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by Elizabeth Sibthorpe Pinchard**

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VOL. 2 \*\*\*

**MYSTERY**

AND

**CONFIDENCE:**

*A TALE.*

**BY A LADY.**

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

**VOL. II.**

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**MYSTERY**

AND

**CONFIDENCE.**

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## CHAP. I.

—To mourn because a sparrow dies,  
To rave in artificial ecstasies,  
Laments how oft her wounded heart has bled,  
And boasts of many a tear she never shed.

MISS MORE'S POEM ON SENSIBILITY.

The next day being Sunday, Lady St. Aubyn, attired in the most elegant undress, and attended by the Earl, made her appearance at the church: the expensive lace veil which shaded her fair face, and hung loosely below her waist, prevented the gazing of those around her from being too oppressive. The neighbouring families certainly had heard that Lord St. Aubyn had married a young person of a rank in life much inferior to his own, for secretly as every thing had been conducted, as no one could tell the name or family of his bride, such, at least, were the conjectures of those who knew him; yet, in spite of the prejudices which had been excited against her, the elegance of her form, and the modest composure of her demeanour, in a great measure overcame it, and all who were entitled, by their situation in life, to visit at the Castle, determined to do so; some prompted by mere curiosity, and some by less unworthy motives. The three or four following days, therefore, brought Ellen many visitors, and her own intuitive sense of propriety, added to the few general directions St. Aubyn had given her, and with the advantageous support his respectful attention gave her, prevented her appearing at all awkward; and these visits, which she had so greatly dreaded, passed over with less pain than she had expected.

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Amongst their first visitors were Sir William and Miss Cecil; the former of whom was a mere common-place character, whom, if you did not happen to see for sometime, you would be apt to forget you had ever seen at all; but the fine countenance of Laura, her expressive features, and the bright black eyes which animated them, charmed Ellen, who had never seen any woman before so pleasing: yet Laura was not strictly beautiful, and at this time the lustre of her fine eyes was dimmed by the melancholy which pervaded her mind, for she said her little invalid was so much indisposed, and so weak, she would not have left her to go any where else; but she wished so very much to be introduced to Lady St. Aubyn she could not resist the temptation.

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The very elegant manner in which she spoke, the clearness of her articulation, and sweetness of her voice, were strikingly agreeable; and St. Aubyn afterwards said that a few years before she had a gaiety of manner, enlivened by wit of a superior nature, with so much playfulness of expression, that by many people she was considered as merely a lively girl, and a little satirical; but time and misfortune had softened what at times might have been too severe in her opinions, had improved and mellowed her fine judgment, and given a pensive sweetness to her manners, which was occasionally relieved by flashes of her former gaiety and ready repartee. St. Aubyn shewed her a particular and most respectful attention, and told Ellen she would be charmed with Miss Cecil's drawings, which were the very finest he ever saw, except from the hands of a professed artist. He then, with a smile, addressed a few words to Laura in an undertone, to which she replied: "Oh, pray, my Lord, do not expose my juvenile follies: I might have done such things when we were mere children together, but I hope you think me wiser now!"

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"The world," said he, "has perhaps made us both graver since the days you speak of; and that, in the eyes of many, will doubtless give us credit for an increase of wisdom; but believe me, my fair friend, I have lost so little of the romance of youth (if such you choose to term it), that I must hope you do not neglect the pleasing talent to which I alluded, and of which you must allow Lady St. Aubyn to judge: I assure you she has a great taste for poetry, and perhaps one day or other may follow your example, and court the Muses in her turn."

"Ah, my Lord!" said Laura, smiling and colouring: "I see you are determined not to keep my secret." "Tell me, Ellen," said St. Aubyn, "can you see any reason why Miss Cecil should wish to make a secret of her having succeeded very happily in some elegant little poetical compositions?" "No, indeed," replied Ellen: "it surely is a gift to be rather proud than ashamed of." "Ah, my dear Lady St. Aubyn, if you could conceive the illiberal prejudice of some minds, you would not wonder at my dislike to having these trifling attempts spoken of. A lady I knew, who was eminently gifted in that way, and indeed an excellent prose-writer also, was, from circumstances, obliged to be less scrupulous than I have been; and if you could have heard the things I have witnessed, when she entered or left a room, you would be amazed: while she, gentle, unassuming, and even timid, judging candidly of every one, unwilling to see faults, and detesting personal satire, had not the most remote idea of the severe and uncandid remarks she excited."

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Ellen was really astonished at this account, as much as she was pleased with the spirit and grace with which it was delivered; and St. Aubyn said to her with an expressive smile, "You see, Ellen, our friend Ross had more reason than we were willing to allow him for *certain prohibitions*. However," added he, "I will not relinquish the hope that Miss Cecil will soon see how little she has to fear from any observations of such a nature from *you*." "I see it already," said Miss Cecil with quickness: "one glance at Lady St. Aubyn would convince the most incredulous that nothing but sweetness and candour can lodge in such a temple."

She then looked at her watch, and saying she had much exceeded her time, and Juliet would expect her, departed with her father, who had been deeply engaged in giving Doctor Montague a long account of a county-meeting, which had been held for some public purpose a few days before. They had scarcely driven from the door, when Miss Alton was announced; and as she

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entered, St. Aubyn whispered to Ellen—"Now you will see a character quite new to you." Then rising hastily, he crossed the room to meet the lady, exclaiming, "Heavens! my dear Miss Alton, how enchanted I am to see you look so well! You really improve every day, at least every year: for I believe it is at least that time since I saw you last." "Oh, my Lord," answered the lady in an affected tone, but in a voice the natural sharpness of which all her efforts failed to soften; "you flatter—don't try to make me vain. Lord bless me, you men have no mercy on us poor young women: but will you not introduce me to your Lady?"

Ellen, who at the distance from whence she had first seen this visitor imagined that she really was young and handsome, was astonished as she approached, to find in the white frock, sash, ringlets, and little straw hat of a girl, a woman apparently between fifty and sixty; and who vainly attempted to conceal, by a quantity of *rouge* and a slight veil thrown over her face, the ravages which time had made in her countenance. Her spare figure gave her some resemblance to youthful slightness; but when near, the sharp bones, and angular projections of her face and person, sufficiently proved, that slender appearance was the result of lean old age, instead of girlish delicacy. In spite of the advanced season, she was clad so lightly, that she still shivered from the impression of the keen breeze which had assailed her as she crossed the Park, and gladly accepted a seat by the comfortable fire, though affecting to conceal her sufferings under an air of gaiety and ease.

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St. Aubyn (who had known her many years, and had been from a boy accustomed to divert himself with her foibles, though he really felt a degree of regard for her, as, in spite of her oddities, she was not without a mixture of good qualities), after having introduced her to his bride, seated himself by her, and began to talk to her in a strain of such marked flattery, as really alarmed Ellen, who thought Miss Alton would certainly be offended; but her enormous vanity prevented her from perceiving that he was merely laughing at her, and she grew every moment more ridiculous. At last, turning to Ellen, she said in a pathetic tone, "Oh, my dear Madam, you cannot conceive how I have felt for you these two days! I declare I have not been able to sleep for thinking of you, and really have shed tears to imagine what a tax you have been paying: how you must have been fatigued by receiving such a succession of visitors! but every one must have some trouble. There is my dear friend, Mrs. Dawkins, the best of women—sweet woman, indeed—there she is lamenting at home such a vexation!" "What is the matter?" said St. Aubyn, laughing, for he knew what sort of misfortunes Mrs. Dawkins and her friend Miss Alton generally lamented with so much pathos: "has she lost her little French dog, or has the careless coachman scratched the pannels of her new carriage?" "Oh, you sad man! how can you make a jest of the dear soul's uncommon sensibility? To be sure she has the tenderest feelings. She often says to me, 'my dear Alton, what should I do without you: you are the only person who can really feel for the misfortunes of a friend.' Sweet woman!"

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"Well, but," said St. Aubyn, "you were going to tell us what has happened to this *amiable friend* of your's."

"Nay, I will tell Lady St. Aubyn, she looks all softness and sensibility: but you are so wicked, you make a jest of every thing. Do you know, my dearest Lady St. Aubyn, just as poor Mrs. Dawkins was coming to make you a visit, this morning, nay, she was actually dressed, and had one foot on the step of the carriage, *I* was in it, for she was so kind as to say she would bring me; so I thought, as I was to come with her, I need not put on a pelisse, or shawl, for you know they spoil one's dress. But I can't say but that it was rather cold walking, as I was at last obliged to do, for *just* as she put her foot upon the step——" "What happened?" interrupted St. Aubyn, laughing still more at the emphatic manner in which poor Alton told her distressing story.—"Did she fall down and break her leg, or did the horses run away and carry off her kid slipper?"—"Now only hear him; did you ever see such a teasing creature: well, I am glad *I* have not the task of keeping you in order; I don't know what even the sweet Countess will do with you."

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This piece of self-congratulation threw St. Aubyn into a violent fit of laughing, in which even the grave Doctor Montague joined, and Ellen could hardly resist, though the fear of quite affronting her guest put a check upon her risibility.

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"Well," said St. Aubyn, at last recovering himself a little, "but what really did happen to poor Mrs. Dawkins?"

"Nay, I protest I won't tell you, you wicked creature; I will tell Lady St. Aubyn some other time, for you do not deserve to hear any thing about it."

"Oh, yes, do, my dear Alton, tell, for really I am in great pain for poor Mrs. Dawkins, who has been standing so long with one foot upon the step: don't leave her in so dangerous a situation any longer."—"Well, then, if I must tell—at that moment up came a servant on horseback, to say her sister, Mrs. Courtenay, was on the road to her own house, in her way from Buxton, and would, with a whole train of children and servants, dine at her house to-day; and as they were coming directly, she was actually obliged to defer her visit to your Ladyship till to-morrow; and she was so sorry, and I am sure so was I, for I was obliged to walk here after all."

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"Well, but," said Lord St. Aubyn, "notwithstanding this terrible shock to her feelings, she might have sent the carriage with *you*."—"Aye, so she might, to be sure; but poor dear soul, she was put in such a bustle she never thought of it; some people don't think—dear me, if I had a carriage of my own, I should be happy to make it useful to my friends, and not let them go broiling on foot two or three miles in warm weather or splashing through the mud in the middle of winter."—"I believe you," said St. Aubyn; for with all her foibles, he knew Miss Alton was

really good-natured, and willing to do a kind action.

"Well, my dear Miss Alton, if you will favour us with your company, and dine with us, Lady St. Aubyn will, I am sure, be happy to send you home in her carriage; and I promise you, if the Prince himself was to make us a visit, that should not prevent your having it." [Pg 15]

Ellen joined in this invitation, to which the happy Miss Alton readily assented; and Ellen found her, after a little while, a more tolerable companion than she expected.

Miss Alton's particular passion was for being with people who lived in style; if they had a title so much the better; and as she would do any thing to make herself useful, and knew how to pay those little attentions which every body likes, she generally made herself agreeable, or so necessary, that she had admittance at almost all the houses of consequence in the neighbourhood. The entrè of St. Aubyn Castle was the height of her ambition. St. Aubyn's mother, who lived much in the country, had been in the habit of receiving Miss Alton, when she was a girl, on familiar terms: the old Lady was fond of needle-work, and Alton assisted in filling up the groundwork of carpets, rugs, &c. with the most patient good humour; or was at any time ready to make up a whist or quadrille table; so that in those days she was very often a week or two together at the Castle, where St. Aubyn, at his vacations, had been accustomed to meet her, and to divert himself with her foibles, though he had always retained a degree of regard for her, a felicity which the death of the old Countess deprived her of, and she had never since ceased to regret; for though her other connections were respectable, they were not so high in fortune or consequence as the St. Aubyns, and great was her joy to find herself once more an invited guest at the Castle. [Pg 16]

Amongst her other friends, as her narrow income by no means permitted her to return their civilities in kind, she yet was always well received, for there was nothing she would not do to oblige: one Lady would send her in her carriage, if not well enough to go herself, to inquire the character of a servant; another would express a wish, in her hearing, for some game, or fruit, for a dinner party, and Miss Alton would set out the next morning "to try her luck," as she termed it, by calling at some of the higher sort of houses, where she was acquainted, and *wishing* she knew where to get a hare, or a pine-apple (according to which was wanted), "to oblige a friend to whom she owed a great many favours," the good natured hearer generally, if possible, was willing to oblige "poor Alton;" or if she did not succeed there, she would tramp a mile or two farther, and at worst could fairly boast what pains she had taken, even if they were not successful. [Pg 17]

In London, if a notable friend wanted a cheap trimming, or to match a silk or lace, yet did not like to go about to little shops herself, Alton would take a hackney coach, or walk if the weather permitted, and never rest till she had obtained the thing in question. [Pg 18]

By these and similar means she had made a great many high acquaintance, and *eked* out a small income by visits, sometimes a little too long, to each in turn.—She had thus acquired some amusing anecdotes, and was far from an unpleasing companion, especially when no male beings came in her way; but when with men, vanity and affectation took such full possession of her, that she became completely ridiculous. This Lady St. Aubyn had an opportunity of seeing: when two or three gentlemen happened to call before dinner, her whole manner changed, and she became really absurd: her voice was softened—her head leant on one shoulder—a tolerably white hand and arm displayed in every possible attitude, and she behaved, in every respect, like a very silly affected girl; but when they were gone, she was again tolerably conversable, and St. Aubyn, ceasing to play upon her foibles, and turning the conversation to such topics as were most likely to shew her to advantage, the afternoon and evening passed pleasantly enough. Nor was St. Aubyn sorry to familiarise Ellen, by degrees, to company, or to do the honour of his table, before they should be obliged to receive the neighbouring families at dinner, many of whom he knew (especially two or three ladies who had unmarried daughters) would be eagerly looking out for any little omission in her, while Miss Alton was so delighted with the good things before her (certainly being *un peu gourmande*) with the beautiful new service of china, rich plate, &c. &c. that she never thought of her entertainers, except to express her pleasure in their kindness and attention: and they sent her home in the evening perfectly happy, and eager to tell dear Mrs. Dawkins what a delightful day she had spent, how happy the Earl was to see her, what a *sweet woman* the Countess was, what fine china! what a dessert! what an elegant new carriage! &c. &c. [Pg 19]

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## CHAP. II.

Yet once again farewell, thou minstrel harp,  
Yet once again forgive my feeble sway,  
And little reck I of the censure sharp,  
May idly cavil at an idle lay.  
Much have I owed thy strains on life's long way,  
Through secret woes the world has never known,  
When on the weary night dawn'd wearier day,  
And bitterer was the grief devour'd alone.

The next month was past in receiving and returning visits; and the most pleasing among them was a sociable day passed at Rose-Hill, the seat of Sir William Cecil. Miss Cecil promised, if Juliet, who now for some time had been tolerably well, should continue so, that Ellen should see her; though she very seldom admitted any company: "But I have said so much of you," said Laura, "that she is quite anxious to see you; and I am particularly anxious to familiarize her to you, both as it will I am sure give her pleasure, and facilitate our being often together." Accordingly, after dinner, when they left the gentlemen, Miss Cecil led Lady St. Aubyn to Juliet's apartment.

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Never had Ellen seen so interesting a being: this fair creature, now about fifteen, was a perfect model of beauty and symmetry; though so slightly formed, she appeared, "like a fairy vision, or some bright creature of the element:" her cheeks were faintly tinged with a hectic blush; her eyes were of the most dazzling brightness; her lips like coral; and her teeth of pearly whiteness; her fair hair was covered with a fine lace cap, and her fragile form enveloped in a large shawl.

"My love," said Laura, "here is Lady St. Aubyn, who is so good as to come and see you."

Juliet extended her white hand, and said in a voice of peculiar harmony, fixing at the same time her sparkling and penetrating eyes on Ellen's face, as if she wished to read her heart in her countenance, "Laura says she loves you already, and I am sure *I* shall." The simple naïvetè of her voice and manner went to the heart of Ellen, who could not help embracing her tenderly, while she felt the tears start to her eyes at seeing one so young and lovely in a state of health so precarious.

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After a little more conversation, Ellen put her hand accidentally on a small book which lay half concealed by one of the pillows of Juliet's couch, and said with that native politeness which ever prevented her from doing any thing rude or intrusive, "May I look at the subject of your studies?" "Yes," said Juliet, with an angelic smile, "If you please." Ellen opened the book. It was in a character totally unknown to her. "Do you read Greek?" asked the fair Juliet, with a simplicity and absence of design which proved her question was serious; and this interrogation, which would from most people to a young woman be absolutely ridiculous, from Juliet appeared merely a natural wish to know whether her new friend was as able as herself to read the book she held in her hand; for strange as it may appear, it was a copy of the New Testament in Greek; and Juliet read it as easily as if it had been English.

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"My dear Juliet," said Laura, "few females make that language their study; I conclude, therefore, Lady St. Aubyn does not know it any more than myself." "Oh, I wish you both did," said Juliet: "if you could but know the delight I feel from reading the Scripture in its original language!—If I live till next summer I hope the Hebrew Bible will be as familiar to me as that book is now."

It is impossible for language to do justice to the perfect innocence and artlessness with which she spoke: she seemed to think her own wonderful attainments no more extraordinary than other girls do of being able to read a newspaper, or work a handkerchief: not a trace of affectation or pedantry was visible in her manner: she had a childishness of voice and tone that singularly contrasted with the subjects on which she spoke; for Laura, willing to let Ellen see what a wonderful creature she was, led her to speak of astronomy; and a celestial globe happening to be on a table before her, led her by degrees to display her extraordinary knowledge in that science—of the dimensions and motions of the heavenly bodies, their distances from the sun and from each other, &c. all of which she explained in the clearest and most perspicuous manner, making such happy allusions to the poets who have touched on the subject, and illustrating it by such apt comparisons, as shewed her imagination was as brilliant, as the calculations she readily made proved her memory was accurate.

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Lady St. Aubyn, who had at every leisure hour since her marriage been engaged in studying this and other interesting subjects of useful knowledge, could in some degree appreciate the value and extent of this sweet girl's extraordinary acquirements, and was lost in admiration of her abilities, and the industry with which, notwithstanding her ill health, she had cultivated them.

This happened to be a day in which Juliet was unusually well, for in general she declined all conversation, and spent most of her time in studying the Scriptures, in devotional exercises, and promoting every plan which her health would permit her to join in for the relief of the poor; for her early piety and extensive charity were as remarkable as her other attainments were wonderful: but this day she was so well, that at Laura's solicitation, in which Ellen earnestly joined, she placed herself at a chamber organ that stood in her apartment, which she touched with great taste and science; and was at last prevailed on to accompany it with a voice of the most angelic sweetness.

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She sung only sacred music, and now delighted Ellen with "Angels ever bright and fair;" and, "I know that my Redeemer liveth:" and while her pure lips poured forth these exquisite specimens of musical inspiration, the soft and pious expression of her heavenly countenance, for ever fixed and hallowed them in the remembrance of her hearers.

To Ellen she seemed hardly a being of this world, and her young and enthusiastic heart was melted with the tenderest love for one so very far superior to any thing she could have imagined.

From this day the St. Aubyns and Cecils spent a great part of their time together, and the highly polished manners of Miss Cecil, her excellent judgment, and fine taste, were extremely advantageous to Lady St. Aubyn. Without losing her natural grace and sweet simplicity, she gradually acquired more of that style which marks both the woman of fashion and the possessor of intellectual knowledge; even her beauty improved with the increased intelligence of her mind,

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and the serenity of her heart; for now for the first time she felt entirely happy; scarcely a cloud overshadowed her.

St. Aubyn was every day more tender and attentive, and every day expressed himself more pleased and delighted with his choice. Those starts of agitation and gloom which on their first acquaintance had appeared in him so frequently, were now very seldom seen. He received frequent letters from Spain, which he told Ellen were from his friend the Marquis of Northington, who was there in a diplomatic situation, and was engaged in seeking a person, by means of his extensive connections on the Continent, who alone could unravel some mysterious circumstances of the most material consequence to *him*. "But when found," said St. Aubyn, one day when he had by degrees been led to speak on this subject—"when found, if ever that should happen, I know not that he will be prevailed on to disclose what I have every reason to believe he alone can tell. He is a villain!"—(and St. Aubyn's frame shook with the agitation of smothered rage) "and may from motives of fear or revenge add to the other injuries he has done me, by withholding that information which alone can secure *my fame*, perhaps *my life*."

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He had never before spoken so much or so calmly on this interesting subject; and seeing that Ellen listened with great anxiety, and that at his last words she trembled and turned pale, he added:

"Fear not, my love: for your dear sake I will take every necessary precaution; and should I find the enemy, who has long, though most unjustly, threatened to revenge on me an act, horrible indeed, but of which I was not the author—should I find him still determined on vindictive measures, I will for a time pass over to the Continent, till some accommodation can be effected. At all events, my Ellen, remember you have promised to *believe me innocent*. In the course of the next summer, this enemy (who, alas! and that is not the least hardship in my wayward fate, ought by every tie to look upon me as a friend and father) will be in England, and I shall perhaps be able to clear his mind from those evil impressions with which an unfortunate chain of circumstances have stamped it—impressions received in early youth, and which he has ever since cherished, and brooded over with the most determined resentment."

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At this juncture, when St. Aubyn seemed for the first time inclined to open his whole heart to his wife, and to disclose to her a story in which she was so deeply interested, they were interrupted by a servant, who announced Mrs. Dawkins, and her tender friend Miss Alton, who came armed with a whole catalogue of sympathetic feelings and notes of admiration of all kinds to entertain Lady St. Aubyn.

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Many were the disasters which had happened since they saw her last: horses had been lame, servants impertinent, showers of rain had fallen at the most unlucky moments, even a dinner had been spoilt which had cost a whole week's preparation, by the cook's inattention in over-roasting the venison; in short, all the minor evils of life had set themselves in array against the peace of poor Mrs. Dawkins: and even the sympathizing Miss Alton could hardly keep pace with lamentations sufficient for such a doleful list of distresses. She fought her way, however, as well as she could, and where words failed her, shrugs, sighs, and the whole artillery of gesticulation, were employed in their stead.

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What then became of poor Ellen, who could at best only sit "with sad civility and an aching head," amid this alternate din of complaint and compassion? But Mrs. Dawkins was pre-determined to like and be pleased with every thing the lovely Countess did or omitted to do, and construed the silence and acquiescence with which she heard every thing into the kindest attention and most obliging concern for the troubles of her friends.

The entrance of a sandwich tray fortunately gave some pause to this melancholy duet; and the excellent hot-house fruits, rich cake, &c. seemed to arrive in good time to refresh both ladies after so much exertion. At last they took their leave, but the moment for confidence was past; indeed, St. Aubyn, in no humour for trifling, had made his escape at one door, as they entered at the other: of course, the conversation was not then resumed.

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Not to interrupt the course of the narrative, we omitted in the proper place to notice that Lord and Lady St. Aubyn had, immediately on their arrival at the Castle, written letters of explanation to Powis and Joanna, and he permitted Mr. Ross to publish what he alone knew the real rank and title of the person Ellen had married.

We will not pretend to describe the astonishment excited by this intelligence amongst the inhabitants of Llanwyllan: the honest and unambitious Powis declared he would much rather Ellen had married a man nearer her own rank in life, for he was afraid, poor dear child, she would be bewildered amongst such fine people, and in such a great house: for his part, even if he were able to travel so far, he should not like to go to such a grand place as she described the Castle to be; besides, he was afraid they would be ashamed to see such a rough, ignorant fellow as he was among their fine company: and if Ellen was above calling him father, he should wish himself in the grave.

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The tears started in his eyes at the painful idea, and the good Ross could hardly dissipate his apprehensions of being forsaken by his only child, by reminding him of her excellent qualities and tender affection for him, and of the kindness with which Lord St. Aubyn had treated him through the whole of his acquaintance.

Mrs. Ross was in ten times a greater bustle than ever; she could not rest till she had told the surprising news to every one she met, and at intervals she scolded Mr. Ross heartily for not

letting her into the secret, as if she were not as worthy to be trusted as any body else for secrecy and prudence; "she that had been a mother to Ellen, was no gossip, and minded nothing but her own business!" but when he reminded her that even Ellen, deeply as she was interested, was not permitted to know it, she could not but acknowledge she had no great right to expect to be better informed.

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As to Joanna, with the natural vanity of youth, she was elated beyond measure at the idea of her dear Ellen's being a *real lady*, and the hope of visiting her one day or other in her fine castle, and seeing all her beautiful things, while Mrs. Ross made no doubt Ellen had a dress for every day in the week, and her caps trimmed with fine lace; then she laughed at the recollection of having once "scolded Ellen for putting on her best white gown when she expected Mr. Mordaunt, as we called him, and now I should not wonder if she wears as good in a morning!"—"Dear mother," said Joanna, who, from the slight view she had of what she fancied the world, when she went with St. Aubyn and Ellen to Carnarvon, imagined herself better instructed in fashionable matters—"dear mother, I daresay she does not wear such gowns at all; I should not wonder if her maid had as good: I am sure I saw a lady's maid on a travelling carriage at Carnarvon much better dressed than either of us." "Well, bless me, what will the world come to," said Mrs. Ross, "when such folks as those wear white gowns and flappits!" Alas, poor Mrs. Ross! could she have seen some ladies' maids!—

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All these things Joanna told Ellen in a letter the longest she had ever written, and greatly was St. Aubyn diverted with the simplicity of their ideas. The good Ross wrote to St. Aubyn, and expressed his high satisfaction at the very just and honourable manner in which he had performed all his engagements respecting Ellen, and requested to hear from time to time whatever might arise concerning those important circumstances which the Earl had done him the honour to confide to him.

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"What can we do for these very good people, my dear Ellen?" said St. Aubyn: "they have no wants nor wishes beyond their present possessions. If I send them any articles of luxury, or the means of encreasing their present expenses, I know not that I should render them happier. I could easily procure a valuable living for Mr. Ross, and told him so; but he assured me nothing should induce him to leave his present flock, and that he had not a wish to rise to a higher sphere, or for any thing in the world, but a few more books; and for those I have sent an order to my bookseller, requesting they may be immediately forwarded to Carnarvon. I shall also enclose to Ross a larger payment for my good old landlady and cook, dame Grey, than I thought it prudent to make while we remained at Llanwyllan. Is there any thing else my Ellen can think of?"—"There are," answered Ellen, in a low voice, "some very poor people at Llanwyllan, that Joanna and I used to be as kind to as we could. I should like, if you approve of it, to send Joanna a little money for their use." "By all means, send whatever you think proper, and as often as you please; never consult me, but do all that your kind and generous heart prompts you to do on all occasions—think also if there is any thing Mrs. Ross and Joanna would be pleased to have. You must be a better judge of their wishes than I can be."—He then took out his pocketbook, and gave her notes to a large amount, telling her, with a smile, that her expences were so small, he should forget he had a wife if she were not a little more profuse. "Well, but Ellen," said St. Aubyn, "surely this is not all you have to ask for the friends of your youth! don't make me fancy either that you are forgetful, or *think more than you choose to express for some of them.*" "My dear Lord, what do you mean?" said Ellen, a little startled by the manner in which he spoke, "Nay, don't be alarmed," replied St. Aubyn, with a smile, "I was thinking of one certainly not so much in *my* favour as he ought to be in *your's*, for he deprived me once of your society for a whole day, for which, and some certain pangs and anxieties, I cannot quite forgive him." "I cannot guess who you mean." "Is that really true?" "Most perfectly so." "Certainly," said St. Aubyn, "I can only mean Charles Ross." "Oh poor Charles!" exclaimed Ellen: "I really had quite forgotten him."

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"Now that was excessively ungrateful," said St. Aubyn, laughing, "for I dare engage he has not forgotten you: well, are you still enough his friend to wish to do him service?"

"Certainly," said Ellen: "I shall always feel a regard for him, though just at that moment I was not thinking of him: but what service can I do him, my Lord?"

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"If *you* give him your interest with me, I may, perhaps, try, and most likely shall succeed, in getting him promotion. Should you wish this to be done?"

"Oh, yes, indeed," replied Ellen, animated and sparkling with the pleasing idea of serving her early friend, and of the joy his promotion would give his parents and sister, "nothing could give me more pleasure."

"Not too much of that bright colour and sparkling eye, though, Ellen," said St. Aubyn, half in jest, half gravely: "I shall be jealous."

"You have so much reason!"

"Well, be cautious, I am in that point a Turk, and bear no rival *near* the throne."

Ellen, half vexed, would have said something, but embracing her tenderly, he stopt her by saying, "Not a word, my love, I am perfectly satisfied," and left her a little disconcerted, and half fearing that she had disturbed or displeased him.

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In the familiar intercourse which now took place between Miss Cecil and Lady St. Aubyn, the former shook off her reserve, and imparted to Ellen, not indeed all the particulars of her early

disappointment, but that she had endured the most painful trials that the perfidy and inconsistent conduct of one sincerely loved could inflict; yet dignified on this, as on every other subject, she never expatiated upon it, or said any thing disrespectful of the author of her sufferings: though she never fully explained the cause of her separation from her unworthy lover, it was understood, that a full conviction of his bad conduct, and that his address to her had chiefly been induced by mercenary motives, had induced her to discard him, and to resist all his subsequent entreaties to be forgiven.

One day, when Lord St. Aubyn and Sir William Cecil were engaged at a great public dinner in the neighbourhood, Ellen had the pleasure of dining tête-à-tête with her agreeable friend: they had spent two hours in Juliet's apartment, who every time they met gained more and more on Ellen's affections, and was become excessively attached to her, when the sweet girl, feeling fatigued, said she would lie down for an hour, and then she should be well enough to enjoy their company at tea, which she requested they would take in her apartment; they went therefore to pass this hour in Miss Cecil's dressing-room, who, opening a writing-desk to shew Ellen a drawing she had just finished, undesignedly displayed to the quick eye of Lady St. Aubyn a little book, marked "Manuscript Poetry."

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"Your own," said Ellen, laying her hand on it playfully, "or extracts?" "Why," returned Laura, "as Lord St. Aubyn thought proper to betray a secret which he learnt when we were children together, I will not deny that little volume contains some insignificant attempts of my own."

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"Oh let me see some of them, pray do," said Ellen: "assure yourself I will make no ill use of your confidence. I really am quite delighted with this opportunity, for I have long wished to see some specimens of your talents in this way." Thus urged, Laura allowed her to read two or three of the little poems contained in the volume, and at her earnest request, permitted her afterwards to have copies of the two following

### ELEGIAC STANZAS.

Athwart the troubled bosom of the night,  
Low heavy clouds in awful grandeur sweep;  
And, in the solemn darkness of their flight,  
Serve but to wrap the world in calmer sleep;  
Save those sad eyes, which only wake to weep;  
And give the dreary hour to meditation deep.

Those eyes perceive, as slow the clouds divide,  
One star, whose tremulous but brilliant ray  
Might serve the uncertain wand'rer's steps to guide,  
And cheer his bosom till the dawn of day;  
Who trembling else, and lost in black dismay,  
Wearied and wild, might rove and perish on the way.

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Even such a star, so fair and so benign,  
When o'er the soul dark clouds of sorrow lour,  
Is Hope; whose tranquil rays serenely shine,  
Brightening the horrors of each dreary hour;  
Smiling when youth prepares the fancied flower,  
And when in age it feels misfortune's blighting power.

Oh, thou bright star! still grateful shalt thou find  
The heart so often cheer'd by thy mild ray:  
I will not call thee faithless and unkind,  
Nor with ingratitude thy smiles repay,  
Because thou hast not, like the glorious day,  
Power to dispel the dark, and drive the clouds away.

Gild but those clouds till brighter suns arise;  
Checking with thy fair light life's troubled stream;  
And oft unwearied shall these wakeful eyes,  
Watching the progress of thy doubtful beam,  
Shine even in tears; and, closing, still shall seem  
Sooth'd by thy gentle ray in every peaceful dream.

### EPISTLE TO LADY DELAMORE, ON RETURNING TO ROSE-HILL.

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From those rain scenes, where fancied pleasure reigns;  
From crowds that weary, and from mirth which pains;  
From flattering praises, from the smiles of art,  
Sweet to the eye but faithless to the heart;  
From guilt which makes fair innocence its prey,  
Sighs but to blast, and courts but to betray;  
From these I fly, impatient to caress  
All lovely Nature in her fairest dress.



Oh, sweet retirement! Oh! secure retreat  
From all the cares and follies of the great!  
Here lavish Nature every charm bestows,  
In softness smiles, in vivid beauty glows!  
Here May presents each blossom of the spring,  
And balmy sweetness falls from Zephyr's wing.

Yet while I stray, in tranquil quiet blest,  
Fond mem'ry presses at my anxious breast;  
And as I rove 'mid scenes so justly dear,  
Remembrance wakes the tributary fear!  
The mental eye perceives a sister's form,  
And even these peaceful shades no longer charm.  
"Yes!" I exclaim, "'twas here she lov'd to stray,  
Smiling in beauty, innocently gay!  
Oft by yon streamlet, in the echoing vale,  
Her voice would swell upon the evening gale,  
Charm from the care-fraught bosom half its woes,  
And hush the wounded spirit to repose!"

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While these delightful hours I thus retrace,  
And dwell on every recollected grace,  
Thy sister's soul, my Agatha, forgets  
That *thou* art blest in that which *she* regrets;  
Forgets that pleasure crowns thy happy hours,  
And fond affection strews thy path with flowers;  
Anxious thy way with rose-buds to adorn,  
And from those buds remove each lurking thorn.  
Ah! selfish heart, lament thy loss no more,  
Nor thus thy recollected bliss deplore;  
Content thyself to know thy sister blest,  
And calm the plaintive anguish of thy breast!  
Be still serenity thy future state;  
Far from the pomps and perils of the great;  
Unnotic'd, quiet, shall thy peace ensure,  
Peace, when the world forgets thee, most secure.  
—Yet, yet, my Agatha, affection swells  
The trembling heart where thy lov'd image dwells;  
Still bids me look to thee for all that cheers  
In lengthen'd life, and blesses ling'ring years:  
My spirit, form'd a *social* bliss to prove,  
Dares but to hope it from thy future love.  
Deceived by him on whom it most relied,  
Pierced in its fondness, wounded in its pride—  
Yet, yet, while throbbing through each shatter'd nerve,  
Disclaims to thee the veil of low reserve;  
Owns all its weakness, will each thought confide,  
And what it dares to feel, disdains to hide;  
Owns, though no more the storms of passion rise,  
That from the thought of selfish bliss it flies,  
Still feels whate'er had once the power to charm,  
Faithful affection, sensitive alarm;  
But from the pangs which once it felt relieved,  
No more will trust where once it was deceived;  
To thee alone will look for future joy,  
And for thy bliss each anxious wish employ:  
Absorbed in thee, and in thy opening views,  
Its pains, its pleasures, nay its being lose:  
One we will be, and one our future cares,  
Our thoughts, our hopes, our wishes, and our prayers.

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#### LAURA.

With both these little pieces Ellen was perhaps more pleased than their intrinsic merit warranted; but we naturally look with a partial eye on the performances of those we love. After looking over several other poetical attempts, and some beautiful drawings, they returned to Juliet's apartment, where they spent a delightful evening; for Juliet seemed materially mending, and Laura's spirits rose in proportion.

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Thus, and in similar pleasures, passed the time till the beginning of March, varied indeed by the occasional visits of the neighbouring families. One day, after a long solicitation, the St. Aubyns, Cecils, and some more of the most fashionable people near them, dined with Mrs. Dawkins, where they also met her tender friend and shadow, Miss Alton, who this day, for the first time in her life, was destined to offend that *sweet woman*, Mrs. Dawkins; for charmed to find herself seated on a sofa between "her *dearest* Lady St. Aubyn," and that *most delightful* man, General Morton, a veteran officer in the neighbourhood, at whom it was supposed Miss Alton had long *set her cap*, as the phrase is, she attended not to the hints, shrugs, and winks of her friend, who, not

keeping a regular housekeeper, and being extremely anxious for the placing her first course properly, wished Miss Alton just to slip out and see it put on table: but vain were her wishes; and the cook, finding no aid-de-camp arrive, after waiting till some of the dishes were over-dressed, and others half cold, was obliged to act as commander-in-chief, and direct the disposition of the table herself; in which, not having clearly understood her mistress's directions (for in fact her anxiety to have all correct made them vary every half hour), she succeeded so ill, that when, after all her fretting and fuming, poor Mrs. Dawkins was told dinner was on table, that unfortunate Lady had nearly fainted at perceiving, when she entered the dining-room, that half the articles intended for the second course were crowded into the first, and roasted, ragoued, boiled, fried, sweet and sour, were jumbled together, in the finest confusion imaginable!

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"This is all *your* fault," said Mrs. Dawkins, in a low voice, but with the countenance of a fury, to poor Alton: "you could not *stir* to see it put down;" and pushing rudely by her, she left her staring with surprize, and wondering what had made the dear soul so very angry: but when she saw the blunders which were so obvious in the arrangement of the table, and recollected her own negligence (for in fact she had promised to see it set down), she was in her turn quite shocked.

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Insupportable was the delay and confusion in putting down this second course; even curtailed as it was, Mrs. Dawkins's servants were not perfectly *au fait* at such things, and at last Lord St. Aubyn gave a hint to his own man, who waited behind his chair to assist, which he did so effectually, that every thing was soon placed as by magic, and the rest of the dinner and dessert passed over tolerably well. After dinner, the ladies retired to the drawing-room, and listened, with their usual patience, to fresh lamentations from Mrs. Dawkins, and renewed sympathies on the part of Miss Alton, who sought, by even increasing her usual portion of *tender sensibility*, to regain her wonted place in Mrs. Dawkins's good graces; but that lady continued so haughty and impracticable, that poor Alton came at last with *real* tears, to complain to the good-natured Ellen and Laura of her hard fate, and the impossibility, do all she could, of pleasing some people; and they really were so sorry for her vexation, that when Lady St. Aubyn's carriage was announced, she rescued her from the visible unkindness of Mrs. Dawkins, by desiring to have the pleasure of setting her down, and made her quite happy again, by asking her to meet a small party at the Castle the next day, which, as it was understood to be rather a select thing, and confined to those most intimate there, assured Miss Alton a renewed importance with Mrs. Dawkins and all her friends, as she should have much to tell, which they could by no other possibility know any thing about.

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### CHAP. III.

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Sweet Juliet, that with angels dost remain,  
Accept this latest favour at my hands,  
That living honour'd thee, and being dead,  
With funeral praises do adorn thy tomb.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

The day was now fixed at the distance of a week for the removal of the St. Aubyns to London. Ellen lamented much the impossibility of having Laura Cecil with her, who would have been such a support to her in a situation so new; but nothing could be urged on that point, as it was impossible she could leave Juliet, who appeared sometimes better sometimes worse, but always patient, gentle, and pious to a degree that was really angelic.

Ellen felt sincerely grieved to leave her, and proposed that she should be removed to London for better advice, but found this expedient had been before resorted to, and Doctor B——'s advice frequently renewed by letters since, and that it was thought the air of London did not agree with her. The weather now, for the time of year, the second week in March, was remarkably mild; and the medical man in attendance on Juliet, who had now been for some days tolerably free from the low fever which generally hung about her, permitted her to go out once or twice in a garden chair, for the benefit of the air: the returning verdure of spring seemed, for a time, to revive her: but whether the exertion was too much, or some unobserved change in the atmosphere affected her delicate frame, could not be known; but she was suddenly seized with one of those attacks of fever which had so frequently brought her to the brink of the grave; and on the day before that fixed for Ellen's leaving Northamptonshire, a note from Laura announced that the life of this admirable young creature was despaired of.

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"She is perfectly sensible," added the afflicted sister; "the dear angel retains all her usual pious composure; she wishes to see you. Could you, dear Lady St. Aubyn, without being too much affected, come to her?"

Ellen, bursting into tears, put the note into St. Aubyn's hand, saying, "Oh, my dear Lord; let me go—pray let me go directly!"

"Be less alarmed, be more composed, my dearest love," replied he, after glancing over the contents, "or I cannot consent to your going. I wish it had not been asked."

"Oh, indeed, dear St. Aubyn, I am quite composed, quite easy; but I shall suffer much more in not

seeing the dear, dear creature once again, than even by witnessing this sudden and most unexpected change."

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"Well, my love, we will go together; but do not be too much alarmed; she may yet recover: Laura's fears may outrun the occasion: Juliet has often been very ill before; but we will go: they will both, I know, be pleased at your coming."

He then ordered the carriage, which was soon ready; and half an hour brought them to Rose-hill. Ellen was immediately shewn to Juliet's room: by the bed-side sat Laura: her cheeks, lips, and whole countenance, were the colour of monumental marble; not a tear fell from her eyes; not a sigh heaved her bosom; but the woe, the deep expressive woe which marked every feature, no language could describe: she rose, and advanced a few steps to meet Ellen, grasping her hand with one which the touch of death could alone have rendered colder; her lips moved, but no articulate word broke the mournful silence.

Ellen turned pale, shuddered, and looked ready to faint; Miss Cecil made a sign to an attendant, who, bathed in tears, stood near her: she placed a chair for Lady St. Aubyn, and brought her a few drops in some water; she wept, and was relieved.

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"Oh, why did I send for you!" said Laura, in a low tone, and speaking with difficulty; "I fear it is too much."

"Don't be frightened, my Lady," said the nurse: "Miss Juliet is a little easier; she is dozing."

In a few minutes Juliet moved and spoke, but so faintly, her voice could hardly be distinguished. In an instant Laura was on her knees beside her, and catching the imperfect sounds, replied in a voice which betrayed not the anguish of her soul, "Yes, my love, she is here—will you see her?"

Then turning to Ellen, she motioned her to approach. Ellen rose, and went to the bed-side; she looked on Juliet, and saw that sweet angelic countenance, slightly flushed, and looking as composed as ever; and ignorant of the appearances of disease, fancied her better, and was, in some measure, comforted. Juliet faintly articulated a few words, expressive of the pleasure she felt in seeing Ellen, and would have said more, but the nurse, for the sake of all, interposed, and requested that Miss Juliet might not be allowed to speak much. With difficulty she held out her feeble emaciated arms to Ellen, who tenderly embraced her, and half dissolved in tears, retired to the window, whither she drew Miss Cecil. Still the wretched Laura shed no tear; and the deep grief, impressed on her fine countenance, was much more painful to the beholder than the loudest expressions of sorrow could have been.

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"Give sorrow vent: the grief which does not speak  
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break!"

"For heaven's sake, my dearest Laura," said Ellen, "endeavour to take comfort; surely she is better—she will recover!"

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Laura only shook her head; and the nurse approaching, said, "Indeed, Madam, Miss Cecil will kill herself; she has not had her clothes off these two nights, nor has the slightest refreshment passed her lips this day."

"Oh! talk not to me of rest or food," cried Laura, "I can partake of neither."

Ellen most tenderly urged her to take something; but pressing her hands upon her heart, she replied, "Oh no, oh no—I could not; indeed I could not. Go," she added, "my dear friend—go, this is no place for you; nothing but the request of —; nothing but *her* request should have induced me to send for you."

"But now I *am* here," said Ellen, "surely you will allow me to stay; I may be of use to you; of comfort to dear dear Juliet."

In vain she urged. Laura sacrificed all selfish considerations, and insisted on her returning home, promising to send to her should Juliet wish to see her again; and St. Aubyn, anxious for her, now sent to request his wife would come: she therefore embraced her friend, and looking once more on the departing saint, who now again lay heavily dozing, she lifted up her hands and eyes to heaven, and, with another shower of tears, left the room.

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St. Aubyn was rejoiced to find her disposed to accompany him home, though she complained bitterly that Laura would not let her stay.

"Laura," said he, "judges as she always does, wisely, and acts kindly: you could be of no real service, and your being here would be highly improper; you must not think of it."

Two days of the greatest anxiety now passed, and at the end of that time the fair and lovely Juliet breathed no more: her last moments were attended by consolation so powerful, and hopes so celestial, as might well have taught the worldly "how a Christian could die!"

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For many days Laura was confined to her bed, and it was feared she would follow her sister to the grave; but by degrees she shook off the excess of her sorrow, and for her father's sake endeavoured to recover from the dreadful shock she had received.

Sir William Cecil, who had long been convinced that Juliet would not live many months, was more easily consoled. The St. Aubyns of course had delayed their journey to London on this event; and

finding that Sir William Cecil was disposed to make an excursion to Bath, which his gouty habit indeed rendered almost necessary, they endeavoured to prevail on Laura to come to them at St. Aubyn Castle for a short time, and then go with them to London. From this proposal, especially the latter part, she for some time shrunk, and wished to be allowed to remain at Rose-hill alone: but that her friends would not permit: and Sir William having arranged to go to Bath at the same time with a neighbouring family, and to be in the same house with them, Laura was at length prevailed on to remove to the Castle, and from thence, after a short stay, to accompany her friends to London, where they promised her an apartment exclusively her own, and that she should see no other till she herself wished it.

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"Yet why," said she, "my dearest Lady St. Aubyn, why should I burden you with one so powerless to add to your comforts, or partake your pleasures?"

"Is not that an unkind question?" said Ellen; "or do you really believe me insensible to the gratification of soothing your mind, and supporting your spirits? Whenever you will permit me, I will be your visitor in your apartment; whenever my company would be irksome, I will leave you to yourself, provided I do not find you the worse for the indulgence."

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All was therefore thus arranged, and Miss Cecil, Lord and Lady St. Aubyn in one carriage, and Miss Cecil's maid, and Ellen's talkative but faithful Jane, in another, with out riders, &c. in great style left Northamptonshire, and arrived the next evening at the Earl's magnificent house in Cavendish-square.—Lady St. Aubyn's first care was to select such an apartment for the mournful Laura as would make her easy, and free from restraint; and having conducted her to it, she told her she was entirely mistress there, and never should be interrupted unless she chose it.

Ellen, who had made several little attempts in verse since she had seen those of Miss Cecil, now soothed her sorrow for the loss of the sweet Juliet by a few stanzas, which, when she thought her able to bear them, she gave to Laura, who was gratified by this little tribute to her loved, lamented sister's memory.

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#### ELEGIAC STANZAS.

How mourns the heart, when early fades away  
The opening promise of a riper bloom;  
When youth and beauty, innocently gay,  
Sink in the silent ruin of the tomb!

Oh, thou pure spirit! which in life's fair dawn,  
Arose superior to that childish frame,  
(Fair tho' it was) from which thou art withdrawn,  
To that bright Heaven from whence thy beauty came.

Sweet Juliet! happily releas'd from care,  
Which future years perhaps had bade the prove;  
A heart so tender, and a form so fair,  
Ill with the perils of the world had strove!

Thy heart expanding at affection's voice,  
How had it borne in native kindness warm,  
To check the rapid fire of youthful choice,  
And dread deceit beneath the loveliest form!

To thee were graces so benignly given,  
A soul so tender, and a wit so rare;  
A love of harmony, as if kind Heaven  
Had bade thee for an early bliss prepare.

Long shall the heart which lov'd thy dawning grace,  
The pensive mem'ry of each charm retain;  
Thy winning manners studiously retrace,  
And dwell anew on each harmonious strain.

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Nor shall that heart to present scenes confine  
Its views and wishes; but with worthier care,  
Seek to preserve an innocence like thine,  
And humbly hope thy happiness to share.

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#### CHAP. IV.

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To such how fair appears each grain of sand,  
Or humblest weed as wrought by nature's hand!  
A shell, or stone, he can with pleasure view.—  
—See with what art each curious shell is made:  
Here carved in fret-work, there with pearl inlaid!

What vivid th' enamel'd stones adorn,  
Fair as the paintings of the purple morn!

S. JENYNS.

The arrival of the St. Aubyns in London opened a wide field for conjecture and conversation in the fashionable world. It was known, for St. Aubyn's haughty relations had not failed to publish it, that he had married a young woman far inferior to him in rank, and absolutely without fortune. It was also known that she was uncommonly beautiful; and great anxiety, mixed with no small share of ridicule, was excited by her expected *debut*; but the modest Ellen was in no haste to afford the starers and sneerers so rich a treat: she merely went to a few morning exhibitions, attended only by her Lord, for the first fortnight of her stay in town; and indeed St. Aubyn hoped, notwithstanding her present distance and displeasure, to induce his aunt, Lady Juliana Mordaunt, to chaperon Ellen to some of the public places, being fully sensible what an advantage it would be to her to be so supported: he therefore acquiesced in her wishes, till he could bring about this desirable arrangement, and allowed his wife to spend most of her evenings at home.

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Several ladies had however called on Lady St. Aubyn, some of whom had left their cards, and others she had seen. Most of these visits she had returned; but one of those, who had shewn the greatest desire to see more of Lady St. Aubyn—indeed, a distant relation of the Earl's, she had not been yet to see.

One morning Lord St. Aubyn said he would go with her to see the museum of an old friend of his, who lived at Knightsbridge, who was a great collector of every thing rare and curious, particularly shells, pictures, and gems. "He is quite a character," added he: "but I will not anticipate your surprize: we can go there early. I told him we would go to-day, or to-morrow; and after we have been there, you can call on Lady Meredith, who gave herself a trouble so extraordinary, as actually to alight from her carriage and make you a personal visit."

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"You will go with me?"

"Pardon me, my love, that is not necessary, and you really must learn to *go alone*, and not depend so much on me."

"I hope her Ladyship may not be at home."

"Indeed, my love, I hope she may; for dissimilar as they are in every respect, my aunt, Lady Juliana, spends a great deal of her time there. She is so fond of finding fault, and differing in opinion from others, that I really believe she goes to Lady Meredith's chiefly for the pleasure of lecturing her, who is so indifferent to the opinion of any one, that she does not think it worth while to be at the trouble of resenting the sharp things Lady Juliana says to her."

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"What a strange motive for being intimate with any one."

"Strange enough: but when you see more of the world, you will discern that affection is not the only bond of union between those who call themselves friends."

"I think I have seen that already in Mrs. Dawkins and Miss Alton."

"True: convenience, the wish of finding a patient *hearer*, accident, the want of a more pleasing companion, are amongst the numerous inducements which form what we are pleased to call friendship. Nay, I once heard a good lady say she was sure a family she mentioned had proved themselves *real friends* to her, for they had sent her a *large plumcake*<sup>[A]</sup>."

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Ellen laughed at this curious definition of friendship.

"Well," said St. Aubyn: "but to return to Lady Meredith. I hope she may, by reporting well of you to Lady Juliana, induce her to become more friendly towards us: you know how anxious I am to have you in her good graces—not, believe me, on account of her immense fortune, but because, with all her pride and stiffness, she has a warm heart and excellent qualities, and would be to you a most valuable friend; so pray do your best to please Lady Meredith."

"Very well: but will you tell me the most likely way to succeed?"

"I am afraid it will be difficult: she will think you too handsome, unless indeed she intends soon to have a large party."

"How is it possible *that* should have any thing to do with the matter?"

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"Why, Lady Meredith's great ambition is to outshine all her competitors in the number and fashion of those collected at her routes; and as sometimes, in spite of her charms, and the lustre of her abundant jewels, there are some obstinate animals who will be uncivil enough to recollect they '*have seen them before*,' consequently become rather weary of them, and desert her for some newer belle. Lady Meredith may think you (so new to the world, and so beautiful) a desirable reinforcement, and may therefore honour you with an invitation: pray accept it, if she does, and take great pains at your toilette to-day: for my friend, Mr. Dorrington, is a great admirer of beauty, and will shew you his fine collection a great deal more readily if he admire your's, particularly if he should fancy you like a bust he has of the *bona Dea* (at least he gives it that name, though it is so mutilated, he confesses he does not exactly know for what or whom it was designed), which he almost idolizes."

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Ellen hastened to obey, but she wished herself at Castle St. Aubyn, for she had not liked the little she had seen of Lady Meredith, and she shrunk from the idea of this formidable morning visit. Conquering her fears, however, as well as she could, and looking uncommonly beautiful, she rejoined her Lord. Her milliner had just sent home a most elegant and expensive morning dress, bonnet, and cloak, all of the finest materials, and in that delicate modest style, which she always chose, and was to her peculiarly becoming. St. Aubyn thought he had never seen her look so well, and gave great credit to Madame de — for consulting so admirably the natural style of her beauty, as to embellish, without overloading it. The barouche was at the door: she had therefore only time to say "farewell" to Laura, and stepping hastily in, half an hour brought them to Mr. Dorrington's.

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As the carriage stopt at the house, the figure of a fine old man with grey hair caught the eye of Lady St. Aubyn: he was at the instant ascending the steps to knock at the door, and was so meanly dressed, that she supposed him a mendicant, or at least extremely poor, and her ready hand sought her purse, intending to give relief to the infirm looking old man. What then was her surprize, when, just as she stretched out her hand for that purpose, the old man, looking into the carriage, and seeing Lord St. Aubyn, advanced, and taking off his hat with the most courtly air imaginable, displayed a fine commanding forehead, expressive eyes, and a contour of countenance so admirable, as, once seen, could never be forgotten.

"Ah! my dear St. Aubyn," he exclaimed, "how rejoiced I am to see you! I am really happy that I returned in time to receive you: as you did not say positively you would come to-day, it was all a chance; but come, do me the favour to alight: I have just succeeded in making the finest purchase—a shell, a unique: you shall see it."

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By this time St. Aubyn had alighted, and giving his hand to Ellen, introduced her to this extraordinary man. Nothing could be more polished than his address, nothing more elegant than the grace with which he received her, or more spirited than the little compliment he made St. Aubyn on his happiness, and the beauty of his lady.

Whoever looked at Mr. Dorrington, when his shabby old hat was removed, must instantly see the man of sense and superior information: whoever heard him speak, heard instantly that it was the voice and enunciation not only of a gentleman, but of one who had lived in the very highest circles; and yet his appearance, at first, would have led any one to suppose him, as Ellen did, in absolute poverty. He led the way into his favourite apartment, indeed the only one he ever inhabited, except his bed-chamber; and into neither would he ever suffer any one to enter unless he was with them. No broom, nor brush of any kind, ever disturbed the sacred dust of this hallowed retirement: in the grate, the accumulated ashes of *many months* remained; the windows were dimmed with the untouched dirt of years: and nothing but the table on which his slender meals were spread (for his temperance in eating and drinking were as remarkable as his singular neglect of personal attire), and two or three chairs for the reception of occasional visitors, were ever wiped. In one of these he seated the astonished Ellen, who gazed around her at treasures, the value of which exceeded her utmost guess. A handsome cabinet with glass doors contained a variety of curious gems, vases, and specimens of minerals: some invaluable pictures stood leaning against the walls: heaps of books in rich bindings, which Ellen afterwards found were either remarkable for their scarceness, or full of fine prints, lay scattered around.

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"Now, my Lord," said Mr. Dorrington, "I will shew you and Lady St. Aubyn my new purchase: I said it was unique, but it is not exactly so: I have another of the same sort; but these are the only two in the world: I think this is a little, a very little finer than that I had before; I bought it at \*\*\*'s sale, and gave a monstrous price for it; but I was determined to have it: it was the only thing in his collection I coveted."

He then displayed his new purchase, and descanted for some time on its various beauties; and seeing Ellen really admired it, pleased also with her beauty and sweetness, he proceeded to shew her his collection, and even those rare articles which never appeared but to particular favourites, saying she was "*worthy to admire them.*" Some beautiful miniatures particularly pleased her, and he was delighted that she seemed to understand their value. He also produced some fine illuminated missals, and explained every thing with so much grace and perspicuity as quite delighted her.

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Two hours fled swiftly in examining these wonders, and even then they had not seen half, but promised to visit him another day. He told Lady St. Aubyn he should be at her command at any time; and then most politely attending her to her carriage, he with a courteous bow took his leave.

On their way home, St. Aubyn told Ellen that the extraordinary man they had just left had for many years led a life of dissipation, by which he reduced a large fortune almost to nothing; but that having once, in consequence of his extravagance, been obliged to sell a collection still finer than that he now had, he had determined to gratify his passion for *virtu*, without the risk of again ruining himself, and therefore denied himself every thing but the bare necessaries of life; and was, consequently, enabled to purchase rare articles at any price, and to outbid other collectors, who had different demands on part of their incomes. He kept no man, and but one female servant; and St. Aubyn said, that when he had called on him a few days before, he found him in a storm of rage with this poor servant-girl, for having dared, while he was engaged with some company in his sitting-room, to brush out his bed-chamber, in the door of which he had, *par miracle*, left the key.—"And I am sure, Sir," said the girl, crying, "I never touched nothing but that great wooden man" (meaning a layman which always stands in Mr. Dorrington's room), "that's

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enough to frighten a body; and he I only just moved, for master never won't have nothing like other people; and I thought if he brought the gentlefolks in his bed-room, as he sometimes will, it was a shame to see such a place, and such a dirty table cover; so I was only just going to make it a little tidy, and I never broke nothing at all."

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"I comforted the poor girl," said St. Aubyn, "by giving her a trifle, and advised her by no means to provoke her master, by presuming to touch a brush in his rooms again without order: and she promised me she would in future be contented with cleaning her own kitchen and passages—'And never touch nothing belonging to master's rooms, nor any of them outlandish things, that be all full of dust, and enough to breed moths and all manner of flies all over the house.'—And I think," said he, laughing, "she appears to have kept her promise very exactly."

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## CHAP. V.

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— So perfumed, that  
The winds were love-sick with it.  
— She did lie  
In her pavilion, cloth of gold.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

Lady St. Aubyn set down the Earl in Cavendish Square, and proceeded alone to the house of Lady Meredith in Portland Place. A carriage which appeared to be in waiting drove from the door to make way for her's, by which Ellen guessed Lady Meredith had company. To the inquiry whether her Ladyship were at home, she was answered in the affirmative, and requested to walk up stairs. Ellen was now tolerably well accustomed to magnificent houses; but there was something in the style of this different from any thing she had yet seen: the hall was not only warmed by superb stoves, but bronze figures, nearly as large as life, stood in different attitudes in every corner, and all bearing censers or urns, in which costly aromatics perpetually burnt, diffusing around a rich but almost overpowering perfume. As she ascended the staircase she found every possible recess filled with baskets, vases, &c. full of the most rare and expensive exotics, which bloomed even amidst the cold winds of March, with nearly as much luxuriance as they would have done in their native climes; for every part of this mansion was kept in a regular degree of heat by flues passing through the walls and beneath the floors communicating with fires, which were not visible: when, on the other hand, the weather became warm, the cambric sun-blinds at every window were kept perpetually moistened with odoriferous waters, by two black servants, whose whole employment it was to attend to this branch of luxury; indeed, to luxury alone the whole mansion appeared to be dedicated. The floors were not merely covered, but carpeted with materials, whose softness and elasticity seemed produced by a mixture of silk and down: the sofas, ottomans, &c. were not merely stuffed, but every one had piles of cushions appertaining to it, filled with eider-down, and covered with the richest silks or velvets. To the presiding goddess of this superb temple Lady St. Aubyn was presently introduced. In her boudoir Lady Meredith sat, or rather lay, not on a chair or sofa, but on piles of cushions, covered with the finest painted velvet. Her majestic, though somewhat large figure, appeared to great advantage in the studied half-dress in which she now appeared; yet there was something in her attitude, in the disposal of her drapery, from which the modest eye of Ellen was involuntarily averted. Her dress was of the finest and whitest muslin that India ever produced, and clung around her so closely as fully to display the perfect symmetry of her form: the sleeves were full, and so short, they scarcely descended below the shoulder, which not the slightest veil shaded from the beholder's gaze, while the delicate arms thus exposed were decorated with rows of what she called undress pearls: they were of an extraordinary size and beauty, and were formed into armlets and bracelets of fanciful but elegant fashion: two or three strings, and a large Maltese cross of the same, were the only covering of her fair bosom, and a few were twisted loosely amongst her dark but glossy and luxuriant hair. At her feet sat a lovely little girl about four years old, with a low hassock before her, on which she was displaying the contents of one of mamma's caskets of jewels, as well amused as the great Potemkin himself could have been by arranging his diamonds in different figures on black velvet; a favourite entertainment of that extraordinary man.

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On one side of Lady Meredith sat a gay young officer in the uniform of the guards, and on the other a stiff formal looking old lady in a dress somewhat old fashioned, but more remarkable for being excessively neat and prim: she had a sour contemptuous look, and her stays and whole figure had the stiff appearance of a portrait of the last century. She levelled her eye-glass at Ellen, as she followed the servant who announced her into the room, and with an emphatic *humph!* (not unlike poor Mrs. Ross's) let it fall again as if perfectly satisfied with one look, and not feeling any wish to repeat it; yet repeat it she did, again and again, and, as if the review displeased or agitated her, her countenance became still more and more sour. In the meantime Lady Meredith half rose from her cushions, and holding out her hand, languidly said:—

"My dear Lady St. Aubyn, how good you are to come and see me! I am delighted I happened to be at home. Andrew," (to the servant, who, having placed a chair, was retiring) "don't give Lady St. Aubyn that shocking chair: bring a heap of those cushions and arrange them like mine: do rest on them, my dear creature; you must be fatigued to death."

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"Excuse me," said Ellen, smiling with modest grace; "I am not accustomed to such a luxurious seat, and prefer a chair."

"Do you really? Is it possible!" exclaimed the languishing Lady, sinking back again as if the exertion of speaking had been too much for her. "Well, I should absolutely die in twelve hours if I might not be indulged in this delicious mode of reposing."

"Nonsense!" said the stiff old lady, in no very conciliating tone; "how can you be so ridiculous: pray how do you manage when you sit six or eight hours at pharo, or go to the Opera—you have none of those silly things there?"

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"Oh, as to pharo, dear delightful pharo, that keeps me alive, prevents my feeling fatigued even when my unfortunate feet cannot command so much as a poor little footstool; and as to the Opera, I wonder your Ladyship asks, for you know very well, my box, and the cushions belonging to it, are stuffed with eider-down, like these," and she sunk still more indolently on her yielding supporters. "Apropos of the Opera," added she; "have you obtained a box there, Lady St. Aubyn?"

"No," replied Ellen: "Lord St. Aubyn had one offered to him, but as it is so late in the season, and our stay in town will not be long, I begged him to decline it."

Lady Meredith here exchanged a smile of contempt with the officer, which seemed to say "how rustic that is!" then half yawning she said:—

"Oh, but indeed that was very wrong: what can a woman of fashion do without a box at the Opera? I am sure, from all I have heard of the former Lady St. Aubyn, for I had not the honour of knowing her, she would not have lived a month in London without one."

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"Very likely," said the old lady, "but for all that *I* think *this young person* quite in the right, and as to the late Lady St. Aubyn, I am sure *she* was no pattern for any body, and I wonder, Lady Meredith, you will name her in my hearing."

"I beg your Ladyship's pardon," replied Lady Meredith; "I forgot."

"Well, no matter; don't say any more."

To paint Ellen's surprize would be difficult: the odd epithet this strange lady had applied to her, "*this young person*," the allusions to the late countess, of whom she never heard without an indescribable sort of emotion, and the suspicion she now entertained that her ungracious neighbour was Lady Juliana Mordaunt, all conspired to overpower her; and the heat of the apartment, the strong smell of perfumes from immense China jars, with which the room was ornamented, completed it; in short, though wholly unaccustomed to such sensations, she had nearly fainted. The young officer, who had long been watching her interesting and lovely countenance, saw her change colour, and said hastily:—

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"The lady is ill."

"What's the matter, child?" said the old lady; and rising hastily, she untied her bonnet and the strings of her mantle, which, falling aside, discovered enough of her figure to render her situation obvious.

"So!" exclaimed the old lady; but whether the interjection expressed surprize, pleasure, or what other sensation, was not easy to discover. "Do, Colonel Lenox, exert yourself so much as to open the door and ring for a glass of water: the air of this room is enough to kill any body."

"Pardon me," said Ellen, the colour returning to her cheeks and lips, "I am sorry to give so much trouble; I am much better."

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"That's well," said the old lady. By this time the water was brought; Ellen drank some, and quite recovered, begged leave to ring for her carriage.

"Don't go yet, child," said the old lady; "perhaps you may be ill again."

"No: pray don't go yet," said Lady Meredith, who all this time had been holding a smelling bottle to her own nose, affecting to be too much overcome to do any thing for the relief of her visitor. "You have frightened me enormously; stay a little to make me amends; besides, you still tremble and look pale: are you subject to these faintings?"

"Not in the least," said Ellen. "I believe the heat of the room overcame me."

"No wonder," said the old lady; "it is a perfect stove, and enough to unstring the nerves of Hercules, especially when aided by the powerful scent of those abominable jars."

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"Oh, my dear sweet jars," cried Lady Meredith; "now positively you shall not abuse them; any thing else you may find what fault you please with, but my sweet jars I cannot give up:—have you ever read Anna Seward's poetical recipe to make one?"

"Not I," replied her friend in an angry tone, "nor ever desire it; all the poetry in the world should never induce me to fill my rooms with such nonsense."

During this conversation, the little girl, who had tired herself with looking at the jewels and trinkets, rose from her cushion, and said:—

"Pretty mamma, dress pretty Miranda in these," holding up some fine emeralds.



"No indeed, child: go to Colonel Lenox, and ask him to adorn you; I cannot take so much trouble."

"No, Miranda won't; Miranda go to pretty, sweet, beautiful lady;" and she went to Ellen, who, admiring the lovely little creature, kissed her, and indulged her by putting the shining ornaments round her little fair neck and arms, and twisting some in the ringlets of her glossy hair. [Pg 91]

"Now I beautiful," said the child, looking at herself. "Is not Miranda pretty now, mamma?"

"Yes, my love, beautiful as an angel: come and kiss me, my darling."

The child, climbing up the load of cushions, laid her sweet little face close to her mother's and kissed her.

"Is not she a beauty and a love?" said the injudicious mother to the Colonel, clasping the little creature to her bosom, with an air more theatrical than tender. He whispered something, in return to which she replied with affected indignation, "Oh, you flattering wretch, *that* she is, and a thousand times handsomer; but she will never know what<sup>[B]</sup> her mother was, for before she is old enough to distinguish, I shall either be dead or hideous, and then she will hate me." She heaved a deep sigh, and looked distressed at the idea, which the child perceiving, fondly twined her little arms round her mother's neck, and answered:— [Pg 92]

"No, dear mamma, Miranda always love you, you so beautiful."

"See," said the old lady, "the effect of your lessons; you teach her to love nothing but beauty, and if you were to lose your good looks, she would of course cease to care any thing about you."

"Yes, that is exactly what I dread."

"Then why do you not endeavour to prevent it, by giving her more reasonable notions? If she is led to suppose beauty and fine dress the only claims to affection, if she is never taught that virtue and an affectionate heart can alone ensure unfading esteem, she will grow up a mere frivolous automaton, and probably throw herself away on the first coxcomb with a handsome face and red coat she meets with." [Pg 93]

The Colonel coloured, laughed, and bowed.

"Nay," said the old lady, "if you choose to apply the character to yourself, with all my heart, settle it as you please; but, I suppose, all red coats are not mere coxcombs."

Lady Meredith and the Colonel laughed, but did not appear entirely pleased even with this half apology.

"Well, but," said Lady Meredith, "what, Ma'am, would you have me do with Miranda? Can I prevent the child from observing that beauty is universally admired?" [Pg 94]

"That," said Colonel Lenox, with a bow, "would indeed be impossible while with *you*."

The old lady shrugged up her shoulders, with a sour contemptuous frown, and said:—"Then put her into a better school."

"A school!" replied Lady Meredith, half screaming; "what, would you have me send the dear creature from me? No, my only darling, thou shalt never leave me."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the old lady, with even encreasing sourness; "well, if fashion absolutely demands this *extraordinary* degree of tenderness, for very good mothers *have* sent their children to school before now, at least, do get the child a rational and sensible governess, and let her employ herself in something better than admiring your jewels, or even your beauty, all the morning.—Ah! I wish," said she, turning abruptly to Ellen, "I wish she had such an instructress as *your Miss Cecil*." [Pg 95]

Ellen's surprise at this sudden address from one with whom not even the ceremony of introduction had passed, yet who seemed to know her and all her concerns so well, almost deprived her of the power to reply; she rallied her spirits, however, and said, that any mother might think half her fortune well bestowed, could it purchase such a preceptress: "But," added she, "such excellent qualities as Miss Cecil possesses, are rarely to be met with in any rank of life: my experience of character has, indeed, been very limited, but Lord St. Aubyn says, for elegance of manners, sweetness of temper, and strength of mind, her equal will hardly ever be found."

The blended modesty and spirit with which she spoke appeared to please the old lady, who, with an approving nod, again took up her eye-glass, and viewed Lady St. Aubyn from head to foot, though she saw that the steadfast gaze embarrassed and covered her with blushes. [Pg 96]

Lady Meredith said something to the old lady in so low a tone, that the word "introduce" was alone audible, to which she replied with some tartness: "No, I can introduce myself."

Ellen now once more rose to depart, and Lady Meredith detained her another minute, to mention a large party she intended having in about three weeks, for which she said she should send Lady St. Aubyn a ticket; and requested her to tell St. Aubyn he might come also, "For I hear," she said, "you always are seen together."

"So much the better," muttered the old lady, who seemed, however, to be speaking aside, so no

one took any notice of her. She rose when Ellen left the room, and returned her graceful courtesy with a not ungracious bend, and bade her good morning with an air more conciliating than she had shewn on her entrance.

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On relating the particulars of this visit to her Lord, Lady St. Aubyn found there was no doubt the old lady she had seen was Lady Juliana Mordaunt: he made her repeat the conversation that had passed, and when she told him that the old lady had made use of the disrespectful term, "*this young person*," in speaking of her, he coloured excessively, and execrating his aunt's pride and impertinence, told his wife she ought to have quitted the room immediately. He smiled when Ellen mentioned Lady Juliana's attention and kindness on her fainting, and said, "That is so like her: her warm heart thaws the ice of her manners when she sees any one ill or distrest."

When Ellen repeated the mention which had been made in the course of conversation of the late Lady St. Aubyn, he changed colour, and said, "Well, Ellen, were you not surprized? You did not, I believe, know—you never heard I had been married before."

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"Pardon me, my Lord, I was previously acquainted with that circumstance."

"You knew it!—from whom? Where did you hear it?"

"From Miss Cecil, from Miss Alton, accidentally."

"And were they not astonished you had not heard it before?"

"I had heard it before from Mrs. Bayfield, the day after we went to Castle St. Aubyn."

"From Mrs. Bayfield—she told you of it?—She told you—What, Ellen, did she tell you more?"

"Nothing, my Lord, but that your lady was young and beautiful, and died abroad."

"And why did you never mention the subject before? Why this reserve, my love?"

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"Because I thought as you never told me of it yourself, you would rather the subject were not mentioned."

"Dear creature!" said St. Aubyn, sighing. "I have always had reason to admire the excellence of your judgment and the delicacy of your sentiments. Believe me, Ellen, I withhold from you only those things which I think will give you pain to know. Our acquaintance commenced under such singular circumstances, that I had hardly opportunity to tell you this before we were married, and in fact, that name, that recollection is so hateful to me, is connected with so many painful ideas, that I cannot bear to recall, to dwell upon it! Why that tear, my love—are you dissatisfied with me?"

"No, dearest St. Aubyn: whatever you do, appears to me wisest and best to be done—but I was pitying—I was thinking——"

"Whom were you pitying?—Of what was my Ellen thinking?"

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"Pitying a woman, who, having once possessed your love, lost it so entirely, as to render her very name unpleasant to you. Thinking—ah, heaven!—thinking—should such ever be *my* lot!"

She paused, struggling with a sudden gush of tears, and sobs which almost choked her.

"Impossible, impossible!" exclaimed St. Aubyn, clasping her to his bosom: "you will never deserve it, never bring disgrace and dishonour on my name, and blast with misery the most acute, the best years of my life!—Agitate not yourself, my best love, with these frightful ideas. Ah, had the hapless Rosolia been like thee!—but oh! how different were her thoughts and actions!—No more of this, compose yourself, my love, and tell me what more passed with this strange proud woman."

After a few moments, Ellen recovered enough to repeat the remainder of the conversation, with the result of which he appeared very well pleased, and prophesied from the latter part of it they should soon be on good terms with Lady Juliana Mordaunt, an event for which he appeared so anxious, that Ellen could not fail to wish it also; and, indeed, that lady's good sense and just sentiments had made a very favourable impression on her mind, though her manners were so sour and repulsive.

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This day Miss Cecil dined with her amiable friends, as they had no other company; indeed, except by a few gentlemen, their dinner hour had generally passed uninterrupted, Ellen not being yet sufficiently acquainted with any ladies to mix with them in dinner parties. The report of St. Aubyn's male friends had, however, been so favourable towards her, as to incline Lady Meredith to wish a more intimate acquaintance, and to attract so much youth, beauty, and grace to her evening parties, while Lady Juliana was pleased to hear that she possessed qualities in her eyes far superior, namely, modesty, talents, and a demeanor towards her husband equally delicate and affectionate.

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After dinner, St. Aubyn having some engagement, left the fair friends alone, and they enjoyed a long and confidential conversation.

From Laura, Lady St. Aubyn learnt that Lady Juliana was well known to her, and that in spite of her austere and forbidden manners, and the pleasure she undoubtedly took in contradicting almost every thing she heard, she was yet a woman of good sense, and would most certainly,

could her esteem be once engaged, prove to Ellen a steady and valuable friend: "Especially," added Laura, "should any thing happen to Lord St. Aubyn, for she is his only near relation to whom he could confide the future interests, either of his wife or child; and young and beautiful as you are, my dear Ellen, no doubt St. Aubyn thinks such an additional support would be highly desirable for you." Seeing she was deeply affected, for Ellen now believed she could discern the cause of St. Aubyn's anxiety for her being on good terms with his aunt, and connected it with the painful circumstances he had told her were hanging over him, Laura now added, with a pensive smile, "Nay, my dear friend, do not be distressed. I have of late thought so much of mortality, I was not sensible how much you would be pained by the suggestion; but certainly, St. Aubyn will not leave you a moment the sooner for my hinting the possibility of such an event."

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Ellen endeavoured to shake off the painful ideas which forced themselves upon her, and asked Miss Cecil if she had known much of the former Countess. "Not very much," said Laura: "she was very handsome, but the character of her beauty was so different from yours, that I have often wondered how St. Aubyn came to *choose* two so different; though, indeed, I believe I should hardly say choose, for Lady Rosolia de Montfort was not so much his choice as that of his relations—at least, I believe he would never have thought of her as a wife if they had not."

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"Who was she? Do tell me a little about her: I am quite a stranger to all particulars."

"I know little more than I have told you, except that she was the only daughter of the late Earl de Montfort, a distant relation of Lord St. Aubyn's. Lord de Montfort, during the life of his elder brother, went to Spain in a diplomatic situation, and there married the daughter of the Duke de Castel Nuovo: this marriage with an English protestant, was, for a long time, opposed by the lady's relations: but, at length, moved by fear and compassion for her, whose attachment threw her into a lingering disease, which threatened her existence, they consented on one condition, namely, that the sons of the marriage should be educated Roman Catholics, and on the death of their father, be placed with their maternal grandfather, while they permitted the daughters to be brought up in the Protestant religion, hoping, perhaps, that the influence of a mother over females might ultimately bring them also over to her faith: but the Countess died young: one son and one daughter were her only children, the boy some years younger than his sister: they both remained with their father (who soon after his marriage became Earl de Montfort), sometimes in Spain, sometimes in England, till the marriage of Lady Rosolia with Lord St. Aubyn, though she was frequently his mother's guest, both in London and at St. Aubyn Castle, where the young Edmund also often spent some time: he was a very fine and amiable boy, and excessively attached to his sister."

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When Lord de Montfort died, the son was claimed by his maternal grandfather, and Lord and Lady St. Aubyn went to Spain with him, where she died: report spoke unfavourably of her conduct during her abode on the Continent; indeed, in England, the gaiety of her manners, especially after the death of Lord St. Aubyn's mother, approached more nearly to the habits of foreign ladies than those of England. It was said, that while abroad, Lord St. Aubyn was involved in many unpleasant circumstances by her behaviour: certain it is, that on his return, he appeared overwhelmed with melancholy, which was the more extraordinary, as it was well known they had not lived on very affectionate terms even before they had quitted this country."

"And what became of her brother: where is the young Lord de Montfort?" asked Ellen. "He has remained ever since in Spain," replied Laura; "but as he will very soon be of age, he must then, I suppose, return to England to take possession of his estates, of which Lord St. Aubyn is the guardian."

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"Oh," thought Ellen, "is it to his return St. Aubyn looks with so much apprehension and dismay? What! O! what is the strange mystery in which this story seems to be involved?"

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## CHAP. VI.

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"Within 'twas brilliant all, and light,  
A thronging scene of figures bright:  
It glowed on Ellen's dazzled sight,  
As when the setting sun has given  
Ten thousand hues to summer's even;  
And from their tissue fancy frames,  
Ærial knights and fairy dames."

LADY OF THE LAKE.

The next morning, Ellen, who felt a little fatigued from the various circumstances of the day before, some of which had considerably agitated her spirits, declined going out; and after breakfast retired to her own dressing-room; Laura, at the same time, going to her's, having letters to write to her father and some other friends.

Lady St. Aubyn was soon surrounded by her favourite books, some maps, a drawing she was finishing, and all those resources with which she now knew so well how to fill up her time. In one corner stood an elegant harp, on which Ellen had been taking lessons, and had made a

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considerable proficiency; in another sat her faithful Jane busy at her needle, at which she was very expert; and Ellen detesting to see any one idle, kept her generally employed either in fine work, or making linen for the poor, to seek out, and relieve whom, was one branch of Jane's business. A simple, though graceful taste, regulated the ornaments and furniture of this favourite retirement; no velvet cushions, no overwhelming perfumes, were met with here; all was elegant, but all was modest, and generally useful: a small bookcase, a porte-feuille, a netting box, shewed that its inhabitant loved to be employed.

By a cheerful fire this fair inhabitant was now seated: the modesty of her demeanor, the delicacy of her dress, were such as suited one, who, though young, and even girlish, was a wife, and likely to be a mother; the *toût-ensemble*, in short, was a perfect contrast to the figure, dress, and apartment of the luxurious Lady Meredith. A complete silence prevailed (for Jane had learned when her lady chose, which as now was sometimes the case, to have her in her apartment, to be quiet), and had lasted at least half an hour, when a step was heard in the anti-room; and a footman knocking at the door, Jane opened it, and the servant requested her to tell her lady that

—A voice behind interrupted him, by saying, "You need not trouble yourself, Sir; I know my way, and shall announce myself." Ellen rose, and looked surprised, for visitors were never shewn to this room: still more was she amazed when she saw the sharp countenance and stiff figure of the old lady she now supposed to be Lady Juliana Mordaunt, who, pushing by the man, gave him one of her express nods, and said, "You may go, Sir."—She then advanced, and seeing Jane, who rose and stared at this extraordinary visitant, she said, with another nod to Ellen, "So, you make your maid work at her needle: I am glad of it; but send her away now, for I want to talk to you." Ellen seeing that Jane hesitated to leave her with this stranger, whom the poor girl began to believe was deranged, told her to go to her own room, and she, gathering up her work, very readily obeyed; though she went to the housekeeper and told her she thought they had better both go and stay in the anti-room, for she really believed a mad-woman was gone into her Lady's dressing-room. "Nonsense!" said the housekeeper: "I saw the lady go up: it is my Lord's aunt, Lady Juliana." This intelligence quieted Jane, who really was under some fears for Ellen, to whom she was become tenderly attached.

In the meantime, Lady Juliana seeing that Ellen continued standing, said—"Sit down, child, and don't be frightened." Ellen gladly obeyed, for she could not help feeling a little agitated by Lady Juliana's strange mode of visiting.

The old lady looked round the room, and after a moment's pause, said—"Why, you are an unfashionable young woman, I see; work, books, maps, and the furniture remaining nearly as it was seven years ago! What, has nobody told you, child, the whole house ought to be new furnished?"

"Indeed, Ma'am, if they had, I should have paid no attention to them," said Ellen. "I must, indeed, be a strange ungrateful creature, if the magnificent furniture of this house was not more than equal to my wishes."

"So much the better, I am glad of it," returned Lady Juliana.—"Do you know me?" she added, turning in her usual abrupt manner to Ellen.

"I believe—I think I can guess."

"Oh, I suppose you told St. Aubyn you had met with a cross, disagreeable old woman at Lady Meredith's, and he told you it must have been his aunt, Lady Juliana Mordaunt."

"Indeed, Madam," said Ellen, blushing a little at a statement so near the truth.

"Nay, don't tell lies, child," bluntly replied the old lady. "I hate flattery; besides, your countenance won't let you. I know what I am, which is more than every body can say. And do you generally spend your mornings in this manner?"

"Generally, unless my Lord wishes me to go any where with him."

"And what do you do in the evening?"

"Lord St. Aubyn, Miss Cecil, and myself, sit together: we net or work, while he reads to us, unless Miss Cecil is sufficiently in spirits to give us some music."

"And have you no idea, child, how ridiculous the fashionable people think all this?"

"I am sorry for it."

"But will you persist in the same plan?" Ellen smiled.

"And do you mean to go on in this way all the time you are in town?"

"Not exactly perhaps. I am to see a little more of the public places; but my Lord wished me to wait till—"

"Till what? You may as well tell me, for I see you have an old-fashioned way of speaking your thoughts."

"It is true, your Ladyship sees in me one so little accustomed to the habits of the great world, that I have not yet learned to dissemble: will you permit me to say, and not be displeased, that Lord St. Aubyn anxiously wished to procure a chaperon, whose sanction should be unexceptionable—in short, Lady Juliana Mordaunt."

"I believe you are a little flatterer after all," said Lady Juliana, relaxing into a smile. "With all your talk of sincerity, I hardly believe St. Aubyn thought of me at all; and how, if he did, he could fancy I should ever get the better of the shock he gave my pride, call it prejudice if you will, by marrying *you*—for I love plain-dealing, child. I don't know but it is all over now—I like you; and if you will continue as modest and unaffected as you are now, keep your neck and arms covered, and bring your Lord an heir, that these de Montforts may not succeed to his title, I will love you, and do all I can to assist and support you."

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Seeing that Ellen blushed at the last hint, she added,—"Nay, you need not blush, though I like to see you can: for I promise you, it was observing the probability of such an event that did more to reconcile me to you than all your beauty and merit could have done; so take care of yourself, and don't disappoint me; and now, my dear, kiss me, and call me *aunt* whenever you please."

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Ellen modestly and gracefully bent to receive the old Lady's embrace, and at that instant St. Aubyn opened the dressing-room door, and found the two people he loved best in the world in each other's arms, with tears of tenderness on the cheeks of both.

"What do I see!" he exclaimed.—"Is it possible!"

"Yes," said Lady Juliana, "it is very possible you see a foolish old woman, who loves you too well not to love one so dear to you, and so worthy of being loved."

St. Aubyn respectfully and affectionately kissed the hand she gave him, and clasping Ellen in his arms, exclaimed, "My dearest Ellen, how happy has all this made me!"

"Come, don't hurry her spirits with your raptures," said Lady Juliana. "She is a good girl, and we shall be very happy together, I dare say. But I find, Sir, you have been waiting for me, of all people, to chaperon your Lady about to all the fine places: I have had enough of them, and at my time of life I do not know any business I have at operas, balls, and plays: however, to oblige you and *my niece*, I will go wherever you wish me. I do not think she is one who will tire me to death: I shall dine with you to-day, and if you choose to let one of your people go to Drury-lane, and inquire if there are places, we may hear the oratorio to-night."

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Charmed with this speech, for St. Aubyn knew his aunt well enough to be sure if she had not been thoroughly pleased with Ellen, she would neither have called her niece, nor have staid to dine with them, he most readily accepted the kind offer.

They dined rather earlier than usual, that they might be in time for the opening of the oratorio, which Ellen was anxious to hear. Laura Cecil, in compliment to Lady Juliana, dined with them, and was quite delighted to see the affection, and even respect, with which she treated Lady St. Aubyn: for Lady Juliana was not a person to do things by halves; and having once conquered her own prejudices, was determined to give her niece all the consequence in her power with every other person, and would have been extremely angry with any one, who had dared to treat her with half the contempt she herself had done the day before. Once a friend, she was a friend for life, unless the object of her affections proved really undeserving, and then she hated with as much warmth as she had loved.

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Miss Cecil could not be persuaded to go with them to the theatre; and indeed Ellen was afterwards glad of it, for many of the songs were those which the sainted Juliet used to sing with so much sweetness and expression: and exquisitely as they were now performed, yet Ellen still felt something wanting. The soul that used to animate the eyes of Juliet, while she sung, was not there. The lips that had breathed those sacred strains, were so pure, so hallowed, that all the wonders of voice and science, now lavished for her entertainment, could not compensate to Ellen's mind for the pang she felt in recollecting that those eyes, those lips, were closed for ever.

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"Mute was the music of her tuneful breath,  
And quenched the radiance of her sparkling eyes."

After this evening, Ellen's engagements became more frequent; but she was never seen in public, except with Lady Juliana, and seldom without her Lord. In vain did fashion dictate, or ridicule assail: the sly glance, the pointed sarcasm, alike were vain: she knew herself safe, her reputation secure, with protectors so respectable; yet there was nothing obtrusive or formal in St. Aubyn's attention to his lovely wife: he was neither inseparable from her side, or incapable of attention to any other lady, or expecting Ellen never to speak to any other gentleman. But it was obvious, without being intrusive, that each was the first object of the other, and that their mutual honour and happiness were the most interesting care of both.

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Hence no bold and disgusting flattery assailed the ears of Ellen; no forward flirting woman dared dispute with her the heart of St. Aubyn; so pure, so spotless was her character, that, raised as she had suddenly been to a rank which might easily excite the envy of those who thought they had a better claim to it, not even the bold license of the age we live in had dared to breathe one syllable against her.

Thus passed the time till the latter end of April, which was the period fixed for Lady Meredith's famous fête, about which all the great world was going mad. The persons who were invited were expected to wear masquerade dresses, and the house appeared in masquerade, as well as the company. The whole had been new furnished in a fanciful style, and at an enormous expence, for this one evening; and her Ladyship's own dress was literally covered with jewels: she wore the habits and ornaments of an eastern beauty, and her attire was exactly copied from that Lady M.

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W. Montague describes for the fair Fatima, only, if possible, still more rich and splendid; and, if possible, still more calculated to display as well as to adorn the figure. No words can do justice to the magnificence and splendour of the whole entertainment: the Bow-street officers at the door, and Mr. G— and his men serving ices and other refreshments in a room fitted up to represent a casino at Naples, with a panorama view of its beautiful bay, &c. gave it all the characteristics of a modern fête; and the number of gay dresses, shining decorations, lights, and music, made the whole appear to Ellen more like a palace in a fairy tale than any thing "which the earth owns." She wore a black domino, but with a very fine set of diamonds, which Lady Juliana had given her the night before: amongst them was a sort of coronet, or chaplet, set to represent sprigs of jessamine and small vine leaves, in commemoration of that which St. Aubyn had woven of those simple materials the day he discovered to her his real rank; for Lady Juliana had heard the whole story, and was much pleased with that little incident.

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Their party consisted of Lord and Lady St. Aubyn, Lady Juliana, and Sir Edward Leicester, a particular friend of St. Aubyn's, a very amiable young man, who appeared much charmed with Laura Cecil, and paid her great attention, whenever he had an opportunity of being with her. They spent a very agreeable evening: it concluded with a splendid supper, at which all the company appeared unmasked, and the super-eminence of Lady St. Aubyn's beauty was allowed by all.

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A few nights after this, Lord and Lady St. Aubyn, Lady Juliana, Lady Meredith, and her favourite beau, Colonel Lenox, went to the Opera: the entertainment for the evening happened to be the beautiful opera of Artaserse. Ellen, lost in delight at the superb stage decorations, the exquisite beauty of the music, and the interest of the story, which, by the help of the action, and having read it in English, she understood very well, was scarcely sensible of any thing around her, till the scene in which Arbace is accused of the murder of the king. Turning then to speak to St. Aubyn, who sat behind her, she saw him pale, agitated, and trembling: "What is the matter?" asked she, in a voice of alarm; but pressing his hand on her arm, he said, in a low voice, "Be silent—do not notice me."

At that moment the voice of the singer, who performed Arbace, in the most pathetic tone, breathed out, "Sono Innocente," to which Artaserse replies:

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Ma l'apparenza O Arbace  
T'accusa ti condanna!

A stifled sigh, almost amounting to a groan, from St. Aubyn, met the ear of Ellen. Recovering himself a little, he whispered—"Remember, Ellen, *and I too am innocent!*"

In spite of the precaution with which he spoke, Lady Meredith turned, and asked him if he were unwell.

"I have a violent head-ache," he replied, forcing himself to appear more composed.

"You look pale, indeed, my Lord," returned Lady Meredith: "and Lady St. Aubyn seems quite overcome with this pathetic scene."

She spoke of the opera, but a crimson flush spread over St. Aubyn's face, and complaining of the intolerable heat, he rose, and went out of the box.

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"Bless me!" said Lady Juliana: "what is the matter?"

"Only Lord St. Aubyn complains of the head-ache," said Lady Meredith.

"Oh, I know what it is," answered Lady Juliana: "my nephew hates to be disturbed when he is attending to music; and I suppose you, Lady Meredith, have been talking to him, as you always do at the Opera."

Lady Meredith only laughed; and St. Aubyn returning soon after, nothing more passed. When the opera was over, and St. Aubyn and Ellen were alone in the carriage, he still appeared so restless and agitated, that Ellen could not resist addressing to him a few words, indicative of curiosity, if not of alarm. For a time he evaded her tender inquiries; but, at length, grasping her hands with an action expressive of the utmost emotion, he again repeated his former words: "Remember, Ellen, oh, remember that I too am innocent!"

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"I know it, I am sure of it," she returned: "but why thus confide by halves? Why torture yourself and me by these mysterious hints?"

"Ah, why indeed!" said he: "I ought to have more command of myself: but that scene—that fatal instrument of a horrid deed!—Appearances how false, yet how convincing!"

"To me," she replied, "appearances are not and never shall be any thing, when opposed to your single assertion, to my confidence in your integrity."

"A thousand thousand thanks," he replied, "for the sweet assurance! Soon, too soon, perhaps, you will be tried!"

"Demanding so much reliance, so much implicit *confidence* from his wife, under such *mysterious* conduct, was St. Aubyn willing, if called upon, to grant an equal share to her?"

Think'st thou I'll make a life of jealousy,  
 To follow still the changes of the moon  
 With fresh surmises?—No; to be once in doubt  
 Is to be resolv'd—  
 I'll see before I doubt; what I doubt prove.

OTHELLO.

After the scene at the Opera, which effectually destroyed her pleasure there, Lady St. Aubyn felt for some days not at all disposed to enter into the gay parties which were offered for her amusement: a gloom hung over her, and she had a weight on her spirits, which in some degree affected her health. Some one says, "A belief in *presentiment* is the favourite superstition of feeling minds;" and Ellen was certainly not entirely free from it. Lady Juliana and Miss Cecil perceived the effect without knowing the cause; and supposing it to be merely a temporary indisposition, persuaded her to remain quietly at home for a day or two; but finding the nervous sort of depression under which she laboured was encreased by indulgence, they imagined a moderate share of amusement might remove it; and prevailed on her to take places at Covent-Garden, to see Mrs. Jordan in a favourite comedy.

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Laura did not yet shew herself in public; Ellen therefore went to the play with only St. Aubyn and Lady Juliana. They were joined there by two or three gentlemen, and amongst them Sir Edward Leicester, who, between the acts, made so many inquiries for Miss Cecil, and spoke so highly of Lady St. Aubyn's "charming friend," as convinced her he took a deep interest in all that concerned Laura. This gave real pleasure to Ellen, who thought so well of Sir Edward, as to wish he might succeed in rendering the prepossession mutual. They were all extremely well pleased with the play. Who, indeed, that ever saw Mrs. Jordan act was otherwise? And Lady Juliana was rejoiced to see Ellen quite as cheerful as usual. They did not choose to stay the farce, and finding at the end of the play the carriage was in waiting, left the box. Lady Juliana being rather timid, and not very alert in getting into a carriage, St. Aubyn gave her his arm, and requested Sir Edward would take care of Lady St. Aubyn.

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As they were crossing the lobby, a gentleman accidentally trod on Ellen's train, and entangled it in his spur, by which she was detained half a minute before it could be disengaged. He begged her pardon, and passed on. St. Aubyn and his aunt not perceiving the circumstance, had advanced some steps before the Countess and Sir Edward. At that moment two or three young men pushed rather rudely by them; and Sir Edward extending his hand, said, "Take care, gentlemen, you incommode the lady."

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One of them turned round, and looking in Ellen's face, exclaimed:

"By heaven 'tis she! 'tis Ellen Powis!"

Lady St. Aubyn starting at the name, cast her eyes upon him, and instantly recognized Charles Ross: but before she could speak to him, as she was preparing to do in a friendly manner, he stamped violently, and with a countenance where the utmost rage was expressed, and a dreadful oath, exclaimed:

"Is this the villain that has undone thee?—But where, then, is that accursed Mordaunt? Ah, Ellen! abandoned, miserable girl, art thou, then, so lost already?"

Pale, gasping for breath at this shocking language, Ellen clung more closely to the arm of Sir Edward, and faintly articulated, "For God's sake let me pass!"

"What do you mean, Sir?" said Sir Edward, fiercely: "Are you intoxicated, or mad? How dare you insult this lady!"

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"And how dare you, Sir," answered Charles, approaching in a menacing attitude, "after seducing her from her friends, and from those who loved her, to look me in the face?"

"Madman!" replied Sir Edward, pushing him aside with one hand, while with the other he supported the now almost fainting Ellen. "Gentlemen, I request you will secure him till I place this lady in her carriage, and then I am ready to give him any explanation he may wish for."

Some of the gentlemen, who by this time surrounded them, knowing Charles, said to him: "Come away, Ross; you are very wrong: at any rate, this quarrel shall go no farther."

At this moment St. Aubyn, having placed his aunt in the carriage, wondering at Ellen's delay, returned to seek her; and astonished at what he beheld, exclaimed:

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"For heaven's sake, what is the matter? My love, what makes you look so pale? Has any one dared to insult you?"

"Oh! you are there, Sir, are you," said Charles: "I know you: I saw you once, and then foretold what has happened: you are the man who must give me satisfaction."

"Pshaw! he is mad, quite mad," cried Sir Edward; "pay no attention to him; he knows not what he talks of."

The by-standers began to be of the same opinion; and, indeed, his rageful countenance, and the violence of his gesticulations, with the apparent inconsistency of his words, rendered the idea extremely probable; they therefore forcibly held him, and said: "Pass on, gentlemen, and take care of the lady: we will prevent him from following you;" while Ross's friends, supposing either that the wine they knew he had drunk had affected him, or that some sudden frenzy had seized him, were amongst the foremost to secure him, especially as a gentleman who now came up said the gentleman and lady were the Earl and Countess of St. Aubyn: but Charles was too outrageous to hear that or any thing else, and called after them aloud, stamping with fury, and swearing terribly:

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"Mean, detestable cowards, come back. I am not mad. Give up that wretched girl: let me take her to her father—to mine, who loved her. Mordaunt, vile, hateful Mordaunt! to you I call—Come back, I say!"

St. Aubyn turned, and but that Ellen hung half-fainting on him, he would have obeyed the summons; for he knew that name was addressed to him, and easily guessed who the supposed madman was, and how the mistake which caused his insults might have arisen; but Sir Edward said, "You shall not go back, St. Aubyn, he is mad; or if not, it belongs to me to chastise him."

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"Is it not Charles Ross?" said St. Aubyn to Ellen.

"Yes," she faintly replied; "but do not go back; he is certainly out of his senses."

By this time they had reached the carriage, and putting her into it, he shut the door; and saying, "Wait a moment, be not alarmed, I must speak to him," he ran back again, Sir Edward following.

Ross having, as soon as they were out of sight, disengaged himself from the by-standers, was hastening with frantic violence to overtake them: when he saw the two gentlemen, he advanced and said:

"You have thought proper, then, to come back; but what have you done with that unfortunate girl?"

"For the sake of your father, Mr. Ross," said St. Aubyn, "for now I know you, I will be patient and tell you."

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"What can you tell me more than I already know?" cried Ross, interrupting him with angry vehemence. "Can you deny that you have seduced her whom I loved better than my own soul? Did you not bring her with you to London? I know it all, Sir: the woman where you lodged found you out. She saw how you had deceived my gentle, innocent Ellen."

"What words are these!" exclaimed St. Aubyn, haughtily. "Whence arises so vile an error?"

"Villain!" exclaimed Charles, with wild impetuosity, "deny not your crimes, but give me the satisfaction of a gentleman."

"You do not act like one," said St. Aubyn: "but here is my card; I am always to be found, and will give you whatever satisfaction you may require."

He threw a card with his address to Charles, who hastily gave St. Aubyn one of his.

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"It shall not be," said Sir Edward. "I was the first insulted: this affair is mine."

"Settle it as you please," said Charles: "come one or both, I am ready."

"Very well," said St. Aubyn; "to-morrow we shall be at your service. Come, Sir Edward; Ellen will be terrified to death." They hastened on; and Ross rudely pushing aside those around him, left the theatre.

St. Aubyn and Sir Edward now went as quickly as possible, where they found the Countess, half-fainting, in the arms of Lady Juliana.

"For God's sake," said the latter, as they opened the door, "what is the matter? What have you been doing? Could you find no time or place to quarrel in but in the presence of this poor girl?"

"For heaven's sake, Madam," said St. Aubyn, after having ordered the servants to drive on, "do not talk in that manner. Am I so regardless of this dear creature's comfort, or so prone to quarrel, that I should seek it at such a time as this?"

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He then made Ellen lean on him, and soothed her with the most affectionate and tender expressions.

"Oh," said she, reviving; "is he gone? Dear St. Aubyn, tell me, are you safe, has he hurt you?"

"No—no, my love; be composed, all is over; he is gone away satisfied."

"Satisfied!" replied she; "what could he mean? Do you think he is mad, or is it the effect of wine, or some mistake?"

"I know not," said St. Aubyn, hastily; "but be at rest—he is gone—we shall hear no more of him."

"Oh, are you sure—are you quite sure? Dear Lady Juliana, tell me: may I depend upon it? You said something about a duel."



"I talked like a fool, then, if I did," replied Lady Juliana; "but I do not remember any thing of it." [Pg 138]

"A duel—ridiculous!" said St. Aubyn, pretending to laugh. "I assure you, Ellen, all is over; pray be composed; there is nothing to fear."

Lady Juliana knew better, but terrified for Ellen, she affected to believe what St. Aubyn said, and between them, they contrived completely to deceive the Countess, who, ignorant of the usages of the world, and not knowing all that had passed, was easily misled. She composed her mind, therefore, in the hope that all was well, though she still trembled, and was so much fluttered, that Lady Juliana, after going home with her, waited till she had seen her in bed; and desiring she might be kept perfectly quiet, she returned to the drawing-room, and endeavoured to learn from St. Aubyn and Leicester what had happened, and what was likely to be the result: but she vainly chid or interrogated either: both persisted in the story that Ross had apologized, and all was over. [Pg 139]

Rather better satisfied, though not fully convinced, Lady Juliana soon after left them, determined however to keep a little watch upon the actions of her nephew, with whose temper she was too well acquainted to suppose such a business would be passed over without farther notice.

St. Aubyn gave Ellen such assurances that nothing more would arise from this affair, that, tired out with the agitation she had undergone, she soon fell into a profound sleep, and awakened in the morning perfectly refreshed and composed. At St. Aubyn's request, however, she remained later than usual in bed. Laura Cecil sat by her side, and gave her her breakfast, after which she appeared so entirely well, that no objection was made to her rising.

In the meantime St. Aubyn had received, at his breakfast-table, the following note:— [Pg 140]

My Lord,

I find by the card you gave me last night, that the name of *Mordaunt* was only assumed to conceal the blackest designs and most detestable perfidy.

If you do not mean to plead your privilege, I demand a meeting with you on Wimbolton Common to-morrow morning at seven o'clock, when I hope to wash out my wrongs, and those of the injured Ellen, in the blood of a villain.

I shall bring pistols and a friend.

CHARLES ROSS.

*Eight o'Clock, Wednesday morning.*

To this St. Aubyn returned the following answer:—

Sir,

I shall be at the place appointed at the time you mention. Sir Edward Leicester will be with me. [Pg 141]

ST. AUBYN.

After dispatching this laconic reply, the Earl went to Ellen's dressing-room. Laura had just left her; Jane only was with her: at the moment he entered, Ellen was reading a note, which, when she saw him, she hastily folded together, and put within the bosom of her morning dress: she seemed a little agitated, and the tears stood in her eyes, but hastening to meet him, she said:—

"My dear St. Aubyn, they told me you were gone out."

"No, my love," said St. Aubyn, a little surprized at the hasty manner in which she spoke; "but I am going out soon."

"Shall you take the barouche or the chariot?"

"Neither; I shall walk to Sir Edward Leicester's: but why; are *you* going out?" [Pg 142]

"Yes—by and bye; I think a little air will do me good."

"Had you not better keep quiet? You know my aunt particularly requested you would do so; she will be here soon: do not go till you have seen her, nor then unless she advises it."

"But I assure you, my Lord, I am perfectly well, and I am sure a little air will be of service."

"Well, do as you please," said St. Aubyn, a little surprized at her adhering so determinately to her idea of going out; for, in general, half a word from him guided her; "but you will not go alone?"

"Oh—no, Laura will go with me."

"Very well, my love; don't fatigue yourself. Where are you going?"

"I don't know exactly: I want to do some shopping." [Pg 143]

St. Aubyn then wished her good-morning, and repeating his request that she would take care of herself, left her.

The real fact was this—Jane, who was Ellen's almoner, and brought to her knowledge many cases

of distress, of which she would otherwise have been ignorant, had the night before, while her lady was at the play, received a petition from an officer's widow, who stated herself to be living in a small lodging in — Street; that she had several children, of whom the youngest was an infant not a month old, born under circumstances of the most acute distress, a few months after its father had fallen in the field of battle; the eldest, a girl of sixteen, in a deep decline: these circumstances, she said, prevented her from waiting herself on Lady St. Aubyn, of whose goodness she had heard much from an old blind lady, her neighbour, whom, in fact, Ellen had supported for some time past, and whom she had visited two or three times with Jane only.

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Ellen, warm-hearted and benevolent, was extremely anxious to see this unfortunate family: Jane had given her the letter just before St. Aubyn came into her room, and fearing if she declared her purpose he would oppose it, lest her health should be injured by the emotion she must necessarily feel from the sight of this unhappy mother and her children, she concealed the letter, and did not exactly tell him why she wished so much to go out, though aware that she must appear unusually pertinacious; but she had set her heart with all the fervor of youth on her object: above all, she desired to see the poor little infant, for Ellen, always fond of children, had, since she knew herself likely to become a mother, felt a peculiar interest in young children, and ardently wished to see and provide for one who had so many claims to the compassion of a tender heart; and having really some purchases to make, she gave without consideration *that* as her only motive for going out. Never before had she departed for an instant from the singular sincerity of her character, and the perfect confidence which she reposed in her husband; dearly did she soon repent of having done so now.

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On asking Laura to go with her, she unexpectedly declined it, having a bad head-ache, and tried to persuade Ellen not to go herself, but to send Jane, and go some other time: but Ellen was so unusually fixed on her point, and her imagination was so impressed with the idea of the *poor little infant*, that, for a wonder, she was not to be prevailed on; and fearing, lest Lady Juliana should come and prevent her, she ordered the carriage directly, and set out.

She drove first to — Street, where she found the distress family in all the poverty and affliction which had been described to her—the unfortunate mother, still weak, and scarcely able to support herself, obliged to act as nurse, not only to the infant, but to her eldest daughter, who, pale and languishing, seemed ready every moment to breathe her last, while two or three other children were playing in the room, distracting by their unconscious noise the poor invalids.

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The tender and compassionate Ellen felt her heart oppress at this melancholy sight, and hastened as much as possible to relieve it: she held herself the baby in her arms, while she sent Jane to seek a nurse for the poor girl, and to the woman of the house where they lodged, to whom she spoke herself; and requested she would take charge of the other children, till the mother was more able to do so. She gave the widow an ample supply of money to procure every thing necessary for her herself and family, and after promising to send a physician to attend the poor girl, and kissing the baby, she departed, followed by thanks and blessings, "not loud but deep," and went to see the poor old blind lady, who, always delighted to hear her sweet voice and kind expressions, detained her as long as she could.

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Returning home, rejoicing in the good she had done, feeling herself animated by the purest pleasure, and quite well in health, Ellen suddenly recollected that she was close by the street where Mrs. Birtley lived, with whom she had lodged the first time she was in London; and she thought she would just stop at the door, and ask for the book she had left there, for which Jane had, as she said, always forgotten to call: it was that very volume of Gray which Mordaunt had given her, and as his first gift she was really anxious to recover it. Meaning merely to stop at the door, and send Jane in for it, she pulled the check, and ordered the coachman to drive down that street, and stop at No. 6, and told Jane for what purpose she was going.

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"Oh, my Lady," said the talkative girl, "I shall be rejoiced that Mrs. Birtley should see you in all your grandeur: she will be surprized after all she had the impertinence to say."

"Indeed," said Ellen, "I never thought of that: she will wonder to see me under such a different appearance, and perhaps say something in the hearing of the servants. I will not go."

"Oh, my Lady," answered Jane, "she need not know who you are: only ask for the book, and come away directly: she will not know a bit the more what your Ladyship's real name is; and I suppose she is not enough amongst the grand people to know the livery or carriage."

"True," said Ellen: "well, you shall go in and ask for the book, but do not explain any thing to her."

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"Oh, no, indeed, my Lady," said Jane; "so far from it, I shall enjoy seeing her puzzle——"

While they spoke, the carriage stopped at the door of Mrs. Birtley. Ellen, who half repented having come, sat back in the carriage, and told Jane to go in and ask for the book, and not to say she was there, for she would not alight: but notwithstanding Ellen's caution, Mrs. Birtley, having been drawn to the window by seeing such an elegant equipage stop at her door, caught a glimpse of her as the footman opened the door of the chariot for Jane to alight, came to the side of the carriage, and with civility asked her if she would not walk in. Ellen, feeling more and more the absurdity of which she had been guilty in coming to the door of a woman who she knew entertained of her a doubtful opinion, and to whom she could not explain herself, coldly declined the offer; but the coachman said he feared the horses would not turn very well, as the street was rather narrow, and that it would be better if her Ladyship pleased to alight for a moment, lest she

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should be alarmed.

Mrs. Birtley stared at the "*Ladyship*" as much as she had done at the *coroneted carriage* and fine horses; for she was not quite so ignorant of *grand people*, as Jane, in the plenitude of her own newly-acquired knowledge, had supposed her.

Ellen, vexed at her own folly in coming thither, was now obliged to get out of the carriage; and several people passing by, staring first at the carriage, and then at Ellen, she thought it would be better to go for an instant into the house. Mrs. Birtley shewed her into the parlour, and requesting she would be seated, added, "My lodger is gone out, and will not, I suppose, be back till dinner-time: he is generally out all the morning. I believe he knows something of you, Ma'am." [Pg 151]

"Of me!" repeated Ellen, surprized.

"Yes, Ma'am: for when he came here about a week ago, he saw, by accident, that book Mrs. Jane has in her hand; and some writing there was in it seemed to put him into a great passion. He made me tell him how I came by the book, and asked me a thousand questions about you: what was the name of the gentleman you came with, if you were young and handsome, and I don't know what; and I believe what I told him put him into a great rage, for he stamp'd and swore like a madman."

Ellen, vexed and astonished, sorry she had come there, and feeling a certain dread of she hardly knew what stealing over her, now turned extremely pale; and Jane exclaimed, "Oh, my Lady will faint: get some water!"

"Your *Lady*! Why she is Mrs. Mordaunt, is not she, *or calls herself so*?" asked Mrs. Birtley with some contempt.

"Don't stand there asking questions," said the impatient Jane: "but fetch some water. Lord, I wish we were at home: if my Lady should be ill, how Lady Juliana will scold, and my Lord." [Pg 152]

"Grant me patience," said Mrs. Birtley, as she left the room to fetch some drops and water: "the girl makes me mad with her Lords and Ladies. Poor fool, I suppose they have imposed upon her too finely."

Not one minute had she been gone, when Ellen finding herself better, and not meaning to wait Mrs. Birtley's return, and farther questions, had risen, and by Jane's help almost reached the door to go to the carriage, which through the window she saw drawing up, when that door opened, and Charles Ross entered the room: amazed beyond the power of words to describe, he saw her standing—saw Ellen in his apartment! And forgetting every thing but that he had once dearly loved her, he rushed towards, and would have caught her in his arms, but she evaded his grasp; and catching hold of Jane (who, frightened, gave a sudden scream), said, "He here! Oh, how I am terrified!" [Pg 153]

"Terrified, Ellen!" he wildly repeated: "*once* you were not terrified by my appearance."

"No, Sir," she replied, with as much spirit as she could assume: "for once I should have expected friendship and protection, not insult."

"Ah, wretched girl!" he exclaimed: "once you deserved and wished for my friendship and protection; but now, that fine gaudy carriage, this elegant dress, the jewels, in which I saw you last night, all tell a dreadful tale—all speak of your shame, of your ruin."

"Of my shame! of my ruin! what, oh, what do you mean?"

"Aye, what indeed!" said the enraged Jane: "let my Lady pass, impertinent fellow, and don't stand there talking in that insolent manner. Do, my Lady, let me call the footmen. I wish my Lord was here: he would soon teach you better manners." [Pg 154]

"Cease, Jane," said Ellen, shaking like a leaf: "cease this shocking altercation. Of your insulting language, Mr. Ross, I know not the meaning: it is well for you Lord St. Aubyn does not hear you thus address his wife."

"His wife! his wife! Is it possible? Have I wronged both him and you? Stay, Ellen, a moment, for heaven's sake—for St. Aubyn's—for my father's: you know not the mischief one word of explanation may prevent."

She stopped, she turned: he seized her hands to detain her. Oh, unfortunate Ellen!

At that moment St. Aubyn himself entered the room. He rushed impetuously forward, exclaiming, "Dissembling woman! Was it for this you left your home—to meet this villain—to come to his very lodging in search of him?" [Pg 155]

"Oh, no! oh, no!" sobbed Ellen, as she sunk at his feet in a swoon so deep, so death-like, that it seemed as if her life had left her.

"Oh, you have killed my Lady!" cried Jane: "my dear Lady! Oh, my Lord, we came here for a book, and not—"

"Peace, peace!" sternly interrupted St. Aubyn: "I will not hear a word. Is she dead?"

"Oh, Lord, I hope not! How can your Lordship talk so shockingly? Oh, Mrs. Birtley, for God's sake help my Lady—call assistance!"

Between them they raised her: for Charles, confounded, shocked, and half distracted, dared not, and St. Aubyn, gloomy, cold, and stern, would not assist her. At length returning life mantled on her cheek, and her first incoherent words were, "St. Aubyn, dear St. Aubyn, save me!"

St. Aubyn, somewhat calmer, and fearing he might have been too rash, struggled with the jealous pangs which rent his heart, and approaching her, said, "How is it, Ellen—are you better?" [Pg 156]

"Yes, better, my love; but sick, oh, sick at heart!"

"Compose yourself; all is well."

A little revived, she looked up, but was too languid to discern the expression of his countenance, which contradicted the kindness of his words; for St. Aubyn felt there was much, very much to be explained, before she could be to him again the Ellen she had been—if, indeed, the perfect confidence he once felt in her could ever be restored; yet fearing quite to destroy her, he constrained himself. Mrs. Birtley, now convinced how unjust had been her suspicions, and Jane, eagerly endeavoured to explain how Lady St. Aubyn came to be there; but motioning with an air of proud dignity to them to be silent, he said, "Enough, I am satisfied!" But his gloomy looks contradicted his words, and turning to Ross, he said, in a low voice, "You and I, Sir, shall meet again." Then, with Jane's assistance, he raised Ellen, and lifting her into the carriage, and putting Jane in, followed himself. [Pg 157]

"Home!" fiercely exclaimed St. Aubyn, and home they went; but oh, to a home how different from that of the day before!

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## CHAP. VIII.

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"Good friend, go to him; for by this light of Heaven  
I know not how I lost him. Here I kneel:—  
If e'er my will did trespass 'gainst his love,  
Either in discourse or thought, or actual deed;  
Or that mine eyes, mine ears, or any sense,  
Delighted them in any other form—  
Comfort, forswear me!—unkindness may do much;  
And his unkindness may defeat my life,  
But never taint my love."

OTHELLO.

Silent and gloomy was the ride homewards. St. Aubyn, bridling with difficulty the jealous rage which consumed him, sat leaning against one side of the carriage, veiling his eyes with his hand, that they might not for an instant fall on Ellen, who, hardly supporting herself with Jane's help, shed no tears, though grief and vexation heaved her bosom with sighs, which almost burst it; for now her recollection was restored, the dreadful words in which St. Aubyn first addressed her rung in her ears, and swelled her heart with anguish. [Pg 159]

At length they reached Cavendish-Square, and were met in the hall by Lady Juliana, whose pride, at first, wounded by Ellen's being from home when she arrived, had, at length, given way to feelings of alarm at her long absence; but when she saw her lifted from the carriage, pale, trembling, and half-dead, terrified and astonished, she vainly demanded an explanation alternately from St. Aubyn and the frightened Jane; her nephew passing her hastily, and in silence, went into his study, and instantly shut and fastened the door. There he meant to consider with himself what part it became him to take, and how to elucidate this extraordinary event.

Ellen, throwing herself into Lady Juliana's arms, exclaimed, "Oh! my dearest madam, let me die at once, for my Lord is angry with me!" [Pg 160]

"Die!" cried Lady Juliana, struggling with a thousand terrors; "Nonsense! for what? Do you suppose no man was ever angry with his wife before? You are so unused to it, it seems strange to you, but you may assure yourself few wives would think it so extraordinary."

By this time they had reached Ellen's dressing-room, where, having placed her on a sofa, and given her some restoratives, Lady Juliana said, "But what is all this about—what offence have you committed?"

"Oh! madam, I know not; but it is too true, St. Aubyn has said such words to me, such words as I never thought to hear from him!"

"What is the meaning of all this?" said Lady Juliana, turning to Jane. "Speak, girl, if you have not quite lost your senses, or do not wish that I should lose mine, and tell me where your lady has been, and what has happened."

Jane, now, as well as the confusion she was in would let her, repeated the adventures of the morning to Lady Juliana, the visit to the officer's widow, and the old blind lady; and lastly, why they went to Mrs. Birtley's: "And it was I," she said, "that persuaded her Ladyship to go to that disagreeable Mrs. Birtley's—out of pride, I own it—it was out of pride, that she might see what a

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grand place I had got, and that *my* lady was not the sort of person that cross old woman fancied she was; and her Ladyship would not even have alighted or gone into her trumpery parlour, if the horses had not been so frightful, and the coachman said, says he, "my Lady had better alight, for the horses—"

"Grant me patience!" said Lady Juliana: "this girl's tongue is enough to distract me! Well, and when you were in her trumpery parlour, as you call it, what happened then? Was Lord St. Aubyn angry that you went there?"

"Oh! no, my Lady, not for that; but the instant after we went in, and while Mrs. Birtley was chattering about the book, and about her lodger (and to be sure there never was such another chattering woman in the world, and looking at my lady from head to foot, so saucy-like, I was quite in a passion with her), I saw my lady turn pale, and thinking she was going to faint, I made Mrs. Birtley go for some water, for I knew well enough how your Ladyship would scold if *my* Lady was to be ill, and so I told Mrs. Birtley."

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"Will this tale ever have an end?" cried the impatient Lady Juliana.

"Well, my Lady, and so just as Mrs. Birtley was gone for the water, and we were got up to go away, in came a young man: I believe, for my part, he was quite mad, not indeed that I am any particular judge of mad people, for I remember the first day your Ladyship came here I thought—but I believe I had better not tell *that*;—however, this young man *was* mad for certain, for the moment he saw my Lady, he ran to her, and seemed as if he was going to catch her in his arms. I screamed, and when her Ladyship said she was terrified, he quite raved, and called her names, and said something about her shame, and her being ruined, and her jewels, last night, and I don't know what."

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"And who, for Heaven's sake, was this man?" asked the astonished Lady Juliana.

"Oh, it was Ross! Charles Ross!" sobbed Ellen; "and St. Aubyn came in while he was speaking to me, and said I came there to meet him, to his very lodgings; and then I fainted quite away."

"So, so, so!" repeated Lady Juliana; "a pretty piece of work! I see what this mistake will end in! But stay; surely it is not too late: I will go to St. Aubyn."

"Yes, go to him, Madam, for Heaven's sake go to him, and explain it to him. Assure him I could not have an idea that Charles Ross lodged at Mrs. Birtley's. Oh! how cruel to be obliged to make this explanation: can St. Aubyn really think so ill of me? Yet, surely, surely he will be undeceived—this is only a momentary start of passion!"

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Lady Juliana shook her head, for she knew St. Aubyn's temper; and how hardly he would endure to hear even her on such a subject; yet, if he would but condescend to hear what the servants, who attended the Countess in this unfortunate excursion, what this Mrs. Birtley would say, their stories would doubtless confirm that of Ellen; for of the truth of that story Lady Juliana had not the smallest doubt; but she knew how St. Aubyn's pride would revolt, and his delicacy be hurt, by the necessity of interrogating such people on the conduct of his wife.

She felt herself indeed angry with Ellen for the childish impatience which had taken her out in the morning, after the fright of the night before had rendered repose so desirable, and for going to Mrs. Birtley's at all; but she could easily forgive a folly apparently of so little importance, since it was quite impossible for Ellen to have foreseen the chain of circumstances which followed, and involved her in so much distress.

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How St. Aubyn happened to go to the same place, no one could guess; it appeared, indeed, extremely unlikely that he should have done so; but, as singular coincidences no less singular do sometimes occur, though their rarity makes us call them improbable, unless they arise within our own immediate knowledge.

The real truth was this: St. Aubyn, recollecting that Charles Ross had said the night before, "*the woman where you lodged found you out*," had determined to ascertain, from this woman herself, what she had told Ross, and how she had dared to speak of him and Ellen in such terms; and to explain who her Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt really were, that no farther slander, even in Mrs. Birtley's narrow circle, might attach to the purity of Lady St. Aubyn's character, had walked thither from Sir Edward Leicester's, with whom he had sat some time, arranging the particulars of their intended meeting with Charles Ross the next morning; there, to his utter astonishment, he found Lady St. Aubyn's carriage in waiting; and inquiring of the servants where she was, was answered, in that house, meaning Mrs. Birtley's.

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"And Miss Cecil?"

"No, my Lord; Miss Cecil did not come out with my Lady, only Mrs. Jane."

St. Aubyn recollected Ellen's apparent agitation in the morning; the letter he had found her reading, and which she so hastily concealed; her having said Laura would go with her; yet she had come with only her maid, a young ignorant girl, come to the very house where he believed Ross was residing; that Ross, of whom, though almost unknown to himself, some secret jealousy had always lurked in his heart.

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All these circumstances rose at once to his memory; and, without waiting to knock or ring, the door standing open, he rushed hastily into the parlour, where the first object that struck his sight

was his wife, his beloved, his adored Ellen, while her hand was held by the man on earth he most detested, the man who but the night before had insulted her and outraged him! What could he think? Was it wonderful that the fury which swelled his heart broke into words of reproach and anger? Was it not rather wonderful he could so far command himself, so far reflect, as to return with her apparently calm, and that he did not at once cast from him a woman who must have appeared so ungrateful and insincere?

Lady Juliana having with the aid of Miss Cecil and Jane put Ellen to bed, would have retired to seek her nephew, leaving Laura shocked, astonished, and grieved, remaining with her friend; but seeing the flush of fever on her cheek, and an unusual brilliancy in her eyes, they sent without delay to the family physician, who, after asking a few questions, and learning the Countess had been alarmed, and was then under the influence of terror for her lord, who, Laura whispered to him, they feared was meditating a duel with a gentleman who had insulted Lady St. Aubyn, the doctor shook his head, and said if her mind were not quieted immediately, he would not be answerable for the consequences: she had, he said, every symptom of an alarming fever, and that if she were not soothed, and kept quiet, the worst event might be expected both to herself and the unborn babe.

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Alarmed beyond measure, Lady Juliana now ran to seek St. Aubyn. With some difficulty she prevailed on him to grant her admittance, and with still greater, to hear what she had to say. She repeated the whole story Jane had told her: he shook his head, was silent, but not convinced. She saw his incredulity, and with some hesitation proposed to interrogate the men servants who went out with their lady as to the real cause of her alighting at Mrs. Birtley's. He started indignantly from the idea; but Lady Juliana assuring him she could ask in such a way as should give them no suspicion why they were questioned, he at last consented, and ringing the bell, she ordered the coachman to be sent to her.

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"John," said she, "your lady has been frightened at something or other this morning during her absence from home. Were the horses restive?"

"No, my Lady: the horses went as quiet as lambs to — Street, where we stopped while my Lady went into a house, I believe to see a poor family, as her Ladyship does sometimes; and then we went to the poor old blind lady's, that Mrs. Jane says her Lady maintains; and after that we went to another house, where my Lady said she would not alight, and told Mrs. Jane to make haste and get the book, for she would not stop an instant; but I was afraid to turn the carriage with her Ladyship in it, the street being very narrow just there, and a dray standing at the house opposite, for fear the horses should prance a little, which my Lady is always afraid of; and so I begged her just to alight a minute while I turned, which she seemed not to like to do, but the old lady of the house coming out and persuading her, she said she would get out for a minute, and the people staring at her as she stood on the pavement, she went into the house, and I believe something or somebody frightened her, for as I drew up to the door, which was not directly, for the horses were a little unruly, I saw a young man go into the parlour where my Lady was waiting, and a minute after, I heard Mrs. Jane scream; and I was going in, and so was James, but just as I was getting off my box, and Richard was standing at the head of the horses, my Lord came up, and afterwards I found my Lady had fainted away."

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"Then your Lady had only been there a short time?"

"Not above ten minutes I am sure, Madam, and as Mrs. Jane screamed when the gentleman went into the parlour, I think he must have frightened her."

"Very well, John: I was afraid it was the horses, and if so, Lady St. Aubyn should never have gone with them again."

"Oh, no, my Lady, the horses are quiet enough, poor things, only that narrow street made me think my Lady had better alight."

The man then retired, and Lady Juliana said:—"Well, St. Aubyn, are you now satisfied?"

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"Not quite; all this might have been contrivance and art."

"How is it possible you can think so! Did you ever see the slightest trace of either in Ellen?"

"Yes, to-day. Why did she tell me Laura was going with her? Why conceal where she was going?"

"Laura lamented just now not having gone out with Ellen, as she requested on account of a bad head-ache: as to Ellen's not telling you where she was going, that arose from a fear lest you should prevent, what, with the natural impatience of youth, she had set her heart upon. But if you still doubt, let us inquire of this woman, this Mrs.—what's her name?—the mistress of the house where you lodged: she can tell what Lady St. Aubyn's errand was there, and why she alighted."

"Good God! Madam," said St. Aubyn, peevishly, "would you have me go about collecting evidences whether I ought to believe my wife blameless, or the most deceitful of women?"

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"Yes I would," replied Lady Juliana, warmly, "if you can suspect her; if such modesty, such guileless sincerity, and purity of words and manners as I never before saw in woman, have no power to convince you: if you can set against them all this one unlucky accident, for I am sure it is no more, you ought to do every thing, seek every body who can give you information. Good God! to what purpose is it, as to this world, that a woman should lead the purest and most unspotted life, if one equivocal appearance can drive all confidence, all reliance, from the heart

which ought to know her best!"

Touched by this generous warmth, St. Aubyn began to feel convinced he had gone too far: he knew how penetrating Lady Juliana was, how much she had been prejudiced against Ellen, and how cautiously she would have observed, ere she had given to her an affection and confidence so tender: he called to mind many "a proof of recollected love," of native modesty, of the strictest principles in his wife, and began deeply to repent his jealous rashness; but suddenly recollecting the note he had seen in her hands, and the haste with which she had concealed it, he hastily said:—"But the letter! What letter was that I found her reading?"

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"What letter?" asked Lady Juliana.

"One I found her reading this morning, just before she went out; she seemed agitated, and had tears in her eyes, and as I entered, she put it into the fold of her morning dress."

"And there," said Lady Juliana, eagerly, "I found it, when we undressed her just now: I have not opened it; here it is." She drew it from her pocket. St. Aubyn recollected it to be the same, and opened it with trembling hands. It was, as has been stated, from the officer's widow to Jane, entreating her good offices with her lady, and describing her own distress, agreeing exactly with what Ellen and her maid had told Lady Juliana, and she had repeated to St. Aubyn. Such a corroboration of her story he could resist no longer; but shocked, alarmed, and ashamed, he hastily said:

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"I have injured her! Oh! can she ever forgive me!"

"It's well," said Lady Juliana with some asperity, for his jealous obstinacy had vexed her—"it's well if you have not killed her and your child too. God defend me from such rash, headstrong people, that can make no distinction between a *Rosolia* and an *Ellen*: poor girl, she has paid dear I am afraid for her dream of happiness, and being "perched up in a glittering greatness, wearing a golden sorrow!"

"For God's sake, Madam, no more reproaches," said St. Aubyn, angrily: "she has not suffered alone; but let me go to her; let me implore her to forgive me. Ah! can I ever forgive myself!"

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"Indeed, nephew, I shall do no such thing, unless you will promise me there shall be no fighting with that mad Ross, who I wish had been a thousand miles off before he had come here to drive us all as mad as himself."

"We will talk of that, hereafter: perhaps he will apologize; at any rate, let us go now to Ellen, and try if I can sooth her spirits, and calm her wounded mind."

But Ellen by the time he reached her was in no condition to hear him: delirium had seized her, and the scene at the Opera dwelling on her mind, on which it had made a powerful impression, connected, though wildly, with the late untoward events, she exclaimed just as he entered the room, "Remember, St. Aubyn, remember Arbace—and *I too am innocent?*" then in low tones she imitated the recitative which had taken such hold on her imagination; and sung in a sweet and plaintive voice "Sono Innocente!" St. Aubyn, combining these words with all the interesting ideas connected with them, with the generous assurances Ellen had so often given him, that no appearances should ever shake her faith in *his* integrity and honour, assurances which he had so ill repaid, was overwhelmed with grief and remorse: he put aside the curtain, and kneeling by the bed-side, said in the tenderest accents:

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"Ellen, my love, my injured Ellen, will you not hear, will you not forgive me?"

"So you are come at last," said she, turning her head quickly towards him: "go to your son, my good friend, and tell him he has cruelly insulted me; that I am St. Aubyn's *wife*, not the wretch he calls me: why, you know, Mr. Ross, you married us, and my father and Joanna were present: then what does Charles mean by talking of my *shame* and *ruin*?"

"Oh, Heavens! she raves," exclaimed St. Aubyn; "my cruelty has destroyed her!"

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"Take away the bloody sword," screamed Ellen. "I tell you Arbace did *not* murder him; no, nor yet St. Aubyn: nothing shall ever make me believe St. Aubyn guilty:—I promised him;—he says he is innocent; enough, my love, enough, Ellen will *never doubt you!*" and again she breathed in plaintive cadences the pathetic "Sono Innocente."

"She will die! she will die!" wildly exclaimed St. Aubyn, starting up: "run for more help! fetch all the physicians in London. Oh! have I lived to this!"

"You will kill her indeed," said Laura, "if you are not quiet: leave her to us. Doctor B— will again be here in a few minutes: he says if she can but be quiet, can but be made to understand, all is well; she will recover; but indeed, my Lord, you must leave her now."

"No, Laura, I will not go; I will sit here without speaking; but should she recover her senses, if only for a minute, it will I know comfort her to see me here."

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This Laura could readily believe, and therefore made no further objection; but Doctor B— arriving soon after, comforted them all with the assurance, that though the Countess's fever at present ran high, he had great hopes that perfect quietude, and the medicines he had ordered, would, in all probability, do much for her, especially, aided as they were by youth and an excellent constitution, and that he saw no immediate danger. He strictly enjoined, however, that

her chamber might be kept as still as possible, and that at most only two persons should remain there: he entreated St. Aubyn and Lady Juliana to retire, and having prevailed on them to do so, he told Miss Cecil he wished her to be as much as possible one of Lady St. Aubyn's attendants.

"As to Lady Juliana," said he, "she is so very anxious and restless; she will only disturb our fair patient: you, my dear Miss Cecil, I perceive have that happy self-possession, joined with gentleness and activity, which alone can make a good nurse; your voice too is particularly calculated to sooth and persuade a sick person:—you may smile, but believe me, few know how many qualifications are requisite to form a good superintendent of a sick bed, and amongst them I have always found a soft but distinct articulation one of the most considerable. Think only how a nervous patient is what is emphatically called *worried* by a droning, discontented voice, or alarmed by too loud a tone, or sudden question. I assure you I have often seen weak persons thrown into a fever by these apparently trifling causes; let me, therefore, beg Miss Cecil will take upon herself the task of replying to any questions the Countess may ask, but in as few words as possible: the moment reason returns, sooth her mind by every assurance that the danger she so much feared is over. I shall see Lord St. Aubyn before I quit the house, and place before him the evil to be dreaded, should he pursue this unfortunate business any farther."

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## CHAP. IX.

Doubt shall for ever quit my strengthen'd heart,  
And anxious jealousy's corroding smart:  
Nor other inmate shall inhabit there,  
But soft belief, young joy, and pleasing care.

PRIOR'S HENRY AND EMMA.

The medicines ordered by her skilful physician had so salutary an effect, that towards midnight Ellen fell into a quiet sleep, from which every thing favourable might be expected. Lady Juliana was therefore prevailed on to retire to bed, Miss Cecil, Jane, and the housekeeper, sitting up with Lady St. Aubyn, the two latter in the anti-chamber. But Lady Juliana was far from being satisfied, notwithstanding the assurances of St. Aubyn that all was at an end between him and Ross: she knew him too well to believe he would pass over insults so marked; and her watchfulness had convinced her no apology from Ross, in writing or otherwise, had been received. Sir Edward Leicester, too, had called once or twice in the course of the day; and though she had tormented him and her nephew, by resolutely remaining in the room in defiance of the hints St. Aubyn gave of wishing to be alone with his friend, yet she overheard a few words, that more and more convinced her a duel was intended. She left orders, therefore, to be called by day-break; and unable to prevail on St. Aubyn to go to bed, wearied and exhausted by emotions, which, at her time of life, she could ill support, she at length left him to himself.

Determined as he was to meet Ross in the morning, and avoiding reflections, which, though he felt how decisive they were against the practice of duelling, he yet thought came too late. St. Aubyn's frame was shaken by various sensations. Recollection of the past, and terror for the future, hung heavily upon him; yet not for himself he feared: but should any thing amiss happen to him, what would become of Ellen—of Ellen, whom he should leave upon a bed of sickness, which, then he felt convinced, would be to her the bed of death!

"And was it for this," he exclaimed, as he paced his study, "for this I drew her from her native shades, where, happy and contented, but for me she might have blossomed still. Oh! little, my Ellen, hast thou had cause to rejoice in that elevation which doubtless many have envied thee. Too often have I been to thee the mysterious cause of sorrow and anxiety. Perhaps I shall have been also the cause of thine untimely end."

The idea so dreadfully shook him, he dared no longer think, lest it should quite unman him; but determined to look upon her once more, he took the taper, which burnt beside him, and, with light steps, passed to her apartment. In the anti-room he found the housekeeper and Jane both sleeping in their chairs: all was profoundly still, and he began to fear Ellen was left without a wakeful guard; but at the sound of his footsteps, almost noiseless as they were, and the approaching light, for the bed-room door was open for air, Laura Cecil stole to meet him: she motioned to him to be silent, and advancing a few steps into the anti-room, said, in the lowest whisper, "For heaven's sake, Lord St. Aubyn, why this—why are you not retired to rest?"

"Ah, Laura! dear, kind Laura," he exclaimed, grasping her hand, "how could I rest, while that injured, perhaps that murdered angel lies suffering thus, and through my fault, through my accursed, headlong jealousy!"

"Deeply, indeed," said Laura, "do I lament that appearances should have thus misled you, my Lord, and am indeed astonished at it: had you but waited one hour, ere you so harshly condemned, from me you might have learned her perfect innocence: she pressed me to go with her this morning, which my having a bad head-ache prevented: she told me where she was going, shewed me the letter she had received, detailed her kind plans for relieving the poor widow, and mentioned not having explained her intentions to you, lest you should prevent her going; and she wished so much, she said, to see the *poor little infant*; certainly she did not mention any intention



of going to that fatal house where you found her, and which, I am assured, she never thought of till passing the top of the street she recollected the book she so much valued, and which I one day heard her tell Jane to call for; but all this is now unavailing: let me beg you to retire: should the murmur of our voices disturb her, I shall indeed greatly lament it."

"Oh, let me look upon her—once more let me see her! Will she die? Is it possible she may recover?"

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"It is very possible, almost certain, from her sleeping so quietly, if you do not disturb her: but think, if she should awake and see you, at this strange hour, with those distracted looks!"

"Yet I must see her *now*—yes, Laura, I must venture all; for how do I know if I shall ever see her more!"

"For heaven's sake, what do you mean? Surely, surely you do not think of—you are not meditating \_\_\_"

"No matter what," said he hastily; "I must see her *now*."

Laura shrunk back astonished and dismayed; but feeling that he would not be contradicted, she again, with light steps, approached the bed; where, in a profound sleep, the effect of opiates, lay Ellen, "fair lily, and whiter than her sheets;" and but that in the stillness of night her quick short breathings were distinctly heard, it could hardly have been known she lived.

Laura then beckoned St. Aubyn to approach, which he did with trembling steps, and shaded by the curtain, gazed wistfully upon her. Overcome by the touching spectacle of youth, beauty, and innocence, in a few hours almost destroyed by his rash jealousy, the tears now ran down his manly cheeks; and hardly could he restrain the groans which heaved his bosom, while Laura's eyes streamed at the affecting sight before her. At that moment Ellen moved a little, and they both retreated, that if she opened her eyes she might not see them; but she still slept; and only murmuring "dear St. Aubyn," and a few inarticulate words, she was again silent.

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Again St. Aubyn asked Laura if it were possible she could recover, and she assured him that Ellen already looked better than she had done an hour before; and at last, after he had knelt and imprinted a soft kiss on one of her hands, which lay on the counterpane, and lifted up his heart to heaven, in silent prayer for her recovery, he was prevailed on to quit the room.

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The rest of the night St. Aubyn spent in settling some papers, and adding a few lines to his will, all of which he locked into a drawer, and sealing up the key, directed it to Lady Juliana.

At day-break his valet, according to order, came to him. To this confidential servant St. Aubyn explained the cause of his going from home so early, and left the packet for Lady Juliana in his care, to be delivered to her, should he not return in safety. He then sent to inquire of Jane for her lady, and had the happiness of hearing a favourable account of her. St. Aubyn then set off, attended only by one servant, to the house of Sir Edward Leicester, whose carriage was at the door, and they instantly proceeded to Wimbledon, where, on the spot marked in Charles Ross's letter, they alighted; and telling the coachman to draw off, and wait at a place they pointed out to him, the two friends walked up and down some time, expecting Ross.

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In about ten minutes they saw him approaching, but alone: St. Aubyn just touched his hat, and said, "Mr. Ross, where is your friend?"

"My Lord," said Ross, in a firm tone, "I am here, not to fight, not to double the injuries you have already received from me, but to make every concession you can desire. I have brought no friend with me; I trust my honour and my life implicitly in your hands. Are you prepared to hear my explanation?—if not, I am ready to stand your fire."

"I know not, Sir," said St. Aubyn, haughtily, "what has caused this sudden alteration in your sentiments: this meeting was at your own request; and the insults you bestowed on Lady St. Aubyn yesterday make me as desirous of it now as you were when you appointed it."

"Yet, my Lord," said Sir Edward, "hear Mr. Ross: if this affair can be accommodated without bloodshed, I think myself called upon to insist it shall be so."

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St. Aubyn bowed with a lofty air to Ross, and said:—

"Well, Sir, your explanation if you please."

Ross now entered into a long detail of the circumstances which had misled him, stated his fears of St. Aubyn under the name of Mordaunt, when he first saw him at Llanwyllan; that no letters from thence had reached him on the station where he had remained for the last half year, till, about a month before his ship had come home, and he had been ordered to London to receive a promotion as unexpected as it was welcome; that he happened to lodge at Mrs. Birtley's, and by chance, finding the volume of Gray Lady St. Aubyn had left there, he recognized the initials "C. F. M. to E. P." in the first page, which the words "Dear Llanwyllan," written in another, confirmed. The answer Mrs. Birtley made to his impatient questions had convinced him who the Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt she spoke of were: this woman had given him also such accounts as led him to believe they were not married, and hence his mad insulting conduct at the theatre had arisen. He next repeated so accurately every word that had passed between him and Ellen, and described their mutual astonishment at meeting so unexpectedly in such a natural manner, that had St. Aubyn doubted before, he could have done so no longer.

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"Yet," said Ross, "convinced as I now was how wrong I had been, I could not prevail on myself to apologize to one whom I confess I hated, for he had robbed me of the only woman I ever loved; yet she had never, even in the happy hours of our youth, given me the slightest hope of ever obtaining more than the affection of a sister from her, and even that seemed at times more the effect of habit than choice; for rough and unpolished, my manners repulsed, and choleric and hasty my temper, alarmed the gentle Ellen; yet I still flattered myself, time, and the retired situation in which she lived preventing her extraordinary beauty from being known, might have done much for me; but from the moment Mr. Mordaunt was known to her, I easily perceived that hope was at an end; and now I had only to desire that I might fall by the hand of the man who had raised her to that greatness. I could have done no more than wish for her; I therefore determined to keep my engagement for this morning. But yesterday it came to my knowledge that the promotion intended for me had been granted to the solicitations of Lord St. Aubyn. Struck, ashamed at the base ingratitude of my conduct, I resolved at length to make every explanation, every concession. I have done so, and now, my Lord, it rests with you to accept this apology: if you refuse it, I am ready to stand your fire, for never will I lift my hand in a cause so unjust, and against a man, who, without my knowledge, had so generously befriended me."

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"I told you before, Mr. Ross," said St. Aubyn, "that for your excellent father's sake I would overlook that in you which in another man I would instantly have resented. I am not of a vindictive spirit, and the practice of duelling, though I have in some measure been forced to countenance it, is against my principles. You are at liberty, Sir, to retire; I am satisfied."

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"I dare not, my Lord," said Ross, "attempt to offer any thanks for the kindness you intended me in my professional career; still less can I consent to profit by it: I have not deserved it at your hands, and declining the promotion offered to me, I shall return to my ship, and leave England as soon as possible, and I hope for ever."

St. Aubyn's generous spirit was moved by this renunciation.

"That promotion, Mr. Ross," he replied, "was sought for you at the request of Lady St. Aubyn, who had not forgotten the friend of her childhood, and in hopes of gratifying your most worthy father, from whom, as well as from your mother and sister, both my wife and myself have experienced much kindness and friendship: I must therefore request you will not renounce it."

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"At this moment Lady St. Aubyn is extremely ill, in consequence of the alarming scene to which your mistake and my rashness gave rise: should this illness prove fatal," (and his lips quivered with emotion as he spoke), "never more must you and I meet again! Should she recover, as I hope and trust she will, I am so perfectly satisfied with the explanations I have received, that I shall not be sorry to see your early acquaintance renewed: for the present we part as friends."

Then bowing, he took Sir Edward's arm, and hastened to his carriage, leaving Ross overwhelmed with shame and remorse for the treatment he had given to a man so generous.

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On reaching Cavendish Square he found Lady Juliana in the utmost alarm; for missing him when she arose, and hearing at how early an hour he had left the house, she had immediately suspected his errand abroad: she had sent to Sir Edward Leicester's, and learned from the servants that their master and Lord St. Aubyn had gone out together. Still more and more alarmed, Lady Juliana paced from room to room in dreadful agitation, not knowing whither to send or what to do. Soon after eight o'clock, Laura sent a note by Jane to Lady Juliana, saying Lady St. Aubyn was awake, that the delirium had totally subsided, but had left her so extremely weak and low she could hardly speak to be heard, but was anxious to see her and Lord St. Aubyn, whose affectionate inquiries she had heard of with much delight, and was prepared to see him with composure, and without recurring to the past. To trust herself near Ellen, agitated as she was, Lady Juliana knew was impossible; she therefore ordered Jane to say, that having sat up almost the whole night, neither the Earl nor herself was up, but in an hour or two they would be with her; then assuring the girl that the unfortunate misunderstanding of the day before was perfectly explained, she charged her not to drop a hint of it amongst the servants, which Jane readily promised, and faithfully performed.

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Soon after this, Doctor B. called, and to him Lady Juliana communicated her fears on St. Aubyn's account: he entreated she would not go near the Countess till her spirits were quieter, and by no means to let any ill tidings reach her, should such arrive: then visiting the sick room, he rejoiced to find his young and lovely patient out of danger, though extremely weak. The excellence of her constitution, assisted by his skill, had triumphed over the disease, and if no new alarm occurred, he doubted not her perfect recovery: leaving strict and repeated orders that no one should be admitted at all likely to hurry her spirits, he left her, and as he passed down the staircase, was rejoiced to see St. Aubyn enter safe and well. The Earl hastened to him with the most eager inquiries for his patient, and listened to his favourable accounts with thankful joy.

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"As to Lady Juliana, my good Lord," said the physician, "she is scarcely in her senses; you have frightened her almost to death: come, let me have the pleasure of leading you to her, and telling her at the same time how much better our fair patient is, after which I would advise you both to take some repose, for your countenance tells me you have not had much rest last night, and I promise you, you must not go to Lady St. Aubyn with those pale and haggard looks."

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The joy of Lady Juliana at seeing St. Aubyn return safe and unhurt was extreme, and was still increased when he owned to her candidly where he had been, and the satisfactory explanation he had received from Ross, which so completely put an end to this untoward affair for ever.

In the afternoon, St. Aubyn, promising to be as composed as possible, was permitted to see Ellen for a few minutes. Both forbore to speak of what had passed, for both felt they could not endure to recur to it; but the warmth and unaffected tenderness of his manner assured her that all suspicion had been effaced from his mind; while the affectionate softness of her's proved to St. Aubyn that his unkindness was forgiven.

In a very few days Ellen was pronounced convalescent, though her remaining weakness, and Lady Juliana's precautions, confined her to her dressing-room: there, by slow degrees, she learned from her affectionate Laura all the circumstances which had led to Charles Ross's mistake, and that of St. Aubyn, nor could she help acknowledging that appearances had been in both instances against her: relieved however by having all her anxieties removed, and by a full though affecting explanation with St. Aubyn, who gave her the tenderest assurances that every jealous disposition was for ever removed from his mind, she now rapidly recovered: but as the weather was now becoming very warm, and she had had no great reason to delight in London, she earnestly requested to be allowed to return to Castle St. Aubyn; and the advice of her medical attendants coinciding with her wishes, the request was easily granted.

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Before she left London, however, she, with her Lord, paid another visit to the officer's widow and her interesting family, and so arranged for them as to ensure them a neat residence a little way out of town, and the certain means of comfortable subsistence for the present; for it was her intention, with St. Aubyn's permission, to form a school, and other useful institutions, in the neighbourhood of the Castle, in which she hoped to render the widow a service, as well as gratify herself, by placing her at the head of the village seminary. She also visited Mr. Dorrington again, and spent a delightful hour amongst his treasures; then leaving her P. P. C. for Lady Meredith, and some other slight acquaintances, she joyfully left London on her way to Northamptonshire, accompanied by the Earl (more tenderly attached than ever), Lady Juliana, and Miss Cecil, Sir Edward Leicester promising to pay them a visit very soon.

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Delighted indeed was Ellen once more to breathe the pure air of the country; and as they passed the little inn where they had stopped on their former journey from town, and caught a distant glimpse of the farm-house where he had told her his real name and rank, she tenderly pressed St. Aubyn's hand, and with a soft tear on her cheek, reminded him of the circumstance.

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"Ah, my Ellen," he said, "much have we both suffered since that interesting moment, but never more, through fault of mine, shall you shed another tear, save such as now glitter in your eyes—tears of tenderness and affection.

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## CHAP. X.

She feels it—'tis her son! with rapture wild,  
Bath'd in warm tears, from soft sensations prest.  
She clasps him to her cheek, her lip, her breast,  
And looks with eye unsated on her child.  
He knows her, sure!—Sure, answering rapture his,  
Leave her at least the visionary bliss!  
Lo! his clear eye to her's responsive speaks,  
And lo! his little mouth, that wistful seeks  
Warm from her lip to suck the sweet o'erflowing kiss.  
She hears the silent call—how quickly hears  
A mother's heart.

SOTHEBY'S OBERON.

Arrived at the Castle, Ellen once more began to breathe; her colour and appetite returned, and she speedily recovered her strength, and thought she had never been so happy: her Lord's renewed, and even increased affection, Lady Juliana's sincere attachment, and the pleasing society of Laura Cecil, who remained her guest (Sir William being in Scotland with Lord and Lady Delamore), left her scarcely any thing to wish.

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This little party received a very agreeable addition about a week after, by the arrival of Sir Edward Leicester, whose continued attentions to Miss Cecil seemed not ill received by her.

Soon after their return to Castle St. Aubyn, letters from Mr. Ross and Joanna arrived, filled with thanks and rejoicings for the promotion of Charles. They said not a word, nor seemed to know any thing of the late transactions; and Lord and Lady St. Aubyn were glad he had not revealed them. It appeared, that through St. Aubyn's interest, he had been made Lieutenant, and honoured with the command of a small frigate, and was gone to cruize in the Mediterranean. At this latter circumstance Ellen was not sorry; for she could not wish, after what had passed, to see Charles Ross again at present. Every thing, therefore, seemed now smooth before her; and though sometimes her thoughts would wander to the former mysterious expressions of St. Aubyn, and recollecting that the time he appointed for their elucidation was arrived, yet as she heard no more of it, and he seemed to have lost those fits of gloom, which even from the commencement of

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their acquaintance had been obvious in him, she hoped all was passed over, and determined by no ill-timed curiosity to revive painful ideas in his mind. But she yet fully knew not St. Aubyn, except when thrown off his guard by any sudden emotion: his command over his spirits and features was wonderful; and no one who saw him composed, cheerful, and even gay, could have suspected what at times passed in his mind, nor to what unpleasant scenes he now looked forward. Not even Lady Juliana knew what reason he had to think of the future with apprehension, though with much of what had formerly befallen him she certainly was acquainted.

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The families round the Castle paid every polite attention to Lady St. Aubyn on her return: many, who had been absent when she was there before, now visited her; and though for the present she declined entering into large parties, every one seemed rejoiced to see her once more amongst them. Not the least delighted was Miss Alton, who with unfading charms, and exhaustless professions of regard, came eagerly to greet the charming Countess's return, to rejoice in her perfect recovery, and to assure her how much she had suffered at hearing she was ill in London.

"And oh! my dear Lady St. Aubyn," said she, "think how shocked I was to hear some rude wretch had annoyed you at the theatre, and that your excellent lord had like to have fought a duel about it. Oh! how thankful I am that these frightful scenes did not more materially injure your valuable health, and that you are returned to us, if possible, more beautiful than ever."

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"And who, my dear Miss Alton," said Laura, who alone retained composure enough to answer her (for this familiar recurrence to scenes so painful had greatly disturbed Lady St. Aubyn and Lady Juliana), "who told you all this wonderful story?"

"Oh, it was a cousin of mine, who happened to be coming out of the playhouse just as it happened, and wrote me word of it; and that the gentlemen had exchanged cards: so you see I had pretty good authority."

"Yes," replied Lady Juliana, with her usual asperity, "and no doubt made pretty good use of it. Pray, Ma'am, did you think it necessary to send a man and horse round the neighbourhood with this amusing piece of intelligence; or were you contented with your own personal exertions?"

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"Dear Lady Juliana, I am sure I thought no harm; I only just mentioned it——"

"To every one who would hear you, no doubt. If, at least, you had spared us the recital, it would have been quite as delicate, and more consistent with your *tender feelings* for Lady St. Aubyn."

Poor Miss Alton, quite shocked to find she had given such offence to the old lady, of whom she stood in great awe, vainly attempted to rally her spirits, and soon after took her leave, earnestly wishing Lady Juliana had staid in London; for she foresaw the entré of the Castle would not be so easily granted to her now as it had been when only the kind-hearted Countess presided; and trembling, lest, if she were not more cautious in future, she should not be admitted to see the little stranger when it arrived, and take cake and caudle in Lady St. Aubyn's apartment.

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"See," said Lady Juliana, drawing herself up, "see, my dear, the consequence of admitting such low, uneducated people to any degree of intimacy! This gossiping woman would not have ventured to hint at what had passed, had you kept her at a proper distance: but the easy impudence of such people in these degenerate times astonishes me. In the days of the Countess of St. Aubyn, my mother, *she* would scarcely have spoken to such a sort of person as this Miss—what do you call her?" For when Lady Juliana felt proud or indignant, she had a great knack of forgetting any name which had not a title tacked to it; though no one remembered more accurately those which had.

"Ah!" thought Ellen, "how with pride so overbearing could I ever have hoped to be myself exempted from this general censure of such sort of persons! How fortunate I may think myself, to have overcome a prejudice of such long standing."

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In the society of a few agreeable neighbours, and the ever-pleasing conversation of Laura, the time passed serenely till the end of August: yet there were moments when gloom seemed again to steal over the features of St. Aubyn. His foreign letters arrived more frequently, but appeared to give him no satisfaction. With Ellen he studiously avoided all conversation on the subject of his anxiety: for he dreaded, in her present state, the least alarm, and delayed by every means in his power the apparently fast approaching crisis of his fate, till her safety should have been secured.

At length, after some hours of uneasy watching, and the most painful anxiety, Lady Juliana announced to him the birth of a *son*, who, notwithstanding all the alarms his mother had undergone in London, seemed likely as well as herself to do well. Lady Juliana was in raptures at this event, to which she had so long looked forward with impatience. Nothing that money could procure was wanting to decorate either the infant or the chamber where he lay, which, as well as that of the Countess, had been entirely new furnished in the most superb and commodious manner at her expence, Lady Juliana having insisted on paying for every thing prepared, even to the elegant cradle lined with quilted white satin; and not even Lady Meredith had softer cushions than those on which the infant heir reposed.

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St. Aubyn, charmed with the lovely little creature, and to see its mother safe, appeared as if he had no wish ungratified, and left no tender attention unpaid which might ensure his Ellen's health and comfort. As she approached towards convalescence, Laura Cecil was her constant and most delightful companion, and well knew how to cheer and adorn the hours which were necessarily given to the quietude of her own apartments. The infant was rather delicate though

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Ah! what avails the cradle's damask roof,  
The eider bolster, or embroidered woof,  
Oft hears the gilded couch unpitied plains,  
And many a tear, the tassel'd cushion stains!  
No voice so sweet attunes his cares to rest,  
So soft no pillow as his mother's breast!  
Thus charm'd to sweet repose, when twilight hours  
Shed their soft influence on celestial bowers,  
The cherub, Innocence, with smile divine,  
Shuts his white wings, and sleeps on beauty's shrine.

DARWIN.

Incessantly anxious about the babe, Lady St. Aubyn could not soon permit it to be removed from her apartments, it lay therefore with its nurse in a smaller room within that where Lady St. Aubyn slept.

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It was about six weeks after this event, so interesting to all parties, had taken place, and Ellen had for some time been returned to the society of her own family, that one day, just as they had finished dinner, St. Aubyn was told two gentlemen in a chaise and four had just arrived, and requested to speak to him immediately. He changed colour, but conquering his perturbation, desired they might be shewn into his study, and he would go to them. "Who are they?" said Lady Juliana. "I did not know, nephew, you expected any company." "Perhaps," said St. Aubyn, evading her questions, "they may not remain here an hour, perhaps till to-morrow morning." He hastily left the room, and Ellen was convinced these strangers were the persons at whom St. Aubyn had often hinted as connected with the mystery which hung around him: she trembled, and felt dismayed, but endeavoured to be as composed as possible. In a few minutes after St. Aubyn had left the room, Mr. Mordaunt was sent for; and as he had been some time an invalid, St. Aubyn desired a carriage might be dispatched to bring him to the Castle. Ellen passing soon after up stairs to the nursery, crossed him in the hall, followed by his assistant with a quantity of papers and parchments: they bowed, and went into the study. "Oh, I know now," said Lady Juliana, who was with her, "who St. Aubyn has with him: it is I suppose Lord De Montfort, and his guardian and tutor, Mr. O'Brien, a Catholic priest, who has the entire management of the young man, and will I suppose now have the entire direction of his estates, which have till now been under the care of my nephew, who was appointed by his father's will the young Earls guardian, as far as related to his English property, till he should be twenty-four, though his Catholic relations have had the care of his person. Rejoiced shall I be when St. Aubyn has finally concluded all his concerns with that family. Heaven knows they have given him trouble enough already! and this young man I know hates him. I don't suppose he will stay an hour after the accounts are settled, indeed he would not have come at all, only Mordaunt having all the affairs in his hands, and being too unwell to go from home, it was I conclude necessary: this I know, if these people stay here to-night, I shall remain in my own room."

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Ellen carefully and anxiously attended to all she said, yet this discourse gave her no clue by which to unravel the mysterious speeches of St. Aubyn. After spending an hour in the nursery, both ladies returned to the drawing-room, and sent a servant to know if coffee should be carried into the study, or if Lord St. Aubyn and his guests would join the ladies. Orders were given for tea and coffee in the study; and Lady Juliana could not restrain her curiosity enough to refrain asking who was with Lord St. Aubyn: from the servant she learned that the party consisted of his Lordship, Mr. Mordaunt, his clerk, and two strange gentlemen, one elderly, the other young, and apparently in ill health. This confirmed her surmises, and soon after tea, not wishing to see Lord De Montfort, should he make his appearance, she retired to her own room, leaving Ellen and Laura together, with a strict injunction to the former not to be kept up too late.

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Ellen's anxiety made her somewhat silent; and Laura, never very talkative, easily fell into her present humour, so that for some time very little conversation passed between them. Laura was netting, and Ellen attempting a drawing; but her hand was unsteady, and her attention divided, therefore finding she should not succeed, she threw down her pencil, and listened in silence to a loud equinoxial wind, which howled around, and shook with "murmur not unlike the dash of ocean on his sounding shores" the ancient trees which grew near the mansion. A chilling sensation insensibly stole upon her, and at length, to break the melancholy silence of the apartment, rather than that she wished to speak, she said, "'Tis a rough night, and cold."

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"Yes," said Laura; and they both drew nearer the fire.

"Do you know Lord De Montfort?" asked Ellen.

"I have seen him when a boy," replied Laura, "and think I should know him again, though six or seven years make a great alteration at his age."

"Was he handsome?"

"Yes, but not so much so as his sister."

"Is he like her?"

"A little, but of a darker complexion: her's was a clear lively brown; dark hazle eyes, full of spirit, and indeed at times of scorn, a Grecian nose, full lips, the upper one curled a little, which gave a haughty air to her countenance; Edmund was thinner, paler, and his eyes had a softer look."

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"Edmund is his name?"

"He has a long list of names, according to the Spanish custom; but his sister always called him Edmund, which was his father's."

"I wonder whether we shall see him?"

"Of course,—I suppose so," said Laura, with some surprize: "it is too late for him to quit the Castle to-night, and he will without doubt pay his compliments to you before he departs."

"I think," replied Ellen, "from what Lady Juliana said just now, that St. Aubyn and Lord De Montfort are not on very good terms, that made me doubt whether he would stay the night."

"It may be so," said Laura, "yet unless they are decidedly at enmity, the young man cannot avoid seeing you."

Soon after the supper tray was brought into the room, and on its being announced to the gentlemen, St. Aubyn came to the library, accompanied by Mr. Mordaunt and Mr. O'Brien, the latter of whom he introduced to the ladies. St. Aubyn looked pale, and his manners had lost some of its usual composure. O'Brien was a grave, respectable old man, of Irish extraction, but bred in a convent abroad, and speaking English but imperfectly.

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"I will return to the study," said St. Aubyn, "and see once more if I can persuade Lord De Montfort to take some refreshment. You remember De Montfort, Miss Cecil?—He is my other guest, but he pleads fatigue, and disinclination to see any one, and will not be prevailed on to take even a glass of wine. I will once more endeavour to induce him to join you."

"Indeed, my Lord," said Ellen, "I hope he will: if he be fatigued, he must the more need refreshment."

"My love," said St. Aubyn, "will you have the goodness to order beds to be prepared for Lord De Montfort and Mr. O'Brien. They remain here this night."

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He then left the room, and Ellen ringing the bell, desired Mrs. Bayfield might be sent to her dressing-room, whither a few minutes after she went herself to give orders respecting the beds. As she passed the study door, which was not quite close, she distinctly heard St. Aubyn say:—

"For Heaven's sake, De Montfort, be persuaded; do not wrong me so cruelly! Why condemn me on mere appearances?"

Ellen passed hastily on, and heard St. Aubyn close the door with some violence, warned perhaps by the light she carried that some one might overhear him.

In her dressing-room she met Mrs. Bayfield, and was instantly struck with her pale countenance and agitated appearance.

[Pg 221]

"My good Bayfield," said Ellen, "I sent for you to request you would see chambers prepared for the strange gentlemen; but you look ill, pray go to bed: Jane shall go with the housemaids and see that all is right."

"I am not ill, my Lady," said Mrs. Bayfield; "but a glimpse I caught of Lord De Montfort just now, and the tone of his voice, reminded me of so many painful events—"

She paused, sighed, and the tears ran down her cheeks as she added:

"I wish he had not come here; I wish he was gone back to Spain; I cannot bear to see him."

"His likeness to your late lady affects you perhaps, my good friend?" said Ellen.

"Oh, no, Madam; it is not that; he is like her to be sure; but it is not *that*. I feel so uneasy when I see him.—He does not love my Lord; and yet he used to love him. But forgive me, Madam; I forget myself: will your Ladyship please to give your orders now?"

[Pg 222]

"I will leave all to your care, my good Bayfield. I suppose the gentlemen will like to be near each other: the two chambers at the end of the gallery where I sleep (those next to that your Lord sleeps in at present, I mean) will suit them best, I think: see that they have good fires, for it is cold to-night: the wind is really alarming."

"Your Ladyship had better take another shawl round your shoulders: the staircase is cold."

Ellen thanked her careful old friend, and returned to the company.

## FOOTNOTES

[A] A fact.

[B] It is said that the once lovely Lady C—, when on her death-bed, lamented to a friend sitting by her, that her little boy, then in the room, *would never know what a beautiful creature his mother was*. "She feels the ruling passion strong in death!"

END OF VOL. II.

B. CLARKE, Printer, Well Street, London.

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