report did not give a very flattering picture of his domestic comforts; and Simpson, the steward, with prophetic shakes of the head, had often insinuated that his master was going on too fast—while Mr. Munden, who was rather more direct in his communications, had confirmed the insinuation by an oath, which we will not attempt to palliate or excuse, although it proceeded from the excessive interest which he had ever taken in the imprudent Henry.

Mary seldom saw Mrs. Piff, never but in the presence of her husband; there, of course, her conversations were nothing more than *questions*, which were answered by simple affirmatives or negatives. She had several times called, and not been admitted; she had been told that Mrs. Piff was not at home, though she knew that she never went abroad; and it was confidently reported that her husband grudged her even the necessities of life, and that he was scraping up every thing together, in order to make a purse for himself, on which to revel after her decease. The coach-horses he had sold, on pretence of Mrs. Piff's being afraid to be drawn by them; and no interference seemed likely to be of any avail, as, intimidated and cowed by him, Mrs. Piff always *said* she was "very happy, very so indeed," and Mr. Piff made her "a most charming husband;" while at the same time her fearful glance towards him, and the malicious scowl of his surly brow, gave the lie to her words.

We will not say but that sometimes a little very *natural* regret stole over the placid countenance of Mary, when she recollected that this beautiful season of enchantment had been passed by Fitzallan in attending the sickbed of his father, for she could not imagine that the sufferings of sir John Fitzallan had experienced any material alleviation; at least the *happy* period which his son had so sanguinely anticipated had not yet arrived—perhaps indeed it never might—perhaps Fitzallan had forgotten her!—an unbidden sigh would force itself, to be stifled ere it was breathed; and, calling off her thoughts, she would immediately engage in some active pursuit.

## CHAP. VII.

Connubial love, parental joy,  
No sympathies like these his soul employ.  
PENROSE.

JUNE, with its roses, was scarcely expired; Mr. Piff had been unusually urgent with the steward to be paid the quarterly allowance of his lady, in conjunction with Mr. Munden (who made a point of giving Timothy some *rough wipes*, and who insisted on having it paid into Mrs. Piff's hand, and who reminded her husband of the gratitude which was due to her, who thus enabled him to *live in clover*). This was done; three or four days elapsed, and it was observed that not a creature had been seen stirring at the Hall. Mr. Simpson at length went to see if any thing was the matter; he found the doors and windows closed; in vain he knocked and rang; he could not gain admittance, but he discovered a key lying on the step at the door; a letter was tied to it; it was directed to him; he opened it, and read as follows:—

“MR. STEWARD,

“You may tell my son, Mr. Henry Elwyn, that I return him many thanks for his kindness, but that I find the Hall much too large and too cumbersome for me and Mr. Piff, so we give up the key and possession to him; we are going to some little convenient bit of a place near London; and when we have settled ourselves, you shall hear again from me, as I beg you will be punctual and exact in sending me my quarterly payment: so, with compliments to all friends, I remain your humble servant,

“ELLEN PIFF.”

Mr. Simpson immediately took the key and the letter to Mr. Munden; and Mr. Munden proceeded to Mary; dancing into the room, and holding up the key, he cried—“Here's for you—here, see what I have got; *this* key may save our friend Harry from ruin; oh, this is a devilish lucky hit.”

Mary was some time in comprehending the nature of his joy, and when she did, she had nearly made him angry by the tears which she shed in commiseration of Mrs. Piff—“Oh, sir,” said she, “look, only look! this is every syllable dictated by that low wretch, although he has made her write it.”

“Well, and don't I know that?” answered Mr. Munden; “but why should you take on so? the old simpleton is rightly served—she had one husband as easy as an old shoe, and he did not content her; and *now* she has got one that pinches; now she knows the difference between a gentleman and his servant.”

“But can nothing be done, sir, to extricate her from this dreadful fate?” cried Mary.

“Stop a little bit, and don't be in a hurry,” said Munden; “there is no finding her *now*, but by-and-by, when the letter comes from my gentleman for the next quarter's remittance, why *then* may be we shall contrive to be even with him.”

“But three months!” cried Mary, clasping her hands together, “three months of agony! poor creature, she may be killed by inches before that time.”

“No, no, don’t you fear that; she’s pretty tough,” replied Munden; “and besides, you know it is master Timmy’s own interest to keep her alive as long as he can.—But how I am wasting time in answering such a foolish chit as you! why, I ought to be writing Harry Elwyn; if he does not come back to his own house again now, I’ll give him up—yes, devil take me if I don’t give him up for ever and for aye; now he has a fair opening; I hear he’s only at Cheltenham, and I’ll send off an express to him within half-an-hour: *do* you wish me good luck, child alive?” said he, pinching her cheek.

“I *wish*,” said Mary, “but *fear*. Mrs. Elwyn hates the country.”

“And I hate *her*,” said Munden; “I always did, and always shall; she is a vain, conceited, envious toad.”

“Oh, what vile names!” cried Miss Letsom; “out, out upon you for a naughty man.”

“And out and out I *am*,” said he; “and when you see me *next*, you shall have good news, or my name’s not Humphrey Munden.”

When the Bath season was expiring, lady Sawbridge went to London; thither Laurretta also wanted to go; but Elwyn exerted the authority of a husband in putting a decided negative on the proposition; and a consent could not be extorted even by the tears which flowed from the bright eyes of Laurretta, even though she told him she believed he wished to *kill* her, that he might marry his favourite Mary Ellis.

Such a speech was calculated to excite the contempt of Elwyn, but not to bend him to her wishes; and Laurretta found that neither sorrow nor sullenness could procure a journey to London; he had determined on never taking Laurretta to any place where she was likely to meet her mother, till general Halifax had made her his wife; the general perhaps might let some *decent* time elapse after the death of one wife before he took another, but in this case a respect to public decorum would be more honoured in the breach than the observance, for in his intimacy with lady Laurretta Montgomery, he had long seemed to set public opinion at defiance.

It was not, however, Elwyn’s design, any more than Laurretta’s wish, to remain in Bath; the society to which he might now be said in some sort to have attached himself were flying off, and some of them, with well-fledged wings, to Cheltenham; thither he followed them, and there plunged with greater avidity than before into the infatuating vice of play; but he could not fly from himself—his imprudence daily haunted him—reflection would force its way—and even the prospect of paternal pleasure had lost its wonted effect on his jaundiced spirit, for he felt that his excesses were injuring his future offspring; he felt that his affection for Laurretta was weakened, and that the delight with which he had once anticipated the reception of an infant resemblance of her lovely self, had now sunk into something nearly allied to cold distaste; he saw that Laurretta’s heart was incapable of a firm or a lasting attachment; he now discovered, now when it was too late, now, when it made him almost frantic to think of it, that she subsisted only on flattery and admiration—that she was selfish, wayward, even childish—that she was jealous of any other person who received the smallest mark of attention, not from him alone, but from any person who surrounded her. The ridiculous and almost idiot-like flummery of Narcissus Finlater had been greedily swallowed by her; she had seemed always to be pleased in his society; nay, Elwyn had often thought that she regarded him with partiality; while her taste for extravagant dress and costly ornaments grew every day to a more inordinate extent; and when Elwyn had represented to her the utter impossibility and imprudence of satisfying all her unreasonable demands, she had scolded or pouted, and perhaps renewed the attack in another form, by telling Narcissus Finlater, in his hearing, how cross and how cruel Mr. Elwyn had behaved to her: such an unusual, such a strange application had its effect—though against his better judgement, he had complied with her

wishes, though most ungraciously, and his breast swelling with passion, *because* he could not bear to be the object of the *would-be* sarcasms of a fool. Lauretta's forced separation from her mother would have demanded all the considerate sympathy of Elwyn's generous disposition, could he have believed that she felt a moment of serious uneasiness from it; he plainly perceived that it was only husbanded in her mind, in order to produce as an instance of his harshness, when she had a mind to quarrel with him.—“Oh, Mary, Mary,” would he say, clasping his hands together, and then striking them on his forehead with emphatic violence, “oh, Mary, and have I for *this* thrown away the rich gem of thy affections!” Such an apostrophe was followed by something little short of madness; and the gay, the handsome, the *self-approving* Harry Elwyn, would sometimes cast himself to the ground, and give way to all the violence of his uncontrolled passion.

Finlater was the *shade* of his sister, lady Sawbridge; he had a very small fortune, and a profession by which he might improve it was beyond the power of his application, it might be said capacity; on his handsome face depended his chance of making a fortune; and some ladies had thought that he had already over-stood his market (notwithstanding that he had worn *stays* the last six months to suppress his redundancy of flesh, for it had been whispered that what Mr. Finlater had *gained* in that point, he had *lost* in beauty; yet he still held out, and had refused to capitulate to a ten, a fifteen, or a twenty thousand pounder, saying that he valued his *person* and *attractions* at thirty; and till he could gain it, he preferred ranging in happy liberty, and paying attention to the *married women*, whom he found quite as fascinating, and much more easy of access than the single. When lady Sawbridge left Bath for London, the *tender* and *lovely* Narcissus took his sentimental adieu of Lauretta; and though Elwyn wondered at himself, he felt relieved and *more* easy when he was gone—“And is it possible,” thought he, “that a butterfly—a moth—a drone, can annoy Harry Elwyn?”

However, Finlater's having taken the road to the metropolis was an additional reason for Elwyn's going to Cheltenham; and he had been passing the last six weeks there, plunging every night yet deeper into the vortex of gaming, and awaking every day more eager to return to it again, to avoid the oppressive weight of *self-reflection*. Sick at heart, and almost overwhelmed by his acute and disapproving feelings, Elwyn was just wishing to tear himself from the contagious atmosphere he now enhaled, and to break off at once from his associates, when Mr. Munden's letter, which was couched in all the warmth and energy of blunt sincerity, was put into his hands. At the idea of Piff's brutal tyranny over his mother, he was almost roused to violence; but when he recollected that he could not revenge her wrongs by a horse-whipping (which, had Mr. Piff been in his presence that moment, he would certainly have inflicted with the utmost of his manual exertion), and that the steps of the fugitives were untraced, he sat down vexed and disappointed; any change offered a prospect of relief; and he had now a feasible pretext for leaving Cheltenham; so, writing a few lines to Mr. Munden, desiring him to give orders to Simpson to prepare the Hall for his reception, and to recall as many of the old servants as were still disengaged, he dispatched it, and with very little preface acquainted Lauretta with his determination. Tears and pouting produced no alteration in it—“Once more, my dear Mrs. Elwyn,” said he, “I talk to you in the language of reason; my affairs urgently require my presence at the Hall, and my fortune cannot support the constant expences we are incurring.”

“Very few have been incurred on *my* account,” said Lauretta; “but if *men* will frequent the *gaming-table*, and fit up *cottages ornée* for *favourite ladies*, it is not to be expected that *any* fortune can support it: and now that I suppose your *Miss Mary* wants you to come down to see her, now that she has got sick of solitude, your *affairs* require your presence;—but I am not to be

so imposed upon, nor will the world blame me for refusing to go where I shall see my rival set up just under my nose."

"Lauretta," said Elwyn, sternly, "I am as *well* convinced that you do not believe *one* syllable that you have been saying, as if I could look into your heart; you know that Mary Ellis is pure, is virtuous as an angel—you *must* know that I have been scrupulously guarded in my conduct towards her; but was she not left to my care?—do I not, ought I not to consider the trust as sacred?—should I be blamed for adding in a trifling instance to her comforts, and those of her present deserving companion? And, in fact, I have merely been benefiting myself; the park house is, you know, my own property, and the little alterations I have made in it will render it more eligible for another tenant. Mary Ellis is not likely to continue there long; the death of sir John Fitzallan, which I have this morning seen in the papers, will enable his deserving son to make a proffer of his hand to the amiable object of his regard. Would to God," continued he, clasping his hands, "would to God that I had no other subject of self-accusation!—would to God that *all* my extravagancies could be referred to the park cottage! then should I be happy."

"Lady Fitzallan?" said Lauretta, "impossible! he never *can*, he never *will* make her his wife—he *dares* not."

"*Dares* not, Lauretta?"

"*Dares* not! what, defy the censures, the opprobrium of the world, and raise the illegitimate child of Clara Elwyn to a *title*, whom *she* palmed upon her foolish dotard of a husband for an orphan foundling?"

"Hold! hold that tongue!" cried Elwyn, with frantic vehemence, putting his hand before her mouth, "nor let me suspect that with an *angel's* face you bear the *malice* of a fiend; oh, what base — what cruel — what slanderous tongue dared whisper so infamous a suggestion? Lauretta," and he seized her hand with an eagerness which almost made her tremble, "give me the author of that base, that hellish falsehood, or I will *swear* it is yourself!"

"Oh, I heard it from the time I first went to Salcombe Lodge," said Lauretta; "it is generally believed, I fancy."

"*Fancy* is not *certainly*, madam," said Elwyn; "neither will *general* information be a satisfactory answer to my question: be so good as to be *particular*, and name your informant."

"Miss Lawson, if you *must* have it," said Lauretta.

"I thought as much; oh! weak and feeble agent of the *wicked one*, thou art below my anger!"

"She is out of the reach of it, however," said Lauretta, resuming her courage, and with it her wish of teasing; "*she* is in London, with *dear* lady Sawbridge, with charming Narcissus Finlater, and *she* sees my own beautiful sweet *good* mama, who never scolded nor contradicted me in all her life, but used to call me the light of her eyes, and the joy of her heart, she did; and you—you are a naughty, and a cruel, and a barbarous man, you are—and you want to kill me, you do, that you may be beforehand with your friend Fitzallan, and marry Mary Ellis yourself; but I'll live, if it be only to spite you—and I'll go to the Hall, if it be only to spite you and that good-for-nothing girl—and I'll, yes, I will, I'll do all I can to teaze and to torment every body, for you use me like a brute, you do;" and the loud and blubbing passion of the *sweet* Lauretta, whose countenance once shone in sunny smiles, the harsh and discordant tones of that harmonious voice, which had once thrilled through his soul with rapture, now drove the miserable husband from her sight.

The intelligence, which Mr. Munden lost no time in communicating at the park cottage, gave much pleasure to Mary; *she* did not fear the proximity of Lauretta; she was conscious of

never having given her the least *just* cause of offence; and if she persisted in her rude behaviour, it would not mortify Mary, for she had never derived any pleasure in her conversation; and if she were to see daily instances of her total unfitness for domestic enjoyment, her regret must be forcibly excited, for she must deeply lament the unfortunate lot of Henry Elwyn.

Mary had always satisfaction in contributing, though in the slightest way, to the accommodation of others, and she let Mrs. Scot go immediately to the Hall, in order to make arrangements for the reception of the family, to put the new domestics in their departments, and to welcome those of the former establishment who returned to their stations; amongst these was the faithful old butler, who declared that he would always stand by the sideboard of his dear master Harry while his legs would support him there. Mrs. Scot had previously declared that if Mrs. Elwyn would go down of her bended knees to *her*, she would never leave her dear Miss Mary, the favourite of her noble, good, and *real* lady of a mistress. These preparations gave a little bustle and interest to the inhabitants of the cottage; and the almost hourly tales of confusion, dirt, squandering, and *confounding*, which were brought by Mrs. Scot—and of plate, linen, and valuables, which were missing at the Hall—and the constant visits of Mr. Munden, who was always stumping backwards and forwards to see that there were “no idle hands,” and that every body “kept moving,” pretty well engrossed the time of our heroine.

By a singular coincidence, the same evening that Mr. and Mrs. Elwyn arrived at the Hall, general Halifax and a splendid retinue reached Salcombe Lodge. The bells struck out to welcome the lord of the manor; but the liberal *douceurs* which were sent to the ringers from the Lodge, and the white favours worn by the postillions, soon set the merry chimes to quickened measures, and proclaimed to the whole neighbourhood that a new lady was brought to the Lodge.

Miss Letsom was much entertained with the idea of writing a burlesque epithalamium on lady Lauretta’s marriage, merely for the amusement of Mary; and without acquainting her with her mischievous intention, she assumed a serious look; and telling her she must retire to woo the muse in some pensive stanzas to suit the solemn tone of her present meditations, she desired not to be interrupted.

Mary left the poetizing lady in the upper room, and descended to their little parlour; at a large casement window at one end of it, she sat down, and contemplated “silent sober evening” as it stole over the landscape; she could here just catch a glimpse of the Hall, and the lights in the windows, which she had rarely seen there of late, inspired at once cheerful and pleasant ideas. Mrs. Scot had gone there to see that every thing was in *order*, and Susan had accompanied her: a quick step approached the front of the cottage; the next moment a gentle rap was heard at the door.

## CHAP. VIII.

Modest flowers adorn  
The spring, and in the spring of life no grace  
So sweet as modesty. MRS. WEST.

MARY rose, and in the indistinct light, she saw a gentleman, and not doubting but that it was Elwyn, she caught his hand, saying—"This is indeed very good of you to come so soon." But the next instant, she would have retreated, only that her hand was firmly held, was pressed to the heart and to the lips of Fitzallan; confused, and scarcely knowing what she said—"Is it you, Mr. Fitzallan?" asked Mary; "I did not know—I did not think—indeed, I did not expect to see you."

"But tell me that you are not displeased at the intrusion," said Fitzallan; "tell me you are not angry—tell me—oh, Mary, tell me, though unexpected, I am not unwelcome."

"I will ring for lights," said Mary, with some embarrassment; but recollecting that there was no one to bring them, she sat down.

"We want none," said Fitzallan; "only give me *light* upon this one interesting subject—only say that you are glad to see me."

"To be sure I am," said the timid girl; "but I have a friend up stairs—you remember Miss Letsom?"

"I know, I know it all," said Fitzallan impatiently; "but my *present* visit is to Mary Ellis, to *her* alone. Say you will hear me with attention," said he, "that you will treat me with that ingenuousness and candour, for which I have frequently admired you?"

"Oh," thought Mary, "this fearful preface! to what does it lead?"

She began to rejoice that there *were* no candles; and though the light was now merely the faint gleam of twilight, yet she averted her head when Fitzallan drew his chair close to hers, and again took her hand—"On my last visit to this place," said he, "I was not insensible to your many artless attractions, and I confess to you, that I thought it very likely that my friend Henry would acknowledge their power, and that Lauretta Montgomery would wear the willow; but it seems *fate*, or the inauspicious star which ruled at Elwyn's birth, forbade it: this idea, however, prevented my courting your society, and trying to dissipate your timid reserve; and I left the Hall, with fervent wishes for your happiness. When I again met you in Bath, I met you in happier, in brighter circumstances; every charm was improved, every grace was heightened; and I had reason to believe—I *still* have reason to believe—I know—I am *sure*, that your judgment, your understanding, and your strength of mind, are far above the level of ordinary characters. I no longer resisted the magnetic influence of your conversation; you soon admitted me to a friendly and confidential intimacy; and the preference which I had from the first felt in your favour was confirmed into an ardent and *lasting* attachment—Start not, dearest Mary, do not thus coldly withdraw your hand; suffer me to retain it *now*—and for ever."

Trembling and confused, poor Mary hung down her head; that Fitzallan did not misconstrue her silence, might be guessed, by the animated manner with which he resumed the subject—he ran through a brief detail of his recent affliction on the death of his father: and then, in all the pleading powerful oratory of real affection, he besought the astonished Mary to share his fortune, his title, and to accept his hand; he waited for her answer—but for some moments he felt only the warm tears of modest sensibility which fell on his hand—"How am I to interpret



those tears, oh, dearest, amiable Mary—tell me how I am to interpret them—have I then distressed you?”

“Yes,” said Mary, assuming some resolution, “yes, noble Fitzallan, you *have* distressed me by your overpowering generosity; oh! sir, do you reflect *who* Mary Ellis is?—do you consider the obscurity of her birth, her low origin, the mean occupation of her parents?”

“They were honest—they were *virtuous*,” said Fitzallan, in a manly tone; “if these—if these, Mary, are *all* your objections——”

“Oh,” said Mary, “how can I ever believe it possible!—when such ideas, such *extravagant* ideas, have forced themselves upon my mind, how have I struggled to repel them!”

“And *have* they forced themselves upon your mind?” asked the transported Fitzallan; “sweet child of ingenuousness and virtue, say those blessed halcyon words again.”

“What have I said?” asked Mary, hastily rising, and endeavouring to leave the room; her enraptured lover would not let her go; and Mary at length confessed that she had taken more pains to drive his image from her mind, than she should use to *reinstate* it, with the candour which always marked her words; and with an ingenuousness which showed her partial confidence in her hearer, she confessed that to those genuine principles of *humility*, which had been firmly rooted in her breast by her beloved protectress, she was indebted for not having become the victim of a hopeless passion—“I loved my youthful companion, Harry Belford,” said she, “with fond affection; I still retain the warmest interest in his happiness; but if I had cherished hopes which were incompatible with my situation in society, if I had given way to ambitious views, whither might they have led me? I restrained them—I smothered them in the bud; and if I dared not lift my humble eyes towards Henry Elwyn, could I have suspected—could I have imagined, that *his* friend——”

Fitzallan’s grateful emotions prevented Mary from proceeding; and when at length Susan returned and brought the candles, his delighted eyes sought those of the retiring Mary, as if once more he would have read in *them* the sweet confirmation of his dearest hopes.

Susan recognised Fitzallan, and instantly ran up to Miss Letsom, to tell her who was below, and to acquaint her with the news which she had just heard at the Hall, of his having lost his father, and being just come into a fine title and fortune.

Miss Letsom had long suspected the *event* of Fitzallan’s attentions to her blooming friend whilst at Bath, but Mary would never suffer her to breathe a hint on the subject, so cautious was this vigilant guardian of her own heart of admitting sentiments which might be inimical to its peace—“The burlesque epithalamium may now be converted into a downright earnest one,” thought Miss Letsom, “and much freer will flow the pen on such a subject—more pleasing will be the theme—more propitious my muse, for friendship, honest friendship will inspire the lay.” She did not think fit to interrupt the *tête-à-tête*; and when at length Fitzallan departed, and Mary came to seek her, she asked no questions; but Mary’s tell-tale eyes revealed the trembling story; and while she hid them on the bosom of her friend, she gently, yet with some archness, whispered—“Fitzallan has been teaching me all that I have been trying to *forget* for the last three months.”

“And has he found it a *difficult* task, and are you a *dull* scholar?” asked her mischievous hearer; “my prophetic spirit,” continued she, “has long foreseen this day, and my delighted heart rejoices in the prospect of my Mary’s happiness.”

“Happiness! happiness!” repeated Mary; “but *this*, this such a strange reverse, such an elevation of fortune—can I ever know myself again? Oh, my dear, lost Mrs. Elwyn, if it be given

to thy pure spirit to witness the felicity of thy child, hover over her, watch her, guard her, keep her from forgetting what *she was*, and what she might have been, had *you* not saved her."

At sir Frederic Fitzallan's return to the Hall, his exhilarated countenance proved to the penetrating eyes of Elwyn that his visit had not been in vain; for a few moments he hesitated ere he could resolve to extend his hand in cordial congratulation; but though his spirits were agitated and harassed, though his mind was not in tone, yet the generous disposition of Harry Elwyn would discover itself—why should he envy his friend a blessing which was not within his own reach? he hastily turned towards Fitzallan, and the firm grasp of his hand spoke volumes, though his tongue was silent.

Lauretta was in the room; she had not been officially informed, though perhaps she guessed, that Fitzallan had joined Elwyn at Cheltenham, and accompanied him to the Hall, merely to facilitate a meeting with Mary Ellis. She had pouted and frowned during the journey; but on hearing that general Halifax was just arrived at Salcombe Lodge with his bridal retinue, her spirits suddenly rose; she guessed that Elwyn's would experience the reverse, and that he would not have brought her into the country, had he known that her mother would so soon have been her neighbour; but here she was mistaken; as the wife of general Halifax, Elwyn did not wish to debar her from an occasional intercourse with lady Lauretta; and when she mentioned her intention of going to the Lodge the following morning, instead of expressing disapprobation, which she had expected, he said he would accompany her.

A letter, which sir Frederic Fitzallan had written to Elwyn at Cheltenham, and which had preceded the writer by one day, we shall copy for our reader's perusal in the ensuing chapter.

## CHAP. IX

On the sea—beat rock,  
Remov'd from ev'ry foam and sound of man,  
In proud communion with the fitful winds,  
Which speak, with many tongues, the fancied words  
Of those who long in silent dust have slept.

*Family Legend*, JOANNA BAILLIE.

“THE papers have ere this informed you, dear Elwyn, that I have lost my father; you have frequently heard me mention him with filial affection and respect, and as I believe you do not suspect me of that insincerity which expresses more than it feels, you will believe me when I tell you that I have been deeply affected; but at the same time, my consolations have been great; the knowledge that the poor invalid is at length released from the arduous and painful conflict which had long subsisted between life and suffering, his perfect resignation to the Divine Will, and a certain soothing something at my breast, which tells me I have done my duty—*these* are the palliatives which I have extracted from that bitter pill in human destiny, the loss of a father.

“I will not detain you on this subject, for *you* have experienced my sensations; to a brighter side of the picture I must now lead you—fancy me, dear Harry, writing from a room which overlooks the Steine, at Brighton; though the lucid waves are now calm and bright as vernal morn, yet I can still revert to the time when they rolled in tempestuous billows, when they were carried up almost to the heavens, and when they returned again to overwhelm, by their tremendous violence, an happy, an honest, and an humble pair, who trusted to the deceitful flattering promises of old Ocean's tide, and who ventured once too often on its treacherous bosom; does not the tale recall some affecting associations of early memory to your mind?—and do you not at once perceive the benignant form of Clara Elwyn starting forth as an angel of Mercy, to succour and to save?—yes, yes, you know it all; and ere this you have guessed that this interesting subject impelled me here.

“I think I once told you, that a man would have nothing to fear in uniting himself to such a woman as Mary Ellis—but what say you

“To the world's dread laugh,  
Which scarce the firm philosopher can scorn?”

I am no philosopher, Elwyn; but as to marrying an orphan, or a foundling, I could have been *firm* enough in resisting all its sneers and laughs; but an insinuation of the most infamous kind had been breathed into my ear, with all the *apparent* kindness of friendly caution; and though I could not be imposed on, in fancying that I could be an object of *anxious interest* to a woman with whom I had scarce had any conversation, yet to investigate the truth of this wicked, this almost *blasphemous* aspersion, on the character of the sainted, yes, friend, *you* must have guessed the word, of the *sainted Clara*, was the ‘determined purpose of my soul,’ and ‘hither, and to that intent, I came;’ but while I resolved to dispel every shadow of doubt, I felt that it was a needless task which I had imposed upon myself; and I constantly, incessantly, repeated to myself the words which you once used in a never-to-be-forgotten conversation which we held, when I was

putting my disinterested regard for Elwyn to a proof, which I scarcely thought—but no matter, I will not be the trumpeter of my own fame—do you remember these words—‘She was educated by the first of women, and her conduct is the best commentary on the character of her protectress?’ yes, on the sands, on the Steine, in the streets of Brighton, as I wandered for three whole days, my inquiries without avail, my hopes, my spirits, would have sank, but for these magnetic words; and as I said them over and over, I would add—‘and if there be virtue, if there be *truth* in human nature, Clara Elwyn *knew*, she taught, she practised it.’

“But in the lapse of nearly eighteen years, what a total revolution takes place!

“Old times were past, old *faces* gone,  
A stranger fill’d ‘The Rose and Crown,”

for *that* was the sign of the little alehouse to which I directed my steps, and which, from description, I had guessed to be the birth-place of Mary Ellis: at length, when almost despairing of procuring any intelligence on the subject, it occurred to me, that by examining the parish records, I might discover who had been the parish overseers during that year, and that period of singular *destruction*, and as *singular* preservation: the examination was made, the discovery took place, and in a narrow and obscure street, I was directed to a home where, in a great armed chair, tortured by ‘gnawing gout,’ and bloated by intemperance, sat a man in the *sear*, but *not* the *yellow* leaf, for his carbuncled countenance and fiery nose proclaimed a hue more sanguine—‘Yes, yes, I remembers it well,’ said he; ‘twas the year I was overseer, sir; very true; oh yes, yes, I remembers all about it; two cursed fools of woman were taken with the *romantics*, you see (plague take this cursed gout, it is tearing me to pieces), and so our parish got rid of two squalling brats that would have been chargeable, you see; well, well, ’tis a bad wind that blows nobody good, as the old saying has it; I remember it as though ’twere but yesterday; yes, yes, we got clear of ’em both, as I was saying afore; one of the fine ladies played me a rum trick, and was off, you see, with *her* booty before one could say Jack Robinson; however, nothing was ever heard of she nor the child to trouble the parish *arter*, you see; I take it as how she went by an *alias*, and didn’t very well know which name to give in; howsomdever, all’s well that ends well, as the saying is—they weren’t chargeable to the parish; but the other lady was quite genteel behaved, and very ready to tell where she lived, and all about it; I see’d her times after and before too; she was one madam Elwyn, out of Gloucestershire; but the other madam never came here no more, as I ever heard of.’—‘What kind of a lady was she?’ asked I, my curiosity excited.—‘Lord, sir, I’ll tell you where you may have a story about it, as long as my arm; old Moll Stevens, who nursed the children, and who staid by the cradle till they were taken by the ladies, is alive now; I do verily think as she must be upwards of four score, but she is mighty recollectful and long winded; Moll has got a little maintenance, I believe, and what with a little trifle of begging, and a little trifle from the parish, she contrives to make out, *snuff* and all.’

“Elwyn, you will begin to wonder at my patience and my memory; but untired is my patience, faithful is my memory, in this instance, and even in this vulgar recapitulation I find interest; but we will now change the scene to

“The sad historian of the pensive *main*,”

though wrinkled was her brow, yet it was not furrowed by old age—‘Do I remember the sweet babes indeed! oh, good lack! and do I remember their father and mother, and *his* father and mother belike; *remember* the poor brats, aye, and the good madam *Elwyn* too; and didn’t she

give me the gown I have *on*?' looking at her sleeve; 'no, no, not this one neither, but the one that's up in the box; and when she walked the streets here in Brighton, weren't the people ready to fall down on their knees and bless her? I hear she is *gone*,' wiping her eyes; 'somebody said as they saw it in the papers, and the tears which were as salt as the sea yonder which I shed for that tender-hearted Christian; but God his will be done!'—'You were here at the birth of the children?'—'To be sure I was; and if I was to live to the age of Methusalem himself, as is mentioned in the Holy Scriptures, I should know one of the dear bantlings again, meet her where I would.'—'Indeed!'—'Not she as Mrs. Elwyn did take to, sir, but she as was kidnapped away belike by that *sensical* lady; yes, she was the eldest of 'em. I shall never forget Kitty Ellis; Kitty was mighty sober and religious, and read the Bible she did, and the Testament too, for all she hadn't much learning or bringing up, poor soul, worse luck; but Kitty she had a willing heart—'Nurse Stevens,' said she, 'I *will* call the dear babies by scriptural names, and that shall be Martha, and this shall be Mary.'—'Then Martha be the eldest,' said I, 'for this came into the world first.'—'Then tie a scarlet thread about her arm,' said Kitty, 'that I may know my Martha from Mary,' says she.—'Oh, there's not much occasion for *that*,' says I to her again, 'been here be two marks on her arm, just in the middle between the shoulder and the elbow, as no time nor chance will ever put out of it.'—'Ah,' said Kitty, said she, 'what is it, dear nursy? is it any thing frightful?' said she again, in a hurry.—'Just as frightful as the two eyes of a whiting,' says I, in a joke-like, and a sort of a *jokelane* way; 'for here they are like two *white pearls*, just side by side, and they feel in the tender skin as round and as firm as two pease, they do; no, my dear baby,' and I gave it to its mother, and she kissed the place twice, 'you'll want no more markings, nor scarlet threads, for thou'lt carry thy two jewels with thee, even if thou go'st to the Indees;' but my Mary, I warrant, was spick and span smooth, without whiting or pearl, and that, sir, I noted down as something comical, for *if* Kitty Ellis *did* long for whiting, why was not one marked as well as the other?'"

"I did not enter the lists with so formidable and experienced an opponent, on the subject of *longings*, but I turned a listening, a willing ear to her thrice-told tale, and am but just returned from her; and if I felt a contented heart in the hut of Mary Stevens, I feel a *happy* one now bounding at my side.

"And now, after all this length of prosing, you *must* bear with me a little longer. I do believe, Elwyn, and I have formerly told you so, that I should have had no chance with Mary Ellis, had you sought her in a proper way, and made her an open manly proffer of your hand; but this you did not do; and taught to think *humbly* of herself, by one who *knew* this was to think *wisely*, taught to guard the avenues of her own heart from the entrance of an hopeless passion, delicacy and resolution both came to her aid, and assisted her in conquering her first predilection: her unrestrained, her unconscious, her modest manner of addressing and conversing with you in Bath, at so early an era after your marriage, I can never forget; it has always appeared to me, as that nice distinction between prudery and freedom, between familiarity and constraint, which few women, in her particular situation, could have attained, while the terms of regard in which she always spoke of you, neither forcing the subject uncalled, nor shunning it when it was naturally touched upon, and the terms of respect with which she mentioned Mrs. Elwyn, these *riveted* my former partiality, and confirmed it into an attachment, which I think, and hope, will end but with my life.

"And now, dear Elwyn, having, as in 'honour bound,' *first* made my application to the doughty guardian of my peerless damsel, and having filled a sheet of paper, from which he will have gathered my meaning (if I have not been very deficient in making myself understood, and

Heaven knows *that* may be the case, for I am not able to be very methodical at this moment); and now having finished this long parenthesis, it is necessary to tell you, that the day after you receive this, I mean to await your answer in *person*, at Cheltenham; and *should* it be propitious to my suit, the day succeeding will see me ‘gallop apace on fiery-footed steeds’ to *Mary’s* mansion, to the romantic shades, the verdant glades,

“Where first I saw my charmer’s face,  
Matchless in each native grace.

“Oh, what a semi-dismal farrago of nonsense is here conjured up to fatigue poor Henry Elwyn! Adieu, my dear friend; all happiness, all pleasure, betide you, so sincerely prays  
“FREDERIC FITZALLAN.”

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## CHAP. X.

Fool! the world

Has other business than to look on thee,  
Save with one casual glance of hate or scorn.

MRS. WEST.

ERE breakfast had began, Mr. Munden bounced into the Hall to give Harry Elwyn the cordial greeting of his honest hand; he staid only a few minutes, for on seeing Lauretta enter the room, he looked at his thick and dirty shoes, and his ungloved hands, and perceiving that *she* did not advance with easy familiarity to welcome him, he made her a distant sarcastic bow; and to Henry's desire of his longer stay, he said—"No, no; I perceive I am not a fit companion for a fine lady, so I will just walk across to see the *girls* at the cottage." In the hall he encountered Fitzallan, and the sly whisper of Elwyn sent the rough and eager Munden back a few paces to grasp his hand, and to say—"You are a noble fellow, and you have pitched upon a noble girl; remember I tell you she's one of a thousand;" and away he walked, more determined than before to go to the park cottage.

Lauretta set about preparing the breakfast, saying that Mr. Munden always made himself so disagreeable, that she was glad he was gone.

Elwyn was going to make her some answer, when the door was opened, and Miss Lawson was announced, dressed in all the *extreme* folly of fashion, which is so generally adopted by half-bred characters, with a lace favour pinned to her left breast, and a semblance of ecstatic pleasure; that lady advanced to her "dear interesting Mrs. Elwyn," who did not seem to be equally transported, for languidly saying—"In the name of fortune, where did you come from?" she scarcely turned her head.

Miss Lawson pointed triumphantly to her favour, saying—"Don't you see? from town—from town, my dear creature; I came with the bride-folks last evening."

"Did you indeed?" said the no longer *half*-interested Lauretta; "oh do let's hear it all, do tell us all about it; for though I am going to the Lodge myself presently, yet I am *dying* with impatience."

"I thought you would go, I said you would go; I knew you were a dear, amiable, tender creature," said Miss Lawson; "and some of them are quite *au de despair* till they see *you*, that I will vouch, but," looking round, and making her curtsies and compliments to the gentlemen before she seated herself *close* to Lauretta, "but surely I have been remiss," addressing Fitzallan. "Sir, I am most happy to see *you*, and to have an opportunity of *condoling* with you on the death of your worthy father, and of *congratulating* you on your accession to his title and fortune; every one who knows sir Frederic Fitzallan *must* be interested for him."

"And every one who knows Miss Lawson," returned Fitzallan, "must have learnt how to estimate such obliging professions."

But not understanding the sarcasm of the speech, neither that which was conveyed in the bow which accompanied it, the self-satisfied Lawson, who had derived no small portion of consequence from having left *town* in the bridal train of general Halifax, turned again towards the eagerly anticipating Lauretta, and resumed her story; while Elwyn stirred his tea round-and-round again with his teaspoon, as though he would have drowned such an overflowing torrent of conceit and volubility—"And so, my dear creature," said Lawson, "you did not expect to see

me? well, to be sure, it was a desperate push for me to leave the dear delights of the metropolis, for I met with so many extreme pleasant, I may say, *superior* people, and I was so particularly distinguished by them—but then, my dear, *what an opportunity!* such an one might not offer again during the whole course of one's life!—and I do say, I had the most delightful journey; nay, I could almost have fancied myself the bride——”

“Indeed!” said Fitzallan, with an expression upon his countenance which Elwyn understood.

“The weather too was so lovely, not a cloud to be seen, quite an *Italian sky*, as the general observed; but look, how I am burnt, sadly burnt; and my sweet companion also, notwithstanding that he took the three several precautions, of a white hat, a silk umbrella, and a green veil, he is sadly bronzed, I assure you——”

“And who may this knight of the green veil be, Miss Lawson?” asked Fitzallan.

“Why, how *very* curious you are!” said she. “Mrs. Elwyn guesses, I dare say; but you shall all hear:—quite by accident, the interesting Narcissus Finlater told me the day when general Halifax was to be married; and as Mrs. Orfield had been ill for ten days or a fortnight, and did not seem likely to get about again in a hurry, and as she was going to Northumberland, quite a contrary route to mine, why I thought it would be a good opportunity of getting down, by joining myself to the bridal retinue. Finlater was delighted, you may be sure, as he was to be bridesman; and so it was all settled by his interference: the general and her ladyship were *so* pleased to have me of the happy party, you've no idea; *they* travelled in the chariot, Finlater and myself in the dicky, and the general's four beautiful Arabians bore us along; abigails and valets followed in a post-chaise. Finlater and myself were so happy, and so amused, and he made so many conundrums, and said so many droll things, I shall never forget him—to be sure, he is a most interesting youth; poor fellow, he was sadly jolted, and complained of being tired last night; but I have not set eyes on a single soul of them this morning, for I stole a march, in order to embrace my beloved Mrs. Elwyn, and to see that my house was not run away in my absence. I am a sad gadabout, that's a fact, my dear. But you cannot think how the Lumleys and Mrs. Buxton *did* stare at me as I passed through Norton, last evening, mounted upon the dicky; I do believe that they began to think that Lawson was no longer *obdurate*, in other words, that I was the bride.”

“I hope the dear general will be happy,” said Laurretta.

“I have no doubt of it,” said Miss Lawson; “he certainly has *now* married the woman of his heart; and such a fine woman too, as I said to Finlater—‘She is of a superior order of beings.’ Well, Finlater will come to call of *you*, before this day is out, I dare say.”

“You forget that we are going to the Lodge, madam,” said Elwyn, in a serious tone.

“Oh true, I am very forgetful, I assure you, and the sound of the wheels is yet in my ears.”

“And how *is* my dear sweet beautiful mama?” asked Laurretta.

“Who, my dear?”

“I ask how is my dear lovely mama?” repeated Laurretta.

“She was quite well, I believe, when I last saw her; but as I happened *then* to be in the party of lady Sawbridge, and as I saw pretty nearly how matters were going on, why I thought it the *safest* plan, that is, I passed on as hastily as I could, and did not much notice her ladyship—a fine woman though, certainly a fine woman, Mrs. Elwyn.”

“I don't understand you,” said Laurretta.

“I am talking of *your* mother, my dear, of ‘our lady of Loretto,’ as that witty creature, Finlater, calls her; surely you agree with me in thinking her a fine woman?”



“And I asked after *her*,” answered Lauretta; “didn’t you tell me you came down with her to the Lodge last evening? didn’t you say you came down with the general and with lady Lauretta Halifax? and yet, afterwards, you said that you had not seen her lately.”

“Oh, my dearest, dearest love, what a gross misunderstanding!” cried Miss Lawson; “of course I thought you knew who the bride was; lady Sawbridge, lady Sawbridge, my dear sweet love, is now the happy bride of general Halifax.”

“Villain!” cried Elwyn, as he rose hastily from his seat, and walked to the window.

Fitzallan looked surprised and astonished; while Lauretta said—“I am sure my own dear beautiful mama expected to be his wife; I am sure they must have stolen this match without her consent; it is very odd, but I shall go to the Lodge, and inquire all about it.”

“Lauretta,” said Elwyn, and he walked to her, and laid his hand with emphasis on her shoulder, “you *must* not, *shall* not, go near the place.”

“*Shall* not, Mr. Elwyn?” repeated she, reddening, and biting her lips; “you delight to contradict, and to make me look like a brow-beaten simpleton before witnesses.”

“Before the *whole world*,” said he, “would I tell you, that you shall not go to Salcombe Lodge; how could you suggest such a thing?”

“Why, Lord bless me, because I wanted to see the general; and sure there’s no harm in going?”

“*Harm*, there is *infamy*!” said Elwyn, as with strong emotion he left the room.

Fitzallan followed him, and the two ladies were left *tête-à-tête*. Who can describe the tumult of passion which agitated the breast of Henry Elwyn? he vowed that he would instantly call general Halifax to an account for his base desertion of lady Lauretta Montgomery; but Fitzallan succeeded in dissuading him from such a purpose—“Your life,” said he, “is of too much consequence to hazard it in a contest with *such* a man as Halifax; if *he* defies the laws of God and man, my friend should still respect them. Perhaps general Halifax may never have bound himself by any promise to lady Lauretta, and in that case the odium of the *world* will not fall on him: at any rate,” continued he, “her ladyship sinned with her eyes open—when she *braved* its censures for Halifax, *he* was a married man; I could pity the betrayed and confiding victim of the libertine, *her* wrongs would rouse my arm, if I did not stedfastly believe they would be referred to a high and unerring tribunal; but lady Lauretta Montgomery, *she* who unblushingly exhibited her lawless attachment to a married man, who exhibited it to a *daughter*—such a woman must reap the fruits of her actions. Put up your sword, dear Elwyn——”

“But Halifax is a villain,” interrupted Elwyn.

“A *worthless* one,” returned Fitzallan, “as such, beneath your notice—leave him to himself; if lady Lauretta should adopt a regular, a proper mode of conduct, if she appears to repent of her errors, if she modestly retires to privacy, she will be more worthy of your returning friendship, of the countenance and respect of her daughter, than if she had risen triumphantly in *vice*, and *blazoned* out her *shame* as lady Lauretta Halifax. Come, come with *me* to the park cottage,” said Fitzallan, gently drawing his friend’s arm through his, “and let us see if Mary Ellis is not of my opinion.”

Elwyn did not resist, though he scarcely consented; his mind was in a chaos of confusion; and while at one moment he was burning with the desire of avenging the wrongs of lady Lauretta Montgomery, at the next he was ready to pour his imprecations on that hapless day when his eyes first lighted upon her, and her bewitching daughter; the foolish, the unfeeling, the indelicate, behaviour of the latter on the recent discovery, filled him with extreme disgust; and he could

scarcely credit his senses, that this was indeed that being whom he had once fancied as perfect as she confessedly was still lovely.

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## CHAP. XI.

Levity and her twin—witch,  
Pale Dissipation, people home with fiends  
And spectres. MRS. WEST.

MARY Ellis was not at the park cottage, and the two gentlemen were directed by Mrs. Scot to follow her to the park-keeper's house, which, though in another direction, was nearer to the Hall, and lay in the road towards Salcombe Lodge.

After Mary had, with no little embarrassment, received the blunt congratulations of Mr. Munden, who told her, that he found her love would soon be out of its maze, that Mr. Suitable was arrived, and many other things to the same purport, which her knowledge of his odd character and his genuine goodness of heart enabled her to parry, though not with *unblushing* confusion, she received an express summons from Jane Osborne, the wife of the park-keeper, desiring her immediate attendance, as a little child whom she had been visiting for some days, and prescribing for a feverish complaint, to the best of her judgment, had in the night been seized with convulsions, and was at present alarmingly ill.

Mary was ever active in the cause of humanity; she partly expected to see Elwyn that morning; it was not *very improbable* that sir Frederic Fitzallan would accompany him; but no selfish motives detained her; and tying on her hat, she "brushed with hasty steps the dew away," and soon arrived at the sick house. The poor little child lay extended in the cradle a miserable spectacle; an eruption, which Mary instantly knew to be the smallpox, had now appeared all over its body; the face was particularly visited by the distemper; and the swollen lips, the distended cheeks, the inflamed and almost closed eyelids, rendered the so lately blooming and sprightly boy a loathsome and disgusting object; but such a sight was not calculated to intimidate Mary, though her humane and compassionate heart was melted by its innocent moanings, and the sight of that suffering which she could not alleviate; telling the mother her opinion with respect to the nature of the disorder, and confessing her own irresolution to administer any further towards its recovery, without medical advice, she desired her immediately to send for Mr. Leonard.

The poor terrified mother, who had been a witness to the fatality of a malignant smallpox, ran like one beside herself to a neighbouring cottage, to get some one to dispatch for Mr. Leonard, and Mary promised to remain by the cradle till her return.

The child, who had just sufficient perception left to know that his mother had quitted the cottage, now began to cry out—"Mammy, mammy, take me out of the cradle, take me out of the cradle;" this he incessantly screamed in Mary's ears; fearing that he would again relapse into convulsions, she endeavoured, by every means in her power, to pacify him, but without effect; till taking him from the cradle, she hushed him to silence, and meek as a lamb, he soon fell asleep on her lap: scarcely breathing, that she might not disturb him, as she anxiously dreaded his again awaking till his mother's return, she sat in melancholy contemplation of her wretched little burden, when she heard the pleasing sound of advancing footsteps, but these were accompanied by mingled voices; she distinguished Lauretta's, Miss Lawson's, and a gentleman's—"Let us get in here," said Lauretta, "and perhaps they will not see us."

"Aye do, do, for Heaven's sake," said Miss Lawson.

"They look *barbarously* savage," said Narcissus Finlater; and the next moment all three of them precipitated themselves into the little room where Mary was sitting, and almost overturned the low and crazy chair on which she held the infant invalid.

"What have we here?" cried Miss Lawson; "dear me, Miss Ellis, as I live! who should have thought of seeing you?"

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" said Finlater, shuddering, as he scarcely glanced at the child.

"Miss Ellis!" said Laretta, in no very conciliating tone; "and *your* child, I conclude," with malicious quickness of manner; "some little *orphan protégée*, eh, Lawson?"

"No," said Mary, with firm unconscious modesty, "a poor little thing, who is likely to suffer severely, if not to lose its life, from what appears to me to be the small-pox, and that too of a most malignant kind."

Mrs. Elwyn's eyes rested for a moment on the child, and then springing out of the cottage, with a fearful, a piercing scream, she cried—"I dare say I am dead! *this* is my death-blow—I *know* it is my death-blow; I have taken the small-pox—I shall die—I know I shall die!"

Miss Lawson and Finlater both tried to pull her back, and to arrest her progress; but she seemed to hear them not; she seemed to see nothing before her; she ran into her husband's arms.

"Laretta!" cried Elwyn, his rising tenderness somewhat quelled as he discerned the form of Finlater behind her; "laretta, say, what means this disorder? tell me what has thus alarmed you?"

"Oh! that child, that cottage!" said she; "I have taken the small-pox—I dare say I never had the disorder, because I remember nothing at all about it; I always thought that Mary Ellis would contrive to be the death of me, in one way or another, and *now* she has effected it."

"Mary Ellis! what of her?" asked the apprehensive Fitzallan; she heard his well-known voice, and as he approached the door of the cottage, she motioned to him not to disturb her sleeping charge; he mentally called down a blessing on her benignant spirit, and joined the group without the door.

"What *is* all this?" said Elwyn, impatiently; "tell me the meaning of this extravagant behaviour?—cannot *you* explain it, sir?" said he, turning fiercely round to Finlater, who turned pale, and almost trembled at his hasty address.

"*Accidentally* meeting these two ladies, sir," said he, pointing to Laretta and Miss Lawson, "and escorting them a little way, we *merely* turned into this cottage——"

"On seeing *me* approach, I guess, sir," interrupted Elwyn.

"And there we saw a young lady," continued Finlater, "nursing a poor animal in a sad pickle indeed, and which has terribly frightened Mrs. Elwyn—the whole truth, '*pon honour*,' laying his hand on his breast; "and why Mrs. Elwyn should be frightened, unless she knows she has not had the disorder, I can't divine."

"Oh, but I don't remember *when* I had it," cried Laretta; "and perhaps I never had it, and then I *must* die."

The poor woman now returned to the cottage; and resigning the unconscious object of all this tumult to *her* care, Mary came to the door, where Fitzallan was waiting for her; she accepted his proffered arm, but kept aloof from the rest of the party, lest Mrs. Elwyn should dread the contagion in her near approach.

"Unless you know you have not had the disorder, such alarm is very weak and childish," said Elwyn.

“Unless I know I *have* had it—I *will* indulge it,” said Laretta, breaking out into a passionate flood of tears; “for I *know* I shall die.”

“I’ll ensure your precious life,” said Miss Lawson, hastily pushing up the loose muslin sleeve of Mrs. Elwyn’s gown some way above the elbow; “look here, look *here!* good people all, and now see what I can shew you; here is the mark of the lancet, and more than that, see under two bright round spots, the size of *pearls*, and just as *white* and just as *hard*.”

Elwyn hastily put Laretta from him; he seized the arm which Miss Lawson had uncovered; he looked at it; he put his hand upon the place; with frenzied vehemence he almost threw her from him; he struck his clenched fist upon his forehead—he caught, he grasped, the hand of Fitzallan—“Look there—look there,” cried he, “and read the damned proof!” and frantically darting towards a gate which opened in a lane that led towards Salcombe Lodge, he stopped, for at the same moment a chaise stopped also, and lady Laretta Montgomery, all loose and wild in her attire, sprang from it; darting towards her daughter, she cried—“Oh, jewel of my soul, see—see your despairing mother.”

“Oh, see your dying child,” said Laretta, falling on her bosom with an emotion not wholly natural.

“And see the weak, the wretched *tool* of your complicated wickedness,” cried Elwyn, seizing the arm of lady Laretta; tearing his wife from her embrace, and giving her to the care of Fitzallan—“tell me,” said Elwyn, “and do not believe that any further deception will avail you—tell me, and beware how you cling to any subterfuge—tell me, is *she* your daughter?”

“My daughter! my daughter!” repeated the agitated lady Laretta “who doubts it?”

“I doubt it,” replied Elwyn; “I *doubt* every thing, *because* I *know* every thing; I *know* that, eighteen years ago, *you* stole this child, an *orphan* child, from Brighton; I *know*——” (Mary Ellis now began to tremble all over—a presentiment, a *natural* presentiment assailed her)—“I *know* your tender mercies; in what have they ended?—in *cruelties*; your blind and foolish fondness, your strange and eccentric example, prevented her mind from every thing valuable; and while the sainted Mrs. Elwyn converted *her* child of adoption into an *angel*, you changed yours into a——”

“Oh! is she—is she then my sister?” interrupted Mary; “oh, Mrs. Elwyn, poor Laretta, who could have thought it?—and are you, are you *indeed* my sister?” and she burst into an hysterical flood of tears, which alarmed her anxious lover: “why not *say* she was my sister before?—why, why not tell us so,” said Mary, appealing to lady Laretta; “we should *then* have loved each other like sisters, we should have existed for each other—one will, one heart, one *soul*, would have united us; how have I longed, how have I wished, how have I *prayed* for this discovery! and now—oh! now, dearest Laretta—dearest Mrs. Elwyn, see, acknowledge, *love* your sister.”

“Never!” cried Laretta, with vehemence, “never will I own a relationship to a being whom I detest; and I don’t believe it—and I won’t believe it; and though my own mama was to *swear* it, I would not credit it; I am the grand-daughter of the earl of Levensdale, I *know* I am—I know I am not related to that trumpery girl; Elwyn only says so to break my heart, and to kill me; but it is not so—and though my own mama was to swear it, I would not credit it.”

“She *dares* not disavow it,” said Elwyn, “for I can *prove* my words. But why, oh why,” continued he, addressing himself to lady Laretta, “why put such an imposition on the world?—why pursue—*continue* it? if your heart was capable of an act of benevolence in adopting an helpless orphan, why not avow it?—it would not have disgraced you.”

“But *disgrace* might attach to an union with the daughter of a *Brighton fisher*,” said lady Lauretta, tauntingly, yet almost incoherently, “while *eclat* would ensue to a connection with the grand-daughter of the earl of Levensdale.”

Elwyn sighed—he almost groaned; he looked at Mary Ellis; he felt the severe, the cutting truth of this remark; his curved, his rumpled brow, his fury-flashing eye, were dreadful *apparitions* of inward horror; he tore himself from the whole group, and ran with wild and hurried footsteps through the park.

Finlater now began to amble off towards the Lodge; and Miss Lawson making her compliments to the party, followed him, eager to communicate the events of the morning to lady Sawbridge; the beau took *her* arm, and whispered in her ear as they went through the gate—“Pon my honour, I think the general manoeuvred well to relinquish our lady of Loretta, and to cut the connexion altogether.”

Miss Lawson’s assenting nod spoke her similarity of opinion.

Lauretta poutingly took hold of her ladyship’s arm, who seemed plunged in *wild reverie*, and to concern herself very little about the recent discovery.

Mary would fain have accompanied the ladies to the Hall, as she tenderly commiserated Lauretta, and already felt towards her the yearnings of a sister; she was apprehensive of the effects of agitation in her present situation, but she found that *her* attentions would not be received; so resigning them both to the care of Fitzallan, who in a few words had been giving her the history of the circumstance which led to this extraordinary *denouement*, she retraced her weary “melancholy way” to the park cottage, and there almost “froze the young blood” of her friend, as she recounted the strange events of the morning.

## CHAP. XII.

“Thy bonny braes, thy dales,  
Each haunted by its wizard stream.”

TWO things engrossed the earl of Levensdale’s whole time, hoarding up riches, and warding off the gout; and though family-pride had a large share in the formation of his character, yet this was frequently rendered subservient to his avarice.

His wife had been dead some years; she had left him one girl, who had been cooped up with an old snuffy-nosed French *madame* till she was past eighteen, and who had learnt to prattle the language of her governess like a parrot, by rote, and had read every French novel which she could finger: but by supplying his daughter with a governess, and by keeping her in seclusion, the earl imagined he was performing the part of a careful and tender parent; and probably lady Lauretta would have continued with *madame* till the earl had made some matrimonial *bargain* for her, if the besetting sin of his soul had not induced him to change her residence.

A gentleman returning from Scotland, accidentally met the earl in company, and told him that he found his father’s sister, lady Deborah Candiddoc, was in a very precarious state of health, that her faculties were very near their dotage, that she was surrounded by servants and mercenaries, and if there was any thing at her own disposal, in all probability it would devolve to strangers, unless it was looked after by some of her family.

The earl was roused; in a retirement in Scotland, Lauretta would be as safe as in a retirement in England; lady Deborah would be as good a *chaperone* as *madame*, and he should be saved the expence of maintaining the latter; so, writing a most *affectionate* and *dutiful* epistle to his *dear* aunt, he sent his little Lauretta to be her nurse and her companion, to enliven her solitude by her conversation, to administer to her wants with attentive tenderness.

Lauretta was tutored to perform her part by the anxious father, who *then* first gave her his *paternal instructions*, and she was packed off for Scotland under a safe escort. Any change was delightful to Lauretta, any companion preferable to *snuffy madame*; the little knowledge she had gained in her reading had served to give her mind a most romantic bias, and she anticipated adventures on every heath she passed, and expected lovers to pass from behind each bush; but heath and bush were harmless, and she arrived in safety at Candiddoc.

Lady Deborah was surprised, but not displeased, at seeing her—“I hope you can read well, child,” said she, “and then you will be a great help, for poor Duncan Montgomery is sometimes tired to death, and I can’t see to read myself, so you must take it in turn; Duncan is gone to Edinburgh for books to-day, and I hope he will bring something new and pretty, and you shall begin off hand.”

Candiddoc, though only nine miles from Edinburgh, was situated in the most lonely solitude; it was a large and old-fashioned mansion; and as on her decease it devolved to the earl of Levensdale, her nephew, lady Deborah did not pay much attention to keeping it in repair; her income was good, but her temper was the reverse of her nephew’s; she was very easy about her affairs, so that she could go on in her own way; and though she had domestics, hangers-on, helpers, and retainers, enough to fill a *palace*, she was very contented while maintaining them all; she saw no company; her whole time was given up to the hearing of novels and romances; and Duncan Montgomery, the son of her bailiff, being a young and idle man, was kept in her pay merely to read to her, and to go to and from Edinburgh to change the books.

Duncan had a fine person, and a pleasing address; Laurretta saw him enter with pleasure; he cast his eyes on her dark and piercing ones, on her elegant person and shape; she was the personified heroine of all his studies.

The *volume* was opened, the *romance* was began, and the future colour of Laurretta's life was determined. Castles, spectres, ghosts, foundlings, orphans, and knights, were the favourite subjects of lady Deborah's entertainment; and ere a few weeks had elapsed, Laurretta was as completely in love, as romantic, as visionary, and as destitute of common sense, as any heroine which she had been reading or hearing about.

Montgomery was, or fancied himself, as much attached as the heroes; but some of the worldly ideas for which his countrymen are noted, whispered to him that his future interest could not be *hurt* by an union with lady Laurretta Candiddoc.

We will not follow this young couple through all their *readings*, which, though carried on from morn to the dread hour of midnight, all turned on the same subjects, and all ended in a wedding. Poor lady Deborah was taken off by a fit of apoplexy; her will was opened and read by the father of Montgomery; she had nothing to bequeath but a small sum which had been deposited in a bank at Edinburgh; this she had divided in legacies to her servants, and those who surrounded her; five hundred pounds she had given to Duncan Montgomery, and a thousand pounds to her grand niece, Laurretta Candiddoc.

The legacies were to be paid immediately; and before the earl of Levensdale, could summon resolution to wrap up his gouty feet, and to take a journey into Scotland, to see after his aunt's effects, and to bring back his daughter, the young and thoughtless couple were married, and were arrived in England, fancying themselves as happy as *princes*, and as rich as Jews, with fifteen hundred pounds in their pockets.

The earl of Levensdale threatened Montgomery with his utmost vengeance; and having married his daughter under age, and without her father's consent, there existed too much probability of his being able to wreak it on their defenceless heads; and lest they should be discovered, they changed their names, and lived in retirement; but the utter ignorance of lady Laurretta in every domestic duty, her contempt of custom, her romantic notions, and her multifarious whims, soon led the wary Scotchman to perceive, that fifteen hundred pounds were not inexhaustible; he would not lay the least embargo on her inclinations, because he dreaded an appeal to her father, which might be succeeded by a separation, and by his ruin; and he quietly saw her purse an unlicensed course of extravagant expenditure, which was much beyond the stretch of his moderate calculations. Turning over in his mind the likeliest means to better his fortune, and having some ambition in his spirit, which the high connexion he had formed had strengthened, he got a distant relative of lady Deborah, whom he had once seen at Candiddoc, to interest himself in getting him an appointment in India.

It suited the tone of lady Laurretta's mind to *brave all danger* with her husband; India she had figured to herself as the mine of gold, and pearls, and diamonds; and she was delighted at learning that Montgomery was going in a military capacity, because the very sound of soldier was heroic.

Montgomery was obliged to be in London to negotiate the business in private, as he feared the earl of Levensdale might otherwise contrive to throw an obstacle in his way; and seeing Laurretta safely within a stage of Brighton, he quitted her for the purpose of making the last preparations previous to his embarkation.

There we have seen his lovely and singular-looking bride, and there we have seen her singular behaviour; lady Laurretta thought it a most charming and delightful *adventure* to take the



orphan infant under her care, and to bear her over the seas to India, and marry her to some *prince* at least.

On meeting Montgomery with this new-found treasure, *he* was not equally transported; he saw the folly of adopting a child in *their* peculiar situation; he saw that if such a circumstance were to be known, it would effectually steel the hearts of Lauretta's family against them; but he talked to the winds; common prudential motives found no entrance in her high-wrought soul, and her violent temper, which asserted her *right* to follow her inclinations, intimidated her husband, and obliged him to accede to her wishes: to her proposal of passing the child as their own upon the world, he did not urge any dissuasive, for if she was determined to adopt it, it would be the only way of concealing her romantic folly from her family, and the knowledge of her having an helpless infant to maintain might melt the hearts of some of them in her favour; at any rate, the deception might be continued till they arrived in India; and when there, the *natural* increase of her family, change of opinion, or many other circumstances, might, and probably would, occur to induce lady Lauretta to cast off the infant from her favour.

The romantic pair embarked, and during a long voyage, Lauretta found infinite amusement in playing with her little *protégée*. On her arrival in India, she found herself much noticed, and great attention paid her, both on account of her rank and her beauty; her singular notions and high ideas rendered her peculiarly susceptible of flattery; she grew vain of the notice and distinction she received; and by degrees, the wild and unformed visionary grew into the vain, the imposing, the capricious woman.

Montgomery's love, which had always been a secondary feeling to his views of interest and promotion, was cooled down into something nearly allied to indifference; and he sedulously pursued the military career, in hopes of preferment; though he perceived with great concern that no inducement could prevail on lady Lauretta to adopt any mode of economy or common sense. Little Lauretta, as she was called, was still her favourite *plaything*; and as no other appeared to divide the palm of affection, she was more steady in her fondness for her than could have been expected; but the education which she gave her was just what may be guessed from a woman of her character: "to dress, to dance, to troll the wanton eye," to appear the thing she was not, to dissemble that she was, to do every thing for *effect*, to pant for admiration, to sigh for flattery, these were the maxims which, both in practice and precept, lady Lauretta recommended to her "heart's idol," her "angel," Lauretta.

We will not detain our readers, or sully our own pages, with the growth of that passion for the handsome and insinuating Halifax, which made such disgraceful ravages in the breast of lady Lauretta, and which not unfrequently had communicated a feeling of uneasiness to that of her husband; but Halifax was the superior officer of Montgomery, and had shewn himself his friend in many pecuniary difficulties, and he had not the courage to resent his perfidy.

The ardour with which Montgomery had pursued independence, even "to the cannon's mouth," had been constantly retarded by the wild profusion of lady Lauretta; and had not a maiden sister of her father's died, and bequeathed to her an annuity during the life of her child, his utter ruin must have ensued; the adoption of the child was therefore the luckiest circumstance which could have happened; and Montgomery's principles were not of that "*penetrable* stuff," that could be proved, by the *slight failure* in rectitude, of palming an imposture upon the world, in order to retain an annuity to which he had no right. At *his* death, lady Lauretta saw the policy of continuing the deceit, and of trying to secure Lauretta an advantageous matrimonial establishment; she began to feel the care of her *heart's idol* too imposing a charge, and this care

often came in contact with that engrossing passion, which she had suffered to “rage without controul,” and to which she had fearlessly sacrificed every thing which she should have valued.

Under the escort, and in the splendid suit of general Halifax, she came to England; and while he swore, a thousand and a thousand times, that the instant he was liberated from “durance vile,” he would make her his bride, lady Laurretta saw that the disposal of *her daughter* by marriage would not be displeasing to Halifax, as a prelude to the *arrangements of felicity* which were to ensue, on the eagerly-anticipated demise of the superannuated Mrs. Halifax.

On seeing Elwyn at Cheltenham, and hearing his expectations, he was fixed on as the happy mortal on whom the peerless Laurretta was to bestow her hand: eager to be her *own* mistress, pleased with his handsome person, enchanted by his elegant flattery, she fell warmly into her mother’s wishes; and though they almost despaired of meeting him again, after his sudden disappearance at Cheltenham, yet no means were left untried of discovering his movements: the meeting at the Opera-House was contrived, as was the hasty departure from London on the following morning; Salcombe Lodge was taken for *Mrs. Halifax*, because it was in the vicinity of Elwyn Hall.

We have seen the success which ensued to these schemes; but the likeness so generally observed between Laurretta and Mary Ellis, and which lady Laurretta only could account for, filled her with the utmost dread and anxiety; should a discovery by any means take place *before* her daughter’s marriage with Elwyn, it would, in all probability, entirely prevent it; should this discovery happen before the death of Mrs. Halifax, she should be deprived of her annuity, and be dependent for every shilling upon her lover; the idea was terrible; so, by a dexterous manoeuvre, she got off Laurretta from the neighbourhood of her likeness, lured Elwyn there also, and by a sudden marriage, effectually secured him to her *heart’s idol*.

Mrs. Halifax at length paid the *debt of nature*, and the general had promised to pay the *debt of gratitude* to lady Laurretta; but the general found he was risen in value an hundred *per cent* since the death of his wife, and that though he might owe a *great deal* to lady Laurretta Montgomery, yet that he owed a *great deal more* to lady Sawbridge, who had “*unsought* been won,” and whose handsome fortune she had fairly owned to be, with her charming self, at his disposal.

Lady Laurretta had no suspicion of his base desertion, till the fact stared her in the face; then she gave way to a fury as uncontrouled as had been her affection; and scarcely knowing what she did, she had flung herself into a chaise, and travelled night and day till she arrived where we have seen her; the violence of her emotion had subsided on seeing Laurretta, and the group which were gathered round her, into something like sullen despair; and though she answered the questions of Elwyn with some degree of art, yet she did not discover the deceit which she had practiced; folding her arms across, she walked to the Hall at her daughter’s side, her eye glaring, and her mind buried in profound reflection.

### CHAP. XIII.

Pride, Ambition, idly vain,  
Revenge and Malice swell her train;  
Devotion warp'd, affection crost,  
Hope in disappointment lost.                      PENROSE.

ALL was confusion and dismay at Elwyn Hall—Lauretta continued to scream, and to accuse her mother, Elwyn, Mary Ellis, every body, every thing, but herself, and was at length carried to a bed in strong hysterics.

Lady Lauretta had recollection sufficient to answer the inquiries of Fitzallan; she well remembered Lauretta's having been inoculated in infancy for the small-pox; but this information did not appease Mrs. Elwyn; she gave way to the most violent and dangerous emotions; lady Lauretta walked up and down the great hall, clasping her hands together, her long black tresses floating in wild disorder round her shoulders, and muttering from time to time—"False, perjured, treacherous *Halifax*."

Elwyn had retired to the library; and on Fitzallan's entreating admittance, his decisive negative forbade the further intrusion of anxious friendship.

It was the hour when Mary and Miss Letsom were retiring to their respective chambers, a gentle rap was heard at their door, and the voice of Fitzallan—"What is the matter?" eagerly inquired Mary.

"Alas! I can scarcely say," said he; "I believe Lauretta is dangerously ill, and the distracted state of Elwyn is beyond description; incessantly he reproaches himself with the murder of his wife, and his unborn offspring, as he believes that his precipitate discovery of lady Lauretta's imposition was the cause of his wife's illness; *she* will not be managed; lady Lauretta flies from her fearful screams; and I am come to ask——"

"I am ready," cried Mary, with eagerness; "I will instantly go with you; she is my *sister*, Fitzallan," said she, hastily wrapping a shawl about her, and tying on a hat, "my sister, you know; and Henry; poor Henry, he is, he *ever was*, my brother."

"Don't agitate yourself, my best love," said Fitzallan; "be careful of your precious health: put on another cloak," said he, taking one which Miss Letsom offered; "consider, you are not used to the night air."

"Oh, I shall not feel it," said Mary, as, hastily putting her arm within his, she lightly ran across the park.

On the steps before the door, without his hat, and in a state of agonizing emotion, Elwyn met her—"Angel of mercy," cried he, "lovely and ever beloved Mary Ellis, haste, haste to the apartment of my—of my Lauretta; save—save her life," said he; "oh, let me not think that my impetuous fury has destroyed her: hark, do you not hear? she screams again; oh, quickly haste and save her."

Mary broke from the retaining hold of Fitzallan, and, pointing to him to watch the motions of his friend, she made her way to the sick chamber, the cries of Lauretta enabling her to find it—"I tell you I am dying," said she; "I *know* I am dying," in a shrill tone of agony, as Mary entered the room.

"Pray, pray compose yourself, Mrs. Elwyn," said Mr. Leonard, who stood near the bed; "I assure you you have every thing to hope, if you are quiet; but your agitation must exhaust you."

"I can't be quiet—I won't be quiet," cried she; "all the doctors in the world can't persuade me to be quiet when I am in torture; oh! I shall die—I know, I know I shall die."

Mary approached the bed—"Let *me* wipe your temples," said she, gently taking the handkerchief from the servant engaged in that office.

"*You*, what *you* come to torment me?" cried Lauretta.

"No, my dear" (sister, Mary *would* have said) "no, my dear madam, I am come to try if I can be useful to you."

"And *you* call your self my *sister*, I suppose?"

"I would willingly *prove* myself one by my conduct."

"No *proofs* for *me*; I do not believe it; I *won't* believe it—'tis all a base fabrication on purpose to murder me—I *know* I shall die—yes, yes, I know I am dying. Where is lady Lauretta?—where is the *beautiful mama* who has been my *ruin*?—why does not *she* come and see me too?—and why does not Elwyn come and see the murder he committed?"

"What *can* be done for her?" said Mary, in an under voice, and looking at Mr. Leonard with the most anxious earnestness.

"Indeed I cannot tell you," said he; "this emotion, if persisted in, *must* be productive of fatal consequences."

But nothing could still the agitation of Lauretta; with unceasing violence it continued during the whole of the night; towards morning, she was delivered of a female infant, who seemed likely to live; but life was then fast ebbing from the hapless parent; insensible and motionless, she lay exhausted by her sufferings.

Elwyn frantically burst into the room, to catch a last glance of her eye, but it had fixed in vacancy for ever.

Lady Lauretta appeared nearly as unconscious as the victim of her blind indulgence, and of her deceitful conduct; she looked on the inanimate corpse for a few moments in still and fixed horror, then, shuddering, she rushed down the stairs, and into the dining-room where Fitzallan was sitting, in melancholy rumination; she hastily snatched up a knife from the table (which had been laid for supper overnight, and which still remained untouched), and saying—"Is this a dagger which I see before me, the handle toward my hand?" would probably have inflicted summary punishment on herself if, quick as thought, Fitzallan had not wrested the instrument of vengeance from her; the loud and convulsive laugh, the daring expression of countenance which succeeded to this discomfiture, evinced to Fitzallan what he had suspected from the moment he saw her alight from the chaise, that her senses were entirely gone.

From such scenes of complicated horror, it is now time to transport our readers; they have seen the proud impetuosity of Henry Elwyn's character; they have watched it as it "grew with his growth, and strengthened with his strength;" *they* will therefore imagine—but *we* cannot describe the complicated feelings which now oppressed his soul; he shut himself up from every body but Fitzallan, who *would* not be excluded; with unceasing patience and kindness, *he* exerted himself in endeavouring to sooth his anguished, his perturbed, and his accusing spirit; and the gratified lover found, that by this conduct he was securing himself a much nearer interest in the heart of Mary, than he *could* have done by the most sedulous attentions bestowed upon herself. Elwyn would not see Mary Ellis; he refused to admit Mr. Munden; and even Fitzallan was rather *suffered* than *permitted* to be near him.

Lady Lauretta Montgomery's malady was fixed and irremediable; through the direction of Mr. Leonard, she was put under the care of a gentleman, whose humanity and attention to the unfortunate objects under his care, had long established his character.

The Halifaxes quitted Salcombe Lodge in a hurry, in hearing of the melancholy events at the Hall; and the Lodge shut up, and the Hall become the house of mourning, Miss Lawson began to vamp up, and recruit her disordered wardrobe, and to meditate another visit to *another* intimate friend; for as she had affronted Mrs. Orfield, by leaving her abruptly, while that lady was confined by illness, she could not *reasonably* expect a second invitation from her.

Fitzallan being obliged to quit the Hall for two days, Elwyn took advantage of this temporary absence, and left it also; the following letter he put on the library table, addressed to his friend:—

“My determination has long been made, dear Fitzallan; my mind must not be suffered to pray upon itself; in the ruin of all my domestic prospects, there is something to give a fresh impulse to my destiny, to nerve my hand with fresh vigour—our valiant troops in the Peninsula, and their noble leader; to *these* I bend my course, and, led by the victorious arm of Wellington, I go—to glory, or—to death!—In either case, to you, and to your virtuous Mary, I bequeath a precious trust—an infant *Clara* Elwyn; she will be bred up in the practice of those pure principles of which we have seen the benignant effect in Mary Ellis; and while she will escape the follies, the misfortunes of her *mother*, she will steer as clear from the headstrong impetuosity of her wretched and suffering father,

“HENRY ELWYN.

“Simpson has orders from me to yield an implicit obedience to your commands.”

And now, gentle reader, what remains to you?—Elwyn is still in Spain; our gentle heroine is not yet become lady Fitzallan, but the period is fast approaching, when she means to bear her infant treasure, her prized and cherished *niece*, the *daughter* of Henry Elwyn, to her husband's mansion; and the generous heart of Fitzallan is well prepared to love and welcome the interesting little guest.

Broken-hearted, and almost sinking to the grave, Mrs. Piff has been rescued, through the effectual interference of Mr. Munden, from the avaricious tyranny of her mean and brutal husband; and while he has agreed to receive fifty pounds per annum during his life, and to tease her no more, the park-cottage is to be the future residence of his foolish wife, where she is resolved to make *patchwork* from morn till night.

As no husband has yet been found for Miss Letsom, she will probably divide her time between lady Fitzallan and Mrs. Piff; enjoying the highly-prized society of the *former*, and amusing herself with *her* own kind of *patchwork* while resident with the latter.

We have not heard that Miss Lawson is likely to change *her* situation; her *change of character* is “a consummation devoutly to be *wished*.”

## THE CONCLUSION

The SUBSTANCE of this our book, we flatter ourselves, may be found in the words of a highly-revered divine of our church; *his* works were much prized by Clara Elwyn, and therefore we shall make no apology for concluding with a quotation from them:—

“And however insipid or insupportable a life may appear to some, which is to be humbly spent in regulating their desires, doing their duty, and expecting their reward, they will find upon trial that every other scheme produces miserable disappointments, and this, as much happiness as our present state is capable of. Length of days, easy circumstances, general esteem, domestic tranquillity, national good order and strength, are the smaller advantages that usually attend practising the rules of religion; but the constant ones, the calm peace, and joyful prospects, of all whose minds are duly affected by the genuine principles of it, these are blessings inexpressibly great.”—ARCHBISHOP SECKER.

FINIS.