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ORMOND;
OR,
THE SECRET WITNESS.
BY
B.C. BROWN,

AUTHOR OF WIELAND, OR TRANSFORMATION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

"Sæpe intereunt aliis meditantes necem."

PHÆDRUS

"Those who plot the destruction of others, very often fall, themselves the victims."

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1811

**TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
LADY CASTLEREAGH,
THESE VOLUMES
are respectfully inscribed,
by her Ladyship's
most obedient, and humble Servant,
HENRY COLBURN.**

**ORMOND,
OR THE
SECRET WITNESS**

CHAPTER I.

On leaving Mr. Ormond's house, Constantia was met by that gentleman. He saw her as she came out, and was charmed with the simplicity of her appearance. On entering, he interrogated the servant as to the business that brought her thither.

"So," said he, as he entered the drawing-room, where Craig was seated, "you have had a visitant. She came, it seems, on a pressing occasion, and would be put off with nothing but a letter."

Craig had not expected this address, but it only precipitated the execution of a design that he had formed. Being aware of this or similar accidents, he had constructed and related on a previous occasion to Ormond a story suitable to his purpose.

"Ay," said he, in a tone of affected compassion, "it is a sad affair enough. I am sorry it is not in my power to help the poor girl. She is wrong in imputing her father's misfortunes to me, but I know the source of her mistake. Would to heaven it was in my power to repair the wrongs they have suffered not from me, but from one whose relationship is a disgrace to me."

"Perhaps," replied the other, "you are willing to explain this affair."

"Yes, I wish to explain it. I was afraid of some such accident as this. An explanation is due to my character. I have already told you my story. I mentioned to you a brother of mine. There is scarcely thirteen months difference in our ages. There is a strong resemblance between him and me in our exterior, though I hope there is none at all in our minds. This brother was a partner of a gentleman, the father of this girl, at New York. He was a long time nothing better than an apprentice to Mr. Dudley, but he advanced so much in the good graces of his master, that he finally took him into partnership. I did not know till I arrived on the continent the whole of his misconduct. It appears that he embezzled the property of the house, and fled away with it, and the consequence was, that his quondam master was ruined. I am often mistaken for my brother, to my no small inconvenience: but all this I told you formerly. See what a letter I just now received from this girl."

Craig was one of the most plausible of men. His character was a standing proof of the vanity of physiognomy. There were few men who could refuse their confidence to his open and ingenuous aspect. To this circumstance, perhaps, he owed his ruin. His temptations to deceive were stronger than what are incident to most other men. Deception was so easy a task, that the difficulty lay, not in infusing false opinions respecting him, but in preventing them from being spontaneously imbibed. He contracted habits of imposture imperceptibly. In proportion as he deviated from the practice of truth, he discerned the necessity of extending and systematizing his efforts, and of augmenting the original benignity and attractiveness of his looks, by studied additions. The further he proceeded, the more difficult it was to return. Experience and habit added daily to his speciousness, till at length the world perhaps might have been searched in vain for his competitor.

He had been introduced to Ormond under the most favourable auspices. He had provided against a danger which he knew to be imminent, by relating his own story as if it were his brother's. He had, however, made various additions to it, serving to aggravate the heinousness of his guilt. This arose partly from policy, and partly from the habit of lying, which was prompted by a fertile invention, and rendered inveterate by incessant exercise. He interwove in his tale an intrigue between Miss Dudley and his brother. The former was seduced, and this man had employed his skill in chirographical imitation, in composing letters from Miss Dudley to his brother, which sufficiently attested her dishonour. He and his brother, he related, to have met in Jamaica, where the latter died, by which meant his personal property and papers came into his possession.

Ormond read the letter which his companion presented to him on this occasion. The papers which Craig had formerly permitted him to inspect had made him familiar with her handwriting. The penmanship was, indeed, similar, yet this was written in a spirit not quite congenial with that which had dictated her letters to her lover. But he reflected that the emergency was extraordinary, and that the new scenes through which she had passed, had, perhaps, enabled her to retrieve her virtue and enforce it. The picture which she drew of her father's distresses affected him and his companion very differently. He pondered on it for some time in silence; he then looked up, and with his usual abruptness said, "I suppose you gave her something?"

"No. I was extremely sorry that it was not in my power. I have nothing but a little trifling silver about me. I have no more at home than will barely suffice to pay my board here, and my expenses to Baltimore. Till I reach there I cannot expect a supply. I was less uneasy I confess on this account, because I knew you to be equally willing and much more able to afford the relief she asks."

This Mr. Ormond had predetermined to do. He paused only to deliberate in what manner it could, with most propriety, be done. He was always willing, when he conferred benefits, to conceal the author. He was not displeased when gratitude was misplaced, and readily allowed his instruments to act as if they were principals. He questioned not the veracity of Craig, and was, therefore, desirous to free him from the molestation that was threatened in the way which had been prescribed. He put a note of one hundred dollars into his hand, and enjoined him to send it to the Dudleys that evening, or early the next morning. "I am pleased," he added, "with the style of this letter: It can be of no service to you; leave it in my possession."

Craig would much rather have thrown it into the fire; but he knew the character of his companion, and was afraid to make any objection to his request. He promised to send, or carry the note the next morning, before he set out on his intended journey.

This journey was to Baltimore, and was undertaken so soon merely to oblige his friend, who was desirous of remitting to Baltimore a considerable sum in English guineas, and who had been for some time in search of one who might execute this commission with fidelity. The offer of Craig had been joyfully accepted, and next morning had been the time fixed for his departure, a period the most opportune for Craig's designs that could be imagined. To return to Miss Dudley.

The sum that remained to her after the discharge of her debts would quickly be expended. It was no argument of wisdom to lose sight of the future in the oblivion of present care. The time would inevitably come when new resources would be necessary. Every hour brought nearer the period without facilitating the discovery of new expedients. She related the recent adventure to her father. He acquiesced in the propriety of her measures, but the succour that she had thus obtained consoled him but little. He saw how speedily it would again be required, and was hopeless of a like fortunate occurrence.

Some days had elapsed, and Constantia had been so fortunate as to procure some employment. She was thus engaged in the evening when they were surprised by a visit from their landlord.

This was an occurrence that foreboded them no good. He entered with abruptness, and scarcely noticed the salutations that he received. His bosom swelled with discontent, which seemed ready to be poured out upon his two companions. To the inquiry as to the condition of his health and that of his family, he surlily answered: "Never mind how I am: none the better for my tenants I think. Never was a man so much plagued as I have been; what with one putting me off from time to time; what with another quarrelling about terms, and denying his agreement, and another running away in my debt, I expect nothing but to come to poverty—God help me!—at last. But this was the worst of all. I was never before treated so in all my life. I don't know what or when I shall get to the end of my troubles. To be fobbed out of my rent and twenty-five dollars into the bargain! It is very strange treatment, I assure you, Mr. Dudley."

"What is it you mean?" replied that gentleman. "You have received your dues, and—"

"Received my dues, indeed! High enough too! I have received none of my dues. I have been imposed upon. I have been put to very great trouble, and expect some compensation. There is no knowing the character of one's tenants. There is nothing but knavery in the world one would think. I'm sure no man has suffered more by bad tenants than I have. But this is the strangest treatment I ever met with. Very strange indeed, Dudley, and I must be paid without delay. To lose my rent and twenty-five dollars into the bargain, is too hard. I never met with the equal of it—not I. Besides, I wouldn't be put to all this trouble for twice the sum."

"What does all this mean, Mr. M'Crea? You seem inclined to scold; but I cannot conceive why you came here for that purpose. This behaviour is improper—"

"No, it is very proper, and I want payment of my money. Fifty dollars you owe me. Miss comes to pay me my rent as I thought. She brings me a fifty-dollar note; I changes it for her, for I thought to be sure I was quite safe: but, behold, when I sends it to the bank to get the money, they sends me back word that it's forged, and calls on me, before a magistrate, to tell them where I got it from. I'm sure I never was so flustered in my life. I would not have such a thing for ten times the sum."

He proceeded to descant on his loss without any interruption from his auditors, whom this intelligence had struck dumb. Mr. Dudley instantly saw the origin and full extent of this misfortune. He was, nevertheless, calm, and indulged in no invectives against Craig. "It is all of a piece," said he: "our ruin is inevitable. Well then, let it come."

After M'Crea had railed himself weary, he flung out of the house, warning them that next morning he should distrain for his rent, and, at the same time, sue them for the money that Constantia had received in exchange for her note.

Miss Dudley was unable to pursue her task. She laid down her needle, and fixed her eyes upon her father. They had been engaged in earnest discourse when their landlord entered. Now there was a pause of profound silence, till the affectionate Lucy, who sufficiently comprehended this scene, gave vent to her affliction in sobs. Her mistress turned to her:—

"Cheer up, my Lucy. We shall do well enough, my girl. Our state is bad enough, without doubt, but despair will make it worse."

The anxiety that occupied her mind related less to herself than to her father. He, indeed in the present instance, was exposed to prosecution. It was he who was answerable for the debt, and whose person would be thrown into durance by the suit that was menaced. The horrors of a prison had not hitherto been experienced or anticipated. The worst evil that she had imagined was inexpressibly inferior to this. The idea had in it something of terrific and loathsome. The mere supposition of its being possible was not to be endured. If all other expedients should fail, she thought of nothing less than desperate resistance. No. It was better to die than to go to prison.

For a time she was deserted of her admirable equanimity. This, no doubt, was the result of surprise. She had not yet obtained the calmness necessary to deliberation. During this gloomy interval, she would, perhaps, have adapted any scheme, however dismal and atrocious, which her father's despair might suggest. She would not refuse to terminate her own and her father's unfortunate existence by poison or the cord.

This confusion of mind could not exist long; it gradually gave place to cheerful prospects. The evil perhaps was not without its timely remedy. The person whom she had set out to visit, when her course was diverted by Craig, she once more resolved to apply to; to lay before him, without reserve, her father's situation, to entreat pecuniary succour, and to offer herself as a servant in his family, or in that of any of his friends who stood in need of one. This resolution, in a slight degree, consoled her; but her mind had been too thoroughly disturbed to allow her any sleep during that night.

She equipped herself betimes, and proceeded with a doubting heart to the house of Mr. Melbourne. She was informed that he had risen, but was never to be seen at so early an hour. At nine o'clock he would be disengaged, and she would be admitted. In the present state of her affairs this delay was peculiarly unwelcome. At breakfast, her suspense and anxieties would not allow her to eat a morsel; and when the hour approached she prepared herself for a new attempt.

As she went out, she met at the door a person whom she recognized, and whose office she knew to be that of a constable. Constantia had exercised, in her present narrow sphere, that

beneficence which she had formerly exerted in a larger. There was nothing, consistent with her slender means, that she did not willingly perform for the service of others. She had not been sparing of consolation and personal aid in many cases of personal distress that had occurred in her neighbourhood. Hence, as far as she was known, he was revered.

The wife of their present visitant had experienced her succour and sympathy, on occasion of the death of a favourite child. The man, notwithstanding his office, was not of a rugged or ungrateful temper. The task that was now imposed upon him he undertook with extreme reluctance. He was somewhat reconciled to it by the reflection that another might not perform it with that gentleness and lenity which he found in himself a disposition to exercise on all occasions, but particularly on the present.

She easily guessed at his business, and having greeted him with the utmost friendliness, returned with him into the house. She endeavoured to remove the embarrassment that hung about him, but in vain. Having levied what the law very properly calls a distress, he proceeded, after much hesitation, to inform Dudley that he was charged with a message from a magistrate, summoning him to come forthwith, and account for having a forged banknote in his possession.

M'Crea had given no intimation of this. The painful surprise that it produced soon yielded to a just view of this affair. Temporary inconvenience and vexation was all that could be dreaded from it. Mr. Dudley hated to be seen or known. He usually walked out in the dusk of evening, but limited his perambulations to a short space. At all other times he was obstinately recluse. He was easily persuaded by his daughter to allow her to perform this unwelcome office in his stead. He had not received, nor even seen the note. He would have willingly spared her the mortification of a judicial examination, but he knew that this was unavoidable. Should he comply with this summons himself, his daughter's presence would be equally necessary.

Influenced by these considerations, he was willing that his daughter should accompany the messenger, who was content that they should consult their mutual convenience in this respect. This interview was to her not without its terrors; but she cherished the hope that it might ultimately conduce to good. She did not foresee the means by which this would be effected, but her heart was lightened by a secret and inexplicable faith in the propitiousness of some event that was yet to occur. This faith was powerfully enforced when she reached the magistrate's door, and found that he was no other than Melbourne, whose succour she intended to solicit. She was speedily ushered, not into his office, but into a private apartment, where he received her alone.

He had been favourably prepossessed with regard to her character by the report of the officer who, on being charged with the message, had accounted for the regret which he manifested, by dwelling on the merits of Miss Dudley. He behaved with grave civility, requested her to be seated, and accurately scrutinized her appearance. She found herself not deceived in her preconceptions of this gentleman's character, and drew a favourable omen as to the event of this interview by what had already taken place. He viewed her in silence for some time, and then, in a conciliating tone, said:—

"It seems to me, madam, as if I had seen you before. Your face, indeed, is of that kind which, when once seen, is not easily forgotten. I know it is a long time since, but I cannot tell when or where. If you will not deem me impertinent, I will venture to ask you to assist my conjectures. Your name, as I am informed, is Acworth."—(I ought to have mentioned that Mr. Dudley, on his removal from New York, among other expedients to obliterate the memory of his former condition, and conceal his poverty from the World, had made this change in his name.)

"That, indeed," said the lady, "is the name which my father at present bears. His real name is Dudley. His abode was formerly in Queen Street, New York. Your conjecture, Sir, is not erroneous. This is not the first time we have seen each other. I well recollect your having been at my father's house in the days of his prosperity."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Mr. Melbourne, starting from his seat in the first impulse of his astonishment. "Are you the daughter of my friend Dudley, by whom I have so often been hospitably entertained? I have heard of his misfortunes, but knew not that he was alive, or in what part of the world he resided."

"You are summoned on a very disagreeable affair, but I doubt not you will easily exculpate your father. I am told that he is blind, and that his situation is by no means as comfortable as might be wished. I am grieved that he did not confide in the friendship of those that knew him. What could prompt him to conceal himself?"

"My father has a proud spirit. It is not yet broken by adversity. He disdains *to beg*, but I must now assume *that office* for his sake. I came hither this morning to lay before you his situation, and to entreat your assistance to save him from a prison. He cannot pay for the poor tenement he occupies; and our few goods are already under distress. He has, likewise, contracted a debt. He is, I suppose, already sued on this account, and must go to gaol, unless saved by the interposition of some friend."

"It is true," said Melbourne, "I yesterday granted a warrant against him at the suit of Malcolm M'Crea. Little did I think that the defendant was Stephen Dudley; but you may dismiss all apprehensions on that score. That affair shall be settled to your father's satisfaction: meanwhile we will, if you please, despatch this unpleasant business respecting a counterfeit note received in payment from you by this M'Crea."

Miss Dudley satisfactorily explained that affair. She stated the relation in which Craig had formerly stood to her father, and the acts of which he had been guilty. She slightly touched on the distresses which the family had undergone during their abode in this city, and the means by which she had been able to preserve her father from want. She mentioned the circumstances which compelled her to seek his charity as the last resource, and the casual encounter with Craig, by which she was for the present diverted from that design. She laid before him a copy of the letter she had written, and explained the result in the gift of the note which now appeared to be a counterfeit. She concluded with stating her present views, and soliciting him to receive her into his family, in quality of a servant, or use his interest with some of his friends to procure a provision of this kind. This tale was calculated deeply to affect a man of Mr. Melbourne's humanity.

"No," said he, "I cannot listen to such a request. My inclination is bounded by my means. These will not allow me to place you in an independent situation; but I will do what I can. With your leave, I will introduce you to my wife in your true character. Her good sense will teach her to set a just value on your friendship. There is no disgrace in earning your subsistence by your own industry. She and her friends will furnish you with plenty of materials; but if there ever be a deficiency, look to them for a supply."

Constantia's heart overflowed at this declaration. Her silence was more eloquent than any words could have been. She declined an immediate introduction to his wife, and withdrew; but not till her new friend had forced her to accept some money.

"Place it to account," said he. "It is merely paying you before hand, and discharging a debt at the time when it happens to be most useful to the creditor."

To what entire and incredible reverses is the tenor of human life subject! A short minute shall effect a transition from a state utterly destitute of hope to a condition where, all is serene and abundant. The path, which we employ all our exertions to shun, is often found, upon trial, to be the true road to prosperity.

Constantia retired from this interview with a heart bounding with exultation. She related to her father all that had happened. He was pleased on her account, but the detection of his poverty by Melbourne was the parent of new mortification. His only remaining hope relative to himself was that he should die in his obscurity, whereas, it was probable that his old acquaintance would trace him to his covert. This prognostic filled him with the deepest inquietude, and all the reasonings of his daughter were insufficient to appease him.

Melbourne made his appearance in the afternoon. He was introduced by Constantia to her father. Mr. Dudley's figure was emaciated, and his features corroded by his ceaseless melancholy. His blindness produced in them a woeful and wildering expression. His dress betokened his penury, and was in unison with the meanness of his habitation and furniture. The visitant was struck with the melancholy contrast, which these appearances exhibited, to the joyousness and splendour that he had formerly witnessed.

Mr. Dudley received the salutations of his guest with an air of embarrassment and dejection. He resigned to his daughter the task of sustaining the conversation, and excused himself from complying with the urgent invitations of Melbourne, while, at the same time, he studiously forebore all expressions tending to encourage any kind of intercourse between them.

The guest came with a message from his wife, who entreated Miss Dudley's company to tea with her that evening, adding that she should be entirely alone. It was impossible to refuse compliance with this request. She cheerfully assented, and in the evening was introduced to Mrs. Melbourne by her husband.

Constantia found in this lady nothing that called for reverence or admiration, though she could not deny her some portion of esteem. The impression which her own appearance and conversation made upon her entertainer was much more powerful and favourable. A consciousness of her own worth, and disdain of the malevolence of fortune, perpetually shone forth in her behaviour. It was modelled by a sort of mean between presumption on the one hand, and humility on the other. She claimed no more than what was justly due to her, but she claimed no less. She did not soothe our vanity nor fascinate our pity by diffident reserves and fluttering. Neither did she disgust by arrogant negligence, and uncircumspect loquacity.

At parting she received commissions in the way of her profession, which supplied her with abundant and profitable employment. She abridged her visit on her father's account, and parted from her new friend just early enough to avoid meeting with Ormond, who entered the house a few minutes after she had left it.

"What pity," said Melbourne to him, "you did not come a little sooner. You pretend to be a judge of beauty. I should like to have heard your opinion of a face that has just left us."

"Describe it," said the other.

"That is beyond my capacity. Complexion, and hair, and eyebrows may be painted, but these are of no great value in the present case. It is in the putting them together that nature has here shown her skill, and not in the structure of each of the parts, individually considered. Perhaps you may at some time meet each other here. If a lofty fellow like you, now, would mix a little common sense with his science, this girl might hope for a husband, and her father for a natural

protector."

"Are they ill search of one or the other?"

"I cannot say they are. Nay, I imagine they would hear any imputation with more patience than that, but certain I am, they stand in need of them. How much would it be to the honour of a man like you rioting in wealth, to divide it with one, lovely and accomplished as this girl is, and struggling with indigence!"

Melbourne then related the adventure of the morning. It was easy for Ormond to perceive that this was the same person of whom he already had some knowledge; but there were some particulars in the narrative that excited surprise. A note had been received from Craig, at the first visit in the evening, and this note was for no more than fifty dollars. This did not exactly tally with the information received from Craig. But this note was forged. Might not this girl mix a little imposture with her truth? Who knows her temptations to hypocrisy? It might have been a present from another quarter, and accompanied with no very honourable conditions. Exquisite wretch! Those whom honesty will not let live must be knaves. Such is the alternative offered by the wisdom of society.

He listened to the tale with apparent indifference. He speedily shifted the conversation to new topics, and put an end to his visit sooner than ordinary.

CHAPTER II.

I know no task more arduous than a just delineation of the character of Ormond. To scrutinize and ascertain our own principles is abundantly difficult. To exhibit these principles to the world with absolute sincerity can hardly be expected. We are prompted to conceal and to feign by a thousand motives; but truly to portray the motives, and relate the actions of another, appears utterly impossible. The attempt, however, if made with fidelity and diligence, is not without its use.

To comprehend the whole truth with regard to the character and conduct of another, may be denied to any human being, but different observers will have, in their pictures, a greater or less portion of this truth. No representation will be wholly false, and some, though not perfectly, may yet be considerably exempt from error.

Ormond was of all mankind the being most difficult and most deserving to be studied. A fortunate concurrence of incidents has unveiled his actions to me with more distinctness than to any other. My knowledge is far from being absolute, but I am conscious of a kind of duty, first to my friend, and secondly to mankind, to impart the knowledge I possess.

I shall omit to mention the means by which I became acquainted with his character, nor shall I enter, at this time, into every part of it. His political projects are likely to possess an extensive influence on the future condition of this western world. I do not conceive myself authorized to communicate a knowledge of his schemes, which I gained, in some sort, surreptitiously, or at least, by means of which he was not apprised. I shall merely explain the maxims by which he was accustomed to regulate his private deportment.

No one could entertain loftier conceptions of human capacity than Ormond, but he carefully distinguished between men in the abstract, and men as they are. The former were beings to be impelled, by the breath of accident, in a right or a wrong road, but whatever direction they should receive, it was the property of their nature to persist in it. Now this impulse had been given. No single being could rectify the error. It was the business of the wise man to form a just estimate of things, but not to attempt, by individual efforts, so chimerical an enterprise as that of promoting the happiness of mankind. Their condition was out of the reach of a member of a corrupt society to control. A mortal poison pervaded the whole system, by means of which every thing received was converted into bane and purulence. Efforts designed to ameliorate the condition of an individual were sure of answering a contrary purpose. The principles of the social machine must be rectified, before men can be beneficially active. Our motives may be neutral or beneficent, but our actions tend merely to the production of evil.

The idea of total forbearance was not less delusive. Man could not be otherwise than a cause of perpetual operation and efficacy. He was part of a machine, and as such had not power to withhold his agency. Contiguosness to other parts, that is, to other men, was all that was necessary to render him a powerful concurrent. What then was the conduct incumbent on him? Whether he went forward, or stood still, whether his motives were malignant, or kind, or indifferent, the mass of evil was equally and necessarily augmented. It did not follow from these preliminaries that virtue and duty were terms without a meaning, but they require us to promote our own happiness and not the happiness of others. Not because the former end is intrinsically preferable, not because the happiness of others is unworthy of primary consideration, but because it is not to be attained. Our power in the present state of things is subjected to certain limits. A man may reasonably hope to accomplish his end when he proposes nothing but his own good: any other point is inaccessible.

He must not part with benevolent desire: this is a constituent of happiness. He sees the value of general and particular felicity; he sometimes paints it to his fancy, but if this be rarely done, it is

in consequence of virtuous sensibility, which is afflicted on observing that his pictures are reversed in the real state of mankind. A wise man will relinquish the pursuit of general benefit, but not the desire of that benefit, or the perception of that in which this benefit consists, because these are among the ingredients of virtue and the sources of his happiness.

Principles, in the looser sense of that term, have little influence on practice. Ormond was, for the most part, governed, like others, by the influences of education and present circumstances. It required a vigilant discernment to distinguish whether the stream of his actions flowed from one or the other. His income was large, and he managed it nearly on the same principles as other men. He thought himself entitled to all the splendour and ease which it would purchase, but his taste was elaborate and correct. He gratified his love of the beautiful, because the sensations it afforded were pleasing, but made no sacrifices to the love of distinction. He gave no expensive entertainments for the sake of exciting the admiration of stupid gazers, or the flattery or envy of those who shared them. Pompous equipage and retinue were modes of appropriating the esteem of mankind which he held in profound contempt. The garb of his attendants was fashioned after the model suggested by his imagination, and not in compliance with the dictates of custom.

He treated with systematic negligence the etiquette that regulates the intercourse of persons of a certain class. He every where acted, in this respect, as if he were alone, or among familiar associates. The very appellations of Sir, and Madam, and Mister, were, in his apprehension, servile and ridiculous, and as custom or law had annexed no penalty to the neglect of these, he conformed to his own opinions. It was easier for him to reduce his notions of equality to practice than for most others. To level himself with others was an act of condescension and not of arrogance. It was of requisite to descend rather than to risk,—a task the most easy, if we regard the obstacle flowing from the prejudice of mankind, but far most difficult if the motive of the agent be considered.

That in which he chiefly placed his boast, was his sincerity. To this he refused no sacrifice. In consequence of this, his deportment was disgusting to weak minds, by a certain air of ferocity and haughty negligence. He was without the attractions of candour, because he regarded not the happiness of others, but in subservience to his sincerity. Hence it was natural to suppose that the character of this man was easily understood. He affected to conceal nothing. No one appeared more exempt from the instigations of vanity. He set light by the good opinions of others, had no compassion for their prejudices and hazarded assertions in their presence which he knew would be, in the highest degree, shocking to their previous notions. They might take it, he would say, as they list. Such were his conceptions, and the last thing he would give up was the use of his tongue. It was his way to give utterance to the suggestions of his understanding. If they were disadvantageous to him, the opinions of others, it was well. He did not want to be regarded in any light but the true one. He was contented to be rated by the world at his just value. If they esteemed him for qualities which he did not possess, was he wrong in rectifying their mistake: but in reality, if they valued him for that to which he had no claim, and which he himself considered as contemptible, he must naturally desire to show them their error, and forfeit that praise which, in his own opinion, was a badge of infamy.

In listening to his discourse, no one's claim to sincerity appeared less questionable. A somewhat different conclusion would be suggested by a survey of his actions. In early youth he discovered in himself a remarkable facility in imitating the voice and gestures of others. His memory was eloquently retentive, and these qualities would have rendered his career, in the theatrical profession, illustrious, had not his condition raised him above it. His talents were occasionally exerted for the entertainment of convivial parties and private circles, but he gradually withdrew from such scenes as he advanced in age, and devoted his abilities to higher purposes.

His aversion to duplicity had flowed from experience of its evils. He had frequently been made its victim; in consequence of this his temper had become suspicious, and he was apt to impute deceit on occasions when others, of no inconsiderable sagacity, were abundantly disposed to confidence. One transaction had occurred in his life, in which the consequences of being misled by false appearances were of the utmost moment to his honour and safety. The usual mode of salving his doubt he deemed insufficient, and the eagerness of his curiosity tempted him, for the first time, to employ, for this end, his talent at imitation. He therefore assumed a borrowed character and guise, and performed his part with so much skill as fully to accomplish his design. He whose mask would have secured him from all other attempts, was thus taken through an avenue which his caution had overlooked, and the hypocrisy of his pretensions unquestionably ascertained.

Perhaps, in a comprehensive view, the success of this expedient was unfortunate. It served to recommend this method of encountering deceit, and informed him of the extent of those powers which are so liable to be abused. A subtlety much inferior to Ormond would suffice to recommend this mode of action. It was defensible on no other principle than necessity. The treachery of mankind compelled him to resort to it. If they should deal in a manner as upright and explicit as himself, it would be superfluous. But since they were in the perpetual use of stratagems and artifices, it was allowable, he thought, to wield the same arms.

It was easy to perceive, however, that this practice was recommended to him by other considerations. He was delighted with the power it conferred. It enabled him to gain access, as if by supernatural means, to the privacy of others, and baffle their profoundest contrivances to hide themselves from his view. It flattered him with the possession of something like omniscience. It was besides an art, in which, as in others, every accession of skill was a source of new

gratification. Compared with this, the performance of the actor is the sport of children. This profession he was accustomed to treat with merciless ridicule, and no doubt some of his contempt arose from a secret comparison between the theatrical species of imitation and his own. He blended in his own person the functions of poet and actor, and his dramas were not fictitious but real. The end that he proposed was not the amusement of a playhouse mob. His were scenes in which hope and fear exercised a genuine influence, and in which was maintained that resemblance to truth so audaciously and grossly violated on the stage.

It is obvious how many singular conjunctures must have grown out of this propensity. A mind of uncommon energy like Ormond's, which had occupied a wide sphere of action, and which could not fail of confederating its efforts with those of minds like itself, must have given birth to innumerable incidents, not unworthy to be exhibited by the most eloquent historian. It is not my business to relate any of these. The fate of Miss Dudley is intimately connected with him. What influence he obtained over her destiny, in consequence of this dexterity, will appear in the sequel.

It arose from these circumstances, that no one was more impenetrable than Ormond, though no one's real character seemed more easily discerned. The projects that occupied his attention were diffused over an ample space; and his instruments and coadjutors were culled from a field, whose bounds were those of the civilized world. To the vulgar eye, therefore, he appeared a man of speculation and seclusion, and was equally inscrutable in his real and assumed characters. In his real, his intents were too lofty and comprehensive, as well as too assiduously shrouded from profane inspection for them to scan. In the latter, appearances were merely calculated to mislead and not to enlighten.

In his youth he had been guilty of the usual excesses incident to his age and character. These had disappeared and yielded place to a more regular and circumspect system of action. In the choice of his pleasures he still exposed himself to the censure of the world. Yet there was more of grossness and licentiousness in the expression of his tenets, than in the tenets themselves. So far as temperance regards the maintenance of health, no man adhered to its precepts with more fidelity, but he esteemed some species of connection with the other sex as venial, which mankind in general are vehement in condemning.

In his intercourse with women he deemed himself superior to the allurements of what is called love. His inferences were drawn from a consideration of the physical propensities of a human being. In his scale of enjoyments the gratifications which belonged to these were placed at the bottom. Yet he did not entirely disdain them, and when they could be purchased without the sacrifice of superior advantages, they were sufficiently acceptable.

His mistake on this head was the result of his ignorance. He had not hitherto met with a female worthy of his confidence. Their views were limited and superficial, or their understandings were betrayed by the tenderness of their hearts. He found in them no intellectual energy, no superiority to what he accounted vulgar prejudice, and no affinity with the sentiments which he cherished with most devotion. Their presence had been capable of exciting no emotion which he did not quickly discover to be vague and sensual; and the uniformity of his experience at length instilled into him a belief, that the intellectual constitution of females was essentially defective. He denied the reality of that passion which claimed a similitude or sympathy of minds as one of its ingredients.

CHAPTER III.

He resided in New York some time before he took up his abode in Philadelphia. He had some pecuniary concerns with a merchant of that place. He occasionally frequented his house, finding, in the society which it afforded him, scope for amusing speculation, and opportunities of gaining a species of knowledge of which at that time he stood in need. There was one daughter of the family, who of course constituted a member of the domestic circle.

Helena Cleves was endowed with every feminine and fascinating quality. Her features were modified by the most transient sentiments, and were the seat of a softness at all times blushing and bewitching. All those graces of symmetry, smoothness, and lustre, which assemble in the imagination of the painter when he calls from the bosom of her natal deep the Paphian divinity, blended their perfections in the shape, complexion, and hair of this lady. Her voice was naturally thrilling and melodious, and her utterance clear and distinct. A musical education had added to all these advantages the improvements of art, and no one could swim in the dance with such airy and transporting elegance.

It is obvious to inquire whether her mental were, in any degree, on a level with her exterior accomplishments. Should you listen to her talk, you would be liable to be deceived in this respect. Her utterance was so just, her phrases so happy, and her language so copious and correct, that the hearer was apt to be impressed with an ardent veneration of her abilities, but the truth is, she was calculated to excite emotions more voluptuous than dignified. Her presence produced a trance of the senses rather than an illumination of the soul. It was a topic of wonder how she should have so carefully separated the husk from the kernel, and be so absolute a mistress of the vehicle of knowledge, with so slender means of supplying it: yet it is difficult to judge but from

comparison. To say that Helena Cleves was silly or ignorant would be hatefully unjust. Her understanding bore no disadvantageous comparison with that of the majority of her sex; but when placed in competition with that of some eminent females or of Ormond, it was exposed to the risk of contempt.

This lady and Ormond were exposed to mutual examination. The latter was not unaffected by the radiance that environed this girl, but her true character was easily discovered, and he was accustomed to regard her merely as an object charming to the senses. His attention to her was dictated by this principle. When she sung or talked, it was not unworthy of the strongest mind to be captivated with her music and her elocution: but these were the limits which he set to his gratifications. That sensations of a different kind never ruffled his tranquillity must not be supposed, but he too accurately estimated their consequences to permit himself to indulge them.

Unhappily the lady did not exercise equal fortitude. During a certain interval Ormond's visits were frequent, and the insensibly contracted for him somewhat more than reverence. The tenor of his discourse was little adapted to cherish her hopes. In the declaration of his opinions he was never withheld by scruples of decorum, or a selfish regard to his own interest. His matrimonial tenets were harsh and repulsive. A woman of keener penetration would have predicted from them the disappointment of her wishes, but Helena's mind was uninured to the discussion of logical points and the tracing of remote consequences. His presence inspired feelings which would not permit her to bestow an impartial attention on his arguments. It is not enough to say that his reasonings failed to convince her: the combined influence of passion, and an unenlightened understanding hindered her from fully comprehending them. All she gathered was a vague conception of something magnificent and vast in his character.

Helena was destined to experience the vicissitudes of fortune. Her father died suddenly and left her without provision. She was compelled to accept the invitations of a kinswoman, and live, in some sort, a life of dependence. She was not qualified to sustain this reverse of fortune in a graceful manner. She could not bear the diminution of her customary indulgences, and to these privations were added the inquietudes of a passion which now began to look with an aspect of hopelessness.

These events happened in the absence of Ormond. On his return he made himself acquainted with them. He saw the extent of this misfortune to a woman of Helena's character, but knew not in what manner it might be effectually obviated. He esteemed it incumbent on him to pay her a visit in her new abode. This token at least of respect or remembrance his duty appeared to prescribe.

This visit was unexpected by the lady. Surprise is the enemy of concealment. She was oppressed with a sense of her desolate situation. She was sitting in her own apartment in a museful posture. Her fancy was occupied with the image of Ormond, and her tears were flowing at the thought of their eternal separation, when he entered softly and unperceived by her. A tap upon the shoulder was the first signal of his presence. So critical an interview could not fail of unveiling the true state of the lady's heart. Ormond's suspicions were excited, and these suspicions speedily led to an explanation.

Ormond retired to ruminate on this discovery. I have already mentioned his sentiments respecting love. His feelings relative to Helena did not contradict his principles, yet the image which had formerly been exquisite in loveliness had now suddenly gained unspeakable attractions. This discovery had set the question in a new light. It was of sufficient importance to make him deliberate. He reasoned somewhat in the following manner:—

"Marriage is absurd. This flows from the general and incurable imperfection of the female character. No woman can possess that worth which would induce me to enter into this contract, and bind myself, without power of revoking the decree, to her society. This opinion may possibly be erroneous, but it is undoubtedly true with respect to Helena, and the uncertainty of the position in general will increase the necessity of caution in the present case. That woman may exist whom I should not fear to espouse. This is not her. Some accident may cause our meeting. Shall I then disable myself, by an irrevocable obligation, from profiting by so auspicious an occurrence?"

This girl's society was to be enjoyed in one of two ways. Should he consult his inclination there was little room for doubt. He had never met with one more highly qualified for that species of intercourse which he esteemed rational. No man more abhorred the votaries of licentiousness. Nothing was more detectable to him than a mercenary alliance. Personal fidelity and the existence of that passion of which he had, in the present case, the good fortune to be the object, were indispensable in his scheme. The union was indebted for its value on the voluntariness with which it was formed, and the entire acquiescence of the judgement of both parties in its rectitude. Dissimulation and artifice were wholly foreign to the success of his project. If the lady thought proper to assent to his proposal, it was well. She did so because assent was more eligible than refusal.

She would, no doubt, prefer marriage. She would deem it more conducive to happiness. This was an error. This was an opinion, his reasons for which he was at liberty to state to her; at least it was justifiable in refusing to subject himself to loathsome and impracticable obligations. Certain inconveniences attended women who set aside, on these occasions, the sanction of law; but these were imaginary. They owed their force to the errors of the sufferer. To annihilate them, it was only necessary to reason justly; but allowing these inconveniences their full weight and an

indestructible existence, it was but a choice of evils. Were they worse in this lady's apprehension than an eternal and hopeless separation? Perhaps they were. If so, she would make her election accordingly. He did nothing but lay the conditions before her. If his scheme should obtain the concurrence of her unbiased judgement he should rejoice. If not, her conduct should be influenced by him. Whatever way she should decide, he would assist her in adhering to her decision, but would, meanwhile, furnish her with the materials of a right decision.

This determination was singular. Many will regard it as incredible. No man it will be thought can put this deception on himself, and imagine that there was genuine beneficence in a scheme like this. Would the lady more consult her happiness by adopting than by rejecting it? There can be but one answer. It cannot be supposed that Ormond, in stating this proposal, acted with all the impartiality that he pretended; that he did not employ fallacious exaggerations and ambiguous expedients; that he did not seize every opportunity of triumphing over her weakness, and building his success rather on the illusions of her heart than the convictions of her understanding. His conclusions were specious but delusive, and were not uninfluenced by improper biases; but of this he himself was scarcely conscious, and it must be at least admitted that he acted with scrupulous sincerity.

An uncommon degree of skill was required to introduce this topic so as to avoid the imputation of an insult. This scheme was little in unison with all her preconceived notions. No doubt the irksomeness of her present situation, the allurements of luxury and ease which Ormond had to bestow, and the revival of her ancient independence and security, had some share in dictating her assent.

Her concurrence was by no means cordial and unhesitating. Remorse and the sense of dishonour pursued her to her retreat, though chosen with a view of shunning their intrusions; and it was only when the reasonings and blandishments of her lover were exhibited, that she was lulled into temporary tranquillity.

She removed to Philadelphia. Here she enjoyed all the consolations of opulence. She was mistress of a small but elegant mansion. She possessed all the means of solitary amusement, and frequently enjoyed the company of Ormond. These however were insufficient to render her happy. Certain reflections might, for a time, be repressed as divested of their sting, but they insinuated themselves at every interval, and imparted to her mind a hue of rejection from which she could not entirely relieve herself.

She endeavoured to acquire a relish for the pursuits of literature, by which her lonely hours might be cheered; but of this, even in the blithsomeness and serenity of her former days, she was incapable; —much more so now when she was the prey of perpetual inquietude. Ormond perceived this change, not without uneasiness. All his efforts to reconcile her to her present situation were fruitless. They produced a momentary effect upon her. The softness of her temper and her attachment to him would, at his bidding, restore her to vivacity and ease, but the illumination seldom endured longer than his presence and the novelty of some amusement with which he had furnished her.

At his next visit, perhaps, he would find that a new task awaited him. She indulged herself in no recriminations or invectives. She could not complain that her lover had deceived her. She had voluntarily and deliberately accepted the conditions prescribed. She regarded her own disposition to repine as a species of injustice. She laid no claim to an increase of tenderness. She hinted not a wish for a change of situation; yet she was unhappy. Tears stole into her eyes, and her thoughts wandered into gloomy reverie, at moments when least aware of their reproach, and least willing to indulge them.

Was a change to be desired? Yes; provided that change was equally agreeable to Ormond, and should be seriously proposed by him: of this she had no hope. As long as his accents rung in her ears, she even doubted whether it were to be wished. At any rate, it was impossible to gain his approbation to it. Her destiny was fixed. It was better than the cessation of all intercourse, yet her heart was a stranger to all permanent tranquillity.

Her manners were artless and ingenuous. In company with Ormond her heart was perfectly unveiled. He was her divinity, to whom every sentiment was visible, and to whom she spontaneously uttered what she thought, because the employment was pleasing; because he listened with apparent satisfaction; and because, in fine, it was the same thing to speak and to think in his presence. There was no inducement to conceal from him the most evanescent and fugitive ideas.

Ormond was not an inattentive or indifferent spectator of those appearances. His friend was unhappy. She shrunk aghast from her own reproaches and the censure of the world. This morbid sensibility he had endeavoured to cure, but hitherto in vain. What was the amount of her unhappiness? Her spirits had formerly been gay; but her gaiety was capable of yielding place to soul-ravishing and solemn tenderness, after sedateness was, at those times, the offspring not of reflection but of passion. There still remained much of her former self. He was seldom permitted to witness more than the traces of sorrow. In answer to his inquiries, she, for the most part, described sensations that were gone, and which she flattered herself and him would never return; but this hope was always doomed to disappointment. Solitude infallibly conjured up the ghost which had been laid, and it was plain that argument was no adequate remedy for this disease.

How far would time alleviate its evils? When the novelty of her condition should disappear, would she not regard it with other eyes? By being familiar with contempt, it will lose its sting; but is that to be wished? Must not the character be thoroughly depraved before the scorn of our neighbours shall become indifferent? Indifference, flowing from a sense of justice, and a persuasion that our treatment is unmerited, is characteristic of the noblest minds; but indifference to obloquy, because we are habituated to it is a token of peculiar baseness. This, therefore, was a remedy to be ardently deprecated.

He had egregiously overrated the influence of truth and his own influence. He had hoped that his victory was permanent. In order to the success of truth, he was apt to imagine that nothing was needful but opportunities for a complete exhibition of it. They that inquire and reason with sufficient deliberateness and caution must inevitably accomplish their end. These maxims were confuted in the present case. He had formed no advantageous conceptions of Helena's capacity. His aversion to matrimony arose from those conceptions; but experience had shown him that his conclusions, unfavourable as they were, had fallen short of the truth. Convictions, which he had conceived her mind to be sufficiently strong to receive and retain, were proved to have made no other than a momentary impression. Hence his objections to ally himself to a mind inferior to his own were strengthened rather than diminished. But he could not endure the thought of being instrumental to her misery.

Marriage was an efficacious remedy, but he could not as yet bring himself to regard the aptitude of this cure as a subject of doubt. The idea of separation sometimes occurred to him. He was not unapprehensive of the influence of time and absence in curing the most vehement passion, but to this expedient the lady could not be reconciled. He knew her too well to believe that she would willingly adopt it. But the only obstacle to this scheme did not flow from the lady's opposition. He would probably have found upon experiment as strong an aversion to adopt it in himself as in her.

It was easy to see the motives by which he would be likely to be swayed into a change of principles. If marriage were the only remedy, the frequent repetition of this truth must bring him insensibly to doubt the rectitude of his determinations against it. He deeply reflected on the consequences which marriage involves. He scrutinised with the utmost accuracy the character of his friend, and surveyed it in all its parts. Inclination could not fail of having some influence on his opinions. The charms of this favourite object tended to impair the clearness of his view, and extenuate or conceal her defects. He entered on the enumeration of her errors with reluctance. Her happiness, had it been wholly disconnected with his own, might have had less weight in the balance, but now, every time the scales were suspended, this consideration acquired new weight.

Most men are influenced in the formation of this contract, by regards purely physical. They are incapable of higher views. They regard with indifference every tie that binds them to their contemporaries, or to posterity. Mind has no part in the motives that guide them. They choose a wife as they choose any household movable, and when the irritation of the senses has subsided, the attachment that remains is the offspring of habit.

Such were not Ormond's modes of thinking. His creed was of too extraordinary a kind not to merit explication. The terms of this contract were, in his eyes, iniquitous and absurd. He could not think with patience of a promise which no time could annul, which pretended to ascertain contingencies and regulate the future. To forego the liberty of choosing his companion, and bind himself to associate with one whom he despised; to raise to his own level whom nature had irretrievably degraded; to avow and persist in his adherence to a falsehood, palpable and loathsome to his understanding; to affirm that he was blind, when in full possession of his senses; to shut his eyes and grope in the dark, and call upon the compassion of mankind on his infirmity, when his organs were in no degree impaired, and the scene around him was luminous and beautiful,—was an height of infatuation that he could never attain. And why should he be thus self-degraded? Why should he take a laborious circuit to reach a point which, when attained, was trivial, and to which reason had pointed out a road short and direct?

A wife is generally nothing more than a household superintendent. This function could not be more wisely vested than it was at present. Every thing in his domestic system was fashioned on strict and inflexible principles. He wanted instruments and not partakers of his authority,—one whose mind was equal and not superior to the cogent apprehension and punctual performance of his will; one whose character was squared with mathematical exactness, to his situation. Helena, with all her faults, did not merit to be regarded in this light. Her introduction would destroy the harmony of his scheme, and be, with respect to herself, a genuine debasement. A genuine evil would thus be substituted for one that was purely imaginary.

Helena's intellectual deficiencies could not be concealed. She was a proficient in the elements of no science. The doctrine of lines and surfaces was as disproportionate with her intellects as with those of the mock-bird. She had not reasoned on the principles of human action, nor examined the structure of society. She was ignorant of the past or present condition of mankind. History had not informed her of the one, nor the narratives of voyagers, nor the deductions of geography of the other. The heights of eloquence and poetry were shut out from her view. She could not commune in their native dialect with the sages of Rome and Athens. To her those perennial fountains of wisdom and refinement were sealed. The constitution of nature, the attributes of its author, the arrangement of the parts of the external universe, and the substance, modes of operation, and ultimate destiny of human intelligence, were enigmas unsolved and insoluble by her.

But this was not all. The superstructure could for the present be spared. Nay, it was desirable

that the province of rearing it should be reserved for him. All he wanted was a suitable foundation; but this Helena did not possess. He had not hitherto been able to create in her the inclination or the power. She had listened to his precepts with docility. She had diligently conned the lessons which he had prescribed, but the impressions were as fleeting as if they had been made on water. Nature seemed to have set impassable limits to her attainments.

This indeed was an unwelcome belief. He struggled to invalidate it. He reflected on the immaturity of her age. What but crude and hasty views was it reasonable to expect at so early a period? If her mind had not been awakened, it had proceeded, perhaps from the injudiciousness of his plans, or merely from their not having been persisted in. What was wanting but the ornaments of mind to render this being all that poets have feigned of angelic nature? When he indulged himself in imaging the union of capacious understanding with her personal loveliness, his conceptions swelled to a pitch of enthusiasm, and it seemed as if no labour was too great to be employed in the production of such a creature. And yet, in the midst of his glowings, he would sink into sudden dejection at the recollection of that which passion had, for a time, excluded. To make her wise it would be requisite to change her sex. He had forgotten that his pupil was a female, and her capacity therefore limited by nature. This mortifying thought was outbalanced by nature. Her attainments, indeed, were suitable to the imbecility of her sex; but did she not surpass in those attainments, the ordinary rate of women? They must not be condemned, because they are outshone by qualities that are necessarily male births.

Her accomplishments formed a much more attractive theme. He overlooked no article in the catalogue. He was confounded at one time, and encouraged at another, on remarking the contradictions that seemed to be included in her character. It was difficult to conceive the impossibility of passing that barrier which yet she was able to touch. She was no poet. She listened to the rehearsal without emotion, or was moved, not by the substance of the passage, by the dazzling image, or the magic sympathy, but by something adscititious; yet, usher her upon the stage, and no poet could wish for a more powerful organ of his conceptions. In assuming this office, she appeared to have drank in the very soul of the dramatist. What was wanting in judgement was supplied by memory, in the tenaciousness of which she has seldom been rivalled.

Her sentiments were trite and undigested, but were decorated with all the fluences and melodies of elocution. Her musical instructor had been a Sicilian, who had formed her style after the Italian model. This man had likewise taught her his own language. He had supplied her chiefly with Sicilian compositions, both in poetry and melody, and was content to be unclassical, for the sake of the feminine and voluptuous graces of his native dialect.

Ormond was an accurate judge of the proficiency of Helena, and of the felicity with which these accomplishments were suited to her character. When his pupil personated the victims of anger and grief, and poured forth the fiery indignation of Calista, or the maternal despair of Constantia, or the self-contentions of Ipsipile, he could not deny the homage which her talents might claim.

Her Sicilian tutor had found her no less tractable as a votary of painting. She needed only the education of Angelica to exercise as potent and prolific a pencil. This was incompatible with her condition, which limited her attainments to the element of this art. It was otherwise with music. Here there was no obstacle to skill, and here the assiduities of many years in addition to a prompt and ardent genius, set her beyond the hopes of rivalship.

Ormond had often amused his fancy with calling up images of excellences in this art. He saw no bounds to the influence of habit, in augmenting the speed and multiplying the divisions of muscular motion. The fingers, by their form and size, were qualified to outrun and elude the most vigilant eye. The sensibility of keys and wires had limits; but these limits depended on the structure of the instrument, and the perfection of its structure was proportioned to the skill of the artist. On well-constructed keys and strings, was it possible to carry diversities of movement and pressure too far? How far they could be carried was mere theme of conjecture, until it was his fate to listen to the magical performances of Helena, whose volant finger seemed to be self-impelled. Her touches were creative of a thousand forms of *piano*, and of numberless transitions from grave to quick, perceptible only to ears like her own.

In the selection and arrangement of notes there are no limits to luxuriance and celerity. Helena had long relinquished the drudgery of imitation. She never played but when there were motives to fervour, and when she was likely to ascend without impediment, and to maintain for a suitable period her elevation, to the element of new ideas. The lyrics of Milton and of Metastasio she sung with accompaniments that never tired, because they were never repeated. Her harp and clavichord supplied her with endless combinations, and these, in the opinion of Ormond, were not inferior to the happiest exertions of Handel and Arne.

Chess was his favourite amusement. This was the only game which he allowed himself to play. He had studied it with so much zeal and success, that there were few with whom he deigned to contend. He was prone to consider it as a sort of criterion of human capacity. He who had acquired skill in this *science* could not be infirm in mind; and yet he found in Helena a competitor not unworthy of all his energies. Many hours were consumed in this employment, and here the lady was sedate, considerate, extensive in foresight, and fertile in expedients.

Her deportment was graceful, inasmuch as it flowed from a consciousness of her defects. She was devoid of arrogance and vanity, neither imagining herself better than she was, and setting light by those qualifications which she unquestionably possessed. Such was the mixed character of this woman.

Ormond was occupied with schemes of a rugged and arduous nature. His intimate associates and the partakers of his confidence were imbued with the same zeal and ardent in the same pursuits. Helena could lay no claim to be exalted to this rank. That one destitute of this claim should enjoy the privileges of his wife was still a supposition truly monstrous. Yet the image of Helena, fondly loving him, and a model as he conceived of tenderness and constancy, devoured by secret remorse, and pursued by the scorn of mankind,—a mark for slander to shoot at, and an outcast of society,—did not visit his meditations in vain. The rigour of his principles began now to relent.

He considered that various occupations are incident to every man. He cannot be invariably employed in the promotion of one purpose. He must occasionally unbend, if he desires that the springs of his mind should retain their full vigour. Suppose his life were divided between business and amusement. This was a necessary distribution, and sufficiently congenial with his temper. It became him to select with skill his sources of amusement. It is true that Helena was unable to participate in his graver occupations: what then? In whom were blended so many pleasurable attributes? In her were assembled an exquisite and delicious variety. As it was, he was daily in her company. He should scarcely be more so if marriage should take place. In that case, no change in their mode of life would be necessary. There was no need of dwelling under the same roof. His revenue was equal to the support of many household establishments. His personal independence would remain equally inviolable. No time, he thought, would diminish his influence over the mind of Helena, and it was not to be forgotten that the transition would to her be happy. It would reinstate her in the esteem of the world, and dispel those phantoms of remorse and shame by which she was at present persecuted.

These were plausible considerations. They tended at least to shake his resolutions. Time would probably have completed the conquest of his pride, had not a new incident set the question in a new light.

CHAPTER IV.

The narrative of Melbourne made a deeper impression on the mind of his guest than was at first apparent. This man's conduct was directed by the present impulse; and, however elaborate his abstract notions, he seldom stopped to settle the agreement between his principles and actions. The use of money was a science like every other branch of benevolence, not reducible to any fixed principles. No man, in the disbursement of money, could say whether he was conferring a benefit or injury. The visible and immediate effects might be good, but evil was its ultimate and general tendency. To be governed by a view to the present rather than the future was a human infirmity from which he did not pretend to be exempt. This, though an insufficient apology for the conduct of a rational being, was suitable to his indolence, and he was content in all cases to employ it. It was thus that he reconciled himself to beneficent acts, and humourously held himself up as an object of censure, on occasions when most entitled to applause.

He easily procured information as to the character and situation of the Dudleys. Neighbours are always inquisitive, and happily, in this case, were enabled to make no unfavourable report. He resolved without hesitation to supply their wants. This he performed in a manner truly characteristic. There was a method of gaining access to families, and marking them in their unguarded attitudes, more easy and effectual than any other: it required least preparation and cost least pains; the disguise, also, was of the most impenetrable kind. He had served a sort of occasional apprenticeship to the art, and executed its functions with perfect ease. It was the most entire and grotesque metamorphosis imaginable. It was stepping from the highest to the lowest rank in society, and shifting himself into a form as remote from his own as those recorded by Ovid. In a word, it was sometimes his practice to exchange his complexion and habiliments for those of a negro and a chimney-sweep, and to call at certain doors for employment. This he generally secured by importunities, and the cheapness of his services.

When the loftiness of his port, and the punctiliousness of his nicety were considered, we should never have believed—what yet could be truly asserted—that he had frequently swept his own chimneys, without the knowledge of his own servants.^[1] It was likewise true, though equally incredible, that he had played at romps with his scullion, and listened with patience to a thousand slanders on his own character.

[1] Similar exploits are related of Count de la Lippe and Wortley Montague.

In this disguise he visited the house of Mr. Dudley. It was nine o'clock in the morning. He remarked with critical eyes, the minutest circumstance in the appearance and demeanour of his customers, and glanced curiously at the house and furniture. Every thing was new and every thing pleased. The walls, though broken into roughness by carelessness or time, were adorned with glistening white. The floor, though loose and uneven, and with gaping seams, had received all the improvements which cloth and brush could give. The pine tables, rush chairs, and uncurtained bed, had been purchased at half price, at vendue, and exhibited various tokens of decay; but care and neatness and order were displayed in their condition and arrangement.

The lower apartment was the eating and sitting room. It was likewise Mr. Dudley's bed chamber. The upper room was occupied by Constantia and Lucy. Ormond viewed every thing with the accuracy of an artist, and carried away with him a catalogue of every thing visible. The faded

form of Mr. Dudley, that still retained its dignity, the sedateness, graceful condescension, and personal elegance of Constantia, were new to the apprehension of Ormond. The contrast between the house and its inhabitants rendered the appearance more striking. When he had finished his task he retired, but returning in a quarter of an hour, he presented a letter to the young lady. He behaved as if by no means desirous of eluding her interrogatories, and, when she desired him to stay, readily complied. The letter, unsigned, and without superscription, was to this effect:—

"The writer of this is acquainted with the transaction between Thomas Craig and Mr. Dudley. The former is debtor to Mr. Dudley in a large sum. I have undertaken to pay as much of this debt, and at such times, as suits my convenience. I have had pecuniary engagements with Craig. I hold myself, in the sum enclosed, discharging so much of his debt. The future payments are uncertain, but I hope they will contribute to relieve the necessities of Mr. Dudley."

Ormond had calculated the amount of what would be necessary for the annual subsistence of this family on the present frugal plan. He had regulated his disbursements accordingly.

It was natural to feel curiosity as to the writer of this epistle. The bearer displayed a prompt and talkative disposition. He had a staring eye and a grin of vivacity forever at command. When questioned by Constantia, he answered that the gentleman had forbidden him to mention his name or the place where he lived. Had he ever met with the same person before? O yes. He had lived with him from a child. His mother lived with him still, and his brothers. His master had nothing for him to do at home, so he sent him out sweeping chimneys, taking from him only half the money that he earned that way. He was a very good master.

"Then the gentleman had been a long time in the city?"

"O yes. All his life he reckoned. Ho used to live in Walnut Street, but now he's moved down town." Here he checked himself, and added,— "But I forgets. I must not tell where he livest. He told me I must'nt."

"He has a family and children, I suppose?"

"O yes. Why, don't you know Miss Hetty and Miss Betsy? There again! I was going to tell the name, that he said I must not tell."

Constantia saw that the secret might be easily discovered, but she forbore. She disdained to take advantage of this messenger's imagined simplicity. She dismissed him with some small addition to his demand, and with a promise always to employ him in this way.

By this mode Ormond had effectually concealed himself. The lady's conjectures, founded on this delusive information, necessarily wandered widely from the truth. The observations that he had made during this visit afforded his mind considerable employment. The manner in which this lady had sustained so cruel a reverse of fortune, the cheerfulness with which she appeared to forego all the gratifications of affluence, the skill with which she selected her path of humble industry, and the steadiness with which she pursued it, were proofs of a moral constitution, from which he supposed the female sex to be debarred. The comparison was obvious between Constantia and Helena, and the result was by no means advantageous to the latter. Was it possible that such a one descended to the level of her father's apprentice? That she sacrificed her honour to a wretch like that? This reflection tended to repress the inclination he would otherwise have felt for cultivating her society, but it did not indispose him to benefit her in a certain way.

On his next visit to his "Bella Siciliana," as he called her, he questioned her as to the need in which she might stand of the services of a seamstress; and being informed that they were sometimes wanted, he recommended Miss Acworth to her patronage. He said that he had heard her spoken of in favourable terms by the gossips at Melbourne's. They represented her as a good girl, slenderly provided for, and he wished that Helena would prefer her to all others.

His recommendation was sufficient. The wishes of Ormond, as soon as they became known, became hers. Her temper made her always diligent in search of novelty. It was easy to make work for the needle. In short, she resolved to send for her the next day. The interview accordingly took place on the ensuing morning, not without mutual surprise, and, on the part of the fair Sicilian, not without considerable embarrassment.

This circumstance arose from their having changed their respective names, though from motives of a very different kind. They were not strangers to each other, though no intimacy had ever subsisted between them. Each was merely acquainted with the name, person, and general character of the other. No circumstance in Constantia's situation tended to embarrass her. Her mind had attained a state of serene composure, incapable of being ruffled by an incident of this kind. She merely derived pleasure from the sight of her old acquaintance. The aspect of things around her was splendid and gay. She seemed the mistress of the mansion, and her name was changed. Hence it was unavoidable to conclude that she was married.

Helena was conscious that appearances were calculated to suggest this conclusion. The idea was a painful one. She sorrowed to think that this conclusion was fallacious. The consciousness that her true condition was unknown to her visitant, and the ignominiousness of that truth, gave an air of constraint to her behaviour, which Constantia ascribed to a principle of delicacy.

In the midst of reflections relative to herself, she admitted some share of surprise at the discovery of Constantia in a situation so inferior to that in which she had formerly known her. She had heard, in general terms of the misfortunes of Mr Dudley, but was unacquainted with

particulars; but this surprise, and the difficulty of adapting her behaviour to circumstances, was only in part the source of her embarrassment, though by her companion it was wholly attributed to this cause. Constantia thought it her duty to remove it by open and unaffected manners. She therefore said, in a sedate and cheerful tone, "You see me, Madam, in a situation somewhat unlike that in which I formerly was placed. You will probably regard the change as an unhappy one; but, I assure you, I have found it far less so than I expected. I am thus reduced not by my own fault. It is this reflection that enables me to conform to it without a murmur. I shall rejoice to know that Mrs. Eden is as happy as I am."

Helena was pleased with this address, and returned an answer full of sweetness. She had not in her compassion for the fallen, a particle of pride. She thought of nothing but the contrast between the former situation of her visitant and the present. The fame of her great qualities had formerly excited veneration, and that reverence was by no means diminished by a nearer scrutiny. The consciousness of her own frailty meanwhile diffused over the behaviour of Helena a timidity and dubiousness uncommonly fascinating. She solicited Constantia's friendship in a manner that showed she was afraid of nothing but denial. An assent was eagerly given, and thenceforth a cordial intercourse was established between them.

The real situation of Helena was easily discovered. The officious person who communicated this information, at the same time cautioned Constantia against associating with one of tainted reputation. This information threw some light upon appearances. It accounted for that melancholy which Helena was unable to conceal. It explained that solitude in which she lived, and which Constantia had ascribed to the death or absence of her husband. It justified the solicitous silence she had hitherto maintained respecting her own affairs, and which her friend's good sense forbade her to employ any sinister means of eluding.

No long time was necessary to make her mistress of Helena's character. She loved her with uncommon warmth, though by no means blind to her defects. She formed no expectations from the knowledge of her character, to which this intelligence operated as a disappointment. It merely excited her pity, and made her thoughtful how she might assist her in repairing this deplorable error.

This design was of no ordinary magnitude. She saw that it was previously necessary to obtain the confidence of Helena. This was a task of easy performance. She knew the purity of her own motives and the extent of her powers, and embarked in this undertaking with full confidence of success. She had only to profit by a private interview, to acquaint her friend with what she knew, to solicit a complete and satisfactory disclosure, to explain the impressions which her intelligence produced, and to offer her disinterested advice. No one knew better how to couch her ideas in words suitable to the end proposed by her in imparting them.

Helena was at first terrified, but the benevolence of her friend quickly entitled her to confidence and gratitude that knew no limits. She had been deterred from unveiling her heart by the fear of exciting contempt or abhorrence; but when she found that all due allowances were made,—that her conduct was treated as erroneous in no atrocious or inexpiable degree, and as far from being insusceptible of remedy,—that the obloquy with which she had been treated found no vindicator or participator in her friend, her heart was considerably relieved. She had been long a stranger to the sympathy and intercourse of her own sex. Now this good, in its most precious form, was conferred upon her, and she experienced an increase rather than diminution of tenderness, in consequence of her true situation being known.

She made no secret of any part of her history. She did full justice to the integrity of her lover, and explained the unforced conditions on which she had consented to live with him. This relation exhibited the character of Ormond in a very uncommon light. His asperities wounded, and his sternness chilled. What unauthorised conceptions of matrimonial and political equality did he entertain! He had fashioned his treatment of Helena on sullen and ferocious principles. Yet he was able, it seemed, to mould her, by means of them, nearly into the creature that he wished. She knew too little of the man justly to estimate his character. It remained to be ascertained whether his purposes were consistent and upright, or were those of a villain and betrayer.

Meanwhile what was to be done by Helena? Marriage had been refused on plausible pretences. Her unenlightened understanding made her no match for her lover. She would never maintain her claim to nuptial privileges in his presence, or, if she did, she would never convince him of their validity.

Were they indeed valid? Was not the disparity between them incurable? A marriage of minds so dissimilar could only be productive of misery immediately to him, and, by a reflex operation, to herself. She could not be happy in a union that was the source of regret to her husband. Marriage, therefore, was not possible, or if possible, was not, perhaps, to be wished. But what was the choice that remained?

To continue in her present situation was not to be endured. Disgrace was a dæmon that would blast every hope of happiness. She was excluded from all society but that of the depraved. Her situation was eminently critical. It depended, perhaps, on the resolution she should now form whether she would be enrolled among the worst of mankind. Infamy is the worst of evils. It creates innumerable obstructions in the paths of virtue. It manacles the hand, and entangles the feet that are active only to good. To the weak it is an evil of much greater magnitude. It determines their destiny; and they hasten to merit that reproach, which, at first it may be, they did not deserve.

This connection is intrinsically flagitious. Helena is subjected by it to the worst ills that are incident to humanity, the general contempt of mankind, and the reproaches of her own conscience. From these there is but one method from which she can hope to be relieved. The intercourse must cease.

It wad easier to see the propriety of separation, than to project means for accomplishing it. It was true that Helena loved; but what quarter was due to this passion when divorced from integrity? Is it not in every bosom a perishable sentiment? Whatever be her warmth, absence will congeal it. Place her in new scenes, and supply her with new associates. Her accomplishments will not fail to attract votaries. From these she may select a conjugal companion suitable to her mediocrity of talents.

But alas! what power on earth can prevail on her to renounce Ormond? Others may justly entertain this prospect, but it must be invisible to her. Besides, is it absolutely certain that either her peace of mind or her reputation will be restored by this means? In the opinion of the world her offences cannot, by any perseverance in penitence, be expiated. She will never believe that separation will exterminate her passion. Certain it is that it will avail nothing to the re-establishment of her fame. But if it were conducive to these ends, how chimerical to suppose that she will ever voluntarily adopt it! If Ormond refuse his concurrence, there is absolutely an end to hope. And what power on earth is able to sway his determinations? At least, what influence was it possible for her to obtain over them?

Should they separate, whither should she retire? What mode of subsistence should she adopt? She has never been accustomed to think beyond the day. She has eaten and drank, but another has provided the means. She scarcely comprehends the principle that governs the world, and in consequence of which nothing can be gained but by giving something in exchange for it. She is ignorant and helpless as a child, on every topic that relates to the procuring of subsistence. Her education has disabled her from standing alone.

But this was not all. She must not only be supplied by others, but sustained in the enjoyment of a luxurious existence. Would you bereave her of the gratifications of opulence? You had better take away her life. Nay, it would ultimately amount to this. She can live but in one way.

At present she is lovely, and, to a certain degree, innocent; but expose her to the urgencies and temptations of want, let personal pollution be the price set upon the voluptuous affluences of her present condition, and it is to be feared there is nothing in the contexture of her mind to hinder her from making the purchase. In every respect therefore the prospect was an hopeless one,—so hopeless, that her mind insensibly returned to the question which she had at first dismissed with very slight examination,—the question relative to the advantages and probabilities of marriage. A more accurate review convinced her that this was the most eligible alternative. It was, likewise, most easily effected. The lady, of course, would be its fervent advocate. There did not want reasons why Ormond should finally embrace it. In what manner appeals to his reason of his passion might most effectually be made she knew not.

Helena was not qualified to be her own advocate. Her unhappiness could not but be visible to Ormond. He had shown himself attentive and affectionate. Was it impossible that, in time, he should reason himself into a spontaneous adoption of this scheme? This, indeed, was a slender foundation for hope, but there was no other on which she could build.

Such were the meditations of Constantia on this topic. She was deeply solicitous for the happiness of her friend. They spent much of their time together. The consolations of her society were earnestly sought by Helena; but to enjoy them, she was for the most part obliged to visit the former at her own dwelling. For this arrangement, Constantia apologized by saying, "You will pardon my requesting you to favour me with your visits, rather than allowing you mine. Every thing is airy and brilliant within these walls. There is, besides, an air of seclusion and security about you that is delightful. In comparison, my dwelling is bleak, comfortless, and unretired, but my father is entitled to all my care. His infirmity prevents him from amusing himself, and his heart is cheered by the mere sound of my voice, though not addressed to him. The mere belief of my presence seems to operate as an antidote to the dreariness of solitude; and, now you know my motives, I am sure you will not only forgive but approve of my request."

CHAPTER V.

When once the subject had been introduced, Helena was prone to descant upon her own situation, and listened with deference to the remarks and admonitions of her companion. Constantia did not conceal from her any of her sentiments. She enabled her to view her own condition in its true light, and set before her the indispensable advantages of marriage, while she, at the same time, afforded her the best directions as to the conduct she ought to pursue in order to effect her purpose.

The mind of Helena was thus kept in a state of perpetual and uneasy fluctuation. While absent from Ormond, or listening to her friend's remonstrances, the deplorableness of her condition arose in its most disastrous hues before her imagination. But the spectre seldom failed to vanish at the approach of Ormond. His voice dissipated every inquietude.

She was not insensible of this inconstancy. She perceived and lamented her own weakness. She was destitute of all confidence in her own exertions. She could not be in the perpetual enjoyment of his company. Her intervals of tranquillity, therefore, were short, while those of anxiety and dejection were insupportably tedious. She revered, but believed herself incapable to emulate the magnanimity of her monitor. The consciousness of inferiority, especially in a case like this, in which her happiness so much depended on her own exertions, excited in her the most humiliating sensations.

While indulging in fruitless melancholy, the thought one day occurred to her, why may not Constantia be prevailed upon to plead my cause? Her capacity and courage are equal to any undertaking. The reasonings that are so powerful in my eyes, would they be trivial and futile in those of Ormond? I cannot have a more pathetic and disinterested advocate.

This idea was cherished with uncommon ardour. She seized the first opportunity that offered itself to impart it to her friend. It was a wild and singular proposal, and was rejected at the first glance. This scheme, so romantic and impracticable as it at first seemed, appeared to Helena in the most plausible colours. She could not bear to relinquish her new-born hopes. She saw no valid objection to it. Every thing was easy to her friend, provided her sense of duty and her zeal could be awakened. The subject was frequently suggested to Constantia's reflections. Perceiving the sanguineness of her friend's confidence, and fully impressed with the value of the end to be accomplished, she insensibly veered to the same opinion. At least the scheme was worthy of a candid discussion before it was rejected.

Ormond was a stranger to her. His manners were repulsive and austere. She was a mere girl. Her personal attachment to Helena was all that she could plead in excuse for taking part in her concerns. The subject was delicate. A blunt and irregular character like Ormond might throw an air of ridicule over the scene. She shrunk from the encounter of a boisterous and manlike spirit.

But were not these scruples effeminate and puerile? Had she studied so long in the school of adversity, without conviction of the duty of a virtuous independence? Was she not a rational being, fully imbued with the justice of her cause? Was it not ignoble to refuse the province of a vindicator of the injured, before any tribunal, however tremendous or unjust? And who was Ormond, that his eye should inspire terror?

The father or brother of Helena might assume the office without indecorum. Nay, a mother or sister might not be debarred from it. Why then should she, who was actuated by equal zeal, and was engaged, by ties stronger than consanguinity, in the promotion of her friend's happiness. It is true she did not view the subject in the light in which it was commonly viewed by brothers and parents. It was not a gust of rage that should transport her into his presence. She did not go to awaken his slumbering conscience, and to abash him in the pride of guilty triumph, but to rectify deliberate errors, and to change his course by the change of his principles. It was her business to point out to him the road of duty and happiness, from which he had strayed with no sinister intentions. This was to be done without raving and fury; but with amicable soberness, and in the way of calm and rational remonstrance. Yet, there were scruples that would not be shut out, and continually whispered to her, "What an office is this for a girl and a stranger to assume!"

In what manner should it be performed? Should an interview be sought, and her ideas be explained without confusion or faltering, undismayed by ludicrous airs or insolent frowns. But this was a point to be examined. Was Ormond capable of such behaviour? If he were, it would be useless to attempt the reformation of his errors. Such a man is incurable and obdurate. Such a man is not to be sought as the husband of Helena; but this, surely, is a different being.

The medium through which she had viewed his character was an ample one, but might not be very accurate. The treatment which Helena had received from him, exclusive of his fundamental error, betokened a mind to which she did not disdain to be allied. In spite of his defects, she saw that their elements were more congenial, and the points of contact between this person and herself more numerous than between her and Helena, whose voluptuous sweetness of temper, and mediocrity of understanding excited in her bosom no genuine sympathy.

Every thing is progressive in the human mind. When there is leisure to reflect, ideas will succeed each other in a long train, before the ultimate point be gained. The attention must shift from one side to the other of a given question many times before it settles. Constantia did not form her resolutions in haste; but when once formed, they were exempt from fluctuation. She reflected before she acted, and therefore acted with consistency and vigour. She did not apprise her friend of her intention. She was willing that she should benefit by her interposition, before she knew it was employed.

She sent her Lucy with a note to Ormond's house. It was couched in these terms:—

"Constantia Dudley requests an interview with Mr. Ormond. Her business being of some moment, she wishes him to name an hour when most disengaged."

An answer was immediately returned that at three o'clock, in the afternoon, he should be glad to see her.

This message produced no small surprise in Ormond. He had not withdrawn his notice from Constantia, and had marked, with curiosity and approbation, the progress of the connexion between the two women. The impressions which he had received from the report of Helena were not dissimilar to those which Constantia had imbibed, from the same quarter, respecting himself;

but he gathered from them no suspicion of the purpose of a visit. He recollected his connection with Craig. This lady had had an opportunity of knowing that some connection subsisted between them. He concluded that some information or inquiry respecting Craig might occasion this event. As it was, it gave him considerable satisfaction. It would enable him more closely to examine one, with respect to whom he entertained great curiosity.

Ormond's conjecture was partly right. Constantia did not forget her having traced Craig to this habitation. She designed to profit by the occasion which this circumstance afforded her, of making some inquiry respecting Craig, in order to introduce, by suitable degrees, a more important subject.

The appointed hour having arrived, he received her in his drawing-room. He knew what was due to his guest. He loved to mortify, by his negligence, the pride of his equals and superiors, but a lower class had nothing to fear from his insolence. Constantia took the seat that was offered to her, without speaking. She had made suitable preparations for this interview, and her composure was invincible. The manners of her host were by no means calculated to disconcert her. His air was conciliating and attentive.

She began with naming Craig, as one known to Ormond, and desired to be informed of his place of abode. She was proceeding to apologise for this request, by explaining, in general terms, that her father's infirmities prevented him from acting for himself, that Craig was his debtor to a large amount, that he stood in need of all that justly belonged to him, and was in pursuit of some means of tracing Craig to his retreat. Ormond interrupted her, examining, at the same time, with a vigilance somewhat too unsparing, the effects which his words should produce upon her:—

"You may spare yourself the trouble of explaining. I am acquainted with the whole affair between Craig and your family. He has concealed from me nothing. I know *all* that has passed between you."

In saying this, Ormond intended that his looks and emphasis should convey his full meaning. In the style of her comments he saw none of those corroborating symptoms that he expected:—

"Indeed! He has been very liberal of his confidence. Confession is a token of penitence; but, alas! I fear he has deceived you. To be sincere was doubtless his true interest, but he is too much in the habit of judging superficially. If he has told you all, there is, indeed, no need of explanation. This visit is, in that case, sufficiently accounted for. Is it in your power, Sir, to inform us whither he has gone?"

"For what end should I tell you? I promise you you will not follow him. Take my word for it, he is totally unworthy of you. Let the past be no precedent for the future. If you have not made that discovery yourself, I have made it for you. I expect at least to be thanked for my trouble."

This speech was unintelligible to Constantia. Her looks betokened a perplexity unmingled with fear or shame.

"It is my way," continued he, "to say what I think. I care little for consequences. I have said that I know *all*. This will excuse me for being perfectly explicit. That I am mistaken is very possible; but I am inclined to place that matter beyond the reach of a doubt. Listen to me, and confirm me in the opinion I have already formed of your good sense, by viewing, in a just light, the unreservedness with which you are treated. I have something to tell, which, if you are wise, you will not be offended at my telling so roundly. On the contrary you will thank me, and perceive that my conduct is a proof of my respect for you. The person whom you met here is named Craig, but, as he tells me, is not the man you look for. This man's brother—the partner, of your father, and, as he assured me, your own accepted and illicitly-gratified lover—is dead."

These words were uttered without any extenuating hesitation or depression of tone. On the contrary, the most offensive terms were drawn out in the most deliberate and emphatic manner. Constantia's cheeks glowed, and her eyes sparkled with indignation, but she forbore to interrupt. The looks with which she listened to the remainder of the speech showed that she fully comprehended the scene, and enabled him to comprehend it. He proceeded:—

"This man is a brother of that. Their resemblance in figure occasioned your mistake. Your father's debtor died, it seems, on his arrival at Jamaica. There he met with this brother, and bequeathed to him his property and papers. Some of these papers are in my possession. They are letters from Constantia Dudley, and are parts of an intrigue, which, considering the character of the man, was not much to her honour. Such was this man's narrative told to me some time before your meeting with him at his house. I have right to judge in this affair; that is, I have a right to my opinion. If I mistake, (and I half suspect myself,) you are able, perhaps, to rectify my error; and in a case like this doubtless you will not want the inclination."

Perhaps if the countenance of this man had not been characterized by the keenest intelligence, and a sort of careless and overflowing good-will, this speech might have produced different effects. She was prepared, though imperfectly, for entering into his character. He waited for an answer, which she gave without emotion:—

"You were deceived. I am sorry for your own sake that you are. He must have had some end in view, in imposing these falsehoods upon you, which perhaps they have enabled him to accomplish. As to myself, this man can do me no injury. I willingly make you my judge. The letters you speak of will alone suffice to my vindication. They never were received from me, and

are forgeries. That man always persisted till he made himself the dupe of his own artifices. That incident in his plot, on the introduction of which he probably the most applauded himself, will most powerfully operate to defeat it.

"Those letters never were received from me, and are forgeries. His skill in imitation extended no farther in the present case than my handwriting. My model of thinking and expression were beyond the reach of his mimicry."

When she had finished, Osmond spent a moment in ruminating. "I perceive you are right," said he. "I suppose he has purloined from me two hundred guineas, which I entrusted to his fidelity. And yet I received a letter; but that may likewise be a forgery. By my soul," continued he, in a tone that had more of satisfaction than disappointment in it, "this fellow was an adept at his trade. I do not repine. I have bought the exhibition at a cheap rate. The pains that he took did not merit a less recompense. I am glad that he was contented with so little. Had he persisted he might have raised the price far above its value. 'Twill be lamentable if he receive more than he stipulated for,—if, in his last purchase, the gallows should be thrown into the bargain. May he have the wisdom to see that a halter, though not included in his terms, is only a new instance of his good fortune! But his cunning will hardly carry him thus far. His stupidity will, no doubt, prefer a lingering to a sudden exit.

"But this man and his destiny are trifles. Let us leave them to themselves. Your name is Constantia. 'Twas given you, I suppose, that you might be known by it. Pr'ythee, Constantia was this the only purpose that brought you hither? If it were, it has received as ample a discussion as it merits. You *came* for this end, but will remain, I hope, for a better one. Haying dismissed Craig and his plots, let us now talk of each other."

"I confess," said the lady, with an hesitation she could not subdue, "this was not my only purpose. One much more important has produced this visit."

"Indeed! pray let me know it. I am glad that so trivial an object as Craig did not occupy the first place in your thoughts. Proceed, I beseech you."

"It is a subject on which I cannot enter without hesitation,—a hesitation unworthy of me."

"Stop," cried Ormond, rising and touching the bell; "nothing like time to make a conquest of embarrassment. We will defer this conference six minutes, just while we eat our dinner."

At the same moment a servant entered, with two plates and the usual apparatus for dinner. On seeing this she rose, in some hurry, to depart:—"I thought, sir, you were disengaged? I call at some other hour."

He seized her hand, and held her from going, but with an air by no means disrespectful. "Nay," said he, "what is it that scares you away? Are you terrified at the mention of victuals? You must have fasted long when it comes to that. I told you true. I am disengaged, but not from the obligation of eating and drinking. No doubt *you* have dined. No reason why *I* should go without my dinner. If you do not choose to partake with me, so much the better. Your temperance ought to dispense with two meals in an hour. Be a looker-on; or, if that will not do, retire into my library, where in six minutes, I will be with you, and lend you my aid in the arduous task of telling me what you came with an intention of telling."

This singular address disconcerted and abashed her. She was contented to follow the servant silently into an adjoining apartment. Here she reflected with no small surprise on the behaviour of this man. Though ruffled, she was not heartily displeased with it. She had scarcely time to collect herself, when he entered. He immediately seated her, and himself opposite to her. He fixed his eyes without scruple on her face. His gaze was steadfast, but not insolent or oppressive. He surveyed her with the looks with which he would have eyed a charming portrait. His attention was occupied with what he saw, as that of an artist is occupied when viewing a madonna of Raffaello. At length he broke silence:—

"At dinner I was busy in thinking what it was you had to disclose. I will not fatigue you with my guesses. They would be impertinent, as long as the truth is going to be disclosed." He paused, and then continued:—"But I see you cannot dispense with my aid. Perhaps your business relates to Helena. She has done wrong, and you wish me to rebuke the girl."

Constantia profited by this opening, and said, "Yes, she has done wrong. It is true my business relates to her. I came hither as a suppliant in her behalf. Will you not assist her in recovering the path from which she has deviated? She left it from confiding more in the judgement of her guide than her own. There is one method of repairing the evil. It lies with you to repair that evil."

During this address the gaiety of Ormond disappeared. He fixed his eyes on Constantia with new and even pathetic earnestness. "I guessed as much," said he. I have often been deceived in my judgement of characters. Perhaps I do not comprehend yours. Yet it is not little that I have heard respecting you. Something I have seen. I begin to suspect a material error in my theory of human nature. Happy will it be for Helena if my suspicions be groundless.

"You are Helena's friend. Be mine also, and advise me. Shall I marry this girl or not? You know on what terms we live. Are they suitable to our respective characters? Shall I wed this girl, or shall things remain as they are?"

"I have an irreconcilable aversion to a sad brow and a sick bed. Helena is grieved, because her

neighbours sneer and point at her. So far she is a fool; but that is a folly of which she never will be cured. Marriage, it seems, will set all right. Answer me, Constantia, shall I marry?"

There was something in the tone, but more in the tenor of this address that startled her. There was nothing in this man but what came upon her unawares. This sudden effusion of confidence was particularly unexpected and embarrassing. She scarcely knew whether to regard it as serious or a jest. On observing her indisposed to speak, he continued:—

"Away with these impertinent circuities and scruples. I know your meaning. Why should I pretend ignorance, and put you to the trouble of explanation? You came hither with no other view than to exact this question, and furnish an answer. Why should not we come at once to the point? I have for some time been dubious on this head. There is something wanting to determine the balance. If you have that something, throw it into the proper scale.

"You err if you think this manner of addressing you is wild or improper. This girl is the subject of discourse. If she was not to be so, why did you favour me with this visit? You have sought me, and introduced yourself. I have, in like manner, overlooked ordinary forms,—a negligence that has been systematic with me, but, in the present case, particularly justifiable by your example. Shame upon you, presumptuous girl, to suppose yourself the only rational being among mankind. And yet, if you thought so, why did you thus unceremoniously intrude upon my retirements? This act is of a piece with the rest. It shows you to be one whose existence I did not believe possible.

"Take care. You know not what you have done. You came hither as Helena's friend. Perhaps time may show that in this visit you have performed the behest of her bitterest enemy. But that is out of season. This girl is our mutual property. You are her friend; I am her lover. Her happiness is precious in my eyes and in yours. To the rest of mankind she is a noisome weed that cannot be shunned too cautiously, nor trampled on too much. If we forsake her, infamy, that is now kept at bay, will seize upon her, and, while it mangles her form, will tear from her her innocence. She has no arms with which to contend against that foe. Marriage will place her at once in security. Shall it be? You have an exact knowledge of her strength and her weakness. Of me you know little. Perhaps, before that question can be satisfactorily answered, it is requisite to know the qualities of her husband. Be my character henceforth the subject of your study. I will furnish you with all the light in my power. Be not hasty in deciding; but, when your decision is formed, let me know it." He waited for an answer, which she, at length, summoned resolution enough to give:—

"You have come to the chief point which I had in view in making this visit. To say truth, I came hither to remonstrate with you on withholding that which Helena may justly claim from you. Her happiness will be unquestionably restored, and increased by it. Yours will not be impaired. Matrimony will not produce any essential change in your situation. It will produce no greater or different intercourse than now exists. Helena is on the brink of a gulf which I shudder to look upon. I believe that you will not injure yourself by snatching her from it. I am sure that you will confer an inexpressible benefit upon her. Let me then persuade you to do her and yourself justice."

"No persuasion," said Ormond, after recovering from a fit of thoughtfulness, "is needful for this end: I only want to be convinced. You have decided, but, I fear hastily. By what inscrutable influences are our steps guided! Come, proceed in your exhortations. Argue with the utmost clearness and cogency. Arm yourself with all the irresistibles of eloquence. Yet you are building nothing. You are only demolishing. Your argument is one thing. Its tendency is another; and is the reverse of all you expect and desire. My assent will be refused with an obstinacy proportioned to the force that you exert to obtain it, and to the just application of that force."

"I see," replied the lady, smiling and leaving her seat, "you can talk in riddles, as well as other people. This visit has been too long. I shall, indeed, be sorry, if my interference, instead of serving my friend, has injured her. I have acted an uncommon, and, as it may seem, an ambiguous part. I shall be contented with construing my motives in my own way. I wish you a good evening."

"'Tis false," cried he, sternly, "you do not wish it!"

"How?" exclaimed the astonished Constantia.

"I will put your sincerity to the test. Allow me to spend this evening in your company; then it will be well spent, and I shall believe your wishes sincere. Else," continued he, changing his affected austerity into a smile, "Constantia is a liar."

"You are a singular man. I hardly know how to understand you."

"Well. Words are made to carry meanings. You shall have them in abundance. Your house is your citadel. I will not enter it without leave. Permit me to visit it when I please. But that is too much. It is more than I would allow you. When will you permit me to visit you?"

"I cannot answer when I do not understand. You clothe your thoughts in a garb so uncouth, that I know not in what light they are to be viewed."

"Well, now, I thought you understood my language, and were an Englishwoman, but I will use another. Shall I have the honour" (bowing with a courtly air of supplication) "of occasionally paying my respects to you at your own dwelling? It would be cruel to condemn those who have the happiness of knowing Miss Dudley, to fashionable restraints. At what hour will she be least incommoded by a visitant?"

"I am as little pleased with formalities," replied the lady, "as you are. My friends I cannot see too often. They need to consult merely their own convenience. Those who are not my friends I cannot see too seldom. You have only to establish your title to that name, and your welcome at all times is sure. Till then you must not look for it."

CHAPTER VI.

Here ended this conference. She had by no means suspected the manner in which it would be conducted. All punctilios were trampled under foot by the impetuosity of Ormond. Things were, at once, and without delay, placed upon a certain footing. The point, which ordinary persons would have employed months in attaining, was reached in a moment. While these incidents were fresh in her memory, they were accompanied with a sort of trepidation, the offspring at once of pleasure and surprise.

Ormond had not deceived her expectations; but hearsay and personal examination, however uniform their testimony may be, produce a very different impression. In her present reflections, Helena and her lover approached to the front of the stage, and were viewed with equal perspicuity. One consequence of this was, that their characters were more powerfully contrasted with each other, and the eligibility of marriage appeared not quite so incontestable as before.

Was not equality implied in this compact? Marriage is an instrument of pleasure or pain in proportion as this equality is more or less. What but the fascination of his senses is it that ties Ormond to Helena. Is this a basis on which marriage may properly be built?

If things had not gone thus far, the impropriety of marriage could not be doubted; but, at present, there is a choice of evils, and that may now be desirable which at a former period, and in different circumstances, would have been clearly otherwise.

The evils of the present connection are known; those of marriage are future and contingent. Helena cannot be the object of a genuine and lasting passion; another may; this is not merely possible; nothing is more likely to happen. This event, therefore, ought to be included in our calculation. There would be a material deficiency without it. What was the amount of the misery that would in this case ensue?

Constantia was qualified, beyond most others, to form an adequate conception of this misery. One of the ingredients in her character was a mild and steadfast enthusiasm. Her sensibilities to social pleasure, and her conceptions of the benefits to flow from the conformity and concurrence of intentions and wishes, heightening and refining the sensual passion, were exquisite.

There, indeed, were evils, the foresight of which tended to prevent them; but was there wisdom in creating obstacles in the way of a suitable alliance. Before we act, we must consider not only the misery produced, but the happiness precluded by our measures.

In no case, perhaps, is the decision of a human being impartial, or totally uninfluenced by sinister and selfish motives. If Constantia surpassed others, it was not because her motives were pure, but because they possessed more of purity than those of others. Sinister considerations flow in upon us through imperceptible channels, and modify our thoughts in numberless ways, without our being truly conscious of their presence. Constantia was young, and her heart was open at a thousand pores, to the love of excellence. The image of Ormond occupied the chief place in her fancy, and was endowed with attractive and venerable qualities. A bias was hence created that swayed her thoughts, though she knew not that they were swayed. To this might justly be imputed some part of that reluctance which she now felt to give Ormond to Helena. But this was not sufficient to turn the scale. That which had previously mounted was indeed heavier than before; but this addition did not enable it to outweigh its opposite. Marriage was still the best upon the whole; but her heart was tortured to think that, best as it was, it abounded with so many evils.

On the evening of the next day, Ormond entered, with careless abruptness, Constantia's sitting-apartment. He was introduced to her father. A general and unrestrained conversation immediately took place. Ormond addressed Mr. Dudley with the familiarity of an old acquaintance. In three minutes, all embarrassment was discarded. The lady and her visitant were accurate observers of each other. In the remarks of the latter, (and his vein was an abundant one) there was a freedom and originality altogether new to his hearers. In his easiest and sprightliest sallies were tokens of a mind habituated to profound and extensive views. His associations were forced on a comprehensive scale.

He pretended to nothing, and studied the concealments of ambiguity more in reality than in appearance. Constantia, however, discovered a sufficient resemblance between their theories of virtue and duty. The difference between them lay in the inferences arbitrarily deduced, and in which two persons may vary without end, and yet never be repugnant. Constantia delighted her companions by the facility with which she entered into his meaning, the sagacity she displayed in drawing out his hints, circumscribing his conjectures, and thwarting or qualifying his maxims. The scene was generally replete with ardour and contention, and yet the impression left on the mind of Ormond was full of harmony. Her discourse tended to rouse him from his lethargy, to furnish him with powerful excitements; and the time spent in her company seemed like a

doubling of existence.

The comparison could not but suggest itself between this scene and that exhibited by Helena. With the latter, voluptuous blandishments, musical prattle, and silent but expressive homage, composed a banquet delicious for awhile, but whose sweetness now began to pall upon his taste. It supplied him with no new ideas, and hindered him, by the lulling sensations it inspired, from profiting by his former acquisitions. Helena was beautiful. Apply the scale, and not a member was found inelegantly disposed, or negligently moulded. Not a curve that was blemished by an angle or ruffled by asperities. The irradiations of her eyes were able to dissolve the knottiest fibres, and their azure was serene beyond any that nature had elsewhere exhibited. Over the rest of her form the glistening and rosy hues were diffused with prodigal luxuriance, and mingled in endless and wanton variety. Yet this image had fewer attractions even to the senses than that of Constantia. So great is the difference between forms animated by different degrees of intelligence.

The interviews of Ormond and Constantia grew more frequent. The progress which they made in acknowledgement of each other was rapid. Two positions, that were favourite ones with him, were quickly subverted. He was suddenly changed, from being one of the calumniators of the female sex, to one of its warmest eulogists. This was a point on which Constantia had ever been a vigorous disputant; but her arguments, in their direct tendency, would never have made a convert of this man. Their force, intrinsically considered, was nothing. He drew his conclusions from incidental circumstances. Her reasonings might be fallacious or valid, but they were composed, arranged, and delivered, were drawn from such sources, and accompanied with such illustrations, as plainly testified a manlike energy in the reasoner. In this indirect and circuitous way her point was unanswerably established.

"Your reasoning is bad," he would say: "every one of your conclusions is false. Not a single allegation but may be easily confuted; and yet I allow that your position is incontrovertibly proved by them. How bewildered is that man who never thinks for himself! who rejects a principle merely because the arguments brought in support of it are insufficient! I must not reject the truth because another has unjustifiably adopted it. I want to reach a certain hill-top. Another has reached it before me, but the ladder he used is too weak to bear me. What then? Am I to stay below on that account? No; I have only to construct one suitable to the purpose, and of strength sufficient."

A second maxim had never been confuted till now. It inculcated the insignificance and hollowness of love. No pleasure he thought was to be despised for its own sake. Every thing was good in its place, but amorous gratifications were to be degraded to the bottom of the catalogue. The enjoyments of music and landscape were of a much higher order. Epicurism itself was entitled to more respect. Love, in itself, was in his opinion of little worth, and only of importance as the source of the most terrible of intellectual maladies. Sexual sensations associating themselves, in a certain way, with our ideas, beget a disease, which has, indeed, found no place in the catalogue, but is a case of more entire subversion and confusion of mind than any other. The victim is callous to the sentiments of honour and shame, insensible to the most palpable distinctions of right and wrong, a systematic opponent of testimony and obstinate perverter of truth.

Ormond was partly right. Madness like death can be averted by no foresight or previous contrivance; This probably is one of its characteristics. He that witnesses its influence on another with most horror, and most fervently deprecates its ravages, is not therefore more safe. This circumstance was realized in the history of Ormond.

This infatuation, if it may so be called, was gradual in its progress. The sensations which Helena was now able to excite were of a new kind. Her power was not merely weakened, but her endeavours counteracted their own end. Her fondness was rejected with disdain, or borne with reluctance. The lady was not slow in perceiving this change. The stroke of death would have been more acceptable. His own reflections were too tormenting to make him willing to discuss them in words. He was not aware of the effects produced by this change in his demeanour, till informed of it by herself.

One evening he displayed symptoms of uncommon dissatisfaction. Her tenderness was unable to dispel it. He complained of want of sleep. This afforded a hint which she drew forth in one of her enchanting ditties. Habit had almost conferred upon her the power of spontaneous poesy, and, while she pressed his forehead to her bosom, she warbled forth a strain airy and exuberant in numbers, tender and ecstatic in its imagery:—

Sleep, extend thy downy pinion
Hasten from thy cell with speed;
Spread around thy soft dominion;
Much those brows thy balmy presence need.

Wave thy wand of slumberous power,
Moistened in Lethæan dews,
To charm the busy spirits of the hour,
And brighten memory's malignant hues.

Thy mantle, dark and starless, cast
Over my selected youth;
Bury in thy womb the mournful past,

And soften with thy dreams th' asperities of truth.

The changeful hues of his impassioned sleep,
My office it shall be to watch the while;
With thee, my love, when fancy prompts, to weep,
And when thou smil'st, to smile.

But sleep! I charge thee, visit not these eyes,
Nor raise thy dark pavilion here,
'Till morrow from the cave of ocean arise,
And whisper tuneful joy in nature's ear.

But mutely let me lie, and sateless gaze
At all the soul that in his visage sits,
While spirits of harmonious air—

Here her voice sunk, and the line terminated in a sigh. Her museful arduous were chilled by the looks of Ormond. Absorbed in his own thoughts, he appeared scarcely to attend to this strain. His sternness was proof against her accustomed fascinations. At length she pathetically complained of his coldness, and insinuated her suspicions that his affection was transferred to another object. He started from her embrace, and after two or three turns across the room, he stood before her. His large eyes were steadfastly fixed upon her face.

"Aye," said he, "thou hast guessed right. The love, poor as it was, that I had for thee, is gone: henceforth thou art desolate indeed. Would to God thou wert wise. Thy woes are but beginning; I fear they will terminate fatally; if so, the catastrophe cannot come too quickly.

"I disdain to appeal to thy justice, Helena, to remind thee of conditions solemnly and explicitly assumed. Shall thy blood be upon thy own head? No. I will bear it myself. Though the load would crush a mountain, I will bear it.

"I cannot help it; I make not myself; I am moulded by circumstances; whether I shall love thee or not is no longer in my own choice. Marriage if indeed still in my power. I may give thee any name, and share with thee my fortune. Will these content thee? Thou canst not partake of my love. Thou canst have no part in my tenderness. These, are reserved for another more worthy than thou.

"But no. Thy state is to the last degree forlorn, even marriage is denied thee. Thou wast contented to take me without it,—to dispense with the name of wife; but the being who has displaced thy image in thy heart is of a different class. She will be to me a wife, or nothing; and I must be her husband, or perish.

"Do not deceive thyself, Helena. I know what it is in which thou hast placed thy felicity. Life is worth retaining by thee but on one condition. I know the incurableness of thy infirmity; but be not deceived. Thy happiness is ravished from thee. The condition on which thou consentedst to live is annulled. I love thee no longer.

"No truth was ever more delicious; none was ever more detestable. I fight against conviction, and I cling to it. That I love thee no longer is at once a subject of joy, and of mourning. I struggle to believe thee superior to this shock; that thou wilt be happy, though deserted by me. Whatever be thy destiny, my reason will not allow me to be miserable on that account. Yet I would give the world—I would forfeit every claim but that which I hope upon the heart of Constantia—to be sure that thy tranquillity will survive this stroke.

"But let come what will, look no longer to me for offices of love. Henceforth all intercourse of tenderness ceases,—perhaps all personal intercourse whatever. But though this good be refused, thou art sure of independence. I will guard thy ease and thy honour with a father's scrupulousness. Would to Heaven a sister could be created by adoption! I am willing, for thy sake, to be an impostor. I will own thee to the world for my sister, and carry thee whither the cheat shall never be detected. I would devote my whole life to prevarication and falsehood for thy sake, if that would suffice to make thee happy."

To this speech Helena had nothing to answer: her sobs and tears choked all utterance. She hid her face with her handkerchief, and sat powerless and overwhelmed with despair. Ormond traversed the room uneasily, sometimes moving to and fro with quick steps, sometimes standing and eyeing her with looks of compassion. At length he spoke:—

"It is time to leave you. This is the first night that you will spend in dreary solitude. I know it will be sleepless and full of agony; but the sentence cannot be recalled. Henceforth regard me as a brother. I will prove myself one. All other claims are swallowed up in a superior affection." In saying this, he left the house, and, almost without intending it, found himself in a few minutes at Mr. Dudley's door.

CHAPTER VII.

The politeness of Melbourne had somewhat abated Mr. Dudley's aversion to society. He allowed

himself sometimes to comply with urgent invitations. On this evening he happened to be at the house of that gentleman. Ormond entered, and found Constantia alone. An interview of this kind was seldom enjoyed, though earnestly wished for, by Constantia, who was eager to renew the subject of her first conversation with Ormond. I have already explained the situation of her mind. All her wishes were centred in the marriage of Helena. The eligibility of this scheme, in every view which she took of it, appeared in a stronger light. She was not aware that any new obstacle had arisen. She was free from the consciousness of any secret bias. Much less did her modesty suspect that she herself would prove an insuperable impediment to this plan.

There was more than usual solemnity in Ormond's demeanour. After he was seated, he continued, contrary to his custom, to be silent. These singularities were not unobserved by Constantia. They did not, however, divert her from her purpose.

"I am glad to see you," said she. "We so seldom enjoy the advantage of a private interview. I have much to say to you. You authorize me to deliberate on your actions, and, in some measure, to prescribe to you. This is a province which I hope to discharge with integrity and diligence. I am convinced that Helena's happiness and your own can be secured in one way only. I will emulate your candour, and come at once to the point. Why have you delayed so long the justice that is due to this helpless and lovely girl? There are a thousand reasons why you should think of no other alternative. You have been pleased to repose some degree of confidence in my judgement. Hear my full and deliberate opinion. Make Helena your wife. This is the unequivocal prescription of your duty."

This address was heard by Ormond without surprise; but his countenance betrayed the acuteness of his feelings. The bitterness that overflowed his heart was perceptible in his tone when he spoke:—

"Most egregiously are you deceived. Such is the line with which human capacity presumes to fathom futurity. With all your discernment you do not see that marriage would effectually destroy me. You do not see that, whether beneficial or otherwise in its effects, marriage is impossible. You are merely prompting me to suicide: but how shall I inflict the wound? Where is the weapon? See you not that I am powerless? Leap, say you, into the flames. See you not that I am fettered? Will a mountain move at your bidding? Sooner than I in the path which you prescribe to me."

This speech was inexplicable. She pressed him to speak less enigmatically. Had he formed his resolution? If so, arguments and remonstrances were superfluous. Without noticing her interrogatories, he continued:—

"I am too hasty in condemning you. You judge, not against, but without knowledge. When sufficiently informed, your decision will be right. Yet how can you be ignorant? Can you for a moment contemplate yourself and me, and not perceive an insuperable bar to this union?"

"You place me," said Constantia, "in a very disagreeable predicament. I have not deserved this treatment from you. This is an unjustifiable deviation from plain dealing. Of what impediment do you speak. I can safely say that I know of none."

"Well," resumed he, with augmented eagerness, "I must supply you with knowledge. I repeat, that I perfectly rely on the rectitude of your judgement. Summon all your sagacity and disinterestedness and choose for me. You know in what light Helena has been viewed by me. I have ceased to view her in this light. She has become an object of indifference. Nay, I am not certain that I do not hate her,—not indeed for her own sake, but because I love another. Shall I marry her whom I hate, when there exists one whom I love with unconquerable ardour?"

Constantia was thunderstruck with this intelligence. She looked at him with some expression of doubt. "How is this?" said she. "Why did you not tell me this before?"

"When I last talked with you on this subject I knew it not myself. It has occurred since. I have seized the first occasion that has offered to inform you of it. Say now, since such is my condition, ought Helena to be my wife?"

Constantia was silent. Her heart bled for what she foresaw would be the sufferings and forlorn destiny of Helena. She had not courage to inquire further into this new engagement.

"I wait for your answer, Constantia. Shall I defraud myself of all the happiness which would accrue from a match of inclination? Shall I put fetters on my usefulness? This is the style in which you speak. Shall I preclude all the good to others that would flow from a suitable alliance? Shall I abjure the woman I love, and marry her whom I hate?"

"Hatred," replied the lady, "is a harsh word. Helena has not deserved that you should hate her. I own this is a perplexing circumstance. It would be wrong to determine hastily. Suppose you give yourself to Helena: will more than yourself be injured by it? Who is this lady? Will she be rendered unhappy by a determination in favour of another? This is a point of the utmost importance."

At these words Ormond forsook his seat, and advanced close up to Constantia:—"You say true. This is a point of inexpressible importance. It would be presumption in me to decide. That is the lady's own province. And now, say truly, are you willing to accept Ormond with all his faults? Who but yourself could be mistress of all the springs of my soul? I know the sternness of your probity. This discovery will only make you more strenuously the friend of Helena. Yet why should you not shun either extreme? Lay yourself out of view. And yet, perhaps the happiness of

Constantia is not unconcerned in this question. Is there no part of me in which you discover your own likeness? Am I deceived, or is it an incontrollable destiny that unites us?"

This declaration was truly unexpected by Constantia. She gathered from it nothing but excitements of grief. After some pause she said:—"This appeal to me has made no change in my opinion. I still think that justice requires you to become the husband of Helena. As to me, do you think my happiness rests upon so slight a foundation? I cannot love but when my understanding points out to me the propriety of love. Ever since I have known you I have looked upon you as rightfully belonging to another. Love could not take place in my circumstances. Yet I will not conceal from you my sentiments. I am not sure that, in different circumstances, I should not have loved. I am acquainted with your worth. I do not look for a faultless man. I have met with none whose blemishes were fewer.

"It matters not, however, what I should have been. I cannot interfere, in this case, with the claims of my friend. I have no passion to struggle with. I hope, in every vicissitude, to enjoy your esteem, and nothing more. There is but one way in which mine can be secured, and that is by espousing this unhappy girl."

"No!" exclaimed Ormond. "Require not impossibilities. Helena can never be any thing to me. I should, with unspeakably more willingness, assail my own life."

"What," said the lady, "will Helena think of this sudden and dreadful change? I cannot bear to think upon the feelings that this information will excite."

"She knows it already. I have this moment left her. I explained to her, in a few words, my motives, and assured her of my unalterable resolution. I have vowed never to see her more but as a brother; and this vow she has just heard."

Constantia could not suppress her astonishment and compassion at this intelligence:—"No surely; you could not be so cruel! And this was done with your usual abruptness, I suppose. Precipitate and implacable man! Cannot you foresee the effects of this madness? You have planted a dagger in her heart. You have disappointed me. I did not think you could act so inhumanly."

"Nay, beloved Constantia, be not so liberal of your reproaches. Would you have me deceive her? She must shortly have known it. Could the truth be told too soon?"

"Much too soon," replied the lady, fervently. "I have always condemned the maxims by which you act. Your scheme is headlong and barbarous. Could not you regard with some little compassion that love that sacrificed, for your unworthy sake, honest fame and the peace of virtue? Is she not a poor outcast, goaded by compunction, and hooted at by a malignant and misjudging world? And who was it that reduced her to this deplorable condition? For whose sake did she willingly consent to brave evils, by which the stoutest heart is appalled? Did this argue no greatness of mind? Who ever surpassed her in fidelity and tenderness? But thus has she been rewarded. I shudder to think what may be the event. Her courage cannot possibly support her against treatment so harsh, so perversely and wantonly cruel. Heaven grant that you are not shortly made bitterly to lament this rashness!"

Ormond was penetrated with these reproaches. They persuaded him for a moment that his deed was wrong; that he had not unfolded his intentions to Helena with a suitable degree of gentleness and caution. Little more was said on this occasion. Constantia exhorted him, in the most earnest and pathetic manner, to return and recant, or extenuate, his former declarations. He could not be brought to promise compliance. When he parted from her, however, he was half resolved to act as she advised. Solitary reflection made him change this resolution, and he returned to his own house.

During the night he did little else than ruminare on the events of the preceding evening. He entertained little doubt of his ultimate success with Constantia. She gratified him in nothing, but left him every thing to hope. She had hitherto, it seems, regarded him with indifference, but this had been sufficiently explained. That conduct would be pursued, and that passion be entertained, which her judgement should previously approve. What then was the obstacle? It originated in the claims of Helena. But what were these claims? It was fully ascertained that he should never be united to this girl. If so, the end contemplated by Constantia, and for the sake of which only his application was rejected, could never be obtained. Unless her rejection of him could procure a husband for her friend, it would, on her own principles, be improper and superfluous.

What was to be done with Helena? It was a terrible alternative to which he was reduced:—to marry her or see her perish. But was this alternative quite sure? Could not she, by time or by judicious treatment, be reconciled to her lot? It was to be feared that he had not made a suitable beginning: and yet, perhaps it was most expedient that a hasty and abrupt sentence should be succeeded by forbearance and lenity. He regretted his precipitation, and though unused to the melting mood, tears were wrung from him by the idea of the misery which he had probably occasioned. He was determined to repair his misconduct as speedily as possible, and to pay her a conciliating visit the next morning.

He went early to her house. He was informed by the servant that her mistress had not yet risen. "Was it usual," he asked, "for her to lie so late?" "No," he was answered, "she never knew it happen before, but she supposed her mistress was not well. She was just going into her chamber to see what was the matter."

"Why," said Ormond, "do you suppose that she is sick?"

"She was poorly last night. About nine o'clock she sent out for some physic to make her sleep."

"To make her sleep?" exclaimed Ormond, in a fettering and affrighted accent.

"Yes: she said she wanted it for that. So I went to the 'pothecary's. When I came back she was very poorly indeed. I asked her if I might not sit up with her. 'No,' she said, 'I do not want anybody. You may go to bed as soon as you please, and tell Fabian to do the same. I shall not want you again.'"

"What did you buy?"

"Some kind of water,—laud'num I think they call it. She wrote it down, and I carried the paper to Mr. Eckhart's, and he gave it to me in a bottle, and I gave it to my mistress."

"'Tis well: retire: I will see how she is myself."

Ormond had conceived himself fortified against every disaster: he looked for nothing but evil, and therefore, in ordinary cases, regarded its approach without fear or surprise. Now, however, he found that his tremors would not be stilled: his perturbations increased with every step that brought him nearer to her chamber. He knocked, but no answer was returned. He opened the door, advanced to the bed side, and drew back the curtains. He shrunk from the spectacle that presented itself. Was this the Helena that, a few hours before, was blithesome with health and radiant with beauty? Her visage was serene, but sunken and pale. Death was in every line of it. To his tremulous and hurried scrutiny every limb was rigid and cold.

The habits of Ormond tended to obscure the appearances, if not to deaden the emotions of sorrow. He was so much accustomed to the frustration of well-intended efforts, and confided so much in his own integrity, that he was not easily disconcerted. He had merely to advert, on this occasion, to the tumultuous state of his feelings, in order to banish their confusion and restore himself to calm. "Well," said he, as he dropped the curtain and turned towards another part of the room, "this, without doubt, is a rueful spectacle. Can it be helped? Is there in man the power of recalling her? There is none such in me.

"She is gone: well then, she *is* gone. If she were fool enough to die, I am not fool enough to follow her. I am determined to live and be happy notwithstanding. Why not?"

"Yet, this is a piteous night. What is impossible to undo, might be easily prevented. A piteous spectacle! But what else, on an ampler scale, is the universe? Nature is a theatre of suffering. What corner is unvisited by calamity and pain? I have chosen as became me. I would rather precede thee to the grave, than live to be thy husband.

"Thou hast done my work for me. Thou hast saved thyself and me from a thousand evils. Thou hast acted as seemed to thee best, and I am satisfied.

"Hast thou decided erroneously? They that know thee need not marvel at that. Endless have been the proofs of thy frailty. In favour of this last act something may be said. It is the last thou wilt ever commit. Others only will experience its effects; thou hast, at least, provided for thy own safety.

"But what is here? A letter for me? Had thy understanding been as prompt as thy fingers, I could have borne with thee. I can easily divine the contents of this epistle."

He opened it, and found the tenor to be as follows:—

"You did not use, my dear friend, to part with me in this manner. You never before treated me so roughly. I am, sorry, indeed I am, that I ever offended you. Could you suppose that I intended it? And if you knew that I meant not offence, why did you take offence?"

"I'm very unhappy, for I have lost you, my friend. You will never see me more, you say. That is very hard. I have deserved it to-be-sure, but I do not know how it has happened. Nobody more desired to please than I have done. Morning, noon, night, it was my only study; but you will love me no more; you will see me no more. Forgive me, my friend, but I must say it is very hard.

"You said rightly; I do not wish to live without my friend. I have spent my life happily heretofore. 'Tis true, these have been transient uneasinesses, but your love was a reward and a cure for every thing. I desired nothing better in this world. Did you ever hear me murmur? No; I was not so unjust. My lot was happy, infinitely beyond my deserving. I merited not to be loved by you. Oh that I had suitable words to express my gratitude for your kindness! but this last meeting,—how different from that which went before? Yet even then there was something on your brow like discontent, which I could not warble nor whisper away as I used to do. But sad as this was, it was nothing like the last.

"Could Ormond be so stern and so terrible? You knew that I would die, but you need not have talked as if I were in the way, and as if you had rather I should die than live. But one thing I rejoice at; I am a poor silly girl, but Constantia is a noble and accomplished one. Most joyfully do I resign you to her, my dear friend. You say you love her. She need

not be afraid of accepting you. There will be no danger of your preferring another to her. It was very natural and very right for you to prefer her to me. She and you will be happy in each other. It is this that sweetens the cup I am going to drink. Never did I go to sleep with more good-will than I now go to death. Fare you well, my dear friend."

This letter was calculated to make a deeper impression on Ormond than even the sight of Helena's corpse. It was in vain, for some time, that he endeavoured to reconcile himself to this event. It was seldom that he was able to forget it. He was obliged to exert all his energies to enable him to support the remembrance. The task was of course rendered easier by time.

It was immediately requisite to attend to the disposal of the corpse. He felt himself unfit for this mournful office. He was willing to relieve himself from it by any expedient. Helena's next neighbour was an old lady, whose scruples made her shun all direct intercourse with this unhappy girl; yet she had performed many acts of neighbourly kindness. She readily obeyed the summons of Ormond, on this occasion, to take charge of affairs till another should assert it. Ormond returned home, and sent the following note to Constantia:—

"You have predicted aright. Helena is dead. In a mind like your's every grief will be suspended, and every regard absorbed in the attention due to the remains of this unfortunate girl. *I cannot attend to them.*"

Constantia was extremely shocked by this intelligence, but she was not unmindful of her duty. She prepared herself, with mournful alacrity, for the performance of it. Every thing that the occasion demanded was done with diligence and care. Till this was accomplished, Ormond could not prevail upon himself to appear upon the stage. He was informed of this by a note from Constantia, who requested him to take possession of the unoccupied dwelling and its furniture.

Among the terms of his contract with Helena, Ormond had voluntarily inserted the exclusive property of a house and its furniture in this city, with funds adequate to her plentiful maintenance. These he had purchased and transferred to her. To this he had afterwards added a rural retreat, in the midst of spacious and well-cultivated fields, three miles from Perth-Amboy, and seated on the right bank of the Sound. It is proper to mention that this farm was formerly the property of Mr. Dudley,—had been fitted up by him, and used as his summer abode during his prosperity. In the division of his property it had fallen to one of his creditors, from whom it had been purchased by Ormond. This circumstance, in conjunction with the love which she bore to Constantia, had suggested to Helena a scheme, which her want of foresight would, in different circumstances, have occasioned her to overlook. It was that of making her testament, by which she bequeathed all that she possessed to her friend. This was not done without the knowledge and cheerful concurrence of Ormond, who, together with Melbourne and another respectable citizen, were named executors. Melbourne and his friend were induced by their respect for Constantia to consent to this nomination.

This had taken place before Ormond and Constantia had been introduced to each other. After this event, Ormond had sometimes been employed in contriving means for securing to his new friend and her father a subsistence, more certain than the will of Helena could afford. Her death he considered as an event equally remote and undesirable. This event, however unexpectedly, had now happened, and precluded the necessity of further consideration on this head.

Constantia could not but accept this bequest. Had it been her wish to decline it, it was not in her power, but she justly regarded the leisure and independence thus conferred upon her, as inestimable benefits. It was a source of unbounded satisfaction on her father's account, who was once more seated in the bosom of affluence. Perhaps, in a rational estimate, one of the most fortunate events that could have befallen those persons, was that period of adversity through which they had been doomed to pass. Most of the defects that adhered to the character of Mr. Dudley, had, by this means, been exterminated. He was now cured of those prejudices which his early prosperity had instilled, and which had flowed from luxurious indigencies. He had learned to estimate himself at his true value, and to sympathize with sufferings which he himself had partaken.

It was easy to perceive in what light Constantia was regarded by her father. He never reflected on his relation to her without rapture. Her qualities were the objects of his adoration. He resigned himself with pleasure to her guidance. The chain of subordination and duties was reversed. By the ascendancy of her genius and wisdom the province of protection and the tribute of homage had devolved upon her. This had resulted from incessant experience of the wisdom of her measures, and the spectacle of her fortitude and skill in every emergency.

It seemed as if but one evil adhered to the condition of this man. His blindness was an impediment to knowledge and enjoyment, of which, the utmost to be hoped was, that he should regard it without pungent regret, and that he should sometimes forget it; that his mind should occasionally stray into foreign paths, and lose itself in sprightly conversations, or benign reveries. This evil, however, was by no means remediless.

A surgeon of uncommon skill had lately arrived from Europe. He was one of the numerous agents and dependants of Ormond and had been engaged to abdicate his native country for purposes widely remote from his profession. The first use that was made of him was to introduce him to Mr. Dudley. The diseased organs were critically examined, and the patient was, with considerable difficulty, prevailed upon to undergo the necessary operation. His success corresponded with Constantia's wishes, and her father was once more restored to the enjoyment

of light.

These were auspicious events. Constantia held herself amply repaid by them for all that she had suffered. These sufferings had indeed been light, when compared with the effects usually experienced by others in a similar condition. Her wisdom had extracted its sting from adversity, and without allowing herself to feel much of the evils of its reign, had employed it as an instrument by which the sum of her present happiness was increased. Few suffered less in the midst of poverty, than she. No one ever extracted more felicity from the prosperous reverse.

CHAPTER VIII.

When time had somewhat mitigated the memory of the late disaster, the intercourse between Ormond and Constantia was renewed. The lady did not overlook her obligations to her friend. It was to him that she was indebted for her father's restoration to sight, and to whom both owed, essentially, though indirectly, their present affluence. In her mind, gratitude was no perverse or ignoble principle. She viewed this man as the author of extensive benefits, of which her situation enabled her to judge with more accuracy than others. It created no bias on her judgement, or, at least, none of which she was sensible. Her equity was perfectly unfettered; and she decided in a way contrary to his inclination, with as little scruple as if the benefits had been received, not by herself, but by him. She indeed intended his benefit, though she thwarted his inclinations.

She had few visitants beside himself. Their interviews were daily and unformal. The fate of Helena never produced any reproaches on her part. She saw the uselessness of recrimination, not only because she desired to produce emotions different from those which infective is adapted to excite, but because it was more just to soothe than to exasperate the inquietudes which haunted him.

She now enjoyed leisure. She had always been solicitous for mental improvement. Any means subservient to this end were valuable. The conversation of Ormond was an inexhaustible fund. By the variety of topics and the excitement to reflection it supplied, a more plenteous influx of knowledge was produced than could have flowed from any other source. There was no end to the detailing of facts, and the canvassing of theories.

I have already said that Ormond was engaged in schemes of an arduous and elevated nature. These were the topics of epistolary discussion between him and a certain number of coadjutors, in different parts of the world. In general discourse, it was proper to maintain a uniform silence respecting these, not only because they involved principles and views remote from vulgar apprehension, but because their success, in some measure, depended on their secrecy. He could not give a stronger proof of his confidence in the sagacity and steadiness of Constantia than he now gave, by imparting to her his schemes, and requesting her advice and assistance in the progress of them.

His disclosures, however, were imperfect. What knowledge was imparted, instead of appeasing, only tended to inflame her curiosity. His answers to her inquiries were prompt, and, at first sight, sufficiently explicit; but upon reconsideration, an obscurity seemed to gather round them, to be dispelled by new interrogatories. These, in like manner, effected a momentary purpose, but were sure speedily to lead into new conjectures, and reimmerge her in doubts. The task was always new, was always on the point of being finished, and always to be recommenced.

Ormond aspired to nothing more ardently than to hold the reins of opinion,—to exercise absolute power over the conduct of others, not by constraining their limbs, or by exacting obedience to his authority, but in a way of which his subjects should be scarcely conscious. He desired that his guidance should control their steps, but that his agency, when most effectual, should be least suspected.

If he were solicitous to govern the thoughts of Constantia, or to regulate her condition, the mode which he pursued had hitherto been admirably conducive to that end. To have found her friendless and indigent, accorded, with the most fortunate exactness, with his views. That she should have descended to this depth, from a prosperous height, and therefore be a stranger to the torpor which attends hereditary poverty, and be qualified rightly to estimate and use the competence to which, by this means, she was now restored, was all that his providence would have prescribed.

Her thoughts were equally obsequious to his direction. The novelty and grandeur of his schemes could not fail to transport a mind ardent and capacious as that of Constantia. Here his fortune had been no less propitious. He did not fail to discover, and was not slow to seize, the advantages flowing thence. By explaining his plans, opportunity was furnished to lead and to confine her meditations to the desirable tract. By adding fictitious embellishments, he adapted it with more exactness to his purpose. By piecemeal and imperfect disclosures her curiosity was kept alive.

I have described Ormond at having contracted a passion for Constantia. This passion certainly existed in his heart, but it must not be conceived to be immutable, or to operate independently of all those impulses and habits which time had interwoven in his character. The person and affections of this woman were the objects sought by him, and which it was the dearest purpose of his existence to gain. This was his supreme good, though the motives to which it was indebted for

its pre-eminence in his imagination were numerous and complex.

I have enumerated his opinions on the subject of wedlock. The question will obviously occur, whether Constantia was sought by him with upright or flagitious views. His sentiments and resolution on this head had for a time fluctuated, but were now steadfast. Marriage was, in his eyes, hateful and absurd as ever. Constantia was to be obtained by any means. If other terms were rejected, he was willing, for the sake of this good, to accept her as a wife; but this was a choice to be made only when every expedient was exhausted for reconciling her to a compact of a different kind.

For this end he, prescribed to himself a path suited to the character of this lady. He made no secret of his sentiments and views. He avowed his love, and described, without scruple, the scope of his wishes. He challenged her to confute his principles, and promised a candid audience and profound consideration to her arguments. Her present opinions he knew to be adverse to his own, but he hoped to change them by subtlety and perseverance. His further hopes and designs he concealed from her. She was unaware that if he were unable to effect a change in her creed, he was determined to adopt a system of imposture,—to assume the guise of a convert to her doctrines, and appear as devout as herself in his notions of the sanctity of marriage.

Perhaps it was not difficult to have foreseen the consequence of these projects. Constantia's peril was imminent. This arose not only from the talents and address of Ormond, but from the community of sentiment which already existed between them. She was unguarded in a point where, if not her whole yet doubtless her principal security and strongest bulwark would have existed. She was unacquainted with religion. She was unhabituated to conform herself to any standard but that connected with the present life. Matrimonial as well as every other human duty, was disconnected in her mind with any awful or divine sanction. She formed her estimate of good and evil on nothing but terrestrial and visible consequences.

This defect in her character she owed to her father's system of education. Mr. Dudley was an adherent to what he conceived to be true religion. No man was more passionate in his eulogy of his own form of devotion and belief, or in his invectives against atheistical dogmas; but he reflected that religion assumed many forms, one only of which is salutary or true, and that truth in this respect is incompatible with infantile and premature instruction.

To this subject it was requisite to apply the force of a mature and unfettered understanding. For this end he laboured to lead away the juvenile reflections of Constantia from religious topics, to detain them in the paths of history and eloquence,—to accustom her to the accuracy of geometrical deduction, and to the view of those evils that have flowed in all ages, from mistaken piety.

In consequence of this scheme, her habits rather than her opinions, were undevout. Religion was regarded by her not with disbelief, but with absolute indifference. Her good sense forbade her to decide before inquiry, but her modes of study and reflection were foreign to, and unfitted her for this species of discussion. Her mind was seldom called to meditate on this subject, and when it occurred, her perceptions were vague and obscure. No objects, in the sphere which she occupied, were calculated to suggest to her the importance of investigation and certainty.

It becomes me to confess, however reluctantly, thus much concerning my friend. However abundantly endowed in other respects, she was a stranger to the felicity and excellence flowing from religion. In her struggles with misfortune, she was supported and cheered by the sense of no approbation but her own. A defect of this nature will perhaps be regarded as of less moment when her extreme youth is remembered. All opinion in her mind were mutable, inasmuch as the progress of her understanding was incessant.

It was otherwise with Ormond. His disbelief was at once unchangeable and strenuous. The universe was to him a series of events, connected by an undesigning and inscrutable necessity, and an assemblage of forms, to which no beginning or end can be conceived. Instead of transient views and vague ideas, his meditations, on religious points, had been intense. Enthusiasm was added to disbelief, and he not only dissented but abhorred.

He deemed it prudent, however, to disguise sentiments which, if unfolded in their full force, would wear to her the appearance of insanity. But he saw and was eager to improve the advantage which his anti-nuptial creed derived from the unsettled state of her opinions. He was not unaware, likewise, of the auspicious and indispensable co-operation of love. If this advocate were wanting in her bosom, all his efforts would be in vain. If this pleader were engaged in his behalf, he entertained no doubts of his ultimate success. He conceived that her present situation, all whose comforts were the fruits of his beneficence, and which afforded her no other subject of contemplation than himself, was as favourable as possible to the growth of this passion.

Constantia was acquainted with his wishes. She could not fail to see that she might speedily be called upon to determine a momentous question. Her own sensations, and the character of Ormond were, therefore, scrutinized with suspicious attention. Marriage could be justified in her eyes only by community of affections and opinions. She might love without the sanction of her judgement; but, while destitute of that sanction, she would never suffer it to sway her conduct.

Ormond was imperfectly known. What knowledge she had gained flowed chiefly from his own lips, and was therefore unattended with certainty. What portion of deceit or disguise was mixed with his conversation could be known only by witnessing his actions with her own eyes and comparing his testimony with that of others. He had embraced a multitude of opinions which

appeared to her erroneous. Till these were rectified, and their conclusions were made to correspond, wedlock was improper. Some of these obscurities might be dispelled, and some of these discords be resolved into harmony by time. Meanwhile it was proper to guard the avenues to her heart, and screen herself from self-delusion.

There was no motive to conceal her reflections on this topic from her father. Mr. Dudley discovered, without her assistance, the views of Ormond. His daughter's happiness was blended with his own. He lived but in the consciousness of her tranquillity. Her image was seldom absent from his eyes, and never from his thoughts. The emotions which it excited sprung but in part from the relationship of father. It was gratitude and veneration which she claimed from him, and which filled him with rapture.

He ruminated deeply on the character of Ormond. The political and anti-theological tenets of this man were regarded, not merely with disapprobation, but antipathy. He was not ungrateful for the benefits which had been conferred upon him. Ormond's peculiarities of sentiment excited no impatience, as long as he was regarded merely as a visitant. It was only as one claiming to possess his daughter that his presence excited, in Mr. Dudley, trepidation and loathing.

Ormond was unacquainted with what was passing in the mind of Mr. Dudley. The latter conceived his own benefactor and his daughter's friend to be entitled to the most scrupulous and affable urbanity. His objections to a nearer alliance were urged with frequent and pathetic vehemence only in his private interviews with Constantia. Ormond and he seldom met. Mr. Dudley, as soon as his sight was perfectly retrieved, betook himself with eagerness to painting,—an amusement which his late privations had only contributed to endear to him.

Things remained nearly on their present footing for some months. At the end of this period some engagement obliged Ormond to leave the city. He promised to return with as much speed as circumstances would admit. Meanwhile, his letters supplied her with topics of reflection. These were frequently received, and were models of that energy of style which results from simplicity of structure, from picturesque epithets, and from the compression of much meaning into few words. His arguments seldom imparted conviction, but delight never failed to flow from their lucid order and cogent brevity. His narratives were unequalled for rapidity and comprehensiveness. Every sentence was a treasury to moralists and painters.

CHAPTER IX.

Domestic and studious occupations did not wholly engross the attention of Constantia. Social pleasures were precious to her heart, and she was not backward to form fellowships and friendships with those around her. Hitherto she had met with no one entitled to an uncommon portion of regard, or worthy to supply the place of the friend of her infancy. Her visits were rare, and, as yet, chiefly confined to the family of Mr. Melbourne. Here she was treated with flattering distinctions, and enjoyed opportunities of extending as far as she pleased her connections with the gay and opulent. To this she felt herself by no means inclined, and her life was still eminently distinguished by love of privacy and habits of seclusion.

One morning, feeling an indisposition to abstraction, she determined to drop in, for an hour, on Mrs. Melbourne. Finding Mrs. Melbourne's parlour unoccupied, she proceeded unceremoniously to an apartment on the second floor, where that lady was accustomed to sit. She entered, but this room was likewise empty. Here she cast her eyes on a collection of prints, copied from the Farnese collection, and employed herself for some minutes in comparing the forms of Titiano and the Caracchi.

Suddenly, notes of peculiar sweetness were wafted to her ear from without. She listened with surprise, for the tones of her father's lute were distinctly recognized. She hied to the window, which chanced to look into a back court. The music was perceived to come from the window of the next house. She recollected her interview with the purchaser of her instrument at the music shop, and the powerful impression which the stranger's countenance had made upon her.

The first use she had made of her recent change of fortune was to endeavour to recover this instrument. The music dealer, when reminded of the purchase, and interrogated as to the practicability of regaining the lute, for which she was willing to give treble the price, answered that he had no knowledge of the foreign lady beyond what was gained at the interview which took place in Constantia's presence. Of her name, residence, and condition, he knew nothing, and had endeavoured in vain to acquire knowledge.

Now, this incident seemed to have furnished her with the information she had so earnestly sought. This performer was probably the stranger herself. Her residence so near the Melbournes, and in a house which was the property of the magistrate, might be means of information as to her condition, and perhaps of introduction to a personal acquaintance.

While engaged in these reflections, Mrs. Melbourne entered the apartment. Constantia related this incident to her friend, and stated the motives of her present curiosity. Her friend willingly imparted what knowledge she possessed relative to this subject. This was the sum.

This house had been hired, previously to the appearance of the yellow fever, by an English family, who left their native soil with a view to a permanent abode in the new world. They had scarcely

taken possession of the dwelling when they were terrified by the progress of the epidemic. They had fled from the danger; but this circumstance, in addition to some others, induced them to change their scheme. An evil so unwonted as pestilence impressed them with a belief of perpetual danger as long as they remained on this side of the ocean. They prepared for an immediate return to England.

For this end their house was relinquished, and their splendid furniture destined to be sold by auction. Before this event could take place, application was made to Mr. Melbourne by a lady whom his wife's description showed to be the same person of whom Constantia was in search. She not only rented the house, but negotiated by means of her landlord for the purchase of the furniture.

Her servants were blacks, and all but one, who officiated as steward, unacquainted with the English language. Some accident had proved her name to be Beauvais. She had no visitants, very rarely walked abroad, and then only in the evening with a female servant in attendance. Her hours appeared to be divided between the lute and the pen. As to her previous history or her present sources of subsistence, Mrs. Melbourne's curiosity had not been idle, but no consistent information was obtainable. Some incidents had given birth to the conjecture that she was wife, or daughter, or sister of Beauvais, the partizan of Brissot, whom the faction of Marat had lately consigned to the scaffold; but this conjecture was unsupported by suitable evidence.

This tale by no means diminished Constantia's desire of personal intercourse. She saw no means of effecting her purpose. Mrs. Melbourne was unqualified to introduce her, having been discouraged in all the advances she had made towards a more friendly intercourse. Constantia reflected, that her motives to seclusion would probably induce this lady to treat others as her friend had been treated.

It was possible, however, to gain access to her, if not as a friend, yet as the original proprietor of the lute. She determined to employ the agency of Roseveldt, the music-shopman, for the purpose of rebuying this instrument. To enforce her application, she commissioned this person, whose obliging temper entitled him to confidence, to state her inducements for originally offering it for sale, and her motives for desiring the repossession on any terms which the lady thought proper to dictate.

Roseveldt fixed an hour in which it was convenient for him to execute her commission. This hour having passed, Constantia, who was anxious respecting his success, hastened to his house. Roseveldt delivered the instrument, which the lady, having listened to his pleas and offers, directed to be gratuitously restored to Constantia. At first, she had expressed her resolution to part with it on no account, and at no price. Its music was her only recreation, and this instrument surpassed any she had ever before seen, in the costliness and delicacy of its workmanship. But Roseveldt's representations produced an instant change of resolution, and she not only eagerly consented to restore it, but refused to receive any thing in payment.

Constantia was deeply affected by this unexpected generosity. It was not her custom to be outstripped in this career. She now condemned herself for her eagerness to regain this instrument. During her father's blindness it was a powerful, because the only, solace of his melancholy. Now he had no longer the same anxieties to encounter, and books and the pencil were means of gratification always at hand. The lute therefore, she imagined, could be easily dispensed with by Mr. Dudley, whereas its power of consoling might be as useful to the unknown lady as it had formerly been to her father. She readily perceived in what manner it became her to act. Roseveldt was commissioned to redeliver the lute, and to entreat the lady's acceptance of it. The tender was received without hesitation, and Roseveldt dismissed without any inquiry relative to Constantia.

These transactions were reflected on by Constantia with considerable earnestness. The conduct of the stranger, her affluent and lonely state, her conjectural relationship to the actors in the great theatre of Europe, were mingled together in the fancy of Constantia, and embellished with the conceptions of her beauty derived from their casual meeting at Roseveldt's. She forgot not their similitude in age and sex, and delighted to prolong the dream of future confidence and friendship to take place between them. Her heart sighed for a companion fitted to partake in all her sympathies.

This strain, by being connected with the image of a being like herself, who had grown up with her from childhood, who had been entwined with her earliest affections, but from whom she had been severed from the period at which her father's misfortunes commenced, and of whose present condition she was wholly ignorant, was productive of the deepest melancholy. It filled her with excruciating, and, for a time, irremediable sadness. It formed a kind of paroxysm, which, like some febrile affections, approach and retire without warning, and against the most vehement struggles.

In this mood her fancy was thronged with recollections of scenes in which her friend had sustained a part. Their last interview was commonly revived in her remembrance so forcibly as almost to produce a lunatic conception of its reality. A ditty which they sung together on that occasion flowed to her lips. If ever human tones were qualified to convey the whole soul, they were those of Constantia when she sang:—

"The breeze awakes, the bark prepares,
To waft me to a distant shore:

But far beyond this world of cares
We meet again to part no more."

These fits were accustomed to approach and to vanish by degrees. They were transitory, but not unfrequent, and were pregnant with such agonizing tenderness, such heart-breaking sighs, and a flow of such bitter yet delicious tears, that it were not easily decided whether the pleasure or the pain surmounted. When symptoms of their coming were felt she hastened into solitude, that the progress of her feelings might endure no restraint.

On the evening of the day on which the lute had been sent to the foreign lady, Constantia was alone in her chamber immersed in desponding thoughts. From these she was recalled by Fabian, her black servant, who announced a guest. She was loath to break off the thread of her present meditations, and inquired with a tone of some impatience, who was the guest. The servant was unable to tell; it was a young lady whom he had never before seen; she had opened the door herself, and entered the parlour without previous notice.

Constantia paused at this relation. Her thoughts had recently been fixed upon Sophia Westwyn. Since their parting four years before she had heard no tidings of this woman. Her fears imagined no more probable cause of her friend's silence than her death. This, however, was uncertain. The question now occurred, and brought with it sensations that left her no power to move:—was this the guest?

Her doubts were quickly dispelled, for the stranger taking a light from the table, and not brooking the servant's delays, followed Fabian to the chamber of his mistress. She entered with careless freedom, and presented to the astonished eyes of Constantia the figure she had met at Roseveldt's, and the purchaser of her lute.

The stranger advanced towards her with quick steps, and mingling tones of benignity and sprightliness, said:—

"I have come to perform a duty. I have received from you to-day a lute that I valued almost as my best friend. To find another in America, would not, perhaps, be possible; but, certainly, none equally superb and exquisite as this can be found. To show how highly I esteem the gift, I have come in person to thank you for it."—There she stopped.

Constantia could not suddenly recover from the extreme surprise into which the unexpectedness of this meeting had thrown her. She could scarcely sufficiently suppress this confusion to enable her to reply to these rapid effusions of her visitant, who resumed with augmented freedom:—

"I came, as I said, to thank you, but to say the truth that was not all, I came likewise to see you. Having done my errand, I suppose I must go. I would fain stay longer and talk to you a little. Will you give me leave?"

Constantia, scarcely retrieving her composure, stammered out a polite assent. They seated themselves, and the visitant, pressing the hand she had taken, proceeded in a strain so smooth, so flowing, sliding from grave to gay, blending vivacity with tenderness, interpreting Constantia's silence with such keen sagacity, and accounting for the singularities of her own deportment in a way so respectful to her companion, and so worthy of a steadfast and pure mind in herself, that every embarrassment and scruple were quickly banished from their interview.

In an hour the guest took her leave. No promise of repeating her visit, and no request that Constantia would repay it, was made. Their parting seemed to be the last; whatever purpose having been contemplated appeared to be accomplished by this transient meeting. It was of a nature deeply to interest the mind of Constantia. This was the lady who talked with Roseveldt, and bargained with Melbourne, and they had been induced by appearances to suppose her ignorant of any language but French; but her discourse, on the present occasion, was in English, and was distinguished by unrivalled fluency. Her phrases and habits of pronouncing were untinged by any foreign mixture, and bespoke the perfect knowledge of a native of America.

On the next evening, while Constantia was reviewing this transaction, calling up and weighing the sentiments which the stranger had uttered, and indulging some regret at the unlikelihood of their again meeting, Martinette (for I will henceforth call her by her true name) entered the apartment as abruptly as before. She accounted for the visit merely by the pleasure it afforded her, and proceeded in a strain even more versatile and brilliant than before. This interview ended like the first, without any tokens on the part of the guest, of resolution or desire to renew it; but a third interview took place on the ensuing day.

Henceforth Martinette became a frequent but hasty visitant, and Constantia became daily more enamoured of her new acquaintance. She did not overlook peculiarities in the conversation and deportment of this woman. These exhibited no tendencies to confidence or traces of sympathy. They merely denoted large experience, vigorous faculties, and masculine attainments. Herself was never introduced, except as an observer; but her observations on government and manners were profound and critical.

Her education seemed not widely different from that which Constantia had received. It was classical and mathematical; but to this was added a knowledge of political and military transactions in Europe during the present age, which implied the possession of better means of information than books. She depicted scenes and characters with the accuracy of one who had partaken and witnessed them herself.

Constantia's attention had been chiefly occupied by personal concerns. Her youth had passed in contention with misfortune, or in the quietudes of study. She could not be unapprised of contemporary revolutions and wars, but her ideas concerning them were indefinite and vague. Her views and her inferences on this head were general and speculative. Her acquaintance with history was exact and circumstantial, in proportion as she retired backward from her own age. She knew more of the siege of Mutina than that of Lisle; more of the machinations of Cataline and the tumults of Clodius, than of the prostration of the Bastille, and the proscriptions of Marat.

She listened, therefore, with unspeakable eagerness to this reciter, who detailed to her, as the occasion suggested, the progress of action and opinion on the theatre of France and Poland. Conceived and rehearsed as this was with the energy and copiousness of one who sustained a part in the scene, the mind of Constantia was always kept at the pitch of curiosity and wonder.

But, while this historian described the features, personal deportment, and domestic character of Antoinette, Mirabeau and Robespierre, an impenetrable veil was drawn over her own condition. There was a warmth and freedom in her details, which bespoke her own co-agency in these events, but was unattended by transports of indignation or sorrow, or by pauses of abstraction, such as were likely to occur in one whose hopes and fears had been intimately blended with public events.

Constantia could not but derive humiliation from comparing her own slender acquirements with those of her companion. She was sensible that all the differences between them arose from diversities of situation. She was eager to discover in what particulars this diversity consisted. She was for a time withheld, by scruples not easily explained, from disclosing her wishes. An accident, however, occurred to remove these impediments. One evening this unceremonious visitant discovered Constantia busily surveying a chart of the Mediterranean Sea. This circumstance led the discourse to the present state of Syria and Cyprus. Martinette was copious in her details. Constantia listened for a time; and, when a pause ensued, questioned her companion as to the means she possessed of acquiring so much knowledge. This question was proposed with diffidence, and prefaced by apologies.

"Instead of being offended by your question," replied the guest, "I only wonder that it never before occurred to you. Travellers tell us much. Volney and Mariti would have told you nearly all that I have told. With these I have conversed personally, as well as read their books; but my knowledge is, in truth, a species of patrimony. I inherit it."

"Will you be good enough," said Constantia, "to explain yourself?"

"My mother was a Greek of Cyprus. My father was a Slavonian of Ragusa, and I was born in a garden at Aleppo."

"That was a singular concurrence."

"How singular? That a nautical vagrant like my father should sometimes anchor in the Bay of Naples; that a Cyprian merchant should carry his property and daughter beyond the reach of a Turkish sangjack, and seek an asylum so commodious as Napoli; that my father should have dealings with this merchant, see, love, and marry his daughter, and afterwards procure from the French government a consular commission to Aleppo; that the union should in due time be productive of a son and daughter,—are events far from being singular. They happen daily."

"And may I venture to ask if this be your history?"

"The history of my parents. I hope you do not consider the place of my birth as the sole or the most important circumstance of my life."

"Nothing would please me more than to be enabled to compare it with other incidents. I am apt to think that your life is a tissue of surprising events. That the daughter of a Ragusan and Greek should have seen and known so much; that she should talk English with equal fluency and more correctness than a native; that I should now be conversing with her in a corner so remote from Cyprus and Sicily, are events more wonderful than any which I have known."

"Wonderful! Pish! Thy ignorance, thy miscalculation of probabilities is far more so. My father talked to me in Slavonic; my mother and her maids talked to me in Greek. My neighbours talked to me in a medley of Arabic, Syriac, and Turkish. My father's secretary was a scholar. He was as well versed in Lysias and Xenophon as any of their contemporaries. He laboured for ten years to enable me to read a language essentially the same with that I used daily to my nurse and mother. Is it wonderful then that I should be skilful in Slavonic, Greek, and the jargon of Aleppo? To have refrained from learning was impossible. Suppose, a girl, prompt, diligent, inquisitive, to spend ten years of her life partly in Spain, partly in Tuscany, partly in France, and partly in England. With her versatile curiosity and flexible organs would it be possible for her to remain ignorant of each of these languages? Latin is the mother of them all, and presents itself of course to her studious attention."

"I cannot easily conceive motives which should lead you before the age of twenty through so many scenes."

"Can you not? You grew and flourished, like a frail mimosa, in the spot where destiny had planted you. Thank my stars, I am somewhat better than a vegetable. Necessity, it is true, and not choice, set me in motion, but I am not sorry for the consequences."

"Is it too much," said Constantia, with some hesitation, "to request a detail of your youthful adventures?"

"Too much to give, perhaps, at a short notice. To such as you my tale might abound with novelty, while to others, more acquainted with vicissitudes, it would be tedious and flat. I must be gone in a few minutes. For that and for better reasons, I must not be minute. A summary at present will enable you to judge how far a more copious narrative is suited to instruct or to please you."

END OF VOL. II

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VOLUME 2 (OF 3) ***

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