

RASH VOWS,

THE EFFECTS OF ENTHUSIASM.

A NOVEL.

954

Translated from the FRENCH of
MADAME DE GENLIS,

AUTHOR OF THE THEATRE OF EDUCATION,
ADELAIDE AND THEODORE, &c. &c.

Eh! le vœu le plus libre et le plus volontaire,
Au Dieu qui prévoit tout, peut sembler téméraire!

LA HARPE.

La modération est le trésor du sage.

VOLTAIRE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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DEDICATORY EPISTLE

TO

954

LADY EDWARD FITZGERALD,

AND

MRS. HENRIETTA MATTHIESON.

My dear and faithful Friends,

How pleasing it is to me to unite such pure and respectable names, and to prefix them to a Work which I presume to think is the most moral Romance in our language; perhaps the only one that young people, and even those whose education is far advanced, may be permitted to read. I have in several works depicted vice with all its horror and absurdity, but in this I have only endeavoured to shew the dangerous consequences of excessive delicacy and extreme sensibility. You, my daughters by adoption—you, who from infancy have been attached to each other by
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the precious bonds of the tenderest friendship—you, whose constant affection has afforded me an inexhaustible source of true consolation—receive this as a token of maternal gratitude. You will only find, in this Work, instructions which may still be profitable to souls endued with your happy dispositions. A perusal of these pages will confirm you in the salutary and well-founded opinion, that without wisdom, and consequently without moderation, sensibility is only a fatal gift. It will prove to you, that without the aid of reason, even virtue itself, losing its noble character by deviating from the invariable principles which ought to direct its operations, is only guided by the most imprudent and violent passions ; and then, following extravagant and dangerous impulses, deceived by a doleful terror, or sacrificing itself to despair, it sooner or later falls the victim of its temerity.



RASH VOWS.

SAINVILLE was reckoned one of the most happy courtiers. "What can be wanting to the happiness of a man," said they, "so amiable and handsome, so distinguished by a thousand graces, and by success in all his undertakings; possessing an immense fortune, youth, and freedom; enjoying the reputation that military talents, illustrious birth, wit, and esteem afford; what more can he desire, and what lot can be compared to his?"

Such was the general opinion of Sainville. Thus the world judge of brilliant appearances, which are almost always deceitful.

Let us listen to Sainville himself, supping *tête-à-tête* with his friend. "Yes, my dear baron," said he to him, "I am upon the verge of that fatal situation which one of our poets has so well depicted in these energetic lines:

"Je respire sans vivre, et m'étiens sans mourir."

"Thanks be to Heaven!" interrupted the baron, "nothing as yet announces in you symptoms of consumption; and I do not perceive upon your countenance any trace of that cruel malady."—"True," replied Sainville: "but this disorder proceeds from the heart; and mine is dejected and exhausted. Yes, satiated with every kind of pleasure, I can no longer enjoy any; a frightful void succeeds the phantom that deceived and left me: in short, chagrin consumes and devours me."—"My friend," said the baron, "you are not the first who paid fortune with ingratitude: but being only thirty-two years old,
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you may again relish glory and pleasure." —
“ During the war,” replied Sainville, “ I loved glory with enthusiasm. I was then happy ; for my heart requires to be animated by great sentiments and a predominant passion. I have performed some brilliant exploits, and I have received with transport, even with intoxication, I confess, the favours and marks of distinction which were the recompence of them. But do you really think that they were due to my conduct ? If my uncle had not been the lover of Madame de ***, and if Madame de Flamigny, in order to serve me, had not yielded to the passion of the minister at war, I should not have been better treated than poor Duval, who, in the same campaign, did prodigies of valour, and obtained nothing from court. Thus I am indebted for the favours that have been lavished upon me only to the intrigues of my uncle and the infidelity of my mistress. This discovery

has considerably diminished my love for glory. In short, three years of peace have given me time for observation and reflexion. I have seen how favours and honours are obtained, and I know how to appreciate the countenance of princes and the voice of the people : that is to say, I am cured of ambition.” — “ You are now a philosopher,” said the baron : “ but a philosopher and a courtier are incompatible beings, and I am not surprised to see you grieved. That is the work of these detestable encyclopedists : although you do not like them, you have adopted their philosophy.” — “ No, no,” replied Sainville ; “ I shall never adopt a philosophy without doctrine ; a philosophy composed of several incoherent systems, and an infinite number of opinions contradictory to each other. Those who preach by turns, for and against, shall never enrol me in their sect. Where I see inconsistency, I am sure to find folly and artifice ; I am therefore the

disciple

disciple neither of Voltaire, Rousseau, nor Diderot; and I am not even that of true philosophers. I love and admire Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, and Fenelon, but I have neither their wisdom nor their philanthropy. Like them, I judge and am struck with the errors, follies, and vices which the great theatre of the court and the world presents to my view: but having been myself abandoned to all these errors, I experience more disgust than contempt. I view objects, such as they are, without having the happy title of esteeming myself the more for it; and I am not so far deluded as to confound the disgust arising from satiety with a virtuous indignation. In a word, discontented with others and with myself, I have lost my sensibility; my imagination is suppressed; I vegetate carelessly, without forming any projects and without desires; my heart no longer speaks to me, and my feeble reason only inspires me with melancholy and vain regrets."—"So, then," said the baron, "you

have become a misanthrope ?"—“ Ah ! would to heaven I were !” exclaimed Sainville. “ I should not then languish under this insupportable apathy, which deprives the soul of all its faculties ; I should be inspired with violent sentiments ; I should profoundly meditate ; I should be agitated, irritated, touched, and always very much occupied ; I should detest the world and mankind ; and indeed I am now perfectly indifferent about them. Happy he whose heart is not only susceptible of love, but likewise of hatred ! To have no feeling, is no longer to exist.” At these words, Sainville fell into a dull reverie ; when the baron, with ~~sur~~prise, silently gazed upon him, and after a few minutes pause resuming the discourse, “ I am quite astonished,” said he ; “ for I perceive that you speak but too seriously. I have for a long time observed a considerable change in your disposition, but I attributed it to very different causes, and particularly to your rupture

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ture with Madame de Tervures.”—“ You strangely deceive yourself,” replied Sainville ; “ I am too well acquainted with women, to be susceptible of that happy resentment which you suppose in me.”—“ You judge women with too much severity,” said the baron. “ Some are sensible and——”—“ At heart,” interrupted Sainville, “ your opinion is much the same as mine : but you are pleased to be their dupe. Your romantic spirit makes you find in gallantry all the charms of love, and enables them to deceive you. For my part, I wish I could find a woman who could inspire me with a passion : but I have never met with any.”—“ What !” exclaimed the baron ; “ you who have captivated so many hearts——”—“ Yes, *hearts*,” replied Sainville, sighing : “ but I am quite tired with the insipid, monotonous, childish, and fatiguing conduct of a man of intrigue. What is the result of all those brilliant successes ? to shew senti-
ments

ments which are not our own—to practise every possible artifice to carry a prude or a coquette whither they wish to be secretly conducted. What is more ridiculous and foolish than to employ all the resources of our mind and imagination, to triumph over a scruple that does not exist, to conquer a resistance that is only apparently such, and to receive a deceiving oath, to which no value is attached? My friend,” continued Sainville, “there is, in what is called high life, a particular character of littleness and duplicity which shocks me, and seems to be peculiar to this age. Every soul is debased. I see monstrous vices, and I do not discover noble passions. This is certainly the height of depravation, and it ought to be the last degree of corruption.”

—“Well,” replied the baron, “drive away chagrin by useful occupations; read, work, seek in study and science happiness which has fled from you by dissipation.”

—“Ah! how can I?” interrupted Sainville.

ville. "I have a thousand times vainly attempted it, but every thing conspires to oppose me, particularly the connexions with which I cannot break off, (although the heart undoubtedly has not formed them,) and which here torment and surround me."—"Fly farther off," said the baron: "go, if necessary, two hundred leagues distance, in order to seek tranquillity and liberty."—"I consent," replied Sainville, "and am ready to depart: but happiness is only a chimera, and tranquillity is an insipid benefit, the idea of which offers me but little charms."—"However, let us go," said the baron; "try a new mode of life; for in your present situation you must gain by the change. Rely upon me; I will not quit you." At these words Sainville, with indifference, approves of the scheme, and his friend urges him to execute it; orders are issued for the necessary preparations, and it is determined they shall set out the following

day to an estate belonging to Sainville, situated at the extremity of Languedoc, one hundred and five leagues from Paris.

The baron de Verceil, this friend of Sainville, who was about thirty years of age, joined to an excellent heart a character full of integrity and generosity. His mind, more cultivated than enlarged, had more delicacy than solidity; and his soul had less energy than sensibility. He loved literature, and his taste for poetry and romance gave to his ideas and conversation a romantic turn, which generally pleased women. Moderate in all his affections, little susceptible of violent sentiments, and having never experienced any, the whole charm of love, according to his idea, consisted in mystery and gallantry. He was satisfied, provided his imagination was occupied about an intrigue; and he liked almost as well to be the confidant as the hero of it. Born with a middling fortune,
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and a name little known, he owed his military advancement, many court favours, and the happiness he enjoyed, to the friendship of Sainville. Such motives of gratitude had inspired him with the most faithful and tender attachment for Sainville, whom he loved and admired as the most amiable and brilliant man he knew, and in whom he discovered the most extraordinary qualities and greatness of soul. Accustomed, from his infancy, to consider his intimacy with Sainville as the only cause of the esteem which he enjoyed, he always heartily rejoiced at the glory and success of his friend; and being the confidant of his casual tastes, the amorous intrigues of Sainville were always of more importance to him than his own. Sainville's mistress ever appeared to him the most perfect heroine of romance; he soon became her intimate friend, and commonly charged himself with consoling her, when the inclinations of Sainville were

turned towards another object. The baron, without possessing the superiority of mind and graces of Sainville, was amiable, especially among women, because he always appeared to listen to them with interest and credulity, and to believe that their nervous complaints and frequent faintings were caused by sensibility. Besides he was well bred, had a noble mien, and much politeness. His mind was adorned with all the usual sentiments that could be agreeably repeated (in particular subjects) upon love, friendship, sympathy, the delights of rural life, &c. He loved the arts, and, above all, music: he knew how to admire and turn to advantage the little talents of society: he was enraptured listening to a woman singing a romance, or playing upon the harp or piano forte: he was a great admirer of the lectures or essays read in company, from any of which he was never absent; and he extolled to the skies every manuscript work read by the author

author to a party of *fifty or sixty friends*. Moreover the baron had been twice in London and once in Switzerland, which had furnished him with the means of occasionally descanting, if not in a novel manner, at least with success, upon *liberty, English verdure, the surprising effects of nature*, and the *sensations* we feel at the brink of a precipice, or upon the top of a mountain. To finish the baron de Verceil's character in a proper manner, we must add, that the good taste which a witty and delicate mind necessarily acquires at court and in high life, preserved him from that insipidity which an extreme affability and an excessive complaisance sometimes give. He had acquired that art of contradiction which, far from ever degenerating into disputation, only rendered conversation more agreeable, and added greater weight to his opinion. It gave him particular pleasure to contradict Sainville, sometimes for the purpose of displaying his
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own wit and that of his friend, and sometimes to disguise himself, and to conceal the great ascendancy which Sainville had over him. In fine, the baron de Verceil possessed those qualities which were fitted to inspire esteem, and render him agreeable in society : but he had not that transcendent merit which excites envy and hatred ; so that he was generally beloved, whilst Sainville, more brilliant and distinguished by superior wit and talents, notwithstanding the dignity of his character, and although he had never sullied his reputation, had a greater number of enemies and detractors.

In the mean time, according to the orders of the two friends, the post horses arrive. Sainville sees, with indifference, the preparations for his departure ; his friend prevails upon him, and they get into the carriage, accompanied only by Mr. Renaud, surgeon and great botanist, a phlegmatic and absent man, who had been attached

tached to Sainville many years. They are now upon their road to Languedoc; Mr. Renaud reflecting, the baron expatiating, and Sainville falling asleep. At day-break, the baron, addressing himself to Mr. Renaud, exclaims, "What a pleasure it is to quit Paris at this season, when the country is so delightful! Behold these meadows, these woods, and this beautiful fresh verdure, which reminds me of that of England! Is not all this transporting?"—"What noisy exclamations!" said Sainville, waking. "How can the sight of objects so common excite such lively transports!"—"Do not ridicule them," replied the baron. "I flatter myself that one day, when you have got rid of your torpor, you will experience them in your turn."—"I do what you wish," said Sainville; "I leave Paris; and this complaisance will cost me but little, since all is equally alike to me, and I do not regret the world: but I have no desire for solitude;
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and I think, besides, that rural life is not much suited to my condition. In order to like it, there is a necessity for having a new and tender heart. Judge if it can be agreeable to mine."—"Well," cried the baron, "your heart is more new than you imagine; it is only unoccupied, and can never be drained, for it was never filled. For my own part, I am glad to rest myself from the fatiguing dissipation of high life. It is true I regret some friends, whose agreeable company particularly delights me: but the pleasure of writing to them is a very happy compensation. Nothing in the world is more agreeable than a correspondence carried on with women of refined wit and sense; for example, such as Madame de Tervures, who writes like Madame de Sévigné." At these words Sainville, shrugging up his shoulders, disdainfully smiled. "Yes," pursued the baron, "her letters will one day form the most interesting collection; and likewise those

those of Madame de S——, who has not, perhaps, the spiritedness and graces of Madame de Tervures, but she has an original style, and abundance of truly extraordinary ideas. Her manner of writing has much affinity to that of Rousseau. I might even quote Madame de Flamigny——”

—“Very well,” interrupted Sainville, with irony; “and we will compare her to *Pascal*, although her morality is not so austere. So, you are going to keep up a sublime correspondence? I congratulate you upon it. For my part, as I have for a long time had the misfortune of finding, in what are called *pretty letters*, nothing but great pretensions and nonsense, I intend to write only to my steward; that is to say, a note of six lines every month.”—

“Every one to his taste,” replied the baron, peevishly. “You reprobate every thing, nothing pleases you, and all is irksome to you. As for myself, I love to give praise; I approve and admire perhaps too

too readily, but I enjoy even my illusions : I amuse myself, and am happy.” — “ Far from criticising you,” replied Sainville, “ I envy you ; and think, that if a person could adopt a character, it would be your’s I should choose.” The conversation ended here. The baron, who had a romance in his pocket, began to read, and Sainville and Mr. Renaud in a few minutes fell asleep again. They now stopped to dine, when the baron, delighted with what he had been reading, communicated it to Sainville, whom nothing could raise from his lethargy. He answered with indifference and confusion ; and if he sometimes appeared a little enlivened, it was only to give vent to some poignant satire against the world, the court, and the sex ; for proportionally as the heart becomes insensible, the judgment is more sound, and the mind more subtle. Men of gaiety and sensibility are liable to infatuation ; they behold every thing in the best point of view:

view: but insensible people criticise and see objects such as they are really are.

Thus they spent the journey. At length the two friends arrive, upon the first of May, at L——, when all the inhabitants run in crowds to meet Sainville, whom they had not seen since his childhood, and they follow his carriage, weeping for joy. Sainville, at this spectacle, coolly said, "I was ten years old when I left this place, and behold how transported they are to see me again! How silly and stupid the people are every where!"—"Ah!" said the baron "these poor people suppose you to be just and good, which makes them weep for joy; and if their conjecture be right, have they not reason to do so?" Our three travellers, followed by an immense multitude, now enter the chateau; the old keeper, quite enraptured to see his master again, bursts into transports of joy; and the baron, equally communicative and sensible, immediately enters into friendship with

with him, and loses not a moment in questioning and being informed of the days when the post arrives and sets out; a matter particularly interesting to him, for he was one of the greatest letter-writers of the age.

After having passed through two porches, they entered an extensive gallery, filled with family portraits. At this sight the baron is perfectly enraptured. He contemplates, with extreme delight and a secret pride, these old pictures, at the bottom of which were written, in golden characters, the names and titles of the persons they represented. "We could here make a summary of the history of France," exclaimed he, "and even trace it back beyond the time of Charlemagne! What antiquity and illustriousness! I am quite charmed to know the traits of that famous Count de —, who behaved so valiantly at the battle of Bouvines! What a martial air! What looks full of animation!

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and that one, who perished at the engagement of Masoure; and this brave captain, who was made prisoner at the battle of Poitiers—Ah! here is the worthy friend of the great Guesclin! All this side describes to us the most mighty feats of antient chivalry. Good God! what large shoulders these antient chevaliers had, and what stature! How little we are, in comparison of these people! Ah! here is a minister of state, who was the greatest politician of his time; and here is one of the favourites of Henry III. What a beauty! That is the head of Antinoüs! But here is another, much more worthy of fixing our attention, who was one of the friends of Henry IV. What a glorious title! Friend of the greatest and best of kings and of men!—We now come to the age of Louis XIV.; the paintings are so much better! That head of the Marshal de **** is superb: it is by Rigault, I am certain. Ah! I perceive the beautiful
Duchess

Duchefs of ****! It is delightful! And that head of the Marquis of **** is absolutely in the manner of Vandyke! These two pictures deserve to be put upon a new canvass. How I admire that ancient costume, these long cravats with lace, and these knots of scarlet riband! There is a peculiar dignity in that dress!—It must require at least eight days to examine and be well acquainted with this numerous collection. I have never seen one so complete. The ancients, at their funerals, made the busts of the deceased be carried before them, but it is much more agreeable to be surrounded by those respectable images during their lives. When we can reckon heroes among our ancestors, it is pleasant to recollect them: it is allowable, and even salutary, to be proud of them. We wish to render still more illustrious a name which is already famous, and we desire to imitate what we admire.” During this long discourse, Sainville was wandering

dering slowly through the gallery, when suddenly finding himself opposite his father's portrait, he recollected it, stopped, and gazed upon it, the tears starting in his eyes. Roger (which was the name of the keeper), being very near him, observed, with delight, this emotion of filial tenderness, and could not refrain from exclaiming his approbation of his master's sensibility. At the same moment the tears of Sainville were dried up; he looked at Roger with an air of surprise and mortification, and resuming a calm and unconcerned countenance, left the picture, took another turn in the gallery, and then went out. This apparent capriciousness was not affectation; for Sainville's tenderness was at that moment excited, and he at the same time felt a disagreeable embarrassment upon meeting the observing eye of Roger.

Born with profound sensibility, having always been alternately courted and de-

ceived by women void of principles and morals, and having never found a heart which corresponded with his own, Sainville mistook the satiety arising from pleasure and dissipation for the callousness of a heart quite dejected. Too proud and too delicate to experience common ambition, and too enlightened to set a value upon the distinctions granted to birth or intrigue, he despised the court; and was disgusted with the world. Carrying every thing to extremes, he liked to think himself, and to appear to others absolutely insensible. This state of mind seemed to him preferable to a more moderate one, as he found a sort of originality in it that better accorded with his self-love, and his splenetic and disdainful temper. Besides, being forcibly struck with the affected sensibility so common in people of high life, his aversion to hypocrisy made him frequently assume the false appearance of a want of sensibility. He loved the baron, and re-
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vered several engaging qualities he possessed, but he neither esteemed his disposition nor his wit, as he always appeared to him emphatical, full of exaggeration, and often even ridiculous. He had that kind of confidence in him which is inspired by habit, and which cannot be separated from a sincere attachment: but he had not that which results from sympathy, nor did he ever feel a desire of imparting to him the impressions he received; yet he neither concealed from him his actions nor his schemes. He entrusted him with his most important secrets, and still he was almost never tempted to disclose his sentiments to him. Going out of the gallery, Sainville enters the parlour, whither the baron soon follows him. Soon after they sat down to table, and during dinner Roger entertained them with the history of the country. "Have you any neighbours here?" demanded the baron. "No, sir," answered Roger; "this chateau is quite solitary, and our nearest

nearest neighbours are three leagues off. But apropos about neighbours. I forgot to relate to you a story, which much engages the attention of our village, and begins to make some noise in the province. About a year ago, a woman, travelling through these cantons, fell ill at Limoux, a small town about four leagues distant from this place. She used to come, during her convalescence, to walk here, and was so delighted with the farm at the end of the village, that she purchased it, together with the inclosure. She has been settled in it about eight or ten months, living like a hermit, and receiving no person. She has only two servants, a valet, who, like herself, is a foreigner, and who does not yet know the French language, and a maid-servant, whom she hired in this country." At this recital the baron's curiosity was much excited, and he asked a thousand questions at once. "What is her age? What kind of figure has this woman? Of what

what country?"—"I cannot," answered Roger, "satisfy you upon any of these questions: we are ignorant of her birth, her country, and her age. She always goes out with a straw hat, which covers half of her face; and the remainder is so hid by a thick gauze veil, that it is impossible to distinguish her features."—"Since no one, in the course of ten months," interrupted Sainville, "has seen her face, it may be presumed that she is neither young nor handsome."—"On that account," replied Roger, "many people pretend that she has some strange deformity, which obliges her to hide herself. Some think that her face is naturally marked with wine, while others imagine her to be one-eyed. There are different stories about her: but these are only conjectures."—"And what says her servant?" asked the baron. "O," replied Roger, "she is such a silly little girl, that we can gain no intelligence from her. I asked her, myself, if

her mistress was ugly or handsome ; when she answered me that she knew nothing about it, as she was no judge of beauty ; besides, there are also many people who think she is so remarkably handsome, that her excessive modesty makes her conceal it.”—“ A likely story !” cried Sainville, smiling. “ O, I do not believe it,” said Roger quickly, upon seeing that his master made a jest of that notion : “ but I am certain that she is young, which may be seen by her shape and her gait.” Here the baron asked what kind of life she led ; when Roger answered, that she passed for a saint, she was so charitable and beneficent ; and that the peasants in the village called her nothing but *the good lady*. Roger added, that she walked a great deal, but in the most solitary places ; that one of her greatest pleasures was gathering plants in the fields, and cultivating flowers ; that, in short, he did not doubt but she was some lady of distinction, retired

tired there to be more at liberty to serve God. Mr. Renaud, who till then had paid little attention to this recital, began to be interested when he heard of the stranger's taste for plants. He conjectured that she was the daughter or the widow of a botanist, and the baron combated this idea, which Sainville adopted. The baron asked a number of questions about this extraordinary person, and inquired what name she gave herself; when he learnt, with delight, that she called herself Constance. Sainville passed some jokes upon this romantic name; and, already tired with this discourse, he talked of other things. He employed the rest of the day in viewing the chateau, criticising upon the Gothic and inconvenient distribution of the apartments; afterwards in visiting the gardens, which were likewise not spared. The old man Roger suffered terribly, hearing his young master reproaching the hornbeam hedges and long

avenues, the end of which the eye can scarcely reach, which he had admired for forty years ; and it was of no use his saying *the deceased marquis planted this labyrinth ; the late marquis thought these walks and quincunxes admirable.* Sainville disdainfully repeated, now and then, “ All this is laid out with shocking bad taste : I shall have it cut down.” The baron, being passionately fond of English gardening, was of the same opinion, and emphatically repeated all the arguments he could collect against that symmetry, the straight walks, and the trees cut in different forms, and in favour of *the imitation of beautiful nature*, and the *picturesque effects* produced by the inequality of the ground. Poor Roger had still one hope left : the two friends had not yet seen the most beautiful part of the garden, in which were a grand arbour formed of interwoven branches, and a grotto decorated with mother of pearl and shells. These two pieces were famous

mous throughout the province ; and Roger doubted not but Sainville, notwithstanding his censorious humour, would pay the tribute of admiration which he had seen rendered to them for nearly half a century : but his expectation was cruelly disappointed. In approaching these wonders of Languedoc, Roger, with an air of triumph, quickened his pace, looking steadfastly at his master ; and as they advance, Sainville discovers the grotto and bower. “ Ah ! ah ! ” said he, in a jeering tone, “ a grotto and bowers ! I expected so ; for I should have been very much surprised not to find these ornaments in such a garden.” — “ Well,” added the baron, “ I am sure that these master-pieces of bad taste have cost a great deal of money, for the labour of them is prodigious. What a pity such a delightful part of the garden should be thus spoiled, for the site is charming ! ” — “ Yes,” replied Sainville ; and I shall put instead of these ridiculous
c 4 inventions

inventions a cottage and rocks." At these words Roger shuddered ; and could not have dissembled his excessive indignation and grief, had this discourse been prolonged : but some drops of rain making them dread a storm, they discontinued this dissertation upon gardens, and quickly returned to the chateau. There they found Mr. Renaud, who had likewise just returned from his walk, but who had been simpling in the fields, and who said that he had met the unknown lady, and had spoken to her ; upon which the baron did not fail to question him, and Mr. Renaud could give no other answer but that the lady was very polite, and appeared to be well acquainted with botany. As to the baron's queries respecting her shapes, her dress, and the sound of her voice, they were of no use.

Next day the baron went out of the chateau, at seven o'clock in the morning, with Mr. Renaud, who conducted him towards

wards Constance's dwelling, near to which he had been the preceding day : but they waited and sought in vain, for Constance did not appear ; yet the baron wished at least to know her habitation. They accordingly went to the hill where it was situated, and saw a neat little house, newly whitened, and surrounded by a hawthorn hedge that formed the edge of a terrace, from which was discovered a charming prospect. After having rambled some time round the house, the baron, being much discontented with his walk, returned to the chateau, where he was told that Sainville, desirous of having some partitions in the apartments, was in his study with a carpenter ; to which he repaired. " You come apropos," said Sainville to him. " I have given all my orders ; and Robert, who appears to love conversation, was talking to me about *the good lady*. He works for her, and has made, at her house, a book-case and some

other furniture : but he did not see her ; for the servant told him what he was to do, and *the good lady* stayed constantly in a room which Robert had never entered. “ Oh ! yes,” said Robert, “ she is worse than a nun ; she has certainly made a vow of solitude : but the report concerning the wine mark is false ; for the servant told me that, on the contrary, her face is extremely pale, and that she has the sight of both eyes ; besides she writes, she draws, and has many other occupations. In the village, she has given three suits of child-bed linen, made by herself ; and she also makes ozier baskets as well as Charlotte. I have fixed a turning machine for her ; and moreover she plays upon a little organ, and sings like a flute. I have myself heard her, but I cannot understand the words, which I believe are the Latin of her country.” Robert, who never could cease speaking when he had begun any narration, was interrupted by the baron, who

who desired a little more connexion in his recitals; and after having undergone a very long examination, Robert was dismissed. "Well, my dear Verceil," said Sainville, "here is a heroine of romance, with youth, talents, and singularity. If her person be agreeable, we must pursue this adventure. Will you attempt it?"—"Who, I? you are surely jesting!"—"But if this woman is handsome, interesting, witty——"—"These are undoubtedly great qualities; but were it even so, what impression could she make upon me? I am unhappily secure against every kind of temptation."—"I cannot say so. I confess, however, I have no desire to enter into any new intrigue, having engagements at Paris that I neither can nor will break; and it is merely curiosity which makes me wish to be acquainted with so singular a character."—"If she be young and handsome, she is really very singular; and to speak the truth, as I am not possessed of

your lively imagination, I have the rudeness to conceive her very ugly, and about forty years old. Roger thinks she is young, because she walks quicker than himself, which a person at forty can very well do, and which only proves that she has neither the gout nor the asthma. As to her white complexion, my bad disposition persuades me that she is extremely wan; for the expression of *pale countenance*, which Robert employs, justifies this conjecture. But since you have no designs upon her, I should be better pleased that she were as I suppose, than according to the idea that you form of her. And why? If she is a young and beautiful person, love is undoubtedly the cause of her extraordinary manner of living. She has had, or thinks she has, a great passion, and she certainly will not settle in this solitude: but if she be a learned and sensible woman of forty, free from vanity, we may the more agreeably enjoy her society and talents."

talents." Sainville was still speaking, when Roger entered the apartment, and addressing his master, said, "Your nurse's two grand-children are just come, and have brought you a present from their grandmother."—"My nurse!" interrupted Sainville. "I thought the good old woman was not alive."—"Oh!" said Roger, "indeed she is very infirm: a rheumatism, which has afflicted her these four months, prevents her from coming herself to pay her respects to your lordship."—"Does she live in the village?"—"No, she lives about a league and a half from this place."—"I hope that she not only wants for nothing, but is in easy circumstances."—"She has experienced several misfortunes these six months past. Her only daughter, the foster-sister of the marquis, who was a widow, died last winter, and left five orphans, who are now under the protection of their grandmother. I think she has great need of assistance."—

"You

“ You ought, then,” replied Sainville sharply, “ to have immediately written and informed me of it.”—“ I wrote to your steward, who returned me no answer. But will my lord permit the children to see him ?”—“ I am going to hunt,” answered Sainville : “ I shall see them as I pass.” At these words Sainville went out with the baron ; and going through the apartments, they perceived, in an anti-chamber, the two girls, when Roger made them advance. One was seventeen years old, and the other a child of six. The handsome person of the young country girl at once wholly attracted Sainville’s attention. She held a basket, filled with vegetables, fruits, and fresh eggs : she approached with a timid and confused air, and with a trembling hand and blushing countenance presented her offering. Sainville gazed upon her with kindness ; when the little girl, who held some flowers, cried out, “ Here, my godfather, here is a nose-gay !”

gay!"—"O! the delightful little creature!" said the baron; "look how pretty she is!" Saying these words, the baron took her up in his arms. "Am I really her godfather?" asked Sainville. "Yes, sir," answered Roger. "I wrote, requesting your permission to name her after you, and I myself had the honour of representing you at her christening."—"That is the reason," said the little girl, "why I am called Louisa Georgina."—"Well, Georgina," said Sainville, embracing her, "you are a charming creature! And you," said he to the young country girl, "what is your name?"—"Jane, at your service."—"Go, Jane, to your grandmother, and tell her that I will come and see her." Jane then curtsied, and went away. When she had left the room, Sainville took Roger aside, and gave him twenty-five guineas, with orders to send them immediately to his nurse. After having fulfilled

this duty, he set out with the baron for the chace.

The two following days passed without any remarkable event. Sainville and his friend took long walks in the fields and in the woods, without meeting Constance. Mr. Renaud was more fortunate. He said that he had found her upon a mountain, about half a league from the village, but could not then enter into conversation with her, because she soon left him. He added, that she was walking with a child, of whom she appeared to be the mother, because he heard her several times call her *mamma*. This discovery gave rise to fresh information, and they learned that she really had for some days a child at her house: but nothing else could be known. Roger having told the baron that Constance went every feast-day to the parish to hear high mass, which was celebrated at seven o'clock in the morning, the baron engaged

gaged Sainville to go to the church with him the following day, being Sunday. The two friends arrived in the church the same moment when Constance entered it. She had no hat on, but a black veil, which covered her face, and a black cloak entirely hid her shape. A servant followed, and she had no child with her. Sainville and the baron bowed to her; and being near the holy water pot, Sainville, in a respectful manner, offered her some holy water. Constance profoundly curtsied; and pulling off her glove to take it, discovered an exceeding beautiful hand and arm. Just at that moment the curate and clergyman approaching Sainville, to pay him the honours granted to the lords of the parish, Constance retired, while Sainville's eyes followed her: but she was lost in the crowd. Sainville, being conducted to his seat, heard mass with much perturbation; and he looked for Constance, but could not find her, as she was seated at the other extremity

extremity of the church. The baron, even more confused than his friend, observed, upon a seat at a little distance from him, Constance's valet, when, under pretext of going to speak to Roger, he quitted the marquis's seat, and after walking about in the church, at last sat down near the servant of Constance. As he had been told that his name was Thomson, he readily conceived from what country he came, and spoke English to him. He was not mistaken, for Thomson answered him; but in such a laconic and unfriendly manner, that he could obtain no new information, except that Constance was an English lady. After mass, the two friends waited a considerable time near the front gate of the church, in hopes of seeing Constance, but she had gone out by a little back door, and they did not meet her again.

Some urgent affairs obliging Sainville to pass two days at Limoux, he set out that night with the baron. Upon the road,
Constance

Constance was frequently the subject of conversation. "You will allow," said the baron, "that a woman of forty has not commonly such a hand and arm as her's?" "Yes, I now begin to think she is young, and I suppose she is an unfortunate creature, who has been seduced and abandoned, together with her infant, and been obliged, through shame and grief, to come here and conceal herself. These adventures are very common in England, where young girls enjoy a liberty which exposes them to so many dangers."—"But to return to our heroine. Now that you allow her to be young, are you still so obstinate as to refuse admitting she is beautiful?"—"O! more than ever; for she readily shewed her charming hand, and constantly hid her face."—"For my part, I think her as beautiful as an angel."—"I do not doubt it; for your imagination represents objects to such advantage! I dare say that you have already composed an admirable romance

romance upon this stranger, and therefore she must be handsome. But the plan will not be very new: a young girl, seduced and deceived, flying, with the fruit of her love, from an irritated family, coming to hide herself for some months in a farm, and afterwards, being tired with solitude, mixing and consoling herself with the world again. There is the whole romance, and it appears to me insipid enough.”—“ But you have composed the catastrophe of it. Who has told you that our stranger will leave her cottage, and be consoled?”—“ I am well acquainted with women. To them, violent expedients never present any difficulties; they determine upon and renounce them with equal facility. They weep, they faint; you see them dead, and immediately come to life again; they go from one extreme to the other; from love to hatred, from timidity to boldness, from modesty to impudence, and from misanthropy to dissipation. They have been
too

too much accused of falseness, because their unevenness and inconstancy of disposition are often attributed to dissimulation and hypocrisy: they openly quit and resume passion, vices, and virtues; and to an exquisite delicacy they owe a liveliness of sensations, which has entire dominion over them, and gives them an equal propensity to good and evil. When guided by the greatest prudence, a slight incident may occasion a fit of madness, and in the midst of their errors the enthusiasm of virtue may seize them. Madame de **** loved me passionately: when we were together at the midnight mass, the majesty of the place, the harmonious sounds of the organ, and the beauty of the music, produced such an effect upon her, that, after going out of the church, she entered a convent, where she lived three years the life of a saint. This woman, at three quarters past eleven o'clock, was entirely devoted to love, and at midnight she sacrificed to
God

God her passion, her lover, and the world. Such is the character of women ; and even those are the most interesting who are ingenuous and sensible : seducing and capricious beings, who owe their greatest charms to their defects—to that facility of sentiment, which gives to their features so much expression and mobility, and to their manners such a striking variety ! Dangerous sex ! which it is impossible to love with safety, and to esteem and despise with justice, because it is equally capable of the most inconceivable errors and the most sublime actions.”—“ This satire upon women,” said the baron, smiling, “ pleases me more than those you usually make ; at least it is of another kind ; and I do not find in it that disdainful indifference, which is still more insulting than anger itself.”—“ Anger supposes resentment,” replied Sainville, “ and I have none. I argue with the greatest impartiality ; I judge women without caprice, because I see them dispassionately ;

passionately ; and believe, that when we speak of them with justice, passion is radically cured." The two friends, discoursing in this manner, arrived at Limoux, and were next day invited to a grand dinner, where there were more than thirty people. During dinner, the conversation fell upon Constance, and each, upon this subject, made a story more or less probable, and all nearly equally injurious ; for in every country, persons who devote themselves to solitude, and who will neither make nor receive visits, are reviled and calumniated by curious and idle people ; and this class is the most numerous : the others are silent, listening to what is said, and always receive unfavourable impressions. So are treated those who, free from ambition, and desirous of peace, fly from society ; whilst intriguers are never without partisans and protectors. However the baron, with some warmth, argued in favour of Constance ; when a lady of the company, who
was

was the handsomest in Limoux, positively asserted that the adventurer (the epithet by which she called the stranger) was an Irish waiting-woman, who, after having robbed her mistress, had sought refuge in Languedoc. Sainville laughed very much at this story, which considerably disconcerted the lady, who had an ardent desire to please a man of the court, a *great lord*, who was young, witty, and handsome. The resentment she felt inspired her with such anger against the stranger, that she whispered to the person sitting next to her, that this *adventurer* had not only committed a robbery, but even a murder, by twice stabbing her mistress with a knife, which caused her immediate death. During this conversation, an old gentleman, dressed in black, sat down near the baron, kept the most profound silence, and continued eating. Suddenly the master of the house addressed him, saying, "Doctor, you can, better than any one here, speak upon this subject;

subject; for (if I am not mistaken) you attended the stranger.”—“ Yes, sir,” answered the doctor, “ but I do not speak of her, since I know that people make me say quite the contrary to what I have related.”—“ No matter,” replied Sainville; “ we cannot too often repeat the truth.”—“ Well, marquis, I had the honour of attending this lady in a serious illness about ten months ago. She told me that she was twenty-four years old: I should have supposed her only eighteen; and she appeared to me to be the handsomest woman I ever saw; and certainly no one could be more respectable, for nothing can equal her mildness, goodness, and modesty. I have had the pleasure of meeting her several times since her convalescence, always at the houses of poor people whom she was taking care of, consoling, and relieving their distress.” This discourse affected Sainville, and transported the baron. Some of the company, whose visits Con-

stance had refused, scornfully smiled, and shewed extreme incredulity; while others, less interested, suspended their judgment: for it was necessary to pass from contempt to admiration, in a matter upon which we cannot rashly determine; and as to the lady of Limoux, she suffered extremely, and could not help saying very loud, that the doctor was a visionary and an old dotard. "Doctor," said Sainville, "since you have given us such an account of this unknown lady, I am not surpris'd that she has so many enemies. A recital of this kind should excite envy, and consequently much malice and absurd calumny." As he had done speaking, they rose from table, and about an hour after the two friends returned again to L****. On the road, they talked of nothing but Constance, when Sainville always spoke of her with indifference: but he added, that he was irritated at the calumnies raised against her, and that therefore he was determin'd to pay

pay her a visit that very day. "Perhaps she will not receive us," continued he; "no matter; we shall have fulfilled a duty, by shewing a mark of consideration and respect to a person so interesting and peaceable, whom hatred and envy try to denigrate."

In reality, Sainville, upon approaching the village, orders his people to stop before the house of Constance; they draw near, and the man on horseback, who precedes the carriage, dismounts, knocks at the door, and calls out loudly for the servant, who runs to him. The footman told her, "Here is the marquis come to visit your mistress: please go and inform her." The servant, quite confused, went into the house, and in a moment after returned, and without any preamble said that her mistress could see no one. The valet, being irritated at such a want of respect towards *the marquis*, was going to

answer in an angry manner, when Sainville, in a sharp tone, and with an air of indifference, ordered him to be silent, and return to the castle. The baron was grieved; his curiosity was excited to the highest pitch, and he did not conceal it; while Sainville, ashamed of experiencing the same sentiment, endeavoured to dissemble it. Moreover he was at heart very much piqued to see himself treated by Constance in the same manner as his neighbours and the inhabitants of Limoux. This taste for profound solitude, which at first interested him, now appeared to him only a *ridiculous antipathy* for society. "This stranger may be interesting, but I am certain she is wanting of *education*."—"I do not doubt but the servant was charged with some compliment, which she has not delivered; she has only bluntly told the message, without repeating the expressions."—"However," replied Sainville, smiling,

smiling, "that is quite indifferent to me." After having spoken these words, they talked of other things.

Upon arriving at the castle, the baron could not question Roger, who had taken advantage of his master's absence, by going to a fair which was held some leagues from the village. Mr. Renaud, being profoundly occupied in his business, and in the study of botany, paid no attention to what was going forward around him. He was neither observing nor curious; and when he was interrogated upon events he ought to have known, or even relating to things he had witnessed, he generally gave only these two answers: *I have not inquired about it; or I did not pay any attention to it.* He was by no means susceptible of any passion, (except that of study,) neither did he conceive them in others: he paid as little attention to effects as he comprehended their causes: he thought matrimony a mere association of interest, and

love only an idle amusement. Although he was kind, he never experienced compassion but for physical evils: others escaped his penetration, or only appeared to him defects of organization and folly. The baron heard nothing new from him about Constance, which made him out of humour: but that being the day when the post went out, he consoled himself by writing all the evening.

The next morning the two friends went to take a walk in a charming wood, about three quarters of a mile from the castle. This wood was entirely decked with a young verdure, strewed with lilies and violets. The ground was unequal, and they found some rocks covered with moss, and several springs of pure water, forming an infinite number of streamlets intersecting each other. Upon entering a narrow avenue of young trees which formed an arbour, Sainville perceived, about fifty paces off, a woman sitting upon a rock. He

He stopped; and recollecting Constance, or rather being certain that it was her, he pointed her to his friend, making a sign to be silent. She was sitting with her back to them, with a child by her side. She had a hat on, the veil of which hid her neck, but left to view the most beautiful head of hair and the most perfect shape in the world. After having for some moments gazed at her, the two friends advance softly and silently. When they were very near her, Constance, who was attentively reading, looked around, and perceived them through her thick veil, when she started with surprise, and rose up. At that moment the child, who was playing with flowers, raised her head, and looking at Sainville, cried out, "*Ab! it is my god-fader!*" Sainville cast his eyes upon her, and recollected, with extreme astonishment, Georgina, his nurse's grandchild. The child ran holding out her arms to him, when Sainville took her up; and ad-

dressng himself to Constance, with emotion stammered a compliment, of which she only heard the last phrase, entreating her to sit down. "Yes, yes, mamma," said Georgina, "*you sitty down*, and my godfader too." At these words Constance sat down again. Sainville then embraced Georgina, and also sat upon the rock, still holding the child upon his knee. The baron was standing; and Constance, spreading the skirt of her gown upon the side opposite to Sainville, appeared to offer him a place, which he eagerly accepted. They kept a moment's silence, which Georgina broke by this question, addressed to Sainville: "*Godfader, you 'ike mamma vedy much, don't you?*"—"Charming child!" answered Sainville: "you suppose that every one, like you, can freely deliver their sentiments! But, madam," continued he, inclining towards Constance, "may I presume to ask if you have been made acquainted with our desire of having
the

the honour of seeing you?"—"I beseech you," replied Constance, "to receive, upon that head, all my excuses; for my health, my situation, and the kind of life to which I have devoted myself, do not permit me to enjoy an honour, of which I am, however, very sensible; and I am charmed that chance has presented me with an opportunity of expressing to you all my regrets." These words were delivered in such an enchanting tone, that Sainville felt himself perplexed. The baron was going to speak, but Georgina prevented him by saying, "O, mamma! you cannot refuse my godfader: and besides, he is our lord." Here Sainville again embraced the child, and replied, "At least, madam, allow me to testify my gratitude to you for your kindness to this child."—"I ought not to have taken her under my care," replied Constance, "without your permission: but I had obtained that of her grandmother a long time before your ar-

rival here. May I flatter myself, sir, that you will approve my design of educating and adopting her?" At these words, the child, terrified at a question which supposed a doubt, threw herself into the arms of Constance, crying and saying, that nothing could make her leave her mamma. Constance, being affected, pressed her tenderly to her bosom, when the child accidentally raised Constance's veil, and discovered an alabaster neck which so much fixed the attention of Sainville, that he forgot to give an answer. The baron, who had hitherto no opportunity of saying a word during this conversation, hastened to speak and express what Sainville ought to have answered; when the latter, in a faltering voice, confirmed by a solemn promise what the baron said. Georgina recompensed him by the most tender caresses, and Constance thanked him in a feeling manner. Sainville, troubled and embarrassed by the extreme tenderness which he experienced,

rose up, took leave of the interesting stranger, and went away. The baron followed him with regret, for he wished very much to prolong such a conversation. Sainville walked on hastily, without speaking a word; and the baron looking at him, O-ho!" said he, "notwithstanding your insensibility, you have shed tears. I see two still upon your cheek."—"Well," replied Sainville, "it was that dear child who bathed my face with tears." In saying these words, he pulled out his pocket-handkerchief, wiped his cheeks, and particularly his eyes, which were still moist. "Moreover," continued he, "I do not deny having been affected by this singular scene."—"That is, then, the child," interrupted the baron, "whom we supposed to be the fruit of a clandestine love?"—"All this is inconceivable," replied Sainville, and said no more. The baron, resuming the discourse, extravagantly praised the stranger; while Sainville, to hide his

extreme agitation and 'embarrassment, affected a composed countenance. Upon arriving at the castle, they found Roger returned. The post had just come in, and the baron received an enormous packet of letters, when he went into his room to read them at his leisure. Sainville received two letters, the superscription of which he recollected, put them in his pocket without opening them, and went into an inner yard which led to the stables, where he ordered a horse to be saddled, and set off immediately, without permitting any one to follow him. He went to the village where his nurse lived. The good woman was transported with joy at the sight of him. She was still confined to bed with the rheumatism. Sainville, who generally shewed little outward demonstrations of sensibility, testified his affection by a thousand caresses, and hastened to justify himself for not having assisted her when she lost her daughter, and was obliged to take charge

charge of all her grandchildren ; and also complained bitterly of the negligence of his steward. At this discourse the nurse wept with affection and gratitude. She answered that she had really experienced great misfortunes, but that heaven had just then sent *an angel to her aid*. At these words Sainville conceived that she was speaking of Constance : he was very attentive to what she said ; and the old woman related that Constance, having come to walk in the village, had learnt her distress, and brought a physician along with her. “ That is not all,” continued the good woman : “ she comes to see me every week, bringing sometimes money, at others linen, broth, and syrups. She has put one of my little boys to school, and pays for him. When she came, she usually stopped two or three hours in the cottage, brought her work along with her, and worked with Jane : she taught her a great many fine works, and then she said, ‘ Jane, you

you must, in your turn, give me a lesson. Teach me to spin :’ then she took the spindle and span, all the while singing hymns. She had scarcely entered, when all the children ran round her, she having her pockets full of cakes and playthings : but she liked Georgina better than the others, and cloathed Jane as well as her. In short, about two months ago she asked me to let her have Georgina, that she might make a young lady of her. I consented to it. She let her remain with me till her lodging was prepared, which was not ready till the day that I sent Jane and Georgina to the castle, and that very day Georgina remained with the good lady.”—“ But tell me,” replied Sainville, “ when that virtuous lady was here, had she always her face covered ?”—“ O, no ! she took off her hat to work.”—“ And is she young ?”—“ Her face is like a child’s.”—“ Has she not black eyes ?”—“ No, they are blue, like those of Jane, only larger ; her eye-
brows

brows are brown, and she has fair hair. O, what a pity it is that she has her mob always over her face! but it is because there is no fun in her country, and she is so much afraid of ours."—"You say her eyes are the colour of Jane's, but I wager she has not such pretty teeth."—"O! I beg your pardon; it is quite the contrary: her teeth are much whiter, and as shining as a glass."—"She is, then, very handsome?"—"O! handsome as an angel! and so charitable and God-fearing! She speaks so mildly!"—"I am charmed, my good mother, to see you so sensible of the beneficence and virtues of this respectable lady. I will contribute, as well as her, to make your life comfortable."—"O, my good lord! I have nothing more to desire; I have seen you, and you have sent me so much money——"—"When the good lady comes to see you, does she send you previous notice of it?"—"Now that I am in better health, and do not want any thing,

thing, she does not come so often. It is about two weeks since I saw her, but she sent word to me that she will come on Saturday, with Georgina."—"On Saturday? In four days hence? Adieu, my dear Magdalen! I shall send you, to-morrow, many little things you stand in need of, and I shall come to see you again next week:"—"If you could come on Saturday, the good lady would be here, and——"—"No, she does not like to be seen, and only comes here on your account. We ought to respect her wishes." After this discourse Sainville left his nurse, and quickly returned to the castle, called to Roger, to whom he in private gave some orders relative to Magdalen, desiring him to mention it to no person whatever, and he afterwards sat down to table with the baron. The latter spoke a great deal about some letters he had received from Paris, when Sainville listened to him with more complaisance than usual; and far
from

from ridiculing the three or four women who wrote to him, he praised them, especially Madame de Flamigny, whose lover he had formerly been, and who was actually the baron's mistress. After dinner, Mr. Renaud and the baron began to play at chess. Sainville was musing in the park. That day appeared to him to glide over rapidly : he was himself astonished at it ; and said at night, going to bed, " I cannot conceive the reason that time has not appeared tedious to me to-day." He slept little, and awoke early. The baron entered his chamber as he finished dressing himself. " I come," said he, " to inform you of my good fortune. I have found and seized the opportunity of doing something that will please Constance. I heard this morning, from Robert, who had just left her, that little Georgina had entirely spoiled a large book of painted flowers and *herbages*, as Robert called it, of which Constance was extremely fond. I then entreated

treated Mr. Renaud to give me his engraved herbal, which is very beautiful, and I immediately sent it to Constance.”—

“Very well,” replied Sainville, with a forced smile; “you should desire me to be silent on this matter, else I shall inform Madame de Flamigny of all this gallantry.”—“O, I have myself made mention to her of this stranger. My last letter contains four pages of particulars concerning her.”—“I only jest,” replied Sainville. “I know, my dear Verceil, that Madame de Flamigny has too much confidence in you to be jealous; and I really think that you will not be tempted to renounce a perfect, handsome, and very amiable woman, for a person with whom you are not acquainted, and who, to all appearance, is herself otherwise engaged.”

The baron made no reply. They set out a hunting, but were soon tired, and about two hours after returned to the castle. The baron finding Robert in the yard, wished
much

much to speak to him privately, but he could not get rid of Sainville. Robert, who had carried the herbal, in the name of Constance returned him many thanks; also adding, that she would not keep it, but would inspect and return it in a few days. From the manner in which Robert delivered the message, Sainville doubted not the baron had sent a note along with the herbal. "You have, then, written to her?" asked he, ironically. "Certainly," answered the baron, blushing; "and I told you so."—"I did not hear it," replied Sainville. At that moment a coach and six horses entering the yard, put an end to this conversation. It was the Intendant of the province, who came to pay a visit to Sainville. They soon sat down to table; and after dinner the Intendant begged Sainville to go into his study, as he wished to converse with him in private. When they were alone, the Intendant began to speak, and said, "I wish to obtain some inform-

information respecting the stranger who has taken up her abode in this place.”—

“What have you heard about her?”—

“O, a thousand extraordinary things. Among others, that she is paid by the English government to act here as a spy.”

—“A spy?”—“Yes. This suspicion proceeds from the extreme curiosity she has shewn respecting our manufactures, in all the towns she has passed through. It is asserted that she takes down notes of every thing she sees; and this particularity, joined to the mysteriousness of her conduct, renders her suspicious to such a degree, that the minister has written to me to make inquiry about her.”—“What, has her name already reached so far as Versailles?”—“They have such an odd portrait of her, that if we were at war with the English, we should have already secured her by a *lettre de cachet*.”—“What! put a young person into the Bastille, because she loves the arts and solitude! It would cer-
tainly

tainly be a very prudent action in the time of war: but as we enjoy perfect peace, what have we to fear?"—"But at all times the secrets of our manufactures are of great importance to our commerce." The Intendant, who was full of pedantry and had very little wit, delivered these words in such a foolish and self-sufficient manner, that Sainville, already impatient, could not help smiling with the utmost contempt. "Sir," said he to him, "you may quiet the minister's fears, by writing to him, that this foreign lady is extremely respectable, notwithstanding her taste for manufactures and retirement; and that I pass my word for her, although I have not the honour of personally knowing her, as she has refused my visits: but I know who she is; and I can assure you there is not a woman who is more entitled to the protection of government, and the esteem of well-thinking people." Sainville, to preserve Constance from an absurd and ridiculous

culous persecution, made up a story by saying that she was no stranger to him : but his jeering and disdainful tone excited the Intendant's anger so much, that it did not give him a more favourable opinion of Constance, and, on the contrary, changed it from slight prejudices into aversion. It is a very great art to defend people who interest us ; for a condemnable weakness and a too great severity are equally dangerous. Some cowardly abandon those whom they seem to protect, while others take up their defence with an insulting ardour, which can only irritate, and produces hatred. The Intendant therefore wrote to Paris, that Constance was an adventurer and an intriguer, but that Sainville protected her on account of his being her lover.

Sainville related this interview to the baron, who was very much irritated at what had passed, and at the same time insisted that Sainville ought to inform Constance

stance of this event; when it was determined that Sainville should write to her upon the subject.

An hour before supper the baron came and told his friend that he had made a charming discovery. "Constance," continued he, "often walks upon the terrace at night, between twelve and one o'clock. Several peasants, returning late from the neighbouring fairs, have seen her at moonlight, when she had no veil on: I therefore propose to you, if it should be fine to-night, to go together softly to the bottom of the terrace. Perhaps by this means we may see her; and I confess I feel the greatest curiosity upon this consideration."—"As you please," replied Sainville coolly. "I will accompany you willingly."

They supped, as usual, at nine o'clock, when they eat and spoke little. After supper they went into the hall, and the windows being open, they looked out several

veral times to see if the weather was clear and serene. At length they set out precisely at eleven o'clock, and arrived at the house of Constance: but to no purpose, as she did not come out to walk; and they returned sorrowfully to the castle at two o'clock in the morning. Next day they determined to attempt it again, and the night was so fine, that the hope of seeing Constance appeared better founded. That idea caused such an emotion in them, that it was taken for a presentiment. The baron was agitated; Sainville experienced an extreme perturbation. They silently approached the terrace with precaution, and hid themselves behind the hawthorn hedge. The sky was clear and serene; the moon spread a light as pleasing as enlivening; the air was impregnated with the perfume of the rural flowers which decorated the terrace: in short, this mysterious and solitary asylum at that time united all that could seduce the imagination and charm

charm the senses. After some moments of profound silence the two friends heard a person walking near them, who sat down, sighed, articulated some words in a feeble voice, but which was known, and was afterwards silent. The two friends, motionless and retaining their breath, listened with eager attention. In a few minutes the same voice was heard in more distinct and sweet sounds. She sang a tender and slow air, with English words. Sainville, although quite vexed that he could not understand them, was, however, consoled by the expression of the music, which seemed to interpret their meaning. He did not know which to prefer—the affecting accents which penetrated to the bottom of his heart, or the taste and art which directed them. The voice was silent, but Sainville still listened. A sigh was again heard, when Sainville started. His heart felt the same sympathetic emotion with that tender soul which appeared to suffer; he experienced

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perienced and deeply felt all the affections that his imagination suggested. However, the baron rising up a little, and moving the foliage, takes Sainville by the arm, who, knowing his design, seconds it: both gently bend a branch, and, without being perceived, they could at last see upon the terrace and discover the object of such lively curiosity. Constance presented herself to their view without hat or veil. She was seated upon a plot of grass, in such a situation that they could only see her profile: but this posture shewed to greater advantage, on the first glance, the perfect regularity of her face and shape. As it was exceedingly warm, her neck and hands were uncovered. The silver light of the moon still added to the dazzling splendour of her fair complexion. With her mouth half open, and her eyes raised towards heaven, Constance contemplated that planet which favours mystery and melancholy. In this attitude, her enchanting counte-

countenance at once expressed tenderness and serenity. This celestial figure made upon the heart of Sainville an impression as deep as rapid: she not only made him lose the recollection of every other idea, but she banished for ever from his imagination the remembrance of all that he had admired. It was to him a singular and new object, for he believed he saw a handsome woman for the first time in his life.

Enchained and fixed by surprize and admiration, he could not quit this dangerous contemplation: but at last Constance, suddenly awaking from her reverie, rose up, walked to her house, and disappeared. Sainville, seeing her no more, still sought her, and continually kept looking upon the seat she had just left: but the baron pulling him by the arm, he was obliged to return to the castle. While they were on their way thither, Sainville did not speak but to ask his friend the signification of the words which Constance had sung; when the

the baron answered, that they expressed the charms of solitude and the dangers of love. The baron made many observations and formed a thousand conjectures upon this subject: he wanted to deliver his sentiments, and to speak of Constance; while Sainville, on the contrary, could not utter a single word, and only wished to be alone. He had scarcely entered his chamber, when he sent his attendants away, and falling into an arm-chair, "Is it possible?" said he. "It is only an illusion.—No; I love her, or rather my heart tells me I shall love her with idolatry. But she loves another object; every thing declares it. She is perhaps married. What does that signify?—Whatever power reason may have over her sentiments, this angelic creature is a woman—she can be seduced! I must, then, banish this stupid supineness which overcomes me. I shall form projects: I shall have a predominant idea. But, ah! should I experience the torment

of

of an unfortunate passion ! At least then I shall exist. Any thing is preferable to nonentity, and hope alleviates all evils."

Sainville, buried in these reflexions, passed a great part of the night walking in his room, calling to mind the image of Constance, and meditating the plan of his conduct towards her. He did not go to bed till five o'clock in the morning, and rose before ten, with an intention of writing to Constance, according to the baron's advice : but wishing to compose a letter at once simple, interesting, and witty, which he could shew to his friend, he wrote half a dozen of them, all of which he tore in pieces. He succeeded no better in the afternoon; and the baron asking him, in the evening, if he had written the letter, he pretended that he had forgotten it, and added, that he would do it the following day; which he accordingly did. The letter, having been communicated to the baron, was sent to Constance; and two hours after, the mes-

senger returned with a written answer, which Sainville received with inexpressible emotion. He opened it, saw a beautiful hand, and read the following lines :

Answer from CONSTANCE *to the Marquis*
of SAINVILLE.

‘ I am infinitely sensible, sir, of the proofs
‘ of esteem with which you are so kind
‘ to honour me ; and my gratitude obliges
‘ me to answer you with a frankness that
‘ will undoubtedly subvert the prejudices
‘ which curiosity and my apparent mysterious
‘ conduct have given rise to.
‘ My disposition is singular ; I am unfociable ; I hate society. In this my
‘ singularity consists. I conceal myself
‘ rather from caprice than for any particular reason ; yet I could, without any
‘ fear of being remarked, frequent society.
‘ My desire for tranquillity, and not any
‘ extraordinary events, has led me to this
‘ retreat, where I wish to live ; and, de-
‘ voting

‘ voting myself to obscurity, I have chosen
‘ the only situation which suits me. I
‘ shall even confess, that one of the mo-
‘ tives which determined me to select this
‘ place for an asylum was the opinion ge-
‘ nerally entertained, that he to whom it
‘ belongs would never come to it.

‘ As to the calumnies spread against me,
‘ they can neither cause affliction nor even
‘ uneasiness to me. I am perfectly indif-
‘ ferent about the opinion that may be
‘ conceived of me, and your generous pro-
‘ tection shelters me from an unjust perse-
‘ cution.

‘ Pardon me, sir, for having thus so far
‘ intruded upon you: but on account of
‘ the interest which you and the baron of
‘ Verceil have so condescendingly taken in
‘ my favour, I felt it my duty to mention
‘ the above particulars.’

“ Well, my dear marquis,” exclaimed
the baron, after having read the letter,

“what do you think of such an answer? Does it not raise your astonishment to the highest pitch? Do you not find in it all that can characterise the most singular person, and the least fitted for the mode of life she has chosen?”—“You know,” answered Sainville, “that in general I have not a very favourable opinion of women, I have discovered in their conduct so much intrigue, artifice, and coquetry: but this one, I confess, confounds all my ideas. One so handsome and so young, voluntarily to sacrifice herself to oblivion! She is ignorant that we have seen her, and endeavours to hide her charms to persuade us that she is only an ordinary person; and she ardently wishes to destroy a prejudice which vexes and displeases her.” Saying these words, Sainville again took up the letter, and after having read it over a second time, “Yes,” said he, “this is surprising!”—“O!” replied the baron, “it is inconceivable! What a woman!

What

What a nobleness in all her expressions ! How she exalts, by wishing to humble herself ! What politeness, what mildness accompanies her misanthropy !” Sainville added nothing more to this eulogium : he fell into a profound reverie ; and recovering from it, he proposed writing another letter to Constance, in the name of them both, to assure her they would respect her wishes and love for solitude, and would even renounce walking in the little wood, having observed, that since they had the happiness of meeting her there, she had not frequented it. This letter being approved by the baron, was immediately sent. Constance returned no answer : she only desired the carpenter to give them her compliments and thanks, and that without seeing him ; the message was delivered by the servant, (as were all others,) a circumstance which augmented their grief at not having received a written answer. The two friends then determined to go no
E 5 more

more at night to the bottom of the terrace; for they were sensible, that if Constance discovered such a trick, they would entirely lose her esteem.

The next day was an important one to Sainville: it was Saturday, when Constance was expected at Magdalen's habitation. Let us now leave Sainville, reflecting upon what would be going forward there, and let us follow Constance into the cottage of Georgina's grandmother. She set out at two o'clock, with the child and the faithful Thomson; and after crossing a forest which led to the village of Magdalen, she was very much surprised to find, instead of a rugged and stony road, a beaten path, perfectly smooth, with a great number of seats in different parts upon the road. She arrived at the old woman's at half past three o'clock; and in approaching the house, she perceived that the walls were newly whitened. Jane, quite overjoyed, was waiting for her at the door, when

when she enters, and finds the interior part of the cottage totally altered. She sees nothing but new furniture, extremely plain and perfectly neat, and she is informed that they were all given by *the marquis*. Magdalen being in better health, was sitting up in an arm-chair; and the good woman, anticipating the questions Constance would make, began to relate all the particulars of *the marquis's kindness to her*. In the midst of this recital, Jane, followed by a servant who was newly come to the house, went into an adjoining room, and returned, bringing with them a table covered with fruits, refreshments, and ices. At this sight Georgina was exceedingly pleased, and sat down immediately to table, inviting Constance to follow her example. Magdalen and her grandchildren only kept up the conversation. Constance spoke but little, and was very pensive; and upon taking leave of Magdalen, the latter wished to learn from her when she should have the

E 6 pleasure

pleasure of another visit: but Constance did not inform her; she only promised, in a vague manner, to come again.

In returning to L****, Constance more attentively examined the new road, which she could no longer doubt had been made on her account; and although she was not tired, she sat down three or four times (as if to pay honour to the utility of the seats). She returned to her house through the garden, and had scarcely entered, when Georgina with joy exclaimed, "Ah, mamma! look how many flowers! How fine and fresh they are!" Constance indeed saw a prodigious quantity of boxes and pots of the finest flowers, with which the garden and terrace had been decorated during her absence. She called her servant, who immediately came and informed that *my lord the marquis* had sent all these flowers *to his godchild*, at the same time delivering a letter to her from Sainville.

Constance

Constance hastily enters her room, and shutting herself in, opens the packet, which contained a large piece of parchment, and a letter to the following purport:

‘ Madam,

‘ While you give me such an example of
‘ the most sublime beneficence, you cannot
‘ be surpris’d at my feeling a desire of at
‘ least fulfilling my duty. The happy
‘ child you have adopted is my godchild:
‘ you are become her mother, and I
‘ have, at her christening, contracted to-
‘ wards her the obligation of a father.
‘ This bond, which attaches me to her, is
‘ not less dear to my heart than sacred in
‘ itself. Suffer me, therefore, madam, also
‘ to interest myself about her destiny, and
‘ deign to receive for her this contract,
‘ which I should have sooner sent, but for
‘ the delay occasioned by the law forms
‘ that

‘ that were judged necessary to secure the
‘ validity of it.’

Constance, after having read this letter, unfolded the parchment, and found it to be a contract in the usual form, securing to Georgina a thousand crowns annually. Knowing her obligation of answering, Constance wrote a short note, wherein she acknowledged that Sainville had certainly every right to exercise his beneficence towards Georgina ; but added, that the child having no need of a pension during the course of her education, she therefore wished the contract to be deposited in the hands of a notary, and that the money should lie out at interest till Georgina should be married. Constance having thus answered, put her note and the contract under cover; and after having called Georgina, she desired her to go herself to thank her godfather, and carry to him
the

the packet she had just sealed. Georgina, quite proud and delighted to receive such a commission, set out immediately along with the servant. Being arrived at the castle, she asks for her godfather, when Sainville runs and embraces the child, takes her by the hand, and leads her into his study. There, *tête-à-tête* with Georgina, he reads the answer two or three times over, when the child interrupted him to repeat her compliments, which he appeared not to have heard. Sainville takes her upon his knees, admires her engaging little ways, and with pleasure remarks that her manners, although still natural, are much more agreeable, and that she speaks infinitely better. “My dear Georgina,” said he to her, “what lessons does your mamma give you?”—“She teaches me to read, and then to sew, and then to count. Will you hear me count up to a hundred?”—“No, I like better to talk with you.”—“O! it is with mamma I talk :

I talk : she tells me such pretty stories !” —“ Do you love music ?” —“ O yes, when mamma sings and plays upon the piano.” —“ Your mamma paints likewise ?” —“ Yes, little pictures no bigger than that. She painted her medallion.” —“ A medallion ! That she wears on her neck ?” —“ Yes, indeed.” —“ But how did you see it ?” —“ She always hides it under her handkerchief : but I have seen it, for all that.” —“ It represents a person ?” —“ Only a very little face, not larger than a nut, and yet there is every thing in it—the eyes, the nose, the mouth.” —“ Is it the face of a woman ?” —“ No, it is the face of a beautiful young man.” —“ Of a young man ?” —“ O, he is so pretty ! I always kiss it when I see it ; and mamma is so fond of it, that she kisses it too.” At these words Sainville, after remaining a moment without speaking, again asked a few questions of Georgina, who always answered with the same ingenuousness ;

nuousness ; and after having promised to send her some playthings, he gave her into the hands of the servant.

The next day Georgina received from her godfather the handsomest dolls made in Limoux, together with a large basket full of pine-apples ; and from that day Sainville found no opportunity of renewing these kind of attentions. Constance did not go to Magdalen's house, but she was sometimes seen walking at a great distance, when no one ventured to come near her.

She often walked in the little wood where Sainville had promised never to go. In short, he in vain sought some new method of recalling him to her mind, and of letting her know how much he was interested about her. However, far from being discouraged, he daily persisted in the design and desire of triumphing over such an uncommon haughtiness. The extreme reserve of Constance, and the certainty that she loved another object, tended only to increase

increase and inflame the passion of a man of his disposition. An easy conquest could not have revived his heart, but to seduce a woman so handsome, so romantic—a woman who discovered so much wit, singularity, and even such attracting virtue and superior reason, notwithstanding her precautions, and undoubtedly oaths and love given to another, to astonish, soften, conquer, render her unfaithful, and become the sole arbiter of her destiny—these were grand projects, and the difficulties and obstacles they presented were to him the most powerful attraction. His head and imagination being strongly filled with this idea, Sainville recovered from his languor, and visibly acquired a new existence: he was no longer that indolent and disdainful man whom nothing could agitate, and whom every thing fatigued: he had not that kind of perturbation occasioned by the supineness of the heart, or that stupor, by which the use of the intellectual faculties

faculties is suspended: he was often thoughtful when he should have given an answer, but then it could be perceived that he was only absent because his mind was intensely pre-occupied: he in general spoke more, and with less malignity. In short, notwithstanding his fears and inquietudes, the joy of having recovered his sensibility made him more chearful and agreeable; he employed himself with more activity, he read much, and particularly books upon botany.

As for the baron, he was not in his usual state of mind. Less agreeable, and not so even-tempered, he became dull, unfociable, and silent; his friendship for Sainville appeared to be diminished; he frequently even shunned him; he walked quite alone, and made his appearance only at the time of hunting, and at the hours of repast. One day, when the baron was in the hall with Mr. Renaud, Roger brought a chest which had just arrived from
Paris

Paris for Sainville, and laid it upon a table. The baron asked what it was. "I see," answered Roger, "that it contains books; for the chest is quite broken, and its contents can be discovered."—"Let us see," said Mr. Renaud: "they are certainly books upon chemistry, which we wanted, and which I begged the marquis to send for." Saying these words, he goes and looks into the chest. "Not at all," said he, "they are only English books—a grammar, a dictionary, and some other volumes. Apparently the marquis wishes to learn English." The baron, who attentively listened to Mr. Renaud, frowned, and fell into a dull reverie. About a quarter of an hour afterwards Sainville came into the hall. "Here is a chest," said the baron to him, "just arrived for you, in the state you now see it, which has made us discover that you have an intention of privately learning the English language." At these words Sainville felt

felt himself extremely embarrassed : but he had the presence of mind to dissemble it perfectly well. “What?” replied he. “I did not tell you that I had ordered these books? I certainly did not intend to make a mystery of it, since I formed that idea only in the hope that you would give me lessons.”—“I give you lessons upon the English language! That would be droll indeed!”—“O, do not *sham modesty*; you are very capable of teaching that language.”—“Very well: but——” —“No *buts*, my dear baron. We shall make an exchange: I shall teach you Spanish, and——” —“Spanish! for what purpose?”—“Do you not intend to travel into Spain?”—“And undoubtedly you think of going to England?”—“How can a person, living with you, avoid having that desire? You speak of that country with so much enthusiasm! *The verdure and the women* are so beautiful there!” —“But nothing pleases you, nothing moves you.

you. Are you not insensible?"—"O," replied Sainville, smiling, "you have debated so much upon my insensibility, that, with due deference to your opinion, I begin not to believe it. Be that as it may, my dear Verceil, give me my first lesson upon the English language." Saying these words, Sainville sits down at the table, takes the grammar, and begins. Mr. Renaud asked permission to be present at the lessons, that he might profit by them; "desiring," said he, "to be able to read the works of Sydenham and sir Hans Sloane." Behold the baron set up for an English teacher, in spite of himself; Sainville, appearing not to perceive his bad humour, which the baron, thinking to conceal, endeavours to conquer, and gives the lesson. After supper, Sainville brings some Spanish books, and obliges the baron, in his turn, to receive a lesson; and it was determined that this study should be continued every day, and it really took place with the greatest regularity,

gularity, notwithstanding the unwillingness of the baron, who taught with extreme negligence. But his pupil did not make less improvement. The progress of Mr. Renaud was not so rapid. He read the travels of Cyrus without comprehending them when Sainville could fluently explain the Spectator.

Two months elapsed in this manner, when Sainville one day going to Magdalen's, found the old woman was gone out, and Jane all alone, keeping the house. He remarked that the young girl was dull, and had been crying; and, upon interrogating her, Jane confessed that she was fond of Sylvester the vine-dresser, whose father, finding her too young and too poor, would not consent to their marriage; that in short, *the good lady*, having promised sixty crowns, the father had given his word; that the banns had been published, but that just now he came and retracted what he had said, and fell out with Magdalen,

dales, of whom he required an hundred crowns instead of the sixty that were promised. The young girl added, that she durst not apply to *the good lady*, fearing, after all she had done, to abuse her generosity. Sainville listened to this recital with much emotion. Constance being mentioned in it was sufficient to interest him in the most lively manner. He thanked Jane for having confided in him, recommended secrecy, especially with *the good lady*, and promised that she should marry Sylvester the next day. He actually sent for the father, and gave Jane such a good dowry, that the vine-dresser joyfully fulfilled his engagements. It was agreed that all these circumstances should be kept secret from Constance, and that the wedding should be the next day. Jane and her intended went to Constance and received the gift which she promised, when they informed her of the day fixed for their marriage, and mentioned that it would be

celebrated by a little rural feast. The day being come, Georgina, as soon as she awoke, received a handsome gown, which was sent to her from Jane : but Georgina, quite delighted, immediately guessed that her godfather was the author of this new present. At twelve o'clock, two of Sainville's gardeners, dressed as shepherds, went to Constance's house, carrying a large basket decorated with ribands, and filled with flowers and fruits. They were preceded by the married couple, returning from church ; all the village formed a numerous company ; and fiddlers, playing rural airs, completed the procession. Constance accepted the basket, but did not appear. The peasants sent her notice, that in the afternoon they would dance in the little wood, and they entreated her to augment their joy by her presence ; when she promised she would, and the company retired.

Meantime Constance wished to make up a bouquet of flowers out of those that were presented to her: but what was her surprise, when, upon looking into the basket, she found charming verses, wherein her beneficence was extolled in the most delicate manner. Those verses, written by a hand which she could not but recollect, were signed by Sylvester and his wife, and contained the most respectful and tender expressions of the liveliest gratitude. Constance hesitated upon what course she ought to take. "Shall I go," said she, "to the little wood? Will they dare to be there? Will they break their promises? Which will triumph, curiosity, or the fear of displeasing her to whom they have hitherto testified their respect? This is a doubt that must be resolved." The time drawing near, Constance determined upon going to the little wood, where she arrived somewhat uneasy and troubled, and found
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the bride, at the head of all the young girls of the village, dressed in white, waiting for her at the entrance of the wood. Constance, attended by the sound of the bagpipes and tambourines, was led in pomp to an artificial hall of verdure which had been made during the night, by lopping the branches and cutting the trees. This rural grove was decorated with garlands of roses and cyphered flowers, forming and repeating a thousand times the name of Constance. At the bottom there was a kind of throne of grass, to which the queen of the feast was conducted, and obliged to sit down. The dancing then began; and Constance, having got rid of an importunate crowd, gave way, without restraint, to her reverie and reflexion. She several times cast her eyes around the grove, in dread of discovering Sainville, but at length she began to persuade herself that he was not there: she inquired of some peasants, who all assured her

her that he was at the chace, which made her more tranquil. But her surprise increased upon every reflexion that arose upon a conduct at once so reserved, submissive, and at the same time full of such diligent and delicate sollicitude. "Perhaps, after all," said she to herself, "it is only a sport, an amusement: they wish to know to what degree a woman can shew herself insensible to vanity, and they amuse themselves by making the experiment. Such undoubtedly is the sole cause of every thing which excites my astonishment." The close of day surprised Constance, while intensely occupied by these different thoughts; she then wished to return home, and the peasants accompanying her, led her under an illuminated bower, where she found a collation, served with as much elegance as profusion; and after stopping a few minutes, she returned homewards, attended by a party of the wedding company. By the way, she questioned

questioned the bride, who, after some little hesitation, entrusted her with her history, and told her all that Sainville had done for her. Constance was more affected by this discovery than by the agreeable *fête* with which she had just been entertained; for she discovered in it something more interesting and more delicate than gallantry. This incident made her recollect the conduct of Sainville towards Magdalen: she felt herself flattered that he had imagined the best means of pleasing her was by being beneficent; and she said to herself, “What kind of a man, then, must this be, who, without knowing me, so well guesses my wishes?”

Whilst all this was passing, Sainville, at the chace, strove in vain to conceal his agitation. The uncertainty of the success of his entertainment was not the only uneasiness that he experienced, for the baron disconcerted and embarrassed him. He had made a mystery of this little intrigue,

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and

and he had reason to apprehend that his friend would be displeased at such a reserve: however he prepared himself to bear with good humour an *eclaircissement*, and to cover his embarrassment by pleasantry and gaiety. They both returned to the castle, and sat down to table. Roger, as usual, came in at the time of supper; and though quite tired with the wedding, and the collation which he had served, he entered into a long narration. Mr. Renaud, who had also returned from the *fête*, joined him; when the baron, quite astonished and displeased, asked several questions; and Sainville, being disconcerted, passed some jokes, for the first time in his life, but not in a witty manner, and endeavoured to hasten the supper, in order to terminate the conversation. In getting up from the table, he complained of an extreme lassitude, and went hastily into his chamber, where, soon forgetting the baron, he thinks of nothing but Constance, and of the
parti-

particulars he receives about the entertainment. He then waited with impatience for the arrival of Sylvester, whom he had desired to ask Constance's permission to bring the musicians under her terrace in the evening by moonlight, for the purpose of giving her a rural serenade. Sylvester at last arrived, quite out of breath, and said that Constance had consented, provided they would retire before twelve o'clock. Sainville immediately sent for four musicians, who had lately come from Paris, and went along with them to the terrace, where they began to play upon the horn and clarinet in the most masterly style, and suddenly the most delightful music was heard. Constance, who expected to hear only the rustic sounds of the bagpipes, at first imagined she was deluded by a dream: but the pleasure which she soon experiences makes her forget even her surprise: she gives herself up to that vague and pleasing reverie which expressive and tender music inspires: she recollects the most interest-

ing moments of her life—dangerous reflexions, which she had promised to banish for ever from her imagination. The time, the place, the coolness and beauty of the night, the choice of the music, and the capital execution of it, all contributed to give to this nocturnal and mysterious concert an enchanting and supernatural effect.

In the midst of this most pathetic *cantata*, Sainville made the music suddenly cease, by giving the signal of retreat, and immediately the company silently withdrew. Constance sighs, and remains a long time motionless upon her grassy seat. She cannot determine to leave the terrace where her heart had been so greatly affected by receiving such sweet impressions. However she resolves to prohibit every thing that could trouble her tranquillity by reviving in her mind such dangerous ideas, and she took the determination of never accepting any concert, and of becoming more recluse than ever.

The

The next day, at seven o'clock in the morning, the baron abruptly entered Sainville's room, whom he found in bed. He then desired the servant to leave the room, and sat down near the head of the bed with an air which announced that he was going to call him to an account; and this Sainville wished rather to avoid. They were both, for a few moments, profoundly silent, when the baron at last began to speak. "It appears to me," said he, "that the air of L**** is better for you than that of Paris." Sainville, imagining that the precaution of sending the servant away was for the purpose of inquiring about the state of his health, answered smiling, that he found himself very well. "Yes," replied the baron, "you recover yourself here, and I am dying; therefore I advise you to remain where you are: but for my part, I shall return to Paris." At these words Sainville appeared confused. "O! what!" said he, "my dear Ver-

ceil, do you speak seriously? No, I cannot think so.”—“Hark ye,” interrupted the baron; “it is your fault: it depended upon yourself not to commit it, and you should not have made me act the most ridiculous part. You ought to have frankly spoken to me: I listen to reason, and have not acted so foolishly as you. I was deluded for awhile, I confess, but that is past, and friendship remains.”—“Ah!” cried Sainville, “you ought to forgive me. Could I read my heart? Do I know, even now, what passes in it?”—“If you are ignorant of it, I will inform you. You are passionately in love.”—“My dear baron, I am extremely pleased with your suggestion—no, I am only surprised, perhaps vexed—but be it what it may, do not leave me.”—“I will stay if I am useful to you. My friendship will easily conquer such a new sentiment; it will be agreeable to me to sacrifice it for you; and even if I cannot surmount it, I shall

shall not therefore be a confidant less faithful. A rival and a confidant would be a singular and a new character, but be assured I would very well perform it.”—“ I do not doubt it,” replied Sainville, smiling, “ for I know that your heart is as generous as your soul is romantic.” This answer charmed the baron, and made up matters: it flattered his fancy, and presented to his idea a long train of interesting events and singular situations. In short, it would form a romance, in which the character of a confidant, far from being a secondary part, might become as brilliant as the hero himself.

In the mean time Sainville unsuccessfully renewed his attempts to obtain Constance’s permission to repeat the nocturnal concerts. A conduct so singular and so well kept up confounded all the ideas of Sainville. “ This woman,” said he to the baron, “ is truly an incomprehensible being: she is inaccessible to vanity. With-

out pride and artifice, she has voluntarily formed the inconceivable design of flying from all society, and of living quite alone. I doubt not, but am certain that she keeps up no correspondence, that she writes no letters, and receives none : however she is in love ; she wears the portrait of a charming young man. But do you conceive, that with such a sentiment she can appear so calm and so happy ? By the uniformity that is observable in all her conduct, one would be more inclined to attribute her misanthropy to wisdom than to passion.” — “ Be assured,” replied the baron, “ that a violent resolution is always the effect of a violent passion. She must be of a very lively disposition, to have formed, at her time of life, such a resolution ; and we may expect every thing from a lively genius.” — “ Nothing is so interesting,” said Sainville, “ as a young and handsome woman who conceals herself, and consequently refuses the homage which all others of her sex seek with

with so much avidity. How insipid coquetry is, when compared to this striking apathy ! I am certain, if we could more frequently see Constance, we should be much less occupied about her. We have hitherto only had one interview with her, and our imagination undoubtedly conceives a thousand charms she does not possess. Perhaps her full face is not so perfect as her profile ; her countenance has not, perhaps, that angelic expression which her features made us suppose ; and probably the day-light is not so favourable to her complexion and figure as the light of the moon ; in short, by being in her company, we should perhaps find that she has less wit than we imagine." The baron strongly argued against this opinion ; for, being again the confidant of his friend, he wished Sainville to be passionately in love ; and at the same time he would fain think that he experienced the same sentiment, in order to persuade Sainville as well

well as himself that he makes a sacrifice equally meritorious and heroic.

One evening the baron received from Paris a letter from Madame de Tervures, with whom Sainville fell out a short time before his departure. This rupture, occasioned by the infidelity of that lady, made a great deal of noise. The baron in vain endeavoured to reconcile the two lovers, and remained the friend of Madame de Tervures. As he no longer concealed any thing from Sainville, he read to him this letter, couched in the following terms :

‘ Yes, certainly, I like *short details*,
‘ when made by you, for the mind or the
‘ heart can then draw interesting infer-
‘ ences from them. A pen in your hand
‘ becomes a pencil : you paint instead of
‘ relating. When I read your letters, I
‘ hear and see you. You attract me
‘ wherever you are, and I cannot help re-
‘ maining there. But you do not now
‘ speak

‘ speak to me with that unlimited confidence, of which it is so pleasing to me to give the example : you are become mysterious and reserved. In love, mystery and reserve are very often a mere delicate circumspection ; in friendship they are always a crime. To deceive one’s mistress, is shewing a desire of preserving her, of still loving her. Diffimulation with a friend is treachery. Perhaps you will think there is too much rigour in these reflexions, but let your heart consider them as the expression of my sentiments for you.’

“ What a puzzling style !” exclaimed Sainville, interrupting the baron. “ How can you like Constance’s manner of writing, and admire such letters ? How can one enjoy the charms of nature and simplicity, when seduced by affectation ? But let us see what Madame de Tervures would be at : she will certainly speak of Constance ?” At these words the baron, taking

taking up the letter, read aloud what follows :

‘ By the divine providence of friendship
‘ I have discovered all that you wished to
‘ hide from me. I know that your beautiful English woman is a courtesan, noted
‘ by her figure, talents, and the infinite
‘ number of admirers she has ruined : I
‘ know, that having seduced a young
‘ lord, the only heir to a great fortune, she
‘ was going to marry him, when this fond
‘ lover surpris’d her in the arms of another. The excess of his passion made it
‘ be feared that he would again be ensnared by this syren, for nothing could
‘ oblige him to leave England. His relations then prevailed upon this dangerous mistress to go over to the continent.
‘ They gave her a great deal of money, and promised her, besides, an immense
‘ sum if she remains three whole years out
‘ of her country perfectly *incog.* in order
‘ that the young man may not trace her
‘ out,

‘out, and be again shamefully capti-
‘vated.

‘This will explain the whole mysterious
‘conduct of your English woman; this is
‘the reason why she conceals herself,
‘and lives in solitude, neither receiving
‘any one, nor holding any correspondence.
‘I was informed of all this history by lord
‘Belmont, who is personally acquainted
‘with this courtezan, whom you have so
‘generously set up for a heroine of ro-
‘mance. I told him what you wrote to
‘me of Constance, when he immediately
‘recollected the celebrated Ophelia, (which
‘is her true name,) and informed me of all
‘that I have just now related. Such is the
‘worthy object of the new passion of your
‘friend; for notwithstanding your dis-
‘cretion, I know that he is her lover;
‘and——’

Here Sainville rose up with agitation.
“What!” said he, “this story is not the
invention of Madame de Tervures? It
is

is lord Belmont who relates it.”—“ You are intimately acquainted with him,” replied the baron, struck with amazement. “ Write to him, requesting the particulars upon this subject.”—“ I shall most certainly do so. But are you not struck with the probability of this supposition ?”—“ Constance an adventurer, a courtesan ! No ; it is a thing impossible for me to believe.”—“ You have travelled twice to England, have you ever heard any talk of this Ophelia ?”—“ Yes, a great deal, but I never saw her ; as she was at Bath when I was in London.”—“ What did they say of her ?”—“ They praised her beauty, her wit, her talents——”—“ Wit and talents ! What coincidents ! I shall write this very night to lord Belmont, for this uncertainty is intolerable.” Sainville being uneasy, agitated, filled with mistrust, sorrow, and fear, wrote without delay to lord Belmont, and received the following answer :

‘ As I do not wish, my dear marquis,
‘ that you should be the dupe and sport of
‘ an ambitious and seducing courtezan, I
‘ shall answer you with the exactness that
‘ you desire ; at the same time, if my
‘ letter should enable you to recognize
‘ Ophelia, observe secrecy, for it would
‘ not be just to make her lose the six thou-
‘ sand guineas which the family of her late
‘ lover have engaged to pay her, if she re-
‘ mains three whole years in France in
‘ profound retirement, and perfectly in-
‘ cog. I repent of having foolishly re-
‘ lated her history to Madame de Ter-
‘ vures : but you can make reparation for
‘ it, by writing to me that your neighbour
‘ does not in the least resemble my Ophe-
‘ lia ; that in short you know with cer-
‘ tainty who she is, &c. I shall shew that
‘ letter to Madame de Tervures, and by
‘ this means Ophelia’s secret will not be
‘ betrayed by us. But to return to her.
‘ You request me to give *her description*,
‘ which

‘ which is as follows: She is thirty years
‘ of age, fair, and of a very elegant mien;
‘ she has large blue eyes, regular features,
‘ and a countenance full of mildness; she
‘ knows several languages, and speaks
‘ them well; amongst others the French
‘ language; her shape is handsome, and
‘ her manners extremely noble; she has
‘ always seen very good company among
‘ men, and her talents have frequently
‘ gained her admission into the society of
‘ women; she has also an excellent de-
‘ meanor, which the uncommon deprav-
‘ ity of her conduct never made her
‘ lose; she possesses wit, originality, and
‘ the most attracting graces; she draws
‘ like an angel, sings, and dances delight-
‘ fully. Upon the whole, although Ophe-
‘ lia is not very young, she is certainly the
‘ most charming and the most dangerous
‘ person that can be met with. It is nearly
‘ two years since she left England, and the
‘ place of her residence is unknown; so
‘ that

‘ that in eighteen months she may return
‘ to her country, and demand the six thou-
‘ sand guineas. I must not omit telling
‘ you that she was born in Ireland, of a
‘ noble catholic family, who, it is said,
‘ gave her an excellent education: but a
‘ Scotchman ran off with Ophelia when
‘ only fourteen years old, and carried
‘ her to London, where, in a short
‘ time, she lost all the principles that she
‘ had received in her childhood. To
‘ make you more completely acquainted
‘ with Ophelia, I send you the literal trans-
‘ lation of a letter she wrote to me after
‘ her last adventure, and at the very mo-
‘ ment of her leaving England. It ap-
‘ peared to me so original, that I very
‘ carefully preserve it. Adieu, my dear
‘ marquis.’

Lord Belmont’s letter contained half a
page more: but Sainville and the baron
being impatient to read that of Ophelia,
eagerly

eagerly seized the paper that inclosed the translation, which they found to the following purport :

Letter from OPHELIA to Lord BELMONT.

‘ I am going, my dear William, like a
‘ princess of romance, to travel under a
‘ fictitious name, according to the condi-
‘ tions imposed upon me by the family of
‘ lord ***, who are still afraid of Ophe-
‘ lia, notwithstanding the just anger of her
‘ lover. Is not this glorious for me ? I
‘ am more flattered by their fears, than
‘ eager to gain the six thousand guineas.
‘ Would it not be a fine thing to be mar-
‘ ried to lord *** a few months after
‘ having received that sum ? Do not
‘ laugh ; this project may very probably
‘ be effected. But who knows if I shall
‘ then wish it ! I loved lord ***, not-
‘ withstanding the *incident* which made us
‘ fall out : but it is likely that in three
‘ years

‘ years I shall have no love for him ; and
‘ in that case his fortune and rank would
‘ not ensnare me. I can *give myself*, but
‘ not *sell myself* ; and if the greatest lord in
‘ England wanted to marry me, he must
‘ first please me. In short, I have pro-
‘ mised to live in France in obscurity for
‘ three years. You will perhaps say that
‘ that it is impossible for one with my
‘ figure, talents, and inconstant disposition :
‘ but my plan is fixed ; it is simple and
‘ sure : a profound retreat, an austere life,
‘ will secrete me from all human eyes, or
‘ make me unknown to them. I have
‘ enjoyed, and I know every thing but
‘ one ; that is, *virtue*. I will, however,
‘ try to enjoy it. I was hurried far away
‘ from it, not by my own choice, but by
‘ the corruption of others. I have always
‘ respected its image wherever I thought I
‘ discovered it ; and this odious blas-
‘ phemy never profaned my lips—*virtue*
‘ *is only a chimera*. Too weak to follow it
‘ myself,

‘ myself, too inconsiderate to regret it, I
‘ abandoned it, without despising and even
‘ without renouncing it. I know how far
‘ distant I am from virtue : but what can I
‘ not do in three years to attain it ? To seek
‘ it sincerely, one must begin by practising
‘ it, which I will do without hypocrisy ;
‘ for I shall most carefully avoid all occa-
‘ sions of a relapse. I shall live in such a
‘ manner as I may no longer hear those
‘ insipid and monotonous praises with
‘ which I begin to be disgusted. They
‘ shall no more boast of my graces and
‘ figure, but I shall hear my goodness,
‘ mildness, and beneficence extolled. I
‘ shall then be respected : I shall know if
‘ esteem be more satisfactory than flattery ;
‘ and after having enjoyed these new suc-
‘ cesses, perhaps I shall not any more re-
‘ sume the too famous name of Ophelia.
‘ But you will no doubt say, my dear Wil-
‘ liam, that I am still too young to frame
‘ such designs. No ; it is, at my age
‘ meri-

‘meritorious to put them in execution.
‘If I devote myself to retirement, I will
‘carry with me the regret of the world
‘and of love. I will make a noble sacrifice, and not an inglorious flight. What
‘merit could there be in the sacrifice of a
‘magdalen in grey hairs? The penitents
‘of Albania and Corregge ought to be our
‘model. However this is not irrevocably
‘decided; I meditate *only an attempt*.

‘Adieu, my amiable William; endeavour to forget the remembrance of some
‘of my little *faux pas*—in short, of my
‘former infidelities to you; remember,
‘that at least I am *faithful* in friendship.
‘Adieu: believe that Ophelia, either *profane* or *sanctified*, will never forget, but
‘always love you.’

After this letter was read, the two friends silently looked at each other with a kind of astonishment which stupified them. Sainville first broke silence. “It is no longer possible to doubt it,” cried he.

“It is she—it is the same Constance whom we have so respectfully worshipped these six months past. We must confess that she has made us act a very ridiculous part.”—

“And we cannot complain of it,” replied the baron; “for she never made the first advances: she constantly refused all our attentions with extreme politeness; therefore we have nothing to reproach her with.”—“Very well,” replied Sainville, displeased; “you may think it quite harmless to be thus treated by a courtesan. As for myself, I honestly confess that I am extremely piqued, and I think myself too old to be so credulous.”—“However,” said the baron, “we are not certain that Constance is really that despicable Ophelia. I allow that the affinity is striking, but yet her age does not agree with that of Constance; for Ophelia, it is said, is thirty years old: Constance is only twenty-five, and even appears younger. The doctor of Limoux says that one would suppose her to
be

be only nineteen or twenty.”—“ That old man’s opinion is of very little consequence. Besides, beauty may deceive one respecting the age. But read the two letters over again.” Saying these words, Sainville began to read them; after which he was confirmed in the idea that Constance and Ophelia were but one person. The baron was of a similar opinion, and was seriously grieved; while Sainville, vexed and disconcerted, hid his excessive rage by joking. “ My dear Verceil,” said he, “ you had conceived the plan of an heroical romance: it is a pity your thoughts will be lost. This will only form a *novel*, in which our parts will not be very brilliant.”—“ I hope, at least,” replied the baron, “ that this discovery will have the impression upon you that it has produced upon me.”—“ What?”—“ That it may cure you of a passion founded upon an error.”—“ A *passion*! That is a great word. I had not yet any passion, and this will not destroy a tempo-

rary fancy. This Ophelia has dignity, wit, a lively disposition, and extraordinary talents: she is beautiful as an angel. Nothing can diminish my love; and what we have learnt of her morals does not make me lose hopes. I shall only shake off that profound respect with which she certainly amuses herself, and secretly ridicules it; I shall endeavour in future to appear less ridiculous, when she will become more compliant, and every difficulty will disappear." This discourse extremely displeased the baron, whose principles, habits, wit, and disposition gave him, all his life, an invincible disgust for courtezans. Besides, seeing that Sainville was infinitely more amorous than he would confess, he was mortally afraid of the ascendancy which such a dangerous woman might have over him. These reflexions plunged him into a profound dullness, when he formed the resolution of henceforward employing all his diligence to recall Sainville to reason, and of neglecting no occasion to
make

make him sensible of all the debasement of such an attachment.

It was now in the midst of autumn, when Sainville, more than ever occupied about Constance, formed a thousand new projects, and at last determined to bribe the servant of Constance, that he might hide himself at night in her house. He one morning took this resolution, and thought of executing it the next day. This same day he took a long walk with the baron, but without communicating his design to him. In returning to the castle, he thought he heard, at a distance, the cries of a child, when he listens, and no longer doubts it. The cries seemed to proceed from the wood where Constance passed her time, and where Sainville had for more than six months forbid himself to enter. He flies into the wood, the baron following him, and they run to the place where the cries are heard, when suddenly they perceived little Georgina in

tears, who cried out, "*Come and help mamma.*"—"Where is she?" asked Sainville. "Yonder, in the great avenue," answered the child. The two friends immediately rushed forward into the way they were directed, when lo! an unexpected sight presents itself to their view: Constance dishevelled, her head uncovered, pursued by three robbers, and upon the point of falling into their hands. Sainville and his friend, unarmed, hasten towards her with inconceivable swiftness. He seized one of the three men, and threw him down: the two others, pursued by the baron, took flight.

Meantime Sainville recollects that the man he had knocked down was the son of one of his huntsmen, when he threatens him with a just punishment, and endeavours to go away from him, but meets with the root of a tree, which made him slip down. At this moment the villain he had just left rose up, approached him, and plunged

plunged his knife into his body ; and after having committed this assassination, he fled and disappeared. Whilst this tragical scene was acting, Constance, thinking herself still pursued, ran on, with her back to her deliverers, for she had perceived neither Sainville nor his friend. At length overcome with fatigue, she feels her strength forsaking her ; and hearing a person's foot very near, she turns round her head, trembling. But what was her joy, upon perceiving the baron ! “ Cheer up, madam,” cried he ; “ the villains who pursued you have disappeared, and are now a great way off. Whilst Sainville knocked down one, I chased the two others, who are gone out of the wood, and I saw the third taking the high road, flying as fast as he could. I gave over the pursuit, that I might quickly return to dissipate your uneasiness.” — “ Ah ! sir,” said Constance, “ what am I not indebted to you ! But let us go and seek for Sainville.”

ville." At these words she leans upon the baron's arm, and with tottering steps accompanies him, with as much pain as trouble and eagerness. Uneasy about Georgina, she calls out loudly to her. A few minutes after the child came running to her, and they asked if she knew where Sainville was, when she answered, that she had only seen him the moment he entered the wood. They then walked on to the side of the high road, while the baron questions Constance, who related, in a few words, the particulars of this adventure. Upon entering the wood, she had sent her servant on an errand; and immediately after he was gone, she saw these three men at a distance, whose countenance and ugly appearance rather alarmed her. When they perceived her, they quickened their pace, and she began to run away. Whilst Constance was speaking, the baron attentively gazed at her, she had thrown off her hat that she might run the better, and
nothing

nothing hid the most charming face that nature had formed : but the decline of day, and the obscurity of the wood, did not permit the baron perfectly to distinguish her features. Meantime Sainville did not appear, and Constance and the baron in vain called him several times. This silence astonishes and disquiets them, for they could not imagine that Sainville had gone out of the wood. They still kept walking on, and night approaching, increased their secret terror ; when suddenly Constance, finding something wet under her feet, slid, and fell into the arms of the baron. He raised her up, and casting his eyes upon her white gown, he perceived some spots which appeared to him to be black. The same thing struck Constance, who took up her gown, and looking closely at it, she shuddered ; and being penetrated with the most horrid terror, exclaimed, “ Good heavens ! it is blood ! ” At these terrible words, the baron, quite

frantic, left her, and following the fatal traces of the blood, he found, after proceeding a few steps, the body of his unhappy friend stretched upon the grass. He thought he was dead, and gave himself up to the most violent despair. Constance, stifled with sobbing, fell upon her knees, and with uplifted arms implored heaven, while little Georgina made the woods resound with her lamentable cries. But Constance soon recalling her courage, said, "We are weeping over him, and letting him remain without succour. He is alive : his blood still runs." At these words the baron looked at the wound, and with his handkerchief, and that of Constance, made a compress which stopped the blood. After this was done, they considered the means of removing him, when Constance proposed making a litter of branches. They accordingly begin the work ; the baron breaks down the branches, and Constance assisting him in this

troublesome work, appears animated by a supernatural strength. She gives her girdle, necklace, garters, and even a linen handkerchief which covered her breast, to fasten the branches together. Georgina stripped herself likewise, and the work advanced with inconceivable rapidity: but there was still wanting a binding to strengthen the whole. Constance's long hair falling down, and floating upon her shoulders, offered her the last resource. Without hesitation she cuts off part of it, with which she forms a thick cord, and the baron ties and fastens it round the branches. At that moment Constance's footman, after having a long time sought her, being attracted by the noise, at last arrived. He appeared to the baron sent by heaven to help him in that dreadful situation; and without losing time he made him assist in laying Sainville upon the litter; after which, turning round to Constance, "Madam," said he, "the castle is half a league

from here ; your house is very near.”—

“ Come, come,” interrupted Constance,

“ I am going to conduct you there.” The

baron and Thomson then took up the lit-

ter, and set out, while Constance and

Georgina walked before them, shedding a

torrent of tears. They at last arrived at

the peaceful dwelling of Constance, where

the servant, frightened, opened the door.

They laid Sainville, still senseless and mo-

tionless, upon Constance’s bed, and the

baron sent for Mr. Renaud. Meantime

lights are brought, they wash Sainville’s

wound with fresh water, made him smell

salts, and at last he began to open his eyes.

What objects strike them ! an unknown

apartment, the baron holding him between

his arms, and Constance upon her knees

at the head of the bed, dishevelled, bathed

in tears, and in such a situation as made

her a thousand times more handsome and

attracting. Sainville, quite astonished,

gazed at her with inexpressible emotion.

His

His ideas were wandering and confused; his weak head had not yet come to: but the sight of Constance recalled all the faculties of his soul. He contemplated her in a kind of ecstasy, and without recollecting, he knew that it must be her.

At length Mr. Renaud arrived, dressed the wound, and finding no appearance of danger, answered for Sainville's life. Their consternation is now succeeded by the most lively joy. Mr. Renaud gave the patient some drops of elixir, which reviving his strength, immediately brought him to his perfect senses. He took hold of Constance's hand, crying out, with transport, "What! is it her? What! do I see her?" Intoxicated with the pleasure of looking at her, and seeing, upon her enchanting face, some tears dropping slowly, he pressed her trembling hand against his heart, repeating, with profound affection, "What! it is her!"

Meanwhile

Meanwhile Mr. Renaud having felt his pulse, said that it was quick, which he attributed to the number of lights and the smallness of the room ; he therefore proposed removing Sainville upon a litter to the castle, adding, that the free air would do him good. Sainville consented, in order to leave Constance to repose, which she so much wanted. The baron said they must again take the litter made of branches, when Sainville asked how this litter had been made ; and this brings about an explanation which increases his gratitude and happiness. Constance's house was surrounded by all the inhabitants of the village, who had been attracted by the report of this tragical event, and they escorted the litter to the castle. When he was come into his room, Sainville desired the litter to be left there, and placed near his bed. Mr. Renaud prescribed silence and tranquillity to the patient, when every
one

one retired; and the baron going to bed, said to himself, "What a pity it is, that the woman who has been the cause of such an adventure should not be as interesting by her morals as she is captivating by her figure and manners!"

Sainville had a fever, and passed a restless night, but the fever abated towards morning. At eight o'clock the baron entered his room, when he found the patient employed examining the litter. The hair was already untied, and Sainville had tied it round his arm. The baron sat down upon his friend's bed, and looking at the hair of Constance, "Well!" said he, "behold you are now quite amorous!"—"Can you be astonished at it, after having seen her?"—"She is beautiful, I allow, and absolutely like the portrait that Lord Belmont has drawn of Ophelia."—"But it is impossible she can be thirty years old."—"Her youthful appearance is really singular, after the mode of life she has led:

led: however, quietness, solitude, the mildness of the climate——”——“If Constance be Ophelia, lord Belmont has not sufficiently praised her beauty. He speaks too indifferently of it.”——“It is because he is no longer fond of her. The enthusiasm for a courtesan can be but of short duration.”——“He does not speak of her long black eye-lashes, her beautiful teeth, the striking expression of her countenance! No, Constance is not Ophelia. We have forgot to send lord Belmont some of her writing——”——“Who knows if she writes to us in her own hand? Perhaps her valet is her secretary.”——“He does not know French.”——“He perhaps feigns to be ignorant of it. Besides, in writing to us she might alter her hand.”——“Blue eyes with black eye-lashes, brown eye-brows, and fair hair—this is surprising! I will write again to lord Belmont.” This discourse was interrupted by Mr. Renaud, who came in and told Sainville that the English lady had

had written to him, requesting to know the state of the *marquis's* health, when Sainville asked to look at the note: but Mr. Renaud had mislaid it; and it was of no use Sainville's being angry, as the note could not be found. Two or three hours after, upon Sainville saying that he hoped Constance would pay him a visit, Mr. Renaud said, "Yes, certainly. I forgot to tell you that she mentioned so in her letter. She will come this afternoon." One may easily imagine that Mr. Renaud was a little reprimanded for these *inconceivable forgets*, and that they impatiently waited for the hour they hoped to see Constance.

Sainville's windows looked into the yard, and at four o'clock he heard a general commotion in the house, the people going hastily down the stairs, calling to the baron, and running towards the yard. Sainville being then alone with Mr. Renaud, appeared much agitated. Mr. Renaud went out to inquire the cause of all this

this noise ; and returning almost immediately, “ I thought,” said he, “ that the castle was on fire : but do not be alarmed ; it is nothing : it is only the foreign lady come to visit you. As she raised her veil upon entering the yard, every one ran to see her, the people here are so curious.” Mr. Renaud was still speaking, when the door opened, and Constance, conducted by the baron, appeared, and advanced softly. They brought her a chair, when she sat down, and casting her eyes upon Sainville, she blushed, seeing what he had done with her hair. She said, with some degree of embarrassment, that he attached too much value to a thing which another person would have done in her place. Sainville answered two or three words, badly articulated, and suddenly lost the power of utterance, looking at her with an eagerness and attention which nothing could divert. Constance spoke much of her gratitude, but only shewed a sensibility

bility rather applied to the service than to the person. Her visit was short, and yet the conversation flagged several times. The baron often revived it; and when Constance was going away, he conducted her to the bottom of the stairs. He had scarcely entered the room again, when Sainville called to him, "Well, my dear baron," cried he, "can you think that she is a courtesan?"—"I should never have supposed so: but it is impossible to doubt it——"—"I am certain that all the affinities which persuade you of it are only false appearances. Let us not speak of her graces, nor of her ravishing beauty. But what nobleness! what modesty! what an air of candour and innocence!"—"Were you not informed that Ophelia is particularly distinguished by her deportment and manners?"—"And I maintain, that it is ridiculous to think the woman we have just now seen and heard should be Ophelia." At these words the baron

baron shrugged up his shoulders, and did not answer. Sainville was displeased, and his friend went out of the room. Meantime the villain who assassinated Sainville was overtaken in his flight, and brought to the castle. This unfortunate creature having been for some time driven from his father's house, on account of his depraved conduct, was associated with a number of smugglers. He protested that he was intoxicated on the day he met Sainville, and that the fear of being confined for life had induced him to commit the crime of which he was guilty. He was put into the prison adjoining the castle, although Sainville was determined not to give him up to justice. The father of this murderer was a venerable and virtuous old man, who, dreading to implore his master's clemency, went and threw himself at the feet of Constance, entreating her to beseech Sainville in his favour. He represented that he had two marriageable daughters, who would be dishonoured

honoured if their brother underwent the just punishment of his crime, and that the whole family would in that case be obliged to leave the village, and to quit their country for ever. Constance sent the old man to Sainville, with a note, containing the following words:

‘ Deign, sir, to listen to the supplication
‘ of an unfortunate father, driven to de-
‘ spair. If I can obtain this favour of you,
‘ I shall certainly have done enough for
‘ him.’

Sainville (as may be easily guessed) received the old man, and after having heard what he had to say, gave him this answer to carry to Constance:

‘ How can I, madam, revenge an
‘ action, which has caused the most happy
‘ moments of my life? The favour you
‘ ask of me was granted, from the bot-
‘ tom

‘ tom of my heart, in that same chamber
‘ where the old man will receive it from
‘ you. Condescend, madam, also to tell
‘ him I will portion his daughters, and
‘ that they shall be married within eight
‘ days.’

Constance, with tears in her eyes, informed the old man of the goodness of his master, and enjoyed great pleasure at his surprise, and the transports of his gladness.

Sainville, ever faithful to his promises, sent the criminal to India, according to his father’s wishes, and the two young girls were married. Constance wrote again to him upon this subject. Her note was kind, but it was found too reserved and too short. Knowing that Sainville had entirely recovered from the fever, she did not visit him any more, but contented herself by sending twice a day to learn the state of his health. Sainville being im-
patient

patient to see her again, was induced to go out much sooner than the surgeon wished. In short, after some strong expostulations, he dressed himself, ordered a carriage, and proposed to the baron to go together to Constance's house; when the baron answered peevishly, but at last accompanied him. They arrived, and obtained easy admittance. Sainville was extremely desirous of going into the same room where he had seen Constance so compassionate and agitated, but he did not obtain that satisfaction; for he was shewn into a library, where Constance soon waited upon them. She could not help shewing the greatest tenderness, by remarking the paleness of Sainville: but after this first emotion, she resumed her calm and serene air, and carried on the conversation with as much ease as agreeableness. Sainville, only occupied with the pleasure of seeing and hearing her, spoke little: but the baron, more curious, and

and less absorbed, put many questions to her respecting her taste, occupations, and her relish for reading; when she answered with that mildness and brevity which is so interesting in people obliged to speak of themselves. The baron, who had no design of praising her before Sainville, discovered, with vexation, the charming simplicity and modesty of her answers. Hoping that she would be less informed than graceful and witty, he turned the conversation upon literature, and talked of our best works. Constance was perfectly acquainted with them, and passed her judgment upon them with as much solidity as delicateness. The baron being confounded, became silent, while Sainville triumphed. Just then Georgina entered running, and threw herself upon her godfather's neck, who embraced her tenderly. "This is our adopted child," said he, turning towards Constance.—"Yes," replied Georgina, "there is mamma, and here

here is papa.”—“ Oh ! my dear Georgina !” cried Sainville, “ call me always by that name.”—“ I promise you I will,” replied Georgina. During this little dialogue, the baron, being impatient, rose up, and approaching a piano forte, he expressed to Constance a desire of hearing her play ; when Sainville immediately joined him. Constance, yielding to their intreaties, sat down to the instrument, played in a masterly manner, and afterwards accompanied with her voice an Italian air. The excellence of the song, the sweetness and beauty of her voice, inspired Sainville with an admiration which he expressed with enthusiasm ; and the baron peevishly said, that he never heard an *amateur* have such influence. A moment after, addressing himself to Constance. “ Your superior talents, madam,” said he, “ make me remember the great desire I had to be acquainted with the celebrated Ophelia : but she was travelling

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while I was in London." Upon hearing the name of Ophelia, Constance started, and blushing, looked downcast. The baron then looked at Sainville, who was likewise abashed, for he had attentively remarked the trouble and embarrassment of Constance. This observation struck him, chagrined him, and at the same time inspired him with extreme resentment against his friend. There was a moment's silence, after which they spoke of different things; and at last Sainville, taking leave of Constance, terminated his visit. Upon stepping into the carriage, he ordered his coachman to drive towards the little wood. Being passionately in love, and piqued against the baron, he took pleasure in mortifying him, by unequivocally expressing his sentiments. In approaching the high road, the baron discovered, with astonishment, an infinite number of labourers at work round the little wood. "It is eight days," said Sainville,

Sainville, "since I gave orders to execute this work, that this beloved wood of Constance may be transformed, and become still more worthy of pleasing her. It will reach as far as the river which borders the meadow, and there is to be a canal dug, which will surround it by the side of the high road, and form an isle. Constance may then walk without any fear or danger: it will be her garden, and I shall neglect nothing to embellish it." At this confidence the baron appeared uneasy. "This undertaking," said he, "is immense."—"Notwithstanding," replied Sainville, "it will be finished next summer." The baron did not answer any more, and was sullen the rest of the day: but the next, he had a long explanation with his friend, when he did not forget to speak to him of the extreme confusion which Ophelia's name appeared to cause Constance. Sainville agreed that he had remarked her agitation; "And I confess,"

continued he, " that I cannot guess the cause : but the more I see her, the more absurd it appears to suppose such a person to be a courtesan. However, if I must not conceal any thing from you, let this incomparable woman be what she may, she has won my heart. I love for the first time, and I love passionately."—" What if Constance should be that Ophelia ?"—" I cannot admit this odious supposition."—" But should you acquire positive proofs of it ?"—" I shall be much to be pitied."—" But at least you will combat a passion so unworthy of you ?"—" If I am beloved, I would combat it in vain."—" If it is so, I presume to tell you, Sainville, that this passion will debase you, will sacrifice your liberty, and consequently your honour."—" Hark ye ; if it be true that Constance has been a depraved woman, if it were possible that vice could influence this angelical form, and all the charms of candour and innocence, I would
cease

cease to admire virtue, I would cease to believe in its power, and I would become one of the most unfortunate and austere of mankind; for a strange revolution has taken place in my heart. The idea of Constance being Ophelia did not affect me about fifteen days ago, as then I had for her only an ordinary sentiment: but this idea is now to me as vexatious as incomprehensible. I see, in Constance, the model of perfection: I feel less the desire of pleasing her, than the wish of admiring her qualities. I can support every thing, even her indifference, if she be really worthy of the sentiment with which she inspires me. This sentiment recalled me to life; it equally occupies my mind, heart, and imagination. If I cease to adore Constance, I cease to live." The baron, from this discourse, conceived that if Sainville were at last obliged to acknowledge Constance to be the dangerous Ophelia, it would very much afflict him,

but would undoubtedly cure him of his passion; and he therefore took the resolution of employing every possible means to enlighten him upon this subject.

Sainville, through circumspection, remained a few days without returning to Constance's house: but he at last attempted another visit, and the baron accompanied him. Constance was not at home, but the servant assured them she would return soon, and she shewed the two friends into the library. While waiting for Constance, the baron amused himself by looking at some pretty little paintings in water colours, done by Constance, which decorated the room they were in. Afterwards, seeing upon the table a *port-folio* half opened, which contained drawings, he looked over them; and stopping to inspect two charming paintings, he suddenly made an exclamation, which drew Sainville from a profound reverie. "See! see!" cried the baron; "here is a complete proof!

proof! Look at these pictures, and read at the bottom of them the name of Ophelia." At these words Sainville turned pale; and indeed, upon reading this fatal name, stood petrified. Just at that moment Constance entered; and upon seeing her *port-folio* open, her pictures in the hands of the baron, and Sainville motionless, she blushed, seemed surprised, and disconcerted: but quickly recovering herself, she advanced, and addressing the two friends, expressed her regret at not having sooner returned home. Sainville did not answer. The baron, whilst she was speaking, shut up the *port-folio*, and then said to her, "We were admiring, madam, these admirable paintings."—"This praise is too flattering," replied Constance. "These two paintings are of my execution."—"What, madam!" said Sainville, in a faltering voice, "the two paintings which are in this *port-folio*?"—"Yes, sir," interrupted Constance; "they

H 4

were

were painted by me." Saying these words, she took the *port-folio*, and shut it up in a drawer; and as she turned her back, Sainville, quite perplexed, whispered to the baron, intreating him to leave him alone with her. The baron accordingly rose up, and went away. Constance returned, and with a tranquil air, full of dignity, sat down opposite Sainville who was standing up. He gazed at her attentively, without uttering a single word; and a few minutes after, Constance, likewise looking at him, said, "Well, sir?" This question was expressed with a striking mildness and firmness. Sainville then prostrated himself at her feet, crying out, "Well, madam, you wanted to prove me—but these two paintings were not done by you; I can never think that your hand could trace the name at the bottom of them." At these words Constance, obliging Sainville to rise up, appeared embarrassed and affected; when he
drew

drew a pocket-book from his pocket, and shewing it to her, "Do you know lord Belmont?" said he. "Yes, I know him."—"This pocket-book contains letters from him; condescend to read them: but in looking them over, do not forget that they were written six weeks ago, and recollect my conduct since that time. Adieu, madam: I shall come to-morrow to fetch these papers, and to receive your final answer." In pronouncing these words, Sainville laid the pocket-book upon the table, and went out immediately. Next morning he received a packet from Constance, which contained lord Belmont's letters, and one from her, in these words:

' I have read the letters you left with
' me, but I do not think this kind of con-
' fidence sufficient to deserve all mine.
' Your esteem is dear to me: I wish to
' obtain, but not to *conquer* it. Hencefor-

ward friendship is the only sentiment I
can grant. Do you wish to be my
friend? Let sympathy alone inform
you and justify me. If your heart be not
acquainted enough with mine, I am
sorry for it: but never expect from me
the least explanation. This is all that I
can say to you; and I aver, by all that
is sacred, that I did not wish to *prove*
you.

The two paintings you have seen were
executed by me: *I traced the name you*
saw upon them, and yet my life was pure,
and my heart always cherished virtue.

You ought now to answer me; and
if you believe me, you will give me a
proof it, by never interrogating me
again upon that subject.

After having read this letter, Sainville
rose up, and hastily dressed himself. As he
was going out, the baron entered his room,
when Sainville shewed him Constance's
letter.

letter. "Well," said the baron, "what is your opinion of it?"—"I have not the smallest doubt."—"What?"—"I am certain there does not exist a woman more virtuous and more perfect."—"What an inconceivable delirium! when it is proved that this woman is Ophelia, when she confesses it, when she tells you *never to interrogate her!*"—"You see all that in her letter; and as for my part, I see quite the contrary. I discover in her a striking confidence, a nobleness of manner, an elevation of soul, which it is impossible to feign."—"In short, the celebrated Ophelia will persuade you that she never was a courtesan."—"And who told you that the name of Ophelia is exclusive to a courtesan? It is the name of the heroine of the tragedy of Hamlet: I have seen it in several romances. Could not her name be given to more than one?"—"But what do you say of so many other striking affinities?"—"Perhaps they are the effect

of chance.”—“ That would be truly miraculous ! A woman with such affecting modesty, celestial countenance—a woman who thus expresses and conducts herself being a hypocrite and the opprobrium of her sex, would be the height of prodigy.” In finishing these words, Sainville hastily left the baron, and ran to Constance’s, whom he found in her garden. She made him sit down beside her upon a grass seat, when Sainville hastened to thank her for her letter. “ It is needless to assure you,” added he, “ that my admiration for you can neither be diminished nor increased. The most urging of all interests certainly makes me desire to be able to unravel your sentiments. This is what affects me. Of what consequence is it to me to learn your true name ? I know your temper, your disposition, and your heart ; that is sufficient to render you justice, but too much for my tranquillity. Never expect me to ask
you

you any indiscreet question—but allow me to venture one, which your letter does not forbid me.—Tell me—are you disengaged?”—“No, I am not.”—“Oh! heavens! you are married?” At these words Constance, instead of answering, appeared pensive; and Sainville soliciting a clear and positive answer, “Do not you believe,” said she, “that a solemn and voluntary oath ought to be a sacred engagement?”—“But,” replied Sainville quickly, “have you given your hand? In short, have you a husband?”—“Alas!”—answered Constance, and could say no more: her tears interrupted her speech. “In the name of heaven,” cried Sainville, “explain yourself!”—“Well,” said Constance, “by law I can dispose of my hand, but religion and honour forbid it: cease, then, to cherish sentiments which I perceive you have, for I cannot answer them; and remember, after this confession, you cannot entertain, nor let me perceive

perceive them, without mortally offending me." This discourse, pronounced in an emphatic and severe manner, determined Sainville quickly to change the conversation. "This is sufficient, madam," replied he. "I can constrain myself to silence; and it is in my sentiments alone that I shall find the necessary support to enable me to obey you. You have offered me your friendship: I have a right to it. It is a treasure I claim, and without which life would become insupportable." Constance, who had formerly perceived something arrogant and violent in Sainville's disposition, did not expect so much submission. She was affected by it, and recompensed him by tenderly looking at him. Sainville, far from appearing to perceive it, turned the conversation upon travelling, asked some questions about England, and spoke a great deal of Spain and Italy. He displayed wit and instruction: he was amiable, appeared to be so, and about an hour

hour after went away, carrying with him as much hope as he gave security to Constance. She indeed had just told him that she was not free, but had no husband : she was only bound by an oath ; and notwithstanding the severity of her language, this kind of engagement did not alarm Sainville. The scruples of delicacy could not have such an effect upon a man who had so often triumphed over them. Constance was by no means a woman of ordinary talents, neither had the plan of conduct he meditated any thing common in it : she knew his passion, testified her gratitude, shewed him much sensibility, and received his attentions and visits. Could there be more powerful motives to expect the most complete success, in the course of time, by address and perseverance ? One thing only made him rather uneasy : Constance was devout, and thought herself bound by religion. She said, (and he could not forget it,) *but religion forbids*

bids it. These words, which she seemed to pronounce with a sort of emphasis, struck Sainville: he discovered in them something mysterious, that inspired him with a fear which neither his self-love nor his reason could surmount.

Having been two days without returning to Constance, he one day thought of going to see her, when he received a letter from Paris. He recollected the hand of lord Belmont: it was an answer to his last questions. Sainville never had the least doubt of the sincerity of Constance: but he could not help experiencing a disagreeable emotion upon opening the letter which was either to confirm or to waver his opinion and confidence. One may judge what he felt, upon reading these words:

‘ I have so much to write to you, my
‘ dear marquis, that I shall begin without
‘ any preamble; for the recital which I
‘ am

‘ am going to give you will answer all
‘ your questions.

‘ Madame de Tervures, the day before
‘ yesterday, requested me to accompany her
‘ to the abbey of Maubuisson, where she
‘ was educated, and where a young lady
‘ was to consecrate herself to God by so-
‘ lemn vows: a curious enough spectacle
‘ for an English person. We arrived at
‘ the monastery at twelve o’clock, and
‘ were immediately conducted into the ex-
‘ terior church, which is only separated
‘ from that of the nuns by a grate. We
‘ there met some of our acquaintance, who
‘ told us that the noviciate, who was going
‘ to pronounce her vows, was a foreigner,
‘ of great beauty, and that she had be-
‘ stowed considerable gifts to the convent.
‘ This recital interested me. I waited for
‘ the ceremony with a degree of curiosity
‘ mixed with emotion; when all of a sud-
‘ den the curtain which covered the grate
‘ was drawn up, and we saw the noviciate
‘ in

‘ in the midst of the nuns. Judge my
‘ surprise, upon seeing that she who ad-
‘ vanced towards the altar to consummate
‘ her sacrifice, was the famous and charm-
‘ ing Ophelia. She appeared to me, under
‘ this modest dress, a thousand times hand-
‘ somer than ever: her eyes were down-
‘ cast; a sweet serenity gave her face an
‘ affecting and extraordinary expression:
‘ there was something noble in her counte-
‘ nance, which persuaded me that she only
‘ felt, at that moment, the glory of expi-
‘ ating her errors, and of resuming all the
‘ dignity of her sex. I thought I saw a
‘ fallen angel whom the heavenly favour
‘ was reinstating in its primary rank. She
‘ articulated her vows in a firm tone. I
‘ heard that seducing and deceiving voice
‘ at last pronounce an irrevocable oath:
‘ I saw this woman, who was so long aban-
‘ doned to pleasure and dissipation, conse-
‘ crate herself to retirement and obscurity:
‘ I saw laid upon her head the eternal veil
‘ which

‘ which was to hide, for ever, her danger-
‘ ous beauty.—But this is enough of Ophe-
‘ lia, who does not interest you. Let us
‘ return to your stranger. You see how
‘ ill-founded our suspicions were. If I
‘ had at first received the exact portrait of
‘ her which you last sent to me, it would
‘ have informed me her true name; yet I
‘ cannot entertain the least doubt respect-
‘ ing her, as I formerly saw her hand-
‘ writing, and immediately knew that of
‘ the note inclosed in your last letter.
‘ However, as she wishes to conceal her
‘ name, I ought to respect a secret
‘ snatched from her, and I shall not betray
‘ it. All that I can inform you is, that
‘ Constance, the victim of love and ca-
‘ lumny, was the most distinguished and in-
‘ comparable beauty in England, cele-
‘ brated as much by her wit and good
‘ character, as by her illustrious birth, rank,
‘ and misfortunes. I was never intimately
‘ acquainted with her; I have only been
‘ in

‘ in her company two or three times : but
‘ that is sufficient to admire and always to
‘ remember her. She must be about
‘ twenty-four or twenty-five years old.
‘ Happy ! a thousand times happy, he
‘ who may console and deliver her from
‘ her just misanthropy !

‘ Adieu, my dear marquis. I shall re-
‘ turn immediately to London, with ex-
‘ treme regret at being deprived of the
‘ pleasure of seeing you before my depar-
‘ ture : but I entertain the flattering hope
‘ of hearing sometimes from you.’

As soon as Sainville finished reading this letter, his first impulse was flying out of his room to seek for the baron ; and nothing could equal the impatience he felt to justify Constance. “ Here, here,” cried he, accosting his friend ; “ read this letter of lord Belmont.”—At these words the baron took the letter, and while he was reading it, Sainville looked attentively at him,

him, enjoying the astonishment and confusion expressed upon his countenance. The baron having entirely read the letter, pretended to be still reading, that he might not be obliged to speak. "Well," said Sainville, "do you still believe that Constance is the *courtezan Ophelia*?"—"Spare me," replied the baron, "for I am truly confounded."—"Yes, my friend, I am too happy to refuse pardoning you."—"Happy! She corresponds, then, to your love? She has confessed it to you?" At this question, Sainville related, without prevarication, all that had passed between him and Constance: he spoke of his passion, hopes, and designs with so much frankness and confidence, as entirely dispelled the embarrassment of the baron, who felt nothing but the joy of regaining his friend and the subject of a romance, whose loss he had so much deplored. "Now I advise you," said he, "to hide lord Belmont's answer from Constance. This little
dis-

disimulation will give the greatest weight to your conduct towards her.”—“ No, no,” replied Sainville ; “ to dissemble with Constance would be a crime ; yet I confess I thought of doing it : but I abjure the idea for ever.” Sainville spoke with sincerity : lord Belmont’s letter served to exalt his imagination and love. The most elevated man can never permit himself to despise the voice of the public. He may not, perhaps, desire the praises of the multitude on his own account, because he congratulates himself at being insensible to them. Vulgar pride solicits them, while scrupulous self-love refuses and even knows how to disregard them : but it is allowable to desire them for whom we love, and then they become highly delightful. Sainville thought, with rapture, that the object he adored had left in England a splendid reputation ; he was proud even of those trifling advantages ; and although he did not attach any value to birth,
yet

yet he was flattered that Constance's was illustrious. He wished to find in her all that could excite a just admiration, and every thing which could dazzle the vulgar. He went that very night along with his friend to Constance, who received them with her usual kindness, and after half an hour's general conversation the baron went away. Sainville, finding himself alone with Constance, spoke to her of lord Belmont; and without shewing his letter, gave her an account of what he had written to him about her and Ophelia. Constance listened to him with the greatest attention. "I am much indebted to you," said she, "for this confidence, and I shall never forget that your esteem for me has been able to withstand such singular and striking appearances. Gratitude makes it my duty to inform you, at last, who I am.—I am going to entrust you with all my sad secrets!"—In pronouncing these words, she rose up, went and opened a bureau, from which

which she took out a manuscript, and presented it to Sainville. "Here is," said she, "the history of my life. I employed myself writing it in French, since I have been in this retirement. Take this manuscript along with you, and read it; and if you wish to communicate it to your friend, I consent." At these words Sainville, full of trouble and agitation, received the manuscript, and hastened to terminate his visit, that he might the sooner begin this interesting narration. He went precipitately to the castle, shut himself up in his room, where he sat down before a table with two lights upon it, and unfolding the manuscript he read the following

History of Lady CLARENDON.

I WAS born in London, of catholic parents, distinguished by their birth and fortune, and being their only daughter, I was

brought up with great care and tenderness. They cultivated my little natural talents, and instructed me in good principles; but there is, in the best education of women, a dangerous error—that of exalting sensibility—which could not be avoided in regard to me. The tenderest of mothers was my only governess, who joined to the most endearing virtues a mind equally cultivated and enlarged. She would certainly have been an incomparable tutress, if her heart could have permitted her to listen more to reason upon the following point: I was born with great sensibility; and my mother, far from endeavouring to moderate my inherent affections, daily augmented their energy by her conduct and example. Her excessive tenderness inspired me with the fondest, and consequently the most unreasonable attachment for her. I slept in the same room, I accompanied her every where, was always with her; in a word, I was so accustomed

tomed to her company, that being deprived of it but for an hour caused the greatest grief to me; and if indispensable affairs sometimes obliged her to leave me for a day, I passed the time of her absence in affliction and tears. At her return I was in a strange situation, weeping, crying, and experiencing the most violent emotions. My mother partook them, and her tender caresses became the recompence of an excessive sensibility which she ought to have suppressed. Nothing enlightens the mind so much as sentiment. My mother applauded my progress, and was astonished at my intelligence: she found in me an acuteness and delicacy which children cannot have when their imagination has never been exalted. My father felt all the inconveniences of such an education, and often spoke of it to my mother. "How can you expect," said he to her, "that your daughter can be happy, with such dispositions as you give birth to in

in her? She has already felt the most violent emotions that can agitate the soul: her young heart has already lost that amiable serenity, the sweetest charm of innocence. Henceforward moderate sentiments will appear insipid to her, and she will never think herself beloved, unless it be with idolatry. This refined sensibility you admire in her will give her an excessive delicacy, which will always render her dissatisfied with others. She will sigh in secret, on account of an imaginary ingratitude, she will appear often unjust and fantastical; and if her inclinations do not correspond with such pure principles as she has received from you, nothing will be comparable to the torments that the strength of her passions, combated by duty, will cause her." Alas! these reflexions were too well founded: but they made little impression upon the mind of my mother. My education was continued upon the same plan, and it was not yet

yet finished when I had the misfortune to lose the most respectable and best of mothers! The grief I could not help experiencing I thought would have cost me my life. Although I was only thirteen years old, my sorrow was as deep as excessive. Having escaped from the danger of a serious and long illness, I fell into a languid state, which determined my father to make me travel; and he accordingly carried me to France, where we spent more than two years. I was in my sixteenth year when we returned to England: my father then thought of choosing me a husband, and very soon many suitors presented themselves: but one only fixed my attention and wishes. I found in him a heart full of sensibility, an agreeable and cultivated mind, an even and sweet disposition, the most seducing figure; in short, all that could interest and please. He loved me, and I partook of his sentiments: our birth, fortune, and age were perfectly

perfectly suitable : I was in my seventeenth year, and he was twenty-six. All these concurrences determined my father in his favour, and the day of my marriage with lord Clarendon was at last fixed. In the interim my father fell ill, and died in a few months after. He left his affairs in the greatest disorder. My grief and inexperience rendered me incapable of arranging them ; and the debts almost entirely swallowing up the fortune, at seventeen years of age I found myself destitute of any estate, a ruined orphan. Lord Clarendon, who had as much generosity as sensibility, solicited me more strongly than ever to accept his hand ; which I selected in a more happy period, to whose wishes I yielded without repugnance ; and immediately after my marriage we set out for one of his estates which lay in Derbyshire. Some friends accompanied us thither ; among them was count d'Elby, the brother-in-law and intimate friend of lord Clarendon.

The count d'Elby, then thirty years old, had a countenance commanding attention and respect, and a figure more regular than agreeable: he spoke well, his conversation was interesting and witty, but too affected; and his manners, noble and simple as they appeared, were not natural. A constrained and composed deportment, a look piercing, at the same time wandering and distracted, and very seldom fixed, which I never saw in any one but him, and a melancholy and unhappy physiognomy, gave to his person a certain equivocal and false air which at first struck one, and with which it was difficult to be reconciled. It was as easy to know he was an observer, as plain to discover that he wished to hide it; and his secret manner of examining what passed around him naturally inspired him with reserve, and even mistrust. In short, one could readily perceive that there was no agreement between his exterior and his disposition; yet, having an ardent imagination,

nation, and the most vehement passions, he affected an extreme gravity, and an austere wisdom. Born with rare qualities and extraordinary sensibility, he would have been virtuous had he had a little more empire over himself: but yielding to all his inclinations, he was always contriving how to disguise those which could hurt his reputation, and thereby became insensibly familiarised with a dissimulation which he carried to the highest and most dangerous pitch. Having been brought up with lord Clarendon, they were both, from their infancy, united by the most strict friendship. The count, a member of parliament, and one of the most eloquent orators of that time, had, over his friend, all the ascendancy which great talents, a renowned capacity, and brilliant successes can afford. Lord Clarendon had adopted all his political ideas, and being naturally indolent and idle, was entirely guided by him. Conformity of opinion, in England, forms
14 a kind

a kind of public intimacy, which one cannot break without losing a part of his personal consideration. But stronger and dearer connexions still united the count and lord Clarendon: the latter owed his life to count d'Elby, who, in one of the battles at the end of last war, exposed himself to the most imminent danger, to snatch his wounded friend from the hands of the enemy. The count had rendered several other services to lord Clarendon, and at last married his sister. The countess d'Elby was adored by her brother, over whose mind she had the most absolute sway. Less tender than him, she had no true attachment but for her husband; and making a merit of a sentiment conformable with her duty, she thought herself the most virtuous of women, because she was the most affectionate. Without forbearance towards those who did not enjoy the same happiness as herself, she despised and feared them, looking upon them as dangerous

gerous rivals, or at least who might become such. Full of ambition and vanity, she had always cherished the hope that her brother would never change his liberty for the matrimonial tie ; and she saw his marriage with a mortal vexation that inspired her with a secret antipathy against me ; which she always maintained. Lady Bolton, another sister of lord Clarendon, had all the defects of the countess, without the art and wit necessary to conceal them. The destiny of a young person almost always depends upon the dispositions and sentiments of those who surround and govern them. Youth has need of counsel and indulgence ; and as they cannot do without a guide, their imprudence and thoughtlessness are excusable. Benevolence only can gain their confidence, and unhappily I never found among my relations that sweet sentiment with which I felt the necessity of inspiring them.

In the mean time I knew all the happiness that an ardent and lawful passion could procure. The lively tenderness, the assiduous cares of an adored husband, gratified all my wishes. We spent the greatest part of the day *tête-à-tête*; and after having said all that love could inspire, sometimes a long silence succeeded such agreeable conversation: but then, in the same room by the side of each other, a delightful reverie, without taking up our thoughts, satisfied our hearts; and in this happy calm the time glided away with inconceivable rapidity. Hunting, fishing, walking, in short, all the amusements the country furnished, continually presented us new charms. I rode on horseback, ever inseparable from lord Clarendon: I accompanied him every where; his tastes became mine; and being along with him, nothing appeared to me insipid or monotonous. To prolong such happy days, he
often

often proposed walking by moonlight in a neighbouring wood : there, soon distant from the rest of society, we found ourselves alone ; there Aurora frequently surprised, and warned us of the hour which love had made us forget. I cannot now recollect what affair obliged lord Clarendon to be absent a few days, when I could not accompany him, but he wrote a note to me, the day before his return home, containing these words : ‘ I find I cannot
‘ live a moment without you. Ah ! at
‘ least, if we are again compelled to be
‘ separated, let it never be for eight days,
‘ for this trial ought to convince us that
‘ this time is too long.’

How pleasing it is, when we love to excess, to hear said, with such simplicity, what, if spoken in cool blood, we would think so exaggerating and extravagant ! I recollect, with sorrowful pleasure, that delightful time when I experienced such keen emotions ; yet my felicity was not

complete. An inexpressible but insupportable uneasiness often embittered it. Every day that passed over I regretted it as part of a happiness, the instability of which I confusedly foresaw. With apprehension I looked forward to the future. Not having a happier destiny to expect, I dreaded a fatal change in my situation; and I said to myself, *What would become of me if he ceased loving me?* This overwhelming idea incessantly came into my mind, and the positive testimonies of lord Clarendon's tenderness made it more terrible and striking. Besides, he possessed all the sentiments of my heart, and I saw other objects, his sister and the count d'Elby, attracting his attachment. I wished to cultivate the friendship of these two persons, but their indifference repelled me, inspiring me with the same sentiment; and at the bottom of my heart I could not help thinking it extraordinary that lord Clarendon did not appear to observe their indifference

difference to me. Then too much beloved to be discontented, I was at least very often sorrowful. Eighteen months passed in this manner; at the end of that time different events called lord Clarendon again to court: but before we could consent to leave this castle, now so dear to us, we wished to go together, and see, once more, all the places which recalled to our mind the happiness we had there enjoyed; and, through a weakness which love alone inspires, these kind of adieus caused us as much sorrow as regret. I remember, when we got into the coach, we both looked at the windows of my room, and I then experienced a great oppression of heart, and an inexpressible sadness.

We arrived in London, where I soon had just reason to regret the pleasing retirement in which our happiest days had been spent. Business, duty, pleasure, continually separated lord Clarendon from me; I became pensive and pre-occupied;
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I perceived I was less amiable in his sight, and he paid less attention to me. Too proud and too delicate to complain, instead of disclosing my sentiments, I took the resolution of being silent and indifferent. An excessive sensibility, perhaps, rendered me unjust, by hiding the sole motive which could have excused me ; and I only seemed capricious and peevish, as it appeared to me that he ought to have guessed my thoughts. Lord Clarendon, less delicate and tender, did not comprehend me : he believed that the vivacity of my sentiments was diminished. He was at first secretly afflicted at it : then he persuaded himself that our hearts were inwardly always the same, and that the perturbation produced by the dissipation of high life alone caused the change which had astonished him. This persuasion, under which he rested secure, made him appear to me indifferent and insensible : but it would have been less cruel to me to see

see him discontented. Too ingenious in tormenting myself, I at last believed he had no more affection for me, and I formed the design of regulating my sentiments according to his. More than once I thought I could succeed in my resolution: but time only can destroy a sincere passion, which we have enjoyed without any reserve. Frequently, when I most flattered myself with having recovered the command of my reason, a slight attention, a single word, a look from lord Clarendon, made me again feel all the violence of my first sentiments: then, abjuring all my resolutions, I accused myself of ingratitude, and justified what before vexed me in his conduct with more art than he would have himself employed, had he attempted his defence. But soon after, passing from one extreme to another, I suddenly experienced the same fears, the same melancholy; and, a few months after, that state became habitual to me. Thinking that
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lord Clarendon did not find any delight in my company, I neglected the opportunities I had of being alone with him. Our conversation became tedious. I was surprised to see him tired with me, and I compared his present manners with what they formerly were, without thinking that the alteration he perceived in my behaviour authorized his own. Being at last extremely discontented, and no less irritated, I could no longer conceal it. But this too late explanation had only the effect of increasing my unhappiness. I had lost part of my influence over him, and my reproaches appeared to him only capricious and whimsical. However I was still beloved. Lord Clarendon being naturally of a mild and moderate temper, heard me with astonishment, and answered me with sensibility. He assured me that I could never cease to be dear to him, that his esteem for me was equal to his affection, and that his confidence, being always the same,

same, ought to be a proof of it; that he had been several times afraid his presence and attentions would not be so agreeable to me as they were before, but that a single word would be sufficient to dissipate his apprehension, and convince him he was mistaken. In short, all he told me was kind and reasonable, but it was no longer the language of passion; and passion alone could satisfy a heart like mine. I replied to him, shedding a torrent of tears, that I loved him more than ever; that I did not exist but for him. He felt himself much affected, protested he was always the same, and then quitted me, in the persuasion he had convinced me of the sincerity of his sentiments; when, on the contrary, he left me in despair. When I was alone, I gave myself up to the most tormenting reflexions. "Can this be the same man," said I to myself, "whom I have seen so passionately fond? With what composure he acknowledged that he supposed

supposed I had less love for him! Has this frightful notion, even for a moment, prevented him from abandoning himself to all the vain pleasures of dissipation? Has it made him less even-tempered or gay? No; he had reconciled himself to it without trouble and without regret. My being melancholy and peevish made him find less pleasure in my company, and will very soon make it troublesome to him. Our hearts were not adapted to each other, and his is not sufficiently delicate and tender to excuse or even ever to comprehend the true cause of my apparent injustice. I can only appear to him whimsical and capricious." Thus I aggravated my trouble, and insensibly dug the abyss wherein I was going to lose myself.

Incapable of dissimulation, I could not assume the appearance of being satisfied. Expecting nothing from a fresh explanation, I did not wish for any: but I appeared more dull and uneven-tempered than

than ever. Lord Clarendon flattering himself at having entirely restored peace to my soul, was confounded at a conduct which appeared to him equally incomprehensible and extravagant. He then began to absent himself from me, not so much by chance as design ; yet a sincere tenderness and strong propensity towards me sometimes brought him back : but I received him with such embarrassment, constraint, and indifference, that I at last entirely lost him. In despair, odious to myself, life became insupportable to me.

My heart, overwhelmed with grief and anxiety, wanted a relief it could not obtain but by imparting them to a friend. Oh ! from what misfortunes a true one could have then preserved me ! Alas ! I had none. I vainly sought salutary counsel : I even saw around me people who, far from pitying me, openly condemned my disposition and conduct. The enmity of my sisters-in-law seemed daily to increase ;

crease ; for I could easily perceive they prejudiced me with their brother, and that they prepossessed against me their numerous acquaintance, who formed the whole society of lord Clarendon. They had it easily in their power to traduce me, for there is in my disposition a certain mixture of timidity and pride, which always hindered me from endeavouring to regain the friendship of those who deserted me. I can, without any repugnance, confess a real fault, and do every thing to make amends for it, but the resentment of injustice absolutely takes away the desire of justifying myself for a supposed one.

I fled from the world I never loved, and which my misfortunes made me hate. In this sad situation, I remarked, with astonishment, that the count d'Elby appeared secretly to sympathize at my troubles. I always met his observing eye, and frequently saw the expression of tenderness and gentle pity upon his countenance ; and
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this discovery revived in my heart a feeble ray of hope. I conceived, that if the intimate friend of lord Clarendon was affected at my destiny, he might soften its bitterness. However, I perceived that he wished to hide from me the sensibility he experienced, as he blushed when he saw my looks fixed upon him. I was afflicted at it, imagining he had no hope nor possibility of serving me; and this idea hindered me from entrusting him with my sorrow: but the compassion and sentiments I supposed in him inspired me with gratitude, which soon became a sincere friendship.

My misanthropy daily increasing, I declared I would not receive any more visits; and my health serving as a pretext, I renounced all kind of company. Lord Clarendon submitted himself to this last caprice with his usual meekness: but such a singularity could not enter his disposition. He continued giving suppers, and seeing his relations and friends; he per-

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mitted me, without complaining of it, to keep myself shut up in my room, and made no change in his mode of living. This conduct perfectly shocked me. I perceived an indifference in it which completed my despair; for I flattered myself that my close retirement would afflict, or at least astonish him. When we experience a violent passion, and have no longer any hope of being beloved, we seek and take advantage of every means to attract the attention of the object of such an unhappy sentiment: we wish to agitate, pique, and even irritate him: for his anger or hatred would appear less insupportable than his entire neglect.

In devoting myself to absolute solitude, I however testified to count d'Elby the desire of sometimes seeing him. He seemed to be affected with such an exception, and with pleasure I soon observed a great change in his manners. Far from dissembling the tenderness which I caused him,
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he shewed me the greatest sensibility. He always spoke to me of the only object which could interest me : I esteemed him, I entertained a slight hope that he could, in process of time, be of use to me, and perhaps even restore a heart, without which I could not exist. All these confused ideas at last determined me not to conceal from him any thing of my sentiments and situation. This particular confidence deeply affected him, and his tears mixed with mine. He spoke reasonably to me, and blamed the excess of a delicacy of sentiment which was so fatal to me ; adding, that few men could partake, or even comprehend it : but that lord Clarendon, without having such a passionate heart as mine, was not less worthy of my tenderness ; that he had loved me with all the ardour of which he was capable ; that my misfortunes only proceeded from my not calculating upon the infinite difference of our dispositions, and requiring of him sentiments

timents of which he was not susceptible; that, in short, I ought to have been contented with obtaining all the attachment he could grant, and not to have expected beyond possibility. I answered this discourse by calling to his mind the first year of our marriage, when I was so happy. "You were then," replied the count, "the only object who could engross lord Clarendon's attention: since that time, being too much occupied with pleasure, and led away by it, he at first neglected you, without having less love for you. In short, his disposition has not the stability and constancy of your's; and be assured, that even in solitude, in the course of time you would have experienced the trouble which now afflicts you. But," added he, "it would have still depended upon yourself to have secured all your precious rights. By habituating yourself in seeing no more in him the transports of a lover, you would have preserved, for ever, the most pleasing

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ing and lasting dominion over his heart; his sentiment of predilection would have always been for you: but you wished to obtain an exclusive one, and I believe it is only in the power of a woman to grant it."

These reflexions making me perfectly acquainted with lord Clarendon's disposition, convinced me how wrong I was in judging his by my own. I apprehended I had lost all his sentiments, because I could not consent to lose any. My regret was sincere; and repentance accompanying it, made it still more grievous. Lord Elby lessened the rigour of such a violent situation, by making me foresee that my disorder was not without a remedy, and that the heart of lord Clarendon might perhaps be easier regained than I imagined. I took this supposition for a positive assurance: I persuaded myself that the count's intention was to operate such a dear re-union, and I relied upon his friendship. The best means undoubtedly

would have been to have gone myself to lord Clarendon, and to have interested him, at least, by a sincere recital of all I suffered: but the embarrassment of such an explanation was not the only reason that prevented me. This proceeding was simple, therefore I believed, that had not the earl foreseen something more disagreeable than the uncertainty of its success, he would have advised me to put it in execution; and his silence upon that head persuaded me it would have been imprudent in me to risk it. - I had no doubt the earl would act strongly in my favour: his assiduity about me, the marks of concern I received from him, the long and lively friendship which subsisted between him and lord Clarendon, in short, every thing convinced me he exerted himself with ardour for our mutual happiness. I did not give him any direct commission, I only let him know how eagerly I desired a reconciliation on which my life depended.

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I could not venture to entreat him to act, or even to speak in my favour, as I imagined, that by leaving to himself the whole merit of such an essential service, I would give him a motive to act with more zeal and readiness. By judging according to the dispositions of my heart and sensibility, I, in short, yielded to the fatal destiny which constantly induced me to choose what was most contrary to my interest. Of what avail is understanding and good sense to a too delicate and passionate heart, who would never consult but sensibility alone? Reason then, quite useless and vain, only presents herself, to oblige us to count the faults she was not able to make us avoid: she is silent when her advice is necessary, and then we judge aright those things only which least interest us.

Meanwhile the time slipped over, and I found myself always in the same situation: but hope at least rendered it sup-

portable to me. The earl, more assiduous and tender than ever, consoled me by proofs of a friendship from which I expected my happiness. I knew that he daily saw lord Clarendon, and I thought he was quite occupied with the design of reconciling us. Such ideas were necessary, to prevent me from being the victim of a mortal grief.

Some time before my great intimacy with lord Elby, lord Clarendon had almost entirely given over seeing me; at least he never came when I was alone: he only appeared when I was at my toilet, or when he was sure of finding the earl with me. His visits soon became as rare as they were short. Since I began to conceive new hopes, I had only seen him twice: but it chanced that the last time I saw him he gave me motives to be better satisfied with him. He found me altered, and spoke to me of my health with an interested air, which prejudice made

made me attribute to the great assiduity of lord Elby. From that time I did not doubt he had already spoken to him of me; and this first imaginary success gave me the greatest hopes of the future. When I knew that he was with lord Clarendon, thinking myself the object of their conversation, I represented to my fancy all that might be said: I thought I heard lord Elby gradually preparing the heart of his friend to sensibility; I saw lord Clarendon astonished and moved; and those consoling chimeras reviving my courage, occupied me several hours in as strong and delightful a manner as if I had really heard such conversation.

One day when I was with lord Elby, a servant came, and said that lord Clarendon wanted him. I started. He perceived my agitation; and upon his leaving me, I remarked he had tears in his eyes. I imagined that joy was the cause of this emotion, and that the happy and decisive

moment was at last arrived. I immediately recollected all that he told me in our last conversation, I interpreted the most simple things according to my wishes; and I thought I clearly saw that my troubles drew near their end. Agitated, transported, I walked about my room, agreeably entertaining myself with the sweetest illusions: I represented to myself the object of so much love, more tender than ever, coming to wipe and dry the tears which he caused me to shed: I heard him protesting to me an eternal affection. My gratitude did not make me forget lord Elby in this affecting picture: I saw him bringing his friend into my arms, happy himself at our happiness, and enjoying the fruit of his triumph. Distracted by these deluding ideas, I was in a state impossible to describe; the least noise, the creaking of a door, caused me the most violent and inexpressible palpitation of the heart. I frequently believed I heard at a distance the
voice

voice of lord Clarendon ; I sprung to meet him ; and although deceived, I still preserved hope. In the midst of this lively agitation I heard the door distinctly open, when I listened with extreme perturbation, and found it was lord Elby hastily advancing. By his return, I then no longer doubted my happiness. I wished to run to meet him, but my limbs refused me their succour. He entered alone, and I fell at his feet, without being able to utter a single word. One glance informed me of my destiny. His dull and gloomy physiognomy chilled me to the very heart. I read my doom upon his countenance, and without any other explanation I gave myself up to the most violent and impetuous despair. He asked me some questions, but without shewing any astonishment, or urging me to answer him, which completely persuaded me that I did not deceive myself in my last conjecture ; and he perceived I had foreseen my misfortune.

Suffocated by a deluge of tears, I could not speak. I scarcely heard the unconnected discourse he addressed to me. Assuring myself all his efforts had been fruitless, judging by his deep sadness, and the mortal embarrassment he could not dissemble, that he had lost all hopes for the present and future, I thought I ought to spare him the pain of giving me useless and fatal details. I in general assured him of my gratitude, and begged of him to leave me alone. He answered me, blushing, that I was not at all indebted to him, and that he was ignorant of what I meant. This answer appearing to me quite sincere, I conceived that he thought it a duty not to confess how much he had tried to soften lord Clarendon's heart, from the fear of rendering him more guilty in my eyes, and thus of aggravating the horrors of my situation. I found this delicacy as natural as estimable; and imposing upon me the obligation of respecting it, I carefully avoided,
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after this fatal conversation, speaking to him of it.

This cruel day was the very epoch of all the misfortunes of my life; and the dreadful night which succeeded it still represents to my memory a picture in such terrible colours, that the remembrance alone would be sufficient to preserve me, for ever, from a passion which might cause such torments. The happiness it procures, always accompanied by fears and anxieties, is as uncertain as unsubstantial; and, by an inevitable fatality, the charm of being beloved does not equal the grief of being no longer the object of such a love. The pleasure of my past felicity could never be compared to the excess of my despair. Certain of having for ever lost the heart of lord Clarendon, it was not enough to bemoan his inconstancy: I still had to complain of his insensibility. "Undoubtedly," said I to myself, "his friend, when relating to him my sad history, did

not fail to describe my regret, my grief, and all the excess of the love which justifies me : he could not forget to tell him that, being cured, by experience and reflexion, of a delicacy which I myself condemn, I abjure, for ever, that caprice and susceptibility, the unhappy source of our divisions ; and his cruel insensibility to my repentance, as well as to my love, abandons, renounces, and even refuses me his pity. No, no ; such cruelty is unnatural ; neither his heart nor his disposition are susceptible of it : a cause unknown to me must produce it.—Seduced, led astray by a new passion, lord Clarendon sacrifices me. It is too well known how much he loved me : perhaps they are weak enough to be afraid I may again be the object of that love, and they require this horrid desertion. He has promised and executes it, knowing that it will cause my death !”

Thus,

Thus, after having flattered myself with the most pleasing hope, I aggravated the severity of my destiny by overwhelming conjectures. Jealousy heightened my torments, and prepared fresh ones, which were to surpass all that I had suffered. Lord Elby, still more affected at my troubles, scarcely ever left me. Being always sad and pensive, the only consolation he offered was often weeping with me. His pity, which appeared to me to confirm my misfortunes, still augmented them, and seemed to forewarn me that the doom pronounced against me was irrevocable. I thus interpreted his deep sighs, his tears, attentions, and even his silence. I thought him no longer of any use to my designs: his visits did not now interest me, his presence afflicted and troubled me, and gratitude only obliged me to receive him. As my health was visibly impaired, I always desired him to leave me before nine o'clock at night, under the pretext that I

wished to go to bed, and when he was gone, I opened my window and sat down upon the balcony; and although it was then the coldest time of winter, I often remained there till two o'clock in the morning. As this balcony looked into the yard, I consequently knew what time lord Clarendon came home, and I could see him coming out of the carriage. Besides, when company came to sup with him, I could easily distinguish, by the light of the flambeaus, every one he received. I paid particular attention in remarking the ladies; and being hid behind a Venetian blind, without any light near me, I could see every thing without being perceived. Jealousy, whose activity perhaps equals that of the sentiment which produced it, —this fatal passion, as violent as love itself—made me support, with inconceivable perseverance, the tediousness of such a sad occupation; as I did not doubt but in the end it would furnish me with some
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light upon the secret conduct of lord Clarendon, and upon the object who took possession of my place in his heart. I indeed soon formed conjectures which immediately became violent suspicions : I remarked, that among all the women who visited lord Clarendon, one only obtained the distinction of being conducted to his carriage. I did not know her, but I observed she had but one servant without livery, and I judged that her rank had nothing which merited particular respect. She appeared to be young and handsome, and that was sufficient to assure me of my destiny. Lord Clarendon, in giving her his hand, frequently stopped a moment upon the steps, whispering to her, and sometimes he waited in the yard to receive her.—Alas ! how little did he think that I, drowned in tears, and overwhelmed with despair, thus espied, in the stillness of the night, his secret actions ! The torment of jealousy gave me fresh occasion to
speak.

peak. I could learn nothing from my people, as they had no communication with those of lord Clarendon; they only informed me that he frequently had music in the house, which it was impossible for me to hear, as lord Clarendon had changed his apartments for others at the opposite extremity of the house: but being previously told of the days when the concerts were to be given, I then observed that the unknown lady always came at these times, and I doubted not she was the object of these entertainments. I could no longer be silent with lord Elby: I spoke to him, gave a perfect description of the person who troubled my repose, and without confiding in him, I hazarded some questions: but comprehending my motives, he appeared afraid of answering; and as I insisted—"About what are you asking me?" said he. "The name alone of this woman will give you the severest blow."—"Nothing can astonish me," cried I. "Speak, I re-

I request you to be candid."—"Well," replied he, "it is Ophelia."—"O heavens!" interrupted I: "a courtezan!"—I could say no more; a torrent of tears hindered me from speaking. The earl, far from trying to console me, by his silence rather completely confirmed me of my misfortune. "Ah! what!" replied I, "is it Ophelia who succeeds me in the heart of lord Clarendon?"—"Succeed you!" replied the earl. "Ah! you certainly cannot think so: but this woman, as dangerous as celebrated, may easily acquire a temporary dominion."—"Yes, I know," interrupted I, "she possesses wit as well as beauty, and likewise the most seducing talents: but how can a person of such a character inspire a noble passion? and how can the sisters of lord Clarendon approve such a conduct? For they authorize it by their presence; they are witnesses of it, and without doubt confidants of such a criminal intrigue; and whilst they
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are blaming the behaviour of their unfortunate sister-in-law, they are present at all the entertainments their brother gives to his mistress. I even saw the aunt of lord Clarendon, the austere lady Nevill, come to these scandalous suppers!"—At these words, lord Elby, resuming the discourse, protested to me that he did not think Ophelia was yet the mistress of lord Clarendon, and that they had but very lately began to suspect the sentiments of the latter. He added, that those suppers appeared to be given solely for the amusement of the ladies who composed the society of lord Clarendon; that Ophelia, being received and made welcome, in several houses, as a woman of talents, was admitted only on that account; that she behaved with great exterior decency, and seemed to be there only for the purpose of singing and playing upon the harpsichord; that thus, far from her seeming to receive the homage of men, it was she alone who rendered

rendered all those evenings agreeable ; and that those entertainments only appeared to be given to the ladies, who were amused by her talents. “ However,” continued the earl, “ I have for a long time been displeased at these suppers, and discontinued being present at them.” Such an unsatisfactory explanation only irritated my grief ; and that I might give myself up to it without restraint, I soon invented a pretext to get rid of lord Elby. I was more than eight days without receiving him, and I found a fatal pleasure in giving complete, uninterrupted sway to my tears and despair. I represented to myself lord Clarendon, this sole beloved object, rejecting, sacrificing, forgetting me, for the purpose of entirely abandoning himself to the most debasing passion ; I thought I saw him at the feet of my rival, as affectionate and happy as I had formerly beheld him at mine : he appeared to me the most cruel man ; and notwithstanding his inhumanity, inconstancy,

constancy, and all his injustice, I could neither console myself, nor even think of it. What a strange sentiment love is! It cannot arise but from esteem, and yet it survives it. If I had not thought lord Clarendon even more affectionate than he seemed amiable to me, I certainly should never have loved him; and as soon as I saw him deprived of the qualities which attracted my affection, I was undeceived, but not consoled. Noble and sacred Friendship! if thou goest astray in thy choice, at least Reason does not in vain offer thee her salutary influence! When we open our eyes upon the conduct of an unfaithful friend, we may shed tears at having been deceived by him, but he is no more the object of our love. This is a sentiment which always existed, and ever will exist; and when it is approved by reason, it is as unalterable and pure as virtue which produced it. Amongst all the grievances which racked my heart, I experienced a
very

very bitter one—that of having for a long time neglected talents in which lord Clarendon took particular delight. Jealousy gave me the desire of surpassing my rival. This emulation, destitute of hope, could only divert, but not console me. I made my harpsichord be tuned, and again took up my pencils: I was continually at work, and even lord Elby's presence could not prevent me giving myself entirely up to these occupations. One day, when he was admiring a picture I had just finished, I asked him, blushing, if he did not know a woman who painted better. "No," answered he; "Ophelia does not paint better, and does not design so well."—"Ah!" replied I sighing, "you answer according to my thoughts, but your friendship perhaps flatters me."—"It is impossible," said he, "to have the design of deceiving you; and if ever I became guilty of such a crime, far from its being the effect of a premeditated intention, it would

would only be the result of a train of errors and mistakes." This answer appeared to me very natural, but I was far from comprehending the true meaning of it.

I always continued to spend part of the night at my window, and I observed, with pleasure, that Ophelia no more appeared. I spoke to the earl of it, who told me she was at Bath. The joy this news gave me did not last long; for a few days after I learnt that lord Clarendon had also gone to Bath, and would remain there a month. This confirmation of my misfortune completely overwhelmed me. In the excess of my grief I successively formed a thousand projects, which overturned each other. At last I was prompted with a violent desire of visiting lord Clarendon's study during his absence. It was situated upon the first floor, near a little garden adjoining the hall, and in which lord Clarendon always studied, even before he changed his apartments. He never received any one in it,
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and in a more happy time I was the only person permitted to enter it. I even possessed a key of it; and I imagined, as there were inside bolts, they would not have had the precaution of changing the locks; I was therefore determined to go in that very night. I had seen my picture hung up in that closet, and I anxiously wished to know if it was still there. When I thought all the servants were fast asleep, I took a dark lantern, pulled off my shoes, and, with no other clothes on than a corset and a muslin petticoat, I went softly down stairs, and was obliged to go through the hall, which I found open. Being come into it, I examined, with curiosity, every thing it contained, and I observed, sighing, a harpsichord which I had never before seen. I easily guessed it had been placed there for Ophelia, and my eyes filled with tears. Continuing to look round me, I perceived a large picture; and upon approaching it, I recollected my

own portrait, which had been taken out of the study and placed there. This sight astonished and surpris'd me. I indeed at first experienced a little joy ; for I thought that lord Clarendon's exposing my picture to the view of every one, at least proved that he had not entirely forsaken me, but preserved his esteem for me. I gazed at this picture as if I had never seen it : I could have wished it had a degree of perfection which I in vain sought for. I discovered, with sorrow, a multitude of faults, but at that time I found it more ugly ; and I was afflicted by thinking, that the little agreeableness of this figure was entirely effaced when compared to the charms of Ophelia. At length I advanced towards the study ; with a trembling hand put the key into the lock, opened the door, and entered. The first object which struck my attention was a picture covered with a veil, when a sad presentiment but too well announced to me what I was

going to discover !' Notwithstanding my trouble and grief, I however remarked, with some pleasure, that they had not ventured to put that mysterious picture in the place which my portrait had occupied. I sorrowfully gazed at the empty space above lord Clarendon's bureau, which was fixed in the same place, but in such a manner as the new picture could not be readily seen. In one instant I made all these observations; for love, almost always ingenious and clear-sighted, often perceives, at a single glance, every thing fit to excite its jealousy, or capable of sweetening its bitterness. I remained a moment motionless, as if to recover all my strength: I then approached the picture, and with as much emotion as curiosity drew aside the curtain which covered the painting, and saw a portrait I could not help recollecting—it was really that of Ophelia ! I presumed it was so—I was assured of it: but complete conviction caused me
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the greatest surprise! — Ophelia, representing a Muse, was crowned with laurels and roses: she was playing upon the lyre, and had at her feet the different attributes of arts. This figure appeared to me of incomparable beauty; and far from supposing she was flattered, I could not help thinking that the original had perhaps still greater charms. In the midst of this sorrowful contemplation I cast my eyes upon two little water-colour paintings which were near the portrait. The name of *Ophelia*, written at the bottom of these pictures, made me examine them attentively. One represented Cupid, sitting with his quiver upon his knees, holding, in the left hand, a pallet, and the other tracing upon canvas, with the point of one of his arrows, the profile of lord Clarendon. — The second painting represented the Graces, laying a veil upon the altar of Love. Through this slight and transparent veil was seen, at the foot of the altar, a nest placed

placed upon the attributes of love, and in which two doves were reposing. Notwithstanding jealousy, which made me exaggerate the advantages that Ophelia possessed, I however thought that I painted as well as her; "at least," said I, "lord Clarendon shall no longer admire these works of my rival; and when he believes that he still contemplates them, his prejudice will procure me the happiness of even attracting his attention." In pronouncing these words, I unhooked the two pictures, and took them with me out of the study. I quickly went up stairs, without making the least noise in my room; and although it was three o'clock in the morning, I immediately began to execute the design I had formed, by drawing the outlines of the two paintings, which I endeavoured to copy with all possible exactness; and at six o'clock, before any one was up, I replaced the originals in the study. The following days I did not fetch them

them till about half an hour before day-break ; and it being then the month of April, I only worked at them from five till six o'clock in the morning, that I might not run the risk of meeting with some of the servants : but at the end of twenty-three days my copies were finished, and with such scrupulous exactness, that it was impossible to distinguish them from the originals. Then taking a pen, " Good God !" cried I, " what name am I now going to trace ! O, cruel husband ! under what disguise you will see this writing, which was formerly so dear to you !" — In speaking thus, bitter tears inundated my face. I wrote at the bottom of my copies the fatal name of *Ophelia*, and I perfectly imitated her signature. I afterwards unfastened the paintings from the frames they were in, put mine in their stead, placed the originals in a portfolio I kept, and took the two pictures I had done into lord Clarendon's study. Sitting up late at night, and so
many

many agitations of mind, completely exhausted my strength. Accustomed, for a long time, to sit up almost every night, I had absolutely lost the want of sleep. I in vain attempted to close my eyes, by remaining the greatest part of the day in bed, for I generally did not get up till seven in the evening. By this mode of life I had the advantage of enjoying entire solitude. For more than four months I had received lord Elby only five or six times, and it was in vain his complaining of it: his company no longer afforded me any consolation, and I found it impossible to relinquish a mode of life which assured to me perfect liberty.

Lord Clarendon returned from Bath after a month's absence, and Ophelia soon appeared again, and oftener than ever. One evening I saw lord Clarendon go out with her in a coach and six horses, and I heard he was taking her to a country-house he had just bought, which was cer-

tainly for the purpose of enjoying her company with less restraint. My health at last sunk under such violent agitations. One day, getting out of bed, I found myself so ill, that I was immediately obliged to lye down again, when one of my women proposed sitting by me, but I refused her attendance. "Indeed, my lady," said she to me, "You are killing yourself."—"How so?" replied I.—"Yes," said she, "by thus sitting up every night, and for such a length of time!—and—without any reason—for no one obliges my lady. All those precautions are unnecessary, and may rather give reason to form conjectures. On the contrary, if my lady had a little more confidence, things would go on the better for it." I absolutely did not comprehend the meaning of this discourse, and I asked an explanation. "Good God!" answered this woman, "one has eyes and ears—It is very mortifying to me to see my lady so continually mistrustful—with
what

what care she shuts herself up at night in her chamber.—But of what use can it be? It is not difficult to guess the truth. For my part, I have seen my lady ten times going up or down stairs in the middle of the night, during my lord's absence." At these words, imagining that this woman, having watched me, had discovered the stealth of the two pictures, I then thought it sufficient to recommend discretion; adding, that the next day I would speak to her more particularly upon that subject. I felt my head so heavy and embarrassed, that I was absolutely unfit to enter into a longer explanation. That same night an ardent fever completely exhausted my strength. A physician was sent for, who immediately warned lord Clarendon of the danger I was in. He came, and found me in the most frightful state of delirium: he watched me, and sat up several nights at the head of my bed, along with lord Elby. Alas! I could not enjoy his at-

tentions,

tentions, being without the use of my senses, and almost without life. Fortune even deprived me of this consolation, which might have perhaps again united two hearts, at last enlightened by gratitude and compassion. Meantime a violent crisis decided my fate, and the physician soon answered for my being cured. Lord Clarendon, from that time, quitted his usual place at the head of my bed, and remained at the other end of my room, hid by the curtains. When the return of my feeble reason permitted me to form a thought and a desire, the beloved name of lord Clarendon was the first expression which proceeded from my lips. Lord Elby being then near my bed, heard me, and immediately answering me, "Will you," said he, "see lord Clarendon?"—"No, no," cried I, as loud as I could; "do not let him come; my presence can only be odious to him." These fatal words, dictated by grief, were but too well heard,
and

and the blindest prejudice interpreted them to my ruin. Lord Clarendon went out of my room without my knowing he was in it, and did not return again. This cruel desertion deeply impressed my heart with a resentment mixed with despair and indignation—an emotion which was the most violent and bitter I had yet felt. Restrained by the presence of some of my family, whom my dangerous state had brought round me, I durst not speak, and in a stupid and dull silence I gazed at lord Elby. My melancholy and fixed looks sufficiently expressed the trouble of my heart, and I thought I read upon his pale and inauspicious countenance that he comprehended this mute and sorrowful confidence. Thus was I an unfortunate victim, snatched from death, and restored to life but with new reasons to hate it the more. My health was not restored, but the fever left me. I declared myself that I was cured, that I might be left alone,

and I made my door be shut as usual. That same day I was quite astonished to see two new waiting-women, instead of those who had attended me since my marriage; and the oldest of them, who was countenanced by one of my sisters-in-law, (lady Bolton,) was sent to me by her. It was the very same person with whom, the day preceding my illness, I had the conversation I have before mentioned, and of which I had then no recollection; for the extreme weakness of my spirits at once took away my memory and the faculty of reflexion. I asked where my women were gone to, and was answered that they had left me; that one of them had entered the service of lady Bolton, and the other that of lady Nevill, the aunt of lord Clarendon. This proceeding appeared to me singular and surprising, but my apathy did not permit me to feel the consequences of it. However the earl having next day come to see me, I questioned

questioned him about it, when he appeared astonished, became pensive, and answered me, that this action seemed inexplicable to him. I spoke no more upon this subject; and not even feeling a want of complaining, being in that exhausted state when the excess of grief deprives one even of the sad hope of finding relief in lamenting, I kept the most profound silence, and did not once pronounce the name of lord Clarendon. Several days elapsed in this manner: I was more dejected than grieved; my ideas were unconnected and confused; I had not power to arrange them, nor strength enough to be deeply afflicted. Stupid, or rather annihilated, my soul had no longer the energy of experiencing those keen griefs, those violent transports, which so often racked it. Like those patients whose sufferings are almost at an end, when their wounds are incurable, the wound of my heart became mortal, and reduced me to that state of annihilation

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wherein

wherein we lose the sentiment of our misfortunes, and even of our existence.

I was still in that sad languishing state, when one morning I saw lord Clarendon suddenly come into my room. The sight of an object, always so dear, immediately produced in me the most astonishing revolution: I felt myself revived; my ideas were not so confused: it appeared to me as if I was getting out of a long and painful sleep; and my soul, recovering all its faculties, regained, at the same time, a ray of hope. Lord Clarendon, after having carefully shut the door, approached my arm-chair. When I saw him near me, I wanted to rush towards him: but my weakness could not support such a violent emotion, and I fell back almost senseless, and suffocated by a torrent of tears. He then looked at me with a composed air, and said, in a tone which chilled me to the soul, "I wished to speak to you, but you do not appear disposed to hear me; I will therefore

therefore return another day." Let one imagine, if possible, what such composure and discourse must have produced upon a heart already so much wounded ! Never did a cause produce such a sudden effect. Had I been susceptible of hatred, I would then have given way to it with as much transport as I had experienced in love. Lord Clarendon now appeared to me the most ungrateful and inhuman object ; and the excess of disdain at last quelled that of love. A violent but concentrated indignation succeeded those tender emotions which at first agitated me, and after a moment's silence I told him, with the greatest coolness, that I was ready to hear him ; when he addressed me in these terrible words : " You now see me for the last time. I will neither importune nor command you : but my own honour and your's being concerned, obliges me to this proceeding. You have fled from society, which vindicates itself and accuses you : they say you are the
lover

lover of lord Elby."—"Believe me," replied I, with the greatest unconcern, "you should try to find me guilty of other crimes, for this infamous and astonishing calumny is the most improbable you could invent. It will be contradicted even by all your people as well as mine, who will tell you, that for more than six months I have not five times received lord Elby——"—"Yes, *in the day-time*," interrupted lord Clarendon with a bitter smile. At these words I remained motionless, with my mouth half open, and my eyes fixed upon him.—"I came," continued he, "with an indulgence which is seldom to be met with in my situation. I did not expect to find in you such intrepid assurance; and so much effrontery merits no forbearance. Know, then, madam, that I am perfectly acquainted with your conduct, which I have for a long time suspected: but I have now obtained the most complete proofs of your errors. Your women, full of indignation

at

at your conduct, have quitted your service, and depose against you : your people and mine confirm their evidence, and all agree in saying that you only banished your lover during the day, that you might receive him at night. Six servants of this house, who espied you, have seen you, while I was at Bath, twenty times upon the staircase, in the middle of the night, holding a lantern in one hand, and a key in the other, coming down to the hall leading to the garden, where you went to open the little door next the street : there you admitted your lover.—You see,” continued he, “ I am well informed.”—“ O, prodigy of ingratitude !” cried I.—“ Suppress,” interrupted lord Clarendon, “ suppress these hypocritical exclamations ; they are absolutely useless. I have been passionately fond of you, and your perfidy cannot banish this remembrance. I do not, however, wish to make a discovery of what would at once dishonour her who bears

bears my name, and the unfaithful friend who formerly saved my life, and who is my brother-in-law. Let us separate without complaining and without noise: choose any of my estates where you wish to live; you will there enjoy perfect liberty, and the same fortune you have here." In finishing these words, lord Clarendon immediately leaving me, went out hastily. I remained petrified with indignation and surprise. I had not yet thought it possible to attack my reputation; such an idea had never presented itself to my mind. The excess of my passion for lord Clarendon so completely banished a fear upon that point, that even error and calumny, of which I was then the victim, produced no impression whatever upon me. Besides, I had a certain means of justifying myself, by shewing Ophelia's two pictures: I could produce the most complete proof, not only of my innocence, but of the delicacy and generosity of the most tender but too neglected sentiment.

sentiment. I was then without fear and uneasiness; I only experienced a violent resentment. I was so shocked at the ingratitude and hard-heartedness of lord Clarendon, that I should have thought him despicable at that moment, had I imagined I could still love him. I could not form the design of discovering and proving to him the truth, but for the purpose of vindicating myself and of confounding him. Lord Clarendon had scarcely left me, when I sent for lord Elby. I gave that order in such a proud and commanding tone, that the servant who received it gazed at me with surprise. "Yes," repeated I, "go and tell lord Elby, from me, to come immediately; and if you meet my lord's people, tell them your message." I would have wished that lord Clarendon, before his doubts were dissipated, should be acquainted with this proceeding; for I experienced a particular desire to provoke him, which I would have

have done with the greatest satisfaction. Lord Elby made no delay, but came running with eagerness. The moment I heard his voice, I went so far as the anti-chamber to meet him; and I affected, before my people, to receive him with demonstrations of friendship, which they could never have perceived in me before, when the earl, confounded and surprised, looked at me with astonishment. I conducted him into my closet, and there, without any preamble, informed him, in a few words, of the manner in which I had substituted my copies in the room of Ophelia's water-colour paintings. He was ignorant of this particular, at which he was deeply affected; and raising his eyes, full of tears, towards heaven, "O, incomparable woman!" cried he.—"Do not interrupt me," said I, "but see and know what is the recompence of so much love and fidelity." I then quickly related to him what had just passed between lord Clarendon
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and me. After having listened to this recital, the earl, all the while standing up, experienced such an emotion as obliged him to sit down; and looking attentively at me, "Well," said he, in a faltering voice, "what are you determined to do?" "To justify myself this very day, and never to pardon——"—"*Never!* Can it be true?"—"Do not doubt it. I could, with disdain, see lord Clarendon at my feet: I have no more love nor esteem for him. You, whom he injures as well as myself, go and tell him what I have related to you: carry those two pictures of his mistress; let him have them again, and burn the copies which I had the weakness to paint. Go and tell him I renounce him for ever, that I am going to hasten my departure, and I shall soon leave this odious and fatal house, never to return." In saying these words, I gave the earl Ophelia's two paintings, which he received with extreme trouble, stammering some words I did

did not understand; and being strongly urged by me to lose no time in executing his commission, he immediately left me. As soon as I found myself alone, my sentiments suddenly changed. I experienced the most violent agitation, and the tenderest sensibility succeeded my anger: my heart strongly palpitated, my eyes filled with tears, and I could not remain in one place. I every moment expected the earl, or rather I expected lord Clarendon himself. The whole evening was spent in this manner. I imagined the earl could not see lord Clarendon, who certainly would not receive him; and I concluded with sorrow, but without any extreme uneasiness, that I should not, perhaps, before two or three days, have the answer I so ardently wished for. The following day, in the morning, I received a note from lady Nevill, announcing her desire to visit me. I wished for advice—I felt I stood in need of it: but those of friendship could alone instruct and guide

guide me, and lady Nevill had not any quality fit to attract confidence. Her mind was as contracted as her heart was insensible: she piqued herself upon being austere, and considered mild indulgence as a kind of defect. Proud at having never loved any thing, she thought herself out of the power of passion because she never inspired any; and her soul was susceptible of none. A strict observer of every kind of decorum, scrupulously attentive in fulfilling the smallest duties of society, her principal maxim was always to sacrifice every thing to custom and opinion. She had less aversion for vice than apprehension for reproach. Punctual in all her proceedings, she thought that the empty forms of etiquette and ceremony could supply the place of sentiment. With this disposition, she acquired an excellent reputation, and never had a friend: but enjoying a great importance, she obtained what she sought, and did not regret a bless-

a blessing she was not capable of appreciating. I was acquainted with her, but did not esteem her; however, being the aunt of lord Clarendon, I was obliged to receive her visit. She came to me in a ceremonious manner, by which she intended to express compassion and concern. After some compliments, she said, that although I had very much neglected her, my present situation made her easily forget my faults, and that she came to offer me all the consolation and service that depended upon her. This discourse was charming; and it would certainly have excited my gratitude, had it been expressed in another manner. But how easy it was to discover that lady Nevill, guided by decorum, only thought of fulfilling a duty, and acted solely for worldly considerations. Her manner, the sound of her voice, her studied deportment, in short altogether banished from me these involuntary effusions, which in grief so easily overcome one.—Unhappy,

happy, truly unhappy he, who cannot excite the confidence of a person in affliction! He must have upon his face the cruel stamp of insensibility. In vain will he strive, by affected expressions, to conceal the hardness of his heart: his countenance, his appearance will betray him: whilst a look, a single word, inspired by a compassionate heart, can obtain, in a moment, all the mildest effusions of friendship! Of what use to me would have been, with lady Nevill, a confidence which she neither desired nor deserved? I would have been obliged to relate the particulars of my life—that is to say, of my sentiments; and as she could not have comprehended them, would she have believed me? No; certainly she would have seen in that recital only an awkward composition of artifice and falsehood. Besides, as I thought lord Clarendon, being informed and persuaded of the truth, or at least very nearly so, I then reckoned it sufficient to
answer,

answer, in a short and indifferent manner, that having nothing to reproach myself with, I had nothing to fear. At these words lady Nevill being extremely shocked, malignantly began a long detail of calumnies, of which I was the object.

“Such are,” continued she, “the injurious reports which are spread. I warn you of it, that you may endeavour to seek the means of contradicting them; and I see but one—that is, to be reconciled with a mild and indulgent husband, whom it will be so much the more easy for you to regain, as he has no children, and wishes for some, he being the last of his name. This is a sufficient reason to make all the family concur in effecting such a union.”—

“I do not know, madam,” replied I, “if lord Clarendon’s family wish him to have children; but I, indeed, sensibly feel the misfortune of not having any. In a more happy period of my life, the sweet name of mother was wanting to my felicity; and

and that title alone would now undoubtedly indemnify me for all I have lost——”——
“But,” interrupted lady Nevill, “if you wish to be reconciled with my nephew, you must first endeavour to justify yourself before him.”——“To justify myself!” replied I. “Who accuses me? bribed servants?”——At this expression lady Nevill blushed excessively, and fury sparkled in her eyes, whilst I stopped. She appeared as if she wished to speak, but confusion subduing her anger, she could not utter a syllable. “Confess, madam,” continued I, “that such evidence can only inspire the greatest contempt.”——“It is the world, madam,” cried lady Nevill, stammering, “it is the whole world that accuse you.”——“The world!” replied I: “For more than a year I have forsaken it; and being totally separated from it, how can it maintain the right of judging me, when I am no longer in its presence, and
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it cannot know the least particular of my conduct? In short, madam, I have no pardon to request. Some ought; perhaps, rather to ask mine: but I do not require it. I shall, with submission and mildness, receive lord Clarendon if he returns to me. In my present situation, it is my duty to wait for him, but not to make the first advances. I shall neither importune him nor humble myself: such is my final and irrevocable determination." Lady Nevill then getting up, sharply said, "Ponder it well; reflect upon the many obligations of a wife towards a husband, to whom she owes her fortune and existence."

—"There was a time," replied I, "when I was beloved: this is the only remembrance which can yet excite my gratitude, and I know of no other obligation." At this answer lady Nevill, notwithstanding her invariable politeness, could not refrain from giving me a haughty look; after

which she made a profound courtesy, and left me to go and boast of her fine and unsuccessful proceedings with me.

In the meantime, not hearing any thing of lord Elby, I wrote to him, requesting to know if he had seen lord Clarendon. Instead of writing to me, the earl sent a verbal message, saying he would answer me the following morning. Under that expectation I did not close my eyes the whole night. But what was my surprise upon getting up, when I was informed that lord Clarendon had set out before day-break upon a very long journey, and that they were perfectly ignorant where he was gone to. This news quite depressed me, and made me but too well foresee all the horror of my destiny. I could by no means allow myself to believe that lord Clarendon would retain the smallest doubt of my innocence, if the earl had been able to execute my commission. I then imagined that lord Clarendon had obstinately refused

refused to hear him ; that this refusal, accompanied, perhaps, by some insult, had occasioned a duel, and that the unfortunate earl had been the victim of it.—The precipitate flight of lord Clarendon, and the mysteriousness of his journey, seemed to authorize this horrid conjecture, which immediately occurred to my mind, and, upon reflexion, appeared certain. At one glance I beheld the extreme depth of the abyss wherein this event would plunge me : lord Elby, no longer in existence, carried with him, into the tomb, my justification ; and I, the sole cause of this dreadful catastrophe, having lost a faithful friend, whom I could not lament and bewail without still adding to my opprobrium and confirming my dishonour. “ Ah ! if it be true,” cried I, shedding a torrent of tears, “ I will despise injustice and shame : I shall exult more in my grief than in my innocence. O, thou only friend whom fortune granted me ! I swear to thy memory an eternal mourning ;

mourning ; and having no other concern but for thy loss, I shall, without constraint, despise the vain clamours of the world, and I shall only bemoan thy fatal lot." I had scarcely uttered these words, when a person entering my room, brought me a letter. I started, upon recollecting lord Elby's hand-writing : I was in doubt whether this letter would expel or confirm my fears, and with a quaking heart I opened, and found it contained the following words :

' I have seen lord Clarendon, and he is
' just set out for six months!—This is tell-
' ing you enough. My heart is extremely
' sensible of all that yours must suffer ;
' and my only consolation is in thinking
' that your soul is no less elevated than
' tender. May so much ingratitude at last
' open your eyes ! This is what I presume
' to expect from time and your own
' reason.

‘ I think that the only proof of attachment I have now to give you is to banish myself for some years. I leave England: I am going to France, and thence to Italy, and I set out immediately. Adieu, madam: deign to pity me for not having been of more service to you: but rest assured, that wherever I may be, I shall always be ready to obey your commands, and to evince to you the unalterable sentiments of respect and admiration with which I ever am—’

After having read this epistle, I remained petrified. The excess of my surprise rendered me stupid and almost insensible. This letter dissipated and annihilated for ever all the illusions of my imagination, all the secret hopes of my heart. Lord Clarendon had received proofs of my tenderness for him, and consequently of my innocence, and yet he persisted in the cruel design of flying from me, disregarding and abandon-

abandoning me, almost dying, and dishonoured in the eyes of mankind ! Quite overwhelmed by such a terrible and unforeseen stroke, I had not sufficient energy to give myself up to indignation, or even to despair: my exhausted courage left in my oppressed and dejected heart no more than a painful sentiment, which seemed to proceed from terror. I did not weep, but, trembling and shocked, with my eyes fixed upon the ground, I was plunged in the most sullen reverie ; and now and then starting, I only repeated these words, *Good God ! what will become of me ?*

In the evening I was informed that Mr. Summers (lord Clarendon's man of business) wanted to speak to me. Guessing that he was charged with some commission for me, I desired them to let him come in, when he immediately appeared, and without ceremony gave me a note from lord Clarendon, containing these words :

‘ I desire you will leave London without delay. Choose which of my estates you wish to live in, and inform Mr. Summers of it, who will arrange every thing relative to your departure and journey.’

This note renewing all my grief with more violence than ever, drew me from the lethargy wherein I was plunged. This writing, these lines once so dear to me, revived in my heart the most forlorn reflexions. I compared this cruel note to other affecting letters, dictated by the love of which I had received such convincing proofs ; and this new mark of so frightful a change in my situation completed all my misfortunes. The irresistible tenderness with which the sight of this writing inspired me suspended my resentment and anger. Through a flood of tears I earnestly gazed at the fatal letter ; and without reading it again, I beheld the characters,

ters, those adored characters, which had hitherto excited in me such delightful emotions! Even at that moment I felt pleasure in contemplating them.—At last, upon Mr. Summers requesting an answer from me, I recovered, dried up my tears, and telling him that I should set out the following day for Derbyshire, I dismissed him. When he was gone out of my room, I found myself so ill that they sent for a physician, who remained with me the greatest part of the night: however at day-break I fell into a slumber, followed very soon after by a profound sleep, which at last gave some intermission to my pains. When I awoke, I heard that Mr. Summers had spent the night making all the necessary preparations for my departure, and that every thing was ready. I arose, and was told that all my people refused to go with me, because they did not wish, they said, to live in the country. They added, that Mr. Summers would accommodate me

with his servant during the journey, and that he was gone in search of a waiting-woman for me. I asked if Thomson would likewise leave me, (this was one of my people whom I liked best,) when they answered that he had gone out. A moment after I saw him come in, accompanied by a young woman who was unknown to me. "Here is, my lady," said he, "a waiting-woman whom I bring to you: she is my sister, and will serve you well."—"But you, Thomson," replied I, "will you also quit me?"—"Never," answered he, and turned aside to hide some tears that started from his eyes, which made mine flow likewise. Wishing to be alone, I beckoned to him to leave me, which he accordingly did: then reflecting upon my situation, and the inconceivable cruelty of lord Clarendon, the most strange and extravagant thought suddenly came into my head, and I considered it as the most satisfactory; for my imagination, continually

nually creating chimeras, ingeniously takes advantage of every circumstance or appearance which can give them the shadow of probability. “No,” cried I; “so much injustice and cruelty cannot be—no; lord Clarendon is not such a monster. All this is only a trial: he wishes to know to what pitch I can carry my love, and if resentment be capable of entirely extinguishing it in my heart. Perhaps he also wishes to justify me in an open manner before my accusers, and all this exterior shew of rigour and separation is perhaps necessary for the execution of his plan. But he is not gone; he has not abandoned me, I am certain of it. He is here, in this very house—yes, I no longer doubt it—he is waiting in his study for me: he knows I always kept the key—that I have made use of it; and he has not asked this key again from me! He imagines, that before I set out I will return to this study, were it only for the purpose of seeing if he has sub-

stituted Ophelia's pictures in the room of those I myself painted : he knows me too well not to be assured that I will take this last step. I shall find him there, perhaps, with all his relations assembled : he wishes that this whole house should see me come down with a key in my hand, cross the hall, and open the study—for these are the things which give rise to my being calumniated—then he will speak publicly of the fact which justifies me, and he will shew the two copies of the pictures, together with the originals ! O heavens ! if it should be so, I shall then expire with joy ! How can I support such a revolution !”

In the midst of this delirium Thomson returned to tell me that the post-horses were arrived and put to the carriage. “ Let us go,” cried I : “ my lot will now be decided !” At these words I drew from my pocket the key of lord Clarendon's study, and went out of my room in a state impossible to describe. Scarcely recovered
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from a long and dangerous illness, my weakness was so great, that I could not go down stairs without being supported and almost carried by two persons. I was obliged to pass by lord Clarendon's apartment, which, as I have before mentioned, was upon the first floor. When I was opposite his door, I recovered all my strength: I got rid of my conductors, and hastily entered the hall. I cast my eyes upon the wainscot (where I had seen my portrait, but it was no longer there! I then advanced with tottering steps towards the fatal study, opened the door, and entered. Alas! I only found it a frightful desert: I there in vain sought the cruel author of my troubles! At last I approached the little pictures. I could not mistake the originals for my copies, as I had certain marks to distinguish them, which were imperceptible to other eyes, but infallible to mine. I gazed at them. What was my surprise, upon recollecting

the two paintings of Ophelia ! I fell upon a chair, and remained some moments in a perfect state of annihilation. I afterwards wandered in this study like one out of her senses: I went insensibly towards the bureau, stopped, and saw near the writing-desk a great many letters, carefully spread and arranged upon one another. A small alabaster figure, representing *Mystery*, was placed upon this pile of papers, and kept it upon the table. I had seen, and correctly imitated Ophelia's signature, therefore it was not difficult for me to know her writing again. I then took the key of the study out of the door, and returning to the bureau, removed the figure of *Mystery*, and put in its place, upon Ophelia's letters, the fatal key, which I for ever abandoned; after which, bursting into tears, and mortified to the heart, I went out of the study. In going through the hall I met one of lord Clarendon's servants, who asked me, in an insolent and jeering tone, what I wanted.

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This question, and the manner in which it was asked, produced in me the first emotion of humiliation that I had ever felt. I saw that I was no longer regarded but as a stranger, and as an object of contempt in this house, from which the most odious ingratitude banished me for ever; and I experienced that one may blush with shame without being guilty. I called Thomson, who conducted, or rather carried me, towards the coach. I found the doors of the court open, entered it, and saw a number of people, attracted by that curiosity which unfortunate persons naturally inspire. They hastened to see me, examined me with malignancy, and all their countenances expressed the most insulting and cruel irony. I distinctly heard discourse equally injurious and vulgar: but what most struck me was a woman talking to her daughter: "*Dost thou see, child,*" said she, "*how ugly vice makes a person? Look, look how altered she is?*"

How

How shocking it is to be the object of such reflexions! It debased me in my own eyes, and that moment the consoling testimony of a pure conscience became almost useless and insignificant. We may, without emotion, support hatred and persecution: but who can be insensible to marked contempt when it is thought deserving, and which can neither be ascribed to malice which affects it, nor to envy which delights in its error?

I shall not undertake to describe all that I felt upon leaving London: it seemed as if I was losing the dearest part of myself, and every step I removed from it took away part of my strength and courage. But what lively and cruel emotions were yet alternately to revive and oppress my heart! Having taken a circuitous road, that I might not meet with the same inns wherein I had rested with lord Clarendon, I thereby very much prolonged my journey, which was as tedious as painful and fatiguing.

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fatiguing. I at 'last arrived at the place of my exile. Aurora then began to appear, and my eyes, bathed in tears, could distinguish the dwelling formerly so dear to me, where I spent the only happy days of my life. I soon discovered the charming wood where I passed such delightful evenings, and the meadow which terminated it, where we walked together. There a tree grows, upon which Love itself engraved plighted oaths, now neglected and violated. Each object recalled to my mind the most pleasing remembrances : every thing speaks to me of my past happiness ; every thing paints it in such striking colours, that I cannot conceive it is like a dream, vanished for ever. Alas ! I bring back with me the same sentiments ; and although these places are not changed, yet they now seem to me only a frightful desert. The moment I perceived the castle, I felt a palpitation and oppression of heart, which almost entirely deprived

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deprived me of the power of respiration. I could no longer reflect, no longer think, but I felt myself fainting; and without being able to shed a tear, I was suffocated, and had not even strength to complain. I now arrived. The keeper, who came to meet me, could scarcely recollect me; and viewing me with pity, repeated these words: "What! is this my lady Clarendon?"—They took me out of the carriage, and conducted me to my apartment without my knowing any thing of it. However, in casting my eyes upon what surrounded me, I soon recovered. I found myself in a closet, the wainscot of which lord Clarendon had painted, and in which I myself assisted. Each pannel represented some interesting circumstance of our life. Every where his face and mine were to be seen; every where he was prostrated at my feet, or occupied about me. I saw myself adored and happy. Floridness, youth, and happiness shone upon my face.

But

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But one picture particularly attracted my attention, which had for its title *The adieu of love*. It represented lord Clarendon, with sorrow expressed upon his countenance, tenderly pressing me in his arms; and at the bottom of the picture were written, by his own hand, the words he himself said to me, *Can it really be for eight days!*

“O God!” cried I, “and I have just left him for ever! He has banished me with ignominy; he saw me depart, almost dying, despairing, and I received nothing but testimonies of hatred and contempt! Ah! unfortunate creature that I am! what abode have I chosen for my last asylum! is it that I might better know or more sensibly feel all that I have lost?”—In pronouncing these words, I chanced to turn my eyes upon a glass which was near me. Being for a long time ill, and overwhelmed with grief, I was not in a state to perceive the change of my figure, and had paid

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paid but very slight attention to it : but at that moment I was greatly struck. I compared myself to what I was before, without being able to know my features. An excessive meagreness disfiguring them, at once deprived me of floridness and youth. Instead of those lively colours which I admired in my portraits, I only saw upon my face a mortal paleness. A melancholy countenance, with languid eyes, succeeded my former smiling and animated appearance, and the lively and brilliant looks which, in those pictures, so well expressed love and happiness. This sorrowful comparison inspired me with a sentiment of compassion for myself, which at first completely enervated my courage. I found myself so much to be pitied, that I could behold no other end to my troubles but death. The situation in which I saw myself persuaded me that I should not very long wait for it ; and notwithstanding my excessive grief, this idea forcibly struck,
but

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but did not console me. I was then perhaps more deeply afflicted than in the first moments of my despair : but I myself relented at my destiny. This secret instinct, which attaches us to life, already expelled from my heart any precipitate and violent resolutions : I had invoked death, and then did not desire it. Waiting for it with resignation, its idea began to trouble me without my perceiving it, and sensibility by degrees returned to me. I continued some days in this painful and dull situation ; my soul and imagination grew indifferent, and I did not give myself up to those impetuous transports which had almost consumed me. At last the fervor and delirium of passions left me : but although weak, languishing, and discouraged, life was not less insupportable. I could not employ myself : I experienced a continual oppression of heart ; and I do not believe that for the first fifteen days I was more than half an hour without crying. Every thing tired or afflicted me. My people scarcely dared to

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to approach and speak to me ; and the short time I spent at my toilet caused me mortal uneasiness. Dull, silent, and discomposed, I thought it a trouble being sometimes obliged to articulate the words *yes* or *no*. After dinner, I ordered my servants to leave me alone, and upon no pretext whatever to come into my room the remainder of the day. When all my people went out, the noise of opening and shutting the doors made me sad ; and considering the loneliness of the vast apartment, it seemed to me as if I was deserted, abandoned by all nature ; and then tears began again to flow. “ Alas ! ” cried I with bitterness, “ I am hated, calumniated, and forgotten at London ; no one pities me nor thinks of me ; and I here find only a frightful solitude ! I am a stranger to every thing which surrounds me ; they fly from and desert me ; and I shall end such a deplorable life without inspiring the slightest sentiment of compassion.” Thus my days were spent in
tears

tears and lamentations. Sometimes I walked about my room: but if my eyes chanced to fall upon a looking-glass, I stopped, and sometimes passed a quarter of an hour viewing myself with an astonishment always equally violent and sorrowful. Then raising my eyes, overflowed with tears, "Great God!" said I, "whom do I see in this glass—in this glass, which two years ago represented to me a figure so different?"—In short, every thing affected me, or produced in my mind some afflicting reflexions. Sometimes I could not hear the least noise out of doors, without starting and receiving a disagreeable impression. If they spoke in the yard, if I heard some words pronounced under my windows, and especially if I heard any one laugh or sing, I lost all patience; thinking that, taking advantage of my troubles, they were insulting me. At other times, stillness and silence excited in me a kind of terror which redoubled my sadness; and my dejected soul became susceptible of a
number

number of caprices and fancies which are usually the consequence of long grief, together with decay of health. I always sat up late at night, and did not go to bed but with extreme reluctance. When my curtains were closed around me I had less distraction, and then more entirely gave way to my grief. Sometimes heaviness procured me, at intervals, a few hours restless sleep; and the only time I experienced a sensation of joy was at the moment I felt myself falling asleep. "At last," said I to myself, "there will be some cessation to my thoughts and sufferings!"—But, alas! I again beheld, in my dreams, the cruel picture of my destiny.

Meanwhile my health daily impaired: I saw death nearer than ever, and the idea of my total dissolution affected and soon entirely occupied me. "What!" cried I, "shall I end my days, leaving a reputation unjustly blemished? Shall I die at the age of twenty-one?"—This thought insensibly

sensibly gave rise to other reflexions, by which I profited. "Such is," said I, "the terrible effect of violent passions, when we do not endeavour to suppress them! Mine is lawful, but can excess ever be so? It is a husband whom I love: but if we had never been united by sacred ties—could I have then conquered my passion?—Ah! have I empire enough over my heart—can I triumph over a sentiment which governs it, and have I moderated the despair which leads me to the gates of death?—I am only a weak and foolish woman. What was wanting to those women, who are culpable, to make them resist temptation? Courage and reason; and I want both. I should be ranked in their class, for I have not the virtues which preserve us from being criminal; and if I am not so, I owe it to my destiny. If I had not been the wife of lord Clarendon, could I have seen him despairing at my feet, without yielding to

other temptations? And with a soul so passionate, and having such little empire over myself, would I have, in short, fulfilled my duty? Whoever does not know how to conquer passion, whoever wants courage, can only possess imperfect and frail virtues, and circumstances alone make them honest or criminal. What! ought not I to be undeceived? Who inspired me with such tender and profound sentiments? Was it only the attraction of a charming figure? Can I be despicable enough to have permitted such a cause to produce an inclination which decided the destiny of my life? No, no; it was the certainty of being solely beloved; it was this strong persuasion I entertained of reigning for ever in a heart as delicate as sensible; and does this error still remain? Who can, then, excuse me? Here every thing represents to me lord Clarendon, such as he formerly thought himself, and such as I believed him to be: but, in short, it is
nothing

nothing but a chimera; this faithful and passionate lover no longer exists; he is dead to me, and I may now lament his loss. But I ought to forget him, whose ingratitude, inconstancy, and cruelty have changed into another man, unworthy of being regretted. This last idea made such a deep impression upon my imagination, that I really formed two beings of lord Clarendon. When I represented him such as I left him in London, I only experienced indignation and resentment; and I did not believe I was mistaken in thinking that I would again see or approach him with repugnance: but being unable to esteem, and not daring to confess that I loved him, such as he was, I recollected him such as he formerly was, and I separated the one idea from the other. He was no longer that disdainful and cruel husband who made me shed tears; he was an esteemed lover, and worthy of being so, whose remembrance only excited my af-

fection and gratitude. And that nothing might be wanting to complete my foolish notion, I supposed him dead, and fixed his death at the time we set out for London. These ideas only occurred successively, and after long and frequent reveries. At first I conceived it as a romance: but without carrying the extravagance so far as to persuade myself it was real, I at length thought of nothing else; and thus making a variation in my grief, I wept for an imaginary being, and believed that I forgot lord Clarendon. It is perhaps less frightful to bemoan the death of our lover than his inconstancy. This cruel conflict of opposite sentiments which infidelity causes, this mixture of anger and resentment, of humiliation and love, is certainly the most violent state that a sensible and proud heart can experience.

However, time gradually abated the trouble and agitation of my soul: melancholy succeeded despair; and being daily accus-

accustomed to see all the objects which recalled my past felicity, their impression became less lively; and, by habit, wore away. I at last perceived that what was not impossible to be obtained; this idea gave me fresh courage in trying to effect it. By insensibly triumphing over such an unhappy passion, I became susceptible of new regrets, certainly less afflicting, but which appeared to increase in proportion as love diminished in my heart. Till then I had existed only for one sole object. In this opinion I had considered my whole glory; but by taking my sensibility from him, it all returned to myself. I deplored the loss of my reputation—was even astonished at having so little reflected upon it, and at having been, till now, in such a small degree affected by it. I endeavoured to console myself by the idea that in the course of time, which always discovers truth, justice would be sooner or later rendered to me. I have sought to obtain it, two thi

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enjoying a great fortune, and not quitting
society. A comfortable house makes all be
forgotten. It at last justifies every thing.
The confederate has too much malignity, and is
unconscionable to rectify its unjust sen-
tences; its rigorous decrees are without
appeal, unless what concerns its pleasures
makes it revoke them: it voluntarily ab-
jures a favourable prejudice, but never ab-
solves the deserters it has condemned. My
resentment against lord Clarendon gained
new strength. By reflecting upon his con-
duct, (till then I had only thought of his
sentiments,) I imagined, with the greatest
indignation, that being certain of my in-
nocence, and far from trying to justify me,
he confirmed, by his proceedings towards
me, all that hatred and malice had dared
to publish. The esteem of others became
so necessary to me, that I began to be un-
easy about the opinion which the few fer-
vents who attended me, and particularly
faithful Thomson, would
have

have of me. To enter into conversation upon this subject, I one day asked him why he did not warn me of the perfidy of my women. "I only knew of it," answered he, "when it was of no use to inform you. I well knew that they went every morning to lady Bolton, lady Nevill, and lady Elby, but I was then ignorant of what was scheming."—"And did not you hear your fellow-servants say that they had seen me, at night, going towards the garden, while my lord was at Bath?"—"I heard it, but not clearly, and without comprehending what they were talking about. They mistrusted me, knowing I was not capable of betraying my lady."—"But, Thomson, what do you think of all this? Do you believe me guilty?"—"I have not reflected upon it. It is none of our business to judge our mistresses."—"Have you ever seen me, at night, going down stairs?"—"No, my lady: I never followed the trade of a spy."—"Well, Thomson,

Thomson, I really went down stairs, at night, to the first floor."—"That is no business of mine. My lady has always been good and generous to me, and I ought to be grateful: but I have nothing to do with other matters." At these words I begged Thomson to listen to me attentively, and I concisely related to him the story of Ophelia's two water-colour paintings. Notwithstanding the explicit manner in which I endeavoured to give him this recital, Thomson did not comprehend much of it: but he listened to me with reservedness and confusion. He said, himself, *it was no business of his*. It was of little importance to him whether I was innocent or not, as he only judged me by my behaviour towards him; and if all mankind thus conducted themselves in society, we should no longer find duplicity and ingratitude.