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Title: The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties (Volume 2 of 5)

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Release date: September 15, 2011 [EBook #37438]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Delphine Lettau, Mary Meehan and the Online
Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE WANDERER; OR, FEMALE
DIFFICULTIES (VOLUME 2 OF 5) ***

VOLUME II

[CHAPTER XX](#)
[CHAPTER XXI](#)
[CHAPTER XXII](#)
[CHAPTER XXIII](#)
[CHAPTER XXIV](#)
[CHAPTER XXV](#)
[CHAPTER XXVI](#)
[CHAPTER XXVII](#)
[CHAPTER XXVIII](#)
[CHAPTER XXIX](#)
[CHAPTER XXX](#)
[CHAPTER XXXI](#)
[CHAPTER XXXII](#)
[CHAPTER XXXIII](#)
[CHAPTER XXXIV](#)
[CHAPTER XXXV](#)
[CHAPTER XXXVI](#)
[CHAPTER XXXVII](#)
[CHAPTER XXXVIII](#)
[CHAPTER XXXIX](#)
[CHAPTER XL](#)

[Pg 179]

[Pg 180]

CHAPTER XX

[Pg 181]

Ellis hastened to the house; but her weeping eyes, and disordered state of mind, unfitted her for an immediate encounter with Elinor, and she went straight to her own chamber; where, in severe meditation upon her position, her duties, and her calls for exertion, she 'communed with her own heart.' Although unable, while involved in uncertainties, to arrange any regular plan of general conduct, conscience, that unerring guide, where consulted with sincerity, pointed out to her, that, after what had passed, the first step demanded by honour, was to quit the house, the spot, and the connexions, in which she was liable to keep alive any intercourse with Harleigh. What strikes me to be right, she internally cried, I must do; I may then have some chance for peace, ... however little for happiness!

Her troubled spirits thus appeased, she descended to inform Elinor of the result of her commission. She had received, indeed, no direct message; but Harleigh meant to desire a conference, and that desire would quiet, she hoped, and occupy the ideas of Elinor, so as to divert her from any minute investigation into the circumstances by which it had been preceded.

The door of the dressing room was locked, and she tapped at it for admission in vain; she concluded that Elinor was in her bed-chamber, to which there was no separate entrance, and tapped louder, that she might be heard; but without any better success. She remained, most uneasily, in the landing-place, till the approaching footstep of Harleigh forced her away.

Upon re-entering her own chamber, and taking up her needle-work, she found a letter in its folds.

'All that now remains for the ill-starred Elinor, is to fly the whole odious human race. What can it offer to me but disgust and aversion? Despoiled of the only scheme in which I ever gloried, that of sacrificing in death, to the man whom I adore, the existence I vainly wished to devote to him in life;—despoiled of this—By whom despoiled?—by you! Ellis,—by you!—Yet—Oh incomprehensible!—You, refuse Albert Harleigh!—Never, never could I have believed in so senseless an apathy, but for the changed countenance which shewed the belief in it of Harleigh.

'If your rejection, Ellis, is that you may marry Lord Melbury, which alone makes its truth probable—you have done what is natural and pardonable, though heartless and mercenary; and you will offer me an opportunity to see how Harleigh—Albert Harleigh, will conduct himself when—like me!—he lives without hope.

'If, on the contrary, you have uttered that rejection, from the weak folly of dreading to witness a sudden and a noble end, to a fragile being, sighing for extinction,—on your own head fall your perjury and its consequences!

'I go hence immediately. No matter whither.

'Should I be pursued, I am aware I may soon be traced: but to what purpose? I am independent alike in person, fortune, and mind; I cannot be brought back by force, and I will not be moved by idle persuasion, or hacknied remonstrance. No! blasted in all my worldly views, I will submit to worldly slavery no longer. My aunt, therefore, will do well not to demand one whom she cannot claim.

'Tell her this.

'Harleigh—

'But no,—Harleigh will not follow me! He would deem himself bound to me ever after, by all that men hold honourable amongst one another, if, through any voluntary measure of his own, the shadow of a censure could be cast upon Elinor.

'Oh, perfect Harleigh! I will not involve your generous delicacy—for not yours, not even yours would I be, by the foul constraint of worldly etiquette! I should disdain to owe your smallest care for me to any menace, or to any meanness.

'Let him, not, therefore, Ellis, follow me; and I here pledge myself to preserve my miserable existence, till I see him again, in defiance of every temptation to disburthen myself of its loathsome weight. By the love I bear to him, I pledge myself!

[Pg 183]

'Tell him this.

'ELINOR JODDREL.'

Ellis read this letter in speechless consternation. To be the confidant of so extraordinary a flight, seemed danger to her safety, while it was horror to her mind.

The two commissions with which, so inconsiderately, she was charged, how could she execute? To seek Harleigh again, she thought utterly wrong: and how deliver any message to Mrs Maple, without appearing to be an accomplice in the elopement? She could only prove her innocence by shewing the letter itself, which, in clearing her from that charge, left one equally heavy to fall upon her, of an apparently premeditated design to engage, or, as the world might deem it, inveigle, the young Lord Melbury into marriage. It was evident that upon that idea alone, rested the belief of Elinor in a faithful adherence to the promised rejection; and that the letter which she had addressed to Ellis, was but meant as a memorandum of terror for its observance.

Not long afterwards, Selina came eagerly to relate, that the dinner-bell having been rung, and the family being assembled, and the butler having repeatedly tapt at the door of sister Elinor, to hurry her; Mrs Maple, not alarmed, because accustomed to her inexactitude, had made every body dine: after which, Tomlinson was sent to ask whether sister Elinor chose to come down to the dessert; but he brought word that he could not make either her or Mrs Golding speak. Selina was then desired to enquire the reason of such strange taciturnity; but could not obtain any answer.

Mrs Maple, saying that there was no end to her vagaries, then returned to the drawing-room; concluding, from former similar instances, that, dark, late, and cold as it was, Elinor had walked out with her maid, at the very hour of dinner. But Mr Harleigh, who looked extremely uneasy, requested Selina to see if her sister were not with Miss Ellis.

To this Ellis, by being found alone, was spared any reply; and Selina skipt down stairs to coffee.

How to avoid, or how to sustain the examination which she expected to ensue, occupied the disturbed mind of Ellis, till Selina, in about two hours, returned, exclaiming, 'Sister Elinor grows odder and odder! do you know she is gone out in the chariot? She ordered it herself, without saying a word to aunt, and got in, with Golding, close to the stables! Tomlinson has just owned it to Mr Harleigh, who was grown quite frightened at her not coming home, now it's so pitch dark. Tomlinson says she went into the hall herself, and made him contrive it all. But we are no wiser

[Pg 184]

still as to where she is gone.'

The distress of Ellis what course to take, increased every moment as it grew later, and as the family became more seriously alarmed. Her consciousness that there was no chance of the return of Elinor, made her feel as if culpable in not putting an end to fruitless expectation; yet how produce a letter of which every word demanded secrecy, when all avowal would be useless, since Elinor could not be forced back?

No one ascended again to her chamber till ten o'clock at night: the confusion in the house was then redoubled, and a footman came hastily up stairs to summon her to Mrs Maple.

She descended with terror, and found Mrs Maple in the parlour, with Harleigh, Ireton, and Mrs Fenn.

In a voice of the sharpest reprimand, Mrs Maple began to interrogate her: while Harleigh, who could not endure to witness a haughty rudeness which he did not dare combat, taking the arm of Ireton, whom he could still less bear to leave a spectator to a scene of humiliation to Ellis, quitted the room.

Vain, however, was either enquiry or menace; and Mrs Maple, when she found that she could not obtain any information, though she had heard, from Mrs Fenn, that Ellis had passed the morning with her niece, declared that she would no longer keep so dangerous a pauper in the house; and ordered her to be gone with the first appearance of light.

Ellis, courtseying in silence, retired.

In re-passing through the hall, she met Harleigh and Ireton; the former only bowed to her, impeded by his companion from speaking; but Ireton, stopping her, said, 'O! I have caught you at last! I thought, on my faith, I was always to seek you where you were never to be found. If I had not wanted to do what was right, and proper, and all that, I should have met with you a hundred times; for I never desired to do something that I might just as well let alone, but opportunity offered itself directly.'

Ellis tried to pass him, and he became more serious. 'It's an age that I have wanted to see you, and to tell you how prodigiously ashamed I am of all that business. I don't know how the devil it was, but I went on, tumbling from blunder to blunder, till I got into such a bog, that I could neither stand still, nor make my way out:—'

[Pg 185]

Ellis, gratified that he would offer any sort of apology, and by no means wishing that he would make it more explicit, readily assured him, that she would think no more upon the subject; and hurried to her chamber: while Harleigh, who stood aloof, thought he observed as much of dignity as of good humour, in her flying any further explanation.

But Mrs Maple, who only meant, by her threat, to intimidate Ellis into a confession of what she knew of the absence, and of the purposes, of Elinor, was so much enraged by her calmness, that she told Mrs Fenn to follow her, with positive orders, that, unless she would own the truth, she should quit the house immediately, though it were in the dead of the night.

Violence so inhuman rather inspired than destroyed fortitude in Ellis, who quietly answered, that she would seek an asylum, till day-light, at the neighbouring farmer's.

Selina followed, and, embracing her, with many tears, vowed eternal friendship to her; and asked whether she did not think that Lady Aurora would be equally constant.

'I must hope so!' she answered, sighing, 'for what else have I to hope?'

She now made her preparations; yet decided not to depart, unless again commanded; hoping that this gust of passion would pass away, and that she might remain till the morning.

While awaiting, with much inquietude, some new order, Selina, to her great surprise, came jumping into the room, to assure her that all was well, and more than well; for that her aunt not only ceased to desire to send her away directly, but had changed her whole plan, and was foremost now in wishing her to stay.

Ellis, begging for an explanation, then heard, that Ireton had told Mrs Maple, that there was just arrived at Brighton M. Vinstreigle, a celebrated professor, who taught the harp; and of whom he should be charmed that Selina should take some lessons.

Mrs Maple answered, that it would be the height of extravagance, to send for a man of whom they knew nothing, when they had so fine a performer under their own roof. Ireton replied, that he should have mentioned that from the first, but for the objections which then seemed to be in the way of trusting Miss Ellis with such a charge: but when he again named the professor, Mrs Maple hastily commissioned Selina to acquaint Ellis, that, to-morrow morning they were to begin a regular course of lessons together upon the harp.

[Pg 186]

Though relieved, by being spared the danger and disgrace of a nocturnal expulsion, Ellis shrunk from the project of remaining longer in a house in which Harleigh was admitted at pleasure; and over which Elinor might keep a constant watch. It was consolatory, nevertheless, to her feelings, that Ireton, hitherto her defamer, should acquiesce in this offer, which, at least, not to disoblige Mrs Maple, she would accept for the moment. To give lessons, also, to a young lady of fashion, might make her own chosen scheme, of becoming a governess in some respectable family, more

practicable.

About midnight, a horseman, whom Mrs Maple had sent with enquiries to Brighthelmstone, returned, and informed her, that he could there gather no tidings; but that he had met with a friend of his own, who had told him that he had seen Miss Joddrel, in Mrs Maple's carriage, upon the Portsmouth road.

Mrs Maple, now, seeing all chance of her return, for the night, at an end, said, that if her niece had freaks of this inconsiderate and indecorous sort, she would not have the family disordered, by waiting for her any longer; and, wishing the two gentlemen good night, gave directions that all the servants should go to bed.

The next morning, during breakfast, the groom returned with the empty carriage. Miss Joddrel, he said, had made him drive her and Mrs Golding to an inn, about ten miles from Lewes, where she suddenly told him that she should pass the night; and bid him be ready for returning at eight o'clock the next morning. He obeyed her orders; but, the next morning, heard, that she had gone on, over night, in a hired chaise, towards Portsmouth; charging no one to let him know it. This was all the account that he was able to give; except that, when he had asked whether his mistress would not be angry at his staying out all night, Miss Joddrel had answered, 'O, Ellis will let her know that she must not expect me back.'

Selina, who related this, was told to fetch Ellis instantly.

Ellis descended with the severest pain, from the cruel want of reflection in Elinor, which exposed her to an examination that, though she felt herself bound to evade, it must seem inexcuseable not to satisfy.

Mrs Maple and the two gentlemen were at the breakfast-table. Harleigh would not even try to command himself to sit still, when he found that Ellis was forced to stand: and even Ireton, though he did not move, kept not his place from any intentional disrespect; for he would have thought himself completely old-fashioned, had he put himself out of his way, though for a person of the highest distinction.

[Pg 187]

'How comes it, Mistress Ellis,' said Mrs Maple, 'that you had a message for me last night, from my niece, and that you never delivered it?'

Ellis, confounded, tried vainly to offer some apology.

Mrs Maple rose still more peremptorily in her demands, mingling the haughtiest menaces with the most imperious interrogations; attacking her as an accomplice in the clandestine scheme of Elinor; and accusing her of favouring disobedience and disorder, for some sinister purposes of her own.

Ireton scrupled not to speak in her favour; and Selina eagerly echoed all that he advanced: but, Harleigh, though trembling with indignant impatience to defend her, feared, in the present state of things, that to become her advocate might rather injure than support her; and constrained himself to be silent.

A succession of categorical enquiries, forced, at length, an avowal from Ellis, that her commission had been given to her in a letter. Mrs Maple, then, in the most authoritative manner, insisted upon reading it immediately.

Against the justice of this desire there was no appeal; yet how comply with it? The secret of Harleigh, with regard to herself, was included in that of Elinor; and honour and delicacy exacted the most rigid silence from her for both. Yet the difficulty of the refusal increased, from the increased urgency, even to fury, of Mrs Maple; till, shamed and persecuted beyond all power of resistance, she resolved upon committing the letter to the hands of Harleigh himself; who, to an interest like her own in its concealment, superadded courage and consequence for sustaining the refusal.

This, inevitably, must break into her design of avoiding him; but, hurried and harassed, she could devise no other expedient, to escape from an appearance of utter culpability to the whole house. When again, therefore, Mrs Maple, repeated, 'Will you please to let me see my niece's letter, or not?' She answered that there was a passage in it upon which Miss Joddrel had desired that Mr Harleigh might be consulted.

It would be difficult to say, whether this reference caused greater surprise to Mrs Maple or to Harleigh; but the feelings which accompanied it were as dissimilar as their characters: Mrs Maple was highly offended, that there should be any competition, between herself and any other, relative to a communication that came from her niece; while Harleigh felt an enchantment that glowed through every vein, in the prospect of some confidence. But when Mrs Maple found that all resistance was vain, and that through this channel only she could procure any information, her resentment gave way to her eagerness for hearing it, and she told Mr Harleigh to take the letter.

[Pg 188]

This was as little what he wished, as what Ellis meant: his desire was to speak with her upon the important subject open between them; and her's, was to make an apology for shewing him the letter, and to offer some explanation of a part of its contents. He approached her, however, to receive it, and she could not hold it back.

'If you will allow me,' said he, in taking it, 'to give you my plain opinion, when I have read it....'

Where may I have the pleasure of seeing you?'

Revived by this question, she eagerly answered, 'Wherever Mrs Maple will permit.'

Harleigh, who, in the scowl upon Mrs Maple's face, read a direction that they should remain where they were, would not wait for her to give it utterance; but, taking the hand of Ellis, with a precipitation to which she yielded from surprise, though with blushing shame, said, 'In this next room we shall be nearest to give the answer to Mrs Maple;' and led her to the adjoining apartment.

He did not dare shut the door, but he conducted her to the most distant window; and, having expressed, by his eyes, far stronger thanks for her trust than he ventured to pronounce with his voice, was beginning to read the letter; but Ellis, gently stopping him, said, 'Before you look at this, let me beg you, Sir, to believe, that the hard necessity of my strange situation, could alone have induced me to suffer you to see what is so every way unfit for your perusal. But Miss Joddrel has herself made known that she left a message with me for Mrs Maple; what right, then, have I to withhold it? Yet how—advise me, I entreat,—how can I deliver it? And—with respect to what you will find relative to Lord Melbury—I need not, I trust, mortify myself by disclaiming, or vindicating—'

He interrupted her with warmth: 'No!' he cried, 'with me you can have nothing to vindicate! Of whatever would not be perfectly right, I believe you incapable.'

Ellis thanked him expressively, and begged that he would now read the letter, and favour her with his counsel.

[Pg 189]

He complied, meaning to hurry it rapidly over, to gain time for a yet more interesting subject; but, struck, moved, and shocked by its contents, he was drawn from himself, drawn even from Ellis, to its writer. 'Unhappy Elinor!' he cried, 'this is yet more wild than I had believed you! this flight, where you can expect no pursuit! this concealment, where you can fear no persecution! But her intellects are under the controul of her feelings,—and judgment has no guide so dangerous.'

Ellis gently enquired what she must say to Mrs Maple.

He hastily put by the letter. 'Let me rather ask,' he cried, half smiling, 'what you will say to Me?—Will you not let me know something of your history,—your situation,—your family,—your name? The deepest interest occasions my demand, my inquietude.—Can it offend you?'

Ellis, trembling, looking down, and involuntarily sighing, in a faltering voice, answered, 'Have I not besought you, Sir, to spare me upon this subject? Have I not conjured you, if you value my peace,—nay, my honour!—what can I say more solemn?—to drop it for ever more?'

'Why this dreadful language?' cried Harleigh, with mingled impatience and grief: 'Can the impression of a compulsory engagement—or what other may be the mystery that it envelopes? Will you not be generous enough to relieve a perplexity that now tortures me? Is it too much for a man lost to himself for your sake,—lost he knows not how,—knows not to whom,—to be indulged with some little explanation, where, and how, he has placed all his hopes?—Is this too much to ask?'

'Too much?' repeated Ellis, with quickness: 'O no! no! Were my confidence to depend upon my sense of what I owe to your generous esteem, your noble trust in a helpless Wanderer,—known to you solely through your benevolence,—were my opinion—and my gratitude my guides,—it would be difficult, indeed, to say what enquiries you could make, that I could refuse to satisfy;—what you could ask, that I ought not to answer! but alas!—'

She hesitated: heightened blushes dyed her cheeks; and she visibly struggled to restrain herself from bursting into tears.

Touched, delighted, yet affrighted, Harleigh tenderly demanded, 'O, why resist the generous impulse, that would plead for some little frankness, in favour of one who unreservedly devotes to you his whole existence?'

[Pg 190]

Suddenly now, as if self-alarmed, checking her sensibility, she gravely cried, 'What would it avail that I should enter into any particulars of my situation, when what has so recently passed, makes all that has preceded immaterial? You have heard my promise to Miss Joddrel,—you see by this letter how direfully she meditates to watch its performance;—'

'And can you suffer the wild flights of a revolutionary enthusiast, impelled by every extravagant new system of the moment;—however you may pity her feelings, respect her purity, and make allowance for her youth, to blight every fair prospect of a rational attachment? to supersede every right? and to annihilate all consideration, all humanity, but for herself?'

'Ah no!—if you believe me ungrateful for a partiality that contends with all that appearances can offer against me, and all that circumstance can do to injure me; if you think me insensible to the honour I receive from it, you do yet less justice to yourself than to me! But here, Sir, all ends!—We must utterly separate;—you must not any where seek me;—I must avoid you every where!—'

She stopt.—The sudden shock which every feature of Harleigh exhibited at these last words, evidently and forcibly affected her; and the big tears, till now forced back, rolled unrestrained, and almost unconsciously, down her cheeks, as she suffered herself, for a moment, in silence to

look at him: she was then hastily retiring; but Harleigh, surprised and revived by the sight of her emotion, exclaimed, 'O why this fatal sensibility, that captivates while it destroys? that gives fascination even to repulse?' He would have taken her hand; but, drawing back, and even shrinking from his touch, she emphatically cried, 'Remember my engagement!—my solemn promise!'

'Was it extorted?' cried he, detaining her, 'or had it your heart's approbation?'

'From whatever motive it was uttered,' answered she, looking away from him, 'it has been pronounced, and must be adhered to religiously!' She then broke from him, and escaping by a door that led to the hall, sought refuge from any further conflict by hastening to her chamber: not once, till she arrived there, recollecting that her letter was left in his hands; while the hundred pounds, which she meant to return to him, were still in her own.

CHAPTER XXI

[Pg 191]

Painfully revolving a scene which had deeply affected her, Ellis, for some time, had remained uninterrupted, when, opening her door to a gentle tap, she was startled by the sight of Harleigh. The letter of Elinor was in his hand, which he immediately presented to her, and bowing without speaking, without looking at her, instantly disappeared.

Ellis was so confounded, first by his unexpected sight, and next by his so speedily vanishing, that she lost the opportunity of returning the bank notes. For some minutes she gazed pensively down the staircase; slowly, then, she shut her door, internally uttering 'all is over:—he is gone, and will pursue me no more.' Then casting up her eyes, which filled with tears, 'may he,' she added, 'be happy!'

From this sadness she was roused, by feeling, from the thickness of the packet, that it must contain some additional paper; eagerly opening it, she found the following letter:

'I have acquainted Mrs Maple that Miss Joddrel has determined upon living, for a while, alone, and that her manner of announcing that determination, in her letter to you, is so peremptory, as to make you deem it improper to be produced. This, as a mark of personal respect, appeases her; and, upon this subject, I believe you will be tormented no more. With regard to the unfortunate secret of Elinor, I can but wish it as safe in her own discretion, as it will remain in your honour.

'For myself, I must now practise that hardest lesson to the stubborn mind of man, submission to undefined, and what appears to be unnecessary evil. I must fly from this spot, and wait, where and as I can, the restoration of Elinor to prudence and to common life. I must trust that the less she is opposed, the less tenaciously she will cling to the impracticable project, of ruling the mind and will of another, by letting loose her own. When she hears that I deny myself inhabiting the mansion which you inhabit, perhaps, relieved from the apprehension of being deceived by others, she may cease to deceive herself. She may then return to her friends, contented to exist by the general laws of established society; which, though they may be ameliorated, changed, or reformed, by experience, wisely reflecting upon the past; by observation, keenly marking the present; or by genius, creatively anticipating the future, can never be wholly reversed, without risking a re-bound that simply restores them to their original condition.

[Pg 192]

'I depart, therefore, without one more effort to see you. I yield to the strange destiny that makes me adore in the dark; yet that blazons to my view and knowledge the rarest excellencies, the most resistless attractions: but to remain in the same house, yet scarcely ever to behold you; or, in seeing you but for a moment, to awaken a sensibility that electrifies every hope, only to inflict, with the greater severity, the shock that strikes me back to mystery and despondence—no, I will be gone! Her whom I cannot soften, I will at least forbear to persecute.

'In this retreat, my only consolation for your happiness is in the friendship, so honourable for both, that you have formed with Lady Aurora Granville; my only reliance for your safety, is in the interest of Mrs Maple to detain you under her roof, for the improvement of Selina; and my only hope for myself, is, that when Elinor becomes reasonable, you will no longer let her exclusively occupy your humanity or your feeling.

'ALBERT HARLEIGH.'

The tone of remonstrance, if not of reproach, which was blended with the serious attachment marked by Harleigh in this letter, deeply touched Ellis; who was anxiously re-perusing it, when she received information, through Selina, that Mr Harleigh had set out for London; whence he meant to proceed to Bath, or, perhaps, to make the western tour.

The earnestness of Ireton that Selina should take some lessons upon the harp, joined to the equal

earnestness of Mrs Maple, to elude the expensive professor at Brighthelmstone, confirmed the new orders that Selina should begin a course of instruction with Ellis. The mistress and the scholar were mutually well disposed, and Ellis was endeavouring to give her pupil some idea of a beautiful Sonata, when Miss Arbe, entering the house upon a morning visit, and catching the sound of a harp from the dressing-room of Selina, so touched as Selina, she knew, could not touch it, nimbly ran up stairs. Happy, then, to have surprised Miss Ellis at the instrument, she would take no denial to hearing her play.

[Pg 193]

The elegance and feeling of her performance, engaged, alike, the ready envy, and the unwilling admiration of Miss Arbe; who, a self-conceived paragon in all the fine arts, thought superior merit in a *diletanti* a species of personal affront. She had already felt as an injury to her theatrical fame, the praise which had reached her ears of Ellis as Lady Townly; and a new rivalry seemed now to menace her supremacy as chief of lady performers: but when she gathered, through Selina, who knew not even of the existence of such an art as that of holding the tongue, that they were now practising together, her supercilious air was changed into one of rapture, and she was seized with a strong desire to profit, also, from such striking talents. A profusion of compliments and civilities, ended, therefore, in an earnest invitation to cultivate so charming an acquaintance.

Mrs Maple, while this was passing, came uneasily into the room, meaning to make a sign to Ellis to glide away unnoticed. But when she found that Ellis was become the principal object with the fastidious Miss Arbe, and heard this wish of intimacy, she was utterly confounded that another person of consequence should countenance, and through her means, this itinerant Incognita. Yet to obviate the mischief by an avowal similar to that which she had been forced to make to Mrs Howel, she thought an insupportable degradation; and Miss Arbe, with the politest declarations that she should call again the next day, purposely to entitle herself to a visit in return from Miss Ellis, was already gone, before Mrs Maple had sufficiently recovered from her confusion, to devise any impediment to the proposal.

All then that occurred to her, was her usually violent, but short measure, of sending Ellis suddenly from the house, and excusing her disappearance, by asserting that her own friends had summoned her away: for Mrs Maple, like at least half the world, though delicate with respect to her character for truth in public, had palliations always ready for any breach of it, in favour of convenience, in private.

Ellis attempted not any opposition. The sufferings annexed to an asylum thus perpetually embittered by reproach and suspicion, had long made her languish to change it for almost any other; and her whole thoughts turned once more upon a journey to London, and an interview with Lady Aurora Granville.

[Pg 194]

Selina warmly protested that this separation should only augment her attachment to her favourite; by whose side she stayed, prattling, weeping, or practising the harp, till she was called away to Mrs Maple; from whom, however, she soon returned, relating, with uplifted hands, that all below was again in the utmost confusion, through a letter, just arrived, from Mrs Howel, stating the following particulars. That upon her communicating to Lord Denmeath the strange transaction, in which she must forever blush to have been, however innocently, involved, his lordship, very properly, had forbidden Lady Aurora to keep any sort of correspondence with so palpable an adventurer. But the excess of grief produced by this prohibition, had astonished and concerned both his lordship and herself: and their joint alarm had been cruelly augmented, by a letter from Mrs Greaves, the housekeeper, with intelligence that Lord Melbury had been shut up nearly two hours with this suspicious young woman, on the day that Mrs Howel had quitted Brighthelmstone; during which time, his lordship had suffered no one to come into the room, though she, Greaves, in accidentally passing by one of the windows, saw his lordship demean himself so far as to be speaking to her upon his knees. Lord Denmeath, treating this account as an impertinent piece of scandal, requested to have it shewn to his nephew; but how unspeakable was their consternation when Lord Melbury undauntedly avowed, that the charge was true; and added, that he was glad of the opportunity thus afforded him, to declare that Miss Ellis was the most virtuous and dignified, as well as the most beautiful and amiable of her sex: she had rejected, he said, a suit which he should always take shame to himself for having made; and rejected it in a manner so impressive of real purity, that he should for ever hold it his duty to do her honour by every means in his power. The wrath expressed by Lord Denmeath, and the tears shed by Lady Aurora, during this scene, were dreadful. Lord Denmeath saw that there was no time to be lost in guarding against the most eminent danger: he desired, therefore, that the young woman might be induced, if possible, to quit the country without delay; and his lordship was willing not only to pay for her voyage back, but to give security that she should receive a very considerable sum of money, the instant that he should be assured of her safe landing upon the continent. Mrs Howel begged that Mrs Maple would endeavour to bring this plan to bear; and, at all events, not lose sight of the young person, till she should be, some how or other, secured from Lord Melbury. The rest of the letter contained injunctions, that Mrs Maple would not let this disgraceful affair transpire in the neighbourhood; with sundry scornful admonitions, that she would herself be more guarded, in future, whom she recommended to her friends.

[Pg 195]

Mrs Maple, now, peremptorily sent word to Ellis, that she must immediately make up her mind to leaving the kingdom. But Ellis, without hesitation, answered that she had no such design. Commands and menaces, though amply employed, were fruitless to obtain any change in her resolution. She was, therefore, positively ordered to seek for charity in some other house.

Ellis, no longer wishing to stay, occupied her mind almost exclusively with the thoughts of her young friends. The tender attachment shewn to her by Lady Aurora, and the honourable testimony borne her by Lord Melbury, cheered her spirits, and warmed her heart, with a trust in their regard, that, defying the inflexibility of Mrs Howel, the authority of Lord Denmeath, and the violence of Mrs Maple, filled her with soft, consolatory ideas, that sweetened her night's rest, even in her uncertainty where she should find, or where seek repose on the night that would follow.

But this brighter side of her prospects, which soothed her on its first view, lost its gay colouring upon farther examination: that Lady Aurora should be forbidden to see, forbidden to write to her, was shocking to her feelings, and blighting to her happiness: and even though the tender nature, and strong partiality, of that youthful friend, might privately yield to the pleadings of an oppressed and chosen favourite, Ellis, while glowing with the hope that the interest which she had excited would be lastingly cherished, revolted from every plan that was clandestine.

Mrs Maple, who, in common with all those whose tempers are violent in the same proportion that their judgment is feeble, had issued forth her mandates, without examining whether they could be obeyed; and had uttered her threats, without considering whether she could put them into execution; no sooner learnt, from Selina, that Ellis was tranquilly preparing to depart, than she repented the step which she had taken, and passed the night in suggesting how it might be retrieved, to spare herself the discredit, in the neighbourhood, of a breach with Mrs Howel.

The next morning, therefore, the willing Selina was instructed to hasten to Ellis, with a message from Mrs Maple, graciously permitting one more lesson upon the harp. [Pg 196]

Destitute as Ellis felt, she would have resisted such a mockery of benevolence, but from gratitude at the pleasure which it procured to Selina.

Again, according to her promise, arrived Miss Arbe, and again hearing the sound of the harp, tript lightly up stairs to the dressing-room of Selina; where she paid her compliments immediately to Ellis, whom she courteously solicited to take an airing with her to Brighthelmstone, and thence to accompany her home for the day.

Anxious to strengthen her weak resources, by forming some new connection, Ellis was listening to this proposal, when a footman brought her a letter.

Concluding that it came from abroad, she received it with strong emotion, and evident alarm; but no sooner had she looked at the direction, than the brightest bloom glowed upon her cheeks, her eyes were suffused with tears of pleasure, and she pressed, involuntarily, to her heart, the writing of Lady Aurora Granville.

The little coronet seal, with the cypher A. G., had been observed not alone by Miss Arbe, but by Mrs Maple, who, curiously, had followed the footman into the room.

Miss Arbe, now, renewed her invitation with redoubled earnestness; and Mrs Maple felt almost insane, from excess of wrath and embarrassment, when, suddenly, and most unexpectedly, Ellis accepted the offer; gratefully embracing Selina, and taking of herself a grave, but respectful leave.

From the window Mrs Maple, then, saw this unknown Wanderer enter the carriage first.

For some time, she remained almost stupified by so unlooked for an event; and she could only quiet her conscience, for having been accessory, though so unintentionally, to procuring this favour and popularity for such an adventurer, by devoutly resolving, that no entreaties, and no representation, should ever in future, dupe her out of her own good sense, into other people's fantastical conceits of charity.

CHAPTER XXII

[Pg 197]

It was not the design of Ellis to return any more to Lewes. The gross treatment which she had experienced, and the daily menace of being dismissed, were become utterly insupportable; and she determined, in a letter from Brighthelmstone, to take a final leave of Mrs Maple.

From the high influence of Miss Arbe in what is called the polite world, she hoped that to engage her favour, would almost secure prosperity to her favourite wish and plan, of exchanging her helpless dependancy, for an honourable, however fatiguing, exertion of the talents and acquirements with which she had been endowed by her education; though nothing short of the courage of distress could have stimulated her to such an attempt.

As soon, therefore, as Miss Arbe renewed her eager invitations, Ellis expressively said, 'Are you sure, Madam, that you will not repent your goodness, when you know that I want, as well as that I value it?'

A carriage, which they just then met, stopt the chaise, and the voice of Miss Bydel called out a lamentation, that she was obliged to go home, because her brother wanted the coach; though she had earnest business at Brighthelmstone, whither she entreated Miss Arbe to convey her. Miss Arbe seemed much chagrined, both by the interruption and the intrusion, yet was so obviously

going that way, that she knew not how to form an excuse; and Miss Bydel entered the chaise.

Extremely pleased by the sight of Ellis, 'What,' she cried, 'my sister actress? Why this is what I did not expect indeed! I was told you would go no where, Miss Ellis, but to Lady Aurora Granville, and the Honourable Med: Howel. Pray is it true? I should not ask if it were a secret, for I know nobody likes one's being curious; but as all the servants must know it, it's not a thing to be kept long in the dark. And I am told, too, since it's being found out that you are a young lady of fashion, that it's the high talk that you've made a conquest of Lord Melbury; and I can't but say but I should like to know if that's a report that has got any foundation. Pray will you be so kind as to tell me.'

[Pg 198]

Ellis assured her that it had not the least.

'Well, how people do like to make strange stories! One piece of information, however, I should be really glad if you would give me; and that is, whether you are come over to settle here, or only upon a visit to Mrs Maple? And whether she has the care of your fortune, as a sort of guardian; or whether it is all in your own hands?'

Ellis, disturbed by these most unseanable questions, answered, in a dejected tone, that she was not happy enough to be able, at this moment, to give any circumstantial account of herself.

Miss Arbe, who only imperfectly understood the speech which had been made as the chaise was stopt, languished to hear it explained. Privately, therefore, by arch winks, and encouraging taps, she urged on the broad questions of Miss Bydel; though she was too expert an adept in the rules, at least, of good breeding, not to hold back herself from such interrogatories, as might level her elevated fame with that of the gross and homely Miss Bydel; who to sordid friends owed a large fortune, left her late in life, but neither education nor manners, that might have taught her that its most hateful privilege is that of authorising unfeeling liberties.

They had arrived, nevertheless, within half a mile of Brighthelmstone, before any thing really explanatory had passed: Ellis, then, alarmed with reflecting that, if again dragged to Lewes, she must again have to quit it, with scarcely a chance of such another opportunity for endeavouring to bring forward her project, conquered her reluctance to opening upon her distress, and said, 'You little suspect, Miss Arbe, how deep an obligation I owe to your kindness, in carrying me to day to Brighthelmstone!'

'How so, Miss Ellis? How so, my dear?' cried Miss Bydel, before Miss Arbe could answer.

'My situation,' she continued, 'which seems so pleasant, is perhaps amongst the most painful that can be imagined. I feel myself, though in my native country, like a helpless foreigner; unknown, unprotected, and depending solely upon the benevolence of those by whom, accidentally, I am seen, for kindness,—or even for support!—'

The amazement of the two ladies, at this declaration, was equally great, though Miss Arbe, who never spoke and never acted, but through the medium of what she believed the world would most approve to hear her say, or to see her do, had no chance of manifesting her surprise as promptly as Miss Bydel; who made her own judgment the sole arbitrator of her speech and conduct, and who immediately called out, 'Well, nobody shall ever try to persuade me I am in the wrong again! I said, the whole time, there was certainly something quite out of the common way in this young person. And it's plain I was right. For how, I said, can it be, that, first of all, a young person is brought out as nothing, and then is turned into a fine lady; when, all the time, nobody knows any thing about her? But pray tell me this one thing, child; what was the first motive of your going over the seas? And what might be the reason of your coming back again in such an untowardly sort of manner? without any money, or any one to be accountable for your character?'

[Pg 199]

Ellis made no answer. The obligations, however heavy of endurance, which led her to bear similar, and still more offensive examinations from Mrs Maple, existed not here; and the compulsion of debts of that nature, could alone strengthen the patience, or harden the feelings of a generous spirit, to sustain so rude and unfeeling an inquisition.

Miss Arbe, though anxious to understand, before she uttered even a word, what sort of footing, independently of Mrs Maple, this young person was upon in the world, failed not to remark, in her silence, a courage that unavoidably spoke in her favour.

Ellis saw, but too plainly, how little she had to expect from spontaneous pity, or liberality; and hesitated whether to plead more humbly, or to relinquish at once her plan.

'You are still, then,' resumed Miss Bydel, 'at your secret-keeping, I find, that we were told so much about at the beginning, before the discovery of your being a lady of family and fashion; which came out so, all of the sudden, at last, that I should never have believed a word of it, but for knowing Mrs Maple to be so amazing particular as to those points.—'

'And Mrs Howel!' here interrupted Miss Arbe, casting at Ellis, upon the recollection of such a confirmation of her birth and connections, a look of so much favour, that, again hoping for her aid, Ellis begged to alight at Miss Matson's, the milliner.

Miss Arbe said that she would attend her thither with pleasure. 'And I, my dear,' said Miss Bydel, 'will go in with you, too; for I want a few odd matters for myself.'

Ellis, finding how little she was understood, was forced to add: 'It is not for any purchases that I

[Pg 200]

go to Miss Matson;—it is to lodge in her house, till I can find some better asylum!—'

The first amazement of the two ladies sunk into nothing, when contrasted with that which they experienced at this moment. That she should acknowledge herself to be poor, was quite enough, be her other claims to notice what they might, to excite immediate contempt in Miss Bydel: while Miss Arbe, in that point, more liberal, but, in all that she conceived to belong to fashion, a very slave, was embarrassed how to treat her, till she could gain some information how she was likely to be treated by the world: but neither of them had entertained the most distant suspicion, that she was not settled under the roof, and the patronage, of Mrs Maple. To hear, therefore, of her seeking a lodging, and wanting an asylum, presented her in so new, so altered, and so humiliated a point of view, that Miss Bydel herself was not immediately able to speak; and the two ladies stared at each other, as if reciprocally demanding how to behave.

Ellis perceived their dilemma, and again lost her hope.

'A lodging?' at length cried Miss Bydel. 'Well, I am less surprised than any body else will be, for when things have an odd beginning, I always expect them to have an odd end. But how comes it, —for that can be no secret,—that you are looking out for a lodging? I should like to know what all that means. Pray what may be the reason that Mrs Maple does not find you a lodging herself? And who is to take care of you? Does she lend you any of her own servants? These things, at least, can be no secrets, or else I should not ask; but the servants must needs know whether they are lent or not.'

Ellis made no reply; and still Miss Arbe held back.

'Well,' resumed Miss Bydel, 'I don't like to judge any body, but certainly it is no good sign to be so close. Some things, however, must be known whether people will or not: so I hope at least I may ask, whether your friends are coming to you in your lodging?—and what you intend to do there?—and how long you think to live there?—and what is the true cause of your going there?—For there must certainly be some reason.'

Ellis, who now found that she must either answer Miss Bydel or forego her whole scheme, from the determined backwardness of Miss Arbe to take any active part in her affairs, said, 'My past history, Madam, it would be useless to hear—and impossible for me to relate: my present plan must depend upon a charitable construction of my unavoidable, indispensable silence; without which it would be madness to hope for any favour, any recommendation, that may give the smallest chance of success to my attempt.'

[Pg 201]

'And what is your attempt?' cried Miss Bydel; 'for if that's a secret too, I can't find out how you're to do it.'

'On the contrary,' she answered, 'I am well aware that I must publish, or relinquish it; and immediately I would make it known, if I dared hope that I might appear qualified for the office I wish to undertake, in the eyes of—'

She looked at Miss Arbe, but did not venture to proceed.

Miss Arbe, understanding, and feeling the compliment, yet uneasy to have it equally understood by Miss Bydel, complacently broke her silence, by saying, 'In whose eyes?—Lady Aurora Granville's?'

'Ah! Madam,—the condescending partiality of Lady Aurora, might encourage every hope of the honour of her interest and zeal;—but she is peculiarly situated;—and perhaps the weight that must be attached to a recommendation of the sort which I require—'

She was going to say, might demand more experience than her ladyship's extreme youth allowed to have yet fallen to her share; but she stopt. She was aware that she stood upon dangerous ground. The vanity of Miss Arbe was, at least, as glaring as her talents; and to celebrate even her judgment in the fine arts, though it was the pride of her life, by an insinuation that, at one-and-thirty she was not in the first budding youth of fifteen, might offend, by an implication that added years contributed to a superiority, which she wished to have considered as due to brighter genius alone.

From what was said, Miss Arbe could not be without some suspicion of what was held back; and she as little desired to hear, as Ellis could to utter, a word that might derogate from the universal elevation and distinction at which she aspired; she was perfectly ready, therefore, to accept what would flatter, and to reject what would mortify her; forgetting, in common with all vain characters, that to shrink from the truth ourselves, saves one person only from hearing our defects.

'It is true,' said Miss Arbe, smiling, 'Lady Aurora cannot be supposed to have much weight with the world, amiable as she is. The world is not very easily led; and, certainly, only by those who acquire a certain ascendance over it, by some qualifications not entirely of the most common sort.—'

'But still I don't understand,' cried Miss Bydel, 'what it is Miss Ellis means. What is it you want to be recommended about, child?—What is this attempt you talk of?—Have you got your fortune with you?—or does Mrs Maple keep it in her own hands?—or have not you got any left?—or perhaps you've had none from the beginning?'

[Pg 202]

Ellis briefly explained, that her wish was to be placed in some family, where there were children, as a governess.

Again, the two ladies were equally surprised, at the project of so steady and elaborate an undertaking; and Miss Bydel broke forth into the most abrupt enquiries, of how Mrs Maple came to agree to such a scheme; whether it were approved of by Mrs Howel; and what Ellis could teach, or do, if it took place.

Ellis, when compelled to speak, was compelled, also, to confess, that she had not mentioned her design to either of those ladies.

Miss Bydel now, stiffly drawing up, declared that she could not help taking the liberty to say, that for a young lady, who was under the care of two persons of so much consideration and fortune, to resolve upon disposing of herself, without consulting either of them, was a thing she never should countenance; and which she was sure all the world would be against.

These were alarming words for Miss Arbe, whose constant and predominant thought, was ever upon public opinion. All, too, seemed, now, at an end, that had led, or could lead, to conciliation, where there was so peculiar a rivalry in talents; joined to a superiority of beauty, visible even to her own eyes; for how, if the hours of Ellis were to be consigned to the care and improvement of young ladies, could either time or opportunity be found, to give, and in private, the musical instructions, for the hope of which alone Miss Arbe had been so earnest in her invitations, and so courteous in her manners?

Without offering, therefore, the smallest softening word to the bluff questions, or gross censures of Miss Bydel, she was silent till they entered Brighthelmstone; and then only spoke to order the postilion to stop at Miss Matson's. There arrived, the two ladies let her alight alone; Miss Bydel, with a proud nod, just uttering, 'Good bye!' and Miss Arbe, with a forced smile, saying she was happy to have been of any use to her.

Ellis remained so confounded, when thus unexpectedly abandoned, that she stood still, a few minutes, at the door, unable to answer, or even to understand, the civil inquiries of a young woman, from the shop, whether she would not come in, to give her commands. When a little recovered, she entered, and, in the meek tone of apprehension, asked whether she could again hire, for a few nights, or a week, the little room in which she had slept some time since.

[Pg 203]

Miss Matson, recollecting her voice, came now from the back parlour, most courteously rejoicing at seeing her; and disguising her surprise, that she should again enquire for so cheap and ordinary a little lodging. For Miss Matson, and her family, had learnt, from various reports, that she was the same young lady who had given so much pleasure by her performance in the Provoked Husband; and who had, since, made a long visit at the Honourable Mrs Howel's, near whose mansion was situated the shop. But, whatever might be the motive of her return, there could be none against her admission, since they knew her high connections, and since, even now, she was set down at the shop by Miss Arbe. The little room, therefore, was speedily prepared, and the first use that Ellis made of it, was to write to Selina.

She desired leave to present her thanks to Mrs Maple, for the asylum which had been afforded to her distress; without any hints at the drawbacks to its comfort; and then briefly communicated her intention, to pass the rest of the time of her suspense and difficulties, in working at her needle; unless she could find means to place herself in some respectable family, as a governess to its children. She finished her letter by the warmest acknowledgments, for the kindness which she had experienced from Selina.

The person who took this note was desired to apply to Mrs Fenn, for the ready prepared baggage of Ellis.

This, which she thought a respect demanded by decency to Mrs Maple, was her first action: she then opened, as a balm to her wounded feelings, the letter of Lady Aurora Granville; but had the cruel disappointment to find in it only these words:

'Hate me not, sweet Miss Ellis—but I am forbidden to write to you!—forbidden to receive your letters!—

'A. G.'

Deeply hurt, and deeply offended, Ellis, now, was filled with the heaviest grief; though neither offended nor hurt by Lady Aurora, whose trembling hand-writing she kissed a thousand times; with a perfect conviction, that their sufferings were nearly reciprocal, from this terrible prohibition.

Her little baggage soon arrived, with a letter from Selina, containing a permission from Mrs Maple, that Ellis might immediately return to Lewes, lest, which Mrs Howel would never forgive, she should meet with Lord Melbury.

[Pg 204]

Ellis wrote a cold excuse, declaring her firm purpose to endeavour to depend, henceforth, upon her own exertions.

And, to strengthen this resolution, she re-read a passage in one of her letters from abroad, to which she had frequent recourse, when her spirits felt unequal to her embarrassments.

'Dans une position telle que la vôtre,—'

'In your present lonely, unprotected, unexampled situation, many and severe may be your trials; let not any of them shake your constancy, nor break your silence: while all is secret, all may be safe; by a single surmise, all may be lost. But chiefly bear in mind, what has been the principle of your education, and what I wish to be that of your conduct and character through life: That where occasion calls for female exertion, mental strength must combat bodily weakness; and intellectual vigour must supply the inherent deficiencies of personal courage; and that those, only, are fitted for the vicissitudes of human fortune, who, whether female or male, learn to suffice to themselves. Be this the motto of your story.'

CHAPTER XXIII

[Pg 205]

The hope of self-dependence, ever cheering to an upright mind, sweetened the rest of Ellis in her mean little apartment, though with no brighter prospect than that of procuring a laborious support, through the means of Miss Matson, should she fail to obtain a recommendation for the superiour office of a governess.

The decision was yet pending, when a letter from Selina charged her, in the name of Mrs Maple, to adopt, as yet, no positive measure, in order to put an end to the further circulation of wonder, that a young lady should go from under Mrs Maple's protection, to a poor little lodging, without any attendant, and avowedly in search of a maintenance: and, further, Selina was bid to add, that, if she would be manageable, she might still persist in passing for a young gentlewoman; and Mrs Maple would say that she was reduced to such straights by a bankruptcy in her family; rather than shock all the ladies who had conversed with her as Mrs Maple's guest, by telling the truth. Mrs Howel, too, with the approbation of Lord Denmeath himself, to keep her out of the way of Lord Melbury, would try to get her the place of an humble companion to some sick old lady who would take up with her reading and singing, and ask no questions.

Ellis, with utter contempt, was still perusing this letter, when she was surprised by a visit from Miss Arbe and Miss Bydel.

Miss Arbe had just been calling upon Mrs Maple, by whom she had been told the plan of Mrs Howel, and the plausible tale of its sudden necessity. Finding Ellis still under a protection so respectable, the wish of a little musical intercourse revived in Miss Arbe; and she remarked to Miss Bydel, that it would be a real charity, to see what could be done for an accomplished young woman of family, in circumstances so lamentable.

[Pg 206]

The reception they met with from Ellis was extremely cold. The careless air with which Miss Arbe had heard, without entering into her distress; and the indifference with which she had suddenly dropt the invitations that, the minute before, had been urgent nearly to persecution, had left an impression of the littleness of her character upon the mind of Ellis, that made her present civilities, though offered with a look that implied an expectation of gratitude, received with the most distant reserve. And still less was she disposed to welcome Miss Bydel, whose behaviour, upon the same occasion, had been rude as well as unfeeling.

Neither of them, however, were rebuffed, though Miss Arbe was disappointed, and Miss Bydel was amazed: but Miss Arbe had a point to carry, and would not be put from her purpose; and Miss Bydel, though she thought it but odd not to be made of more consequence, could not be hurt from a feeling which she neither possessed nor understood,—delicacy.

'So I hear, Miss Ellis, you have met with misfortunes?' Miss Bydel began: 'I am sorry for it, I assure you; though I am sure I don't know who escapes. But I want to know how it all first began. Pray, my dear, in what manner did you set out in life? A great deal of one's pity depends upon what people are used to.'

'What most concerns me for poor Miss Ellis,' said Miss Arbe, 'is her having no instrument. I can't think how she can live without one. Why don't you hire a harp, Miss Ellis?'

Ellis quietly answered, that she was not very musically inclined.

'But you must not think how you are inclined,' said Miss Bydel, 'if you are to go out for a companion, as Mrs Howel wants you to do; for I am sure I don't know who you will get to take you, if you do. I have known pretty many young women in that capacity, and not one among them ever had such a thought. How should they? People do not pay them for that.'

'I only hope,' said Miss Arbe, 'that whoever has the good fortune to obtain the society of Miss Ellis, will have a taste for music. 'Twill be a thousand shames if her fine talents should be thrown away.'

Ellis, as she suspected not her design, was much surprised by this return to fine speeches. Still, however, she sustained her own reserve, for the difficulty of devising to what the change might be owing, made her cast it upon mere caprice. To the enquiries, also, of Miss Bydel, she was equally immoveable, as they evidently sprang from coarse and general curiosity.

[Pg 207]

This distance, however, was not successful, either in stopping the questions of Miss Bydel, or the compliments of Miss Arbe. Each followed the bent of her humour, till Miss Arbe, at length, started an idea that caught the attention of Ellis: this was, that instead of becoming an humble companion, she should bring her musical acquirements into use, by giving lessons to young ladies.

Ellis readily owned that such a plan would be best adapted to her inclinations, if Mrs Howel and Mrs Maple could be prevailed upon to exert their influence in procuring her some scholars.

'But a good word or two from Miss Arbe,' said Miss Bydel, 'would do more for you, in that tuning way, than all their's put together. I should like to know how it was you got this musical turn, Miss Ellis? Were your own friends rich enough, my dear, before their bankruptcy, to give you such an education themselves? or did it all come, as one may say, from a sort of knack?'

Ellis earnestly asked whether she might hope for the powerful aid of Miss Arbe to forward such a plan?

Miss Arbe, now, resumed all her dignity, as an acknowledged judge of the fine arts, and a solicited patroness of their votaries. With smiles, therefore, of ineffable affability, she promised Ellis her protection; and glibly ran over the names of twenty or thirty families of distinction, every one of which, she said, in the choice of instructors to their children, was guided by her opinion.

'But then,' added she, with an air that now mingled authority with condescension, 'you must have a better room than this, you know. The house is well enough, and the milliner is fashionable: she is my own; but this little hole will never do: you must take the drawing room. And then you must buy immediately, or at least hire, a very fine instrument. There is a delightful one at Strode's now: one I long for myself, and then—' patting her shoulder, 'you must dress, too, a little ... like other people, you know.'

'But how is she to do it,' said Miss Bydel, 'if she has got no money?'

Ellis, however ashamed, felt rather assisted than displeased by this plump truth; but it produced no effect upon Miss Arbe, who lightly replied, 'O, we must not be shabby. We must get things a little decent about us. A few scholars of my recommending will soon set all that to rights. Take my advice, Miss Ellis, and you won't find yourself vastly to be pitied.'

'But what have you got to begin with?' said Miss Bydel. 'How much have you in hand?'

[Pg 208]

'Nothing!' answered Ellis, precipitately: 'I lost my purse at Dover, and I have been destitute ever since! Dependant wholly upon accidental benevolence.'

Miss Bydel, now, was extremely gratified: this was the first time that she had surprized from Ellis any account of herself, and she admitted not a doubt that it would be followed by her whole history. 'That was unlucky enough,' she said; 'and pray what money might you have in it?'

Ellis, strongly affected herself, though she had not affected her auditors, by the retrospection of a misfortune which had been so eventful to her of distress, said no more; till she saw some alarm upon the countenance of Miss Arbe, at the idea of a *protégée* really penniless; and then, fearing to forfeit her patronage, she mentioned the twenty pounds which she owed to the generous kindness of Lady Aurora Granville.

Miss Arbe now smiled more complacently than ever; and Miss Bydel, straining wide open her large dull eyes, repeated, 'Twenty pounds? Good me! has Lady Aurora given you twenty pounds?'

'The money,' said Ellis, blushing, 'I hope I may one day return: the goodness surpasses all requital.'

'Well, if that is the case, we must all try to do something for you, my dear. I did not know of any body's having begun. And I am never for being the first in those sort of subscriptions; for I think them little better than picking people's pockets. Besides that I entirely disapprove bringing persons that are poor into habits of laziness. However, if Lady Aurora has given so handsomely, one does not know how to refuse a trifle. So, I tell you what; I'll pay you a month's hire of a harp.'

Ellis, deeply colouring, begged to decline this offer; but Miss Arbe, with an air of self-approbation that said: I won't be excelled! cried, 'And I, Miss Ellis, will go to the music shop, and chuse your instrument for you myself.'

Both the ladies, now, equally elated by internal applause, resolved to set out instantly upon this errand; without regarding either refusal or objection from Ellis. Yet Miss Bydel, upon finding that neither Mrs Howel nor Mrs Maple had yet given any thing, would have retracted from her intended benefaction, had not Miss Arbe dragged her away, positively refusing to let her recant, from a conviction that no other method could be started, by which her own contribution could so cheaply be presented.

[Pg 209]

A very fine harp soon arrived, with a message from Miss Arbe, desiring that she might find Miss Ellis wholly disengaged the next morning, when she meant to come quite alone, and to settle every thing.

The total want of delicacy shewn in this transaction, made the wishes of Ellis send back the instrument to Miss Bydel, and refuse the purposed visit of Miss Arbe: but a little reflection taught

her, that, in a situation so defenceless, pride must give way to prudence; and nicer feelings must submit to necessity. She sat down, therefore, to her harp, resolved diligently to practise it as a business, which might lead her to the self-dependence at which she so earnestly languished to arrive; and of which she had only learnt the just appreciation, by her helplessness to resist any species of indignity, while accepting an unearned asylum.

Cheered, therefore, again, by this view of her new plan, she received Miss Arbe, the next morning, with a gratitude the most flattering to that lady, who voluntarily renewed her assurances of protection. 'Very luckily for you,' she added, 'I shall stay here very late; for Papa says that he can't afford to begin his winter this year before May or June.'

Then, sending for a large packet of music from her carriage, she proposed trying the instrument; complacently saying, that she had chosen the very best which could be procured, though Miss Bydel had vehemently struggled to make her take a cheaper one. Miss Arbe, however, would not indulge her parsimony. 'I can't bear,' she cried, 'any thing that is mean.'

What Miss Arbe called trying the instrument, was selecting the most difficult passages, from the most difficult music which she attempted to play, and making Ellis teach her the fingering, the time, and the expression, in a lesson which lasted the whole morning.

Miss Arbe, who aspired at passing for an adept in every accomplishment, seized with great quickness whatever she began to learn; but her ambition was so universal, and her pursuits were so numerous, that one of them marred another; and while every thing was grasped at, nothing was attained. Yet the general aim passed with herself for general success; and because she had taken lessons in almost all the arts, she concluded that of all the arts she was completely mistress.

This persuasion made her come forward, in the circles to which she belonged, with a courage that she deemed to be the just attribute of superiour merit; and her family and friends, not less complaisant, and rarely less superficial, in their judgments than herself, sanctioned her claims by their applause; and spread their opinions around, till, hearing them reverberated, they believed them to be fame.

[Pg 210]

The present scheme for Ellis had another forcible consideration in its favour with Miss Arbe; a consideration not often accustomed to be treated with utter contempt, even by higher and wiser characters; the convenience of her purse. Her various accomplishments had already exhausted the scanty powers for extra-expences of her father; and it was long since she had received any instructions through the ordinary means of remuneration. But, ingenious in whatever could turn to her advantage, she contrived to learn more when she ceased to recompense her masters, than while the obligation between them and their pupil was reciprocated; for she sought no acquaintance but amongst the scholars of the most eminent professors, whether of music or painting: her visits were always made at the moment which she knew to be dedicated to practising, or drawing; and she regularly managed, by adroit questions, seasoned with compliments, to attract the attention of the master to herself, for an explanation of the difficulties which distressed her in her private practice.

Compliments, however, were by no means the only payment that she returned for such assistance: if a benefit were in question, she had not an acquaintance upon whom she did not force tickets; if a composition were to be published, she claimed subscriptions for it from all her friends; if scholars were desired, not a parent had a child, not a guardian had a ward, whom she did not endeavour to convince, that to place his charge under such or such a professor, was the only method to draw forth his talents. She scarcely entered a house in which she had not some little scheme to effect; and seldom left it with her purpose unfulfilled.

The artists, also, were universally her humble servants; for though they could not, like the world at large, be the dupes of her unfounded pretensions to skill, they were sure, upon all occasions, to find her so active to serve and oblige them, so much more civil than those who had money, and so much more social than those who had power, that, from mingling gratitude with their personal interest, they suffered her claims to superiour knowledge to pass uncanvassed; and while they remarked that her influence supplied the place of wealth, they sought her favour, they solicited her recommendation, they dedicated to her their works. She charmed them by personal civilities; she won them by attentions to their wives, sisters, or daughters; and her zeal in return for their gratuitous services had no limit—except what might be attached to her purse.

[Pg 211]

To pay for the instructions of Ellis by patronage, was no sooner decided than effected. A young lady who had been educated abroad, who was brought forth into the world by Mrs Maple, and protected by Mrs Howel, and Lady Aurora Granville, was already an engaging object; but when she was reduced to support herself by her own talents, through the bankruptcy of her friends, she became equally interesting and respectable; and, as such, touched for her misfortunes, yet charmed to profit from her accomplishments, Lady Kendover, a leading *Diletante* in the highest circles, was the first to beg that Miss Arbe would arrange the terms, and fix a day and hour, for Miss Ellis to attend Lady Barbara Frankland, her ladyship's niece.

One pupil of this rank, thus readily offered, procured another before the day was over; and, before the evening was finished, a third.

Miss Arbe, enchanted with her success, hastened to have the pleasure of communicating it to Ellis, and of celebrating her own influence. The gratitude of Ellis was, however, by no means unruffled, when Miss Arbe insisted upon regulating the whole of her proceedings; and that with

an expence which, however moderate for any other situation, was for hers alarming, if not ruinous. But Miss Arbe declared that she would not have her recommendation disgraced by any meanness: she engaged, therefore, at a high price, the best apartment in the house; she chose various articles of attire, lest Ellis should choose them, she said, too parsimoniously; and employed, in fitting her up, some trades-people who were honoured, occasionally, by working for herself. In vain Ellis represented the insufficiency of her little store for such expences. Miss Arbe impatiently begged that they might not waste their time upon such narrow considerations; and, seizing the harp, devoted the rest of the visit to a long, though unacknowledged lesson; after which, in hastily nodding an adieu, she repeated her high disdain of whatever was wanting in spirit and generosity.

Mrs Maple, with mingled choler and amazement, soon learnt the wonderful tidings, that the discarded Wanderer had hired the best drawing-room at the famous milliner's, Miss Matson, and was elegantly, though simply arrayed, and prepared and appointed to be received, in various houses of fashion, as a favoured and distinguished professor.

The fear of some ultimate responsibility, for having introduced such an imposter into high life, now urged Mrs Maple to work upon the curiosity of Mrs Ireton, to offer the unknown traveller the post of her humble companion: but Ellis retained a horror of the disposition and manners of Mrs Ireton, that made her decidedly refuse the proposition; and the incensed Mrs Maple, and the imperious Mrs Howel, alike ashamed to proclaim what they considered as their own dupery, were alike, ultimately, reduced to leave the matter to take its course: Mrs Howel finally comforting herself, that, in case of detection, she could cast the whole disgrace upon Mrs Maple; who equally consoled herself by deciding, in that case, to throw the whole blame upon Mr Harleigh.

[Pg 212]

CHAPTER XXIV

[Pg 213]

Thus equipped, and decided, the following week opened upon Ellis, with a fair prospect of fulfilling the injunctions of her correspondent, by learning to suffice to herself. This idea animated her with a courage which, in some measure, divested her of the painful timidity, that, to the inexperienced and modest, is often subversive of the use of the very talents which it is their business and interest to display. Courage, not only upon such occasions, but upon others of infinitely higher importance, is more frequently than the looker on suspects, the effect of secret reasoning, and cool calculation of consequences, than of fearless temperament, or inborn bravery.

Her first essay exceeded her best expectations in its success; a success the more important, as failure, there, might have fastened discredit upon her whole enterprize, since her first pupil was Lady Barbara Frankland.

Lady Kendover, the aunt of that young lady, to whom Miss Arbe, for the honour of her own patronage, had adroitly dwelt upon the fortnight passed at Mrs Howel's, and, in the society of Lady Aurora Granville, by her *protégée*; received and treated her with distinguished condescension, and even flattering kindness. For though her ladyship was too high in rank, to share in the anxious tenaciousness of Mrs Howel, for manifesting the superiour judgment with which she knew how to select, and how to reject, persons qualified for her society; and though yet less liable to be controlled by the futile fears of the opinion of a neighbourhood, which awed Mrs Maple; still she was more a woman of quality than a woman of the world; and the circle in which she moved, was bounded by the hereditary habits, and imitative customs, which had always limited the proceedings of her ladyship's, in common with those of almost every other noble family, of patronizing those who had already been elevated by patronage; and of lifting higher, by peculiar favour, those who were already mounting by the favour of others. To go further,—to draw forth talents from obscurity, to honour indigent virtue, were exertions that demanded a character of a superiour species; a character that had learnt to act for himself, by thinking for himself and feeling for others.

[Pg 214]

The joy of Lady Barbara, a lively and lovely young creature, just blooming into womanhood, in becoming the pupil of Ellis, was nearly extatic. Lady Aurora Granville, with whom she was particularly connected, had written to her in such rapture of the private play, that she was wild to see the celebrated Lady Townly. And though she was not quite simple, nor quite young enough, to believe that she should literally behold that personage, her ideas were, unconsciously, so bewildered, between the representation of nature and life, or nature and life themselves, that she had a certain undefined pleasure in the meeting which perplexed, yet bewitched her imagination. She regarded it as the happiest possible event, to be brought into such close intercourse, with a person whom she delighted herself with considering as the first actress of the age. She looked at her; watched her; listened to her; and prevailed upon Lady Kendover to engage that she should every day take a lesson; during which her whole mind was directed to imitating Miss Ellis in her manner of holding the harp; in the air of her head as she turned from it to look at the musical notes; in her way of curving, straightening, or elegantly spreading her fingers upon the strings; and in the general bend of her person, upon which depended the graceful effect of the whole. Not very singular, indeed, was Lady Barbara, in regarding these as the principal points to be attained, in acquiring the accomplishment of playing upon the harp; which, because it shews beauty and grace to advantage, is often erroneously chosen for exhibiting those who have

neither; as if its powers extended to bestow the charms which it only displays.

The admiration of Lady Barbara for her instructress, lost some boundary of moderation every day; and Ellis, though ashamed of such excess of partiality, felt fostered by its warmth, and returned it with sincerity. Lady Barbara, who was gaily artless, and as full of kindness as of vivacity, had the strong recommendation of being wholly natural; a recommendation as rare in itself, as success is in its deviations.

Miss Arbe was all happy exultation, at a prosperity for which she repaid herself, without scruple, by perpetual, though private lessons; and Ellis, whose merit, while viewed with rivalry, she had sought to depreciate, she was now foremost to praise. The swellings of envy and jealousy gave way to triumph in her own discernment; and all severities of hypercriticism subsided into the gentler vanity, and more humane parade, of patronage.

[Pg 215]

Another happy circumstance signalized, also, this professional commencement of Ellis; Miss Arbe secured to her the popular favour of Sir Marmaduke Crawley, a travelled fine gentleman, just summoned from Italy, to take possession of his title and estate; and to the guardianship of two hoyden sisters, many years younger than himself. His character of a connoisseur, and admirer of *les beaux arts*; a person of so refined a conformation, as to desire to be thought rather to vegetate than to live, when removed from the genial clime of the sole region of the muses, and of taste, Italy; made his approbation as useful to her fame, as the active influence of Miss Arbe was to her fortune. This gentleman, upon hearing her perform to Lady Kendover, declared, with a look of melancholy recollection, that The Ellis was more divine than any thing that he had yet met with on this side the Alps. He requested Miss Arbe, therefore, to place his sisters under her elegant tuition, if he might hope that The Ellis could be prevailed upon to undertake two such Vandals.

Born to a considerable fortune, though with a narrow capacity, Sir Marmaduke had persuaded himself, that to make the tour of Europe, and to become a connoisseur in all the arts, was the same thing; and, as he was rich, and, therefore, able to make himself friends, civil, and therefore never addicted to make enemies, no one felt tempted, either by sincerity or severity, to undeceive him; and, as all he essentially wanted, for the character to which he thought himself elevated, was 'spirit, taste, and sense,' he uttered his opinions upon whatever he saw, or heard, without the smallest suspicion, that the assiduity with which he visited, or the wealth with which he purchased, works of art, included not every requisite for their appreciation. Yet though, from never provoking, he never encountered, that foe to the happy feelings of inborn presumption, truth, he felt sometimes embarrassed, when suddenly called upon to pronounce an opinion on any abtruse point of taste. He was always, therefore, watchful to catch hints from the dashing Miss Arbe, since to whatever she gave her fearless sanction, he saw fashion attached.

Nothing could be more different than the reception given to Ellis by Lady Kendover, and that which she experienced from the Miss Crawleys. Without any superiority to their brother in understanding, they had a decided inferiority in education and manners. They had been brought up by a fond uncle, in the country, with every false indulgence which can lead to idle ease and pleasure, for the passing moment; but which teems with that weariness, that a dearth of all rational employment nurses up for the listless and uncultured, when folly and ignorance out-live mere thoughtless merriment. Accustomed to follow, in every thing, the uncontrolled bent of their own humours, they felt fatigued by the very word decorum; and thought themselves oppressed by any representation of what was due to propriety. Their brother, on the contrary, taking the opposite extreme, had neither care nor wish but what related to the opinion of the *virtuosi*: because, though possessed of whatever could give pecuniary, he was destitute of all that could inspire mental independence.

[Pg 216]

'Oh ho! The Ellis!' cried Miss Crawley, mimicking her brother: 'you are come to be our school-mistress, are you? Quick, quick, Di; put on your dumpish face, and begin your task.'

'Be quiet, be quiet!' cried Miss Di; 'I shall like to learn of all things. The Ellis shall make me The Crawley. Come, what's to be done, The Ellis? Begin, begin!'

'And finish, finish!' cried the eldest: 'I can't bear to be long about any thing: there's nothing so fogrum.'

Their brother, now, ventured, gently, to caution them not to make use of the word fogrum, which, he assured them, was by no means received in good company.

'O, I hate good company!' cried the eldest: 'It always makes me fall asleep.'

'So do I,' cried the youngest; 'except when I take upon myself to wake it. O! that's the delight of my life! to run wild upon a set of formals, who think one brainless, only because one is not drowsy. Do you know any fogrums of that sort, brother?'

The merriment that this question, which they meant to be personal, occasioned, extremely confused Sir Marmaduke; and his evident consciousness flung them into such immoderate laughter, that the new mistress was forced to desist from all attempt at instruction, till it subsided; which was not till their brother, shrugging his shoulders, with shame and mortification, left the room.

Yawning, then, with exhausted spirits, they desired to be set to work.

Proficiency they had no chance, for they had no wish to make; but Ellis, from this time, attended

them twice a-week; and Sir Marmaduke was gratified by the assurances of Miss Arbe, that all the world praised his taste, for choosing them so accomplished an instructress. [Pg 217]

The fourth scholar that the same patronage procured for Ellis, was a little girl of eleven years of age, whose mother, Lady Arramede, the nearly ruined widow of a gamester peer, sacrificed every comfort to retain the equipage, and the establishment, that she had enjoyed during the life of her luxurious lord. Her table, except when she had company, was never quite sufficient for her family; her dress, except when she visited, was always old, mended, and out of fashion; and the education of her daughter, though destined to be of the first order, was extracted, in common with her gala dinners, and gala ornaments, from these daily savings. Ellis, therefore, from the very moderate price at which Miss Arbe, for the purpose of obliging her own various friends, had fixed her instructions, was a treasure to Lady Arramede; who had never before so completely found, what she was always indefatigably seeking, a professor not more cheap than fashionable.

On the part of the professor, the satisfaction was not quite mutual. Lady Arramede, reduced by her great expences in public, to the most miserable parsimony in private, joined, to a lofty desire of high consideration in the world, a constant alarm lest her pecuniary difficulties should be perceived. The low terms, therefore, upon which Ellis taught, though the real inducement for her being employed, urged the most arrogant reception of the young instructress, in the apprehension that she might, else, suspect the motive to her admission; and the instant that she entered the room, her little pupil was hurried to the instrument, that she might not presume to imagine it possible, that she could remain in the presence of her ladyship, even for a moment, except to be professionally occupied.

Yet was she by no means more niggardly in bestowing favour, than rapacious in seeking advantage. Her thoughts were constantly employed in forming interrogatories for obtaining musical information, by which her daughter might profit in the absence of the mistress; though she made them without troubling herself to raise her eyes, except when she did not comprehend the answer; and then, her look was of so haughty a character, that she seemed rather to be demanding satisfaction than explication.

The same address, also, accompanied her desire to hear the pieces, which her daughter began learning, performed by the mistress: she never made this request till the given hour was more than passed; and made it then rather as if she were issuing a command, for the execution of some acknowledged duty, than calling forth talents, or occupying time, upon which she could only from courtesy have any claim. [Pg 218]

Miss Brinville, the fifth pupil of Ellis, was a celebrated beauty, who had wasted her bloom in a perpetual search of admiration; and lost her prime, without suspecting that it was gone, in vain and ambitious difficulties of choice. Yet her charms, however faded and changed, still, by candle-light, or when adroitly shaded, through a becoming skill in the arrangement of her head-dress, appeared nearly in their first lustre; and in this view it was that they were always present to herself; though, by the world, the altered complexion, sunk eyes, and enlarged features, exhibited by day-light, or by common attire, were all, except through impertinent retrospection, that were any more noticed.

She was just arrived at Brighthelmstone, with her mother, upon a visit to an acquaintance, whom that lady had engaged to invite them, with a design of meeting Sir Lyell Sycamore, a splendid young baronet, with whom Miss Brinville had lately danced at a private ball; where, as he saw her for the first time, and saw her to every advantage which well chosen attire, animated vanity, and propitious wax-light could give, he had fallen desperately enamoured of her beauty; and had so vehemently lamented having promised to join a party to Brighthelmstone, that both the mother and the daughter concluded, that they had only to find a decent pretence for following him, to secure the prostration of his title and fortune at their feet. And though similar expectations, from gentlemen of similar birth and estate, had already, at least fifty times, been disappointed, they were just as sanguine, in the present instance, as if, new to the world, and inexperienced in its ways, they were now receiving their first lessons, upon the fallaciousness of self-appreciation: so slight is the impression made, even where our false judgment is self-detected, by wounds to our vanity! and so elastic is the re-bounce of that hope, which originates in our personal estimation of our deserts!

The young Baronet, indeed, no sooner heard of the arrival at Brighthelmstone of the fair one who had enchanted him, than, wild with rapture, he devoted all his soul to expected extacies. But when, the next morning, fine and frosty, though severely cold, he met her upon the Steyn, her complexion and her features were so different to those yet resting, in full beauty, upon his memory, that he looked at her with a surprise mingled with a species of indignation, as at a caricature of herself. [Pg 219]

Miss Brinville, though too unconscious of her own double appearance to develope what passed in his mind, was struck and mortified by his change of manner. The bleak winds which blew sharply from the sea, giving nearly its own blue-green hue to her skin, while all that it bestowed of the carnation's more vivid glow, visited the feature which they least become, but which seems always the favourite wintry hot-bed of the ruddy tints; in completing what to the young Baronet seemed an entire metamorphosis, drove him fairly from the field. The wondering heroine was left in a consternation that usefully, however disagreeably, might have whispered to her some of those cruel truths which are always buzzing around faded beauties,—missing no ears but their own!—had she not been hurried, by her mother, into a milliner's shop, to make some preparations for a ball to which she was invited for the evening. There, again, she saw the Baronet, to whose

astonished sight she appeared with all her first allurements. Again he danced with her, again was captivated; and again the next morning recovered his liberty. Yet Miss Brinville made no progress in self-perception: his changes were attributed to caprice or fickleness; and her desire grew but more urgent to fix her wavering conquest.

At the dinner at Lady Kendover's, where Miss Arbe brought forward the talents and the plan of Ellis, such a spirit was raised, to procure scholars amongst the young ladies of fashion then at Brighthelmstone; and it seemed so youthful to become a pupil, that Miss Brinville feared, if left out, she might be considered as too old to enter such lists. Yet her total ignorance of music, and a native dull distaste to all the arts, save the millinery, damped her wishes with want of resolution; till an exclamation of Sir Lyell Sycamore's, that nothing added so much grace to beauty as playing upon the harp, gave her sudden strength and energy, to beg to be set down, by Miss Arbe, as one of the first scholars for her *protegée*.

Ellis was received by her with civility, but treated with the utmost coldness. The sight of beauty at its height, forced a self-comparison of no exhilarating nature; and, much as she built upon informing Sir Lyell of her lessons, she desired nothing less than shewing him from whom they were received. To sit at the harp so as to justify the assertion of the Baronet, became her principal study; and the glass before which she tried her attitudes and motions, told her such flattering tales, that she soon began to think the harp the sweetest instrument in the world, and that to practise it was the most delicious of occupations.

[Pg 220]

Ellis was too sincere to aid this delusion. Of all her pupils, no one was so utterly hopeless as Miss Brinville, whom she found equally destitute of ear, taste, intelligence, and application. The same direction twenty times repeated, was not better understood than the first moment that it was uttered. Naturally dull, she comprehended nothing that was not familiar to her; and habitually indolent, because brought up to believe that beauty would supply every accomplishment, she had no conception of energy, and not an idea of diligence.

Ellis, whose mind was ardent, and whose integrity was incorrupt, felt an honourable anxiety to fulfil the duties of her new profession, though she had entered upon them merely from motives of distress. She was earnest, therefore, for the improvement of her pupils; and conceived the laudable ambition, to merit what she might earn, by their advancement. And though one amongst them, alone, manifested any genius; in all of them, except Miss Brinville, she saw more of carelessness, or idleness, than of positive, incapacity. But here, the darkness of all musical apprehension was so impenetrable, that not a ray of instruction could make way through it; and Ellis who, though she saw that to study her looks at the instrument was her principal object, had still imagined that to learn music came in for some share in taking lessons upon the harp, finding it utterly vain to try to make her distinguish one note from another, held her own probity called upon to avow her opinion; since she saw herself the only one who could profit from its concealment.

Gently, therefore, and in terms the most delicate that she could select, she communicated her fears to Mrs Brinville, that the talents of Miss Brinville were not of a musical cast.

Mrs Brinville, with a look that said, What infinite impertinence! declared herself extremely obliged by this sincerity; and summoned her daughter to the conference.

Miss Brinville, colouring with the deepest resentment, protested that she was never so well pleased as in hearing plain truth; but each made an inclination of her head, that intimated to Ellis that she might hasten her departure: and the first news that reached her the next morning was, that Miss Brinville had sent for a celebrated and expensive professor, then accidentally at Brighthelmstone, to give her lessons upon the harp.

Miss Arbe, from whom Ellis received this intelligence, was extremely angry with her for the strange, and what she called unheard-of measure that she had taken. 'What had you,' she cried, 'to do with their manner of wasting their money? Every one chooses to throw it away according to his own taste. If rich people have not that privilege, I don't see how they are the better for not being poor.'

[Pg 221]

The sixth scholar whom Ellis undertook, was sister to Sir Lyell Sycamore. She possessed a real genius for music, though it was so little seconded by industry, that whatever she could not perform without labour or time, she relinquished. Thus, though all she played was executed in a truly fine style, nothing being practised, nothing was finished; and though she could amuse herself, and charm her auditors, with almost every favourite passage that she heard, she could not go through a single piece; could play nothing by book; and hardly knew her notes.

Nevertheless, Ellis found her so far superiour, in musical capacity, to every other pupil that had fallen to her charge, that she conceived a strong desire to make her the fine player that her talents fitted her for becoming.

Her utmost exertions, however, and warmest wishes, were insufficient for this purpose. The genius with which Miss Sycamore was endowed for music, was unallied to any soft harmonies of temper, or of character: she was presumptuous, conceited, and gaily unfeeling. If Ellis pressed her to more attention, she hummed an air, without looking at her; if she remonstrated against her neglect, she suddenly stared at her, though without speaking. She had a haughty indifference about learning; but it was not from an indifference to excel; 'twas from a firm self-opinion, that she excelled already. If she could not deny, that Ellis executed whole pieces, in as masterly a manner as she could herself play only chosen passages, she deemed that a mere mechanical part

of the art, which, as a professor, Ellis had been forced to study; and which she herself, therefore, rather held cheap than respected.

Ellis, at first, seriously lamented this wayward spirit, which wasted real talents; but all interest for her pupil soon subsided; and all regret concentrated in having such a scholar to attend; for the manners of Miss Sycamore had an excess of insolence, that rather demanded apathy than philosophy to be supported, by those who were in any degree within her power. Ellis was treated by her with a sort of sprightly defiance, that sometimes seemed to arise from gay derision; at others, from careless haughtiness. Miss Sycamore, who gave little attention to the rumours of her history, saw her but either as a Wanderer, of blighted fortune, and as such looked down upon her with contempt; or as an indigent young woman of singular beauty, and as such, with far less willingness, looked up to her with envy.

[Pg 222]

Twice a-week, also, Selina, with the connivance, though not with the avowed consent of Mrs Maple, came from Lewes, to continue her musical lessons, at the house of Lady Kendover, or of Miss Arramede.

Such was the set which the powerful influence of Miss Arbe procured for the opening campaign of Ellis; and to this set its own celebrity soon added another name. It was not, indeed, one which Miss Arbe would have deigned to put upon her list; but Ellis, who had no pride to support in her present undertaking, save the virtuous and right pride of owing independence to her own industry, as readily accepted a preferred scholar from the daughter of a common tradesman, as she had accepted the daughter of an Earl, whom she taught at Lady Kendover's.

Mr Tedman, a grocer, who had raised a very large fortune, was now at Brighthelmstone, with his only daughter and heiress, at whose desire he called at Miss Matson's, to enquire for the famous music-teacher.

Ellis, hearing that he was an elderly man, conceived what might be his business, and admitted him. Much surprised by her youthful appearance, 'Good now, my dear,' he cried, 'why to be sure it can't be you as pretends to learn young misses music? and even misses of quality, as I am told? It's more likely it's your mamma; put in case you've got one.'

When Ellis had set him right, he took five guineas from his purse, and said, 'Well, then, my dear, come to my darter, and give her as much of your tudeling as will come to this. And I think, by then, she'll be able to twiddle over them wires by herself.'

The hours of attendance being then settled, he looked smirkingly in her face, and added, 'Which of us two is to hold the stakes, you or I?' shaking the five guineas between his hands. But when she assured him that she had not the most distant desire to anticipate such an appropriation, he assumed an air of generous affluence, and assuring her, in return, that he was not afraid to trust her, counted two guineas and a half a guinea, upon the table, and said, 'So if you please, my dear, we'll split the difference.'

Ellis found the daughter yet more innately, though less obviously, vulgar; and far more unpleasant, because uncivil, than the father. In a constant struggle to hide the disproportion of her origin, and early habits, with her present pretensions to fashion, she was tormented by an incessant fear of betraying, that she was as little bred as born to the riches which she now possessed. This made her always authoritative with her domestics, or inferiours, to keep them in awe; pert with gentlemen, by way of being genteel; and rude with ladies, to shew herself their equal.

[Pg 223]

Mr Tedman conceived, immediately, a warm partiality for Ellis, whose elegant manners, which, had he met with her in high life, would have distanced him by their superiority, now attracted him irresistibly, in viewing them but as good-nature. He called her his pretty tudeler, and bid her make haste to earn her five guineas; significantly adding, that, if his daughter were not finished before they were gone, he was rich enough to make them ten.

CHAPTER XXV

[Pg 224]

With these seven pupils, Ellis, combating the various unpleasant feelings that were occasionally excited, prosperously began her new career.

Her spirits, from the fulness of her occupations, revived; and she soon grew a stranger to the depression of that ruminating leisure, which is wasted in regret, in repining, or in wavering meditation.

Miss Arbe reaped, also, the fruits of her successful manœuvres, by receiving long, and almost daily instructions, under the pretence of trying different compositions; though never under the appellation of lessons, nor with the smallest acknowledgement of any deficiency that might require improvement; always, when they separated, exclaiming, 'What a delightful musical regale we have enjoyed this morning!'

So sincere, nevertheless, was the sense which Ellis entertained of the essential obligations which she owed to Miss Arbe, that she suffered this continual intrusion and fatigue without a murmur.

Miss Bydel, also, who was nearly as frequent in her visits as Miss Arbe, claimed constantly, however vainly, in return for paying the month's hire of the harp, the private history of the way of life, expences, domestics, and apparent income, of every family to which that instrument was the means of introduction. And but that these ladies had personal engagements for their evenings, Ellis could not have found time to keep herself in such practice as her new profession required; and her credit, if not her scholars, might have been lost, through the selfishness of the very patronesses by whom they had been obtained.

Another circumstance, also, somewhat disturbed, though she would not suffer it to interrupt what she now deemed to be her professional study: she no sooner touched her harp, than she heard a hurrying, though heavy step, descend the stairs; and never opened her door, after playing or singing, without perceiving a gentleman standing against it, in an attitude of listening. He hastened away ashamed, upon her appearance; yet did not the less fail to be in waiting at her next performance. Displeased, and nearly alarmed by the continual repetition of this curiosity, she complained of it to Miss Matson, desiring that she would find means to put an end to so strange a liberty.

[Pg 225]

Miss Matson said, that the person in question, who was a gentleman of very good character, though rather odd in his ways, had taken the little room which Ellis had just relinquished: she was sure, however, that he meant no harm, for he had often told her, as he passed through the shop, that he ought to pay double for his lodging, for the sake of hearing the harp, and the singing. Miss Matson remonstrated with him, nevertheless, upon his indiscretion; in consequence of which, he became more circumspect.

From Selina, whose communications continued to be as unabated in openness, as her friendship was in fondness, Ellis had the heartfelt satisfaction of receiving occasional intelligence, drawn from the letters of Mrs Howel to Mrs Maple, of the inviolable attachment of Lady Aurora Granville.

She heard, also, but nearly with indifference, that the two elder ladies had been furious with indignation, at the prosperity of the scheme of Miss Arbe, by which Ellis seemed to be naturalized at Brighthelmstone; where she was highly considered, and both visited and invited, by all who had elegance, sense, or taste to appreciate her merits.

Of Elinor nothing was positively known, though some indirect information reached her aunt, that she had found means to return to the continent.

About three weeks passed thus, in the diligent and successful practice of this new profession, when a morning concert was advertised at the New Rooms, for a blind Welsh harper, who was travelling through the principal towns of England.

All the scholars of Ellis having, upon this occasion, taken tickets of Lady Kendover, who patronized the harper, Ellis meant to dedicate the leisure thus left her to musical studies; but she was broken in upon by Miss Bydel, who, possessing an odd ticket, and having, through some accident, missed joining her party, desired Ellis would immediately get ready to go with her to the concert. Ellis, not sorry to hear the harper, consented.

[Pg 226]

The harper was in the midst of his last piece when they arrived. Miss Bydel, deaf to a general buz of 'Hush!' at the loud voice with which, upon entering the room, she said, 'Well, now I must look about for some acquaintance,' straitly strutted on to the upper end of the apartment. Ellis quietly glided after her, concluding it to be a matter of course that they should keep together. Here, however, Miss Bydel comfortably arranged herself, between Mrs Maple and Selina, telling them that, having been too late for all her friends, and not liking to poke her way alone, she had been forced to make the young music-mistress come along with her, for company.

Ellis, though both abashed and provoked, felt herself too justly under the protection of Miss Bydel, to submit to the mortification of turning back, as if she had been an unauthorised intruder; though the averted looks, and her consciousness of the yet more disdainful opinions of Mrs Maple, left her no hope of countenance, but through the kindness of Selina. She sought, therefore, the eyes of her young friend, and did not seek them in vain; but great was her surprise to meet them not merely unaccompanied by any expression of regard, but even of remembrance; and to see them instantaneously withdrawn, to be fixed upon those of Lady Barbara Frankland, which were wholly occupied by the blind harper.

Disappointed and disconcerted, she was now obliged to seat herself, alone, upon a side form, and to strive to parry the awkwardness of her situation, by an appearance of absorbed attention to the performance of the harper.

A gentleman, who was lounging upon a seat at some distance, struck by her beauty, and surprised by her lonely position, curiously loitered towards her, and dropt, as if accidentally, upon the same form. He was young, tall, handsome, and fashionable, but wore the air of a decided libertine; and her modest mien, and evident embarrassment, rendered her peculiarly attractive to a voluptuous man of pleasure. To discover, therefore, whether that modesty were artificial, or the remains of such original purity as he, and such as he, adore but to demolish, was his immediate determination.

It was impossible for Ellis to escape seeing how completely she engrossed his attention, sedulously as she sought to employ her own another way. But, having advanced too far into the room, by following Miss Bydel, to descend without being recognized by those whose good opinion

[Pg 227]

it was now her serious concern to preserve, all her scholars being assembled upon this occasion; she resolved to sustain her credit, by openly joining, or, at least, closely following, Miss Bydel, when the concert should be over.

When the concert, however, was over, her difficulties were but increased, for no one retired. Lady Kendover ordered tea for herself and her party; and the rest of the assembly eagerly formed itself into groups for a similar purpose. A mixt society is always jealous of its rights of equality; and any measure taken by a person of superiour rank, or superiour fortune to the herd, soon becomes general; not humbly, from an imitative, but proudly, from a levelling spirit.

The little coteries thus every where arranging, made the forlorn situation of Ellis yet more conspicuous. All now, but herself, were either collected into setts to take tea, or dispersed for sauntering. She felt, therefore, so awkward, that, hoping by a fair explanation, to acquit herself to her scholars at their next lessons, she was rising to return alone to her lodging, when the gentleman already mentioned, planting himself abruptly before her, confidently enquired whether he could be of any service in seeing her out.

She gravely pronounced a negative, and re-seated herself. He made no attempt at conversation, but again took his place by her side.

In the hope of lessening, in some degree, her embarrassment, Ellis, once more, sought the notice of Selina, whose behaviour appeared so extraordinary, that she began to imagine herself mistaken in believing that she had yet been seen; but when, again, she caught the eye of that young lady, a low and respectful courtesy vainly solicited return, or notice. The eye looked another way, without seeming to have heeded the salutation.

She grew, now, seriously apprehensive, that some cruel calumny must have injured her in the opinion of her affectionate young friend.

Her ruminations upon this unpleasant idea were interrupted, by the approach of Mrs and Miss Brinville, who, scornfully passing her, stopt before her lounging neighbour, to whom Mrs Brinville said, 'Do you take nothing Sir Lyell? We are just going to make a little tea.'

Sir Lyell, looking negligently at Miss Brinville, and then, from her faded beauty, casting a glance of comparison at the blooming prime of the lovely unknown by his side, carelessly answered, that he took tea but once in a day.

Miss Brinville, though by no means aware of the full effect of such a contrast, had not failed to remark the direction of the wandering eye; nor to feel the waste and inadequacy of her best smiles to draw it back. She was compelled, however, to walk on, and Ellis now concluded that her bold and troublesome neighbour must be Sir Lyell Sycamore, who, seldom at home but to a given dinner, had never been present at any lesson of his sister's.

[Pg 228]

The chagrin of being seen, and judged, so unfavourably, by a friend of Lord Melbury, was a little softened, by the hope that he would soon learn who she was from Miss Sycamore; and that accident, not choice, had placed her thus alone in a public room.

Miss Brinville had not more keenly observed the admiring looks of Sir Lyell, than the Baronet had remarked her own of haughty disdain, for the same object. This confirmed his idea of the fragile character of his solitary beauty; though, while it fixed his pursuit, it deterred him from manifesting his design. His quietness, however, did not deceive Ellis; the admiration conveyed by his eyes was so wholly unmixt with respect, that, embarrassed and comfortless, she knew not which way to turn her own.

Mr Tedman, soon after, perceiving her to be alone, and unserved, came, with a good humoured smirk upon his countenance, to bring her a handful of cakes. It was in vain that she declined them; he placed them, one by one, till he had counted half a dozen, upon the form by her side, saying, 'Don't be so coy, my dear, don't be so coy. Young girls have appetites as well as old men, for I don't find that that tudeling does much for one's stomach; and, I promise you, this cold February morning has served me for as good a whet, as if I was an errand boy up to this moment—put in case I ever was one before;—which, however, is neither here nor there; though you may as well,' he added, lowering his voice, and looking cautiously around, 'not mention my happening to drop that word to my darter; for she has so many fine Misses coming to see her, that she got acquainted with at the boarding-school, where I was over-persuaded to put her—for I might have set up a good smart shop for the money it cost me; but she had a prodigious hankering after being teached dancing, and the like; and so now, when they come to see us, she wants to pass for as fine a toss up as themselves! And, lauk adaisy! put in case I was to let the cat out of the bag—.'

Steadily as Ellis endeavoured to avoid looking either to the right or to the left, she could not escape observing the surprise and diversion, which this visit and whisper afforded to Sir Lyell; yet the good humour of Mr Tedman, and her conviction of the innocence of his kindness, made it impossible for her to repulse him with anger.

[Pg 229]

Advancing, next, his mouth close to her ear, he said, 'I should have been glad enough to have had you come and drink a cup of tea with I and my darter; I can tell you that; only my darter's always in such a fuss about what the quality will think of her; else, we are dull enough together, only she and me; for, do what she will, the quality don't much mind her. So she's rather a bit in the sulks, poor dear. And, at best, she is but a so so hand at the agreeable. Though indeed, for the matter of that, I am no rare one myself; except with my particulars;—put in case I am then.'

He now, good-humouredly nodding, begged her not to spare the cakes, and promising she should have more if she were hungry, returned to his daughter.

Sir Lyell, with a scarcely stifled laugh, and in a tone the most familiar, enquired whether she wished for any further refreshment.

Ellis, looking away from him, pronounced a repulsive negative.

An elderly gentleman, who was walking up and down the room, now bowed to her. Not knowing him, she let his salutation pass apparently disregarded; when, some of her cakes accidentally falling from the form, he eagerly picked them up, saying, as he grasped them in his hand, 'Faith, Madam, you had better have eaten them at once. You had, faith! Few things are mended by delay. We are all at our best at first. These cakes are no more improved by being mottled with the dirt of the floor, than a pretty woman is by being marked with the small pox. I know nothing that i'n't the worse for a put-off, ... unless it be a quarrel.'

Ellis, then, through his voice and language, discovered her fellow voyager, Mr Riley; though a considerable change in his appearance, from his travelling garb, had prevented a more immediate recollection.

Additional disturbance now seized her, lest he should recur to the suspicious circumstances of her voyage and arrival.

While he still stood before her, declaiming upon the squeezed cakes, which he held in his hand, Mr Tedman, coming softly back, and gently pushing him aside, produced, with a self-pleased countenance, a small plate of bread and butter, saying, 'Look, here, my dear, I've brought you a few nice slices; for I see the misfortune that befel my cakes, of their falling down; and I resolved you should not be the worse for it. But I advise you to eat this at once, for fear of accidents; only take care,' with a smile, 'that you don't grease your pretty fingers.'

[Pg 230]

He did not smile singly; Sir Lyell more than bore him company, and Riley laughed aloud saying,

"'Twould be pity, indeed, if she did not take care of her pretty fingers, 'twould, faith! when she can work them so cunningly. I can't imagine how the lady could sit so patiently, to hear that old Welsh man thrum the cords in that bang wang way, when she can touch them herself, like a little Queen David, to put all one's feelings in a fever. I have listened at her door, till I have tingled all over with heat, in the midst of the hard frost. And, sometimes, I have sat upon the stairs, to hear her, till I have been so bent double, and numbed, that my nose has almost joined my toes, and you might have rolled me down to the landing-place without uncurbing me. You might, faith!'

Ellis now further discovered, that Mr Riley was the listening new lodger. Her apprehensions, however, of his recollection subsided, when she found him wholly unsuspecting that he had ever seen her before; and called to mind her own personal disguise at their former meeting.

Sir Lyell, piqued to see her monopolized by two such fogrums as he thought Messieurs Riley and Tedman, was bending forward to address her more freely himself, when Lady Barbara Frankland, suddenly perceiving her, flew to take her hand, with the most cordial expressions of partial and affectionate regard.

Sir Lyell Sycamore, after a moment of extreme surprise, combining this condescension with what Riley had said of her performance, surmized that his suspicious beauty must be the harp-mistress, who had been recommended to him by Miss Arbe; who taught his sister; and whose various accomplishments had been extolled to him by Lord Melbury. That she should appear, and remain, thus strangely alone in public, marked her, nevertheless, in his opinion, as, at least, an easy prey; though her situation with regard to his sister, and a sense of decency with regard to her known protectors, made him instantly change his demeanour, and determine to desist from any obvious pursuit.

Lady Barbara had no sooner returned to her aunt, than Sir Marmaduke Crawley, in the name of that lady, advanced with a request, that Miss Ellis would be so obliging as to try the instrument of the Welsh harper.

Though this message was sent by Lady Kendover in terms of perfect politeness, and delivered by Sir Marmaduke with the most scrupulous courtesy, it caused Ellis extreme disturbance, from her unconquerable repugnance to complying with her ladyship's desire; but, while she was entreating him to soften her refusal, by the most respectful expressions, his two sisters came hoydening up to her, charging him to take no denial, and protesting that they would either drag The Ellis to the harp, or the harp to The Ellis, if she stood dilly dallying any longer. And then, each seizing her by an arm, without any regard to her supplications, or to the shock which they inflicted upon the nerves of their brother, they would have put their threat into immediate execution, but for the weakness occasioned by their own immoderate laughter at their merry gambols; which gave time for Lady Kendover to perceive the embarrassment and the struggles of Ellis, and to suffer her partial young admirer, Lady Barbara, to be the bearer of a civil apology, and a recantation of the request.

[Pg 231]

To this commission of the well-bred aunt, the kind-hearted niece added a positive insistance, that Ellis should join their party; to which she rather drew than led her, seating her, almost forcibly, next to herself, with exulting delight at rescuing her from the turbulent Miss Crawleys.

Lady Kendover, to whom the exact gradations of *etiquette* were always present, sought, by a

look, to intimate to her niece, that while the Hon. Miss Arramede was standing, this was not the place for Ellis: but the niece, natural, inconsiderate, and zealous, understood not the hint; and the timid embarrassment of Ellis shewed so total a freedom from all obtrusive intentions, that her ladyship could not but forgive, however little she had desired the junction; and, soon afterwards, encouragingly led her to join both in the conversation and the breakfast.

Selina, now, ran to shake hands with her dear Ellis, expressing the warmest pleasure at her sight. Ellis as much, though not as disagreeably surprised by her notice now, as she had been by the more than neglect which had preceded it, was hesitating what judgment to form of either, when Miss Sycamore, from some distance, scornfully called out to her, 'Don't fail to stop at our house on your way back to your lodgings, Miss Ellis, to look at my harp. I believe it's out of order.'

Lady Kendover, whose invariable politeness made her peculiarly sensible of any failure of that quality in another, perceiving Ellis extremely disconcerted, by the pointed malice of this humiliating command, at the moment that she was bearing her part in superiour society, redoubled her own civilities, by attentions as marked and public as they were obliging; and, pleased by the modest gratitude with which they were received, had again restored the serenity of Ellis; when a conversation, unavoidably overheard, produced new disturbance.

[Pg 232]

Mr Riley, who had just recognized Ireton and Mrs Maple, was loud in his satisfaction at again seeing two of his fellow-voyagers; and, in his usually unceremonious manner, began discoursing upon their late dangers and escape; notwithstanding all the efforts of Mrs Maple, who knew nothing of his birth, situation in life, or fortune, to keep him at a distance.

'And pray,' cried her, 'how does Miss Nelly do? She is a prodigious clever girl; she is faith! I took to her mightily; though I did not much like that twist she had got to the wrong side of my politics. I longed prodigiously to give her a twitch back to the right. But how could you think Ma'am, of taking over such a brisk, warm, young girl as that, at the very instant when the new-fangled doctrines were beginning to ferment in every corner of France? boiling over in one half of their pates, to scald t'other half.'

Mrs Maple, however unwilling to hold a public conference with a person of whom she had never seen the pedigree, nor the rent-roll, could still less endure to let even a shadow of blame against herself pass unanswered: she therefore angrily said, that she had travelled for health, and not to trouble herself about politics.

'O, as to you, Ma'am, it's all one, at your years: but how you could fancy a skittish young girl, like that, could be put into such a hot bed of wild plants, and not shoot forth a few twigs herself, I can't make out. You might as well send her to a dance, and tell her not to wag a foot. And pray what's become of Mr Harleigh? I've no where seen his fellow. He was the most of a manly gentleman that ever fell in my walk. And your poor ailing mama, Squire Ireton? Has she got the better of her squeamish fits? She was deuced bad aboard; and not much better ashore. And that Demoiselle, the black-skinned girl, with the fine eyes and nose? Where's she, too? Have you ever heard what became of her?'

Ellis, who every moment expected this question, had prepared herself to listen to it with apparent unconcern: but Selina, tittering, and again running up to her, and pinching her arm, asked whether it were not she, that that droll man meant by the black-skinned girl?

'She was a good funny girl, faith!' continued Riley. 'I was prodigiously diverted with her. Yet we did nothing but quarrel. Though I don't know why. But I could never find out who she was. I believe the devil himself could not have made her speak.'

[Pg 233]

The continual little laughs of Selina, whom no supplications of Ellis could keep quiet, now attracted the notice of Lady Kendover; which so palpably increased the confusion of Ellis, that the attention of her ladyship was soon transferred to herself.

'She was but an odd fish, I believe, after all,' Riley went on; 'for, one day, when I was sauntering along Oxford Street, who should I meet but the noble Admiral? the only one of our set I have seen, till this moment, since I left Dover. And when we talked over our adventures, and I asked him if he knew any thing of the Demoiselle, how do you think she had served him? She's a comical hand, faith! Only guess!'

Ellis, now, apprehensive of some strange attack, involuntarily, looked at him, with as much amazement and attention, as he began to excite in all others who were near him; while Mrs Maple, personally alarmed, demanded whether the Admiral had found out that any fraud had been practised upon him by that person?

'Fraud? ay, fraud enough!' cried Riley. 'She choused him neatly out of the hire of her place in the Diligence; besides that guinea that we all saw him give her.'

Ellis now coloured deeply; and Ireton, heartily laughing, repeated the word 'choused?' while Mrs Maple, off all guard, looked fiercely at Ellis, and exclaimed, 'This is just what I have all along expected! And who can tell who else may have been pilfered? I protest I don't think myself safe yet.'

This hasty speech raised a lively curiosity in all around; for all around had become listeners, from the loud voice of Riley; who now related that the Admiral, having paid the full fare for bringing the black-skinned girl to town, had called at the inn at which the stage puts up in London, to

enquire, deeming her a stranger, whether she were safely arrived; and there he had been informed, that she had never made use of her place.

Ellis had no time to dwell upon the cruel, but natural misconstruction, from the change of her plan, which had thus lost her the good opinion of the benevolent Admiral; the speech which followed from Mrs Maple was yet more terrific. 'I have not the least doubt, then,' said that lady, in a tone of mingled triumph and rage, 'that she put the money for her place into her pocket, as well as the guinea, while she wheedled Mrs Ireton into bringing her up to town gratis! for I was all along sure she was an adventurer and an impostor; with her blacks, and her whites, and her double face!'—

[Pg 234]

She stopt abruptly, recollecting the censure to which anger and self-importance were leading her, of having introduced into society, a creature of whom, from the origin of any knowledge of her, she had conceived so ill an opinion.

But while the various changes of complexion, produced in Ellis by this oration, were silently marked by Lady Kendover; and drew from Lady Barbara the most affectionate enquiries whether she were indisposed; the Miss Crawleys, who heard all that passed with their customary search of mirth, whether flowing from the ridiculous, the singular, or the mischievous, now clamourously demanded what Mrs Maple meant, by the double face, the blacks, and the whites.

'Oh, no matter,' answered Mrs Maple, stammering; 'tis not a thing worth talking of.'

'But the blacks—and the whites—and the double face?' cried Miss Crawley.

'Ay, the double face, the blacks, and the whites?' cried Miss Di.

'The blacks,' said Mr Riley, 'I understand well enough; but I remember nothing about the double face. Surely the Demoiselle could not hodge-podge herself into one of the whites? What do you mean by all that, Ma'am?'

'Pray ask me nothing about the matter,' replied Mrs Maple, impatiently. 'I am not at all accustomed to talk of people of that sort.'

'Why, how's all this?' cried Riley. 'Have any of you met with the Demoiselle again?'

Mrs Maple would not deign to make any further reply.

He addressed himself to Ireton, who only laughed.

'Well, this is droll enough! it is, faith! I begin to think the Demoiselle has appeared amongst you again. I wish you'd tell me, for I should like to see her of all things, for old acquaintance sake. She was but a dowdy piece of goods, to be sure; but she had fine eyes, and a fine nose; and she amused me prodigiously, she was so devilish shy.'

'You believe, then,' said Ireton, excited, not checked, by the palpable uneasiness of Ellis, 'that if you saw her again, you should know her?'

'Know the Demoiselle? ay, from an hundred, with her beautiful black marks, and *insignia* of the order of fisty cuffs.'

'Look for her, then, man! Look for her!'

[Pg 235]

'I shall want small compulsion for that, I promise you; but where am I to look? Is she here?'

Ireton nodded.

'Nay, then, Master Ireton, since you bid me look, lend me, at least, some sort of spectacles, that may help me to see through a mask; for I am sure, if she be here, she must wear one.'

'Are you sure that, if you should see her without one, you should not mistake her?'

'Yes, faith, am I!'

'What will you bet upon it?'

'What you will, Squire Ireton. A guinea to half a crown.'

Mrs Maple, alarmed now, for her own credit, desired Ireton to enquire whether her carriage were ready; but Ireton, urged by an unmeaning love of mischief, which, ordinarily, forms a large portion of the common cast of no character, would not rest till he had engaged Riley in a wager, that he could make him look his Demoiselle full in the face, without recollecting her.

Riley said that he should examine every lady, now, one by one, and take special note that she wore her own natural visage.

He began with the jocund Miss Crawleys, whose familiar gaiety, which deemed nothing indecorous that afforded them sport, encouraged him, by its flippant enjoyment, to proceed to others. But he no sooner advanced to Ellis, than she turned from his investigation, in so much disorder, that her kind young friend, Lady Barbara, enquired what was the matter.

She endeavoured to control her alarm, cheerfully answering, that she was well; but Riley no sooner caught the sound of her voice, than, riotously clapping his hands, he exclaimed, 'Tis the Demoiselle! Faith, 'tis the Demoiselle herself! That's her voice! And those are her eyes! And

there's her nose! It's she, faith! And so here are the whites, and the double face!

A laugh from Ireton confirmed his suggestion, while the change of countenance in Ellis, satisfied all who could see her, that some discovery was made, or impending, which she earnestly wished concealed.

Mrs Maple, scarcely less disconcerted than herself, enquired again for her carriage.

'Faith, this is droll enough! it is, faith!' cried Riley, when his first transport of surprise subsided. 'So the Demoiselle is a Beauty, after all! And the finest harp-player, to boot, on this side King David!'

[Pg 236]

Ellis, dreadfully distressed, silently bowed down her head.

'I should like to have a model of her face,' continued Riley; 'to find out how it's done. What a fine fortune she may raise, if she will take up a patent for beauty-making! I know many a dowager that would give half she is worth for the secret. I should think you would not be sorry yourself, Mrs Maple, to have a little touch of the art. It would not do you much harm, I can tell you, Ma'am.'

The scornful looks of Mrs Maple alone announced that she heard him; and the disturbed ones of Ellis made the same confession; but both were equally mute.

'You'll pay for your sport, I can tell you, Master Ireton!' Riley triumphantly went on; 'for I shall claim my wager. But pray, Demoiselle, what's become of all those plaisters and patches, as well as of the black coat over the skin? One could see nothing but eyes and nose. And very handsome eyes and nose they are. I don't know that I ever saw finer; I don't, faith! However, ladies, you need none of you despair of turning out beauties, in the long run, if she'll lend you a hand; for the ugliest Signora among you i'n't so frightful as poor Demoiselle was, when we saw her first; with her bruises, and scars, and bandages.'

Overwhelmed with shame at this disgraceful, and, in public, unanswerable attack, Ellis, utterly confounded, was painfully revolving in her mind, what vindication she might venture to offer; and whether it were better to speak at once, or afterwards, and individually; when, at the intimation of these deceits and disguises, the whole party turned towards her with alarmed and suspicious looks; and then abruptly arose to depart; Lady Kendover, taking the hand of her young niece, who still would have fondled Ellis, leading the way. Miss Arbe alone, of all the society to which Ellis was known, personally fearing to lose her useful mistress, ventured to whisper, 'Good morning, Miss Ellis: I'll call upon you to-morrow.' While all others, with cast-up eyes and hands, hurried off, as if contagion were in her vicinity.

Riley, claiming his wager, followed Ireton.

Petrified at her own situation, Ellis remained immovable, till she was roused from her consternation, by a familiar offer, from Sir Lyell Sycamore, to attend her home.

Fearful of fresh offence, she recovered from her dismay to rise; but, when she saw that the bold Baronet was fixed to accompany her, the dread of such an appearance to any one that she might meet, after the disastrous scene in which she had been engaged, frightened her into again sitting down.

[Pg 237]

Sir Lyell stood, or sauntered before her, meaning to mark her, to the gentlemen who still lingered, observant and curious, in the room, as his property; till Mr Tedman, coming back from an inner apartment, begged, in the civilest manner, leave to pass, and carry a glass of white wine negus to the young music-player, which he had saved out of a bowl that he had been making for himself.

'Oh, by all manner of means, Sir!' cried Sir Lyell, sneeringly giving way: 'pray don't let me mar your generosity!'

Ellis declined the negus, but, rejoicing in any safe and honest protection, entreated that Mr Tedman would have the goodness to order one of his servants to see her home.

Sir Lyell, sneeringly, and again placing himself before her, demanded to play the part of the domestic; and Mr Tedman, extremely disconcerted, as well as disappointed by the rejection of his negus, hung back ashamed.

Ellis, now, feeling a call for the most spirited exertion to rescue herself from this impertinence, begged Mr Tedman to stop; and then, addressing the young Baronet with dignity, said, 'If, as I believe, I have the honour of speaking to Sir Lyell Sycamore, he will rather, I trust, thank me, than be offended, that I take the liberty to assure him, that he will gratify the sister of his friend, —gratify Lady Aurora Granville,—by securing me from being molested.'

Had she named Lord Melbury, the ready suspicions of libertinism would but have added to the familiarity of the Baronet's pursuit; but the mention of Lady Aurora Granville startled him into respect, and he involuntarily bowed, as he made way for her to proceed. She then eagerly followed Mr Tedman out of the room; while Sir Lyell merely vented his spleen, by joining some of his remaining companions, in a hearty laugh, at the manners, the dress, the age, and the liberality of her chosen esquire.

The shock given to Ellis by this scene of apparent detection and disgrace, prevented not Mr Tedman from exulting at a mark of preference, which he considered as a letting down to what he called the quality. He ordered his footman to see Miss safe to her lodging; and regretted that he could not take her to it in his own coach, 'which I would certainly, my dear, do,' he said, 'but for the particularity of my darter, who will never consent to the most minimus thing in the world, but what she thinks will be agreeable to the quality.'

Ellis passed the rest of the day in the most severe inquietude, ruminating upon the ill effects that would probably result from an attack which she had been so little able to parry. Vainly she expected Miss Arbe, from whom alone she had any hope of support; and the apprehension of being forsaken even by her professed patroness, made the thought of appearing before Lady Kendover grow seriously formidable: but all fears were trifling compared to the consternation with which they terminated, when, the next day, while fancying that every sound would prove the chaise of Miss Arbe, hour after hour passed, without any carriage, any message; and, finally, the night closed in by the reception of a note from the steward of Lady Kendover, to demand the account of Miss Ellis, as Lady Barbara Frankland did not purpose to take any more lessons.

The abruptness of this dismissal, and the indelicacy of sending it through a domestic, were not more offensive to the feelings of Ellis, than the consequences to be expected from such a measure of hostility, were menacing to her present plan of existence.

She was still deliberating in what manner to address some sort of self-justification to Lady Kendover, when a similar note arrived from the butler of Lady Arramede.

[Pg 239]

The indignant sensations which these testimonies of utter contempt excited in Ellis, were embittered by every kind of perplexity. She had not courage to present herself to any other of her scholars, while uncertain whether she might not meet with treatment equally scornful; and in this state of depression and panic, she rejoiced to receive a visit, the following morning, even from Miss Bydel, as some mark of female countenance and protection.

Yet the opening to this interview seemed not very propitious: Miss Bydel, instead of ascending the stairs, as usual, seated herself with Miss Matson, and sent for Ellis; who obeyed the call with extreme ill will, conscious how little fit for a milliner's shop, was either what she might be called upon to say, or what she might be constrained to hear.

Miss Bydel failed not to take this opportunity of making sundry enquiries into the manner in which Ellis passed her time; whom she saw; whither she went; what sort of table she kept; and what allowance she made for the trouble which she gave to the servants.

'Well, my dear,' she cried, 'this is but a bad affair, this business of the day before yesterday. I have been to Mrs Maple, and I have worked out the truth, at last; though nobody would believe the pains it cost me before I could sift it to the bottom. However, the most extraordinary part is, that when all came to all, she did not tell me who you were! for she persists she don't so much as know it herself!'

The surprise of the milliners, and the disturbance of Ellis, were alike unheeded by Miss Bydel, whose sole solicitude was to come to the point.

'Now the thing I principally want to know, my dear, is whether this is true? for though I would not for ever so much doubt Mrs Maple's word, this is such a prodigious old thing, that I can't give it the least credit.'

Ellis, in much confusion, besought that she would have the goodness to walk up stairs.

'No, no; we are very well here; only be so kind as to let me know why you make such a secret of who you are? Every body asks me the question, go where I will; and it's making me look no better than a fool; to think I should be at such an expence as to hire a harp for a person I know nothing of.'

Affrighted at the effect which this display of her poverty, and detection of its mystery, might produce upon her hostess, Ellis was again entreating for a *tête à tête*, when Mr Riley, descending from his room to pass through the shop, exclaimed, 'Ah ha! the Demoiselle? Why I had never the pleasure to meet you down here before, Ma'am?'

[Pg 240]

'Well, if this is not the gentleman who told us all those odd things about you at the concert!' cried Miss Bydel: 'I should not be sorry to speak a word or two to him myself. You were one of the passengers, I think, Sir, who came over in the same boat with Mrs Maple? And glad enough you must have been to have got back; though I suppose you were only there upon business, Sir?'

'Not a whit, Madam! not a whit, faith! I never make bad better. I make that a rule. I always state the worst, that is to say the truth, in my own case as well as in my neighbour's.'

'Why then pray, Sir, if it's no secret,—what might be the reason of your going over to such a place?'

'Curiosity, Madam! Neither more nor less. I was agog to know what those famous Mounseers were about; and whether there were any Revolution really going forward amongst them, or not. For I used often to think they invented tales here in England, basking by their own fire-sides, that

had not an atom of truth in them. I thought so, faith! But I paid for my scepticism! I was cast into prison, by Master Robertspierre, a demon of an attorney, that now rules the roast in France, without knowing what the devil it was for; while I was only gaping about me, to see what sort of a figure Mounseer would make as a liberty boy! But I shall be content to look after my own liberty in future! I shall, faith. So one's never too old to learn; as you may find yourself, Madam, if you'll take the trouble to cross the little canal, on a visit to Master Robertspierre. He'll teach you gratis, I give you my word, if you have a fancy to take a few lessons. He won't mind your age of a fig, any more than he did mine; though I imagine you to be some years my senior.'

'I don't know what you may imagine, Sir,' said Miss Bydel; 'but you can't know much of the matter, I think, if you have not seen my register.'

'Nay, Ma'am, you may just as well be my junior, for any knowledge I have about it. Women look old so much sooner than men, that there is no judging by the exterior.'

'Well, Sir, and if they do, I don't know any great right you have to call them to account for it.'

'Bless me, Sir!' cried Miss Matson, 'if you knew Miss Ellis all this time, why did you ask us all so many questions about her, as if you had never seen her before in your life?'

[Pg 241]

'Why I never had! That's the very problem that wants solving! Though I had spent a good seven or eight hours as near to her as I am to you, I never had seen her before!'

'Oh! you mean because of her disguise, I take it, Sir?' said Miss Bydel; 'but I heard all that at the very first, from Miss Selina Joddrel; but Miss Elinor told us it was only put on for escaping; so I thought no more about it; for Mrs Maple assured us she was a young lady of family and fashion, for else she would never, she said, have let her act with us. And this we all believed easily enough, as Mrs Maple's own nieces were such chief performers; so that who could have expected such a turn all at once, as fell out the day before yesterday, of her proving to be such a mere nothing?'

Ellis would now have retired, but Miss Bydel, holding her gown, desired her to wait.

'Faith, Madam, as to her being a mere nothing,' said Riley, 'I don't know that any of us are much better than nothing, when we sift ourselves to our origin. What are you yourself, Ma'am, for one?'

'I, Sir? I'm descended from a gentleman's family, I assure you! I don't know what you mean by such a question!'

'Why then you are descended from somebody who was rich without either trouble or merit; for that's all that your gentleman is, as far as belongs to birth. The man amongst your grand-dads who first got the money, is the only one worth praising; and he, who was he? Why some one who baked sugar, or brewed beer, better than his neighbours; or who slashed and hewed his fellow-creatures with greater fury than they could slash and hew him in return; or who culled the daintiest herbs for the cure of gluttony; or filled his coffers with the best address, in emptying those of the knaves and fools who had been set together by the ears. Such, Ma'am, are the origins of your English gentlemen.'

'That, Sir, is as people take things. But the most particular part of the affair here, is, that here is a person that we have got in the very midst of us, without so much as knowing her name! for, would you believe it, Miss Matson, they tell me she had no name at all, till I gave her one? For I was the very first person that called her Miss Ellis! And so here I have been a godmother, without going to a christening!'

Miss Matson expressed her surprise, with a look towards Ellis that visibly marked a diminution of respect; while one of the young women, who had fetched Ellis a chair, at the back of which she had been courteously standing, now freely dropt into it herself.

[Pg 242]

'But pray, Sir, as we are upon the subject,' continued Miss Bydel, 'give me leave to ask what you thought of this Miss we don't know who, at the beginning.'

'Faith, Madam, I had less to do with her than any of them. The Demoiselle and I did not hit it off together at all. I could never get her to speak for the life of me. Ask what I would, she gave me no answer. I was in a devil of an ill humour with her sometimes; but I hope the Demoiselle will excuse that, I was so plaguy qualmish: for when a man with an empty stomach can't eat but he turns sick, nor fast, but he feels his bowels nipt with hunger, he is in no very good temper of mind for being sociable. However, the Demoiselle must know but little of human nature, if she fancies she can judge before breakfast what a man may be after dinner.'

They were here broken in upon by the appearance of Mr Tedman, who, gently opening the shop-door, and carefully closing it again before he spoke or looked round, was beginning a whispering enquiry after the young music-maker; when, perceiving her, he exclaimed, 'Mercy me, why, where were my eyes? Why, my dear, I never hapt to light upon you in the shop before! And I often pop in, to buy me a bit of ribbon for my pig-tail; or some odd little matter or other. However, I have called now, on purpose to have a little bit of chat with you, about that consort of music that we was at the day before yesterday.'

Miss Bydel, in a low voice, enquired the name of this gentleman; and, hearing that he was a man of large fortune, said to Ellis, 'Why you seem to be intimate friends together, my dear! Pray, Sir, if one may ask such a thing, how long may you and this young person have known one another?'

'How long, Ma'am? Why I'd never sate eyes upon Miss a fortnight ago! But she's music-learner to my darter. And they tell me she's one of the best, which I think like enough to be true, for she tudles upon them wires the prettiest of any thing I ever heard.'

'And pray, Sir, if you have no objection to telling it, how might she come to be recommended to you? for I never heard Miss Arbe mention having the pleasure of your acquaintance.'

'Miss Arbe? I don't know that ever I heard the lady's name in my life, Ma'am. Though, if she's one of the quality, my darter has, I make small doubt, for she sets great store upon knowing the names of all the quality; put in case she can light upon any body that can count them over to her. But the way I heard of this music-miss was at the book-shop, where my darter always makes me go to subscribe, that our names, she says, may come out in print, with the rest of the gentry. And there my darter was put upon buying one of those tudeling things herself; for she heard say as a young lady was come over from France, that learns all the quality. So that was enough for my darter; for there's nothing the mode like coming from France. It makes any thing go down. And 'twould be a remarkable cheap job, they said, for the young lady was in such prodigious want of cash, as one Miss Bydel, her particular friend, told us in the shop, that she'd jump at any price; put in case she could but get paid. So, upon that—'

[Pg 243]

The narration was here interrupted by Sir Lyell Sycamore, who, having caught a glimpse of Ellis through the glass-door, entered the shop with a smile of admiration and pleasure; though, at sight of Mr Tedman, it was changed into one of insolence and derision. With a careless swing of his hat, and of his whole person, he negligently said, that he hoped she had caught no cold at the concert; or at least none beyond what the cakes, the bread and butter, or the negus, of her gallant and liberal admirer, had been able to cure.

Mr Tedman, much affronted, mumbled the gilt head of his cane; Ellis gravely looked another way, without deigning to make any answer; and Riley exclaimed, 'O, faith, if you expect a reply from the Demoiselle, except she's in a talking humour, you'll find yourself confoundedly out in your reckoning! You will, faith! Unless you light upon something that happens to hit her taste, you may sail from the north pole to the south, and return home by a voyage round the world, before she'll have been moved to squeeze out a syllable.'

The young Baronet, disdainng the plain appearance, and rough dialect and manners of Riley, nearly as much as he despised the more civil garrulity and meanness of Tedman, was turning scoffingly upon his heel, when he overheard the latter say, in a low voice, to Ellis, 'Suppose we two go up stairs to your room, to have our talk, my dear; for I don't see what we get by staying down with the quality, only to be made game of.'

Highly provoked, yet haughtily smiling, 'I see,' said the Baronet, 'for whose interest I am to apply, if I wish for the honour of a private audience!'

'Well, if you do,' said Mr Tedman, muttering between his teeth, 'it's only a sign Miss knows I would not misbehave myself.'

[Pg 244]

Sir Lyell, now, not able to keep his countenance, went to the other end of the shop; and pitched upon the prettiest and youngest of Miss Matson's work-women, to ask some advice relative to his cravats.

Mr Tedman, in doubt whether this retreat were the effect of contempt, or of being worsted, whispered to Ellis, 'One knows nothing of life, as one may say, without coming among the quality! I should have thought, put in case any body had asked me my opinion, that that gentleman was quite behind hand as to his manners; for I'll warrant it would not be taken well from me, if I was to behave so! but any thing goes down from the quality, by way of politeness.'

'Sir Lyell Sycamore,' said Miss Bydel, who was as hard, though not as bold as himself, 'if it won't be impertinent, I should be glad to know how you first got acquainted with this young person? for I can't make out how it is so many people happen to know her. Not that I mean in the least to dive into any body's private affairs; but I have a particular reason for what I ask; so I shall take it as a favour, Sir Lyell, if you'll tell me.'

'Most willingly, Ma'am, upon condition you will be so kind as to tell me, in return, whether this young lady is under your care?'

'Under my care, Sir Lyell? Don't you know who I am, then?'

A supercilious smile said No.

'Well, that's really odd enough! Did not you see me with Mrs Maple at that blind harper's concert?'

'Faith, Madam,' cried Riley, 'when a man has but one pair of eyes, you elderly ladies can't have much chance of getting a look, if a young lass is by. The Demoiselle deserves a full pair to herself.'

'Why yes, Sir, that's true enough!' said Mr Tedman, simpering, 'the young lady deserves a pair of eyes to herself! She's well enough to look at, to be sure!'

'If she has your eyes to herself, Sir,' said Sir Lyell, contemptuously, 'she must be happy indeed!'

'She should have mine, if she would accept them, though I had an hundred!' cried Riley.

Ellis, now, was only restrained from forcing her way up stairs, through the apprehension of exciting fresh sneers, by an offered pursuit of Mr Tedman.

'Don't mind them, my dear,' cried Miss Bydel; 'I'll soon set them right. If you have any naughty thoughts, gentlemen, relative to this young person, you must give me leave to inform you that you are mistaken; for though I don't know who she is, nor where she comes from, nor even so much as what is her name; except that I gave her myself, without in the least meaning it; still you may take my word for it she is a person of character; for Mrs Maple herself, though she confessed how the young woman played upon her, with one contrivance after another, to ferret herself into the house; declared, for positive, that she was quite too particular about her acquaintances, to let her stay, if she had not been a person of virtue. And, besides, Sir Lyell, my young Lord Melbury—'

[Pg 245]

At this name Ellis started and changed colour.

'My young Lord Melbury, Sir Lyell, as young lords will do, offered to make her his mistress; and, I can give you my word for it, she positively refused him. This his young lordship told to Mr Ireton, from whom I had it; that is from Mrs Maple, which is the same thing. Is it not true Mrs Ellis? or Mrs something else, I don't know what?'

The most forcible emotions were now painted upon the countenance of Ellis, who, unable to endure any longer such offensive discourse, disengaged herself from Miss Bydel, and, no longer heeding Mr Tedman, hurried up stairs.

Sir Lyell Sycamore stared after her, for a few minutes, with mingled surprise, curiosity, admiration, and pique; and then loitered out of the shop.

Riley, shouting aloud, said the Demoiselle always amused him; and followed.

Mr Tedman, not daring, after the insinuations of Sir Lyell, to attempt pursuing the young *music-maker*, produced a paper-packet, consisting of almonds, and raisins, and French plums; saying, 'I intended to pop these nice things upon that young Miss's table, unbeknown to her, for a surprise; for I did not like to come empty handed; for I know your young housekeepers never afford themselves little dainties of this kind; so I poked together all that was left, out of all the plates, after desert, yesterday, when we happened to have a very handsome dinner, because of company. So you'll be sure to give her the whole, Mrs Matson. Don't leave 'em about, now! They are but tempting things.'

Miss Bydel remained last; unable to prevail upon herself to depart, while she could suggest a single interrogatory for the gratification of her curiosity.

CHAPTER XXVII

[Pg 246]

The retreat sought by Ellis, from a recital as offensive to her ear as it was afflicting to her heart, was not long uninterrupted: Miss Arbe, next, made her appearance. Gravely, but civilly, she lamented the disturbance at the concert; paradingly assuring Ellis that she should have called sooner, but that she had incessantly been occupied in endeavours to serve her. She had conversed with every one of her scholars; but nothing was yet quite decided, as to what would be the result of that strange attack. Poor Mrs Maple, to whom, of course, she had made her first visit, seemed herself in the utmost distress; one moment repining, that she had suffered her charity to delude her into countenancing a person so unknown; and another, vindicating herself warmly from all possible imputation of indiscretion, by the most positive affirmations of the unblemished reputation of Miss Ellis; and these assertions, most fortunately, had, at length, determined Miss Bydel to support her, for how else, as she justly asked, should she get the money repaid that she had advanced for the harp?

'And Miss Bydel,' continued Miss Arbe, 'like all other old maids, is so precise about those sort of particulars, that, though she has not the smallest influence with any body of any consequence, as to any thing else, she is always depended upon for that sort of thing. We must not, therefore, shew her that we despise her, for she may be useful enough; especially in letting you have the harp, you know, that we may still enjoy a little music together. For I can make her do whatever I please for the sake of my company.'

Ellis had long known that the civilities which she owed to Miss Arbe, had their sole motive in selfishness; but the total carelessness of giving them any other colour, became, now, so glaring, that she could with difficulty conceal the decrease either of her respect or of her gratitude.

[Pg 247]

Miss Arbe, however, was but little troubled with that species of delicacy which is solicitous to watch, that it may spare the feelings of others. She continued, therefore, what she had to offer, hurrying to come to a conclusion, as she had not, she declared, three minutes to stay.

If Lady Kendover, she said, could be brought over, every body would follow; not excepting Lady Arramede, who was obliged to be so great a niggard, in the midst of her splendid expences, that she would be quite enchanted to renew her daughter's lessons, with so economical a mistress, if once she could be satisfied that she would be sustained by other persons of fashion. But Lady Kendover, who did not wait to be led, protested that she could by no means place her niece again under the tuition of Miss Ellis, till the concert-scene should be explained.

Miss Arbe then asked whether Ellis would give it any explanation.

Ellis dejectedly answered, that she could offer no other, than that necessity had forced her to disguise herself, that she might make her escape.

'Well but, then, people say,' cried Miss Arbe, 'now that your escape is made, why don't you speak out? That's the cry every where.'

Ellis looked down, distressed, ashamed; and Miss Arbe declared that she had not another moment at present, for discussion, but would call again, to settle what should be done on Monday. Meantime, she had brought some new music with her, which she wished to try; for the time was so unaccountable, that she could not make out a bar of it.

Ellis heartily felicitated herself upon every occasion, by which she could lessen obligations of which she now felt the full weight, and, with the utmost alacrity, took her harp.

Miss Arbe here had so much to study, so many passages to pick out, and such an eagerness to practise till she could conquer their difficulties, that she soon forgot that she had not a moment to spare; and two hours already had been consecrated to her improvement, when intelligence was brought that Mr Tedman's carriage was come for Miss Ellis.

'You must not accept it for the world!' cried Miss Arbe. 'If, at the moment people of distinction are shy of you, you are known to cultivate amongst mechanics, and people of that sort, it's all over with you. Persons of fashion can't possibly notice you again.'

[Pg 248]

She then added, that, after the scene of the preceding day, Miss Ellis must make it a point to let the first house that she entered be that of somebody of condition. She might go amongst trades-people as much as she pleased, when once she was established amongst persons of rank; for trades-people were so much the best paymasters, that nobody could be angry if artists were partial to them; but they must by no means take the lead; nor suppose that they were to have any hours but those that would not suit other people. As she could not, therefore, re-commence her career at Lady Kendover's, or at Lady Arramede's, she must try to get received at Miss Sycamore's;—or, if that should be too difficult, at the Miss Crawleys, who would object to nothing, as they cared for nobody's opinion, and made it a rule to follow nobody's advice. And this they took so little pains to hide from the world, that their countenance would not be of the least service, but for their living with Sir Marmaduke, who was scrupulosity itself. This being the case, joined to their extreme youth, they had not yet been set down, as they must necessarily be, in a few years, for persons of no weight, and rather detrimental than advantageous to people of no consequence. At present, therefore, Ellis might safely make her court to them, as she could always drop them when they became dangerous, or of no use. And just now she must snap at whoever and whatever could help to bring her again into credit. And the Miss Crawleys, though each of them was as wilful as a spoiled child, as full of tricks as a schoolboy, and of as boisterous mirth as a dairy-maid, were yet sisters of a baronet, and born of a very good family; and therefore they would be more serviceable to her than that vulgar Miss Tedman, even though she were an angel.

Ellis listened in silent, and scarcely concealed disdain, to these worldly precepts; yet Miss Tedman was so utterly disagreeable, and the sneers of Sir Lyell Sycamore had added such repugnance to her distaste of the civilities of Mr Tedman, that she did not attempt opposing the dictatorial proceedings of Miss Arbe; who gave orders, that the coachman should be told that Miss Ellis was indisposed, and sent her compliments, but could not wait upon Miss Tedman till the next week.

She then again went on with her unacknowledged, but not less, to her tutress, laborious lesson, till she was obliged to hasten to her toilette, for her dinner-engagement; leaving Ellis in the utmost alarm for her whole scheme; and tormented with a thousand fears, because unable to fix upon any standard for the regulation of her conduct.

[Pg 249]

The next day was Sunday. Ellis had constantly on that day attended divine worship, during the month which she had spent at Brighthelmstone; and now, to a call stronger than usual for the consolation which it might afford her, she joined an opinion, that to stay away, in her present circumstances, might have an air of absconding, or of culpability.

She was placed, as usual, in a pew, with some other decent strangers, by a fee to the pew-opener; but she had the mortification to find, when the service was over, that the dry clear frost, of the latter end of March, which had enabled her to walk to the church, was broken up by a heavy shower of rain. She had been amongst the first to hurry away, in the hope of escaping unnoticed, by hastening down the hill, on which the church is built, before the higher ranks of the congregation left their pews; but, arrived at the porch, she was compelled to stop: she was unprovided with an umbrella, and the rain was so violent that, without one, she must have been wet through in a minute.

She would have made way back to the pew which she had quitted, to wait for more moderate weather; but the whole congregation was coming forth, and there was no re-passing.

She was the more sensibly vexed at being thus impeded, from finding herself, almost immediately, joined by Sir Lyell Sycamore; whose eagerness to speak to her by no means concealed his embarrassment in what manner to address, or to think of her. He was making, various offers of service; to find the pew-opener; to give her a seat to herself; to fetch her a

chaise from the nearest inn; or an umbrella from his own carriage; when Mrs and Miss Brinville, who hurried from their pew, the instant that they saw the Baronet depart, cast upon them looks of such suspicious disdain, that he deemed it necessary, though he smiled and appeared gratified by their undisguised pique, to walk on with them to their carriage; whispering, however, to Ellis that he should return to take her under his care.

Ellis, extremely shocked, could not endure to remain on the same spot, as if awaiting his services; she glided, therefore, into a corner, close to the door; hoping that the crowd, which incommoded, would at least protect her from being seen: but she had not been stationed there a moment, before she had the unwelcome surprise of hearing the words, 'Why, Mr Stubbs, if here is not Miss Ellis!' and finding that she had placed herself between young Gooch, the farmer's son, and Mr Stubbs, the old steward.

[Pg 250]

'Good now, Ma'am,' the young man cried, 'why I have never seen you since that night of our all acting together in that play, when you out-topped us all so to nothing! I never saw the like, not even at the real play. And some of the judges said, you were not much short of what they be at the grand London theatre itself. I suppose, Ma'am, you were pretty well used to acting in France? for they say all the French are actors or dancers, except just them that go to the wars. I should like to know, Ma'am, whether they pop off them players and fidlers at the same rate they do the rest? for, if they do, it's a wonder how they can get 'em to go on acting and piping, and jiggetting about, and such like, if they know they are so soon to have their heads off, all the same. You could not get we English now to do so, just before being hanged, or shot. But the French a'n't very thoughtful. They're always ready for a jig.'

'I am sorry I had no notice of seeing you here to day, Ma'am,' said Mr Stubbs, 'for if I had, I would have brought my bit of paper with me, that I've writ down my queries upon, about raising the rents in those parts, and the price that land holds in general; and about a purchase that I am advised to make.—'

'But I should like much to know, Ma'am,' resumed Gooch, 'whether it's a truth, what I've been told at our club, that your commonest soldier in France, when once he can bring proof he has killed you his dozen or so, with his own hand, is made a general upon the spot? If that's the case, to be sure it's no great wonder there's so much blood shed; for such encouragement as that's enough to make soldiers of the very women and children.'

'Why, I am told, the French have no great head,' said Mr Stubbs, 'except for the wars; and that's what makes the land so cheap; for, I am told, you may buy an estate, of a thousand or two acres, for an old song. And that's the reason I am thinking of making a purchase. The only point is, how to see the premises without the danger of crossing the seas; and how to strike the bargain.'

Ellis, thus beset, was not sorry to be joined by Mr Scope, who, though more formal and tedious than either of the others, was a gentleman, spoke in a lower tone of voice, and attracted less attention.

'I am happy, Ma'am,' he said, 'to have met with you again; for I have wished for some time to hold a little discourse with you, relative to the rites practised abroad, as to that Goddess of Reason, that, as I am credibly informed, has been set up by Mr Robert-Spierre. Now I should wish to enquire, what good they expect to accrue by proclaiming, one day, that there is no religion, and then, the next day, making a new one by the figure of a woman. It is hardly to be supposed that such sort of fickleness can serve to make a government respectable. And as to so many females being called Goddesses of Reason,—for I am assured there are some score of them,—one don't very well see what that means; the ladies in general,—I speak without offence, as it's out of their line,—not being particularly famous for their reason; at least not here; and I should suppose they can hardly be much more so in that light nation. The Pagans, it is true, though from what mode of thinking we are now at a loss to discover, thought proper to have Reason represented by a female; and that, perhaps, may be the cause of the French adopting the same notion, on account of their ancient character for politeness; though I cannot much commend their sagacity, taken in a political point of view, in putting the female head, which is very well in its proper sphere, upon coping, if I may use such an expression, with the male.'

[Pg 251]

This harangue, which Mr Stubbs and young Gooch, though too respectful to interrupt, waited, impatiently, to hear finished, might have lasted unbroken for half an hour, if Miss Bydel, in passing by with her brother, to get to her carriage, had not called out, 'Bless me, Mr Scope, what are you talking of there, with that young person? Have you been asking her about that business at the blind harper's concert? I should be glad to know, myself, Miss Ellis, as I call you, what you intend to do next? Have any of your scholars let you go to them again? And what says Miss Arbe to all this? Does she think you'll ever get the better of it?'

Mr Bydel, here, begged his sister to invite Mr Scope to take a place in the carriage.

Young Gooch, then, would have renewed his questions relative to the generals, but that, upon pronouncing again her name, Mr Tedman, who, with his daughter, was passing near the porch, to examine whether they could arrive safely at their carriage, called out, 'Well, if you are not here, too, my dear! Why how will you do to get home? You'll be draggled up to your chin, if you walk; put in case you haven't got your umbrella, and your pattens. But I suppose some of your quality friends will give you a lift; for I see one of 'em just coming. It's Miss Ellis, the music-maker, Ma'am,' added he, to Lady Arramede, who just then came out with Miss Arramede; 'the young girl as teaches our darters the musics; and she'll spoil all her things, poor thing, if somebody

[Pg 252]

don't give her a lift home.'

Lady Arramede, without moving a muscle of her face, or deigning to turn towards either the object or the agent of this implied request, walked on in silent contempt.

Mr Tedman, extremely offended, said, 'The quality always think they may behave any how! and Lady Arrymud is not a bit to choose, from the worst among them. And even my own darter,' he whispered, 'is just as bad as the best; for she'd pout at me for a month to come, put in case I was to ride you home in our coach, now that the quality's taken miff at you.'

During this whisper, which Ellis strove vainly to avoid hearing, and which the familiar junction of young Gooch, who was related to Mr Tedman, rendered more observable, she had the mortification of being evidently seen, though no longer, as heretofore, courteously acknowledged, by all her scholars and acquaintances. Miss Sycamore, the hardest, passed, staring disdainfully in her face; Mrs Maple, the most cowardly, and who was accidentally at Brighthelmstone, pretended to have hurt her foot, that she might look down: the Miss Crawleys screamed out, 'The Ellis! The Ellis! look, The Marmaduke, 'tis The Ellis!' Sir Marmaduke, turning back to address Miss Arbe, said, with concern, 'Is it possible, Madam, 'tis The Ellis, the elegant Ellis, that can join such low company?' Miss Arbe shrugged her shoulders, crying, 'What can one do with such people?' Lady Kendover's eyes kept carefully a straight-forward direction; while Lady Barbara, whom she held by one hand, incessantly kissed the other at Ellis, with ingenuous and undisguised warmth of kindness; an action which was eagerly repeated by Selina, who closely followed her ladyship.

Ireton, who brought up the rear, quitted the group, to approach Ellis, and say, 'I am, positively, quite confounded, my dear Miss Ellis, at the mischief my confounded giddiness has brought about. I had not an idea of it, I assure you. I merely meant to play upon that confounded queer fellow, Riley. He's so cursed troublesome, and so confounded free, that I hate him horribly. That's all, I assure you.'

Ellis would make no answer, and he was forced to run after Selina.

The rain being, now, much abated, the congregation began to disperse, and Mr Tedman was compelled to attend his daughter; but he recommended the young music-maker to the care of his cousin Gooch; whose assistance she was declining, when she was again joined by Sir Lyell Sycamore, with a capacious umbrella, under which he begged to be her escort.

[Pg 253]

She decidedly refused his services; but he protested that, if she would not let him walk by her side, he would follow her, like an Indian slave, holding the umbrella over her head, as if she were an Indian queen.

Vexed and displeased, and preferring any other protection, she addressed herself to old Mr Stubbs, who still stood under the porch, and begged him to have the kindness to see her home.

Mr Stubbs, extremely flattered, complied. The other candidates vainly opposed the decision: they found that her decree was irrevocable, and that, when once it was pronounced, her silence was resolute. Mr Stubbs, nevertheless, had by no means the enjoyment that he expected from this distinction; for Ellis had as little inclination as she had spirit, to exert herself for answering the numerous enquiries, relative to lands and rents, which he poured into her ears.

CHAPTER XXVIII

[Pg 254]

Harassed and comfortless, Ellis passed the remainder of the day in painful recollections and apprehensive forebodings; though utterly unable, either by retrospection to avoid, or by anticipation to prepare for the evils that she might have to encounter.

The next morning, Miss Arbe came to her usual appointment. Though glad, in a situation so embarrassed, to see the only person whom she could look upon as a guide, her opinion of Miss Arbe, already lowered during that lady's last visit, had been so completely sunk, from her joining in the cry raised at the church, that she received her with undisguised coldness; and an open remonstrance against the cruel injustice of ascribing to choice, circumstances the most accidental, and a position as unavoidable, as it had been irksome and improper.

Miss Arbe, who came into the room with a gravely authoritative air, denoting that she expected not simply a welcome, but the humblest gratitude, for the condescension of her visit, was astonished by the courage, and disconcerted by the truth of this exhortation. She was by no means ignorant how unpleasantly Ellis might have been struck by her behaviour at the church; but she thought her in a condition too forlorn to feel, much less to express any resentment: and she meant, by entering the chamber with an wholly uncustomary importance, to awe her from hazarding any complaint. But the modesty of Ellis was a mixture of dignity with humility; if she thought herself oppressed or insulted, the former predominated; if she experienced consideration and kindness, she was all meek gratitude in return.

But when, by the steadiness of her representation, Miss Arbe found her own mistake, and saw what firmness could exist with indigence, what spirit could break through difficulty, she disguised her surprise, and changed, with alertness, the whole of her manner. She protested that

[Pg 255]

some other voice must have been taken for her's; declared that she had always thought nobody so charming as Miss Ellis; railed against the abominable world for its prejudices; warmly renewed her professions of regard; and then rang the bell, to order her footman to bring up a little parcel of music from her coach, which she was sure would delight them both to try together.

Ellis suffered the music to be fetched; but, before she would play it, entreated Miss Arbe to spare a few minutes to discourse upon her affairs.

'What, Madam, am I now to do? 'Tis to your influence and exertions I am indebted for the attempt which I have made, to procure that self-dependance which I so earnestly covet. I shall always be most ready to acknowledge this obligation; but, permit me to solicit your directions, and, I hope, your aid, how I may try to allay the storm which accident has so cruelly raised around me; but which misconception alone can make dangerous or durable.'

'Very true, my dear Miss Ellis, if every body judged you as justly as I do; but when people have enemies—'

'Enemies?' repeated Ellis, amazed, 'surely, Madam, you are not serious?—Enemies? Can I possibly have any enemies? That, in a situation so little known, and so unlikely to be understood, I may have failed to create friends, I can easily, indeed, conceive,—but, offending no one, distressed, yet not importunate, and seeking to obviate my difficulties by my exertions; to supply my necessities by my labours,—surely I cannot have been so strangely, so unaccountably unfortunate as to have made myself any enemies?'

'Why you know, my dear Miss Ellis, how I blamed you, from the first, for that nonsense of telling Miss Brinville that she had no ear for music: what could it signify whether she had or not? She only wanted to learn that she might say she learnt; and you had no business to teach, but that you might be paid for teaching.'

'And is it possible, Madam, that I can have made her really my enemy, merely by forbearing to take what I thought would be a dishonourable advantage, of her ignorance of that defect?'

'Nay, she has certainly no great reason to be thankful, for she would never have found it out; and I am sure nobody else would ever have told it her! She is firmly persuaded that you only wanted to give Sir Lyell Sycamore an ill opinion of her accomplishments; for she declares that she has seen you unceasingly pursuing him, with all the wiles imaginable. One time she surprised you sitting entirely aloof, at the Welshman's benefit, till he joined you; another time, she caught you waiting for him in the aisle of the church; and, in short—'

[Pg 256]

'Miss Arbe,' cried Ellis, interrupting her, with undisguised resentment, 'if Miss Brinville can be amused by inventing, as well as propagating, premeditated motives for accidental occurrences, you must permit me to decline being the auditress, if I cannot escape being the object of such fictitious censure!'

Miss Arbe, somewhat ashamed, repeated her assurances of personal good opinion; and then, with many pompous professions of regard and concern, owned that there had been a discussion at Lady Kendover's, after church-time on Sunday, which had concluded by a final decision, of her ladyship's, that it was utterly impossible to admit a young woman, so obscurely involved in strange circumstances, and so ready to fall into low company, to so confidential a kind of intercourse, as that of giving instructions to young persons of fashion. Every body else, of course, would abide by her ladyship's decision, 'and therefore, my dear Miss Ellis,' she continued, 'I am excessively sorry, but our plan is quite upset. I am excessively sorry, I assure you; but what can be done? However, I have not above three minutes to stay, so do let us try that sweet adagio. I want vastly to conquer the horrid long bars of that eternal cadenza.'

Ellis, for a few moments, stood almost stupified with amazement at so selfish a proposition, at the very instant of announcing so ruinous a sentence. But disdain soon supplied her with philosophy, and scorning to make an appeal for a consideration so unfeelingly withheld, she calmly went to her harp.

When Miss Arbe, however, rose to be gone, she begged some advice relative both to the debts which she had contracted, and those which she was entitled to claim; but Miss Arbe, looking at her watch, and hurrying on her gloves, declared that she had not a second to lose. 'I shall see you, however,' she cried, in quitting the chamber, 'as often as possible: I can find a thousand pretences for coming to Miss Matson's, without any body's knowing why; so we can still have our delightful little musical meetings.'

The contempt inspired by this worldly patroness, so intent upon her own advantage, so insensible to the distress of the person whom she affected to protect, occupied the mind of Ellis only while she was present; the door was no sooner shut, than she felt wholly engrossed by her own situation, and her disappointment at large. This scheme, then, she cried, is already at an end! this plan for self-dependence is already abortive! And I have not my disappointment only to bear, it is accompanied with disgrace, and exposes me to indignity!

[Pg 257]

Deeply hurt and strongly affected, how insufficient, she exclaimed, is a FEMALE to herself! How utterly dependant upon situation—connexions—circumstance! how nameless, how for ever fresh-springing are her DIFFICULTIES, when she would owe her existence to her own exertions! Her conduct is criticised, not scrutinized; her character is censured, not examined; her labours are unhonoured, and her qualifications are but lures to ill will! Calumny hovers over her head, and

slander follows her footsteps!

Here she checked herself; candour, the reigning feature of her mind, repressed her murmurs. Involved as I am in darkness and obscurity, she cried, ought I to expect milder judgment? No! I have no right to complain. Appearances are against me; and to appearances are we not all either victims or dupes?

She now turned her thoughts to what measures she must next pursue; but felt no chance of equally satisfying herself in any other attempt. Music was her favourite study, and in the practice of that elegant, grateful, soul-soothing art, she found a softening to her cares, that momentarily, at least, lulled them to something like forgetfulness. And though this was a charm that could by no means extend to the dull and dry labour of teaching, it was a profession so preferable to all others, in her taste, that she bore patiently and cheerfully the minute, mechanical, and ear-wearing toil, of giving lessons to the unapt, the stupid, the idle, and the wilful; for such, unhappily are the epithets most ordinarily due to beginners in all sciences and studies.

The necessity, however, of adopting some plan that should both be speedy and vigorous, was soon alarmingly enforced by a visit from Miss Matson; who civilly, but with evidently altered manners, told her that she had a little account to settle with some tradesmen, and that she should take it as a favour if her own account could be settled for her lodgings.

There are few attacks to which we are liable, that give a greater shock to upright and unhackneyed minds, than a pecuniary demand which they know to be just, yet cannot satisfy. Pride and shame assault them at once. They are offended by a summons that seems to imply a doubt of their integrity; while they blush at appearing to have incurred it, by not having more scrupulously balanced their means with their expences.

[Pg 258]

She suffered, therefore, the most sensible mortification, from her inability to discharge, without delay, a debt contracted with a stranger, upon whose generosity she had no claim; upon whose forbearance she had no tie.

Far from having this power, she had other bills to expect which she as little could answer. The twenty pounds of Lady Aurora were already nearly gone, in articles which did not admit of trust; and in the current necessaries which her situation indispensably and daily required. She feared that all the money which was due to her would be insufficient to pay what she owed; or, at least, would be wholly employed in that act of justice; which would leave her, therefore, in the same utter indigence as when she began her late attempt.

Her look of consternation served but to stimulate the demands of Miss Matson, which were now accompanied with allusions to the conversation that had been held in the shop, between Miss Bydel and Mr Riley, relative to her poverty and disguise, that were designedly offensive.

Ellis, with an air grave and commanding, desired to be left alone; calmly saying that Miss Matson should very speedily be satisfied.

The impulse of her wishes was to have recourse to the deposit of Harleigh, that her answer to this affront might be an immediate change of lodging, as well as payment. But this was a thought that scarcely out-lived the moment of its formation. Alas! she cried, he who alone could serve me, whose generosity and benevolence would delight in aiding me, has put it out of my power to accept his smallest assistance! Had my friendship contented him, how essentially might I have been indebted to his good offices!

She was here broken in upon by one of the young apprentices, who, with many apologies, brought, from the several trades-people, all the little bills which had been incurred through the directions of Miss Arbe.

However severely she was shocked, she could not be surprised. She wrote immediately to communicate these demands to Miss Arbe, stating her distress, and entreating that her late scholars might be urged to settle their accounts with the utmost expedition. She felt her right to make this application to Miss Arbe, whose advice, or rather insistance, had impelled her into the measures which produced her present difficulties. Her request, therefore, though urged with deference and respect, had a tone which she was sure could not justly be disputed.

[Pg 259]

She wished earnestly to address a few words to Lady Kendover, of such a nature as might speak in her favour to her scholars at large; but so many obstacles were in the way, to her giving any satisfactory explanation, that she was obliged to be contented with silent acquiescence.

Miss Arbe sent word that she was engaged, and could not write. The rest of the day was passed in great anxiety. But when the following, also, wore away, without producing any reply, she wrote again, proposing, if Miss Arbe had not time to attend to her request, to submit it to Miss Bydel.

In about half an hour after she had sent this second note, Mr Giles Arbe desired to be admitted, that he might deliver to her a message from his cousin.

She recollected having heard, from Selina, that he was a very absent, but worthy old man, and that he had the very best temper of any person breathing.

She did not hesitate, therefore, to receive him; and his appearance announced, at once, the latter quality, by a smile the most inartificial, which was evidently the emanation of a kind heart, opening to immediate good will at sight of a fellow-creature. It seemed the visible index of a good

and innocent mind; and his manners had the most singular simplicity.

His cousin, he said, had desired him to acquaint her, that she could not call, because she was particularly engaged; and could not write, because, she was particularly hurried. 'And whenever I have a commission from my cousin,' he continued, 'I always think it best to deliver it in her own words, for two or three reasons; one of which is that my own might not be half as good; for she is the most accomplished young lady living, I am told; and my other reasons you'll do me a favour by not asking me to mention.'

'I may, at least infer, then, Sir, that, when less hurried, and less engaged, Miss Arbe means to have the goodness to come, or to write to me?'

'I don't doubt it: those ladies that she don't like should see her with you, can hardly keep watching her all day long.'

'What ladies, Sir?'

'O, I must not mention names!' returned he, smiling; 'my cousin charged me not. My fair cousin likes very well to be obeyed. But, may be, so do you, too? For they tell me it's not an uncommon thing among ladies. And if that's the case, I shall find myself in a dilemma; for my cousin has the best right; and yet, what have you done to me that I should deny you what you ask me?'

[Pg 260]

Then looking earnestly, but with an air so innocent, that it was impossible to give offence, in her face, he added, 'My cousin has often told me a great many things about you; yet she never mentioned your being so pretty! But may be she thought I might find it out.'

Ellis enquired whether he were acquainted with the nature of her application to Miss Arbe.

He nodded an assent, but checking himself from confirming it, cried, 'My cousin bid me say nothing; for she will have it that I always mention things that should not be told; and that makes me very careful. So I hope you won't be angry if you find me rather upon my guard.'

Ellis disclaimed all inquisitive designs, beyond desiring to know, whether Miss Arbe meant that she should discuss her situation with him, and receive his counsel how she should proceed.

'My cousin never asks my counsel,' he answered: 'she knows every thing best herself. She is very clever, they tell me. She often recounts to me how she surprises people. So does her papa. I believe they think I should not discover it else. And I don't know but they are in the right, for I am a very indifferent judge. But I can't make out, with that gentle air of yours, and so pretty a face, how you can have made those ladies take such a dislike to you?'

'A dislike, Sir?'

'Yes; Lady Arramede talks of you with prodigious contempt, and—'

Ellis colouring at this word, hung back, evidently declining to hear another; but Mr Giles, not remarking this, went on. 'And Miss Brinville can't endure you, neither. It's a curious thing to see what an angry look comes over her features, when she talks of you. Do you know the reason?'

'I flatter myself it is not to be known, Sir! Certainly I am innocent of any design of offending her.'

'Why then perhaps she does not know what she has taken amiss, herself, poor lady! She's only affronted, and can't tell why. It will happen so sometimes, to those pretty ladies, when they begin going a little down hill. And they can't help it. They don't know what to make of it themselves, poor things! But we can see how it is better, we lookers-on.'

He then seated himself upon an arm-chair, and, leaning back at his ease, continued talking, but without looking at Ellis, or seeming to address her.

[Pg 261]

'I always pity them, the moment I see them, those pretty creatures, even when they are in their prime. I always think what they have got to go through. After seeing every body admire them, to see nobody look at them! And when they cast their eyes on a glass, to find themselves every day changing,—and always for the worse! It is but hard upon them, I really think, when they have done nothing to deserve it. It is but a short time ago that that Miss Brinville was almost as pretty as this young harp-player here.'—

'Sir!' cried Ellis, surprised.

'Ma'am?' cried he, starting, and looking round; and then, smiling at himself, adding, 'I protest I did not think of your being so near me! I had forgot that. But I hope you won't take it ill?'

'By no means,' she answered; and asked whether she might write a few lines by him to Miss Arbe.

He willingly consented.

She then drew up an animated representation, to that lady, of the irksome situation into which she was cast, from the evident distrust manifested by Miss Matson; and the suspicious speed with which the other bills had been delivered. She meant to send her small accounts immediately to all her scholars, and entreated Miss Arbe to use her interest in hastening their discharge.

When she raised her head to give this, with an apology, to Mr Giles, she saw him unfolding some small papers, which he began very earnestly to examine. Not to interrupt him, she took up some needle-work; but, upon looking, soon after, at the chimney-piece, she missed the packet which

she had placed there, of her bills, and then with the utmost surprise, perceived that it was in his hands.

She waited a few instants, in expectation that he would either put it down, or make some excuse for his curiosity; but he seemed to think of nothing less. He sorted and counted the bills, and began casting them up.

'Have you then the goodness, Sir,' said Ellis, 'to prepare yourself for acquainting Miss Arbe with the state of my affairs?'

He started again at this question, and looked a little scared; but, after a minute's perplexity, he suddenly arose, and hastily refolding, and placing them upon the chimney-piece, said, with a good deal of confusion, 'I beg your pardon a thousand times! I don't well know how this happened; but the chimney-piece looks so like my own,—and the fire was so comfortable,—that I suppose I thought I was at home, and took that parcel for one that the servant had put there for me. And I was wondering to myself when I had ordered all those linens, and muslins, and the like: I could not recollect one article of them.'

[Pg 262]

He then, after again begging her pardon, took leave.

While Ellis was ruminating whether this strange conduct were the effect of absence, oddity, or curiosity, he abruptly returned, and said, 'I protest I was going without my errand, at last! Did you bid me tell my cousin that all those bills were paid?'

'All paid?—alas, no!—not one of them!'

'And why not? You should always pay your bills, my dear.'

Ellis looked at him in much perplexity, to see whether this were uttered as a sneer, or as a remonstrance; but soon perceived, by the earnestness of his countenance, that it was the latter; and then, with a sigh, answered, 'You are undoubtedly right, Sir! I am the first to condemn all that appears against me! But I made my late attempt with a persuasion that I was as secure of repaying others, as of serving myself. I would not, else, have run any risk, where I should not have been the sole sufferer.'

'But what,' said he, staring, and shutting the door, and not seeming to comprehend her, 'what is the reason that you can't pay your bills?'

'A very simple reason, Sir—I have not the power!'

'Not the power?—what, are you very poor, then?'

Ellis could not forbear smiling, but seeing him put his hand in his pocket, hastened to answer, 'Yes, Sir,—but very proud, too! I am sometimes, therefore, involved in the double distress, of being obliged to refuse the very assistance I require.'

'But you would not refuse mine!'

'Without a moment's hesitation!'

'Would you, indeed? And from what motive?'

Again Ellis could scarcely keep her countenance, at a question so unexpected, while she answered, 'From the customs, Sir, of the world, I have been brought up to avoid all obligations with strangers.'

'How so? I don't at all see that. Have you not an obligation to that linen draper, and hosier, and I don't know who, there, upon your chimney-piece, if you take their things, and don't pay for them?'

Yet more struck with the sense of unbiassed equity manifested by this question, than by the simplicity shewn by that which had preceded it, Ellis felt her face suffused with shame, as she replied, 'I blush to have incurred such a reprimand; but I hope to convince you, by the exertions which I shall not a moment delay making, how little it is my intention to practise any such injustice; and how wide it would be from my approbation.'

[Pg 263]

She sat down, sensibly affected by the necessity of uttering this vindication.

'Well, then,' said he, without observing her distress, 'won't it be more honest to run in debt with an old bachelor, who has nobody but himself to take care of, than with a set of poor people who, perhaps, have got their houses full of children?'

The word honest, and the impossibility of disproving a charge of injuring those by whom she had been served, so powerfully shocked her feelings in arraiging her principles, that she could frame no answer.

Conceiving her silence to be assent, he returned to the chimney-piece, and, taking the little packet of bills, prepared to put it into his pocket-book; but, hastily, then, rising, she entreated him to restore it without delay.

Her manner was so earnest that he did not dare contest her will, though he looked nearly as angry as he was sorry. 'I meant,' he said, 'to have given you the greatest pleasure in the world; that was what I meant. I thought your debts made you so unhappy, that you would love me all

your life for getting them off your hands. I loved a person so myself, who paid for some tops for me, when I was a boy, that I had bought for some of my playmates; without recollecting that I had no money to pay for them. However, I beg your pardon for my blunder, if you like your debts better.'

He now bowed to her, with an air of concern, and, wishing her health and happiness, retreated; but left her door wide open; and she heard him say to the milliners, 'My dears, I've made a great mistake: I wanted to set that pretty lady's heart at rest, by paying her bills; but she says she had rather owe them; though she did not mention her reason. So I hope the poor people are in no great hurry. However, whether they be or not, don't let them torment her for the money, for she says she has none. So 'twould only be plaguing her for nothing. And I should be sorry for her, for she looks as if she were very smart, besides being so pretty.'

CHAPTER XXIX

[Pg 264]

Ellis, for some minutes, hardly knew whether to be most provoked or diverted by this singular visit. But all that approached to amusement was short lived. The most distant apprehension that her probity could be arraigned, was shocking; and she determined to dedicate the evening to calculating all that she had either to pay or to receive; and sooner to leave herself destitute of every means of support, but such as should arise from day to day, than hazard incurring any suspicion injurious to her integrity.

These estimates, which were easily drawn up, afforded her, at once, a view of her ability to satisfy her creditors, and of the helpless poverty in which she must then remain herself: her courage, nevertheless, rose higher, from the conviction that her honour would be cleared.

She was thus employed, when, late in the evening, Miss Arbe, full dressed, and holding her watch in her hand, ran up stairs. 'I have but a quarter of an hour,' she cried, 'to stay, so don't let us lose a moment. I am just come from dining at Lady Kendover's, and I am going to an assembly at the Sycamore's. But I thought I would just steal a few minutes for our dear little lyre. You can give me your answer, you know, as I am going down stairs. Come, quick, my dear Miss Ellis!—'Tis such a delight to try our music together!'

'My answer, Madam?' cried Ellis, surprised: 'I had hoped for yours! and, as you will, probably, meet all the ladies to whom you have had the goodness to mention me, at Miss Sycamore's, I entreat—'

'I am so dreadfully hurried,' cried she, unrolling her music, 'that I can't say a word of all that now. But we'll arrange it, and you can tell me how you like our plan, you know, as I am putting up my music, and going; but we can't possibly play the harp while I am drawing on my gloves, and scampering down stairs.'

[Pg 265]

This logic, which she felt to be irrefutable, she uttered with the most perfect self-complacency, while spreading her music, and placing herself at the harp; but once there, she would neither say nor hear another word; and it was equally in vain that Ellis desired an explanation of the plan to which she alluded, or an answer to the petition which she had written herself. Miss Arbe could listen to no sounds but those produced by her own fingers; and could balance no interests, but those upon which she was speculating, of the advantages which she should herself reap from these continual, though unacknowledged lessons. And Ellis found all her painful difficulties, how to extricate herself from the distresses of penury, the horror of creditors, and the fears of want, treated but as minor considerations, when put in competition with the importance of Miss Arbe's most trivial, and even stolen improvement.

She saw, however, no redress; displeasure was unnoticed, distaste was unheeded; and she had no choice but to put aside every feeling, and give her usual instructions; or to turn a professed protectress into a dangerous and resentful enemy.

She sat down, therefore, to her business.

The quarter of an hour was scarcely passed, before Miss Arbe started up to be gone; and, giving her music to Ellis to fold, while she drew on her gloves, cried, 'Well, you can tell me, now, what I must say to Lady Kendover. I hope you like my scheme?'

Ellis protested herself utterly ignorant what scheme she meant.

'Bless me,' she cried, 'did not my cousin tell you what I've been doing for you? I've quite slaved in your service, I can assure you. I never made such exertions in my life. Every body had agreed to give you up. It's really shocking to see how people are governed by their prejudices! But I brought them all round; for, after Lady Aurora's letter, they none of them could tell what to resolve upon, till I gave them my advice. That, indeed, is no unusual thing to happen to me. So few people know what they had best do!'

This self-eulogium having elated her spirits, her haste to depart sufficiently slackened, to give her time to make a farther demand, whether her cousin had executed her commission.

Ellis knew not even that he had had any to execute.

'Well,' she cried, 'that old soul grows more provoking every day! I have resolved a thousand times never to trust him again; only he is always at hand, and that's so convenient, one does not know how to resist making use of him. But he really torments me more than any thing existing. If he had literally no sense, one should not be so angry; but, when it's possible to make him listen, he understands what one says well enough: and sometimes, which you will scarcely believe, he'll suddenly utter something so keen and so neat, that you'd suppose him, all at once, metamorphosed into a wit. But the fact is, he is so tiresomely absent, that he never knows what he does, nor hears what one says. At breakfast, he asks whether there is nothing more coming for dinner; at dinner, he bids his servant get ready his night-cap and slippers, because he shall eat no supper; if any body applies to him for a pinch of snuff, he brings them an arm chair; if they ask him how he does, he fetches his hat and cane, buttons his great coat up to his chin, and says he is ready to attend them; if they enquire what it is o'clock, he thanks them for their kindness, and runs over a list of all his aches and pains; and the moment any body enters the room, the first word he commonly says to them is Good-bye!'

[Pg 266]

Ellis earnestly begged to know what was meant by the letter of Lady Aurora.

Miss Arbe again declared herself too much hurried to stay; and spent more time in censuring Mr Giles, for not having spared her such a loss of it, than would have been required for even a minute recital of the business which he had forgotten. Ellis, however, at length learnt, that Miss Arbe had had the address to hit upon a plan which conciliated all interests, and to which she had prevailed upon Lady Kendover to consent. 'Her la'ship's name,' she continued, 'with my extensive influence, will be quite enough to obtain that of every body else worth having at Brighthelmstone. And she was vastly kind, indeed; for though she did it, she said, with the extremest repugnance, which, to be sure, is natural enough, not being able to imagine who or what she serves; yet, in consideration of your being patronized by me, she would not refuse to give you her countenance once more. Nothing in the world could be kinder. You must go immediately to thank her.'

'Unhappily, Madam,' answered Ellis, colouring, 'I have too many obligations of my own unrepaid, to have the presumption to suppose I can assist in the acknowledgments of others: and this plan, whatever it may be, has so evidently received the sanction of Lady Kendover solely to oblige Miss Arbe, that it would be folly, if not impertinence, on my part, to claim the honour of offering her ladyship my thanks.'

Miss Arbe, whose watch was always in her hand, when her harp was not, had no time to mark this discrimination; she went on, therefore, rapidly, with her communication. 'Lady Kendover,' she said, 'had asserted, that if Miss Ellis had been celebrated in any public line of life, there would be less difficulty about employing her; but as she had only been seen or noticed in private families, it was necessary to be much more particular as to her connexions and conduct; because, in that case, she must, of course, be received upon a more friendly footing; and with a consideration and confidence by no means necessary for a public artist. If, therefore, all were not clear and satisfactory—'

[Pg 267]

Ellis, with mingled spirit and dignity, here interrupted her: 'Spare me, Madam, this preamble, for both our sakes! for though the pain it causes is only mine, the useless trouble,—pardon me!—will be yours. I do not desire—I could not even consent to enter any house, where to receive me would be deemed a disgrace.'

'O, but you have not heard my plan! You don't know how well it has all been settled. The harp-professor now here, a proud, conceited old coxcomb, full of the most abominable airs, but a divine performer, wants to obtrude his daughter upon us, in your place; though she has got so cracked a voice, that she gives one the head-ache by her squeaks. Well, to make it his interest not to be your enemy, I have prevailed with Lady Kendover to desire him to take you in for one of his band, either to play or sing, at the great concert-room.'

Ellis, amazed, exclaimed, 'Can you mean, Madam,—can Lady Kendover mean—to propose my performing in public?'

'Precisely that. 'Tis the only way in the world to settle the business, and conquer all parties.'

'If so, Madam, they can never be conquered! for never, most certainly never, can I perform in public!'

'And why not? You'll do vastly well, I dare say. Why should you be so timid? 'Tis the best way to gain you admission into great houses; and if your performance is applauded, you'll have as many scholars as you like; and you may be as impertinent as you will. Your humility, now, won't make you half so many friends, as a set of airs and graces, then, will make you partizans.'

'I am much obliged to you for a recommendation so powerful, Madam,' answered Ellis, dryly; 'but I must entreat you to pardon my inability to avail myself of it; and my frank declaration, that my objections to this plan are unsuperable.'

Miss Arbe only treated this as an ignorant diffidence, scarcely worth even derision, till Ellis solemnly and positively repeated, that her resolution not to appear in public would be unalterable: she then became seriously offended, and, slightly wishing her good night, ran down stairs; without making any other answer to her enquiry, concerning the request in her note, than that she knew not what it meant, and could not stay another moment.

[Pg 268]

Ellis, now, was deeply disturbed. Her first impulse was to write to Lady Aurora, and implore her

protection; but this wish was soon subdued by an invincible repugnance, to drawing so young a person into any clandestine correspondence.

Yet there was no one else to whom she could apply. Alas! she cried, how wretched a situation!—And yet,—compared with what it might have been!—Ah! let me dwell upon that contrast!—What, then, can make me miserable?

With revived vigour from this reflection, she resolved to assume courage to send in all her accounts, without waiting any longer for the precarious assistance of Miss Arbe. But what was to follow? When all difficulty should be over with respect to others, how was she to exist herself?

Music, though by no means her only accomplishment, was the only one which she dared flatter herself to possess with sufficient knowledge, for the arduous attempt of teaching what she had learnt. Even in this, she had been frequently embarrassed; all she knew upon the subject had been acquired as a *diletante*, not studied as an artist; and though she was an elegant and truly superiour performer, she was nearly as deficient in the theoretical, as she was skilful in the practical part of the science of which she undertook to give lessons.

Wide is the difference between exhibiting that which we have attained only for that purpose, from the power of dispensing knowledge to others. Where only what is chosen is produced; only what is practised is performed; where one favourite piece, however laboriously acquired, however exclusively finished, gains a character of excellence, that, for the current day, and with the current throng, disputes the prize of fame, even with the solid rights of professional candidates; the young and nearly ignorant disciple, may seem upon a par with the experienced and learned master. But to disseminate knowledge, by clearing that which is obscure, and explaining that which is difficult; to make what is hard appear easy, by giving facility to the execution of what is abstruse to the conception; to lighten the fatigue of practice, by the address of method; to shorten what requires study, by anticipating its result; and, while demonstrating effects to expound their cause: by the rules of art, to hide the want of science; and to supply the dearth of genius, by divulging the secrets of embellishments;—these were labours that demanded not alone brilliant talents, which she amply possessed, but a fund of scientific knowledge, to which she formed no pretensions. Her modesty, however, aided her good sense, in confining her attempts at giving improvement within the limits of her ability; and rare indeed must have been her ill fortune, had a pupil fallen to her lot, sufficiently advanced to have surpassed her powers of instruction.

[Pg 269]

But this art, the favourite of her mind, and in which she had taste and talents to excel, must be now relinquished: and Drawing, in which she was also, though not equally, an adept, presented the same obstacles of recommendation for obtaining scholars, as music. Her theatrical abilities, though of the first cast, were useless; since from whatever demanded public representation, her mind revolted: and her original wish of procuring herself a safe and retired asylum, by becoming a governess to some young lady, was now more than ever remote from all chance of being gratified.

How few, she cried, how circumscribed, are the attainments of women! and how much fewer and more circumscribed still, are those which may, in their consequences, be useful as well as ornamental, to the higher, or educated class! those through which, in the reverses of fortune, a FEMALE may reap benefit without abasement! those which, while preserving her from pecuniary distress, will not aggravate the hardships or sorrows of her changed condition, either by immediate humiliation, or by what, eventually, her connexions may consider as disgrace!

Thus situated, she could have recourse only to the dull, monotonous, and cheerless plan, from which Miss Arbe had turned her aside; that of offering her services to Miss Matson as a needle-woman.

Her first step, upon this resolution, was to send back the harp to the music-shop. Since no further hope remained of recovering her scholars, she would not pay her court to Miss Arbe at the expence of Miss Bydel. She next dispatched her small accounts to Lady Kendover, Lady Arramede, Miss Sycamore, Miss Brinville, the Miss Crawleys, and Miss Tedman; but, notwithstanding her poverty, she desired to be allowed to have instructed Selina simply from motives of gratitude.

To give up her large apartment, was her next determination; and she desired to speak with Miss Matson, to whom she made known her intention; soliciting, at the same time, some employment in needle-work.

[Pg 270]

This was a measure not more essential than disagreeable. 'Mercy, Ma'am!' Miss Matson cried, seating herself upon the sofa: 'I hope, at least, you won't leave my first floor before you pay me for it? And as to work,—what is the premium you mean to propose to me?'

Ellis answered that she could propose none: she desired only to receive and to return her work from day to day.

Looking at her, now, with an air extremely contemptuous, Miss Matson replied, that that was by no means her way; that all her young ladies came to her with handsome premiums; and that she had already eight or nine upon her list, more than she was able to admit into her shop.

Ellis, affrighted at the prospect before her, earnestly enquired whether Miss Matson would have the kindness to aid her in an application elsewhere, for some plain work.

'That, Ma'am, is one of the things the most difficult in the world to obtain. Such loads of young women are out of employ, that one's quite teized for recommendations. Besides which, your being known to have run up so many debts in the town,—you'll excuse me, Ma'am,—makes it not above half reputable to venture staking one's credit—after all those droll things that Mr Riley, you know, Ma'am, said to Miss Bydel.—'

Ellis could bear no more: she promised to hasten her payment; and begged to be left alone.

CHAPTER XXX

[Pg 271]

Ellis had but just cast herself, in deep disturbance, upon a chair, when her door was opened, without tapping, or any previous ceremony, by Mr Giles Arbe; who smilingly enquired after her health, with the familiar kindness of an intimate old friend; but, receiving no immediate answer, gave her a nod, that said, don't mind me; and, sitting down by her side, began talking to himself.

Roused by this interruption, she begged to know his commands.

He finished his speech to himself, before he took any notice of hers, and then, very good humouredly, asked what she wanted.

'May I hope,' she cried, 'that you have the goodness to bring me some answer to my note?'

'What note, my pretty lady?'

'That which you were so obliging as to undertake delivering for me to Miss Arbe?'

He stared and looked amazed, repeating, 'Note?—what note?' but when, at last, she succeeded in making him recollect the circumstance, his countenance fell, and leaning against the back of his chair, while his stick, and a parcel which he held under his arm, dropt to the ground: 'I am frighted to death,' he cried, 'for fear it's that I tore last night, to light my little lamp!'

Then, emptying every thing out of his pockets; 'I can soon tell, however,' he continued, 'because I put t'other half back, very carefully; determining to examine what it was in the morning; for I was surprised to find a folded note in my pocket: but I thought of it no more, afterwards, from that time to this.'

Collecting, then, the fragments; 'Here,' he continued, 'is what is left.—'

Ellis immediately recognized her hand-writing.

[Pg 272]

'I protest,' cried he, in great confusion, 'I have never above twice or thrice, perhaps, in my life, been more ashamed! And once was when I was so unfortunate as to burn a gentleman's stick; a mighty curious sort of cane, that I was unluckily holding in my hand, just as the fire wanted stirring; and not much thinking, at that moment, by great ill luck, of what I was about, I poked it into the middle of the grate; and not a soul happened to take notice of it, any more than myself, till it made a prodigious crackling; and all that was not consumed split into splinters. I never was so out of countenance in my life. I could not make a single apology. So they all thought I did not mind it! Don't you think so, too, now? For I am very sorry I tore your note, I assure you!'

Ellis readily accepted his excuse.

'Well, and another time,' he continued, 'I had a still worse accident. I was running after an ill-natured gnat, that had stung a lady, with my hand uplifted to knock him down, and, very unluckily, after he had led me a dance all over the room, he darted upon the lady's cheek; and, in my hurry to crush him, I gave her such a smart slap of the face, that it made her quite angry. I was never so shocked since I was born. I ran away as fast as I could; for I had not a word to say for myself.'

He then began relating a third instance; but Ellis interrupted him; and again desired to know his business.

'Good! true!' cried he, 'you do well to put me in mind, for talking of one thing makes a man sometimes forget another. It's what has happened to me before now. One i'n't always upon one's guard. I remember, once, my poor cousin was disappointed of a chaperon, to go with her to a ball, after being dressed out in all the best things that she had in the world, and looking better than ever she did before in her life, as she told me herself; and she asked me to run to a particular friend, to beg that she would accompany her, instead of the one that had failed her; so I set off, as fast as possible, for I saw that she was in a prodigious fidget; not much caring, I suppose, to be dizened out, and to put on her best looks, to be seen by nobody but her papa and me; which is natural enough, for her papa always thinks her pretty; and as to me, I don't doubt but she may be so neither; though I never happened to take much notice of it.'

'Well, Sir, to our business?' cried Ellis.

'Well, when I arrived at this friend of my cousin's, I met there a friend of my own, and one that I had not seen for fifteen years. I had so prodigious much to say to him, that it put all my poor cousin's fine clothes and best looks out of my head! and, I am quite ashamed to own it, but we never once ceased our confabulation, my old friend and I, till, to my great surprise, supper was

[Pg 273]

brought upon the table! I was in extreme confusion, indeed, for, just then, somebody asked me how my cousin did; which made me recollect my commission. I told it, in all haste, to the lady, and begged, so urgently, that she would oblige my cousin, who would never forgive me for not delivering my message sooner, if I carried a refusal, that, at last, I persuaded her to comply; but I was so abashed by my forgetfulness, that I never thought of mentioning the ball. So that when she arrived, all in her common gear, my poor cousin, who supposed that she had only waited, for her hair-dressers and shoe-makers, looked at her with as much amazement as if she had never seen her before in her life. And the lady was prodigiously piqued not to be received better; so that they were upon the very point of a quarrel, when they discovered that all the fault was mine! But by the time that they came to that part, I was so out of countenance, you would have judged that I had done it all on purpose! I was frightened out of my wits: and I made off as fast as possible; and when I got to my own room, there was not a chair nor a table that I did not put against the door, for fear of their bursting the lock; they were both of them in such prodigious passions, to know why I had served them so. And yet, the whole time, I was as innocent of it as you are; for I never once thought about either of them! never in my life!

Again Ellis enquired what were his commands, frankly avowing, that she was too much engrossed by the melancholy state of her own affairs, to attend to any other.

'What, then, I'm afraid those poor people a'n't paid yet?'

'A poorer person, Sir, as I believe, and hope,' answered she, sighing, 'than any amongst them, is unpaid also! They would not, else, have this claim upon your compassion.'

'What, have you got any bad debts yourself?'

'Enquire, Sir, of Miss Arbe; and if you extend your benevolence to representing what is due to my creditors, it may urge her to consider what is due to me.'

'Does any body owe you any money, then?'

'Yes, Sir; and as much as will acquire all I myself owe to others.'

'What is the reason, then, that they don't pay you?'

[Pg 274]

'The want of knowing, Sir, the value of a little to the self-supported and distressed! The want, in short, of consideration.'

'Bad! bad!—that i'n't right!' cried he: 'I'll put an end to it, however;' rising hastily: 'I'll make my cousin go to every one of them. They must be taught what they should do. They mean very well; but that's of no use if they don't act well too. And if my cousin don't go to them, I'll go myself.'

He then quitted the house, in the greatest haste; leaving behind him his parcel and his stick, which were not perceived till his departure.

Ellis knew not whether to lament or to rejoice at this promised interference; but, wholly upset by these new and unexpected obstacles to providing for her immediate subsistence, she had no resource but to await with patience the effect of his efforts.

The following day, while anxiously expecting him, she was surprised by another visit from Miss Arbe; who, with an air as sprightly as her own was dejected, cried, 'Well, I hope this new plan will make an end of all our difficulties. You have had time enough, now, to consider of it; for I have such a little minute always to stay, that I can never pretend to discuss an hundred *pros* and *cons*. Though, indeed, I flatter myself, 'tis impossible your scruples should still hold out. But where in the world have you hid your harp? I have been peeping about for it ever since I came in. And my music? Have you looked it over? Is it not delightful? I long to play it with you. I tried it twenty times by myself, but I could not manage it. But every thing's so much easier when one tries it together, that I dare say we shall conquer all those horrid hard passages at once. But where's your harp?—Tell me, however, first, what you decide about our plan; for when once we begin playing, there's no thinking of any thing else.'

'If it be the concert you mean, Madam, I can only repeat my thanks; and that I can never, except to those ladies who are, or who would venture to become my pupils, consent to be a performer.'

'What a thousand pities, my dear Miss Ellis, to throw away your charming talents, through that terrible diffidence! However, I can't give you up so easily. I must positively bring you round;—only if we stop now, we shan't have a moment for those horrid hard passages. So where's my music? And where have you conjured your harp?'

The music, she answered, she had neither seen nor heard of; the harp, useless since no longer necessary, she had sent home.

The smiles and sprightly airs of Miss Arbe now instantly vanished, and were succeeded by undisguised displeasure. To send back, without consulting her, an instrument that could never have been obtained but through her recommendation, she called an action the most extraordinary: she was too much hurried, however, to enter into any discussion; and must drive home immediately, to enquire what that eternal blunderer, her cousin Giles, had done, not only with her note, but with her music; which was of so much consequence, that his whole life could not make her amends, if it had met with any accident.

[Pg 275]

Ellis had been so far from purporting to cast herself into any dependence upon Miss Arbe, that,

upon this unjust resentment, she suffered her to run down stairs, without offering any apology. Conceiving, however, that the parcel, left by Mr Giles, might possibly contain the music in question, she followed her with it into the shop; where she had the mortification of hearing her say, 'Miss Matson, as to your debts, you must judge for yourself. I can't pretend to be responsible for the credit of every body that solicits my patronage.'

With the silent displeasure of contempt, Ellis put the parcel into her hands, and retreated.

'Why how's this? here is my note unopened,' cried Miss Arbe.

Ellis, returning, said that she had not seen any note.

Miss Arbe declared that she had placed it, herself, within the pack-thread that was tied round the music; but it appeared that Mr Giles had squeezed it under the brown paper cover, whence it had not been visible.

'And I wrote it,' cried Miss Arbe, 'purposely that you might be ready with your answer; and to beg that you would not fail to study the passages I marked with a pencil, that we might know how to finger them when we met. However, I shall certainly never trust that monstrous tiresome creature with another commission.'

She then, accompanied by Miss Bydel, who now entered the shop, and invited herself to be of the party, followed Ellis up stairs, to read the note, and talk the subject over.

From this note, Ellis discovered that the plan was entirely altered: the professor was wholly omitted, and she was placed herself at the head of a new enterprize. It was to be conducted under the immediate and avowed patronage of Miss Arbe, upon a scheme of that lady's own suggestion and arrangement, which had long been projecting.

A subscription was to be raised amongst all the ladies of any fashion, or consequence, in or near Brighthelmstone, who, whether as mothers, aunts, guardians, or friends, had the care of any young ladies possessing musical talents. Lady Kendover had consented that her name should be placed at the head of the list, as soon as any other lady, of sufficient distinction to be named immediately after her ladyship, should come forward. The concert was to be held, alternately, at the houses of the principal subscribers, whose apartments, and inclinations, should best be suited to the purpose. The young ladies were to perform, by rotation or selection, according as the lady directress of the night, aided by Miss Arbe's counsel, should settle. A small band was to be engaged, that the concert might be opened with the dignity of an overture; that the concertos might be accompanied; and that the whole might conclude with the *eclat* of a full piece. Ellis, for whose advancement, and in whose name, the money was to be raised, that was to pay herself, the other artists, and all the concomitant expences, was to play upon the harp, and to sing an air, in the course of every act.

[Pg 276]

This plan was far less painful to her feelings than that which had preceded it, since the concert was to be held in private houses, and young ladies of fashion were themselves to be performers; but, though her thanks were grateful and sincere, her determination was immoveable. 'It is not,' she said, 'believe me, Madam, from false notions of pride, that, because I, alone, am to be paid, I decline so honourable a method of extricating myself from my present difficulties: my pride, on the contrary, urges me to every exertion that may lead to self-dependence: but who is permitted to act by the sole guidance of their own perceptions and notions? who is so free,—I might better, perhaps, say so desolate,—as to consider themselves clear of all responsibility to the opinions of others?'

'Of others? Why do you belong, then, really, to any body, Mrs Ellis?' cried Miss Bydel.

'They must be pretty extraordinary people,' said Miss Arbe, contemptuously dropping her eyes, 'if they can disapprove a scheme that will shew your talents to so much advantage; besides bringing you into the notice of so many people of distinction.' Then, rising, she would forbear, she said, to trouble her any more; inform Lady Kendover of her refusal; and let Lady Aurora know that her farther interference would be unacceptable.

At the name of Lady Aurora, Ellis entreated some explanation; but Miss Arbe, without deigning to make any, hurried to her carriage.

Miss Bydel, pouring forth a volley of interrogatories upon the intentions of Ellis, her expectations, and her means, would have remained; but she reaped so little satisfaction that, tired, at length, herself, she retreated; though not till she had fully caught the attention of Ellis, by the following words: 'I have been very ready, Mrs Ellis, to serve you in your distress; but I hope you won't forget that I always intended to be disbursed by your music teaching: so, if you don't do that any more, I can't see why you won't do this; that you may pay me.'

[Pg 277]

She then took leave.

Ellis was far more grieved than offended by this reprimand, which, however gross, did not seem unjust. To judge me, she cried, by my present appearance, my resisting this offer must be attributed to impertinence, ingratitude, or folly. And how can I expect to be judged but by what is seen, what is known? Who is willing to be so generous, who is capable to be so noble, as to believe, or even to conceive, that lonely distress, like mine, may call for respect and forbearance, as well as for pity and assistance?—Oh Lady Aurora!—sole charm, sole softener of my sufferings!—Oh liberal, high-minded Harleigh!—why are there so few to resemble you? And why must your

virtues and your kindness, for me, be null? Why am I doomed to seek—so hardly—the support that flies me,—yet to fly the consolation that offers?

CHAPTER XXXI

[Pg 278]

The sole hope of Ellis for extrication from these difficulties hung now upon Mr Giles Arbe; whom she had begun to apprehend had forgotten his promise, when, to her great relief, he appeared.

Nothing could be less exhilarating than his air and manner. He looked vexed and disconcerted; sat down without answering the civilities of her reception; sucked, for some minutes, the head of his stick; and then began talking to himself; from time to time ejaculating little broken phrases aloud, such as: 'It i'n't right!—It can't be right!—I wish they would not do such things.—Fair young creatures, too, some of them—Fie! fie!—They've no thought;—that's it!—they've no thought.—Mighty good hearts,—and very pretty faces, too, some of 'em;—but sad little empty heads,—except for their own pleasures;—no want of flappers^[1] there!—Fie! fie!'

Then letting fall two guineas and a half upon the table, 'There, my dear,' he cried, in a tone of chagrin, 'there's all I have been able to gather amongst all your scholars put together! What they do with their money I don't know; but they are all very poor, they tell me: except Lady Arramede; and she's so rich, that she can't possibly attend, she says, to such pitiful claims: though I said to her, If the sum, Ma'am, is too small for your ladyship's notice, the best way to shew your magnificence, is to make it greater; which will also be very acceptable to this young person. But she did not mind me. She only said that you might apply to her steward at Christmas, which was the time, she believed, when he settled her affairs; but as to herself, she never meddled with such insignificant matters.'

[Pg 279]

'Christmas?' repeated Ellis; 'and 'tis now but the beginning of April!'

'I went next to the Miss Crawleys; but they only fell a laughing. All I could say, and all I could do, and all I could represent, only set 'em a laughing. I never knew what at. Nor they, neither. But they did not laugh the less for that. One of them stretched her mouth so wide, that I was afraid she would have cut her cheeks through to her ears: and t'other frightened me still more, for she giggled herself so black in the face, that I thought she must have expired in a fit. And not one among us knew what it was all for! But the more I stared at them, the louder they laughed. They never stopt till they were so weak that they could not stand; and then they held their sides, and were quiet enough; till I happened to ask them, if they had done? and that set them off again. They are merry little souls; not very heavy, I believe, in the head: I don't suppose they have a thought above once in a twelve-month.'

He had then applied to their brother. Sir Marmaduke professed himself extremely shocked, at the circumstances which had prevented his sisters from profiting longer by the instructions of so fine a virtuosa as The Ellis; but he hoped that something might yet be adjusted for the future, as he was utterly ashamed to offer such a trifle as this account, to so accomplished a young person as The Ellis. 'I told him, then,' continued Mr Giles, 'that it was no trifle to you, for you were so very poor that you could not pay for your clothes; but I could never obtain any other answer from him, than that he had too much consideration for you, to think of offering you a sum so unworthy your merit.'

'This, indeed, is rather singular,' cried Ellis, half smiling, 'that the smallness of my demands should make one person decline paying me from contempt, and another, from respect!'

Next, he related, he went to Miss Brinville, who, with great displeasure, denied, at first, having ever been a scholar of Miss Ellis. The young woman had been with her, indeed, she said, to chose her a harp, or tune it, or something of that sort; but she had found her so entirely unequal to giving any lessons; and the professor, her present master, had so completely convinced her of the poor young woman's ignorance, that it was quite ridiculous to suppose having seen any body, once or twice, for an odd hour or two, was sufficient for being considered as their scholar. 'Upon this,' continued Mr Giles, 'I told her that if she were not amongst your pupils, she must be amongst your friends; and, in that case, I doubted not, from your great good nature, you would dispense with her payment.'

[Pg 280]

'Well, Sir?' cried Ellis laughing, 'and what said my friend?'

'Good me! all was changed in a minute! she had never, she said, had such a thought as receiving you but as her music-mistress. So then, again, I demanded the money; for if she is not your friend, said I, you can't expect her to teach you for nothing. But she told me she was just quitting Brighthelmstone, and could not pay you till she got to London. I really can't find out what makes them all so poor; but they are prodigiously out of cash. Those operas and gauzes, I believe, ruin them. They dress themselves so prettily, and go to hear those tunes so often, that they have not a shilling left for other expences. It i'n't right! It can't be right! And so I told her. I gave her some advice. "There's a great concert to-night, Miss Brinville," said I; "if you take my counsel, you won't go to it; nor to ever another for a week or two to come: and then you can pay this young lady what you owe her, without putting yourself to any difficulty." But she made me no reply. She only eyed me askance, as if she would have liked prodigiously to order me out of the room. I thought I never saw her nose look so thick! I never took so much notice of it before: but it spoils

her beauty sadly. After this, I went to Miss Sycamore, and I surprized her playing upon her harp. "This is lucky enough," said I, "Miss Sycamore! I find you in the act of reaping advantage from the very person who wants to reap advantage from you." So then I demanded your money. But she told me that she had none to spare, and that she could not pay you yet. "Why then," said I, "Miss Sycamore, you must give her back her instructions!" I thought this would have piqued her; but she won't easily be put out of her way. So she threw her arms round her harp, with the prettiest languishment you can imagine, making herself look just like a picture; and then she played me a whole set of airs and graces; quite ravishing, I protest. And when she had done, "There!" she cried, "there, Mr Arbe, those were her instructions: carry them back!"—I declare I don't know how I could be angry with her, she did it with such an elegant toss! But it was not right; it could not be right; so I was angry enough, after the first moment. "Pray, Miss Sycamore," said I, "what have you done for this young lady, to expect that she should do all this for you? Have you got her any place?—Have you procured her any emolument?—Have you given her any pleasure?—Have you done her any honour?"—She had not a word to answer: so she twirled her fingers upon her harp, and sung and played till I was almost ravished again. But I would not give way; so I said, "Miss Sycamore, if she owes you neither place, nor profit; neither pleasure, nor honour, I should be glad to know upon what pretence you lay claim to her Time, her Trouble, her Talents, and her Patience?"

[Pg 281]

'O could such a question,' cried Ellis, 'be put more at large for all the harassed industrious, to all the unfeeling indolent!—what reflections might it not excite! what injustice might it not obviate!'

'Why I'll say it any where, my dear, if you think it will do any good. I always give my opinion; for I never see what a man has one for, if he must not utter it. However, I could make nothing of Miss Sycamore. Those young ladies who play and sing in public, at those private rooms, of four or five hundred people, have their poor little heads so taken up, between the compliments of the company when they are in the world, and their own when they are by themselves, that there i'n't a moment left them for a little thought.'

His next visit was to Lady Kendover; by whom he was received, he said, with such politeness, and by whom Ellis was mentioned with so much consideration, that he thought he should quite oblige her ladyship, by giving her an opportunity to serve a young person of whom she spoke with so much civility. 'Upon which,' continued he, 'I told her about your debts, and how much you would thank her to be as quick as possible in helping you to pay them. But then she put on quite a new face. She was surprised, she said, that you should begin your new career by running into debt; and much more at my supposing that she should sanctify such imprudence, by her name and encouragement. Still, however, she talked about her concern, and her admiration, in such elegant sentences, that, thinking she was coming round, "Madam," said I, "as your ladyship honours this young lady with so generous a regard, I hold it but my duty to tell you how you may shew it the most to her benefit. Send for all her creditors, and let them know your ladyship's good opinion of her; and then, I don't doubt, they'll wait her own convenience for being paid." Well! All at once her face turned of a deep brick red, as if I had offered her an affront in only naming such a thing! So then I grew very angry indeed; for, as she is neither young nor pretty, there is no one thing to excuse her. If she had been young, one might have hoped she would mend; and if she were pretty, one might suppose she was only thinking of her looking-glass. But her ladyship is plain enough, as well as old; so I felt no scruple to reprimand her. But I gained no ground; for just as I was beginning to cry down the uselessness of that complimentary language, if it meant nothing; she said that she was very sorry to have the honour to leave me, but that she must go and dress for dinner. But then, just as I was coming away, and upon the point of being in a passion, I was stopt by little Lady Barbara; that sweet fine child; who asked me a hundred kind questions about you, without paying any regard to the winking or blinking of her aunt Kendover. She is a mighty agreeable little soul. I have taken a great kindness to her. She let out all their secrets to me; and I should like nothing better than to tell them all to you; only Lady Kendover charged me to hold my tongue. The ladies are very fond of giving that recommendation to us men! I don't know (smiling) whether they are as fond of giving the example! In particular, she enjoined me not to mention Lady Aurora's being your banker.'

[Pg 282]

'Lady Aurora?'

'Yes, because my cousin would be quite affronted; for she arranges things, Lady Kendover says, so extremely well, that she deserves to have her own way. She likes to have it too, I believe, very well.'

'Lady Aurora my banker?'

'Yes; they wrote to Lady Aurora about it, and she sent them word that, if the scheme were agreeable to you, she begged to be considered as responsible for any expences that you might incur in its preparation.'

'Lady Aurora, then, approves the plan?' cried Ellis in much disturbance.

'Yes, mightily, I believe; though I am not quite sure, for she desired you might not be pressed, nor hurried; for "if," says she, in a letter to Lady Barbara, "it is not her own desire, don't let any body be so cruel as to urge her. We know not her history, and cannot judge her objections; but she is so gently mannered, so sweetly well bred, so inexpressibly amiable, that it is impossible she should not do every thing that is right.'"

'Sweet-trusting-generous Lady Aurora!' cried Ellis, while tears gushed fast into her eyes, with

strong, but delighted emotion: 'Mr Giles, I see, now, what path I may pursue; and you, who are so benevolent, will aid me on my way.'

She then entreated him, through the medium of Lady Barbara, to supplicate that the beneficence of Lady Aurora might be exerted in the payment of the debts already contracted; not in obviating new ones, which she felt no disposition to incur.

'I'll undertake that with all my heart, my dear; and you'll be sure to have the money for what you like best, because it's a man who is to be your paymaster.' [Pg 283]

'A man?'

'Yes; for Lady Aurora says, that though she shall pay the whole herself ultimately, the draft upon the banker, for the present, must be in the name of her brother.'

Ellis changed colour, and, with far deeper emotion, now walked about her room, now seated herself, now hid her face with her hands, and now ejaculated, 'How—how shall I decide!'

She then enquired from whom Mr Giles had received the two guineas and the half guinea which he had put upon the table.

From Mr Tedman.

Mr Tedman, she said, was the only person of the whole set who owed her nothing; but to whom, on the contrary, she was herself indebted; not having yet had an opportunity to clear what he had advanced.

'So he told me,' cried Mr Giles; 'for I don't believe he forgets things of that sort. But he said he had such a regard for you, that he would stand to trusting you with as much again, *put in case* you would give him your receipt for paying it off in lessons to his daughter. And for this much, in the mean while, as you were not by, he consented to take mine.'

'You are very kind, Sir,' said Ellis; 'and Mr Tedman himself, notwithstanding his deficiency in education and language, is, I believe, really good: nevertheless, I am too uncertain of my power to continue my musical project, to risk a new bankruptcy of this nature.' She then begged him to take back the money; with a promise that she would speedily settle what yet remained undischarged of the former account.

He blamed her warmly. 'Mr Tedman,' he said, 'is rich and good natured, you are poor and helpless: he ought to give; it's only being just: you ought to accept, or you are only very foolish.'

'Do not be hasty to blame me, my good Mr Giles. There are certain points in which every one must judge for himself. With regard to me, I must resist all pecuniary obligations.'

'Except to poor trades-people!' cried he, nodding a little reproachfully; 'and those you will let work and toil for you gratis!'

Ellis, shocked, and struck to the quick, looked deeply distressed. 'Perhaps,' she said, 'I may be wrong! Justice, certainly, should take place of whatever is personal, however dear or near its interest!—'

She paused, ruminated, irresolute, and dissatisfied; and then said, 'Were I to consult only myself, my own feelings, whatever they may be, should surely and even instantly, give way, to what is due to others; but I must not imagine that I shall be doomed for ever to this deplorable condition; and those to whom I may yet belong, may blame—may resent any measures that may give publicity to my situation. Will not this objection have some weight, Sir, to lessen your censure of my seeming insensibility, to claims of which I acknowledge the right?' [Pg 284]

'What, then, you think, I suppose, that when your friends come to you, they'll be quite pleased to find you have accepted goods and favours from your shoe-maker, and your hosier, and your linen-draper? though they would be too proud to let you receive money from the rich and idle? Better sing those songs, my dear! much better sing those songs! Then you'll have money for yourself and every body.'

Ellis now breathed hard. 'Alas!' she cried, 'justice, reason, common sense, all seem against me! If, therefore, Lady Aurora approve this scheme,—my fears and my feelings must yield to such a tide!'

Again, painfully, she paused; and then, sighing bitterly, added, 'Tell Miss Arbe, Sir,—acquaint Lady Kendover,—let Lady Aurora be informed,—that I submit to their opinions, and accept, upon their own terms, their benevolent assistance.'

He held out his hand to her, now, with exulting approbation; but she seemed overwhelmed with grief, apprehension, and regret.

He looked at her with surprise. 'Why now, my dear,' he said, tenderly, 'what's the matter with you? Now that you are going to do all that is right, you must be happy.'

'What is right, alas!—for me, at least,' she cried, 'I know not!—I should not else be thus perplexed.—But I act in the dark!—The measure in which I acquiesce, I may for ever repent,—yet I know not how, else, to extricate myself from difficulties the most alarming, and remonstrances —if not menaces—the most shocking!'

Heavily she sighed; yet, definitively, she agreed, that, since, unhappily, the debts were incurred, and her want of credit made immediate payment necessary, she could not, herself, in combining the whole of her intricate situation, find any plan more eligible than that of performing at this subscription-concert.

CHAPTER XXXII

[Pg 285]

This resolution once made known, not an instant was allowed to retract, or even to deliberate: to let it reach Miss Arbe was to put it into execution. That lady appeared now in her chosen element. She suggested all that was to be attempted; she directed all that was to be done. A committee of ladies was formed, nominally for consultation, but, in fact, only for applause; since whoever ventured to start the smallest objection to an idea of Miss Arbe's, was overpowered with conceited insinuations of the incompetency of her judgment for deciding upon such matters; or, if any one, yet bolder, presumed to hint at some new arrangement, Miss Arbe looked either sick or angry, and declared that she could not possibly continue to offer her poor advice, if it were eternally to be contested. This annihilated rather than subdued interference; for the whole party was of opinion, that nothing less than utter ruin to the project could ensue from her defection.

This helpless submission to ignorant dominion, so common in all committees where the leaders have no deeper science than the led, impeded not the progress of the preparations. Concentrated, or arbitrary government may be least just, but it is most effective. Unlimited in her powers, uncontroled in their exertion, Miss Arbe saved as much time by the rapidity, as contention by the despotism of her proceedings.

All seemed executed as soon as planned. The rooms were fitted up; the music was selected for the performance; the uniform for the lady-artists was fixed upon; all succeeded, all flourished,—save, only, the subscription for the concert!

But this, the essential point, neither her authority nor her influence was sufficiently potent to accelerate. Nothing is so quick as the general circulation of money, yet nothing requires more address than turning it into new channels. Curiosity was amply awakened for one evening's entertainment; but the subscription, which amounted to ten guineas, was for three nights in the week. The scheme had no interest adequate to the expence either of time or of money thus demanded; except for matrons who had young ladies, or young ladies who had talents to display. And even these, in the uncertainty of individual success, were more anxious to see the sum raised from others, than alert to advance it themselves.

[Pg 286]

This slackness of generosity, and dearth of spirit, however offensive to the pride, rather animated than damp the courage of Miss Arbe. She saw, she said, that the enterprize was arduous; but its difficulties, and not the design, should be vanquished. Her preparations, therefore, were continued with unabated confidence, and, within a week, all the performers were summoned to a rehearsal.

Ellis was called upon with the rest; for in the name of Miss Ellis, and for the sake and the benefit of Miss Ellis, all the orders were given, all the measures were taken, and all the money was to be raised: yet in no one point had Ellis been consulted; and she would hardly have known that a scheme which owed to her its name, character, and even existence, was in agitation, but from the diligence with which Miss Arbe ordered the restoration of the harp; and from the leisure which that lady now found, in the midst of her hurries, for resuming her lessons.

Ellis, from the time that she had agreed to this scheme, devoted herself completely to musical studies; and the melodious sounds drawn forth from her harp, in playing the exquisite compositions of the great masters, with whose works her taste, industry, and talents had enriched her memory, softened her sorrows, and soothed her solitude. Her vocal powers, also, she cultivated with equal assiduity; and she arrived at the house of Miss Sycamore, where the first rehearsal was to be held, calmly prepared to combat every internal obstacle to exertion, and to strive, with her best ability, to obtain the consideration which she desired, from the satisfaction, rather than solely from the indulgence of her auditors.

But the serenity given, at least assumed, by this resolution, was suddenly shaken through a communication made to her by Mr Giles Arbe, who was watching for her upon the staircase, that fifty pounds had been deposited, for her use, with his cousin, Miss Arbe, by Lady Aurora Granville.

[Pg 287]

Intelligence so important, and so touching, filled her with emotion. Why had not Miss Arbe transmitted to her a donation so seasonable, and so much in unison with her wishes? Instantly, and without scruple, she resolved to accept it; to adopt some private plan of maintenance, and to relinquish the concert-enterprise altogether.

This idea was enforced by all her feelings. Her original dislike to the scheme augmented into terrour, upon her entrance into the apartment destined for its opening execution, when she perceived her own harp placed in the most conspicuous part of the upper end of the room, which was arranged for an orchestra: while the numerous forms with which the floor was nearly covered, shewed her by how many auditors she was destined to be judged, and by how many spectators to be examined. Struck and affrighted, her new hope of deliverance was doubly

welcomed, and she looked eagerly round for Miss Arbe, to realize it without delay.

Miss Arbe, however, was so encircled, that there seemed little chance of obtaining her attention. The situation of Ellis was awkward and painful; for while the offences by which she had so lately been wounded, made her most want encouragement, the suspicions which she had excited seemed to distance all her acquaintance. No mistress of the house deigned to receive, or notice her; and though, as a thing of course, she would herself have approached any other than Miss Sycamore, there was a lively, yet hardy insolence in that young lady, which she had not courage to encounter.

The company, at large, was divided into groups, to the matron part of which Miss Arbe was dictatorially haranguing, with very apparent self-applause. The younger sets were engaged in busy whispering trios or quartetts, in corners, or at the several windows.

Embarrassed, irresolute, Ellis stopt nearly upon her entrance, vainly seeking some kind eye to invite her on; but how advance, where no one addressed, or seemed to know her? Ah! ye proud, ye rich, ye high! thought she, why will you make your power, your wealth, your state, thus repulsive to all who cannot share them? How small a portion of attention, of time, of condescension, would make your honours, your luxuries, your enjoyments, the consolation, not the oppression, of your inferiours, or dependants?

While thus, sorrowingly, if not indignantly, looking round, and seeing herself unnoticed, if not avoided, even by those whose favour, whose kindness, whose rising friendship, had most eminently distinguished her, since the commencement of her professional career, she recollected the stories of her disguises, and of her surreptitious name, which were spread abroad: her justice, then, felt appeased; and she ceased to resent, though she could not to grieve, at the mortification which she experienced.

[Pg 288]

Catching, nevertheless, the eye of Selina, she ventured to courtesy and smile; but neither courtesy nor smile was returned: Selina looked away, and looked confused; but rapidly continued her prattling, though without seeming to know herself what she was uttering, to Miss Arramede.

Ellis, disconcerted, then proceeded, with no other interruption than an 'Ah ha! are you there, The Ellis?' from Miss Crawley; and an 'Oh ho! how do do, The Ellis?' from Miss Di.

At the sound, however, of her name, Lady Barbara Frankland, starting from a little group, of which she had been the orator, exclaimed, 'Ellis?—Is Miss Ellis come?' And, skipping to the place where Ellis was seated, expressed the most lively pleasure at her sight, mixt with much affectionate regret at their long separation.

This was a kindness the most reviving to Ellis, who was now approached, also, by Lady Kendover; and, while respectfully courtesying to a cold salutation from that lady, one of her hands was suddenly seized, and warmly pressed by Selina.

Excited by the example of Lady Kendover, various ladies, who, from meeting Ellis at the houses of her several scholars, had been struck with her merit, and had conceived a regard for her person, flocked towards her, as if she had now first entered the room. Yet the notice of Lady Kendover was merely a civil vehicle, to draw from her attractions the young and partial Lady Barbara.

Miss Arbe no sooner saw her thus surrounded, than, alertly advancing, and assuming the character and state of a patroness, she complacently bowed around her, saying, 'How kind you all are to my *Protegée!*'

Miss Sycamore ended this scene, by calling upon one of the young ladies to open the rehearsal.

She called, however, in vain; every one declared herself too much frightened to take the lead; and those whose eager eyes rolled incessantly round the room, in search of admirers; and whose little laughs, animated gestures, and smiling refusals, invited solicitation, were the most eloquent in talking of their timidity, and delaying their exhibition; each being of opinion that the nearer she could place her performance to the conclusion, the nearer she should approach to the post of honour.

[Pg 289]

To finish these difficulties, Miss Arbe desired Ellis to sing and play.

Ellis, whose hopes were all alive, that she might spare herself this hazardous experiment, demanded a previous conference; but Miss Arbe was deaf and blind to whatever interfered with the vivacity of her proceedings; and Ellis, not daring, without more certain authority than that of Mr Giles Arbe, to proclaim her intended change of measures, was forced to give way; though with an unwillingness so palpable, that she inspired general pity.

Mr Scope himself would have handed her to the orchestra, but that he apprehended such a step might be deemed an action of gallantry, and as such affect the public opinion of his morals; and Mr Giles Arbe would have been enchanted to have shewn her his high regard, but that the possibility of so doing, occurred to him only when the opportunity was past. Sir Marmaduke Crawley, however, studiously devoted to the arts, set apart, alike, the rumours which, at one time, raised Ellis to a level with the rest of the company, and, at another, sunk her beneath their domestics; and, simply considering her claim to good breeding and attention, as an elegant artist, courteously offered her his hand.

Somewhat comforted by this little mark of respect, Ellis accepted it with so much grace, and crossed the apartment with an air so distinguished, that the urbanity of Sir Marmaduke soon raised an almost general envy of his office.

Every one now was attentive: singing charms universally: no art, no accomplishment has such resistless attraction: it catches alike all conditions, all ages, and all dispositions: it subdues even those whose souls are least susceptible either to intellectual or mental harmony.

Foremost in the throng of listeners came Lady Barbara Frankland, attended by Selina; unopposed either by Lady Kendover or Mrs Maple; those ladies not being less desirous that their nieces should reap every advantage from Ellis, than that Ellis should reap none in return.

But Ellis was seized with a faint panic that disordered her whole frame; terror took from her fingers their elasticity, and robbed her mind and fancy of those powers, which, when free from alarm, gave grace and meaning to her performance: and, what to herself she had played with a taste and an expression, that the first masters would most have admired, because best have understood, had now neither mark, spirit, nor correctness: while her voice was almost too low to be heard, and quite too feeble and tremulous to give pleasure.

[Pg 290]

The assembly at large was now divided between sneerers and pitiers. The first insinuated, that Ellis thought it fine and lady-like to affect being frightened; the second saw, and compassionated, in her failure, the natural effect of distressed modesty, mingled with wounded pride.

Nevertheless, her fervent, but indiscriminating juvenile admirer, Lady Barbara, echoed by Selina, enthusiastically exclaimed, 'How delightfully she plays and sings! How adorably!'

Miss Arbe, well aware that fear alone had thus 'unstrung the lyre' of Ellis, secretly exulted, that the *Diletanti* would possess her name and services for their institution, without her superiority. The Miss Crawleys were laughing so immoderately, at Mr Giles Arbe's requesting them to be quiet, that they did not find out that the rehearsal was begun: and the rest of the ladies had seized the moment of performance, for communicating to one another innumerable little secrets, which never so aptly occur as upon such occasions; Miss Sycamore excepted, who, with a cold and cutting sneer, uttered a malicious 'bravissima!'

Inexpressibly hurt and chagrined, Ellis precipitately quitted the orchestra; and, addressing Miss Arbe, said, 'Alas, Madam, I am unequal to this business! I must relinquish it altogether! And,—if I have not been misinformed, Lady Aurora Granville—'

Miss Arbe, reddening, and looking much displeased, repeated, 'Lady Aurora?—who has been talking to you about Lady Aurora?'

Ellis would have declined giving her authority; but Miss Arbe, without scruple, named Mr Giles. 'That tiresome old creature,' she cried, 'is always doing some mischief. He's my cousin, to be sure; and he's a very good sort of man, and all that; but I don't believe it's possible for an old soul to be more troublesome. As to this little sum of Lord Melbury's—'

'Lord Melbury's?' repeated Ellis, much agitated, 'If it be Lord Melbury's, I have, indeed, no claim to make! But I had hoped Lady Aurora—'

'Well, well, Lady Aurora, if you will. It's Lady Aurora, to be sure, who sends it for you; but still—'

'She has, indeed, then, sent it for me?' cried Ellis, rapturously; 'sweet, amiable Lady Aurora!—Oh! when will the hour come—'

[Pg 291]

She checked her speech; but could not check the brilliant colour, the brightened countenance, which indicated the gay ideas that internally consoled her recent mortification.

'And why, Madam,' she soon more composedly, yet with spirit, added, 'might I not be indulged with the knowledge of her ladyship's goodness to me? Why is Mr Giles Arbe to be blamed for so natural a communication? Had it, happily, reached me sooner, it might have spared me the distress and disgrace of this morning?'

She then earnestly requested to receive what was so kindly meant for her succour, upon milder terms than such as did violence to her disposition, and were utterly unfitting to her melancholy situation.

Somewhat embarrassed, and extremely piqued, Miss Arbe made no reply but a fretful 'Pish!'

'Lady Aurora,' continued Ellis, 'is so eminently good, so feelingly delicate, that if any one would have the charity to name my petition to her ladyship, she would surely consent to let me change the destination of what she so generously assigns to me.'

Her eyes here glanced anxiously towards Lady Barbara; who, unable to resist their appeal, sprang from Lady Kendover, into the little circle that was now curiously forming around Ellis; eagerly saying, 'Miss Ellis, 'tis to me that Lady Aurora wrote that sweet letter, about the fifty pounds; and I'll send for it to shew you this moment.'

'Do, little lady, do!' cried Mr Giles, smiling and nodding, 'you are the sweetest little soul amongst them all!'

Laughing and delighted, she was dancing away; but Lady Kendover, gently stopping her, said, 'You are too young, yet, my dear, to be aware of the impropriety of making private letters public.'

'Well, then, at least, Miss Ellis,' she cried, 'I will tell you that one paragraph, for I have read it so often and often that I have got it by heart, it's so very beautiful! "You will entreat Miss Arbe, my dear Lady Barbara, since she is so good as to take the direction of this concert-enterprize, to employ this little loan to the best advantage for Miss Ellis, and the most to her satisfaction. Loan I call it, for Miss Ellis, I know, will pay it, if not in money, at least in a thousand sweetesses, of a thousand times more value."'

Ellis, touched with unspeakable pleasure, was forced to put her hand before her eyes.

"Don't let her consult Miss Ellis about its acceptance. Miss Ellis will decline every thing that is personal; and every thing that is personal is what I most wish to present to her. I beg Miss Arbe will try to find out what she most requires, and endeavour to supply it unnamed.

[Pg 292]

"Oh! could I but discover what would sooth, would console her! How often I think of her! How I love to recollect her enchanting talents, and to dwell upon every hour that I passed in her endearing society! Why did not Lady Kendover know her at that time? She could not, then, my dear Lady Barbara, have wished you a sweeter companion. Even Mrs Howel was nearly as much captivated by her elegance and manners, as I was, and must ever remain, by her interesting qualities, and touching sensibility. O be kind to her, Lady Barbara! for my sake be kind to her: I am quite, quite unhappy that I have no power to be so myself!"

Tears now rolled in resistless streams down the cheeks of Ellis, though from such heartfelt delight, that her eyes, swimming in liquid lustre, shone but more brightly.

Nevertheless, the respect which such a panegyric might have excited in the assembly at large, was nearly lost through the rapidity with which it was uttered by the eager Lady Barbara; and nothing short of the fascinated attention, and quick consciousness given by deep personal interest, could have made it completely intelligible even to Ellis: but to the sounds we wish to hear the heart beats responsive: it seizes them almost unpronounced.

Revived, re-animated, enchanted, Ellis now, with grace, with modesty, yet with firmness, renewed her request to Miss Arbe; who, assuming a lively air, though palpably provoked and embarrassed, answered, that Miss Ellis did not at all understand her own interest; and declared that she had taken the affair in hand herself, merely to regulate it to the best advantage; adding, 'You shall see, now, the surprise I had prepared for you, if that blabbing old cousin of mine had not told you every thing before hand.'

Then, in a tone of perfectly restored self-complacency, she produced a packet, and, with a parading look, that said, See what I bestow upon you! ostentatiously spread its contents upon a table.

'Now,' she cried, 'Miss Ellis, I hope I shall have the good fortune to please you! see what a beautiful gown I have bought you!'

The gown was a sarcenet of a bright rose-colour; but its hue, though the most vivid, was pale to the cheeks of Ellis, as she repeated, 'A gown, Madam? Permit me to ask—for what purpose?'

'For what purpose?—To sing at our concert, you know! It's just the thing you want the most in the world. How could you possibly do without it, you know, when you come to appear before us all in public?'

[Pg 293]

While Ellis hesitated what to reply, to a measure which, thus conducted, and thus announced, seemed to her unequivocally impertinent, the packet itself was surrounded by an eager tribe of females, and five or six voices broke forth at once, with remarks, or animadversions, upon the silk.

'How vastly pretty it is!' cried Miss Arramede, addressing herself courteously to Miss Arbe.

'Yes, pretty enough, for what it is meant for,' answered Miss Sycamore; glancing her eyes superciliously towards Ellis.

'Pray, Miss Arbe, what did you give a yard for it,' demanded Miss Bydel; 'and how much will the body-lining come to? I hope you know of a cheap mantua-maker?'

'Bless me, how fine you are going to make The Ellis!' cried Miss Crawley: 'why I shall take her for a rose!'

'Why then The Ellis will be The rose!' said Miss Di; 'but I should sooner take her for my wax-doll, when she's all so pinky winky.'

'Why then The Ellis will be The doll!' cried Miss Crawley.

The two sisters now seated, or rather threw themselves upon a sofa, to recover from the excessive laughter with which they were seized at their own pleasantry; and which was exalted nearly to extacy, by the wide stare, and uplifted hands, of Mr Giles Arbe.

'It's horridly provoking one can't wear that colour one's self,' said Miss Arramede, 'for it's monstrously pretty.'

'Pretty?' repeated Miss Brinville: 'I hope, Miss Arramede, you don't wish to wear such a frightful vulgar thing, because it's pretty?'

'Well, I think it's vastly well,' said Miss Sycamore, yawning; 'so don't abuse it. As our uniform is fixed to be white, with violet-ornaments, it was my thought to beg Miss Arbe would order something of this shewy sort for Miss Ellis; to distinguish us *Diletanti* from the artists.'

It was not Ellis alone who felt the contemptuous haughtiness of this speech; the men all dropt their eyes; and Lady Barbara expressively exclaimed, 'Miss Ellis can't help looking as beautiful and as elegant as an angel, let her dress how she will!'

All obstacles being now removed for continuing the rehearsal, the willing Lady-artists flocked around Miss Arbe; and songs were sung, and lessons upon the piano forte, or harp, were played; with a readiness of compliance, taken, by the fair performers, for facility of execution; and with a delight in themselves that elevated their spirits to rapture; since it was the criterion whence they calculated the pleasure that they imparted to others.

[Pg 294]

The pieces which they had severally selected were so long, and the compliments which the whole company united to pour forth after every performance, were so much longer, that the day was nearly closing, when Ellis was summoned to finish the act.

Ellis, who had spent this interval first in curious, next in civil, and lastly in forced attention, rose now with diminished timidity, to obey the call. It was not that she thought better of the scheme, but that it appeared to her less formidable; her original determination, therefore, to make her best exertions, returned with more effect, and she executed a little prelude with precision and brilliancy; and then accompanied herself in a slow and plaintive air, with a delicacy, skill, and expression, at once touching and masterly.

This concluded the first act; and the first act was so long, that it was unanimously agreed, that some new regulations must be adopted, before the second and third could be rehearsed.

Every piece which had followed the opening performance, or, rather, failure, of Ellis, had been crowned with plaudits. Every hand had clapped every movement; every mouth had burst forth with exclamations of praise: Ellis alone was heard in silence; for Ellis was unprotected, unsustained, unknown. Her situation was mysterious, and seemed open at times, to the most alarming suspicions; though the unequivocal regularity and propriety of her conduct, snatched her from any positive calumny. Yet neither this, nor the most striking talents, could have brought her forward, even for exhibition, into such an assembly, but for the active influence of Miss Arbe; who, shrewd, adroit, and vigilant, never lost an opportunity to serve herself, while seeming to serve others.

The fortune of this young lady was nearly as limited as her ambition and vanity were extensive; she found, therefore, nothing so commodious, as to repay the solid advantages which she enjoyed, gratuitously, from various artists, by patronage; and she saw, in the present case, an absolute necessity, either to relinquish her useful and elegant mistress, as an unknown adventurer, not proper to be presented to people of fashion; or to obviate the singular obstacles to supporting her, by making them become a party themselves in the cause of her *protegée*, through the personal interest of a subscription for their own amusement.

[Pg 295]

Nevertheless, Ellis, after a performance which, if fairly heard, and impartially judged, must have given that warm delight that excites 'spirit-stirring praise,' was heard in silence; though had a single voice been raised in her favour, nearly every voice would have joined in chorus. But her patroness was otherwise engaged, and Lady Barbara was gone; no one, therefore, deemed it prudent to begin. Neglect is still more contagious than admiration: it is more natural, perhaps, to man, from requiring less trouble, less candour, less discernment, and less generosity. The *Diletanti*, also, already reciprocally fatigued, were perfectly disposed to be as parsimonious to all without their own line, as they were prodigal to all within it, of those sweet draughts of flattery, which they had so liberally interchanged with one another.

Miss Arbe considered her own musical debts to be cancelled, from the moment that she had introduced her *protegée* into this assembly. She was wholly, therefore, indifferent to what might give her support, or mortification; and had taken the time of her performance, to demand a general consultation, whether the first harmonic meeting should be held in the apartment of Lady Arramede, which was the most magnificent; or in that of Miss Sycamore, which, though superb, was the least considerable amongst the select subscribers.

This was a point of high importance, and of animated discussion. The larger apartment would best excite the expectations of the public, and open the business in the highest style; but the smaller would be the most crowded;—there would not be room to stir a step;—scarcely a soul could get a seat;—some of the company must stand upon the stairs;—'O charming!'—'O delightful!'—was echoed from mouth to mouth; and the motion in favour of Miss Sycamore was adopted by acclamation.

Ellis now, perceiving that the party was breaking up, advanced to Miss Arbe, and earnestly requested to be heard; but Miss Arbe, looking as if she did not know, and was too busy to enquire what this meant, protested herself quite bewildered with the variety of matters which she had to arrange; and, shaking hands with Miss Sycamore, was hurrying away, when the words 'Must I address myself, then, Madam, to Lady Aurora!' startled her, and she impatiently answered, 'By no means! Lady Aurora has put the money into my hands, and I have disposed of it to the very best advantage.'

'Disposed of it——I hope not!—I hope—I trust—that, knowing the generous wishes of Lady Aurora

to indulge, as well as to relieve me, you have not disposed of so considerable a sum, without permitting me first to state to you, how and in what manner her ladyship's benevolence may most effectually be answered?'

[Pg 296]

Miss Arbe, evidently more disturbed though more civil, lowered her tone; and, taking Ellis apart, gently assured her, that the whole had been applied exclusively for her profit, in music, elegant desks, the hire of instruments, and innumerable things, requisite for opening the concert upon a grand scale; as well as for the prettiest gown in the world, which, she was sure, would become her of all things.

Ellis, with undisguised astonishment, asked by what arrangement it could justly be settled, that the expences of a subscription-concert should be drawn from the bounty of one lady; that lady absent, and avowedly sending her subscription merely for the service of an individual of the sett?

'That's the very thing!' cried Miss Arbe, with vivacity: 'her ladyship's sending it for that one performer, has induced me to make this very arrangement; for, to tell you the truth, if Lady Aurora had not been so considerate for you, the whole scheme must have been demolished; and if so, poor Miss Ellis! what would become of you, you know?'

Then, with a volubility that shewed, at once, her fear of expostulation, and her haste to have done, she sought to explain that, without the necessary preparations, there could be no concert; without a concert Miss Ellis could not be known; without being known, how could she procure any more scholars? and without procuring scholars, how avoid being reduced again to the same pitiable state, as that from which Miss Arbe had had the pleasure to extricate her? And, in short, to save further loss of time, she owned that it was too late to make any change, as the whole fifty pounds was entirely spent.

It was not, now, chagrin alone, nor disappointment, nor anxiety, that the speaking features of Ellis exhibited; indignation had a strong portion of their expression; but Miss Arbe awaited not the remonstrance that they announced: more courteous, while more embarrassed, she took Ellis by the hand, and caressingly said, 'Lady Aurora knows—for I have written to her ladyship myself,—that every smiling is laid out for your benefit;—only we must have a beginning, you know,—so you won't distress poor Lady Aurora, by seeming discontented, after all that she has done for you? It would be cruel, you know, to distress her.'

With all its selfishness, Ellis felt the truth of this observation with respect to Lady Aurora, as forcibly as its injustice with regard to herself. She sighed from helplessness how to seek any redress; and Miss Arbe, still fawningly holding her hand, added, 'But you don't think to steal away without giving us another air?—Miss Sycamore!—Sir Marmaduke!—Sir Lyell! pray help me to persuade Miss Ellis to favour us with one more air.'

[Pg 297]

Disgusted and fatigued, Ellis would silently have retired; but the signal being given by Miss Arbe, all that remained of the assembly professed themselves to be dying for another piece; and Ellis, pressed to comply with an eagerness that turned solicitation into persecution, was led, once more, by Sir Marmaduke, to the orchestra.

Here, her melancholy and distressed feelings again marred her performance; she scarcely knew what she played, nor how she sung; her execution lost its brilliancy, and her expression its refined excellence: but Miss Arbe, conscious of the cause, and alarmed lest any appeal to Lady Aurora should sully her own character of patroness, hoped, by the seductive bribery of flattery, to stifle complaint. She was the first, therefore, to applaud; and her example animated all around, except the supercilious Miss Sycamore, and the jealous Miss Brinville, whom envy rendered inveterate. 'How exquisite!'—'How sweet!'—'How incomparable!'—'What taste!'—'What sounds!'—'What expression!'—now accompanied almost every bar of the wavering, incorrect performance; though not even an encouraging buzz of approbation, had cheered the exertions of the same performer during the elegant and nearly finished piece, by which it had been preceded. The public at large is generally just, because too enormous to be individually canvassed; but private circles are almost universally biassed by partial or prejudiced influence.

Miss Arbe chose now to conclude, that every objection was obviated; and Ellis strove vainly to obtain a moment's further attention, from the frivolous flutter, and fancied perplexities, of busy self-consequence. The party broke up: the company dispersed; and the poor, unconsidered, unaided *protégée*, dejectedly left the house, at the same moment that it was quitted triumphantly, by her vain, superficial, unprotecting patroness.

CHAPTER XXXIII

[Pg 298]

Discouraged and disgusted as Ellis returned from this rehearsal, the sad result of her reflections, upon all that had passed, and upon her complicate difficulties, with her debtors and creditors, served but to convince her of the necessity of perseverance in what she had undertaken; and of patience in supporting whatever that undertaking might require her to endure.

From the effects of a hard shower of rain, in which she had been caught, while returning from the first rehearsal, she was seized with a hoarseness, that forced her to decline her own vocal performance at the second. This was immediately spread about the room, as an excess of

impertinence; and the words, 'What ridiculous affection!'—'What intolerable airs!'—'So she must have a cold? Bless us! how fine!'—were repeated from mouth to mouth, with that contemptuous exultation, which springs from the narrow pleasure of envy, in fixing upon superior merit the stigma of insolence, or caprice.

Ellis, who, unavoidably, heard these murmurs, was struck with fresh alarm, at the hardship of those professions which cast their votaries upon the mercy of superficial judges; who, without investigation, discernment, or candour, make their decisions from common place prejudice; or current, but unexamined opinions.

Having no means to obviate similar injustice for the future, but by chacing the subject of suspicion, the dread of public disapprobation, to which she was now first awakened, made her devote her whole attention to the cure of her little malady.

Hitherto, a desire to do well, that she might not displease or disappoint her few supporters, had been all her aim; but sarcasms, uttered with so little consideration, in this small party, represented to her the disgrace to which her purposed attempt made her liable, in cases of sickness, of nervous terrors, or of casual inability, from an audience by which she could be regarded only as an artist, who, paid to give pleasure, was accountable for fulfilling that engagement.

[Pg 299]

She trembled at this view of her now dependent condition; and her health which, hitherto, left to nature, and the genial vigour of youth, had disdained all aid, and required no care, became the first and most painful object of her solicitude. She durst not venture to walk out except in the sun-shine; she forbore to refresh herself near an open window; and retreated from every unclosed door, lest humidity, or the sharpness of the wind, or a sudden storm, should again affect her voice; and she guarded her whole person from the changing elements, as sedulously as if age, infirmity, or disease, had already made her health the salve of prudential forethought.

These precautions, though they answered in divesting her of a casual and transient complaint, were big with many and greater evils, which threatened to become habitual. The faint warmth of a constantly shut up apartment; the total deprivation of that spring which exercise gives to strength, and fresh air to existence, soon operated a change in her whole appearance. Her frame grew weaker; the roses faded from her cheeks; she was shaken by every sound, and menaced with becoming a victim to all the tremors, and all the languors of nervous disorders.

Alas! she cried, how little do we know either of the labours, or the privations, of those whose business it is to administer pleasure to the public! We receive it so lightly, that we imagine it to be lightly given!

Alarmed, now, for her future and general health, she relinquished this dangerous and enervating system; and, committing herself again to the chances of the weather, and the exertions of exercise, was soon, again, restored to the enjoyment of her excellent constitution.

Meanwhile, the reproaches of Mr Giles Arbe, for her seeming neglect of her own creditors, who had applied for his interest, constrained her to avow to him the real and unfeeling neglect which was its cause.

Extremely angry at this intelligence, he declared that he should make it his especial business, to urge those naughty ladies to a better behaviour.

Accordingly, at the next rehearsal,—for, as the relation of Miss Arbe, he was admitted to every meeting,—he took an opportunity, upon observing two or three of the scholars of Ellis in a group, to bustle in amongst them; and, pointing to her, as she sat upon a form, in a distant corner, 'Do but look,' he said, 'at that pretty creature, ladies! Why don't you pay her what you owe her? She wants the money very much, I assure you.'

[Pg 300]

A forced little laugh, from the ladies whom this concerned, strove to turn the attack into a matter of pleasantry. Lady Kendover alone, and at the earnest desire of her niece, took out her purse; but when Mr Giles, smiling and smirking, with a hand as open as his countenance, advanced to receive what she meant to offer, she drew back, and, saying that she could not, just then, recollect the amount of the little sum, walked to the other end of the room.

'Oh, I'll bring you word what it is directly, my lady!' cried Mr Giles; 'so don't get out of the way. And you, too, my Lady Arramede; and you, Miss Sycamore; and you, Miss Brinville; if you'll all stand together, here, in a cluster, I'll bring every one of you the total of your accounts from her own mouth. And I may as well call those two merry young souls, the Miss Crawleys, to come and pay, too. She has earned her money hardly enough, I'm sure, poor pretty lady!'

'O, very hardly, to be sure!' cried Lady Arramede; 'to play and sing are vast hardships!'

'O, quite insupportable!' said Miss Sycamore: 'I don't wonder she complains. Especially as she has so much else to do with her time.'

'Do you think it very agreeable, then, ladies,' cried Mr Giles, 'to teach all that thrim thrum?'

'Why what harm can it do her?' said Miss Brinville: 'I don't see how she can well do any thing that can give her less trouble. She had only just to point out one note, or one finger, instead of another.'

'Why yes, that's all she does, sure enough,' said Miss Bydel, 'for I have seen her give her lessons.'

'What, then, ladies,' cried Mr Giles, surprised; 'do you count for nothing being obliged to go out when one had rather stay at home? and to dress when one has nothing to put on? as well as to be at the call of folks who don't know how to behave? and to fag at teaching people who are too dull to learn?'

Ellis, who was within hearing, alarmed to observe that, in these last two phrases, he looked full at Miss Sycamore and Miss Brinville, upon whose conduct towards herself she had confidentially entrusted him with her feelings, endeavoured to make him some sign to be upon his guard: though, as neither of those two ladies had the misfortune to possess sufficient modesty to be aware of their demerits, they might both have remained as secure from offence as from consciousness, if her own quick fears had as completely escaped notice. But, when Mr Giles perceived her uneasiness, he called out, 'Don't be frightened, my pretty lady! don't think I'll betray my trust! No, no. I can assure you, ladies, you can't be in better hands, with respect to any of your faults or oversights, for she never names them but with the greatest allowances. For as to telling them to me, that's nothing; because I can't help being naturally acquainted with them, from seeing you so often.'

[Pg 301]

'She's vastly good!'—'Amazingly kind!' was now, with affected contempt, repeated from one to another.

'Goodness, Mr Giles!' cried Miss Bydel, 'why what are you thinking of? Why you are calling all the ladies to account for not paying this young music-mistress, just as if she were a butcher, or a baker; or some useful tradesman.'

'Well, so she is, Ma'am! so she is, Mrs Bydel! For if she does not feed your stomachs, she feeds your fancies; which are all no better than starved when you are left to yourselves.'

'Nay, as to that, Mr Giles,' said Miss Bydel, 'much as it's my interest that the young woman should have her money, for getting me back my own, I can't pretend to say I think she should be put upon the same footing with eating and drinking. We can all live well enough without music, and painting, and those things, I hope; but I don't know how we are to live without bread and meat.'

'Nor she, neither, Mrs Bydel! and that's the very reason that she wants to be paid.'

'But, I presume, Sir,' said Mr Scope, 'you do not hold it to be as essential to the morals of a state, to encourage luxuries, as to provide for necessaries? I don't speak in any disparagement to this young lady, for she seems to me a very pretty sort of person. I put her, therefore, aside; and beg to discuss the matter at large. Or, rather, if I may take the liberty, I will speak more closely to the point. Let me, therefore, Sir, ask, whether you opine, that the butcher, who gives us our richest nutriment, and the baker, to whom we owe the staff of life, as Solomon himself calls the loaf, should barely be put upon a par with an artist of luxury, who can only turn a sonata, or figure a minuet, or daub a picture?'

'Why, Mr Scope, a person who pipes a tune, or dances a jig, or paints a face, may be called, if you will, an artist of luxury; but then 'tis of your luxury, not his.'

'Mine, Sir?'

[Pg 302]

'Yes, yours, Sir! And Mrs Maple's; and Mrs Bydel's; and Miss Brinville's; and Miss Sycamore's; and Mrs and Miss every body's;—except only his own.'

'Well, this,' said Miss Bydel, 'is curious enough! So because there are such a heap of squallers, and fidlers, and daubers, I am to have the fault of it?'

'This I could not expect indeed,' said Mrs Maple, 'that a gentleman so amazingly fond of charity, and the poor, and all that, as Mr Giles Arbe, should have so little principle, as to let our worthy farmers and trades-people languish for want, in order to pamper a set of lazy dancers, and players, and painters; who think of no one thing but idleness, and outward shew, and diversion.'

'No, Mrs Maple; I am not for neglecting the farmers and trades-people; quite the contrary; for I think you should neither eat your meat, nor drink your beer, nor sit upon your chairs, nor wear your clothes, till you have rewarded the industrious people who provide them. Till then, in my mind, every body should bear to be hungry, and dry, and tired, and ragged! For what right have we to be fed, and covered, and seated, at other folks' cost? What title to gormandize over the butcher's fat joints, and the baker's quartern loaves, if they who furnish them are left to gnaw bones, and live upon crumbs? We ought all of us to be ashamed of being warmed, and dized in silks and satins, if the poor weavers, who fabricate them, and all their wives and babies, are shivering in tatters; and to toss and tumble ourselves about, on couches and arm-chairs, if the poor carpenters, and upholsterers, and joiners, who have had all the labour of constructing them, can't find a seat for their weary limbs!'

'What you advance, there, Sir,' said Mr Scope, 'I can't dispute; but still, Sir, I presume, putting this young lady always out of the way; you will not controvert my position, that the morals of a state require, that a proper distinction should be kept up, between the instruments of subsistence, and those of amusement.'

'You are right enough, Mr Scope,' cried Miss Bydel; 'for if singing and dancing, and making images, are ever so pretty, one should not pay folks who follow such light callings, as one pays people that are useful.'

'I hope not, truly!' said Mrs Maple.

Mr Scope, thus encouraged, went on to a formal dissertation, upon the morality of repressing luxury; which was so cordially applauded by Miss Bydel; and enforced by sneers so personal and pointed against Ellis, by Mrs Maple, Miss Brinville, and Miss Sycamore, that Mr Giles, provoked, at length, to serious anger, got into the middle of the little auditory, and, with animated gesticulation, stopping all the attempts of the slow and prosing Mr Scope to proceed, exclaimed, 'Luxury? What is it you all of you mean by luxury? Is it your own going to hear singing and playing? and to see dancing and capering? and to loll at your ease, while a painter makes you look pretty, if you are ever so plain? If it be, do those things no more, and there will soon be an end to them! but don't excite people to such feats, and then starve them for their pains. Luxury? do you suppose, because such sights, and such sounds, and such flattery, are luxuries to you, they are luxuries to those who produce them? Because you are in extacies to behold yourselves grow younger and more blooming every moment, do you conclude that he who mixes your colours, and covers your defects, shares your transports? No; he is sick to death of you; and longing to set his pencil at liberty. And because you, at idle hours, and from mere love of dissipation, lounge in your box at operas and concerts, to hear a tune, or to look at a jump, do you imagine he who sings, or who dances, must be a voluptuary? No! all he does is pain and toil to himself; learnt with labour, and exhibited with difficulty. The better he performs, the harder he has worked. All the ease, and all the luxury are yours, Mrs Maple, and yours, Miss Bydel, and yours, ladies all, that are the lookers on! for he does not pipe or skip at his own hours, but at yours; he does not adorn himself for his own warmth, or convenience, but to please your tastes and fancies; he does not execute what is easiest, and what he like best, but what is hardest, and has most chance to force your applause. He sings, perhaps, when he may be ready to cry; he plays upon those harps and fiddles, when he is half dying with hunger; and he skips those gavots, and fandangos, when he would rather go to bed! And all this, to gain himself a hard and fatiguing maintenance, in amusing your dainty idleness, and insufficiency to yourselves.'

[Pg 303]

This harangue, uttered with an energy which provocation alone could rouse in the placid, though probing Mr Giles, soon broke up the party: Miss Sycamore, indeed, only hummed, rather louder than usual, a favourite passage of a favourite air; and the Miss Crawleys nearly laughed themselves sick; but Mrs Maple, Miss Bydel, and Miss Brinville, were affronted; and Miss Arbe, who had vainly made various signs to her cousin to be silent, was ashamed, and retreated: without Miss Arbe, nothing could go on; and the rehearsal was adjourned.

[Pg 304]

The attempt of Mr Giles, however, produced no effect, save that of occasioning his own exclusion from all succeeding meetings.

CHAPTER XXXIV

[Pg 305]

The *Diletanti*, in a short time, thought themselves perfect, yet the destined concert was not opened; the fifty pounds, which had been sent for Ellis, had been lavished improvidently, in ornamental preparations; and the funds otherwise raised, were inadequate for paying the little band, which was engaged to give effect in the orchestra.

Severely as Ellis dreaded the hour of exhibition, a delay that, in its obvious consequences, could only render it more necessary, gave her no satisfaction.

A new subject for conjecture and reflexion speedily ensued: the visits of Miss Arbe, hitherto wearisome and oppressive, alike from their frequency and their selfishness, suddenly, and without any reason assigned, or any visible motive, ceased.

The relief which, in other circumstances, this defection might have given to her spirits, she was now incapable of enjoying; for though Miss Arbe rather abused than fulfilled the functions of a patroness, Ellis immediately experienced, that even the most superficial protection of a lady of fashion, could not, without danger, be withdrawn from the indigent and unsupported. Miss Matson began wondering, with a suspicious air, what was become of Miss Arbe; the young work-women, when Ellis passed them, spared even the civility of a little inclination of the head; and the maid of the house was sure to be engaged, on the very few occasions on which Ellis demanded her assistance.

Some days elapsed thus, in doubt and uneasiness, not even broken into by a summons to a rehearsal: another visit, then, from Mr Giles Arbe, explained the cause of this sudden desertion. He brought a manuscript air, which Miss Arbe desired that Ellis would copy, and, immediately, though unintentionally, divulged, that his cousin had met with the newly-arrived professor at Miss Brinville's, and had instantly transferred to him the enthusiasm of her favour.

[Pg 306]

Ellis but too easily comprehended, that the ruin of her credit and consequence in private families, would follow the uselessness of her services to her patroness. The prosecution, therefore, of the concert-scheme, which she had so much disliked in its origin, became now her own desire, because her sole resource.

The next morning, while she was busy in copying the MS., the customary sound of the carriage and voice of Miss Arbe, struck her ears, and struck them, for the first time, with pleasure.

'I have not,' cried that lady, 'a moment to stay; but I have something of the greatest importance to tell you, and you have not an instant to lose in getting yourself ready. What do you think? You are to sing, next week, at Mr Vinstreigle's benefit!'

'I, Madam!'

'Yes! for you must know, my dear Miss Ellis, he has asked it of me himself! So you see what a compliment that is! I am quite charmed to bring you such news. So be sure to be ready with one of your very best *scenas*.'

She was then, with a lively air, decamping; but Ellis gently, yet positively, declined performing at any concert open to the public at large.

'Pho, pho! don't begin all those scruples again, pray! It must be so, I assure you. I'll tell you how the matter stands. Our funds are not yet rich enough for beginning our own snug scrip-concert, without risk of being stopt short the first or second night. And that, you know, would raise the laugh against us all horribly. I mean against us *Diletanti*. So that, if we don't hit upon some new measure, I am afraid we shall all go to town before the concert can open. And that, you know, would quite ruin you, poor Miss Ellis! which would really give me great concern. So I consulted with Sir Marmaduke Crawley; and he said that you ought, by all means, to sing once or twice in public, to make yourself known; for that would raise the subscription directly; especially as it would soon be spread that you are a *protégée* of mine. So, you see, we must either take this method, or give the thing quite up; which will be your utter destruction, I am sorry to say. So now decide quick, for there is not a second to spare.'

Ellis was alarmed, yet persisted in her negative.

Piqued and offended, Miss Arbe hurried away; declaring aloud, in passing through the shop, that people who were so determined to be their own enemies, might take care of themselves: that, for her part, she should do nothing more in the affair; and only wished that Miss Ellis might find better means for paying her debts, and procuring herself a handsome maintenance.

[Pg 307]

However shocked by this petulant indelicacy, Ellis saw not without the most serious concern, that the patronage of Miss Arbe was clearly at an end. Personal interest which, it was equally clear, had excited it, now ran in another channel; for if, by flattery or good offices, she could obtain gratis, the instructions of an eminent professor, what could she want with Ellis, whom she had never sought, nor known, nor considered, but as a musical preceptress? And yet, far from elevating as was such patronage, its extinction menaced the most dangerous effects.

With little or no ceremony, Miss Matson, the next morning, came into her room, and begged leave to enquire when their small account could be settled. And, while Ellis hesitated how to answer, added, that the reason of her desiring a reply as quickly as possible, was an interview that she had just had with the other creditors, the preceding evening; because she could not but let them know what had passed with Miss Arbe. 'For, after what I heard the lady say, Miss Ellis, as she went through my shop, I thought it right to follow her, and ask what she meant; as it was entirely upon her account my giving you credit. And Miss Arbe replied to me, in so many words, "Miss Ellis can pay you All, if she pleases: she has the means in her own power: apply to her, therefore, in whatever way you think proper; for you may do her a great service by a little severity: but, for my part, remember, I take no further responsibility." So upon this, I talked it all over with your other creditors; and we came to a determination to bring the matter to immediate issue.'

Seized with terror, Ellis now hastily took, from a locked drawer, the little packet of Harleigh, and, breaking the seal, was precipitately resolving to discharge every account directly; when other conflicting emotions, as quick as those which had excited, checked her first impulse; and, casting down, with a trembling hand, the packet, O let me think!—she internally cried;—surrounded with perils of every sort, let me think, at least, before I incur new dangers!

She then begged that Miss Matson would grant her a few minutes for deliberation.

Certainly, Miss Matson said; but, instead of leaving the room, took possession of the sofa, and began a long harangue upon her own hardships in trade; Ellis, neither answering nor listening.

[Pg 308]

Presently, the door opened, and Mr Giles Arbe, in his usually easy manner, made his appearance.

'You are busy, you are busy, I see,' he cried; 'but don't disturb yourselves. I'll look for a book, and wait.'

Ellis, absorbed in painful ruminations, scarcely perceived him; and Miss Matson loquaciously addressed to him her discourse upon her own affairs; too much interested in the subject herself, to mark whether or not it interested others, till Mr Giles caught her attention, and awakened even that of Ellis, by saying aloud, though speaking to himself, 'Why now here's money enough!—Why should not all those poor people be paid?'

Ellis, turning round, saw then, that he had taken up Harleigh's packet; of which he was examining the contents, and spreading, one by one, the notes upon a table.

She hastily ran to him, and, with an air extremely displeased, seized those which she could reach; and begged him instantly to deliver to her those which were still in his hand.

Her discomposed manner brought him to the recollection of what he was doing; and, making

abundant apologies, 'I protest,' he cried, 'I don't know how it happened that I should meddle with your papers, for I meant only to take up a book! But I suppose it was because I could not find one.'

Ellis, in much confusion, re-folded the notes, and put them away.

'I am quite ashamed to have done such a thing, I assure you,' he continued, 'though I am happy enough at the accident, too; for I thought you very poor, and I could hardly sleep, sometimes, for fretting about it. But I see, now, you are better off than I imagined; for there are ten of those ten pound bank-notes, if I have not miscounted; and your bills don't amount to more than two or three of them.'

Ellis, utterly confounded, retreated to the window.

Miss Matson, who, with the widest stare, had looked first at the bank-notes, and next at the embarrassed Ellis, began now to offer the most obsequious excuses for her importunity; declaring that she should never have thought of so rudely hurrying such a young lady as Miss Ellis, but that the other creditors, who were really in but indifferent circumstances, were so much in want of their money, that she had not been able to quiet them.

[Pg 309]

And then, begging that Miss Ellis would take her own time, she went, courtesying, down stairs.

'So you have got all this money, and would not own it?' said Mr Giles, when she was gone. 'That's odd! very odd, I confess! I can't well understand it; but I hope, my pretty lady, you won't turn out a rogue? I beg you won't do that; for it would vex me prodigiously.'

Ellis, dropping upon a chair, ejaculated, with a heavy sigh, 'What step must I take!'

'What?—why pay them all, to be sure! What do other people do, when they have got debts, and got money? I shall go and tell them to come to you directly, every one of them.'

Ellis, starting, supplicated his forbearance.

'And why?—why?' cried he, looking a little angry: 'Do you really want to hide up all that money, and make those poor good people, who have served you at their own cost, believe that you have not gotten any?'

She assured him that the money was simply a deposit left in her hands.

This intelligence overset and disappointed him. He returned to his chair, and drawing it near the fire, gave himself up to considering what could be done; ejaculating from time to time, 'That's bad!—that's very bad!—being really so poor is but melancholy!—I am sorry for her, poor pretty thing!—very sorry!—But still, taking up goods one can't pay for?—Who has a right to do that?—How are trades-people to live by selling their wares gratis?—Will that feed their little ones?'

Then, turning to Ellis, who, in deep disturbance at these commentaries, had not spirits to speak; 'But why,' he cried, 'since you have gotten this money, should not you pay these poor people with it, rather than let it lie dead by your side? for as to the money's not being yours,—theirs is not yours, neither.'

'Should I raise myself, Sir, in your good opinion, by contracting a new debt to pay an old one?'

'If you contract it with a friend to pay a stranger, Yes.—And these notes, I suppose, of course, belong to a friend?'

'Not to ... an enemy, certainly!—' she answered, much embarrassed; 'but is that a reason that I should betray a trust?'

'What becomes of the trust of these poor people, then, that don't know you, and that you don't know? Don't you betray that? Do you think that they would have let you take their goods, if they had not expected your payment?'

[Pg 310]

'Oh heaven, Mr Arbe!' cried Ellis, 'How you probe—perplex—entangle me!'

'Don't vex, don't vex!' said he, kindly, 'for that will fret me prodigiously. Only, another time, when you are in want, borrow from the rich, and not from the poor; for they are in want themselves. This friend of yours is rich, I take for granted?'

'I ... I believe so!'

'Well, then, which is most equitable, to take openly from a rich friend, and say, "I thank you;" or to take, underhand, from a hardworking stranger, whom you scorn to own yourself obliged to, though you don't scruple to harass and plunder? Which, I say, is most equitable?'

Ellis shuddered, hesitated, and then said, 'The alternative, thus stated, admits of no contest! I must pay my debts—and extricate myself from the consequences as I can!'

'Why then you are as good as you are pretty!' cried he, delighted: 'Very good, and very pretty, indeed! And so I thought you at first! And so I shall think you to the end!'

He then hurried away, to give her no time to retract; nodding and talking to himself in her praise, with abundant complacency; and saying, as he passed through the shop, 'Miss Matson, you'll be all of you paid to-morrow morning at farthest. So be sure bid all the good people come; for the

lady is a person of great honour, as well as prettiness; and there's money enough for every one of you,—and more, too.'

CHAPTER XXXV

[Pg 311]

Ellis remained in the deepest disturbance at the engagement into which she had entered. O cruel necessity! cruel, imperious necessity! she cried, to what a resource dost thou drive me! How unjust, how improper, how perilous!—Ah! rather let me cast myself upon Lady Aurora—Yet, angel as she is, can Lady Aurora act for herself? And Lord Melbury, guileless, like his nature, as may now be his intentions, what protection can he afford me that calumny may not sully? Alas! how may I attain that self-dependence which alone, at this critical period, suits my forlorn condition?

The horror of a new debt, incurred under circumstances thus delicate, made the idea even of performing at the public benefit, present itself to her in colours less formidable, if such a measure, by restoring to her the patronage of Miss Arbe, would obviate the return of similar evils, while she was thus hanging, in solitary obscurity, upon herself. Vainly she would have turned her thoughts to other plans, and objects yet untried; she had no means to form any independent scheme; no friends to promote her interest; no counsellors to point out any pursuit, or direct any measures.

Her creditors failed not to call upon her early the next morning, guided and accompanied by Mr Giles Arbe; who, bright with smiles and good humour, declared, that he could not refuse himself the pleasure of being a witness to her getting rid of such a bad business, as that of keeping other people's money, by doing such a good one as that of paying every one his due. 'You are much obliged to this pretty lady, I can tell you,' he said, to the creditors, 'for she pays you with money that is not her own. However, as the person it belongs to is rich, and a friend, I advise you, as you are none of you rich yourselves, and nearly strangers to her, to take it without scruple.'

[Pg 312]

To this counsel there was not one dissentient voice.

Can the same person, thought Ellis, be so innocent, yet so mischievous? so fraught with solid notions of right, yet so shallow in judgement, and knowledge of the world?

With a trembling hand, and revolting heart, she changed three of the notes, and discharged all the accounts at once; Mr Giles, eagerly and unbidden, having called up Miss Matson to take her share.

Ellis now deliberated, whether she might not free herself from every demand, by paying, also, Miss Bydel; but the reluctance with which she had already broken into the fearful deposit, soon fixed her to seal up the remaining notes entire.

The shock of this transaction, and the earnestness of her desire to replace money which she deemed it unjustifiable to employ, completed the conquest of her repugnance to public exhibition; and she commissioned Mr Giles to acquaint Miss Arbe, that she was ready to obey her commands.

This he undertook with the utmost pleasure; saying, 'And it's lucky enough your consenting to sing those songs, because my cousin, not dreaming of any objection on your part, had already authorised Mr Vinstreigle to put your name in his bills.'

'My name?' cried Ellis, starting and changing colour: but the next moment adding, 'No, no! my name will not appear!—Yet should any one who has ever seen me....'

She shuddered; a nervous horror took possession of her whole frame; but she soon forced herself to revive, and assume new courage, upon hearing Mr Giles, from the landing-place, again call Miss Matson; and bid all her young women, one by one, and the two maid-servants, hurry up stairs directly, with water and burnt feathers.

Ellis made every enquiry in her power, of who was at Brighthelmstone; and begged Mr Giles to procure her a list of the company. When she had read it, she became more tranquil, though not less sad.

Miss Arbe received the concession with infinite satisfaction; and introduced Ellis, as her *protégée*, to her new favourite; who professed himself charmed, that the presentation of so promising a subject, to the public, should be made at his benefit.

'And now, Miss Ellis,' said Miss Arbe, 'you will very soon have more scholars than you can teach. If once you get a fame and a name, your embarrassments will be at an end; for all enquiries about who people are, and what they are, and those sort of niceties, will be over. We all learn of the celebrated, be they what they will. Nobody asks how they live, and those sort of things. What signifies? as Miss Sycamore says. We don't visit them, to be sure, if there is any thing awkward about them. But that's not the least in the way against their making whole oceans of riches.'

[Pg 313]

This was not a species of reasoning to offer consolation to Ellis; but she suppressed the disdain which it inspired; and dwelt only upon the hoped accomplishment of her views, through the private teaching which it promised.

In five days' time, the benefit was to take place; and in three, Ellis was summoned to a rehearsal at the rooms.

She was putting on her hat, meaning to be particularly early in her attendance, that she might place herself in some obscure corner, before any company arrived; to avoid the pain of passing by those who knowing, might not notice, or noticing, might but mortify her; when one of the young work-women brought her intelligence, that a gentleman, just arrived in a post chaise, requested admittance.

'A gentleman?' she repeated, with anxiety:—'tell him, if you please, that I am engaged, and can see no company.'

The young woman soon returned.

'The gentleman says, Ma'am, that he comes upon affairs of great importance, which he can communicate only to yourself.'

Ellis begged the young woman to request, that Miss Matson would desire him to leave his name and business in writing.

Miss Matson was gone to Lady Kendover's, with some new patterns, just arrived from London.

The young woman, however, made the proposition, but without effect: the gentleman was in great haste, and would positively listen to no denial.

Strong and palpable affright, now seized Ellis; am I—Oh heaven!—she murmured to herself, pursued?—and then began, but checked an inquiry, whether there were any private door by which she could escape: yet, pressed by the necessity of appearing at the rehearsal, after painfully struggling for courage, she faintly articulated, 'Let him come up stairs.'

The young woman descended, and Ellis remained in breathless suspense, till she heard some one tap at her door.

She could not pronounce, Who's there? but she compelled herself to open it; though without lifting up her eyes, dreading to encounter the object that might meet them, till she was roused by the words, 'Pardon my intrusion!' and perceived Harleigh gently entering her apartment.

[Pg 314]

She started,—but it was not with terror; she came forward,—but it was not to escape! The colour which had forsaken her cheeks, returned to them with a crimson glow; the fear which had averted her eyes, was changed into an expression of even extatic welcome; and, clasping her hands, with sudden, impulsive, irresistible surprise and joy, she cried, 'Is it you?—Mr Harleigh! you!'

Surprise now was no longer her own, and her joy was participated in yet more strongly. Harleigh, who, though he had forced his way, was embarrassed and confused, expecting displeasure, and prepared for reproach; who had seen with horror the dismay of her countenance; and attributed to the effect of his compulsory entrance the terrified state in which he found her; Harleigh, at sight of this rapid transition from agony to delight; at the flattering ejaculation of 'Is it you?' and the sound of his own name, pronounced with an expression of even exquisite satisfaction;—Harleigh in a sudden trance of irrepressible rapture, made a nearly forcible effort to seize her hand, exclaiming, 'Can you receive me, then, thus sweetly? Can you forgive an intrusion that—' when Ellis recovering her self-command, drew back, and solemnly said, 'Mr Harleigh, forbear! or I must quit the room!'

Harleigh reluctantly, yet instantly desisted; but the pleasure of so unhop'd a reception still beat at his heart, though it no longer sparkled in her eyes: and though the enchanting animation of her manner, was altered into the most repressing gravity, the blushes which still tingled, still dyed her cheeks, betrayed that all within was not chilled, however all without might seem cold.

Checked, therefore, but not subdued, he warmly solicited a few minutes conversation; but, gaining firmness and force every instant, she told him that she had an appointment which admitted not of procrastination.

'I know well your appointment,' cried he, agitated in his turn, 'too, too well!—'Tis that fatal—or, rather, let me hope, that happy, that seasonable information, which I received last night, in a letter containing a bill of the concert, from Ireton, that has brought me hither;—that impelled me, uncontrollably, to break through your hard injunctions; that pointed out the accumulating dangers to all my views, and told me that every gleam of future expectation—'

[Pg 315]

Ellis interrupted him at this word: he entreated her pardon, but went on.

'You cannot be offended at this effort: it is but the courage of despondence, I come to demand a final hearing!'

'Since you know, Sir,' cried she, with quickness, 'my appointment, you must be sensible I am no longer mistress of my time. This is all I can say. I must be gone,—and you will not, I trust,—if I judge you rightly,—you will not compel me to leave you in my apartment.'

'Yes! you judge me rightly! for the universe I would not cause you just offence! Trust me, then, more generously! be somewhat less suspicious, somewhat more open, and take not this desperate step, without hearkening to its objections, without weighing its consequences!'

She could enter, she said, into no discussion; and prepared to depart.

'Impossible!' cried he, with energy; 'I cannot let you go!—I cannot, without a struggle, resign myself to irremediable despair!'

Ellis, recovered now from the impression caused by his first appearance, with a steady voice, and sedate air, said, 'This is a language, Sir,—you know it well,—to which I cannot, must not listen. It is as useless, therefore, as it is painful, to renew it. I beseech you to believe in the sincerity of what I have already been obliged to say, and to spare yourself—to spare, shall I add, me?—all further oppressive conflicts.'

A sigh burst from her heart, but she strove to look unmoved.

'If you are generous enough to share, even in the smallest degree,' cried he, 'the pain which you inflict; you will, at least, not refuse me this one satisfaction.... Is it for Elinor ... and for Elinor only ... that you deny me, thus, all confidence?'

'Oh no, no, no!' cried she, hastily: 'if Miss Joddrel were not in existence,—' she checked herself, and sighed more deeply; but, presently added, 'Yet, surely, Miss Joddrel were cause sufficient!'

'You fill me,' he cried, 'with new alarm, new disturbance!—I supplicate you, nevertheless, to forego your present plan;—and to shew some little consideration to what I have to offer.—'

She interrupted him. 'I must be unequivocally, Sir,—for both our sakes,—understood. You must call for no consideration from me! I can give you none! You must let me pursue the path that my affairs, that my own perceptions, that my necessities point out to me, without interference, and without expecting from me the smallest reference to your opinions, or feelings.—Why, why,' continued she, in a tone less firm, 'why will you force from me such ungrateful words?—Why leave me no alternative between impropriety, or arrogance?'

[Pg 316]

'Why,—let me rather ask,—why must I find you for ever thus impenetrable, thus incomprehensible?—I will not, however, waste your patience. I see your eagerness to be gone.—Yet, in defiance of all the rigour of your scruples, you must bear to hear me avow, in my total ignorance of their cause, that I feel it impossible utterly to renounce all distant hope of clearer prospects.—How, then, can I quietly submit to see you enter into a career of public life, subversive—perhaps—to me, of even any eventual amelioration?'

Ellis blushed deeply as she answered, 'If I depended, Sir, upon you,—if you were responsible for my actions; or if your own fame, or name, or sentiments were involved in my conduct ... then you would do right, if such is your opinion, to stamp my project with the stigma of your disapprobation, and to warn me of the loss of your countenance:—but, till then, permit me to say, that the business which calls me away has the first claim to my time.'

She opened the door.

'One moment,' cried he, earnestly, 'I conjure you!—The hurry of alarm, the certainty that delay would make every effort abortive; have precipitated me into the use of expressions that may have offended you. Forgive them, I entreat! and do not judge me to be so narrow minded; or so insensible to the enchantment of talents, and the witchery of genius; as not to feel as much respect for the character, where it is worthy, as admiration for the abilities, of those artists whose profession it is to give delight to the public. Had I first known you as a public performer, and seen you in the same situations which have shewn me your worth, I must have revered you as I do at this instant: I must have been devoted to you with the same unalterable attachment: but then, also,—if you would have indulged me with a hearing,—must I not have made it my first petition, that your accomplishments should be reserved for the resources of your leisure, and the happiness of your friends, at your own time, and your own choice? Would you have branded such a desire as pride? or would you not rather have allowed it to be called by that word, which your own every action, every speech, every look bring perpetually to mind, propriety?'

Ellis sighed: 'Alas!' she said, 'my own repugnance to this measure makes me but too easily conceive the objections to which it may be liable! and if you, so singularly liberal, if even you—'

[Pg 317]

She stopt; but Harleigh, not less encouraged by a phrase thus begun, than if she had proceeded, warmly continued.

'If then, in a case such as I have presumed to suppose, to have withdrawn you from the public would not have been wrong, how can it be faulty, upon the same principles, and with the same intentions, to endeavour, with all my might, to turn you aside from such a project?—I see you are preparing to tell me that I argue upon premises to which you have not concurred. Suffer me, nevertheless, to add a few words, in explanation of what else may seem presumption, or impertinence: I have hinted that this plan might cloud my dearest hopes; imagine not, thence, that my prejudices upon this subject are invincible: no! but I have Relations who have never deserved to forfeit my consideration;—and these—not won, like me, by the previous knowledge of your virtues.—'

Ellis would repeatedly have interrupted him, but he would not be stopped.

'Hear me on,' he continued, 'I beseech you! By my plainness only I can shew my sincerity. For these Relations, then, permit me to plead. It is true, I am independent: my actions are under no control; but these are ties from which we are never emancipated; ties which cling to our nature,

and which, though voluntary, are imperious, and cannot be broken or relinquished, without self-reproach; ties formed by the equitable laws of fellow-feeling; which bind us to our family, which unites us with our friends; and which, by our own expectations, teach us what is due to our connexions. Ah, then, if ever brighter prospects may open to my eyes, let me see them sullied, by mists hovering over the approbation of those with whom I am allied!

'How just,' cried Ellis, trying to force a smile, 'yet how useless is this reasoning! I cannot combat sentiments in which I concur; yet I can change nothing in a plan to which they must have no reference! I am sorry to appear ungrateful, where I am only steady; but I have nothing new to say; and must entreat you to dispense with fruitless repetitions. Already, I fear, I am beyond the hour of my engagement.'

She was now departing.

'You distract me!' cried he, with vehemence, 'you distract me!' He caught her gown, but, upon her stopping, instantly let it go. Pale and affrighted, 'Mr Harleigh,' she cried, 'is it to you I must own a scene that may raise wonder and surmises in the house, and aggravate distresses and embarrassments which, already, I find nearly intolerable?'

[Pg 318]

Shocked and affected, he shut the door, and would impetuously, yet tenderly, have taken her hand; but, upon her shrinking back, with displeasure and alarm, he more quietly said, 'Pardon! pardon! and before you condemn me inexorably to submit to such rigorous disdain and contempt —'

'Why will you use such words? Contempt?—Good heaven!' she began, with an emotion that almost instantly subsided, and she added, 'Yet of what consequence to you ought to be my sensations, my opinions?' They can avail you nothing! Let me go,—and let me conjure you to be gone!

'You are then decided against me?' cried he, in a voice scarcely articulate.

'I am,' she answered, without looking at him, but calmly.

He bowed, with an air that relinquished all further attempt to detain her; but which shewed him too much wounded to speak.

Carefully still avoiding his eyes, she was moving off; but, when she touched the lock of the door, he exclaimed, 'Will you not, at least, before you go, allow me to address a few words to you as a friend? simply,—undesignedly,—only as a friend?'

'Ah! Mr Harleigh!' cried Ellis, irresistibly softened, 'as a friend could I, indeed, have trusted you, I might long since,—perhaps,—have confided in your liberality and benevolence: but now, 'tis wholly impossible!'

'No!' exclaimed he, warmly, and touched to the soul; 'nothing is impossible that you wish to effect! Hear me, then, trust and speak to me as a friend; a faithful, a cordial, a disinterested friend! Confide to me your name—your situation—the motives to your concealment—the causes that can induce such mystery of appearance, in one whose mind is so evidently the seat of the clearest purity:—the reasons of such disguise—'

'Disguise, I acknowledge, Sir, you may charge me with; but not deceit! I give no false colouring. I am only not open.'

'That, that is what first struck me as a mark of a distinguished character! That noble superiority to all petty artifices, even for your immediate safety; that undoubting innocence, that framed no precautions against evil constructions; that innate dignity, which supported without a murmur such difficulties, such trials;—'

'Ah, Mr Harleigh! a friend and a flatterer—are they, then, synonymous terms? If, indeed, you would persuade me you feel that they are distinct, you will not make me begin a new and distasteful career—since to begin it I think indispensable;—with the additional chagrin of appearing to be wanting in punctuality. No further opposition, I beg!'

[Pg 319]

'O yet one word, one fearful word must be uttered—and one fatal—or blest reply must be granted!—The excess of my suspense, upon the most essential of all points, must be terminated! I will wait with inviolable patience the explanation of all others. Tell me, then, to what barbarous cause I must attribute this invincible, this unrelenting reserve?—How I may bear an abrupt answer I know not, but the horror of uncertainty I experience, and can endure no longer. Is it, then, to the force of circumstances I may impute it?—or ... is it...'

'Mr Harleigh,' interrupted Ellis, with strong emotion, 'there is no medium, in a situation such as mine, between unlimited confidence, or unbroken taciturnity: my confidence I cannot give you; it is out of my power—ask me, then, nothing!'

'One word,—one little word,—and I will torment you no longer: is it to pre-engagement—'

Her face was averted, and her hand again was placed upon the lock of the door.

'Speak, I implore you, speak!—Is that heart, which I paint to myself the seat of every virtue ... is it already gone?—given, dedicated to another?'

He now trembled himself, and durst not resist her effort to open the door, as she replied, 'I have

no heart!—I must have none?'

She uttered this in a tone of gaiety, that would utterly have confounded his dearest expectations, had not a glance, with difficulty caught, shewed him a tear starting into her eye; while a blush of fire, that defied constraint, dyed her cheeks; and kept no pace with the easy freedom from emotion, that her voice and manner seemed to indicate.

Flushed with tumultuous sensations of conflicting hopes and fears, he now tenderly said, 'You are determined then, to go?'

'I am; but you must first leave my room.'

'Is there, then, no further appeal?'

'None! none—We may be heard disputing down stairs:—persecute me no longer!'

Her voice grew tremulous, and spoke displeasure; but her eyes still sedulously shunned his, and still her cheeks were crimsoned. Harleigh paused a moment, looking at her with speechless anxiety; but, upon an impatient motion of her hand that he would depart, he mildly said, 'As your friend, at least, you will permit me to see you again?' and, without risking a reply, slowly descended the stairs.

[Pg 320]

Ellis, shutting herself into her room, sunk upon a chair, and wept.

She was soon interrupted by a message from Mr Vinstreigle, to acquaint her that the rehearsal was begun.

She felt unable to sing, play, or speak, and, sending an excuse that she was indisposed, desired that her attendance might be dispensed with for that morning.

CHAPTER XXXVI

[Pg 321]

Ellis passed the rest of the day in solitary meditation upon the scene just related, her singular situation, and complicated difficulties. If, at times, her project yielded to the objections to which she had been forced to give ear, those objections were soon subdued, by the painful recollection of the unacknowledged, yet broken hundred pounds. To replace them, by whatever efforts, without giving to Harleigh the dangerous advantage of discovering what she owed to him, became now her predominant wish. Yet her distaste to the undertaking, her fears, her discomfort, were cruelly augmented; and she determined that her airs should be accompanied only by herself upon the harp, to obviate any indispensable necessity for appearing at the rehearsals.

To this effect, she sent, the next morning, a message that pleaded indisposition, to M. Vinstreigle; yet that included an assurance, that he might depend upon her performance, on the following evening, at his concert.

Once more, therefore, she consigned herself to practice; but vainly she attempted to sing; her voice was disobedient to her desires: she had recourse, however, to her harp; but she was soon interrupted, by receiving the following letter from Harleigh.

'To Miss Ellis.

'With a satisfaction which I dare not indulge—and yet, how curb?—I have learnt, from Ireton, that you have renounced the rehearsals. 'Tis, but, however, the trembling joy of a reprieve, that, while welcoming hope, sees danger and death still in view. For me and for my feelings your disclaim all consideration: I will not, therefore, intrude upon you, again, my wishes or my sufferings; yet as you do not, I trust, utterly reject me as a friend, permit me, in that capacity, to entreat you to deliberate, before you finally adopt a measure to which you confess your repugnance. Your situation I know not; but where information is withheld, conjecture is active; and while I see your accomplishments, while I am fascinated by your manners, I judge your education, and, thence, your connections, and original style of life. If, then, there be any family that you quit, yet that you may yourself desire should one day reclaim you; and if there be any family—leave mine alone!—to which you may hereafter be allied, and that you may wish should appreciate, should revere you, as you merit to be revered and appreciated—for such let me plead! Wound not the customs of their ancestors, the received notions of the world, the hitherto acknowledged boundaries of elegant life! Or, if your tenderness for the feelings—say the failings, if you please,—the prejudices, the weaknesses of others,—has no weight, let, at least, your own ideas of personal propriety, your just pride, your conscious worth, point out to you the path in society which you are so eminently formed to tread. Or, if, singularly independent, you deem that you are accountable only to yourself for your conduct, that notion, beyond any other, must shew you the high responsibility of all actions that are voluntary. Remember, then, that your example may be pleaded by those who are not gifted, like you, with extraordinary powers for sustaining its consequences; by those who have neither your virtues to bear them through the trials and vicissitudes of public enterprise; nor your motives for

[Pg 322]

encountering dangers so manifest; nor your apologies—pardon the word!—for deviating, alone and unsupported as you appear, from the long-beaten track of female timidity. Your example may be pleaded by the rash, the thoughtless, and the wilful; and, therefore, may be pernicious. An angel, such I think you, may run all risks with impunity, save those which may lead feeble minds to hazardous imitation.

Is this language plain enough, this reasoning sufficiently sincere, to suit the character of a friend? And as such may I address you, without incurring displeasure? or, which is still, if possible, more painful to me, exciting alarm? O trust me, generously trust me, and be your ultimate decision what it may, you shall not repent your confidence!

'A.H.'

This was not a letter to quiet the shaken nerves of Ellis, nor to restore to her the modulation of her voice. She read it with strong emotion, dwelling chiefly upon the phrase, 'long-beaten track of female timidity.'—Ah! she cried, delicacy is what he means, though he possesses too much himself to mark more strongly his opinion that I swerve from it! And in that shall I be wanting?—And what he thinks—he, the most liberal of men!—will surely be thought by all whose esteem, whose regard I most covet!—How dreadfully am I involved! in what misery of helplessness!—What is woman,—with the most upright designs, the most rigid circumspection,—what is woman unprotected? She is pronounced upon only from outward semblance:—and, indeed, what other criterion has the world? Can it read the heart?

[Pg 323]

Then, again perusing her letter, You, alone, O Harleigh! she cried, you, alone, escape the general contagion of superficial decision! Your own heart is the standard of your judgment; you consult that, and it tells you, that honour and purity may be in the breasts of others, however forlorn their condition, however mysterious their history, however dark, inexplicable, nay impervious, the latent motives of their conduct!—O generous Harleigh!—Abandoned as I seem—you alone—Tears rolled rapidly down her cheeks, and she lifted the letter up to her lips; but ere they touched it, started, shuddered, and cast it precipitately into the fire.

One of Miss Matson's young women now came to tell her, that Mr Harleigh begged to know whether her commissions were prepared for London.

Hastily wiping her eyes, she answered that she had no commissions; but, upon raising her head, she saw the messenger descending the stairs, and Harleigh entering the room.

He apologised for hastening her, in a calm and formal style, palpably intended for the hearing of the young woman; but, upon shutting the door, and seeing the glistening eyes of Ellis, calmness and formality were at an end; and, approaching her with a tenderness which he could not resist, 'You are afflicted?' he cried. 'Why is it not permitted me to soothe the griefs it is impossible for me not to share? Why must I be denied offering even the most trivial assistance, where I would devote with eagerness my life?—You are unhappy,—you make me wretched, and you will neither bestow nor accept the consolation of sympathy? You see me resigned to sue only for your friendship:—why should you thus inflexibly withhold it? Is it—answer me sincerely!—is it my honour that you doubt?—'

He coloured, as if angry with himself even for the surmise; and Ellis raised her eyes, with a vivacity that reproached the question; but dropt them almost instantaneously.

[Pg 324]

'That generous look,' he continued, 'revives, re-assures me. From this moment, then, I will forego all pretensions beyond those of a friend. I am come to you completely with that intention. Madness, indeed,—but for the circumstances which robbed me of self-command,—madness alone could have formed any other, in an ignorance so profound as that in which I am held of all that belongs to propriety. Does not this confession shew you the reliance you may have upon the sincerity with which I mean to sustain my promised character? Will it not quiet your alarms? Will it not induce you to give me such a portion of your trust as may afford me some chance of being useful to you? Speak, I entreat; devise some service,—and you shall see, when a man is piqued upon being disinterested, how completely he can forget—seem to forget, at least!—all that would bring him back, exclusively, to himself.—Will you not, then, try me?'

Ellis, who had been silent to recover the steadiness of her voice, now quietly answered, 'I am in no situation, Sir, for hazarding experiments. What you deem to be your own duties I have no doubt that you fulfil; you will the less, therefore, be surprised, that I decidedly adhere to what appears to me to be mine. Your visits, Sir, must cease: your letters I can never answer, and must not receive: we must have no intercourse whatever; partial nor general. Your friendship, nevertheless, if under that name you include good will and good wishes, I am far from desiring to relinquish:—but your kind offices—grateful to me, at this moment, as all kindness would be!'—she sighed, but hurried on; 'those, in whatever form you can present them, I must utterly disclaim and repel. Pardon, Sir, this hard speech. I hold it right to be completely understood; and to be definitive.'

Turning then, another way, she bid him good morning.

Harleigh, inexpressibly disappointed, stood, for some minutes, suspended whether resentfully to tear himself away, or importunately to solicit again her confidence. The hesitation, as usual where hesitation is indulged in matters of feeling, ended in directing him to follow his wishes; though he became more doubtful how to express them, and more fearful of offending or tormenting her. Yet in contrasting her desolate situation with her spirit and firmness, redoubled

admiration took place of all displeasure. What, at first, appeared icy inflexibility, seemed, after a moment's pause, the pure effect of a noble disdain of trifling; a genuine superiority to coquetry. But doubly sad to him was the inference thence deduced. She cruelly wanted assistance; a sigh escaped her at the very thought of kindness; yet she rejected his most disinterested offers of aid; evidently in apprehension lest, at any future period, he might act, or think, as one who considered himself to be internally favoured.

[Pg 325]

Impressed with this idea, 'I dare not,' he gently began, 'disobey commands so peremptory; yet—' He stopt abruptly, with a start that seemed the effect of sudden horror. Ellis, again looking up, saw his colour changed, and that he was utterly disordered. His eyes directed her soon to the cause: the letter which she had cast into the fire, and from which, on his entrance, he had scrupulously turned his view, now accidentally caught it, by a fragment unburnt, which dropt from the stove upon the hearth. He immediately recognized his hand-writing.

This was a blow for which he was wholly unprepared. He had imagined that, whether she answered his letter or not, she would have weighed its contents, have guarded it for that purpose; perhaps have prized it! But, to see it condemned to annihilation; to find her inexorably resolute not to listen to his representations; nor, even in his absence, to endure in her sight what might bring either him or his opinions to her recollection; affected him so deeply, that, nearly unconscious what he was about, he threw himself upon a chair, exclaiming, 'The illusion is past!'

Ellis, with gravity, but surprise, ejaculated, an interrogative, 'Sir?'

'Pardon me,' he cried, rising, and in great agitation; 'pardon me that I have so long, and so frequently, intruded upon your patience! I begin, indeed, now, to perceive—but too well!—how I must have persecuted, have oppressed you. I feel my error in its full force:—but that eternal enemy to our humility, our philosophy, our contentment in ill success, Hope,—or rather, perhaps, self-love,—had so dimmed my perceptions, so flattered my feelings, so loitered about my heart, that still I imagined, still I thought possible, that as a friend, at least, I might not find you unattainable; that my interest for your welfare, my concern for your difficulties, my irrepressible anxiety to diminish them, might have touched those cords whence esteem, whence good opinion vibrate; might have excited that confidence which, regulated by your own delicacy, your own scruples, might have formed the basis of that zealous, yet pure attachment, which is certainly the second blessing, and often the first balm of human existence,—permanent and blameless friendship!'

[Pg 326]

Ellis looked visibly touched and disturbed as she answered, 'I am very sensible, Sir, of the honour you do me, and of the value of your approbation: it would not be easy to me, indeed, to say—unfriended, unsupported, nameless that I am!—how high a sense I feel of your generous judgment: but, as you pleaded to me just now,' half smiling, 'in one point, the customs of the world; you must not so far forget them in another, as not to acknowledge that a confidence, a friendship, such as you describe, with one so lonely, so unprotected, would oppose them utterly. I need only, I am sure, without comment, without argument, without insistence, call this idea to your recollection, to see you willingly relinquish an impracticable plan: to see you give up all visits; forego every species of correspondence, and hasten, yourself, to finish an intercourse which, in the eye of that world, and of those prejudices, those connections, to which you appeal, would be regarded as dangerous, if not injurious.'

'What an inconceivable position!' cried Harleigh, passionately; 'how incomprehensible a state of things! I must admire, must respect the decree that tortures me, though profoundly in the dark with regard to its motives, its purposes,—I had nearly said, its apologies! for not trifling must be the cause that can instigate such determined concealment, where an interest is excited so warm, so sincere, and, would you trust it, honourable as mine!'

'You distress, you grieve me,' cried Ellis, with an emotion which she could not repress, 'by these affecting, yet fruitless conflicts! Could I speak ... can you think I would so perseveringly be silent?'

'I think, nay I am convinced, that you can do nothing but what is dictated by purity, what is intentionally right; yet here, I am persuaded, 'tis some right of exaggeration, some right stretched, by false reasoning, or undue influence, nearly to wrong. That the cause of the mystery which envelopes you is substantial, I have not any doubt; but surely the effects which you attribute to it must be chimerical. To reject the most trivial succour, to refuse the smallest communication—'

'You probe me, Sir, too painfully!—I appear, to you, I see, wilfully obstinate, and causelessly obscure: yet to be justified to you, I must incur a harsher censure from myself! Thus situated, we cannot separate too soon. Think over, I beg of you, when you are alone, all that has passed: your candour, I trust, will shew you, that my reserve has been too consistent in its practice, to be capricious in its motives. I can add nothing more. I entreat, I even supplicate you, to desist from all further enquiry; and to leave me!'

[Pg 327]

'In such utter, such impenetrable darkness?—With no period assigned?—not even any vague, any distant term in view, for letting in some little ray of light?—'

He spoke this in a tone so melancholy, yet so unoppositively respectful, that Ellis, resistlessly affected, put her hand to her head, and half, and almost unconsciously pronounced, 'Were my destiny fixed ... known even to myself....'

She stopt, but Harleigh, who, slowly, and by hard self-compulsion, had moved towards the door, sprang back, with a countenance wholly re-animated; and with eyes brightly sparkling, in the full lustre of hope and joy, exclaimed, 'It is not, then, fixed?—your destiny—mine, rather! is still open to future events?—O say that again! tell me but that my condemnation is not irrevocable, and I will not ask another word!—I will not persecute you another minute!—I will be all patience, all endurance;—if there be barely some possibility that I have not seen and admired only to regret you!—that I have not known and appreciated—merely to lose you!'

'You astonish, you affright me, Sir!' cried Ellis, recovering a dignity that nearly amounted to severity: 'if any thing has dropt from me that can have given rise to expressions—deductions of this nature, I beg leave, immediately, to explain that I have been utterly misunderstood. I see however, too clearly, the danger of such contests to risk their repetition. Permit me, therefore, unequivocally, to declare, that here they end! I have courage to act, though I have no power to command. You, Sir, must decide, whether you will have the kindness to quit my apartment immediately;—or whether you will force me to so unpleasant a measure as that of quitting it myself. The kindness, I say; for however ill my situation accords with the painful perseverance of your ... investigations ... my memory must no longer "hold its seat," when I lose the impression I have received of your humanity, your goodness, your generosity!... You will leave me, Mr Harleigh, I am sure!'

Harleigh, as much soothed by these last words, as he was shocked by all that had preceded them, silently bowed; and, unable, with a good grace, to acquiesce in a determination which he was yet less entitled to resist, slowly, sadly, and speechless, with concentrated feelings, left the room.

'All good betide you, Sir!—and may every blessing be yours!'—in a voice of attempted cheerfulness, but involuntary tremour, was pronounced by Ellis, as, hastily rising, she herself shut the door. [Pg 328]

CHAPTER XXXVII

[Pg 329]

The few, but precious words, that marked, in parting, a sensibility that he had vainly sought to excite while remaining, bounded to the heart of Harleigh; but were denied all acknowledgment from his lips, by the sight of Miss Bydel and Mr Giles Arbe, who were mounting the stairs.

Miss Bydel tapt at the door of Ellis; and Harleigh, ill as he felt fitted for joining any company, persuaded himself that immediately to retreat, might awaken yet more surmize, than, for a few passing minutes, to re-enter the room.

He looked at Ellis, in taking this measure, and saw that, while she struggled to receive her visitors with calm civility, her air of impatience for his departure was changed, by this surprize, into confusion at his presence.

He felt culpable for occasioning her so uneasy a sensation; and, to repair it as much as might be in his power, assumed a disengaged countenance, and treated as a mark of good fortune, having chanced to enquire whether Miss Ellis had any commands for town, at the same time that Miss Bydel and Mr Giles Arbe made their visit.

'Why we are come, Mrs Ellis,' said Miss Bydel, 'to know the real reason of your not being at the rehearsal this morning. Pray what is it? Not a soul could tell it me, though I asked every body all round. So I should be glad to hear the truth from yourself. Was it real illness, now? or only a pretext?'

'Illness,' cried Mr Giles, 'with all those roses on her cheeks? No, no; she's very well; as well as very pretty. But you should not tell stories, my dear: though I am heartily glad to see that there's nothing the matter. But it's a bad habit. Though it's convenient enough, sometimes. But when you don't like to do a thing, why not say so at once? People mayn't be pleased, to be sure, when they are refused; but do you think them so ill natured, as to like better to hear that you are ill?' [Pg 330]

Ellis, abashed, attempted no defence; and Harleigh addressed some discourse to Miss Bydel, upon the next day's concert; while Mr Giles went on with his own idea.

'We should always honestly confess our likings and dislikings, for else what have we got them for? If every one of us had the same taste, half the things about us would be of no service; and we should scramble till we came to scratches for t'other half. But the world has no more business, my dear lady, to be all of one mind, than all of one body.'

'O now, pray Mr Giles,' cried Miss Bydel, 'don't go beginning your comical talk; for if once you do that, one can't get in a word.'

'But, for all that, we should all round try to help and be kind to one another; what else are we put all together for in this world? We might, just as well, each of us have been popt upon some separate bit of a planet, one by himself one. All I recommend, is, to tell truth, or to say nothing. We whip poor pretty children for telling stories, when they are little, and yet hardly speak a word, without some false turn or other, ourselves, when we grow big!'

'Well, but, Mr Giles,' said Miss Bydel, 'where's the use of talking so long about all that, when I'm

wanting to ask Mrs Ellis why she did not come to the rehearsal?

'For my own part, Ma'am,' continued Mr Giles, 'if any body puts me to a difficulty, I do the best I can: but I'd rather do the worst than tell a fib. So when I am asked an awkward question, which some people can't cure themselves of doing, out of an over curiosity in their nature, as, Giles, how do you like Miss such a one? or Mr such a one? or Mrs such a one? as Miss Bydel, for instance, if she came into any body's head; or—'

'Nay, Mr Giles,' interrupted Miss Bydel, 'I don't see why I should not come into a person's head as well as another; so I don't know what you say that for. But if that's your notion of being so kind one to another, Mr Giles, I can't pretend to say it's mine; for I see no kindness in it.'

'I protest, Ma'am, I did not think of you in the least!' cried Mr Giles, much out of countenance: 'I only took your name because happening to stand just before you put it, I suppose, at my tongue's end; but you were not once in my thoughts, I can assure you, Ma'am, upon my word of honour! No more than if you had never existed, I protest!'

[Pg 331]

Miss Bydel, neither accepting nor repelling this apology, said, that she did not come to talk of things of that sort, but to settle some business of more importance. Then, turning to Ellis, 'I hear,' she continued, 'Mrs Ellis, that all of the sudden, you are grown very rich. And I should be glad to know if it's true? and how it has happened?'

'I should be still more glad, Madam,' answered Ellis, 'to be able to give you the information!'

'Nay, Mrs Ellis, I had it from your friend Mr Giles, who is always the person to be telling something or other to your advantage. So if there be any fault in the account, it's him you are to call upon, not me.'

Mr Giles, drawn by the silence of Ellis to a view of her embarrassment, became fearful that he had been indiscreet, and made signs to Miss Bydel to say no more upon the subject; but Miss Bydel, by no means disposed, at this moment, to oblige him, went on.

'Nay, Mr Giles, you know, as well as I do, 'twas your own news. Did not you tell us all, just now, at the rehearsal, when Miss Brinville and Miss Sycamore were saying what a monstrous air they thought it, for a person that nobody knew any thing of, to send excuses about being indisposed; just as if she were a fine lady; or some famous singer, that might be as troublesome as she would; did you not tell us, I say, that Mrs Ellis deserved as much respect as any of us, on account of her good character, and more than any of us on account of her prettiness and her poverty? Because her prettiness, says you, tempts others, and her poverty tempts herself; and yet she is just as virtuous as if she were as rich and as ordinary as any one of the greatest consequence amongst you. These were your own words, Mr Giles.'

Harleigh, who, conscious that he ought to go, had long held by the lock of the door, as if departing, could not now refrain from changing the position of his hand, by placing it, expressively, upon the arm of Mr Giles.

'And if all this,' Miss Bydel continued, 'is not enough to make you respect her, says you, why respect her for the same thing that makes you respect one another, her money. And when we all asked how she could be poor, and have money too, you said that you had yourself seen ever so many bank-notes upon her table.'

Ellis coloured; but not so painfully as Harleigh, at the sight of her blushes, unattended by any refutation; or any answer to this extraordinary assertion.

[Pg 332]

'And then, Mr Giles, as you very well know, when I asked, if she has money, why don't she pay her debts? you replied, that she had paid them all. Upon which I said, I should be glad to know, then why I was to be the only person left out, just only for my complaisance in waiting so long? and upon that I resolved to come myself, and see how the matter stood. For though I have served you with such good will, Mrs Ellis, while I thought you poor, I must be a fool to be kept out of my money, when I know you have got it in plenty: and Mr Giles says that he counted, with his own hands, ten ten-pound bank-notes. Now I should be glad if you have no objection, to hear how you came by all that money, Mrs Ellis; for ten ten-pound bank-notes make a hundred pounds.'

Oh! absent—unguarded—dangerous Mr Giles Arbe! thought Ellis, how much benevolence do you mar, by a distraction of mind that leads to so much mischief!

'I hope I have done nothing improper?' cried Mr Giles, perceiving, with concern, the disturbance of Ellis, 'in mentioning this; for I protest I never recollected, till this very minute, that the money is not your own. It slipt my memory, somehow, entirely.'

'Nay, nay, how will you make that out, Mr Giles?' cried Miss Bydel. 'If it were not her own, how came she to pay her tradesmen with it, as you told us that she did, Mr Giles?'

Ellis, in the deepest embarrassment, knew not which way to turn her head.

'She paid them, Miss Bydel,' said Mr Giles, 'because she is too just, as well as too charitable, to let honest people want, only because they have the good nature to keep her from wanting herself; while she has such large sums, belonging to a rich friend, lying quite useless, in a bit of paper, by her side. For the money was left with her by a very rich friend, she told me herself.'

'No, Sir,—no, Mr Giles,' cried Ellis, hastily, and looking every way to avoid the anxious enquiring,

quick-glancing eyes of Harleigh: 'I did not ... I could not say....' she stopt, scarcely knowing what she meant either to deny or to affirm.

'Yes, yes, 'twas a rich friend, my dear lady, you owned that. If you had not given me that assurance, I should not have urged you to make use of it. Besides, who but a rich friend would leave you money in such a way as that, neither locked, nor tied, nor in a box, nor in a parcel; but only in a little paper cover, directed For Miss Ellis, at her leisure?'

[Pg 333]

At these words, which could leave no doubt upon the mind of Harleigh, that the money in question was his own; and that the money, so often refused, had finally been employed in the payment of her debts, Ellis involuntarily, irresistibly, but most fearfully, stole a hasty glance at him; with a transient hope that they might have escaped his attention; but the hope died in its birth: the words, in their fullest meaning, had reached him, and the sensation which they produced filled her with poignant shame. A joy beamed in his countenance that irradiated every feature; a joy that flushed him into an excess of rapture, of which the consciousness seemed to abash himself; and his eyes bent instantly to the ground. But their checked vivacity checked not the feelings which illumined them, nor the alarm which they excited, when Ellis, urged by affright to snatch a second look, saw the brilliancy with which they had at first sought her own, terminate in a sensibility more touching; saw that they glistened with a tender pleasure, which, to her alarmed imagination, represented the potent and dangerous inferences that enchanted his mind, at a discovery that he had thus essentially succoured her; and that she had accepted, at last, however secretly, his succour.

This view of new danger to her sense of independence, called forth new courage, and restored an appearance of composure; and, addressing herself to Miss Bydel, 'I entreat you,' she cried, 'Madam, to bear a little longer with my delay. To-morrow I shall enter upon a new career, from the result of which I hope speedily to acknowledge by obligation to your patience; and to acquit myself to all those to whom I am in any manner, pecuniarily obliged;—except of the lighter though far more lasting debt of gratitude.'

Harleigh understood her determined perseverance with cruel disappointment, yet with augmented admiration of her spirited delicacy; and, sensible of the utter impropriety of even an apparent resistance to her resolution in public, he faintly expressed his concern that she had no letters prepared for town, and with a deep, but stifled sigh, took leave.

Miss Bydel continued her interrogations, but without effect; and soon, therefore, followed. Mr Giles remained longer; not because he obtained more satisfaction, but because, when not answered, he was contented with talking to himself.

[Pg 334]

The rest of the day was passed free from outward disturbance to Ellis; and what she might experience internally was undivulged.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

[Pg 335]

The day now arrived which Ellis reluctantly, yet firmly, destined for her new and hazardous essay. Resolute in her plan, she felt the extreme importance of attaining courage and calmness for its execution. She shut herself up in her apartment, and gave the most positive injunctions to the milliners, that no one should be admitted. The looks of Harleigh, as he had quitted her room, had told her that this precaution would not be superfluous, and, accordingly, he came; but was refused entrance: he wrote; but his letters were returned unread. His efforts to break, served but to fix her purpose: she saw the expectations that he would feed from any concession; and potent as had hitherto been her objection to the scheme, they all subsided, in preference to exciting, or passively permitting, any doubts of the steadiness of her rejection.

Still, however, she could not practise: her voice and her fingers were infected by the agitation of her mind, and she could neither sing nor play. She could only hope that, at the moment of performance, the positive necessity of exertion, would bring with it, as so often is its effect, the powers which it requires.

The tardiness of her resolution caused, however, such an accumulation of business, not only for her thoughts, but for her time, from the indispensable arrangements of her attire, that scarcely a moment remained either for the relief or the anxieties of rumination. She set off, therefore, with tolerable though forced composure, for the rooms, in the carriage of Miss Arbe; that lady, once again, chusing to assume the character of her patroness, since as such she could claim the merit of introducing her to the public, through an obligation to her own new favourite, M Vinstreigle.

Upon stopping at the hotel, in which the concert was to be held, a strange figure, with something foreign in his appearance, twice crossed before the chariot, with a menacing air, as if purposing to impede her passage. Easily startled, she feared descending from the carriage; when Harleigh, who was watching, though dreading her arrival, came in sight, and offered her his hand. She declined it; but, seeing the intruder retreat abruptly, into the surrounding crowd of spectators, she alighted and entered the hotel.

[Pg 336]

Pained, at once, and charmed by the striking elegance of her appearance, and the air of gentle dignity which shewed such attire to be familiar to her, Harleigh felt irresistibly attracted to follow

her, and once more plead his cause. 'Hear, hear me!' he cried, in a low, but touching voice: 'One moment hear me, I supplicate, I conjure you! still it is not too late to avert this blow! Indisposition cannot be disputed, or, if doubted, of what moment would be the suspicion, if once, generously, trustingly, you relinquish this cruel plan?'

He spoke in a whisper, yet with an impetuosity that alarmed, as much as his distress affected her; but, when she turned towards him, to call upon his forbearance, she perceived immediately at his side, the person who had already disconcerted her. She drew hastily back, and he brushed quickly past, looking round, nevertheless, and evidently and anxiously marking her. Startled, uneasy, she involuntarily stopt; but was relieved by the approach of one of the door-keepers, to the person in question; who haughtily flung at him a ticket, and was passing on; but who was told that he could not enter the concert-room in a slouched hat.

A sort of attendant, or humble friend, who accompanied him, then said, in broken English, that the poor gentleman only came to divert himself, by seeing the company, and would disturb nobody, for he was deaf and dumb, and very inoffensive.

Re-assured by this account, Ellis again advanced, and was met by Mr Vinstreigle; who had given instructions to be called upon her arrival, and who, now, telling her that it was late, and that the concert was immediately to be opened, handed her to the orchestra. She insisted upon seating herself behind a violencello-player, and as much out of sight as possible, till necessity must, of course, bring her forward.

From her dislike to being seen, her eyes seemed rivetted upon the music-paper which she held in her hand, but of which, far from studying the characters, she could not read a note. She received, with silent civility, the compliments of M Vinstreigle; and those of his band, who could approach her; but her calmness, and what she had thought her determined courage, had been so shaken by personal alarm, and by the agitated supplications of Harleigh, that she could recover them no more. His desponding look, when he found her inexorable, pursued her; and the foreign clothing, and foreign servant, of the man who, though deaf and dumb, had so marked and fixt her, rested upon her imagination, with a thousand vague fears and conjectures.

[Pg 337]

In this shattered state of nerves, the sound of many instruments, loud however harmonious, so immediately close to her ears, made her start, as if electrified, when the full band struck up the overture, and involuntarily raise her eyes. The strong lights dazzled them; yet prevented her not from perceiving, that the deaf and dumb man had planted himself exactly opposite to the place, which, by the disposition of the harp, was evidently prepared for her reception. Her alarm augmented: was he watching her from mere common curiosity? or had he any latent motive, or purpose? His dress and figure were equally remarkable. He was wrapt in a large scarlet coat, which hung loosely over his shoulders, and was open at the breast, to display a brilliant waistcoat of coloured and spangled embroidery. He had a small, but slouched hat, which he had refused to take off, that covered his forehead and eye-brows, and shaded his eyes; and a cravat of enormous bulk encircled his chin, and enveloped not alone his ears, but his mouth. Nothing was visible but his nose, which was singularly long and pointed. The whole of his habiliment seemed of foreign manufacture; but his air had something in it that was wild, and uncouth; and his head was continually in motion.

To the trembling Ellis, it now seemed but a moment before she was summoned to her place, though four pieces were first performed. M Vinstreigle would have handed her down the steps; she declined his aid, hoping to pass less observed alone; but the moment that she rose, and became visible, a violent clapping was begun by Sir Lyell Sycamore, and seconded by every man present.

What is new, of almost any description, is sure to be well received by the public; but when novelty is united with peculiar attractions, admiration becomes enthusiasm, and applause is nearly clamour. Such, upon the beholders, was the effect produced by the beauty, the youth, the elegance, and the timidity of Ellis. Even her attire, which, from the bright pink sarsenet, purchased by Miss Arbe, she had changed into plain white satin, with ornaments of which the simplicity shewed as much taste as modesty, contributed to the interest which she inspired. It was suited to the style of her beauty, which was Grecian; and it seemed equally to assimilate with the character of her mind, to those who, judging it from the fine expression of her countenance, conceived it to be pure and noble. The assembly appeared with one opinion to admire her, and with one wish to give her encouragement.

[Pg 338]

But, unused to being an object of tumultuous delight, the effect produced by such transports was the reverse of their intention; and Ellis, ashamed, embarrassed, confused, lost the recollection, that custom demanded that she should postpone her acknowledgements till she arrived at her post. She stopt; but in raising her eyes, as she attempted to courtesy, she was struck with the sight of her deaf and dumb tormentor; who, in agitated watchfulness, was standing up to see her descend; and whose face, from the full light to which he was exposed, she now saw to be masked; while she discerned in his hand, the glitter of steel. An horrible surmise occurred, that it was Elinor disguised, and Elinor come to perpetrate the bloody deed of suicide. Agonized with terror at the idea, she would have uttered a cry; but, shaken and dismayed, her voice refused to obey her; her eyes became dim; her tottering feet would no longer support her; her complexion wore the pallid hue of death, and she sunk motionless on the floor.

In an instant, all admiring acclamation subsided into tender pity, and not a sound was heard in the assembly; while in the orchestra all was commotion; for Harleigh no sooner saw the fall, and

that the whole band was in movement, to offer aid, than, springing from his place, he overcame every obstacle, to force a passage to the spot where the pale Ellis was lying. There, with an air of command, that seemed the offspring of rightful authority, he charged every one to stand back, and give her air; desired M Vinstreigle to summon some female to her aid; and, snatching from him a phial of salts, which he was attempting to administer, was greatly bending down with them himself, when he perceived that she was already reviving: but the instant that he had raised her, what was his consternation and horror, to hear a voice, from the assembly, call out:

'Turn, Harleigh, turn! and see thy willing martyr!—Behold, perfidious Ellis! behold thy victim!'

Instantly, though with agony, he quitted the sinking Ellis to dart forward.

The large wrapping coat, the half mask, the slouched hat, and embroidered waistcoat, had rapidly been thrown aside, and Elinor appeared in deep mourning; her long hair, wholly unornamented, hanging loosely down her shoulders. Her complexion was wan, her eyes were fierce rather than bright, and her hair was wild and menacing.

[Pg 339]

'Oh Harleigh!—adored Harleigh!—' she cried, as he flew to catch her desperate hand;—but he was not in time; for, in uttering his name, she plunged a dagger into her breast.

The blood gushed out in torrents, while, with a smile of triumph, and eyes of idolizing love, she dropt into his arms, and clinging round him, feebly articulated, 'Here let me end!—accept the oblation—the just tribute—of these dear, delicious, last moments!'

Almost petrified with horror, he could with difficulty support either her or himself; yet his presence of mind was sooner useful than that of any on the company; the ladies of which were hiding their faces, or running away; and the men, though all eagerly crowding to the spot of this tremendous event, approaching rather as spectators of some public exhibition, than as actors in a scene of humanity. Harleigh called upon them to fly instantly for a surgeon; demanded an arm-chair for the bleeding Elinor, and earnestly charged some of the ladies to come to her aid.

Selina, who had made one continued scream resound through the apartment, from the moment that her sister discovered herself, rapidly obeyed the summons, with Ireton, who, being unable to detain, accompanied her. Mrs Maple, thunderstruck by the apparition of her niece, scandalized by her disguise, and wholly unsuspecting of her purpose, though sure of some extravagance, had pretended sudden indisposition, to escape the shame of witnessing her disgrace; but ere she could get away, the wound was inflicted, and the public voice, which alone she valued, forced her to return.

A surgeon of eminence, who was accidentally in the assembly, desired the company to make way; declaring no removal to be practicable, till he should have stopt the effusion of blood.

The concert was immediately broken up; the assembly, though curious and unwilling, dispersed; and the apparatus for dressing the wound, was speedily at hand:—but to no purpose. Elinor would not suffer the approach of the surgeon; would not hear of any operation, or examination; would not receive any assistance. Looks of fiery disdain were the only answers that she bestowed to the pleadings of Mrs Maple, the shrieks of Selina, the remonstrances of the surgeon, and the entreaties of every other. Even to the supplications of Harleigh she was immovable; though still she fondly clung to him, uttering from time to time, 'Long—long wished for moment! welcome, thrice welcome to my wearied soul!'

[Pg 340]

The shock of Harleigh was unspeakable, and it was aggravated by almost indignant exhortations, ejaculated from nearly every person present, that he would snatch the self-devoted enthusiast from this untimely end, by returning her heroic tenderness.

Mrs Maple was now covered with shame, from apprehension that this conduct might be imputed either to any precepts or any neglect of her own.

'My poor niece is quite light-headed, Mr Harleigh,' she cried, 'and knows not what she says.'

Fury started into the eyes of Elinor as she caught these words, and neither prayers nor supplications could silence or quiet her. 'No, Mrs Maple, no!' she cried, 'I am not light-headed! I never so perfectly knew what I said, for I never so perfectly spoke what I thought. Is it not time, even yet, to have done with the puerile trammels of prejudice?—Yes! I here cast them to the winds! And, in the dauntless hour of willing death, I proclaim my sovereign contempt of the whole race of mankind! of its cowardly subterfuges, its mean assimilations, its heartless subtleties! Here, in the sublime act of voluntary self-extinction, I exult to declare my adoration of thee,—of thee alone, Albert Harleigh! of thee and of thy haughty,—matchless virtues!'

Gasping for breath, she leant, half motionless, yet smiling, and with looks of transport, upon the shoulder of Harleigh; who, ashamed, in the midst of his concern, at his own situation, thus publicly avowed as the object of this desperate act; earnestly wished to retreat from the gazers and remarkers, with whom he shared the notice and the wonder excited by Elinor. But her danger was too eminent, and the scene was too critical, to suffer self to predominate. Gently, therefore, and with tenderness, he continued to support her; carefully forbearing either to irritate her enthusiasm, or to excite her spirit of controversy, by uttering, at such a crisis, the exhortations to which his mind and his principles pointed: or even to soothe her feeling too tenderly, lest misrepresentation should be mischievous, either with herself or with others.

The surgeon declared that, if the wound were not dressed without delay, no human efforts could

save her life.

'My life? save my life?' cried Elinor, reviving from indignation: 'Do you believe me so ignoble, as to come hither to display the ensigns of death, but as scare crows, to frighten lookers on to court me to life? No! for what should I live? To see the hand of scorn point at me? No, no, no! I come to die: I bleed to die; and now, even now, I talk to die! to die—Oh Albert Harleigh! for thee:—Dost thou sigh, Harleigh?—Do I hear thee sigh?—Oh Harleigh! generous Harleigh!—for me is it thou sighest?—'

[Pg 341]

Deeply oppressed, 'Elinor,' he answered, 'you make me indeed wretched!'

'Ebb out, then, oh life!' cried she, 'in this extatic moment! Harleigh no longer is utterly insensible!—Well have I followed my heart's beating impulse!—Harleigh! Oh noble Harleigh!—'

Spent by speech and loss of blood, she fainted.

Harleigh eagerly whispered Mrs Maple, to desire that the surgeon would snatch this opportunity for examining, and, if possible, dressing the wound.

This, accordingly, was done, all who were not of some use, retiring.

Harleigh himself, deeply interested in the event, only retreated to a distant corner; held back by discretion, honour, and delicacy, from approaching the spot to which his wishes tended.

The surgeon pronounced, that the wound was not in its nature mortal; though the exertions and emotions which had succeeded it, gave it a character of danger, that demanded the extremest attention, and most perfect tranquillity.

The satisfaction with which Harleigh heard the first part of this sentence, though it could not be counter-balanced, was cruelly checked by its conclusion. He severely felt the part that he seemed called upon to act; and had a consciousness, that was dreadful to himself, of his powers, if upon her tranquillity alone depended her preservation.

She soon recovered from her fainting fit; though she was too much weakened and exhausted, both in body and spirits, to be as soon restored to her native energies. The moment, therefore, seemed favourable for her removal: but whither? Lewes was too distant; Mrs Maple, therefore, was obliged to apply for a lodging in the hotel; to which, with the assiduous aid of Harleigh, Elinor, after innumerable difficulties, and nearly by force, was conveyed.

The last to quit the apartment in which this bloody scene had been performed, was Ellis; who felt restored by fright for another, to the strength of which she had been robbed by affright for herself. Her sufferings, indeed, for Elinor, her grief, her horror, had set self wholly aside, and made her forget all by which, but the moment before, she had been completely absorbed. She durst not approach, yet could not endure to retreat. She remained alone in the orchestra, from which all the band had been dismissed. She looked not once at Harleigh; nor did Harleigh once dare turn her way. In the shock of this scene, she thought it would be her duty to see him no more; for though she was unassailed by remorse, since unimpeached by self-reproach—for when had she wilfully, or even negligently, excited jealousy?—still she could not escape the inexpressible shock, of knowing herself the cause, though not, like Harleigh, the object of this dreadful deed.

[Pg 342]

When Elinor, however, was gone, she desired to hurry to her lodgings. Miss Arbe had forgotten, or neglected her, and she had no carriage ordered. But the terrific magnitude of the recent event, divested minor difficulties of their usual powers of giving disturbance. 'Tis only when we are spared great calamities, that we are deeply affected by small circumstances. The pressing around her, whether of avowed, or discreet admirers; the buzz of mingled compliments, propositions, interrogatories or entreaties; which, at another time, would have embarrassed and distressed her, now scarcely reached her ears, and found no place in her attention; and she quietly applied for a maid-servant of the hotel; leaning upon whose arm she reached, sad, shaken, and agitated, the house of Miss Matson.

Before she would even attempt to go to rest, she sent a note of enquiry to Mr Naird, the surgeon, whom she had seen at Mrs Maple's: his answer was consonant to what he had already pronounced to Harleigh.

CHAPTER XXXIX

[Pg 343]

Nothing now appeared so urgent to Ellis, as flying the fatal sight of Harleigh. To wander again alone, to seek strange succour, new faces, and unknown haunts; to expose her helplessness, plead her poverty, and confess her mysterious, nameless situation; even to risk delay in receiving the letter upon which hung all her ultimate expectations, seemed preferable to the danger of another interview, that might lead to the most horrible of catastrophes;—if, already, the danger were not removed by a termination the most tragic.

To escape privately from Brixthelmstone, and commit to accident, since she had no motive for choice, the way that she should go, was, therefore her determination. Her debts were all paid, save what their discharge had made her incur with that very Harleigh from whom she must now

escape; though to the resources which he had placed in her hands, she owed the liberation from her creditors, that gave her power to be gone; and must owe, also, the means for the very flight which she projected from himself. Severely she felt the almost culpability of an action, that risked implications of encouragement to a persevering though rejected man. But the horror of instigating self-murder conquered every other; even the hard necessity of appearing to act wrong, at the very moment when she was braving every evil, in the belief that she was doing right.

She ordered a post-chaise, in which she resolved to go on stage; and then to wait at some decent house upon the road, for the first passing public vehicle; in which, whithersoever it might be destined, she would proceed.

At an early hour the chaise was ready; and she was finishing her preparations for removal, when a tap at her chamber-door, to which, imagining it given by the maid, she answered, 'Come in,' presented Harleigh to her affrighted view.

[Pg 344]

'Ah heaven!' she cried, turning pale with dismay, 'are you then fixed, Mr Harleigh, to rob me of peace for life?'

'Be not,' cried he, rapidly, 'alarmed! I will not cost you a moment's danger, and hardly a moment's uneasiness. A few words will remove every fear; but I must speak them myself. Elinor is at this instant out of all but wilful danger; wilful danger, however, being all that she had had to encounter, it must be guarded against as sedulously as if it were inevitable. To this end, I must leave Brighthelmstone immediately—'

'No, Sir,' interrupted Ellis; 'it is I who must leave Brighthelmstone; your going would be the height of inhumanity.'

'Pardon me, but it is to clear this mistake that, once more, I force myself into your sight. I divined your design when I saw an empty post-chaise drive up to your door; which else, at a time such as this, I should unobtrusively have passed.'

'Quick! quick!' cried Ellis, 'every moment affrights me!'

'I am gone. I cannot oppose, for I partake your fears. Elinor has demanded to see us together tomorrow morning.'

'Terrible!' cried Ellis, trembling; 'what may be her design? And what is there not to dread! Indeed I dare not encounter her!'

'There can be, unhappily, but one opinion of her purpose,' he answered: 'She is wretched, and from impatience of life, wishes to seek death. Nevertheless, the cause of her disgust to existence not being any intolerable calamity, though the most probing, perhaps, of disappointments, life, with all its evils, still clings to her; and she as little knows how to get rid of, as how to support it.'

'You cannot, Sir, mean to doubt her sincerity?'

'Far from it. Her mind is as noble as her humour and taste are flighty; yet, where she has some great end in view, she studies, in common with all those with whom the love of fame is the ruling passion, Effect, public Effect, rather than what she either thinks to be right, or feels to be desirable.'

'Alas, poor Miss Joddrel! You are still, then, Sir, unmoved—' She stopt, and blushed, for the examining eyes of Harleigh said, 'Do you wish to see me conquered?'

Pleased that she stopt, enchanted that she blushed, an expression of pleasure illumined his countenance, which instantly drew into that of Ellis a cold severity, that chilled, or rather that punished his rising transport. Ah! thought he, was it then but conscious modesty, not anxious doubt, that mantled in her cheek?

[Pg 345]

'Pity,' he returned, 'in a woman to a man, is grateful, is lenient, is consoling. It seems an attribute of her sex, and the haughtiest of ours accepts it from her without disdain or disgrace; but pity from a man—upon similar causes—must be confined to his own breast. Its expression always seems insolent. Who is the female that could wish, that could even bear to excite it? Not Elinor, certainly! with all her excentricities, she would consider it as an outrage.'

'Give it her, then,' cried Ellis, with involuntary vivacity, 'the sooner to cure her!'

'Nay, who knows,' he smilingly returned, 'since extremes meet, that absconding may not produce the same effect? At all events, it will retard the execution of her terrible project; and to retard an act of voluntary violence, where the imagination is as ardent, the mind as restless, and the will as despotic as those of Elinor, is commonly to avert it. Some new idea ordinarily succeeds, and the old one, in losing its first moment of effervescence, generally evaporates in disgust.'

'Do not, Sir, trust to this! do not be so cruel as to abandon her! Think of the desperation into which you will cast her; and if you scruple to avow your pity, act at least with humanity, in watching, soothing, and appeasing her, while you suffer me quietly to escape; that neither the sound, nor the thought, of my existing so near her, may produce fresh irritation.'

'I see,—I feel,—' cried he, with emotion, 'how amiable for her,—yet how barbarous for me,—is your recommendation of a conduct, my honour, from regard to her reputation, in a union to which every word that you utter, and every idea to which you give expression, make me more and

more averse!—'

Ellis blushed and paused; but presently, with strengthened resolution, earnestly cried, 'If this, Sir, is the sum of what you have to say, leave me, I entreat, without further procrastination! Every moment that you persist in staying presents to me the image of Miss Joddrel, breaking from her physicians, and darting bloody and dying, into the room to surprize you!'

'Pardon, pardon me, that I should have given birth to so dreadful an apprehension! I will relieve you this instant: and omit no possible precaution to avert every danger. But that least reflexion, to a mind delicate as yours, will exculpate me from blame in not remaining at her side,—after the scene of last night,—unless I'purposed to become her permanent guardian. The tattling world would instantly unite—or calumniate us. But you, who, if you retreat, will be doubted and suspected, you, must at present, stay, and openly, clearly, and unsought, be seen. Elinor, who breathes but to spur her misery by despair, that she may end it, reserves for me, and for my presence,—to astonish, to shock, or to vanquish me,—every horror she can devise. In my absence, rest assured, no evil will be perpetrated. 'Tis for her, then, for her sake, that you must remain, and that I must depart.'

[Pg 346]

Ellis could not contest a statement which, thus explained, appeared to be just; and, gratified by her concurrence, he no longer resisted her urgent injunctions that he would be gone. He tried, in quitting her, to seize and kiss her hand; but she drew back, with an air not to be disputed; and a look of reproach, though not of displeasure. He submitted, with a look, also, of reproach; though expressive, at the same time, of reverence and admiration mixt with the deepest regret.

Mechanically, rather than intentionally, she went to the window, when he had left her, whence she saw him cross the way, and then wistfully look up. She felt the most painful blushes mount into her cheeks, upon observing that he perceived her. She retreated like lightning; yet could not escape remarking the animated pleasure that beamed from his countenance at this surprize.

She sat down, deeply confused, and wept.

The postilion sent in the maid for orders.

She satisfied and discharged him; and then, endeavouring to dismiss all rumination upon the past, deliberated upon the course which she ought immediately to pursue.

Her musical plan once more became utterly hopeless; for what chance had she now of any private scholars? what probability of obtaining any new protection, when, to the other mysterious disadvantages under which she laboured, would be added an accusation of perjury, denounced at the horrible moment of self-destruction?

While suggesting innumerable new schemes, which, presented by desperation, died in projection, she observed a small packet upon the ground, directed to herself. The inside was sealed, but upon the cover she found these words:

'This packet was prepared to reach you by an unknown messenger; but I see that you are departing, and I must not risk its missing you. As a friend only, a disinterested, though a zealous one, I have promised to address you. Repel not, then, my efforts towards acquiescence, by withholding the confidence, and rejecting the little offices, which should form the basis of that friendship. 'Tis as your banker, only, that I presume to enclose these notes.

[Pg 347]

'A. H.'

Ellis concluded that, upon seeing the chaise at the door, he had entered some shop to write these lines.

The silence which she had guarded, relative to his former packet, from terrour of the conflicts to which such a subject might lead, had made him now, she imagined, suppose it not partially but completely expended. And can he think, she cried, that not alone I have had recourse,—unacknowledged, yet essential recourse,—to his generosity in my distress, but that I am contented to continue his pensioner?

She blushed; but not in anger: she felt that it was from his view of her situation, notions of her character, that he pressed her thus to pecuniary obligation. She would not, however, even see the amount, or contents, of what he had sealed up, which she now enclosed, and sealed up herself, with the remaining notes of the first packet.

The lines which he had written in the cover, she read a second time. If, indeed, she cried, he could become a disinterested friend!... She was going to read them again, but checked by the suggested doubt,—the if,—she paused a moment, sighed, felt herself blush, and, with a quick motion that seemed the effect of sudden impulse, precipitately destroyed them; murmuring to herself, while brushing off with her hand a starting tear, that she would lose no time and spare no exertions, for replacing and returning the whole sum.

Yet she was forced, with whatever reluctance, to leave the development of her intentions to the chances of opportunity; for she knew not the address of Harleigh, and durst not risk the many

dangers that might attend any enquiry.

A short time afterwards, she received a letter from Selina, containing a summons from Elinor for the next morning.

Mr Naird, the surgeon, had induced Mrs Maple to consent to this measure, which alone deterred Elinor from tearing open her wound; and which had extorted from her a promise, that she would remain quiet in the interval. She had positively refused to admit a clergyman; and had affronted away a physician.

Ellis could not hesitate to comply with this demand, however terrified she felt at the prospect of the storm which she might have to encounter. [Pg 348]

The desperate state of her own affairs, called, nevertheless, for immediate attention; and she decided to begin a new arrangement, by relinquishing the far too expensive apartment which Miss Arbe had forced her to occupy.

In descending to the shop, to give notice of her intention, she heard the voice of Miss Matson, uttering some sharp reprimand; and presently, and precipitately, she was passed, upon the stairs, by a forlorn, ill-dressed, and weeping female; whose face was covered by her handkerchief, but whose air was so conspicuously superiour to her garb of poverty, that it was evidently a habit of casual distress, not of habitual indigence. Ellis looked after her with quick-awakened interest; but she hastily mounted, palpably anxious to escape remark.

Miss Matson, softened in her manners since she had been paid, expressed the most violent regret, at losing so genteel a lodger. Ellis knew well how to appreciate her interested and wavering civility; yet availed herself of it to beg a recommendation to some decent house, where she might have a small and cheap chamber; and again, to solicit her assistance in procuring some needle-work.

A room, Miss Matson replied, with immediate abatement of complaisance, of so shabby a sort as that, might easily enough be found; but as to needle-work, all that she had had to dispose of for some time past, had been given to her new lodger up two pair of stairs, who had succeeded Mr Riley; and who did it quicker and cheaper than any body; which, indeed, she had need do, for she was extremely troublesome, and always wanting her money.

'And for what else, Miss Matson,' said Ellis, dryly, 'can you imagine she gives you her work?'

'Nay, I don't say any thing as to that,' answered Miss Matson, surprised by the question: 'I only know it's sometimes very inconvenient.'

Ah! thought Ellis, must we be creditors, and poor creditors, ourselves, to teach us justice to debtors? And must those who endure the toil be denied the reward, that those who reap its fruits may retain it?

Miss Matson accepted the warning, and Ellis resolved to seek a new lodging the next day.

CHAPTER XL

[Pg 349]

At five o'clock, on the following morning, the house of Miss Matson was disturbed, by a hurrying message from Elinor, demanding to see Miss Ellis without delay. Ellis, arose, with the utmost trepidation: it was the beginning of May, and brightly light; and she accompanied the servant back to the house.

She found all the family in the greatest disorder, from the return of another messenger, who had been forwarded to Mr Harleigh, with the unexpected news that that gentleman had quitted Brighthelmstone. The intelligence was conveyed in a letter, which he had left at the hotel, for Miss Maple; and in which another was enclosed for Elinor. Mrs Maple had positively refused to be the bearer of such unwelcome tidings to the sick room; protesting that she could not risk, before the surgeon and the nurse, the rude expression which her poor niece might utter; and could still less hazard imparting such irritating information *tête à tête*.

'Why, then,' said Ireton, 'should not Miss Ellis undertake the job? Nobody has had a deeper share in the business.'

This idea was no sooner started, than it was seized by Mrs Maple; who was over-joyed to elude the unpleasant task imposed upon her by Harleigh; and almost equally gratified to mortify, or distress, a person whom she had been led, by numberless small circumstances, which upon little minds operate more forcibly than essential ones, to consider as a source of personal disgrace to her own dignity and judgement. Deaf, therefore, to the remonstrances of Ellis, upon whom she forced the letter, she sent for Mr Naird, charged him to watch carefully by the side of her poor niece, desired to be called if any thing unhappy should take place; and, complaining of a violent head-ache, retired to lie down. [Pg 350]

Ellis, terrified at this tremendous commission, and convinced that the feelings and situation of Elinor were too publicly known for any attempt at secrecy, applied to Mr Naird for counsel how to proceed.

Mr Naird answered that, in cases where, as in the present instance, the imagination was yet more diseased than the body, almost any certainty was less hurtful than suspense. 'Nevertheless, with so excentrical a genius,' he added, 'nothing must be risked abruptly: if, therefore, as I presume, this letter is to acquaint the young lady, with the proper modifications, that Mr Harleigh will have nothing to say to her; you must first let her get some little inkling of the matter by circumstances and surmizes, that the fact may not rush upon her without warning: keep, therefore, wholly out of her way, till the tumult of her wonder and her doubts, will make any species of explication medicinal.'

She had certainly, he added, some new project in contemplation; for, after extorting from her, the preceding evening, a promise that she would try to sleep, he heard her, when she believed him gone, exclaim, from Cato's soliloquy:

'Sleep? Ay, yes,—This once I'll favour thee,
That may awaken'd soul may take its flight
Replete with all its pow'rs, and big with life,
An offering fit for ... Glory, Love, ... and Harleigh!'

'Our kind-hearted young ladies of Sussex,' continued Mr Naird, 'are as much scandalized that Mr Harleigh should have the insensibility to resist love so heroic, as their more prudent mammas that he should so publicly be made its object. No men, however,—at least none on this side the Channel,—can wonder that he should demur at venturing upon a treaty for life, with a lady so expert in foreign politics, as to make an experiment, in her own proper person, of the new atheistical and suicidal doctrines, that those ingenious gentlemen, on t'other side the water, are now so busily preaching for their fellow-countrymen's destruction.^[2] Challenging one's existence for every quarrel with one's Will; and running one's self through the Body for every affront to one's Mind; used to be thought peculiar to the proud and unbending humour of John Bull; but John did it rarely enough to make it a subject of gossiping, and news-paper squibs, for at least a week. Our merry neighbours, on the contrary, now once they have set about it, do the job with an air, and a grace, that shew us we are as drowsy in our desperation, as we are phlegmatic in our amusements. They talk of it wherever they go; write of it whenever they hold a pen; and are so piqued to think that we got the start of them, in beginning the game first, that they pop off more now in a month, than we do in a year: and I don't in the least doubt, that their intention is to go on with the same briskness, till they have made the balance even.'

[Pg 351]

Looking then archly at Ellis, 'However clever,' he added, 'this young lady may be; and she seems an adept in their school of turning the world upside down; she did not shew much skill in human nature, when she fired such a broadside at the heart of the man she loved, at the very instant that he had forgotten all the world, in his hurry to fire one himself upon the heart of another woman.'

Ellis blushed, but was silent; and Mrs Golding, Elinor's maid, came, soon after, to hasten Mr Naird to her mistress; who, persuaded, she said, by their non-appearance, that Mr Harleigh had eloped with Miss Ellis, was preparing to dress herself; and was bent to pursue them to the utmost extremity of the earth.

Mr Naird, then, entering the room, heard her in the agitated voice of feverish exultation, call out, 'Joy! Joy and peace, to my soul! They are gone off together!—'Tis just what I required, to "spur my almost blunted purpose!—"'

Ellis, beckoned by Mr Naird, now appeared.

Elinor was struck with astonishment; and her air lost something of its wildness. 'Is Harleigh,' she cried, 'here too?'

Ellis durst not reply; nor, still less, deliver the letter; which she dropt unseen upon a table.

Amazed at this silence, Elinor repeated her enquiries: 'Why does he not come to me? Why will he not answer me?'

'Nay, I should think it a little odd, myself,' said Mr Naird, 'if I did not take into consideration, that our hearing requires an approximation that our wishes can do without.'

'Is he not yet arrived, then?—Impenetrable Harleigh! And can he sleep? O noble heart of marble! polished, white, exquisite—but unyielding!—Ellis, send to him yourself! Call him to me immediately! It is but for an instant! Tell him it is but for an instant.'

Ellis tremblingly drew back. The impatience of Elinor was redoubted, and Mr Naird thought proper to confess that Mr Harleigh could not be found.

[Pg 352]

Her vehemence was then converted into derision, and, with a contemptuous laugh, 'You would make me believe, perhaps,' she cried, 'that he has left Brighthelmstone? Spare your ingenuity a labour so absurd, and my patience so useless a disgust. From me, indeed, he may be gone! for his soul shrinks from the triumph in which it ought to glory! 'Tis pity! Yet in him every thing seems right; every thing is becoming. Even the narrow feelings of prudence, that curb the expansions of greatness, in him seem graceful, nay noble! Ah! who is like him? The poor grovelling wretches that call themselves his fellow creatures, sink into nothingness before him, as if beings of another order! Where is he? My soul sickens to see him once more, and then to be extinct!'

No one venturing to speak, she again resolved to seek him in person; convinced, she said, that, since Ellis remained, he could not be far off. This appeared to Mr Naird the moment for producing the letter.

At sight of the hand-writing of Harleigh, addressed, to herself, every other feeling gave way to rapturous joy. She snatched the letter from Mr Naird, blew it all around, as if to disperse the contagion of any foreign touch, and then, in a transport of delight, pressed it to her lips, to her heart, and again to her lips, with devouring kisses. She would not read it, she declared, till night: all she experienced of pleasure was too precious and too rare, not to be lengthened and enjoyed to its utmost possible extent; yet, nearly at the same moment, she broke the seal, and ordered every one to quit the room; that the air which would vibrate with words of Harleigh, should be uncontaminated by any breath but her own. They all obeyed; though Mr Naird, fearing what might ensue, stationed himself where, unsuspectedly, he could observe her motions. Eagerly, rapidly, and without taking breath till she came to the conclusion, she then read aloud the following lines:

'To Miss JODDREL.

'I fly you, O Elinor, not to irritate those feelings I dare not hope to soothe! My heart recoils, with prophetic terrour, from the summons which you have issued for this morning. I know you too noble to accept, as you have shewn yourself too sincere to present, a heartless hand; but will you, therefore, blight the rest of my existence, by making me the cause of your destruction? Will you only seek relief to your sufferings, by means that must fix indelible horror on your survivors? Will you call for peace and rest to yourself, by an action that must nearly rob me of both?

[Pg 353]

'Where death is voluntary, without considering our ultimate responsibility, have we none that is immediate? For ourselves only do we exist? No, generous Elinor, such has not been your plan. For ourselves alone, then, should we die? Shall we seek to serve and to please merely when present, that we may be served and pleased again? Is there no disinterested attachment, that would suffer, to spare pain to others? that would endure sooner than inflict?

'If to die be, as you hold, though as I firmly disbelieve, eternal sleep, would you wish the traces that may remain of that period in which you thought yourself awake, to be marked, for others, by blessings, or by misfortune? Would you desire those whom you have known and favoured whilst amongst them, gratefully to cherish your remembrance, or to shrink with horror from its recollection? Would you bequeath to them the pleasing image of your liberal kindness, or the terrific one of your despairing vengeance?

'To you, to whom death seems the termination of all, the extinguisher, the absorber of unaccounted life, this airy way of meeting, of invoking it, may appear suitable:—to me, who look forward to corporeal dissolution but as to the opening to spiritual being, and the period of retribution for our past terrestrial existence; to me it seems essential to prepare for it with as much awe as hope, as much solicitude as confidence.

'Wonder not, then, that, with ideas so different, I should fly witnessing the crisis which so intrepidly you invite. Would you permit your cooler reason to take the governance of your too animated feelings, with what alacrity, and what delight, should I seek your generous friendship!

'The Grave, you say, is the end of All, of soul and of body alike!

'Pause, Elinor!—should you be mistaken!...

'Pause!—The less you believe yourself immortal, the less you should deem yourself infallible.

'You call upon us all, in this enlightened age, to set aside our long, old, and hereditary prejudices. Give the example with the charge, in setting aside those that, new, wilful, and self-created, have not even the apology of time or habit to make them sacred; and listen, O Elinor, to the voice and dictates of religion! Harden not your heart against convictions that may pour balm into all its wounds!

[Pg 354]

'Consent to see some learned and pious divine.

'If, upon every science, every art, every profession, you respect the opinions of those who have made them their peculiar study; and prefer their authority, and the result of their researches; to the sallies, the loose reasoning, and accidental knowledge of those who dispute at large, from general, however brilliant conceptions; from partial, however ingenious investigations; why in theology alone must you distrust the fruits of experience? the proofs of examination? the judgement of habitual reflexion?

'Consent, then, to converse with some devout, yet enlightened clergyman. Hear him patiently, meditate upon his doctrine impartially; and you will yet, O Elinor, consent to live, and life again will find its reviving, however chequered, enjoyments.

'Youth, spirits, fortune, the liveliest parts, the warmest heart, are yours. You have only to look around you to see how rarely such gifts are thus concentrated; and, grateful for

your lot, you will make it, by blessing others, become a blessing to yourself: and you will not, Elinor, harrow to the very soul, the man who flattered himself to have found in you the sincerest of friends, by a stroke more severe to his peace than he could owe to his bitterest enemy.

'ALBERT HARLEIGH.'

The excess of the agitation of Elinor, when she came to the conclusion, forced Mr Naird to return, but rendered her insensible to his re-appearance. She flung off her bandages, rent open her wound, and tore her hair; calling, screaming for death, with agonizing wrath. 'Is it for this,' she cried, 'I have thus loved—for this I have thus adored the flintiest of human hearts? to see him fly me from the bed of death? Refuse to receive even my parting sigh? Make me over to a dissembling priest?'

Ellis, returning also, urged Mr Naird, who stood aloof, stedfastly, yet quietly fixing his eyes upon his patient, to use his authority for checking this dangerous violence.

Without moving, or lowering his voice, though Ellis spoke in a whisper, he drily answered, 'It is not very material.'

'How so?' cried Ellis, extremely alarmed: 'What is it you mean, Sir?'

'It cannot, now,' he replied, 'occasion much difference.'

Ellis, shuddering, entreated him to make some speedy effort for her preservation.

[Pg 355]

He thoughtfully stroked his chin, but as Elinor seemed suddenly to attend to them, forbore making further reply.

'What have you been talking of together?' cried she impatiently, 'What is that man's opinion of my situation?—When may I have done with you all? Say! When may I sleep and be at rest?—When, when shall I be no longer the only person in this supine world, awake? He can sleep! Harleigh can sleep, while he yet lives!—He, and all of you! Death is not wanted to give repose to hearts of adamant!'

Ellis, in a low voice, again applied to Mr Naird; but Elinor, watchful and suspicious, insisted upon hearing the subject of their discourse.

Mr Naird, advancing to the bed-side, said, 'Is there any thing you wish, my good lady? Tell me if there is any thing we can do, that will procure you pleasure?'

In vain Ellis endeavoured to give him an hint, that such a question might lead her to surmise her danger: the perceptions of Elinor were too quick to allow time for retraction or after precaution: the deepest damask flushed her pallid cheeks; her eyes became wildly dazzling, and she impetuously exclaimed, 'The time, then, is come! The struggle is over!—and I shall quaff no more this "nauseous draught of life"^[3]?'"

She clasped her hands in an extacy, and vehemently added, 'When—when—tell me if possible, to a moment! when eternal stillness may quiet this throbbing breast?—when I may bid a final, glad adieu to this detestable world, to all its servile customs, and all its despicable inhabitants?—Why do you not speak?—Be brief, be brief!'

Mr Naird, slowly approaching her, silently felt her pulse.

'Away with this burlesque dumb shew!' cried she, indignantly. 'No more of these farcical forms! Speak! When may your successor close these professional mockeries? fit only for weak patients who fear your sentence: to me, who boldly, eagerly demand it, speak reason and truth. When may I become as insensible as Harleigh?—Colder, death itself has not power to make me!'

Again he felt her pulse, and, while her eyes, with fiery impatience, called for a prompt decision, hesitatingly pronounced, that if she had any thing to settle, she could not be too expeditious.

Her countenance, her tone, her whole appearance, underwent, now, a sudden change; and she seemed as powerfully struck as if the decree which so earnestly she had sought, had been internally unexpected. She sustained herself, nevertheless, with firmness; thanked him, though in a low and husky voice, for his sincerity; and crossing her arms, and shutting her eyes, to obviate any distraction to her ideas by surrounding objects, delivered herself up to rapt meditation: becoming, in a moment, as calm, and nearly as gentle, as if a stranger by nature to violent passions, or even to strong feelings.

[Pg 356]

An impression so potent, made by the no longer doubted, and quick approximation of that Death, which, in the vigour and pride of Life, and Health, she had so passionately invoked, forcibly and fearfully affected Ellis; who uttered a secret prayer, that her own preparations for an event, which though the most indispensably common, could never cease to be the most universally tremendous of mortality, might be frequent enough, and cheerful enough, to take off horror from its approach, without substituting presumption.

After a long pause, Elinor opened her eyes; and, in a subdued voice and manner, that seemed to stifle a struggling sigh, softly said, 'There is no time, then, it seems, to lose? My short race is already run,—yet already has been too long! O Harleigh! had I been able to touch your heart!—'

Tears gushed into her eyes: she dispersed them hastily with her fingers; and, looking around her

with an air of inquietude and shame, said, with studied composure, 'You have kindly, Mr Naird, offered me your services. I thankfully accept them. Pursue and find, without delay, Mr Harleigh, repeat to him what you have just pronounced, and tell him....' She blushed deeply, sighed; checked herself, and mildly went on, 'This is no season for pride! Tell him my situation, and that I beg, I entreat, I conjure, I even implore him to let me once more—' Again she stopt, almost choked with repressed emotions; but presently, with a calmer accent, added, 'Say to him, he will not merely soften, but delight my last moments, in being then the sole object I shall behold, as, from the instant that I first saw him, he has been the only one who has engaged my thoughts:—the imperious, constant master of my mind!'

Mr Naird respectfully accepted the commission; demanding only, in return, that she would first permit him once more to dress her wound. This she opposed; though so faintly, that it was evident that she was more averse to being thought cowardly, or inconsistent, than to stopping the quicker progress of dissolution. When Mr Naird, therefore represented, that it was sending him upon a fruitless errand, if she meant to bleed to death in his absence, she complied. He then enjoined her to be quiet, and went forth.

[Pg 357]

With the most perfect stillness she awaited his return; neither speaking nor moving; and holding her watch in her hand, upon which she fixed her eyes without intermission; except to observe, from time to time, whether Ellis were in sight.

When he re-appeared, she changed colour, and covered her face with her hand; but, soon removing it, and shewing a steady countenance, she raised her head. When however, she perceived that he was alone; and, after looking vainly towards the door, found that no one followed, she tremulously said,

'Will he not, then, come?'

Mr Naird answered, that it had not been possible to overtake him; a note, however, had been left at his lodgings, containing an earnest request, that a daily written account of the patient, till the danger should be over, might be forwarded to Cavendish Square; where it would follow him with the utmost expedition.

Elinor now looked almost petrified.

'Danger!' she repeated: 'He knows me, then, to be in danger,—yet flies me! And for Him I have lived;—and for Him I die!'

This reflexion destroyed all her composure; and every strong passion, every turbulent emotion, resumed its empire over her mind. She commanded Mr Naird from the room, forced Golding to dress her, and ordered a chaise and four horses immediately to the door. She was desperate, she said, and careless alike of appearances and of consequences. She would seek Harleigh herself. His icy heart, with all its apathy, recoiled from the sound of her last groan; but she would not spare him that little pain, since its infliction was all that could make the end of her career less intolerable than its progress.

She was just ready, when Mrs Maple, called up by Mr Naird, to dissuade her niece from this enterprize, would have represented the impropriety of the intended measure. But Elinor protested that she had finally taken leave of all fatiguing formalities; and refused even to open the chamber-door.

She could not, however, save herself from hearing a warm debate between Mrs Maple and Mr Naird, in which the following words caught her ears: 'Shocking, Madam, or not, it is indispensable, if go she will, that you should accompany her; for the motion of a carriage in her present inflamed, yet enfeebled state, may shorten the term of your solicitude from a few days to a few hours. I am sorry to pronounce such a sentence; but as I find myself perfectly useless, I think it right to put you upon your guard, before I take my leave.'

[Pg 358]

Elinor changed colour, ceased her preparations, and sunk upon the bed. Presently, however, she arose, and commanded Golding to call Mr Naird.

'I solemnly claim from you, Mr Naird,' she cried, 'the same undisguised sincerity that you have just practised with Mrs Maple.' Then, fixing her eyes upon his face, with investigating severity, 'Tell me,' she continued, 'in one word, whether you think I have strength yet left to reach Cavendish Square?'

'If you go in a litter, Madam, and take a week to make the journey—'

'A week?—I would arrive there in a few hours!—Is that impossible?'

'To arrive?—no; to arrive is certainly—not impossible.'

'Dead, you perhaps mean?—To arrive dead is not impossible?—Speak clearly!'

'A medical man, Madam, lives in a constant round of perplexity; for either he must risk killing his patients by telling them unpleasant truths; or letting them kill themselves by nourishing false hopes.'

'Take some other time for bewailing your own difficulties, Sir! and speak to the point, without that hateful official cant.'

'Well, Madam, if nothing but rough honesty will satisfy you, bear it, at least, with fortitude. The

motion of a carriage is so likely to open your wound, that, in all probability, before you could gain Cuckfield—or Reigate, at furthest,—'

He stopt. Elinor finished for him: 'I should be no more?'

He was silent.

'I thank you, Sir!' she cried, in a firm voice, though with livid cheeks. 'And pray, how long,—supposing I do just, and only, what you bid me,—how long do you think it likely I should linger?'

'O, some days, I have no doubt. Perhaps a week.'

The storm, now, again kindled in her disordered mind: 'How!' she cried, 'have I done all this—dared, risked, braved all things human,—and not human—to die, at last, a common death?—to expire, in a fruitless journey, an unacknowledged, and unoffered sacrifice?—or to lie down tamely in my bed, till I am extinct by ordinary dissolution?—'

Wringing then her hands, with mingled anguish and resentment, 'Mr Naird,' she cried, 'if you have the smallest real skill; the most trivial knowledge or experience in your profession; bind up my wound so as to give me strength to speed to him! and then, though the lamp of life should be instantly extinguished; though the same moment that bless annihilate me, I shall be content—O more than content! I shall expire with transport!'

[Pg 359]

Mr Naird making no reply, she went on yet more impetuously: 'Oh snatch me,' she cried, 'snatch me from the despicable fate that threatens me!—With energies so pure, with affections so genuine, with feelings so unadulterated, as mine, let me not be swept from the earth, with the undistinguished herd of common broken-hearted, broken-spirited, love-sick fanatics! Let me but once more join Harleigh! once more see that countenance which is life, light, and joy to my soul! hear, once more, that voice which charms all my senses, which thrills every nerve!—and then, that parting breath which rapturously utters, Harleigh, I come to die in beholding thee! shall bless you, too, as my preserver, and bid him share with you all that Elinor has to bequeath!'

She uttered this with a rapidity and agitation that nearly exhausted her remnant strength; and, tamed by feeling her dependance upon medical skill, she listened patiently to the counsels and propositions of Mr Naird; in consequence of which, an express was sent to Harleigh, explaining her situation, her inability to be removed, her request to see him, and her immediate danger, if not kept quiet both in body and mind.

This done, satisfied that Harleigh could not read such a letter without hastening back, she agreed to all the prescriptions that were proposed; and even suffered a physician to be called to the assistance of Mr Naird, in her fear lest, if Harleigh should not be found in Cavendish Square, she might expire, before the sole instant for which she desired either to live or to die, should arrive.

[Pg 360]

[1] Swift's Laputa.

[2] During the dominion of Robespierre.

[3] Dryden.

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