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# A SIMPLE STORY

BY

MRS. INCHBALD

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
G. L. STRACHEY

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# INTRODUCTION

*A Simple Story* is one of those books which, for some reason or other, have failed to come down to us, as they deserved, along the current of time, but have drifted into a literary backwater where only the professional critic or the curious discoverer can find them out. “The iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy;” and nowhere more blindly than in the republic of letters. If we were to inquire how it has happened that the true value of Mrs. Inchbald’s achievement has passed out of general recognition, perhaps the answer to our question would be found to lie in the extreme difficulty with which the mass of readers detect and appreciate mere quality in literature. Their judgment is swayed by a hundred side-considerations which have nothing to do with art, but happen easily to impress the imagination, or to fit in with the fashion of the hour. The reputation of Mrs. Inchbald’s contemporary, Fanny Burney, is a case in point. Every one has heard of Fanny Burney’s novels, and *Evelina* is still widely read. Yet it is impossible to doubt that, so far as quality alone is concerned, *Evelina* deserves to be ranked considerably below *A Simple Story*. But its writer was the familiar friend of the greatest spirits of her age; she was the author of one of the best of diaries; and her work was immediately and immensely popular. Thus it has happened that the name of Fanny Burney has maintained its place upon the roll of English novelists, while that of Mrs. Inchbald is forgotten.

But the obscurity of Mrs. Inchbald’s career has not, of course, been the only reason for the neglect of her work. The merits of *A Simple Story* are of a kind peculiarly calculated to escape the notice of a generation of readers brought up on the fiction of the nineteenth century. That fiction, infinitely various as it is, possesses at least one characteristic common to the whole of it—a breadth of outlook upon life, which can be paralleled by no other body of literature in the world save that of the Elizabethans. But the comprehensiveness of view shared by Dickens and Tolstoy, by Balzac and George Eliot, finds no place in Mrs. Inchbald’s work. Compared with *A Simple Story* even the narrow canvases of Jane Austen seem spacious pictures of diversified life. Mrs. Inchbald’s novel is not concerned with the world at large, or with any section of society, hardly even with the family; its subject is a group of two or three individuals whose interaction forms the whole business of the book. There is no local colour in it, no complexity of detail nor violence of contrast; the atmosphere is vague and neutral, the action passes among ill-defined sitting-rooms, and the most poignant scene in the story takes place upon a staircase which has never been described. Thus the reader of modern novels is inevitably struck, in *A Simple Story*, by a sense of emptiness and thinness, which may well blind him to high intrinsic merits. The spirit of the eighteenth century is certainly present in the book, but it is the eighteenth century of France rather than of England. Mrs. Inchbald no doubt owed much to Richardson; her view of life is the indoor sentimental view of the great author of *Clarissa*; but her treatment of it has very little in common with his method of microscopic analysis and vast accumulation. If she belongs to any school, it is among the followers of the French classical tradition that she must be placed. *A Simple Story* is, in its small way, a descendant of the Tragedies of Racine; and Miss Milner may claim relationship with Madame de Clèves.

Besides her narrowness of vision, Mrs. Inchbald possesses another quality, no less characteristic of her French predecessors, and no less rare among the novelists of England. She is essentially a stylist—a writer whose whole conception of her art is dominated by stylistic intention. Her style, it is true, is on the whole poor; it is often heavy and pompous, sometimes clumsy and indistinct; compared with the style of such a master as Thackeray it sinks at once into insignificance. But the interest of her style does not lie in its intrinsic merit so much as in the use to which she puts it. Thackeray’s style is mere ornament, existing independently of what he has to say; Mrs. Inchbald’s is part and parcel of her matter. The result is that when, in moments of inspiration, she rises to the height of her opportunity, when, mastering her material, she invests her expression with the whole intensity of her feeling and her thought, then she achieves effects of the rarest beauty—effects of a kind for which one may search through Thackeray in vain. The most triumphant of these passages is the scene on the staircase of Elmwood House—a passage which would be spoilt by quotation and which no one who has ever read it could forget. But the same quality is to be found throughout her work. “Oh, Miss Woodley!” exclaims Miss Milner, forced at last to confess to her friend what she feels towards Dorriforth, “I love

him with all the passion of a mistress, and with all the tenderness of a wife." No young lady, even in the eighteenth century, ever gave utterance to such a sentence as that. It is the sentence, not of a speaker, but of a writer; and yet, for that very reason, it is delightful, and comes to us charged with a curious sense of emotion, which is none the less real for its elaboration. In *Nature and Art*, Mrs. Inchbald's second novel, the climax of the story is told in a series of short paragraphs, which, for bitterness and concentration of style, are almost reminiscent of Stendhal:

> The jury consulted for a few minutes. The verdict was "Guilty".
>
> She heard it with composure.
>
> But when William placed the fatal velvet on his head and rose to pronounce sentence, she started with a kind of convulsive motion, retreated a step or two back, and, lifting up her hands with a scream, exclaimed—
>
> "Oh, not from *you*!"
>
> The piercing shriek which accompanied these words prevented their being heard by part of the audience; and those who heard them thought little of their meaning, more than that they expressed her fear of dying.
>
> Serene and dignified, as if no such exclamation had been uttered, William delivered the fatal speech, ending with "Dead, dead, dead".
>
> She fainted as he closed the period, and was carried back to prison in a swoon; while he adjourned the court to go to dinner.

Here, no doubt, there is a touch of melodrama; but it is the melodrama of a rhetorician, and, in that fine "She heard it with composure", genius has brushed aside the forced and the obvious, to express, with supreme directness, the anguish of a soul.

For, in spite of Mrs. Inchbald's artificialities, in spite of her lack of that kind of realistic description which seems to modern readers the very blood and breath of a good story, she has the power of doing what, after all, only a very few indeed of her fellow craftsmen have ever been able to do—she can bring into her pages the living pressure of a human passion, she can invest, if not with realism, with something greater than realism—with the sense of reality itself—the pains, the triumphs, and the agitations of the human heart. "The heart," to use the old-fashioned phrase—there is Mrs. Inchbald's empire, there is the sphere of her glory and her command. Outside of it, her powers are weak and fluctuating. She has no firm grasp of the masculine elements in character: she wishes to draw a rough man, Sandford, and she draws a rude one; she tries her hand at a hero, Rushbrook, and she turns out a prig. Her humour is not faulty, but it is exceedingly slight. What an immortal figure the dim Mrs. Horton would have become in the hands of Jane Austen! In *Nature and Art*, her attempts at social satire are superficial and overstrained. But weaknesses of this kind—and it would be easy to prolong the list—are what every reader of the following pages will notice without difficulty, and what no wise one will regard. "Il ne faut point juger des hommes par ce qu'ils ignorent, mais par ce qu'ils savent;" and Mrs. Inchbald's knowledge was as profound as it was limited. Her Miss Milner is an original and brilliant creation, compact of charm and life. She is a flirt, and a flirt not only adorable, but worthy of adoration. Did Mrs. Inchbald take the suggestion of a heroine with imperfections from the little masterpiece which, on more sides than one, closely touches her's—Manon Lescaut? Perhaps; and yet, if this was so, the borrowing was of the slightest, for it is only in the fact that she *is* imperfect that Miss Milner bears to Manon any resemblance at all. In every other respect, the English heroine is the precise contrary of the French one: she is a creature of fiery will, of high bearing, of noble disposition; and her shortcomings are born, not of weakness, but of excess of strength. Mrs. Inchbald has taken this character, she has thrown it under the influence of a violent and absorbing passion, and, upon that theme, she has written her delicate, sympathetic, and artificial book.

As one reads it, one cannot but feel that it is, if not directly and circumstantially, at least in essence, autobiographical. One finds oneself speculating over the author, wondering what was her history, and how much of it was Miss Milner's. Unfortunately the greater part of what we should most like to know of Mrs. Inchbald's life has vanished beyond recovery. She wrote her Memoirs, and she burnt them; and who can tell whether even there we should have found a self-revelation? Confessions

are sometimes curiously discreet, and, in the case of Mrs. Inchbald, we may be sure that it is only what was indiscreet that would really be worth the hearing. Yet her life is not devoid of interest. A brief sketch of it may be welcome to her readers.

Elizabeth Inchbald was born on the 15th of October, 1753, at Standingfield, near Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk;[1] one of the numerous offspring of John and Mary Simpson. The Simpsons, who were Roman Catholics, held a moderate farm in Standingfield, and ranked among the gentry of the neighbourhood. In Elizabeth's eighth year, her father died; but the family continued at the farm, the elder daughters marrying and settling in London, while Elizabeth grew up into a beautiful and charming girl. One misfortune, however, interfered with her happiness—a defect of utterance which during her early years rendered her speech so indistinct as to be unintelligible to strangers. She devoted herself to reading and to dreams of the great world. At thirteen, she declared she would rather die than live longer without seeing the world; she longed to go to London; she longed to go upon the stage. When, in 1770, one of her brothers became an actor at Norwich, she wrote secretly to his manager, Mr. Griffith, begging for an engagement. Mr. Griffith was encouraging, and, though no definite steps were taken, she was sufficiently charmed with him to write out his name at length in her diary, with the inscription "Each dear letter of thy name is harmony." Was Mr. Griffith the hero of the company as well as its manager? That, at any rate, was clearly Miss Simpson's opinion; but she soon had other distractions. In the following year she paid a visit to her married sisters in London, where she met another actor, Mr. Inchbald, who seems immediately to have fallen in love with her, and to have proposed. She remained cool. "In spite of your eloquent pen," she wrote to him, with a touch of that sharp and almost bitter sense that was always hers, "matrimony still appears to me with less charms than terrors: the bliss arising from it, I doubt not, is superior to any other—but best not to be ventured for (in my opinion), till some little time have proved the emptiness of all other; which it seldom fails to do." Nevertheless, the correspondence continued, and, early in 1772, some entries in her diary give a glimpse of her state of mind:—

> *Jan. 22*. Saw Mr. Griffith's picture.
>
> *Jan. 28*. Stole it.
>
> *Jan. 29*. Rather disappointed at not receiving a letter from Mr. Inchbald.

A few months later she did the great deed of her life: she stepped secretly into the Norwich coach, and went to London. The days that followed were full of hazard and adventure, but the details of them are uncertain. She was a girl of eighteen, absolutely alone, and astonishingly attractive—"tall," we are told, "slender, straight, of the purest complexion, and most beautiful features; her hair of a golden auburn, her eyes full at once of spirit and sweetness;" and it was only to be expected that, in such circumstances, romance and daring would soon give place to discomfort and alarm. She attempted in vain to obtain a theatrical engagement; she found herself, more than once, obliged to shift her lodging; and at last, after ten days of trepidation, she was reduced to apply for help to her married sisters. This put an end to her difficulties, but, in spite of her efforts to avoid notice, her beauty had already attracted attention, and she had received a letter from a stranger, with whom she immediately entered into correspondence. She had all the boldness of innocence, and, in addition, a force of character which brought her safely through the risks she ran. While she was still in her solitary lodging, a theatrical manager, named Dodd, attempted to use his position as a cover for seduction. She had several interviews with him alone, and the story goes that, in the last, she snatched up a basin of hot water and dashed it in his face. But she was not to go unprotected for long; for within two months of her arrival in London she had married Mr. Inchbald.

The next twelve years of Mrs. Inchbald's life were passed amid the rough and tumble of the eighteenth-century stage. Her husband was thirty-seven when she married him, a Roman Catholic like herself, and an actor who depended for his living upon ill-paid and uncertain provincial engagements. Mrs. Inchbald conquered her infirmity of speech and threw herself into her husband's profession. She accompanied him to Bristol, to Scotland, to Liverpool, to Birmingham, appearing in a great variety of rôles, but never with any very conspicuous success. The record of these journeys throws an interesting light upon the conditions of the provincial companies of those days. Mrs. Inchbald and her companions would set out to walk from one Scotch town to another; they would think themselves lucky if they could climb

on to a passing cart, to arrive at last, drenched with rain perhaps, at some wretched hostelry. But this kind of barbarism did not stand in the way of an almost childish gaiety. In Yorkshire, we find the Inchbalds, the Siddonses, and Kemble retiring to the moors, in the intervals of business, to play blindman's buff or puss in the corner. Such were the pastimes of Mrs. Siddons before the days of her fame. No doubt this kind of lightheartedness was the best antidote to the experience of being "saluted with volleys of potatoes and broken bottles", as the Siddonses were by the citizens of Liverpool, for having ventured to appear on their stage without having ever played before the King. On this occasion, the audience, according to a letter from Kemble to Mrs. Inchbald, "extinguished all the lights round the house; then jumped upon the stage; brushed every lamp out with their hats; took back their money; left the theatre, and determined themselves to repeat this till they have another company." These adventures were diversified by a journey to Paris, undertaken in the hope that Mr. Inchbald, who found himself without engagements, might pick up a livelihood as a painter of miniatures. The scheme came to nothing, and the Inchbalds eventually went to Hull, where they returned to their old profession. Here, in 1779, suddenly and somewhat mysteriously, Mr. Inchbald died. To his widow the week that followed was one of "grief, horror, and almost despair"; but soon, with her old pertinacity, she was back at her work, settling at last in London, and becoming a member of the Covent Garden company. Here, for the next five years, she earned for herself a meagre living, until, quite unexpectedly, deliverance came. In her moments of leisure she had been trying her hand upon dramatic composition; she had written some farces, and, in 1784, one of them, *A Mogul Tale*, was accepted, acted, and obtained a great success. This was the turning-point of her career. She followed up her farce with a series of plays, either original or adapted, which, almost without exception, were well received, so that she was soon able to retire from the stage with a comfortable competence. She had succeeded in life; she was happy, respected, free.

Mrs. Inchbald's plays are so bad that it is difficult to believe that they brought her a fortune. But no doubt it was their faults that made them popular—their sentimentalities, their melodramatic absurdities, their strangely false and high-pitched moral tone. They are written in a jargon which resembles, if it resembles anything, an execrable prose translation from very flat French verse. "Ah, Manuel!" exclaims one of her heroines, "I am now amply punished by the Marquis for all my cruelty to Duke Cordunna—he to whom my father in my infancy betrothed me, and to whom I willingly pledged my faith, hoping to wed; till Romono, the Marquis of Romono, came from the field of glory, and with superior claims of person as of fame, seized on my heart by force, and perforce made me feel I had never loved till then." Which is the more surprising—that actors could be found to utter such speeches, or that audiences could be collected to applaud them? Perhaps, for us, the most memorable fact about Mrs. Inchbald's dramatic work is that one of her adaptations (from the German of Kotzebue) was no other than that *Lovers' Vows* which, as every one knows, was rehearsed so brilliantly at Ecclesford, the seat of the Right Hon. Lord Ravenshaw, in Cornwall, and which, after all, was *not* performed at Sir Thomas Bertram's. But that is an interest *sub specie aeternitatis*; and, from the temporal point of view, Mrs. Inchbald's plays must be regarded merely as means—means towards her own enfranchisement, and that condition of things which made possible *A Simple Story*. That novel had been sketched as early as 1777; but it was not completely written until 1790, and not published until the following year. A second edition was printed immediately, and several more followed; the present reprint is taken from the fourth, published in 1799—but with the addition of the characteristic preface, which, after the second edition, was dropped. The four small volumes of these early editions, with their large type, their ample spacing, their charming flavour of antiquity, delicacy, and rest—may be met with often enough in secluded corners of secondhand bookshops, or on some neglected shelf in the library of a country house. For their own generation, they represented a distinguished title to fame. Mrs. Inchbald—to use the expression of her biographer—"was ascertained to be one of the greatest ornaments of her sex." She was painted by Lawrence, she was eulogized by Miss Edgeworth, she was complimented by Madame de Stael herself. She had, indeed, won for herself a position which can hardly be paralleled among the women of the eighteenth century—a position of independence and honour, based upon talent, and upon talent alone. In 1796 she published *Nature and Art*, and ten years later appeared her last work—a series of biographical and critical notices

prefixed to a large collection of acting plays. During the greater part of the intervening period she lived in lodgings in Leicester Square—or "Leicester Fields" as the place was still often called—in a house opposite that of Sir Joshua Reynolds. The œconomy which she had learnt in her early days she continued to practise; dressing with extraordinary plainness, and often going without a fire in winter; so that she was able, through her self-sacrifice, to keep from want a large band of poor relatives and friends. The society she mixed with was various, but, for the most part, obscure. There were occasional visits from the now triumphant Mrs. Siddons; there were incessant propositions—but alas! they were equivocal—from Sir Charles Bunbury; for the rest, she passed her life among actor-managers and humble playwrights and unremembered medical men. One of her friends was William Godwin, who described her to Mrs. Shelley as a "piquante mixture between a lady and a milkmaid", and who, it is said, suggested part of the plot of *A Simple Story*. But she quarreled with him when he married Mary Wollstonecraft, after whose death she wrote to him thus—"With the most sincere sympathy in all you have suffered—with the most perfect forgiveness of all you have said to me, there must nevertheless be an end to our acquaintance *for ever*. I respect your prejudices, but I also respect my own." Far more intimate were her relations with Dr. Gisborne—a mysterious figure, with whom, in some tragic manner that we can only just discern, was enacted her final romance. His name—often in company with that of another physician, Dr. Warren, for whom, too, she had a passionate affection—occurs frequently among her papers; and her diary for December 17, 1794, has this entry:—"Dr. Gisborne drank tea here, and staid very late: he talked seriously of marrying—but not *me*." Many years later, one September, she amused herself by making out a list of all the Septembers since her marriage, with brief notes as to her state of mind during each. The list has fortunately survived, and some of the later entries are as follows:—

> 1791. London; after my novel, Simple Story ... very happy.
>
> 1792. London; in Leicester Square ... cheerful, content, and sometimes rather happy....
>
> 1794. Extremely happy, but for poor Debby's death.
>
> 1795. My brother George's death, and an intimate acquaintance with Dr. Gisborne—not happy....
>
> 1797. After an alteration in my teeth, and the death of Dr. Warren—yet far from unhappy.
>
> 1798. Happy, but for suspicion amounting almost to certainty of a rapid appearance of age in my face....
>
> 1802. After feeling wholly indifferent about Dr. Gisborne—very happy but for ill health, ill looks, &c.
>
> 1803. After quitting Leicester Square probably for ever—after caring scarce at all or thinking of Dr. Gisborne ... very happy....
>
> 1806.... After the death of Dr. Gisborne, too, often very unhappy, yet mostly cheerful, and on my return to London nearly happy.

The record, with all its quaintness, produces a curious impression of stoicism—of a certain grim acceptance of the facts of life. It would have been a pleasure, certainly, but an alarming pleasure, to have known Mrs. Inchbald.

In the early years of the century, she gradually withdrew from London, establishing herself in suburban boarding-houses, often among sisters of charity, and devoting her days to the practice of her religion. In her early and middle life she had been an indifferent Catholic: "Sunday. Rose late, dressed, and read in the Bible about David, &c."—this is one of the very few references in her diary to anything approaching a religious observance during many years. But, in her old age, her views changed; her devotions increased with her retirement; and her retirement was at last complete. She died, in an obscure Kensington boarding-house, on August 1, 1821. She was buried in Kensington churchyard. But, if her ghost lingers anywhere, it is not in Kensington: it is in the heart of the London that she had always loved. Yet, even there, how much now would she find to recognize? Mrs. Inchbald's world has passed away from us for ever; and, as we walk there to-day amid the press of the living, it is hard to believe that she too was familiar with Leicester Square.

G. L. STRACHEY.

[1] The following account is based upon the *Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald, including her familiar correspondence with the most*

*distinguished persons of her time*, edited by James Boaden, Esq.—a discursive, vague, and not unamusing book.

# A
# SIMPLE STORY,

IN FOUR VOLUMES,

BY

MRS. INCHBALD.

VOL. I.

*THE FOURTH EDITION.*

LONDON:
Printed for G. G. and J. ROBINSON,
PATERNOSTER ROW.
1799.

# PREFACE.

It is said, *a book should be read with the same spirit with which it has been written*. In that case, fatal must be the reception of this—for the writer frankly avows, that during the time she has been writing it, she has suffered every quality and degree of weariness and lassitude, into which no other employment could have betrayed her.

It has been the destiny of the writer of this Story to be occupied throughout her life, in what has the least suited either her inclination or capacity—with an invincible impediment in her speech, it was her lot for thirteen years to gain a subsistence by public speaking—and, with the utmost detestation to the fatigue of inventing, a constitution suffering under a sedentary life, and an education confined to the narrow boundaries prescribed her sex, it has been her fate to devote a tedious seven years to the unremitting labour of literary productions—whilst a taste for authors of the first rank has been an additional punishment, forbidding her one moment of those self-approving reflections, which are assuredly due to the industrious. But, alas! in the exercise of the arts, industry scarce bears the name of merit. What then is to be substituted in the place of genius? GOOD FORTUNE. And if these volumes should be attended by the good fortune that has accompanied her other writings, to that divinity, and that alone, she shall attribute their success.

Yet, there is a *first cause* still, to whom I cannot here forbear to mention my obligations.

The Muses, I trust, will pardon me, that to them I do not feel myself obliged—for, in justice to their heavenly inspirations, I believe they have never yet favoured me with one visitation; but sent in their disguise NECESSITY, who, being the mother of Invention, gave me all mine—while FORTUNE kindly smiled, and was accessory to the cheat.

But this important secret I long wished, and endeavoured to conceal; yet one unlucky moment candidly, though unwittingly, divulged it—I frankly owned, “That Fortune having chased away Necessity, there remained no other incitement to stimulate me to a labour I abhorred.” It happened to be in the power of the person to whom I confided this secret, to send NECESSITY once more. Once more, then, bowing to its empire, I submit to the task it enjoins.

This case has something similar to a theatrical anecdote told (I think) by Colly Cibber:

“A performer of a very mean salary, played the Apothecary in Romeo and Juliet so exactly to the satisfaction of the audience, that this little part, independent of the other characters, drew immense houses whenever the play was performed. The manager in consequence, thought it but justice to advance the actor’s salary; on which the poor man (who, like the character he represented, had been half starved before) began to live so comfortably, he became too plump for the part; and being of no importance in any thing else, the manager of course now wholly discharged him—and thus, actually reducing him to the want of a piece of bread, in a short time he became a proper figure for the part again.”

Welcome, then, thou all-powerful principle, NECESSITY! THOU, who art the instigator of so many bad authors and actors—THOU, who from my infancy seldom hast forsaken me, still abide with me. I will not complain of any hardship thy commands require, so thou dost not urge my pen to prostitution. In all thy rigour, oh! do not force my toil to libels—or what is equally pernicious—panegyric on the unworthy!

# A SIMPLE STORY.

# CHAPTER I.

Dorriforth, bred at St. Omer's in all the scholastic rigour of that college, was, by education, and the solemn vows of his order, a Roman Catholic priest—but nicely discriminating between the philosophical and the superstitious part of that character, and adopting the former only, he possessed qualities not unworthy the first professors of Christianity. Every virtue which it was his vocation to preach, it was his care to practise; nor was he in the class of those of the religious, who, by secluding themselves from the world, fly the merit they might have in reforming mankind. He refused to shelter himself from the temptations of the layman by the walls of a cloister, but sought for, and found that shelter in the centre of London, where he dwelt, in his own prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.

He was about thirty, and had lived in the metropolis near five years, when a gentleman above his own age, but with whom he had from his youth contracted a most sincere friendship, died, and left him the sole guardian of his daughter, who was then eighteen.

The deceased Mr. Milner, on his approaching dissolution, perfectly sensible of his state, thus reasoned with himself before he made the nomination:—"I have formed no intimate friendship during my whole life, except one—I can be said to know the heart of no man, except the heart of Dorriforth. After knowing his, I never sought acquaintance with another—I did not wish to lessen the exalted estimation of human nature which he had inspired. In this moment of trembling apprehension for every thought which darts across my mind, and more for every action which I must soon be called to answer for; all worldly views here thrown aside, I act as if that tribunal, before which I every moment expect to appear, were now sitting in judgment upon my purpose. The care of an only child is the great charge that in this tremendous crisis I have to execute. These earthly affections that bind me to her by custom, sympathy, or what I fondly call parental love, would direct me to study her present happiness, and leave her to the care of those whom she thinks her dearest friends; but they are friends only in the sunshine of fortune; in the cold nipping frost of disappointment, sickness, or connubial strife, they will forsake the house of care, although the very house which they may have themselves built."

Here the excruciating anguish of the father, overcame that of the dying man.

"In the moment of desertion," continued he, "which I now picture to myself, where will my child find comfort? That heavenly aid which religion gives, and which now, amidst these agonizing tortures, cheers with humbler hope my afflicted soul; that, she will be denied."

It is in this place proper to remark, that Mr. Milner was a member of the church of Rome, but on his marriage with a lady of Protestant tenets, they mutually agreed their sons should be educated in the religious opinion of their father, and their daughters in that of their mother. One child only was the result of their union, the child whose future welfare now occupied the anxious thoughts of her expiring father. From him the care of her education had been with-held, as he kept inviolate his promise to her departed mother on the article of religion, and therefore consigned his daughter to a boarding-school for Protestants, whence she returned with merely such ideas of religion as ladies of fashion at her age mostly imbibe. Her little heart employed in all the endless pursuits of personal accomplishments, had left her mind without one ornament, except such as nature gave; and even they were not wholly preserved from the ravages made by its rival, *Art*.

While her father was in health he beheld, with extreme delight, his accomplished daughter, without one fault which taste or elegance could have imputed to her; nor ever enquired what might be her other failings. But, cast on a bed of sickness, and upon the point of leaving her to her fate, those failings at once rushed on his thought—and all the pride, the fond enjoyment he had taken in beholding her open the ball, or delight her hearers with her wit, escaped his remembrance; or, not escaping it, were lamented with a sigh of compassion, or a contemptuous frown, at such frivolous qualifications.

"Something essential," said he to himself, "must be considered—something to prepare her for an hour like this. Can I then leave her to the charge of those who themselves never remember such an hour will come? Dorriforth is the only person I know, who, uniting the moral virtues to those of religion, and pious faith to native honour, will protect, without controlling, instruct, without tyrannizing, comfort, without

flattering; and, perhaps in time, make good by choice, rather than by constraint, the dear object of his dying friend’s sole care.”

Dorriforth, who came post from London to visit Mr. Milner in his illness, received a few moments before his death all his injunctions, and promised to fulfil them. But, in this last token of his friend’s esteem, he still was restrained from all authority to direct his ward in one religious opinion, contrary to those her mother had professed, and in which she herself had been educated.

“Never perplex her mind with an idea that may disturb, but cannot reform”—were his latest words; and Dorriforth’s reply gave him entire satisfaction.

Miss Milner was not with her father at this affecting period—some delicately nervous friend, with whom she was on a visit at Bath, thought proper to conceal from her not only the danger of his death, but even his indisposition, lest it might alarm a mind she thought too susceptible. This refined tenderness gave poor Miss Milner the almost insupportable agony of hearing that her father was no more, even before she was told he was not in health. In the bitterest anguish she flew to pay her last duty to his remains, and performed it with the truest filial love, while Dorriforth, upon important business, was obliged to return to town.

# CHAPTER II.

Dorriforth returned to London heavily afflicted for the loss of his friend; and yet, perhaps, with his thoughts more engaged upon the trust which that friend had reposed in him. He knew the life Miss Milner had been accustomed to lead; he dreaded the repulses his admonitions might possibly meet; and feared he had undertaken a task he was too weak to execute—the protection of a young woman of fashion.

Mr. Dorriforth was nearly related to one of our first Catholic Peers; his income was by no means confined, but approaching to affluence; yet such was his attention to those in poverty, and the moderation of his own desires, that he lived in all the careful plainness of œconomy. His habitation was in the house of a Mrs. Horton, an elderly gentlewoman, who had a maiden niece residing with her, not many years younger than herself. But although Miss Woodley was thirty-five, and in person exceedingly plain, yet she possessed such an extreme cheerfulness of temper, and such an inexhaustible fund of good nature, that she escaped not only the ridicule, but even the appellation of an old maid.

In this house Dorriforth had lived before the death of Mr. Horton; nor upon that event had he thought it necessary, notwithstanding his religious vow of celibacy, to fly the roof of two such innocent females as Mrs. Horton and her niece. On their part, they regarded him with all that respect and reverence which the most religious flock shews to its pastor; and his friendly society they not only esteemed a spiritual, but a temporal advantage, as the liberal stipend he allowed for his apartments and board, enabled them to continue in the large and commodious house which they had occupied during the life of Mr. Horton.

Here, upon Mr. Dorriforth’s return from his journey, preparations were made for the reception of his ward; her father having made it his request that she might, for a time at least, reside in the same house with her guardian, receive the same visits, and cultivate the acquaintance of his companions and friends.

When the will of her father was made known to Miss Milner, she submitted, without the least reluctance, to all he had required. Her mind, at that time impressed with the most poignant sorrow for his loss, made no distinction of happiness that was to come; and the day was appointed, with her silent acquiescence, when she was to arrive in London, and there take up her abode, with all the retinue of a rich heiress.

Mrs. Horton was delighted with the addition this acquisition to her family was likely to make to her annual income, and style of living. The good-natured Miss Woodley was overjoyed at the expectation of their new guest, yet she herself could not tell why—but the reason was, that her kind heart wanted a more ample field for its benevolence; and now her thoughts were all pleasingly employed how she should render, not only the lady herself, but even all her attendants, happy in their new situation.

The reflections of Dorriforth were less agreeably engaged—Cares, doubts, fears, possessed his mind—and so forcibly possessed it, that upon every occasion which offered, he would inquisitively endeavour to gain intelligence of his ward’s disposition before he saw her; for he was, as yet, a stranger not only to the real propensities of her mind, but even to her person; a constant round of visits having prevented his meeting her at her father’s, the very few times he had been at his house, since her final return from school. The first person whose opinion he, with all proper reserve, asked concerning Miss Milner, was Lady Evans, the widow of a Baronet, who frequently visited at Mrs. Horton’s.

But that the reader may be interested in what Dorriforth says and does, it is necessary to give some description of his person and manners. His figure was tall and elegant, but his face, except a pair of dark bright eyes, a set of white teeth, and a graceful fall in his clerical curls of brown hair, had not one feature to excite admiration—yet such a gleam of sensibility was diffused over each, that many people mistook his face for handsome, and all were more or less attracted by it—in a word, the charm, that is here meant to be described, is a *countenance*—on *his* you read the feelings of his heart—saw all its inmost workings—the quick pulses that beat with hope and fear, or the gentle ones that moved in a more equal course of patience and resignation. On this countenance his thoughts were pourtrayed; and as his mind was enriched with every virtue that could make it valuable, so was his face adorned with every expression of those virtues—and they not only gave a lustre to his aspect, but added a harmonious sound to all he uttered; it was persuasive, it was

perfect eloquence; whilst in his looks you beheld his thoughts moving with his lips, and ever coinciding with what he said.

With one of those interesting looks which revealed the anxiety of his heart, and yet with that graceful restraint of all gesticulation, for which he was remarkable, even in his most anxious concerns, he addressed Lady Evans, who had called on Mrs. Horton to hear and to request the news of the day: “Your Ladyship was at Bath last spring—you know the young lady to whom I have the honour of being appointed guardian. Pray,”—

He was earnestly intent upon asking a question, but was prevented by the person interrogated.

“Dear Mr. Dorriforth, do not ask me any thing about Miss Milner—when I saw her she was very young: though indeed that is but three months ago, and she can’t be much older now.”

“She is eighteen,” answered Dorriforth, colouring with regret at the doubts which this lady had increased, but not inspired.

“And she is very beautiful, that I can assure you,” said Lady Evans.

“Which I call no qualification,” said Dorriforth, rising from his chair in evident uneasiness.

“But where there is nothing else, let me tell you, beauty is something.”

“Much worse than nothing, in my opinion,” returned Dorriforth.

“But now, Mr. Dorriforth, do not from what I have said, frighten yourself, and imagine your ward worse than she really is—all I know of her, is merely, that she’s young, idle, indiscreet, and giddy, with half a dozen lovers in her suite; some coxcombs, others men of gallantry, some single, and others married.”

Dorriforth started. “For the first time of my life,” cried he with a manly sorrow, “I wish I had never known her father.”

“Nay,” said Mrs. Horton, who expected every thing to happen just as she wished, (for neither an excellent education, the best company, or long experience had been able to cultivate or brighten this good lady’s understanding,) “Nay,” said she, “I am sure, Mr. Dorriforth, you will soon convert her from all her evil ways.”

“Dear me,” returned Lady Evans, “I am sure I never meant to hint at any thing evil—and for what I have said, I will give you up my authors if you please; for they were not observations of my own; all I do is to mention them again.”

The good-natured Miss Woodley, who sat working at the window, an humble, but an attentive listener to this discourse, ventured here to say exactly six words: “Then don’t mention them any more.”

“Let us change the subject,” said Dorriforth.

“With all my heart,” cried Lady Evans; “and I am sure it will be to the young lady’s advantage.”

“Is Miss Milner tall or short?” asked Mrs. Horton, still wishing for farther information.

“Oh, tall enough of all conscience,” returned she; “I tell you again that no fault can be found with her person.”

“But if her mind is defective”—exclaimed Dorriforth, with a sigh——

“That may be improved as well as the person,” cried Miss Woodley.

“No, my dear,” returned Lady Evans, “I never heard of a pad to make straight an ill-shapen disposition.”

“Oh, yes,” answered Miss Woodley, “good company, good books, experience, and the misfortunes of others, may have more power to form the mind to virtue, than”——

Miss Woodley was not permitted to proceed, for Lady Evans rising hastily from her seat, cried, “I must be gone—I have an hundred people waiting for me at home—besides, were I inclined to hear a sermon, I should desire Mr. Dorriforth to preach, and not you.”

Just then Mrs. Hillgrave was announced. “And here is Mrs. Hillgrave,” continued she—“I believe, Mrs. Hillgrave, you know Miss Milner, don’t you? The young lady who has lately lost her father.”

Mrs. Hillgrave was the wife of a merchant who had met with severe losses: as soon as the name of Miss Milner was uttered, she lifted up her hands, and the tears started in her eyes.

“There!” cried Lady Evans, “I desire you will give your opinion of her, and I am sorry I cannot stay to hear it.” Saying this, she curtsied and took her leave.

When Mrs. Hillgrave had been seated a few minutes, Mrs. Horton, who loved information equally with the most inquisitive of her sex, asked the

new visitor—“If she might be permitted to know, why, at the mention of Miss Milner, she had seemed so much affected?”

This question exciting the fears of Dorriforth, he turned anxiously round, attentive to the reply.

“Miss Milner,” answered she, “has been my benefactress and the best I ever had.” As she spoke, she took out her handkerchief and wiped away the tears that ran down her face.

“How so?” cried Dorriforth eagerly, with his own eyes moistened with joy, nearly as much as her’s were with gratitude.

“My husband, at the commencement of his distresses,” replied Mrs. Hillgrave, “owed a sum of money to her father, and from repeated provocations, Mr. Milner was determined to seize upon all our effects—his daughter, however, by her intercessions, procured us time, in order to discharge the debt; and when she found *that* time was insufficient, and her father no longer to be dissuaded from his intention, she secretly sold some of her most valuable ornaments to satisfy his demand, and screen us from its consequences.”

Dorriforth, pleased at this recital, took Mrs. Hillgrave by the hand, and told her, “she should never want a friend.”

“Is Miss Milner tall, or short?” again asked Mrs. Horton, fearing, from the sudden pause which had ensued, the subject should be dropped.

“I don’t know,” answered Mrs. Hillgrave.

“Is she handsome, or ugly?”

“I really can’t tell.”

“It is very strange you should not take notice!”

“I did take notice, but I cannot depend upon my own judgment—to me she appeared beautiful as an angel; but perhaps I was deceived by the beauties of her disposition.”

# CHAPTER III.

This gentlewoman’s visit inspired Mr. Dorriforth with some confidence in the principles and character of his ward. The day arrived on which she was to leave her late father’s seat, and fix her abode at Mrs. Horton’s; and her guardian, accompanied by Miss Woodley, went in his carriage to meet her, and waited at an inn on the road for her reception.

After many a sigh paid to the memory of her father, Miss Milner, upon the tenth of November, arrived at the place, half-way on her journey to town, where Dorriforth and Miss Woodley were expecting her. Besides attendants, she had with her a gentleman and lady, distant relations of her mother’s, who thought it but a proper testimony of their civility to attend her part of the way, but who so much envied her guardian the trust Mr. Milner had reposed in him, that as soon as they had delivered her safe into his care, they returned.

When the carriage, which brought Miss Milner, stopped at the inn gate, and her name was announced to Dorriforth, he turned pale—something like a foreboding of disaster trembled at his heart, and consequently spread a gloom over all his face. Miss Woodley was even obliged to rouse him from the dejection into which he was cast, or he would have sunk beneath it: she was obliged also to be the first to welcome his lovely charge.—Lovely beyond description.

But the natural vivacity, the gaiety which report had given to Miss Milner, were softened by her recent sorrow to a meek sadness—and that haughty display of charms, imputed to her manners, was changed to a pensive demeanor. The instant Dorriforth was introduced to her by Miss Woodley as her “Guardian, and her deceased father’s most beloved friend,” she burst into tears, knelt down to him for a moment, and promised ever to obey him as her father. He had his handkerchief to his face at the time, or she would have beheld the agitation—the remotest sensations of his heart.

This affecting introduction being over, after some minutes passed in general conversation, the carriages were again ordered; and, bidding farewell to the relations who had accompanied her, Miss Milner, her guardian, and Miss Woodley departed for town; the two ladies in Miss Milner’s carriage, and Dorriforth in that in which he came.

Miss Woodley, as they rode along, made no attempts to ingratiate herself with Miss Milner; though, perhaps, such an honour might constitute one of her first wishes—she behaved to her but as she constantly behaved to every other human creature—that, was sufficient to gain the esteem of a person possessed of an understanding equal to Miss Milner’s—she had penetration to discover Miss Woodley’s unaffected worth, and was soon induced to reward it with the warmest friendship.

# CHAPTER IV.

After a night's rest in London, less violently impressed with the loss of her father, reconciled, if not already attached to her new acquaintance, her thoughts pleasingly occupied with the reflection that she was in that gay metropolis—a wild and rapturous picture of which her active fancy had often formed—Miss Milner waked from a peaceful and refreshing sleep, with much of that vivacity, and with all those airy charms, which for a while had yielded their transcendent power to the weaker influence of her filial sorrow.

Beautiful as she had appeared to Miss Woodley and to Dorriforth on the preceding day, when she joined them this morning at breakfast, repossessed of her lively elegance and dignified simplicity, they gazed at her, and at each other alternately, with astonishment!—and Mrs. Horton, as she sat at the head of her tea-table, felt herself but as a menial servant: such command has beauty if united with sense and virtue. In Miss Milner it was so united. Yet let not our over-scrupulous readers be misled, and extend their idea of her virtue so as to magnify it beyond that which frail mortals commonly possess; nor must they cavil, if, on a nearer view, they find it less—but let them consider, that if she had more faults than generally belong to others, she had likewise more temptations.

From her infancy she had been indulged in all her wishes to the extreme of folly, and started habitually at the unpleasant voice of control. She was beautiful; she had been too frequently told the high value of that beauty, and thought every moment passed in wasteful idleness during which she was not gaining some new conquest. She had a quick sensibility, which too frequently discovered itself in the immediate resentment of injuries or neglect. She had, besides, acquired the dangerous character of a wit; but to which she had no real pretensions, although the most discerning critic, hearing her converse, might fall into this mistake. Her replies had all the effect of repartee, not because she possessed those qualities which can properly be called wit, but that what she said was delivered with an energy, an instantaneous and powerful conception of the sentiment, joined with a real or a well-counterfeited simplicity, a quick turn of the eye, and an arch smile. Her words were but the words of others, and, like those of others, put into common sentences; but the delivery made them pass for wit, as grace in an ill-proportioned figure will often make it pass for symmetry.

And now—leaving description—the reader must form a judgment of her by her actions; by all the round of great or trivial circumstances that shall be related.

At breakfast, which had just begun at the commencement of this chapter, the conversation was lively on the part of Miss Milner, wise on the part of Dorriforth, good on the part of Miss Woodley, and an endeavour at all three on the part of Mrs. Horton. The discourse at length drew from Mr. Dorriforth this observation:

"You have a greater resemblance of your father, Miss Milner, than I imagined you had from report: I did not expect to find you so like him."

"Nor did I, Mr. Dorriforth, expect to find you any thing like what you are."

"No?—pray what did you expect to find me?"

"I expected to find you an elderly man, and a plain man."

This was spoken in an artless manner, but in a tone which obviously declared she thought her guardian young and handsome. He replied, but not without some little embarrassment, "A plain man you shall find me in all my actions."

"Then your actions are to contradict your appearance."

For in what she said, Miss Milner had the quality peculiar to wits, of hazarding the thought that first occurs, which thought, is generally truth. On this, he paid her a compliment in return.

"You, Miss Milner, I should suppose, must be a very bad judge of what is plain, and what is not."

"How so?"

"Because I am sure you will readily own you do not think yourself handsome; and allowing that, you instantly want judgment."

"And I would rather want judgment than beauty," she replied, "and so I give up the one for the other."

With a serious face, as if proposing a very serious question, Dorriforth continued, "And you really believe you are not handsome?"

“I should, if I consulted my own opinion, believe that I was not; but in some respects I am like Roman Catholics; I don’t believe upon my own understanding, but from what other people tell me.”

“And let this convince you,” replied Dorriforth, “that what we teach is truth; for you find you would be deceived did you not trust to persons who know better than yourself. But, my dear Miss Milner, we will talk upon some other topic, and never resume this again—we differ in opinion, I dare say, on one subject only, and this difference I hope will never extend itself to any other. Therefore, let not religion be named between us; for as I have resolved never to persecute you, in pity be grateful, and do not persecute me.”

Miss Milner looked with surprise that any thing so lightly said, should be so seriously received. The kind Miss Woodley ejaculated a short prayer to herself, that heaven would forgive her young friend the involuntary sin of religious ignorance—while Mrs. Horton, unperceived, as she imagined, made the sign of the cross upon her forehead as a guard against the infectious taint of heretical opinions. This pious ceremony Miss Milner by chance observed, and now shewed such an evident propensity to burst into a fit of laughter, that the good lady of the house could no longer contain her resentment, but exclaimed, “God forgive you,” with a severity so different from the idea which the words conveyed, that the object of her anger was, on this, obliged freely to indulge that impulse which she had in vain been struggling to suppress; and no longer suffering under the agony of restraint, she gave way to her humour, and laughed with a liberty so uncontrolled, that soon left her in the room with none but the tender-hearted Miss Woodley a witness of her folly.

“My dear Miss Woodley,” (then cried Miss Milner, after recovering herself) “I am afraid you will not forgive me.”

“No, indeed I will not,” returned Miss Woodley.

But how unimportant, how weak, how ineffectual are *words* in conversation—looks and manners alone express—for Miss Woodley, with her charitable face and mild accents, saying she would not forgive, implied only forgiveness—while Mrs. Horton, with her enraged voice and aspect, begging heaven to pardon the offender, palpably said, she thought her unworthy of all pardon.

# CHAPTER V.

Six weeks have now elapsed since Miss Milner has been in London partaking with delight all its pleasures, while Dorriforth has been sighing with apprehension, attending to her with precaution, and praying with zealous fervour for her safety. Her own and her guardian's acquaintance, and, added to them, the new friendships (to use the unmeaning language of the world) which she was continually forming, crowded so perpetually to the house, that seldom had Dorriforth even a moment left him from her visits or visitors, to warn her of her danger:—yet when a moment offered, he caught it eagerly—pressed the necessity of "Time not always passed in society; of reflection; of reading; of thoughts for a future state; and of virtues acquired to make old age supportable." That forcible power of genuine feeling, which directs the tongue to eloquence, had its effect while she listened to him, and she sometimes put on the looks and gesture of assent—sometimes even spoke the language of conviction; but this the first call of dissipation would change to ill-timed raillery, or peevish remonstrance, at being limited in delights her birth and fortune entitled her to enjoy.

Among the many visitors who attended at her levees, and followed her wherever she went, there was one who seemed, even when absent from her, to share her thoughts. This was Lord Frederick Lawnly, the younger son of a Duke, and the avowed favourite of all the most discerning women of taste.

He was not more than twenty-three; animated, elegant, extremely handsome, and possessed of every accomplishment that would captivate a heart less susceptible of love than Miss Milner's was supposed to be. With these allurements, no wonder if she took pleasure in his company—no wonder if she took pride in having it known that he was among the number of her devoted admirers. Dorriforth beheld this growing intimacy with alternate pain and pleasure—he wished to see Miss Milner married, to see his charge in the protection of another, rather than of himself; yet under the care of a young nobleman, immersed in all the vices of the town, without one moral excellence, but such as might result eventually from the influence of the moment—under such care he trembled for her happiness—yet trembled more lest her heart should be purloined without even the authority of matrimonial views.

With sentiments like these, Dorriforth could never disguise his uneasiness at the sight of Lord Frederick, nor could the latter help discerning the suspicion of the guardian, and consequently each was embarrassed in the presence of the other. Miss Milner observed, but observed with indifference, the sensations of both—there was but one passion which then held a place in her bosom, and that was vanity; vanity defined into all the species of pride, vain-glory, self-approbation—an inordinate desire of admiration, and an immoderate enjoyment of the art of pleasing, for her own individual happiness, and not for the happiness of others. Still had she a heart inclined, and oftentimes affected by tendencies less unworthy; but those approaches to what was estimable, were in their first impulse too frequently met and intercepted by some darling folly.

Miss Woodley (who could easily discover a virtue, although of the most diminutive kind, and scarce through the magnifying glass of calumny could ever perceive a fault) was Miss Milner's inseparable companion at home, and her zealous advocate with Dorriforth, whenever, during her absence, she became the subject of discourse. He listened with hope to the praises of her friend, but saw with despair how little they were merited. Sometimes he struggled to subdue his anger, but oftener strove to suppress tears of pity for her hapless state.

By this time all her acquaintance had given Lord Frederick to her as a lover; the servants whispered it, and some of the public prints had even fixed the day of marriage;—but as no explanation had taken place on his part, Dorriforth's uneasiness was increased, and he seriously told his ward, he thought it would be indispensably prudent in her to entreat Lord Frederick to discontinue his visits. She smiled with ridicule at the caution, but finding it repeated, and in a manner that indicated authority, she promised not only to make, but to enforce the request. The next time he came she did so, assuring him it was by her guardian's desire; "Who, from motives of delicacy, had permitted her to solicit as a favour, what he could himself make a demand." Lord Frederick reddened with anger—he loved Miss Milner; but he doubted whether, from the frequent proofs he had experienced of his own inconstancy, he should continue to love—and this interference of her guardian threatened an

explanation or a dismission, before he became thoroughly acquainted with his own heart.—Alarmed, confounded, and provoked, he replied,

“By heaven, I believe Mr. Dorriforth loves you himself, and it is jealousy that makes him treat me in this manner.”

“For shame, my Lord!” cried Miss Woodley, who was present, and who trembled with horror at the sacrilegious idea.

“Nay, shame to him if he is not in love”—answered his Lordship, “for who but a savage could behold beauty like her’s without owning its power?”

“Habit,” replied Miss Milner, “is every thing—Mr. Dorriforth sees and converses with beauty, but from habit he does not fall in love; as you, my Lord, from habit, so often do.”

“Then you believe that love is not in my nature?”

“No more of it, my Lord, than habit could very soon extinguish.”

“But I would not have it extinguished—I would rather it should mount to a flame, for I think it a crime to be insensible of the divine blessings love can bestow.”

“Then you indulge the passion to avoid a sin?—this very motive deters Mr. Dorriforth from that indulgence.”

“It ought to deter him, for the sake of his oaths—but monastick vows, like those of marriage, were made to be broken—and surely when your guardian looks at you, his wishes”——

“Are never less pure,” she replied eagerly, “than those which dwell in the bosom of my *celestial* guardian.”

At that instant Dorriforth entered the room. The colour had mounted into Miss Milner’s face from the warmth with which she had delivered her opinion, and his accidental entrance at the very moment this praise had been conferred upon him in his absence, heightened the blush to a deep glow on every feature—confusion and earnestness caused even her lips to tremble and her whole frame to shake.

“What’s the matter?” cried Dorriforth, looking with concern on her discomposure.

“A compliment paid by herself to you, Sir,” replied Lord Frederick, “has affected your ward in the manner you have seen.”

“As if she blushed at the untruth,” said Dorriforth.

“Nay, that is unkind,” cried Miss Woodley; “for if you had been here”——

“—I would not have said what I did,” replied Miss Milner, “but left him to vindicate himself.”

“Is it possible that I can want any vindication? Who would think it worth their while to slander so unimportant a person as I am?”

“The man who has the charge of Miss Milner,” replied Lord Frederick, “derives a consequence from her.”

“No ill consequence, I hope, my Lord?” said Dorriforth, with a firmness in his voice, and with an eye so fixed, that his antagonist hesitated for a moment in want of a reply—and Miss Milner softly whispering to him, as her guardian turned his head, to avoid an argument, he bowed acquiescence. And then, as if in compliment to her, he changed the subject;—with an air of ridicule he cried,

“I wish, Mr. Dorriforth, you would give me absolution of all my sins, for I confess they are many, and manifold.”

“Hold, my Lord,” exclaimed Dorriforth, “do not confess before the ladies, lest, in order to excite their compassion, you should be tempted to accuse yourself of sins you have never yet committed.”

At this Miss Milner laughed, seemingly so well pleased, that Lord Frederick, with a sarcastic sneer, repeated,

> “From Abelard it came,
> And Eloisa still must love the name.”

Whether from an inattention to the quotation, or from a consciousness it was wholly inapplicable, Dorriforth heard it without one emotion of shame or of anger—while Miss Milner seemed shocked at the implication; her pleasantry was immediately suppressed, and she threw open the sash and held her head out at the window, to conceal the embarrassment these lines had occasioned.

The Earl of Elmwood was at that juncture announced—a Catholic nobleman, just come of age, and on the eve of marriage. His visit was to his cousin, Mr. Dorriforth, but as all ceremonious visits were alike received by Dorriforth, Miss Milner, and Mrs. Horton’s family, in one

common apartment, Lord Elmwood was ushered into this, and of course directed the conversation to a different subject.

# CHAPTER VI.

With an anxious desire that the affection, or acquaintance, between Lord Frederick and Miss Milner might be finally dissolved, her guardian received with infinite satisfaction, overtures of marriage from Sir Edward Ashton. Sir Edward was not young or handsome; old or ugly; but immensely rich, and possessed of qualities that made him worthy of the happiness to which he aspired. He was the man whom Dorriforth would have chosen before any other for the husband of his ward, and his wishes made him sometimes hope, against his cooler judgment, that Sir Edward would not be rejected—he was resolved, at all events, to try the force of his own power in the strongest recommendation of him.

Notwithstanding that dissimilarity of opinion which, in almost every instance, subsisted between Miss Milner and her guardian, there was in general the most punctilious observance of good manners from each towards the other—on the part of Dorriforth more especially; for his politeness would sometimes appear even like the result of a system which he had marked out for himself, as the only means to keep his ward restrained within the same limitations. Whenever he addressed her there was an unusual reserve upon his countenance, and more than usual gentleness in the tone of his voice; this appeared the effect of sentiments which her birth and situation inspired, joined to a studied mode of respect, best calculated to enforce the same from her. The wished-for consequence was produced—for though there was an instinctive rectitude in the understanding of Miss Milner that would have taught her, without other instruction, what manners to observe towards her deputed father; yet, from some volatile thought, or some quick sense of feeling, which she had not been accustomed to subdue, she was perpetually on the verge of treating him with levity; but he would immediately recall her recollection by a reserve too awful, and a gentleness too sacred for her to violate. The distinction which both required, was thus, by his skilful management alone, preserved.

One morning he took an opportunity, before her and Miss Woodley, to introduce and press the subject of Sir Edward Ashton’s hopes. He first spoke warmly in his praise, then plainly said that he believed she possessed the power of making so deserving a man happy to the summit of his wishes. A laugh of ridicule was the only answer; but a sudden frown from Dorriforth having put an end to it, he resumed his usual politeness, and said,

“I wish you would shew a better taste, than thus pointedly to disapprove of Sir Edward.”

“How, Mr. Dorriforth, can you expect me to give proofs of a good taste, when Sir Edward, whom you consider with such high esteem, has given so bad an example of his, in approving me?”

Dorriforth wished not to flatter her by a compliment she seemed to have sought for, and for a moment hesitated what answer to make.

“Reply, Sir, to that question,” she said.

“Why then, Madam,” returned he, “it is my opinion, that supposing what your humility has advanced be just, yet Sir Edward will not suffer by the suggestion; for in cases where the heart is so immediately concerned, as I believe Sir Edward’s to be, taste, or rather reason, has no power to act.”

“You are in the right, Mr. Dorriforth; this is a proper justification of Sir Edward—and when I fall in love, I beg that you will make the same excuse for me.”

“Then,” said he earnestly, “before your heart is in that state which I have described, exert your reason.”

“I shall,” answered she, “and not consent to marry a man whom I could never love.”

“Unless your heart is already given away, Miss Milner, what can make you speak with such a degree of certainty?”

He thought on Lord Frederick when he said this, and he riveted his eyes upon her as if to penetrate her sentiments, and yet trembled for what he should find there. She blushed, and her looks would have confirmed her guilty, if the unembarrassed and free tone of her voice, more than her words, had not preserved her from that sentence.

“No,” she replied, “my heart is not given away; and yet I can venture to declare, Sir Edward will never possess an atom of it.”

“I am sorry, for both your sakes, that these are your sentiments,” he replied. “But as your heart is still your own,” (and he seemed rejoiced to

find it was) “permit me to warn you how you part with a thing so precious—the dangers, the sorrows you hazard in bestowing it, are greater than you may be aware of. The heart once gone, our thoughts, our actions, are no more our own, than that is.” He seemed *forcing* himself to utter all this, and yet broke off as if he could have said much more, if the extreme delicacy of the subject had not prevented him.

When he left the room, and she heard the door shut after him, she said, with an inquisitive thoughtfulness, “What can make good people so skilled in all the weaknesses of the bad? Mr. Dorriforth, with all those prudent admonitions, appears rather like a man who has passed his life in the gay world, experienced all its dangerous allurements, all its repentant sorrows; than like one who has lived his whole time secluded in a monastery, or in his own study. Then he speaks with such exquisite sensibility on the subject of love, that he commends the very thing which he attempts to depreciate. I do not think my Lord Frederick would make the passion appear in more pleasing colours by painting its delights, than Mr. Dorriforth could in describing its sorrows—and if he talks to me frequently in this manner, I shall certainly take pity on Lord Frederick, for the sake of his adversary’s eloquence.”

Miss Woodley, who heard the conclusion of this speech with the tenderest concern, cried, “Alas! you then think seriously of Lord Frederick!”

“Suppose I do, wherefore that *alas!* Miss Woodley?”

“Because I fear you will never be happy with him.”

“That is plainly telling me he will not be happy with me.”

“I do not know—I cannot speak of marriage from experience,” answered Miss Woodley, “but I think I can guess what it is.”

“Nor can I speak of love from experience,” replied Miss Milner, “but I think I can guess what it is.”

“But do not fall in love, my dear,” (cried Miss Woodley, with her accustomed simplicity of heart, as if she had been asking a favour that depended upon the will of the person entreated,) “pray do not fall in love without the approbation of your guardian.”

Her young friend smiled at the inefficacious prayer, but promised to do all she could to oblige her.

# CHAPTER VII.

Sir Edward, not wholly discouraged by the denial with which Dorriforth had, with delicacy, acquainted him, still hoped for a kind reception, and was so often at the house of Mrs. Horton, that Lord Frederick's jealousy was excited, and the tortures he suffered in consequence, convinced him, beyond a doubt, of the sincerity of his affection. Every time he beheld the object of his passion, (for he still continued his visits, though not so frequently as heretofore) he pleaded his cause with such ardour, that Miss Woodley, who was sometimes present, and ever compassionate, could not resist wishing him success. He now unequivocally offered marriage, and entreated that he might lay his proposals before Mr. Dorriforth, but this was positively forbidden.

Her reluctance he imputed, however, more to the known partiality of her guardian for the addresses of Sir Edward, than to any motive which depended upon herself; and to Mr. Dorriforth he conceived a greater dislike than ever; believing that through his interposition, in spite of his ward's attachment, he might yet be deprived of her. But Miss Milner declared both to him and to her friend, that love had, at present, gained no influence over her mind. Yet did the watchful Miss Woodley oftentimes hear a sigh escape from her unknown to herself, till she was reminded of it, and then a sudden blush would instantly overspread her face. This seeming struggle with her passion, endeared her more than ever to Miss Woodley, and she would even risk the displeasure of Dorriforth by her compliance with every new pursuit that might amuse the time, which else her friend passed in heaviness of heart.

Balls, plays, incessant company, at length roused her guardian from that mildness with which he had been accustomed to treat her. Night after night his sleep had been disturbed by fears for her when abroad; morning after morning it had been broken by the clamour of her return. He therefore gravely said to her one forenoon as he met her accidentally upon the staircase,

"I hope, Miss Milner, you pass this evening at home?"

Unprepared for the sudden question, she blushed and replied, "Yes."—Though she knew she was engaged to a brilliant assembly, for which her milliner had been consulted a whole week.

She, however, flattered herself that what she had said might be excused as a mistake, the lapse of memory, or some other trifling fault, when he should know the truth. The truth was earlier divulged than she expected—for just as dinner was removed, her footman delivered a message to her from her milliner concerning a new dress for the evening—the *present evening* particularly marked. Her guardian looked astonished.

"I thought, Miss Milner, you gave me your word that you would pass this evening at home?"

"I mistook—for I had before given my word that I should pass it abroad."

"Indeed!" cried he.

"Yes, indeed; and I believe it is right that I should keep my first promise; is it not?"

"The promise you gave me then, you do not think of any consequence?"

"Yes, certainly, if you do."

"I do."

"And mean, perhaps, to make it of more consequence than it deserves, by being offended."

"Whether or not, I *am* offended—you shall find I am." And he looked so.

She caught his piercing eyes—hers were immediately cast down; and she trembled—either with shame or with resentment.

Mrs. Horton rose from her seat—moved the decanters and fruit round the table—stirred the fire—and came back to her seat again, before another word was uttered. Nor had this good woman's officious labours taken the least from the awkwardness of the silence, which, as soon as the bustle she had made was over, returned in its full force.

At last, Miss Milner rising with alacrity, was preparing to go out of the room, when Dorriforth raised his voice, and in a tone of authority said,

"Miss Milner, you shall not leave the house this evening."

"Sir!" she exclaimed with a kind of doubt of what she had heard—a surprise, which fixed her hand on the door she had half opened, but

which now she shewed herself irresolute whether to open wide in defiance, or to shut submissively. Before she could resolve, he rose from his chair, and said, with a force and warmth she had never heard him use before,

“I command you to stay at home this evening.” And he walked immediately out of the apartment by another door.

Her hand fell motionless from that which she held—she appeared motionless herself—till Mrs. Horton, “Beseeching her not to be uneasy at the treatment she had received,” made her tears flow as if her heart was breaking.

Miss Woodley would have said something to comfort her, but she had caught the infection, and could not utter a word. It was not from any real cause of grief that she wept; but there was a magnetic quality in tears, which always attracted hers.

Mrs. Horton secretly enjoyed this scene, though the real well meaning of her heart, and ease of her conscience, did not suffer her to think so. She, however, declared she had “long prognosticated it would come to this;” and she “only thanked heaven it was no worse.”

“What could be worse, Madam?” cried Miss Milner; “am not I disappointed of the ball?”

“You don’t mean to go then?” said Mrs. Horton; “I commend your prudence; and I dare say it is more than your guardian gives you credit for.”

“Do you think I would go,” answered Miss Milner, with an eagerness that for a time suppressed her tears, “in contradiction to his will?”

“It is not the first time, I believe, you have acted contrary to that, Miss Milner,” replied Mrs. Horton, and affected a tenderness of voice, to soften the harshness of her words.

“If you think so, Madam, I see nothing that should prevent me now.” And she flung out of the room as if she had resolved to disobey him. This alarmed poor Miss Woodley.

“My dear aunt,” she cried to Mrs. Horton, “follow and prevail upon Miss Milner to give up her design; she means to be at the ball in opposition to her guardian’s will.”

“Then,” said Mrs. Horton, “I’ll not be instrumental in detering her—if she does it may be for the best; it may give Mr. Dorriforth a clearer knowledge what means are proper to convert her from evil.”

“But, my dear Madam, she must be preserved from the evil of disobedience; and as you tempted, you will be the most likely to dissuade her. But if you will not, I must endeavour.”

Miss Woodley was leaving the room to perform this good work, when Mrs. Horton, in imitation of the example given her by Dorriforth, cried,

“Niece, I command you not to stir out of this room this evening.”

Miss Woodley obediently sat down—and though her thoughts and heart were in the chamber of her friend, she never marked by one impertinent word, or by one line of her face, the restraint she suffered.

At the usual hour, Mr. Dorriforth and his ward were summoned to tea:—he entered with a countenance which evinced the remains of anger; his eye gave testimony of his absent thoughts; and though he took up a pamphlet affecting to read, it was plain to discern that he scarcely knew he held it in his hand.

Mrs. Horton began to make tea with a mind as intent upon something else as Dorriforth’s—she longed for the event of this misunderstanding; and though she wished no ill to Miss Milner, yet with an inclination bent upon seeing something new—without the fatigue of going out of her own house—she was not over scrupulous what that novelty might be. But for fear she should have the imprudence to speak a word upon the subject which employed her thoughts, or even to look as if she thought of it at all; she pinched her lips close together, and cast her eyes on vacancy, lest their significant regards might expose her to detection. And for fear any noise should intercept even the sound of what might happen, she walked across the room more softly than usual, and more softly touched every thing she was obliged to lay her hand on.

Miss Woodley thought it her duty to be mute; and now the gingle of a tea spoon was like a deep-toned bell, all was so quiet.

Mrs. Horton, too, in the self-approving reflection that she was not in a quarrel or altercation of any kind, felt herself at this moment remarkably peaceful and charitable. Miss Woodley did not recollect *herself* so, but was so in reality—in her, peace and charity were instinctive virtues, accident could not increase them.

The tea had scarce been made, when a servant came with Miss Milner's compliments, and she "did not mean to have any tea." The pamphlet shook in Dorriforth's hand while this message was delivered—he believed her to be dressing for her evening's entertainment, and now studied in what manner he should prevent, or resent her disobedience to his commands. He coughed—drank his tea—endeavoured to talk, but found it difficult—sometimes read—and in this manner near two hours were passed away, when Miss Milner came into the room.—Not dressed for a ball, but as she had risen from dinner. Dorriforth read on, and seemed afraid of looking up, lest he should see what he could not have pardoned. She drew a chair and sat at the table by the side of her delighted friend.

After a few minutes' pause, and some little embarrassment on the part of Mrs. Horton, at the disappointment she had to encounter from this unexpected dutiful conduct, she asked Miss Milner, "if she would now have any tea?" She replied, "No, I thank you, Ma'am," in a voice so languid, compared with her usual one, that Dorriforth lifted up his eyes from the book; and seeing her in the same dress that she had worn all the day, turned them hastily away from her again—not with a look of triumph, but of confusion.

Whatever he might have suffered if he had seen her decorated, and prepared to bid defiance to his commands, yet even upon that trial, he would not have endured half the painful sensations he now for a moment felt—he felt himself to blame.

He feared that he had treated her with too much severity—he admired her condescension, accused himself for having exacted it—he longed to ask her pardon—he did not know how.

A cheerful reply from her, to a question of Miss Woodley's, embarrassed him still more—he wished that she had been sullen, he then would have had a temptation, or pretence, to have been sullen too.

With all these sentiments crowding fast upon his heart, he still read, or seemed to read, as if he took no notice of what was passing; till a servant came into the room and asked Miss Milner at what time she should want the carriage? to which she replied, "I don't go out to-night." Dorriforth then laid the book out of his hand, and by the time the servant had left the room, thus began:

"Miss Milner, I give you, I fear, some unkind proofs of my regard. It is often the ungrateful task of a friend to be troublesome—sometimes unmannerly. Forgive the duties of my office, and believe that no one is half so much concerned if it robs you of any degree of happiness, as I myself am."

What he said, he looked with so much sincerity, that had she been burning with rage at his late behaviour, she must have forgiven him, for the regret which he so forcibly exprest. She was going to reply, but found she could not, without accompanying her words with tears, therefore, after the first attempt, she desisted.

On this he rose from his chair, and going to her, said, "Once more shew your submission by obeying me a second time to-day. Keep your appointment, and be assured that I shall issue my commands with more circumspection for the future, as I find how strictly they are complied with."

Miss Milner, the gay, the vain, the dissipated, the haughty Miss Milner, sunk underneath this kindness, and wept with a gentleness and patience, which did not give more surprise than it gave joy to Dorriforth. He was charmed to find her disposition so tractable—prophesied to himself the future success of his guardianship, and her eternal as well as temporal happiness from this specimen.

# CHAPTER VIII.

Although Dorriforth was the good man that he has been described, there were in his nature shades of evil—there was an obstinacy which he himself, and his friends termed firmness of mind; but had not religion and some opposite virtues weighed heavily in the balance, it would frequently have degenerated into implacable stubbornness.

The child of a sister once beloved, who married a young officer against her brother's consent, was at the age of three years left an orphan, destitute of all support but from his uncle's generosity: but though Dorriforth maintained, he would never see him. Miss Milner, whose heart was a receptacle for the unfortunate, no sooner was told the melancholy history of Mr. and Mrs. Rushbrook, the parents of the child, than she longed to behold the innocent inheritor of her guardian's resentment, and took Miss Woodley with her to see the boy. He was at a farm house a few miles from town; and his extreme beauty and engaging manners, wanted not the sorrows to which he had been born, to give him farther recommendation to the kindness of her, who had come to visit him. She looked at him with admiration and pity, and having endeared herself to him by the most affectionate words and caresses, on her bidding him farewell, he cried most pitiously to go along with her. Unused at any time to resist temptations, whether to reprehensible, or to laudable actions, she yielded to his supplications, and having overcome a few scruples of Miss Woodley's, determined to take young Rushbrook to town, and present him to his uncle. This idea was no sooner formed than executed. By making a present to the nurse, she readily gained her consent to part with him for a day or two, and the signs of joy denoted by the child on being put into the carriage, repaid her beforehand for every reproof she might receive from her guardian, for the liberty she had taken.

"Besides," said she to Miss Woodley, who had still her fears, "do you not wish his uncle should have a warmer interest in his care than duty?—it is duty alone which induces Mr. Dorriforth to provide for him; but it is proper that affection should have some share in his benevolence—and how, hereafter, will he be so fit an object of the love which compassion excites, as he is at present?"

Miss Woodley acquiesced. But before they arrived at their own door it came into Miss Milner's remembrance, that there was a grave sternness in the manners of her guardian when provoked, the recollection of which made her a little apprehensive for what she had done—her friend, who knew him better than she did, was more so. They both became silent as they approached the street where they lived—for Miss Woodley having once represented her fears, and having suppressed them in resignation to Miss Milner's better judgment, would not repeat them—and Miss Milner would not confess they were now troubling her.

Just, however, as the coach stopped at the door, she had the forecast and the humility to say, "We will not tell Mr. Dorriforth the child is his nephew, unless he should appear fond, and pleased with him, and then I think we may venture without any danger."

This was agreed; and when Dorriforth entered the room just before dinner, poor Harry Rushbrook was introduced as the son of a lady who frequently visited there. The deception passed—his uncle shook hands with him, and at length highly pleased with his engaging manner, and applicable replies, took him on his knee, and kissed him with affection. Miss Milner could scarce restrain the joy it gave her; but unluckily, Dorriforth said soon after to the child, "And now tell me your name."

"Harry Rushbrook," replied he, with force and clearness of voice.

Dorriforth was holding him fondly round the waist as he stood with his feet upon his knees; and at this reply he did not *throw* him from him—but he removed his hands, which had supported him, so suddenly, that the child, to prevent falling on the floor, threw himself about his uncle's neck. Miss Milner and Miss Woodley turned aside to conceal their tears. "I had like to have been down," cried Harry, fearing no other danger. But his uncle took hold of each hand which had twined around him, and placed him immediately on the ground. The dinner being that instant served, he gave no greater marks of his resentment than calling for his hat, and walking instantly out of the house.

Miss Milner cried for anger; yet she did not shew less kindness to the object of this vexatious circumstance: she held him in her arms while she sat at table, and repeatedly said to him, (though he had not the sense to thank her) "That she would always be his friend."

The first emotions of resentment against Dorriforth being passed, she

returned with her little charge to the farm house, before it was likely his uncle should come back; another instance of obedience, which Miss Woodley was impatient her guardian should know; she therefore enquired where he was, and sent him a note for the sole purpose of acquainting him with it, offering at the same time an apology for what had happened. He returned in the evening seemingly reconciled, nor was a word mentioned of the incident which had occurred in the former part of the day; yet in his countenance remained a perfect remembrance of it, without one trait of compassion for his helpless nephew.

# CHAPTER IX.

There are few things so mortifying to a proud spirit as to suffer by immediate comparison—men can hardly bear it, but to women the punishment is intolerable; and Miss Milner now laboured under this humiliation to a degree which gave her no small inquietude.

Miss Fenton, young, of exquisite beauty, elegant manners, gentle disposition, and discreet conduct, was introduced to Miss Milner's acquaintance by her guardian, and frequently, sometimes inadvertently, held up by him as a pattern for her to follow—for when he did not say this in direct terms, it was insinuated by the warmth of his panegyric on those virtues in which Miss Fenton excelled, and in which his ward was obviously deficient. Conscious of her own inferiority in these subjects of her guardian's praise, Miss Milner, instead of being inspired to emulation, was provoked to envy.

Not to admire Miss Fenton was impossible—to find one fault with her person or sentiments was equally impossible—and yet to love her was unlikely.

That serenity of mind which kept her features in a continual placid form, though enchanting at the first glance, upon a second or third, fatigued the sight for want of variety; and to have seen her distorted with rage, convulsed with mirth, or in deep dejection, had been to her advantage. But her superior soul appeared above those emotions, and there was more inducement to worship her as a saint than to love her as a woman. Yet Dorriforth, whose heart was not formed (at least not educated) for love, regarding her in the light of friendship only, beheld her as the most perfect model for her sex. Lord Frederick on first seeing her was struck with her beauty, and Miss Milner apprehended she had introduced a rival; but he had not seen her three times, before he called her "The most insufferable of Heaven's creatures," and vowed there was more charming variation in the plain features of Miss Woodley.

Miss Milner had a heart affectionate to her own sex, even where she saw them in possession of superior charms; but whether from the spirit of contradiction, from feeling herself more than ordinarily offended by her guardian's praise of this lady, or that there was a reserve in Miss Fenton that did not accord with her own frank and ingenuous disposition, so as to engage her esteem, certain it is that she took infinite satisfaction in hearing her beauty and virtues depreciated or turned into ridicule, particularly if Mr. Dorriforth was present. This was painful to him upon many accounts; perhaps an anxiety for his ward's conduct was not among the least; and whenever the circumstance occurred, he could with difficulty restrain his anger. Miss Fenton was not only a person whose amiable qualities he admired, but she was soon to be allied to him by her marriage with his nearest relation, Lord Elmwood, a young nobleman whom he sincerely loved.

Lord Elmwood had discovered all that beauty in Miss Fenton which every common observer could not but see. The charms of her mind and of her fortune had been pointed out by his tutor; and the utility of the marriage, in perfect submission to his precepts, he never permitted himself to question.

This preceptor held with a magisterial power the government of his pupil's passions; nay, governed them so entirely, that no one could perceive (nor did the young Lord himself know) that he had any.

This rigid monitor and friend was a Mr. Sandford, bred a Jesuit in the same college at which Dorriforth had since been educated, but before his time the order was compelled to take another name. Sandford had been the tutor of Dorriforth as well as of his cousin, Lord Elmwood, and by this double tie seemed now entailed upon the family. As a Jesuit, he was consequently a man of learning; possessed of steadiness to accomplish the end of any design once meditated, and of sagacity to direct the conduct of men more powerful, but less ingenious, than himself. The young Earl, accustomed in his infancy to fear him as his master, in his youthful manhood received every new indulgence with gratitude, and at length loved him as a father—nor had Dorriforth as yet shaken off similar sensations.

Mr. Sandford perfectly knew how to influence the sentiments and sensations of all human kind, but yet he had the forbearance not to "draw all hearts towards him." There were some whose hatred he thought not unworthy of his pious labours; and in that pursuit he was more rapid in his success than even in procuring esteem. It was an enterprise in which he succeeded with Miss Milner even beyond his most sanguine wish.

She had been educated at an English boarding school, and had no idea of the superior and subordinate state of characters in a foreign seminary—besides, as a woman, she was privileged to say any thing she pleased; and as a beautiful woman, she had a right to expect that whatever she pleased to say, should be admired.

Sandford knew the hearts of women, as well as those of men, though he had passed little of his time in their society—he saw Miss Milner's heart at the first view of her person; and beholding in that little circumference a weight of folly that he wished to eradicate, he began to toil in the vineyard, eagerly courting her detestation of him, in the hope he could also make her abominate herself. In the mortifications of slight he was expert; and being a man of talents, whom all companies, especially her friends, respected, he did not begin by wasting that reverence so highly valued upon ineffectual remonstrances, of which he could foresee the reception, but wakened her attention by his neglect of her. He spoke of her in her presence as of an indifferent person, sometimes forgetting even to name her when the subject required it; then would ask her pardon, and say that he "Really did not recollect her," with such seeming sorrow for his fault, that she could not think the offence intended, and of course felt the affront more acutely.

While, with every other person she was the principle, the cause upon whom a whole party depended for conversation, cards, musick, or dancing, with Mr. Sandford she found that she was of no importance. Sometimes she tried to consider this disregard of her as merely the effect of ill-breeding; but he was not an ill-bred man: he was a gentleman by birth, and one who had kept the best company—a man of sense and learning. "And such a man slights me without knowing it," she said—for she had not dived so deeply into the powers of simulation, as to suspect that such careless manners were the result of art.

This behaviour of Mr. Sandford had its desired effect—it humbled her in her own opinion more than a thousand sermons would have done preached on the vanity of youth and beauty. She felt an inward shame at the insignificance of these qualities that she never knew before, and would have been cured of all her pride, had she not possessed a degree of spirit beyond the generality of her sex—such a degree as even Mr. Sandford, with all his penetration, did not expect. She determined to resent his treatment; and, entering the lists as his declared enemy, give to the world a reason why he did not acknowledge her sovereignty, as well as the rest of her devoted subjects.

She now commenced hostilities against all his arguments, his learning, and his favourite axioms; and by a happy talent of ridicule, in want of other weapons for this warfare, she threw in the way of the holy Father as great trials of his patience, as any that his order could have substituted in penance. Many things he bore like a martyr—at others, his fortitude would forsake him, and he would call on her guardian, his former pupil, to interpose with his authority: she would then declare that she only had acted thus "to try the good man's temper, and that if he had combated with his fretfulness a few moments longer, she would have acknowledged his claim to canonization; but that having yielded to the sallies of his anger, he must now go through numerous other probations."

If Miss Fenton was admired by Dorriforth, by Sandford she was adored—and, instead of placing her as an example to Miss Milner, he spoke of her as of one endowed beyond Miss Milner's power of imitation. Often, with a shake of his head and a sigh, would he say,

"No; I am not so hard upon you as your guardian: I only desire you to love Miss Fenton; to resemble her, I believe, is above your ability."

This was too much to bear composedly—and poor Miss Woodley, who was generally a witness of these controversies, felt a degree of sorrow at every sentence which like the foregoing chagrined and distressed her friend. Yet as she suffered too for Mr. Sandford, the joy of her friend's reply was abated by the uneasiness it gave to *him*. But Mrs. Horton felt for none but the right reverend priest; and often did she feel so violently interested in his cause, that she could not refrain giving an answer herself in his behalf—thus doing the duty of an adversary with all the zeal of an advocate.

# CHAPTER X.

Mr. Sandford finding his friend Dorriforth frequently perplexed in the management of his ward, and he himself thinking her incorrigible, gave his counsel, that a suitable match should be immediately sought out for her, and the care of so dangerous a person given into other hands. Dorriforth acknowledged the propriety of this advice, but lamented the difficulty of pleasing his ward as to the quality of her lover; for she had refused, besides Sir Edward Ashton, many others of equal pretensions. “Depend upon it then,” cried Sandford, “that her affections are engaged; and it is proper that you should know to whom.” Dorriforth thought he did know, and mentioned Lord Frederick; but said that he had no farther authority for the supposition than what his observation had given him, for that every explanation both upon his and her side had been evaded. “Take her then,” cried Sandford, “into the country, and if Lord Frederick should not follow, there is an end of your suspicions.”

“I shall not easily prevail upon Miss Milner to leave town,” replied he, “while it is in the highest fashion.”

“You can but try,” returned Sandford; “and if you should not succeed now, at least fix the time you mean to go during the autumn, and be firm to your determination.”

“But in the autumn,” replied Dorriforth, “Lord Frederick will of course be in the country; and as his uncle’s estate is near our residence, he will not then so evidently follow her, as he would if I could induce her to go now.”

It was agreed the attempt should be made. Instead of receiving this abrupt proposal with uneasiness, Miss Milner, to the surprise of all present, immediately consented; and gave her guardian an opportunity of saying several of the kindest and politest things upon her ready compliance.

“A token of approbation from you, Mr. Dorriforth,” returned she, “I always considered with high estimation—but your commendations are now become infinitely superior in value by their scarcity; for I do not believe that since Miss Fenton and Mr. Sandford came to town, I have received one testimony of your esteem.”

Had these words been uttered with pleasantry, they might have passed without observation; but at the conclusion of the period, resentment flew to Miss Milner’s face, and she darted a piercing look at Mr. Sandford, which more pointedly expressed that she was angry with him, than if she had spoken volumes in her usual strain of raillery. Dorriforth was confused—but the concern which she had so plainly evinced for his good opinion throughout all that she had been saying, silenced any rebuke he might else have given her, for this unwarrantable charge against his friend. Mrs. Horton was shocked at the irreverent manner in which Mr. Sandford was treated—and Miss Woodley turned to him with a benevolent smile upon her face, hoping to set him an example of the manner in which he should receive the reproach. Her good wishes did not succeed—yet he was perfectly unruffled, and replied with coolness,

“The air of the country has affected the lady already—but it is a comfortable thing,” continued he, “that in the variety of humours to which some women are exposed, they cannot be uniform even in deceit.”

“Deceit!” cried Miss Milner, “in what am I deceitful? did I ever pretend that I had an esteem for you?”

“That would not have been deceit, Madam, but merely good manners.”

“I never, Mr. Sandford, sacrificed truth to politeness.”

“Except when the country has been proposed, and you thought it politeness to appear satisfied.”

“And I *was* satisfied, till I recollected that you might probably be of the party—then, every grove was changed into a wilderness, every rivulet into a stagnated pool, and every singing bird into a croaking raven.”

“A very poetical description,” returned he calmly. “But, Miss Milner, you need not have had any apprehensions of *my* company in the country, for I understand the seat to which your guardian means to go, belongs to you; and you may depend upon it, Madam, that I shall never enter a house in which you are the mistress.”

“Nor any house, I am certain, Mr. Sandford, but in which you are yourself the master.”

“What do you mean, Madam? (and for the first time he elevated his voice,) am I the master here?”

“Your servants,” replied she, looking at the company, “will not tell you

so; but I do."

"You condescend, Mr. Sandford," cried Mrs. Horton, "in talking so much to a young heedless woman; but I know you do it for her good."

"Well, Miss Milner," cried Dorriforth, (and the most cutting thing he could say,) "since I find my proposal of the country has put you out of humour, I shall mention it no more."

With all that quantity of resentment, anger, or rage, which sometimes boiled in the veins of Miss Milner, she was yet never wanting in that respect towards her guardian, which with-held her from ever uttering one angry sentence, directed immediately to him; and a severe word of his, instead of exasperating, was sure to subdue her. This was the case at present—his words wounded her to the heart, but she had not the asperity to reply to them as she thought they merited, and she burst into tears. Dorriforth, instead of being concerned, as he usually was at seeing her uneasy, appeared on the present occasion provoked. He thought her weeping was a new reproach to his friend Mr. Sandford, and that to suffer himself to be moved by it, would be a tacit condemnation of his friend's conduct. She understood his thoughts, and getting the better of her tears, apologised for her weakness; adding,

"She could never bear with indifference an unjust accusation."

"To prove that mine was unjust, Madam," replied Dorriforth; "be prepared to quit London, without any marks of regret, in a few days."

She bowed assent; the necessary preparations were agreed upon; and while with apparent satisfaction she adjusted the plan of her journey, (like those who behave well, not so much to please themselves as to vex their enemies,) she secretly triumphed in the mortification she hoped that Mr. Sandford would receive from her obedient behaviour.

The news of this intended journey was of course soon made public. There is a secret charm in being pitied, when the misfortune is but ideal; and Miss Milner found infinite gratification in being told, "That her's was a cruel case, and that it was unjust and barbarous to force so much beauty into concealment while London was filled with her admirers; who, like her, would languish in consequence of her solitude." These things, and a thousand such, a thousand times repeated, she still listened to with pleasure; yet preserved the constancy not to shrink from her resolution of submitting.

Those involuntary sighs, however, that Miss Woodley had long ago observed, became still more frequent; and a tear half starting in her eye was an additional subject of her friend's observation. Yet though Miss Milner at those times was softened into melancholy, she by no means appeared unhappy. Her friend was acquainted with love only by name; yet she was confirmed from these increased symptoms, in what she before only suspected, that *love* must be the foundation of her care. "Her senses have been captivated by the person and accomplishments of Lord Frederick," said Miss Woodley to herself, "but her understanding compels her to see his faults, and reproaches her passion.—And, oh!" cried she, "could her guardian and Mr. Sandford know of this conflict, how much would they have to admire; how little to condemn!"

With such friendly thoughts, and with the purest intentions, Miss Woodley did not fail to give both gentlemen reason to believe, a contention of this nature was the actual state of Miss Milner's mind. Dorriforth was affected at the description, and Sandford urged more than ever the necessity of leaving town. In a few days they departed; Mrs. Horton, Miss Woodley, Miss Milner, and Mr. Dorriforth, accompanied by Miss Fenton, whom Miss Milner, knowing it to be the wish of her guardian, invited, for three months before her marriage, to her country seat. Elmwood House, or rather Castle, the seat of Lord Elmwood, was only a few miles distant from this residence, and he was expected to pass great part of the summer there, with his tutor, Mr. Sandford.

In the neighbourhood was also (as it has been already said) an estate belonging to an uncle of Lord Frederick's, and most of the party suspected they should soon see him on a visit there. To that expectation they in great measure attributed Miss Milner's visible content.

# CHAPTER XI.

With this party Miss Milner arrived at her country house, and for near six weeks, all around was the picture of tranquillity; her satisfaction was as evident as every other person's; and all severe admonition being at this time unnecessary, either to exhort her to her duty, or to warn her against her folly, she was even in perfect good humour with Miss Fenton, and added friendship to hospitality.

Mr. Sandford, who came with Lord Elmwood to the neighbouring seat, about a week after the arrival of Miss Milner at her's, was so scrupulously exact in the observance of his word, "*Never to enter a house of Miss Milner's,*" that he would not even call upon his friend Dorriforth there—but in their walks, and at Lord Elmwood's, the two parties would occasionally join, and of course Sandford and she at those times met—yet so distant was the reserve on either side, that not a single word upon any occasion was ever exchanged between them.

Miss Milner did not like Mr. Sandford; yet as there was no cause of inveterate rancour, admiring him too as a man who meant well, and being besides of a most forgiving temper, she frequently felt concerned that he did not speak to her, although it had been to find fault as usual—and one morning as they were all, after a long ramble, drawing towards her house, where Lord Elmwood was invited to dine, she could not restrain dropping a tear at seeing Sandford turn back and wish them a "Good day."

But though she had the generosity to forgive an affront, she had not the humility to make a concession; and she foresaw that nothing less than some very humble atonement on her part would prevail upon the haughty priest to be reconciled. Dorriforth saw her concern upon this last trifling occasion with a secret pleasure, and an admiration that she had never before excited. She once insinuated to him to be a mediator between them; but before any accommodation could take place, the peace and composure of their abode were disturbed by the arrival of Sir Edward Ashton at Lord Elmwood's, where it appeared as if he had been invited in order to pursue his matrimonial plan.

At a dinner given by Lord Elmwood, Sir Edward was announced as an unexpected visitor; Miss Milner did not suppose him such, and she turned pale when his name was uttered. Dorriforth fixed his eyes upon her with some tokens of compassion, while Sandford seemed to exult, and by his repeated "Welcomes" to the Baronet, gave proofs how much he was rejoiced to see him. All the declining enmity of Miss Milner was renewed at this behaviour, and suspecting Sandford as the instigator of the visit, she could not overcome her displeasure, but gave way to it in a manner she thought the most mortifying. Sir Edward, in the course of conversation, enquired "What neighbours were in the country;" and she, with an appearance of high satisfaction, named Lord Frederick Lawnly as being hourly expected at his uncle's. The colour spread over Sir Edward's face—Dorriforth was confounded—and Mr. Sandford looked enraged.

"Did Lord Frederick tell *you* he should be down?" Sandford asked of Dorriforth.

To which he replied, "No."

"But I hope, Mr. Sandford, you will permit *me* to know?" said Miss Milner. For as she now meant to torment him by what she said, she no longer constrained herself to silence—and as he harboured the same kind intention towards her, he had no longer any objection to make a reply, and therefore answered,

"No, madam, if it depended upon my permission, you should *not* know."

"Not *any thing*, Sir, I dare say; you would keep me in utter ignorance."

"I would."

"From a self-interested motive, Mr. Sandford—that I might have a greater respect for you."

Some of the company laughed—Mrs. Horton coughed—Miss Woodley blushed—Lord Elmwood sneered—Dorriforth frowned—and Miss Fenton looked just as she did before.

The conversation was changed as soon as possible, and early in the evening the party from Milner Lodge returned home.

Miss Milner had scarce left her dressing room, where she had been taking off some part of her dress, when Dorriforth's servant came to acquaint her that his master was alone in his study, and begged to speak

with her. She felt herself tremble—she immediately experienced a consciousness that she had not acted properly at Lord Elmwood's; for she felt a presentiment that her guardian was going to upbraid her, and her heart whispered that he had never yet reproached her without a cause.

Miss Woodley just then entered her apartment, and she found herself so much a coward, as to propose that she should go with her, and aid her with a word or two occasionally in her excuse.

"What you, my dear," returned Miss Woodley, "who not three hours ago had the courage to vindicate your own cause before a whole company, of whom many were your adversaries; do *you* want an advocate before your guardian alone, who has ever treated you with tenderness?"

"It is that very tenderness which frightens me; which intimidates, and strikes me dumb. Is it possible I can return impertinence to the language and manners which Mr. Dorriforth uses? and as I am debarred from that resource, what can I do but stand before him like a guilty creature, acknowledging my faults."

She again entreated her friend to go with her; but on a positive refusal, from the impropriety of such an intrusion, she was obliged at length to go by herself.

How much does the difference of exterior circumstances influence not only the manners, but even the persons of some people! Miss Milner in Lord Elmwood's drawing room, surrounded by listeners, by admirers, (for even her enemies could not look at her without admiration) animated with approbation and applause—and Miss Milner, with no giddy observer to give her actions a false éclat, destitute of all but her own understanding, (which secretly condemns her) upon the point of receiving censure from her guardian and friend, are two different beings. Though still beautiful beyond description, she does not look even in person the same. In the last-mentioned situation, she was shorter in stature than in the former—she was paler—she was thinner—and a very different contour presided over her whole air, and all her features.

When she arrived at the door of the study, she opened it with a trepidation she could hardly account for, and entered to Dorriforth the altered woman she has been represented. His heart had taken the most decided part against her, and his face had assumed the most severe aspect of reproach; but her appearance gave an instantaneous change to his whole mind, and countenance.

She halted, as if she feared to approach—he hesitated, as if he knew not how to speak. Instead of the anger with which he was prepared to begin, his voice involuntarily softened, and without knowing what he said, he began,

"My dear Miss Milner."—

She expected he was angry, and in her confusion his gentleness was lost upon her. She imagined that what he said might be censure, and she continued to tremble, though he repeatedly assured her, that he meant only to advise, not upbraid her.

"For as to all those little disputes between Mr. Sandford and you," said he, "I should be partial if I blamed you more than him—indeed, when you take the liberty to condemn him, his character makes the freedom appear in a more serious light than when he complains of you—and yet, if he provokes your retorts, he alone must answer for them; nor will I undertake to decide betwixt you. But I have a question to ask you, and to which I require a serious and unequivocal answer. Do you expect Lord Frederick in the country?"

Without hesitation she replied, "I do."

"One more question I have to ask, madam, and to which I expect a reply equally unreserved. Is Lord Frederick the man you approve for your husband?"

Upon this close interrogation she discovered an embarrassment, beyond any she had ever yet betrayed, and faintly replied,

"No, he is not."

"Your words tell me one thing," answered Dorriforth, "but your looks declare another—which am I to believe?"

"Which you please," was her answer, while she discovered an insulted dignity, that astonished, without convincing him.

"But then why encourage him to follow you hither, Miss Milner?"

"Why commit a thousand follies (she replied in tears) every hour of my life?"

"You then promote the hopes of Lord Frederick without one serious

intention of completing them? This is a conduct against which it is my duty to guard you, and you shall no longer deceive either him or yourself. The moment he arrives, it is my resolution that you refuse to see him, or consent to become his wife.”

In answer to the alternative thus offered, she appeared averse to both propositions; and yet came to no explanation why; but left her guardian at the end of the conference as much at a loss to decide upon her true sentiments, as he was before he had thus seriously requested he might be informed of them; but having stedfastly taken the resolution which he had just communicated, he found that resolution a certain relief to his mind.

# CHAPTER XII.

Sir Edward Ashton, though not invited by Miss Milner, yet frequently did himself the honour to visit her at her house; sometimes he accompanied Lord Elmwood, at other times he came to see Dorriforth alone, who generally introduced him to the ladies. But Sir Edward was either so unwilling to give pain to the object of his love, or so intimidated by her frowns, that he seldom addressed her with a single word, except the usual compliments at entering, and retiring. This apprehension of offending, without one hope of pleasing, had the most awkward effect upon the manners of the worthy Baronet; and his endeavours to insinuate himself into the affections of the woman he loved, merely by not giving her offence either in speaking to her or looking at her, formed a character so whimsical, that it frequently forced a smile from Miss Milner, though his very name had often power to throw a gloom over her face: she looked upon him as the cause of her being hurried to the election of a lover, before her own mind could well direct her where to fix. Besides, his pursuit was troublesome, while it was no triumph to her vanity, which by the addresses of Lord Frederick, was in the highest manner gratified.

His Lordship now arrives in the country, and calls one morning at Miss Milner's; her guardian sees his carriage coming up the avenue, and gives orders to the servants, to say their lady is not at home, but that Mr. Dorriforth is: Lord Frederick leaves his compliments and goes away.

The ladies all observed his carriage and servants. Miss Milner flew to her glass, adjusted her dress, and in her looks expressed every sign of palpitation—but in vain she keeps her eye fixed upon the door of the apartment; no Lord Frederick appears.

After some minutes of expectation, the door opens and her guardian comes in;—she was disappointed; he perceived that she was, and he looked at her with a most serious face;—she immediately called to mind the assurance he had given her, "That her acquaintance with Lord Frederick in its then improper state should not continue," and between chagrin and confusion, she was at a loss how to behave.

Though the ladies were all present, Dorriforth said, without the smallest reserve, "Perhaps, Miss Milner, you may think I have taken an unwarrantable liberty, in giving orders to your servants to deny you to Lord Frederick; but until his Lordship and I have had a private conference, or you condescend to declare your sentiments more fully in regard to his visits, I think it my duty to put an end to them."

"You will always perform your duty, Mr. Dorriforth, I have no doubt, whether I concur or not."

"Yet believe me, madam, I should perform it more cheerfully, if I could hope that it was sanctioned by your inclinations."

"I am not mistress of my inclinations, Sir, or they should conform to yours."

"Place them under my direction, and I will answer for it they will."

A servant came in—"Lord Frederick is returned, Sir, and says he should be glad to see you."

"Shew him into the study," cried Dorriforth hastily, and rising from his chair, left the room.

"I hope they won't quarrel," said Mrs. Horton, meaning, that she thought they would.

"I am sorry to see you so uneasy, Miss Milner," said Miss Fenton, with perfect unconcern.

As the badness of the weather had prevented their usual morning's exercise, the ladies were employed at their needles till the dinner bell called them away. "Do you think Lord Frederick is gone?" then whispered Miss Milner to Miss Woodley.—"I think not," she replied. —"Go ask of the servants, dear creature." And Miss Woodley went out of the room. She soon returned and said, apart, "He is now getting into his chariot; I saw him pass in violent haste through the hall; he seemed to fly."

"Ladies, the dinner is waiting," cried Mrs. Horton, and they repaired to the dining room, where Dorriforth soon after came, and engrossed their whole attention by his disturbed looks, and unusual silence. Before dinner was over, he was, however, more himself, but still he appeared thoughtful and dissatisfied. At the time of their evening walk he excused himself from accompanying them, and they saw him in a distant field with Mr. Sandford in earnest conversation; for Sandford and he often

stopped on one spot for a quarter of an hour, as if the interest of the subject had so engaged them, they stood still without knowing it. Lord Elmwood, who had joined the ladies, walked home with them; Dorriforth entered soon after, in a much less gloomy humour than when he went out, and told his relation, that he and the ladies would dine with him the next day if he was disengaged; and it was agreed they should.

Still Dorriforth was in some perturbation, but the immediate cause was concealed till the day following, when, about an hour before the company's departure from the Castle, Miss Milner and Miss Woodley were desired, by a servant, to walk into a separate apartment, in which they found Mr. Dorriforth with Mr. Sandford waiting for them. Her guardian made an apology to Miss Milner for the form, the ceremony, of which he was going to make use; but he trusted, the extreme weight which oppressed his mind, lest he should mistake the real sentiments of a person whose happiness depended upon his correct knowledge of them, would plead his excuse.

"I know, Miss Milner," continued he, "the world in general allows to unmarried women great latitude in disguising their mind with respect to the man they love. I too, am willing to pardon any little dissimulation that is but consistent with a modesty that becomes every woman upon the subject of marriage. But here, to what point I may limit, or you may extend, this kind of venial deceit, may so widely differ, that it is not impossible for me to remain unacquainted with your sentiments, even after you have revealed them to me. Under this consideration, I wish once more to hear your thoughts in regard to matrimony, and to hear them before one of your own sex, that I may form an opinion by her constructions."

To all this serious oration, Miss Milner made no other reply than by turning to Mr. Sandford, and asking, "If he was the person of her own sex, to whose judgment her guardian was to submit his own?"

"Madam," cried Sandford angrily, "you are come hither upon serious business."

"Any business must be serious to me, Mr. Sandford, in which you are concerned; and if you had called it *sorrowful*, the epithet would have suited as well."

"Miss Milner," said her guardian, "I did not bring you here to contend with Mr. Sandford."

"Then why, Sir, bring him hither? for where he and I are, there must be contention."

"I brought him hither, Madam, or I should rather say, brought you to this house, merely that he might be present on this occasion, and with his discernment relieve me from a suspicion, that my own judgment is neither able to suppress nor to confirm."

"Are there any more witnesses you may wish to call in, Sir, to remove your doubts of my veracity? if there are, pray send for them before you begin your interrogations."

He shook his head—she continued.

"The whole world is welcome to hear what I say, and every different person is welcome to judge me differently."

"Dear Miss Milner,"—cried Miss Woodley, with a tone of reproach for the vehemence with which she had spoken.

"Perhaps, Miss Milner," said Dorriforth, "you will not now reply to those questions I was going to put?"

"Did I ever refuse, Sir," returned she with a self-approving air, "to comply with any request that you have seriously made? Have I ever refused obedience to your commands whenever you thought proper to lay them upon me? If not, you have no right to suppose that I will do so now."

He was going to reply, when Mr. Sandford sullenly interrupted him, and making towards the door, cried, "When you come to the point for which you brought me here, send for me again."

"Stay now," said Dorriforth. "And Miss Milner," continued he, "I not only entreat, but command you to tell me—have you given your word, or your affections to Lord Frederick Lawnly?"

The colour spread over her face, and she replied—"I thought confessions were always to be in secret; however, as I am not a member of your church, I submit to the persecution of a heretic, and I answer—Lord Frederick has neither my word, nor any share in my affections."

Sandford, Dorriforth, and Miss Woodley looked at each other with a degree of surprise that for some time kept them silent. At length Dorriforth said, "And it is your firm intention never to become his wife?"

To which she answered—“At present it is.”

“At present! do you suspect you shall change your sentiments?”

“Women sometimes do.”

“But before that change can take place, your acquaintance will be at an end: for it is that which I shall next insist upon, and to which you can have no objection.”

She replied, “I had rather it should continue.”

“On what account?” cried Dorriforth.

“Because it entertains me.”

“For shame, for shame!” returned he; “it endangers your character and your happiness. Yet again, do not suffer me to interfere, if the breaking with Lord Frederick can militate against your felicity.”

“By no means,” she answered; “Lord Frederick makes part of my amusement, but could never constitute my felicity.”

“Miss Woodley,” said Dorriforth, “do you comprehend your friend in the same literal and unequivocal sense that I do?”

“Certainly I do, Sir.”

“And pray, Miss Woodley,” said he, “were those the sentiments which you have always entertained?”

Miss Woodley hesitated—he continued. “Or has this conversation altered them?”

She hesitated again, then answered—“This conversation has altered them.”

“And yet you confide in it!” cried Sandford, looking at her with contempt.

“Certainly I do,” replied Miss Woodley.

“Do not you then, Mr. Sandford?” asked Dorriforth.

“I would advise you to act as if I did,” replied Sandford.

“Then, Miss Milner,” said Dorriforth, “you see Lord Frederick no more —and I hope I have your permission to apprize him of this arrangement.”

“You have, Sir,” she replied with a completely unembarrassed countenance and voice.

Her friend looked at her as if to discover some lurking wish, adverse to all these protestations, but she could not discern one. Sandford too fixed his penetrating eyes upon her, as if he would look through her soul, but finding it perfectly composed, he cried out,

“Why then not write his dismission herself, and save you, Mr. Dorriforth, the trouble of any farther contest with him?”

“Indeed, Miss Milner,” said Dorriforth, “that would oblige me; for it is with great reluctance that I meet him upon this subject—he was extremely impatient and importunate when he was last with me—he took advantage of my ecclesiastical situation to treat me with a levity and ill breeding, that I could ill have suffered upon any other consideration than a compliance with my duty.”

“Dictate what you please, Mr. Dorriforth, and I will write it,” said she, with a warmth like the most unaffected inclination. “And while you, Sir,” she continued, “are so indulgent as not to distress me with the importunities of any gentleman to whom I am averse, I think myself equally bound to rid you of the impertinence of every one to whom you may have objection.”

“But,” answered he, “rest assured I have no material objection to my Lord Frederick, except from that dilemma, in which your acquaintance with him has involved us all; and I should conceive the same against any other man, where the same circumstance occurred. As you have now, however, freely and politely consented to the manner in which it has been proposed that you shall break with him, I will not trouble you a moment longer upon a subject on which I have so frequently explained my wishes, but conclude it by assuring you, that your ready acquiescence has given me the sincerest satisfaction.”

“I hope, Mr. Sandford,” said she, turning to him with a smile, “I have given *you* satisfaction likewise?”

Sandford could not say yes, and was ashamed to say no; he, therefore, made answer only by his looks, which were full of suspicion. She, notwithstanding, made him a very low courtesy. Her guardian then handed her out of the apartment into her coach, which was waiting to take her, Miss Woodley, and himself, home.

# CHAPTER XIII.

Notwithstanding the seeming readiness with which Miss Milner had resigned all farther acquaintance with Lord Frederick, during the short ride home she appeared to have lost great part of her wonted spirits; she was thoughtful, and once sighed heavily. Dorriforth began to fear that she had not only made a sacrifice of her affections, but of her veracity; yet, why she had done so, he could not comprehend.

As the carriage moved slowly through a lane between Elmwood Castle and her own house, on casting her eyes out of the window, Miss Milner's countenance was brightened in an instant, and that instant Lord Frederick, on horse-back, was at the coach door, and the coachman stopped.

"Oh, Miss Milner," cried he, (with a voice and manner that could give little suspicion of the truth of what he said) "I am overjoyed at the happiness of seeing you, even though it is but an accidental meeting."

She was evidently glad to see *him*; but the earnestness with which he spoke, put her upon her guard not to express the like, and she said, in a cool constrained manner, she "Was glad to see his Lordship."

The reserve with which she spoke, gave Lord Frederick immediate suspicion who was in the coach with her, and turning his head quickly, he met the stern eye of Dorriforth; upon which, without the smallest salutation, he turned from him again abruptly and rudely. Miss Milner was confused, and Miss Woodley in torture, at this palpable affront, to which Dorriforth alone appeared indifferent.

"Go on," said Miss Milner to the footman, "desire the coachman to drive on."

"No," cried Lord Frederick, "not till you have told me when I shall see you again."

"I will write you word, my Lord," replied she, something alarmed. "You shall have a letter immediately after I get home."

As if he guessed what its contents were to be, he cried out with warmth, "Take care, then, Madam, how you treat me in that letter—and you, Mr. Dorriforth," turning to him, "do you take care what it contains; for if it is dictated by you, to you I shall send the answer."

Dorriforth, without making any reply, or casting a look at him, put his head out of the window on the opposite side, and called, in a very angry tone, to the coachman, "How dare you not drive on, when your Lady orders you?"

The sound of Dorriforth's voice in anger, was to the servants so unusual, that it acted like electricity upon the man, and he drove on at the instant with such rapidity, that Lord Frederick was in a moment left many yards behind. As soon, however, as he recovered from the surprise into which this sudden command had thrown him, he rode with speed after the carriage, and followed it, till it arrived at the door of Miss Milner's house; there, giving himself up to the rage of love, or to rage against Dorriforth for the contempt he had shewn to him, he leaped from his horse when Miss Milner stepped from her carriage, and seizing her hand, entreated her "Not to desert him, in compliance with the injunctions of monkish hypocrisy."

Dorriforth heard this, standing silently by, with a manly scorn upon his countenance.

Miss Milner struggled to loose her hand, saying, "Excuse me from replying to you now, my Lord."

In return, he lifted her hand eagerly to his lips, and began to devour it with kisses; when Dorriforth, with an instantaneous impulse, rushed forward, and struck him a violent blow in the face. Under the force of this assault, and the astonishment it excited, Lord Frederick staggered, and letting fall the hand of Miss Milner, her guardian immediately laid hold of it, and led her into the house.

She was terrified beyond description; and with extreme difficulty Mr. Dorriforth conveyed her to her own chamber, without taking her in his arms. When, by the assistance of her maid, he had placed her upon a sofa—covered with shame and confusion for what he had done, he fell upon his knees before her, and earnestly "Entreated her forgiveness for the indelicacy he had been guilty of in her presence." And that he had alarmed her, and had forgot the respect which he thought sacredly her due, seemed the only circumstance which then dwelt upon his thoughts.

She felt the indecorum of the posture he had condescended to take, and was shocked. To see her guardian at her feet, struck her with a

sense of impropriety, as if she had seen a parent there. All agitation and emotion, she implored him to rise, and, with a thousand protestations, declared, “That she thought the rashness of the action was the highest proof of his regard for her.”

Miss Woodley now entered; her care being ever employed upon the unfortunate, Lord Frederick had been the object of it: she had waited by his side, and, with every good purpose, had preached patience to him, while he was smarting under the pain, but more under the shame, of his chastisement. At first, his fury threatened a retort upon the servants around him (and who refused his entrance into the house) of the punishment he had received. But, in the certainty of an *amende honorable*, which must hereafter be made, he overcame the many temptations which the moment offered, and re-mounting his horse rode away from the scene of his disgrace.

No sooner had Miss Woodley entered the room, and Dorriforth had resigned to her the care of his ward, than he flew to the spot where he had left Lord Frederick, negligent of what might be the event if he still remained there. After enquiring, and being told that he was gone, Dorriforth returned to his own apartment; and with a bosom torn by more excruciating sensations than those which he had given to his adversary.

The reflection that struck him first with remorse, as he shut the door upon himself, was:—“I have departed from my character—from the sacred character, and the dignity of my profession and sentiments—I have departed from myself. I am no longer the philosopher, but the ruffian—I have treated with an unpardonable insult a young nobleman, whose only offence was love, and a fond desire to insinuate himself into the favour of his mistress. I must atone for this outrage in whatever manner he may choose; and the law of honour and of justice (though in this one instance contrary to the law of religion) enjoins, that if he demands my life in satisfaction for his wounded feelings, it is his due. Alas! that I could have laid it down this morning, unsullied with a cause for which it will make but inadequate atonement.”

His next reproach was—“I have offended and filled with horror, a beautiful young woman, whom it was my duty to have protected from those brutal manners, to which I myself have exposed her.”

Again—“I have drawn upon myself the just upbraidings of my faithful preceptor and friend; of the man in whose judgment it was my delight to be approved—above all, I have drawn upon myself the stings of my conscience.”

“Where shall I pass this sleepless night?” cried he, walking repeatedly across his chamber; “Can I go to the ladies? I am unworthy of their society. Shall I go and repose my disturbed mind on Sandford? I am ashamed to tell him the cause of my uneasiness. Shall I go to Lord Frederick, and humbling myself before him, beg his forgiveness? He would spurn me for a coward. No”——(and he lifted up his eyes to Heaven) “Thou all great, all wise and omnipotent Being, Thou whom I have most offended, it is to Thee alone that I have recourse in this hour of tribulation, and from Thee alone I solicit comfort. And the confidence in which I now address myself to Thee, encouraged by that long intercourse which religion has effected, repays me amply in this one moment, for the many years of my past life devoted with my best, though imperfect, efforts to thy service.”

# CHAPTER XIV.

Although Miss Milner had not foreseen any fatal event resulting from the indignity offered to Lord Frederick, yet she passed a night very different from those to which she had been accustomed. No sooner was she falling into a sleep, than a thousand vague, but distressing, ideas darted across her imagination. Her heart would sometimes whisper to her when she was half asleep, “Lord Frederick is banished from you for ever.” She shakes off the uneasiness this idea brings along with it—she then starts, and sees the blow still aimed at him by Dorriforth. No sooner has she driven away this painful image, than she is again awakened by beholding her guardian at her feet sueing for pardon. She sighs, she trembles, and is chilled with terror.

Relieved by tears, towards the morning she sinks into a slumber, but waking, finds the same images crowding all together upon her mind: she is doubtful to which to give the preference—one, however, rushes the foremost, and continues so. She knows not the fatal consequence of ruminating, nor why she dwells upon that, more than upon all the rest, but it will give place to none.

She rises languid and disordered, and at breakfast, adds fresh pain to Dorriforth by her altered appearance.

He had scarce left the room, when an officer waited upon him with a challenge from Lord Frederick. To the message delivered by this gentleman, he replied,

“Sir, as a clergyman, more especially of the church of Rome, I know not whether I am not exempt from answering a demand of this kind; but not having had forbearance to avoid an offence, I will not claim an exemption that would only indemnify me from making reparation.”

“You will then, Sir, meet Lord Frederick at the appointed hour?” said the officer.

“I will, Sir; and my immediate care shall be to find a gentleman who will accompany me.”

The officer withdrew, and when Dorriforth was again alone, he was going once more to reflect, but he durst not. Since yesterday, reflection, for the first time, was become painful to him; and even as he rode the short way to Lord Elmwood’s immediately after, he found his own thoughts were so insufferable, that he was obliged to enter into conversation with his servant. Solitude, that formerly charmed him, would, at those moments, have been worse than death.

At Lord Elmwood’s, he met Sandford in the hall, and the sight of him was no longer welcome—he knew how different the principles which he had just adopted were to those of that reverend friend, and without his complaining, or even suspecting what had happened, his presence was a sufficient reproach. He passed him as hastily as he could, and enquiring for Lord Elmwood, disclosed to him his errand. It was to ask him to be his second;—the young Earl started, and wished to consult his tutor, but that, his kinsman strictly forbade; and having urged his reasons with arguments, which at least *he* could not refute, he was at length prevailed upon to promise that he would accompany him to the field, which was at the distance only of a few miles, and the parties were to be there at seven on the same evening.

As soon as his business with Lord Elmwood was settled, Dorriforth returned home, to make preparations for the event which might ensue from this meeting. He wrote letters to several of his friends, and one to his ward, in writing which, he could with difficulty preserve the usual firmness of his mind. Sandford going into Lord Elmwood’s library soon after his relation had left him, expressed his surprise at finding he was gone; upon which that nobleman having answered a few questions, and given a few significant hints that he was entrusted with a secret, frankly confessed, what he had promised to conceal.

Sandford, as much as a holy man could be, was enraged at Dorriforth for the cause of the challenge, but was still more enraged at his wickedness in accepting it. He applauded his pupil’s virtue in making the discovery, and congratulated himself that he should be the instrument of saving not only his friend’s life, but of preventing the scandal of his being engaged in a duel.

In the ardour of his designs, he went immediately to Miss Milner’s—entered that house which he had so long refused to enter, and at a time when he was upon aggravated bad terms with its owner.

He asked for Dorriforth, went hastily into his apartment, and poured upon him a torrent of rebukes. Dorriforth bore all he said with the

patience of a devotee, but with the firmness of a man. He owned his fault, but no eloquence could make him recall the promise he had given to repair the injury. Unshaken by the arguments, persuasions, and menaces of Sandford, he gave an additional proof of that inflexibility for which he had been long distinguished—and after a dispute of two hours, they parted, neither of them the better for what either had advanced, but Dorriforth something the worse; his conscience gave testimony to Sandford's opinion, "that he was bound by ties more sacred than worldly honour." But while he owned, he would not yield to the duty.

Sandford left him, determined, however, that Lord Elmwood should not be accessory in his guilt, and this he declared; upon which Dorriforth took the resolution of seeking another second.

In passing through the house on his return home, Sandford met, by accident, Mrs. Horton, Miss Milner, and the other two ladies returning from a saunter in the garden. Surprised at the sight of Mr. Sandford in her house, Miss Milner would not express that surprise, but going up to him with all the friendly benevolence which in general played about her heart, she took hold of one of his hands, and pressed it with a kindness which told him more forcibly that he was welcome, than if she had made the most elaborate speech to convince him of it. He, however, seemed little touched with her behaviour, and as an excuse for breaking his word, cried,

"I beg your pardon, madam, but I was brought hither in my anxiety to prevent murder."

"Murder!" exclaimed all the ladies.

"Yes," answered he, addressing himself to Miss Fenton, "your betrothed husband is a party concerned; he is going to be second to Mr. Dorriforth, who means this very evening to be killed by my Lord Frederick, or to kill him, in addition to the blow that he gave him last night."

Mrs. Horton exclaimed, "if Mr. Dorriforth dies, he dies a martyr."

Miss Woodley cried with fervour, "Heaven forbid!"

Miss Fenton cried, "dear me!"

While Miss Milner, without uttering one word, sunk speechless on the floor.

They lifted her up and brought her to the door which entered into the garden. She soon recovered; for the tumult of her mind would not suffer her to remain inactive, and she was rouzed, in spite of her weakness, to endeavour to ward off the impending disaster. In vain, however, she attempted to walk to her guardian's apartment—she sunk as before, and was taken to a settee, while Miss Woodley was dispatched to bring him to her.

Informed of the cause of her indisposition, he followed Miss Woodley with a tender anxiety for her health, and with grief and confusion that he had so carelessly endangered it. On his entering the room Sandford beheld the inquietude of his mind, and cried, "Here is your *Guardian*," with a cruel emphasis on the word.

He was too much engaged by the sufferings of his ward to reply to Sandford. He placed himself on the settee by her, and with the utmost tenderness, reverence, and pity, entreated her not to be concerned at an accident in which he, and he alone, had been to blame; but which he had no doubt would be accommodated in the most amicable manner.

"I have one favour to require of you, Mr. Dorriforth," said she, "and that is, your promise, your solemn promise, which I know is ever sacred, that you will not meet my Lord Frederick."

He hesitated.

"Oh, Madam," cried Sandford, "he is grown a libertine now, and I would not believe his word, if he were to give it you."

"Then, Sir," returned Dorriforth angrily, "you *may* believe my word, for I will keep that which I gave to *you*. I will give Lord Frederick all the restitution in my power. But my dear Miss Milner, let not this alarm you; we may not find it convenient to meet this many a day; and most probably some fortunate explanation may prevent our meeting at all. If not, reckon but among the many duels that are fought, how few are fatal: and even in that case, how small would be the loss to society, if——" He was proceeding.

"I should ever deplore the loss!" cried Miss Milner; "on such an occasion, I could not survive the death of either."

"For my part," he replied, "I look upon my life as much forfeited to my Lord Frederick, to whom I have given a high offence, as it might in other instances have been forfeited to the offended laws of the land. Honour, is

the law of the polite part of the land; we know it; and when we transgress against it knowingly, we justly incur our punishment. However, Miss Milner, this affair will not be settled immediately, and I have no doubt, but that all will be as you could wish. Do you think I should appear thus easy," added he with a smile, "if I were going to be shot at by my Lord Frederick?"

"Very well!" cried Sandford, with a look that evinced he was better informed.

"You will stay within then, all this day?" said Miss Milner.

"I am engaged to dinner," he replied; "it is unlucky—I am sorry for it—but I'll be at home early in the evening."

"Stained with human blood," cried Sandford, "or yourself a corpse."

The ladies lifted up their hands!—Miss Milner rose from her seat, and threw herself at her guardian's feet.

"You kneeled to me last night, I now kneel to you," (she cried) "kneel, never desiring to rise again, if you persist in your intention. I am weak, I am volatile, I am indiscreet, but I have a heart from which some impressions can never—oh! never, be erased."

He endeavoured to raise her, she persisted to kneel—and here the affright, the terror, the anguish, she endured, discovered to her, her own sentiments—which, till that moment, she had doubted—and she continued,

"I no longer pretend to conceal my passion—I love Lord Frederick Lawnly."

Her guardian started.

"Yes, to my shame I love him:" (cried she, all emotion) "I meant to have struggled with the weakness, because I supposed it would be displeasing to you—but apprehension for his safety has taken away every power of restraint, and I beseech you to spare his life."

"This is exactly what I thought," cried Sandford, with an air of triumph.

"Good heaven!" cried Miss Woodley.

"But it is very natural," said Mrs. Horton.

"I own," said Dorriforth, (struck with amaze, and now taking her from his feet with a force that she could not resist) "I own, Miss Milner, I am greatly affected and wounded at this contradiction in your character."—

"But did not I say so?" cried Sandford, interrupting him.

"However," continued he, "you may take my word, though you have deceived me in your's, that Lord Frederick's life is secure. For your sake, I would not endanger it for the universe. But let this be a warning to you"——

He was proceeding with the most austere looks, and pointed language, when observing the shame, and the self-reproach that agitated her mind, he divested himself in great measure of his resentment, and said, mildly,

"Let this be a warning to you, how you deal in future with the friends who wish you well. You have hurried me into a mistake that might have cost me my life, or the life of the man you love; and thus exposed *you* to misery, more bitter than death."

"I am not worthy of your friendship, Mr. Dorriforth," said she, sobbing with grief, "and from this moment forsake me."

"No, Madam, not in the moment you first discover to me, how I can make you happy."

The conversation appearing now to become of a nature in which the rest of the company could have no share whatever, they were all, except Mr. Sandford, retiring; when Miss Milner called Miss Woodley back, saying, "Stay you with me; I was never so unfit to be left without your friendship."

"Perhaps at present you can dispense with mine?" said Dorriforth. She made no answer. He then, once more assured her Lord Frederick's life was safe, and was quitting the room—but when he recollected in what humiliation he had left her, turning towards her as he opened the door, he added,

"And be assured, Madam, that my esteem for you, shall be *the same as ever*."

Sandford, as he followed him, bowed, and repeated the same words —"And, Madam, be assured that my esteem for you, shall be the same as ever."

# CHAPTER XV.

This taunting reproof from Sandford made little impression upon Miss Milner, whose thoughts were all fixed on a subject of much more importance than the opinion which he entertained of her. She threw her arms about her friend the moment they were left alone, and asked, with anxiety, “What she thought of her behaviour?” Miss Woodley, who could not approve of the duplicity she had betrayed, still wished to reconcile her as much as possible to her own conduct, and replied, she “Highly commended the frankness with which she had, at last, acknowledged her sentiments.”

“Frankness!” cried Miss Milner, starting. “Frankness, my dear Miss Woodley! What you have just now heard me say, is all a falsehood.”

“How, Miss Milner!”

“Oh, Miss Woodley,” returned she, sobbing upon her bosom, “pity the agonies of my heart, my heart, by nature sincere, when such are the fatal propensities it cherishes, that I must submit to the grossest falsehoods rather than reveal the truth.”

“What can you mean?” cried Miss Woodley, with the strongest amazement in her face.

“Do you suppose I love Lord Frederick? Do you suppose I *can* love him? Oh fly, and prevent my guardian from telling him such an untruth.”

“What can you mean?” repeated Miss Woodley; “I protest you terrify me.” For this inconsistency in the behaviour of Miss Milner, appeared as if her senses had been deranged.

“Fly,” she resumed, “and prevent the inevitable ill consequence which will ensue, if Lord Frederick should be told this falsehood. It will involve us all in greater disquiet than we suffer at present.”

“Then what has influenced you, my dear Miss Milner?”

“That which impels all my actions—an unsurmountable instinct—a fatality, that will for ever render me the most miserable of human beings; and yet you, even you, my dear Miss Woodley, will not pity me.”

Miss Woodley pressed her closely in her arms, and vowed, “That while she was unhappy, from whatever cause, she still would pity her.”

“Go to Mr. Dorriforth then, and prevent him from imposing upon Lord Frederick.”

“But that imposition is the only means of preventing the duel,” replied Miss Woodley. “The moment I have told him that your affection was but counterfeited, he will no longer refuse accepting the challenge.”

“Then at all events I am undone,” exclaimed Miss Milner, “for the duel is horrible, even beyond every thing else.”

“How so?” returned Miss Woodley, “since you have declared you do not care for Lord Frederick?”

“But are you so blind,” returned Miss Milner with a degree of madness in her looks, “as to believe I do not care for Mr. Dorriforth? Oh! Miss Woodley! I love him with all the passion of a mistress, and with all the tenderness of a wife.”

Miss Woodley at this sentence sat down—it was on a chair that was close to her—her feet could not have taken her to any other. She trembled—she was white as ashes, and deprived of speech. Miss Milner, taking her by the hand, said,

“I know what you feel—I know what you think of me—and how much you hate and despise me. But Heaven is witness to all my struggles—nor would I, even to myself, acknowledge the shameless prepossession, till forced by a sense of his danger”——

“Silence,” cried Miss Woodley, struck with horror.

“And even now,” resumed Miss Milner, “have I not concealed it from all but you, by plunging myself into a new difficulty, from which I know not how I shall be extricated? And do I entertain a hope? No, Miss Woodley, nor ever will. But suffer me to own my folly to you—to entreat your soothing friendship to free me from my weakness. And, oh! give me your advice, to deliver me from the difficulties which surround me.”

Miss Woodley was still pale, and still silent.

Education, is called second nature; in the strict (but not enlarged) education of Miss Woodley, it was more powerful than the first—and the violation of oaths, persons, or things consecrated to Heaven, was, in her opinion, if not the most enormous, yet among the most terrific in the catalogue of crimes.

Miss Milner had lived so long in a family who had imbibed those

opinions, that she was convinced of their existence; nay, her own reason told her that solemn vows of every kind, ought to be sacred; and the more she respected her guardian's understanding, the less did she call in question his religious tenets—in esteeming him, she esteemed all his notions; and among the rest, venerated those of his religion. Yet that passion, which had unhappily taken possession of her whole soul, would not have been inspired, had there not subsisted an early difference, in their systems of divine faith. Had she been early taught what were the sacred functions of a Roman ecclesiastic, though all her esteem, all her admiration, had been attracted by the qualities and accomplishments of her guardian, yet education, would have given such a prohibition to her love, that she would have been precluded from it, as by that barrier which divides a sister from a brother.

This, unfortunately, was not the case; and Miss Milner loved Dorriforth without one conscious check to tell her she was wrong, except that which convinced her—her love would be avoided by him with detestation, and with horror.

Miss Woodley, something recovered from her first surprise, and sufferings—for never did her susceptible mind suffer so exquisitely—amidst all her grief and abhorrence, felt that pity was still predominant—and reconciled to the faults of Miss Milner by her misery, she once more looked at her with friendship, and asked, "What she could do to render her less unhappy?"

"Make me forget," replied Miss Milner, "every moment of my life since I first saw you—that moment was teeming with a weight of cares, under which I must labour till my death."

"And even in death," replied Miss Woodley, "do not hope to shake them off. If unrepented in this world"——

She was proceeding—but the anxiety her friend endured, would not suffer her to be free from the apprehension, that, notwithstanding the positive assurance of her guardian, if he and Lord Frederick should meet, the duel might still take place; she therefore rang the bell and enquired if Mr. Dorriforth was still at home?—the answer was—"He had rode out. You remember," said Miss Woodley, "he told you he should dine from home." This did not, however, dismiss her fears, and she dispatched two servants different ways in pursuit of him, acquainting them with her suspicions, and charging them to prevent the duel. Sandford had also taken his precautions; but though he knew the time, he did not know the exact place of their appointment, for that Lord Elmwood had forgot to enquire.

The excessive alarm which Miss Milner discovered upon this occasion, was imputed by the servants, and by others who were witnesses of it, to her affection for Lord Frederick; while none but Miss Woodley knew, or had the most distant suspicion of the real cause.

Mrs. Horton and Miss Fenton, who were sitting together expatiating on the duplicity of their own sex in the instance just before them, had, notwithstanding the interest of the discourse, a longing desire to break it off; for they were impatient to see this poor frail being whom they were loading with their censure. They longed to see if she would have the confidence to look them in the face: them, to whom she had so often protested, that she had not the smallest attachment to Lord Frederick, but from motives of vanity.

These ladies heard with infinite satisfaction that dinner had been served, but met Miss Milner at the table with a less degree of pleasure than they had expected; for her mind was so totally abstracted from any consideration of *them*, that they could not discern a single blush, or confused glance, which their presence occasioned. No, she had before them divulged nothing of which she was ashamed; she was only ashamed that what she had said was not true. In the bosom of Miss Woodley alone was that secret entrusted which could call a blush into her face, and before her, she *did* feel confusion—before the gentle friend, to whom she had till this time communicated all her faults without embarrassment, she now cast down her eyes in shame.

Soon after the dinner was removed, Lord Elmwood entered; and that gallant young nobleman declared—"Mr. Sandford had used him ill, in not permitting him to accompany his relation; for he feared that Mr. Dorriforth would now throw himself upon the sword of Lord Frederick, without a single friend near to defend him." A rebuke from the eye of Miss Woodley, which from this day had a command over Miss Milner, restrained her from expressing the affright she suffered from this intimation. Miss Fenton replied, "As to that, my Lord, I see no reason why Mr. Dorriforth and Lord Frederick should not now be friends." "Certainly," said Mrs. Horton; "for as soon as my Lord Frederick is made

acquainted with Miss Milner's confession, all differences must be reconciled."

"What confession?" asked Lord Elmwood.

Miss Milner, to avoid hearing a repetition of that which gave her pain even to recollect, rose in order to retire into her own apartment, but was obliged to sit down again, till she received the assistance of Lord Elmwood and her friend, who led her into her dressing room. She reclined upon a sofa there, and though left alone with that friend, a silence followed of half an hour; nor when the conversation began, was the name of Dorriforth once uttered—they were grown cool and considerate since the discovery, and both were equally fearful of naming him.

The vanity of the world, the folly of riches, the charms of retirement, and such topics engaged their discourse, but not their thoughts, for near two hours; and the first time the word Dorriforth was spoken, was by a servant, who with alacrity opened the dressing room door, without previously rapping, and cried, "Madam, Mr. Dorriforth."

Dorriforth immediately came in, and went eagerly to Miss Milner. Miss Woodley beheld the glow of joy and of guilt upon her face, and did not rise to give him her seat, as was her custom, when she was sitting by his ward and he came to her with intelligence. He therefore stood while he repeated all that had happened in his interview with Lord Frederick.

But with her gladness to see her guardian safe, she had forgot to enquire of the safety of his antagonist; of the man whom she had pretended to love so passionately—even smiles of rapture were upon her face, though Dorriforth might be returned from putting him to death. This incongruity of behaviour Miss Woodley observed, and was confounded—but Dorriforth, in whose thoughts a suspicion either of her love for him, or indifference for Lord Frederick, had no place, easily reconciled this inconsistency, and said,

"You see by my countenance that all is well, and therefore you smile on me before I tell you what has passed."

This brought her to the recollection of her conduct, and now with looks ill constrained, she attempted the expression of an alarm she did not feel.

"Nay, I assure you Lord Frederick is safe," he resumed, "and the disgrace of his blow washed entirely away, by a few drops of blood from this arm." And he laid his hand upon his left arm, which rested in his waistcoat as a kind of sling.

She cast her eyes there, and seeing where the ball had entered the coat sleeve, she gave an involuntary scream, and sunk upon the sofa. Instead of that affectionate sympathy which Miss Woodley used to exert upon her slightest illness or affliction, she now addressed her in an unpitying tone, and said, "Miss Milner, you have heard Lord Frederick is safe, you have therefore nothing to alarm you." Nor did she run to hold a smelling bottle, or to raise her head. Her guardian seeing her near fainting, and without any assistance from her friend, was going himself to give it; but on this, Miss Woodley interfered, and having taken her head upon her arm, assured him, "It was a weakness to which Miss Milner was accustomed: that she would ring for her maid, who knew how to relieve her instantly with a few drops." Satisfied with this, Dorriforth left the room; and a surgeon being come to examine his wound, he retired into his own chamber.

# CHAPTER XVI.

The power delegated by the confidential to those entrusted with their secrets, Miss Woodley was the last person on earth to abuse—but she was also the last, who, by an accommodating complacency, would participate in the guilt of her friend—and there was no guilt, except that of murder, which she thought equal to the crime in question, if it was ever perpetrated. Adultery, reason would perhaps have informed her, was a more pernicious evil to society; but to a religious mind, what sound is so horrible as *sacrilege*? Of vows made to God or to man, the former must weigh the heaviest. Moreover, the sin of infidelity in the married state, is not a little softened to common understandings, by its frequency; whereas, of religious vows broken by a devotee she had never heard; unless where the offence had been followed by such examples of divine vengeance, such miraculous punishments in this world, (as well as eternal punishment in the other) as served to exaggerate the wickedness.

She, who could, and who did pardon Miss Milner, was the person who saw her passion in the severest light, and resolved upon every method, however harsh, to root it from her heart—nor did she fear success, resting on the certain assurance, that however deep her love might be fixed, it would never be returned. Yet this confidence did not prevent her taking every precaution, lest Dorriforth should come to the knowledge of it. She would not have his composed mind disturbed with such a thought —his steadfast principles so much as shaken by the imagination—nor overwhelm him with those self-reproaches which his fatal attraction, unpremeditated as it was, would still have drawn upon him.

With this plan of concealment, in which the natural modesty of Miss Milner acquiesced, there was but one effort for which this unhappy ward was not prepared; and that was an entire separation from her guardian. She had, from the first, cherished her passion without the most remote prospect of a return—she was prepared to see Dorriforth, without ever seeing him more nearly connected to her than as her guardian and friend; but not to see him at all—for *that*, she was not prepared.

But Miss Woodley reflected upon the inevitable necessity of this measure before she made the proposal; and then made it with a firmness that might have done honour to the inflexibility of Dorriforth himself.

During the few days that intervened between her open confession of a passion for Lord Frederick and this proposed plan of separation, the most intricate incoherence appeared in the character of Miss Milner—and in order to evade a marriage with him, and conceal, at the same time, the shameful propensity which lurked in her breast, she was once even on the point of declaring a passion for Sir Edward Ashton.

In the duel which had taken place between Lord Frederick and Dorriforth, the latter had received the fire of his antagonist, but positively refused to return it; by which he had kept his promise not to endanger his Lordship’s life, and had reconciled Sandford, in great measure, to his behaviour—and Sandford now (his resolution once broken) no longer refused entering Miss Milner’s house, but came whenever it was convenient, though he yet avoided the mistress of it as much as possible; or showed by every word and look, when she was present, that she was still less in his favour than she had ever been.

He visited Dorriforth on the evening of his engagement with Lord Frederick, and the next morning breakfasted with him in his own chamber; nor did Miss Milner see her guardian after his first return from that engagement before the following noon. She enquired, however, of his servant how he did, and was rejoiced to hear that his wound was but slight—yet this enquiry she durst not make before Miss Woodley.

When Dorriforth made his appearance the next day, it was evident that he had thrown from his heart a load of cares; and though they had left a languor upon his face, content was in his voice, in his manners, in every word and action. Far from seeming to retain any resentment against his ward, for the danger into which her imprudence had led him, he appeared rather to pity her indiscretion, and to wish to soothe the perturbation which the recollection of her own conduct had evidently raised in her mind. His endeavours were successful—she was soothed every time he spoke to her; and had not the watchful eye of Miss Woodley stood guard over her inclinations, she had plainly discovered, that she was enraptured with the joy of seeing him again himself, after the danger to which he had been exposed.

These emotions, which she laboured to subdue, passed, however, the bounds of her ineffectual resistance, when at the time of retiring after

dinner, he said to her in a low voice, but such as it was meant the company should hear, “Do me the favour, Miss Milner, to call at my study some time in the evening; I have to speak with you upon business.”

She answered, “I will, Sir.” And her eyes swam with delight, in expectation of the interview.

Let not the reader, nevertheless, imagine, there was in that ardent expectation, one idea which the most spotless mind, in love, might not have indulged without reproach. Sincere love (at least among the delicate of the female sex) is often gratified by that degree of enjoyment, or rather forbearance, which would be torture in the pursuit of any other passion. Real, delicate, and restrained love, such as Miss Milner’s, was indulged in the sight of the object only; and having bounded her wishes by her hopes, the height of her happiness was limited to a conversation, in which no other but themselves took a part.

Miss Woodley was one of those who heard the appointment, but the only one who conceived with what sensation it was received.

While the ladies remained in the same room with Dorriforth, Miss Milner thought of little, except of him. As soon as they withdrew into another apartment, she remembered Miss Woodley; and turning her head suddenly, saw her friend’s face imprinted with suspicion and displeasure: this at first was painful to her—but recollecting that in a couple of hours she was to meet her guardian alone—to speak to him, and hear him speak to her only—every other thought was absorbed in that one, and she considered with indifference, the uneasiness, or the anger of her friend.

Miss Milner, to do justice to her heart, did not wish to beguile Dorriforth into the snares of love: could any supernatural power have endowed her with the means, and at the same time have shewn to her the ills that must arise from such an effect of her charms, she had assuredly virtue enough to have declined the conquest; but without enquiring what she proposed, she never saw him, without previously endeavouring to look more attractive, than she would have desired, before any other person. And now, without listening to the thousand exhortations that spoke in every feature of Miss Woodley, she flew to a looking-glass, to adjust her dress in a manner that she thought most enchanting.

Time stole away, and the time of going to her guardian arrived. In his presence, unsupported by the presence of any other, every grace that she had practised, every look that she had borrowed to set off her charms, were annihilated; and she became a native beauty, with the artless arguments of reason only for her aid. Awed thus by his power, from every thing but what she really was, she never was perhaps half so bewitching, as in those timid, respectful, and embarrassed moments she passed alone with him. He caught at those times her respect, her diffidence, nay, even her embarrassment; and never would one word of anger pass on either side.

On the present occasion, he first expressed the high satisfaction that she had given him, by at length revealing to him the real state of her mind.

“And when I take every thing into consideration, Miss Milner,” added he, “I rejoice that your sentiments happen to be such as you have owned. For, although my Lord Frederick is not the very man I could have wished for your perfect happiness; yet, in the state of human perfection and human happiness, you might have fixed your affections with perhaps less propriety; and still, where my unwillingness to thwart your inclinations might not have permitted me to contend with them.”

Not a word of reply did this demand; or if it had, not a word could she have given.

“And now, Madam, the reason of my desire to speak with you—is, to know the means you think most proper to pursue, in order to acquaint Lord Frederick, that notwithstanding this late repulse, there are hopes of your partiality in his favour.”

“Defer the explanation,” she replied eagerly.

“I beg your pardon—it cannot be. Besides, how can you indulge a disposition thus unpitying? Even so ardently did I desire to render the man who loves you happy, that though he came armed against my life, had I not reflected, that previous to our engagement it would appear like fear, and the means of bartering for his forgiveness, I should have revealed your sentiments the moment I had seen him. When the engagement was over, I was too impatient to acquaint you with his safety, to think then on gratifying him. And indeed, the delicacy of the declaration, after the many denials which you have no doubt given him,

should be considered. I therefore consult your opinion upon the manner in which it shall be made."

"Mr. Dorriforth, can you allow nothing to the moments of surprise, and that pity, which the fate impending inspired? and which might urge me to express myself of Lord Frederick, in a manner my cooler thoughts will not warrant?"

"There was nothing in your expressions, my dear Miss Milner, the least equivocal—if you were off your guard when you pleaded for Lord Frederick, as I believe you were, you said more sincerely what you thought; and no discreet, or rather indiscreet attempts to retract, can make me change these sentiments."

"I am very sorry," she replied, confused and trembling.

"Why sorry? Come give me commission to reveal your partiality. I'll not be too hard upon you—a hint from me will do. Hope is ever apt to interpret the slightest words to its own use, and a lover's hope is beyond all others, sanguine."

"I never gave Lord Frederick hope."

"But you never plunged him into despair."

"His pursuit intimates that I never have, but he has no other proof."

"However light and frivolous you have been upon frivolous subjects, yet I must own, Miss Milner, that I did expect when a case of this importance came seriously before you, you would have discovered a proper stability in your behaviour."

"I do, Sir; and it was only when I was affected with a weakness, which arose from accident, that I have betrayed inconsistency."

"You then assert again, that you have no affection for my Lord Frederick?"

"Not enough to become his wife."

"You are alarmed at marriage, and I do not wonder you should be so; it shews a prudent foresight which does you honour—but, my dear, are there no dangers in a single state? If I may judge, Miss Milner, there are many more to a young lady of your accomplishments, than if you were under the protection of a husband."

"My father, Mr. Dorriforth, thought your protection sufficient."

"But that protection was rather to direct your choice, than to be the cause of your not choosing at all. Give me leave to point out an observation which, perhaps, I have too frequently made before, but upon this occasion I must intrude it once again. Miss Fenton is its object—her fortune is inferior to your's, her personal attractions are less"——

Here the powerful glow of joy, and of gratitude, for an opinion so negligently, and yet so sincerely expressed, flew to Miss Milner's face, neck, and even to her hands and fingers; the blood mounted to every part of her skin that was visible, for not a fibre but felt the secret transport, that Dorriforth thought her more beautiful than the beautiful Miss Fenton.

If he observed her blushes, he was unsuspicious of the cause, and went on.

"There is, besides, in the temper of Miss Fenton, a sedateness that might with less hazard ensure her safety in an unmarried life; and yet she very properly thinks it her duty, as she does not mean to seclude herself by any vows to the contrary, to become a wife—and in obedience to the counsel of her friends, will be married within a very few weeks."

"Miss Fenton may marry from obedience, I never will."

"You mean to say, that love shall alone induce you."

"I do."

"If you would point out a subject upon which I am the least able to reason, and on which my sentiments, such as they are, are formed only from theory, (and even there, more cautioned than instructed) it is the subject of love. And yet, even that little which I know, tells me, without a doubt, that what you said yesterday, pleading for Lord Frederick's life, was the result of the most violent and tender love."

"The *little you know* then, Mr. Dorriforth, has deceived you; had you *known more*, you would have judged otherwise."

"I submit to the merit of your reply; but without allowing me a judge at all, I will appeal to those who were present with me."

"Are Mrs. Horton and Mr. Sandford to be the connoisseurs?"

"No; I'll appeal to Miss Fenton and Miss Woodley."

"And yet, I believe," replied she with a smile, "I believe theory must only be the judge even there."

“Then from all you have said, Madam, on this occasion, I am to conclude that you still refuse to marry Lord Frederick?”

“You are.”

“And you submit never to see him again?”

“I do.”

“All you then said to me, yesterday, was false?”

“I was not mistress of myself at the time.”

“Therefore it was truth!—for shame, for shame!”

At that moment the door opened, and Mr. Sandford walked in—he started back on seeing Miss Milner, and was going away; but Dorriforth called to him to stay, and said with warmth,

“Tell me, Mr. Sandford, by what power, by what persuasion, I can prevail upon Miss Milner to confide in me as her friend; to lay her heart open, and credit mine when I declare to her, that I have no view in all the advice I give to her, but her immediate welfare.”

“Mr. Dorriforth, you know my opinion of that lady,” replied Sandford; “it has been formed ever since my first acquaintance with her, and it continues the same.”

“But instruct me how I am to inspire her with confidence,” returned Dorriforth; “how I am to impress her with a sense of that, which is for her advantage?”

“You can work no miracles,” replied Sandford, “you are not holy enough.”

“And yet my ward,” answered Dorriforth, “appears to be acquainted with that mystery; for what but the force of a miracle can induce her to contradict to-day, what before you, and several other witnesses, she positively acknowledged yesterday?”

“Do you call that miraculous?” cried Sandford; “the miracle had been if she had *not* done so—for did she not yesterday contradict what she acknowledged the day before? and will she not to-morrow disavow what she says to-day?”

“I wish that she may—” replied Dorriforth mildly, for he saw the tears flowing down her face at the rough and severe manner in which Sandford had spoken, and he began to feel for her uneasiness.

“I beg pardon,” cried Sandford, “for speaking so rudely to the mistress of the house—I have no business here, I know; but where *you* are, Mr. Dorriforth, unless I am turned out, I shall always think it my duty to come.”

Miss Milner curtsied, as much as to say, he was welcome to come. He continued,

“I was to blame, that upon a nice punctilio, I left you so long without my visits, and without my counsel; in that time, you have run the hazard of being murdered, and what is worse, of being excommunicated; for had you been so rash as to have returned your opponent’s fire, not all my interest at Rome would have obtained remission of the punishment.”

Miss Milner, through all her tears, could not now restrain her laughter. On which he resumed;

“And here do I venture, like a missionary among savages—but if I can only save you from their scalping knives—from the miseries which that lady is preparing for you, I am rewarded.”

Sandford spoke this with great fervour, and the offence of her love never appeared to her in so tremendous a point of view, as when thus, unknowingly, alluded to by him.

“*The miseries that lady is preparing for you*,” hung upon her ears like the notes of a raven, and sounded equally ominous. The words “*murder*” and “*excommunication*” he had likewise uttered; all the fatal effects of sacrilegious love. Frightful superstitions struck her to the heart, and she could scarcely prevent falling down under their oppression.

Dorriforth beheld the difficulty she had in sustaining herself, and with the utmost tenderness went towards her, and supporting her, said, “I beg your pardon—I invited you hither with a far different intention than your uneasiness, and be assured——”

Sandford was beginning to speak, when Dorriforth resumed,—“Hold, Mr. Sandford, the lady is under my protection, and I know not whether it is not requisite that you should apologize to her, and to me, for what you have already said.”

“You asked my opinion, or I had not given it you—would you have me, like *her*, speak what I do not think?”

“Say no more, Sir,” cried Dorriforth—and leading her kindly to the

door, as if to defend her from his malice, told her, “He would take another opportunity of renewing the subject.”

# CHAPTER XVII.

When Dorriforth was alone with Sandford, he explained to him what before he had only hinted; and this learned Jesuit frankly confessed, “That the mind of woman was far above, or rather beneath, his comprehension.” It was so, indeed—for with all his penetration, and few even of that school had more, he had not yet penetrated into the recesses of Miss Milner’s heart.

Miss Woodley, to whom she repeated all that had passed between herself, her guardian, and Sandford, took this moment, in the agitation of her spirits, to alarm her still more by prophetic insinuations; and at length represented to her here, for the first time, the necessity, “That Mr. Dorriforth and she no longer should remain under the same roof.” This was like the stroke of sudden death to Miss Milner, and clinging to life, she endeavoured to avert the blow by prayers, and by promises. Her friend loved her too sincerely to be prevailed upon.

“But in what manner can I accomplish the separation?” cried she, “for till I marry we are obliged, by my father’s request, to live in the same house.”

“Miss Milner,” answered Miss Woodley, “much as I respect the will of a dying man, I regard your and Mr. Dorriforth’s present and eternal happiness much more; and it is my resolution that you *shall part*. If *you* will not contrive the means, that duty falls on me, and without any invention I see the measure at once.”

“What is it?” cried Miss Milner eagerly.

“I will reveal to Mr. Dorriforth, without hesitation, the real state of your heart; which your present inconsistency of conduct will but too readily confirm.”

“You would not plunge me into so much shame, into so much anguish!” cried she, distractedly.

“No,” replied Miss Woodley, “not for the world, if you will separate from him by any mode of your own—but that you *shall* separate is my determination; and in spite of all your sufferings, this shall be the expedient, unless you instantly agree to some other.”

“Good Heaven, Miss Woodley! is this your friendship?”

“Yes—and the truest friendship I have to bestow. Think what a task I undertake for your sake and his, when I condemn myself to explain to him your weakness. What astonishment! what confusion! what remorse, do I foresee painted upon his face! I hear him call you by the harshest names, and behold him fly from your sight for ever, as an object of his detestation.”

“Oh spare the dreadful picture.—Fly from my sight for ever! Detest my name! Oh! my dear Miss Woodley, let but his friendship for me still remain, and I will consent to any thing. You may command me. I will go away from him directly—but let us part in friendship—Oh! without the friendship of Mr. Dorriforth, life would be a heavy burthen indeed.”

Miss Woodley immediately began to contrive schemes for their separation; and, with all her invention alive on the subject, the following was the only natural one that she could form.

Miss Milner, in a letter to her distant relation at Bath, was to complain of the melancholy of a country life, which she was to say her guardian imposed upon her; and she was to entreat the lady to send a pressing invitation that she would pass a month or two at her house; this invitation was to be laid before Dorriforth for his approbation, and the two ladies were to enforce it, by expressing their earnest wishes for his consent. This plan having been properly regulated, the necessary letter was sent to Bath, and Miss Woodley waited with patience, but with a watchful guard upon the conduct of her friend, till the answer should arrive.

During this interim a tender and complaining epistle from Lord Frederick was delivered to Miss Milner; to which, as he received no answer, he prevailed upon his uncle, with whom he resided, to wait upon her, and obtain a verbal reply; for he still flattered himself, that fear of her guardian’s anger, or perhaps his interception of the letter which he had sent, was the sole cause of her apparent indifference.

The old gentleman was introduced both to Miss Milner and to Mr. Dorriforth, but received from each an answer so explicit, that left his nephew no longer in doubt but that all farther pursuit was vain.

Sir Edward Ashton about this time also submitted to a formal dismission; and had the mortification to reflect, that he was bestowing

upon the object of his affections, the tenderest proof of his regard, by absenting himself entirely from her society.

Upon this serious and certain conclusion to the hopes of Lord Frederick, Dorriforth was more astonished than ever at the conduct of his ward. He had once thought her behaviour in this respect was ambiguous, but since her confession of a passion for that nobleman, he had no doubt but in the end she would become his wife. He lamented to find himself mistaken, and thought it proper now to condemn her caprice, not merely in words, but in the general tenor of his behaviour. He consequently became more reserved, and more austere than he had been since his first acquaintance with her; for his manners, not from design, but imperceptibly to himself, had been softened since he became her guardian, by that tender respect which he had uniformly paid to the object of his protection.

Notwithstanding the severity he now assumed, his ward, in the prospect of parting from him, grew melancholy; Miss Woodley's love to her friend rendered her little otherwise; and Dorriforth's peculiar gravity, frequently rigour, could not but make their whole party less cheerful than it had been. Lord Elmwood too, at this time was lying dangerously ill of a fever; Miss Fenton of course was as much in sorrow as her nature would permit her to be, and both Sandford and Dorriforth in extreme concern upon his Lordship's account.

In this posture of affairs, the letter of invitation arrives from Lady Luneham at Bath; it was shewn to Dorriforth; and to prove to his ward that he is so much offended, as no longer to feel that excessive interest in her concerns which he once felt, he gives an opinion on the subject with indifference—he desires "Miss Milner will do what she herself thinks proper." Miss Woodley instantly accepts this permission, writes back, and appoints the day upon which her friend means to set off for the visit.

Miss Milner is wounded at the heart by the cold and unkind manners of her guardian, but dares not take one step to retrieve his opinion. Alone, or to her friend, she sighs and weeps: he discovers her sorrow, and is doubtful whether the departure of Lord Frederick from that part of the country is not the cause.

When the time she was to set out for Bath was only two days off, the behaviour of Dorriforth took, by degrees, its usual form, if not a greater share of polite and tender attention than ever. It was the first time he had parted from Miss Milner since he became her guardian, and he felt upon the occasion, a reluctance. He had been angry with her, he had shewn her that he was, and he now began to wish that he had not. She is not happy, (he considered within himself) every word and action declares she is not; I may have been too severe, and added perhaps to her uneasiness. "At least we will part on good terms," said he—"Indeed, my regard for her is such, I cannot part otherwise."

She soon discerned his returning kindness, and it was a gentle tie that would have fastened her to that spot for ever, but for the firm resistance of Miss Woodley.

"What will the absence of a few months effect?" said she, pleading her own cause; "At the end of a few months at farthest, he will expect me back, and where then will be the merit of this separation?"

"In that time," replied Miss Woodley, "we may find some method to make it longer." To this she listened with a kind of despair, but uttered, she "Was resigned,"—and she prepared for her departure.

Dorriforth was all anxiety that every circumstance of her journey should be commodious; he was eager she should be happy; and he was eager she should see that he entirely forgave her. He would have gone part of the way with her, but for the extreme illness of Lord Elmwood, in whose chamber he passed most of the day, and slept in Elmwood House every night.

On the morning of her journey, when Dorriforth gave his hand and conducted Miss Milner to the carriage, all the way he led her she could not restrain her tears; which increased, as he parted from her, to convulsive sobs. He was affected by her grief; and though he had previously bid her farewell, he drew her gently on one side, and said, with the tenderest concern,

"My dear Miss Milner, we part friends?—I hope we do?—On my side, depend upon it, that I regret nothing so much at our separation, as having ever given you a moment's pain."

"I believe so," was all she could utter, for she hastened from him, lest his discerning eye should discover the cause of the weakness which thus overcame her. But her apprehensions were groundless; the rectitude of

his own heart was a bar to the suspicion of her's. He once more kindly bade her adieu, and the carriage drove away.

Miss Fenton and Miss Woodley accompanied her part of the journey, about thirty miles, where they were met by Sir Harry and Lady Luneham. Here was a parting nearly as affecting as that between her and her guardian. Miss Woodley, who for several weeks had treated her friend with a rigidness she herself hardly supposed was in her nature, now bewailed that she had done so; implored her forgiveness; promised to correspond with her punctually, and to omit no opportunity of giving her every consolation short of cherishing her fatal passion—but in that, and that only, was the heart of Miss Milner to be consoled.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

# A
# SIMPLE STORY,

IN FOUR VOLUMES,

BY

MRS. INCHBALD.

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# A SIMPLE STORY

# CHAPTER I.

When Miss Milner arrived at Bath, she thought it the most altered place she had ever seen—she was mistaken—it was herself that was changed.

The walks were melancholy, the company insipid, the ball-room fatiguing—for, she had left behind all that could charm or please her.

Though she found herself much less happy than when she was at Bath before, yet she felt, that she would not, even to enjoy all that past happiness, be again reduced to the being she was at that period. Thus does the lover consider the extinction of his passion with the same horror as the libertine looks upon annihilation; the one would rather live hereafter, though in all the tortures described as constituting his future state, than cease to exist; so, there are no tortures which a lover would not suffer, rather than cease to love.

In the wide prospect of sadness before her, Miss Milner's fancy caught hold of the only comfort which presented itself; and this, faint as it was, in the total absence of every other, her imagination painted to her as excessive. The comfort was a letter from Miss Woodley—a letter, in which the subject of her love would most assuredly be mentioned, and in whatever terms, it would still be the means of delight.

A letter arrived—she devoured it with her eyes. The post mark denoting from whence it came, the name of "Milner Lodge" written on the top, were all sources of pleasure—and she read slowly every line it contained, to procrastinate the pleasing expectation she enjoyed, till she should arrive at the name of Dorriforth. At last, her impatient eye caught the word, three lines beyond the place she was reading—irresistibly, she skipped over those lines, and fixed on the point to which she was attracted.

Miss Woodley was cautious in her indulgence; she made the slightest mention of Dorriforth; saying only, "He was extremely concerned, and even dejected, at the little hope there was of his cousin, Lord Elmwood's, recovery." Short and trivial as this passage was, it was still more important to Miss Milner than any other in the letter—she read it again and again, considered, and reflected upon it. Dejected, thought she, what does that word exactly mean?—did I ever see Mr. Dorriforth dejected?—how, I wonder, does he look in that state? Thus did she muse, while the cause of his dejection, though a most serious one, and pathetically described by Miss Woodley, scarce arrested her attention once. She ran over with haste the account of Lord Elmwood's state of health; she certainly pitied him while she thought of him, but she did not think of him long. To die, was a hard fate for a young nobleman just in possession of his immense fortune, and on the eve of marriage with a beautiful young woman; but Miss Milner thought that an abode in Heaven might be still better than all this, and she had no doubt but his Lordship would go thither. The forlorn state of Miss Fenton ought to have been a subject for compassion, but she knew that lady had resignation to bear any lot with patience, and that a trial of her fortitude might be more flattering to her vanity than to be Countess of Elmwood: in a word, she saw no one's misfortunes equal to her own, because she saw no one so little able to bear misfortune.

She replied to Miss Woodley's letter, and dwelt very long on that subject which her friend had passed over lightly; this was another indulgence; and this epistolary intercourse was now the only enjoyment she possessed. From Bath she paid several visits with Lady Luneham—all were alike tedious and melancholy.

But her guardian wrote to her, and though it was on a topic of sorrow, the letter gave her joy—the sentiments it expressed were merely common-place, yet she valued them as the dearest effusions of friendship and affection; and her hands trembled, and her heart beat with rapture while she wrote the answer, though she knew it would not be received by him with one emotion like those which she experienced. In her second letter to Miss Woodley, she prayed like a person insane to be taken home from confinement, and like a lunatic protested, in sensible language, she "Had no disorder." But her friend replied, "That very declaration proves its violence." And she assured her, nothing less than placing her affections elsewhere, should induce her to believe but that she was incurable.

The third letter from Milner Lodge brought the news of Lord Elmwood's death. Miss Woodley was exceedingly affected by this event, and said little else on any other subject. Miss Milner was shocked when she read the words "He is dead", and instantly thought,

“How transient are all sublunary things! Within a few years *I* shall be dead—and how happy will it then be, if I have resisted every temptation to the alluring pleasures of this life!” The happiness of a peaceful death occupied her contemplation for near an hour; but at length, every virtuous and pious sentiment this meditation inspired, served but to remind her of the many sentences she had heard from her guardian’s lips upon the same subject—her thoughts were again fixed on him, and she could think of nothing besides.

In a short time after this, her health became impaired from the indisposition of her mind; she languished, and was once in imminent danger. During a slight delirium of her fever, Miss Woodley’s name and her guardian’s were incessantly repeated; Lady Luneham sent them immediate word of this, and they both hastened to Bath, and arrived there just as the violence and danger of her disorder had ceased. As soon as she became perfectly recollected, her first care, knowing the frailty of her heart, was to enquire what she had uttered while delirious. Miss Woodley, who was by her bedside, begged her not to be alarmed on that account, and assured her she knew, from all her attendants, that she had only spoken with a friendly remembrance (as was really the case) of those persons who were dear to her.

She wished to know whether her guardian was come to see her, but she had not the courage to ask before her friend; and she in her turn was afraid by the too sudden mention of his name, to discompose her. Her maid, however, after some little time, entered the chamber, and whispered Miss Woodley. Miss Milner asked inquisitively “What she said?”

The maid replied softly, “Lord Elmwood, Madam, wishes to come and see you for a few moments, if you will allow him.”

At this reply Miss Milner stared wildly.

“I thought,” said she, “I thought Lord Elmwood had been dead—are my senses disordered still?”

“No, my dear,” answered Miss Woodley, “it is the present Lord Elmwood who wishes to see you; he whom you left ill when you came hither, *is* dead.”

“And who is the present Lord Elmwood?” she asked.

Miss Woodley, after a short hesitation, replied—“Your guardian.”

“And so he is,” cried Miss Milner; “he is the next heir—I had forgot. But is it possible that he is here?”

“Yes—” returned Miss Woodley with a grave voice and manner, to moderate that glow of satisfaction which for a moment sparkled even in her languid eye, and blushed over her pallid countenance. “Yes—as he heard you were ill, he thought it right to come and see you.”

“He is very good,” she answered, and the tear started in her eyes.

“Would you please to see his Lordship?” asked her maid.

“Not yet, not yet,” she replied; “let me recollect myself first.” And she looked with a timid doubt upon her friend, to ask if it was proper.

Miss Woodley could hardly support this humble reference to her judgment, from the wan face of the poor invalid, and taking her by the hand, whispered, “You shall do what you please.” In a few minutes Lord Elmwood was introduced.

To those who sincerely love, every change of situation or circumstances in the object beloved, appears an advantage. So, the acquisition of a title and estate was, in Miss Milner’s eye, an inestimable advantage to her guardian; not on account of their real value; but that any change, instead of diminishing her passion, would have served only to increase it—even a change to the utmost poverty.

When he entered—the sight of him seemed to be too much for her, and after the first glance she turned her head away. The sound of his voice encouraged her to look once more—and then she riveted her eyes upon him.

“It is impossible, my dear Miss Milner,” he gently whispered, “to say, what joy I feel that your disorder has subsided.”

But though it was impossible to say, it was possible to *look* what he felt, and his looks expressed his feelings. In the zeal of those sensations, he laid hold of her hand, and held it between his—this he did not himself know—but she did.

“You have prayed for me, my Lord, I make no doubt?” said she, and smiled, as if thanking him for those prayers.

“Fervently, ardently!” returned he; and the fervency with which he had prayed spoke in every feature.

“But I am a protestant, you know, and if I had died such, do you believe I should have gone to Heaven?”

“Most assuredly, that would not have prevented you.”

“But Mr. Sandford does not think so.”

“He must; for he means to go there himself.”

To keep her guardian with her, Miss Milner seemed inclined to converse; but her solicitous friend gave Lord Elmwood a look, which implied that it might be injurious to her, and he retired.

They had only one more interview before he left the place; at which Miss Milner was capable of sitting up—he was with her, however, but a very short time, some necessary concerns relative to his late kinsman’s affairs, calling him in haste to London. Miss Woodley continued with her friend till she saw her entirely reinstated in her health: during which time her guardian was frequently the subject of their private conversation; and upon those occasions Miss Milner has sometimes brought Miss Woodley to acknowledge, “That could Mr. Dorriforth have possibly foreseen the early death of the last Lord Elmwood, it had been more for the honour of his religion (as that ancient title would now after him become extinct), if he had preferred marriage vows to those of celibacy.”

# CHAPTER II.

When the time for Miss Woodley's departure arrived, Miss Milner entreated earnestly to accompany her home, and made the most solemn promises that she would guard not only her behaviour, but her very thoughts, within the limitation her friend should prescribe. Miss Woodley at length yielded thus far, "That as soon as Lord Elmwood was set out on his journey to Italy, where she had heard him say that he should soon be obliged to go, she would no longer deny her the pleasure of returning; and if (after the long absence which must consequently take place between him and her) she could positively affirm the suppression of her passion was the happy result, she would then take her word, and risk the danger of seeing them once more reside together."

This concession having been obtained, they parted; and as winter was now far advanced, Miss Woodley returned to her aunt's house in town, from whence Mrs. Horton was, however, preparing to remove, in order to superintend Lord Elmwood's house, (which had been occupied by the late Earl,) in Grosvenor Square; and her niece was to accompany her.

If Lord Elmwood was not desirous Miss Milner should conclude her visit and return to his protection, it was partly from the multiplicity of affairs in which he was at this time engaged, and partly from having Mr. Sandford now entirely placed with him as his chaplain; for he dreaded, that living in the same house, their natural antipathy might be increased even to aversion. Upon this account, he once thought of advising Mr. Sandford to take up his abode elsewhere; but the great pleasure he took in his society, joined to the bitter mortification he knew such a proposal would be to his friend, would not suffer him to make it.

Miss Milner all this time was not thinking upon those she hated, but on those she loved. Sandford never came into her thoughts, while the image of Lord Elmwood never left them. One morning, as she sat talking to Lady Luneham on various subjects, but thinking alone on him, Sir Harry Luneham, with another gentleman, a Mr. Fleetmond, came in, and the conversation turned upon the improbability, during the present Lord Elmwood's youth, that he should ever inherit the title and estate which had now fallen to him—and, said Mr. Fleetmond, "Independent of rank and fortune, it must be matter of infinite joy to Mr. Dorriforth."

"No," answered Sir Harry, "independent of rank and fortune, it must be a motive of concern to him; for he must now regret, beyond measure, his folly in taking priest's orders, thus depriving himself of the hopes of an heir, so that his title, at his death, will be lost."

"By no means," replied Mr. Fleetmond; "he may yet have an heir, for he will certainly marry."

"Marry!" cried the Baronet.

"Yes," answered the other, "it was that I meant by the joy it might probably give him, beyond the possession of his estate and title."

"How he married?" said Lady Luneham, "Has he not taken a vow never to marry?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Fleetmond, "but there are no *religious* vows, from which the sovereign Pontiff at Rome cannot grant a dispensation, as those commandments which are made by the church, the church has always the power to revoke; and when it is for the general good of religion, his Holiness thinks it incumbent on him, to publish his bull, and remit all penalties for their non-observance; and certainly it is for the honour of the Catholics, that this Earldom should continue in a Catholic family. In short, I'll venture to lay a wager, my Lord Elmwood is married within a year."

Miss Milner, who listened with attention, feared she was in a dream, or deceived by the pretended knowledge of Mr. Fleetmond, who might know nothing—yet all that he had said was very probable; and he was himself a Roman Catholic, so that he must be well informed on the subject upon which he spoke. If she had heard the direst news that ever sounded in the ears of the most susceptible of mortals, the agitation of her mind and person could not have been stronger—she felt, while every word was speaking, a chill through all her veins—a pleasure too exquisite, not to bear along with it the sensation of exquisite pain; of which she was so sensible, that for a few moments it made her wish that she had not heard the intelligence; though, very soon after, she would not but have heard it for the world.

As soon as she had recovered from her first astonishment and joy, she wrote to Miss Woodley an exact account of what she had heard, and received this answer:

“I am sorry any body should have given you this piece of information, because it was a task, in executing which, I had promised myself extreme satisfaction—but from the fear that your health was not yet strong enough to support, without some danger, the burthen of hopes which I knew would, upon this occasion, press upon you, I deferred my communication and it has been anticipated. Yet, as you seem in doubt as to the reality of what you have been told, perhaps this confirmation of it may fall very little short of the first news; especially when it is enforced by my request, that you will come to us, as soon as you can with propriety leave Lady Luneham.

“Come, my dear Miss Milner, and find in your once rigid monitor a faithful confidante. I will no longer threaten to disclose a secret you have trusted me with, but leave it to the wisdom, or sensibility of *his* heart, (who is now to penetrate into the hearts of our sex, in search of one that may beat in unison with his own) to find it out. I no longer condemn, but congratulate you on your passion; and will assist you with all my advice and my earnest wishes, that it may obtain a return.”

This letter was another of those excruciating pleasures, that almost reduced Miss Milner to the grave. Her appetite forsook her; and she vainly endeavoured, for several nights, to close her eyes. She thought so much upon the prospect of accomplishing her wishes, that she could admit no other idea; nor even invent one probable excuse for leaving Lady Luneham before the appointed time, which was then at the distance of two months. She wrote to Miss Woodley to beg her contrivance, to reproach her for keeping the secret so long from her, and to thank her for having revealed it in so kind a manner at last. She begged also to be acquainted how Mr. Dorriforth (for still she called him by that name) spoke and thought of this sudden change in his destiny.

Miss Woodley’s reply was a summons for her to town upon some pretended business, which she avoided explaining, but which entirely silenced Lady Luneham’s entreaties for her stay.

To her question concerning Lord Elmwood she answered, “It is a subject on which he seldom speaks—he appears just the same he ever did, nor could you by any part of his conduct, conceive that any such change had taken place.” Miss Milner exclaimed to herself, “I am glad he is not altered—if his words, looks, or manners, were any thing different from what they formerly were, I should not like him so well.” And just the reverse would have been the case, had Miss Woodley sent her word he was changed. The day for her leaving Bath was fixed; she expected it with rapture, but before its arrival, sunk under the care of expectation; and when it came, was so much indisposed, as to be obliged to defer her journey for a week.

At length she found herself in London—in the house of her guardian—and that guardian no longer bound to a single life, but *enjoined* to marry. He appeared in her eyes, as in Miss Woodley’s, the same as ever; or perhaps more endearing than ever, as it was the first time she had beheld him with hope. Mr. Sandford did *not* appear the same; yet he was in reality as surly and as disrespectful in his behaviour to her as usual; but she did not observe, or she did not feel his morose temper as heretofore—he seemed amiable, mild, and gentle; at least this was the happy medium through which her self-complacent mind began to see him; for good humour, like the jaundice, makes every one of its own complexion.

# CHAPTER III.

Lord Elmwood was preparing to go abroad, for the purpose of receiving in form, the dispensation from his vows; it was, however, a subject he seemed carefully to avoid speaking upon; and when by any accident he was obliged to mention it, it was without any marks either of satisfaction or concern.

Miss Milner's pride began to be alarmed. While he was Mr. Dorriforth, and confined to a single life, his indifference to her charms was rather an honourable than a reproachful trait in his character, and in reality, she admired him for the insensibility. But on the eve of being at liberty, and on the eve of making his choice, she was offended *that* choice was not immediately fixed upon her. She had been accustomed to receive the devotion of every man who saw her, and not to obtain it of the man from whom, of all others, she most wished it, was cruelly humiliating. She complained to Miss Woodley, who advised her to have patience; but that was one of the virtues in which she was the least practised.

Encouraged, nevertheless, by her friend in the commendable desire of gaining the affections of him, who possessed all her own, she, however, left no means unattempted for the conquest—but she began with too great a certainty of success, not to be sensible of the deepest mortification in the disappointment—nay, she anticipated a disappointment, as she had before anticipated her success; by turns feeling the keenest emotions from hope and from despair.

As these passions alternately governed her, she was alternately in spirits or dejected; in good or in ill humour; and the vicissitudes of her prospect at length gave to her behaviour an air of caprice, which not all her follies had till now produced. This was not the way to secure the affections of Lord Elmwood; she knew it was not; and before him she was under some restriction. Sandford observed this, and without reserve, added to the list of her other failings, hypocrisy. It was plain to see that Mr. Sandford esteemed her less and less every day; and as he was the person who most influenced the opinion of her guardian, he became to her, very soon, an object not merely of dislike, but of abhorrence.

These mutual sentiments were discoverable in every word and action, while they were in each other's company; but still in his absence, Miss Milner's good nature, and total freedom from malice, never suffered her to utter a sentence injurious to his interest. Sandford's charity did not extend thus far; and speaking of her with severity one evening while she was at the opera, "His meaning," as he said, "but to caution her guardian against her faults," Lord Elmwood replied,

"There is one fault, however, Mr. Sandford, I cannot lay to her charge."

"And what is that, my Lord?" cried Sandford, eagerly, "What is that one fault, which Miss Milner has not?"

"I never," replied Lord Elmwood, "heard Miss Milner, in your absence, utter a syllable to your disadvantage."

"She dares not, my Lord, because she is in fear of you and she knows you would not suffer it."

"She then," answered his Lordship, "pays me a much higher compliment than you do; for you freely censure *her*, and yet imagine I *will* suffer it."

"My Lord," replied Sandford, "I am undeceived now, and shall never take that liberty again."

As Lord Elmwood always treated Sandford with the utmost respect, he began to fear he had been deficient upon this occasion; and the disposition which had induced him to take his ward's part, was likely, in the end, to prove unfavourable to her; for perceiving Sandford was offended at what had passed, as the only means of retribution, he began himself to lament her volatile and captious propensities; in which lamentation, Sandford, now forgetting his affront, joined with the heartiest concurrence, adding,

"You, Sir, having now other cares to employ your thoughts, ought to insist upon her marrying, or retiring into the country."

She returned home just as this conversation was finished, and Sandford, the moment she entered, rang for his candle to retire. Miss Woodley, who had been at the opera with Miss Milner, cried,

"Bless me, Mr. Sandford, are you not well, you are going to leave us so early?"

He replied, "No, I have a pain in my head."

Miss Milner, who never listened to complaints without sympathy, rose immediately from her seat, saying,

“I think I never heard you, Mr. Sandford, complain of indisposition before. Will you accept of my specific for the head-ache? Indeed it is a certain relief—I’ll fetch it instantly.”

She went hastily out of the room, and returned with a bottle, which, she assured him, “Was a present from Lady Luneham, and would certainly cure him.” And she pressed it upon him with such an anxious earnestness, that with all his churlishness he could not refuse taking it.

This was but a common-place civility, such as is paid by one enemy to another every day; but the *manner* was the material part. The unaffected concern, the attention, the good will, she demonstrated in this little incident, was that which made it remarkable, and immediately took from Lord Elmwood the displeasure to which he had been just before provoked, or rather transformed it into a degree of admiration. Even Sandford was not insensible to her behaviour, and in return, when he left the room, “Wished her a good night.”

To her and Miss Woodley, who had not been witnesses of the preceding conversation, what she had done appeared of no merit; but to the mind of Lord Elmwood, the merit was infinite; and upon the departure of Sandford, he began to be unusually cheerful. He first pleasantly reproached the ladies for not offering him a place in their box at the opera.

“Would you have gone, my Lord?” asked Miss Milner, highly delighted.

“Certainly,” returned he, “had you invited me.”

“Then from this day I give you a general invitation; nor shall any other company be admitted but those whom you approve.”

“I am very much obliged to you,” said he.

“And you,” continued she, “who have been accustomed only to church-music, will be more than any one, enchanted with hearing the softer music of love.”

“What ravishing pleasures you are preparing for me!” returned he—“I know not whether my weak senses will be able to support them!”

She had her eyes upon him when he spoke this, and she discovered in his, that were fixed upon her, a sensibility unexpected—a kind of fascination which enticed her to look on, while her eyelids fell involuntarily before its mighty force, and a thousand blushes crowded over her face. He was struck with these sudden signals; hastily recalled his former countenance, and stopped the conversation.

Miss Woodley, who had been a silent observer for some time, now thought a word or two from her would be acceptable rather than troublesome.

“And pray, my Lord,” said she, “when do you go to France?”

“To Italy you mean;—I shall not go at all,” said he. “My superiors are very indulgent, for they dispense with all my duties. I ought, and I meant, to have gone abroad; but as a variety of concerns require my presence in England, every necessary ceremony has taken place here.”

“Then your Lordship is no longer in orders?” said Miss Woodley.

“No; they have been resigned these five days.”

“My Lord, I give you joy,” said Miss Milner.

He thanked her, but added with a sigh, “If I have given up content in search of joy, I shall perhaps be a loser by the venture.” Soon after this, he wished them a good night, and retired.

Happy as Miss Milner found herself in his company, she saw him leave the room with infinite satisfaction, because her heart was impatient to give a loose to its hopes on the bosom of Miss Woodley. She bade Mrs. Horton immediately good night; and, in her friend’s apartment, gave way to all the language of passion, warmed with the confidence of meeting its return. She described the sentiments she had read in Lord Elmwood’s looks; and though Miss Woodley had beheld them too, Miss Milner’s fancy heightened the expression of every glance, till her construction became, by degrees, so extremely favourable to her own wishes, that had not her friend been present, and known in what measure to estimate those symptoms, she must infallibly have thought, by the joy to which they gave birth, that he had openly avowed a passion for her.

Miss Woodley, therefore, thought it her duty to allay these ecstasies, and represented to her, she might be deceived in her hopes—or even supposing his wishes inclined towards her, there were yet great obstacles between them.—“Would not Sandford, who directed his every thought and purpose, be consulted upon this? and if he was, upon what,

but the most romantic affection on the part of Lord Elmwood, had Miss Milner to depend? and his Lordship was not a man to be suspected of submitting to the excess of any passion." Thus did Miss Woodley argue, lest her friend should be misled by her wishes; yet, in her own mind, she scarce harboured a doubt that any thing would thwart them. The succeeding circumstance proved she was mistaken.

Another gentleman of family and fortune made overtures to Miss Milner; and her guardian, so far from having his thoughts inclined towards her on his own account, pleaded this lover's cause even with more zeal than he had pleaded for Sir Edward and Lord Frederick; thus at once destroying all those plans of happiness which poor Miss Milner had formed.

In consequence, her melancholy humour was now predominant; she confined herself at home, and yet, by her own order, was denied to all her visitors. Whether this arose from pure melancholy, or the still lingering hope of making her conquest, by that sedateness of manners which she knew her guardian admired, she herself perhaps did not perfectly know. Be that as it may, Lord Elmwood could not but observe this change, and one morning thought fit to mention, and to applaud it.

Miss Woodley and she were at work together when he came into the room; and after sitting several minutes, and talking upon indifferent subjects, to which his ward replied with a dejection in her voice and manner—he said,

"Perhaps I am wrong, Miss Milner, but I have observed that you are lately more thoughtful than usual."

She blushed, as she always did when the subject was herself. He continued, "Your health appears perfectly restored, and yet I have observed you take no delight in your former amusements."

"Are you sorry for that, my Lord?"

"No, I am extremely glad; and I was going to congratulate you upon the change. But give me leave to enquire, to what lucky accident we may attribute this alteration?"

"Your Lordship then thinks all my commendable deeds arise from accident, and that I have no virtues of my own."

"Pardon me, I think you have many." This he spoke emphatically; and her blushes increased.

He resumed—"How can I doubt of a lady's virtues, when her countenance gives me such evident proofs of them? Believe me, Miss Milner, that in the midst of your gayest follies, while you thus continue to blush, I shall reverence your internal sensations."

"Oh! my Lord, did you know some of them, I am afraid you would think them unpardonable."

This was so much to the purpose, that Miss Woodley found herself alarmed—but without reason—Miss Milner loved too sincerely to reveal it to the object. He answered,

"And did you know some of mine, you might think them *equally* unpardonable."

She turned pale, and could no longer guide her needle—in the fond transport of her heart she imagined that his love for her, was among the sensations to which he alluded. She was too much embarrassed to reply, and he continued,

"We have all much to pardon in one another: and I know not whether the officious person who forces, even his good advice, is not as blameable as the obstinate one, who will not listen to it. And now, having made a preface to excuse you, should you once more refuse mine, I shall venture to give it."

"My Lord, I have never yet refused to follow your advice, but where my own peace of mind was so nearly concerned, as to have made me culpable, had I complied."

"Well, Madam, I submit to your determinations; and shall never again oppose your inclination to remain single."

This sentence, as it excluded the idea of soliciting for himself, gave her the utmost pain; and her eye glanced at him, full of reproach. He did not observe it, but went on.

"While you continue unmarried, it seems to have been your father's intention that you should continue under my immediate care; but as I mean for the future to reside chiefly in the country—answer me candidly, do you think you could be happy there, for at least three parts of the year?"

After a short hesitation, she replied, "I have no objection."

“I am glad to hear it,” he returned eagerly, “for it is my earnest desire to have you with me—your welfare is dear to me as my own; and were we apart, continual apprehensions would prey upon my mind.”

The tear started in her eye, at the earnestness that accompanied these words; he saw it, and to soften her still more with the sense of his esteem for her, he increased his earnestness while he said,

“If you will take the resolution to quit London for the time I mention, there shall be no means omitted to make the country all you can wish—I shall insist upon Miss Woodley’s company for both our sakes; and it will not only be *my* study to form such a society as you may approve, but I am certain it will be likewise the study of Lady Elmwood—–”

He was going on, but as if a poniard had thrust her to the heart, she writhed under this unexpected stroke.

He saw her countenance change—he looked at her steadfastly.

It was not a common change from joy to sorrow, from content to uneasiness, which Miss Milner discovered—she felt, and she expressed anguish—Lord Elmwood was alarmed and shocked. She did not weep, but she called Miss Woodley to come to her, with a voice that indicated a degree of agony.

“My Lord,” (cried Miss Woodley, seeing his consternation and trembling lest he should guess the secret,) “My Lord, Miss Milner has again deceived you—you must not take her from London—it is that, and that alone, which is the cause of her uneasiness.”

He seemed more amazed still—and still more shocked at her duplicity than at her torture. “Good Heaven!” exclaimed he, “How am I to accomplish her wishes? What am I to do? How can I judge, if she will not confide in me, but thus for ever deceive me?”

She leaned, pale as death, on the shoulder of Miss Woodley, her eye fixed with apparent insensibility to all that was said, while he continued,

“Heaven is my witness, if I knew—If I could conceive the means how to make her happy, I would sacrifice my own happiness to hers.”

“My Lord,” said Miss Woodley with a smile, “perhaps I may call upon you hereafter to fulfil your word.”

He was totally ignorant what she meant, nor had he leisure, from the confusion of his thoughts, to reflect upon her meaning; he nevertheless replied, with warmth, “Do. You shall find I’ll perform it.—Do. I will faithfully perform it.”

Though Miss Milner was conscious this declaration could not, in delicacy, be ever adduced against him; yet the fervent and solemn manner in which he made it, cheered her spirits; and as persons enjoy the reflection of having in their possession some valuable gem, though they are determined never to use it, so she upon this, was comforted and grew better. She now lifted up her head, and leaned it on her hand, as she sat by the side of a table—still she did not speak, but seemed overcome with sorrow. As her situation became, however, less alarming, her guardian’s pity and affright began to take the colour of resentment; and though he did not say so, he was, and looked, highly offended.

At this juncture Mr. Sandford entered. On beholding the present party, it required not his sagacity to see at the first view, that they were all uneasy; but instead of the sympathy this might have excited in some dispositions, Mr. Sandford, after casting a look at each of them, appeared in high spirits.

“You seem unhappy, my Lord,” said he, with a smile.

“You do *not*—Mr. Sandford,” Lord Elmwood replied.

“No, my Lord, nor would I, were I in your situation. What should make a man of sense out of temper but a worthy object!” And he looked at Miss Milner.

“There are no objects unworthy our care:” replied Lord Elmwood.

“But there are objects on whom all care is fruitless, your Lordship will allow.”

“I never yet despaired of any one, Mr. Sandford.”

“And yet there are persons, of whom it is presumption to entertain hopes.” And he looked again at Miss Milner.

“Does your head ache, Miss Milner?” asked her friend, seeing her hold it with her hand.

“Very much,” returned she.

“Mr. Sandford,” said Miss Woodley, “did you use all those drops Miss Milner gave you for a pain in the head?”

“Yes:” answered he, “I did.” But the question at that moment somewhat embarrassed him.

“And I hope you found benefit from them:” said Miss Milner, with great kindness, as she rose from her seat, and walked slowly out of the room.

Though Miss Woodley followed her, so that Mr. Sandford was left alone with Lord Elmwood, and might have continued his unkind insinuations without one restraint, yet his lips were closed for the present. He looked down on the carpet—twitched himself upon his chair —and began to talk of the weather.

# CHAPTER IV.

When the first transports of despair were past, Miss Milner suffered herself to be once more in hope. She found there were no other means to support her life; and to her comfort, her friend was much less severe on the present occasion than she expected. No engagement between mortals was, in Miss Woodley's opinion, binding like that entered into with heaven; and whatever vows Lord Elmwood had possibly made to another, she justly supposed that no woman's love for him equalled Miss Milner's—it was prior to all others too; that established her claim to contend at least for success; and in a contention, what rival would not fall before her?

It was not difficult to guess who this rival was; or if they were a little time in suspence, Miss Woodley soon arrived at the certainty, by inquiring of Mr. Sandford; who, unsuspecting why she asked, readily informed her the intended Lady Elmwood was no other than Miss Fenton; and that their marriage would be solemnized as soon as the mourning for the late Lord Elmwood was over. This last intelligence made Miss Woodley shudder—she repeated it, however, to Miss Milner, word for word.

"Happy! happy woman!" exclaimed Miss Milner of Miss Fenton; "she has received the first fond impulse of his heart, and has had the transcendent happiness of teaching him to love!"

"By no means," returned Miss Woodley, finding no other suggestion likely to comfort her; "do not suppose that his marriage is the result of love—it is no more than a duty, a necessary arrangement, and this you may plainly see by the wife on whom he has fixed. Miss Fenton was thought a proper match for his cousin, and that same propriety has transferred her to him."

It was easy to convince Miss Milner that all her friend said was truth, for she wished it so. "And oh!" she exclaimed, "could I but stimulate passion, against the cold influence of propriety;—Do you think, my dear Miss Woodley," (and she looked with such begging eyes, it was impossible not to answer as she wished,) "do you think it would be unjust to Miss Fenton, were I to inspire her destined husband with a passion which she may not have inspired, and which I believe *she* cannot feel?"

Miss Woodley paused a minute, and then answered, "No:"—but there was a hesitation in her manner of delivery—she *did* say, "No:" but she looked as if she was afraid she ought to have said "Yes." Miss Milner, however, did not give her time to recall the word, or to alter its meaning by adding others to it, but ran on eagerly, and declared, "As that was her opinion, she would abide by it, and do all she could to supplant her rival." In order, nevertheless, to justify this determination, and satisfy the conscience of Miss Woodley, they both concluded that Miss Fenton's heart was not engaged in the intended marriage, and consequently that she was indifferent whether it ever took place or not.

Since the death of the late Earl, she had not been in town; nor had the present Earl been near the place where she resided, since the week in which her lover died; of course, nothing similar to love could have been declared at so early a period; and if it had been made known at a later, it must only have been by letter, or by the deputation of Mr. Sandford, who they knew had been once in the country to visit her; but how little he was qualified to enforce a tender passion, was a comfortable reflection.

Revived by these conjectures, of which some were true, and others false; the very next day a gloom overspread their bright prospects, on Mr. Sandford's saying, as he entered the breakfast-room,

"Miss Fenton, ladies, desired me to present her compliments."

"Is she in town?" asked Mrs. Horton.

"She came yesterday morning," returned Sandford, "and is at her brother's, in Ormond-street; my Lord and I supped there last night, and that made us so late home."

Lord Elmwood entered soon after, and bowing to his ward, confirmed what had been said, by telling her, that "Miss Fenton had charged him with her kindest respects."

"How does poor Miss Fenton look?" Mrs. Horton asked Lord Elmwood.

To which question Sandford replied, "Beautiful—she looks beautifully."

"She has got over her uneasiness, I suppose then?" said Mrs. Horton—not dreaming that she was asking the questions before her new lover.

"Uneasy!" replied Sandford, "uneasy at any trial this world can send? That would be highly unworthy of her."

“But sometimes women do fret at such things:” replied Mrs. Horton, innocently.

Lord Elmwood asked Miss Milner—“If she meant to ride, this delightful day?”

While she was hesitating—

“There are different kinds of women,” (said Sandford, directing his discourse to Mrs. Horton;) “there is as much difference between some women, as between good and evil spirits.”

Lord Elmwood asked Miss Milner again—If she took an airing?

She replied, “No.”

“And beauty,” continued Sandford, “when endowed upon spirits that are evil, is a mark of their greater, their more extreme wickedness. Lucifer was the most beautiful of all the angels in Paradise”—

“How do you know?” said Miss Milner.

“But the beauty of Lucifer,” (continued Sandford, in perfect neglect and contempt of her question,) “was an aggravation of his guilt; because it shewed a double share of ingratitude to the Divine Creator of that beauty.”

“Now you talk of angels,” said Miss Milner, “I wish I had wings; and I should like to fly through the park this morning.”

“You would be taken for an angel in good earnest,” said Lord Elmwood.

Sandford was angry at this little compliment, and cried, “I should think the serpent’s skin would be much more characteristic.”

“My Lord,” cried she, “does not Mr. Sandford use me ill?” Vext with other things, she felt herself extremely hurt at this, and made the appeal almost in tears.

“Indeed, I think he does.” And he looked at Sandford as if he was displeased.

This was a triumph so agreeable to her, that she immediately pardoned the offence; but the offender did not so easily pardon her.

“Good morning, ladies,” said Lord Elmwood, rising to go away.

“My Lord,” said Miss Woodley, “you promised Miss Milner to accompany her one evening to the opera; this is opera night.”

“Will you go, my Lord?” asked Miss Milner, in a voice so soft, that he seemed as if he wished, but could not resist it.

“I am to dine at Mr. Fenton’s to-day,” he replied; “and if he and his sister will go, and you will allow them part of your box, I will promise to come.”

This was a condition by no means acceptable to her; but as she felt a desire to see him in company of his intended bride, (for she fancied she could perceive his secret sentiments, could she once see them together) she answered not ungraciously, “Yes, my compliments to Mr. and Miss Fenton, and I hope they will favour me with their company.”

“Then, Madam, if they come, you may expect me—else not.” He bowed and left the room.

All the day was passed in anxious expectation by Miss Milner, what would be the event of the evening: for upon her penetration that evening all her future prospects she thought depended. If she saw by his looks, by his words, or assiduities, that he loved Miss Fenton, she flattered herself she would never think of him again with hope; but if she observed him treat her with inattention or indifference, she would cherish, from that moment, the fondest expectations. Against that short evening her toilet was consulted the whole day: the alternate hope and fear which fluttered in her heart, gave a more than usual brilliancy to her eyes, and more than usual bloom to her complection. But vain was her beauty; vain all her care to decorate that beauty; vain her many looks to her box-door in hopes to see it open—Lord Elmwood never came.

The music was discord—every thing she saw was disgusting—in a word, she was miserable.

She longed impatiently for the curtain to drop, because she was uneasy where she was—yet she asked herself, “Shall I be less unhappy at home? Yes; at home I shall see Lord Elmwood, and that will be happiness. But he will behold me with neglect, and that will be misery! Ungrateful man! I will no longer think of him.” Yet could she have thought of him, without joining in the same idea Miss Fenton, her anguish had been supportable; but while she painted them as lovers, the tortures of the rack are but a few degrees more painful than those which she endured.

There are but few persons who ever felt the real passion of jealousy, because few have felt the real passion of love; but with those who have

experienced them both, jealousy not only affects the mind, but every fibre of their frame; and Miss Milner's every limb felt agonizing torment, when Miss Fenton, courted and beloved by Lord Elmwood, was present to her imagination.

The moment the opera was finished, she flew hastily down stairs, as if to fly from the sufferings she experienced. She did not go into the coffee-room, though repeatedly urged by Miss Woodley, but waited at the door till her carriage drew up.

Piqued—heart-broken—full of resentment against the object of her uneasiness, and inattentive to all that passed, a hand gently touched her own; and the most humble and insinuating voice said, "Will you permit me to lead you to your carriage?" She was awakened from her revery, and found Lord Frederick Lawnly by her side. Her heart, just then melting with tenderness to another, was perhaps more accessible than heretofore; or bursting with resentment, thought this the moment to retaliate. Whatever passion reigned that instant, it was favourable to the desires of Lord Frederick, and she looked as if she was glad to see him: he beheld this with the rapture and the humility of a lover; and though she did not feel the least particle of love in return, she felt gratitude in proportion to the insensibility with which she had been treated by her guardian; and Lord Frederick's supposition was not very erroneous, if he mistook this gratitude for a latent spark of affection. The mistake, however, did not force from him his respect: he handed her to her carriage, bowed low, and disappeared. Miss Woodley wished to divert her thoughts from the object which could only make her wretched, and as they rode home, by many encomiums upon Lord Frederick, endeavoured to incite her to a regard for him; Miss Milner was displeased at the attempt, and exclaimed,

"What! love a rake, a man of professed gallantry? impossible. To me, a common rake is as odious as a common prostitute is to a man of the nicest feelings. Where can be the joy, the pride, of inspiring a passion which fifty others can equally inspire?"

"Strange," cried Miss Woodley, "that you, who possess so many follies incident to your sex, should, in the disposal of your heart, have sentiments so contrary to women in general."

"My dear Miss Woodley," returned she, "put in competition the languid addresses of a libertine, with the animated affection of a sober man, and judge which has the dominion? Oh! in my calendar of love, a solemn Lord Chief Justice, or a devout archbishop, ranks before a licentious king."

Miss Woodley smiled at an opinion which she knew half her sex would ridicule; but by the air of sincerity with which it was delivered, she was convinced her recent behaviour to Lord Frederick was but the mere effect of chance.

Lord Elmwood's carriage drove to his door just at the time her's did; Mr. Sandford was with him, and they were both come from passing the evening at Mr. Fenton's.

"So, my Lord," said Miss Woodley, as soon as they met in the apartment, "you did not come to us?"

"No," answered he, "I was sorry; but I hope you did not expect me."

"Not expect you, my Lord?" cried Miss Milner; "Did not you say that you would come?"

"If I had, I certainly should have come," returned he, "but I only said so conditionally."

"That I am a witness to," cried Sandford, "for I was present at the time, and he said it should depend upon Miss Fenton."

"And she, with her gloomy disposition," said Miss Milner, "chose to sit at home."

"Gloomy disposition!" repeated Sandford: "She has a great share of sprightliness—and I think I never saw her in better spirits than she was this evening, my Lord."

Lord Elmwood did not speak.

"Bless me, Mr. Sandford," cried Miss Milner, "I meant no reflection upon Miss Fenton's disposition; I only meant to censure her taste for staying at home."

"I think," replied Mr. Sandford, "a much heavier censure should be passed upon those who prefer rambling abroad."

"But I hope, ladies, my not coming," said Lord Elmwood, "was no inconvenience to you; for you had still, I see, a gentleman with you."

"Oh! yes, two gentlemen:" answered the son of Lady Evans, a lad from school, whom Miss Milner had taken along with her.

“What two?” asked Lord Elmwood.

Neither Miss Milner nor Miss Woodley answered.

“You know, Madam,” said young Evans, “that handsome gentleman who handed you into your carriage, and you called my Lord.”

“Oh! he means Lord Frederick Lawnly:” said Miss Milner carelessly, but a blush of shame spread over her face.

“And did he hand you into your coach?” asked Lord Elmwood earnestly.

“By mere accident, my Lord,” Miss Woodley replied, “for the crowd was so great——”

“I think, my Lord,” said Sandford, “it was very lucky that you were *not* there.”

“Had Lord Elmwood been with us, we should not have had occasion for the assistance of any other,” said Miss Milner.

“Lord Elmwood has been with you, Madam,” returned Sandford, “very frequently, and yet—”

“Mr. Sandford,” said Lord Elmwood, interrupting him, “it is near bed-time, your conversation keeps the ladies from retiring.”

“Your Lordship’s does not,” said Miss Milner, “for you say nothing.”

“Because, Madam, I am afraid to offend.”

“But do not you also hope to please? and without risking the one, it is impossible to arrive at the other.”

“I think, at present, the risk would be too hazardous, and so I wish you a good night.” And he went out of the room somewhat abruptly.

“Lord Elmwood,” said Miss Milner, “is very grave—he does not look like a man who has been passing the evening with the woman he loves.”

“Perhaps he is melancholy at parting from her,” said Miss Woodley.

“More likely offended,” said Sandford, “at the manner in which that lady has spoken of her.”

“Who, I? I protest I said nothing——”

“Nothing! Did not you say that she was gloomy?”

“Nothing but what I thought—I was going to add, Mr. Sandford.”

“When you think unjustly, you should not express your thoughts.”

“Then, perhaps, I should never speak.”

“And it were better you did not, if what you say is to give pain. Do you know, Madam, that my Lord is going to be married to Miss Fenton?”

“Yes,” answered Miss Milner.

“Do you know that he loves her?”

“No,” answered Miss Milner.

“How! do you suppose he does not?”

“I suppose that he does, yet I don’t know it.”

“Then if you suppose that he does, how can you have the imprudence to find fault with her before him?”

“I did not. To call her gloomy, was, I knew, to commend her both to him and to you, who admire such tempers.”

“Whatever her temper is, *every one* admires it; and so far from its being what you have described, she has great vivacity; vivacity which comes from the heart.”

“No, if it *came* from thence, I should admire it too; but, if she has any, it rests there, and no one is the better for it.”

“Pshaw!” said Miss Woodley, “it is time for us to retire; you and Mr. Sandford must finish your dispute in the morning.”

“Dispute, Madam!” said Sandford, “I never disputed with any one beneath a doctor of divinity in my life. I was only cautioning your friend not to make light of those virtues which it would do her honour to possess. Miss Fenton is a most amiable young woman, and worthy of just such a husband as my Lord Elmwood will make her.”

“I am sure,” said Miss Woodley, “Miss Milner thinks so—she has a high opinion of Miss Fenton—she was at present only jesting.”

“But, Madam, a jest is a very pernicious thing, when delivered with a malignant sneer. I have known a jest destroy a lady’s reputation—I have known a jest give one person a distaste for another—I have known a jest break off a marriage.”

“But I suppose there is no apprehension of that in the present case?” said Miss Woodley—wishing he might answer in the affirmative.

“Not that I can foresee. No, Heaven forbid,” he replied, “for I look upon them to be formed for each other—their dispositions, their pursuits,

their inclinations the same. Their passions for each other just the same—pure—white as snow."

"And I dare say, not warmer," replied Miss Milner.

He looked provoked beyond measure.

"My dear," cried Miss Woodley, "how can you talk thus? I believe in my heart you are only envious, because my Lord Elmwood has not offered himself to you."

"To her!" said Sandford, affecting an air of the utmost surprise; "to her! Do you think he received a dispensation from his vows, to become the husband of a coquette—a——."—He was going on.

"Nay, Mr. Sandford," cried Miss Milner, "I believe, after all, my worst crime, in your eyes, is that of being a heretic."

"By no means—it is the only circumstance that can apologize for your faults; and if you had not that excuse, there would be none for you."

"Then, at present, there *is* an excuse—I thank you, Mr. Sandford—this is the kindest thing you ever said to me. But I am vext to see that you are sorry you have said it."

"Angry at your being a heretic!" he resumed—"Indeed I should be much more concerned to see you a disgrace to our religion."

Miss Milner had not been in a good humour the whole evening—she had been provoked several times to the full extent of her patience: but this harsh sentence hurried her beyond all bounds, and she arose from her seat in the most violent agitation, exclaiming, "What have I done to be thus treated?"

Though Mr. Sandford was not a man easily intimidated, he was upon this occasion evidently alarmed; and stared about him with so violent an expression of surprise, that it partook, in some degree, of fear. Miss Woodley clasped her friend in her arms, and cried with the tenderest affection and pity, "My dear Miss Milner, be composed."

Miss Milner sat down, and was so for a minute; but her dead silence was almost as alarming to Sandford as her rage had been; and he did not perfectly recover himself till he saw tears pouring down her face. He then heaved a sigh of content that all had thus ended; but in his heart resolved never to forget the ridiculous affright into which he had been thrown. He stole out of the room without uttering a syllable—but as he never retired to rest before he had repeated a long form of evening prayer, when this evening he came to that part which supplicates "Grace for the wicked," he mentioned Miss Milner's name with the most fervent devotion.

# CHAPTER V.

Of the many restless nights that Miss Milner passed, this was not one. It is true, she had a weight of care upon her heart, even heavier than usual, but the burden had overcome her strength: wearied out with hopes, with fears, and, at the end, with disappointment and rage, she sunk at once into a deep slumber. But the more forgetfulness had then prevailed, the more powerful was the force of remembrance when she awoke. At first, so sound her sleep had been, that she had a difficulty in calling to mind why she was unhappy; but that she *was* unhappy she well recollected—when the cause came to her memory, she would have slept again—but it was impossible.

Though her rest had been sound, it had not been refreshing—she was far from well, and sent word of her indisposition, as an apology for not being present at breakfast. Lord Elmwood looked concerned when the message was delivered—Mr. Sandford shook his head.

“Miss Milner’s health is not good!” said Mrs. Horton a few minutes after.

Lord Elmwood laid down the newspaper to attend to her.

“To me, there is something very extraordinary about her!” continued Mrs. Horton, finding she had caught his Lordship’s attention.

“So there is to me!” added Sandford, with a sarcastic sneer.

“And so there is to me!” said Miss Woodley, with a serious face and a heartfelt sigh.

Lord Elmwood gazed by turns at each, as each delivered their sentiments—and when they were all silent, he looked bewildered, not knowing what judgment to form from any of these sentences.

Soon after breakfast, Mr. Sandford withdrew to his own apartment: Mrs. Horton, in a little time, went to hers: Lord Elmwood and Miss Woodley were left alone. He immediately rose from his seat, and said,

“I think, Miss Woodley, Miss Milner was extremely to blame, though I did not chuse to tell her so before Mr. Sandford, in giving Lord Frederick an opportunity of speaking to her, unless she means that he shall renew his addresses.”

“That, I am certain,” replied Miss Woodley, “she does *not* mean—and I assure you, my Lord, seriously, it was by mere accident she saw him yesterday evening, or permitted his attendance upon her to her carriage.”

“I am glad to hear it,” he returned quickly; “for although I am not of a suspicious nature, yet in regard to her affections for him, I cannot but still have my doubts.”

“You need have none, my Lord,” replied Miss Woodley, with a smile of confidence.

“And yet you must own her behaviour has warranted them—has it not been in this particular incoherent and unaccountable?”

“The behaviour of a person in love, no doubt,” answered Miss Woodley.

“Don’t I say so?” replied he warmly; “and is not that a just reason for my suspicions?”

“But is there only one man in the world on whom those suspicions can fix?” said Miss Woodley, with the colour mounting into her face.

“Not that I know of—not one more that I know of,” he replied, with astonishment at what she had insinuated, and yet with a perfect assurance that she was in the wrong.

“Perhaps I am mistaken,” answered she.

“Nay, that is impossible too,” returned he with anxiety—“You share her confidence—you are perpetually with her; and if she did not confide in you, (which I know, and rejoice that she does) you would yet be acquainted with all her inclinations.”

“I believe I am *perfectly* acquainted with them,” replied Miss Woodley, with a significance in her voice and manner which convinced him there was some secret to learn.

After a hesitation——

“It is far from me,” replied he, “to wish to be entrusted with the private sentiments of those who desire to with-hold them from me; much less would I take any unfair means to be informed of them. To ask any more questions of you, I believe, would be unfair. Yet I cannot but lament that I am not as well informed as you are. I wish to prove my friendship to Miss Milner, but she will not suffer me—and every step that I take for her happiness, I take in the most perplexing uncertainty.”

Miss Woodley sighed—but she did not speak. He seemed to wait for her reply; but as she made none, he proceeded—

"If ever breach of confidence could be tolerated, I certainly know no occasion that would so justly authorise it as the present. I am not only proper from character, but from circumstances, to be relied upon—my interest is so nearly connected with the interest, and my happiness with the happiness of my ward, that those principles, as well as my honour, would protect her against every peril arising from my being trusted."

"Oh! my Lord," cried Miss Woodley, with a most forcible accent, "*You* are the last person on earth she would pardon me for entrusting."

"Why so?" said he, warmly. "But that is the way—the person who is our friend we distrust—where a common interest is concerned, we are ashamed of drawing on a common danger—afraid of advice, though that advice is to save us.——Miss Woodley," said he, changing his voice with excess of earnestness, "do you not believe, that I would do anything to make Miss Milner happy?"

"Any thing in honour, my Lord."

"She can desire nothing farther," he replied in agitation. "Are her desires so unwarrantable, that I cannot grant them?"

Miss Woodley again did not speak—and he continued——

"Great as my friendship is, there are certainly bounds to it—bounds that shall save her in spite of herself:"—and he raised his voice.

"In the disposal of themselves," resumed he, with a less vehement tone, "that great, that terrific disposal in marriage, (at which I have always looked with fear and dismay) there is no accounting for the rashness of a woman's choice, or sometimes for the depravity of her taste. But in such a case, Miss Milner's election of a husband shall not direct mine. If she does not know how to estimate her own value, I do. Independent of her fortune, she has beauty to captivate the heart of any man; and with all her follies, she has a frankness in her manner, an unaffected wisdom in her thoughts, a vivacity in her conversation, and withal, a softness in her demeanour, that might alone engage the affections of a man of the nicest sentiments, and the strongest understanding. I will not see all these qualities and accomplishments debased. It is my office to protect her from the consequences of a degrading choice, and I will."

"My Lord, Miss Milner's taste is not a depraved one; it is but too refined."

"What can you mean by that, Miss Woodley? You talk mysteriously. Is she not afraid that I will thwart her inclinations?"

"She is sure that you will, my Lord."

"Then must the person be unworthy of her."

Miss Woodley rose from her seat—she clasped her hands—every look and every gesture proved her alternate resolution and irresolution of proceeding. Lord Elmwood's attention was arrested before; but now it was fixed to a degree which her extraordinary manner only could occasion.

"My Lord," said she, with a tremulous voice, "promise me, declare to me, nay, swear to me, that it shall ever remain a secret in your own breast, and I will reveal to you, on whom she has placed her affections."

This preparation made Lord Elmwood tremble, and he ran over instantly in his mind all the persons he could recollect, in order to arrive at the knowledge by thought, quicker than by words. It was in vain he tried; and he once more turned his inquiring eyes upon Miss Woodley. He saw her silent and covered with confusion. Again he searched his own thoughts; nor ineffectually as before. At the first glance, the object was presented, and he beheld—*himself*.

The rapid emotion of varying passions, which immediately darted over his features, informed Miss Woodley that her secret was discovered—she hid her face, while the tears that fell down to her bosom, confirmed the truth of his suggestion, beyond what oaths could have done. A short interval of silence followed, during which, she suffered tortures for the manner in which he would next address her—two seconds gave her this reply:

"For God's sake take care what you are doing—you are destroying my prospects of futurity—you are making this world too dear to me."

Her drooping head was then lifted up, and she caught the eye of Dorriforth; she saw it beam expectation, amazement, joy, ardour, and love.——Nay, there was a fire, a vehemence in the quick fascinating rays it sent forth, she never before had seen—it filled her with alarm—she wished him to love Miss Milner, but to love her with moderation. Miss

Woodley was too little versed in the subject, to know, this would have been not to love at all; at least, not to the extent of breaking through engagements, and all the various obstacles that still militated against their union.

Lord Elmwood was sensible of the embarrassment his presence gave Miss Woodley, and understood the reproaches which she seemed to vent upon herself in silence. To relieve her from both, he laid his hand with force upon his heart, and said, “Do you believe me?”

“I do, my Lord,” she answered, trembling.

“I will make no unjust use of what I know,” he replied with firmness.

“I believe you, my Lord.”

“But for what my passions now dictate,” continued he, “I will not answer. They are confused—they are triumphant at present. I have never yet, however, been vanquished by them; and even upon this occasion, my reason shall combat them to the last—and my reason shall fail me, before I do wrong.”

He was going to leave the room—she followed him, and cried, “But, my Lord, how shall I see again the unhappy object of my treachery?”

“See her,” replied he, “as one to whom you meant no injury, and to whom you have done none.”

“But she would account it an injury.”

“We are not judges of what belongs to ourselves,” he replied—“I am transported at the tidings you have revealed, and yet, perhaps, I had better never have heard them.”

Miss Woodley was going to say something farther, but as if incapable of attending to her, he hastened out of the room.

# CHAPTER VI.

Miss Woodley stood for some time to consider which way she was to go. The first person she met, would enquire why she had been weeping? and if Miss Milner was to ask the question, in what words could she tell, or in what manner deny the truth? To avoid her was her first caution, and she took the only method; she had a hackney-coach ordered, rode several miles out of town, and returned to dinner with so little remains of her swoln eyes, that complaining of the head-ache was a sufficient excuse for them.

Miss Milner was enough recovered to be present at dinner, though she scarce tasted a morsel. Lord Elmwood did not dine at home, at which Miss Woodley rejoiced, but at which Mr. Sandford appeared highly disappointed. He asked the servants several times, what he said when he went out? They replied, “Nothing more than that he should not be at home to dinner.”

“I can’t imagine where he dines?” said Sandford.

“Bless me, Mr. Sandford, can’t you guess?” (cried Mrs. Horton, who by this time was made acquainted with his intended marriage) “He dines with Miss Fenton to be sure.”

“No,” replied Sandford, “he is not there; I came from thence just now, and they had not seen him all day.” Poor Miss Milner, on this, ate something; for where we hope for nothing, we receive small indulgencies with joy.

Notwithstanding the anxiety and trouble under which Miss Woodley had laboured all the morning, her heart for many weeks had not felt so light as it did this day at dinner. The confidence that she reposed in the promises of Lord Elmwood—the firm reliance she had upon his delicacy and his justice—the unabated kindness with which her friend received her, while she knew that no one suspicious thought had taken harbour in her bosom—and the conscious integrity of her own intentions, though she might have been misled by her judgment, all comforted her with the hope, she had done nothing she ought to wish recalled. But although she felt thus tranquil, in respect to what she had divulged, yet she was a good deal embarrassed with the dread of next seeing Lord Elmwood.

Miss Milner, not having spirits to go abroad, passed the evening at home. She read part of a new opera, played upon her guitar, mused, sighed, occasionally talked with Miss Woodley, and so passed the tedious hours till near ten, when Mrs. Horton asked Mr. Sandford to play a game at piquet, and on his excusing himself, Miss Milner offered in his stead, and was gladly accepted. They had just begun to play when Lord Elmwood came into the room—Miss Milner’s countenance immediately brightened, and though she was in a negligent morning dress, and looked paler than usual, she did not look less beautiful. Miss Woodley was leaning on the back of her chair to observe the game, and Mr. Sandford sat reading one of the Fathers at the other side of the fire place. Lord Elmwood, as he advanced to the table, bowed, not having seen the ladies since the morning, or Miss Milner that day: they returned the salute, and he was going up to Miss Milner, (as if to enquire of her health) when Mr. Sandford, laying down his book, said,

“My Lord, where have you been all day?”

“I have been very busy,” replied he, and walking from the card-table, went up to him.

Miss Milner played one card for another.

“You have been at Mr. Fenton’s this evening, I suppose?” said Sandford.

“No; not at all to-day.”

“How came that about, my Lord?”

Miss Milner played the ace of diamonds instead of the king of hearts.

“I shall call to-morrow,” answered Lord Elmwood; and then walking with a very ceremonious air up to Miss Milner, said, “He hoped she was perfectly recovered.”

Mrs. Horton begged her “To mind what she was about.” She replied, “I am much better, Sir.”

He then returned to Sandford again; but never, during all this time, did his eye once encounter Miss Woodley’s; and she, with equal care, avoided his.

Some cold dishes were now brought up for supper—Miss Milner lost her deal, and the game ended.

As they were arranging themselves at the supper-table, “Do, Miss

Milner," said Mrs. Horton, "have something warm for your supper; a chicken boiled, or something of that kind; you have eat nothing to-day."

With feelings of humanity, and apparently no other sensation—but never did he feel his philanthropy so forcible—Lord Elmwood said, "Let me beg of you, Miss Milner, to have something provided for you."

The earnestness and emphasis with which these few words were pronounced, were more flattering than the finest turned compliment would have been; her gratitude was expressed in blushes, and by assuring him she was now "So well, as to sup on the dishes before her." She spoke, however, and had not made the trial; for the moment she carried a morsel to her lips, she laid it on her plate again, and turned paler, from the vain endeavour to force her appetite. Lord Elmwood had always been attentive to her; but now he watched her as he would a child; and when he saw by her struggles that she could not eat, he took her plate from her; gave her something else; and all with a care and watchfulness in his looks, as if he had been a tender-hearted boy, and she his darling bird, the loss of which would embitter all the joy of his holidays.

This attention had something in it so tender, so officious, and yet so sincere, that it brought the tears into Miss Woodley's eyes, attracted the notice of Mr. Sandford, and the observation of Mrs. Horton; while the heart of Miss Milner overflowed with a gratitude, that gave place to no sentiment except her love.

To relieve the anxiety which her guardian expressed, she endeavoured to appear cheerful, and that anxiety, at length, really made her so. He now pressed her to take one glass of wine with such solicitude, that he seemed to say a thousand things besides. Sandford still made his observations, and being unused to conceal his thoughts before the present company, he said bluntly,

"Miss Fenton was indisposed the other night, my Lord, and you did not seem half thus anxious about her."

Had Sandford laid all Lord Elmwood's estate at Miss Milner's feet, or presented her with that eternal bloom which adorns the face of a goddess, he would have done less to endear himself to her, than by this one sentence—she looked at him with a most benign countenance, and felt affliction that she had ever offended him.

"Miss Fenton," Lord Elmwood replied, "has a brother with her: her health and happiness are in *his* care—Miss Milner's are in mine."

"Mr. Sandford," said Miss Milner, "I am afraid that I behaved uncivilly to you last night—will you accept of an atonement?"

"No, Madam," returned he, "I accept no expiation without amendment."

"Well, then," said she, smiling, "suppose I promise never to offend you again, what then?"

"Why, then, you'll break your promise."

"Do not promise him," said Lord Elmwood, "for he means to provoke you to it."

In the like conversation the evening passed, and Miss Milner retired to rest in far better spirits than her morning's prospect had given her the least pretence to hope. Miss Woodley, too, had cause to be well pleased; but her pleasure was in great measure eclipsed by the reflection, that there was such a person as Miss Fenton—she wished she had been equally acquainted with her's as with Miss Milner's heart, and she would then have acted without injustice to either; but Miss Fenton had of late shunned their society, and even in their company was of a temper too reserved ever to discover her mind; Miss Woodley was obliged, therefore, to act to the best of her own judgment only, and leave all events to Providence.

# CHAPTER VII.

Within a few days, in the house of Lord Elmwood, every thing, and every person, wore a new face. He, was the professed lover of Miss Milner—she, the happiest of human beings—Miss Woodley partaking in the joy—Mr. Sandford lamenting, with the deepest concern, that Miss Fenton had been supplanted; and what added poignantly to his concern was, that she had been supplanted by Miss Milner. Though a churchman, he bore his disappointment with the impatience of one of the laity: he could hardly speak to Lord Elmwood; he would not look at Miss Milner, and was displeased with every one. It was his intention, when he first became acquainted with Lord Elmwood's resolution, to quit his house; and as the Earl had, with the utmost degree of inflexibility, resisted all his good counsel upon this subject, he resolved, in quitting him, never to be his adviser again. But, in preparing to leave his friend, his pupil, his patron, and yet him, who, upon most occasions, implicitly obeyed his will, the spiritual got the better of the temporal man, and he determined to stay, lest in totally abandoning him to the pursuit of his own passions, he should make his punishment even greater than his offence. "My Lord," said he, "on the stormy sea, upon which you are embarked, though you will not shun the rocks that your faithful pilot would point out, he will, nevertheless, sail in your company, and lament over your watery grave. The more you slight my advice, the more you want it; so that, until you command me to leave your house, (as I suppose you will soon do, to oblige your Lady) I will continue along with you."

Lord Elmwood liked him sincerely, and was glad that he took this resolution; yet as soon as his reason and affections had once told him that he ought to break with Miss Fenton, and marry his ward, he became so decidedly of this opinion, that Sandford's never had the most trivial weight; nor would he even flatter the supposed authority he possessed over him, by urging him to remain in his house a single day, contrary to his inclinations. Sandford observed, with grief, this firmness; but finding it vain to contend, submitted—not, however, with a good grace.

Amidst all the persons affected by this change in Lord Elmwood's marriage-designs, Miss Fenton was, perhaps, affected the least—she would have been content to have married, she was content to live single. Mr. Sandford had been the first who made overtures to her on the part of Lord Elmwood, and was the first sent to ask her to dispense with the obligation.—She received both of these proposals with the same insipid smile of approbation, and the same cold indifference at the heart.

It was a perfect knowledge of this disposition in his intended wife which had given to Lord Elmwood's thoughts on matrimony, the idea of dreary winter; but the sensibility of Miss Milner had now reversed that prospect into perpetual spring; or the dearer variety of spring, summer, and autumn.

It was a knowledge also of this torpor in Miss Fenton's nature, from which he formed the purpose of breaking with her; for Lord Elmwood still retained enough of the sanctity of his former state to have yielded up his own happiness, and even that of his beloved ward, rather than have plunged one heart into affliction by his perfidy. This, before he offered his hand to Miss Milner, he was perfectly convinced would not be the case—even Miss Fenton herself assured him, that her thoughts were more upon the joys of Heaven than upon those of earth; and as this circumstance would, she believed, induce her to retire into a convent, she thought it a happy, rather than an unhappy, event. Her brother, on whom her fortune devolved if she took this resolution, was exactly of her opinion.

Lost in the maze of happiness that surrounded her, Miss Milner oftentimes asked her heart, and her heart whispered like a flatterer, "Yes;" Are not my charms even more invincible than I ever believed them to be? Dorriforth, the grave, the pious, the anchorite Dorriforth, by their force, is animated to all the ardour of the most impassioned lover—while the proud priest, the austere guardian is humbled, if I but frown, into the veriest slave of love. She then asked, "Why did I not keep him longer in suspense? He could not have loved me more, I believe: but my power over him might have been greater still. I am the happiest of women in the affection he has proved to me, but I wonder whether it would exist under ill treatment? If it would not, he still does not love me as I wish to be loved—if it would, my triumph, my felicity, would be enhanced." These thoughts were mere phantoms of the brain, and never, by system, put into action; but, repeatedly indulged, they were practised by casual occurrences; and the dear-bought experiment of being loved in spite of

her faults, (a glory proud women ever aspire to) was, at present, the ambition of Miss Milner.

Unthinking woman! she did not reflect, that to the searching eye of Lord Elmwood, she had faults, with her utmost care to conceal or overcome them, sufficient to try all his love, and all his patience. But what female is not fond of experiments? To which, how few do not fall a sacrifice!

Perfectly secure in the affections of the man she loved, her declining health no longer threatened her; her declining spirits returned as before; and the suspicions of her guardian being now changed to the liberal confidence of a doting lover, she again professed all her former follies, all her fashionable levities, and indulged them with less restraint than ever.

For a while, blinded by his passion, Lord Elmwood encouraged and admired every new proof of her restored happiness; nor till sufferance had tempted her beyond her usual bounds, did he remonstrate. But she, who, as his ward, had been ever gentle, and (when he strenuously opposed) always obedient; became, as a mistress, sometimes haughty, and, to opposition, always insolent. He was surprised, but the novelty pleased him. And Miss Milner, whom he tenderly loved, could put on no change, or appear in no new character that did not, for the time she adopted it, seem to become her.

Among the many causes of complaint which she gave him, want of œconomy, in the disposal of her income, was one. Bills and drafts came upon him without number, while the account, on her part, of money expended, amounted chiefly to articles of dress that she sometimes never wore, toys that were out of fashion before they were paid for, and charities directed by the force of whim. Another complaint was, as usual, extreme late hours, and often company that he did not approve.

She was charmed to see his love struggling with his censure—his politeness with his anxiety—and by the light, frivolous, or resentful manner in which she treated his admonitions, she triumphed in shewing to Miss Woodley, and, more especially to Mr. Sandford, how much she dared upon the strength of his affections.

Everything in preparation for their marriage, which was to take place at Elmwood House during the summer months, she resolved for the short time she had to remain in London to let no occasion pass of tasting all those pleasures that were not likely ever to return; but which, though eager as she was in their pursuit, she never placed in competition with those she hoped would succeed—those more sedate and superior joys, of domestic and conjugal happiness. Often, merely to hasten on the tedious hours that intervened, she varied and diverted them, with the many recreations her intended husband could not approve.

It so happened, and it was unfortunate it did, that a lawsuit concerning some possessions in the West Indies, and other intricate affairs that came with his title and estate, frequently kept Lord Elmwood from his house part of the day; sometimes the whole evening; and when at home, would often closet him for hours with his lawyers. But while he was thus off his guard, Sandford never was—and had Miss Milner been the dearest thing on earth to him, he could not have watched her more narrowly; or had she been the frailest thing on earth, he could not have been more hard upon her, in all the accounts of her conduct he gave to her guardian. Lord Elmwood knew, on the other hand, that Sandford’s failing was to think ill of Miss Milner—he pitied him for it, and he pitied her for it—and in all the aggravation which his representations gave to her real follies, affection for them both, in the heart of Dorriforth, stood between that and every other impression.

But facts are glaring; and he, at length, beheld those faults in their true colours, though previously pointed out by the prejudice of Mr. Sandford.

As soon as Sandford perceived his friend’s uneasiness, “There, my Lord!” cried he, exultingly, “did I not always say the marriage was an improper one? but you would not be ruled—you would not see.”

“Can you blame *me* for not seeing,” replied his Lordship, “when *you* were blind? Had you been dispassionate, had you seen Miss Milner’s virtues as well as her faults, I should have believed, and been guided by you—but you saw her failings only, and therein have been equally deceived with me, who have only beheld her perfections.”

“My observations, however, my Lord, would have been of most use to you; for I have seen what to avoid.”

“But mine have been the most gratifying,” replied he; “for I have seen —what I must always love.”

Sandford sighed, and lifted up his hands.

“Mr. Sandford,” resumed Lord Elmwood, with a voice and manner such as he used to put on when not all the power of Sandford, or of any other, could change his fixed determination, “Mr. Sandford, my eyes are now open to every failing, as well as to every accomplishment; to every vice, as well as to every virtue of Miss Milner; nor will I suffer myself to be again prepossessed in her favour, by your prejudice against her—for I believe it was compassion at your unkind treatment, that first gained her my heart.”

“I, my Lord?” cried Sandford; “do not load me with the burthen—with the mighty burthen of your love for her.”

“Do not interrupt me. Whatever your meaning has been, the effect of it is what I have described. Now, I will no longer,” continued he, “have an enemy, such as you have been, to heighten her charms, which are too transcendent in their native state. I will hear no more complaints against her, but I will watch her closely myself—and if I find her mind and heart (such as my suspicions have of late whispered) too frivolous for that substantial happiness I look for with an object so beloved, depend upon my word—the marriage shall yet be broken off.”

“I depend upon your word; it *will* then,”—replied Sandford eagerly.

“You are unjust, Sir, in saying so before the trial,” replied Lord Elmwood, “and your injustice shall make me more cautious, lest I follow your example.”

“But, my Lord——”

“My mind is made up, Mr. Sandford,” returned he, interrupting him; “I am no longer engaged to Miss Milner than she shall deserve I should be—but, in my strict observations upon her conduct, I will take care not to wrong her as you have done.”

“My Lord, call my observations wrong, when you have reflected upon them as a man, and not as a lover—divest yourself of your passion, and meet me upon equal ground.”

“I will meet no one—I will consult no one—my own judgment shall be the judge, and in a few months marry, or—*banish me from her for ever*.”

There was something in these last words, in the tone and firmness with which they were delivered, that the heart of Sandford rested upon with content—they bore the symptoms of a menace that would be executed; and he parted from his patron with congratulations upon his wisdom, and with giving him the warmest assurances of his firm reliance on his *word*.

Lord Elmwood having come to this resolution, was more composed than he had been for several days before; while the horror of domestic wrangles—a family without subordination—a house without œconomy—in a word, a wife without discretion, had been perpetually present to his mind.

Mr. Sandford, although he was a man of understanding, of learning, and a complete casuist, yet all the faults he himself committed, were entirely—for want of knowing better. He constantly reproved faults in others, and he was most assuredly too good a man not to have corrected and amended his own, had they been known to him—but they were not. He had been for so long a time the superior of all with whom he lived, had been so busied with instructing others, that he had not recollected that himself wanted instructions—and in such awe did his habitual severity keep all about him, that although he had numerous friends, not one told him of his failings—except just now Lord Elmwood, but whom, in this instance, as a man in love, he would not credit. Was there not then some reason for him to suppose he *had* no faults? his enemies, indeed, hinted that he had, but enemies he never harkened to; and thus, with all his good sense, wanted the sense to follow the rule, *Believe what your enemies say of you, rather than what is said by your friends*. This rule attended to, would make a thousand people amiable, who are now the reverse; and would have made *him* a perfectly upright character. For could an enemy to whom he would have listened, have whispered to Sandford as he left Lord Elmwood, “Cruel, barbarous man! you go away with your heart satisfied, nay, even elated, in the prospect that Miss Milner’s hopes, on which she alone exists, those hopes which keep her from the deepest affliction, and cherish her with joy and gladness, will all be disappointed. You flatter yourself it is for the sake of your friend, Lord Elmwood, that you rejoice, and because he has escaped a danger. You wish him well; but there is another cause for your exultation which you will not seek to know—it is, that in his safety, shall dwell the punishment of his ward. For shame! for shame! forgive her faults, as this of yours requires to be forgiven.”

Had any one said this to Sandford, whom he would have credited, or had his own heart suggested it, he was a man of that rectitude and conscientiousness, that he would have returned immediately to Lord Elmwood, and have strengthened all his favourable opinions of his intended wife—but having no such monitor, he walked on, highly contented, and meeting Miss Woodley, said, with an air of triumph,

"Where's your friend? where's Lady Elmwood?"

Miss Woodley smiled, and answered—She was gone with such and such ladies to an auction. "But why give her that title already, Mr. Sandford?"

"Because," answered he, "I think she will never have it."

"Bless me, Mr. Sandford," said Miss Woodley, "you shock me!"

"I thought I should," replied he, "and therefore I told it you."

"For Heaven's sake what has happened?"

"Nothing new—her indiscretions only."

"I know she is imprudent," said Miss Woodley—"I can see that her conduct is often exceptionable—but then Lord Elmwood surely loves her, and love will overlook a great deal."

"He *does* love her—but he has understanding and resolution. He loved his sister too, tenderly loved her, and yet when he had taken the resolution, and passed his word that he would never see her again—even upon her death-bed he would not retract it—no entreaties could prevail upon him. And now, though he maintains, and I dare say loves, her child, yet you remember, when you brought him home, that he would not suffer him in his sight."

"Poor Miss Milner!" said Miss Woodley, in the most pitying accents.

"Nay," said Sandford, "Lord Elmwood has not *yet* passed his word, that he will never see her more—he has only threatened to do it; but I know enough of him to know, that his threats are generally the same as if they were executed."

"You are very good," said Miss Woodley, "to acquaint me of this in time—I may now warn Miss Milner of it, and she may observe more circumspection."

"By no means," cried Sandford, hastily—"What would you warn her for? It will do her no good—besides," added he, "I don't know whether Lord Elmwood does not expect secrecy on my part; and if he does——"

"But, with all deference to your opinion," said Miss Woodley, (and with all deference did she speak) "don't you think, Mr. Sandford, that secrecy upon this occasion would be wicked? For consider the anguish that it may occasion to my friend; and if, by advising her, we can save her from ——" She was going on.——

"You may call it wicked, Madam, not to inform her of what I have hinted at," cried he; "but I call it a breach of confidence—if it *was* divulged to me in confidence——"

He was going to explain; but Miss Milner entered, and put an end to the discourse. She had been passing the whole morning at an auction, and had laid out near two hundred pounds in different things for which she had no one use, but bought them because they were said to be cheap—among the rest was a lot of books upon chemistry, and some Latin authors.

"Why, Madam," cried Sandford, looking over the catalogue where her purchases were marked by a pencil, "do you know what you have done? You can't read a word of these books."

"Can't I, Mr. Sandford? But I assure you that you will be very much pleased with them, when you see how elegantly they are bound."

"My dear," said Mrs. Horton, "why have you bought china? You and my Lord Elmwood have more now, than you have places to put them in."

"Very true, Mrs. Horton—I forgot that—but then you know I can give these away."

Lord Elmwood was in the room at the conclusion of this conversation ——he shook his head and sighed.

"My Lord," said she, "I have had a very agreeable morning; but I wished for you—if you had been with me, I should have bought a great many other things; but I did not like to appear unreasonable in your absence."

Sandford fixed his inquisitive eyes upon Lord Elmwood, to observe his countenance—he smiled, but appeared thoughtful.

"And, oh! my Lord, I have bought you a present," said she.

"I do not wish for a present, Miss Milner."

“What not from me? Very well.”

“If you present me with yourself, it is all that I ask.”

Sandford moved upon his chair, as if he sat uneasy.

“Why then, Miss Woodley,” said Miss Milner, “*you* shall have the present. But then it won’t suit you—it is for a gentleman. I’ll keep it and give it to my Lord Frederick the first time I meet with him. I saw him this morning, and he looked divinely—I longed to speak to him.”

Miss Woodley cast, by stealth, an eye of apprehension upon Lord Elmwood’s face, and trembled at seeing it flushed with resentment.

Sandford stared with both his eyes full upon him: then threw himself upright on his chair, and took a pinch of snuff upon the strength of the Earl’s uneasiness.

A silence ensued.

After a short time—“You all appear melancholy,” said Miss Milner: “I wish I had not come home yet.”

Miss Woodley was in agony—she saw Lord Elmwood’s extreme displeasure, and dreaded lest he should express it by some words he could not recall, or she could not forgive—therefore, whispering to her she had something particular to say, she took her out of the room.

The moment she was gone, Mr. Sandford rose nimbly from his seat, rubbed his hands, walked briskly across the room, then asked Lord Elmwood in a cheerful tone, “Whether he dined at home to-day?”

That which had given Sandford cheerfulness, had so depressed Lord Elmwood, that he sat dejected and silent. At length he answered in a faint voice, “No, I believe I shall *not* dine at home.”

“Where is your Lordship going to dine?” asked Mrs. Horton; “I thought we should have had your company to-day; Miss Milner dines at home, I believe.”

“I have not yet determined where I shall dine,” replied he, taking no notice of the conclusion of her speech.

“My Lord, if you mean to go to the hotel, I’ll go with you, if you please,” cried Sandford officiously.

“With all my heart, Sandford—” and they both went out together, before Miss Milner returned to the apartment.

# CHAPTER VIII.

Miss Woodley, for the first time, disobeyed the will of Mr. Sandford; and as soon as Miss Milner and she were alone, repeated all he had revealed to her; accompanying the recital, with her usual testimonies of sympathy and affection. But had the genius of Sandford presided over this discovery, it could not have influenced the mind of Miss Milner to receive the intelligence with a temper more exactly the opposite of that which it was the intention of the informer to recommend. Instead of shuddering at the menace Lord Elmwood had uttered, she said, she "Dared him to perform it." "He dares not," repeated she.

"Why dares not?" said Miss Woodley.

"Because he loves me too well—because his own happiness is too dear to him."

"I believe he loves you," replied Miss Woodley, "and yet there is a doubt if——"

"There shall be no longer a doubt," cried Miss Milner, "I'll put him to the proof."

"For shame, my dear! you talk inconsiderately—what can you mean by proof?"

"I mean I will do something that no prudent man *ought* to forgive; and yet, with all his vast share of prudence, *he* shall forgive it, and make a sacrifice of just resentment to partial affection."

"But if you should be disappointed, and he should *not* make the sacrifice?" said Miss Woodley.

"Then I have only lost a man who had no regard for me."

"He may have a great regard for you, notwithstanding."

"But for the love I have felt, and do still feel, for my Lord Elmwood, I will have something more than a *great regard* in return."

"You have his love, I am sure."

"But is it such as mine? *I* could love *him* if he had a thousand faults. And yet," said she, recollecting herself, "and yet, I believe his being faultless, was the first cause of my passion."

Thus she talked on—sometimes in anger, sometimes apparently jesting—till her servant came to let her know the dinner was served. Upon entering the dining-room, and seeing Lord Elmwood's place at table vacant, she started back. She was disappointed of the pleasure she expected in dining with him; and his sudden absence, so immediately after the intelligence that she had received from Miss Woodley, increased her uneasiness. She drew her chair, and sat down with an indifference, that said she should not eat; and as soon as she was seated, she put her fingers sullenly to her lips, nor touched her knife and fork, nor spoke a word in reply to any thing that was said to her during the whole dinner. Miss Woodley and Mrs. Horton were both too well acquainted with the good disposition of her heart, to take offence, or appear to notice this behaviour. They dined, and said nothing either to provoke or sooth her. Just as the dinner was going to be removed, a loud rap came at the door—"Who is that?" said Mrs. Horton. One of the servants went to the window, and answered, "My Lord and Mr. Sandford, Madam."

"Come back to dinner as I live," cried Mrs. Horton.

Miss Milner continued her position and said nothing—but at the corners of her mouth, which her fingers did not entirely cover, there were discoverable, a thousand dimpled graces like small convulsive fibres, which a restrained smile upon Lord Elmwood's return, had sent there.

Lord Elmwood and Sandford entered.

"I am glad you are returned, my Lord," said Mrs. Horton, "for Miss Milner would not eat a morsel."

"It was only because I had no appetite," returned she, blushing like crimson.

"We should not have come back," said Sandford, "but at the place where we went to dine, all the rooms were filled with company."

Lord Elmwood put the wing of a fowl on Miss Milner's plate, but without previously asking if she chose any; yet she condescended to eat—they spoke to each other too in the course of conversation, but it was with a reserve that appeared as if they had been quarrelling, and felt so to themselves, though no such circumstance had happened.

Two weeks passed away in this kind of distant behaviour on both sides,

without either of them venturing a direct quarrel, and without either of them expressing (except inadvertently) their strong affection for each other.

During this time they were once, however, very near becoming the dearest friends in expression, as well as in sentiment. This arose from a favour that he had granted in compliance with her desire, though that desire had not been urged, but merely insinuated; and as it was a favour which he had refused to the repeated requests of many of his friends, the value of the obligation was heightened.

She and Miss Woodley had taken an airing to see the poor child, young Rushbrook. Lord Elmwood inquiring of the ladies how they had passed their morning, Miss Milner frankly told him; and added, “What pain it gave her to leave the child behind, as he had again cried to come away with her.”

“Go for him then to-morrow,” said Lord Elmwood, “and bring him home.”

“Home!” she repeated, with surprise.

“Yes,” replied he, “if you desire it, this shall be his home—you shall be a mother, and I will, henceforward, be a father to him.”

Sandford, who was present, looked unusually sour at this high token of regard for Miss Milner; yet, with resentment on his face, he wiped a tear of joy from his eye, for the boy’s sake—his frown was the force of prejudice, his tear the force of nature.

Rushbrook was brought home; and whenever Lord Elmwood wished to shew a kindness to Miss Milner, without directing it immediately to her, he took his nephew upon his knee, talked to him, and told him, he “Was glad they had become acquainted.”

In the various, though delicate, struggles for power between Miss Milner and her guardian, there was not one person a witness to these incidents, who did not suppose, that all would at last end in wedlock—for the most common observer perceived, that ardent love was the foundation of every discontent, as well as of every joy they experienced. One great incident, however, totally reversed the hope of all future accommodation.

The fashionable Mrs. G—— gave a masked ball; tickets were presented to persons of quality and fashion; among the rest, three were sent to Miss Milner. She had never been at a masquerade, and received them with ecstasy—the more especially, as the masque being at the house of a woman of fashion, she did not conceive there could be any objection to her going. She was mistaken—the moment she mentioned it to Lord Elmwood, he desired her, somewhat sternly, “Not to think of being there.” She was vexed at the prohibition, but more at the manner in which it was delivered, and boldly said, “That she should certainly go.”

She expected a rebuke for this, but what alarmed her much more, he said not a word; but looked with a resignation, which foreboded her sorrow greater than the severest reproaches would have done. She sat for a minute, reflecting how to rouse him from this composure—she first thought of attacking him with upbraidings; then she thought of soothing him; and at last of laughing at him. This was the most dangerous of all, and yet, this she ventured upon.

“I am sure your Lordship,” said she, “with all your saintliness, can have no objection to my being present at the masquerade, if I go as a Nun.”

He made no reply.

“That is a habit,” continued she, “which covers a multitude of faults—and, for that evening, I may have the chance of making a conquest even of you—nay, I question not, if under that inviting attire, even the pious Mr. Sandford would not ogle me.”

“Hush!” said Miss Woodley.

“Why hush?” cried Miss Milner, aloud, though Miss Woodley had spoken in a whisper, “I am sure,” continued she, “I am only repeating what I have read in books about nuns and their confessors.”

“Your conduct, Miss Milner,” replied Lord Elmwood “gives evident proofs of the authors you have read; you may spare yourself the trouble of quoting them.”

Her pride was hurt at this, beyond bearing; and as she could not, like him, govern her anger, it flushed in her face, and almost forced her into tears.

“My Lord,” said Miss Woodley, (in a tone so soft and peaceful, that it should have calmed the resentment of both,) “my Lord, suppose you were to accompany Miss Milner? there are tickets for three, and you can then have no objection.”

Miss Milner's brow was immediately smoothed; and she fetched a sigh, in anxious expectation that he would consent.

"I go, Miss Woodley?" he replied, with astonishment, "Do you imagine I would play the buffoon at a masquerade?"

Miss Milner's face changed into its former state.

"I have seen grave characters there, my Lord," said Miss Woodley.

"Dear Miss Woodley," cried Miss Milner, "why persuade Lord Elmwood to put on a mask, just at the time he has laid it aside?"

His patience was now tempted to its height, and he answered, "If you suspect me of inconsistency, Madam, you shall find me changed."

Pleased that she had been able at last to irritate him, she smiled with a degree of triumph, and in that humour was going to reply; but before she could speak four words, and before she thought of it, he abruptly left the room.

She was highly offended at this insult, and declared, "From that moment she banished him from her heart for ever." And to prove that she set his love and his anger at equal defiance, she immediately ordered her carriage, and said, she "Was going to some of her acquaintance, whom she knew to have tickets, and with whom she would fix upon the habit she was to appear in at the masquerade; for nothing, unless she was locked up, should alter the resolution she had formed, of being there." To remonstrate at that moment, Miss Woodley knew would be in vain—her coach came to the door, and she drove away.

She did not return to dinner, nor till it was late in the evening; Lord Elmwood was at home, but he never once mentioned her name.

She came home, after he had retired, in great spirits; and then, for the first time, in her whole life, appeared careless what he might think of her behaviour:—but her whole thoughts were occupied upon the business which had employed the chief of her day; and her dress engrossed all her conversation, as soon as Miss Woodley and she were alone. She told her, she had been shewn the greatest variety of beautiful and becoming dresses she had ever beheld; "and yet," said she, "I have at last fixed upon a very plain one; but one I look so well in, that you will hardly know me, when I have it on."

"You are seriously then resolved to go," said Miss Woodley, "if you hear no more on the subject from your guardian?"

"Whether I do hear or not, Miss Woodley, I am equally resolved to go."

"But you know, my dear, he has desired you not—and you used always to obey his commands."

"As my guardian, I certainly did obey him; and I could obey him as a husband; but as a lover, I will not."

"Yet that is the way never to have him for a husband."

"As he pleases—for if he will not submit to be my lover, I will not submit to be his wife—nor has he the affection that I require in a husband."

Thus the old sentiments, repeated again and again, prevented a separation till towards morning.

Miss Milner, for that night, dreamed less of her guardian than of the masquerade. On the evening of the next day it was to be—she was up early, breakfasted in her dressing room, and remained there most of the day, busied in a thousand preparations for the night; one of them was, to take every particle of powder out of her hair, and have it curled all over in falling ringlets. Her next care was, that her dress should exactly fit, and display her fine person to the best advantage—it did so. Miss Woodley entered as it was trying on, and was all astonishment at the elegance of the habit, and its beautiful effect upon her graceful person; but, most of all, she was astonished at her venturing on such a character —for though it represented the goddess of Chastity, yet from the buskins, and the petticoat festooned far above the ankle, it had, on a first glance, the appearance of a female much less virtuous. Miss Woodley admired this dress, yet objected to it; but as she admired first, her objections after had no weight.

"Where is Lord Elmwood?" said Miss Milner—"he must not see me."

"No, for heaven's sake," cried Miss Woodley, "I would not have him see you in such a disguise for the universe."

"And yet," returned the other, with a sigh, "why am I then thus pleased with my dress? for I had rather he should admire me than all the world besides, and yet he is not to see me in it."

"But he would not admire you so dressed," said Miss Woodley.

"How shall I contrive to avoid him," said Miss Milner, "if in the evening

he should offer to hand me into my carriage? But I believe he will not be in good humour enough for that."

"You had better dress at the house of the ladies with whom you go," said Miss Woodley; and this was agreed upon.

At dinner they learnt that Lord Elmwood was to go that evening to Windsor, in order to be in readiness for the king's hunt early in the morning. This intelligence having dispersed Miss Milner's fears, she concluded upon dressing at home.

Lord Elmwood appeared at dinner, in an even, but not in a good temper; the subject of the masquerade was never brought up, nor indeed was it once in his thoughts; for though he was offended at his ward's behaviour on the occasion, and considered that she committed a fault in telling him, "She would go," yet he never suspected she meant to do so, not even at the time she said it, much less that she would persist, coolly and deliberately, in so direct a contradiction to his will. She, for her part, flattered herself, that his going to Windsor, was intended in order to give her an opportunity of passing the evening as she pleased, without his being obliged to know of it, and consequently to complain. Miss Woodley, who was willing to hope as she wished, began to be of the same opinion; and, without reluctance, dressed herself as a wood-nymph to accompany her friend.

# CHAPTER IX.

At half after eleven, Miss Milner's chair, and another with Miss Woodley, took them from Lord Elmwood's, to call upon the party (wood-nymphs and huntresses) who were to accompany them, and make up the suit of Diana.

They had not left the house two minutes, when a thundering rap came at the door—it was Lord Elmwood in a post chaise. Upon some occasion the next day's hunt was deferred: he had been made acquainted with it, and came from Windsor at that late hour. After he had informed Mrs. Horton and Mr. Sandford, who were sitting together, of the cause of his sudden return, and had supper ordered for him, he enquired, "What company had just left the house?"

"We have been alone the whole evening, my Lord," replied Mrs. Horton.

"Nay," returned he, "I saw two chairs, with several servants, come out of the door as I drove up, but what livery I could not discern."

"We have had no creature here," repeated Mrs. Horton.

"Nor has Miss Milner had visitors?" asked he.

This brought Mrs. Horton to her recollection, and she cried, "Oh! now I know;"——and then checked herself, as if she knew too much.

"What do you know, Madam?" said he, sharply.

"Nothing," said Mrs. Horton, "I know nothing—" and she lifted up her hands and shook her head.

"So all people say, who know a great deal," cried Sandford, "and I suspect that is at present your case."

"Then I know more than I wish, I am sure, Mr. Sandford," returned she, shrugging up her shoulders.

Lord Elmwood was all impatience.

"Explain, Madam, explain."

"Dear my Lord," said she, "if your Lordship will recollect, you may just have the same knowledge that I have."

"Recollect what?" said he sternly.

"The quarrel you and your ward had about the masquerade."

"What of that? she is not gone there?" he cried.

"I am not sure she is," returned Mrs. Horton; "but if your Lordship saw two sedan chairs going out of this house, I cannot but suspect it must be Miss Milner and my niece going to the masquerade."

He made no answer, but rang the bell violently. A servant entered. "Send Miss Milner's maid hither," said he, "immediately." The man withdrew.

"Nay, my Lord," cried Mrs. Horton, "any of the other servants could tell you just as well, whether Miss Milner is at home, or gone out."

"Perhaps not," replied he.

The maid entered.

"Where is your mistress?" said Lord Elmwood.

The woman had received no orders to conceal where the ladies were gone, and yet a secret influence which governs the thoughts of all waiting-women and chambermaids, whispered to her that she ought not to tell the truth.

"Where is your mistress?" repeated he, in a louder voice than before.

"Gone out, my Lord," she replied.

"Where?"

"My Lady did not tell me."

"And don't you know?"

"No, my Lord:" she answered, and without blushing.

"Is this the night of the masquerade?" said he.

"I don't know, my Lord, upon my word; but, I believe, my Lord, it is not."

Sandford, as soon as Lord Elmwood had asked the last question, ran hastily to the table, at the other side of the room, took something from it, and returned to his place again—and when the maid said, "It was not the night of the masquerade," he exclaimed, "But it is, my Lord, it is—yes, it is," and shewing a newspaper in his hand, pointed to the paragraph which contained the information.

"Leave the room," said Lord Elmwood to the woman, "I have done with

you." She withdrew.

"Yes, yes, here it is," repeated Sandford, with the paper in his hand. ——He then read the paragraph: "'*The masquerade at the honorable Mrs. G——'s this evening*'—This evening, my Lord, you find—'*it is expected will be the most brilliant, of any thing of the kind for these many years past.*'"

"They should not put such things in the papers," said Mrs. Horton, "to tempt young women to their ruin." The word ruin grated upon Lord Elmwood's ear, and he said to the servant who came to wait on him, while he supped, "Take the supper away." He had not attempted either to eat, or even to sit down; and he now walked backwards and forwards in the room, lost in thought and care.

A little time after, one of Miss Milner's footmen came in upon some occasion, and Mr. Sandford said to him, "Pray did you attend your lady to the masquerade?"

"Yes, Sir," replied the man.

Lord Elmwood stopped himself short in his walk, and said to the servant, "You did?"

"Yes, my Lord," replied he.

He walked again.

"I should like to know what she was dressed in," said Mrs. Horton: and turning to the servant, "Do you know what your lady had on?"

"Yes, Madam," replied the man, "she was in men's clothes."

"How!" cried Lord Elmwood.

"You tell a story, to be sure," said Mrs. Horton to the servant.

"No," cried Sandford, "I am sure he does not; for he is an honest good young man, and would not tell a lie upon any account—would you, George?"

Lord Elmwood ordered Miss Milner's woman to be again sent up. She came.

"In what dress did your lady go to the masquerade?" asked he, and with a look so extremely morose, it seemed to command the answer in a single word, and that word to be truth.

A mind, with a spark of sensibility more than this woman possessed, could not have equivocated with such an interrogator, but her reply was, "She went in her own dress, my Lord."

"Was it a man's or a woman's?" asked he, with a look of the same command.

"Ha, ha, my Lord," (half laughing and half crying) "a woman's dress, to be sure, my Lord."

On which Sandford cried——

"Call the footman up, and let him confront her."

He was called; but Lord Elmwood, now disgusted at the scene, withdrew to the further end of the room, and left Sandford to question them.

With all the authority and consequence of a country magistrate, Sandford—his back to the fire, and the witnesses before him, began with the footman.

"In what dress do you say, that you saw your lady, when you attended, and went along with her, to the masquerade?"

"In men's clothes," replied the man, boldly and firmly as before.

"Bless my soul, George, how can you say such a thing?" cried the woman.

"What dress do *you* say she went in?" cried Sandford to her.

"In women's clothes, indeed, Sir."

"This is very odd!" said Mrs. Horton.

"Had she on, or had she not on, a coat?" asked Sandford.

"Yes, Sir, a petticoat," replied the woman.

"Do *you* say she had on a petticoat?" said Sandford to the man.

"I can't answer exactly for that," replied he, "but I know she had boots on."

"They were not boots," replied the maid with vehemence—"indeed, Sir, (turning to Sandford) they were only half boots."

"My girl," said Sandford kindly to her, "your own evidence convicts your mistress—What has a woman to do with *any* boots?"

Impatient at this mummery, Lord Elmwood rose, ordered the servants out of the room, and then, looking at his watch, found it was near one.

“At what hour am I to expect her home?” said he.

“Perhaps not till three in the morning,” answered Mrs. Horton.

“Three! more likely six,” cried Sandford.

“I can’t wait with patience till that time,” answered Lord Elmwood, with a most anxious sigh.

“You had better go to bed, my Lord,” said Mrs. Horton; “and, by sleeping, the time will pass away unperceived.”

“If I *could* sleep, Madam.”

“Will you play a game of cards, my Lord?” said Sandford, “for I will not leave you till she comes home; and though I am not used to sit up all night——”

“All night!” repeated Lord Elmwood; “she dares not stay all night.”

“And yet, after going,” said Sandford, “in defiance to your commands, I should suppose she dared.”

“She is in good company, at least, my Lord,” said Mrs. Horton.

“She does not know herself what company she is in,” replied he.

“How should she,” cried Sandford, “where every one hides his face?”

Till five o’clock in the morning, in conversation such as this, the hours passed away. Mrs. Horton, indeed, retired to her chamber at two, and left the gentlemen to a more serious discourse; but a discourse still less advantageous to poor Miss Milner.

She, during this time, was at the scene of pleasure she had painted to herself, and all the pleasure it gave her was, that she was sure she should never desire to go to a masquerade again. Its crowd and bustle fatigued her—its freedom offended her delicacy—and though she perceived that she was the first object of admiration in the place, yet there was one person still wanting to admire; and the remorse at having transgressed his injunctions for so trivial an entertainment, weighed upon her spirits, and added to its weariness. She would have come away sooner than she did, but she could not, with any degree of good manners, leave the company with whom she went; and not till half after four, were they prevailed on to return.

Daylight just peeped through the shutters of the room in which Lord Elmwood and Sandford were sitting, when the sound of her carriage, and the sudden stop it made at the door, caused Lord Elmwood to start from his chair. He trembled extremely, and looked pale. Sandford was ashamed to seem to notice it, yet he could not help asking him, “To take a glass of wine.” He took it—and for once, evinced he was reduced so low, as to be *glad* of such a resource.

What passion thus agitated Lord Elmwood at this crisis, it is hard to define—perhaps it was indignation at Miss Milner’s imprudence, and exultation at being on the point of revenge—perhaps it was emotion arising from joy, to find that she was safe—perhaps it was perturbation at the regret he felt that he must upbraid her—perhaps it was not one alone of these sensations, but all of them combined.

She, wearied out with the tedious night’s dissipation, and far less joyous than melancholy, had fallen asleep as she rode home, and came half asleep out of her carriage. “Light me to my bed-chamber instantly,” said she to her maid, who waited in the hall to receive her. But one of Lord Elmwood’s valets went up to her, and answered, “Madam, my Lord desires to see you before you retire.”

“Your Lord!” she cried, “Is he not out of town?”

“No, Madam, my Lord has been at home ever since you went out; and has been sitting up with Mr. Sandford, waiting for you.”

She was wide awake immediately. The heaviness was removed from her eyes, but fear, grief, and shame, seized upon her heart. She leaned against her maid, as if unable to support herself under those feelings, and said to Miss Woodley,

“Make my excuse—I cannot see him to-night—I am unfit—indeed I cannot.”

Miss Woodley was alarmed at the idea of going to him by herself, and thus, perhaps, irritating him still more: she, therefore, said, “He has sent for *you*; for heaven’s sake, do not disobey him a second time.”

“No, dear Madam, don’t,” cried her woman, “for he is like a lion—he has been scolding me.”

“Good God!” (exclaimed Miss Milner, and in a tone that seemed prophetic) “Then he is not to be my husband, after all.”

“Yes,” cried Miss Woodley, “if you will only be humble, and appear sorry. You know your power over him, and all may yet be well.”

She turned her speaking eyes upon her friend, the tears starting from them, her lips trembling—“Do I not appear sorry?” she cried.

The bell at that moment rang furiously, and they hastened their steps to the door of the apartment where Lord Elmwood was.

“No, this shuddering is only fright,” replied Miss Woodley—“Say to him you are sorry, and beg his pardon.”

“I cannot,” said she, “if Mr. Sandford is with him.”

The servant opened the door, and she and Miss Woodley went in. Lord Elmwood, by this time, was composed, and received her with a slight inclination of his head—she bowed to him in return, and said, with some marks of humility,

“I suppose, my Lord, I have done wrong.”

“You have indeed, Miss Milner,” answered he; “but do not suppose, that I mean to upbraid you: I am, on the contrary, going to release you from any such apprehension *for the future*.”

Those last three words he delivered with a countenance so serious and so determined, with an accent so firm and so decided, they pierced through her heart. Yet she did not weep, or even sigh; but her friend, knowing what she felt, exclaimed, “Oh?” as if for her.

She herself strove with her anguish, and replied, (but with a faltering voice) “I expected as much, my Lord.”

“Then, Madam, you perhaps expect *all* that I intend?”

“In regard to myself,” she replied, “I suppose I do.”

“Then,” said he, “you may expect that in a few days we shall part.”

“I am prepared for it, my Lord,” she answered, and, while she said so, sunk upon a chair.

“My Lord, what you have to say farther,” said Miss Woodley, in tears, “defer till the morning—Miss Milner, you see, is not able to bear it now.”

“I have nothing to *say* further,” replied he coolly—“I have now only to act.”

“Lord Elmwood,” cried Miss Milner, divided between grief and anger, “you think to terrify me by your menaces—but I can part with you—heaven knows I can—your late behaviour has reconciled me to a separation.”

On this he was going out of the room—but Miss Woodley, catching hold of him, cried, “Oh! my Lord, do not leave her in this sorrow—pity her weakness, and forgive it.” She was proceeding; and he seemed as if inclined to listen, when Sandford called out in a tone of voice so harsh,

“Miss Woodley, what do you mean?”—She gave a start, and desisted.

Lord Elmwood then turned to Sandford, and said, “Nay, Mr. Sandford, you need entertain no doubts of me—I have judged, and have deter——”

He was going to say *determined*; but Miss Milner, who dreaded the word, interrupted the period, and exclaimed, “Oh! could my poor father know the days of sorrow I have experienced since his death, how would he repent his fatal choice of a protector!”

This sentence, in which his friend’s memory was recalled, with an additional allusion to her long and secret love for him, affected Lord Elmwood much—he was moved, but ashamed of being so, and as soon as possible conquered the propensity to forgive. Yet, for a short interval, he did not know whether to go out of the room, or to remain in it; whether to speak, or to be silent. At length he turned towards her, and said,

“Appeal to your father in some other form—in that (pointing at her dress) he will not know you. Reflect upon him, too, in your moments of dissipation, and let his idea controul your indiscretions—not merely in an hour of contradiction call peevishly upon his name, only to wound the dearest friend you have.”

There was a degree of truth, and a degree of passionate feeling, in the conclusion of this speech, that alarmed Sandford—he caught up one of the candles, and, laying hold of his friend’s elbow, drew him out of the room, crying, “Come, my Lord, come to your bed-chamber—it is very late—it is morning—it is time to rise.” And by a continual repetition of these words, in a very loud voice, drowned whatever Lord Elmwood, or any other person might have wished either to have said or to have heard.

In this manner, Lord Elmwood was forced out of the apartment, and the evening’s entertainment concluded.

# CHAPTER X.

Two whole days passed in the bitterest suspense on the part of Miss Milner, while neither one word or look from Lord Elmwood, denoted the most trivial change of the sentiments he had declared, on the night of the masquerade. Still those sentiments, or intentions, were not explicitly delivered; they were more like intimations, than solemn declarations—for though he had said, "He would never reproach her *for the future*," and that "She might expect they should part," he had not positively said they should; and upon this doubtful meaning of his words, she hung with the strongest agitation of hope and of fear.

Miss Woodley seeing the distress of her mind, (much as she endeavoured to conceal it) entreated, nay implored of her, to permit her to be a mediator; to suffer her to ask for a private interview with Lord Elmwood, and if she found him inflexible, to behave with a proper spirit in return; but if he appeared not absolutely averse to a reconciliation, to offer it in so cautious a manner, that it might take place without farther uneasiness on either side. But Miss Milner peremptorily forbade this, and acknowledging to her friend every weakness she felt on the occasion, yet concluded with solemnly declaring, "That after what had passed between her and Lord Elmwood, *he* must be the first to make a concession, before she herself would condescend to be reconciled."

"I believe I know Lord Elmwood's temper," replied Miss Woodley, "and I do not think he will be easily induced to beg pardon for a fault which he thinks *you* have committed."

"Then he does not love me."

"Pshaw! Miss Milner, this is the old argument. He may love you too well to spoil you—consider that he is your guardian as well as your lover, he means also to become your husband; and he is a man of such nice honour, that he will not indulge you with any power before marriage, to which he does not intend to submit hereafter."

"But tenderness, affection, the politeness due from a lover to his mistress demands his submission; and as I now despair of enticing, I will oblige him to it—at least I'll make the trial, and know my fate at once."

"What do you mean to do?"

"Invite Lord Frederick to the house, and ask my guardian's consent for our immediate union; you will then see, what effect that will have upon his pride."

"But you will then make it too late for him to be humble. If you resolve on this, my dear Miss Milner, you are undone at once—you may thus hurry yourself into a marriage with a man you do not love, and the misery of your whole future life may be the result. Or, would you force Mr. Dorriforth (I mean Lord Elmwood) to another duel with my Lord Frederick?"

"No, call him Dorriforth," answered she, with the tears stealing from her eyes; "I thank you for calling him so; for by that name alone, is he dear to me."

"Nay, Miss Milner, with what rapture did you not receive his love, as Lord Elmwood!"

"But under this title he has been barbarous; under the first, he was all friendship and tenderness."

Notwithstanding Miss Milner indulged herself in all these soft bewailings to her friend—before Lord Elmwood she maintained a degree of pride and steadiness, which surprised even him, who perhaps thought less of her love for him, than any other person. She now began to fear she had gone too far in discovering her affection, and resolved to make trial of a contrary method. She determined to retrieve that haughty character which had inspired so many of her admirers with passion, and take the chance of its effect upon this only one, to whom she ever acknowledged a mutual attachment. But although she acted this character well—so well, that every one but Miss Woodley thought her in earnest—yet, with nice and attentive anxiety, she watched even the slightest circumstances that might revive her hopes, or confirm her despair. Lord Elmwood's behaviour was calculated only to produce the latter—he was cold, polite, and perfectly indifferent. Yet, whatever his manners now were, they did not remove from her recollection what they had been—she recalled, with delight, the ardour with which he had first declared his passion to her, and the thousand proofs he had since given of its reality. From the constancy of his disposition, she depended that sentiments like these were not totally eradicated; and from the extreme desire which Mr. Sandford now, more than ever, discovered of

depreciating her in his patron's esteem—from the now, more than common zeal, which urged him to take Lord Elmwood from her company, whenever he had it in his power, she was led to believe, that while his friend entertained such strong fears of his relapsing into love, she had reason to indulge the strongest hopes that he would.

But the reserve, and even indifference, that she had so well assumed for a few days, and which might perhaps have effected her design, she had not the patience to persevere in, without calling levity to their aid. She visited repeatedly without saying where, or with whom—kept later hours than usual—appeared in the highest spirits—sung, laughed, and never heaved a sigh—but when she was alone.

Still Lord Elmwood protracted a resolution, that he was determined he would never break when taken.

Miss Woodley was excessively uneasy, and with cause; she saw her friend was providing herself with a weight of cares, that she would soon find infinitely too much for her strength to bear—she would have reasoned with her, but all her arguments had long since proved unavailing. She wished to speak to Lord Elmwood upon the subject, and (unknown to her) plead her excuse; but he apprehended Miss Woodley's intention, and evidently shunned her. Mr. Sandford was now the only person to whom she could speak of Miss Milner, and the delight he took to expatiate on her faults, was more sorrow to her friend, than not to speak of her at all. She, therefore, sat a silent spectator, waiting with dread for the time when she, who now scorned her advice, would fly to her in vain for comfort.

Sandford had, however, said one thing to Miss Woodley, which gave her a ray of hope. During their conversation on the subject, (not by way of consolation to her, but as a reproach to Lord Elmwood) he one day angrily exclaimed, "And yet, notwithstanding all this provocation, he has not come to the determination that he will think no more of her—he lingers and he hesitates—I never saw him so weak upon any occasion before."

This was joyful hearing to Miss Woodley; still, she could not but reflect, the longer he was in coming to this determination, the more irrevocable it would be, when once taken; and every moment that passed, she trembled lest it should be the very moment, in which Lord Elmwood should resolve to banish Miss Milner from his heart.

Amongst her unpardonable indiscretions, during this trial upon the temper of her guardian, was the frequent mention of many gentlemen, who had been her professed admirers, and the mention of them with partiality. Teased, if not tortured, by this, Lord Elmwood still behaved with a manly evenness of temper, and neither appeared provoked on the subject, nor insolently careless. In a single instance, however, this calmness was near deserting him.

Entering the drawing-room, one evening, he started, on seeing Lord Frederick Lawnly there, in earnest conversation with Miss Milner.

Mrs. Horton and Miss Woodley were both indeed present, and Lord Frederick was talking in an audible voice, upon some indifferent subjects; but with that impressive manner, in which a man never fails to speak to the woman he loves, be the subject what it may. The moment Lord Elmwood started, which was the moment he entered, Lord Frederick arose.

"I beg your pardon, my Lord," said Lord Elmwood, "I protest I did not know you."

"I ought to entreat your Lordship's pardon," returned Lord Frederick, "for this intrusion, which an accident alone has occasioned. Miss Milner has been almost overturned by the carelessness of a lady's coachman, in whose carriage she was, and therefore suffered me to bring her home in mine."

"I hope you are not hurt," said Lord Elmwood to Miss Milner, but his voice was so much affected by what he felt that he could scarce articulate the words. Not with the apprehension that she was hurt, was he thus agitated, for the gaiety of her manners convinced him *that* could not be the case, nor did he indeed suppose any accident, of the kind mentioned, had occurred; but the circumstance of unexpectedly seeing Lord Frederick had taken him off his guard, and being totally unprepared, he could not conceal indications of the surprise, and of the shock it had given him.

Lord Frederick, who had heard nothing of his intended union with his ward, (for it was even kept a secret, at present, from every servant in the house) imputed this discomposure to the personal resentment he might bear him, in consequence of their duel; for though Lord Elmwood had

assured the uncle of Lord Frederick, (who once waited upon him on the subject of Miss Milner) that all resentment was, on his part, entirely at an end; and that he was willing to consent to his ward's marriage with his nephew, if she would concur; yet Lord Frederick doubted the sincerity of this, and would still have had the delicacy not to have entered Lord Elmwood's house, had he not been encouraged by Miss Milner, and emboldened by his love. Personal resentment was therefore the construction he put upon Lord Elmwood's emotion on entering the room; but Miss Milner and Miss Woodley knew his agitation to arise from a far different cause.

After his entrance, Lord Frederick did not attempt once to resume his seat, but having bowed most respectfully to all present, he took his leave; while Miss Milner followed him as far as the door, and repeated her thanks for his protection.

Lord Elmwood was hurt beyond measure; but he had a second concern, which was, that he had not the power to conceal how much he was affected. He trembled—when he attempted to speak, he stammered —he perceived his face burning with confusion, and thus one confusion gave birth to another, till his state was pitiable.

Miss Milner, with all her assumed gaiety and real insolence, had not, however, the insolence to seem as if she observed him; she had only the confidence to observe him by stealth. And Mrs. Horton and Miss Woodley, having opportunely begun a discourse upon some trivial occurrences, gave him time to recover himself by degrees—yet, still it was merely by degrees; for the impression which this incident had made, was deep, and not easily to be erased. The entrance of Mr. Sandford, who knew nothing of what had happened, was however, another relief; for he began a conversation with him, which they very soon retired into the library to terminate. Miss Milner, taking Miss Woodley with her, went directly to her own apartment, and there exclaimed in rapture,

"He is mine—he loves me—and he is mine for ever."

Miss Woodley congratulated her upon believing so, but confessed she herself "Had her fears."

"What fears?" cried Miss Milner: "don't you perceive that he loves me?"

"I do," said Miss Woodley, "but that I always believed; and, I think, if he loves you now, he has yet the good sense to know that he has reason to hate you."

"What has good sense to do with love?" returned Miss Milner—"If a lover of mine suffers his understanding to get the better of his affection —"

The same arguments were going to be repeated; but Miss Woodley interrupted her, by requiring an explanation of her conduct as to Lord Frederick, whom, at least, she was treating with cruelty, if she only made use of his affection to stimulate that of Lord Elmwood.

"By no means, my dear Miss Woodley," returned she—"I have, indeed, done with my Lord Frederick from this day; and he has certainly given me the proof I wanted of Lord Elmwood's love; but then I did not engage him to this by the smallest ray of hope. No; do not suspect me of that, while my heart was another's: and I assure you, seriously, that it was from the circumstance we described he came with me home—yet, I must own, that if I had not had this design upon Lord Elmwood's jealousy in idea, I would have walked on foot through the streets, rather than have suffered his rival's civilities. But he pressed his services so violently, and my Lady Evans (in whose coach I was when the accident happened) pressed me so violently to accept them, that he cannot expect any farther meaning from this acquiescence than my own convenience."

Miss Woodley was going to reply, when she resumed,

"Nay, if you intend to say I have done wrong, still I am not sorry for it, when it has given me such convincing proofs of Lord Elmwood's love. Did you see him? I am afraid you did not see how he trembled? and that manly voice faltered, as mine does sometimes—his proud heart was humbled too, as mine is now and then. Oh! Miss Woodley, I have been counterfeiting indifference to *him*—I now find that all *his* indifference to *me* has been counterfeit, and that we not only love, but love equally."

"Suppose this all as you hope—I yet think it highly necessary that your guardian should be informed, seriously informed, it was mere accident (for, at present, that plea seems but as a subterfuge) which brought Lord Frederick hither."

"No, that will be destroying the work so successfully begun. I will not suffer any explanation to take place, but let my Lord Elmwood act just as his love shall dictate; and now I have no longer a doubt of its excess,

instead of stooping to him, I wait in the certain expectation of his submission to me.”

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# CHAPTER XI.

In vain, for three long days, did Miss Milner wait impatiently for this submission; not a sign, not a symptom appeared—nay, Lord Elmwood had, since the evening of Lord Frederick's visit, (which, at the time it happened, seemed to affect him so exceedingly) become just the same man he was before the circumstance occurred; except, indeed, that he was less thoughtful, and now and then cheerful; but without any appearance that his cheerfulness was affected. Miss Milner was vext—she was alarmed—but was ashamed to confess those humiliating sensations, even to Miss Woodley—she supported, therefore, when in company, the vivacity she had so long assumed; but gave way, when alone, to a still greater degree of melancholy than usual. She no longer applauded her scheme of bringing Lord Frederick to the house, and trembled, lest, on some pretence, he should dare to call again. But as these were feelings which her pride would not suffer her to disclose even to her friend, who would have condoled with her, their effects were doubly poignant.

Sitting in her dressing-room one forenoon with Miss Woodley, and burthened with a load of grief that she blushed to acknowledge, while her companion was charged with apprehensions that she too was loath to disclose, one of Lord Elmwood's valets tapped gently at the door, and delivered a letter to Miss Milner. By the person who brought it, as well as by the address, she knew it came from Lord Elmwood, and laid it down upon her toilet, as if she was fearful to unfold it.

"What is that?" said Miss Woodley.

"A letter from Lord Elmwood," replied Miss Milner.

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed Miss Woodley.

"Nay," returned she, "it is, I have no doubt, a letter to beg my pardon." But her reluctance to open it plainly evinced she did not think so.

"Do not read it yet," said Miss Woodley.

"I do not intend it," replied she, trembling extremely.

"Will you dine first?" said Miss Woodley.

"No—for not knowing its contents, I shall not know how to conduct myself towards him."

Here a silence followed. Miss Milner took up the letter—looked earnestly at the handwriting on the outside—at the seal—inspected into its folds—and seemed to wish, by some equivocal method, to guess at the contents, without having the courage to come at the certain knowledge of them.

Curiosity, at length, got the better of her fears—she opened the letter, and, scarce able to hold it while she read, she read the following words:—

> "MADAM,
>
> "While I considered you only as my ward, my friendship for you was unbounded—when I looked upon you as a woman formed to grace a fashionable circle, my admiration equalled my friendship—and when fate permitted me to behold you in the tender light of my betrothed wife, my soaring love left those humbler passions at a distance.
>
> "That you have still my friendship, my admiration, and even my love, I will not attempt to deceive either myself or you by disavowing; but still, with a firm assurance, I declare, that prudence outweighs them all; and I have not, from henceforward, a wish to be regarded by you, in any other respect than as one 'who wishes you well.' That you ever beheld me in the endearing quality of a destined and an affectionate husband, (such as I would have proved) was a deception upon my hopes: they acknowledge the mistake, and are humbled—but I entreat you to spare their farther trial, and for a single week do not insult me with the open preference of another. In the short space of that period I shall have taken my leave of you—*for ever*.
>
> "I shall visit Italy, and some other parts of the Continent; from whence I propose passing to the West Indies, in order to inspect my possessions there: nor shall I return to England till after a few years' absence; in which time I hope to become once more reconciled to

the change of state I am enjoined—a change I now most fervently wish could be entirely dispensed with.

"The occasion of my remaining here a week longer, is to settle some necessary affairs, among which the principal is, that of delivering to a friend, a man of worth and of tenderness, all those writings which have invested me with the power of my guardianship—he will, the day after my departure, (without one upbraiding word) resign them to you in my name; and even your most respected father, could he behold the resignation, would concur in its propriety.

"And now, my dear Miss Milner, let not affected resentment, contempt, or levity, oppose that serenity, which, for the week to come, I wish to enjoy. By complying with this request, give me to believe, that, since you have been under my care, you think I have, at least, faithfully discharged some part of my duty. And wherever I have been inadequate to your wishes, attribute my demerits to some infirmity of mind, rather than to a negligence of your happiness. Yet, be the cause what it will, since these faults have existed, I do not attempt to disavow or extenuate them, and I beg your pardon.

"However time, and a succession of objects, may eradicate more tender sentiments, I am sure *never* to lose the liveliest anxiety for your welfare—and with all that solicitude, which cannot be described, I entreat for your own sake, for mine—when we shall be far asunder—and for the sake of your dead father's memory, that, *upon every important occasion, you will call your serious judgment to direct you*.

"I am, Madam,

"Your sincerest friend,

"ELMWOOD."

After she had read every syllable of this letter, it dropped from her hands; but she uttered not a word. There was, however, a paleness in her face, a deadness in her eye, and a kind of palsy over her frame, which Miss Woodley, who had seen her in every stage of her uneasiness, never had seen before.

"I do not want to read the letter," said Miss Woodley; "your looks tell me its contents."

"They will then discover to Lord Elmwood," replied she, "what I feel; but Heaven forbid—that would sink me even lower than I am."

Scarce able to move, she rose, and looked in her glass, as if to arrange her features, and impose upon him: alas! it was of no avail—a serenity of mind could alone effect what she desired.

"You must endeavour," said Miss Woodley, "to feel the disposition you wish to make appear."

"I will," replied she, "I will feel a proper pride—and a proper scorn of this treatment."

And so desirous was she to attain the appearance of these sentiments, that she made the strongest efforts to calm her thoughts, in order to acquire it.

"I have but a few days to remain with him," she said to herself, "and we part for ever—during those few days it is not only my duty to obey his commands, or rather comply with his request, but it is also my wish to leave upon his mind an impression, which may not add to the ill opinion he has formed of me, but, perhaps, serve to diminish it. If, in every other instance, my conduct has been blameable, he shall, at least in this, acknowledge its merit. The fate I have drawn upon myself, he shall find I can be resigned to; and he shall be convinced, that the woman, of whose weakness he has had so many fatal proofs, is yet in possession of some fortitude—fortitude, to bid him farewell, without discovering one affected or one real pang, though her death should be the immediate consequence."

Thus she resolved, and thus she acted. The severest judge could not have arraigned her conduct, from the day she received Lord Elmwood's letter, to the day of his departure. She had, indeed, involuntary weaknesses, but none with which she did not struggle, and, in general, her struggles were victorious.

The first time she saw him after the receipt of his letter, was on the

evening of the same day—she had a little concert of amateurs of music, and was herself singing and playing when he entered the room: the connoisseurs immediately perceived she made a false cadence—but Lord Elmwood was no connoisseur in the art, and he did not observe it.

They occasionally spoke to each other through the evening, but the subjects were general—and though their manners every time they spoke, were perfectly polite, they were not marked with the smallest degree of familiarity. To describe his behaviour exactly, it was the same as his letter, polite, friendly, composed, and resolved. Some of the company staid supper, which prevented the embarrassment that must unavoidably have arisen, had the family been by themselves.

The next morning each breakfasted in his separate apartments—more company dined with them—in the evening, and at supper, Lord Elmwood was from home.

Thus, all passed on as peaceably as he had requested, and Miss Milner had not betrayed one particle of frailty; when, the third day at dinner, some gentlemen of his acquaintance being at table, one of them said,

“And so, my Lord, you absolutely set off on Tuesday morning?”

This was Friday.

Sandford and he both replied at the same time, “Yes.” And Sandford, but not Lord Elmwood, looked at Miss Milner when he spoke. Her knife and fork gave a sudden spring in her hand, but no other emotion witnessed what she felt.

“Aye, Elmwood,” cried another gentleman at table, “you’ll bring home, I am afraid, a foreign wife, and that I shan’t forgive.”

“It is his errand abroad, I make no doubt,” said another visitor.

Before he could return an answer, Sandford cried, “And what objection to a foreigner for a wife? do not crowned heads all marry foreigners? and who happier in the married state than some kings?”

Lord Elmwood directed his eyes to the side of the table, opposite to that where Miss Milner sat.

“Nay,” (answered one of the guests, who was a country gentleman) “what do you say, ladies—do you think my Lord ought to go out of his own nation for a wife?” and he looked at Miss Milner for the reply.

Miss Woodley, uneasy at her friend’s being thus forced to give an opinion upon so delicate a subject, endeavoured to satisfy the gentleman, by answering to the question herself: “Whoever my Lord Elmwood marries, Sir,” said Miss Woodley, “he, no doubt, will be happy.”

“But what say you, Madam?” asked the visitor, still keeping his eyes on Miss Milner.

“That whoever Lord Elmwood marries, he *deserves* to be happy:” returned she, with the utmost command of her voice and looks; for Miss Woodley, by replying first, had given her time to collect herself.

The colour flew to Lord Elmwood’s face, as she delivered this short sentence; and Miss Woodley persuaded herself, she saw a tear start in his eye.

Miss Milner did not look that way.

In an instant he found means to change the subject, but that of his journey still employed the conversation; and what horses, servants, and carriages he took with him, was minutely asked, and so accurately answered, either by himself or by Mr. Sandford, that Miss Milner, although she had known her doom before, till now had received no circumstantial account of it—and as circumstances increase or diminish all we feel, the hearing these things told, increased the bitterness of their truth.

Soon after dinner the ladies retired; and from that time, though Miss Milner’s behaviour continued the same, yet her looks and her voice were totally altered—for the world, she could not have looked cheerfully; for the world, she could not have spoken with a sprightly accent; she frequently began in one, but not three words could she utter, before her tones sunk into dejection. Not only her colour, but her features became changed; her eyes lost their brilliancy, her lips seemed to hang without the power of motion, her head drooped, and her dress was neglected. Conscious of this appearance, and conscious of the cause from whence it arose, it was her desire to hide herself from the only object she could have wished to have charmed. Accordingly, she sat alone, or with Miss Woodley in her own apartment as much as was consistent with that civility which her guardian had requested, and which forbade her totally absenting herself.

Miss Woodley felt so acutely the torments of her friend, that had not her reason told her, that the inflexible mind of Lord Elmwood, was fixed

beyond her power to shake, she had cast herself at his feet, and implored the return of his affection and tenderness, as the only means to save his once-beloved ward from an untimely death. But her understanding—her knowledge of his firm and immoveable temper; and of all his provocations—her knowledge of his word, long since given to Sandford, "That if once resolved, he would not recall his resolution"—the certainty of the various plans arranged for his travels, all convinced her, that by any interference, she would only expose Miss Milner's love and delicacy, to a contemptuous rejection.

If the conversation did not every day turn upon the subject of Lord Elmwood's departure—a conversation he evidently avoided himself—yet, every day, some new preparation for his journey, struck either the ear or the eye of Miss Milner—and had she beheld a frightful spectre, she could not have shuddered with more horror, than when she unexpectedly passed his large trunks in the hall, nailed and corded, ready to be sent off to meet him at Venice. At the sight, she flew from the company that chanced to be with her, and stole to the first lonely corner of the house to conceal her tears—she reclined her head upon her hands, and bedewed them with the sudden anguish, that had overcome her. She heard a footstep advancing towards the spot where she hoped to have been concealed; she lifted up her eyes, and saw Lord Elmwood. Pride, was the first emotion his presence inspired—pride, which arose from the humility into which she was plunged.

She looked at him earnestly, as if to imply, "What now, my Lord?"

He only answered with a bow, which expressed; "I beg your pardon." And immediately withdrew.

Thus each understood the other's language, without either having uttered a word.

The just construction she put upon his looks and behaviour upon this occasion, kept up her spirits for some little time; and she blessed heaven, repeatedly, for the singular favour of shewing to her, clearly, by this accident, his negligence of her sorrows, his total indifference.

The next day was the eve of that on which he was to depart—of the day on which she was to bid adieu to Dorriforth, to her guardian, to Lord Elmwood; to all her hopes at once.

The moment she awoke on Monday morning, the recollection, that this was, perhaps, the last day she was ever again to see him, softened all the resentment his yesterday's conduct had raised: forgetting his austerity, and all she had once termed cruelties, she now only remembered his friendship, his tenderness, and his love. She was impatient to see him, and promised herself, for this last day, to neglect no one opportunity of being with him. For that purpose she did not breakfast in her own room, as she had done for several mornings before, but went into the breakfast-room, where all the family in general met. She was rejoiced on hearing his voice as she opened the door, yet the sound made her tremble so much, that she could scarcely totter to the table.

Miss Woodley looked at her as she entered, and was never so shocked at seeing her; for never had she yet seen her look so ill. As she approached, she made an inclination of her head to Mrs. Horton, then to her guardian, as was her custom, when she first saw them in a morning —he looked in her face as he bowed in return, then fixed his eyes upon the fire-place, rubbed his forehead, and began talking with Mr. Sandford.

Sandford, during breakfast, by accident cast a glance upon Miss Milner; his attention was caught by her deadly countenance, and he looked earnestly. He then turned to Lord Elmwood to see if he was observing her appearance—he was not—and so much were her thoughts engaged on him alone, that she did not once perceive Sandford gazing at her.

Mrs. Horton, after a little while observed, "It was a beautiful morning."

Lord Elmwood said, "He thought he heard it rain in the night."

Sandford cried, "For his part he slept too well to know." And then (unasked) held a plate with biscuits to Miss Milner—it was the first civility he had ever in his life offered her; she smiled at the whimsicality of the circumstance, but she took one in return for his attention. He looked grave beyond his usual gravity, and yet not with his usual ill temper. She did not eat what she had so politely taken, but laid it down soon after.

Lord Elmwood was the first who rose from breakfast, and he did not return to dinner.

At dinner, Mrs. Horton said, "She hoped he would, however, favour them with his company at supper."

To which Sandford replied, “No doubt, for you will hardly any of you see him in the morning; as we shall be off by six, or soon after.”

Sandford was not going abroad with Lord Elmwood, but was to go with him as far as Dover.

These words of his—“*Not see Lord Elmwood in the morning*”—[never again to see him after this evening,] were like the knell of death to Miss Milner. She felt the symptoms of fainting, and eagerly snatched a glass of water, which the servant was holding to Sandford, who had called for it, and drank it off;—as she returned the glass to the servant, she began to apologize to Mr. Sandford for her seeming rudeness, but before she could utter what she intended, he said, good-naturedly, “Never mind—you are very welcome—I am glad you took it.” She looked at him to observe, whether he had really spoken kindly, or ironically; but before his countenance could satisfy her, her thoughts were called away from that trivial matter, and again fixed upon Lord Elmwood.

The moments seemed tedious till he came home to supper, and yet, when she reflected how short the remainder of the evening would be after that time, she wished to defer the hour of his return for months. At ten o’clock he arrived; and at half after ten the family, without any visitor, met at supper.

Miss Milner had considered, that the period for her to counterfeit appearances, was diminished now to a most contracted one; and she rigorously enjoined herself not to shrink from the little which remained. The certain end, that would be so soon put to this painful deception, encouraged her to struggle through it with redoubled zeal; and this was but necessary, as her weakness increased. She therefore listened, she talked, and even smiled with the rest of the company, nor did *their* vivacity seem to arise, from a much less compulsive source than her own.

It was past twelve, when Lord Elmwood looked at his watch, and rising from his chair, went up to Mrs. Horton, and taking her hand, said, “Till I see you again, Madam, I sincerely wish you every happiness.”

Miss Milner fixed her eyes upon the table before her.

“My Lord,” replied Mrs. Horton, “I sincerely wish you health and happiness likewise.”

He then went to Miss Woodley, and taking her hand, repeated much the same, as he had said to Mrs. Horton.

Miss Milner now trembled beyond all power of concealment.

“My Lord,” replied Miss Woodley, a good deal affected, “I sincerely hope my prayers for your happiness may be heard.”

She and Mrs. Horton were both standing as well as Lord Elmwood; but Miss Milner kept her seat, till his eye was turned upon her, and he moved slowly towards her; she then rose:—every one who was present, attentive to what he would now say, and how she would receive what he said, here cast their eyes upon them, and listened with impatience. They were all disappointed—he did not utter a syllable. Yet he took her hand, and held it closely between his. He then bowed most respectfully and left her.

No “I wish you well;—I wish you health and happiness.” No “Prayers for blessings on her.” Not even the word “Farewell,” escaped his lips—perhaps, to have attempted any of these, might have choaked his utterance.

She had behaved with fortitude the whole evening, and she continued to do so, till the moment he turned away from her. Her eyes then overflowed with tears, and in the agony of her mind, not knowing what she did, she laid her cold hand upon the person next to her—it happened to be Sandford; but not observing it was he, she grasped his hand with violence—yet he did not snatch it away, nor look at her with his wonted severity. And thus she stood, silent and motionless, while Lord Elmwood, now at the door, bowed once more to all the company, and retired.

Sandford had still Miss Milner’s hand fixed upon his; and when the door was shut after Lord Elmwood, he turned his head to look in her face, and turned it with some marks of apprehension for the grief he might find there. She strove to overcome that grief, and after a heavy sigh, sat down, as if resigned to the fate to which she was decreed.

Instead of following Lord Elmwood, as usual, Sandford poured out a glass of wine, and drank it. A general silence ensued for near three minutes. At last, turning himself round on his seat, towards Miss Milner, who sat like a statue of despair at his side, “Will you breakfast with us to-morrow?” said he.

She made no answer.

“We shan’t breakfast before half after six,” continued he, “I dare say;

and if you can rise so early—why do."

"Miss Milner," said Miss Woodley, (for she caught eagerly at the hope of her passing this night in less unhappiness than she had foreboded) "pray rise at that hour to breakfast; Mr. Sandford would not invite you, if he thought it would displease Lord Elmwood."

"Not I," replied Sandford, churlishly.

"Then desire her maid to call her:" said Mrs. Horton to Miss Woodley.

"Nay, she will be awake, I have no doubt;" returned her niece.

"No;" replied Miss Milner, "since Lord Elmwood has thought proper to take his leave of me, without even speaking a word; by my own design, never will I see him again." And her tears burst forth, as if her heart burst at the same time.

"Why did not *you* speak to *him*?" cried Sandford—"Pray did *you* bid *him* farewell? and I don't see why one is not as much to be blamed, in that respect, as the other."

"I was too weak to say I wished him happy," cried Miss Milner; "but, Heaven is my witness, I do wish him so from my soul."

"And do you imagine he does not wish you so?" cried Sandford. "You should judge him by your own heart; and what you feel for him, imagine he feels for you, my dear."

Though "*my dear*" is a trivial phrase, yet from certain people, and upon certain occasions, it is a phrase of infinite comfort and assurance. Mr. Sandford seldom said "my dear" to any one; to Miss Milner never; and upon this occasion, and from him, it was an expression most precious.

She turned to him with a look of gratitude; but as she only looked, and did not speak, he rose up, and soon after said, with a friendly tone he had seldom used in her presence, "I sincerely wish you a good night."

As soon as he was gone, Miss Milner exclaimed, "However my fate may have been precipitated by the unkindness of Mr. Sandford, yet, for that particle of concern which he has shown for me this night, I will always be grateful to him."

"Ay," cried Mrs. Horton, "good Mr. Sandford may show his kindness now, without any danger from its consequences. Now Lord Elmwood is going away for ever, he is not afraid of your seeing him once again." And she thought she praised him by this suggestion.

# CHAPTER XII.

When Miss Milner retired to her bed-chamber, Miss Woodley went with her, nor would leave her the whole night—but in vain did she persuade her to rest—she absolutely refused; and declared she would never, from that hour, indulge repose. “The part I undertook to perform,” cried she, “is over—I will now, for my whole life, appear in my own character, and give a loose to the anguish I endure.”

As daylight showed itself—“And yet I might see him once again,” said she—“I might see him within these two hours, if I pleased, for Mr. Sandford invited me.”

“If you think, my dear Miss Milner,” said Miss Woodley, “that a second parting from Lord Elmwood would but give you a second agony, in the name of Heaven do not see him any more—but, if you hope your mind would be easier, were you to bid each other adieu in a more direct manner than you did last night, let us go down and breakfast with him. I’ll go before, and prepare him for your reception—you shall not surprise him—and I will let him know, it is by Mr. Sandford’s invitation you are coming.”

She listened with a smile to this proposal, yet objected to the indelicacy of her wishing to see him, after he had taken his leave—but as Miss Woodley perceived that she was inclined to infringe this delicacy, of which she had so proper a sense, she easily persuaded her, it was impossible for the most suspicious person (and Lord Elmwood was far from such a character) to suppose, that the paying him a visit at that period of time, could be with the most distant idea of regaining his heart, or of altering one resolution he had taken.

But though Miss Milner acquiesced in this opinion, yet she had not the courage to form the determination that she would go.

Daylight now no longer peeped, but stared upon them. Miss Milner went to the looking-glass, breathed upon her hands and rubbed them on her eyes, smoothed her hair and adjusted her dress; yet said, after all, “I dare not see him again.”

“You may do as you please,” said Miss Woodley, “but I will. I that have lived for so many years under the same roof with him, and on the most friendly terms, and he going away, perhaps for these ten years, perhaps for ever, I should think it a disrespect not to see him to the last moment of his remaining in the house.”

“Then do you go,” said Miss Milner, eagerly; “and if he should ask for me, I will gladly come, you know; but if he does not ask for me, I will not—and pray don’t deceive me.”

Miss Woodley promised her not to deceive her; and soon after, as they heard the servants pass about the house, and the clock had struck six, Miss Woodley went to the breakfast room.

She found Lord Elmwood there in his travelling dress, standing pensively by the fire-place—and, as he did not dream of seeing her, he started when she entered, and, with an appearance of alarm, said, “Dear Miss Woodley, what’s the matter?” She replied, “Nothing, my Lord; but I could not be satisfied without seeing your Lordship once again, while I had it in my power.”

“I thank you,” he returned with a sigh—the heaviest and most intelligent sigh she ever heard him condescend to give. She imagined, alas, that he looked as if he wished to ask how Miss Milner did, but would not allow himself the indulgence. She was half inclined to mention her to him, and was debating in her mind whether she should or not, when Mr. Sandford came into the room, saying, as he entered,

“For Heaven’s sake, my Lord, where did you sleep last night?”

“Why do you ask!” said he.

“Because,” replied Sandford, “I went into your bed-chamber just now, and I found your bed made. You have not slept there to-night.”

“I have slept no where,” returned he; “I could not sleep—and having some papers to look over, and to set off early, I thought I might as well not go to bed at all.”

Miss Woodley was pleased at the frank manner in which he made this confession, and could not resist the strong impulse to say, “You have done just then, my Lord, like Miss Milner, for she has not been in bed the whole night.”

Miss Woodley spoke this in a negligent manner, and yet, Lord Elmwood echoed back the words with solicitude, “Has not Miss Milner been in bed the whole night?”

“If she is up, why does not she come and take some coffee?” said Sandford, as he began to pour it out.

“If she thought it would be agreeable,” returned Miss Woodley, “I dare say she would.” And she looked at Lord Elmwood while she spoke, though she did not absolutely address him; but he made no reply.

“Agreeable!” returned Sandford, angrily—“Has she then a quarrel with any body here? or does she suppose any body here bears enmity to *her*? Is she not in peace and charity?”

“Yes,” replied Miss Woodley, “that I am sure she is.”

“Then bring her hither,” cried Sandford, “directly. Would she have the wickedness to imagine we are not all friends with her?”

Miss Woodley left the room, and found Miss Milner almost in despair, lest she should hear Lord Elmwood’s carriage drive off before her friend’s return.

“Did he send for me?” were the words she uttered as soon as she saw her.

“Mr. Sandford did, in his presence,” returned Miss Woodley, “and you may go with the utmost decorum, or I would not tell you so.”

She required no protestations of this, but readily followed her beloved adviser, whose kindness never appeared in so amiable a light as at that moment.

On entering the room, through all the dead white of her present complection, she blushed to a crimson. Lord Elmwood rose from his seat, and brought a chair for her to sit down.

Sandford looked at her inquisitively, sipped his tea, and said, “He never made tea to his own liking.”

Miss Milner took a cup, but had scarce strength to hold it.

It seemed but a very short time they were at breakfast, when the carriage, that was to take Lord Elmwood away, drove to the door. Miss Milner started at the sound—so did he—but she had nearly dropped her cup and saucer; on which Sandford took them out of her hand, saying,

“Perhaps you had rather have coffee?”

Her lips moved, but he could not hear what she said.

A servant came in, and told Lord Elmwood, “The carriage was at the door.”

He replied, “Very well.” But though he had breakfasted, he did not attempt to move.

At last, rising briskly, as if it was necessary to go in haste when he did go; he took up his hat, which he had brought with him into the room, and was turning to Miss Woodley to take his leave, when Sandford cried, “My Lord, you are in a great hurry.” And then, as if he wished to give poor Miss Milner every moment he could, added, (looking about) “I don’t know where I have laid my gloves.”

Lord Elmwood, after repeating to Miss Woodley his last night’s farewell, now went up to Miss Milner, and taking one of her hands, again held it between his, but still without speaking—while she, unable to suppress her tears as heretofore, suffered them to fall in torrents.

“What is all this?” cried Sandford, going up to them in anger.

They neither of them replied, or changed their situation.

“Separate this moment,” cried Sandford, “or resolve to be separated only by—death.”

The commanding and awful manner in which he spoke this sentence, made them both turn to him in amazement, and as it were, petrified with the sensation his words had caused.

He left them for a moment, and going to a small bookcase in one corner of the room, took out of it a book, and returning with it in his hand, said,

“Lord Elmwood, do you love this woman?”

“More than my life.” He replied, with the most heartfelt accents.

He then turned to Miss Milner—“Can you say the same by him?”

She spread her hands over her eyes, and exclaimed, “Oh, Heavens!”

“I believe you *can* say so,” returned Sandford; “and in the name of God, and your own happiness, since this is the state of you both, let me put it out of your power to part.”

Lord Elmwood gazed at him with wonder! and yet, as if enraptured by the sudden change this conduct gave to his prospects.

She, sighed with a kind of trembling ecstasy; while Sandford, with all the dignity of his official character, delivered these words——

“My Lord, while I thought my counsel might save you from the worst of misfortunes, conjugal strife, I importuned you hourly, and set forth your danger in the light it appeared to me. But though old, and a priest, I can submit to think I have been in an error; and I now firmly believe, it is for the welfare of you both, to become man and wife. My Lord, take this woman’s marriage vows—you can ask no fairer promises of her reform—she can give you none half so sacred, half so binding; and I see by her looks that she will mean to keep them. And my dear,” continued he, addressing himself to her, “act but under the dominion of those vows, to a husband of sense and virtue, like him, and you will be all that I, himself, or even Heaven can desire. Now, then, Lord Elmwood, this moment give her up for ever, or this moment constrain her by such ties from offending you, as she shall not *dare* to violate.”

Lord Elmwood struck his forehead in doubt and agitation; but, still holding her hand, he cried, “I cannot part from her.” Then feeling this reply as equivocal, he fell upon his knees, and cried, “Will you pardon my hesitation? and will you, in marriage, show me that tender love you have not shown me yet? Will you, in possessing all my affections, bear with all my infirmities?”

She raised him from her feet, and by the expression of her countenance, by the tears that bathed his hands, gave him confidence.

He turned to Sandford—then placing her by his own side, as the form of matrimony requires, gave this for a sign to Sandford that he should begin the ceremony. On which, he opened his book, and—married them.

With voice and manners so serious, so solemn and so fervent, he performed these rites, that every idea of jest, or even of lightness, was absent from the mind of all who were present.

Miss Milner, covered with shame, sunk on the bosom of Miss Woodley.

When the ring was wanting, Lord Elmwood supplied it with one from his own hand, but throughout all the rest of the ceremony, appeared lost in zealous devotion to Heaven. Yet, no sooner was it finished, than his thoughts descended to this world. He embraced his bride with all the transport of the fondest, happiest bridegroom, and in raptures called her by the endearing name of “wife.”

“But still, my Lord,” cried Sandford, “you are only married by your own church and conscience, not by your wife’s, or by the law of the land; and let me advise you not to defer that marriage long, lest in the time you disagree, and she should refuse to become your legal spouse.”

“I think there is danger,” returned Lord Elmwood, “and therefore our second marriage must take place to-morrow.”

To this the ladies objected, and Sandford was to fix their second wedding-day, as he had done their first. He, after consideration, gave them four days.

Miss Woodley then recollected (for every one else had forgot it) that the carriage was still at the door to convey Lord Elmwood far away. It was of course dismissed—and one of those great incidents of delight which Miss Milner that morning tasted, was to look out of the window, and see this very carriage drive from the door unoccupied.

Never was there a more rapid change from despair to happiness—to happiness perfect and supreme—than was that, which Miss Milner and Lord Elmwood experienced in one single hour.

The few days that intervened between this and their lawful marriage, were passed in the delightful care of preparing for that happy day—yet, with all its delights inferior to the first, when every unexpected joy was doubled by the once expected sorrow.

Nevertheless, on that first wedding-day, that joyful day, which restored her lost lover to her hopes again; even on that *very* day, after the sacred ceremony was over, Miss Milner—(with all the fears, the tremors, the superstition of her sex)—felt an excruciating shock; when, looking on the ring Lord Elmwood had put upon her finger, in haste, when he married her, she perceived it was a—mourning ring.

# A
# SIMPLE STORY,

IN FOUR VOLUMES,

BY

MRS. INCHBALD.

VOL. III.

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# A SIMPLE STORY.

# CHAPTER I.

Not any event, throughout life, can arrest the reflection of a thoughtful mind more powerfully, or leave so lasting an impression, as that of returning to a place after a few years absence, and observing an entire alteration, in respect to all the persons who once formed the neighbourhood. To find that many, who but a few years before were left in their bloom of youth and health, are dead—to find that children left at school, are married and have children of their own—that some, who were left in riches, are reduced to poverty—that others, who were in poverty are become rich—to find, those once renowned for virtue, now detested for vice—roving husbands, grown constant—constant husbands, become rovers—the firmest friends, changed to the most implacable enemies—beauty faded. In a word, every change to demonstrate, that,

"All is transitory on this side the grave."

Guided by a wish, that the reflecting reader may experience the sensation, which an attention to circumstances like these, must excite; he is desired to imagine seventeen years elapsed, since he has seen or heard of any of those persons who in the foregoing volumes have been introduced to his acquaintance—and then, supposing himself at the period of those seventeen years, follow the sequel of their history.

To begin with the first female object of this story. The beautiful, the beloved Miss Milner—she is no longer beautiful—no longer beloved—no longer—tremble while you read it!—no longer—virtuous.

Dorriforth, the pious, the good, the tender Dorriforth, is become a hard-hearted tyrant. The compassionate, the feeling, the just Lord Elmwood, an example of implacable rigour and injustice.

Miss Woodley is grown old, but less with years than grief.

The boy, Rushbrook, is become a man, and the apparent heir of Lord Elmwood's fortune; while his own daughter, his only child by his once adored Miss Milner, he refuses ever to see again, in vengeance to her mother's crimes.

The least wonderful change, is, the death of Mrs. Horton. Except Sandford, who remains much the same as heretofore.

We left Lady Elmwood in the last volume at the summit of human happiness; a loving and beloved bride. We begin this volume, and find her upon her death-bed.

At thirty-five, her "Course was run"—a course full of perils, of hopes, of fears, of joys, and at the end, of sorrows; all exquisite of their kind, for exquisite were the feelings of her susceptible heart.

At the commencement of this story, her father is described in the last moments of his life, with all his cares fixed upon her, his only child—how vain these cares! how vain every precaution that was taken for her welfare! She knows, she reflects upon this; and yet, impelled by that instinctive power which actuates a parent, Lady Elmwood on *her* dying day has no worldly thoughts, but that of the future happiness of an only child. To every other prospect in her view, "Thy will be done" is her continual exclamation; but where the misery of her daughter presents itself, the expiring penitent would there combat the will of Heaven.

To detail the progression by which vice gains a predominancy in the heart, may be a useful lesson; but it is one so little to the satisfaction of most readers, that the degrees of misconduct by which Lady Elmwood fell, are not meant to be related here; but instead of picturing every occasion of her fall, to come briefly to the events that followed.

There are, nevertheless, some articles under the former class, which ought not to be entirely omitted.

Lord Elmwood, after four years enjoyment of the most perfect happiness that marriage could give, after becoming the father of a beautiful daughter, whom he loved with a tenderness almost equal to his love of her mother, was under the indispensable necessity of leaving them both for a time, in order to rescue from the depredation of his own steward, his very large estates in the West Indies. His voyage was tedious; his residence there, from various accidents, prolonged from time to time, till near three years had at length passed away. Lady Elmwood, at first only unhappy, became at last provoked; and giving way to that irritable disposition which she had so seldom governed, resolved, in spite of his injunctions, to divert the melancholy hours caused by his absence, by mixing in the gay circles of London.

Lord Elmwood at this time, and for many months before, had been detained abroad by a severe and dangerous illness, which a too cautious

fear of her uneasiness, had prompted him to conceal; and she received his frequent apologies for not returning, with a suspicion and resentment they were calculated, but not intended, to inspire.

To violent anger, succeeded a degree of indifference still more fatal—Lady Elmwood's heart was not formed for such a state—there, where all the tumultuous passions harboured by turns, one among them soon found the means to occupy all vacancies: a passion, commencing innocently, but terminating in guilt. The dear object of her fondest, her truest affections, was away; and those affections, painted the time so irksome that was past; so wearisome, that, which was still to come; that she flew from the present tedious solitude, to the dangerous society of one, whose whole mind depraved by fashionable vices, could not repay her for a moment's loss of him, whose absence he supplied. Or, if the delirium gave her a moment's recompence, what were her sufferings, her remorse, when she was awakened from the fleeting joy, by the arrival of her husband? How happy, how transporting would have been that arrival a few months before! As it would then have been felicity unbounded, it was now—language affords no word that can describe Lady Elmwood's sensations, on being told her Lord was arrived, and that necessity alone had so long delayed his return.

Guilty, but not hardened in her guilt, her pangs, her shame were the more excessive. She fled from the place at his approach; fled from his house, never again to return to a habitation where he was the master. She did not, however, elope with her paramour, but escaped to shelter herself in the most dreary retreat; where she partook of no one comfort from society, or from life, but the still unremitting friendship of Miss Woodley. Even her infant daughter she left behind, nor would allow herself the consolation of her innocent, though reproachful smiles—she left her in her father's house, that she might be under his protection; parted with her, as she thought, for ever, with all the agonies with which mothers part from their infant children: and yet, even a mother can scarce conceive how much more sharp those agonies were, on beholding —the child sent after her, as the perpetual outcast of its father.

Lord Elmwood's love to his wife had been extravagant—the effect of his hate was the same. Beholding himself separated from her by a barrier never to be removed, he vowed in the deep torments of his revenge, never to be reminded of her by one individual object; much less, by one so near to her as her child. To bestow upon that child his affections, would be, he imagined, still, in some sort, to divide them with the mother. Firm in his resolution, the beautiful Matilda, was, at the age of six years, sent out of her father's house, and received by her mother with all the tenderness, but with all the anguish, of those parents, who behold their offspring visited by the punishment due only to their own offences.

While this rigid act was executing by Lord Elmwood's agents at his command, himself was engaged in an affair of still weightier importance —that of life or death:—he determined upon his own death, or the death of the man who had wounded his honour and destroyed his happiness. A duel with his old antagonist was the result of this determination; nor was the Duke of Avon (who before the decease of his father and eldest brother, was Lord Frederick Lawnly) averse from giving him all the satisfaction he required. For it was no other than he, whose passion for Lady Elmwood had still subsisted, and whose address in gallantry left no means unattempted for the success of his designs;—no other than he, (who, next to Lord Elmwood, had been of all her lovers, the most favoured,) to whom Lady Elmwood sacrificed her own and her husband's future peace, and thus gave to his vanity a prouder triumph, than if she had never bestowed her hand in marriage on another. This triumph however was but short—a month only, after the return of Lord Elmwood, the Duke was called upon to answer for his conduct, and was left where they met, so defaced with scars, as never again to endanger the honour of a husband. As Lord Elmwood was inexorable to all accommodation, their engagement continued for a long space of time; nor could any thing but the assurance that his opponent was slain, have at last torn him from the field, though he himself was dangerously wounded.

Yet even during the period of his danger, while for days he lay in the continual expectation of his own death, not all the entreaties of his dearest, most intimate, and most respected friends, could prevail upon him to pronounce forgiveness of his wife, or to suffer them to bring his daughter to him, for his last blessing.

Lady Elmwood, who was made acquainted with the minutest circumstance as it passed, appeared to wait the news of her husband's decease with patience; but upon her brow, and in every lineament of her

face was marked, that his death was an event she would not for a day survive: and she would have left her child an orphan, to have followed Lord Elmwood to the tomb. She was prevented the trial; he recovered; and from the ample vengeance he had obtained upon the irresistible person of the Duke, in a short time seemed to regain his usual tranquillity.

He recovered, but Lady Elmwood fell sick and languished—possessed of youth to struggle with her woes, she lingered on, till ten years decline brought her to that period, with which the reader is now going to be presented.

# CHAPTER II.

In a lonely country on the borders of Scotland, a single house by the side of a dreary heath, was the residence of the once gay, volatile Miss Milner. In a large gloomy apartment of this solitary habitation (the windows of which scarce rendered the light accessible) was laid upon her death-bed, the once lovely Lady Elmwood—pale, half suffocated with the loss of breath; yet her senses perfectly clear and collected, which served but to sharpen the anguish of dying.

In one corner of the room, by the side of an old fashioned stool, kneels Miss Woodley, praying most devoutly for her still beloved friend, but in vain endeavouring to pray composedly—floods of tears pour down her furrowed cheeks, and frequent sobs of sorrow, break through each pious ejaculation.

Close by her mother's side, one hand supporting her head, the other wiping from her face the cold dew of death, behold Lady Elmwood's daughter—Lord Elmwood's daughter too—yet he far away, negligent of what either suffers. Lady Elmwood turns to her often and attempts an embrace, but her feeble arms forbid, and they fall motionless. The daughter perceiving these ineffectual efforts, has her whole face convulsed with grief: kisses her mother; holds her to her bosom; and hangs upon her neck, as if she wished to cling there, not to be parted even by the grave.

On the other side of the bed sits Sandford—his hair grown white—his face wrinkled with age—his heart the same as ever.—The reprover, the enemy of the vain, the idle, and the wicked; but the friend and comforter of the forlorn and miserable.

Upon those features where sarcasm, reproach, and anger dwelt, to threaten and alarm the sinner; mildness, tenderness, and pity beamed, to support and console the penitent. Compassion changed his language, and softened all those harsh tones that used to denounce perdition.

"In the name of God," said he to Lady Elmwood, "of that God, who suffered for you, and, suffering, knew and pitied all our weaknesses—By him, who has given his word to *take compassion on the sinner's tears*, I bid you hope for mercy. By that innocence in which you once lived, be comforted—By the sorrows you have known since your degradation, hope, that in some measure, you have atoned—By the sincerity that shone upon your youthful face when I joined your hands, and those thousand virtues you have since given proofs of, trust, that you were not born to die *the death of the wicked*."

As he spoke these words of consolation, her trembling hand clasped his—her dying eyes darted a ray of brightness—but her failing voice endeavoured in vain, to articulate. At length, fixing her looks upon her daughter as their last dear object, she was just understood to utter the word "Father."

"I understand you," replied Sandford, "and by all that influence I ever had over him, by my prayers, my tears," (and they flowed as he spoke) "I will implore him to own his child."

She could now only smile in thanks.

"And if I should fail," continued he, "yet while I live, she shall not want a friend or protector—all an old man, like me can answer for"——here his tears interrupted him.

Lady Elmwood was sufficiently sensible of his words and their import, to make a sign as if she wished to embrace him: but finding her life leaving her fast, she reserved this last token of love for her daughter—with a struggle she lifted herself from her pillow, clung to her child—and died in her arms.

# CHAPTER III.

Lord Elmwood was by nature, and more from education, of a serious, thinking, and philosophic turn of mind. His religious studies had completely taught him to consider this world but as a passage to another; to enjoy with gratitude what Heaven in its bounty should bestow, and to bear with submission, whatever in its vengeance it might inflict. In a greater degree than most people he practised this doctrine; and as soon as the shock he received from Lady Elmwood's conduct was abated, an entire calmness and resignation ensued; but still of that sensible and feeling kind, that could never suffer him to forget the happiness he had lost; and it was this sensibility, which urged him to fly from its more keen recollection as much as possible—this, he alleged as the reason why he would never permit Lady Elmwood, or even her child, to be named in his hearing. But this injunction (which all his friends, and even the servants in the house who attended his person, had received) was, by many people, suspected rather to proceed from his resentment, than his tenderness; nor did he deny, that resentment co-operated with his prudence: for prudence he called it, not to remind himself of happiness he could never taste again, and of ingratitude that might impel him to hatred: and prudence he called it, not to form another attachment near to his heart, more especially so near as a parent's which might again expose him to all the torments of ingratitude, from an object whom he affectionately loved.

Upon these principles he formed the unshaken resolution, never to acknowledge Lady Matilda as his child—or acknowledging her as such—never to see, to hear of, or take one concern whatever in her fate and fortune. The death of her mother appeared a favourable time, had he been so inclined, to have recalled this declaration which he had solemnly and repeatedly made—she was now destitute of the protection of her other parent, and it became his duty, at least, to provide her a guardian, if he did not chuse to take that tender title upon himself—but to mention either the mother or child to Lord Elmwood, was an equal offence, and prohibited in the strongest terms to all his friends and household; and as he was an excellent good master, a sincere friend, and a most generous patron, not one of his acquaintance or dependants, were hardy enough to draw upon themselves his certain displeasure, which was always violent in the extreme, by even the official intelligence of Lady Elmwood's death.

Sandford himself, intimidated through age, or by the austere, and morose manners which Lord Elmwood had of late years adopted; Sandford wished, if possible, that some other would undertake the dangerous task of recalling to his memory there ever was such a person as his wife. He advised Miss Woodley to write a proper letter to him on the subject; but she reminded him that such a step would be more perilous to her, than to any other person, as she was the most destitute being on earth, without the benevolence of Lord Elmwood. The death of her aunt, Mrs. Horton, had left her solely relying on the bounty of Lady Elmwood, and now her death, had left her totally dependant upon the Earl—for Lady Elmwood though she had separate effects, had long before her death declared it was not her intention to leave a sentence behind her in the form of a will. She had no will, she said, but what she would wholly submit to Lord Elmwood's; and, if it were even his will, that her child should live in poverty, as well as banishment, it should be so. But, perhaps, in this implicit submission to him, there was a distant hope, that the necessitous situation of his daughter, might plead more forcibly than his parental love; and that knowing her bereft of every support but through himself, that idea might form some little tie between them, and be at least a token of the relationship.

But as Lady Elmwood anxiously wished this principle upon which she acted, should be concealed from his suspicion, she included her friend, Miss Woodley, in the same fate; and thus, the only persons dear to her, she left, but at Lord Elmwood's pleasure, to be preserved from perishing in want. Her child was too young to advise her on this subject, her friend too disinterested; and at this moment they were both without the smallest means of subsistence, except through the justice or compassion of Lord Elmwood. Sandford had indeed promised his protection to the daughter; but his liberality had no other source than from his patron, with whom he still lived as usual, except during part of the winter, when the Earl resided in town; he then mostly stole a visit to Lady Elmwood.—On this last visit he staid to see her buried.

After some mature deliberations, Sandford was now preparing to go to Lord Elmwood at his house in town, and there, to deliver himself the news that must sooner or later be told; and he meant also to venture, at

the same time, to keep the promise he had made to his dying Lady—but the news reached his Lordship before Sandford arrived; it was announced in the public papers, and by that means first came to his knowledge.

He was breakfasting by himself, when the newspaper that first gave the intelligence of Lady Elmwood's death, was laid before him—the paragraph contained these words:

"On Wednesday last died, at Dring Park, a village in Northumberland, the right honourable Countess Elmwood.—This lady, who has not been heard of for many years in the fashionable world, was a rich heiress, and of extreme beauty; but although she received overtures from many men of the first rank, she preferred her guardian, the present Lord Elmwood (then Mr. Dorriforth) to them all—and it is said, their marriage was followed by an uncommon share of felicity, till his Lordship going abroad, and remaining there some time, the consequences (to a most captivating young woman left without a protector) were such as to cause a separation on his return. Her Ladyship has left one child by the Earl, a daughter, about fifteen."

Lord Elmwood had so much feeling upon reading this, as to lay down the paper, and not take it up again for several minutes—nor did he taste his chocolate during this interval, but leaned his elbow on the table and rested his head upon his hand. He then rose up—walked two or three times across the room—sat down again—took up the paper—and read as usual.—Nor let the vociferous mourner, or the perpetual weeper, here complain of his want of sensibility—but let them remember that Lord Elmwood was a man—a man of understanding—of courage—of fortitude—above all, a man of the nicest feelings—and who shall say, but that at the time he leaned his head upon his hand, and rose to walk away the sense of what he felt, he might not feel as much as Lady Elmwood did in her last moments.

Be this as it may, his susceptibility on the occasion was not suspected by any one—yet he passed that day the same as usual; the next day too, and the day after. On the morning of the fourth, he sent for his steward to his study, and after talking of other business, said to him;

"Is it true that Lady Elmwood is dead?"

"It is, my Lord."

His Lordship looked unusually grave, and at this reply, fetched an involuntary sigh.

"Mr. Sandford, my lord," continued the steward, "sent me word of the news, but left it to my own discretion, whether I would make your Lordship acquainted with it or not: I let him know I declined."

"Where is Sandford?" asked Lord Elmwood.

"He was with my Lady," replied the steward.

"When she died?" asked he.

"Yes, my Lord."

"I am glad of it—he will see that every thing she desired is done—Sandford is a good man, and would be a friend to every body."

"He is a very good man indeed, my Lord."

There was now a silence.——Mr. Giffard then bowing, said, "Has your Lordship any further commands?"

"Write to Sandford," said Lord Elmwood, hesitating as he spoke, "and tell him to have every thing performed as she desired. And whoever she may have selected for the guardian of her child, has my consent to act as such.—Nor in one instance, where I myself am not concerned, shall I oppose her will." The tears rushed into his eyes as he said this, and caused them to start in the steward's—observing which, he sternly resumed,

"Do not suppose from this conversation, that any of those resolutions I have long since taken, are, or will be changed—they are the same; and shall continue inflexible."

"I understand you, my Lord," replied Mr. Giffard, "your express orders, to me, as well as to every other person, remain just the same as formerly, never to mention this subject to you again."

"They do, Sir."

"My Lord, I always obeyed you, and hope I always shall."

"I hope so too," he replied in a threatening accent—"Write to Sandford," continued he, "to let him know my pleasure, and that is all you have to do."

The steward bowed and withdrew.

But before his letter arrived to Sandford, Sandford arrived in town;

and Mr. Giffard related, word for word, what had passed between him and his Lord. Upon every occasion, and upon every topic, except that of Lady Elmwood and her child, Sandford was just as free with Lord Elmwood as he had ever been; and as usual (after his interview with the steward) went into his apartment without any previous notice. Lord Elmwood shook him by the hand, as upon all other meetings; and yet, whether his fear suggested it or not, Sandford thought he appeared more cool and reserved with him than formerly.

During the whole day, the slightest mention of Lady Elmwood, or of her child, was cautiously avoided—and not till the evening, (after Sandford had risen to retire, and had wished Lord Elmwood good night) did he dare to mention the subject. He then, after taking leave, and going to the door—turned back and said, “My Lord,”—

It was easy to guess on what he was preparing to speak—his voice failed, the tears began to trickle down his cheeks, he took out his handkerchief, and could proceed no farther.

“I thought,” said Lord Elmwood, angrily, “I thought I had given my orders upon the subject—did not my steward write them to you?”

“He did, my Lord,” said Sandford, humbly, “but I was set out before they arrived.”

“Has he not *told* you my mind then?” cried he, more angrily still.

“He has;” replied Sandford,—“But”——

“But what, Sir?” cried Lord Elmwood.

“Your Lordship,” continued Sandford, “was mistaken in supposing that Lady Elmwood left a will, she left none.”

“No will? no will at all?” returned he, surprised.

“No, my Lord,” answered Sandford, “she wished every thing to be as you willed.”

“She left me all the trouble, then, you mean?”

“No great trouble, Sir; for there are but two persons whom she has left behind her, to hope for your protection.”

“And who are those two?” cried he hastily.

“One, my Lord, I need not name—the other is Miss Woodley.”

There was a delicacy and humility in the manner in which Sandford delivered this reply, that Lord Elmwood could *not* resent, and he only returned,

“Miss Woodley—is she yet living?”

“She is—I left her at the house I came from.”

“Well then,” answered he, “you must see that my steward provides for those two persons. That care I leave to you—and should there be any complaints, on you they fall.”

Sandford bowed and was going.

“And now,” resumed Lord Elmwood, in a more stern voice, “let me never hear again on this subject. You have power to act in regard to the persons you have mentioned; and upon you their situation, the care, the whole management of them depends—but be sure you never let them be named before me, from this moment.”

“Then,” said Sandford, “as this must be the last time they are mentioned, I must now take the opportunity to disburden my mind of a charge”—

“What charge?” cried Lord Elmwood, morosely interrupting him.

“Though Lady Elmwood, my Lord, left no will behind her, she left a request.”

“A request!” said he, starting, “If it is for me to see her daughter, I tell you now before you ask, that I will not grant it—for by heaven (and he spoke and looked most solemnly) though I have no resentment against the innocent child, and wish her happy, yet I will never see her. Never, for her mother’s sake, suffer my heart again to be softened by an object I might dote upon. Therefore, Sir, if that is the request, it is already answered; my will is fixed.”

“The request, my Lord,” replied Sandford, (and he took out a pocket-book from whence he drew several papers) “is contained in this letter; nor do I rightly know what its contents are.” And he held it out to him.

“Is it Lady Elmwood’s writing?” asked Lord Elmwood, extremely discomposed.

“It is, my Lord.—She wrote it a few days before she died, and enjoined me to deliver it to you, with my own hands.”

“I refuse to read it:” cried he, putting it from him—and trembling while he did so.

“She desired me,” said Sandford, (still presenting the letter) “to conjure you to read it, *for her father’s sake*.”

Lord Elmwood took it instantly. But as soon as it was in his hand, he seemed distressed to know what he should do with it—in what place to go and read it—or how to fortify himself against its contents. He appeared ashamed too, that he had been so far prevailed upon, and said, by way of excuse,

“For Mr. Milner’s sake I would do much—nay, any thing, but that to which I have just now sworn never to consent. For his sake I have borne a great deal—for his sake alone, his daughter died my wife. You know, no other motive than respect for him, prevented my divorcing her. Pray (and he hesitated) was she buried with him?”

“No, my Lord—she expressed no such desire; and as that was the case, I did not think it necessary to carry the corpse so far.”

At the word corpse, Lord Elmwood shrunk, and looked shocked beyond measure—but recovering himself, said, “I am sorry for it; for he loved *her* sincerely, if she did not love him—and I wish they had been buried together.”

“It is not then too late,” said Sandford, and was going on—but the other interrupted him.

“No, no—we will have no disturbing the dead.”

“Read her letter then,” said Sandford, “and bid her rest in peace.”

“If it is in my power,” returned he, “to grant what she asks, I will—but if her demand is what I apprehend, I cannot, I will not, bid her rest by complying. You know my resolution, my disposition, and take care how you provoke me. You may do an injury to the very person you are seeking to befriend—the very maintenance I mean to allow her daughter I can withdraw.”

Poor Sandford, all alarmed at this menace, replied with energy, “My Lord, unless you begin the subject, I never shall presume to mention it again.”

“I take you at your word, and in consequence of that, but of that alone, we are friends. Good night, Sir.”

Sandford bowed with humility, and they went to their separate bedchambers.

# CHAPTER IV.

After Lord Elmwood had retired into his chamber, it was some time before he read the letter Sandford had given him. He first walked backwards and forwards in the room—he then began to take off some part of his dress, but he did it slowly. At length, he dismissed his valet, and sitting down, took the letter from his pocket. He looked at the seal, but not at the direction; for he seemed to dread seeing Lady Elmwood's handwriting. He then laid it on the table, and began again to undress. He did not proceed, but taking up the letter quickly, (with a kind of effort in making the resolution) broke it open. These were its contents:

"My Lord,

"Who writes this letter I well know—I well know also to whom it is addressed—I feel with the most powerful force both our situations; nor should I dare to offer you even this humble petition, but that at the time you receive it, there will be no such person as I am, in existence.

"For myself, then, all concern will be over—but there is a care that pursues me to the grave, and threatens my want of repose even there.

"I leave a child—I will not call her mine: that has undone her—I will not call her yours; that will be of no avail—I present her before you as the granddaughter of Mr. Milner. Oh! do not refuse an asylum even in your own house, to the destitute offspring of your friend; the last, and only remaining branch of his family.

"Receive her into your household, be her condition there ever so abject. I cannot write distinctly what I would—my senses are not impaired, but the powers of expression are. The complaint of the unfortunate child in the scriptures (a lesson I have studied) has made this wish cling so fast to my heart, that without the distant hope of its being fulfilled, death would have more terrors than my weak mind could support.

"'*I will go to my father; how many servants live in my father's house, and are fed with plenty, while I starve in a foreign land?*'

"I do not ask a parent's festive rejoicing at her approach—I do not even ask her father to behold her; but let her live under his protection. For her grandfather's sake do not refuse this—to the child of his child, whom he entrusted to your care, do not refuse it.

"Be her host; I remit the tie of being her parent. Never see her—but let her sometimes live under the same roof with you.

"It is Miss Milner, your ward, to whom you never refused a request, who supplicates you—not now for your nephew, Rushbrook, but for one so much more dear, that a denial——she dares not suffer her thoughts to glance that way.—She will hope—and in that hope, bids you farewell, with all the love she ever bore you.

"Farewell Dorriforth—farewell Lord Elmwood—and before you throw this letter from you with contempt or anger, cast your imagination into the grave where I am lying. Reflect upon all the days of my past life—the anxious moments I have known, and what has been their end. Behold *me*, also—in my altered face there is no anxiety—no joy or sorrow—all is over.——My whole frame is motionless—my heart beats no more. Look at my horrid habitation, too,—and ask yourself—whether I am an object of resentment?"

While Lord Elmwood read this letter, it trembled in his hand: he once or twice wiped the tears from his eyes as he read, and once laid the letter down for a few minutes. At its conclusion, the tears flowed fast down his face; but he seemed both ashamed and angry they did, and was going to throw the paper upon the fire—he however suddenly checked his hand, and putting it hastily into his pocket, went to bed.

# CHAPTER V.

The next morning, when Lord Elmwood and Sandford met at breakfast, the latter was pale with fear for the success of Lady Elmwood's letter—the Earl was pale too, but there was besides upon his face, something which evidently marked he was displeased. Sandford observed it, and was all humbleness, both in his words and looks, in order to soften him.

As soon as the breakfast was removed, Lord Elmwood drew the letter from his pocket, and holding it towards Sandford, said,

"That, may be of more value to you, than it is to me, therefore I give it you."

Sandford called up a look of surprise, as if he did not know the letter again.

"'Tis Lady Elmwood's letter," said Lord Elmwood, "and I return it to you for two reasons."

Sandford took it, and putting it up, asked fearfully, "What those two reasons were?"

"First," said he, "because I think it is a relick you may like to preserve—my second reason is, that you may shew it to her daughter, and let her know why, and on what conditions, I grant her mother's request."

"You *do* then grant it?" cried Sandford joyfully; "I thank you—you are kind—you are considerate."

"Be not hasty in your gratitude; you may have cause to recall it."

"I know what you have said;" replied Sandford, "you have said you grant Lady Elmwood's request—you cannot recall these words, nor I my gratitude."

"Do you know what her request is?" returned he.

"Not exactly, my Lord—I told you before, I did not; but it is no doubt something in favour of her child."

"I think not," he replied: "such as it is, however, I grant it: but in the strictest sense of the word—no farther—and one neglect of my commands, releases me from this promise totally."

"We will take care, Sir, not to disobey them."

"Then listen to what they are, for to you I give the charge of delivering them again. Lady Elmwood has petitioned me in the name of her father, (a name I reverence) to give his grandchild the sanction of my protection. In the literal sense, to suffer that she may reside at one of my seats; dispensing at the same time with my ever seeing her."

"And you will comply?"

"I will, till she encroaches on this concession, and dares to hope for a greater. I will, while she avoids my sight, or the giving me any remembrance of her. But if, whether by design or by accident, I ever see or hear from her, that moment, my compliance to her mother's supplication ceases, and I abandon her once more."

Sandford sighed. Lord Elmwood continued:

"I am glad her request stopped where it did. I would rather comply with her desires than not; and I rejoice they are such as I can grant with ease and honour to myself. I am seldom now at Elmwood castle; let her daughter go there; the few weeks or months I am down in the summer, she may easily in that extensive house avoid me—while she does, she lives in security—when she does not—you know my resolution."

Sandford bowed—the Earl resumed:

"Nor can it be a hardship to obey this command—she cannot lament the separation from a parent whom she never knew—" Sandford was going eagerly to prove the error of that assertion, but he prevented him, saying, "In a word—without farther argument—if she obeys me in this, I will provide for her as my daughter during my life, and leave her a fortune at my death—but if she dares—"

Sandford interrupted the menace prepared for utterance, saying, "and you still mean, I suppose, to make Mr. Rushbrook your heir?"

"Have you not heard me say so? And do you imagine I have changed my determination? I am not given to alter my resolutions, Mr. Sandford; and I thought you knew I was not; besides, will not my title be extinct, whoever I make my heir? Could any thing but a son have preserved my title?"

"Then it is yet possible——"

"By marrying again, you mean? No—no—I have had enough of marriage—and Henry Rushbrook I shall leave my heir. Therefore, Sir

——”

“My Lord, I do not presume—”

“Do not, Sandford, and we may still be good friends. But I am not to be controlled as formerly; my temper is changed of late; changed to what it was originally; till your religious precepts reformed it. You may remember, how troublesome it was, to conquer my stubborn disposition in my youth; *then*, indeed, you *did*; but in my more advanced age, you will find the task too difficult.”

Sandford again repeated, “He should not presume—”

To which Lord Elmwood again made answer, “Do not, Sandford;” and added, “for I have a sincere regard for you, and should be loath, at these years, to quarrel with you seriously.”

Sandford turned away his head to conceal his feelings.

“Nay, if we do quarrel,” resumed Lord Elmwood, “You know it must be your own fault; and as this is a theme the most likely of any, nay, the only one on which we can have a difference (such as we cannot forgive) take care never from this day to resume it; indeed that of itself, would be an offence I could not pardon. I have been clear and explicit in all I have said; there can be no fear of mistaking my meaning; therefore, all future explanation is unnecessary—nor will I permit a word, or a hint on the subject from any one, without shewing my resentment even to the hour of my death.” He was going out of the room.

“But before we bid adieu to the subject for ever, my Lord—there was another person whom I named to you—”

“Do you mean Miss Woodley? Oh, by all means let her live at Elmwood House too. On consideration, I have no objection to see Miss Woodley at any time—I shall be glad to see her—do not let *her* be frightened at me—to her I shall be the same, that I have always been.”

“She is a good woman, my Lord,” cried Sandford, pleased.

“You need not tell me that, Mr. Sandford; I know her worth.” And he left the room.

Sandford, to relieve Miss Woodley and her lovely charge from the suspence in which he had left them, prepared to set off for their habitation, in order himself to conduct them from thence to Elmwood Castle, and appoint some retired part of it for Lady Matilda, against the annual visit her father should pay there. But before he left London, Giffard, the steward, took an opportunity to wait upon him, and let him know, that his Lord had acquainted him with the consent he had given for his daughter to be admitted at Elmwood Castle, and upon what restrictions: that he had farther uttered the severest threats, should these restrictions ever be infringed. Sandford thanked Giffard for his friendly information. It served him as a second warning of the circumspection that was necessary; and having taken leave of his friend and patron, under the pretence that “He could not live in the smoke of London,” he set out for the North.

It is unnecessary to say with what delight Sandford was received by Miss Woodley, and the hapless daughter of Lady Elmwood, even before he told his errand. They both loved him sincerely; more especially Lady Matilda, whose forlorn state, and innocent sufferings, had ever excited his compassion and caused him to treat her with affection, tenderness, and respect. She knew, too, how much he had been her mother’s friend; for that, she also loved him; and for being honoured with the friendship of her father, she looked up to him with reverence. For Matilda (with an excellent understanding, a sedateness above her years, and early accustomed to the most private converse between Lady Elmwood and Miss Woodley) was perfectly acquainted with the whole fatal history of her mother; and was, by her, taught the respect and admiration of her father’s virtues which they justly merited.

Notwithstanding the joy of Mr. Sandford’s presence, once more to cheer their solitary dwelling; no sooner were the first kind greetings over, than the dread of what he might have to inform them of, possessed poor Matilda and Miss Woodley so powerfully, that all their gladness was changed into affright. Their apprehensions were far more forcible than their curiosity; they dared not ask a question, and even began to wish he would continue silent upon the subject on which they feared to listen. For near two hours he was so.——At length, after a short interval from speaking, (during which they waited with anxiety for what he might next say) he turned to Lady Matilda, and said,

“You don’t ask for your father, my dear.”

“I did not know it was proper:” she replied, timidly.

“It is always proper,” answered Sandford, “for *you* to think of him,

though he should never think on you.”

She burst into tears, and said that she “*Did* think of him, but she felt an apprehension of mentioning his name”—and she wept bitterly while she spoke.

“Do not think I reproved you,” said Sandford; “I only told you what was right.”

“Nay,” said Miss Woodley, “she does not weep for that—she fears her father has not complied with her mother’s request. Perhaps—not even read her letter?”

“Yes, he *has* read it,” returned Sandford.

“Oh Heavens!” exclaimed Matilda, clasping her hands together, and the tears falling still faster.

“Do not be so much alarmed, my dear,” said Miss Woodley; “you know we are prepared for the worst; and you know you promised your mother, whatever your fate should be, to submit with patience.”

“Yes,” replied Matilda, “and I am prepared for every thing, but my father’s refusal to my dear mother.”

“Your father has not refused your mother’s request,” replied Sandford.

She was leaping from her seat in ecstasy.

“But,” continued he, “do you know what her request was?”

“Not entirely,” replied Matilda, “and since it is granted, I am careless. But she told me her letter concerned none but me.”

To explain perfectly to Matilda, Lady Elmwood’s letter, and that she might perfectly understand upon what terms she was admitted into Elmwood Castle, Sandford now read the letter to her; and repeated, as nearly as he could remember, the whole of the conversation that passed between Lord Elmwood and himself; not even sparing, through an erroneous delicacy, any of those threats her father had denounced, should she dare to transgress the limits he prescribed—nor did he try to soften, in one instance, a word he uttered. She listened sometimes with tears, sometimes with hope, but always with awe, and with terror, to every sentence in which her father was concerned. Once she called him cruel—then exclaimed “He was kind;” but at the end of Sandford’s intelligence, concluded “that she was happy and grateful for the boon bestowed.” Even her mother had not a more exalted idea of Lord Elmwood’s worth than his daughter had formed; and this little bounty just obtained, would not have been greater in her mother’s estimation, than it was now in hers. Miss Woodley, too, smiled at the prospect before her—she esteemed Lord Elmwood beyond any mortal living—she was proud to hear what he had said in her praise, and overjoyed at the prospect of being once again in his company; painting at the same time a thousand bright hopes, from watching every emotion of his soul, and catching every proper occasion to excite or increase his paternal sentiments. Yet she had the prudence to conceal those vague hopes from his child, lest a disappointment might prove fatal; and assuming a behaviour neither too much elated or depressed, she advised that they should hope for the best, but yet, as usual, expect and prepare for the worst.——After taking measures for quitting their melancholy abode, within the fortnight, they all departed for Elmwood Castle—Matilda, Miss Woodley, and even Sandford, first visiting Lady Elmwood’s grave, and bedewing it with their tears.

# CHAPTER VI.

It was on a dark evening in the month of March, that Lady Matilda, accompanied by Sandford and Miss Woodley, arrived at Elmwood Castle, the magnificent seat of her father. Sandford chose the evening, rather to steal into the house privately, than by any appearance of parade, to suffer Lord Elmwood to be reminded of their arrival by the public prints, or by any other accident. Nor would he give the neighbours or servants reason to suppose, the daughter of their Lord was admitted into his house, in any other situation than that, in which she really was permitted to be there.

As the porter opened the gates of the avenue to the carriage that brought them, Matilda felt an awful, and yet gladsome sensation, which no terms can describe. As she entered the door of the house this sensation increased—and as she passed along the spacious hall, the splendid staircase, and many stately apartments, wonder, with a crowd of the tenderest, yet most afflicting sentiments, rushed to her heart. She gazed with astonishment!—she reflected with still more.

"And is *my father* the master of this house?" she cried—"and was my mother once the mistress of this castle?" Here tears relieved her from a part of that burthen, which was before insupportable.

"Yes," replied Sandford, "and you are the mistress of it now, till your father arrives."

"Good God!" exclaimed she, "and will he ever arrive? and shall I live to sleep under the same roof with my father?"

"My dear," replied Miss Woodley, "have not you been told so?"

"Yes," said she, "but though I heard it with extreme pleasure, yet the idea never so forcibly affected me as at this moment. I now feel, as the reality approaches, that to be admitted here, is kindness enough—I do not ask for more—I am now convinced, from what this trial makes me feel, that to see my father, would occasion emotions I could not survive."

The next morning gave to Matilda, more objects of admiration and wonder, as she walked over the extensive gardens, groves, and other pleasure grounds belonging to the house. She, who had never been beyond the dreary, ruinous places which her deceased mother had made her residence, was naturally struck with amazement and delight at the grandeur of a seat, which travellers came for miles to see, nor thought their time mispent.

There was one object, however, among all she saw, which attracted her attention above the rest, and she would stand for hours to look at it. This was a whole length portrait of Lord Elmwood, esteemed a very capital picture, and a perfect likeness—to this picture she would sigh and weep; though when it was first pointed out to her, she shrunk back with fear, and it was some time before she dared venture to cast her eyes completely upon it. In the features of her father she was proud to discern the exact mould in which her own appeared to have been modelled; yet Matilda's person, shape, and complexion were so extremely like what her mother's once were, that at the first glance she appeared to have a still greater resemblance of her, than of her father—but her mind and manners were all Lord Elmwood's; softened by the delicacy of her sex, the extreme tenderness of her heart, and the melancholy of her situation.

She was now in her seventeenth year—of the same age, within a year and a few months, of her mother, when she became the ward of Dorriforth. She was just three years old when her father went abroad, and remembered something of bidding him farewell; but more of taking cherries from his hand, as he pulled them from the tree to give to her.

Educated in the school of adversity, and inured to retirement from her infancy, she had acquired a taste for all those amusements which a recluse life affords. She was fond of walking and riding—was accomplished in the arts of music and drawing, by the most careful instructions of her mother—and as a scholar, she excelled most of her sex, from the pains which Sandford had taken with that part of her education, and the superior abilities he possessed for the task.

In devoting certain hours of the day to study with him, others to music, riding, and such amusements, Matilda's time never appeared tedious at Elmwood Castle, although she received and paid no one visit—for it was soon divulged in the neighbourhood, upon what stipulation she resided at her father's, and studiously intimated, that the most prudent and friendly behaviour of her true friends, would be, to take no notice whatever that she lived among them: and as Lord Elmwood's will was a

law all around, such was the consequence of that will, known, or merely supposed.

Neither did Miss Woodley regret the want of visitors, but found herself far more satisfied in her present situation, than her most sanguine hopes could have formed. She had a companion whom she loved with an equal fondness, with which she had loved her deceased mother; and frequently, in this charming mansion, where she had so often beheld Lady Elmwood, her imagination represented Matilda as her friend risen from the grave, in her former youth, health, and exquisite beauty.

In peace, in content, though not in happiness, the days and weeks passed away till about the middle of August, when preparations began to be made for the arrival of Lord Elmwood. The week in which he was to come was at length fixed, and some part of his retinue was arrived before him. When this was told Matilda, she started, and looked just as her mother at her age had often done, when in spite of her love, she was conscious that she had offended him, and was terrified at his approach. Sandford observing this, put out his hand, and taking hers, shook it kindly; and bade her (but it was not in a cheering tone) “not be afraid.” This gave her no confidence; and she began, before her father’s arrival, to seclude herself in the apartments allotted for her during the time of his stay; and in the timorous expectation of his coming, her appetite declined, and she lost all her colour. Even Miss Woodley, whose spirits had been for some time elated with the hopes she had formed, on drawing near to the test, found those hopes vanished; and though she endeavoured to conceal it, she was full of apprehensions. Sandford, had certainly fewer fears than either; yet upon the eve of the day on which his patron was to arrive, he was evidently cast down.

Lady Matilda once asked him—“Are you certain, Mr. Sandford, you made no mistake in respect to what Lord Elmwood said, when he granted my mother’s request? Are you sure he *did* grant it? Was there nothing equivocal on which he may ground his displeasure should he be told that I am here? Oh do not let me hazard being once again turned out of his house! Oh! save me from provoking him perhaps to curse me.” And here she clasped her hands together with the most fervent petition, in the dread of what might happen.

“If you doubt my words or my senses,” said Sandford, “call Giffard, and let him inform you; the same words were repeated to him as to me.”

Though from her reason, Matilda could not doubt of any mistake from Mr. Sandford, yet her fears suggested a thousand scruples; and this reference to the steward she received with the utmost satisfaction, (though she did not think it necessary to apply to him) as it perfectly convinced her of the folly of the suspicions she had entertained.

“And yet, Mr. Sandford,” said she, “if it is so, why are you less cheerful than you were? I cannot help thinking but it must be your expectation of Lord Elmwood, which has occasioned this change.”

“I don’t know,” replied Sandford, carelessly, “but I believe I am grown afraid of your father. His temper is a great deal altered from what it once was—he raises his voice, and uses harsh expressions upon the least provocation—his eyes flash lightning, and his face is distorted with anger upon the slightest motives—he turns away his old servants at a moment’s warning, and no concession can make their peace. In a word, I am more at my ease when I am away from him—and I really believe,” added he with a smile, but with a tear at the same time, “I really believe, I am more afraid of *him* in my age, than he was of *me* when he was a boy.”

Miss Woodley was present; she and Matilda looked at one another; and each of them saw the other turn pale at this description.

The day at length came, on which Lord Elmwood was expected to dinner. It would have been a high gratification to his daughter to have gone to the topmost window of the house, and have only beheld his carriage enter the avenue; but it was a gratification which her fears, her tremor, her extreme sensibility would not permit her to enjoy.

Miss Woodley and she, sat down that day to dinner in their retired apartments, which were detached from the other part of the house by a gallery; and of the door leading to the gallery, they had a key to impede any one from passing that way, without first ringing a bell; to answer which, was the sole employment of a servant, who was placed there during the Earl’s residence, lest by any accident he might chance to come near that unfrequented part of the house, on which occasion the man was to give immediate notice to his Lady.

Matilda and Miss Woodley sat down to dinner, but did not dine. Sandford dined as usual, with Lord Elmwood. When tea was brought, Miss Woodley asked the servant, who attended, if he had seen his Lord.

The man answered, “Yes, Madam; and he looks vastly well.” Matilda wept with joy to hear it.

About nine in the evening, Sandford rang at the bell, and was admitted —never had he been so welcome—Matilda hung upon him, as if his recent interview with her father, had endeared him to her more than ever; and staring anxiously in his face, seemed to enquire of him something about Lord Elmwood, and something that should not alarm her.

“Well—how do you find yourself?” said he to her.

“How are you, Mr. Sandford?” she returned, with a sigh.

“Oh! very well,” replied he.

“Is my Lord in a good temper?” asked Miss Woodley.

“Yes; very well,” replied Sandford, with indifference.

“Did he seem glad to see you?” asked Matilda.

“He shook me by the hand,” replied Sandford.

“That was a sign he was glad to see you, was it not?” said Matilda.

“Yes; but he could not do less.”

“Nor more:” replied she.

“He looks very well, our servant tells us,” said Miss Woodley.

“Extremely well indeed,” answered Sandford: “and to tell the truth, I never saw him in better spirits.”

“That is well—” said Matilda, and sighed a weight of fears from her heart.

“Where is he now, Mr. Sandford?”

“Gone to take a walk about his grounds, and I stole here in the mean time.”

“What was your conversation during dinner?” asked Miss Woodley.

“Horses, hay, farming, and politics.”

“Won’t you sup with him?”

“I shall see him again before I go to bed.”

“And again to-morrow!” cried Matilda, “what happiness!”

“He has visitors to-morrow,” said Sandford, “coming for a week or two.”

“Thank Heaven,” said Miss Woodley, “he will then be diverted from thinking on us.”

“Do you know,” returned Sandford, “it is my firm opinion, that his thinking of ye at present, is the cause of his good spirits.”

“Oh, Heavens!” cried Matilda, lifting up her hands with rapture.

“Nay, do not mistake me,” said Sandford; “I would not have you build a foundation for joy upon this surmise; for if he is in spirits that you are in this house—so near him—positively under his protection—yet he will not allow himself to think it is the cause of his content—and the sentiments he has adopted, and which are now become natural to him, will remain the same as ever; nay, perhaps with greater force, should he suspect his weakness (as he calls it) acting in opposition to them.”

“If he does but think of me with tenderness,” cried Matilda, “I am recompensed.”

“And what recompense would his kind thoughts be to you,” said Sandford, “were he to turn you out to beggary?”

“A great deal—a great deal,” she replied.

“But how are you to know he has these kind thoughts, if he gives you no proof of them?”

“No, Mr. Sandford; but *supposing* we could know them without proof.”

“But as that is impossible,” answered he, “I shall suppose, till proof appears, that I have been mistaken in my conjectures.”

Matilda looked deeply concerned that the argument should conclude in her disappointment; for to have believed herself thought of with tenderness by her father, would have alone constituted her happiness.

When the servant came up with something by way of supper, he told Mr. Sandford that his Lord was returned from his walk and had enquired for him; Sandford immediately bade his companions good night, and left them.

“How strange is this!” cried Matilda, when Miss Woodley and she were alone, “My father within a few rooms of me, and yet I am debarred from seeing him! Only by walking a few paces I could be at his feet, and perhaps receive his blessing!”

“You make me shudder,” cried Miss Woodley; “but some spirits less

timid than mine, might perhaps advise you to the experiment."

"Not for worlds!" returned Matilda, "no counsel could tempt me to such temerity—and yet to entertain the thought that it is possible I could do this, is a source of infinite comfort."

This conversation lasted till bed time, and later; for they sat up beyond their usual hour to indulge it.

Miss Woodley slept little, but Matilda less—she awaked repeatedly during the night, and every time sighed to herself, "I sleep in the same house with my father! Blessed spirit of my mother, look down and rejoice."

# CHAPTER VII.

The next day the whole Castle appeared to Lady Matilda (though she was in some degree retired from it) all tumult and bustle, as was usually the case while Lord Elmwood was there. She saw from her windows, the servants running across the yards and park; horses and carriages driving with fury; all the suite of a nobleman; and it sometimes elated, at other times depressed her.

These impressions however, and others of fear and anxiety, which her father's arrival had excited, by degrees wore off; and after some little time, she was in the same tranquil state that she enjoyed before he came.

He had visitors, who passed a week or two with him; he paid visits himself for several days; and thus the time stole away, till it was about four weeks from the time that he had arrived; in which long period, Sandford, with all his penetration, could never clearly discover whether he had once called to mind that his daughter was living in the same house. He had not once named her (that was not extraordinary) consequently no one dared name her to him; but he had not even mentioned Miss Woodley, of whom he had so lately spoken in the kindest terms, and had said, "He should take pleasure in seeing her again." From these contradictions in Lord Elmwood's behaviour in respect to her, it was Miss Woodley's plan neither to throw herself in his way, nor avoid him. She therefore frequently walked about the house while he was in it, not indeed entirely without restraint, but at least with the show of liberty. This freedom, indulged for some time without peril, became at last less cautious; and as no ill consequences had arisen from its practice, her scruples gradually ceased.

One morning, however, as she was crossing the large hall, thoughtless of danger, a footstep at a distance alarmed her almost without knowing why. She stopped for a moment, thinking to return; the steps approached quicker, and before she could retreat, she beheld Lord Elmwood at the other end of the hall, and perceived that he saw her. It was too late to hesitate what was to be done; she could not go back, and had not courage to go on; she therefore stood still. Disconcerted, and much affected at his sight, (their former intimacy coming to her mind with the many years, and many sad occurrences passed, since she last saw him) all her intentions, all her meditated plans how to conduct herself on such an occasion, gave way to a sudden shock—and to make the meeting yet more distressing, her very fright, she knew, would serve to recall more powerfully to his mind, the subject she most wished him to forget. The steward was with him, and as they came up close by her side, Giffard observing him look at her earnestly, said softly, but so as she heard him, "My Lord, it is Miss Woodley." Lord Elmwood took off his hat instantly—and, with an apparent friendly warmth, laying hold of her hand, he said, "Indeed, Miss Woodley, I did not know you—I am very glad to see you:" and while he spoke, shook her hand with a cordiality which her tender heart could not bear—and never did she feel so hard a struggle as to restrain her tears. But the thought of Matilda's fate—the idea of awakening in his mind a sentiment that might irritate him against his child, wrought more forcibly than every other effort; and though she could not reply distinctly, she replied without weeping. Whether he saw her embarrassment, and wished to release her from it, or was in haste to conceal his own, he left her almost instantly: but not till he had entreated she would dine that very day with him and Mr. Sandford, who were to dine without other company. She curtsied assent, and flew to tell Matilda what had occurred. After listening with anxiety and with joy to all she told, Matilda laid hold of that hand which she said Lord Elmwood had held, and pressed it to her lips with love and reverence.

When Miss Woodley made her appearance at dinner, Sandford, (who had not seen her since the invitation, and did not know of it) looked amazed; on which Lord Elmwood said, "Do you know, Sandford, I met Miss Woodley this morning, and had it not been for Giffard, I should have passed her without knowing her—but Miss Woodley, if I am not so much altered but that you knew me, I take it unkind you did not speak first." She was unable to speak even now—he saw it, and changed the conversation; when Sandford eagerly joined in discourse, which relieved him from the pain of the former.

As they advanced in their dinner, the embarrassment of Miss Woodley and of Mr. Sandford diminished; Lord Elmwood in his turn became, not embarrassed, but absent and melancholy. He now and then sighed heavily—and called for wine much oftener than he was accustomed.

When Miss Woodley took her leave, he invited her to dine with him and Sandford whenever it was convenient to her; he said, besides, many things of the same kind, and all with the utmost civility, yet not with that warmth with which he had spoken in the morning—into *that* he had been surprised—his coolness was the effect of reflection.

When she came to Lady Matilda, and Sandford had joined them, they talked and deliberated on what had passed.

“You acknowledge Mr. Sandford,” said Miss Woodley, “that you think my presence affected Lord Elmwood, so as to make him much more thoughtful than usual; if you imagine these thoughts were upon Lady Elmwood, I will never intrude again; but if you suppose that I made him think upon his daughter, I cannot go too often.”

“I don’t see how he can divide those two objects in his mind,” replied Sandford, “therefore you must e’en visit him on, and take your chance, what reflections you may cause—but, be they what they will, time will steal away from you that power of affecting him.”

She concurred in the opinion, and occasionally she walked into Lord Elmwood’s apartments, dined, or took her coffee with him, as the accident suited; and observed, according to Sandford’s prediction, that time wore off the impression her visits first made. Lord Elmwood now became just the same before her as before others. She easily discerned, too, through all that politeness which he assumed—that he was no longer the considerate, the forbearing character he formerly was; but haughty, impatient, imperious, and more than ever, *implacable*.

# CHAPTER VIII.

When Lord Elmwood had been at his country seat about six weeks, Mr. Rushbrook, his nephew, and his adopted child—that friendless boy whom poor Lady Elmwood first introduced into his uncle's house, and by her kindness preserved there—arrived from his travels, and was received by his uncle with all the marks of affection due to the man he thought worthy to be his heir. Rushbrook had been a beautiful boy, and was now an extremely handsome young man; he had made unusual progress in his studies, had completed the tour of Italy and Germany, and returned home with the air and address of a perfect man of fashion—there was, besides, an elegance and persuasion in his manner almost irresistible. Yet with all those accomplishments, when he was introduced to Sandford, and put forth his hand to take his, Sandford, with evident reluctance, gave it to him; and when Lord Elmwood asked him, in the young man's presence, "If he did not think his nephew greatly improved?" He looked at him from head to foot, and muttered "He could not say he observed it." The colour heightened in Mr. Rushbrook's face upon the occasion, but he was too well bred not to be in perfect good humour.

Sandford saw this young man treated, in the house of Lord Elmwood, with the same respect and attention as if he had been his son; and it was but probable the old priest would make a comparison between the situation of him, and of Lady Matilda Elmwood. Before her, it was Sandford's meaning to have concealed his thoughts upon the subject, and never to have mentioned it but with composure; that was, however, impossible—unused to hide his feelings, at the name of Rushbrook, his countenance would always change, and a sarcastic sneer, sometimes a frown of resentment, would force its way in spite of his resolution. Miss Woodley, too, with all her boundless charity and good will, was, upon this occasion, induced to limit their excess; and they did not extend so far as to reach poor Rushbrook. She even, and in *reality*, did not think him handsome or engaging in his manners—she thought his gaiety frivolousness, his complaisance affectation, and his good humour impertinence. It was impossible to conceal those unfavourable sentiments entirely from Matilda; for when the subject arose, as it frequently did, Miss Woodley's undisguised heart, and Sandford's undisguised countenance, told them instantly. Matilda had the understanding to imagine, that she was, perhaps, the object who had thus deformed Mr. Rushbrook, and frequently (though he was a stranger to her, and one who had caused her many a jealous heart-ache) frequently she would speak in his vindication.

"You are very good," said Sandford, one day to her; "you like him, because you know your father loves him."

This was a hard sentence for the daughter of Lord Elmwood to hear, to whom her father's love would have been more precious than any other blessing.—She, however, checked the assault of envy, and kindly replied,

"My mother loved him too, Mr. Sandford."

"Yes," answered Sandford, "he has been a *grateful* man to your poor mother.—She did not suppose when she took him into the house; when she intreated your father to take him; and through her caresses and officious praises of him, first gave him that power which he now possesses over his uncle; she little foresaw, at that time, his ingratitude, and its effects."

"Very true," said Miss Woodley, with a heavy sigh.

"What ingratitude?" asked Matilda, "do you suppose Mr. Rushbrook is the cause that my father will not see me? Oh do not pay Lord Elmwood's motive so ill a compliment."

"I do not say that he is the absolute cause," returned Sandford; "but if a parent's heart is void, I would have it remain so, till its lawful owner is replaced—usurpers I detest."

"No one can take Lord Elmwood's heart by force," replied his daughter, "it must, I believe, be a free gift to the possessor; and as such, whoever has it, has a right to it."

In this manner she would plead the young man's excuse—perhaps but to hear what could be said in his disfavour, for secretly his name was bitter to her—and once she exclaimed in vexation, on Sandford's saying Lord Elmwood and Mr. Rushbrook were gone out shooting together,

"All that pleasure is now eclipsed which I used to take in listening to the report of my father's gun, for I cannot now distinguish his, from his parasite's."

Sandford, (much as he disliked Rushbrook) for this expression which comprised her father in the reflection, turned to Matilda in extreme anger—but as he saw the colour mount into her face, for what, in the strong feelings of her heart had escaped her lips, he did not say a word—and by her tears that followed, he rejoiced to see how much she reproved *herself*.

Miss Woodley, vexed to the heart, and provoked every time she saw Lord Elmwood and Rushbrook together, and saw the familiar terms on which this young man lived with his benefactor, now made her visits to him very seldom. If Lord Elmwood observed this, he did not appear to observe it; and though he received her politely when she did pay him a visit, it was always very coldly; nor did she suppose if she never went, he would ever ask for her. For his daughter's sake, however, she thought it right sometimes to shew herself before him; for she knew it must be impossible that, with all his apparent indifference, he could ever see *her* without thinking for a moment on his child; and what one fortunate thought might some time bring about, was an object much too serious for her to overlook. She therefore, after remaining confined to her apartments near three weeks, (excepting those anxious walks she and Matilda stole, while Lord Elmwood dined, or before he rose in a morning) went one forenoon into his apartments, where, as usual, she found him, with Mr. Sandford, and Mr. Rushbrook. After she had sat about half an hour, conversing with them all, though but very little with the latter, Lord Elmwood was called out of the room upon some business; presently after, Sandford; and now, by no means pleased with the companion with whom she was left, she rose, and was going likewise, when Rushbrook fixed his speaking eyes upon her, and cried,

"Miss Woodley, will you pardon me what I am going to say?"

"Certainly, Sir. You can, I am sure, say nothing but what I must forgive." But she made this reply with a distance and a reserve, very unlike the usual manners of Miss Woodley.

He looked at her earnestly and cried, "Ah! Miss Woodley, you don't behave so kindly to me as you used to do!"

"I do not understand you, Sir," she replied very gravely; "Times are changed, Mr. Rushbrook, since you were last here—you were then but a child."

"Yet I love all those persons now, that I loved then," replied he; "and so I shall for ever."

"But you mistake, Mr. Rushbrook; I was not even then so very much the object of your affections—there were other ladies you loved better. Perhaps you don't remember Lady Elmwood?"

"Don't I," cried he, "Oh!" (clasping his hands and lifting up his eyes to heaven) "shall I ever forget her?"

That moment Lord Elmwood opened the door; the conversation of course that moment ended; but confusion, at the sudden surprise, was on the face of both parties—he saw it, and looked at each of them by turns, with a sternness that made poor Miss Woodley ready to faint; while Rushbrook, with the most natural and happy laugh that ever was affected, cried, "No, don't tell my Lord, pray Miss Woodley." She was more confused than before, and Lord Elmwood turning to him, asked what the subject was. By this time he had invented one, and, continuing his laugh, said, "Miss Woodley, my Lord, will to this day protest that she saw my apparition when I was a boy; and she says it is a sign I shall die young, and is really much affected at it."

Lord Elmwood turned away before this ridiculous speech was concluded; yet so well had it been acted, that he did not for an instant doubt its truth.

Miss Woodley felt herself greatly relieved; and yet so little is it in the power of those we dislike to do any thing to please us, that from this very circumstance, she formed a more unfavourable opinion of Mr. Rushbrook than she had done before. She saw in this little incident the art of dissimulation, cunning, and duplicity in its most glaring shape; and detested the method by which they had each escaped Lord Elmwood's suspicion, and perhaps anger, the more, because it was so dexterously managed.

Lady Matilda and Sandford were both in their turns informed of this trait in Mr. Rushbrook's character; and although Miss Woodley had the best of dispositions, and upon every occasion spoke the strictest truth, yet in relating this occurrence, she did not speak *all* the truth; for every circumstance that would have told to the young man's advantage, *literally* had slipped her memory.

The twenty-ninth of October arrived; on which a dinner, a ball, and

supper, was given by Lord Elmwood to all the neighbouring gentry—the peasants also dined in the park off a roasted bullock, several casks of ale were distributed, and the bells of the village rung. Matilda, who heard and saw some part of this festivity from her windows, inquired the cause; but even the servant who waited upon her had too much sensibility to tell her, and answered, “He did not know.” Miss Woodley however, soon learned the reason, and groaning with the painful secret, informed her, “Mr. Rushbrook on that day was come of age.”

“*My* birth-day was last week,” replied Matilda; but not a word beside.

In their retired apartments, this day passed away not only soberly, but almost silently; for to speak upon any subject that did not engage their thoughts had been difficult, and to speak upon the only one that did, had been afflicting.

Just as they were sitting down to dinner their bell gently rung, and in walked Sandford.

“Why are you not among the revellers, Mr. Sandford?” cried Miss Woodley, with an ironical sneer—(the first her features ever wore)—“Pray, were not you invited to dine with the company?”

“Yes,” replied Sandford; “but my head ached; and so I had rather come and take a bit with you.”

Matilda, as if she had seen his heart as he spoke, clung round his neck and sobbed on his bosom: he put her peevishly away, crying “Nonsense, nonsense—eat your dinner.” But he did not eat himself.

# CHAPTER IX.

About a week after this, Lord Elmwood went out two days for a visit; consequently Rushbrook was for that time master of the house. The first morning he went a shooting, and returning about noon, enquired of Sandford, who was sitting in the room, if he had taken up a volume of plays left upon the table. “I read no such things,” replied Sandford, and quitted the room abruptly. Rushbrook then rang for his servant, and desired him to look for the book, asking him angrily, “Who had been in the apartment? for he was sure he had left it there when he went out.” The servant withdrew to enquire, and presently returned with the volume in his hand, and “Miss Woodley’s compliments, she begs your pardon, Sir, she did not know the book was yours, and hopes you will excuse the liberty she took.”

“Miss Woodley!” cried Rushbrook with surprise, “she comes so seldom into these apartments, I did not suppose it was her who had it—take it back to her instantly, with my respects, and I beg she will keep it.”

The man went; but returned with the book again, and laying it on the table without speaking, was going away; when Rushbrook, hurt at receiving no second message, said, “I am afraid, Sir, you did very wrong when you first took this book from Miss Woodley.”

“It was not from her I took it, Sir,” replied the man, “it was from Lady Matilda.”

Since he had entered the house, Rushbrook had never before heard the name of Lady Matilda, he was shocked—confounded more than ever—and to conceal what he felt, instantly ordered the man out of the room.

In the mean time, Miss Woodley and Matilda were talking over this trifling occurrence; and frivolous as it was, drew from it strong conclusions of Rushbrook’s insolence and power. In spite of her pride, the daughter of Lord Elmwood even wept at the insult she had received on this insignificant occasion; for the volume being merely taken from her at Mr. Rushbrook’s command, she felt an insult; and the manner in which it was done by the servant, might contribute to the offence.

While Miss Woodley and she were upon this conversation, a note came from Rushbrook to Miss Woodley, wherein he entreated he might be permitted to see her. She sent a verbal answer, “She was engaged.” He sent again, begging she would name her own time. But sure of a second denial, he followed the servant who took the last message, and as Miss Woodley came out of her apartment into the gallery to speak to him, Rushbrook presented himself, and told the man to retire.

“Mr. Rushbrook,” said Miss Woodley, “this intrusion is insupportable; and destitute as you may think me of the friendship of Lord Elmwood”——

In the ardour with which Rushbrook was waiting to express himself, he interrupted her, and caught hold of her hand.

She immediately snatched it from him, and withdrew into her chamber.

He followed, saying, in a low voice, “Dear Miss Woodley, hear me.”

At that juncture Lady Matilda, who was in an inner apartment, came out of it into Miss Woodley’s. Perceiving a gentleman, she stopped short at the door.

Rushbrook cast his eyes upon her, and stood motionless—his lips only moved. “Do not depart, Madam,” said he, “without hearing my apology for being here.”

Though Matilda had never seen him since her infancy, there was no occasion to tell her who it was that addressed her—his elegant and youthful person, joined to the incident which had just occurred, convinced her it was Rushbrook: she looked at him with an air of surprise, but with still more, of dignity.

“Miss Woodley is severe upon me, Madam,” continued he, “she judges me unkindly; and I am afraid she will prepossess you with the same unfavourable sentiments.”

Still Matilda did not speak, but looked at him with the same air of dignity.

“If, Lady Matilda,” resumed he, “I have offended you, and must quit you without pardon, I am more unhappy than I should be with the loss of your father’s protection—more forlorn, than when an orphan boy, your mother first took pity on me.”

At this last sentence, Matilda turned her eyes on Miss Woodley, and seemed in doubt what reply she was to give.

Rushbrook immediately fell upon his knees—“Oh! Lady Matilda,” cried

he, “if you knew the sensations of my heart, you would not treat me with this disdain.”

“We can only judge of those sensations, Mr. Rushbrook,” said Miss Woodley, “by the effect they have upon your conduct; and while you insult Lord and Lady Elmwood’s daughter by an intrusion like this, and then ridicule her abject state by mockeries like these——”

He rose from his knees instantly, and interrupted her, crying, “What can I do? What am I to say, to make you change your opinion of me? While Lord Elmwood has been at home, I have kept an awful distance; and though every moment I breathed was a wish to cast myself at his daughter’s feet, yet as I feared, Miss Woodley, that you were incensed against me, by what means was I to procure an interview but by stratagem or force? This accident has given a third method, and I had not strength, I had not courage, to let it pass. Lord Elmwood will soon return, and we may both of us be hurried to town immediately—then how for a tedious winter could I endure the reflexion that I was despised, nay, perhaps considered as an object of ingratitude, by the only child of my deceased benefactress?”

Matilda replied with all her father’s haughtiness, “Depend upon it, Sir, if you should ever enter my thoughts, it will only be as an object of envy.”

“Suffer me then, Madam,” said he, “as an earnest that you do not think worse of me than I merit, suffer me to be sometimes admitted into your presence—.”

She would scarce permit him to finish the period, before she replied, “This is the last time, Sir, we shall ever meet, depend upon it—unless, indeed, Lord Elmwood should delegate to you the controul of me—*his* commands I never dispute.” And here she burst into tears.

Rushbrook walked towards the window, and did not speak for some time—then turning himself to make a reply, both Matilda and Miss Woodley were somewhat surprised to see, that he had been shedding tears himself.—Having conquered them, he said, “I will not offend you, Madam, by remaining one moment longer; and I give you my honour, that, upon no pretence whatever, will I presume to intrude here again. Professions, I find, have no weight, and only by this obedience to your orders, can I give a proof of that respect which you inspire;—and let the agitation I now feel, convince you, Lady Matilda, that, with all my seeming good fortune, I am not happier than yourself.” And so much was he agitated while he delivered this, that it was with difficulty he came to the conclusion. When he did, he bowed with reverence, as if leaving the presence of a deity, and retired.

Matilda immediately entered the chamber she had left, and without casting a single look at Miss Woodley by which she might guess of the opinion she had formed of Mr. Rushbrook’s conduct. The next time they met they did not even mention his name; for they were ashamed to own a partiality in his favour, and were too just to bring any accusation against him.

But Miss Woodley, the day following, communicated the intelligence of this visit to Mr. Sandford, who not being present, and a witness of those marks of humility and respect which were conspicuous in the deportment of Mr. Rushbrook, was highly offended at his presumption, and threatened if he ever dared to force his company there again, he would acquaint Lord Elmwood with his arrogance, whatever might be the event. Miss Woodley, however, assured him, she believed he would have no cause for such a complaint, as the young man had made the most solemn promise never to commit the like offence; and she thought it her duty to enjoin Sandford, till he did repeat it, not to mention the circumstance, even to Rushbrook himself.

Matilda could not but feel a regard for her father’s heir, in return for that which he had so fervently declared for her; yet the more favourable her opinion of his mind and manners, the more he became an object of her jealousy for the affections of Lord Elmwood, and he was now consequently, an object of greater sorrow to her, than when she believed him less worthy. These sentiments were reversed on his part towards her —no jealousy intervened to bar his admiration and esteem—the beauty of her person, and grandeur of her mien, not only confirmed, but improved, the exalted idea he had formed of her previous to their meeting, and which his affection to both her parents had inspired. The next time he saw his benefactor, he began to feel a new esteem and regard for him, for his daughter’s sake; as he had at first an esteem for her, on the foundation of his love for Lord and Lady Elmwood. He gazed with wonder at his uncle’s insensibility to his own happiness, and would gladly have led him to the jewel he cast away, though even his own expulsion should be the fatal consequence. Such was the youthful, warm,

generous, grateful, but unreflecting mind of Rushbrook.

# CHAPTER X.

After this incident, Miss Woodley left her apartments less frequently than before—she was afraid, though till now mistrust had been a stranger to her heart, she was afraid that duplicity might be concealed under the apparent friendship of Rushbrook; it did not indeed appear so from any part of his behaviour, but she was apprehensive for the fate of Matilda; she disliked him too, and therefore she suspected him. Near three weeks she had not now paid a visit to Lord Elmwood, and though to herself every visit was a pain, yet as Matilda took a delight in hearing of her father, what he said, what he did, what his attention seemed most employed on, and a thousand other circumstantial informations, in which Sandford would scorn to be half so particular, it was a deprivation to her, that Miss Woodley did not go oftener. Now too, the middle of November was come, and it was expected her father would soon quit the country.

Partly therefore to indulge her hapless companion, and partly because it was a duty, Miss Woodley once again paid Lord Elmwood a morning visit, and staid dinner. Rushbrook was officiously polite, (for that was the epithet she gave his attention in relating it to Lady Matilda) yet she owned he had not that forward impertinence she had formerly discovered in him, but appeared much more grave and sedate.

“But tell me of my father,” said Matilda.

“I was going, my dear—but don’t be concerned—don’t let it vex you.”

“What? what?” cried Matilda, frightened by the preface.

“Why, on my observing that I thought Mr. Rushbrook looked paler than usual, and appeared not to be in perfect health, (which was really the case) your father expressed the greatest anxiety imaginable; he said he could not bear to see him look so ill, begged him, with all the tenderness of a parent, to take the advice of a physician, and added a thousand other affectionate things.”

“I detest Mr. Rushbrook,” said Matilda, with her eyes flashing indignation.

“Nay, for shame,” returned Miss Woodley; “do you suppose I told you this, to make you hate him?”

“No, there was no occasion for that,” replied Matilda; “my sentiments (though I have never before avowed them) were long ago formed; he was always an object which added to my unhappiness; but since his daring intrusion into my apartments, he has been an object of my hatred.”

“But now, perhaps, I may tell you something to please you,” cried Miss Woodley.

“And what is that?” said Matilda, with indifference; for the first intelligence had hurt her spirits too much to suffer her to listen with pleasure to anything.

“Mr. Rushbrook,” continued Miss Woodley, “replied to your father, that his indisposition was but a slight nervous fever, and he would defer a physician’s advice till he went to London”—on which Lord Elmwood said, “And when do you expect to be there?”—he replied, “Within a week or two, I suppose, my Lord.” But your father answered, “I do not mean to go myself till after Christmas.” “No indeed, my Lord!” said Mr. Sandford, with surprise: “you have not passed your Christmas here these many years.” “No,” returned your father; “but I think I feel myself more attached to this house at present, than ever I did in my life.”

“You imagine, then, my father thought of me, when he said this?” cried Matilda eagerly.

“But I may be mistaken,” replied Miss Woodley. “I leave you to judge. Though I am sure Mr. Sandford imagined he thought of you, for I saw a smile over his whole face immediately.”

“Did you, Miss Woodley?”

“Yes; it appeared on every feature except his lips; those he kept fast closed, for fear Lord Elmwood should perceive it.”

Miss Woodley, with all her minute intelligence, did not however acquaint Matilda, that Rushbrook followed her to the window when the Earl was out of the room, and Sandford half asleep at the other end of it, and inquired respectfully but anxiously for *her*; adding, “It is my concern for Lady Matilda which makes me thus indisposed: I suffer more than she does; but I am not permitted to tell her so, nor can I hope, Miss Woodley, you will.” She replied, “You are right, Sir.” Nor did she reveal this conversation, while not a sentence that passed except that, was omitted.

When Christmas arrived, Lord Elmwood had many convivial days at

Elmwood House, but Matilda was never mentioned by one of his guests, and most probably was never thought of. During all those holidays, she was unusually melancholy, but sunk into the deepest dejection when she was told the day was fixed, on which her father was to return to town. On the morning of that day she wept incessantly; and all her consolation was, “She would go to the chamber window that was fronting the door through which he was to pass to his carriage, and for the first time, and most probably for the last time in her life, behold him.”

This design was soon forgot in another:—“She would rush boldly into the apartment where he was, and at his feet take leave of him for ever—she would lay hold of his hands, clasp his knees, provoke him to spurn her, which would be joy in comparison to this cruel indifference.” In the bitterness of her grief, she once called upon her mother, and reproached her memory—but the moment she recollected this offence, (which was almost instantaneously) she became all mildness and resignation. “What have I said?” cried she; “Dear, dear saint, forgive me; and for your sake I will bear all with patience—I will not groan, I will not even sigh again—this task I set myself to atone for what I have dared to utter.”

While Lady Matilda laboured under this variety of sensations, Miss Woodley was occupied in bewailing and endeavouring to calm her sorrows—and Lord Elmwood, with Rushbrook, was ready to set off. The Earl, however, loitered, and did not once seem in haste to be gone. When at last he got up to depart, Sandford thought he pressed his hand, and shook it with more warmth than ever he had done in his life. Encouraged by this supposition, Sandford said, “My Lord, won’t you condescend to take your leave of Miss Woodley?”

“Certainly, Sandford,” replied he, and seemed glad of an excuse to sit down again.

Impressed with the idea of the state in which she had left his only child, Miss Woodley, when she came before Lord Elmwood to bid him farewell, was pale, trembling, and in tears. Sandford, notwithstanding his patron’s apparently kind humour, was shocked at the construction he must put upon her appearance, and cried, “What, Miss Woodley, are you not recovered of your illness yet?” Lord Elmwood, however, took no notice of her looks, but after wishing her her health, walked slowly out of the house; turning back frequently and speaking to Sandford, or to some other person who was behind him, as if part of his thoughts were left behind, and he went with reluctance.

When he had quitted the room where Miss Woodley was, Rushbrook, timid before her, as she had been before her benefactor, went up to her, all humility, and said, “Miss Woodley, we ought to be friends: our concern, our devotion is paid to the same objects, and one common interest should teach us to be friendly.”

She made no reply.—“Will you permit me to write to you when I am away?” said he; “You may wish to hear of Lord Elmwood’s health, and of what changes may take place in his resolutions.—Will you permit me?” At that moment a servant came and said, “Sir, my Lord is in the carriage, and waiting for you.” He hastened away, and Miss Woodley was relieved from the pain of giving him a denial.

No sooner was the chaise, with all its attendants, out of sight, than Lady Matilda was conducted by Miss Woodley from her lonely retreat, into that part of the house from whence her father had just departed—and she visited every spot where he had so long resided, with a pleasing curiosity that for a while diverted her grief. In the breakfast and dining rooms, she leaned over those seats with a kind of filial piety, on which she was told he had been accustomed to sit. And, in the library, she took up with filial delight, the pen with which he had been writing; and looked with the most curious attention into those books that were laid upon his reading desk. But a hat, lying on one of the tables, gave her a sensation beyond any other she experienced on this occasion—in that trifling article of his dress, she thought she saw himself, and held it in her hand with pious reverence.

In the mean time, Lord Elmwood and Rushbrook were proceeding on the road, with hearts not less heavy than those which they had left at Elmwood House; though neither of them could so well define the cause of this oppression, as Matilda could account for the weight which oppressed her’s.

# CHAPTER XI.

Young as Lady Matilda was during the life of her mother, neither her youth, nor the recluse state in which she lived, had precluded her from the notice and solicitations of a nobleman who had professed himself her lover. Viscount Margrave had an estate not far distant from the retreat Lady Elmwood had chosen; and being devoted to the sports of the country, he seldom quitted it for any of those joys which the town offered. He was a young man, of a handsome person, and was, what his neighbours called, “A man of spirit.” He was an excellent fox-hunter, and as excellent a companion over his bottle at the end of the chace—he was prodigal of his fortune, where his pleasures were concerned, and as those pleasures were chiefly social, his sporting companions and his mistresses (for these were also of the plural number) partook largely of his wealth.

Two months previous to Lady Elmwood’s death, Miss Woodley and Lady Matilda were taking their usual walk in some fields and lanes near to their house, when chance threw Lord Margrave in their way during a thunder storm in which they were suddenly caught; and he had the satisfaction to convey his new acquaintances to their home in his coach, safe from the fury of the elements. Grateful for the service he had rendered them, Miss Woodley and her charge, permitted him to enquire occasionally after their health, and would sometimes see him. The story of Lady Elmwood was known to Lord Margrave, and as he beheld her daughter with a passion such as he had been unused to overcome, he indulged it with the probable hope, that on the death of the mother Lord Elmwood would receive his child, and perhaps accept him as his son-in-law. Wedlock was not the plan which Lord Margrave had ever proposed to himself for happiness; but the excess of his love on this new occasion, subdued all the resolutions he had formed against the married state; and not daring to hope for the consummation of his wishes by any other means, he suffered himself to look forward to that, as his only resource. No sooner was the long expected death of Lady Elmwood arrived, than he waited with impatience to hear that Lady Matilda was sent for and acknowledged by her father; for he meant to be the first to lay before Lord Elmwood his pretensions as a suitor. But those pretensions were founded on the vague hopes of a lover only; and Miss Woodley, to whom he first declared them, said every thing possible to convince him of their fallacy. As to the object of his passion, she was not only insensible, but wholly inattentive to all that was said to her on the subject. Lady Elmwood died without ever being disturbed with it; for her daughter did not even remember his proposals so as to repeat them again, and Miss Woodley thought it prudent to conceal from her friend, every new incident which might give her cause for new anxieties.

When Sandford and the ladies left the north and came to Elmwood House, so much were their thoughts employed with other ideas, that Lord Margrave did not occupy a place; and during the whole time they had been at their new abode, they had never once heard of him. He had, nevertheless, his whole mind fixed upon Lady Matilda, and had placed spies in the neighbourhood to inform him of every circumstance relating to her situation. Having imbibed an aversion to matrimony, he heard with but little regret, that there was no prospect of her ever becoming her father’s heir, while such an information gave him the hope of obtaining her, upon the terms of a mistress.

Lord Elmwood’s departure to town forwarded this hope, and flattering himself that the humiliating state in which Matilda must feel herself in the house of her father might gladly induce her to take shelter under any other protection, he boldly advanced as soon as the Earl was gone, to make such overture as his wishes and his vanity told him, could not be rejected.

Inquiring for Miss Woodley, he easily gained admittance; but at the sight of so much modesty and dignity in the person of Matilda, the appearance of so much good will, and yet such circumspection in her companion; and charmed at the good sense and proper spirit which were always apparent in the manners of Sandford, he fell once more into the despondency of never becoming to Lady Matilda any thing of more importance to his reputation, than a husband.

Even that humble hope was sometimes denied him, while Sandford set forth the impropriety of troubling Lord Elmwood on such a subject at present; and while the Viscount’s penetration, small as it was, discovered in his fair one, more to discourage, than to favour his wishes. Plunged, however, too deep in his passion to emerge from it in haste, he meant

still to visit, and wait for a change to happier circumstances, when he was peremptorily desired by Mr. Sandford to desist from ever coming again.

“And why, Mr. Sandford?” cried he.

“For two reasons, my Lord;—in the first place, your visits might be displeasing to Lord Elmwood; in the next place, I know they are so to his daughter.”

Unaccustomed to be addressed so plainly, particularly in a case where his heart was interested, he nevertheless submitted with patience; but in his own mind determined how long this patience should continue—no longer than it served as the means to prove his obedience, and by that artifice, to secure his better reception at some future period.

On his return home, cheered with the huzzas of his jovial companions, he began to consult those friends, what scheme was best to be adopted for the accomplishment of his desires. Some, boldly advised application to the father in defiance to the old priest; but that was the very last method his Lordship himself approved, as marriage must inevitably have followed Lord Elmwood’s consent: besides, though a Peer, Lord Margrave was unused to rank with Peers; and even the formality of an interview with one of his equals, carried along with it a terror, or at least a fatigue, to a rustic Baron. Others of his companions advised seduction; but happily the Viscount possessed no arts of this kind, to affect a heart joined with such an understanding as Matilda’s. There were not wanting among his most favourite counsellors some, who painted the superior triumph and gratification of force; those assured him there was nothing to apprehend under this head, as from the behaviour of Lord Elmwood to his child, it was more than probable, he would be utterly indifferent as to any violence that might be offered her. This last advice seemed inspired by the aid of wine; and no sooner had the wine freely circulated, than this was always the expedient, which appeared by far the best.

While Lord Margrave alternately cherished his hopes and his fears in the country, Rushbrook in town gave way to his fears only. Every day of his life made him more acquainted with the firm, unshaken temper of Lord Elmwood, and every day whispered more forcibly to him, that pity, gratitude, and friendship, strong and affectionate as these passions are, were weak and cold to that, which had gained the possession of his heart —he doubted, but he did not long doubt, that, which he felt was love. “And yet,” said he to himself, “it is love of such a kind, as arising from causes independent of the object itself can scarce deserve that sacred name. Did I not love Lady Matilda before I beheld her?—for her mother’s sake I loved her—and even for her father’s. Should I have felt the same affection for her, had she been the child of other parents? No. Or should I have felt that sympathetic tenderness which now preys upon my health, had not her misfortunes excited it? No.” Yet the love which is the result of gratitude and pity only, he thought had little claim to rank with his; and after the most deliberate and deep reflection, he concluded with this decisive opinion—He had loved Lady Matilda, in *whatever state*, in *whatever circumstances*; and that the tenderness he felt towards her, and the anxiety for her happiness before he knew her, extreme as they were, were yet cool and dispassionate sensations, compared to those which her person and demeanour had incited—and though he acknowledged, that by the preceding sentiments, his heart was softened, prepared, and moulded, as it were, to receive this last impression, yet the violence of his passion told him that genuine love, if not the basis on which it was founded, had been the certain consequence. With a strict scrutiny into his heart he sought this knowledge, but arrived at it with a regret that amounted to despair.

To shield him from despondency, he formed in his mind a thousand visions, displaying the joys of his union with Lady Matilda; but her father’s implacability confounded them all. Lord Elmwood was a man who made few resolutions—but those were the effect of deliberation; and as he was not the least capricious or inconstant in his temper, they were resolutions which no probable event could shake. Love, that produces wonders, that seduces and subdues the most determined and rigid spirits, had in two instances overcome the inflexibility of Lord Elmwood; he married Lady Elmwood contrary to his determination, because he loved; and for the sake of this beloved object, he had, contrary to his resolution, taken under his immediate care young Rushbrook; but the magic which once enchanted away this spirit of immutability was no more—Lady Elmwood was no more, and the charm was broken.

As Miss Woodley was deprived of the opportunity of desiring Rushbrook not to write, when he asked her the permission, he passed one whole morning, in the gratification of forming and writing a letter to

her, which he thought might possibly be shewn to Matilda. As he dared not touch upon any of those circumstances in which he was the most interested, this, joined to the respect he wished to pay the lady to whom he wrote, limited his letter to about twenty lines; yet the studious manner with which these lines were dictated, the hope that they might, and the fear that they might not, be seen and regarded by Lady Matilda, rendered the task an anxiety so pleasing, that he could have wished it might have lasted for a year; and in this tendency to magnify trifles, was discoverable, the never-failing symptom of ardent love.

A reply to this formal address, was a reward he wished for with impatience, but he wished in vain; and in the midst of his chagrin at the disappointment, a sorrow, little thought of, occurred, and gave him a perturbation of mind he had never before experienced. Lord Elmwood proposed a wife to him; and in a way so assured of his acquiescence, that if Rushbrook's life had depended upon his daring to dispute his benefactor's will, he would not have had the courage to have done so. There was, however, in his reply, and his embarrassment, something which his uncle distinguished from a free concurrence; and looking stedfastly at him, he said, in that stern manner which he now almost invariably adopted,

"You have no engagements, I suppose! Have made no previous promises!"

"None on earth, my Lord," replied Rushbrook candidly.

"Nor have you disposed of your heart?"

"No, my Lord," replied he; but not candidly—nor with any appearance of candour: for though he spoke hastily, it was rather like a man frightened than assured. He hurried to tell the falsehood he thought himself obliged to tell, that the pain and shame might be over; but there he was deceived—the lie once told was as troublesome as in the conception, and added another confusion to the first.

Lord Elmwood now fixed his eyes upon him with a sullen contempt, and rising from his chair, said, "Rushbrook, if you have been so inconsiderate as to give away your heart, tell me so at once, and tell me the object."

Rushbrook shuddered at the thought.

"I here," continued the Earl, "tolerate the first untruth you ever told me, as the false assertion of a lover; and give you an opportunity of recalling it—but after this moment, it is a lie between man and man—a lie to your friend and father, and I will not forgive it."

Rushbrook stood silent, confused, alarmed, and bewildered in his thoughts. Lord Elmwood proceeded:

"Name the person, if there is any, on whom you have bestowed your heart; and though I do not give you the hope that I shall not censure your folly, I will at least not reproach you for having at first denied it."

To repeat these words in writing, the reader must condemn the young man that he could hesitate to own he loved, if he was even afraid to name the object of his passion; but his interrogator had made the two answers inseparable, so that all evasions of the second, Rushbrook knew would be fruitless, after having avowed the first—and how could he confess the latter? The absolute orders he received from the steward on his first return from his travels, were, "Never to mention his daughter, any more than his late wife, before Lord Elmwood." The fault of having rudely intruded into Lady Matilda's presence, rushed also upon his mind; for he did not even dare to say, by what means he had beheld her. But more than all, the threatening manner in which this rational and apparently conciliating speech was uttered, the menaces, the severity which sat upon the Earl's countenance while he delivered those moderate words, might have intimidated a man wholly independent, and less used to fear than his nephew had been.

"You make no answer, Sir," said Lord Elmwood, after waiting a few moments for his reply.

"I have only to say, my Lord," returned Rushbrook, "that although my heart may be totally disengaged, I may yet be disinclined to marriage."

"May! May! Your heart *may* be disengaged," repeated he. "Do you dare to reply to me equivocally, when I have asked a positive answer?"

"Perhaps I am not positive myself, my Lord; but I will enquire into the state of my mind, and make you acquainted with it very soon."

As the angry demeanour of his uncle affected Rushbrook with fear, so that fear, powerfully (but with proper manliness) expressed, again softened the displeasure of Lord Elmwood; and seeing and pitying his nephew's sensibility, he now changed his austere voice, and said mildly,

but firmly,

“I give you a week to consult with yourself; at the expiration of that time I shall talk with you again, and I command you to be then prepared to speak, not only without deceit, but without hesitation.” He left the room at these words, and left Rushbrook released from a fate, which his apprehensions had beheld impending that moment.

He had now a week to call his thoughts together, to weigh every circumstance, and to determine whether implicitly to submit to Lord Elmwood’s recommendation of a wife, or to revolt from it, and see another, with more subserviency to his will, appointed his heir.

Undetermined how to act upon this trial which was to decide his future destiny, Rushbrook suffered so poignant an uncertainty, that he became at length ill, and before the end of the week that was allotted him for his reply, he was confined to his bed in a high fever. Lord Elmwood was extremely affected at his indisposition; he gave him every care he could bestow, and even much of his personal attendance. This last favour had a claim upon the young man’s gratitude, superior to every other obligation which since his infancy his benefactor had conferred; and he was at times so moved by those marks of kindness he received, that he would form the intention of tearing from his heart every trace that Lady Matilda had left there, and as soon as his health would permit him, obey, to the utmost of his views, every wish his uncle had conceived. Yet again, her pitiable situation presented itself to his compassion, and her beauteous person to his love. Divided between the claims of obligation to the father, and tender attachment to the daughter, his illness was increased by the tortures of his mind, and he once sincerely wished for that death, of which he was in danger, to free him from the dilemma in which his affections had involved him.

At the time his disorder was at the height, and he lay complaining of the violence of his fever, Lord Elmwood, taking his hand, asked him, “If there was any thing he could do for him?”

“Yes, yes, my Lord, a great deal:” he replied eagerly.

“What is it, Harry?”

“Oh! my Lord,” replied he, “that is what I must not tell you.”

“Defer it then till you are well:” said Lord Elmwood; afraid of being surprised, or affected by the state of his health, into any promises which he might hereafter find the impropriety of granting.

“And when I recover, my Lord, you give me leave to reveal to you my wishes, let them be what they will?”

His uncle hesitated——but seeing an anxiety for the answer, by his raising himself upon his elbow in the bed and staring wildly, Lord Elmwood at last said, “Certainly—Yes, yes,” as a child is answered for its quiet.

That Lord Elmwood could have no idea what the real petition was, which Rushbrook meant to present him is certain; but it is certain he expected he had some request to make, with which it might be wrong for him to comply, and therefore he avoided hearing what it was; for great as his compassion for him was in his present state, it was not of sufficient force to urge him to give a promise he did not mean to perform. Rushbrook, on his part was pleased with the assurance he might speak when he was restored to health; but no sooner was his fever abated, and his senses perfectly recovered from the slight derangement his malady had occasioned, than the lively remembrance of what he had hinted, alarmed him, and he was even afraid to look his kind, but awful relation in the face. Lord Elmwood’s cheerfulness, however, on his returning health, and his undiminished attention, soon convinced him that he had nothing to fear. But, alas! he found too, that he had nothing to hope. As his health re-established, his wishes re-established also, and with his wishes, his despair.

Convinced now, that his nephew had something on his mind which he feared to reveal, the Earl no longer doubted but that some youthful attachment had armed him against any marriage he should propose; but he had so much pity for his present weak state, to delay that further inquiry which he had threatened before his illness, to a time when he should be entirely restored.

It was the end of May before Rushbrook was able to partake in the usual routine of the day—the country was now prescribed him as the means of complete restoration; and as Lord Elmwood designed to leave London some time in June, he advised him to go to Elmwood House a week or two before him; this advice was received with delight, and a letter was sent to Mr. Sandford to prepare for Mr. Rushbrook’s arrival.

# CHAPTER XII.

During the illness of Rushbrook, news had been sent of his danger, from the servants in town to those at Elmwood House, and Lady Matilda expressed compassion when she was told of it—she began to conceive, the instant she thought he would soon die, that his visit to her had merit rather than impertinence in its design, and that he might possibly be a more deserving man, than she had supposed him to be. Even Sandford and Miss Woodley, began to recollect qualifications he possessed, which they never had reflected on before, and Miss Woodley in particular, reproached herself that she had been so severe and inattentive to him. Notwithstanding the prospects his death pointed out to her, it was with infinite joy she heard he was recovered; nor was Sandford less satisfied; for he had treated the young man too unkindly not to dread, lest any ill should befall him; but although he was glad to hear of his restored health, when he was informed he was coming down to Elmwood House for a few weeks in the style of its master, Sandford, with all his religious and humane principles, could not help thinking, “That if the lad had been properly prepared to die, he had been as well out of the world as in it.”

He was still less his friend when he saw him arrive with his usual florid complexion: had he come pale and sickly, Sandford had been kind to him; but in apparently good health and spirits, he could not form his lips to tell him he was “Glad to see him.”

On his arrival, Matilda, who for five months had been at large, secluded herself as she would have done upon the arrival of Lord Elmwood; but with far different sensations. Notwithstanding her restriction on the latter occasion, the residence of her father in that house had been a source of pleasure, rather than of sorrow to her; but from the abode of Rushbrook she derived punishment alone.

When, from inquiries, Rushbrook found that on his approach, Matilda had retired to her own confined apartments, the thought was torture to him; it was the hope of seeing and conversing with her, of being admitted at all times to her society as the mistress of the house, that had raised his spirits, and effected his perfect cure beyond any other cause; and he was hurt to the greatest degree at this respect, or rather contempt, shown to him by her retreat.

It was, nevertheless, a subject too delicate for him to touch upon in any one sense—an invitation for her company on his part, might carry the appearance of superior authority, and an affected condescension, which he justly considered as the worst of all insults. And yet, how could he support the idea that his visit had placed the daughter of his benefactor, as a dependent stranger in that house, where in reality *he* was the dependent, and she the lawful heir? For two or three days he suffered the torment of these reflections, hoping that he should come to an explanation of all he felt, by a fortunate meeting with Miss Woodley; but when that meeting occurred, though he observed she talked to him with less reserve than she had formerly done, and even gave some proofs of the native goodness of her disposition, yet she scrupulously avoided naming Lady Matilda; and when he diffidently inquired of her health, a cold restraint overspread Miss Woodley’s face, and she left him instantly. To Sandford it was still more difficult for him to apply; for though frequently together, they were never sociable; and as Sandford seldom disguised his feelings, to Rushbrook he was always extremely severe, and sometimes unmannerly.

In this perplexed situation, the country air was rather of detriment than service to the invalid; and had he not, like a true lover, clung fast to hope, while he could perceive nothing but despair, he would have returned to town, rather than by his stay have placed in a subordinate state, the object of his adoration. Persisting in his hopes, he one morning met Miss Woodley in the garden, and engaging her a longer time than usual in conversation, at last obtained her promise “She would that day dine with him and Mr. Sandford.” But no sooner had she parted from him, than she repented of her consent; and upon communicating it, Matilda, for the first time in her life, darted upon her kind companion, a look of the most cutting reproach and haughty resentment. Miss Woodley’s own sentiments had upbraided her before; but she was not prepared to receive so pointed a mark of disapprobation from her young friend, till now duteous and humble to her as to a mother, and not less affectionate. Her heart was too susceptible to bear this disrespectful and contumelious frown, from the object of her long-devoted care and concern; the tears instantly covered her face, and she laid her hands upon her heart, as if she thought it would break. Matilda was moved, but

she possessed too much of the manly resentment of her father, to discover what she felt for the first few minutes. Miss Woodley, who had given so many tears to her sorrows, but never till now, one to her anger, had a deeper sense of this indifference, than of the anger itself, and to conceal what she suffered, left the room. Matilda, who had been till this time working at her needle, seemingly composed, now let her work drop from her hand, and sat for a while in a deep reverie. At length she rose up, and followed Miss Woodley to the other apartment. She entered grave, majestic and apparently serene, while her poor heart fluttered with a thousand distressing sensations. She approached Miss Woodley (who was still in tears) with silence; and awed by her manners, the faithful friend of her deceased mother exclaimed, “Dear Lady Matilda, think no more on what I have done—do not resent it any longer, and on my knees I’ll beg your pardon.” Miss Woodley rose as she uttered these last words; but Matilda laid fast hold of her to prevent the posture she offered to take, and instantly assumed it herself. “Oh, let this be my atonement!” she cried with the most earnest supplication.

They interchanged forgiveness; and as this reconciliation was sincere, they each, without reserve, gave their opinion upon the subject that had caused the misunderstanding; and it was agreed an apology should be sent to Mr. Rushbrook, “That Miss Woodley had been suddenly indisposed:” nor could this be said to differ from the truth, for since what had passed she was unfit to pay a visit.

Rushbrook, who had been all the morning elated with the advance he supposed he had made in that lady’s favour, was highly disappointed, vexed, and angry, when this apology was delivered; nor did he, nor perhaps could he, conceal what he felt, although his severe observer, Mr. Sandford, was present.

“I am a very unfortunate man!” said he, as soon as the servant was gone who brought the message.

Sandford cast his eyes upon him with a look of surprise and contempt.

“A very unfortunate man indeed, Mr. Sandford,” repeated he, “although you treat my complaint contemptuously.”

Sandford made no reply, and seemed above making one.

They sat down to dinner;—Rushbrook eat scarce any thing, but drank frequently; Sandford took no notice of either, but had a book (which was his custom when he dined with persons whose conversation was not interesting to him) laid by the side of his plate, which he occasionally looked into, as the dishes were removing, or other opportunities served.

Rushbrook, just now more hopeless than ever of forming an acquaintance with Lady Matilda, began to give way to symptoms of despondency; and they made their first attack, by urging him, to treat on the same level of familiarity that he himself was treated, Mr. Sandford, to whom he had, till now, ever behaved with the most profound tokens of respect.

“Come,” said he to him as soon as the dinner was removed, “lay aside your book and be good company.”

Sandford lifted up his eyes upon him—stared in his face—and cast them on the book again.

“Pshaw,” continued Rushbrook, “I want a companion; and as Miss Woodley has disappointed me, I must have your company.”

Sandford now laid his book down upon the table; but still holding his fingers in the pages he was reading, said, “And why are you disappointed of Miss Woodley’s company? When people expect what they have no right to hope, ’tis impertinent assurance to complain they are disappointed.”

“I had a right to hope she would come,” answered Rushbrook, “for she promised she would.”

“But what right had you to ask her?”

“The right every one has, to make his time pass as agreeably as he can.”

“But not at the expence of another.”

“I believe, Mr. Sandford, it would be a heavy expence to you, to see me happy; I believe it would cost you even your own happiness.”

“That is a price I have not now to give:” replied Sandford, and began reading again.

“What, you have already paid it away? No wonder that at your time of life it should be gone. But what do you think of my having already squandered mine?”

“I don’t think about you;” returned Sandford, without taking his eyes

from the book.

“Can you look me in the face and say that, Mr. Sandford? No, you cannot—for you know you *do* think of me, and you know you hate me.”—Here he drank two glasses of wine one after another; “And I can tell you why you hate me,” continued he: “It is from a cause for which I often hate myself.”

Sandford read on.

“It is on Lady Matilda’s account you hate me, and use me thus.”

Sandford put down the book hastily, and put both his hands by his side.

“Yes,” resumed Rushbrook, “you think I am wronging her.”

“I think you insult her,” exclaimed Sandford, “by this rude mention of her name; and I command you at your peril to desist.”

“At my peril! Mr. Sandford? Do you assume the authority of my Lord Elmwood?”

“I do on this occasion; and if you dare to give your tongue a freedom”——

Rushbrook interrupted him—“Why then I boldly say, (and as her friend you ought rather to applaud than resent it) I boldly say, that my heart suffers so much for her situation, that I am regardless of my own. I love her father—I loved her mother more—but I love *her* beyond either.”

“Hold your licentious tongue,” cried Sandford, “or quit the room.”

“Licentious! Oh! the pure thoughts that dwell in her innocent mind, are not less sensual than mine towards her. Do you upbraid me with my respect, my pity for her? They are the sensations which impel me to speak thus undisguised, even to you, my open—no, even worse—my secret enemy!”

“Insult *me* as you please, Mr. Rushbrook,—but beware how you mention Lord Elmwood’s daughter.”

“Can it be to her dishonour that I pity her? that I would quit the house this moment never to return, so that she supplied the place I with-hold from her.”

“Go, then;” cried Sandford.

“It would be of no use to her, or I would. But come, Mr. Sandford, I will dare do as much as you. Only second me, and I will entreat Lord Elmwood to be reconciled—to see and own her.”

“Your vanity would be equal to your temerity—*you* entreat? She must greatly esteem those paternal favours which *your* entreaties gained her! Do you forget, young man, how short a time it is, since you were *entreated for*?”

“I prove that I do not, while this anxiety for Lady Matilda, arises, from what I feel on that account.”

“Remove your anxiety, then, from her to yourself; for were I to let Lord Elmwood know what has now passed”—

“It is for your own sake, not for mine, if you do not.”

“You shall not dare me to it, Mr. Rushbrook.” And he rose from his seat: “You shall not dare me to do you an injury. But to avoid the temptation, I will never again come into your company, unless my friend, Lord Elmwood, be present, to protect me and his child from your insults.”

Rushbrook rose in yet more warmth than Sandford

“Have you the injustice to say that I have insulted Lady Matilda?”

“To speak of her at all, is in you an insult. But you have done more—you have dared to visit her—to force into her presence and shock her with your offers of services which she scorns; and with your compassion, which she is above.”

“Did she complain to you?”

“She or her friend did.”

“I rather suppose, Mr. Sandford, that you have bribed some of the servants to reveal this.”

“The suspicion becomes Lord Elmwood’s heir.”

“It becomes the man, who lives in a house with you.”

“I thank you, Mr. Rushbrook, for what has passed this day—it has taken a weight off my mind. I thought my disinclination to you, might perhaps arise from prejudice—this conversation has relieved me from those fears, and—I thank you.” Saying this he calmly walked out of the room, and left Rushbrook to reflect on what he had been doing.

Heated with the wine he had drank (and which Sandford, engaged on his book, had not observed) no sooner was he alone, than he became by

degrees cool and repentant. “What had he done?” was the first question to himself—“He had offended Sandford.”—The man, whom reason as well as prudence had ever taught him to respect, and even to revere. He had grossly offended the firm friend of Lady Matilda, by the unreserved and wanton use of her name. All the retorts he had uttered came now to his memory; with a total forgetfulness of all that Sandford had said to provoke them.

He once thought to follow him and beg his pardon; but the contempt with which he had been treated, more than all the anger, with-held him.

As he sat forming plans how to retrieve the opinion, ill as it was, which Sandford formerly entertained of him, he received a letter from Lord Elmwood, kindly enquiring after his health, and saying that he should be down early in the following week. Never were the friendly expressions of his uncle half so welcome to him; for they served to sooth his imagination, racked with Sandford’s wrath, and his own displeasure.

# CHAPTER XIII.

When Sandford acted deliberately, he always acted up to his duty; it was his duty to forgive Rushbrook, and he did so—but he had declared he would never “Be again in his company unless Lord Elmwood was present;” and with all his forgiveness, he found an unforgiving gratification, in the duty, of being obliged to keep his word.

The next day Rushbrook dined alone, while Sandford gave his company to the ladies. Rushbrook was too proud to seek to conciliate Sandford by abject concessions, but he endeavoured to meet him as by accident, and meant to try what, in such a case, a submissive apology might effect. For two days all the schemes he formed on that head proved fruitless; he could never procure even a sight of him. But on the evening of the third day, taking a lonely walk, he turned the corner of a grove, and saw in the very path he was going, Sandford accompanied by Miss Woodley; and, what agitated him infinitely more, Lady Matilda was with them. He knew not whether to proceed, or to quit the path and palpably shun them—to one, who seemed to put an unkind construction upon all he said and did, he knew that to do either, would be to do wrong. In spite of the propensity he felt to pass so near to Matilda, could he have known what conduct would have been deemed the most respectful, whatever painful denial it had cost him, *that*, he would have adopted. But undetermined whether to go forward, or to cross to another path, he still walked on till he came too nigh to recede: he then, with a diffidence not affected, but most powerfully felt, pulled off his hat; and without bowing, stood respectfully silent while the company passed. Sandford walked on some paces before, and took no further notice as he went by him, than just touching the fore part of his hat with his finger. Miss Woodley curtsied as she followed. But Lady Matilda made a full stop, and said, in the gentlest accents, “I hope, Mr. Rushbrook, you are perfectly recovered.”

It was the sweetest music he had ever listened to; and he replied with the most reverential bow, “I am better a great deal, Ma’am.” Then instantly pursued his way as if he did not dare to utter another syllable.

Sandford seldom found fault with Lady Matilda; not because he loved her, but because she seldom did wrong—upon this occasion, however, he was half inclined to reprimand her; but yet he did not know what to say—the subsequent humility of Rushbrook, had taken from the indiscretion of her speaking to him, and the event could by no means justify his censure. On hearing her begin to speak, Sandford had stopped; and as Rushbrook after replying, walked away, Sandford called to her crossly, “Come, come along.” But at the same time he put out his elbow for her to take hold of his arm.

She hastened her steps, and did so—then turning to Miss Woodley, she said, “I expected you would have spoken to Mr. Rushbrook; it might have prevented me.”

Miss Woodley replied, “I was at a loss what to do;—when we met formerly, he always spoke first.”

“And he ought now,” cried Sandford angrily—and then added, with a sarcastic smile, “It is certainly proper that the *superior*, should be the first who speaks.”

“He did not look as if he thought himself our superior,” replied Matilda.

“No,” returned Sandford, “some people can put on what looks they please.”

“Then while he looks so pale,” replied Matilda, “and so dejected, I can never forbear speaking to him when we meet, whatever he may think of it.”

“And were he and I to meet a hundred, nay a thousand times,” returned Sandford, “I don’t think I should ever speak to him again.”

“Bless me! what for, Mr. Sandford?” cried Matilda—for Sandford, who was not a man that repeated little incidents, had never mentioned the circumstance of their quarrel.

“I have taken such a resolution,” answered he, “yet I bear him no enmity.”

As this short reply indicated that he meant to say no more, no more was asked; and the subject was dropped.

In the mean time, Rushbrook, happier than he had been for months, intoxicated with joy at that voluntary mark of civility he had received from Lady Matilda, felt his heart so joyous, and so free from every particle of malice, that he resolved, in the humblest manner, to make

atonement for the violation of decorum he had lately committed against Mr. Sandford.

Too happy, at this time, to suffer a mortification from any indignities he might receive, he sent his servant to him into his study, as soon as he was returned home, to beg to know “If he might be permitted to wait upon him, with a message he had to deliver from Lord Elmwood.”

The servant returned—“Mr. Sandford desired he would send the message by him, or the house-steward.” This was highly affronting; but Rushbrook was not in a humour to be offended, and he sent again, begging he would admit him; but the answer was, “He was busy.”

Thus wholly defeated in his hopes of reconciliation, his new transports felt an allay, and the few days that remained before Lord Elmwood came, he passed in solitary musing, and ineffectual walks and looks towards that path in which he had met Matilda—she came that way no more—indeed scarce quitted her apartment, in the practice of that confinement she was to experience on the arrival of her father.

All her former agitations now returned. On the day he arrived she wept—all the night she did not sleep—and the name of Rushbrook again became hateful to her. The Earl came in extremely good health and spirits, but appeared concerned to find Rushbrook less well than when he went from town. Sandford was now under the necessity of being in Rushbrook’s company, yet he would never speak to him but when he was obliged; or look at him, but when he could not help it. Lord Elmwood observed this conduct, yet he neither wondered, or was offended at it—he had perceived what little esteem Sandford showed his nephew from his first return; but he forgave, in Sandford’s humour, a thousand faults he would not forgive in any other; nor did he deem this one of his greatest faults, knowing the demand upon his partiality from another object.

Miss Woodley waited on Lord Elmwood as formerly; dined with him, and related, as heretofore, to the attentive Matilda, all that passed.

About this time Lord Margrave, deprived by the season of all the sports of the field, felt his love for Matilda (which had been violent, even though divided with the love of hunting) now too strong to be subdued; and he resolved, though reluctantly, to apply to her father for his consent to their union; but writing to Sandford this resolution, he was once more repulsed, and charged as a man of honour, to forbear to disturb the tranquillity of the family by any application of the kind. To this, Sandford received no answer; for the peer, highly incensed at his mistress’s repugnance to him, determined more firmly than ever to consult his own happiness alone; and as that depended merely upon his obtaining her, he cared not by what method it was effected.

About a fortnight after Lord Elmwood came into the country, as he was riding one morning, his horse fell with him, and crushed his leg in so unfortunate a manner, as to be at first pronounced of dangerous consequence. He was brought home in a post chaise, and Matilda heard of the accident with more grief than would, perhaps, on such an occasion, appertain to the most fondled child.

In consequence of the pain he suffered, his fever was one night very high; and Sandford, who seldom quitted his apartment, went frequently to his bedside, every time with the secret hope he should hear him ask to see his daughter—he was every time disappointed—yet he saw him shake, with a cordial friendship, the hand of Rushbrook, as if he delighted in seeing those he loved.

The danger in which Lord Elmwood was supposed to be, was but of short duration, and his sudden recovery succeeded. Matilda, who had wept, moaned, and watched during the crisis of his illness, when she heard he was amending, exclaimed, (with a kind of surprise at the novelty of the sensation) “And this is joy that I feel! Oh! I never till now knew, what those persons felt who experienced joy.”

Nor did she repine, like Mr. Sandford and Miss Woodley, at her father’s inattention to her during his malady, for she did not hope like them—she did not hope he would behold her, even in dying.

But notwithstanding his seeming indifference, while his indisposition continued, no sooner was he recovered so as to receive the congratulations of his friends, than there was no one person he evidently showed so much satisfaction at seeing, as Miss Woodley. She waited upon him timorously, and with more than ordinary distaste at his late conduct, when he put out his hand with the utmost warmth to receive her; drew her to him; saluted her, (an honour he had never in his life conferred before) with signs of the sincerest friendship and affection. Sandford was present; and ever associating the idea of Matilda with Miss

Woodley, felt his heart bound with a triumph it had not enjoyed for many a day.

Matilda listened with delight to the recital Miss Woodley gave on her return, and many times while it lasted exclaimed, “She was happy.” But poor Matilda’s sudden transports of joy, which she termed happiness, were not made for long continuance; and if she ever found cause for gladness, she far oftener had motives for grief.

As Mr. Sandford was sitting with her and Miss Woodley, one evening about a week after, a person rang at the bell and inquired for him: on being told of it by the servant, he went to the door of the apartment, and cried, “Oh! is it you? Come in.” An elderly man entered, who had been for many years the head gardener at Elmwood House; a man of honesty and sobriety, and with an indigent family of aged parents, children, and other relations, who subsisted wholly on the income arising from his place. The ladies, as well as Sandford, knew him well, and they all, almost at once, asked, “What was the matter?” for his looks told them something distressful had befallen him.

“Oh, Sir!” said he to Sandford, “I come to intreat your interest.”

“In what, Edwards?” said Sandford with a mild voice; for when his assistance was supplicated in distress, his rough tones always took a plaintive key.

“My Lord has discharged me from his service!” (returned Edwards trembling, and the tears starting in his eyes) “I am undone, Mr. Sandford, unless you plead for me.”

“I will,” said Sandford, “I will.”

“And yet I am almost afraid of your success,” replied the man, “for my Lord has ordered me out of his house this moment; and though I knelt down to him to be heard, he had no pity.”

Matilda sighed from the bottom of her heart, and yet she envied this poor man, who had been kneeling to her father.

“What was your offence?” cried Sandford.

The man hesitated; then looking at Matilda, said, “I’ll tell you, Sir, some other time.”

“Did you name me, before Lord Elmwood?” cried she eagerly, and terrified.

“No, Madam,” replied he, “but I unthinkingly spoke of my poor Lady who is dead and gone.”

Matilda burst into tears.

“How came you to do so mad a thing?” cried Sandford; and the encouragement which his looks had once given him, now fled from his face.

“It was unthinkingly,” repeated Edwards; “I was showing my Lord some plans for the new walks, and told him, among other things, that her Ladyship had many years ago approved of them. ‘Who?’ cried he. Still I did not call to mind, but said, ‘Lady Elmwood, Sir, while you were abroad.’—As soon as these words were delivered, I saw my doom in his looks, and he commanded me to quit his house and service that instant.”

“I am afraid,” said Sandford, shaking his head, “I can do nothing for you.”

“Yes, Sir, you know you have more power over my Lord than any body —and perhaps you may be able to save me and all mine from misery.”

“I would, if I could,” replied Sandford quickly.

“You can but try, Sir.”

Matilda was all this while bathed in tears; nor was Miss Woodley much less affected—Lady Elmwood was before their eyes—Matilda beheld her in her dying moments; Miss Woodley saw her as the gay ward of Dorriforth.

“Ask Mr. Rushbrook,” said Sandford, “prevail on him to speak for you; he has more power than I have.”

“He has not enough, then,” replied Edwards, “for he was in the room with my Lord when what I have told you happened.”

“And did he say nothing?” asked Sandford.

“Yes, Sir; he offered to speak in my behalf, but my Lord interrupted him, and ordered him out of the room—he instantly went.”

Sandford, now observing the effect which this narration had on the two ladies, led the man to his own apartments, and there assured him he dared not undertake his cause; but that if time or chance should happily make an alteration in his Lord’s disposition, he would be the first who would endeavour to replace him.—Edwards was obliged to submit; and

before the next day at noon, his pleasant house by the side of the park, his garden, and his orchard, which he had occupied above twenty years, were cleared of their old inhabitant, and all his wretched family.

# CHAPTER XIV.

This melancholy incident, perhaps affected Matilda and all the friends of the deceased Lady Elmwood, beyond any other that had occurred since her death. A few days after this circumstance, Miss Woodley, in order to divert the disconsolate mind of Lady Matilda, (and in the hope of bringing her some little anecdotes, to console her for that which had given her so much pain) waited upon Lord Elmwood in his library, and borrowed some books out of it. He was now perfectly well from his fall, and received her with his usual politeness, but, of course, not with that peculiar warmth which he had discovered when he received her just after his illness. Rushbrook was in the library at the same time; he shewed her several beautiful prints which Lord Elmwood had just received from London, and appeared anxious to entertain and give tokens of his esteem and respect for her. But what gave her pleasure beyond any other attention, was, that after she had taken (by the aid of Rushbrook) about a dozen volumes from different shelves, and had laid them together, saying she would send her servant to fetch them; Lord Elmwood went eagerly to the place where they were, and taking up each book, examined minutely what it was. One author he complained was too light, another too depressing, and put them on the shelves again: another was erroneous, and he changed it for a better: thus, he warned her against some, and selected other authors, as the most cautious preceptor culls for his pupil, or a fond father for his darling Child. She thanked him for his attention to her, but her heart thanked him for his attention to his daughter. For as she had herself never received such a proof of his care since all their long acquaintance, she reasonably supposed, Matilda’s reading, and not hers, was the object of his solicitude.

Having in these books store of comfort for poor Matilda, she eagerly returned with them; and in reciting every particular circumstance, made her consider the volumes, almost like presents from her father.

The month of September was now arrived; and Lord Elmwood, accompanied by Rushbrook, went to a small shooting seat, near twenty miles distant from Elmwood Castle, for a week’s particular sport. Matilda was once more at large; and one beautiful morning, about eleven o’clock, seeing Miss Woodley walking on the lawn before the house, she hastily took her hat to join her; and not waiting to put it on, went nimbly down the great staircase, with it hanging on her arm. When she had descended a few stairs, she heard a footstep walking slowly up; and, (from what emotion she could not tell,) she stopped short, half resolved to turn back. She hesitated a single instant whether she should or not—then went a few steps further till she came to the second landing place; when, by the sudden winding of the staircase,—Lord Elmwood was immediately before her!

She had felt something like affright before she saw him; but her reason told her she had nothing to fear, as he was away. But now, the appearance of a stranger whom she had never before seen; the authority in his looks, as well as in the sound of his steps; a resemblance to the portrait she had been shown of him; a start of astonishment which he gave on beholding her; but above all—her *fears* confirmed her that it was him. She gave a scream of terror—put out her trembling hands to catch the balustrades for support—missed them—and fell motionless into her father’s arms.

He caught her, as by the same impulse, he would have caught any other person falling for want of aid. Yet when he found her in his arms, he still held her there—gazed on her attentively—and once pressed her to his bosom.

At length trying to escape the snare into which he had been led, he was going to leave her on the spot where she fell, when her eyes opened and she uttered, “Save me.” Her voice unmanned him. His long-restrained tears now burst forth—and seeing her relapsing into the swoon, he cried out eagerly to recall her. Her name did not, however, come to his recollection—nor any name but this—“Miss Milner—Dear Miss Milner.”

That sound did not awaken her; and now again he wished to leave her in this senseless state, that not remembering what had passed, she might escape the punishment.

But at this instant, Giffard, with another servant, passed by the foot of the stairs: on which, Lord Elmwood called to them—and into Giffard’s hands delivered his apparently dead child; without one command respecting her, or one word of any kind; while his face was agitated with

shame, with pity, with anger, with paternal tenderness.

As Giffard stood trembling, while he relieved his Lord from this hapless burthen, her father had to unloose her hand from the side of his coat, which she had caught fast hold of as she fell, and grasped so closely, it was with difficulty released.—On attempting to take the hand away he trembled—faltered—then bade Giffard do it.

“Who, I, my Lord! I separate you!” cried he. But recollecting himself, “My Lord, I will obey your commands whatever they are.” And seizing her hand, pulled it with violence—it fell—and her father went away.

Matilda was carried to her own apartments, laid upon the bed, and Miss Woodley hasted to attend her, after listening to the recital of what had passed.

When Lady Elmwood’s old and affectionate friend entered the room, and saw her youthful charge lying pale and speechless, yet no father by to comfort or sooth her, she lifted up her hands to Heaven exclaiming, with a burst of tears, “And is this the end of thee, my poor child? Is this the end of all our hopes?—of thy own fearful hopes—and of thy mother’s supplications! Oh! Lord Elmwood! Lord Elmwood!”

At that name Matilda started, and cried, “Where is he? Is it a dream, or have I seen him?”

“It is all a dream, my dear,” said Miss Woodley.

“And yet I thought he held me in his arms,” she replied—“I thought I felt his hands press mine.—Let me sleep and dream again.”

Now thinking it best to undeceive her, “It is no dream, my dear,” returned Miss Woodley.

“Is it not?” cried she, starting up and leaning on her elbow—“Then I suppose I must go away—go for ever away.”

Sandford now entered. Having been told the news, he came to condole—but at the sight of him Matilda was terrified, and cried, “Do not reproach me, do not upbraid me—I know I have done wrong—I know I had but one command from my father, and that I have disobeyed.”

Sandford could not reproach her, for he could not speak; he therefore only walked to the window and concealed his tears.

That whole day and night was passed in sympathetic grief, in alarm at every sound, lest it should be a messenger to pronounce Matilda’s destiny.

Lord Elmwood did not stay upon this visit above three hours at Elmwood House; he then set off again for the seat he had left; where Rushbrook still remained, and from whence his Lordship had merely come by accident, to look over some writings which he wanted dispatched to town.

During his short continuance here, Sandford cautiously avoided his presence; for he thought, in a case like this, what nature would not of herself effect, no art, no arguments of his, could accomplish: to Nature and Providence he left the whole. What these two powerful principles brought about, the reader will judge, when he peruses the following letter, received early the next morning by Miss Woodley.

# A
# SIMPLE STORY,

IN FOUR VOLUMES,

BY

MRS. INCHBALD.

# VOL. IV.

*THE FOURTH EDITION.*

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# A SIMPLE STORY.

# CHAPTER I.

*A letter from Giffard, Lord Elmwood's House Steward, to Miss Woodley.*

"MADAM,

"My Lord, above a twelvemonth ago, acquainted me he had permitted his daughter to reside in his house; but at the same time he informed me, the grant was under a certain restriction, which, if ever broken, I was to see his then determination (of which he also acquainted me) put in execution. In consequence of Lady Matilda's indisposition, Madam, I have ventured to delay this notice till morning.—I need not say with what concern I now give it, or mention to you, I believe, what is forfeited. My Lord staid but a few hours yesterday, after the unhappy circumstance on which I write, took place; nor did I see him after, till he was in his carriage; he then sent for me to the carriage door, and told me he should be back in two days time, and added, 'Remember your duty.' That duty, I hope, Madam, you will not require me to explain in more direct terms.—As soon as my Lord returns, I have no doubt but he will ask me if it is fulfilled, and I shall be under the greatest apprehension, should his commands not be obeyed.

"If there is any thing wanting for the convenience of your and Lady Matilda's departure, you have but to order it, and it is at your service—I mean likewise any cash you may have occasion for. I should presume to add my opinion where you might best take up your abode; but with such advice as you will have from Mr. Sandford, mine would be but assuming.

"I would also have waited upon you, Madam, and have delivered myself the substance of this letter; but I am an old man, and the changes I have been witness to in my Lord's house since I first lived in it, has encreased my age many years; and I have not the strength to see you upon this occasion. I loved my deceased Lady—I love my Lord—and I love their child—nay, so I am sure does my Lord himself; but there is no accounting for his resolutions, or for the alteration his disposition has lately undergone.

"I beg pardon, Madam, for this long intrusion, and am, and ever will be, (while you and my Lord's daughter are so) your afflicted humble servant,

"ROBERT GIFFARD.

"Elmwood House,
"Sept. 12."

When this letter was brought to Miss Woodley, she knew what it contained before she opened it, and therefore took it with an air of resignation—yet though she guessed the momentous part of its contents, she dreaded in what words it might be related; and having now no essential good to expect, hope, that will never totally expire, clung at this crisis to little circumstances, and she hoped most fervently, the terms of the letter might not be harsh, but that Lord Elmwood had delivered his commands in gentle language. The event proved he had; and lost to every important comfort, she felt grateful to him for this small one.

Matilda, too, was cheered by this letter, for she expected something worse; and the last line, in which Giffard said he knew "His Lordship loved her," she thought repaid her for the purport of the other part.

Sandford was not so easily resigned or comforted—he walked about the room when the letter was shewn to him—called it cruel—stifled his tears, and wished to show his resentment only—but the former burst through all his endeavours, and he sunk into grief.

Nor was the fortitude of Matilda, which came to her assistance on the first onset of this trial, sufficient to arm her, when the moment came she was to quit the house—her father's house—never to see that, or him again.

When word was brought that the carriage was at the door, which was to convey her from all she held so dear, and she saw before her the prospect of a long youthful and healthful life, in which misery and

despair were all she could discern; that despair seized her at once, and gaining courage from it, she cried,

“What have I to fear if I disobey my father’s commands once more?—he cannot use me worse. I’ll stay here till he returns—again throw myself in his way, and then I will not faint, but plead for mercy. Perhaps were I to kneel to him—kneel, like other children to their parents, and beg his blessing, he would not refuse it me.”

“You must not try:” said Sandford, mildly.

“Who,” cried she, “shall prevent me flying to my father? Have I another friend on earth? Have I one relation in the world but him? This is the second time I have been turned out of his house. In my infant state my cruel father turned me out; but then, he sent me to a mother—now I have none; and I will stay with him.”

Again the steward sent to let them know the coach was waiting.

Sandford, now, with a determined countenance, went coolly up to Lady Matilda, and taking her hand, seemed resolved to lead her to the carriage.

Accustomed to be awed by every serious look of his, she yet resisted this; and cried, “Would *you* be the minister of my father’s cruelty?”

“Then,” said Sandford solemnly to her, “farewell—from this moment you and I part. I will take my leave, and do you remain where you are—at least till you are forced away. But I’ll not stay to be driven hence—for it is impossible your father will suffer any friend of yours to continue here, after this disobedience. Adieu.”

“I’ll go this moment,” said she, and rose hastily.

Miss Woodley took her at her word, and hurried her immediately out of the room.

Sandford followed slow behind, as if he had followed at her funeral.

When she came to that spot on the stairs where she had met her father, she started back, and scarce knew how to pass it. When she had —“There he held me in his arms,” said she, “and I thought I felt him press me to his heart, but I now find I was mistaken.”

As Sandford came forward, to hand her into the coach, “Now you behave well;” said he, “by this behaviour, you do not entirely close all prospect of reconciliation with your father.”

“Do you think it is not yet impossible?” cried she, clasping his hand. “Giffard says he loves me,” continued she, “and do you think he might yet be brought to forgive me?”

“Forgive you!” cried Sandford.

“Suppose I was to write to him, and entreat his forgiveness?”

“Do not write yet,” said Sandford, with no cheering accent.

The carriage drove off—and as it went, Matilda leaned her head from the window, to survey Elmwood House from the roof to the bottom. She cast her eyes upon the gardens too—upon the fish ponds—even the coach houses, and all the offices adjoining—which, as objects that she should never see again—she contemplated, as objects of importance.

# CHAPTER II.

Rushbrook, who, at twenty miles distance, could have no conjecture what had passed at Elmwood House, during the short visit Lord Elmwood made there, went that way with his dogs and gun in order to meet him on his return, and accompany him in the chaise back—he did so—and getting into the carriage, told him eagerly the sport he had had during the day; laughed at an accident that had befallen one of his dogs; and for some time did not perceive but that his uncle was perfectly attentive. At length, observing he answered more negligently than usual to what he said, Rushbrook turned his eyes quickly upon him, and cried,

“My Lord, are you not well?”

“Yes; perfectly well, I thank you, Rushbrook,” and he leaned back against the carriage.

“I thought, Sir,” returned Rushbrook, “you spoke languidly—I beg your pardon.”

“I have the head-ache a little,” answered he:—then taking off his hat, brushed the powder from it, and as he put it on again, fetched a most heavy sigh; which no sooner had escaped him, than, to drown its sound, he said briskly,

“And so you tell me you have had good sport to-day?”

“No, my Lord, I said but indifferent.”

“True, so you did. Bid the man drive faster—it will be dark before we get home.”

“You will shoot to-morrow, my Lord?”

“Certainly.”

“How does Mr. Sandford do, Sir?”

“I did not see him.”

“Not see Mr. Sandford, My Lord? but he was out I suppose—for they did not expect you at Elmwood House.”

“No, they did not.”

In such conversation Rushbrook and his uncle continued to the end of their journey. Dinner was then immediately served, and Lord Elmwood appeared much in his usual spirits; at least, not suspecting any cause for their abatement, Rushbrook did not observe any alteration.

Lord Elmwood went, however, earlier to bed than ordinary, or rather to his bed-chamber; for though he retired some time before his nephew, when Rushbrook passed his chamber door it was open, and he not in bed, but sitting in a musing posture, as if he had forgot to shut it.

When Rushbrook’s valet came to attend his master, he said to him,

“I suppose, Sir, you do not know what has happened at the Castle?”

“For heaven’s sake what?” cried Rushbrook.

“My Lord has met Lady Matilda:” replied the man.

“How? Where? What’s the consequence?”

“We don’t know yet, Sir; but all the servants suppose her Ladyship will not be suffered to remain there any longer.”

“They all suppose wrong,” returned Rushbrook hastily—“My Lord loves her I am certain, and this event may be the happy means of his treating her as his child from this day.”

The servant smiled and shook his head.

“Why, what more do you know?”

“Nothing more than I have told you, Sir; except that his Lordship took no kind of notice of her Ladyship that appeared like love.”

Rushbrook was all uneasiness and anxiety to know the particulars of what had passed; and now Lord Elmwood’s inquietude, which he had but slightly noticed before, came full to his observation. He was going to ask more questions; but he recollected Lady Matilda’s misfortunes were too sacred, to be talked of thus familiarly by the servants of the family;—besides, it was evident this man thought, and but naturally, it might not be for his master’s interest the father and the daughter should be united; and therefore would certainly give to all he said the opposite colouring.

In spite of his prudence, however, and his delicacy towards Matilda, Rushbrook could not let his valet leave him till he had inquired, and learned all the circumstantial account of what had happened; except, indeed, the order received by Giffard, which being given after Lord Elmwood was in his carriage and in concise terms, the domestics who attended him (and from whom this man had gained his intelligence) were unacquainted with it.

When the servant had left Rushbrook alone, the perturbation of his mind was so great, that he was, at length, undetermined whether to go to bed, or to rush into his uncle's apartment, and at his feet beg for that compassion upon his daughter, which he feared he had denied her. But then, to what peril would he not expose himself by such a step? Nay, he might perhaps even injure her whom he wished to serve; for if his uncle was at present unresolved, whether to forgive or to resent this disobedience to his commands, another's interference might enrage, and precipitate him on the latter.

This consideration was so weighty, it resigned Rushbrook to the suspense he was compelled to endure till the morning; when he flattered himself, that by watching every look and motion of Lord Elmwood, his penetration would be able to discover the state of his heart, and how he meant to act.

But the morning came, and he found all his prying curiosity was of no avail; Lord Elmwood did not drop one word, give one look, or use one action that was not customary.

On first seeing him, Rushbrook blushed at the secret with which he was entrusted; then, as he gazed on the Earl, contemplated the joy he ought to have known in clasping in his arms a child like Matilda, whose tenderness, reverence, and duty, had deprived her of all sensation at his sight; which was in Rushbrook's mind an honour, that rendered him superior to what he was before.

They were in the fields all the day as usual; Lord Elmwood now cheerful, and complaining no more of the head-ache. Yet once being separated from his nephew, Rushbrook crossed over a stile into another field, and found him sitting by the side of a bank, his gun lying by him, and himself lost in thought. He rose on seeing him, and proceeded to the sport as before.

At dinner, he said he should not go to Elmwood House the next day, as he had appointed, but stay where he was, three or four days longer. From these two small occurrences, Rushbrook would fain have extracted something by which to judge the state of his mind; but upon the test, that was impossible—he had caught him so musing many a time before; and as to his prolonging his stay, that might arise from the sport—or, indeed, had any thing more material swayed him, who could penetrate whether it was the effect of the lenity, or the severity, he had dealt towards his child? whether his continuance there was to shun her, or to shun the house from whence he had banished her?

The three or four days for their temporary abode being passed, they both returned together to Elmwood House. Rushbrook thought he saw his uncle's countenance change as they entered the avenue, yet he did not appear less in spirits; and when Sandford joined them at dinner, the Earl went with his usual alacrity to him, and (as was his custom after any separation) put out his hand cheerfully to take his. Sandford said, "How do you do, my Lord?" cheerfully in return; but put both his hands into his bosom, and walked to the other side of the room. Lord Elmwood did not seem to observe this affront—nor was it done as an affront—it was merely what poor Sandford felt; and he felt he could *not* shake hands with him.

Rushbrook soon learned the news that Matilda was gone, and Elmwood House was to him a desert—he saw there no real friend of her's, except poor Sandford, and to him, Rushbrook knew himself now, more displeasing than ever; and all his overtures of atonement, he, at this time, found more and more ineffectual. Matilda was exiled; and her supposed triumphant rival was, to Sandford, more odious than he had ever been.

In alleviation of their banishment, Miss Woodley, with her charge, had not returned to their old retreat; but were gone to a farm house, not farther than thirty miles from Lord Elmwood's: here Sandford, with little inconvenience, visited them; nor did his patron ever take notice of his occasional absence; for as he had before given his daughter, in some measure, to his charge; so honour, delicacy, and the common ties of duty, made him approve, rather than condemn his attention to her.

Though Sandford's frequent visits soothed Matilda, they could not comfort her; for he had no consolation to bestow that was suited to her mind—her father had given no one token of regret for what he had done. He had even inquired sternly of Giffard on his returning home,

"If Miss Woodley had left the house?"

The steward guessing the whole of his meaning, answered, "Yes, my Lord; and *all* your commands in that respect have been obeyed."

He replied, "I am satisfied." And, to the grief of the old man, appeared

really so.

To the farm-house, the place of Matilda’s residence, there came, besides Sandford, another visitor far less welcome—Viscount Margrave. He had heard with surprise, and still greater joy, that Lord Elmwood had once more shut his doors against his daughter. In this her discarded state, he no longer burthened his lively imagination with the dull thoughts of marriage, but once more formed the idea of making her his mistress.

Ignorant of a certain decorum which attended all Lord Elmwood’s actions, he suspected that his child might be in want; and an acquaintance with the worst part of her sex informed him, that relief from poverty was the sure bargain for his success. With these hopes, he again paid Miss Woodley and her a visit; but the coldness of the former, and the haughtiness of the latter, still kept him at a distance, and again made him fear to give one allusion to his purpose: but he returned home resolved to write what he durst not speak—he did so—he offered his services, his purse, his house—they were rejected with contempt, and a stronger prohibition than ever given to his visits.

# CHAPTER III.

Lord Elmwood had now allowed Rushbrook a long vacation, in respect to his answer upon the subject of marriage; and the young man vainly imagined, his intentions upon that subject were entirely given up. One morning, however, as he was attending him in the library,

“Henry,”——said his uncle, with a pause at the beginning of his speech, which indicated that he was going to say something of importance, “Henry——you have not forgot the discourse I had with you a little time previous to your illness?”

Henry hesitated—for he wished to have forgotten it—but it was too strongly impressed upon his memory. Lord Elmwood resumed,

“What! equivocating again, Sir? Do you remember it, or do you not?”

“Yes, my Lord, I do.”

“And are you prepared to give me an answer?”

Rushbrook paused again.

“In our former conversation,” continued the Earl, “I gave you but a week to determine—there has, I think, elapsed since that time, half a year.”

“About as much, Sir.”

“Then surely you have now made up your mind?”

“I had done that at first, my Lord—if it had met with your concurrence.”

“You wished to lead a bachelor’s life, I think you said?”

Rushbrook bowed.

“Contrary to my will?”

“No, my Lord, I wished to have your approbation.”

“And you wished for my approbation of the very opposite thing to that I proposed? But I am not surprised—such is the gratitude of the world—and such is yours.”

“My Lord, if you doubt my gratitude——”

“Give me a proof of it, Harry, and I will doubt no longer.”

“Upon every other subject but this, my Lord, Heaven is my witness your happiness——”

Lord Elmwood interrupted him. “I understand you—upon every other subject, but the only one, my content requires, you are ready to obey me. I thank you.”

“My Lord, do not torture me with this suspicion; it is so contrary to my deserts, that I cannot bear it.”

“Suspicion of your ingratitude!—you judge too favourably of my opinion—it amounts to certainty.”

“Then to convince you, Sir, I am not ungrateful, tell me who the Lady is you have chosen for me, and here I give you my word, I will sacrifice all my future prospects of happiness—all, for which I would wish to live—and become her husband as soon as you shall appoint.”

This was spoken with a tone so expressive of despair, that Lord Elmwood replied,

“And while you obey me, you take care to let me know, it will cost you your future peace. This is, I suppose, to enhance the merit of the obligation—but I shall not accept your acquiescence on these terms.”

“Then in dispensing with it, I hope for your pardon.”

“Do you suppose, Rushbrook, I can pardon an offence, the sole foundation of which, arises from a spirit of disobedience?—for you have declared to me your affections are disengaged. In our last conversation did you not say so?”

“At first I did, my Lord—but you permitted me to consult my heart more closely; and I have since found that I was mistaken.”

“You then own you at first told me a falsehood, and yet have all this time, kept me in suspense without confessing it.”

“I waited, my Lord, till you should enquire——”

“You have then, Sir, waited too long;” and the fire flashed from his eyes.

Rushbrook now found himself in that perilous state, that admitted of no medium of resentment, but by such dastardly conduct on his part, as would wound both his truth and courage; and thus, animated by his danger, he was resolved to plunge boldly at once into the depth of his patron’s anger.

“My Lord,” said he, (but he did not undertake this task without sustaining the trembling and convulsion of his whole frame) “My Lord—waving for a moment the subject of my marriage—permit me to remind you, that when I was upon my sick bed, you promised, that on my recovery, you would listen to a petition I should offer to you.”

“Let me recollect,” replied he. “Yes—I do remember something of it. But I said nothing to warrant any improper petition.”

“Its impropriety was not named, my Lord.”

“No matter—that, you must judge of, and answer for the consequences.”

“I would answer with my life, willingly—but I own that I shrink from your anger.”

“Then do not provoke it.”

“I have already gone too far to recede—and you would of course demand an explanation, if I attempted to stop here.”

“I should.”

“Then, my Lord, I am bound to speak—but do not interrupt me—hear me out, before you banish me from your presence for ever.”

“I will, Sir,” replied he, prepared to hear something that would displease him, and yet determined to hear with patience to the conclusion.

“Then, my Lord,”—(cried Rushbrook, in the greatest agitation of mind and body) “Your daughter”——

The resolution Lord Elmwood had taken (and on which he had given his word to his nephew not to interrupt him) immediately gave way. The colour rose in his face—his eye darted lightning—and his hand was lifted up with the emotion, that word had created.

“You promised to hear me, my Lord!” cried Rushbrook, “and I claim your promise.”

He now suddenly overcame his violence of passion, and stood silent and resigned to hear him; but with a determined look, expressive of the vengeance that should ensue.

“Lady Matilda,” resumed Rushbrook, “is an object that wrests from me the enjoyment of every blessing your kindness bestows. I cannot but feel myself as her adversary—as one, who has supplanted her in your affections—who supplies her place, while she is exiled, a wanderer, and an orphan.”

The Earl took his eyes from Rushbrook, during this last sentence, and cast them on the floor.

“If I feel gratitude towards you, my Lord,” continued he, “gratitude is innate in my heart, and I must also feel it towards her, who first introduced me to your protection.”

Again the colour flew to Lord Elmwood’s face; and again he could hardly restrain himself from uttering his indignation.

“It was the mother of Lady Matilda,” continued Rushbrook, “who was this friend to me; nor will I ever think of marriage, or any other joyful prospect, while you abandon the only child of my beloved patroness, and load me with rights, which belong to her.”

Here Rushbrook stopped—Lord Elmwood was silent too, for near half a minute; but still his countenance continued fixed, with his unvaried resolves.

After this long pause, the Earl said with composure, but with firmness, “Have you finished, Mr. Rushbrook?”

“All that I dare to utter, my Lord; and I fear, I have already said too much.”

Rushbrook now trembled more than ever, and looked pale as death; for the ardour of speaking being over, he waited his sentence, with less constancy of mind than he expected he should.

“You disapprove my conduct, it seems;” said Lord Elmwood, “and in that, you are but like the rest of the world—and yet, among all my acquaintance, you are the only one who has dared to insult me with your opinion. And this you have not done inadvertently; but willingly, and deliberately. But as it has been my fate to be used ill, and severed from all those persons to whom my soul has been most attached; with less regret I can part from you, than if this were my first trial.”

There was a truth and a pathetic sound in the utterance of these words, that struck Rushbrook to the heart—and he beheld himself as a barbarian, who had treated his benevolent and only friend, with insufferable liberty; void of respect for those corroding sorrows which had imbittered so many years of his life, and in open violation of his most

peremptory commands. He felt that he deserved all he was going to suffer, and he fell upon his knees; not so much to deprecate the doom he saw impending, as thus humbly to acknowledge, it was his due.

Lord Elmwood, irritated by this posture, as a sign of the presumptuous hope that he might be forgiven, suffered now his anger to burst all bounds; and raising his voice, he exclaimed in a rage,

“Leave my house, Sir. Leave my house instantly, and seek some other home.”

Just as these words were begun, Sandford opened the library door, was witness to them, and to the imploring situation of Rushbrook. He stood silent with amazement!

Rushbrook arose, and feeling in his mind a presage, that he might never from that hour, behold his benefactor more; as he bowed in token of obedience to his commands, a shower of tears covered his face; but Lord Elmwood, unmoved, fixed his eyes upon him, which pursued him with enraged looks to the end of the room. Here he had to pass Sandford; who, for the first time in his life, took hold of him by the hand, and said to Lord Elmwood, “My Lord, what’s the matter?”

“That ungrateful villain,” cried he, “has dared to insult me.—Leave my house this moment, Sir.”

Rushbrook made an effort to go, but Sandford still held his hand; and meekly said to Lord Elmwood,

“He is but a boy, my Lord, and do not give him the punishment of a man.”

Rushbrook now snatched his hand from Sandford’s, and threw it with himself upon his neck; where he indeed sobbed like a boy.

“You are both in league,” exclaimed Lord Elmwood.

“Do you suspect me of partiality to Mr. Rushbrook?” said Sandford, advancing nearer to the Earl.

Rushbrook had now gained the point of remaining in the room; but the hope that privilege inspired (while he still harboured all the just apprehensions for his fate) gave birth, perhaps, to a more exquisite sensation of pain, than despair would have done. He stood silent—confounded—hoping that he was forgiven—fearing that he was not.

As Sandford approached still nearer to Lord Elmwood, he continued, “No, my Lord, I know you do not suspect me, of partiality to Mr. Rushbrook—has any part of my behaviour ever discovered it?”

“You now then only interfere to provoke me.”

“If that were the case,” returned Sandford, “there have been occasions, when I might have done it more effectually—when my own heart-strings were breaking, because I would not provoke, or add to what you suffered.”

“I am obliged to you, Mr. Sandford:” he returned, mildly.

“And if, my Lord, I have proved any merit in a late forbearance, reward me for it now; and take this young man from the depth of despair in which I see he is sunk, and say you pardon him.”

Lord Elmwood made no answer—and Rushbrook, drawing strong inferences of hope from his silence, lifted up his eyes from the ground, and ventured to look in his face: he found it composed to what it had been, but still strongly marked with agitation. He cast his eyes away again, in confusion.

On which his uncle said to him—“I shall postpone executing your obedience to my late orders, till you think fit once more to provoke them—and then, not even Sandford, shall dare to plead your excuse.”

Rushbrook bowed.

“Go, leave the room, Sir.”

He instantly obeyed.

Then Sandford, turning to Lord Elmwood, shook him by the hand, and cried, “My Lord, I thank you—I thank you very kindly, my Lord—I shall now begin to think I have some weight with you.”

“You might indeed think so, did you know how much I have pardoned.”

“What was his offence, my Lord?”

“Such as I would not have forgiven you, or any earthly being besides himself—but while you were speaking in his behalf, I recollected there was a gratitude so extraordinary in the hazards he ran, that almost made him pardonable.”

“I guess the subject then,” cried Sandford; and yet I could not have supposed”——

“It is a subject we cannot speak on, Sandford, therefore let us drop it.”

At these words the discourse concluded.

# CHAPTER IV.

To the relief of Rushbrook, Lord Elmwood that day dined from home, and he had not the confusion to see him again till the evening. Previous to this, Sandford and he met at dinner; but as the attendants were present, nothing passed on either side respecting the incident in the morning. Rushbrook, from the peril which had so lately threatened him, was now in his perfectly cool, and dispassionate senses; and notwithstanding the real tenderness which he bore to the daughter of his benefactor, he was not insensible to the comfort of finding himself, once more in the possession of all those enjoyments he had forfeited, and for a moment lost.

As he reflected on this, to Sandford he felt the first tie of acknowledgement—but for his compassion, he knew he should have been at that very time of their meeting at dinner, away from Elmwood House for ever; and bearing on his mind a still more painful recollection, the burthen of his kind patron's continual displeasure. Filled with these thoughts, all the time of dinner, he could scarce look at his companion, without tears of gratitude; and whenever he attempted to speak to him, gratitude choaked his utterance.

Sandford, on his part, behaved just the same as ever; and to show he did not wish to remind Rushbrook of what he had done, he was just as uncivil as ever.

Among other things, he said, "He did not know Lord Elmwood dined from home, for if he had, he should have dined in his own apartment."

Rushbrook was still more obliged to him for all this; and the weight of obligations with which he was oppressed, made him long for an opportunity to relieve himself by expressions. As soon, therefore, as the servants were all withdrawn, he began:

"Mr. Sandford, whatever has been your opinion of *me*, I take pride to myself, that in my sentiments towards *you*, I have always distinguished you for that humane, disinterested character, you have this day proved."

"Humane, and disinterested," replied Sandford, "are flattering epithets indeed, for an old man going out of the world, and who can have no temptation to be otherwise."

"Then suffer me to call your actions generous and compassionate, for they have saved me——"

"I know, young man," cried Sandford, interrupting him, "you are glad at what I have done, and that you find a gratification in telling me you are; but it is a gratification I will not indulge you with—therefore, say another sentence on the subject, and" (rising from his seat) "I'll leave the room, and never come into your company again, whatever your uncle may say to it."

Rushbrook saw by the solemnity of his countenance, he was serious, and positively assured him he would never thank him more: on which Sandford took his seat again, but he still frowned, and it was many minutes before he conquered his ill humour. As his countenance became less sour, Rushbrook fell from some general topics he had eagerly started in order to appease him, and said,

"How hard is it to restrain conversation from the subject of our thoughts; and yet amidst our dearest friends, and among persons who have the same dispositions and sentiments as our own, their minds, too, fixed upon the self-same objects, is this constraint practised—and thus, society, which was meant for one of our greatest blessings, becomes insipid, nay, often more wearisome than solitude."

"I think, young man," replied Sandford, "you have made pretty free with your speech to-day, and ought not to complain of the want of toleration on that score."

"I do complain;" replied Rushbrook, "for if toleration was more frequent, the favour of obtaining it would be less."

"And your pride, I suppose, is above receiving a favour."

"Never from those I esteem; and to convince you of it, I wish this moment to request a favour of you."

"I dare say I shall refuse it. However what is it?"

"Permit me to speak to you upon the subject of Lady Matilda?"

Sandford made no answer, consequently did not forbid him—and he proceeded.

"For her sake—as I suppose Lord Elmwood may have told you—I this morning rashly threw myself into the predicament from whence you released me—for her sake, I have suffered much—for her sake I have

hazarded a great deal, and am still ready to hazard more."

"But for your own sake, do not," returned Sandford, drily.

"You may laugh at these sentiments as romantic, Mr. Sandford, but if they are, to me they are nevertheless natural."

"But of what service are they to be either to her, or to yourself?"

"To me they are painful, and to her would be but impertinent, were she to know them."

"I shan't inform her of them, so do not trouble yourself to caution me against it."

"I was not going—you know I was not—but I was going to say, that from no one so well as from you, could she be told my sentiments, without the danger of receiving offence."

"And what impression do you wish to give her, from her becoming acquainted with them?"

"The impression, that she has one sincere friend: that upon every occurrence in life, there is a heart so devoted to all she feels, that she never can suffer without the sympathy of another: or can ever command him, and all his fortunes to unite for her welfare, without his ready, his immediate compliance."

"And do you imagine, that any of your professions, or any of her necessities, would ever prevail upon her to put you to the trial?"

"Perhaps not."

"What, then, are the motives which induce you to wish her to be told of this?"

Rushbrook paused.

"Do you think," continued Sandford, "the intelligence will give her any satisfaction?"

"Perhaps not."

"Will it be of any to yourself?"

"The highest in the world."

"And so all you have been urging upon this occasion, is, at last, only to please yourself."

"You wrong my meaning—it is her merit which inspires me with the desire of being known to her—it is her sufferings, her innocence, her beauty——"

Sandford stared—Rushbrook proceeded: "It is her——"

"Nay, stop where you are," cried Sandford; "you are arrived at the zenith of perfection in a woman, and to add one qualification more, would be an anti-climax."

"Oh!" cried Rushbrook with warmth, "I loved her, before I ever beheld her."

"Loved her!" cried Sandford, with astonishment, "You are talking of what you did not intend."

"I am, indeed:" returned he in confusion, "I fell by accident on the word love."

"And by the same accident stumbled on the word beauty; and thus by accident, am I come to the truth of all your professions."

Rushbrook knew that he loved; and though his affection had sprung from the most laudable motives, yet was he ashamed of it, as of a vice—he rose, he walked about the room, and he did not look Sandford in the face for a quarter of an hour: Sandford, satisfied that he had judged rightly, and yet unwilling to be too hard upon a passion, which he readily believed must have had many noble virtues for its foundation, now got up and went away, without saying a word in censure, though not a word in approbation.

It was in the month of October, and just dark, at the time Rushbrook was left alone, yet in the agitation of his mind, arising from the subject on which he had been talking, he found it impossible to remain in the house, and therefore walked into the fields; but there was another instigation, more powerful than the necessity of walking—it was the allurement of passing along that path where he had last seen Lady Matilda, and where, for the only time, she had condescended to speak to him divested of haughtiness; and with a gentleness that dwelt upon his memory beyond all her other endowments.

Here, he retraced his own steps repeatedly, his whole imagination engrossed with her idea, till the sound of her father's carriage returning from his visit, roused him from the delusion of his trance, to the dread of the confusion and embarrassment he should endure, on next meeting him. He hoped Sandford might be present, and yet he was now, almost

as much ashamed of seeing him, as his uncle, whom he had so lately offended.

Loath to leave the spot where he was, as to enter the house, he remained there, till he considered it would be ill manners, in his present humiliated situation, not to show himself at the usual supper hour, which was immediately.

As he laid his hand upon the door of the apartment to open it, he was sorry to hear by Lord Elmwood's voice, he was in the room before him; for there was something much more conspicuously distressing, in entering where he already was, than had his uncle come in after him. He found himself, however, re-assured, by overhearing the Earl laugh and speak in a tone expressive of the utmost good humour to Sandford, who was with him.

Yet again, he felt all the awkwardness of his own situation; but making one courageous effort, opened the door and entered. Lord Elmwood had been away half the day, had dined abroad, and it was necessary to take some notice of his return; Rushbrook, therefore, bowed humbly, and what was more to his advantage, he looked humbly. His uncle made a slight return to the salutation, but continued the recital he had begun to Sandford; then sat down to the supper table—supped—and passed the whole evening without saying a syllable, or even casting a look, in remembrance of what had passed in the morning. Or if there was any token, that shewed he remembered the circumstance at all, it was the putting his glass to his nephew's, when Rushbrook called for wine, and drinking at the time he did.

# CHAPTER V.

The repulse Lord Margrave received, did not diminish the ardour of his pursuit; for as he was no longer afraid of resentment from the Earl, whatever treatment his daughter might receive, he was determined the anger of Lady Matilda, or of her female friend, should not impede his pretensions.

Having taken this resolution, he laid the plan of an open violation of all right; and determined to bear away that prize by force, which no art was likely to procure. He concerted with two of his favourite companions, but their advice was, “One struggle more of fair means.” This was totally against his inclination; for, he had much rather have encountered the piercing cries of a female in the last agonies of distress, than the fatigue of her sentimental harangues, or elegant reproofs, such as he had the sense to understand, but not the capacity to answer.

Stimulated, however, by his friends to one more trial, in spite of the formal dismission he had twice received, he intruded another visit on Lady Matilda at the Farm. Provoked beyond bearing at such unfeeling assurance, Matilda refused to come into the room where he was, and Miss Woodley alone received him, and expressed her surprise at the little attention he had paid to her explicit desire.

“Madam,” replied the nobleman, “to be plain with you, I am in love.”

“I do not the least doubt it, my Lord,” replied Miss Woodley: “nor ought you to doubt the truth of what I advance, when I assure you, that you have not the smallest reason to hope your love will be returned; for Lady Matilda is resolved *never* to listen to your passion.”

“That man,” he replied, “is to blame, who can relinquish his hopes, upon the mere resolution of a lady.”

“And that lady would be wrong,” replied Miss Woodley, “who should entrust her happiness in the care of a man, who can think thus meanly of her and of her sex.”

“I think highly of them all,” he replied; “and to convince you in how high an estimation I hold *her* in particular, my whole fortune is at her command.”

“Your entire absence from this house, my Lord, she would consider as a much greater mark of your respect.”

A long conversation, as uninteresting as this, ensued: the unexpected arrival of Mr. Sandford, put an end to it. He started at the sight of Lord Margrave; but the Viscount was much more affected at the sight of him.

“My Lord,” said Sandford boldly to him, “have you received any encouragement from Lady Matilda to authorize this visit?”

“None, upon my honour, Mr. Sandford; but I hope you know how to pardon a lover!”

“A rational one I do—but you, my Lord, are not of that class while you persecute the pretended object of your affection.”

“Do you call it persecution that I once offered her a share of my title and fortune—and even now, declare my fortune is at her disposal?”

Sandford was uncertain whether he understood his meaning—but Lord Margrave, provoked at his ill reception, felt a triumph in removing his doubts, and proceeded thus:

“For the discarded daughter of Lord Elmwood, cannot expect the same proposals, which I made, while she was acknowledged, and under the protection of her father.”

“What proposals then, my Lord?” asked Sandford hastily.

“Such,” replied he, “as the Duke of Avon made to her mother.”

Miss Woodley quitted the room that instant. But Sandford, who never felt resentment but against those in whom he saw some virtue, calmly replied,

“My Lord, the Duke of Avon was a gentleman, a man of elegance and breeding; and what have you to offer in recompense for your defects in qualities like these?”

“My wealth,” replied he, “opposed to her indigence.” Sandford smiled, and answered,

“Do you suppose *that* wealth can be esteemed, which has not been able to make you respectable? What is it makes wealth valuable? Is it the pleasures of the table? the pleasure of living in a fine house? or of wearing fine cloaths? These are pleasures, a Lord enjoys, but in common with his valet. It is the pleasure of being conspicuous, which makes riches desirable; but if we are conspicuous only for our vice and folly,

had we not better remain in poverty?”

“You are beneath my notice.”

“I trust I shall continue so—and that your Lordship will never again condescend to come where I am.”

“A man of rank condescends to mix with any society, when a pretty woman is the object.”

“My Lord, I have a book here in my pocket, which I am eager to read; it is an author who speaks sense and reason—will you pardon the impatience I feel for such company; and permit me to call your carriage?”

Saying this, he went hastily and beckoned to the coachman; the carriage drove up, the door was opened, and Lord Margrave, ashamed to be exposed before his attendants, and convinced of the inutility of remaining any longer where he was, departed.

Sandford was soon joined by the ladies; and the conversation falling, of course, upon the nobleman who had just taken his leave, Sandford unwarily exclaimed, “I wish Rushbrook had been here.”

“Who?” cried Lady Matilda.

“I do believe,” said Miss Woodley, “that young man has some good qualities.”

“A great many,” returned Sandford, mutteringly.

“Happy young man!” cried Matilda: “he is beloved by all those, whose affection it would be my choice to possess, beyond any other blessing this world could bestow.”

“And yet I question, if Rushbrook is happy,” said Sandford.

“He cannot be otherwise,” returned Matilda, “if he is a man of understanding.”

“He does not want understanding neither,” replied Sandford; “although he has certainly many indiscretions.”

“But which Lord Elmwood, I suppose,” said Matilda, “looks upon with tenderness.”

“Not upon all his faults,” answered Sandford; “for I have seen him in very dangerous circumstances with your father.”

“Have you indeed?” cried Matilda: “then I pity him.”

“And I believe,” said Miss Woodley, “that from his heart, he compassionates you. Now, Mr. Sandford,” continued she, “though this is the first time I ever heard you speak in his favour, (and I once thought as indifferently of Mr. Rushbrook as you can do) yet now I will venture to ask you, whether you do not think he wishes Lady Matilda much happier than she is?”

“I have heard him say so,” answered Sandford.

“It is a subject,” returned Lady Matilda, “which I did not imagine you, Mr. Sandford, would have permitted him to have mentioned lightly, in your presence.”

“Lightly! Do you suppose, my dear, we turned your situation into ridicule?”

“No, Sir,—but there is a sort of humiliation in the grief to which I am doomed, that ought surely to be treated with the highest degree of delicacy by my friends.”

“I don’t know on what point you fix real delicacy; but if it consists in sorrow, the young man gives a proof he possesses it, for he shed tears when I last heard him mention your name.”

“I have more cause to weep at the mention of his.”

“Perhaps so.—But let me tell you, Lady Matilda, that your father might have preferred a more unworthy object.”

“Still had he been to me,” she cried, “an object of envy. And as I frankly confess my envy of Mr. Rushbrook, I hope you will pardon my malice, which is, you know, but a consequent crime.”

The subject now turned again upon Lord Margrave; and all of them being firmly persuaded, this last reception would put an end to every further intrusion from him, they treated his pretensions, and himself, with the contempt they inspired—but not with the caution that was requisite.

# CHAPTER VI.

The next morning early, Mr. Sandford returned to Elmwood House, but with his spirits depressed, and his heart overcharged with sorrow. He had seen Lady Matilda, the object of his visit, but he had beheld her considerably altered in her looks and in her health; she was become very thin, and instead of the vivid bloom that used to adorn her cheeks, her whole complexion was of a deadly pale—her countenance no longer expressed hope or fear, but a fixed melancholy—she shed no tears, but was all sadness. He had beheld this, and he had heard her insulted by the licentious proposals of a nobleman, from whom there was no satisfaction to be demanded, because she had no friend to vindicate her honour.

Rushbrook, who suspected where Sandford was gone, and imagined he would return that day, took his morning's ride, so as to meet him on the road, at the distance of a few miles from the Castle; for, since his perilous situation with Lord Elmwood, he was so fully convinced of the general philanthropy of Sandford's character, that in spite of his churlish manners, he now addressed him, free from that reserve to which his rough behaviour had formerly given birth. And Sandford, on his part, believing he had formed an illiberal opinion of Lord Elmwood's heir, though he took no pains to let him know that his opinion was changed, yet resolved to make him restitution upon every occasion that offered.

Their mutual greetings when they met, were unceremonious, but cordial; and Rushbrook turned his horse and rode back with Sandford; yet, intimidated by his respect and tenderness for Lady Matilda, rather than by fear of the rebuffs of his companion, he had not the courage to name her, till the ride was just finished, and they came within a few yards of the house—incited then by the apprehension, he might not soon again enjoy so fit an opportunity, he said,

"Pardon me, Mr. Sandford, if I guess where you have been, and if my curiosity forces me to inquire for Miss Woodley's and Lady Matilda's health?"

He named Miss Woodley first, to prolong the time before he mentioned Matilda; for though to name her gave him extreme pleasure, yet it was a pleasure accompanied by confusion and pain.

"They are both very well," replied Sandford, "at least they did not complain they were sick."

"They are not in spirits, I suppose?" said Rushbrook.

"No, indeed:" replied Sandford, shaking his head.

"No new misfortune has happened, I hope?" cried Rushbrook; for it was plain to see Sandford's spirits were unusually cast down.

"Nothing new," returned he, "except the insolence of a young nobleman."

"What nobleman?" cried Rushbrook.

"A lover of Lady Matilda's," replied Sandford.

Rushbrook was petrified. "Who? What lover, Mr. Sandford?—explain?"

They were now arrived at the house; and Sandford, without making any reply to this question, said to the servant who took his horse, "She has come a long way this morning; take care of her."

This interruption was torture to Rushbrook, who kept close to his side, in order to obtain a further explanation; but Sandford, without attending to him, walked negligently into the hall, and before they advanced many steps, they were met by Lord Elmwood.

All further information was put an end to for the present.

"How do you do, Sandford?" said Lord Elmwood with extreme kindness; as if he thanked him for the journey which, it was likely, he suspected he had been taking.

"I am indifferently well, my Lord:" replied he, with a face of deep concern, and a tear in his eye, partly in gratitude for his patron's civility, and partly in reproach for his cruelty.

It was not now till the evening, that Rushbrook had an opportunity of renewing the conversation, which had been so barbarously interrupted.

In the evening, no longer able to support the suspense into which he was thrown; without fear or shame, he followed Sandford into his chamber at the time of his retiring, and entreated of him, with all the anxiety he suffered, to explain his allusion when he talked of a lover, and of insolence to Lady Matilda.

Sandford, seeing his emotion, was angry with himself that he had

inadvertently mentioned the subject; and putting on an air of surly importance, desired,—if he had any business with him, that he would call in the morning.

Exasperated at so unexpected a reception, and at the pain of his disappointment, Rushbrook replied, “He treated him cruelly, nor would he stir out of his room, till he had received a satisfactory answer to his question.”

“Then bring your bed,” replied Sandford, “for you must pass your whole night here.”

He found it vain to think of obtaining any intelligence by threats, he therefore said in a timid and persuasive manner,

“Did you, Mr. Sandford, hear Lady Matilda mention my name?”

“Yes,” replied Sandford, a little better reconciled to him.

“Did you tell her what I lately declared to you?” he asked with still more diffidence.

“No,” replied Sandford.

“It is very well, Sir,” returned he, vexed to the heart—yet again wishing to sooth him—

“You certainly, Mr. Sandford, know what is for the best—yet I entreat you will give me some further account of the nobleman you named?”

“I know what is for the best,” replied Sandford, “and I won’t.”

Rushbrook bowed, and immediately left the room. He went apparently submissive, but the moment he showed this submission, he took the resolution of paying a visit himself to the farm at which Lady Matilda resided; and of learning, either from Miss Woodley, the people of the house, the neighbours, or perhaps from Lady Matilda’s own lips, the secret which the obstinacy of Sandford had with-held.

He saw all the dangers of this undertaking, but none appeared so great as the danger of losing her he loved, by the influence of a rival—and though Sandford had named “insolence,” he was in doubt whether what had appeared so to him, was so in reality, or would be so considered by her.

To prevent the cause of his absence being suspected by Lord Elmwood, he immediately called his groom, ordered his horse, and giving those servants concerned, a strict charge of secrecy, with some frivolous pretence to apologize for his not being present at breakfast (resolving to be back by dinner) he set off that night, and arrived at an inn about a mile from the farm at break of day.

The joy he felt when he found himself so near to the beloved object of his journey, made him thank Sandford in his heart, for the unkindness which had sent him thither. But new difficulties arose, how to accomplish the end for which he came; he learned from the people of the inn, that a Lord, with a fine equipage, had visited at the farm, but who he was, or for what purpose he went, no one could inform him.

Dreading to return with his doubts unsatisfied, and yet afraid of proceeding to extremities that might be construed into presumption, he walked disconsolately (almost distractedly) about the fields, looking repeatedly at his watch, and wishing the time would stand still, till he was ready to go back with his errand compleated.

Every field he passed, brought him nearer to the house on which his imagination was fixed; but how, without forfeiting every appearance of that respect which he so powerfully felt, could he attempt to enter it?—he saw the indecorum, resolved not to be guilty of it, and yet walked on till he was within but a small orchard of the door. Could he then retreat?—he wished he could; but he found that he had proceeded too far to be any longer master of himself. The time was urgent; he must either behold her, and venture her displeasure, or by diffidence during one moment, give up all his hopes perhaps for ever.

With that same disregard to consequences, which actuated him when he dared to supplicate Lord Elmwood in his daughter’s behalf, he at length went eagerly to the door and rapped.

A servant came—he asked to “Speak with Miss Woodley, if she was quite alone.”

He was shown into an apartment, and Miss Woodley entered to him.

She started when she beheld who it was; but as he did not see a frown upon her face, he caught hold of her hand, and said persuasively,

“Do not be offended with me. If I mean to offend you, may I forfeit my life in atonement.”

Poor Miss Woodley, glad in her solitude to see any one from Elmwood House, forgot his visit was an offence, till he put her in mind of it; she

then said, with some reserve,

“Tell me the purport of your coming, Sir, and perhaps I may have no reason to complain?”

“It was to see Lady Matilda,” he replied, “or to hear of her health. It was to offer her my services—it was, Miss Woodley, to convince her, if possible, of my esteem.”

“Had you no other method, Sir?” said Miss Woodley, with the same reserve.

“None;” replied he, “or with joy I should have embraced it; and if you can inform me of any other, tell me I beseech you instantly, and I will immediately be gone, and pursue your directions.”

Miss Woodley hesitated.

“You know of no other means, Miss Woodley,” he cried.

“And yet I cannot commend this,” said she.

“Nor do I. Do not imagine because you see me here, that I approve my conduct; but reduced to this necessity, pity the motives that have urged it.”

Miss Woodley did pity them; but as she would not own that she did, she could think of nothing else to say.

At this instant a bell rung from the chamber above.

“That is Lady Matilda’s bell,” said Miss Woodley; “she is coming to take a short walk. Do you wish to see her?”

Though it was the first wish of his heart, he paused, and said, “Will you plead my excuse?”

As the flight of stairs was but short, which Matilda had to come down, she was in the room with Miss Woodley and Mr. Rushbrook, just as that sentence ended.

She had stepped beyond the door of the apartment, when perceiving a visitor, she hastily withdrew.

Rushbrook, animated, though trembling at her presence, cried, “Lady Matilda, do not avoid me, till you know that I deserve such a punishment.”

She immediately saw who it was, and returned back with a proper pride, and yet a proper politeness in her manner.

“I beg your pardon, Sir,” said she, “I did not know you; I was afraid I intruded upon Miss Woodley and a stranger.”

“You do not then consider me as a stranger, Lady Matilda? and that you do not, requires my warmest acknowledgements.”

She sat down, as if overcome by ill spirits and ill health.

Miss Woodley now asked Rushbrook to sit—for till now she had not.

“No, Madam,” replied he, with confusion, “not unless Lady Matilda gives me permission.”

She smiled, and pointed to a chair—and all the kindness which Rushbrook during his whole life had received from Lord Elmwood, never inspired half the gratitude, which this one instance of civility from his daughter excited.

He sat down, with the confession of the obligation upon every feature of his face.

“I am not well, Mr. Rushbrook,” said Matilda, languidly; “and you must excuse any want of etiquette at this house.”

“While you excuse me, Madam, what can I have to complain of?”

She appeared absent while he was speaking, and turning to Miss Woodley, said, “Do you think I had better walk to-day?”

“No, my dear,” answered Miss Woodley; “the ground is damp, and the air cold.”

“You are not well, indeed, Lady Matilda,” said Rushbrook, gazing upon her with the most tender respect.

She shook her head; and the tears, without any effort either to impel or to restrain them, ran down her face.

Rushbrook rose from his seat, and with an accent and manner the most expressive, said, “We are cousins, Lady Matilda—in our infancy we were brought up together—we were beloved by the same mother—fostered by the same father”——

“Oh!” cried she, interrupting him, with a tone which indicated the bitterest anguish.

“Nay, do not let me add to your uneasiness,” he resumed, “while I am attempting to alleviate it. Instruct me what I can do to show my esteem and respect, rather than permit me thus unguided, to rush upon what

you may construe into insult and arrogance."

Miss Woodley went to Matilda, took her hand, then wiped the tears from her eyes, while Matilda reclined against her, entirely regardless of Rushbrook's presence.

"If I have been in the least instrumental to this sorrow,"—said Rushbrook, with a face as much agitated as his mind.

"No," said Miss Woodley, in a low voice, "you have not—she is often thus."

"Yes," said Matilda, raising her head, "I am frequently so weak that I cannot resist the smallest incitement to grief. But do not make your visit long, Mr. Rushbrook," she continued, "for I was just then thinking, that should Lord Elmwood hear of this attention you have paid me, it might be fatal to you." Here she wept again, as bitterly as before.

"There is no probability of his hearing of it, Madam," Rushbrook replied; "or if there was, I am persuaded that he would not resent it; for yesterday, when I am confident he knew that Mr. Sandford had been to see you, he received him on his return, with unusual marks of kindness."

"Did he?" said she—and again she lifted up her head; her eyes for a moment beaming with hope and joy.

"There is something which we cannot yet define," said Rushbrook, "that Lord Elmwood struggles with; but when time shall have eradicated"——

Before he could proceed further, Matilda was once more sunk into despondency, and scarce attended to what he was saying.

Miss Woodley observing this, said, "Mr. Rushbrook, let it be a token we shall be glad to see you hereafter, that I now use the freedom to beg you will put an end to your visit."

"You send me away, Madam," returned he, "with the warmest thanks for the reception you have give me; and this last assurance of your kindness, is beyond any other favour you could have bestowed. Lady Matilda," added he, "suffer me to take your hand at parting, and let it be a testimony that you acknowledge me for a relation."

She put out her hand—which he knelt to receive, but did not raise it to his lips—he held the boon too sacred—and looking earnestly upon it, as it lay pale and wan in his, he breathed one sigh over it, and withdrew.

# CHAPTER VII.

Sorrowful and affecting as this interview had been, Rushbrook, as he rode home, reflected upon it with the most inordinate delight; and had he not seen decline of health, in the looks and behaviour of Lady Matilda, his felicity had been unbounded. Entranced in the happiness of her society, the thought of his rival never came once to his mind while he was with her; a want of recollection, however, he by no means regretted, as her whole appearance contradicted every suspicion he could possibly entertain, that she favoured the addresses of any man living—and had he remembered, he would not have dared to name the subject.

The time ran so swiftly while he was away, that it was beyond the dinner hour at Elmwood House, when he returned. Heated, his dress and his hair disordered, he entered the dining room just as the dessert was put upon the table. He was confounded at his own appearance, and at the falsehoods he should be obliged to fabricate in his excuse: there was yet, that which engaged his attention, beyond any circumstance relating to himself—the features of Lord Elmwood—of which his daughter's, whom he had just beheld, had the most striking resemblance; though her's were softened by sorrow, while his were made austere by the self-same cause.

"Where have you been?" said his uncle, with a frown.

"A hers chase, my Lord—I beg your pardon—but a pack of dogs I unexpectedly met." For in the hacknied art of lying without injury to any one, Rushbrook, to his shame, was proficient.

His excuses were received, and the subject ceased.

During his absence that day, Lord Elmwood had called Sandford apart, and said to him,—that as the malevolence which he once observed between him and Rushbrook, had, he perceived, subsided, he advised him, if he was a well-wisher to the young man, to sound his heart, and counsel him not to act against the will of his nearest relation and friend. "I myself am too hasty," continued Lord Elmwood, "and, unhappily, too much determined upon what I have once (though, perhaps, rashly) said, to speak upon a topic where it is probable I shall meet with opposition. You, Sandford, can reason with moderation. For after all that I have done for my nephew, it would be a pity to forsake him at last; and yet, that is but too likely, if he provokes me."

"Sir," replied Sandford, "I will speak to him."

"Yet," added Lord Elmwood, sternly, "do not urge what you say for my sake, but for his—I can part from him with ease—but he may then repent, and, you know, repentance always comes too late with me."

"My Lord, I will exert all the efforts in my power for his welfare. But what is the subject on which he has refused to comply with your desires?"

"Matrimony—have not I told you?"

"Not a word."

"I wish him to marry, that I may then conclude the deeds in respect to my estate,—and the only child of Sir William Winterton (a rich heiress) was the wife I meant to propose; but from his indifference to all I have said on the occasion, I have not yet mentioned her name to him; you may."

"I will, my Lord, and use all my persuasion to engage his obedience; and you shall have, at least, a faithful account of what he says."

Sandford the next morning sought an opportunity of being alone with Rushbrook—he then plainly repeated to him what Lord Elmwood had said, and saw him listen to it all, and heard him answer with the most tranquil resolution, "That he would do any thing to preserve the friendship and patronage of his uncle—but marry."

"What can be your reason?" asked Sandford—though he guessed.

"A reason, I cannot give to Lord Elmwood."

"Then do not give it to me, for I have promised to tell him every thing you say to me."

"And every thing I *have* said?" asked Rushbrook hastily.

"As to what you have said, I don't know whether it has made impression enough on my memory, to enable me to repeat it."

"I am glad it has not."

"And my answer to your uncle, is to be simply, that you will not obey him?"

"I should hope, Mr. Sandford, that you would express it in better

terms.”

“Tell me the terms, and I will be exact.”

Rushbrook struck his forehead, and walked about the room.

“Am I to give him any reason for your disobeying him?”

“I tell you again, that I dare not name the cause.”

“Then why do you submit to a power you are ashamed to own?”

“I am not ashamed—I glory in it.—Are you ashamed of your esteem for Lady Matilda?”

“Oh! if she is the cause of your disobedience, be assured I shall not mention it, for I am forbid to name her.”

“And surely, as that is the case, I need not fear to speak plainly to you. I love Lady Matilda—or, perhaps, unacquainted with love, what I feel may be only pity—and if so, pity is the most pleasing passion that ever possessed a human heart, and I would not change it for all her father’s estates.”

“Pity, then, gives rise to very different sensations—for I pity you, and that sensation I would gladly exchange for approbation.”

“If you really feel compassion for me, and I believe you do, contrive some means by your answers to Lord Elmwood to pacify him, without involving me in ruin. Hint at my affections being engaged, but not to whom; and add, that I have given my word, if he will allow me a short time, a year or two only, I will, during that period, try to disengage them, and use all my power to render myself worthy of the union for which he designs me.”

“And this is not only your solemn promise—but your fixed determination?”

“Nay, why will you search my heart to the bottom, when the surface ought to content you?”

“If you cannot resolve on what you have proposed, why do you ask this time of your uncle? For should he allow it you, at the expiration, your disobedience to his commands will be less pardonable than it is now.”

“Within a year, Mr. Sandford, who can tell what strange events may not occur, to change all our prospects? Even my passion may decline.”

“In that expectation, then—the failure of which yourself must answer for—I will repeat as much of this discourse as shall be proper.”

Here Rushbrook communicated his having been to see Lady Matilda, for which Sandford reproved him, but in less rigorous terms than he generally used in his reproofs; and Rushbrook, by his entreaties, now gained the intelligence who the nobleman was who addressed Matilda, and on what views; but was restrained to patience, by Sandford’s arguments and threats.

Upon the subject of this marriage, Sandford met his patron, without having determined exactly what to say, but rested on the temper in which he should find him.

At the commencement of the conversation he said, “Rushbrook begged for time.”

“I have given him time, have I not?” cried Lord Elmwood: “What can be the meaning of his thus trifling with me?”

Sandford replied, “My Lord, young men are frequently romantic in their notions of love, and think it impossible to have a sincere affection, where their own inclinations do not first point out the choice.”

“If he is in love,” answered Lord Elmwood, “let him take the object, and leave my house and me for ever. Nor under this destiny can he have any claim to pity; for genuine love will make him happy in banishment, in poverty, or in sickness: it makes the poor man happy as the rich, the fool blest as the wise.” The sincerity with which Lord Elmwood had loved, was expressed more than in words, as he said this.

“Your Lordship is talking,” replied Sandford, “of the passion in its most refined and predominant sense; while I may possibly be speaking of a mere phantom, that has led this young man astray.”

“Whatever it be,” returned Lord Elmwood, “let him and his friends weigh the case well, and act for the best—so shall I.”

“His friends, my Lord?—What friends, or what friend has he upon earth but you?”

“Then why will he not submit to my advice; or himself give me a proper reason why he cannot?”

“Because there may be friendship without familiarity—and so it is between him and you.”

“That cannot be; for I have condescended to talk to him in the most

familiar terms.”

“To condescend, my Lord, is *not* to be familiar.”

“Then come, Sir, let us be on an equal footing through you. And now speak out *his* thoughts freely, and hear mine in return.”

“Why, then, he begs a respite for a year or two.”

“On what pretence?”

“To me, it was preference of a single life—but I suspect it is—what he imagines to be love—and for some object whom he thinks your Lordship would disapprove.”

“He has not, then, actually confessed this to you?”

“If he has, it was drawn from him by such means, that I am not warranted to say it in direct words.”

“I have entered into no contract, no agreement on his account with the friends of the lady I have pointed out,” said Lord Elmwood; “nothing beyond implications have passed betwixt her family and myself at present; and if the person on whom he has fixed his affections, should not be in a situation absolutely contrary to my wishes, I may, perhaps, confirm his choice.”

That moment Sandford’s courage prompted him to name Lady Matilda, but his discretion opposed—however, in the various changes of his countenance from the conflict, it was plain to discern that he wished to say more than he dared.

On which Lord Elmwood cried,

“Speak on, Sandford—what are you afraid of?”

“Of you, my Lord.”

He started.

Sandford went on——“I know no tie—no bond—no innocence, that is a protection when you feel resentment.”

“You are right,” he replied, significantly.

“Then how, my Lord, can you encourage me to *speak on*, when that which I perhaps would say, might offend you to hear?”

“To what, and whither are you changing our subject?” cried Lord Elmwood. “But, Sir, if you know my resentful and relentless temper, you surely know how to shun it.”

“Not, and speak plainly.”

“Then dissemble.”

“No, I’ll not do that—but I’ll be silent.”

“A new parade of submission. You are more tormenting to me than any one I have about me. Constantly on the verge of disobeying my commands, that you may recede, and gain my good will by your forbearance. But know, Mr. Sandford, that I will not suffer this much longer. If you chuse in every conversation we have together (though the most remote from such a subject) to think of my daughter, you must either banish your thoughts, or conceal them—nor by one sign, one item, remind me of her.”

“Your daughter did you call her? Can you call yourself her father?”

“I do, Sir—but I was likewise the husband of her mother. And, as that husband, I solemnly swear.”——He was proceeding with violence.

“Oh! my Lord,” cried Sandford, interrupting him, with his hands clasped in the most fervent supplication—“Oh! do not let me draw upon her one oath more of your eternal displeasure—I’ll kneel to beg that you will drop the subject.”

The inclination he made with his knees bent towards the ground, stopped Lord Elmwood instantly. But though it broke in upon his words, it did not alter one angry look—his eyes darted, and his lips trembled with, indignation.

Sandford, in order to appease him, bowed and offered to withdraw, hoping to be recalled. He wished in vain—Lord Elmwood’s eyes followed him to the door, expressive of rejoicing at his absence.

# CHAPTER VIII.

The companions and counsellors of Lord Margrave, who had so prudently advised gentle methods in the pursuit of his passion, while there was left any hope of their success; now, convinced there was none, as strenuously commended open violence;—and sheltered under the consideration, that their depredations were to be practised upon a defenceless woman, who had not one protector, except an old priest, the subject of their ridicule;—assured likewise from the influence of Lord Margrave's wealth, that all inferior consequences could be overborne, they saw no room for fears on any side, and what they wished to execute, with care and skill premeditated.

When their scheme was mature for performance, three of his chosen companions, and three servants, trained in all the villainous exploits of their masters, set off for the habitation of poor Matilda, and arrived there about the twilight of the evening.

Near four hours after that time (just as the family were going to bed) they came up to the doors of the house, and rapping violently, gave the alarm of fire, conjuring all the inhabitants to make their way out immediately, as they would save their lives.

The family consisted of few persons, all of whom ran instantly to the doors and opened them; on which two men rushed in, and with the plea of saving Lady Matilda from the pretended flames, caught her in their arms, and carried her off; while all the deceived people of the house, running eagerly to save themselves, paid no regard to her, till looking for the cause for which they had been terrified, they perceived the stratagem, and the fatal consequences.

Amidst the complaints, the sorrow, and the affright of the people of the farm, Miss Woodley's sensations wanted a name—terror and anguish give but a faint description of what she suffered—something like the approach of death stole over her senses, and she sat like one petrified with horror. She had no doubt who was the perpetrator of this wickedness; but how was she to follow? how effect a rescue?

The circumstances of this event, as soon as the people had time to call up their recollection, were sent to a neighbouring magistrate; but little could be hoped from that. Who was to swear to the robber? Who, undertake to find him out! Miss Woodley thought of Rushbrook, of Sandford, of Lord Elmwood—but what could she hope from the want of power in the two former?—what from the latter, for the want of will? Now stupified, and now distracted, she walked about the house incessantly, begging for instructions how to act, or how to forget her misery.

A tenant of Lord Elmwood's, who occupied a little farm near to that where Lady Matilda lived, and who was well acquainted with the whole history of her's and her mother's misfortunes, was returning from a neighbouring fair, just as this inhuman plan was put in execution. He heard the cries of a woman in distress, and followed the sound, till he arrived at a chaise in waiting, and saw Matilda placed in it, by the side of two men, who presented pistols to him, as he offered to approach and expostulate.

The farmer, uncertain who this female was, yet went to the house she had been taken from (as the nearest) with the tale of what he had seen; and there, being informed it was Lady Matilda whom he had beheld, this intelligence, joined to the powerful effect her screams had on him, made him resolve to take horse immediately, and with some friends, follow the carriage till they should trace the place to which she was conveyed.

The anxiety, the firmness discovered in determining on this understanding, somewhat alleviated the agony Miss Woodley endured, and she began to hope, timely assistance might yet be given to her beloved charge.

The man set out, meaning at all events to attempt her release; but before he had proceeded far, the few friends that accompanied him, began to reflect on the improbability of their success, against a nobleman, surrounded by servants, with other attendants likewise, and, perhaps, even countenanced by the father of the lady, whom they presumed to take from him; or if not, while Lord Elmwood beheld the offence with indifference, that indifference gave it a sanction, they might in vain oppose. These cool reflections tending to their safety, had their weight with the companions of the farmer; they all rode back, rejoicing at their second thoughts, and left him to pursue his journey and prove his valour by himself.

# CHAPTER IX.

It was not with Sandford, as it had lately been with Rushbrook under the displeasure of Lord Elmwood—to the latter he behaved, as soon as their dissension was past, as if it had never happened—but to Sandford it was otherwise—the resentment which he had repressed at the time of the offence, lurked in his heart, and dwelt upon his mind for several days; during which, he carefully avoided exchanging a word with him, and gave every other demonstration of his anger.

Sandford, though experienced in the cruelty and ingratitude of the world, yet could not without difficulty brook this severity, this contumely, from a man, for whose welfare, ever since his infancy, he had laboured; and whose happiness was more dear to him, in spite of all his faults, than that of any other person. Even Lady Matilda was not so dear to Sandford as her father—and he loved her more that she was Lord Elmwood's child, than for any other cause.

Sometimes the old Priest, incensed beyond bearing, was on the point of saying to his patron, "How, in my age, dare you thus treat the man, whom in his youth you respected and revered?"

Sometimes instead of anger, he felt the tear, he was ashamed to own, steal to his eye, and even fall down his cheek. Sometimes he left the room half determined to leave the house—but these were all half determinations; for he knew him with whom he had to deal too well, not to know that he might be provoked into yet greater anger; and that should he once rashly quit his house, the doors most probably would be shut against him for ever.

In this humiliating state (for even many of the domestics could not but observe their Lord's displeasure) Sandford passed three days, and was beginning the fourth, when sitting with Lord Elmwood and Rushbrook just after breakfast, a servant entered, saying, as he opened the door, to somebody who followed, "You must wait till you have my Lord's permission."

This attracted their eyes to the door, and a man meanly dressed, walked in, following close to the servant.

The latter turned, and seemed again to desire the person to retire, but in vain; he rushed forward regardless of his opposer, and in great agitation, cried,

"My Lord, if you please, I have business with you, provided you will chuse to be alone."

Lord Elmwood, struck with the intruder's earnestness, bade the servant leave the room; and then said to the stranger,

"You may speak before these gentlemen."

The man instantly turned pale, and trembled—then, to prolong the time before he spoke, went to the door to see if it was shut—returned—yet still trembling, seemed unwilling to say his errand.

"What have you done," cried Lord Elmwood, "that you are in this terror? What have you done, man?"

"Nothing, my Lord," replied he, "but I am afraid I am going to offend you."

"Well, no matter;" (he answered carelessly) "only go on, and let me know your business."

The man's distress increased—and he cried in a voice of grief and affright—"Your child, my Lord!"——

Rushbrook and Sandford started; and looking at Lord Elmwood, saw him turn white as death. In a tremulous voice he instantly cried,

"What of her?" and rose from his seat.

Encouraged by the question, and the agitation of him who asked it, the poor man gave way to his feelings, and answered with every sign of sorrow,

"I saw her, my Lord, taken away by force—two ruffians seized and carried her away, while she screamed in vain to me for help, and tore her hair in distraction."

"Man, what do you mean?" cried the Earl.

"Lord Margrave," replied the stranger, "we have no doubt, has formed this plot—he has for some time past beset the house where she lived; and when his visits were refused, he threatened this. Besides, one of his servants attended the carriage; I saw, and knew him."

Lord Elmwood listened to the last part of this account with seeming composure—then turning hastily to Rushbrook, he said,

“Where are my pistols, Harry?”

Sandford rose from his seat, and forgetting all the anger between them, caught hold of the Earl’s hand, and cried, “Will you then prove yourself a father?”

Lord Elmwood only answered, “Yes,” and left the room.

Rushbrook followed, and begged with all the earnestness he felt, to be permitted to accompany his uncle.

While Sandford shook hands with the farmer a thousand times; and he, in his turn, rejoiced, as if he had already seen Lady Matilda restored to liberty.

Rushbrook in vain entreated Lord Elmwood; he laid his commands upon him not to go a step from the Castle; while the agitation of his own mind, was too great, to observe the rigour of this sentence on his nephew.

During the hasty preparations for the Earl’s departure, Sandford received from Miss Woodley the sad intelligence of what had happened; but he returned an answer to recompence her for all she had suffered on the occasion.

Within a few hours Lord Elmwood set off, accompanied by his guide, the farmer, and other attendants furnished with every requisite to ascertain the success of their enterprise—while poor Matilda little thought of a deliverer nigh, much less, that her deliverer should prove her father.

# CHAPTER X.

Lord Margrave, black as this incident of his life must make him appear to the reader, still nursed in his conscience a reserve of specious virtue, to keep him in peace with himself. It was his design to plead, to argue, to implore, nay even to threaten, long before he put his threats in force; and with this and the following reflection, he reconciled—as most bad men can—what he had done, not only to the laws of humanity, but to the laws of honour.

“I have stolen a woman certainly;” said he to himself, “but I will make her happier than she was in that humble state from which I have taken her. I will even,” said he, “now that she is in my power, win her affections—and when, in fondness, hereafter she hangs upon me, how will she thank me for this little trial, through which I shall have conducted her to happiness!”

Thus did he hush his remorse, while he waited impatiently at home, in expectation of his prize.

Half expiring with her sufferings, of body as well as of mind, about twelve o’clock the next night, after she was borne away, Matilda arrived; and felt her spirits revive by the superior sufferings that awaited her—for her increasing terrors roused her from the death-like weakness, brought on by fatigue.

Lord Margrave’s house, to which he had gone previous to this occasion, was situated in the lonely part of a well-known forest, not more than twenty miles distant from London: this was an estate he rarely visited; and as he had but few servants here, it was a place which he supposed would be less the object of suspicion in the present case, than any other of his seats. To this, then, Lady Matilda was conveyed—a superb apartment allotted her—and one of his confidential females placed to attend upon her, with all respect, and assurances of safety.

Matilda looked in this woman’s face, and seeing she bore the features of her sex, while her own knowledge reached none of those worthless characters of which this person was a specimen, she imagined that none of those could look as she did, and therefore found consolation in her seeming tenderness. She was even prevailed upon (by her promises to sit by her side and watch) to throw herself on the bed, and suffer sleep for a few minutes—for sleep to her was suffering; her fears giving birth to dreams terrifying as her waking thoughts.

More wearied than refreshed with her sleep, she rose at break of day, and refusing to admit of the change of an article in her dress, she persisted to sit in the torn disordered habit in which she had been dragged away; nor would she taste a morsel, of all the delicacies that were prepared for her.

Her attendant, for some time observed the most reverential awe; but finding this had not the effect of gaining compliance with her advice, she varied her manners, and began by less submissive means to attempt an influence. She said her orders were to be obedient, while she herself was obeyed—at least in circumstances so material as the lady’s health, of which she had the charge as a physician, and expected equal compliance from her patient—food and fresh apparel she prescribed as the only means to prevent death; and even threatened her invalid with something worse, a visit from Lord Margrave, if she continued obstinate.

Now loathing her for the deception she had practised, more, than had she received her thus at first, Matilda hid her eyes from the sight of her; and when she was obliged to look, she shuddered.

This female at length thought it her duty to wait upon her worthy employer, and inform him the young lady in her trust would certainly die, unless there were means employed to oblige her to take some nourishment.

Lord Margrave, glad of an opportunity that might apologize for his intrusion upon Lady Matilda, went with eagerness to her apartment, and throwing himself at her feet, conjured her if she would save his life, as well as her own, to submit to be consoled.

The extreme disgust and horror his presence inspired, caused Matilda for a moment to forget all her want of power, her want of health, her weakness; and rising from the place where she sat, she cried, with her voice elevated,

“Leave me, my Lord, or I’ll die in spite of all your care; I’ll instantly expire with grief, if you do not leave me.”

Accustomed to the tears and reproaches of the sex—though not of those like her—he treated with contempt these menaces of anger, and

seizing her hand, carried it to his lips.

Enraged, and overwhelmed with sorrow at the affront, she cried, (forgetting every other friend she had,) “Oh! my dear Miss Woodley, why are you not here to protect me?”

“Nay,” returned Lord Margrave, stifling a fit of laughter, “I should think the old Priest would be as good a champion as the lady.”

The remembrance of Sandford, with all his kindness, now rushed so forcibly on Matilda’s mind, that she shed a shower of tears, on thinking how much he felt, and would continue to feel, for her situation. Once she thought on Rushbrook, and thought even *he* would be sorry for her. Of her father she did not think—she dared not—one single moment that thought intruded, but she hurried it away—it was too bitter.

It was now again quite night; and near to that hour when she came first to the house. Lord Margrave, though at some distance from her, remained still in her apartment, while her female companion had stolen away. His insensibility to her lamentations—the agitated looks he sometimes cast upon her—her weak and defenceless state, all conspired to fill her mind with horror.

He saw her apprehensions in her distracted face, disheveled hair, and the whole of her forlorn appearance—yet, notwithstanding his former resolutions, he could not resist the desire of fulfilling all her dreadful expectations.

He once again approached her, and again was going to seize her hand; when the report of a pistol, and a confused noise of persons assembling towards the apartment prevented him.

He started—but looked more surprised than alarmed—her alarm was augmented; for she supposed this tumult was some experiment to intimidate her into submission. She wrung her hands, and lifted up her eyes to Heaven, in the last agony of despair, when one of Lord Margrave’s servants entered hastily and announced,

“Lord Elmwood!”

That moment her father entered—and with all the unrestrained fondness of a parent, folded her in his arms.

Her extreme, her excess of joy on such a meeting, and from such anguish rescued, was, in part, repressed by his awful presence. The apprehensions to which she had been accustomed, kept her timid and doubtful—she feared to speak, or clasp him in return for his embrace, but falling on her knees, clung round his legs, and bathed his feet with her tears.——These were the happiest moments that she had ever known—perhaps, the happiest *he* had ever known.

Lord Margrave, on whom Lord Elmwood had not even cast a look, now left the room; but as he quitted it, called out,

“My Lord Elmwood, if you have any demands on me,”—

The Earl interrupted him, “Would you make me an executioner? The law shall be your only antagonist.”

Matilda, quite exhausted, yet upheld by the sudden transport she had felt, was led by her father out of this wretched dwelling—more despicable than the beggar’s hovel.

# CHAPTER XI.

Overcome with the want of rest for two nights, from her distracting fears, and all those fears now hushed; Matilda, soon after she was placed in the carriage with Lord Elmwood, dropped fast asleep; and thus, insensibly surprised, leaned her head against her father in the sweetest slumber that imagination can conceive.

When she awoke, instead of the usual melancholy scene before her view, she beheld her father, and heard the voice of the once dreaded Lord Elmwood tenderly saying,

"We will go no further to-night, the fatigue is too much for her; order beds here directly, and some proper person to sit up and attend her."

She could only turn to him with a look of love and duty; her lips could not utter a sentence.

In the morning she found her father by the side of her bed. He inquired "If she was in health sufficient to pursue her journey, or if she would remain where she was?"

"I *am* able to go with you," she answered instantly.

"Nay," replied he, "perhaps you ought to stay here till you are better?"

"I am better," said she, "and ready to go with you."——Half afraid that he meant to send her from him.

He perceived her fears, and replied, "Nay, if you stay, so shall I—and when I go, I shall take you along with me to my house."

"To Elmwood House?" she asked eagerly.

"No, to my house in town, where I intend to be all the winter, and where we shall live together."

She turned her face on the pillow to conceal tears of joy, but her sobs revealed them.

"Come," said he, "this kiss is a token you have nothing to fear." And he kissed her affectionately. "I shall send for Miss Woodley too immediately," continued he.

"Oh! I shall be overjoyed to see her, my Lord—and to see Mr. Sandford —and even Mr. Rushbrook."

"Do you know *him*?" said Lord Elmwood.

"Yes," she replied, "I have seen him two or three times."

The Earl hoping the air might be a means of re-establishing her strength and spirits, now left the room, and ordered his carriage to be prepared: while she arose, attended by one of his female servants, for whom he had sent to town, to bring such changes of apparel as were requisite.

When Matilda was ready to join her father in the next room, she felt a tremor seize her, that made it almost impossible to appear before him. No other circumstance now impending to agitate her heart, she felt more forcibly its embarrassment at meeting on terms of easy intercourse, him, of whom she had never been used to think, but with that distant reverence and fear, which his severity had excited; and she knew not how she should dare to speak to, or look on him, with that freedom her affection warranted.

After several efforts to conquer these nice and refined sensations, but to no purpose, she at last went to his apartment. He was reading; but as she entered, he put out his hand and drew her to him. Her tears wholly overcame her. He could have intermingled his—but assuming a grave countenance, he commanded her to desist from exhausting her spirits; and, after a few powerful struggles, she obeyed.

Before the morning was over, she experienced the extreme joy of sitting by her father's side as they drove to town, and of receiving, during his conversation, a thousand proofs of his love, and tokens of her lasting happiness.

It was now the middle of November; and yet, as Matilda passed along, never to her, did the sun shine so bright as upon this morning—never did her imagination comprehend, that the human heart could feel happiness true and genuine as hers!

On arriving at the house, there was no abatement of her felicity: all was respect and duty on the part of the domestics—all paternal care on the part of Lord Elmwood; and she would have been at that summit of her wishes which annihilates hope, but that the prospect of seeing Miss Woodley and Mr. Sandford, still kept this passion in existence.

# CHAPTER XII.

Rushbrook was detained at Elmwood House during all this time, more from the persuasions, nay prayers, of Sandford, than the commands of Lord Elmwood. He had, but for Sandford, followed his uncle, and exposed himself to his anger, sooner than have endured the most piercing inquietude, which he was doomed to suffer, till the news arrived of Lady Matilda's safety. He indeed had little else to fear from the known firm, courageous character of her father, and the expedition with which he undertook his journey; but lovers' fears are like those of women, obstinate, and no argument could persuade either him or Miss Woodley (who had now ventured to come to Elmwood House) but that Matilda's peace of mind might be for ever destroyed, before she was set at liberty.

The summons from Lord Elmwood for their coming to town, was received by each of this party with delight; but the impatience to obey it, was in Rushbrook so violent, it was painful to himself, and extremely troublesome to Sandford; who wished, from his regard to Lady Matilda, rather to delay, than hurry their journey.

"You are to blame," said he to him and Miss Woodley, "to wish by your arrival, to divide with Lord Elmwood that tender bond, which ties the good who confer obligations, to the object of their benevolence. At present there is no one with him to share in the care and protection of his daughter, and he is under the necessity of discharging that duty himself; this habit may become so powerful, that he *cannot* throw it off, even if his former resolutions should urge him to it. While we remain here, therefore, Lady Matilda is safe with her father; but it would not surprise me, if on our arrival (especially if we are precipitate) he should place her again with Miss Woodley at a distance."

To this forcible conjecture, they submitted for a few days, and then most gladly set out for town.

On their arrival, they were met, even at the street-door, by Lady Matilda; and with an expression of joy, they did not suppose her features could have worn. She embraced Miss Woodley! hung upon Sandford! and to Mr. Rushbrook, who from his conscious love only bowed at an humble distance, she held out her hand with every look and gesture of the tenderest esteem.

When Lord Elmwood joined them, he welcomed them all sincerely; but Sandford the most, with whom he had not spoken for many days before he left the country, for his allusion to the wretched situation of his daughter.—And Sandford (with his fellow-travellers) now saw him treat that daughter with an easy, a natural fondness, as if she had lived with him from her infancy. He appeared, however, at times, under the apprehension, that the propensity of man to jealousy, might give Rushbrook a pang at this dangerous rival in his love and fortune—for though Lord Elmwood remembered well the hazard he had once ventured to befriend Matilda, yet the present unlimited reconciliation was something so unlooked for, it might be a trial too much for his generosity, to remain wholly disinterested on the event. Slight as was this suspicion, it did Rushbrook injustice. He loved Lady Matilda too sincerely, he loved her father's happiness, and her mother's memory too faithfully, not to be rejoiced at all he witnessed; nor could the secret hope that whispered him, "Their blessings might one day be mutual," increase the pleasure he found, in beholding Matilda happy.

Unexpected affairs, in which Lord Elmwood had been for some time engaged, had diverted his attention for awhile from the marriage of his nephew; nor did he at this time find his disposition sufficiently severe, to exact from the young man a compliance with his wishes, at so cruel an alternative as that of being for ever discarded. He felt his mind, by the late incident, too much softened for such harshness; he yet wished for the alliance he had proposed; for he was more consistent in his character than to suffer the tenderness his daughter's peril had awakened, to derange those plans which he had long projected. Never even now, for a moment did he indulge—for perhaps it would have been an indulgence—the idea of replacing her exactly in the rights of her birth, to the disappointment of all his nephew's expectations.

Yet, milder at this crisis in his temper than he had been for years before, and knowing he could be no longer irritated upon the subject of his daughter, he once more resolved to trust himself in a conference with Rushbrook on the subject of marriage; meaning at the same time to mention Matilda as an opponent from whom he had nothing to fear. But for some time before Rushbrook was called to this private audience, he had, by his unwearied attention, endeavoured to impress upon Matilda's

mind, the softest sentiments in his favour. He succeeded—but not as he wished. She loved him as her friend, her cousin, her foster-brother, but not as a lover. The idea of love never once came to her thoughts; and she would sport with Rushbrook like the most harmless child, while he, all impassioned, could with difficulty resist telling her, what she made him suffer.

At the meeting between him and Lord Elmwood, to which he was called for his final answer on that subject which had once nearly proved so fatal to him; after a thousand fears, much confusion and embarrassment, he at length frankly confessed his “Heart was engaged, and had been so, long before his uncle offered to direct his choice.”

Lord Elmwood desired to know, “On whom he had placed his affections.”

“I dare not tell you, my Lord,” returned he, infinitely confused; “but Mr. Sandford can witness their sincerity and how long they have been fixed.”

“Fixed!” cried the Earl.

“Immoveably fixed, my Lord; and yet the object is as unconscious of my love to this moment, as you yourself have been; and I swear ever shall be so, without your permission.”

“Name the object,” said Lord Elmwood, anxiously.

“My Lord, I dare not.—The last time I named her to you, you threatened to abandon me for my arrogance.”

Lord Elmwood started.——“My daughter! Would you marry her?”

“But with your approbation, my Lord; and that——”

Before he could proceed a word further, his uncle left the room hastily —and left Rushbrook all terror for his approaching fate.

Lord Elmwood went immediately into the apartment where Sandford, Miss Woodley, and Matilda, were sitting, and cried with an angry voice, and with his countenance disordered,

“Rushbrook has offended me beyond forgiveness.—Go, Sandford, to the library, where he is, and tell him this instant to quit my house, and never dare to return.”

Miss Woodley lifted up her hands and sighed.

Sandford rose slowly from his seat to execute the office.

While Lady Matilda, who was arranging her music books upon the instrument, stopped from her employment suddenly, with her face bathed in tears.

A general silence ensued, till Lord Elmwood, resuming his angry tone, cried, “Did you hear me, Mr. Sandford?”

Sandford now, without a word in reply, made for the door—but there Matilda impeded him, and throwing her arms about his neck, cried,

“Dear Mr. Sandford, do not.”

“How!” exclaimed her father.

She saw the impending frown, and rushing towards him, took his hand fearfully, and knelt at his feet. “Mr. Rushbrook is my relation,” she cried in a pathetic voice, “my companion, my friend—before you loved me he was anxious for my happiness, and often visited me to lament with, and console me. I cannot see him turned out of your house without feeling for *him*, what he once felt for *me*.”

Lord Elmwood turned aside to conceal his sensations—then raising her from the floor, he said, “Do you know what he has asked of me?”

“No,” answered she in the utmost ignorance, and with the utmost innocence painted on her face; “but whatever it is, my Lord, though you do not grant it, yet pardon him for asking.”

“Perhaps *you* would grant him what he has requested?” said her father.

“Most willingly—was it in my gift.”

“It is,” replied he. “Go to him in the library, and hear what he has to say; for on your will his fate shall depend.”

Like lightning she flew out of the room; while even the grave Sandford smiled at the idea of their meeting.

Rushbrook, with his fears all verified by the manner in which his uncle had left him, sat with his head reclined against a bookcase, and every limb extended with the despair that had seized him.

Matilda nimbly opened the door and cried, “Mr. Rushbrook, I am come to comfort you.”

“That you have always done,” said he, rising in rapture to receive her,

even in the midst of all his sadness.

“What is it you want?” said she. “What have you asked of my father that he has denied you?”

“I have asked for that,” replied he, “which is dearer to me than my life.”

“Be satisfied then,” returned she, “for you shall have it.”

“Dear Matilda! it is not in your power to bestow.”

“But he has told me it *shall* be in my power; and has desired me to give, or to refuse it you, at my own pleasure.”

“O Heavens!” cried Rushbrook in transport, “Has he?”

“He has indeed—before Mr. Sandford and Miss Woodley. Now tell me what you petitioned for?”

“I asked him,” cried Rushbrook, trembling, “for a wife.”

Her hand, which had just then taken hold of his, in the warmth of her wish to serve him, now dropped down as with the stroke of death—her face lost its colour—and she leaned against the desk by which they were standing, without uttering a word.

“What means this change?” said he; “Do you not wish me happy?”

“Yes,” she exclaimed: “Heaven is my witness. But it gives me concern to think we must part.”

“Then let us be joined,” cried he, falling at her feet, “till death alone can part us.”

All the sensibility—the reserve—the pride, with which she was so amply possessed, returned to her that moment. She started and cried, “Could Lord Elmwood know for what he sent me?”

“He did,” replied Rushbrook—“I boldly told him of my presumptuous love, and he has given to you alone, the power over my happiness or misery. Oh! do not doom me to the latter.”

Whether the heart of Matilda, such as it has been described, *could* sentence him to misery, the reader is left to surmise—and if he supposes that it could *not,* he has every reason to suppose that their wedded life, was—a life of happiness.

He has beheld the pernicious effects of an *improper education* in the destiny which attended the unthinking Miss Milner.—On the opposite side, what may not be hoped from that school of prudence—though of adversity—in which Matilda was bred?

And Mr. Milner, Matilda’s grandfather, had better have given his *fortune* to a distant branch of his family—as Matilda’s father once meant to do—so that he had given to his daughter

A PROPER EDUCATION.

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