

1078

MATRIMONY.



A NOVEL.

Lane, Darling, and Co. Leadenhall-Street.

MATRIMONY, 1078

THE HEIGHT OF BLISS, OR THE EXTREME OF MISERY.

A Novel.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

MRS. MEEKE,

AUTHOR OF "THERE IS A SECRET," FIND IT OUT!
OLD WIFE AND YOUNG HUSBAND, &c.

Thrice happy they in pure delights,
Whom love with mutual bond unites:
Unbroken by complaints or strife,
E'en to the latest hours of life.

FRANCIS.

VOL. II.

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MATRIMONY.

CHAP. I.



BEFORE we proceed to Woodford with lord Clairville, or anticipate his intended visit there, it may be as well to proceed with Webster and his party into *** court. The bride and bridegroom, of course, took the lead. As the former was to be their pilot, Tom wished to have taken his father's arm, but he objected to the proposal—he was as able to walk as he was; he was not fond of such finikin doings; he hated to see men lounging arm in arm. A woman

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might require support, but he desired he would learn to walk without assistance.

They proceeded, though not, perhaps, in a very straight or direct line, down Oxford-street, till they reached Hanover-square, where, notwithstanding it was with the utmost difficulty the bride kept her husband upon his legs, he did retain his senses sufficiently to know his way, and promised to take them a very short cut through Soho; and as he was the only one of the party who had any idea of where they were, admitting it had been daylight, they all trusted implicitly to his judgment; and he certainly did reach his own door about two o'clock in the morning.

Mr Bolton, senior, who had been sitting up for them, observed that they had made it rather late. Upon glancing his eyes over the farmer, he perceived that he had rolled a few times in the dirt as they came along, but had fortunately been able to recover his feet before he lost sight of his guide. Thomas not having followed them in, he remained
for

for some seconds with the street-door in his hand, and then called out, "What is become of Mr. Thomas?"

By this time, Mrs. Bolton was the only person who could answer his question; and she supposed he could not be far behind, as she had seen him not a quarter of an hour since; but having placed her now almost senseless husband in a large arm-chair, and led her father to a sofa, which was also in the room, and upon which he very cordially stretched himself at full-length, she returned with her father-in-law into the street, and repeatedly called the absentee; but no Thomas answered; and the watchman declared only one lady and two gentlemen had passed his box. Both she and the elder Bolton, therefore, began to be very seriously alarmed; and she could not give him the slightest clue to enable him to trace the wanderer, as she did not know which way they had come. He therefore desired she would go and take care of her father and husband, while he

sallied forth, and made inquiries of all the watchmen in the vicinity ; but no one appeared to have seen the lost sheep ; and having, at last, lost all traces of them, though he had taken the direct road to Portman-square, he thought it best to return home.

Thomas had not, however, made his appearance *ad interim* ; he therefore concluded that he had been carried to some watch-house, in consequence of his not being able to give any account of himself ; he therefore visited those belonging to the two parishes they must have passed through ; still he could learn no tidings of him he sought. At four o'clock, he therefore again returned home, resolving not to renew his search till daylight, or till his son was able to give him some likely clue ; though he thought it very probable, that when the latter did recover his senses, he would not recollect which way he had come ; and Mrs. Bolton only knew that they were all together in some square.

In this state of unpleasant suspense did
they

they remain till eight o'clock, when the younger Bolton awoke ; but he knew no more which way they had come than Mr. Webster did, who still remained buried in a profound sleep.

HAVING, however, changed his dress, and hastily swallowed a few cups of very strong tea, he accompanied his father in search of the future nabob, and even proceeded with him into Portman-square, where they questioned the porter ; but he could give them no information respecting the sapient Thomas ; nor could they learn any tidings respecting him, notwithstanding they inquired of every likely person, and at every likely place.

The farmer was awake when they returned, and had learnt from his daughter whither they had gone, in consequence of Thomas not having yet made his appearance. He acknowledged that he was so drunk, he did not recollect having even seen the boy, after they left Portman-square ; but, as he had a tongue in his head,

he would surely find his way home when he grew sober. What was the most provoking, he had promised to be in Finsbury-square before eleven, and he wished to have taken the foolish whelp with him, since he did not know what excuse to make for leaving him behind—he had certainly never slept in the street.

“This was very unlikely,” Mr. Bolton, senior, observed; “as the watchmen would have found him, had he fallen down, and conveyed him to some place of security; and as he was not at any watch-house he had visited, he thought he must have found a lodging elsewhere,” promising to renew his search immediately after breakfast.

But during their meal, just as the clock was striking ten, to their great joy, Thomas walked into the shop, in company with a shabby-looking fellow, who, having waited till the first welcomes were over, presented the farmer with a bill, in answer to his inquiry—“Where did you find my son?”

Of course he cast his eyes over the scrawl
which

which had been given him, and saw that the sum total amounted to one pound eight shillings and sixpence.

“What does all this mean?” he demanded, looking first at the man and then at Thomas, who was literally covered with dirt.

Thomas burst into tears, declaring that it was all a take-in, and that he had been dragged into a house, very much against his will, and when he awoke, he had found all his money gone, and even his best silk handkerchief.

The elder Bolton, who was a shrewd, lively man of his age, and perfectly acquainted with the town, gave the farmer a wink, while he thus addressed the stranger: “Pray, friend, where do you live?”

“In *** court, *** street, Soho.”

“And pray what profession do you follow?”

“I keep a lodging-house.”

“So I supposed; and your door happened to be open at two o'clock in the morning;

morning; you must be very obliging, to sit up so late to accommodate your lodgers."

The old man had, however, this time met with his match, as this shabby fellow was far more knowing than he was, and a thorough-bred rogue into the bargain, who would not have changed countenance even at the bar of the Old Bailey.

"I did not come here to be catechized by you, Mr. Tooth-drawer; I have my bread to get as well as you; and I am ready to swear to the charge I have made. That young chap was found lying in the street by two of my lodgers, who, out of humanity, picked him up, and brought him home; in return for which, and he could not have done less, when he came to his senses, he ordered supper, and that bill is a very just one."

"Let me see," resumed Bolton; "two bottles of wine, twelve shillings; ham, oysters, and lodging. Then you also keep a tavern, I suppose?"

"No, sir; I only keep a lodging-house.
I procure

I procure what my lodgers want, and make a reasonable charge for my trouble."

"Very reasonable, I agree; and pray, Mr. Thomas, what sum may you have lost besides your handkerchief?"

"A matter of six pounds four shillings, sir; and it was a mercy I gave the bill my lord gave me to my father, else that would have gone too. This money was not all my own, as I brought some of it up to buy some silk handkerchiefs for two of our men."

Webster flew into a violent passion. "Six pounds and more! and pray, Mr. Lodging-keeper, where is my son's money?"

"Pray answer Mr. Webster's question?" said Bolton.

"As for money, he had none about him when he was brought into my house, since his pockets were turned inside out; therefore, I suppose he had been knocked down and robbed."

"And yet," said Bolton, "you ventured

to provide him and the ladies with a supper, at the risk of never being paid. Now, pray, Mr. Thomas, have you any recollection of what passed after you were housed, or before?"

"I know, sir, that I fell down more than once, and at last I remember that somebody picked me up, and dragged me into a house, that they told me was your's; but as for the supper, I am sure I never ordered any; but they certainly forced me to drink some wine; and when I woke this morning, I was surprised to find I was not here, but in a nasty dark room, where I could hardly see my hand; so I first thought of my money, and that was all gone; and when I asked where I was, the young woman told me I had been robbed in the street the over-night, and that she and another young lady had found me, and had brought me home with them; so I got up, and said I must go home immediately, because I knew you would all be very uneasy about me."

"Well, well," replied the elder Bolton,

“we will not inquire too minutely into the business, at least in my shop ; so here, Mr. I don't know your name,” holding out two dollars, “either take those, and go about your business, or accompany me into Bow-street ; the office there either is, or soon will be open—so take your choice ; for, by the God that made me, 'tis all I will give you ; and if you reject my offer, I will sift this matter to the bottom, and I do not despair, cunning as you are, of meeting with redress.”

“I agree, sir,” said the fellow, seizing the money, “that the young fellow did not know what he was about, and I can make my lodgers pay the difference,” hurrying away, not relishing the proposed visit to Bow-street.

“A pretty kettle of fish you have made of it, Tom !” said Webster ; “but I am very much obliged to you, my dear Mr. Bolton, for having settled it without going before those justices ; since this petty freak might, in that case, have reached my uncle's, if

not lord Clairville's ears; and they have both been so kind to the good-for-nothing drunken young rake, I should not like to have had them learn how undeserving he is of their bounty. What a mercy I had the hundred pounds bank-bill! Well, of a bad job it might have been worse."

"You were all much to blame to have thought of walking home in the situation you all were," rejoined Bolton; "you in particular, Charles, ought to have foreseen that some misfortune would probably befall you. I dare say lord Clairville was not aware you were all so tipsy."

Mrs. Bolton declared my lord had offered to send for a coach for them; and she also remembered their having met several young women in some passages they had come through, who had laughed at them, and called them names.

But as the farmer ought, ere this, to have been in Finsbury-square, a coach was sent for; and as Thomas could not accompany him, he agreed to make the best excuse he could

could for him, without relating facts—he should say he had a very bad head-ach, in consequence of having drank more than he was accustomed to take; and the young fellow set about brushing his cloaths, that he might be able to attend his father to complete his purchases when he returned.

As the interview between the banker and his nephew might not prove very interesting to our readers, we will return to lord Clairville, who resolved, in consequence of a concerted plan between him and his grandmother, to visit Woodford this same morning.

CHAP. II.

Mrs. Manby, who felt even more impatient than her grandson to forward the recovery

recovery of Miss Mildmay, left town as soon as she had breakfasted, leaving Mr. Manby to follow her in the stage, which he frequently made use of when she wanted the carriage. The moment she reached home, the old lady sent to inquire how the fair damsel did, promising to look in upon Mrs. Nesbitt in the course of an hour, if the invalid was well enough to receive company.

Mrs. Nesbitt, who had been more candid in her avowals to the old lady than she had thought proper to acknowledge to lord Clairville, conceived that this message boded a happy issue to her sister's complaint, to whom she repeated it verbatim, and who readily agreed to receive her much-respected friend in her dressing-room.

Mrs. Nesbitt chose, however, to give her the meeting in the hall; and the few words Mrs. Manby contrived to whisper in her ear before they ascended the stairs, greatly raised her spirits, since she felt persuaded that the certainty of being beloved by lord Clairville

Clairville would alone inspire her with a wish to recover, as at present she rather seemed to hope that she might not; indeed, her complaint had particularly affected her spirits and disposition.

She appeared much the same as when Mrs. Manby had last seen her, who endeavoured to raise her spirits, by entering into a few concise details respecting the Websters, towards whom lord Clairville had behaved with his accustomed good humour; declaring, that had Miss Mildmay been well enough to have joined the party, she would have given them a dinner at Woodford; but, as the spring was advancing, if she did but take the air whenever her spirits were equal to a drive or a ride, and mixed more in society, she would be answerable for her shaking off the depression which now hung about her, which solely arose from her having been so long confined to the house.

Miss Mildmay agreed, that being confined to her dressing-room was by no means
in

in her favour, but declared herself unequal to any present exertion.

“ With the fine weather your strength will return,” said Mrs. Nesbitt, who presumed Mrs. Manby had seen lord Angus since his return to town. This led to her entering into various details respecting his Spanish campaign, and the truly fraternal affection which reigned between him and her grandson ; but having sat for more than an hour, she talked of departing.

Miss Mildmay, who could almost forget her complaints while listening to any discourse alluding to the man upon whom she had so prematurely bestowed her heart, requested she would sit still ; she had not seen her for some days, and her conversation always revived her spirits.

“ Then you will find me henceforth a very constant visitor ; but I rather expect a visit from my grandson this morning : he told me, when we parted last night, that he meant, if the weather proved favourable, to ride to Wanstead to see an invalid friend,
and,

and, I dare say, he will not return to town without calling to inquire whether I reached home in safety ; but he may not chuse to alight, should he be told I am out, except, indeed, my servants tell him that I am here, which may induce him to wait to hear my report of your health, my young friend."

Miss Mildmay's rising colour and faint smile convinced the old lady that she would be highly gratified by the personal inquiries of his lordship, while she said—" I did not suppose that the indisposition of such an insignificant being as myself would ever have been noticed by lord Clairville, who has, of late, been so little at Woodford, I thought he had almost forgotten every family in these environs, your's excepted."

" Upon my word, Miss Mildmay, you do not do my grandson justice ; his enthusiastic regard for his brother (for such I often term it) took him down to Portsmouth, where he spent a week ; but he sup-
ped

ped with us the very evening he returned from thence. When I first mentioned, in answer to his inquiries, your indisposition, and though I made very light of it, I can assure you he displayed very great anxiety for your recovery ; and he questioned me so particularly respecting your health, when he saw me yesterday, that I even told him I should place his future visits to Woodford as much to your account as to his regard for me and Mr. Manby."

The invalid's bloom was still more heightened, while she said, "Then I am fearful you have drawn so flattering a likeness of me to his lordship, that I ought to remain upon more distant terms with him than ever, for fear he should discover how much you have misled him by your kind partiality."

At this moment her maid entered with a very polite message of inquiry from lord Clairville, who wished to see Mrs. Manby in the parlour, where he would not detain her more than three minutes.

The

The good lady, with well-affected surprise, rose to obey the summons.

"I must accompany you down," said Mrs. Nesbitt. "Should his lordship express a wish to see you, Elinor, I presume I may ask him up stairs? The grandson of such a friend as Mrs. Manby is a privileged personage."

"He must always be a welcome guest, sister," faltered out the invalid, who seemed almost gasping for breath, though she endeavoured to suppress her emotion; "but I dare say he will not ask to see me."

"Then we shall not pay him what I consider as a mere necessary compliment," replied Mrs. Nesbitt, following Mrs. Manby down stairs.

Had Miss Mildmay guessed that she was indebted for this unexpected visit to the compassion of lord Clairville, excited by the persuasions and representations of Mrs. Manby, she would have put a decided negative upon her sister's proposal; but as she fancied that no one had guessed she
was

was become a martyr to feelings she had indulged, till they had preyed upon both her health and spirits, she saw nothing to alarm her delicacy in this very apropos visit. It was very natural he should wish to know how Mrs. Manby did after her journey; and as natural that he should inquire how she did, when he alighted at her father's door. Would he ask to see her? This she mentally inquired, as she approached a looking-glass to adjust her lace cap, which she thought made her look old, and she resolved to discard such an incumbrance, should he talk of renewing his visits, which, as they had long been rather intimate, was not very unlikely. The agitation of her spirits increased her languor, and she was soon obliged to resume her seat, which she had scarcely done ere Mrs. Manby returned.

“My grandson was so anxious to be permitted to make his personal inquiries after your health, my dear young friend, that Mrs. Nesbitt has asked him up stairs.”

The

The invalid bowed as she sat in return for this speech ; she was unable to speak, and by way of affording her time to rally her spirits, Mrs. Nesbitt stopped his lordship upon the stairs, to shew him a very curious exotic, which sir Charles had lately purchased.

At last, however, he made his appearance ; and as he met the eyes of the fair invalid as he advanced towards the sofa, he thought he had never seen her look so lovely. Possibly his pride was also gratified, when he considered that she, like Shakespeare's Viola, was a martyr to secret, and, as she feared, unrequited love ; pity therefore modulated his voice, and beamed in his eyes, while he expressed his regret at finding her so unwell ; but he hoped that the approach of spring would remove all her complaints ; the present fashionable hours were very inimical to delicate constitutions ; and he feared that her illness arose from her having been too complaisant in that respect to her friends.

To hear her illness thus accounted for
by

by him who had occasioned it, was a great relief to the agitated Elinor, who agreed that a life of dissipation neither suited her health nor her disposition: but her evident emotion and visible tremor were such convincing proofs of his power over her heart, that the young peer wished he dared have set her mind perfectly at ease at once, as he read her love in every downcast look, and in every varying line of her expressive countenance; but he dared not alarm her feelings, therefore merely endeavoured, by the most delicate insinuations, to convince her that he felt greatly interested in her recovery, and that he had been very much shocked when he heard of her illness.

Mrs. Nesbitt was sure her sister would do very well, if she would but exert herself rather more; but her fever seemed to have fallen upon her spirits, and this rendered her very averse to taking even gentle exercise; but she hoped, with Mrs. Manby's assistance, to prevail upon her to pay more
attention

attention to the advice of her medical attendants.

“ I shall also presume to add my entreaties to those of my grandmother,” rejoined Cecil; “ as I am to the full as anxious to see Miss Mildmay able to enjoy the society of her numerous friends, amongst whom I have long ventured to rank myself.”

Lord Clairville's countenance was so expressive of his feelings, that, for the first time in her life, the fair Elinor hoped he had not seen her with indifference; but in her weak state, the joy this supposed discovery occasioned her proved too much for her, and she would probably have fallen off her seat, as her senses entirely forsook her, had not the now seriously alarmed Cecil caught her in his arms, while the two ladies came to his assistance. Never having before seen any one for whom he felt interested in such a situation, he at first feared that she was actually dying, and that he had unintentionally hastened her departure.

departure. "Send instantly for the nearest medical man!" he exclaimed. "My groom is in the court, let him gallop off directly."

"There is no need, my lord," said the much less alarmed Mrs. Nesbitt; "Elinor is very subject to fainting fits; they are part of her complaint; but she will soon recover:" and having had recourse to the usual remedies upon such occasions, the invalid soon became sensible that she was supported by the only man she had ever wished to captivate; and, in the true spirit of love and romance, she fancied that she could readily have resigned her breath, if she was not to hope, ere long, to call him her's: but his agitation, and the alarm which his voice and actions still betrayed, were so flattering to her feelings, that she did not open her eyes quite so soon as she would have done; and when she did, his kind feeling inquiries were far more efficacious than her sister's aromatics or volatiles.

Mrs. Nesbitt proposed her retiring, as a
few

few hours' repose were necessary after such an attack.

Cecil instantly rose to depart, as did Mrs. Manby, who said she should look in upon her young friend again in the evening, when she hoped to find her much better.

"And I shall trouble you, my dear grandmother, to write me a few lines when you return home. One of my grooms shall ride down in the evening for your note, as I shall be very anxious till I hear how Miss Mildmay is this afternoon."

The invalid bowed as she sat, in return for this grateful anxiety, and his lordship withdrew with Mrs. Manby, whom he handed into her coach, and stepping in after her, he ordered his groom to follow him with the horses.

They were no sooner upon the move than the old lady caught his hand, exclaiming, "You have made me almost as happy as, I trust, you have left Miss Mildmay, who will, I am sure, make you a most excellent wife. She doats upon you—that you must

have perceived ; her joy, you saw, quite overcame her ; you acted your part admirably ; and I trust she will never know that she is more indebted to your pity than to your love for your attentions. Believe me, I would not have interfered in the business, if I had not felt convinced that she was exactly the wife to suit you : but we must not be too hasty ; her nerves have been very much shattered, and she is delicate to excess in her notions and ideas. I would not have her suspect that even I had guessed her wishes. You must seem to solicit her regard, as warmly as if you could not read her heart in her eyes, and in every look she bestows upon you. Well, I can only say, you will be a very happy man, if the being adored by your wife can constitute your felicity."

"It is surely a very good foundation for a matrimonial structure," rejoined Cecil ; "and as it is said that 'love begets love,' who knows but that I may be a most doating husband ? But I must pay a few more

friendly

friendly visits before I enact the lover. If, as I hope, Miss Mildmay should soon recover, I may proceed rather more briskly, as I own I should not like to dangle, for any length of time, after any woman; since, in my opinion, a man never appears so much like a fool as while sighing at the feet of his intended wife."

Mrs. Manby was certain Miss Mildmay would not keep him in suspense, nor would she wish to postpone their union after she had accepted of his offers; and as Cecil wished to give in his report to his father, he took leave of the old lady at her own door, feeling very impatient to impart what might be deemed his happy prospects to his brother.

During his ride to town, he reflected that Mr. Manby would also be very anxious to learn the result of his visit to Woodford; therefore, as Finsbury-square was in his road home, he resolved to look in upon the banker, from whom

he expected to learn how the farmer did, after having kept it up so stoutly the overnight.

CHAP. III.

No people are so easily duped, it is said, as lovers, since they are ever ready to believe what they wish ; therefore it is not surprising that Elinor Mildmay saw nothing extraordinary in lord Clairville's visit ; and as Mrs. Nesbitt assured her that he seemed to be extremely interested in her recovery, she became assured that he returned her passion, and fancied that she must have been wilfully blind not to have sooner perceived his regard. But then, would the earl of Monmouth approve of their marriage?

riage? Mrs. Nesbitt could not suppose he would object to it. The Manby family did not rank with theirs; and lord Clairville was not, like his brother, nobly descended on either side.

“Possibly lord Angus might laugh him out of marrying a citizen’s daughter, and he seemed wrapped up in his brother. If they ever did come together, she should be very jealous of this said young officer.”

“Of course he will give his wife the preference, so do not begin to conjure up imaginary evils, when all your real ones seem to have ceased. Lord Angus will also marry, and then the brothers will be less together, and will have other and more endearing ties to divide their affections. I have heard lady Frances Clairville highly extolled, so a wife may suffer from the comparison; but perhaps she will not be allowed to seek an intimacy with a merchant’s daughter. I have heard Mr. Manby say the countess of Monmouth is very proud.”

“Positively, Elinor, you seem only anxious to dash your cup of happiness by your usual melancholy forebodings. You have hurt your health and depressed your spirits by fretting, because you fancied that lord Clairville had seen you with indifference. His late visit seems to have convinced you of that error ; but now, with your usual ingenuity in the art of self-tormenting, you foresee a thousand obstacles, and fancy that his brother will rival his wife in his affections ; that his sister will look down upon you ; and the earl and countess are, I suppose, to complete the climax of these imaginary evils, to forbid you their house. Do pray cease to give way to these absurd fancies. And now let me advise you to lie down till dinner, and dream of lord Clairville ;” retiring, and leaving the fair, but, as she justly styled her, self-tormentor, to seek the repose she so much required.

Meanwhile, little supposing that his mistress was thus diving into futurity, and already beginning to feel jealous of his
beloved

beloved Godfrey, the gay-hearted Cecil alighted in Finsbury-square, just as the banker was preparing to walk into Bishops-gate-street, where he meant to take the stage.

He was rejoiced to see his grandson, whose countenance proclaimed him to be the herald of joyful tidings.

Lord Clairville briefly related the occurrences of the morning, assuring the old man, that if Miss Mildmay recovered as speedily as his grandmother prognosticated, he should immediately make proposals to her, and he made no doubt but they should be a very happy and a very unfashionable couple.

“ I am sure you will ; and I will engage to settle every thing with sir Charles entirely to your satisfaction ; so only tell me when I may break the ice, and leave all the rest to me.”

“ We must not be too precipitate, my dear sir ; so for the present let us wave the
c 4 subject.

subject. Have you seen Mr. Webster this morning?"

"Yes; and I learnt from him how very bountiful you had been towards him and his booby son, who I sincerely wish was safe on board his ship; and if the father was also on his way northward, I should not repine. I foresaw you would make them completely tipsy last night. Indeed, Webster acknowledged that he had never been more completely overtaken. He did not make his appearance in the square till near twelve, and he looked as stupid as an owl. Thomas is laid up with a severe head-ach; however, he is to shew his face at the India-house to-morrow, and I hope their next visit to me will be to take leave; and I think it is very unlikely that Thomas and I should ever meet again, except I live to the age of old Parr. The ship in which he is to sail is to drop down in three days; and though it may not be necessary that he should go on board before she sails, (which she

she may not do this fortnight), I have made a point of his going on board the very day she breaks ground, as that may induce Webster to hasten his departure."

Cecil approved of the notion; and as he feared he might prevent his reaching Woodford in time for dinner, if he made a longer visit, he re-mounted his horse and took the New Road home, where, as he expected, he found Godfrey waiting his return.

"I am very glad you were able to leave the fair Elinor so soon, as I began to fear I should be obliged to proceed into Berkeley-square alone, before I had heard how you had succeeded. The earl expects us to dinner, and is no less impatient to learn what you now think of Miss Mildmay."

"I can only say, that I do really believe she has placed her heart in my keeping; and, in return, I am resolved, if my visit proves accessory to her recovery, to offer her my hand;" entering into every detail the reader is already acquainted with.

"I dare say she will make a most excellent wife, since her regard for you will render her subservient to all your wishes: and so now let me tell you, I have received a short letter from Melbourne, whose uncle is in a very dangerous way, and who is, at present, resolved to make him his heir, and has actually made a will constituting him such; but he is such a strange capricious mortal, that Lionel owns he thinks it an even chance, should he recover, that he may alter his mind."

"Then I could find in my heart to wish it might please God to take him," rejoined Cecil; "since Melbourne is a very pleasant young fellow, and seems truly deserving of Fortune's favours."

"Then now, adieu for the present, as I must run; I shall leave you to tell your own story to the earl—a twice-told tale loses its interest," and away he ran.

Lord Clairville did not arrive in Berkeley-square till dinner was ready, therefore mere general conversation passed during
their

their social meal, since no family were ever more united or more happy in each others company.

But the ladies having withdrawn, Cecil, who knew they had not yet been made acquainted with his matrimonial prospects, briefly related how he and his grandmother had settled matters, and what had been the result of his morning visit.

“Then let us drink to Miss Mildmay’s speedy recovery,” said the earl.

Of course the young men made no objection ; and as lord Clairville mentioned having called in Finsbury-square, he added, “and it should seem the farmer had enough of it last night, and, of course, Thomas had found his way home, as he was confined with a head-ach ; for, to let you know, sir, I had my fears whether I had not carried the joke rather too far, as I learnt from my porter that Bolton had returned to my house early this morning, to inquire after this future nabob, who had not been home all night.”

“As I participated in your fear,” said lord Angus, “I positively walked into *** court, as soon as you set out for Woodford. Not having decided who to ask for when I arrived there, I walked into the shop: a very pleasant-looking elderly man was behind the counter, of whom I inquired if Mr. Webster was at home?”

‘No, sir, he is gone into Finsbury-square; but my name is Bolton, and as he is, at present, my guest, in consequence of my son having married his daughter, if you will leave any message for him, you may depend upon its being punctually delivered.’

“I was both pleased and struck with his manner and the gay expression of his countenance, therefore instantly told him who I was, and what had induced me to visit *** court. He instantly invited me into a small inner room, which he styles his surgery, and he there entered into so ludicrous a detail respecting poor Thomas, that I never laughed more heartily,” repeating

peating what the reader is already acquainted with ; declaring that he had never been more amused. "There was such a fund of humour and drollery about the old man, and he seemed so perfectly to understand the characters of his guests, I could have listened to him for another hour ; but so many patients dropped in during our short *tête-à-tête*, I reluctantly departed, after requesting he would not mention my visit to the Websters."

The earl and lord Clairville had laughed till they cried at poor Tom's misfortunes, and both thought he had, upon the whole, purchased experience at no very dear rate. In the height of their glee, they were summoned to tea, and as they had no particular engagements for the evening, the brothers spent it *en famille*, and amused lady Monmouth by an account of the Websters. After which they sat down to whist with the earl and lady Frances. About ten o'clock a note was put into Cecil's hands. As the direction was written by his grandmother,

ther,

ther, he laid it down, meaning to read it when he had finished his game.

“Had that been from a favourite of either sex,” said lady Frances, “you would not have been so ceremonious, Cecil.”

“Positively it does come from a very great favourite of mine, Fanny, since it was written by my good grandmother, and no doubt contains some very material intelligence respecting your sister-in-law that is to be.”

“May I believe you, brother?”

“Are you in earnest?” asked lady Monmouth.

“You do not suppose, *mama*, I would venture to joke upon so serious a subject. I appeal to the earl if I have not taken the desperate resolution to marry a beautiful young maiden, who has not the same dislike to us *coachmen* Fanny avows; since either the smack of my whip, the sound of my bugle, my slang language, or my *costume*, have charmed her into a belief that she cannot exist except I drive her to church.

I was

I was not so wise yesterday morning; yet to-day I have visited the lady, and if she recovers, I expect to enter the holy pale in less than two months: but, not to keep you in suspense, my dear little sister, I commission Godfrey to enter into every necessary detail after I am gone. You, sir," looking at the earl, "will be so kind as to do the same to lady Monmouth; so now let us proceed with our rubber."

"Well, but read Mrs. Manby's note first," said the earl.

He did so; it was very short. Miss Mildmay seemed already the better for his visit, and she hoped he would not let many days elapse ere he repeated his inquiries.

He put it into his father's hands, saying, "You perceive, sir, that I shall soon be able to rival *sir Felix Fascinate*, who prescribed so skilfully, says Mr. Surr, in low complaints. Be sure you send for me, Fanny, if you ever suffer love to get the better of your reason."

The

The countess was very anxious to know to whom Cecil alluded, but did not renew the subject; and soon after midnight he took his leave, when both she and lady Frances earnestly inquired "what lady had fallen in love with Cecil? some friend of Mrs. Manby's, they presumed."

The earl candidly repeated all he had learnt from his sons, adding, "I could have wished Cecil should have married a woman of higher birth; yet I have no objection to make to Miss Mildmay; and I trust she will effectually prevent him from giving into any more follies; those he has hitherto given into will soon evaporate; and I am so anxious to see him domesticated, I rejoice the Manbys are so eager to promote this match; but as it may not take place, since many things may occur to prevent its completion, for the present it may be as well not to mention our expectations."

The ladies perfectly agreed with him. The countess had seen Miss Mildmay, and recollected having admired her; and as sir

Charles

Charles was so respectable a man, and his eldest daughter was so well married, she thought, upon the whole, it was a very desirable connexion ; and as it grew late, the family party separated ; when matrimony being, of course, uppermost in their heads, Godfrey and lady Frances began seriously to reflect upon the subject. The former had as yet never seen any woman upon whom he would have bestowed his hand, and he feared that he should be rather fastidious in his choice, as he wished his wife to unite every domestic virtue to the high polish of a woman of the first fashion, as he should require her to shine as a star of the first magnitude in the high world, and yet to appear with no less advantage in a domestic circle : while lady Frances thought Lionel Melbourne was the most amiable, unaffected young man of fashion she had yet met with ; and had he been a colonel instead of a cornet, she was convinced her parents would not object to his alliance.

CHAP. IV.

THE two following days Cecil contented himself with sending to Woodford, and devoted his mornings to selecting a suitable stud for his brother, who, though a very good judge of horses himself, and of course a most excellent horseman, entertained a higher opinion of his knowledge in these respects. A chariot and a curricule were all the carriages he chose at present to sport. When he became of age (which he did in May) he agreed to add a barouche to the number, as he had no objection to driving four fine horses in the country, or even the environs of London; but was fully resolved never to assume the dress or language of the members of the four-in-hand club.

On

On the third morning, Cecil paid a second visit to Woodford, and was so graciously received, he found he might soon venture to declare his passion, he told Godfrey the next day, acknowledging that he should not be troubled by any of those doubts which perhaps rendered the formidable *yes* so delightful a sound to some men; strongly advising Godfrey to follow his example very speedily, that their children, by intermarrying, might connect them still more closely. Godfrey assured him he would take his advice into consideration; and when he met with a woman who exactly answered his ideas of a wife, he would certainly enter the holy pale. "When she is well enough to receive my visits, I hope you will introduce me to Miss Mildmay. Possibly I may select a bride from among her friends, though, could I meet with a woman of equal rank, as accomplished and unaffected as Fanny, I think I should give her the preference."

"I don't

“I don’t know whether you will not make far the better husband, Godfrey, though you would not have suited my mistress. Your being a soldier would, to her, I find, be a very material objection.”

“She is not singular; though possibly absence may sometimes revive an expiring flame, it must be very inimical to the happiness of a woman who really loves her husband, particularly when she knows he is employed in dangerous service; therefore, perhaps I had better remain single till I have attained the rank of general; then I may repose upon my laurels, and attend to my family concerns.”

“Well, but will you accompany me to Blackheath this morning, to see a famous horse, which a gentleman there wishes to dispose of, and which I wish, if it answers to the description I have received, to purchase?”

“With all my heart; as I have paid all my ceremonious visits, and you will be obliged

obliged to devote all your time to your mistress, when once you have passed the Rubicon—I positively long to see her.”

“You shall certainly do so ere long; but, upon my soul, I wish my heart may not misgive me before I come to the point! I feel, like a coward in time of danger, very desperate. I almost wish the farce was over, and ‘*she had simpered at love, and whispered obey,*’ for fear I should recant. When in her presence, I positively feel almost in love with her; but by the time I reach town, my pity has evaporated, and I only see a pining love-sick damsel, who may transfer her vapours and low spirits to me, or some of her complaints, and I shall not shine as a valetudinarian.”

Godfrey laughed very heartily at his imaginary fears; and the imperial being ready, he ascended the box with his brother, who dashed off at his usual rate.

The day was very pleasant for the season, rather warm; and they reached the place of their destination without meeting with any occurrence

occurrence worthy relating. The horse they went to see more than answered Cecil's expectations, who made the purchase upon the usual conditions; and having taken some refreshment at his late owner's, who was a young merchant, and a member of the driving club, of course known to Cecil, they set out upon their return; but had not proceeded half a mile ere it began to rain, which increased to a violent shower before they reached the turnpike-gate in what is called the Kent-road, where Cecil was obliged to pull up, in consequence of an assemblage of carts and waggons that were paying the toll. Cecil wished his brother to have taken an inside place when the shower came on, but he declared that a soldier ought to be seasoned to all weathers; and as he readily accepted a great-coat of his brother's, who always had a second in the carriage to change if he was wet through the one he wore, he continued on the box.

They had hardly pulled up when they
remarked

remarked three men hurrying into the turnpike house for shelter; but they were unable to discern their features, owing to the way in which they held their hats to guard their faces from the storm.

Having waited with very considerable patience till the last cart had made way for them to pass, lord Clairville was just flourishing his whip to dash off full speed when through the gate, but, at the very instant, a voice which he fancied was familiar to him assailed his ears.

"Here you, coachee, we will give you a shilling a-head to carry us to London."

Cecil instantly turned his head, and immediately recognised farmer Webster in the speaker, who was standing in the doorway swinging the wet out of his hat, while he was thus addressing the supposed coachman; but the instant he caught sight of his face, he shrunk back, his hat fell from his hand, and his countenance fully expressed his contrition for the liberty he had taken so unknowingly.

The

The person he had addressed so uncere-
moniously was much more amused than of-
fended, and actually pulled up again the
moment he recollected him, calling out, in
answer to his liberal offer, "Come along,
my hearty, I cannot refuse so good an offer."

By this time the two turnpike-men were
shouting with laughter, since it was in
consequence of the farmer having asked
one of them "whether there was any chance
of their meeting with a coach?" that
he had, in fun, pointed out to what he
called the stage-coach, which was waiting
to drive through the gate; and as the ap-
pearance of the vehicle as it stood, the two
gentlemen upon the box, and the servants
exalted behind, certainly resembled that of
a mail-coach, the farmer had erred very
innocently; but he swore, when he discover-
ed his mistake, that if the fellow dared to
play him such another trick, he would
knock him down at every risk.

Cecil soon silenced the altercation by
desiring the farmer to get into the carriage,
and

and he would convey him gratis to London.

“ I am sure, my lord, I am very sorry I should have taken the liberty to hail you, owing to that grinning scoundrel’s impudence; but I cannot venture to accept your kind offer, because I am not alone; here are three of us, and we are all soaked in wet.”

But his lordship having made a sign to one of the grooms behind, by this time the door of the carriage was open, and he called out, “ Nonsense! get in, get in; where are your companions ?”

“ I hope I know better than to dispute your lordship’s commands, and to keep you in the rain, although it seems to be clearing; so come along, Mr. Bolton; ’tis of no use your skulking, for you perceive I am known.”

Mr. Bolton, senior, instantly obeyed the summons, followed by Thomas, who had, like him, retreated still farther into the turnpike-house, when they understood the

blunder the farmer had made. Bolton bowed very respectfully to both gentlemen, while Thomas never ventured to raise his eyes, but bowed and scraped at every step.

There was so much good humour and drollery legibly expressed upon the elder Bolton's countenance, that Cecil, like Godfrey, took a sort of intuitive liking to him; for the present, however, he requested he would step into the carriage, which Godfrey seconded, assuring him that he would oblige lord Clairville by so doing. This removed all the worthy man's scruples, who, slipping off his great-coat, as did his companions, which they gave to the groom, they took their seats in the elegant vehicle; and the door being closed upon them, the groom resumed his seat, and our young peer dashed off at the full speed of his bays, though the rain had considerably abated, and by the time they reached Westminster-bridge, had quite blown over.

During their drive, the brothers wondered
where

where this party had been. It was now near four o'clock, and they had picked them up at an odd hour, at such a distance from home. Without asking them where they chose to be set down, his lordship turned up St. Martin's-lane, and pulled up at the church; by alighting here they would have but a little way to walk; and his lordship did not chuse to draw up to the very court, as it might set the neighbours a-talking, or Webster might boast too freely of his great condescension. The moment they stopped, the brothers leaped down, or their passengers must have paid their parting compliments in too loud a voice, and would, of course, by addressing them by their titles, have attracted the notice of those who might chance to be passing by.

The farmer would have renewed his apologies, but Cecil cut them short by observing, "he was the last person he should have expected to meet so far from town."

"Why you must know, my lord, we all

set out this morning to go and see the ship which Thomas is to sail in, Mr. Bolton undertaking to be our pilot; and as he was sober, as well as us, why we all kept together. I dare say he took us the nearest way, but, upon my soul, I am deucedly tired. I never saw such a walker for a man of his age; he would kill me in no time: nay, I do not think Thomas could keep pace with him long. I always ride about my business at home, so I should soon give it in."

Bolton rallied both father and son with infinite humour, adding, "As you gentlemen know how unfortunate poor Mr. Thomas was the night he dined in Portman-square, you will not be surprised to hear that two very smart ladies entered my shop last night, under a very ingenious pretence, but soon inquired for the young countryman, who had played a friend of theirs such a shabby trick the other evening. I immediately guessed to what they alluded, but affected complete ignorance.

' Come,

‘Come, come, old gentleman, we know he lives here, for your son married his sister, and he is going out to India, and had been dining at some lord’s; that was a flam though, I dare say; but the shabby scrub never gave his bedfellow a sixpence. I only wish we may ever catch him again in a similar plight; he shall not escape so easily.’

“I merely bid them take care I had not them and their friend taken before a magistrate, to account for how my young friend had lost his money; but the young jades only laughed at me, well knowing that I could not bring any proofs home to them, since what money he had about him was all in cash.”

Old Webster declared “it was a shameful affair; and if Tom had not been, as a body may say, upon the wing, he would have made some of the party have smarted for their fun. He only hoped Mr. Manby would never hear how unlucky Tom had been.”

“ There was no chance of his so doing,” lord Clairville said ; “ besides, if he should, I will take all the blame upon myself, as having been the primary cause of the misfortune.”

“ Then God bless you, and thank you, my lord ; however, he will not have many more frolics in England, since he is to go on board the day after to-morrow, or, at latest, early the next morning, for the ship is to drop down by the morning tide ; so I am afraid he will not have an opportunity of again returning his thanks to your lordship, except you would both condescend to look in upon us to-morrow night, when Mr. Bolton gives a ball and supper, in honour of his son’s marriage, and that we may make a jovial parting.”

“ I dare not have made such a request, gentlemen,” rejoined Bolton ; “ but if you would condescend to drop your titles for a few hours, if you are not better engaged, I should be highly flattered ; and let me add, it is no bad policy for men of your
rank

rank to mix now and then incognito, among the middling classes, as my friends are by no means vulgar or low-bred. For my own part, I have been a very gay fellow in my time; and I have frequently shoved my nose into assemblies, where, had I been known, ten to one but I had been turned, if not kicked out, for my presumption; and I have also mixed in parties where I should have been ashamed to have been seen by my acquaintance; but, I protest, I never ventured to assume either a name or a rank to which I was not entitled; but had I been born a nobleman, I should certainly have often, as some of our great men have frequently done, laid aside my title, that I might have studied men and manners at my ease. I have been associated in some very daring pranks with some gentlemen who little thought I was only a journeyman surgeon-barber, and who supposed I was as ignorant of their rank in life as they were of mine; however, I never have put them to the blush by claiming an

acquaintance with them; indeed I should scorn to take advantage of their past familiarity; but I have seen as much of life as most men of my age, and I have been guilty of many youthful follies; but my conscience never occasioned me a serious reproach for the past, as I grew older and wiser. I am now on the wrong side of sixty, yet I can enjoy a dance for an hour or two as much as I ever did, though I am not quite so nimble. In short, I do hope that my heart will never grow old, nor my spirits fail me. I am not fond of hoarding money; I have just enough, should any thing befall me, to keep me above want, and my son is a very able assistant; but he never had my flow of spirits; and as he is now married, God forbid he should run rantipole as I did at his age. But, positively, I beg your lordship's pardon, for detaining you to listen to my nonsense; but if the sketch I have given you of my life could induce you to drop your titles for one evening, just that you might form an idea
how

how we plebeians enjoy ourselves, you may rely upon our discretion, and our respectful gratitude in return for such a favour."

Cecil, who foresaw that much diversion might arise from an evening so spent, assured the old man that he was fond of studying mankind in every rank of life; "therefore you may expect to have Mr. Cecil and Mr. Godfrey announced to-morrow night, since you will suffer us to enact your friends."

Never had old Bolton been so much gratified. He actually took a short skip, so great was his joy. "Your lordship's condescension will render me your debtor to all eternity. No one present will have an idea who you are, except those who will, like myself, feel highly gratified at being so honoured;" skipping off in the highest glee, desiring his companions to follow, not to detain their noble friends any longer; but the farmer rather hobbled than walked, declaring he was quite stiff. "And

yet you are always boasting of working very hard, and riding and walking over a county at a stretch, if you may be believed, while I could beat half a dozen of you hollow, except at eating, drinking, and smoking."

The young men laughed, and thought there was great truth in the remark. They soon reached Portman-square, and had resolved, during their ride, to make their appearance at Bolton's ball. Godfrey was as fond of studying mankind as his brother, and agreed, that in the higher circles there was very little originality of character.

"I once aimed at being singular," said Cecil; "but I have dwindled into the *cocher* of the day, and cannot yet talk slang language so well as many mail-coachmen. After all, ours are very puerile pursuits. You have had others, Godfrey; and I often wish I had also entered the army, for I have frequently found time hang very heavy on my hands during your absence."

"A good

"A good wife will relieve you from this tedium; and at forty I expect you will be a model for the rising generation."

"Do the rising generation pay much respect to the lessons of experience? How much good advice has my father thrown away upon me! But when once I am married, I dare say I shall be rather more solid. I wonder whether there will be any pretty girls at this said *bal bourgeoise*."

"I dare say there will; I have seen many very pretty women among the wives of our inferior officers. Birth and fortune cannot insure beauty to their possessor; though a superior education is frequently a great aid even to beauty. But Miss Mildmay is a first-rate belle, I understand. I really long to see her."

"Then what say you to accompanying me down to Woodford to-morrow? You stand pledged to dine at my grandfather's, and I will let him know in the morning that he may expect us."

"I can have no objection; but will the lady

be sufficiently recovered to admit of my visit? Besides, you are not yet her declared lover."

"I wish to have your opinion of her first; though, joking apart, I cannot very well retreat, since I have certainly raised her hopes; so I must soon ask whether she will please to have me: but, as I told you before, I can almost fancy I am *bona fide* in love when in her presence; still I do not pine in absence; and if we were never to meet again, I should bear up with heroic fortitude against such a misfortune."

"Your regard is founded on esteem, therefore you cannot enact the hero of romance. But whether I am admitted into her presence or not, I am very ready to accompany you down to-morrow. At present I must hasten home. You are engaged out to dinner, you told me."

"I am; but I will call for you at one to-morrow, that we may have time to pay all our visits before dinner; and remember, you sleep in Portman-square to-mor-

row,

row, since we may keep it up at Bolton's, *vous me comprenez*; but that visit need not be mentioned to the earl. He might not be so fully convinced as we are of the necessity of our studying mankind in every rank of life; which is a proof of the justice of my former remark, that sons in every age, and of every age, indubitably think themselves wiser than their fathers. So adieu."

"*Au revoir*," cried Godfrey, as he left the room; and thus, for the present, the brothers separated.

CHAP. V.

EARLY next morning, lord Clairville dispatched his groom to Woodford, with a kind note to his grandmother, inviting himself

self and his brother to dine with her and the banker, and sending her, in consequence, a large basket of fish, promising to be with her early, as he meant to pay his respects to Miss Mildmay before dinner.

The old lady was extremely gratified by his polite attention; and Mr. Manby rejoiced when he learnt lord Angus meant to accompany him down; he therefore resolved not to leave home: but Mrs. Manby having issued her orders respecting dinner, walked to sir Charles's. She was always a most welcome guest; and Miss Mildmay was so much better, that Mrs. Nesbitt talked of returning home. Of course the old lady mentioned who she expected to dinner, and lord Clairville's intentions of inquiring after the health of the invalid, who seemed highly flattered by the intimation, as she certainly longed to look down upon her city friends as lady Clairville; since handsome as Cecil certainly was, and amiable as he was allowed to be, possibly she would not have fallen so desperately

perately in love with him, had he not been a titled man. But the late lady Mildmay had early, and very foolishly, implanted a wish into her youthful mind to be united to a man of rank. Lord Clairville was the first patrician whom she had ever met in private society, and she certainly construed his mere good-humoured politeness into very serious attentions, which his having of late relaxed, in consequence of his having been less at Woodford, and more engaged with his fashionable friends, had occasioned her illness; since vanity, in the first instance, had certainly induced her to bestow her heart upon him; and both that and her pride were deeply wounded by what she construed into neglect: yet she did not wish her love for him to be known. Indeed, had she not supposed that her illness had revived his flame, she would certainly have forbidden his visits.—Mrs. Manby chose to wait the arrival of her grandson at the baronet's, who drove his barouche up to the door about three o'clock, when,

when, as agreed upon by the brothers, he jumped down, putting the reins into Godfrey's hands, whom he hoped would be also requested to alight.

Miss Mildmay gave him a most flattering reception. Gratified vanity is a great improver of looks ; and she was too anxious to secure so valuable a prize, to be deficient in any of those minor acts which are such able female auxiliaries upon such occasions, and by which so many men are duped out of their liberty ; and as she fondly loved him, and suffered her regard to be perceived, he thought her a most lovely creature, towards whom he could not be sufficiently grateful.

“Pray is that lord Angus in whose hands your lordship has left the reins?” asked Mrs. Nesbitt ; “if it is, suffer me to request he will alight, and join our party.”

Of course no objection was made to this expected proposal ; and in less than three minutes Godfrey was introduced to his sister-in-law elect, who made a much more favourable

favourable impression upon him than he did upon her. He was certainly very handsome, she agreed ; but she fancied that his fine countenance bore an expression of *hauteur*, and she dreaded him as a rival too near the throne.

Mrs. Manby was much too profuse in her compliments towards him ; and even her sister seemed to look up to him as the greatest man. Such were her reflections, while his lordship was paying the accustomed compliments to the other ladies.

Lord Clairville had feared he should not have found Miss Mildmay at home, the weather was so fine.

“ Yet I cannot persuade my sister to take even an airing in the carriage,” said Mrs. Nesbitt. “ I was requesting Mrs. Manby would exert her rhetoric in the same cause, when your lordship joined us, as Dr. *** is a great advocate for air and exercise.”

“ Then what say you, my dear Miss Mildmay, to half an hour’s drive in my barouche ? My grandmother and Mrs. Nesbitt

bitt will, I am sure, accompany you ; and I shall feel highly gratified if I can in any way contribute to your recovery, or if I find that my persuasions are of more avail than the learned Dr. ***'s."

" I will convince you that they are, my lord, by accepting of your kind offer."

Cecil, who was really very much pleased by her ready compliance, raised her hand to his lips, and fancied that so complaisant a wife would render him the happiest of mortals.

Mrs. Nesbitt and her sister having left the room to prepare for their airing, Mrs. Manby eagerly asked lord Angus " what he thought of Miss Mildmay?"

His answer was extremely gratifying to both her and his brother. " By the way," he went on, " you had better make the fourth in the barouche, Cecil, and suffer me to drive. Upon my honour, you ought to be very vain of having turned the head of so lovely a creature. We soldiers are often accused of making strange havoc among ladies"

ladies' hearts; but I never yet, to my knowledge, made any conquest worth mentioning."

"Envious of my good fortune, by all the gods!" cried the laughing Cecil; "now, hang me if I do not think she would suit you best; and if she knew as much of you as I do, I am sure she would give you the preference."

"May she but make you as happy as you deserve to be, Cecil, and she will render me her avowed admirer."

The return of the ladies broke in upon their discourse; and Mrs. Manby told the invalid, that lord Clairville chose to ride inside, that he might enjoy their conversation, as lord Angus had kindly undertaken to supply his place upon the box.

Godfrey presumed the good lady wished to oblige his brother to come rather speedily to the point; but did not absolutely approve of her thus making him appear more the lover than he really was.

"His lordship is in the habit of driving, I hope?"

"I hope?" said the invalid; "for I am such a fearful creature in a carriage, since I have been in this nervous state, that I positively confine myself, to avoid displaying my cowardice."

"You need be under no apprehensions, my dear madam," rejoined Cecil; "though not a member of the club, my brother drives as well as I do; and even more carefully; but if you have a higher opinion of my skill, I will take the reins."

She assured him she had no longer the slightest apprehension, and readily suffered him to place her in the carriage: the other ladies and he followed her in; and Godfrey having mounted the box, convinced them that he could handle the reins as well as his brother, though he drove very slow, not to alarm or fatigue the invalid, who declared herself much the better for her airing, when Mrs. Manby and the brothers took leave of her in her father's hall; and lord Clairville had been so attentive towards her during their drive, that
her

her spirits were quite elated when he departed, and she declared herself the happiest of women.

“Only take care, my dearest Elinor, you do not mar your now happy prospects, by giving way to the idle, groundless fears you are continually infected with. I was extremely distressed at your implied doubts of lord Angus’s skill, when his brother, from so kind a motive, resigned the reins. You may fancy that the other sex are partial to timid women, and like to be looked up to for protection; so they may; but they dislike real cowards, and, still more, affected fears; but I trust you will get over these childish follies, which have often distressed my father, and behave henceforward like a reasonable wise woman.”

The invalid, who had been the darling of her mother, could not bear reproof, even in gentlest shape. A violent flood of tears was, therefore, her only answer; and she told her sister, when she could speak, “that she

she seemed resolved to depress her joy ;" and retired in such a mood, that had Cecil caught a glance of her face, or heard various other reproachful speeches addressed to a most affectionate sister, who pitied her too much to retort upon her, 'tis a chance whether he would not have suffered her to " die for love," even admitting he had not done so for glory.

Mr. Manby was extremely 'happy to see the young men, and very much pleased to hear they had left Miss Mildmay so well ; asking "when he was to enter upon money matters with sir Charles?"

" Not till I have made the fair lady a tender of my hand, sir ; and she is not yet sufficiently recovered to admit of her thinking of marrying."

" You have completed her cure, I tell you ; and by the time the necessary preparations are made, she will be as blooming as a rose ; since the moment she is out of suspense, she will recover both colour, flesh, and strength."

" I hope

"I hope she is not habitually nervous?" rejoined Cecil, looking at his grandmother.

"I never heard her talk of her nerves before her present illness, my dear Cecil; and I dare say she caught the silly jargon from her physician. When they are at a loss what name to give a complaint, they call it nervous. Her spirits have been depressed; and she cannot immediately shake off the debility which hangs about her; but marriage will cure all her complaints, remove all her imaginary fears, and render you both completely happy: her mild gentleness will form an admirable contrast to your vivacity; she will submit in every thing to your guidance; and I know she is an excellent manager, and that she knows the value of money, though she is neither mean nor ostentatious. Sir Charles has kept a tight rein over his daughters, and has not suffered them to give in to any of the fashionable follies. Mrs. Nesbitt makes a most excellent wife: she is of a gayer disposition than her sister, but I do not think

think she has so good an understanding, therefore she will suit you the best; and she will render your home such a paradise, that I dare say you will have forsaken many of your present pursuits before the expiration of a twelvemonth."

The banker was still more profuse in her praise. Godfrey did not chuse to meddle in the discourse, as he conceived that Mr. and Mrs. Manby were much the best judges of the fair Elinor's disposition; and a summons to dinner gave a change to the conversation. As ostentation was one of the banker's foibles, he kept an excellent table; and as this was lord Angus's first visit since his return, the repast was sumptuous in the extreme for such a private party.

The discourse turned upon the Websters. Mr. Manby was sorry the girl had married in town, as, should Bolton meet with any check in trade, he might have the assurance to apply to him, and thus blazon their very distant relationship.

Cecil did not conceive that he need entertain

certain any apprehensions of the kind, since, from Webster's account, the father was in a very good line of business; not chusing to mention his having seen this despised trader, in whom he had found much to admire. Godfrey thought there were many very good points about Mr. Webster; and thought Thomas would appear to much greater advantage when he returned, as the farmer expected, a nabob.

"I dare say, if he ever should make a fortune, he will bring over a plentiful stock of pride and assurance: nay, I should not wonder were he then to style you young gentlemen cousins."

"He might with justice give me that title now," said Cecil; "but I think Godfrey will never be so addressed by him, even should he rise to be governor-general, since he dare not claim any affinity to the Bolingbrokes, though he may, through me, to the Clairvilles; but here's to his success, at every risk. Will you pledge me, Angus?"

“Most willingly;” and as they soon joined Mrs. Manby, Cecil gave orders for his carriage to be at the door by eight, pleading a pre-engagement, in reply to the banker’s entreaties that they would sleep at Woodford.

“Well, but if you must go,” rejoined the banker, “may not I just hint to sir Charles, with whom I very frequently go to town, that you mean to make proposals to his daughter?”

“Suffer me to do so before you enter upon the subject, for fear I should, after all, meet with a refusal, as ladies are sometimes as skittish as one of my bays, which I have had great difficulty in breaking-in. I will make Miss Mildmay an offer of my hand to-morrow, if I can find time to write a suitable letter, and her answer shall decide my fate; if it should be favourable, you shall have full power to treat with the baronet; only remember, sir, do not give him room to suppose that money was my object,

object, when I selected his daughter for my better half."

"Leave every thing to me. I know exactly what is proper to be said or done upon the occasion. I will not make you appear mean in the eyes of any man. Sir Charles cannot be worth less than three hundred thousand pounds; and, as he cannot take it into the other country with him, it will be but proper that he should secure an equal share of it to each of his children and their heirs. This youngest is of a very delicate constitution; but that I shall not hint to him; she may bear you a few children, and yet not live to a great age; and they ought to inherit what sir Charles may have to leave behind him. You may make a second choice; and it will be but right that her or his money should provide for her younger children. The eldest boy is sure to have enough; but I have lived long enough to look farther into futurity than you do. You will, by your choice, confer a very great honour

E 2 upon

upon Miss Mildmay. You may laugh; but I see lord Angus is of my way of thinking, and I will have my own way in this arrangement. I am a man of business, and so is the baronet, and we shall soon understand each other. I know he will rejoice very sincerely in his daughter's happy prospects; and I shall merely impress upon his mind, that you are lord viscount Clairville, and that you will be earl of Monmouth; that your father's estates are unencumbered; that you did not chuse a city heiress, to pay off your mortgages or debts of honour; and that you will be my sole heir;—and I think, if he is not satisfied, why 'tis pity his daughter should ever bear your name. As for her, poor soul! you need not doubt her acquiescence; but as we must suffer her to say yes, in reply to the important question, I shall wait till she has performed her part in the play; so let me hear from you to-morrow, if you do write to her; or, perhaps, you may think it necessary to return your thanks to
your

your fair mistress in person, for having rendered herself completely happy by accepting your offer. However, she requires a little humouring now : when she is once in harness, you may keep as tight a rein as you chuse over her ; but if I did not think she would prove a most docile, tractable wife, I would not have recommended her to your notice."

Most of this passed while the young men were standing preparatory to their departure. At last the banker brought his prolix harangue to a conclusion, by telling his grandson,—“ that as his carriage was at the door, he would not keep his horses in the cold, since he believed he was almost as fond of them as he would ever be of a wife."

Mrs Manby cried, “For shame, Mr. Manby ! though I agree that it is a great proof of humanity to be kind to animals ; and no man who is so will ever make a bad husband."

“ There I agree, Mrs. Manby ; so good
x 3 night,

night, my dear Cecil. Lord Angus, I hope you will often accompany your brother down to Woodford while he acts the lover; we shall be very happy to see you, and we will treat you in the best manner we are able, in return for your condescension."

Godfrey made a suitable reply; and then preceded his brother into the barouche, as they chose to ride inside on their return, they being both sufficiently dressed to make their appearance at this *bal bourgeois*, where opera hats would have been extremely out of character. They alighted, as agreed upon, at the end of **** court, and sent the carriage and servants home.

There was a sort of crowd before Mr. Bolton's door, in which they mixed, to hear what was said respecting the *fête*, and the owner of the mansion; since, notwithstanding the window-curtains were drawn, it was evident that the first floor was very handsomely illuminated; and they could not only hear a very good band playing a lively Scotch air, but could also
both

both hear and discern the dancers. The watchmen were going half past nine; and some of the by-standers observed "they were just in the height of their glee, and they made no doubt but the old man would make them keep it up till a late hour."

"When was his son married?" asked another.

"About a fortnight ago, I have been told, and in the north. He has brought home a fine cherry-cheeked spanking lass; and I dare say they will be a very happy couple."

"That may be; but old George Bolton is worth a hundred of his son: he is one of the gayest fellows of his age and inches in all his Majesty's dominions, and has ten times the spirit of his son," replied the first.

"Young George wished to have made up to the black-eyed heiress, I have heard," said a third; "but she soon sent him a grazing; so he married to spite her, I suppose."

pose. She is there to-night, I know, for I saw her and Mr. and Mrs. Dawson go in. Ecod she is a nice girl ! and I wish she was well married ; but she holds her head too high, for she has refused some deuced good offers. I dare say, if old George had been twenty years younger, she would have married him."

" And she may go further and fare worse yet," said another of the throng, who were all inhabitants of the court. " Old Bolton is a very clever man in his profession, and a very warm one too, or I am much mistaken, and no one does more good."

The brothers were now convinced that their new favourite was very generally respected ; but, fearful the by-standers might suspect why they had mixed among them, they took a short turn, and entering the court at the other end, knocked at the door, which was opened by a very smart fellow out of livery, who had been hired for the night from some of the neighbouring coffee-houses.

fee-houses. He preceded them up stairs, and announced " Mr. Cecil and Mr. Godfrey."

Ten couple were footing it away, in the midst of whom was the elder Bolton, who was dancing with a very handsome, well-dressed, black-eyed lassy, about eighteen; but as he instantly stepped out of the set, a short pause ensued. The little man, taking a hand of each, said, " How could you make it so late, gentlemen? though I recollect you told me you could not be here to open the ball; and ' the end of a feast is better than the beginning of a fray.' Gentlemen and ladies, Mr. Cecil and Mr. Godfrey, two friends of mine, wholesale dealers in horses. I am thus explicit, to save you a world of inquiries, and many whispers."

The brothers bowed, in return for the polite reception they met with; and were well convinced that no one present, the family excepted, doubted the veracity of their host; and Bolton had so well tutored his son, the bride, and the Websters, that

R 5

they

they behaved very properly upon the occasion.

Cecil requested they might not derange the company, who readily resumed their diversion, while they walked to the upper end of the room with their host, who requested to know what they chose to take before they joined the dancers, which he hoped they were inclined to do, as he began to fag, and would, therefore, readily resign his handsome little partner, who had also retreated from the set when the dancing recommenced.

She blushed, and gave the dentist, as he was generally styled, a smart pat in return for his compliment.

“ You little gipsy, you don't know how much you ought to be obliged to me for having selected you, notwithstanding you refused my son, in preference to all my guests. Did not I tell you that I expected two very smart Yorkshire dealers, to either of whom I would resign your hand when I grew tired? You turned up your pretty
nose

nose at my Yorkshiremen, and asked if they resembled Mrs. Bolton's brother? What think you of them now, Miss Hunter?"

"I think that you are a very provoking old man, Mr. Bolton, and I vow I will never dance with you again."

"There is a challenge, Mr. Cecil; but if I was you, I would select another partner."

Cecil declared he was not so much his own enemy, if Miss Hunter would favour him with her hand; offering to take it.

"As I have been thrown, in a manner, upon your compassion, sir, I ought to think myself very fortunate at not having been rejected."

A good deal of gay raillery passed between Bolton and the brothers, as he led them into an adjoining room, where a profusion of refreshments were set out in a very handsome style. He requested they would help themselves to what they liked, as they did not mean to have a regular sup-

per ; and as no one had followed them into the inner apartment, the master of the house seized the opportunity to return them thanks in the most respectful manner, for having honoured his ball with their presence ; assuring them, that no one present would ever suspect he had been thus favoured ; and promising to select a pleasant partner for Godfrey to begin with.

“ That Miss Hunter is a deuced pretty girl,” said Cecil ; “ who and what is she ? ”

“ The orphan daughter of a deceased friend of mine, a pawnbroker, who resided in this neighbourhood, and who left that girl ten thousand pounds. To my great regret, he named his brother-in-law, a pewterer, his executor, and sole guardian to that pretty girl, and he has given her a very poor education ; and as he has no means of bringing her forward in good company, I am afraid she will not meet with a suitable match. My son made her an offer of his hand, and, had they come together, Charles should have set up fine gentleman ;

gentleman ; and I would have endeavoured to have introduced her into a better circle ; but she looks higher than him. I only wish she was well married to some man of her own rank, as she can only suit you gentlemen as a partner at a ball."

Cecil smiled assent ; telling the worthy man, in confidence, that he was upon the high-road to marriage ; and declaring that he would be answerable for Godfrey's not attempting to turn her head.

A new dance having been called, the brothers joined the set, Godfrey having taken out the bride. The party danced much better than our young men had expected, who were never more amused. Miss Hunter and another very smart girl, a distant relative of the Boltons, bore off the palm, and frequently danced with the young peers, who did not take leave of their gay host till after four o'clock ; and agreed, as they jolted home in a hackney-coach, that they had spent a very pleasant evening ; and that people in middling life knew how

to enjoy themselves as well as the great, and with less form and ceremony, exploded as both now were from fashionable parties.

They were no sooner gone than Bolton was assailed with inquiries respecting them.

"Are they really Yorkshire horse-dealers?" asked Miss Hunter.

"Why should you doubt my word, rosebud?"

"They dance so well, and appeared so much the gentlemen. I never saw a finer figure than the youngest; and when we danced reels, he excelled every man I ever saw attempt the Scotch and Irish steps: but the eldest seems much the most gay."

"Where do they live?" asked another lady.

"With their fathers or grandfathers, I suppose; but really I never absolutely put the question to them. I have heard Mr. Cecil extolled for being famous at breaking-in unruly horses."

"Some stable-keeper after all!" said Miss Hunter. But as the dentist merely laughed

laughed at their questions, or returned the most evasive answers, his company departed, supposing that he had become acquainted with them in the way of trade, and that their fine teeth had not all grown in their mouths.

CHAP. VI.

THE brothers did not rise very early the next morning; but having breakfasted between twelve and one, they were going to sally forth to pay their devoirs in Berkeley-square, when Lionel Melbourne, having been previously announced, entered the library, and paid his compliments with his accustomed gaiety and good humour.

“Why has the old man taken a new lease?” asked lord Clairville.

“I am

"I am afraid not ; but I have offended beyond forgiveness ; therefore I must pay my devoirs more assiduously than ever to the great men in power. I arrived in town late last night, and my father assured me that my name stands next to your's, lord Angus, in the list for promotion, and this has perfectly consoled me for having lost the fortune of the most capricious man in existence."

"That you will, in due time, attain the highest rank in the army, there can be no doubt," rejoined Godfrey: "but what can have occurred to have induced this uncle of your's to alter his mind? I am sure you would not purposely have thwarted any one in such a situation."

"You do me justice ; but I have already fully made up my mind, since I own I never looked forward with absolute hope to becoming my uncle's heir. He is, as I believe I have already told you, an old bachelor, and changes his mind almost as often as he does his shirt ; yet never relents in
favour

favour of any one whom he conceives has done any thing to incur his displeasure. He never married, because he would neither be thwarted nor contradicted by a woman; though, by the death of a maternal uncle, about twenty years since, he came into an estate of four thousand a-year, in addition to the one he inherited from my grandfather; but he has lived much within his income from his youth upwards, my mother says, though he never made the slightest addition to either her's or my aunt's fortune, contenting himself with promising lady Melbourne that one of her sons should be his heir; and my elder brother was, of course, considered as such, since he seemed to have taken a great liking to him, though, as I have told you, lord Angus, he certainly made both me and Harry frequent presents, and sometimes talked of making us each an allowance, in addition to our pay. Unfortunately for our senior William, he paid Mr. Warrender a very long visit, about a twelvemonth ago, and,
by

by way of amusing his leisure hours, made love to the dairy-maid, till the consequences of their intimacy became obvious. The old gentleman, who has never kept a mistress, was furious at his having dared to seduce an innocent maiden under his roof, and ended by forbidding him his house; burning his will, and making another in my favour: nay, he even wished me to have resigned my commission in time of war, and when I was under orders for foreign service. By my mother's advice, I suffered my father to point out to him the impossibility of my complying with his wishes; and, for a miracle, he agreed that he had exacted what I could not have obliged him in but at the expence of my honour; and he declared that I should be his heir. The paternal estate is intailed upon my elder brother; but the other, being an acquired one, together with his personals, were secured to me; and handsome legacies were left my mother and sister, we understood, at least so he told me

me when I went down ; and all was peace and harmony till yesterday about this time. While I was sitting on one side of his bed, and his physician and surgeon on the other, the former said that he was just come from the reverend Mr. Drewe's, of Southwell, who had been taken very suddenly, and who was in a very dangerous state. My uncle, raising himself in bed, said, in a much louder tone than I had yet heard him speak, ' 'Tis no matter, he can be very well spared.'

“ Knowing the living was in my uncle's gift, I naturally concluded that he had some friend in view upon whom he wished to bestow it, before he also departed this life ; but I soon discovered that the reverend gentleman, having very lately become what is styled a gospel-preacher, had even from the pulpit thrown out some hints against my uncle, whose want of charity and loving-kindness towards his fellow-creatures has been but too obvious through life ; but the divine's zeal proved of no avail,
and

and only rendered Mr. Warrender his irreconcilable enemy, who declared that he was become a worthless fawning hypocrite—a Methodist in his heart; and who, being conscious of his own sly wickedness, wanted to persuade himself and others that good works were of no avail. The physician was not, however, aware of the enmity subsisting between the parties, nor was I when he started the subject; but my uncle soon convinced us that he disliked the rector, as he condemned his doctrines *in toto*; and ran on reviling the poor man till he really shocked us all three; of course we did not join in his censures, which induced him, turning hastily to me, to say, ‘If this scoundrel should survive me, upon whom, Lionel, will you bestow the living?’

‘I hope, sir, you will be able to present it to some one of whom you have a better opinion than you seem to have of Mr. Drewe.’

‘That is not answering my question, boy.’

boy. Upon whom do you mean to bestow it, as I have left you this estate, and I feel I cannot live many days?’

“Unacquainted as I was with his prejudices and likings, I unfortunately said I had heard my mother speak very highly of Mr. Drewe’s curate, and as having a large family; should he have any objection to his succeeding to the rectory?”

“Never did I see a man, in so weak a state, in such a fury; since Mr. Blake had equally incurred his hatred, for having ventured to defend the rector. He accused me of being a concealed Methodist, and declared that I was a disgrace to my profession, and to the name I bore. In vain I pleaded ignorance of Mr. Blake’s sentiments and principles, protesting that I had never heard of his having quarrelled with Mr. Drewe. He vowed that it was impossible; swearing that my mother and I were in a league, as she had been twice to church since she had been down, and had declared she thought
Mr.

Mr. Blake a very impressive preacher ; and he now might preach patience and resignation to us all, since he would send for his solicitor that moment, and leave every farthing that was at his own disposal to some public charity ; but he would take care that no Methodist should reap the benefit of his good intentions. I merely said in reply, ‘ That he had an undoubted right to do as he pleased with his property.’

‘ I will soon make you feel that I have, young fellow ; so leave my house this moment ; I see you now in your proper colours ; you was all submission and feeling while you hoped to be my heir, and now you look as proud and as insolent as you are by nature ; so leave my house, or I will order my servants to shew you the door ; and I only hope my precious sister and your’s will accompany you, since I should not chuse to turn them out. Here, Walter, take this key and bring me my will,

will, 'tis in the iron-chest, that I may destroy it, and thus give the death-blow to that young fellow's hopes.'

"This said Walter is the only manservant who has ever lived with him for any length of time, and has, of late, been his constant attendant; he was therefore, as usual, in the dressing-room; and as the door was open, had doubtless heard all that passed; but when he approached the bed, he begged to know what his master wanted?

'My will, you lazy hound! that I may destroy it, and that young rascal's hopes.'

'Had not your honour better make another before you destroy this, because Mr. William Melbourne may else stand a chance of coming in for every thing?'

'You are right, Walter; bring pen, ink and paper this moment, and write what I shall dictate. Please to remain till he returns, Mr. Lionel Melbourne, that you may be fully convinced how much I am in earnest.'

"Willing

“Willing to humour his fancy, I resumed my seat, and Walter was soon prepared to write his master’s letter.

“The physician and surgeon, who had remained in the room, now interposed, and requested he would not thus flurry himself, as it might be attended with dangerous consequences: he had better point out a successor to Mr. Drewe, and they would be answerable for my conforming to his wishes. They had better have preached to the winds.

‘You have fully given me to understand, gentlemen, that I cannot recover; of course I have no time to lose, as that insolent boy shall not benefit by my having entertained a very different opinion of him; so begin to write, Walter.’

“The physician instantly rose to retire, as did the surgeon.

‘What, you are inclined to resent my disposing as I chuse of my property, Dr. Dalby? As you please; here is your fee.’

“The now highly-offended doctor left the
room

room in silence. The surgeon still lingered, as the sick man ‘hoped he was not also going to leave him to die.’

‘Are you ready, Walter?’

‘Yes, sir. To whom am I to write, and what am I to say?’

‘To Mr. Morgan, my attorney; merely to request he will return with the bearer, who will, if he does not loiter upon the road, be in Lincoln’s-inn-fields by eight o’clock this evening; therefore I may expect to see Mr. Morgan before eight to-morrow morning.’

“Walter wrote to this purport, and was then ordered to dispatch the groom upon one of the best horses; but the next moment he resolved the under-gardener should be his messenger, as less likely to get drunk upon the road: he was accordingly summoned into the sick-room to receive his final instructions, while the groom saddled the fleetest horse in the stable.

“As I was really fearful that I might hasten his departure if I left the room till

I had received my final dismissal, I waited while Thomas received his orders, and was then desired to begone. I did not make him repeat his words, though I assured him I sincerely forgave him for having thus made me the sport of his caprice : this set him a-storming afresh ; therefore I hastened to my mother, who did not oppose my departure ; and here I am, quite reconciled to my disappointment."

The brothers declared they had never heard of so strange a character. Godfrey thought it more than probable he would have altered his mind again before his attorney arrived—"I only hope he may in that case make Harry his heir."

"Well, pray God he may have breathed his last, say I, before Mr. Morgan reaches his house : his medical attendants think him very bad, you say?"

"They told my mother yesterday morning that they much doubted his surviving the day ; but he may disappoint their expectations."

Godfrey

Godfrey could only secretly resolve to procure his friend's advancement, even by purchase, rather than fail: but as it grew late, Lionel readily agreed to accompany them into Berkeley-square; and his unexpected return effectually prevented the earl and countess from inquiring, which they would very naturally have done, where the brothers had spent their evening.

Lady Frances soon joined their party; she had learnt that Lionel had come with them, which rendered her more anxious to see her brothers; and, perhaps, she grieved more than the young cornet, when she learnt his recent disappointment respecting his uncle's fortune; not that he required great riches to have aspired to her hand, but she had sense enough to acknowledge, that even her fortune, added to his pay, would not enable them to keep up an appearance suitable to her rank and connexions.

They were commenting upon Mr. War-

render's strange behaviour, the earl observing, "that no one could have hoped to have been his heir, who had ever resided under his roof," when a man on horseback rode up to the door—"Why that is my uncle's gardener," cried the astonished Lionel; "the very fellow he sent off yesterday express to Mr. Morgan's; what can have brought him here? Surely he might have been upon his return to Lenham ere this."

"Let us hope Mr. Warrender changed his mind again before his departure," said Godfrey. "I think you said that you did not see him upon the road?"

"I did not, which surprised me; but I certainly saw him leave Lenham before I departed."

The man having alighted and knocked at the door, a servant entered the room, saying, "Here is a messenger in the hall who wishes to speak to Mr. Melbourne."

Lionel instantly advanced towards the door at which the gardener stood, who put a letter

a letter into his hand. "From my mother," glancing his eyes over the direction. "But how came you to know I was here, my good fellow?"

"I rode first into Brook-street, sir. Sir Willoughby himself, for whom I had also a letter, sent me into Portman-square, and lord Clairville's porter directed me hither, as I was resolved to deliver that letter into your own hands."

"Well, but did not you leave Lenham yesterday about one o'clock? have you been home since then?"

"That letter will explain every thing, I dare say, sir; if not, I will, as far as I am able."

"Then I desire you would not stand upon ceremony, Mr. Melbourne," said the earl, "as we are all, more or less, interested in your concerns."

Lionel instantly broke the seal, and having hastily ran over his letter to himself, read aloud as follows :

“ Lenham, seven o'clock in the morning.

“ MY DEAR LIONEL,

“ You must hasten down upon receipt of this, as speedily as you possibly can make it convenient, as your presence is now become absolutely necessary. You must remember leaving Mr. Maddocks, the surgeon, in my brother's room, when he, after so cruelly disappointing your just expectations, forbid you his house. This worthy man almost immediately took leave of his irritable patient, promising to return in a few hours, and kindly remained in wait for the gardener, whom he had long known, and whose mother's life he has very recently saved; taking him on one side, he told him Mr. Warrender was no longer in his absolute senses; but, not to contradict him, he had suffered him to send off for his attorney; still, as he could not survive the night, it would be absurd were he to pursue his journey, since the
lawyer

lawyer must be paid for his time and trouble ; though he could not arrive in time, admitting the old gentleman was in a fit state of mind to make a will ; he therefore gave the man a five-pound note, advising him to spend the night at ***, and to call upon him very early in the morning, when he would, if necessary, give him his further instructions. Thomas readily came into all his plans ; and Mr. Maddocks told me last night that he had detained him, since he was convinced that my brother's hours were numbered ; and as he had predicted and foreseen, the poor unhappy man departed this life about two hours ago. The worthy Walter, who prevented his master from destroying the will in your favour, rejoices to find Mr. Maddocks acted so wisely, as he has long wished that his master's fortune should centre in my children ; and he knows that my brother has left you every thing, a few legacies excepted ; and he is convinced that you will find him much richer than is generally supposed ;

F 4

posed ; but I can say no more, as Mr. Maddocks wishes to convey my letter to Thomas, whom you will reward for his wish to forward our plans. I can therefore only add, that I am, &c. &c."

The moment Lionel ceased reading, the whole family wished him joy of what might be deemed an almost unexpected acquisition.

"Had your uncle departed this life in a happier frame of mind, my young friend," said lord Monmouth, "I should certainly not have rejoiced at his demise; but he seemed resolved not to be regretted by his family and friends; since I own I fear, had he lived till morning, he would have made a very absurd will."

"I am very sure I should not have come in for any part of his estate or his personals," replied Lionel.

"Then thank God he was not permitted to execute his absurd intentions," said Godfrey;

Godfrey; and as they presumed Lionel wished to have some conversation with his father before he left town, they suffered him to take an immediate leave of them, Godfrey merely desiring to hear from him the first leisure moment.

This the young cornet readily promised; and he was no sooner gone than Cecil exclaimed, "Z—ds! I was to have written a declaration of my passion to my fair mistress this morning: positively Lionel's unexpected return, and the recent occurrences, has made me forget Woodford and its inhabitants. I am afraid I shall not shine as a lover; however, you must assist me in the arduous task, Godfrey; since I should quite as leave write the next speech for the king, as every sentence will be weighed both by the lady and her relatives, and as I shall be rejected or accepted by rule."

The countess and lady Frances had retired before Cecil recollected his omission, who resolved to return home to write this promised missive while he was full of the

subject, as he must allow the lady time for reflection, and he could not hope for an answer before the next day.

“She will send it through the medium of Mrs. Manby,” said the earl; “but I would have you write at the same time to your grandfather, to tell him that I am ready to meet him and sir Charles to settle preliminaries whenever they please, at my house or at your’s. I have long since decided what addition I shall make to your income upon the occasion. My Lincolnshire estate I propose giving up to you; and when I die, you will, of course, come into that in Yorkshire, and a few etceteras. To my daughter, I mean to bequeath my personals, though she has been very handsomely provided for by her grandfather; and you, my beloved Godfrey, are in want of nothing I have to bestow, since your income, when you become of age, will be larger than mine ever was.”

“And I must beg, my dear father, that you do not straiten yourself to increase mine,”

mine," said Cecil. "Mr. Manby will be profuse upon such an occasion. I expect to receive a large fortune with my wife—and——"

"I agree to all you say, Cecil; but I can very well spare what I shall make over to you. I never considered what your grandfather did or might do for you, as exonerating me from acting towards you as to an eldest and beloved son; and I chuse to be a party concerned in regulating the marriage settlements: so go home and write your letters, and dispatch them to Woodford: perhaps, as the lady is in so weak a state, it may be as prudent to enclose her's in one to Mrs. Manby, whom you may request would plead your cause. The old lady will be flattered, and the sooner out of her suspense; and grandpapa can enter immediately upon the subject with sir Charles."

"I shall implicitly adhere to your instructions, sir," said Cecil, who departed to write and dispatch his epistle, requesting

Godfrey would dine with him *tête-à-tête*, as he should wish to submit the copies to his inspection, and to have a little serious conversation with him respecting his matrimonial projects.

Lord Angus having no previous engagement, readily agreed to his proposal, and arrived in Portman-square before the groom set out upon his embassy; he therefore perused the original letter intended for Miss Mildmay, and thought it so well worded, and so much to the purpose, that he declared he should request his brother would become his amanuensis, should he ever find himself in a similar situation.

“Why I thought it best to be perfectly explicit at once. I should despise a man who merely made love by inuendoes. I am resolved to make my little *water lily* as kind a husband as she could wish; and I perfectly agree with La Rochefoucault, that we are very apt to love those who admire us; yet I can lay my hand upon my heart and swear, that I never intentionally gave her reason,
before

before her illness, to expect I meant to make her an offer of my hand. I may have talked frothy nonsense with her ; but I always made it a rule to steer clear of any of those insinuating expressions, which seem to mean more than meets the ear ; since I think it base to a degree to creep thus pitifully into a poor girl's heart, and then make a jest of your triumph."

" You argue like an oracle, Cecil, and I mean henceforth to keep a very strict guard upon my own tongue, for we may sometimes talk nonsense too fluently. The earl wishes me to marry early ; but I oppose my profession to his reasoning : he argues in return, that, exposed as I am from that very circumstance, I ought to leave an heir to my name, title and estates ; so if I should, when I have mixed a little more with the gay world, meet some lively Iphigenia, who may put the final polish to my manners and ideas, I also will become a benedict, and then we will set an example to the rising generation."

" I shall

“ I shall make no promises, Godfrey. I am only afraid my intended will be too meek, too milk and water. She will never venture to squeeze any acid into our matrimonial dialogues, and too much honey is very cloying ; even poor Mr Shandy required a little contradiction in a wife.”

“ As Miss Mildmay is by no means deficient in understanding, I dare say she will make a very agreeable companion.”

“ I hope she will, else she will have but little of my company ; since I have long since resolved that no woman shall make me miserable at home, while I can enjoy myself abroad : but I dare say the dear girl (if she does not surfeit me with love) will work a thorough reformation in my way of thinking ; since I shall certainly study her happiness in all I do or say ; and as she is no fool, I dare say I shall take whatever impression she chuses to give me, that is, if she but studies my temper and disposition.”

“ And is always of your mind ; says yes,
or

or no, to your lead ; and never ventures to have a will of her own, Mr. Shandy."

"Then we shall not agree, my saucy brother. Oh that you were but also on the brink of marriage ! then I should see which of us was the best manager of a wife."

"Or the easiest managed by one ; but do dispatch your letters."

This was immediately done ; and just as the brothers were going to the opera, the man returned with a kind note from Mr. Manby, who wrote his grandson that Mrs. Manby was gone upon her embassy, and that he should settle all the preliminaries with sir Charles, as soon as Miss Mildmay had gone through the usual forms : at all events, he might depend upon either seeing or hearing from him the next day ; and as Cecil had very little doubt of meeting with a refusal, he agreed that he was in a great measure out of suspense, now he had passed the Rubicon.

CHAP. VII.

MR. and Mrs. Manby had been in anxious expectation of hearing from their grandson during the morning, and had presumed something had occurred to prevent his writing the promised letter, when the arrival of his groom dissipated their fears, and Mrs. Manby readily agreed to become his advocate, and proceeded to sir Charles's with her own and Miss Mildmay's letter, while her husband addressed his grandson, and then followed her to the baronet's, to enter upon his part of the business, since he was much more impatient to bring matters to a conclusion than lord Clairville either felt or expressed himself.

Mrs.

Mrs. Manby was received, as usual, in Miss Mildmay's dressing-room, and entered upon her task with great delicacy and propriety, presenting her with his lordship's letter, and making a very appropriate reference to its contents.

Never had Elinor Mildmay been so completely gratified: her varying colour and laboured respiration rather alarmed the old lady; but Mrs. Nesbitt saw in them merely the expression of triumphant joy. To be beloved and chosen by a peer of the realm, had long been the height of her ambition. Lord Clairville was besides a very fashionable and a very rich man. Elysium seemed open to her view, and her transport actually deprived her of her senses, and rendered Mrs. Manby more than ever her friend, who attributed her fit to excess of love, and was flattered accordingly; and when the invalid was sufficiently recovered, she seconded lord Clairville's request so earnestly, that the delighted fair one, after disclaiming all the merits his lordship had attributed

attributed to her, and expressing her fears that he would repent of his condescension, agreed to leave every thing to her father, by whose will she promised to be solely guided. Yet she feared she was punishing lord Clairville, by thus easily acceding to his wishes. She could not flatter herself that nature had intended her to figure as a countess. She dreaded appearing awkward in lady Monmouth and lady Frances Clairville's eyes, and she supposed they had great influence over lord Clairville.

Lord Angus had struck her as being rather proud: she hoped he would not treat her with *hauteur*; her spirits were very weak, and she should require great indulgence; but this she was sure Mrs. Manby would represent to his lordship: thus did she run on to the delighted old lady, who, of course, obviated all her objections, and at last retired to impart her happy proposals to sir Charles, to whom Miss Mildmay had requested she would give lord Clairville's letter.

She

She found the baronet with Mr. Manby; and already apprized of the nature of her visit, he was as much delighted as they expected at his daughter's brilliant prospects, and suffered his guest to dwell upon his grandson's rank, future expectations, &c. till he ran himself completely out of breath.

Sir Charles assured him in return, that it was an offer much beyond his expectations, since he knew that lord Clairville was not in want of money. As to his family and connexions, they were unexceptionable, and his moral character was unimpeached. He also rejoiced to find that the earl approved of the match; to him he thought they had better delegate the task of settling his daughter's jointure; he meant to give her eighty thousand pounds upon her wedding-day; and he would settle fifty thousand pounds upon her younger children when he died. Pin-money and jointure he should wholly leave to the earl, who had acted with very great liberality towards his countess, he understood.

“ His

“ His lordship is a man of strict principles,” resumed the banker; “ I was foolishly prejudiced against him because he ran away with my daughter; but I am more liberal and indulgent now towards young people; and I mean to present my grandson with a hundred thousand pounds when he marries; and, of course, he will come into all I shall leave behind me; and let me tell you, it will be no small advantage to his family that all his relations are equally well provided for. Lord Angus will be a richer man than his father; and lady Frances must marry well, as I understand she is a very fine girl, and will have a very large fortune.”

Thus did these gentlemen rejoice over the future prospects of their descendants, who bid fair, Mr. Manby thought, to be ranked among the richest of the British nobles; and as he considered money as the *summum bonum* of earthly happiness, he made no doubt of their being blest, far beyond the lot of common mortals.

They

They agreed before they separated to go to town together in the morning, and to proceed first into Portman and then into Berkeley square, as Mr. Manby having been in a manner invited to meet the earl upon the present occasion, he felt himself authorized to pay this visit.

Nothing having occurred to prevent their proposed journey, as Miss Mildmay had had a very good night, and looked, as she felt, almost well when she received her father's usual morning visit, the two gentlemen proceeded to town, and drove first into Portman-square. Lord Clairville had just left home, but the porter told them he was gone into Berkeley-square, and had desired, if Mr. Manby called or sent, that a servant might be sent after him.

“We had better follow his lordship,” said sir Charles; the banker made no objection, though, as the interview drew near, he began to fear that the earl might receive him coolly, though not with unpoliteness, and this would be doubly mortifying

ing

ing in sir Charles's presence ; but as it must take place, he only wished it was over ; and never did he feel less at ease than when the carriage stopped at lord Monmouth's door, who was at home ; and the visitors, having declined their names, were immediately shewn into the library, where his lordship and lord Clairville were *tête-à-tête*, Godfrey having left the room by another, while the servant announced these by no means unexpected visitors. Lord Monmouth's reception of the confused banker completely dispelled his apprehensions of being treated with *hauteur*, or cool indifference, before his friend, as he greeted him as an old friend, and inquired after Mrs. Manby, before he addressed sir Charles, who had no less reason to be satisfied with his welcome.

The usual general compliments being over, the earl led to the subject he presumed they were anxious to discuss, by telling them that he understood his son was a candidate for Miss Mildmay's favour,
and

and their early visit led him to hope that his suit would prove propitious. The banker was eager to set his beloved Cecil's mind at ease, and prognosticated that he would be one of the happiest men in existence, blessed as he would be with a most amiable wife, and as he already was in a most affectionate father, mother, brother, and sister.

"We are certainly a most united family," said the earl; "and we shall with pleasure henceforward include Mr. and Mrs. Manby, and Miss Mildmay and her family, among our relatives; as the young lady is of a domestic turn, she will prove a great addition to our circle; and change of air, place, and scene, may totally remove the weakness and languor which still, I understand, hangs about her."

Sir Charles was delighted with the earl's kind promises, and expatiated with no less politeness upon his gratitude, &c. &c. Settlements were next discussed, and all parties were pleased with the earl's arrangements.

ments. "They were liberal in the extreme," said the baronet; and exactly what Mr. Manby would have proposed: and every thing having been finally discussed and settled, the earl proposed introducing his visitors to lady Monmouth and his daughter.

"You are both already acquainted with my son Godfrey, gentlemen."

"And have seen much to admire in his lordship," said sir Charles: "indeed, had I been allowed to select my son-in-law, my choice would have fallen upon lord Clairville, since, independent of his own merits, he derives great lustre from those of his family."

Lady Monmouth received the gentlemen with her usual ease and affability; promised herself much pleasure in Miss Mildmay's society; and invited herself to dine with Mr. Manby, whenever he and Mrs. Manby could conveniently receive her, as she meant to pay an early visit to her son Cecil's bride-elect.

Never had the banker been more elated;
he

he requested he might have the honour of entertaining her ladyship and family the next day but one, as he would be answerable for sir Charles and his daughter's joining their party. No objections were made to the proposal ; and various refreshments having been introduced, as it grew late, the gentlemen made their parting bow, lord Clairville telling sir Charles, when he took leave, "that he must not be surprised if he should find him at Woodford when he returned."

"Then you will sleep at our house," said Mr. Manby ; and thus it was finally settled.

Lord Monmouth had been as much pleased with sir Charles as he had been with him ; as for Mr. Manby, he saw, that, in spite of his boasted riches, he was now ready to cringe to his superiors in rank ; but he merely made this remark to lady Monmouth, lord Clairville having set out for Woodford almost immediately after his grandfather had taken his leave ; and

as Miss Mildmay was really delighted to see him, he was persuaded that they should be a most happy couple. Having dined with the sisters, who had sent for Mrs. Manby to join their party, and who was not the least happy of the quatuor, sir Charles and the banker found them all in high glee when they came down in the evening. The baronet insisted upon their staying supper; henceforth they were to be as one family, he observed. To this Miss Mildmay merely assented by a movement of her head, since, had it not been to obtain the favour of lord Clairville, she would never have courted the friendship of Mr. Manby: his wife she really liked; but as various visions of greatness floated before her eyes, she could scarcely reconcile herself to the idea of living upon very familiar terms with a man who had, in her hearing, often condemned delicate women, and who seemed an advocate for unconditional submission in a wife. In Mrs. Manby she hoped to have a staunch auxiliary; and as her want
of

of health and spirits had evidently interested her lord in her favour, she was resolved not to recover too rapidly, as a delicate invalid might govern him more easily than a woman in high health, at least so she presumed; little supposing that lord Clairville told his grandmother that very evening, "he hoped matrimony would remove all his mistress's complaints, as he should not be able to enact the nurse to a sickly wife for any length of time."

Mrs. Manby was sure her young friend would soon shine the gayest amongst the gay; at present her spirits were very much agitated; but when once the ceremony was over, she would be answerable for the recovery of her health; resolving, nevertheless, to hint her grandson's fears to Mrs. Nesbitt, which might induce Miss Mildmay to exert her spirits, and to throw off the languor and debility she at present rather gave way to. Sir Charles was, however, beforehand with her, as he told his daughter that very evening, that he hoped she would

now discard her medical attendants, and all her nervous complaints, as a gay young man would soon be completely weary of a vapourish wife. She had attributed her late illness to having kept bad hours, and given in to too much dissipation; this might in part have brought it on; but he feared her mind had been the true seat of the disease; as matters had turned out so fortunately, it was all very well; but she must now endeavour to keep her future husband in continual good humour, and never, if she valued his regard, give way to any absurd fears, much less assume any, by way of interesting his compassion, as tears even of penitence, much less those of sullenness, had seldom much effect upon men.

Miss Mildmay pouted during this lecture, and felt well assured that, as she had gained a husband by what her father chose to style her weakness, she should retain him in her chains by the same means, and if she could but detach him from his own family, and render Mr. Manby's advice nugatory, she hoped

hoped to convince her father and sister that she understood the management of a husband better than they were willing to suppose.

CHAP. VIII.

LORD Clairville having enacted the lover for so many hours running, chose to set out early the next morning for town, that he might not be cloyed with sweets before the honeymoon, he told his grandmother, by whom he sent a kind message to his bride-elect.

He was alighting at his own door, about eleven o'clock, when he was addressed by farmer Webster, in whose companion he recognised the gay little dentist, who, fearful that their visit might be deemed an intrusion,

trusion, instantly made his bow, saying, "My lord, Mr. Webster could not think of leaving town before he had again personally returned you thanks for the numerous favours you have conferred upon him and his family; he proposes starting this evening in the Edinburgh mail."

"Pray walk in, gentlemen," said the ever kind Cecil; "I am glad I chanced to return home so apropos."

They did as he desired, and having taken their seats in the library, "Is Mr. Thomas gone on board?" he inquired.

"Yes, my lord," replied the farmer, who seemed unusually dejected, which Cecil naturally ascribed to his son's departure.

"Well, my good friend, you have only now to look forward to his returning a nabob. If he behaves well, I will exert my interest in his behalf; so cheer up, man; the best friends are sometimes doomed to part. My brother's profession may call him out of England again; but I never meet sorrow halfway."

"Your

"Your lordship seems to have adopted my creed," rejoined the pleasant little dentist, "which is always to consider the bright side of every occurrence that befalls me. If I meet with any serious misfortune, I console myself by thinking it might have been worse; and my good fortune is always heightened by my reflections upon my wonderful luck: but Mr. Webster has met with a very severe shock this morning, and he cannot, like me, immediately console himself with rejoicing that it was no worse; for his son was very near being drowned about four hours ago."

"And but for your skill," rejoined the farmer, "I am sure he would never have been restored to life. Well, I never was so frightened in my born days; I thought it was all up with him."

"I am happy to hear so serious an accident did not terminate fatally," said Cecil. "Pray how and where did it occur?"

"The ship in which Mr. Thomas was to sail



sail dropped down with this morning's tide, and, by right, he ought to have gone on board last night; but we understood that if he was at *** by seven o'clock this morning, it would do; but we unfortunately were rather beyond our time, and the ship was actually under way when we arrived; we were therefore rowed alongside. I was the first to step on board, and Thomas followed me; but either his hand or his foot slipped, and he fell into the river. It was with some difficulty he was prevented from being drawn under the vessel, and he was absolutely senseless when he was put on board; but by proper applications he soon recovered his breath and his faculties, and in less than an hour he was as well as ever he was in his life: he had, of course, a change of clothes on board; and I dare say he spoke truth when he said, he thought his ducking had been of service to him."

"I can only rejoice he escaped so well," said lord Clairville; "and such an accident will

will render him so careful, that his friends need be under no apprehension for him in future."

The dentist perfectly agreed with his lordship ; and the farmer believed the boy was top-heavy, as they had kept it up with a party of friends till it was too late to go to bed, so he had not slept off what he had drank. They had been set on shore as soon as they could, and had fortunately met with a coach setting out for London ; and the farmer having secured his place, meant to turn his back upon the great city in the evening. Cecil wished his guests to have taken some refreshment ; but Webster candidly confessed that he was rather crop-sick, having been up all night, added to his having been frightened about his son, whom he had perhaps seen for the last time, therefore he had no appetite ; but if ever his lordship came within five miles of his farm, he could venture to promise him a good plain dinner, and an excellent bottle of port, and as good a bed as he

would wish to lie on, as the feathers had all grown upon his own geese, and were more wholesome to sleep upon than down; he only wished he knew as well how to word his invitation as his friend Bolton would have done in his place, and that his lordship would not think he meant to take advantage of his condescension.

“ I perfectly understand all you mean to say, my good friend; and should I ever travel alone, or with my brother, your road, depend upon my beating up your quarters, and trying the softness of your beds.”

“ Then God bless you, and thank you, my lord. But pray will Mr. Manby (for he don't like I should call him uncle, and I have no wish either to offend him or to put him to the blush) be in town this morning, or ought I to go down to Woodford to take my leave of him?”

“ He will certainly be in town, and you will indubitably find him at his banking-house about two o'clock; but I think you
had

had better not mention your son's recent misfortune."

"A thousand thanks, my lord; you are indeed my friend; though many young men in your place would enjoy making one appear in a ridiculous light before the old gentleman, who is not over fond of his country relations, as it is."

He was still speaking, when Godfrey, unannounced, entered the room; and as he was equally kind to the farmer, and polite to Bolton, they took their leave, more than ever prepossessed in favour of the brothers.

Bolton accompanied his guest, of whom he was almost weary, to the banking-house, and certainly did not meet with a very cordial reception from the old gentleman, who pleaded business as an excuse for dismissing them almost immediately, without asking them either to eat or drink; and as the farmer felt half-piqued, they soon departed, leaving the banker to rejoice that he had got rid of so great a torment. The boy he had promised to provide for; but

for no other of the family did he ever intend to draw his purse-strings. This he had given the farmer pretty plainly to understand, who told Bolton he should certainly have affronted him, if he had not been related to lord Clairville.

The dentist laughed at his anger, telling him "that he ought to have lived long enough in the world not to mind such little rubs ; bear and forbear had always been his maxim ; and he need not again expose himself to the affront of this rich relation, who might push his son forward, notwithstanding his pride, and it would have been very foolish to have quarrelled with his bread and butter."

The poor old man did not like to be reminded of his origin ; he could only talk of his descendants ; his ancestors he wished to forget ; and as he might, if he did not thwart his ruling passion, leave him something in his will, he had better never, unasked, intrude upon him again.

Webster would be d—d if he did ; and
having

having reached the court, set about making preparations for his departure.

The brothers meanwhile had been talking over Cecil's approaching wedding, and the next day's dinner-party. If Elinor Mildmay recovered as fast as it was expected, lord Clairville was resolved to make quick work of it; for when once a man had decided to marry, the sooner the desperate deed was done, the better; and he should soon have expended his stock of love speeches. To a wife a man might talk reasonably, but a mistress required so much attention and punctilio, he was afraid he should be sick of his part before he became a benedict.

Godfrey laughed at his fears; and as Cecil wished to have some conversation with the earl, they proceeded together into Berkeley-square, where Godfrey found a letter from his friend Lionel, who had arrived safe at the old mansion, now his own, and who hoped, as he must spend at least a month or six weeks there, that lord Angus would

would enliven his solitude for a few days after the funeral, as he had many real curiosities to shew him, and was greatly in need of his advice; his mother and sister meant to leave him in a few days; and so quiet a retreat, so remote from all dissipation, where he might keep very early hours, and take so much exercise, would completely renovate his health and spirits, which had both, he knew, rather suffered during their late campaign; and as not having as yet been presented, he did not mix much in the world of fashion, he trusted he would take his certainly selfish proposal at least into consideration; he dared not extend his invitation to lord Clairville, because he had given him to understand that he had a matrimonial project in view; but if it was possible that he should feel any sensation like ennui while thus engaged, he had better drive his bays down to Lenham, and rusticate with him and lord Angus for a few days, as he could not give up the hope of seeing the latter; concluding
by

by a very polite message to the earl and countess.

Lord Monmouth was very happy so deserving a young man was so well provided for, and advised lord Angus to spend a week with him, as he thought change of air and good hours would enable him to lay in an ample stock of health for the summer.

Cecil agreed he could never better spare him, as he meant to spend the ensuing week at Woodford; but resolved to drive him down to Lenham, and to spend a couple of nights there. Godfrey, therefore, wrote his friend when he might expect them, and entered into various details respecting Miss Mildmay, as he made no doubt but the newspapers would soon announce her approaching marriage.

Lady Monmouth and her daughter set out for Woodford before the earl and his sons, as she resolved to pay Miss Mildmay a visit, previous to their expected meeting at Mr. Manby's; and as Elinor was in expectation of such a favour, she received her with the most winning grace, and

5 seemed

seemed as much struck with lady Frances as she had been with lord Clairville, declaring that it would be no small addition to her happiness, the being able to claim a relationship to lady Monmouth and her charming daughter. Of lord Angus she also spoke in the highest terms. Never had she exerted herself so much to please, and never did she succeed better; the ladies were in raptures with her, and congratulated Cecil very warmly upon his good fortune when they joined him at Mr. Mahby's.

Mrs. Manby was no less pleased with her titled guests, and no longer wondered at Cecil's avowed regard for his *mother* and sister.

Sir Charles and his daughters soon made their appearance, and the day went off extremely well: every one present readily agreed to dine in Berkeley-square on that day week; and the earl returned to town, convinced that Cecil would be a happy husband.

CHAP. IX.

A WEEK soon glided away. Cecil spent most of his time at Woodford, and Godfrey now and then accompanied him thither; but the Manbys and Mildmays having paid the expected visit in Berkeley-square, he asked his brother whether he still felt inclined to drive him down to Lenham, declaring he did not mean to take advantage of his kind offer, if he felt loath to remove to such a distance from Woodford, as he could drive his curricie part of the way, and ride the rest of his journey, though he agreed that his company would greatly enliven him.

“Now you have said all you thought proper

proper upon the subject, young gentleman, let me tell you, that my mistress does not, nor do I think that my wife will ever rival you in my affections, and I shall rejoice at having a little respite from my fool's paradise; so to-morrow we start; only let Lionel know when to expect us, and I will pay my visit of *congé* to-day at Woodford. Elinor cannot expect to engross all my time; if she does, she will find herself mistaken: but as it grows late, adieu. I shall send my greys forward to-night; my bays will take us halfway, and we shall reach the old mansion in very good time for dinner: tell my father I shall breakfast with you all in Berkeley-square, as we will start from thence."

Godfrey agreed to this arrangement, and wrote accordingly to Lionel, while Cecil rode to Woodford, to let the Manbys and Miss Mildmay knew where he was going. Elinor was, of course, in expectation of him, but felt sorely vexed when she learned he proposed being absent at least three days;

days; yet she had sense, or rather art enough to conceal her vexation, and to appear perfectly satisfied with his arrangement; and entertained him in her turn with telling him how she proposed employing herself during his absence. Mr. Nesbitt was expected in town; she should accompany her sister to meet him, and perhaps sleep in London, when she might venture to call upon his charming sister, and ask her down to Woodford, as she longed to be upon intimate terms with so near a relative of his.

Cecil was delighted to find she thus anticipated his most sanguine wishes, as he was very anxious to have her received as a friend in Berkeley-square; and as she easily read his satisfaction in his speaking countenance, she acted her part to admiration; since, in fact, she had taken a sort of dislike to lady Frances, and became every day more jealous of lord Angus; but she hoped, by proper management, and a little female artifice, to wean her lord from
these

these beloved relatives after marriage; at present, she would have worshipped his Danish dog, had he required her to give him such a proof of her regard.

The Manbys were glad he was going this little tour, as they feared he might grow tired of enacting the lover, before the necessary preparations could be made for the marriage.

Therefore, at the appointed time, he made his appearance in Berkeley-square, and candidly replied, in answer to his sister's raillery, that he wished the ceremony was over; while a man remained in doubt, his imagination continued upon the stretch, and he found full employment for his time and thoughts; but when two people had agreed to take each other for better for worse, the sooner the business was done the better, as a sensible wife was a far more amusing companion than a sensible mistress.

Lord Monmouth perfectly agreed with him; and the countess promised to drive
down

down to Woodford that morning, and to leave Fanny, if Miss Mildmay chose, till his return. He felt himself very much obliged by her kind proposal; and soon after departed with his brother, who took his seat beside him, their valets being inside passengers. Lord Angus had sent his grooms, curricie, and saddle-horses, off the day before.

Lionel met them on the road, and seemed delighted to see them; his mother and sister had both left him; but Sir Willoughby and his elder brother meant to pay him a short visit the ensuing week, he told the brothers, who found much to admire in the old mansion, which its present owner meant to refurnish when he married, having it amply in his power, he said, to gratify the taste of whatever lady did him the honour of accepting of his hand.

“My elder brother inherited my uncle’s paternal estate,” he continued, “which is supposed to bring in about two thousand a-year;

a-year ; and he also left my mother, sister, and younger brother, in the will he was so anxious to cancel, five thousand pounds a-piece ; but not even a ring to poor William. I have added a similar sum to each legacy, and mean to present William with a *memento mori* of the old gentleman. To my father I shall make over some of his hoarded curiosities, which I will display to you gentlemen to-morrow, as I am really so much richer than I ever expected to be, that I begin to fear I shall hardly know how to expend my income."

" Then you had better enter your name in our club," said lord Clairville ; " and if you also rattle the bones, and keep a stud at Newmarket, I think you will soon get rid of your superfluous *argent* ; but if you will really attend to my advice, e'en follow my example, and marry some gentle, modest, pretty girl, that your fortune may centre in your children."

" I will consider of your proposal ; and
if

if I can persuade any lady to become a soldier's wife, I may venture to think of matrimony; but I own I shall require more perfections in a wife than I shall probably meet with in any woman who will share my fortune, improved as it is of late."

"Don't refine away your happiness, Lionel; now I do not profess to be a romantic lover, yet I make no doubt Elinor and I shall set you and Angus an excellent example."

"I dare say you, Lord Clairville, will make an excellent husband; and I have heard Miss Mildmay highly extolled by my mother, who was intimate with her, and still, I believe, visits the family."

"Well, I only hope our three wives will be as much attached to each other as I dare say we shall continue to be, and then they may greatly increase our domestic comforts; our children may intermarry, and twenty years hence we may, perhaps with pleasure, revert to this conversation."

The first evening soon slipped away;
and

and immediately after breakfast the next morning, Lionel took his friends into what his uncle called the strong-room, where, having unlocked an iron closet in the wall, he pulled out a drawer of the same metal, saying, "What think you of the old man's provident care?"

"I never saw such a number of guineas collected together before," exclaimed the astonished Cecil.

"Surely the old gentleman did not thus hoard his money?" said Godfrey; "if he did, I should suppose he has not died so rich as he might have done."

"Of course he has not; nevertheless he has died much richer than it was generally expected he was. Only read this paper," putting a folded one into his hand, which he had taken out of the drawer.

Godfrey did as he desired.

"My dear Lionel, as I began, at an early age, to lay by all the gold that came into my hands, I have been able to accumulate the sum of sixty thousand guineas, and
you

you will derive the greatest advantage from my prudent foresight, in the event of a revolution, or the failure of the bank. You must remember what an outcry and alarm there was only a few years ago, though I believe you were too young at the period I mention to have participated in the general consternation; it rendered me doubly careful not to break into my hoard; and I would advise you to reserve it, untouched, for some great emergency, when you may benefit by my wisdom. I have placed the bulk of my fortune upon different securities, as we cannot be too careful these times; but all cannot fail, at least at once."

"Surely you do not mean to be guided by the old croaker's narrow policy," said the laughing Godfrey.

"How truly absurd to suffer such an immense sum to lay idle in his possession!" rejoined Cecil; "I hope you mean to render it rather more profitable to yourself and the community at large?"

“ Indeed I do. It was well for Mr. Warrender no one knew he had such a sum by him, else I think it very possible he might have been murdered, and his heirs effectually prevented from benefiting by his foresight, and I give you my honour I will not run a similar risk, though no one but my mother and you gentlemen are as yet acquainted with the contents of this closet; but I mean to dispose of it to the best advantage, and expect it to add three thousand a-year to my income, which I may either suffer to accumulate for my children, or devote it to charitable purposes; either will be more acceptable in the eyes of Heaven than suffering it to lie useless. But here,” shutting this drawer, and pulling out another crammed with papers, “ here are all his securities for his money out at interest; and I believe there is not a public institution in London in which he was not, more or less, concerned: he held one or more shares in every assurance-office; in all the water-works; in

in every canal that has been dug since he was thirty; and in most of the companies instituted for various purposes. This paper," unfolding a large folio sheet, "has informed me what each security brings in; and he has added a few remarks respecting which pays the best, and those he thinks the most secure."

Godfrey ran over the items, and shouted with laughter upon discovering that the old gentleman held several shares in three different newspapers. "My uncle derived a double advantage from those speculations, as he received each paper daily free of expence; and as they are all anti-ministerial, it rather accounts for his considering the nation in so deplorable a state; they are also generally full of advertisements, so he was sure to know when there was any purchase to be made likely to suit him; and as he had an agent in town, he had only to write to give his orders."

"He seems to have been guarded at all points against a national bankruptcy," said

lord Clairville. "Was he also a subscriber to all the public charities?"

"Charity began and ended at home with him; indeed, he lived in constant dread of coming to want. But I have not yet displayed all my treasures," closing the drawer of papers, and opening another filled with parchment-deeds; "these I have not yet examined, except in the abstract. But this book," taking one out of a niche above the drawers, "contains a long and diffuse detail respecting his landed property, his houses in this neighbourhood and in London, and his warehouses in the latter place; the prime cost is first mentioned, then what improvements have been made, and at what expence, and what advantages he now derives from the whole. This packet contains his shares in various mines in Derbyshire, Cornwall, Wales, and Northumberland; but in the memorandum relative to these, he cautions his heir against meddling in these speculations, as he has found, by experience, that no great benefit is likely

to

to arise from them, except the owner of them resides upon the spot; and he has long wished to get out of some of them; but they are hardly to be given away; with respect to these, I mean to follow his advice; and I also mean to dispose of his shares in the newspapers, and of some others, which appear to me equally petty and frivolous, though his agent in town collected the interest for him for a very moderate premium, and was required to pay the money into his banker's hands, whenever he held to the amount of one hundred pounds. His banker's book, household ditto, and duplicates of all you have seen, he kept in an iron chest which stood in his dressing-room."

"I wonder whether any of us three will take the same pains, for the benefit and instruction of our heirs?" said Cecil.

"We may derive some useful hints from the old gentleman's arrangements," said Godfrey; "he certainly seems to have provided against the worst that could befall him,

him, since all his securities must have failed ere he could have been totally ruined. Had he any money in the bank?"

"About forty thousand pounds; but he had a purchase in view, to which he had in imagination appropriated it; as matters have turned out, it will pay the legacies and his funeral expences, and provide the household with mourning."

"And had you no idea of his being so rich?" asked Cecil.

"Not the slightest; nor had my mother. She knew what his estates were supposed to be worth, and that he had of late years purchased a few houses; he had also told her that his savings were in the bank; but he never mentioned his gold, nor his other securities. But now you have seen every thing, what do you suppose, upon a gross calculation, that my annual income may be?"

The brothers declared they had no idea.

"Then what say you to a clear thirteen thousand a-year? and had he placed his grand hoard out to the same advantage he has

has done some of his thousands, I should have been a much richer man; but I am perfectly satisfied; and I do not mean, till I do marry, to keep up a very expensive establishment; nor then to live beyond my income. But now let us walk over the pleasure-grounds; I think a little money laid out upon this old mansion will render it a very comfortable abode. But you have not yet seen all my curiosities; so before we explore the gardens, in which I acknowledge there is not much to admire, you shall see my stud and the family-coach."

Never did Cecil laugh more heartily. The coach-horses were in their eighteenth year; but had been so little worked, that they looked fat and sleek, and "would go a journey of twenty miles without flogging," said their driver.

Lionel had resolved never to part with the poor beasts; they might yet do a little light work, and should, he said, have the run of the park and the stable while they lived. The coach had been built in 1765,

and had never been painted since, though it had had two or three sets of new wheels. It was surmised, lady Melbourne had told her son, that her brother had some idea of marrying when he set up his carriage ; but no one knew to whom, nor why he altered his mind. One tolerable saddle-horse, and two scrubby ponies, completed the stud.

The coachman very justly observed, that his poor old dock-tails did not look to advantage by the side of lord Clairville's high-mettled greys, and lord Angus's blood bays, in whose praise he was very eloquent ; and Cecil promised to select four equally fine for Lionel when he returned to town.

During the evening they examined an immense quantity of plate, which had equally been hoarded, and which Lionel meant to divide with his father, as there was a vast deal in common use ; and he knew sir Willoughby was not so well provided as he could have wished with such valuable articles. Neither Walters nor the butler knew there was any locked up ; and from
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the different crests and cyphers upon the various articles, and their very old-fashioned make, they all three presumed they had been picked up as old silver, and had been hoarded, in case of an invasion, or any other national misfortune.

The brothers declared the old man had thought of every thing, yet conceived he must have been very miserable, always brooding over imaginary misfortunes, and providing against a famine, or a general bankruptcy. His absurdities amused them during the whole evening: and after an early breakfast the next morning, lord Clairville returned to town, as neither Godfrey nor Lionel could press his longer stay, since they knew the lawyers had his marriage-settlements in hand, and that he had many preparations to make for his approaching nuptials.

Having visited every thing worthy notice in the immediate environs of the gothic mansion, the young men chose to extend
H 5 their

their ride, as they were both anxious to reconnoitre the neighbourhood, and to learn the general character of those families who resided near Lenham; and they seldom failed to discover in what estimation the owners of the different seats in the environs were held, by inquiring who lived in such and such houses of the different rustics they chanced to meet.

One morning they walked across some pleasant fields, which Lionel knew belonged to himself, and were let to a neighbouring farmer; they stopped, as usual, to converse with the men, who had been plowing and sowing, but who were now assembled under a bank, eating their luncheon. Lionel had been too short a time in the country to be much known among the common people, and lord Angus was a total stranger in those parts; and their dress was very little superior to some of the present race of farmers' buckish sons.

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"I do not think this land seems in very high condition," said Lionel. "I am afraid you do not manure it sufficiently."

"Why you seem to understand something about the matter, master," replied the foreman, "though you don't seem as if you had ever held the plough; however, if you were as wise as the folks hereabouts are, you would not be surprised at this land being 'rather poor; but, thank God, the old miser is dead, and he may have left a better man behind him."

"What your master has had a bad landlord?"

"You have hit it; a worse there could not be, if a body happened to say a wry word; else he was well enough, if people did but keep their payments good; but the turn of a straw would set his back up, and then out a tenant must go; and as he never granted a lease, that he might always have it in his power to keep them under his thumbs, none of them chose to lay out much money in improving his land; for why, perhaps the

very next day he was warned off the premises; but he is gone to pay off all his old scores; and if his heir treads in his shoes, no matter how soon he goes to the d—v—l after him.”

At that moment somebody at a little distance called out, “Who are you sending to the d—v—l, Sám? come, look sharp, you have been——”

What was to follow can only be guessed, for at that moment Sam replied, “Why your new landlord, master.”

The farmer caught sight of Lionel, whose features were familiar to him, owing to his having seen and spoke to him at the funeral.

Sam, unconscious of the shock he had given him, burst into a horse-laugh, crying, “Why you seem struck comical, master. I was not sending you, but your young landlord to the d—v—l after his uncle, your old one, that is, if he is not of another kidney, mind me; and he must be old nick himself, if he turns out worse.”

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The farmer having rather recovered from his surprise, seized one of the whips, and in his fury would have laid it about poor Sam, if Lionel, who had been highly amused, had not rushed forward and placed himself between the enraged master and his ploughman, who now began to guess that all was not right.

“Let me horsewhip him, sir, I pray you do. You d—d rogue, do you know who you are talking to? Do you know that this is my present landlord, Mr. Melbourne, whom I already honour and respect?”

The consternation of the ploughman may easily be conceived; he was unable to utter a single word in his defence: but the good-tempered Lionel soon set all their hearts at ease, by relating, in very few words, all that had passed, and assuring the poor fellow that he forgave him most cordially, since his wishes merely extended to bad landlords, and he hoped to deserve a different character. His uncle was naturally

rally rather capricious, and displayed it as much towards his relatives as his tenants; and as he might also have been a sufferer from his disposition, he would take care never to fall into the same errors; therefore he would grant every farmer a lease, that they might, in future, be able to do both themselves and the land justice.

The farmer was very thankful for his kind promise; and each gentleman having given Sam a dollar to drink with his companions, they pursued their walk, followed by the blessings of all present.

The farmer was now convinced that good often arose out of evil, since, at the moment he dreaded being turned out of his farm, he had had it secured to him upon as good terms as he could wish, since he might now improve his land, without dreading that others would reap the benefit of his exertions.

The friends were meanwhile debating respecting the advantages or disadvantages of granting leases; the value of land had increased

increased so much of late, some people thought they could not set too high a price upon their possessions ; but as most things declined after they had reached a certain point, the young men conceived that the rent of land and houses was hardly susceptible of increase, and might rather decline in value ; they therefore resolved to grant leases at every risk, to those tenants who wished to hold such a security ; and as they were both partial to a country life, and very desirous of acquiring every necessary information against they turned experimental farmers, and resigned their swords for the ploughshare, lord Angus readily agreed to prolong his stay : nor were the earl and countess sorry that he was thus removed out of the vortex of dissipation, during the height of the London season, as lord Clairville was too busy to require his brother's company to keep him from giving way to his propensity for notoriety. They constantly corresponded, it may be supposed ; Cecil frequently acknowledging
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that he wished his dangling season was over, and that he was eternally plagued with questions by his gay friends, who were all anxious to be introduced to his choice; and he owned he feared she would never cut a dash, as he could not persuade her, as yet, to ascend the box; nay, she had even hinted she wished he would trust to his coachman's skill; but he turned a deaf ear to every hint of this kind, as he was resolved not to give up one of his favourite amusements to please any woman. Sir Charles improved upon acquaintance, and Mr. and Mrs. Nesbitt were a very pleasant happy couple, and greatly enlivened the Woodford circle. Fanny had spent a few days at the baronet's, and had been much admired by every one. Elinor had declared she meant, in future, to make her her model. Grandpapa Manby was up to his ears in business, and held frequent consultations with his lawyers; and grandmama was very busy in preparing some fine presents for her favourite Elinor; and concluding with desiring

siring Godfrey and Lionel would hold themselves in readiness to attend him to the altar, as the ceremony was to be performed at the bride's parish-church, from the door of which he and his best beloved were to set out for Binningfield, his Lincolnshire seat; and from thence they meant to cross to Clifton; then they were to proceed northward, as he was resolved to be at Inverness castle when he (Godfrey) celebrated his one-and-twentieth birth-day.

Lord Angus promised, in return, to obey his first summons, which he received the last week in March, and, as agreed, immediately proceeded to town with Lionel, who was extremely flattered at being thus truly considered as *l'ami de la maison* in Berkeley-square.

CHAP. X.

THE wedding took place the second day after the young men returned to town: the bridegroom, his brother, and friend, slept the preceding night at Mr. Manby's, who was to entertain a large party at dinner the next day, in honour of his grandson's nuptials. Sir Charles was to give a breakfast to his friends; and after the departure of the new-married couple, the younger part of the company were to dance upon the lawn at the baronet's. The earl and lady Monmouth came down to breakfast. Lady Frances had slept at sir Charles's; and nothing having intervened to occasion any alteration in their plans, lord Clairville

gave

gave his hand to the fair Elinor, during canonical hours, at the parish-church of Woodford, and set off, as agreed upon, in a very elegant post-chaise and four for Binningfield, their suite following in his lordship's barouche.

Mrs. Nesbitt, who had done the honours of this memorable day, now opened the ball with lord Angus. Lionel had secured the hand of lady Frances, and, as he was an excellent dancer, he appeared to great advantage in the reels, strathspeys and cotillions, country-dances having been thought too violent exercise for a morning.

At four o'clock the whole party adjourned to Mr. Manby's, who gave them a most sumptuous dinner. The bride and bridegroom's health was drank before the ladies retired. Lady Monmouth's was then proposed by Mr. Manby; and lady Frances was given by sir Charles, who spoke very highly in her praise. The founder of the feast was no less lavish in his encomiums; but seized the opportunity to launch out
in

in praise of his grandson, who he was sure would make the best of husbands ; appealing to the earl to confirm his assertion.

“ He is no phoenix, though my son, Mr. Manby ; but I know he possesses an excellent heart, and that his morals have not been corrupted by his follies. I dare say lady Clairville will render home so agreeable to him, that he will no longer seek for amusement abroad ; at the same time, she must not expect to wean him, all at once, from his fashionable, or perhaps frivolous propensities. He will not immediately secede from his clubs ; but if she studies his temper, I think she may be a very happy wife ; and by the time he is thirty, I dare say he will be a very respectable member of society. A young family will help to domesticate him ; and as he was always fond of our own circle, I trust we shall never suffer him to depend upon strangers for comfort and amusement.”

Mr. Manby agreed to the justice of all his lordship said ; and then, being a little mellow,

mellow, he entertained the company with various anecdotes, tending to give them a very high opinion of his talents for business; declaring that he now had in his possession parchments that must oblige the heir to the estates to seek a rich wife in the city; whereas lord Clairville was so amply provided for, that choice alone had led him on the eastern side of Temple-bar; "and as for you, lord Angus, I only wish you may meet with as amiable a wife, as I know lady Clairville will never have a will of her own."

"I sincerely hope she will," rejoined lord Monmouth; "since a wife may be as much too passive as too wilful."

"I hope my daughter will make lord Clairville happy," said the baronet. "As she is tenderly attached to him, I think that will be a security for her good behaviour; since, as lord Monmouth said, speaking of his son, she is no phoenix, but a mere mortal woman, who, like her mother and sister,

ter—ah ! Nesbitt—can have a will of her own.”

“ If she does but make as good a wife as Jemima does,” replied Mr. Nesbitt, “ his lordship will have reason to congratulate himself upon his choice.”

“ Mrs. Nesbitt, gentlemen,” said lord Monmouth, when called upon for his toast ; and at a late hour the party separated, perfectly satisfied with each other.

Lionel returned to town, with a gentleman who resided in the vicinity of sir Willoughby ; and Godfrey made the fourth in his father’s coach.

After a few remarks respecting their entertainment, the countess asked her son “ what he now thought of lady Clairville ? ”

“ Upon my word, I am not yet competent to answer your question, my dear madam. She was in very poor health and spirits the first time I saw her, therefore I forgave her doubting my skill as a *cocher*. She looked much better when I saw her in
Berkeley-

Berkeley-square, and I then thought her manners very pleasing. She is certainly very handsome, and highly accomplished, says Mrs. Manby."

"Of this I can be no judge, since I have never seen her paintings, nor heard her play and sing; but she is very graceful, and merely requires a little polish to render her a very elegant woman; yet I own I think her rather affected, and that she fancies an air of languor becomes her, or, perhaps, that delicate health will render her more interesting to Cecil."

"The very remarks, mama, you made to me this morning," said lady Frances. "I hope you will not prove true prophets; but I must say she seems too fond of a smelling-bottle; and upon every slight occasion, declares she shall faint; but during the week I spent at Woodford, she seldom talked of doing so before Cecil; yet I saw he sometimes wished she had not such delicate nerves; but I dare say, as she gains strength, her mind will regain its tone."

tone. She was very much spoiled by lady Mildmay, Mrs. Nesbitt told me, who was herself a sort of valetudinarian; and this has, perhaps, rather led to her giving way to low spirits, and to her fancying she is worse than she really is; but she is so fond of Cecil, I dare say she will now shake off all her complaints, and become, in compliment to him, a dashing woman of fashion."

"That would be as bad as becoming an habitual valetudinarian, my little sister; so I hope better things of her; though I am very sorry to hear she was a spoiled child, as such pets seldom make their near connections happy, and are generally miserable themselves."

The countess thought her too young to wish to enact the *matrude imagine*; she only feared she would require Cecil to be continually at her beck and call, since she would find herself woefully disappointed, and there appeared a sort of impatience of temper in her manners, which she hoped would wear off as her health improved:

her

her suspense was now over; and she trusted she would consider that the future happiness of her life was at stake, since she might now either rivet, loosen, or render her husband's chains very galling.

"What say you, my lord?" turning to the earl. "What I most fear is her being too fond, and that she will disgust her husband, by being over-solicitous for her safety. I heard her this morning, when he was talking during breakfast with Mr. Nesbitt about his horses, hoping that he would never again attempt either to break or to drive a violent horse, as she should be miserable if she knew him to be so employed. Now she had much better keep these silly fears to herself, if she hopes to keep Cecil tied to her girdle, as ladies no longer wear aprons. I pity her folly; since, though he would not willingly, I am sure, hurt her feelings, she may deaden his. I hope part of her fears are only affected; and she may fancy her anxiety will be very flattering to her husband; since I must suppose

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that her heart and disposition are very good, as the Manbys (and Mrs. Manby is both a worthy and a sensible woman) are wrapped up in her."

"She was certainly very anxious to promote the match," said Godfrey; "and lady Clairville may possess many merits we have not yet discovered. Mr. Manby has acknowledged to me, that he thought she would be very easily governed; but her chief merit in his eyes was her father's fortune; however, I think it very possible that her regard for Cecil may insure their joint happiness; at all events, she will never render him very miserable, as he will easily console himself in the society of his friends for the error of his choice; he may laugh at her follies, but I am convinced he will never quarrel with her."

"I should rather be scolded than laughed at, brother," resumed lady Frances.

Godfrey burst out a-laughing, and the earl joined in his mirth; nay, even the countess lost her gravity, while she said,
"Our

“Our sex cannot bear contempt; and I do believe many a woman has been beaten who could not have been rallied into submission. I have heard of a gentleman who, having buried three wives, was asked how he had managed to get rid of them so soon; and his reply was, “By never contradicting them.”

Their arrival in Berkeley-square led them to change the subject; and little of moment occurred during the ensuing fortnight.

Lord Angus and Lionel visited all the places of fashionable amusement, and joined some select parties at the earl's and sir Willoughby's.

Goufrey had been appointed to the command of a company; and Lionel having purposely exchanged into his regiment, succeeded him as lieutenant; and readily agreed, as they were not required immediately to join their corps, to accompany his lordship into Scotland. He became of age in May; and as the earl and countess wished him to celebrate his one-and-twentieth

tieth birth-day in a style suitable to his rank, at his principal seat, he chose to precede them thither, to give the necessary orders, and to make the necessary arrangements; they having, at his earnest request, given him a general outline to work and improve upon; and promised to join him at Inverness Castle, at least a week before his natal-day. Cecil had also promised to bring his bride to partake of the intended festivities, as he thought the more she mixed with his own family, the more amiable she would become.

Every necessary preliminary having been settled, and various new purchases of horses and carriages having been sent forward, Godfrey and Lionel began their journey, and reached the castle three weeks before the festivities were to commence.

Inverness Castle was a noble baronial residence, delightfully situated upon the banks of the ocean, and exactly calculated for the abode of one of the first Scottish nobles. In former times it had been
strongly

strongly fortified; but the excellent taste of its later inhabitants had rendered it a far less gloomy abode, though the gothic grandeur of the building was now displayed to much greater advantage; but as no part of it was shut up, and there were no ghost stories related respecting it, we shall not enter into a minute description of the superb edifice, since we have no prisoners to release, nor any miraculous adventures to relate. Suffice it to say, that Lionel was delighted with both the castle and the adjacent grounds; and that all the old servants who had served the late marquis of Inverness, hailed the arrival of his successor with every demonstration of joy and rapture. The noblemen and gentry in the vicinity were no less forward in welcoming him to Scotland; and they one and all approved of all he proposed doing upon the approaching occasion. His tenants were still more flattered; and every one looked forward with delight to the festive scenes in expectation. The season was extremely

propitious; and the friends found full employment in superintending the various workmen who were erecting booths round a beautiful lawn, in the centre of which was to be a Turkish tent, for the accommodation of the more distinguished guests. The extensive pleasure-grounds and shrubberies were to be most elegantly illuminated; and various pleasure-boats were to be stationed in front of the castle, decorated with streamers in the day, and from whence fireworks were to play at night. Several skilful artists from London had come down; and every thing promised to go off extremely well, and to be in unison with Godfrey's intentions.

The earl, countess, and lady Frances, made their appearance at the appointed time: a select party of their most particular friends were to follow them down. Sir Charles Mildmay had also promised to give the bride and bridegroom the meeting there, who arrived two days before the *fête*; and who, it may be supposed, met with a most cordial

cordial welcome from every branch of the Monmouth family, who had all expected to have seen lady Clairville perfectly restored to health and spirits, as she had now been married nearly seven weeks, and had been travelling during the whole time; but they were all equally disappointed, since she did not even look so well as on her wedding-day, appeared very languid, and complained of having been more fatigued than benefited by travelling; declaring that she enjoyed the idea of being stationary any where for a short time—this she said during the first compliments.

Lord Clairville smiled at her speech; but Godfrey fancied it was more a smile of pity than of delight; while he said, “And I also enjoy the idea of spending a few weeks under your roof, my dear Godfrey, since you have assembled all our dearest relations and best friends, as here I also hope to enjoy both pleasure and repose.”

The earl thought that more was meant

in this speech than met the ear, but did not chuse to express his sentiment; while Lionel thought the bridegroom's spirits appeared much less in alto than when he gave his brother the meeting at Portsmouth; but the first *compliments d'usage* being over, and the bride having expressed her surprise at her father not having yet made his appearance, the countess begged to know where they had been, and hoped lady Clairville had derived some benefit from the tour.

"She really hardly knew how to answer the kind inquiry; her nerves were so weak, she feared travelling was too great an exertion for her; indeed, she had never before been farther from London than Margate or Brighton, and she thought she had never breathed a purer air than at Woodford."

"I cannot exactly agree with you, my dear lady Clairville," replied the earl. "Woodford is hardly sufficiently removed from the smoke of Whitechapel. There are some beautiful

beautiful villages in Surrey; but I have fancy I inhale a very pure air till I am at least twenty miles from St. Paul's."

"I shall not dispute the point with you, sir; but surely you will agree that it is impossible to procure the same delicacies at such a distance from the metropolis. The fish we ate at Binningfield was not near so good as I have ate in town; and the poultry was very inferior; and in the inland counties, where there is no fish to be had, a few eels excepted, I should positively be starved; and since we have entered Scotland, I cannot say we have fared very sumptuously; nor have I, as yet, seen much to admire in this country; but I own I was never of a romantic turn. I never could, like my sister, have set myself down quietly in a dreary country-seat. My mother always preferred London, and its immediate environs, to any part of England; and, I am sure, so do I; there is always something to be seen to enliven the ideas; and

to "may enjoy every luxury, if you are rich."

"Agreed," said lady Moamouth; "but I think either London or Woodford cannot be so pleasant a residence, at this season, as this my favourite castle. I was born here, so you must allow me to be partial. Can there be a finer marine view than these windows afford? or a more sublime one than those blue highlands, in the background? and I can premise you sea and fresh water fish in high perfection, excellent poultry, and every other luxury you may have been accustomed to in London."

"You are very obliging, my dear madam; and I dare say, for Scotland, this is a very fine seat; but I must give the preference to Clairville, where we spent three days. This is, like Binningfield, much too near the sea. Were I condemned to spend the winter at either, I should live in constant dread of being washed away; the least breeze

breeze would terrify me to such a degree, I should live in misery."

"Surely, my dear sister, you cannot suppose that the sea could do this ancient pile any damage," said the laughing Godfrey. "Why it is almost coeval with the battle of Flodden-field!"

"That may be, lord Angus; therefore, it may the sooner be shaken to the foundation."

"They are too solid to be shaken by the most violent gale that ever blew," replied Godfrey; "and, as I will insure your safety, I hope you will often favour me with your company, since, in future, I shall spend part of every summer here; and as here are no dilapidated apartments, nor no *wraiths* or *banshees* in my suite, I am sure you have nothing to apprehend in this abode, which I will endeavour to render as pleasant as good company, good cheer, and good humour can make it."

The conversation then took another

turn; and soon after the ladies retired to dress.

Lady Clairville did not appear to discern any beauties in the noble entrance-hall; the staircase she thought awfully gloomy, and the rooms much too large for her ideas of comfort. This she told lady Frances, who had accompanied her into her dressing-room, and who soon left her to vent her spleen to her attendant.

The brothers followed her up stairs; the earl accompanied them; and as they stopped to admire what might be deemed a very sublime prospect from one of the painted arched windows in a gothic gallery, which ran through the house, Lord Monmouth said, "I do not think lady Clairville has derived so much benefit from her tour as I had hoped and expected she would."

"Neither matrimony nor the purest air in England can remove every complaint, sir: like you, I hoped Elinor would have recovered both her health and spirits long before

before this; but she is nervous; that is saying all in one word; and I begin to be disheartened; at least I must trust to chance, more than to my cares and persuasions, for effecting her cure. She is timorous to a degree I never before had an idea that even a child could have been. Her lengthened shadow would suffice to alarm her; of course she is a very bad traveller. At every hill she seems to fancy she is ascending the Alps; and even upon level ground, and a fine turnpike road, she conjures up a thousand imaginary fears."

"These fears can only arise from her having led a secluded life," replied the earl; "she will soon shake them off, as well as her nervous complaints, when she becomes more accustomed to travelling."

"I hope you will prove a true prophet, sir, else I shall give up travelling for pleasure."

Godfrey laughed at the ludicrous expression of his brother's countenance, while

while the earl resumed, "Upon my word, I feel a great degree of pity for my new daughter; and I hardly know whether she had not better have become stationary at Binningfield or at Clairville, till her nerves had regained their usual tone; the fatigue she seems to have sustained may have counteracted the good effects of change of air."

"That is very probable," replied Cecil. "Upon my honour, I only wish I knew what would best suit her constitution; for I can laugh at her little fancies, and pity her for her imaginary fears, which I dare say will wear off in time; and if I find she prefers a retired life, I assure you I will accede to her wishes."

This was said in so gay and good-humoured a tone, that both the earl and Godfrey still hoped Elinor would shake off the sort of listless languor in which she seemed to indulge, and to which they attributed the weakness of her conduct. The air of the Highlands was very bracing; and
if

if she would but take proper exercise, and cease to give way to her idle fears, they thought they might still be happy.

CHAP. XI.

WHEN the party met at dinner, lady Clairville looked better than when she arrived, and seemed in much better spirits; yet she could not help declaring, that she thought ancient castles far from comfortable abodes. Tapestry hangings were her aversion, though she thought oaken panels still more gloomy. Were she lord Angus, she should never visit such a dreary pile.

Godfrey defended his castle with great good humour, and hoped she would not
publish

publish her objections to it when she returned to town, for fear the ladies might fancy him a second Blue Beard, and his mansion a horrid prison. The Gobelin tapestry, which decorated some of the apartments, was much admired by some people; and as it had all been made for his grandfather, and represented many well-known events in the Scottish history, he would not remove it; but if she would give her own orders, he would have a bed and dressing-room, not to mention a *boudoir*, fitted up for her reception.

He was very kind; but she could make a very good shift; every place must be pleasant in such company;—and as the dinner was exceedingly good, and served in the most elegant style, she rose from table in very good spirits.

As the evening was remarkably fine, lady Frances proposed their taking a short stroll, to see the preparations for the *fête*. Lady Clairville made no objection. The countess preferred remaining at home.

Lady

Lady Clairville inquired if much company was expected down?

"The house would be very full," lady Frances replied.

"Then she feared the noise and gaiety would be too much for her;" congratulating lady Frances upon her high spirits. "She never had been used to large parties, or to these sort of riotous festivities, which seldom gave general satisfaction."

Lady Frances presumed that a city feast at Guildhall, or an Easter ball, must be much more noisy and fatiguing than a rural *fête* could possibly be: and she acknowledged that she had been greatly annoyed while sir Charles was mayor, by being obliged to mix in such indiscriminate crowds.

The arrangements for the *fête* met her approbation; and she pointed out some improvements, which lady Frances was sure her brother would adopt; but, as she complained of fatigue, they soon returned to the house; and the gentlemen having
been

been summoned to tea, joined them in the saloon ; and as the sun was declining into the ocean, and the evening was delightful, though a slight sea-breeze had sprung up, the countess proposed their taking a walk upon the terrace which overlooked the beach, to convince lady Clairville how well the castle was defended from the encroachments of the ocean ; adding, “ a rock rises abruptly at that extremity of the home-grounds, from the summit of which the prospect is enchanting, and the ascent has been rendered very easy.”

“ I dare say the view is sublime,” replied the bride ; “ but I have really no delight in mountain or marine scenery ; and as the sun is now setting, I dare not venture out, since I was particularly ordered, by my medical attendants, never to venture out after sunset. I shall not mind being left alone, so pray do not let me deprive you ladies of your accustomed walk.”

“ The evening is so warm, that I own I did not apprehend you would run any risk
of

of taking cold," replied the countess; "and do you know, with all due deference to medical men, I think they may render us too careful, and induce us to confine ourselves too much to the house. As the summer advances, I shall hope to render you a convert to my way of thinking; but as I merely wished to do the honours of my natal place to you, I will remain at home to keep you company. Fanny is quite at home here, and will be protected from all danger by her father and brothers."

"You will greatly distress me, my dear madam, if you confine yourself upon my account. I may be too cautious; but my spirits are so depressed this evening, I am unequal to any exertion."

This was said in such an affected tone, and her languor was so evidently more than half-assumed, that no one were her dupes; but she had taken it into her head that she should rivet her husband's chains by affecting to be more delicate than she really was; since she hoped that, by keep-
ing

ing him in constant alarm for her safety, she should always retain him near her. She was, besides, when once she had formed a resolution, impenetrable to persuasion; and she had made up her mind not to go out this evening, as she fully expected that her husband would either remain at home with her, or use all his persuasion to induce her to walk to the terrace.

He had, of course, though conversing with Godfrey and Lionel at a distant window, heard what past; and as he now began to be a very good judge of his wife's temper, he felt very angry at her beginning already to throw off the mask before his relations; he therefore approached the countess, saying, "What are your plans for this evening, *mama*? as you reign lady paramount here till Godfrey brings home a wife."

The countess told him she meant to stay at home with lady Clairville, who was rather afraid of the dew.

"Oh, nonsense, Elinor! a short walk
will

will do you good: the sea breeze will brace your nerves; and the dew will not fall yet. I must stretch my legs, so come, take my arm."

"If any thing could induce me to exert myself, it would be my wish to oblige you, Cecil; but positively I am too fatigued to venture out to-night, therefore you must excuse me."

"Well," said the gay good-natured Cecil, "it must be as you please, Elinor, since I made a vow never to contradict you; therefore we shall be the happiest couple in the universe; so will you accept of my arm, *mama*? since I shall not suffer you to punish yourself to oblige lady Clairville."

The countess readily did as he desired, rallying him upon his gallantry to his mother-in-law; as, like him, she did not feel inclined to humour the mere caprice of his nervous bride.

Lady Frances challenged the fair lady to a game at chess, or piquet; observing
that

that the scenery round the castle had no longer the charm of novelty to her; and she did not like to leave her sister alone, who, piqued at not having been more pressed by her husband, and by his not having offered to bear her company, said she had a letter to write, and she requested she might be no restraint upon any one. Lady Frances said no more; and readily accepted the proffered arm of Lionel, who had been her constant beau since her arrival in Scotland, as he now ventured to consider his friend's sister as not absolutely above his reach.

The conversation was very general during their walk, and rolled chiefly upon the approaching *fête*, and the expected guests; till, having reached the rock the countess had mentioned to lady Clairville, Cecil said he must admire the prospect from thence, which he had not been able to do for some years.

"Then Fanny and I will saunter along the terrace," said the countess, "while
you

you revisit your former favourite haunts."

Lionel offered her ladyship the arm he had at liberty, while the earl and his sons ascended the rock, the sun having set before they reached the summit.

"I am not sorry," said the earl, "lady Clairville did not accompany us, as she would have been too late to remark the effect of the setting sun from hence."

"And you may depend upon it, sir, she will never, even to enjoy the most sublime prospect, ascend what she would consider such an elevation; smooth as the path is, she would have fancied herself in danger, or have feared that her head would have become giddy, when she did reach the summit, and so, as she did at Clifton, have shut her eyes to avoid falling into the Avon."

"That was certainly very prudent," said the laughing Godfrey. "I remember she expressed her fears for her neck, the only time I ever officiated as her coachman; but I supposed that was out of compliment
to

to you, to convince you that she had a much higher opinion of your skill."

"I recollect the circumstance; but my good grandmother then attributed all her petty womanly fears to weakness of body and want of spirits; but now I am convinced they spring from weakness of mind; besides, you know, like Sextus the fifth, she has obtained the prize she angled for; and I have 'taken her for better, for worse, in sickness or in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part;' so I must e'en make the best of my bargain."

This was said in Cecil's usual gay tone; and Godfrey acknowledged that matrimony was a very serious thing, and that he should look twice before he leaped.

The earl was convinced that Cecil did not think his wife improved upon acquaintance; and he recollected that when, blinded by love, he had chosen his mother, he had soon made a similar discovery. Lady Clairville greatly reminded him of his first wife; she seemed, like her, of a
fretful

fretful capricious disposition, without having had her vexations to try her temper; and he now began to fear there was no small degree of art in her composition, since she had evidently led Cecil, before marriage, to believe she was a very different character.

Mrs. Manby had boasted of her understanding; but he feared she was rather deficient in that respect: yet possibly he judged her too harshly; she seemed to have some consumptive symptoms about her, and caprice and fretfulness were generally the attendants of that complaint; and if she gave way to either, she might not only increase her disorder, but also hasten her death.

Such were the earl's reflections, while he affected to be considering a small vessel at a distance; but, unwilling to encourage them, he again approached his sons.

Cecil was relating various instances of his wife's silly fears, protesting that she

generally contrived to meet or to occasion the danger she was so eager to shun.

“ You forget that she has never been accustomed to travelling,” said lord Monmouth. “ You must learn to make allowances for so young a woman, and who is evidently of a very delicate constitution.”

“ I give you my honour, sir, that I have, and do make every allowance for her. I have never said an unkind word to her respecting her fears; indeed, I pity more than I blame her, for giving way to them; still, as she never yet has met with any accident, nor has never been in any danger, except in her own imagination, I do not feel inclined to encourage them: perhaps I might feel more indulgent respecting her folly, if I did not plainly perceive that some of her fears are assumed; and surely she would have run no risk of taking cold this evening; whereas, out of mere caprice, she has confined herself to the house, though I know she is now fretting at her
own

own folly. I really pity her, since she may render herself, but will never render me miserable, through her fancies. She may, nay, does, and will torment herself a thousand times more than she ever will me, since I am fully resolved to let her have her own way; though, perhaps, my complaisance may be less pleasing to her than were I to argue every point with her, and contradict all her whims. I did not marry for love; and esteem must be deserved to be retained. She will not, however, easily provoke me to contradict her; if she does, she must take the consequence. Yet, notwithstanding what I deem her perverseness, I know she loves me. Were I romantic, I might, perhaps, use a stronger expression; but I cannot help thinking she loves herself better, as she seems to have a pleasure in tormenting me. I dare say that, had I pressed her this evening, she would, to oblige me, *she would have said*, have joined our party; and to-morrow, if she had fancied she had caught a slight cold, she would have

K 2

reproached

reproached me with having persuaded her to accompany me, at the risk of her life. Nay, had her foot slipped in ascending this mountain, she would, very probably, have accused me of leading her into danger, to gratify my own fancy : yet she would not have loved me the less ; since, next to self, I know I reign paramount in her heart. For her own sake, more than for mine, I wish she would endeavour to render herself agreeable ; perhaps she may, while here, strive to deserve the regard of lady Monmouth and Fanny ; from them she can learn nothing but good, and their example may work a salutary reform in her conduct."

" I dare say it will," rejoined the earl ; " and as she grows more intimate with the countess and your sister, I think they may be able to point out her errors to her, without hurting her feelings. Mrs. Manby spoke very highly of her to me, and she has known her from a child."

" I place great dependance upon lady Monmouth's

Monmouth's judicious advice," rejoined Cecil. "My grandmother has, I know, a very high opinion of Elinor, or she would never have recommended her so strenuously to my notice; and I feel assured that she will not ruin me by her extravagance, as she is an excellent manager of a family, says grandmama, which is not to be slighted, even in high life. I wish she would now endeavour to study how to manage, or rather to please her husband, as we are not all either to be caught or to be retained by the same means. I am well assured that I shall never use her ill; but she may render home as unpleasant to me, by her caprice and fits of love, as if she was very extravagant and dissipated. Indeed, I could easier manage a dasher than my present deary, who has tears at command, and who is even jealous of my horses and my favourite Dane; nay, she has more than once hinted she is afraid I love you, sir, and Godfrey and Fanny, better than her, which she assures me would break her heart. Now, pray how can I reply to such absurd

K 3

speeches?

speeches? and, depend upon it, she will declare I have lost all regard for her, or I should not have left her at home this evening; now I am among my family, I don't mind neglecting her;—such will be my curtain-lecture; and she will have been in tears, if she has not retired for the night ere we return. Now, pray, sir," turning to his father, "can you advise me how to manage with such a temper?"

"Treat her as you would a spoiled child, and endeavour to laugh her out of her silly notions; as her love cools, she will grow more reasonable. Brides, like mistresses, are apt to be rather unreasonable. At twelve-month hence she will be a very good wife; and your excellent temper is a sure pledge to me for your equally becoming a very good husband."

"May be so, sir; but I fear our tastes, tempers, and dispositions, are so dissimilar, that——"

"Like oil and vinegar, you will beat up to a most palatable mixture," interrupted the laughing Godfrey. "Why, man, I have heard

heard you wish for a little acid in your matrimonial dialogues."

"Agreed; but you know I dreaded an over-dose of love; and I have been surfeited of that already. I do think that if I had been as well acquainted with her disposition as I am now, when my grandmother became her advocate, I should have steeled my heart against her blandishments, and have suffered her, had she been so inclined, to have taken the lover's-leap; so take warning by my example, Godfrey, as one dupe in a family is quite enough; however, if you do but purchase experience at my expence, I shall not mind, admitting Elinor should not turn out all I could wish."

Lord Angus was prevented from making any reply by the approach of Lionel, and his mother and sister, who had advanced to meet them; and with them they extended their walk, till the castle clock striking nine, reminded them that it was time to return home.

As Cecil had predicted, his bride had been in tears. She was very cool and reserved in her replies to the earl's and countess's kind inquiries; and seemed even piqued with Godfrey, to whom she was barely civil; and declared she was very glad she had not been persuaded to join their party, as they had walked so late.

Cecil had never felt more provoked; and, by way of punishing her, took a seat near the countess. She seemed to feel that she had offended him; and endeavoured, by her looks, to entice him to draw near; but he kept his ground, in spite of her audible sighs, and every alluring sign she made him. Godfrey, who freely forgave her feeling rather jealous of him, took the chair next her, and told her where they had been, hoping that she would soon be reconciled to his favourite mountains; and telling her, that she must visit the now famous Abbey of Melross and Loch Katrine, which Scot had so beautifully described.

“ I never read poetry, my lord. My
mother

mother was not partial to what she deemed such light reading."

The countess, anxious to remove the gloom which pervaded her countenance, presumed she had been advised to ride on horseback, as no exercise was more recommended by the faculty.

"My mother thought it too masculine for any delicate woman. My sister is a good horsewoman; but I was always guided by the very superior sense of lady Mildmay, who was the decided enemy to all boisterous sports."

"Her ladyship might not approve of ladies riding so near London as Woodford, or upon any of the great roads leading to the metropolis; but in the country, I am very partial, even now, to the exercise; and you will probably, during your stay, see me exalted upon a pillion behind my son, as I prefer riding to a carriage in some roads. Fanny is a capital horsewoman; and we can procure you a safe-footed Shetland poney, which will carry you up and down these

mountains in perfect safety; and I own some of the Scotch roads do not suit either a barouche or a curricule."

"The roads are certainly very horrid; but I shall never venture to mount even the smallest poney. Near London, you agree it is not proper for a woman to ride, and, by my own consent, I shall never remove out of that vicinity. Woodford is, I agree, rather a citizen's village; but then, what can be more delightful than Richmond, Twickenham, or many other places in that vicinity? Clairville is certainly a fine place, but very dull. I am fond of a moving scene, such as the banks of the Thames, or the principal roads near London, always afford. I should be hipped to death at Binningfield, as I shall never learn to ride: and I am not fond of the water; nor am I able to take long walks: but I beg I may be no restraint upon any one present; the tastes of you ladies are different from mine, so, therefore, ought to be our pursuits. I have never visited my sister since her marriage,

riage,

riage, as I knew I should die of *ennui* at Mapleton, as she rides and walks, and is the lady Bountiful of her village; but, like my mother, I am not partial to a country life."

It was now evident to every one present, that this certainly beautiful young woman could be very perverse; even Cecil had never seen her so completely disagreeable; and he could have found in his heart to have boxed her ears, for thus giving way to her fractious humour, on the first night of her arrival at his brother's seat, and making such an ungracious return for the countess's politeness and kind intentions.

Lady Monmouth soon transferred all her pity to her favourite Cecil; lady Frances felt exceedingly provoked upon his account; and Godfrey sincerely wished he had advised his brother to take some time to study her disposition before he parted with his liberty, since she bid fair to make him pay very dear for her complaisance;

and were he to treat her as she deserved, he would be deemed cruel and unfeeling, because she was still in very indifferent health, and they were hardly out of the honeymoon. He therefore affected to take all she said as more jest than earnest; and every one followed his lead, wishing to bring her into good humour.

She yet felt herself offended at being what she deemed slighted, and was not of a forgiving temper. She, besides, really disliked Lord Angus; first, because he was such a decided favourite of her husband's; and, secondly, for being a greater man than his brother, who had told her he would certainly soon be marquis of Inverness, as he knew his father had been promised that the family title should be revived in his favour; and then this ancient castle, which she affected so greatly to dislike, was a palace when compared to Binningfield, and even superior to Clairville; and much as she really loved Cecil, she now wished he had been the younger brother. The Manbys
3 were

were very vulgar, low people, and their connexions degrading. Such had been her reflections, when left to indulge in them; and she grew more and more resolved to wean Cecil from all his relations, by declaring her dislike of Scotland, and her dread of living so near the sea; nay, she even meant to tell him the ladies of his family wilfully slighted her; and chose, in consequence, to give way to her natural temper when they returned from their walk; and she certainly succeeded in disgusting every one present; but she had taken a very wrong method to detach her husband from his truly amiable and affectionate relatives.

Every one seemed pleased when the supper-trays were introduced. She did not chuse to eat, though almost maternally pressed by lady Monmouth, who, for Cecil's sake, wished to render her as comfortable as her own temper would allow of during her stay.

“Could she mention any thing she should prefer to what there was upon the table?”

asked

asked Godfrey, "since he was convinced that she had only to issue her orders."

"She seldom ate suppers;" and as lord Clairville did not join lady Frances to press her to taste a jelly, she did not touch any thing, and would only drink a glass of water; keeping her eyes constantly fixed upon Cecil, and sighing most bitterly when he laughed or addressed either his brother or sister. Of course, no one was sorry when, complaining of fatigue, she took her night-taper.

The countess desired lady Frances to see her *sister* to her dressing-room, accompanying them up stairs, and taking a very kind leave of the capricious bride at her own dressing-room door. Lady Frances walked forward with her new relation, who had scarcely entered the very handsome one allotted her, than giving a sudden start, she exclaimed, "What is that? Good Heavens, what a dreadful sound! There, again! Did not you hear it, lady Frances?"

"Most certainly. The tide is coming in; and,

and, as I believe the breeze has rather increased, the waves are dashing against the terrace-wall. I am partial to the sound, as it generally lulls me to sleep, when I entertain no fears for those upon the sea."

"I am sure that it will have a very contrary effect upon me, as the least noise alarms me, and this is quite awful."

"But as it cannot be prevented, and you now know that it proceeds from a very natural cause, I trust that it will not disturb your repose; so good-night, and pleasant dreams;" leaving the room and the frightened lady to dwell upon her absurd fears to her abigail, feeling perfectly convinced that they were half affected.

CHAP. XII.

MRS. Dormer, lady Clairville's maid, though she had never before been a resident in a house so near the sea, could not believe that there was any thing to fear, the castle was so strong, and had stood so many hundred years. The tide, she had heard, came in every where, and generally with a rushing noise. To reason with lady Clairville had long, she well knew, been labour in vain; still, as she felt no fear herself, she thought it but right to endeavour to remove hers.

But she resolved not to go to bed till her husband came up stairs, declaring that the wind was rising, and she expected that it would blow up a dreadful storm; and the countess had acknowledged that the waves,
in

in very bad weather, sometimes washed over the wall; lamenting her ever having undertaken such a journey, as she foresaw she should never enjoy a night's rest, nor a happy day, while she remained at this odious castle.

Dormer knew that her mistress was an adept in the art of self-tormenting, and that she fancied herself the most miserable of women, for the nicest trifling contradiction; therefore she did not know what to say or do, though she felt well-assured that she might, by thus continually conjuring up imaginary evils, be at last a prey to some very severe real ones. To contradict her was high treason; and to agree to the justice of her fears, only rendered her ten times more childish; however, while she was soothing her in the most gentle terms, the gentlemen below, Cecil excepted, as Lionel was no longer considered as a stranger, were endeavouring to find excuses for the bride's behaviour, before, during, and after supper. Cecil only wished
he

he knew how to manage her ; but he feared she would give him more trouble than all his stud. However, he would give her a fair trial ; and if she continued to run restive, he must give her up, and suffer her to go her own way, while he went his ; " and then," he went on, " 'tis ten to one whether we meet again in haste."

" Only give her, as you say, a fair trial, Cecil," replied the earl, " and I will be answerable she will become every thing we wish. The countess seems inclined to take her in hand."

" And if she does but follow the example of lady Frances Clairville," cried Lionel, " she will be, like her, the most amiable of women."

" Well said, my dear friend," rejoined Godfrey ; " so now let us, before we part, drink to lady Clairville's perfect recovery."

" Here's to her reformation," exclaimed Cecil, tossing off a bumper. " Excuse me for altering your toast, Godfrey ; but if you love me, drink mine." He laughingly agreed ;

agreed; and soon after they all went up stairs. Godfrey and Lionel went to the left, and the earl and Cecil to the right, as they both slept towards the terrace.

Lord Clairville was soon undressed, as he thought his wife might be rather fatigued, and he knew she would not go to sleep till he joined her; but, to his great surprise, when he was preparing to step into bed, he perceived she was not there. His dressing-room was on the opposite side to hers; and, upon stepping to the door leading into the latter, he heard her conversing, in a very plaintive tone, with Dormer. "Perhaps she is complaining of me to her *soubrette*," thought he; "yet surely she cannot be so weak." But, not chusing to interrupt their conference, he got into bed, where he lay ruminating upon her strange behaviour, when the door opened, and he heard her say, in an accent of despair, "I tell you 'tis no such thing; the gentlemen are aware of the danger, and mean to sit
up

up all night. I will dress again, and join them. I shall feel much safer below."

Cecil did not hear very distinctly the latter part of her speech, as she returned into her dressing-room; but wondering what new fancy had seized her, he called out, "Are you coming to bed?"

She instantly returned, "Was that you I heard, my lord?"

"Pray who else did you expect to find in this room?" was the gay reply. "What has made you so late? I have had half my night's sleep."

"You surprise me!" in a well-feigned tone of agitation, as she had it in contemplation to play off one of her *chef d'œuvres* upon her good-tempered husband, since she was by no means so alarmed by the noise of the waves as she had chosen to make Dormer believe. "I looked into this room not ten minutes ago, and did not suppose you were come upstairs. You were certainly asleep. Good Heavens! how could

could you forget yourself in such a dreadful storm? Do pray let us leave this horrid castle to-morrow: I shall not survive a three days' residence here."

She was standing at the bedside, and as she had the most perfect command of her countenance, the light she held falling upon it, induced Cecil to believe her to be a prey to the most dreadful terror and alarm.

"For Heaven's sake, my love, what is the matter?" starting up in bed, not supposing it possible that she was putting on the terror she seemed to feel, though he could not conceive what could have thus alarmed her; since, though the wind was rather rough, he could not suppose that had frightened her, till she assured him it would be useless for her to go to bed, as she should find it impossible to sleep in such a storm, since the castle would certainly be either blown or washed down by the violence of the waves.

"Surely, my love, this is giving way to mere chimeras; since, positively, till you
talked

talked of a storm, I was not conscious there was any wind; but I agree that, upon listening very attentively, I can hear the waves beating against the wall, which I think a very lulling sound; so do come to bed, since your present are merely imaginary fears."

"To oblige you, Cecil, I would do any thing, unkindly as you have treated me to-night, since I shall die in your arms; and, believe me, I do not wish to survive you."

At this moment, as if to second her scheme, one of the windows, which did not fit very tight, as the wind sat full in them, gave a smart rattle; giving a faint scream, her artful ladyship fell in so well-counterfeited a fainting-fit upon the side of the bed, that Cecil was completely her dupe, since, not having a grain of artifice in his own composition, he had no idea that any woman would have thus attempted to worry and deceive a man she certainly loved. Her taper she had dextrously contrived to extinguish as she fell; therefore,
by

by the mere glimmer of the night-lamp, he could not discern the real expression of her countenance, which might have taught him a useful lesson ; as it was, he was seriously alarmed for her safety ; and starting out of bed, he threw his dressing-gown over his shoulders, while he loudly called her maid, who, fully expecting how her terrors would terminate, having lived with her near twelve months, had remained within call, and hastened to the assistance of her kind master, who leaving her to recover the fair insensible, as she assured him that her mistress was in no danger, he hastened to his brother's apartment. Godfrey was stepping into bed, but paused upon hearing his door open, and was not a little surprised upon recognising Cecil in the intruder, whose countenance bespoke his anxiety and vexation.

“What has happened?” he hastily exclaimed, advancing to meet him.

“Elinor is unwell ; or, more properly, has been so much alarmed by the wind and
the

the coming-in of the tide, in addition to the sashes of our room not fitting very tight, that I wish she could be removed to a more quiet apartment."

"That can be soon done: she shall have this one, where, I am sure, neither the wind nor the waves can break her repose. My mother thought she would enjoy the prospect from the room she had allotted her, as she prefers sleeping on that side of the house herself; but she did not reflect that her ladyship's nerves are not yet cast-iron;" sending his valet in search of the house-keeper, and some of the maids, to make the necessary alterations.

"I am very sorry I have been under the necessity of disturbing you, Godfrey," resumed Cecil, the moment they were alone; "but, upon my soul, I left Elinor in a fit, brought on by giving way to her imaginary fears."

"I am more sorry to hear that, since there is merely a brisk breeze to-night. I hope we shall not have a real storm during
her

her stay, since that will quite set her against my poor castle."

"Would to God she had a little common sense, or that she would give her judgment fair play ! since, at this rate, I shall never have a son and heir."

"Indeed I fear not ; but you seem to stand a chance of being soon a widower ; since, if she thus gives way to such very idle terrors, her health must suffer by her folly."

"Then she must take the consequence of her fretfulness and cowardice, since I cannot attempt to cure her of such chronic complaints. She was accusing me of unkindness, a few seconds before she fainted. Now, as I should not wish to have any thing to reproach myself with, in case she does leave me to mourn her loss, I will return to Dormer's assistance, who, I am sorry to say, seemed so much less alarmed than I was when I called her in, that I fear these fits are constitutional, if they do not partly arise from a less pardonable motive ;"

when, hearing the valet returning with several females, he returned to his wife's apartment, to inform her of the arrangements he had made to insure her a comfortable repose.

Godfrey, having put on a few clothes, said he would wait his return in his dressing-room, when he would try if he could not repose, undisturbed, in this terrific *blue chamber*, which had so alarmed lady Clairville.

Dormer, as she fully expected, soon succeeded in bringing her lady to her senses, who perceiving, upon opening her eyes, that her lord was no longer near her, an information her ears had already conveyed to her, declared herself to be the most miserable of all wretches. Her adored Cecil had left her to die, alone and unheeded; and her terrors would kill her, independent of the wind and waves.

Dormer told her his lordship was gone to have another apartment prepared for her; this the meek fair-one flatly contradicted;

dicted; and, in a tone certainly not of languor, asked her how she dare tell his lordship there was no danger in such fits as hers, when she knew Dr. *** had declared they were very alarming?

Had Dormer dared, she could have retorted, by asking how she came to hear what she had said, while in such a dangerous fit; and, to her great relief, Cecil's return prevented her from being obliged to reply to this undeserved reproach. The moment she heard his voice, her ladyship adopted another mode of tormenting him, by falling into violent hysterics; her piercing sobs seemed so natural, her husband was extremely shocked, and blamed himself for having left her, as Dormer told him her lady had been extremely hurt, when, upon recovering, she found herself alone: at last she chose to grow rather more calm, and faintly asked her lord—"If he still thought the castle would withstand this dreadful storm?"

"Of that there can be no doubt, my love;

but I have secured you another apartment, in which you will neither hear the wind or tide, and where I make no doubt of your enjoying a comfortable repose."

"You are very kind; I am very sorry I have given you so much trouble. I wish I could get over my fears; but this storm positively terrifies me to death. Had I remained single, I should not have dreaded coming to an untimely end; but now when life was never so dear to me, I cannot enact the heroine." Thus did she soothe and lull all the angry passions of her lover, and induce him to attribute even her follies to a very flattering source. "You are sure we shall be safer on the other side of the house than here?"

"A thousand times; so let me hope you will endeavour to get a little repose."

"You have now convinced me that you do think we are not safe here. Oh, what would I give that you had never been tempted to visit this odious place! There, don't you hear how the wind roars? I dare say the window-

window-frames will soon be dashed in, and I am sure the waves are rising above the terrace-wall. In another minute the sea will beat against these walls."

Cecil felt very angry at her thus absurdly misconstruing his kind meaning; but, fancying she was really unwell, he merely assured her "that the waves had never, except during the most violent storms, and in the depth of winter, rose above the wall; and even when they did, no danger could be apprehended from their encroachments; but as Godfrey, laughingly, said, this room seems to be to you, indeed, a *blue chamber*," alluding to the bed and curtains, which were pale blue silk.

"I dare say my terror afforded him great amusement, my lord. I see he does not like me; and I am sure I pity the poor woman who falls to the lot of this second *Abomelique*, with his fierce military whiskers."

Fortunately the housekeeper entered, to tell her ladyship the *green room* was now

L 3

ready

ready for her reception; and to inquire whether she chose to take any thing to revive her spirits, or it is more than probable that Cecil would have lost all patience with her, since he thought his brother the first of human beings, and loved him much better than he did his wife; when leaving her with Mrs. Macleod and Dormer to remove into her new apartment, he hastened to join the *fierce Abomelique*, a comparison he never freely forgave his wife, who was obliged to acknowledge that she might have taken the alarm too soon, as Mrs. Macleod, who had resided nine-and-forty years in the castle, had never had her rest broken, during that period, by any storm, or by any encroachment of the sea; and as she also prevailed upon the invalid to take a cordial of her recommending, she gained sufficient strength to walk to her new apartment, merely declaring her abhorrence of gothic mansions, as she paced the noble gallery, and her detestation of painted windows; but having allowed the housekeeper, whom she

she would not suffer to leave her, to assist Dormer in putting her to bed, she suffered her to let her lord know that she was quite recovered, and very comfortable : the brothers, therefore, again wished each other good-night, and sought their respective apartments.

Cecil's displeasure having evaporated while conversing with his brother, who had prudently sought to find excuses for the caprices of the fair bride, he inquired, in the kindest manner, how she found herself ?

"Very much recovered, and very sorry she had occasioned her dear Cecil so much alarm and trouble ; but, after all, this is a most uncomfortable abode, since a person might actually expire before medical advice could be procured for them."

"There you are mistaken. A most excellent physician, who always attended the late marquis, resides in the immediate vicinity, and Scotch medical men are allowed to be particularly skilful. The first
L 4 practitioners

practitioners in England are of this nation. Your favourite Dr. *** was born and bred on this side of the Tweed."

"Agreed; and the most learned soon find their way to England."

"Many still remain beyond, I give you my honour; but I did not think it necessary to send for any of them to-night, as Dormer seemed perfectly competent to restore you to your senses; and surely you will never again give way to such imaginary terrors, else you will positively die a martyr to fears of your own creation."

"And no matter if I do, since you seem inclined to blame me for what I cannot avoid. I have not lady Frances's boisterous spirits, nor am I so masculine as the countess. I only wish I was once more in London, or those environs; there I should not have any thing to alarm me; and I am sure I should soon recover both health and strength, which here I never shall."

"Then I shall not attempt to persuade you to remain, only I would have you remember

member that sir Charles is expected to dinner here to-day, (for it is no longer night); and I shall certainly not leave the castle for this week or more."

"Then would you suffer me to set out alone, lord Clairville? Is it already come to this? I may thank your brother for this treatment: he has been advising you to break my spirit and my heart at once." A violent burst of tears followed this speech.

"Take care, Elinor, you do not provoke me beyond endurance. My brother would scorn to interfere in our matrimonial disputes; he is merely eager to find excuses for your absurdities, instead of rendering them more glaring; so if you wish to retain any portion of my regard, never again introduce his name in such a manner. You may, as I tell you, set out as early as you please in the morning; Dormer can accompany you; and I will take care you have a sufficient number of men-servants in your suite to insure your safety; but I shall remain here at least a

L 5

week,

week, and perhaps longer. You may make your health an excuse for your caprice. I shall agree that you are far from well, though I think your mind is more disordered than your body."

Again her ladyship wept and sobbed, and intreated him to accompany her, if only to Clairville; nay, she preferred Binningfield to this odious castle; or she would return to Clifton, which would afford him an excellent excuse for accompanying her. He must see that neither lady Monmouth nor lady Frances felt very cordially inclined towards her, else they would not have left her alone, ill as she was.

"They were both much kinder than I thought you deserved, as you were most absurdly capricious, and did not treat either of them with the politeness so much their due. You cannot lower them in my esteem, so never again complain of their want of attention to you. You are at liberty, if you chuse, to return to London, or to go to Clifton. I must and shall remain

main here. I wish to render you happy, if I can; but I will never act in direct opposition to my own will and principles, to oblige you; nor will I be laughed at for a hen-pecked Jerry Sneak by my gay friends. We came down to spend a month or six weeks, and I tell you very plainly I do not wish to shorten my stay to humour your fancies; nevertheless, I do not wish you should punish yourself to oblige me. Make what excuse you please for your immediate departure, and I will join you as soon as my engagements will permit."

His lordship might have gone on for another hour, as his wife felt half-alarmed, and found that she had gone too far. She should have proceeded more slowly. Her grand effort had failed in taking effect; and this good-natured husband could run restive, now she had hoped to have governed him most despotically, as he had generally hitherto given-in to all her little fancies, and humoured all her whims; but he

was now among his odious family, and she no longer had fair play.

Finding she must be guided by circumstances, she affected to dry her tears, assuring him, that where he chose to remain, she would also stay, since she loved him too fervently to be easy, much more happy, at any distance from him.

Cecil, who was heartily sick of the debate, requested she would only please herself, bidding her good-night ; and though no sound reached their ears, that of the great house-clock excepted, they were neither of them in a frame of mind to sleep very sound.

CHAP. XIII.

LORD Angus found his reflections equally anti-somniferous : he was as strongly attached to Cecil as he had ever been to him ; and now began seriously to dread that Elinor was not of a disposition to render him happy. Her excess of love, which she pleaded in excuse for all her follies and whims, was more likely to cloy than to gratify a young man of his gay turn and lively disposition.

The earl had hoped that his marriage would effectually wean him from all his dissipated companions ; but if this tender wife surfeited him with her kindness, and teased him with her caprice, he was afraid he would soon, as he had said he should, leave her to go her way while he took
another ;

another ; and then it was more than probable they should be separated for ever ; but she must and would see her errors before it was too late. She was a most lovely woman : and a young family might be of great advantage to both. Her children would divide her regard, and would domesticate him.

Such being his thoughts, *the blue chamber* certainly did break his rest, since even the monotonous dashing of the waves did not steep his senses in forgetfulness till it was broad daylight ; and as he soon woke again, he started up, thinking that a short walk would revive his spirits. The workmen were just come to their labour, and he directed them to make the alterations lady Clairville had suggested, by way of putting her into better humour with his abode. He was still talking to the men, when he saw his brother advancing to join him ; giving him the meeting, he eagerly exclaimed, as he seized his extended hand — “ How is the fair Elinor this morning ? ”

“ Very

“Very quiet. I left her in a sound sleep, after a very restless night;” relating the heads of what had passed after they separated, omitting her avowed dislike of him, and softening down her complaints of the countess. “Now how would you have acted in a similar situation, Godfrey?”

“Exactly as you have done, if I know my own heart, since, as I should do, you wish to remain master of your time and actions.”

“At Woodford, she was always talking of the delights of a country-life, and of the pleasure she hoped to derive from mixing in our family circle. Now she openly avows her dislike to Binningfield, which is merely preferable to this old castle; and is already sick of the family party she was, before she married, so anxious to join; and next, I suppose, she will long for a villa upon one of the high-roads leading to the metropolis, where she may always enjoy a delightful moving scene from her windows. I think she shall pitch her tent somewhere
in

in the city, or the New-Road, and there she may inhale the dust and the refreshing smoke of the metropolis at the same time."

"Come, come, she wishes to reside at Richmond or Twickenham, which are both very pleasant places. I cannot suppose her remaining here can be prejudicial to her health, else I would not press you to prolong your stay; though I own I shall not enjoy the approaching *fête* if you are absent; and, except her life was at stake, I would not move a peg."

"Oh, Godfrey, take warning, man! When children, our kind mother used to tell me I must keep you out of harm's-way, by never running into danger myself. I have not implicitly obeyed her precepts now; but if my having run my head into the fire prevents you from following my example, I shall not mind being a little sore. She certainly has taken a most wonderful dislike to this castle. Wishing to make her laugh, I sillily told her what you
had

had said respecting the blue room, and she retorted by declaring your terrific whiskers reminded her of *Abomelique*."

"Oh, worse and worse! then I am as much upon the black list as my abode: but I thought I had put my whiskers upon the peace-establishment when I came home. I hope my wife, if ever I do marry, will not be so easily alarmed."

"Joking apart, I never heard her speak very favourably of any body. To you I can speak more freely than to my father; and I wish to make you as well acquainted with her disposition as I am myself. Sir Charles, she has hinted to me, has been a severe father; her sister is his favourite, and she has taken advantage of the circumstance. She does not absolutely say she dislikes my grandfather Manby, but she owns she wonders I can be upon such intimate terms with him; my grandmother is very well, but no favourite; and I know she is jealous of you in particular; not a little of Fanny, and rather so of the earl
and

and countess. She wished very much to have persuaded me to return into the south, instead of crossing the Tweed, as the sea at Brighton would not have been so alarming. You heard her opinion of Clairville and Binningfield last night. At Bath she found herself too warm; and declared that she makes no doubt that city is built over a subterraneous volcano, which will explode some time or other; of course she will never reside there. Bristol she disliked *in toto*; the wells were too low, and Clifton as much too high; Durdham Downs were bleak to a degree; and having seen a hackney-coach stuck fast in attempting to ascend Clifton-hill, she insisted upon leaving the hotel immediately, for fear my bays should equally refuse the collar, though we had agreed to spend a few days there; therefore I begin to fear she will never think herself absolutely safe any where."

One of the workmen coming up to ask a question of lord Angus, put a stop to the
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the conversation; and they were proposing to extend their walk, when the earl, who was a very early riser, joined them.

Cecil related, in very droll terms, the adventures of the night.

Lord Monmouth stood amazed at such a glaring proof of his daughter-in-law's folly; but said, in a gay tone, "At all events, Cecil, lady Clairville meant to display her regard for you, though, perhaps, you would have excused such a proof of her tenderness; but you find she is so happy, she is very unwilling to die." And as lord Clairville did not dwell upon the subject, the conversation took a different turn, till they joined the ladies and Lionel in the breakfast-room.

The countess had learnt what had been the consequences of lady Clairville's alarm from her woman; and as she supposed she really had been in fits, she desired to be informed, as soon as she rang, when she found her so much better than she expected, that she much doubted her having
been

been so ill as she had heard ; but advised her breakfasting in her dressing-room ; politely regretting she had not sooner known her dread of the sea, since she would certainly, in that case, have allotted her a different apartment.

The bride was no less polite in return, and condemned herself very freely, declaring she should hardly know how to look lord Angus in the face, after turning him out of his room, and giving him so much trouble.

The countess promised to make all the requisite civil speeches for her, which she told the gentlemen when they came in, who were all happy to hear she was so well recovered, and that she had behaved so well.

The fact was, her grand plan had failed, and, for the present, she resolved to alter her conduct. To render the Monmouth family her enemies, would be equally rendering her husband so ; she must, therefore, change her batteries, and proceed

ceed more cautiously, since she was resolved to break with them and the Manbys, and to live upon very distant terms with her father; but she found she must not be too precipitate, if she wished to succeed. Her present dressing-room commanded a side-view of the lawn, and the preparations which were making for the next day's *fête*. Having breakfasted, she took her station at the window, to arrange her future plans: her husband had not come to inquire how she did; she should lose all control over him, if he remained at this horrid castle; hitherto she had, as she fancied, completely governed him, merely because he did not chuse, during what might be termed the honeymoon, to thwart her inclinations; but he had quickly discovered her foibles, and had been much hurt when he found that self was her idol, and that even he was only a secondary object in her esteem.

While she was reflecting upon the past, and settling her future proceedings, she

saw

saw her husband walking with the countess and her sister. How unkind not to have visited her before he went out ! yet, were she to give way to ill-humour, she foresaw she should make bad worse. Perhaps he was, even now, complaining of her to his odious relations—how she detested them ! She resolved, however, to endeavour to discover the subject of their discourse ; therefore, hastening down, she followed them along the lawn, and thus learnt that they were talking of the Lady of the Lake, and of visiting Loch Katrine : but even this did not please her ; she was become of too little estimation to her husband to be even the subject of his conversation ; dearly, at some future time, should he pay for this marked indifference ; but wishing to see how he would receive her, she called out, in a very gay tone, “ Suffer me to join your party, lady Monmouth.”

Cecil instantly turned to meet her. “ I am glad to see you so much recovered, my love ; a short walk will complete your cure.”

“ I mean

"I mean to follow your prescription," she replied, with a most winning smile, placing her arm within his.

Lord Clairville thought she had never looked so handsome, and never did she exert herself more successfully to please.

The earl, who, with Godfrey and Lionel, soon joined them, was quite delighted with her. She apologized in the most pleasant manner to lord Angus; declared herself to be an incorrigible fool; but hoped to profit by the excellent example of her dear countess and her gay sister.

Cecil had never seen her so amiable, and was half-angry with himself for having ever been seriously angry with so lovely a creature.

Several of the earl's and lady Monmouth's particular friends arrived to dinner, as did sir Charles Mildmay, who found his daughter so gay, and looking so happy, that he flattered himself she would make a most excellent wife, since marriage seemed to have worked a very salutary reform in
her

her temper ; of course he met with a most hearty welcome, and the evening went off very agreeably.

The next day the festive revels began ; and, as possibly our readers may not wish for a very minute detail of the arrangements, we shall merely observe, that there were neither oxen nor sheep roasted whole ; but an ample provision of barons and rounds of beef, quarters of lamb, mutton, hams, and veal, for the populace. The tenants were regaled in the newly-erected booths, as were the middling people in the neighbourhood. The ale was drawn and distributed with a bountiful hand to all the comers and goers, as the park-gates were opened at eleven, and were not closed till midnight. The party at the castle, and the neighbouring nobility and gentry, dined in the Turkish tent, and danced in the grand saloon of the castle ; and those among the tenants and peasantry who chose to follow their example did so, upon platforms erected for the purpose. The fireworks and illuminations

illuminations were allowed to be superb, and every thing went off extremely well. The castle-party kept it up till broad daylight. Lady Clairville danced several reels, and bore off the palm of beauty. Even lady Frances, though a most lovely woman, was not thought so handsome as the bride ; and Cecil began to hope that he had mistaken her character, and that she would prove a much more agreeable companion for life than he had dared to expect : but she did not suffer him to be cloyed with sweets, as the very morning after the *fête*, before he had left her side, she asked him “ When he now meant to remove her from this horrid gothic place ? surely her complaisance deserved some return ; to oblige him, she had been all politeness to his family ; and, though she detested *fêtes*, which led to such a mixture of company, she had affected to appear delighted with what had wearied her to death. Her father would not spend more than a week in Scotland, and they had better return with him. A

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month or six weeks at Weymouth, or Brighton, would quite restore her health."

"And have you then, Elinor, merely been acting a studied part these two days? I had hoped you were quite reconciled to what I think a most delightful abode, and that you felt anxious to cultivate an intimacy with my mother and sister."

"I can act any part to retain your love, my dear Cecil; and while we do stay, I will be all politeness to your *mother*," (this was said with due emphasis) "and *your beloved sister*. Nay, I will not shrink from the advances of your favourite *Godfrey*, though I shall never see him with your eyes. He is the earl's favourite also, I perceive, who would not be sorry, I can suppose, were his, as well as the marquis of Inverness's, titles to centre in this nobly-descended youth, who is not a little proud of his maternal ancestors: however, I hope he was sufficiently glutted with adulation yesterday; you were quite overlooked, wedded as you are to him and his family."

"Once

“Once for all, Elinor, let me tell you very seriously, that you are taking a very wrong method to raise yourself in my esteem. My father never made the least distinction between me and my favourite Godfrey; and as for your mean insinuation respecting his wishing my brother to inherit his title, I think his absolutely prohibiting me from going into the army, and suffering him to expose his life in his country’s cause, is a sufficient refutation of your unfounded assertion. *My mother* has always behaved to me like one, and would be equally kind to you, were you inclined to profit by her regard for any connexion of mine; but your mind does not beat in unison with hers and my sister’s. You envy their excellencies, while they are endeavouring to render you happy, almost in spite of yourself; but as you cannot deny being much better in health, here I shall remain for at least another month. You may return to town with sir Charles; and if you have taken such a dislike to the castle and its inhabitants, I think you will do

do very wisely, as I do not wish you to play the hypocrite towards them, to oblige me; and they, like myself, are too free from guile not to become your dupes; therefore you will oblige me by returning with your father."

Again the artful Elinor found she had been too precipitate. To leave him behind her was very far from her intentions; yet, having acknowledged that she continued to dislike his beloved relatives, she foresaw she should find it a difficult matter to act her part in future. At present she had no resource, but, as was her general custom, to plead excess of love as an excuse for what she had said, and to acknowledge that she was jealous of every individual of his family; nor would she suffer him to leave her till he had pronounced her forgiveness, for merely loving him too well to bear the idea of dividing his affection even with his father, much less his brother and sister.

END OF VOL. II.