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GERALDWOOD:

BY THE AUTHOR OF

VILLEROY, AND SIGISMA.



VOL. II.



"I left no calling for this idle trade,
"No duty broke.——"

POPE.



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GERALDWOOD.

CHAP. XI.

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HER friend, the Countess, having neither her cause for sorrow, nor her aptness to indulge it, arose the following morning, with no other care than how she should divert the Earl from his usual breakfast-lecture, which, in spite of all her attempts, he had commenced, when he was interrupted by the entrance of a servant with a letter to her Ladyship. The Earl, torn with suspicion, and racked by jealousy, snatched it from him, and would have opened it, had not a look, accompanied with, "On your peril, my

VOL. II. B Lord,"

Lord," unnerved his hand, and compelled him to relinquish it.

She had no sooner examined the contents, than crying, "Pish!" she presented it to him; adding, "This is most unlucky, as I am particularly engaged this whole forenoon."

The Earl, eager to know what had thus deranged her, read as follows:—

3.
"Presuming on your Ladyship's connection with the family of the Earl of Belmont, and intimacy with his daughter, I am encouraged to request you will indulge me with an audience of a few minutes, on a business too delicate to be intrusted to an uninterested person; but least, from what I have said, your Ladyship should be led to suppose it is of more moment than it really is, I shall briefly inform you, it is only to restore some letters, with a picture,

“ picture, now in my possession, be-
“ longing to the late Lady Jane Felix.
“ Concluding that you are not unac-
“ quainted, Madam, with the engage-
“ ments formerly subsisting between that
“ lady and myself, I do not hesitate to
“ add, that I think it would be incon-
“ sistent with my honour, as with her’s,
“ and her husband’s feelings, were I to
“ retain them, after every possible right
“ to any token of her regard has been so
“ decidedly disproved.

“ As my stay in town is limited, I
“ should esteem it a proof of your Lady-
“ ship’s great condescension, might I be
“ permitted to see you any time this
“ morning.

“ With every possible respect,

“ FITZROY.”

“ Impossible !—quite impossible !” re-
peated the Countess.—“ I would as soon

consent to see the ghost of my great grandmother, or even your Lordship's maiden aunt, as this love-lorn Strephon, with his dolorous tale of cruel perfidy, and bleeding love—it would unfit me for every purpose I have in view.”

“Certainly you do not mean to refuse his request?” asked the Earl.

“Indeed, my Lord, I do.”

“On what pretence?”

“The best in the world—that I have engagements I like better.”

“That you have engagements you prefer, I do not doubt—if you have any, as much to your honour, I am greatly deceived.”

“Far be it from me to wish to deceive you, though I think it would be very pleasant for both you and me, if you would deceive yourself.”

“Lady Belmont, I cannot—it is beyond my power.”

“Indeed!

“ Indeed! my Lord—that is very strange. The world says you can deceive any thing. Not deceive yourself! Well, that is unlucky; for, I should think, you would find it very comfortable.”

The Earl felt the severity of this remark; but he likewise felt this not to be the time to notice it. He reminded her, that Mr. Fitzroy’s servant waited for her answer—and entreated her to appoint an hour to see him.

“ That is easily done, my Lord; but, I do assure your Lordship, to keep the appointment will not be so easy: yet, I believe I can find a substitute.—What think you of Jane herself?—They can sob and weep, and weep and sob, without disturbing other people.—The thought is admirable.—Who waits? My compliments to Mr. Fitzroy, and I shall be

at home at three o'clock.—And now for Lady Jane.”

“ You are not serious, Lady Belmont; do but reflect how indelicate—how indecorous, such a meeting would be.—It must not take place.”

“ Very well, my Lord; Jane must not, and I cannot, meet Mr. Fitzroy—yet, somebody must. I see no alternative, but your Lordship’s performing this ceremony yourself; and now I reflect upon it, nothing can be so proper. You are her father, and may be able to comfort the poor broken-hearted youth, and to account for the wondrous alteration in your daughter’s sentiments; besides, your not having met for a long time, will furnish each an opportunity of renewing your suspended friendship.”

‘This was by no means an alternative suited to the selfish policy of the Earl, who,
with

with his accustomed docility, substituted the difficulty that only involved another, in the place of that which would have inconvenienced himself; he, therefore, after some useless arguing with his Countess, to attend the appointment herself, allowed, that if she did not, his daughter was the only person who could. Her Ladyship highly approved of his decision, and very politely lamented the impossibility of her obliging him on this occasion; assuring him, she never, in her whole life, could take any part in a love affair, in which she was not the principal. Then, presenting him a finger, with the most ineffable grace and sweetness, bade him adieu until dinner, and, retiring, wrote the following billet to her friend:

“ I hope the indisposition of last night
“ has vanished, and, ‘like the baseless
“ fabric of a vision, left not a wreck be-
“ hind.’ Be this as it may, you must,

“with your best diligence, reach your
“noble father’s dwelling; there, placing
“yourself in the library, expect a visit
“from your ci-devant captive, the in-
“censed Fitzroy, who says he has ‘re-
“membrances of your’s, which he has
“longed long to re-deliver, for, ‘to the
“noble mind, rich gifts,’ he says, ‘wax
“poor, when givers prove unkind.’ So,
“you must e’en take back your baubles,
“for which purpose, I, with my Lord’s
“approbation, have appointed him to
“meet you at three, this day. An in-
“dispensable engagement prevents me
“offering my services, to be ready with
“the eau de luce, or to display my
“white handkerchief, in sympathetic
“agony.—Adieu,

“S. BELMONT.”

It would be difficult to determine,
whether hope and joy, or fear and sorrow,
were predominant in the breast of Lady
Jane,

Jane, on the perusal of this billet. She was alternately swayed by these varying passions: she one moment felt the most ecstatic delight, in the certainty of again conversing with the object of her dearest affections—the next, she shuddered at his presence. She fancied herself soothed by his compassion, and cheered by his forgiveness; then, humbled by his scorn, and wounded by his reproaches. She dreaded, yet anxiously wished the hour of their meeting. At one time, she determined to demand his approbation of her conduct; at another, to deprecate his just resentment. In this state of indecision, she reached the Earl's, and was met by her friend, who informed her, Fitzroy was already there. After some raillery on her flutterings, she took her leave, and the agitated Jane entered the apartment to which she had been directed.

On the servant's opening the door,

Fitzroy had advanced to meet, as he supposed, the Countess; but, at sight of her representative, he hastily retreated, while she followed, saying, "Mr. Fitzroy, from your conduct of last night, I fear I have little to expect from this meeting; yet, do not condemn me unheard."

He sunk into a seat; and covering his face with his hands, remained for some moments in a state of unutterable anguish; till, roused by her asking, "Will you not speak to me, my friend?" he arose, and in a broken voice demanded, Why she thus added to the sufferings of a wretch, her baseness had destroyed? Then, stifling his emotions, he continued:

"Cruel, unworthy woman! Blessed as I feel myself on our fates being separated, I yet cannot behold you without the most agonizing torture! — Wherefore, then, did you intrude yourself upon me? Did you seek, by witnessing, to triumph
over

over my weakness? Or did you wish to hear me pronounce the detestation in which I hold your principles? If such was your desire, it shall not go unrewarded.—Go, and be satisfied, you have my contempt.”

“ Hold, Fitzroy—in mercy hold !” exclaimed the astonished lady, “ I cannot bear your hate;—do not insult a wretch, unjust to you in act, but not in thought. I came to ask for your compassion to the most lost of human beings. I am the victim of a father’s necessities—wife to a man I hate—without one joy in life. Surely, my offence has fallen heavily upon my head ; you need not have augmented my distress, nor given me cause to deplore, still more, my fatal marriage with a man whom my soul has ever shuddered to think of. But, ought this to degrade me in your opinion ?”

“ Mistake me not, Madam; it is not

the wife of Mr. Twiddle I condemn;—no, the sacrifice to a father's tyranny would have claimed my compassion—my reverence. I should—I did, respect the weakness which had undone me. Forgetful of my own distress, my heart only bled for your's;—I would have died, Lady Jane, to have restored your peace. No, no! it is not the helpless, the unwilling wife, it is the votary of dissipation—the idolater of folly—the mistress of Lord Morpeth; who is the object of my lasting contempt.”

“The mistress of Lord Morpeth!—Gracious Heaven, support me!—Am I awake?—And is it Fitzroy who thus treats me?” asked the weeping lady; but she spoke to vacancy—her lover had not waited to either give or receive explanation.

After some time spent in anguish, she returned home, and was handed from her carriage

carriage by Lord Morpeth, who conducted her to an apartment, with the most anxious solicitude for the disorder which she apparently laboured under. Seating her, he placed himself beside her, tenderly inquiring the cause, and entreating her to look upon him as one devoted to her service. He was, at this moment, the man on earth she would have avoided, but her voice would not suffer her to express her sentiments—tears rolled down her cheeks, while convulsive sobbings rent her bosom.

Lord Morpeth knelt at her feet, and throwing his arms round her, pressed her to his heart.

At this instant the door opened; and Mr. Twaddle, with two servants, entered the room; the first calling out, “At last, I have caught you, my Lady wife—and you, my friendly Lord; but don’t, on any account, let me disturb you—I have

have obtained all I want, and shall leave you to your rapture."

Conscious innocence, for Lady Jane was really innocent of even intentional guilt—unthinking, and imprudent, she had most certainly been, but her heart was uncorrupted. She, therefore, requested to be heard; and likewise entreated Lord Morpeth would vindicate her character, and account to Mr. Twaddle for the improper situation in which they had been discovered. This Twaddle declined listening to, gravely swearing he had neither time, nor inclination, to be crammed with lies; but that, at his return, he would treat her sweet Ladyship according to her deserts—and that his Lordship should pay dear for his love-making.

He was no sooner gone, than Lord Morpeth endeavoured to sooth his trembling companion, but in vain; she was
lost

lost to hope—to comfort. The knowledge which she had of her husband's temper, led her to expect the most brutal violence. In answer to his Lordship's pleadings, she adjured him to be gone, and leave her to the fate he had provoked. He urged her to fly with him; but to this she replied with scorn, assuring him, not even the violent death, which probably awaited her, should induce her to give this confirmation to her cruel husband's unjust, though, certainly, too well grounded suspicions.

Her anguish shocked the soul of Lord Morpeth: he entreated her to hear what he had to unfold, which, though it would for ever ruin him in her opinion, would convince her she had nothing to fear from the wretch whose tyranny she dreaded.

He then proceeded to relate, that on his first acquaintance, struck with her beauty,

beauty, and encouraged by the knowledge of her reluctant marriage, he had attached himself to her, with shame he confessed it, in the hope of engaging those affections her husband did not, nor ever could possess. That this hope had rather increased than diminished, by the ease with which his attentions had been admitted, and the seeming preference with which they had been honoured. That he early discovered, that the man to whom her accursed father had sold her, was as devoid of principle as he was of resolution, or honour; and that he was destitute of common regard for the woman he had married; yet that pride, or want of occupation, would keep him near her person, to the prevention of his design. "To obviate this," he continued, "I descended to court his intimacy, and introduced him to other still more dangerous acquaintances, who easily engaged

engaged him in play, and to whom he lost large sums of money, until his necessities threatened, by compelling his return to your society, to deprive me of it. Alarmed at the destruction of my dearest hope, for, by this time, you had become necessary to my existence, I became his banker, and thought myself well rewarded by his absence.

“I am now, Lady Jane, arrived at a part of my confession, which, I am sensible, will require all your gentleness and humanity to listen to with patience; and had I any other method to convince you of the sincerity of my contrition, I should be tempted to withhold what I greatly fear will distress you, when known.

“Some censorious persons, envious of your merit, or my happiness, had dared to join our names, without that respect which your innocence and virtue demanded. These calumnies reached your
husband

husband—he taxed me with the truth of them. Mindful only of your repose, I laboured to exculpate you from every shadow of blame, and in so doing, betrayed how deeply I was interested in your welfare. This, Twaddle commented on, until he drew from me a repeated assurance of your innocence, with my avowal, that I should deem my fortune, nay, my life, a cheap recompense for the possession of your person and affections. His reply was, that he wished, to his soul, I, or the devil had you, he cared not which; but if you were so cursedly virtuous, he saw no hope of getting rid of you. Then, after a moment's hesitation, he added, ‘Come, my good fellow, don’t despair.—Lend me two thousand more, and take your chance with her—faint heart never won fair lady.’

“Shocked beyond expression, I was on the point of giving vent to my rage, had

had not the thought of rescuing you from such a monster suddenly interposed. To deliberate a moment on such a proposal was to consent—I deliberated, and was lost. Far from being a disgusted listener, I became an active principal; and the meeting of this day was contrived as the means of throwing you under my protection.

“After this confession, I dare not add one word in my own behalf. To yourself I must leave my cause. Should the fervency of my affection, joined to the difficulties of our situation, be allowed, in some degree, to mitigate my offence, and plead for your forgiveness, I shall deem the remainder of my life, spent in your service, too short to express my gratitude, which will be as unbounded as my love. But, you are ill, Madam—very ill.—Shall I call for assistance?”

She motioned to ring the bell—her

woman

woman was ordered—and conducted her to her apartment.

The various trials of the day had been too much; they brought on a premature labour, and she was delivered of a seven-months child, to the utter astonishment of all her connections and dependents, to none of whom she had given the smallest hint, of her situation.

Here I must again interpose in behalf of my erring friend, whom my readers must condemn, and whom it is not my intention wholly to exculpate. Yet, let me ask, where had this unfortunate female a friend? Was it possible to deem her low-minded, brutal husband such?—Was it possible there could be any confidential or tender intercourse between minds so every way at variance? So far from it, she trembled at the sound of his footsteps; and rather than endure his presence,

presence, she would have lived contented in a dungeon. She was sensible that he ought to be made acquainted with what so nearly concerned him, but she was likewise certain the intelligence could never be received from her. The Countess of Belmont was, indeed, her friend, that is, she led her into dissipation—ridiculed her virtues, until they wore the semblance of vices—and extolled her weaknesses, until they assumed the aspect of virtues—participated in her pleasures—and laughed at her sorrows. Was this a friend to speak to on so delicate a subject—a subject on which she dared not trust herself to think; for the father and the child were so immediately connected, that the one could not occupy her thoughts, without the other being present. Yet, there was one person worthy of the confidence of Lady Jane, and to her she every day intended to disclose her situation,

situation, but reluctance to enter on the subject, each day disposed her to postpone it. This person had been the confidential servant of the late Countess of Belmont, and had religiously fulfilled the dying request of that parent, to supply, as far as circumstances would admit, her place to her darling child. She had long mourned over the sorrows of the mother—she was now called upon to participate in those of the daughter, who lay for several days, alike insensible to her affliction, and her own. Her suspended faculties at length regained their powers; and she was pronounced out of danger.

C H A P. XII.

HER sympathizing attendant, eager to be the messenger of joy, informed her that her infant lived; and asked if she felt herself possessed of calmness sufficient to behold it?

She scarcely credited her senses, when she heard this reply:—

“No, Agnes, nor ever shall—it is the child of the man I hate—the offspring of discord. I feel no pleasure in its life. I rather deem its existence an additional weight to those evils, which already overwhelm me.”

“Gracious God!” exclaimed the af-
frighted woman, “is it from my be-
loved,

loved—my gentle lady, I hear such cruel words?" Then, uncovering the sleeping innocent, which lay upon her knee, she pressed it to her bosom, adding, "Sweet, but unfortunate baby, hard is thy lot!—Disowned by thy brutal father, and hated by thy yet more unnatural mother. Oh, lady, lady, look upon it—listen to its cries—it already mourns its untoward destiny. Oh, my dear, departed mistress, if thy sainted spirit takes account of this, it will damp the joys of Heaven."

The suffering Jane turned her hitherto averted eyes.—Agnes proceeded:

"You relent;—nay, look again. In such an hour, and in circumstances nearly as unpropitious, how differently did your mother act. You, my dearest lady, were little less welcome to your unkind father, than is this infant; you were, indeed, acknowledged, but it was from necessity; no fatherly affection
hailed

hailed your birth ; but you had still a parent, who, by doubling her duties, shielded you from wrong ; and will you refuse to follow such a monitress ? She held the child forward, while the mother, extending her arms, received it, and bathed its face with the tears of contrition. From this moment, it became her idol ; and from her attentions to it, she derived a degree of happiness, she had despaired of ever regaining.

“ This was, however, not of long duration ; the intelligence of her convalescence brought her husband to her apartment. He affected to feel his honour wounded, by the premature birth of her daughter, whom he boisterously renounced every claim to, and insisted on her signing a confession of its illegitimacy. This she steadily refused ; when, at last, provoked by what he termed her insolence, he struck her a violent blow,

and saying, he gave her one hour to consider, whether she and her bastard would meet his vengeance, or comply with his demands, left her imprecating curses on them both.

The distracted mother gazed on the helpless cause of her distress:—trembling, she gazed;—each moment threatened destruction to both:—no time was to be lost. Wrapping, therefore, a cloak about her, she descended the stair-case, and passed unobserved into the street. It was evening, which favoured her escape. She walked on for some time, in equal ignorance of where or what she intended, until a carriage passing, the driver asked her, “If she was going down the road?” It was a return chaise, and she gladly got into it.

Stupified with the terror and fatigue which she had endured, she was incapable of thinking; and it was not until the
post-

post-boy had several times demanded five shillings, that she understood she must leave the carriage. This she did with some difficulty; the little strength she had regained since her illness being quite exhausted. The man, seeing she was ill, recommended her to go into the public house, at which they had stopped. She followed him into a kitchen, where several people were drinking, one of whom, resigned to her his seat, by the fire, saying, the young woman did not seem well.

This remark, with the crying of the child, drew the landlady's attention. The youth, and extreme beauty, with the elegant dishabille and unseemly situation, left no doubt upon the woman's mind, as to the occupation of her guest, who she as readily pictured to herself, as newly discarded by some brutal and surfeited keeper; and she mentally cursed the hard-hearted wretch, who could abandon to

want, such a pretty creature, with her poor little babe.

After a short meditation on the improbability of her being able to pay for any accomodation, humanity conquered, and she invited the weeping stranger into her own parlour; where she made her some tea, which greatly refreshed her; but finding that her tears still flowed, she attempted to speak what she conceived would be comfort, by bidding her to cheer up, and not think any more of the hard-hearted brute, for she must have bad luck, indeed, if she could not get as good as he, any day. “For to go for to turn out such a little innocent, that could not have done him no harm; and, you look so good, and so genteel, as one may say, that no-body would suspect you for what you are, if it war’n’t for that frippery dress.—Now, hadn’t you better wear a cotton gound, like mine, that will keep you

you warm, and do you service, besides, —and live honest, and work for your bread, than that there flimsy thing, in which you sit shivering with cold, and then to be taken in and turned out at the pleasure of every idle fellow, and to be used no better than a dog, as one may say? For my part, I wonders as how you can abear it—I'd sooner work my fingers to the bones, than be anybody's trollope. — That's my way of thinking."

Lady Jane had collected from the good woman's harangue, the very injurious opinion she had formed; yet, though it greatly shocked, it did not offend her. The first impulse she felt, was to undeceive her; but a moment's reflection shewed her, that such a declaration would either obtain no credit, or, if believed, some other account of herself be expected; she, therefore, only replied, she was

thankful for her advice, which she would endeavour to profit by, although she was not so guilty as she supposed. This added to the kindness the well-meaning creature already felt, and she recommended her going to bed; which, she said, might not be as soft, or as flashy, as some she had lain in, but she would answer for its being as clean; and when she was in bed, she would bring her a little whey. In the mean time, she would, herself, undress the baby, and try to make it eat a little pap—for she had children of her own, and knew how to manage them.

The grateful heart of Lady Jane was deeply sensible of these humane attentions, for which she expressed her obligations; adding, that whatever expence was incurred, should be faithfully discharged.

This the good woman conceiving to allude to some future day, said, “That
is,

is, as it may be—I hears you sort of folks bes very generous when you's got where-withal—so, if it comes, well and good—if not, it will not be the first money I've lost, and I hopes I sha'n't be the poorer for it when I dies.”

So saying, she led the way to a garret, where, on a bed, literally such as the owner had described, clean and hard, was stretched the exhausted frame of the late dissipated and admired daughter of the Earl of Belmont.—She, whose beauty and accomplishments had been the theme of thousands—whose rank had commanded respect—whose splendour had created envy—now thought herself most fortunate in the possession of an apartment, in which the meanest domestic of her family would have deemed it an insult to have been lodged. Yet, here, even here, on this uneasy pallet, she could, she thought, have tasted sweeter repose, than

under the costly, canopied bed, 'with all appliances and means, to boot,' of her ungracious husband, had not her bodily sufferings kept her waking. The blow which she had received, still gave her infinite pain; her temple was much swollen, and very black; beside which, she had taken a violent cold, which, with fatigue, and the distress of her mind, brought on a fever, that she feared would not easily be subdued, and might be detrimental to her infant. She, therefore, on the woman's return with it, presented her a ten pound note, requesting her to let it be her companion for that night, with which she willingly complied.

For several days the fever raged with unabating fury, during which, the hostess did every thing that her knowledge and abilities enabled her; and was truly happy to see her effects succeed so far, as to admit of her guest's once more taking charge

charge of her chi'd, which had occupied more of her time than could be conveniently spared from her various employments. Yet, that she had proved herself a good nurse, was visible by the continued health of the little girl.

Lady Jane's extreme weakness had, as yet, prevented her from making any effort to repair to a more comfortable abode, or even to acquaint any of her friends with her situation. In truth, this last idea always came accompanied with her dread of being compelled to return to her detested husband; rather than which, death would have been preferred.

In this state, she was waked one morning by voices in the room below. To this she would have paid no attention, had not the well recollected voice of Lord Morpeth roused every faculty of her soul. She did not understand what he said, but distinctly heard her hostess reply: "I

tells you, gentlemen, there's no parson in my house, but a poor, sick trav'ler, who sha'n't be disturbed at this hour, for nobody—so take your answer. Haven't you got no bowels, to stand here making a noise, when I tells you that the poor soul's dying for want of rest?—I doesn't know how you fine folks can be so hard-hearted to a fellow-creature.”

Though a little encouraged by the woman's steady denial, the bosom of the trembling Jane was agonized by a thousand terrors, which were in no wise relieved by the entrance of the landlady, saying, in an angry tone, “Here's a fine to-do, truly—I wish you had gone a mile round before you had com'd to my house, to bring nothing but trouble.—There you beest, standing, shivering in the cold, without your cloaths—and by and by I shall have you to nurse again. What business had you to get up?”

Her

Her last words, which were uttered in a mild accent, somewhat calmed her apprehensions, particularly as the woman had begun to dress her, with great kindness; and having noticed the agitation she was in, continued: "Hey day! what a fuss you are in! Why, may be you didn't like my telling a pack of lies—and sending that there Lord, for so they called him, away."

"Oh! yes, yes—you are my preserver.—I would not have seen him for worlds!"

"What, then, you know him?"

"Too well.—His voice awoke me.—I could not be mistaken."

"Mayhap, then, you know the other ugly fellow?"

"Were there two?"

"To be sure there was; and he was ten times more ugly, and more huff-bluff, as one may say, than that there Lord. But I was a match for them both; for I

says, says I, my house is my castle—and my customers arn't to be disturbed when they are sick, for ne'er a Lord in the metropolis."

She might, and would, no doubt, have talked on, had not the action of her unfortunate guest, sinking at her feet, and clasping her knees, taken her from the admiration she felt at the sapience of the speeches she had made to the two gentlemen.

"Save me from those men! Heaven will reward you—and I will reward you," with difficulty articulated the agonized suppliant, who felt the terrible conviction, that the companion of Lord Morpeth could be no other than her husband: the description of his person and manners could, she thought, belong to no other; so unjust is the prejudiced mind.

The temper and manners of Twaddle were, undoubtedly, rude and unpolished; but

but his person was such as would, had it been adorned with the feelings and education of a gentleman, have been termed handsome; yet his wife would have entertained a strange opinion of the taste of that person who should have acknowledged this. In her eye, the whole man was terrible—form, mind, and manners, were confounded beyond the powers of her imagination to separate. She saw “Othello’s visage in his mind”—she thought it what the woman had described, and readily believed others must think so, too.

Her hostess raised her, saying, “God-a-mercy!—Don’t take on so. Ha’n’t I bin your friend?—and didn’t I as good as swear I never set eyes upon you?—I tells you, leave off crying, and I’ll do every thing as you wants me to; and as for your rewarding me, poor soul, I believes you have as good as nothing for yourself:

yourself:—but that's all one, I sha'n't turn my back upon you, now you bees in trouble. May be, Heaven may reward me, though I fears you hav'n't got much interest there, neither—worse luck for you. But this here Lord, and t'other ugly fellow, will soon come back; so we had better agree what's to be done.—For my part, when they comes, I thinks you had better slip out of the back door, and go up the lane; and as soon as they be gone, I'll come and fetch you.”

“ I will go this instant, dear, blessed Mrs. Shaw—I will go—not a moment is to be lost,” exclaimed the almost frantic lady.

“ Well, then, put on your cloak, and I will see that the coast is clear.”

She soon returned, and accompanied the trembling fugitive to the lane she spoke of, and giving her directions where to wait her coming, left her.

She,

She, with her infant in her arms, walked on for some distance, and finding herself unable to proceed, sat down on a stone. The morning was damp, and the place dreary. She felt herself very ill and faint; and had not sat long, before the sound of voices, at no great distance, met her ear. She listened—they approached nearer. Terror giving her strength, she quitted the lane, and fled, not caring whither, until coming to a large group of trees, she hid herself in the thickest part; where, overpowered by fatigue, she sunk upon the sod.

It had rained in the night, and the drops still fell from the leaves.—It was the middle of April, but the day was uncommonly bleak and cold. She again heard the voices; but unable to fly, resigned herself to her fate.

She saw two men pass her, at some distance, and then heard them, seemingly

ingly, near to her; but as she could not now see them, she hoped they might not discover her. The glimpse she had of their persons, was sufficient to convince her they were neither Lord Morpeth, nor her husband.

Somewhat revived, she crept close to a large tree, and pressing her sleeping baby to her bosom, endeavoured to recal her fleeting spirits, and attend to the conversation of the strangers; who, she still thought, were employed to search for her. A hoarse voice soon convinced her this fear was groundless, by saying, "We shall have warm work of it, Mark; for he always goes well armed, and attended. There will be some hard knocks, before we touch the cash. I hope you have not forgot to load your pistols, as you did the other night."

"Never fear me," replied his companion; "I shall do my part, though I am
am.

am not for spilling blood.—I never could see any reason for killing a man because we take his money.”

“Not kill him! How the devil will you get it, then? Dost think he will make you a present of it, you damn’d fool?—No, never till his brains are out.”

“I won’t have it then; for I tell you what, Ned, I should never sleep in quiet again, if I sent a poor devil out of the world, because he defended what I have no right to take.—I’ll have his money, if I can get it by frightening him; but damn me, if I take his life.”

“Then he will have your’s, you milk-sop—he will teach you to dance upon nothing.”

“May be so; but that’s better than being tossed about, for I know not how many thousand years, by old Belzebub’s pitchfork.”

“Stop your jaw—I hear the signal.—

Wait

Wait you here, while I look into the lane."

This dialogue had given fresh terror to the before agonized Jane. She felt her illness increase, and was convinced, death would very shortly end her sorrows. All her cares now centered in her hapless child;—it too, must perish! Again a voice reached her.—She listened—it was the man who had remained, and who was singing. His voice was harmonious and plaintive—she distinctly heard these words:

"My rum is out, my spirits die,

"My mother gave me all her store;

"The tears that left her aged eye,

"Fall on the beach I hail no more.

"Jemmy," she said, "grey is my hair;

"Expect no more my form to see;

"Thy little sisters claim thy care—

"Give them the love thou ow'st to me.

"And

- “ And tho’ three thousand miles apart ;
“ And tho’ my aged mother sleep,
“ My sisters still shall have my heart,
“ The world shall never make them weep.
- “ Jemmy will come, my sisters dear ;
“ Think, when the winds blow loud at night,
“ My latitude may still be clear,
“ I wish my cag of rum was tight.”

There was something in the voice, and manner of using it; nay, the very choice of the words, which spoke a mind not totally depraved. “ He is a robber,” she mentally exclaimed, “ but no murderer; —he yet has the feelings of humanity, and may preserve my child from death.”

She made an effort to rise, but failed —a second succeeded; and, directing her tottering steps to the part from whence the voice had issued, presented herself to the astonished man, holding out the infant to him, and saying in a broken voice, “ Protect this helpless being, and
God

God will protect you." She would have added a direction to her brother, but nature could no more—she sunk lifeless at his feet.

He had instinctively caught the child, and stood for a moment, in a kind of stupid amazement. He at length attempted to raise the body; but finding it cold and stiff, he said, "Dead as my grandmother;—but that's not your case, young one, for you make noise enough."

The sudden removal had awakened it, and it cried piteously. He hushed it to his bosom, still continuing to talk to it.

"Come, come, its time enough for you to take on so, but you are as cold, now, as you ever can be, until you are like your poor mother, there—her cloak would not keep her warm, you see;—by Jove, but that's well thought on—it may you, though—she has done with it, and you are her heir at law, so may fairly take possession."

Without

Without any farther ceremony, he stripped the cloak from the lifeless Jane, and wrapt it about her shivering infant.

Whilst he was thus employed, his companion returned, telling him they were all ready, and expected the gentleman every minute; to which he coolly replied, "I cannot come, Ned—I am engaged."

Ned, who had now seen the body, and likewise remarked how carefully he was concealing something, asked, What in the devil's name he had been about, and what he had got there?

He only answered, "Nothing."

"How came this woman here?"

"I don't know."

"What's the matter with her?"

"She's only dead."

"Come, come, Mark give us none of your tricks.—This is your conscience—you can't commit murder—damn your palaver.—But don't think to play trap with
with

with me, for I'll share the booty, so give us held on't; open your bundle, I say."

He uncovered the infant's face, when again it cried.

Ned started back some paces; whilst the other, holding it out to him, said, "Take your share.—Why don't you take it?"

"Take the devil! Where did you get it?"

"She gave it to me."

"Who is she?—Where did she come from?"

"I tell you I don't know.—She came close up to me before I saw her, and looking as pale as she does now, said, in a very moving manner, 'My good fellow, take this baby, and protect it, and God will protect you.'"

"And what did you say?"

"It was no use to say any thing, because she was dead before I could make out

out what it was she had given me ; so I took her cloak, and wrapped it round my present, as you see."

"And what else had she?"

"I don't know, for I did not search?"

"Then I will."

This was no sooner thought than executed ; and the result was a small pocket-book, which contained several bank notes.

"This," said the unfeeling wretch, "is better than nothing—we will divide it by and by ; so put down your bundle, and come along."

"What ! leave it here to starve ?—I'd see you damn'd first.—I could not do such a thing. Besides, I promised the gentlewoman I would take care of it ; and I can't break my promise."

"Why, you lying lubber, you told me you did not speak one word to her."

"Did

“Did I? Well, I promised myself; then, and that’s all one.”

“Then you will not go?”

“No.”

“Why, then, stay and be hanged, for a murder you had not the courage to commit—as I don’t suppose you are sap-scul enough to believe any body will credit the story you have told me?—They whistle again; I shall be too late.”

With this he was running off, when his companion called out, “Not so fast, Ned—give me my share of the book.”

“Your share? Why, you unconscionable dog, have you not got your share?—Didn’t the gentlewoman make you a present?”

He waited no reply; but was out of sight in an instant.

Mark now began to think there might
be

be some truth in what was hinted, of his being brought to account for the death of the person he had so strangely encountered; to avoid which, he determined to return home with his charge. The necessity of this was rendered still more urgent, by the sound of voices entering the wood; so taking a contrary direction, he hurried away.

As he walked, he mused on his morning's adventure; sometimes laughing at the idea of his mother's surprize, when she should discover what sort of booty he had brought her—at others, giving way to some degree of fear, as to the death of the lady. In this manner he reached the miserable dwelling, which he termed his house—a place chosen to conceal him from the pursuit of justice.

After his usual signal, the door was opened by its only inhabitant, his mother.

"I did not expect thee so soon," said the old woman. — "What hast thee brought me, boy?"

"A nice little sucking pig, I remember-you liked one, mother.—It has squeaked confoundedly, the best part of the way."

"Thou beest a good lad—and we will stop its squeaking, for we will have it to supper."

"But you must give it some dinner first, mother, as it is devilish hungry."

"None the worse for that, lad—feeding would do it no good, if its fat enough for present use."

"Judge for yourself," he said; at the same time uncovering the infant.

"A child!" screamed the mother.
"Oh! Mark, Mark, so thou beest ruined at last! Hav'n't I told thee what thee would come to? And to have the imperance to bring me your base-begotten
ten

ten imps! I do suppose I shall have your slut next. Oh, Mark! Mark!—is your own mother com'd to this?"

It was some time before she could persuade herself of the truth of what he told her, as to the child's coming into his possession, and much longer before he could prevail on her to consent to its remaining with them; she strongly urging to have it dropped at farmer Gristle's gate, as a return for some ill office which she owed him; nor was it till after her son had assured her, the dying lady, who, he was almost sartain, was some fairy, or spirit, had told him, the taking care of that baby would be the making of both his and his mother's fortune, that she felt any inclination to comply with his entreaties; but once having inclined to them, all the rest followed of course, and such attentions as she could pay, were cheerfully dispensed; and the same fate,

which had hitherto attended the infantine Mary, for such she had been called by the rites of baptism, still followed her.

In a few days she had made a friend of the mother, and become dear to the son; nor was it long before the promises of the spirit, or fairy, began to acquire increasing belief, for the whole of the gang to which Mark belonged, were taken in the actual robbery from which she alone had detained him; and there being no plea for mercy, they suffered the death which their manifold offences had long merited.

This, we may presume, did not lessen the value of our heroine; for this, my readers, is that very personage so necessary to a novel, and for whom, I doubt not, many of you have been some time impatiently looking. You could not possibly suppose me so dull, as to intend that any of the dramatis personæ, who have yet appeared, should figure in so conspicuous

cuous a character. They were all married, and that is the last act of heroism a woman is permitted to commit. Indeed, it is reaching the top of the ladder, and all beside must be descending; so bear in your minds, that Mary, by whatever other name she may hereafter be called, is the heroine of the piece. Whether I shall make her worthy your patronage, is not for me to determine; but in justice to myself, I must say, that I think, for a beginning, I have done tolerably well. And now, having made her known to you under her proper style and title, I shall proceed in my story.

C H A P. XIII.



MARK, and his mother, had several times agreed, that it would be necessary to call their protégée by some name, but what, had not been decided, when the intelligence of the fate of his companions reached him. The recollection of his escape, increased his affection for the little orphan; such he believed her to be, and gratitude prompted the idea of giving her a name, which would at once remind him of that event, and her situation, to which end, he, with great formality, christened her, "Geraldwood Orphan."

Gerald-Wood, was the name given by the gang to which he belonged, to the place where he had found our heroine.

It

It had been so called after their captain, who had fixed on it as their general rendezvous. The addition of Orphan, was designed to express her situation. Having now placed her with such eligible protectors, we will leave her to benefit by their instruction, while we return to learn what became of her unfortunate mother.

But first, it will be necessary to account for the appearance of Lord Morpeth at the public-house.

From the hour of Lady Jane's delivery, by the express command of her husband, no one of her friends had been permitted to see her for some time. The danger of her situation had been, with propriety, the plea, and would have still continued so, had not the physician's declaration rendered it abortive; since which, the Countess of Belmont, as well as others, had repeated their attempts to gain admission, but without success.

Surprized at this, her Ladyship had, the day of Lady Jane's flight, sent for Agnes, in order to have the mystery solved, and from whence she did not return, until after her Lady's departure. On missing her, she was informed by one of the servants, of their master's visit; and likewise of his having left her Ladyship's apartment, and the house, much agitated, and seemingly in great anger.

Alarmed, she waited his return; when on asking him whither her Lady had gone, he coolly replied, to the devil, he hoped, if any where. But on finding she was actually missing, he burst into a violent passion of oaths and execrations—vowing vengeance on that scoundrel, Fitzroy, with whom, he said, she had eloped.

Of this Agnes believed not one word; and imagining his anger put on, to cover some diabolical scheme, her alarm for her

her Lady's safety increased, and she hurried back to the Countess, with the intelligence, and her fears.

Although her Ladyship could not admit the idea which her informer entertained, of Twaddle's having murdered his wife, yet, she was equally certain, that Fitzroy had no concern in her flight from Lord Morpeth. In the moment of penitence, and while the life of her friend was in danger, she had learned the agreement, which had subsisted between Twaddle and his Lordship. This agreement now returned to her recollection, accompanied with almost positive conviction, that the removal of her friend was the result of that agreement. Impressed with this opinion, she instantly wrote the following note to his Lordship:

“ Your Lordship does not need to be
“ informed, that Lady Jane Twaddle has
“ been this evening secretly removed
D 5 “ from

“ from her own house, whither, and for
“ what purpose, you can best determine,
“ being the honourable confidant and
“ agent of her equally respectable hus-
“ band. I little thought, my Lord, that
“ at the time I listened to your peniten-
“ tial confession of your iniquitous fel-
“ lowship with that low man, your con-
“ science, then so sore, would be already
“ seared; neither did I imagine the
“ knowledge of barter and sale, in which
“ your tale amply instructed me, could
“ ever be turned to my own profit; yet,
“ such is the case. For, after being ini-
“ tiated into the mysteries of your’s, and
“ your coadjutor’s profession, I were un-
“ worthy such preceptors, if I suffered
“ myself to be outwitted, by failing to
“ repel trick by trick. But as your
“ Lordship, on that occasion, set me the
“ example of candour, I will be equally
“ honest, and confess to you, though
“ without

“without all that contrition you so well
“could describe, that if my friend is
“not returned to me this night, to-mor-
“row morning shall publish to the world
“my suspicion, that you, in connivance
“with her husband, have fraudulently
“obtained possession of her person and
“liberty. Your Lordship has too much
“good sense to suppose, I shall withhold
“any part of the evidence on which I
“ground my accusation.

“S. BELMONT.”

The consternation of Lord Morpeth on reading this billet, cannot easily be described. He hesitated not a moment, but followed the bearer to the presence of the Countess, to whom he very soon acquitted himself of all suspicion; but, at the same time, plunged her into greater incertitude and disquiet. His Lordship was equally distressed, but from a diffe-

rent motive :—he entertained no doubt of Lady Jane's having taken refuge from his pursuit, and her husband's tyranny, in the arms of Fitzroy. The thought was distraction !—He declared his opinion and his despair, accusing the author of it with ingratitude and injustice.

The Countess could not be convinced : she had learned from her woman, who had either by accident or intention, overheard the conversation between Fitzroy and her friend, at the meeting which she had brought about, all that passed, and was positive, no communication had since taken place. Notwithstanding which, she dispatched a messenger, late as it was, to Mr. Fitzroy's lodgings, with a request to see him instantly, on business which would not admit of delay. He obeyed the summons, ruminating as deeply as astonishment would allow him, on the extraordinary request.

He

He entered with an anxious countenance; and after casting an enquiring look around the room, assumed, in some degree, the courage he had lost in the dread of finding his faithless mistress there. The Countess, too, for the first time in her life, was sensible of something resembling embarrassment; she, however, addressed Mr. Fitzroy, thanking him in the politest terms for his ready compliance with her entreaty, by which he had infinitely obliged her. He coldly replied, it was impossible for her to estimate the obligation she acknowledged to feel, unless she could be sensible of the indescribable reluctance he felt evermore to enter that house—a reluctance which, he was compelled to say, not even her Ladyship's commands could have conquered, had he not been impelled by an irresistible curiosity, to learn what purpose

pose those commands were intended to answer.

The Countess, colouring, said, that after so candid a declaration, it would be cruel to keep him in suspense; she would, therefore, inform him, that Lady Jane Twaddle had, that evening, privately left her own house, and was supposed to be under his protection.

With a look of disdain, he asked, "And was this, Madam, your motive for demanding my presence?"

"It was, Sir."

"It was worthy of your Ladyship."

Finding he was leaving the room, she caught his arm, and with great agitation, said, "Mr. Fitzroy, if ever you had any regard for my poor unhappy friend, and still wish her safety—speak instantly—say, where I may find her?"

Somewhat softened by her emotion, he
replied,

replied, "Do not distress yourself, Lady Belmont; though I am ignorant of all that respects that Lady's flight, here is one who most undoubtedly can satisfy your fears.—My Lord Morpeth, you certainly will not prolong her Ladyship's alarm?"

"No, Mr. Fitzroy," sharply returned his Lordship, "not if I had your power to dissipate it."

"See there, now," exclaimed the affrighted Countess; "two fools are wasting that time in blustering at each other, which, differently employed, might save my luckless friend.—Cease, gentlemen; cease this folly, or leave me to take such measures for her protection as my judgment shall direct."

Fitzroy bowed and was departing, had not the entrance of Agnes prevented him, by her saying, "Oh, Mr. Fitzroy, my poor Lady is certainly murdered, or
taken

taken to a mad-house—John the porter heard Mr. Twaddle swear, this very evening, he would put her in one.”

“Tell me, Agnes,” said Fitzroy, “tell me, what does all this mean?”

She related what she knew of her Lady's absence, with the circumstance of Mr. Twaddle's telling her, when she announced the birth of the infant, that it was none of his, and that fellow, Fitzroy, should not think to father his bastard upon him to keep, for he had had plague enough with the infamous mother, who did nothing, even in her sleep, but talk of her beloved—her idolized Charles.”

“Did she?” exclaimed the deeply affected Fitzroy. “Ah, Agnes, was it true?—Did she think of—did she name me?”

“Never to me,” returned the woman, “except in her illness; and then she talked strangely, that you had insulted her,

her, and broken her heart; but she was quite beside herself, so was not to be minded; for I am sure you would not hurt her for the world. As to that matter, she was unhappy enough, poor Lady; to be sure, she was dressed, and went into company, so people thought she was running after pleasure; but I know better, for I saw all along, she was running away from herself."

Fitzroy was greatly moved.

Lord Morpeth approached, saying, "Mr. Fitzroy—that Lady Jane has been deeply injured, both by your groundless suspicion of her honour, and my unsuccessful attempts upon it, is but too manifest. Her present situation must be distressful, and may be calamitous.—Not one moment is to be lost.—I know her husband to be equal to any baseness. Let us unite our endeavours for her preservation; that secured, I shall be ready to submit

submit the whole of my reprehensible conduct to your inspection, and to give you any satisfaction her sufferings may demand."

"Spoken like yourself," cried the Countess. "Now, depart; and remember that you are friends, at least, until this business is completed, who have but one object in view. I will to my Lord; if he has a particle of natural affection in his composition, I think, this will draw it forth.—His son, too, shall be summoned."

The party, here, separated; the gentlemen to consult on what steps were most likely to promise success, and the Countess, to her Lord's dressing-room:—with him she found Twaddle. They appeared equally incensed against the unfortunate fugitive, who, they insisted, was under the protection of Fitzroy. They were joined by Lord Felix, who took the matter

ter very coolly; declaring, he thought it exceedingly probable that she was with her lover, and could not be with an honest fellow—that he, for one, would not disturb them, unless it was to tell them he approved of their conduct, and wished them all manner of happiness.

For some time, every effort of the equally enamoured rivals, to obtain the slightest intelligence, proved abortive. Their hopes, and the fears of the Countess, had undergone very nearly the same diminution. *She* had returned to society, satisfied she had done a great deal for her friend—*they* had retired to solitude, lamenting they had done nothing. Twaddle gave vent to his feelings, by talking of his wife, and his injured honour; while the Earl pathetically entreated his might be spared, by that stain to her noble blood, never being mentioned. When Lord Felix thought of her at all, he
thought

thought she was snug with Fitzroy: who, he said, was always one of your quiet, but devilish deep, fellows.

Thus would the heart-broken lady have been left to her own guidance, had not a servant of Lord Morpeth met, in a public-house, with the postillion who had taken her up on the road; and who was tantalizing the bar-maid with a cambric handkerchief, which he had promised several times to give her, but still withheld. She, at length, snatched it from him, telling him she was sure he had stolen it, it was so very fine. "And see here, Mr. John," she added, addressing Lord Morpeth's man, "if it is not marked with a crownnet, and the letters J. F.!"

This led the boy to tell how he met the young woman, who had left it in his chaise. With this intelligence, John made the best of his way to his Lord, taking his informer with him; and this
it

it was that brought his Lordship to Mrs. Shaw's.

He was accompanied by his steward, who had advised him, on his return to the house, to declare the rank of the Lady they were in search of, and threaten any further concealment. This succeeded to their wish; and the woman, without further hesitation, accompanied them to the lane; but not finding her they sought, continued their search into the wood, and reached the spot where lay the lifeless Jane, immediately after Mark had quitted it. Their horror and astonishment on seeing the body, cannot be described. She was, to all appearance, quite dead: they, however, on reaching the house, conveyed her instantly to bed, and sent for medical assistance.

After some time, symptoms of respiration encouraged a continuation of their efforts;

efforts ; and, at length, the hapless lady opened her eyes, but remained perfectly insensible.

Lord Morpeth's joy was excessive ; but it was quickly damped by the gentlemen who had been called in, declining to give any opinion at present, as to the probability of her recovery, there being much more to be apprehensive of than to hope.

CHAP. XIV.

AS soon as Lord Morpeth had regained sufficient composure, he dispatched a messenger with intelligence of his success to the Countess, and Mr. Fitzroy. It found the first of these in the midst of her equipment for a superb gala, given by one of her numberless admirers, and for which she had prepared the most splendid and most becoming dress imaginable; notwithstanding which, she ordered her travelling chariot to be got ready, with all possible expedition; at the same time, directing, that after her departure, her Lord should be informed that she was going out of town, and probably
might

might not return that night, as her visit was to a dying friend.

The women stared, first at their Lady, then at each other, and doubting their senses, obliged her to repeat her message.

Her carriage being announced, she tripped to it, in a great degree recompensed for her disappointment, by the consternation in which she had left the family, and diverted herself, during the journey, by anticipating the jealous conjectures and vehement exclamations of the Earl, when he should know of her departure.

On reaching Mrs. Shaw's, she was conducted to the bed-side of her once lovely friend; but, oh, how changed! She started back at sight of her; asking, in a hurried voice, "Is she dead?"

The nurse replied, "No, madam; the lady is much better."

Nature at this moment resuming its long lost empire in her bosom, she burst into

into a passion of tears, and taking the clammy hand of the insensible victim to a father's selfishness, she said, while shivering at the touch, "Better!—Do you call this better? What, then, must she have been? Lord Belmont, why are you not here, to witness the effect of your labours? Wretched! wretched man! what have you to answer for?"

Lady Jane opened her eyes—they were dim, and vacant. The Countess's tears fell afresh; she with difficulty articulated, "Speak to me, Jane—my friend—my companion—speak to your Susan."

"She does not know you, Madam," said the nurse; "nor if she did, could she speak."

"Not know me!—Not speak! Why, then, she must be dead, or dying.—Why, then, tell me she was better?"

The entrance of the physician prevented any reply; and the Countess im-

patiently waited his decision. He said he must forbear to give hopes, which, it was too probable might not be realized; yet he would not encourage them to despair.—Her youth might do much; but Lady Jane's mental sufferings had greatly injured her constitution, which with her subsequent illness, and, above all, the length of time, during which she had been exposed to the cold and wet, rendered it impossible to say what she might have to combat. After giving his directions to the attendants, he took his leave; and the Countess resumed her seat by the side of her friend.

The silence and gloom of a sick chamber, are at all times calculated to promote meditation; with our present visitant they were particularly so.—Unused to any thing that wore the aspect of solemnity, or even quiet, the present stillness appeared terrific—her heart felt oppressed—
and

and melancholy phantoms danced before her eyes. She endeavoured to conduct her thoughts to the ball which she was to have graced :—it would not do. She again thought of her Lord's perplexity :—it ceased to amuse her. She was at once convinced, every effort would be vain ; so giving her ideas the rein, they followed her eyes to the wan countenance of her friend.

“ My God,” she mentally exclaimed, “ how altered ! Two months since, you were as beautiful as an angel. Beautiful ! What is beauty ?—What is its worth ?—Of what value can be so frail a possession ?—A possession surrounded by a host of foes ; pain, care, poverty, and pleasure, are equally armed against it, and equally destructive is their power. Should it, by some uncommon fortune, escape all these destroyers, it is shortly overtaken by age.” (She shuddered, and instinctively turned
E 2 her

her eyes to the wrinkled face of the nurse.)
“Frightful!—Horrid!” she continued,
(turning from the woman).—“Better to
be dead than so.”

This brought to her mind, death, and
its accompaniments—of a patent coffin,
from whence there was no escape—an
hideous dress—and a cold, gloomy grave;
for of all beyond the grave, the Countess
had heard little, and thought less. In
her present meditation we must leave her,
to see what effect her departure from
home had produced.

The carriage had no sooner left the
door, than her women gave a loose to
their astonishment.

“What can this mean?—What will
my Lord say?—Who is the dying friend?
—Not return to-night?”

All these questions were asked, but not
answered; until the principal woman,
who had for some time been displeased at
her

her Lady's not intrusting her with her secrets, of which she was sure she had plenty; majestically repeating the words, "Not to return to-night?" continued, "No, nor to-morrow night; nor, if I were Lord Belmont, should she ever return.—Who can the dying friend be, but that wretch Sir Harry Faulkner? who, I do suppose, has been fighting a duel."

Both her companions were convinced that what she had surmised was the fact; and wondered at their own stupidity, in not seeing it sooner.

They now hastened to their Lord with the intelligence, not omitting those little emendations. To describe his Lordship's sensations is impossible; he wept, and raved, by turns; until being informed that the person who had brought the letter to the Countess, was still in the house, having been invited to the servants hall, he desired to see him. To his inquiries

the man replied, he had been overtaken on the Dartford road by a servant in livery, who offered him two guineas to take that, and another letter, to the places directed—that he was desired to use all possible expedition, as it was a case of life and death. This was a confirmation of all the Earl had before heard, and of his worst fears; it was more than he could support, and he sunk senseless in his chair.

During the confusion which this occasioned, Lady Bell Fitzmorris came, by appointment, to accompany the Countess to the gala. The porter told her, his Lady was from home; and his Lord too ill to be spoken with. Surprized, and dissatisfied with this reply, she desired to see the Countess's woman; who, happy in the ideal consequence she derived from being the historian of so fine a tale, related all that she did know to be true, and

and all that she thought likely to be so. Lady Bell declared she was petrified with horror; and ordered her coachman to drive as fast as possible to the place appointed for the evening's amusement. This he did; but neither his diligence, nor her impatience, prevented their way being impeded by a throng of carriages, which had preceded him.

Vexatious, as this circumstance proved, it was not without its attendant advantage, as it gave her Ladyship time to arrange her ideas, which had been somewhat confused by the numerous incidents of the drama, which she was on the wing to make public.—The Countess gone off.—Sir Harry Faulkner wounded.—The Earl of Belmont dying.—How delightfully tragic! She almost envied the Countess (for the Countess was her particular friend), the eclat of such a denouement.

Arrived at the door, she checked the ecstacy which elated her features, and entered the room of reception with an air of wounded sensibility; and, almost unmindful of the civilities which she received, sunk languidly on a seat. On being asked, If she was not well? she replied, with a sigh, Very well in health; but the scene she had just been a witness of, had quite overpowered her.

This was sufficient. A circle was formed; and the fair mourner, though deeply afflicted herself, had too much feeling for the sufferings of others, to keep them long in suspense. She therefore detailed, that having called at the Earl of Belmont's house, she was conducted to a room, where lay the Earl in the most horrid convulsions; at intervals exclaiming, "Base—infamous woman!—My death be on your head!"

Shocked at this spectacle, she inquired,

quired, and learned, to her utter confusion, that the Countess had eloped with Sir Harry Faulkner—that they had been pursued, and overtaken by the Earl, who had shot Sir Harry dead on the spot, but had himself, at the same moment, received a ball, from whence was not known, no person but the unhappy Countess being present; but from the effect of which, he was now expiring.

The gentlemen were speechless with amazement, and so were the ladies, except two or three, who whispered to each other, that there could be no doubt but that the execrable Countess had shot her husband. How long this silence would have prevailed, it is difficult to say, had not the entrance of Sir Harry Faulkner loosened their oracular faculties. The company stared — Lady Bell looked aghast, as if she had seen his ghost. — Indeed, at that moment, fearful as she

was of spirits, his ghost would have been the most agreeable of the two.

The guests now divided their attentions between the historian and the hero of her piece, congratulating him on his return to life, and her Ladyship on her invention. The former no sooner knew, than he acknowledged his obligation, adding, it was cruel, the moment she had put him in possession of his most ardent wishes, to deprive him of the power of enjoying them. She too well knew this sneer was meant to wound her self-love, by declaring his preference to the woman who had rivalled her in his affections. Stung to the quick, she replied, "It was certainly proved, that the whole of her information had not been strictly true—she supposed the mistake had arisen from a still greater mistake—that of Lord Belmont's servants' viewing him in the light of their Lady's favourite lover. For her

her cleverness at deceiving, or their stupidity at being deceived, she was not accountable. She only knew, that the Countess of Belmont had eloped with somebody;—if it was not with him, why, it must be with somebody else.”

Her Ladyship's words were confirmed by the return of one of the party, who had slipped away on the moment of her recital, in the hope of snatching a leaf from the laurel her discovery had obtained, by the minute particulars he should be able to glean. The business was now decided;—the Countess had ran away—the Earl had shot the lover—and somebody had shot the Earl.

This last circumstance the gleaner did not aver, but as the Earl was dying, it was fair to suppose something had killed him. To this reasonable conclusion, nothing could be objected; and as it was now very late, or rather, early, we will

take our leave of the disappointed giver of this fête, whose only object, in this ill-afforded expence, had been the gratification of Lord Belmont's wife and his dissatisfied guests, who universally protested they had never been present at so ill-conducted a thing.

We must except Lady Bell, whose triumph over Sir Harry, had so animated her spirits, as to drive from her memory the character of wounded sensibility she had assumed on entering the room, and which she had determined to preserve until she left the company: whilst the mortified Sir Harry, a prey to every tormenting sensation, wished to hide himself from observation, but dared not furnish what would be deemed so convincing a proof of his chagrin. But, having left the Earl in a very pitiable state, common humanity demands we should now return to inquire after him.

He

He had been put immediately to bed, where he shortly returned to recollection, and in doing that, to anguish. His sufferings were now all his own—he had no subterfuge — no unfortunate, to whom, with his wonted dexterity, he could transfer them. After a night of horror, he sunk into a perturbed sleep, from which he was awakened by the intelligence, that the carriage which had conveyed his Lady had returned. He ordered the driver into his presence, and commanded him to relate, in as few words as possible, what he knew of the Countess.

He replied, that he had left her at a miserable ale-house, sixteen miles from town; that she had bade him return home as soon as he pleased, and that, in obedience to this desire, he had only waited a couple of hours to refresh his horses.

“ Did

“Did she say nothing farther?—No message—no letter?”

“Nothing, my Lord.”

“Unfeeling — ungrateful woman!— Did you see any gentleman?—Any person, I mean, who received her? Where did she go?—What observation did you make?”

“I saw no man, your Lordship, but a doctor, I think they said he was, and the mistress of the house met my Lady at the door, and took her up into a garret, to see some sick person, I understood; and so, as every thing was very uncomfortable, and not even fit for your Lordship’s beasts, I made the best of my way home, my Lord.”

“And now, get fresh horses, and make the best of your way back with me.—Fly—be not a moment.”

“I shall be ready instantly.”

The

The man withdrew to execute, what he deemed, a most unreasonable command; and the Earl was very soon equipped for his journey.

On reaching the house, he inquired of Mrs. Shaw, If she had not a sick person in it.

She, taking him for some other physician who had been sent for, replied, "Ah, Sir, I fears you can do no good—I believes it bees all over with the poor soul; but please to come up these here stairs, but don't make a noise."

He followed.

She softly opened a door, and left him.

His heart palpitating, he paused at the entrance, when the first object which met his view was Fitzroy. His dress disordered—his face pale and emaciated, leaning against the wall—his arms folded across his breast, and his eyes fixed on vacancy—his whole appearance bespoke the extremity of despair. An awful sensation,

sensation, bordering on terror, prevented the Earl from proceeding, until the voice of the Countess, inquiring for something, roused him, and he hastily entered, uttering, in an accent of rage, "Infamous, perfidious woman! I am come to be the witness of my shame!"

He had, indeed; for, exposed to his view lay his sacrificed daughter, shaken by convulsions, which threatened every struggle should be the last. His Countess, looking like the angel of mercy, was moistening her parched lips, while Lord Morpeth, kneeling at the side of the bed, with a countenance that proclaimed how deeply he partook of the sufferer's agonies, was holding her hands.

His Lordship's words drew the attention of this sorrowing group; they looked at him, but spoke not, until, on his exclaiming, "Great God! what does this mean?"

Lord.

Lord Morpeth, addressing the nurse, who was busied in preparing something for the patient, said, in a low voice, "Take him away."

Fitzroy had been roused from the stupor which oppressed him. He started at sight of the Earl, and sprang toward him; when the Countess hastily arose, and giving him a look of reproach, pointing, at the same time to her friend, he threw himself into a chair, and burst into tears.

At this time, the physician entered; and being acquainted with the person of Lord Belmont, respectfully led him from a scene, which he conceived to be too heart-rending for a father to support.

Mrs. Shaw now informed him of all that had happened since Lady Jane had been at her house, and of the child's being lost in Gerald Wood, for by this name it was known to those in its vicinity.

The

The Earl was now left, for some hours, to his own reflections—these were companions in whom he had long ceased to take delight, and at this time, was particularly anxious to avoid communing with. To effect this, he endeavoured to forget the past, and look forward to the future; but the prospect was so dimmed—so often darkened with shadows, or perplexed with difficulties, that his fortitude failed, and he chose, rather, to retrace the evil deeds he had surmounted, than examine those he had to encounter. Yet, on a nearer view, he found the catalogue so vast, and the offences of such a magnitude, as made him equally earnest to conduct his thoughts to another resting-place. The present moment presented itself: his indiscreet wife—his expiring daughter—and his wasted fortune, stood before him. His brain was on fire.—“Great God!” he exclaimed, “on what
ans

am I to fix, when the past, the present, and the future, are equally tremendous—equally fearful to my sick imagination? I will remain here no longer:—this place is baneful to me.”

“A good resolve, my sagacious Lord,” said the Countess, as she entered. “after the notable discovery you have made.”

The Earl stood abashed. Recollection of the words with which he had addressed her, so ill-suited to the situation in which he found her, for a moment, chained his tongue; until, recovering himself, he approached her, and dropping on his knee, conjured her to forgive his rash words, and his unjust suspicions, and to impute them to his unbounded love, and a too nice sense of honour.

Scornfully repeating, “A too nice sense of honour!” she bade him rise, and quit a place where his stay could not be useful to any, but might be dangerous
to

to himself; that it was, as yet, impossible to say, what would be the termination of her ruined friend's disorder; that she slept, at present, which was deemed a favourable symptom; should it prove otherwise, she begged his Lordship, with his usual prudence, to consider what might be the effect of her death upon the feelings of the outraged Fitzroy.

He assured her that he would be ruled by her.

“Then, return whence you came, and send Agnes to my assistance.”

He ventured to ask when she would follow, as something had occurred which rendered her speedy appearance absolutely necessary,

“On what account?” she haughtily inquired.

“The most distressing imaginable; it was of such a nature, an evil of such magnitude——”

“Spare

"Spare your prologue," interrupted the Countess; "I hate long speeches—tell me this dreadful tale at once."

"I fear to tell you:—Indeed, my love, I am most unhappy at my own imprudence;—your character is ruined!"

"Is that the mighty business? I declare you frightened me; but, pray be composed, and comfort yourself, my Lord, with this reflection, that, for once in your life, you have not done any harm."

"Ah, Lady Belmont, you know not what I have done. I have not only credited, but sanctioned a report, of your having eloped with Sir Harry Faulkner."

"Excellent!—And this is believed?"

"By every body. Your sudden and mysterious departure astonished your family, and overpowered my senses. In this moment of confusion, Lady Bell Fitzmorris called——"

"Enough,

“Enough, my dear Lord—Lady Bell is an host on such an occasion: had I chosen from all my friends, she is the identical one I would have selected.—How fortunate that she should call!—and how lucky that you should have lost your senses! It was such a finish—quite an afterpiece; only that Thalia took precedence of Melpomene.”

“Degenerate woman; are you so regardless of your fame, as to term the loss of it a farce?”

“I crave your pardon—I do believe you are right: it was your Lordship’s losing your senses, that composed the comic part—so let it rest. Go you to town—permit my friends to enjoy the treat you have provided for them until my return; as I would not, for the universe, lose my share in their second surprise.”

“Have you no regard for my honour,
Lady

Lady Belmont? What would the world say to such conduct?"

"Does it not know that you have lost your senses? Be advised, my good Lord Belmont, do not convince it of its error in this point, as it may be exceedingly useful on more occasions than the present, and prevent it from seeking for your real motives.—Fare you well.—Send Agnes—keep yourself quiet—and leave the rest to me."

The Earl left her, severely mortified by the contempt which he had experienced, and greatly alarmed at the disregard she had shewn to the opinion of mankind. On her love of fame he had grounded his own safety:—to keep her place in society, he had believed to be her earnest wish; and this led him to hope she would stop short of dishonour. Of this solitary comfort he was now bereaved; he, however, returned to town, resolved

resolved on justifying her conduct, and vindicating her character from the unmerited calumny which he himself had given rise to.

The Countess returned to her friend, whom she found still sleeping. Whether it was this circumstance—the pleasure of seeing her Lord—or the intelligence he had brought, that raised her spirits, we cannot determine; but, certain it is, that something pleased her, as she was observed to smile several times; and once, rising with ecstasy from her seat, she said, that nothing could have happened better than Lady Bell's calling at that moment.

CHAP. XV.



THE next morning found Lady Jane free from convulsions, and every way better; and the attentions of Agnes greatly aiding the skill of the physician, she every day gained strength and recollection. She had inquired for her child, and had been told it had been sent to a distance for the benefit of air. With this she was satisfied; until one day, when her ideas seemed more collected, and her recollection clearer than had yet been observed, she asked, If the man who preserved her infant had been rewarded.

The Countess, to whom this was addressed, being off her guard, inquired, "What man, my dear Jane?"

"The robber," she replied; "to whom I gave it, when I thought I was dying."

"Merciful God!" exclaimed the terrified Agnes, "did you give the sweet innocent to a robber?—Then he has murdered it.—We shall never see it more."

The Countess motioned her to be silent, but it was too late; the alarm had reached the bosom of the ill-fated parent. She uttered a scream of horror, and fell lifeless on her pillow. With returning life, returning recollection came, and again drove her to a state of insensibility, from which it seemed inhuman to awaken her.

After several days of stupefaction, her reason returned: she appeared calm and collected, requesting that her father might be sent for. On his arrival, she detailed every material circumstance which had taken place from her quitting her own house, to her parting with her child

child in the wood ; and concluded, with conjuring him to use every immediate effort to discover the person to whom she had delivered it. She added, should he not be successful, while she lived, she entreated him to consider it as her dying request, that he would never, during his life, give over the pursuit ; and if at any period, he should discover her, let what would be her situation, or demerits, that he would rescue, protect, and acknowledge her. All of which the Earl promised solemnly to perform : calling on Heaven to witness his protestation ; at the same time, joining with those about her to urge the almost certainty of regaining the object of their anxiety.

Lured by these encouraging suggestions, she once more regained such a degree of health and strength, as enabled her to be removed to her father's house in town. Here she was still cheated with

the hope of discovering her child ; during which time she had been repeatedly urged by the Earl to return to her husband, but which she steadily refused : declaring that he had her most perfect forgiveness for every injury he had done, or had intended her—that she was sensible her own indiscretions had been many, and such as in some measure, excused the cruelty with which he had treated her.—She wished him to be happy ; but felt the most positive conviction, that neither of them could in any way contribute to the happiness of the other, but by a mutual release from the most intolerable bondage. She further added, that it was her intention, on the recovery of her daughter, to retire from the world ; and endeavour, by the attentions of a mother, to atone for the rejection of a father.

Time wore away ; her anxiety daily increased as her hopes diminished ; she
lived

lived in solitude, though surrounded by festivity. Her father laboured to drive her and her sorrows from his thoughts; her volatile brother seldom recollected either; the Countess had grown weary of her complaints, and was trying, by the most indefatigable industry, to make up for the time she had lost, while performing the offices of friendship. She had been much diverted with the various calumnies which her most intimate friends had been zealous in diffusing throughout the whole circle of fashion; she felt a degree of unalloyed happiness never before experienced—it *was* the triumph of virtue; yet, as such, she knew it not. On the contrary, she imagined that her unusual satisfaction arose from the disappointment of her slanderers, and not from the rectitude of that conduct which had given occasion for their malice. Had she been more habituated

to works of beneficence and humanity, she would have known, that they give rise to the sweetest and most cheerful feelings of the heart; but, unconscious of the origin of her present bliss, she hurried from it. In the haunts of dissipation and folly it was lost—she perceived the change and redoubled her pursuit: it was gone for ever.

Immediately on her return, she had given a most splendid fête, in direct opposition to the wishes of both her husband and her father, who dreaded the mortification which her rejected invitations would occasion her to feel. She laughed at their fears, and ridiculed the plebeian ideas which led them to suppose, the character of chastity to be as necessary to a woman of fashion, as courage to the commander of an army, or decorum to a curate's wife; that she knew the world better, and on that knowledge would proceed.

The

The event amply justified her pretensions; her house, spacious as it was, was crowded. It was true, indeed, there were very few of the females but had some good excuse to offer to each other, in palliation of the seeming condescension; such as, wishing to witness the confusion she would feel; or, desiring to see the impudence with which she would carry it; some went to discover if any one else went—some to observe how she conducted herself to Sir Harry Faulkner—others to look at her mean-spirited husband—and many from motives of the purest compassion, to prevent the wretched creature's being driven from society, through the want of their countenance. A variety of other reasons were assigned, equally substantial—and equally sincere; but as none of them ever reached the giver of the fête, we cannot decide which would have had the largest share in her approbation. All we know

is, that the whole were received with her usual affability and good breeding. Her Ladyship, particularly inquiring after their healths during her absence.

Amongst the foremost, was Lady Bell Fitzmorris: who, after the most ardent expressions of joy, at seeing her look so well, and so beautiful, inquired after the good Earl.

The Countess assured her, with much good humour, that he was quite recovered from all his wounds, both mental and corporeal.

It was not Lady Bell's place to notice this allusion; she, therefore, made way for others, who impatiently waited to pay their devoirs, and the night, which was concluded, to, at least, the apparent satisfaction of all the parties, left the Countess, restored to all the rights and privileges she had hitherto enjoyed, without her having condescended to account, in
any

any degree, for the conduct which had provoked their malice.

We have said she had become weary of her hapless friend's society ; this weariness was augmented by every visit ; nor was it to be wondered at, that a being, dedicated to pleasure, should shrink from associating with one, whose countenance bespoke cureless despair ; and whose conversation was the record of sorrow. Her visits, which had been short and seldom, at length, entirely ceased ; and a daily inquiry after her health was deemed sufficient.

Thus, abandoned by her nearest connections, and deserted by hope, the forlorn sufferer resigned herself to the undisturbed contemplation of her misfortunes. Self reproach, added to their bitterness ; she dwelt upon her venial errors, until they were magnified into the most unpardonable crimes : she believed they had

provoked the justice of Heaven, and that her child had been the victim of its wrath. The disorder of her mind, aided by the want of air and exercise, preyed upon her already enfeebled constitution, and she would, in all probability, have sunk to an early grave, had not the good-natured Lady Felix interposed to save her.

This Lady, who had been for some time prevented by illness from visiting her sorrowing sister, employed the first moment of her going abroad in calling on her. She found her much altered in her person, and more unhappy in her mind, than when she had last seen her. She inquired the cause. This brought on a detail of her wretchedness.—It was listened to with infinite compassion.

The tear of sympathy is balsam to a wounded heart—it was what Lady Jane had not lately experienced—she felt its influence—so consoling—so resembling
comfort,

comfort, that she could not refrain from expressing her gratitude, "to the only being, she added, "who felt pity for her."

"Now, for goodness sake," asked Lady Felix, "what should make you think so?—Ar'n't you got a many friends besides me?"

This brought on an explanation: she listened to the neglect of those friends with amazement, which she expressed by declaring, they were a parcel of the biggest brutes she had ever heard of, and proper Lunnunners; for none of them had natural feeling. For her part, she believed Ned was no better than the rest of them, with his staying out all night, and running over head and ears in debt; she was tired of such ways, and would leave him to his goings on, with his fine, naked opera-dancers, and such trumpery.

Lady Jane expressed her concern at her brother's want of conduct; but en-

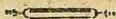
treated she would not think of leaving him, as her presence would be, at least, a check upon his follies.

She replied, "As to that matter, he could not be worse than he was, and she would not be made a fool of any longer; besides, she should die outright if she staid in this vile town, without a mouthful of fresh air, or a soul to speak to. For she wasn't such a fool but she could see that all the fine folks only ax't her to their houses to laugh at her, and to make game of her breeding; thof, for any thing she could find out, she was more politer than they were. But, be that as it might, she would go down to Beech-Grove; and she added, "If you haven't a mind to be stewed to death in this dismal place, come along with me, and I'll nurse you; and talk to you, and not leave you all alone by yourself, to think on your troubles, as God knows, you, as well as I, have

have enough of them, for Joey has got his lady too; so, only say, you will go, and I will be heartily glad of your company—if not, I will go by myself.”

Lady Jane's anxious wish was to quit her father's house; and to have such a kind, indulgent companion, was an inducement not to be withstood; she, therefore, eagerly accepted the invitation, and a few days after, they arrived safe at Beech-Grove, an antient seat belonging to the Earl, which had been settled on Lady Felix, at the time of her marriage with his son.

CHAP. XVI.



HERE we will leave the disconsolate Jane to her sorrows, and her well-meaning friend to the cultivation of cauliflowers—early peas—Patagonian cucumbers—and many other useful, as well as excellent articles; not omitting a large poultry-yard, a small piggery, and a respectable dairy, with numberless improvements or alterations, in the house and garden—the witnessing the progress of which, could afford no great amusement to our readers, while we return to our heroine. But, as extreme infancy has little to distinguish it, we shall pass her's over without farther notice, until she had nearly attained

attained her fifth year ; at which time, her friend Mark's affairs assumed a gloomy aspect, having laboured rather too earnestly in his vocation, which the reader recollects to be that of a robber.

A warrant had been issued to apprehend him, with a reward to those who should be aiding and assisting therein. From this, he knew there were not any means of escaping, but such as flight afforded. All the world was much the same to Mark ; therefore, the only regret he felt, was on account of the little Geraldwood, whom he was under the necessity of leaving behind him. Time was precious ; he consequently made his determination, and proceeded accordingly.

After causing her to be dressed in her best frock, sash, and bonnet, he divided his purse with the old woman, begging God to bless her until better times ; and, taking

taking the hand of his protégée, left his home.

The little Geraldwood, delighted to go abroad, prattled away at a great rate, but the heart of Mark was too full to answer her. As he carried her in his arms, she would stroke his cheek and ask, "Why don't e speak to I, Daddy?"

This never failed to fill his eyes with tears, or when she would press her innocent soft face to his, and lisp out, "Poor daddy sick—I cure e."

At the end of several miles, he stopped near a splendid seat, in the park belonging to which, were two boys at play. After some moments of hesitation, he pressed his young favourite to his bosom, kissing her several times, then, wiping the tears from his eyes, he led her towards them.

The least, a boy of seven years, having
thrown

thrown his ball beyond his reach, requested Mark to get it for him. This he did, and on receiving the child's thanks, he said, "You are very welcome, young gentleman; and I will now ask a favour of you in return. This little girl is tired with walking, and I am tired of carrying her—will you be so kind as to let her stay with you until I come back?—I shall not be gone half an hour."

To this he willingly consented; and taking Geraldwood by the hand, ran with her to his brother, while Mark disappeared.

The boys were equally pleased with their young companion, who chatted and laughed, and was as merry as the best of them; until, evening advancing, they were called from their sport, when they recollected that the man was not yet returned to take his little girl. The servant said, they must leave her there until he

he did come, as the Duke (for they were sons to the Duke of M——) thought they had been out too late already.

The Marquis of L——, the eldest, replied, "He would be hanged if he would, though; as something might hurt the poor little thing."

"Let us take her home with us, Charles," cried Lord John; "and Thomas can stay here, and tell the man where she is." Then, taking each a hand, they made as much speed to the house, as was consistent with the convenience of their little bandy-legged, rickety friend, conducting her, without any ceremony, into the apartment, where sat the Duke and Duchess, with Doctor Mirvan, her Grace's brother.

"Whom have you got here?" asked the Duke.

"A little girl," was the reply. "A man is a coming for her in half an hour.
But

But let us give her some supper, first, papa, for she is come a great way, and must be very hungry."

This brought on other inquiries, as how long she had been with them—and what the man had said ; during which, Geraldwood was amusing herself by walking round the room—admiring the fine things—and feeling such as she could reach. When she had satisfied her curiosity, she very deliberately took off her bonnet, handkerchief, and gloves ; having folded, and laid them by, she seated herself between the doctor's knees, and fell fast asleep, to the great amusement of the party : the Duke observing, that the young lady seemed perfectly at home.

" I fancy she is right, my Lord," returned the doctor ; " for I am mistaken, if he who left her here, means to take her back again.—She is a legacy to your Grace, I do believe."

" If

“If that should be the case,” said his Grace, “I declare Charles shall maintain her—he brought her here.”

“So I will, papa,” cried the boy.

“Very well, Sir,” continued the Duke, “she is your’s.”

Doctor Mirvan heard a dismal sigh from Lord John; and turning round, saw him retreating to a corner, in great trouble. On inquiring the cause, he burst into tears, and sobbed out, “Because Charles was a year older than him, he had every thing, and he had nothing.”

Charles denied it.

“Pray,” exclaimed John, “did not I find Tiger?—Ought he not to have been mine? And did you not take him from me? And did not the man give me the little girl? and now you have taken her too.”

“This is a dreadful charge,” said the doctor; “you must not treat your brother so.”

“No,

"No, uncle, I do not wish to——~~he~~ may have Tiger."

"I don't want Tiger—I would not give a farthing for Tiger," muttered John.

"What, then?" asked the Duke. "Do you wish to have the little girl?"

"Yes, papa; the man gave her to me."

"Very well, then; she shall be your's, and Charles shall keep Tiger."

"Well, but John," said the doctor, "you hear that you are to maintain her; how will you manage this?—Can you afford it?"

"Yes, uncle. Here is the guinea you gave me, and three shillings, besides.—I'll give it to papa, and he shall let her live with him."

The Duke received the money, saying, "But when this is gone, what are we to do, then, John?"

After

After a little hesitation, he replied, "Why, I think, uncle will give me another guinea."

"I do not know what to say to it," rejoined his Grace; "that is very uncertain; and this is too little.—I think I must send her back."

On this, Lord Charles stepped forward, and putting his guinea into his father's hand, said, "You shall have my guinea, also, Sir."

"No, no," vociferated John; "I will not have his money, for then he will want half of her."

"Indeed, I shall not, brother, the little girl is very welcome to my guinea; and I will give her some more, when I get them; and you shall keep her all to yourself."

The doctor stroked the head of Charles with more than his common kindness.

Geraldwood now awoke, and running
to

to her bonnet, put it on; saying, "Go to daddy."

This reminded them to learn whether any one had inquired for her; when the servant, who had been left to wait the arrival of Mark, said he had but just returned from the spot, which Lord John pointed out for him to wait at, and had not seen a soul; and it was now quite dark. The child began to be very restless, repeatedly calling out for her daddy.

"You see, John," said the doctor, "your troubles are beginning; you had better have taken Tiger—you can't take care of this poor thing."

"But Pierrot, the cook, will," returned the boy; "for he takes care of Tiger, for Charles; and I am sure he will do as much for me."

"To be friends with the cook," replied the doctor, "is, in general, no bad speculation; but here comes one who, I think,

I think, will serve our purpose as well, upon the present occasion."

This was the nursery-maid ; a decent, respectable woman, to whom the doctor recommended the care of our little heroine ; telling her, he fancied she was some little helpless innocent, thrown by her wretched parents on the charity of the Duke.

The woman pressed her lips to its cheek ; while Lord John called out, " But mind, Martha, you must give her plenty of victuals—as much as Pierrot gives Tiger."

" Well remembered, John," said the doctor ; " and you must use your interest with Martha, to try to make her poor little crooked legs as straight as Tiger's."

Martha looked consent, and departed with her new charge, and the brothers.

In compliance with the doctor's wishes,
the

the two young Lords were always permitted, during his visits, to eat at their father's table. Accordingly, the next day's breakfast-hour brought them Lord John, leading in his protégée, in great spirits. The first thing which caught her attention, was a loaf of bread, to which she made the best of her way ; and hugging it in her arms, toddled to Doctor Mirvan, and, tumbling it on his knees, said, " Cut I piece."

The Duchess, who had the foregoing evening been too deeply engaged with Mrs. Ratcliff's last heroine, to cast a single glance upon ours, now beheld her for the first time, and bursting into a violent fit of laughing, inquired what odd little wretch they had got there? On being told, she exclaimed, " Mercy on me, what an ugly little beast it is !"

Lord John looked greatly discomfited ; putting his hand under the chin of his fa-

avourite, he said, "I am sure her face is very pretty;" at the same time, turning it to the company, that they might have an opportunity of judging. His Grace, and the Doctor, both agreeing, that it was a pretty face, recovered John's good humour, and led him to tell them her name was "Geraldwood Orphan," for it was so written on her pocket; and that she had a very handsome gold play-thing about her neck. This information raised Doctor Mirvan's curiosity, and led him to examine the pocket, on which were worked in worsted, the words, "Geraldwood Orphan—her pocket;" and, suspended by a small gold chain, round her neck, was a glass, such as short-sighted people use, but made to close into a case, which was of beautiful workmanship; on the center of it was painted the figure of Hope, weeping over her broken anchor—beneath was this inscription: "Thy
power

power is lost."—On the reverse, an urn, with the words, "Here sorrow rests."

Both the Duke and Duchess extolled the beauty of the toy, particularly the exquisite delicacy of the painting; while Doctor Mirvan expressed his surprize, than an ornament so ill suited to the child's appearance and apparel, which, though of good materials, was both tawdry and vulgar, should be in her possession. The fact was, the glass had belonged to Lady Jane, and was always worn by her, till on the morning of her leaving Mrs. Shaw's, that good woman had, while talking to her guest, been also employed in quieting the infant, to facilitate which, she had passed the chain round its neck, dancing the ornament before its eyes, in hopes the glitter of it would attract them. Here Mark had found it, and here it was al-

ways placed, when the best frock was put on.

The doctor was likewise struck with the name of Orphan, which he thought might allude to her friendless state. He would have communicated his ideas, had he not feared to draw on him the ridicule of the Duke, or to increase the romantic fancies of the Duchess ; who would, on the slightest hint of a possibility that she was of other parentage than she seemed, have made a princess of her, or, at the least, the daughter of some exiled noble—some unfortunate lady, whose wonderful birth and beauty, could be equalled only by her sorrows ; or, not improbably, hold her forth as the offspring of the murdered Antoinette, the once idolized queen of France. To avoid both these awkward circumstances, he confined his thoughts to his own bosom, determining, however, to have

have some care of the little outcast. To this end, he caused the clothes she had worn, when the man left her, to be preserved; and requested Martha to make a point of her always wearing the chain, with its elegant appendage, about her neck.

The little object of his cares was now known by the title of Lord John's little Orphan, and became his constant companion, attending him in all his plays, or excursions; and, even when with his tutor, she would continue to be at his side, at which times she would take a book, and appear to be learning her lesson with as much earnestness and attention as he could possibly assume, oftentimes to the great annoyance of both the boys, who could not always restrain the mirth which her ridiculous gravity occasioned. When they went to repeat to their tutor what they had been studying,

she likewise walked up, and made her bow; but she perceived that she could not say what they did, which seemed to discompose her. At length, taking courage, she presented the book which she held, to the tutor, and looking earnestly upon his face, after making a fine bow, "Pees, Sir, to teets I, too."

There was something in the little pleading countenance and voice not to be resisted—he kissed her. "Yes, you pretty little soul, I will teach you, too;" and immediately commenced the employment, which she took good care should every day be repeated, never omitting to present herself, and her spelling-book.

The rapid progress which she made, soon converted what had been began by Mr. Daniel, as a frolic, into a pleasure. Indeed, her assiduity and retention were such, as led him several times to threaten Lord John with making her his governess.

ness. Nor was reading the only point in which she displayed her abilities: at peg-top, and marbles she had made equal proficiency. From her first instructors, she was not without acquirements; from Mark, she had learned to whistle and swear—from the old woman, to take snuff, groan, turn up her eyes, and ejaculate, “Lord, be merciful to me, a poor sinner!” or some sentence equally pious. However these accomplishments might be disregarded in the drawing-room, they were not without their value in the servant’s hall, where Geraldwood was ever a welcome guest, and to which apartment she was shortly after consigned, by the conclusion of Doctor Mirvan’s visit, and the removal of the young Lords to Harrow school: her friend, the nursery-maid, also, took this opportunity of revisiting her distant parents.

All these deprivations were severely

felt by our heroine, nor could even the society of Tiger console her, though he, poor fellow, equally miserable with herself, never left her side, unless to pay his respects to his patron, Mr. Pierrot. It was after his return from one of these visits, that she invited him to take their usual ramble in the park: he betrayed some reluctance, but at length obeyed. They had not gone very far, before he stretched himself at his length on the grass, from whence not all the coaxing of his companion could prevail on him to rise; the truth was, Tiger, like his betters, was fond of the good things of this world, and like them, sometimes, did not know when to stop. This had been the case that morning; for not having found his friend Pierrot in his usual place of audience, he had sought him in the larder, where, finding many things to his palate, he had made rather too free with them, which

which occasioned a heaviness and inclination to sleep. Geraldwood, finding he would not get up to walk with her, saw no other way of enjoying his society, than by laying down with him; this she did, making him her pillow, in which position they were both soon asleep.

They had not had half their nap, when the barking of a spaniel awaked them, and Geraldwood saw a fine gentleman examining very earnestly the ornament already mentioned, and which had never been taken from her neck. She sprang up, and made a courtesy, which Betty, one of the kitchen-maids, had told her, "was much more genteeler than bowing as if she were a boy."

The gentleman continued to examine the trinket, which he attempted to take from her neck; but this she prevented, saying, "No, sa'n't have it."

"Where did you get this pretty thing?" he inquired.

"From daddy."

"Daddy!—Who is your daddy?—Where does he live?"

The child looked wistfully round, but was silent.

"Where do you live?"

She pointed to the house.

He seemed lost in thought. On his turning to leave her, she ran after him, and putting her little hand in his, said, "I go, too."

Although this man had a heart not often visited by soft sensations, for it was no other than the Earl of Belmont, grandfather to the neglected little being, whom he had found sleeping on the ground, with no other guardian or companion than a dog; at this moment, he felt something in his bosom like kindness,

kindness, which would not suffer him to reject the hand she had given. He took it, and they walked on together, Geraldwood chattering, as was her custom, until they were met by the Duke, who, without noticing the child, asked, how his Lordship liked his improvements?

The Earl replied, "Exceedingly. But who," he continued, "is this very talkative young lady, who has introduced herself to my acquaintance?"

"Oh," returned his Grace, "this is a protégée of Lord John's—she was a present to him."

"You know her parents, then?"

"No, they took care of that—if I did, they should have as good a present in return. Some fellow left her with John, four months since, on pretence of calling for her in half an hour; so she is become his property."

“He has made her very fine,” said the Earl, pointing to her neck.

“No,” replied his Grace, “she wore it at the time.”

“And what name has your son given to his legacy?”

“That she brought with her also; for, on her clothes were marked, the words, ‘Geraldwood Orphan.’”

The Earl started, and repeated, “Geraldwood!” Then, recovering himself, added, “Very romantic, upon my word!”

CHAP. XVII.

OUR heroine's life now passed on without much variation, being mostly spent in running about the park and gardens, or romping with her friend Tiger. At length, the vacation brought home the young Lords.

Their joy at meeting was very great.— Their usual occupations were returned to. Mr. Daniel was equally surprized at her recollection of his former instructions, and the avidity and delight with which she received those that he now gave her; but her happiness was of short duration—the vacation ended, and she was

was once more consigned to the society of Tiger.

About this time, Lady Georgina, the Duke's only daughter, a girl of six years old, returned from a visit to her grandmother, and was shortly after confined to her bed by a cold. This threw the whole family into confusion. Several physicians were sent for, but Lady Georgina had never done any thing she did not like, and, unfortunately, taking medicines was amongst her antipathies. The physicians wrote excellent prescriptions—the apothecaries made them up, but her Ladyship would not so much as even look at the phial which contained them.

She grew worse, and more advice was called in. At this period, our heroine was deprived of her companion, the faithful Tiger, he having been tied up to prevent his making a noise. The being left to herself she by no means approved, therefore,

therefore, ran after every person she saw on the move ; and having followed one of Georgina's attendants, unperceived, got admission into the sick room, where sat the Duchess, with several other females, in vain using every persuasion to prevail on the patient to take a draught, which they offered her.

Geraldwood was soon at the Duchess's side, saying, " Give I some."

Her Grace held it to her lips, and she drank it off. One of the attendants asked, in sport, if it was not very good; to which she replied in the affirmative.

Lady Georgina now cried violently for that which she had before rejected.—Another phial satisfied her, and the joyful tidings, that their young lady had taken her medicines was conveyed to every domestic in the family ; and the instrument of so much good, was rewarded with some sweet-meats.

Delighted

Delighted with her good cheer, our heroine felt no inclination to depart, but sat herself down very contented, until hearing the invalid cry, she clambered upon the bed, and began coaxing, and kissing, and begging her not to cry. So successful were her efforts, that a short time saw her, not only satisfied, but pleased.

From this day, the attendance of Geraldwood was absolutely necessary; and the recovery of Lady Georgina was justly attributed to her persuasions and society, which occasioned a vast revolution in her affairs. Instead of the little neglected orphan, she was the little angel of the Duchess, and the darling of the attendants; besides which, every morning, when his Grace made his visit to the invalid, he kissed her, and said she was a good child. She was, moreover, dressed in the young lady's clothes, and had her
fine

fine dolls, and other play-things. The medical attendants were employed in straightening her legs, and reducing her high stomach ; in short, the favourite of Lady Georgina was deemed deserving of every attention.

Thus situated, it was not wonderful if most of her former friends were forgotten ; amongst whom, truth compels us to confess, honest Tiger ran the chance of making one, had not the warmth of his affection bade defiance to time and neglect—for the poor fellow, on hearing the voice of his favourite, one day, as she returned with her attendant from a walk in the park, struggled so violently to be released from durance vile, as to break his chain, and rushing forward, overthrew every thing which threatened to impede his progress, until he reached the Duchess's dressing-room, where sat assembled, the invalid, and both her parents—
her

her uncle, Doctor Mirvan, and the just-returned Geraldwood. The noise occasioned by the not very light movements of the agitated dog, with the rattling of part of the chain, which trailed after him, had drawn every eye to the door, when he announced himself.

Had he been one of the blood-royal, the company could not have arisen from their seats with more expedition ; but quite unmindful of the attention shewn him, he passed on to the object of his pursuit, and placing his paws upon her shoulders, they were instantly rolling on the floor together. Her Grace jumped on a table, screaming violently ; while Lady Georgina re-echoed her cries. The Duke rang the bell ; while Doctor Mirvan, terrified for the safety of the child, with difficulty succeeded in tearing her from his grasp—a footman at that moment securing the offender.

It

It would not be easy to describe the astonishment of the whole party, when they beheld Geraldwood return, and clasp the neck of the beast, crying out, "Oh! my dear Tider, how glad I bees to see u!—Where have u been, u naughty boy?" He looked in her face—pawed her—and whined; while she continued:—"Well, don't ee cry—I forgive u; and ont tell Lord John a word, if u promise never to do so no more."

The fright of the beholders was now converted into mirth; and the doctor, who was but just arrived, endeavoured to renew his acquaintance with the little orphan; but she was too much occupied with her late found friend, to derive any pleasure from the caresses which he now felt more than ever inclined to bestow. The doctor was a lover of nature; he had, besides, a heart overflowing with benevolence—the tear of sympathy and commiseration

seration was given to those sorrows which were beyond the reach of his bounty, whilst those within its influence, ceased to exist. From the first moment of seeing Geraldwood, he had felt interested in her welfare; and the scene with Tiger, had, in his opinion, furnished an early specimen of innate goodness, which held out a promise of much future worth; and, from this moment, he determined to make her his peculiar care.

Thus, surrounded by friends, the days of our heroine glided on without one ungratified wish, save that of detaining the young Lords always at home. Her gentle, yet playful disposition, had obtained her the love of every part of the family; and here it would be ungenerous to refuse Lady Georgina that praise which her conduct to her young friend so highly merited, of whose superior abilities she was not only sensible herself, but ever anxious
to

to make them conspicuous to others. She had now attained the age when the assistance of masters, to prepare her for the exalted station of life in which she was to figure, became necessary, and these were procured with an unsparing hand; but not a lesson could she be prevailed upon to attend to, unless Geraldwood had set the example. Thus did the little orphan acquire an education in every respect suitable to her real birth.

At ten years old, she, with her friend, accompanied the family to town, for the winter; and at this time, the young Lords were sent to Eton. Hitherto, Geraldwood had given no promise of beauty, further than sweetness of countenance went; but she now began, in some measure, to outgrow the deformity of person, which she had acquired from the indulgence of Mark, and neglect of his mother; yet, when she had reached her
twelfth

twelfth year, Lord John continued to call her his little Punch. At this age, Lady Georgina, and herself, accompanied the Duchess, who was in ill health, to try the influence of an Italian climate. They remained abroad four years, when her Grace returned with a renovated constitution, and her young companions grown into women.

Lady Georgina was something above the middle size, finely formed, and bordering on the embonpoint—her complexion sandy, and a profusion of very light hair—an eye which denoted quickness and good sense, and a mouth, whose lips and teeth would, of themselves, have rendered any face more than tolerable—her temper, naturally volatile, impatient, and unthinking, had gained nothing by an Italian education, where the utile had been sacrificed to the dulce—her beauty had procured her admiration—her birth, homage—

homage—and her fortune, servile attention.

Geraldwood differed, in most respects, from her friend; and was, by inaccurate observers, deemed less handsome—her form was less, nor was her complexion so dazzling—her hair, light chesnut—her whole deportment less commanding, yet her person was without fault—her countenance interesting—her manner fascinating, and her voice persuasive. It might justly be said of them, that the eye of the first demanded your admiration, whilst that of the latter solicited your friendship. Nor did the minds of our belles differ less widely; our heroine's had not been spoiled by adulation—the gaiety of her disposition had been, in a great degree, subdued by the supposed meanness of her birth; and her obligations to the protectors of her youth, had called forth every latent feeling of gratitude and sensibility,

sibility, with which nature had amply provided her.

Such were the novelties which the Duchess impatiently wished to introduce to the world, and such were the objects which were to meet the eyes of the young Lords, after an absence of four years. If they were astonished at the improvement of their sister and friend, that sister and friend had little less reason to be so at the alteration which had taken place in them. The young Marquis, now in his twentieth year, was amongst the first of human forms; his countenance was at once manly and beautiful—his manner dignified, yet tender. His brother's person bordered upon the feminine; his hair and complexion were like those of his sister's—his features perfectly faultless—his manner gay and unceremonious.

On Geraldwood's approaching him, he started with surprize; but recovering himself,

himself, he pressed her fondly to his bosom, saying, "By Jove, though I have lost my little Punch, you shall still be my orphan—won't you, Geraldwood?"

She replied with a smile, "She should ever consider that title as an honour."

The Marquis kissed her hand, which, his brother laughingly told him, was quite sufficient for a distant acquaintance, such as he was.

Cards of invitation now flowed in from every quarter; not a leader of the *haut t6n* but was anxious to greet the newly returned Duchess, and her highly accomplished daughter; and, as these ladies were equally desirous of displaying their foreign acquirements, gaiety, dress, and dissipation, became the order of the day. In all those parties, Lady Georgina and her friend bore sovereign sway, and many an heart had cause to rue their re-treading British ground, for many a *Damocles* la-

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mented his lost peace, and many a Delia bewailed her inconstant lover, whilst belles, whose syren tones had roused the torpid to deeds of valour, or lulled the hero to inglorious ease, were heard no more. Even the humble temper of Geraldwood was not proof against the distinguished reception which every where awaited her. Respect and admiration became familiar to her, until, by degrees, she fancied them to be her due: still, the meanness of her birth would, at times, intrude, and at those times, she was most wretched. She felt, that however brilliant her future station in life might be, this would never cease to pursue her; that the man who should exalt *her*, must degrade *himself*: nor was this all; the probable misery of her supposed parents sat heavy at her heart; of their fondness she still retained a faint remembrance, and nothing, she was convinced,

but

but inability to support, could induce them to abandon the child whom they loved. Of her father, she had a more perfect recollection than of her mother, particularly the tears which he had shed at parting with her. On these occasions, she would draw the little elegant memorial from its concealment, and weeping over it, wish to discover and relieve, or share the poverty of the hapless donor and his partner. These painful meditations were confined to the hours of rest, for at no other was she mistress of her time: her society being held in the highest estimation by every part of the family.

Thus surrounded, she knew no cares, save that I have just spoken of; but in this happy state, she was not, however, to remain. She was admired and beloved, but she was also envied and hated—those whom she had eclipsed by her superior beauty and accomplishments, were armed

against her. The history of her introduction into the Duke's family had been obtained from the identical kitchen-maid, who first instructed her in polite manners.—It was made public, and with additions; though most people would have supposed the truth, without varnish or embellishment, to be sufficiently humiliating to have satisfied the keenest malice.

Amongst Lady Georgina's admirers, was a Mr. Dash, the son of a Baronet, whom she, in her levity, had treated with much ridicule, and no small degree of contempt—which he only waited an opportunity to repay. This, her exalted situation made him almost despair of obtaining, until Geraldwood's story gave him hopes of rendering her Ladyship, at least, ridiculous, through the medium of her friend. An approaching ball was chosen as a proper place to execute his unworthy

unworthy project. For this purpose, he had managed to procure for himself a partner, who he well knew bore our heroine no good will.

At the time appointed, the company assembled; soon after which, the dancing commenced. Lady Georgina taking the lead, as usual, desired her friend to stand next to her. This, though certainly improper, where people of rank were present, had never been objected to; whence, like other habits, it had, by continuance, become familiar. Geraldwood had proceeded through the first couple, when she was stopped by Mr. Dash, who requested to know her rank in life. She appeared confused, and hesitated. He repeated his demand. She replied, that she had not any particular rank. He begged, since that was acknowledged, she would not usurp the place of those who had; and leading her from where

she stood, conducted his partner to it; while that of our heroine insisted on her retaining her first situation. The conversation grew loud—the music was stopped—and the lady of the house called upon to decide.

Mr. Dash alleged in defence of what he had done, that his partner was a woman of consequence; as such he was bound to see her treated. Her whom he had removed, was of no consequence at all. That, by her own confession, she had not any particular rank in life, though he believed in this point she had exceeded the truth, as, either he was misinformed, or her rank in life was very particular, indeed; and, until that was properly explained, she should not take place of any person for whom he entertained a respect.

Lady Georgina had not immediately learned the cause of this quarrel: she was now referred to by the giver of the ball,
who

who knew not how to act, as any decision of her's must offend one or other of the parties; when her Ladyship desired that no further altercation might ensue, as neither Miss Orphan or herself would condescend to dance in a set, of which Mr. Dash made one. Mr. Dash replied, that that was not acting with her usual humility;—she who could descend to make her father's menial servant her most intimate companion, and introduce her as such, might, in his opinion, without any *condescension*, dance in any set, or with any person.

Lord John now entered the room, and was instantly informed, by his imprudent sister, of not only the insult to Geraldwood, but of that to herself; for both of which he now demanded instant satisfaction. Mr. Dash replied, that to the daughter of the Duke of M——, he was ready to make every apology, but to a

beggar-girl, or what was worse, the offspring of the very dregs of infamy, he should make no concession. Here he was interrupted by Lord John's seizing him by the collar, and dragging him to the door, where they were met by the Marquis of L——, who interposed to release Mr. Dash, and retiring with the combatants, was followed by most of the gentlemen.

Mean-while, the shocked and affrighted Geraldwood had been joined by her friend, who was in vain using every effort to abate her fears for the safety of Lord John. The company were divided into parties, from whom proceeded whisperings—shaking of heads—clasping of hands—and every other symptom of exquisite feeling. After some time, the Marquis returned, informing his sister, he had procured hack chairs, and would conduct them home, which he thought would

would be better than to wait for their own, to which his sister consenting, he took the hand of Geraldwood, but, finding her trembling exceedingly, he passed his arm round her, and supported her to her chair, which he walked beside, until she was set down at the Duke's. Lady Georgina then inquired for Lord John, and was told the affair was settled, and that he was going to pass the remainder of the evening with some of the parties. This greatly relieved both herself and friend, and enabled them to regain some composure before the return of his Grace and the Duchess, who had gone to the opera.

CHAP. XVIII.

WHEN these personages were informed of the events of the evening, they expressed the highest resentment; her Grace declaring, that she could not conjecture on what terms, short of a duel, Lord John could have entered into an adjustment with such a fellow. A servant entering with a letter for the Duke, put a stop to the conversation.

“Why, it is from Charles!” said his Grace.—“Lay it upon the table. What can he write to me for?”

The heart of Geraldwood sunk within her. Lady Georgina hastily took the letter up, and read as follows:—

“My

“ My sister will have informed your
 “ Grace of the unpleasant business at
 “ Lady Holwood’s, between my brother
 “ and Mr. Dash, and which had pro-
 “ ceeded too far, on both sides, to admit
 “ of any interference ; in consequence of
 “ which, a meeting has taken place, and
 “ the aggressor received that chastisement
 “ his unmanly conduct to Miss Orphan
 “ merited; the ball having lodged in his
 “ body, the event is uncertain. I there-
 “ fore think it best my brother should
 “ absent himself for a few days, that, in
 “ case of the worst, we may have leisure
 “ to take such steps as would then be
 “ necessary. I shall accompany him
 “ until he is safe ; when I shall return, to
 “ learn your Grace’s pleasure on any
 “ point we may have omitted.

“ Your Grace’s truly affectionate,

“ and dutiful son,

“ J. ———.”

Lady Georgina, throwing down the paper, exclaimed, with ecstasy, "Oh! my beloved, my heroic John—you are the very quintessence of gallantry.—Who shall say the age of chivalry is gone?" and bursting into an hearty laugh, she continued:—"My dear, delightful Mr. Dash, how I should like to see you with the ball in your body. Well, after all, he ~~has~~ been in luck, though, for he got dance, which is more than we did, Geraldwood, and danced at a ball of John's giving, too. I dare swear he capered nimbly, and, probably, to his own music.—I trust it will be his last caper."

"Fie, my love," said the Duke; "that would occasion much trouble to your brother."

"Oh!" returned her Ladyship, "I only mean that it should spoil his dancing—there can be no harm in wishing the accomplished Mr. Dash may hop through life;

life ; it is giving him what he refused us—exercise.”

Her ridiculous manner of treating this really serious event, prevented its having the effect it would have otherwise had. She had again taken up the letter, for the pleasure, as she said, of seeing that Mr. Dash, who had been so famous for giving balls, had, at last, received one, when she cried out, “ Here is writing on the other side—’tis from the hero himself—hold your tongues, and be attentive.”

“ Dear Georgina I hope will forgive
“ my spoiling the elegant waistcoat of
“ her favourite, Mr. Dash, particularly
“ when I assure her that it was not my
“ intention ; half a dozen of his white
“ teeth, or a part of his nose, would have
“ satisfied my resentment. It was at
“ these I aimed ; but we little fellows are
“ always unfortunate when we attempt
“ to

“ to soar, yet, I protest, I had elevated
“ my pistol so much, in my own idea,
“ that I dreaded shooting the moon,
“ which shone full upon me at the mo-
“ ment, and, after all, I scarcely got
“ above his watch-chain, which, I have,
“ however, the pleasure to tell you, is
“ safe. Upon my soul, Georgina, I
“ would not have missed him, and injured
“ it, for the universe—never should I
“ have recovered it.—*Little John*, the
“ watch-chain shooter, would have at-
“ tended me while living, and stuck to
“ me when dead. Thanks to my better
“ stars, I have now nothing to fear, even
“ if Dash should die; for since our jury-
“ men are all become soldiers, they will
“ hardly condemn a man for committing
“ murder in an honourable way; so far
“ from it, I shall not be in the least sur-
“ prized, if, in addition to their verdict
“ of not guilty, they declare, to a man,
“ that,

“ that, in the same situation, they would
“ have pursued him through all *created*
“ *space* : so, if he dies, I am safe ; and
“ whether he lives or dies, I am a hero.
“ No one will be hardy enough to affront
“ such a desperate fellow ; and, as to the
“ ladies, that single ball, which lies in
“ his stomach, makes them my own.
“ What Geraldwood may think of my
“ prowess, I know not ; but this you
“ may assure her, I esteem myself her
“ own true knight, going in quest of fur-
“ ther adventures ; and that whatever
“ feats of valour I shall yet achieve, must,
“ like the last, be attributed to her peer-
“ less beauty, and my loyalty.

“ Farewell, dear girl,

“ WALSINGHAM.

This letter so well corresponded with
the turn his sister had given the busi-
ness, as to make the parties at least easy

as

as to the consequences which might ensue to Lord John ; but our heroine's spirits sunk as to those which she felt must result to herself. Her prospects, she saw, were blighted ; and she determined to retreat from that society, in which she must no longer presume to look for respect.

After a restless and unhappy night, she attended the breakfast-table, and as soon as the servants had withdrawn, collecting all her fortitude, she addressed her patrons in the most forcible and energetic language, acknowledging the innumerable obligations she had received at their hands, and the never-to-be-extinguished gratitude which filled her heart. She then proceeded to declare, that feeling as she did, for the affront given through her, to her noble benefactors, she could never again expose them to the chance of such insult, and must, therefore,

therefore, withdraw from a situation which their unbounded benevolence had hitherto blinded her to the impropriety of—that, destitute and friendless as she was, she must still implore their bounty, as far as it would enable her to live in retirement, until she had fitted herself for some occupation by which she might become a useful member of society.

Here Lady Georgina arose angrily from her seat, saying, “And this is the gratitude which you have been talking about!—Hang me, if it isn’t excellent!—There sat I, expecting to hear you swear, that nothing should make you quit friends who had done so much for you, particularly that good girl, Georgina, whom you would accompany every where she went, in spite of old Nick, or Mr. Dash; instead of which, comes a pretty worded speech about going away—retirement—and occupation. Gerald-
wood,

wood, if you don't wish to make us all think you grown silly, say not a word more on this subject. Do you really wish to convince the world that the Duchess of M—— has not the power to make it receive, with respect, whom she pleases to patronize?"

This was touching the proper key;—her Grace was instantly convinced, that to support her own consequence, she must support that of her protégée; she, therefore, insisted on Geraldwood's not thinking any more on the subject, but continuing to be guided by her; this the Duke thought would be perfectly proper, and left the room.

The paper of the day was now brought in, and in it the whole of the fracas was detailed with tolerable accuracy, concluding with an elegant compliment to the discernment, generosity, and exquisite sensibility of the Duchess of M——, who

who had, with such unequalled liberality, protected the most lovely and unfortunate of the works of nature. It concluded, by saying, "The malice of Miss Orphan's enemies would be utterly defeated; her good genius having given her a protectress too powerful, and of too superior an understanding, to let her feel any diminution of respect, either from her family or acquaintance."

The delight which this flourish afforded her Grace, was not to be concealed:—she caressed Geraldwood—promised, while she had life, to protect her with her fortune, countenance, and affection—kissed the tears of gratitude from her cheek, and desiring Georgina to rally the dear girl out of her low spirits, was retiring, when the Earl of Belmont was announced.

The Duchess and his Lordship, who were distantly related, had not met for several years, he having been out of town since

Since her return from the Continent. As they had always lived on good terms, their present meeting was very gracious. She presented her daughter and Miss Orphan. At sight of the latter, his countenance underwent an alteration too conspicuous to escape observation : his knees trembled, and he hastily took a seat. Her Grace feared he was not well.—He assured her, he was perfectly well—nothing but a little giddiness, occasioned by having rode faster than was his custom, in the fear of being too late to make his bow before her Grace took her airing. She bowed her thanks, and the young ladies left the room.

The Earl followed Geraldwood with his eyes, until the door was closed; he then seemed lost in thought, until, roused by his companion's inquiring what was his opinion of Lady Georgina's person? he said, "That which must be the opinion
of

of every one who saw her; nothing could be more lovely than both her form and face, unless it were those of the lady who accompanied her.—Who was she?”

“Bless me,” returned her Grace, “have you forgot the little girl you found asleep in my Lord’s park?”

“What!” exclaimed his Lordship, with well-affected astonishment, “the little beggar?—It is impossible!—it cannot be!—this girl is perfection itself—the prototype of elegance and fashion—that, a little vulgar wretch, whose deformity was incurable.”

“And yet, my Lord, it is even so. I need not tell your Lordship, that instruction with example will do much.”

“Granted:—and that all which both can do, must be expected from her protectress; yet, even your Grace could not, I think, rectify the mistakes of nature, or rather, her frolic, for she certainly formed

formed that little abortion in one of her most sportive moods."

"What will your Lordship say, then, to her mind being equally elegant with her person?"

"That high as my ideas ever have been of your Grace's power, they were exceedingly inferior to their deserts."

"I am flattered by Lord Belmont's approbation."

"Pardon me—though astonished at the performance of what appeared to me impossible, I am yet uncertain if I approve, or not; and to be candid, such incalculable pains to cultivate a weed, which, at best, can only adorn your kitchen garden, appears to me, not only a waste of labour, but judgment also."

"As how? my Lord."

"Inasmuch as a less beautiful and accomplished woman would have made a better and a happier wife to one of your
Grace's

Grace's domestics ; and though the favourite attendant of Lady Georgina, I fear she must not look higher."

"Your Lordship is in an error—Miss Orphan is Lady Georgina's friend—her companion."

"I beg your Grace's pardon."

"You appear surprized, Lord Belmont."

"Madam?"

"Nay, my good Lord, now you are angry—I have done something wrong—tell me, I beseech you, how I have offended?"

"Your Grace can never offend, nor can you ever do wrong, when guided by your own capacious understanding ; but pardon, if I suppose, in the instance of this girl, that you have submitted it to the opinion of others less wise. To place a plebeian, the probable offspring of infamy, as the friend, the companion to

the daughter of the Duchess of M——, is a step so extraordinary, so without example, that I must imagine it has originated with some one by whom you ought not to have been influenced, or in some motive to which you are a stranger. But I entreat your pardon; my respect has led me to speak warmly on a subject which can concern only your Grace's family—we will therefore change the conversation: and pray, tell me what was the business between your son and that wrong-headed young man, Mr. Dash? Who was the lady for whom they fought? I have not heard the particulars."

"The lady, my Lord, was Miss Orphan, that is, Geraldwood Orphan."

"What! the girl of whom we have been speaking?"

"The same."

"Then, I am afraid, I have erred beyond forgiveness."

"How

"How so, my Lord?"

"Because I learn from report, that the lady whom your son so gallantly defended is to become his wife."

"Merciful powers! do you mean to distract, or insult me?—Lord John Walsingham unite himself to a miserable orphan, who would have perished in beggary, had it not been for the charity of his family. I would see him dead, my Lord, or die myself, before I would endure such degradation."

"I cannot wonder at your Grace's indignation, nor can I repent that I have been the cause of it, by acquainting you with reports so injurious to the honour of your name. That such reports prevail, is undeniable; and that they are generally believed, is equally so."

"Then I demand, as an act of friendship, that you will contradict them—say, they are as false as they are malicious."

“I dare not say so much—all that friendship can, I will; but your Grace has not reflected in how great a degree you yourself have contributed to sanction this report. Has not this girl been educated, dressed, and introduced on a footing with your daughter?—And your son exposed his life in her defence? On what ground could I deem that to be malicious, which was warranted by such circumstantial proof? No, I will say, that the scandal is without foundation; at least, that your Grace believes it to be so.”

“Nay, my Lord, I see you are not convinced.”

“So far as your Grace’s power extends, I am, perfectly. You see the imprudence and impolicy of such a connection: but give me leave to observe, Lord John may not be equally clear-sighted.—The girl is lovely—and he is young;

young; he is, likewise, or I have been misinformed, of a generous, unthinking temper; now, as she has had art sufficient to lead you to do so much for her, I think it very possible she may prevail with him to do yet more, unless, by your Grace's exertions, while he is abroad, she can be so disposed of as to render a marriage impossible."

"And she shall be disposed of—they never more must meet."

"Yet, beware, my excellent friend, one rash step may undo you—you must repel art by art—a discovery of your sentiments or intentions would only tend to hasten the calamity you dread."

Here he took his leave, after proffering his services, if any circumstances should occur in which he could be useful, while her Grace hastened to the Duke's apartment, eager to communicate the intelli-

gence which she had received from his Lordship.

Greatly shocked by the possibility of such an union, he entreated her Grace, with more energy than he was accustomed to use, instantly to provide for the object of their fears, in some very distant, but respectable situation, where she should not again see Lord John, until it was beyond his power to contaminate his blood by so unworthy an alliance, which never could take place, being altogether hateful and unnatural; not that he wished any ill to the poor girl, who might be recalled on his son's being more eligibly mated.

The Duchess withdrew, not a little astonished at the uncommon exertion and earnestness of her noble partner, whose advice, for once, she highly approved, and determined to follow, with all possible expedition, lest the return of
Lord

Lord John should frustrate her designs ; the most difficult part of which appeared to her, that of finding a proper residence for Geraldwood, and the removing her with that privacy the nature of the business required.

Before she had thought of any plan which seemed likely to answer his purpose, a visitor was announced, who not only suspended her meditations, but promised to render the renewal of them unnecessary. This was a Mr. Delville, a gentleman of large fortune, and high consideration—his age was about thirty—his person, manners, and understanding, were unexceptionable. After some short preamble, he told her Grace, he thought himself particularly fortunate in finding her alone, as he had for some time most earnestly desired to confide to her his sentiments ; and if they met her approbation, solicit the honour of her interesting her-

self in his behalf. She expressed the pleasure she should feel in serving him ; and he proceeded to state, that from the first moment of his having seen Miss Orphan, he had been greatly charmed with her beauty, and sweetness of manners.— That every interview had increased his respect and admiration, until it had become the ruling wish of his heart, to make her the partner of his life and fortune.

The Duchess appeared surprized, but remained silent. After a short pause, he continued : “ Your Grace can probably inform me if the heart of Miss Orphan is disengaged ? ”

The Duchess having recovered the surprise which Mr. Delville’s generous, and unexpected offer had occasioned, assured him, she believed, nay, was certain, that the young woman was perfectly free from any attachment whatever.

“ Then,

“Then, Madam, may I hope, through you, to obtain his Grace’s permission to make my sentiments known to her?”

“Certainly; but will Mr. Delville give me leave to ask if he has been rightly informed of the birth and fortune of the person he wishes so highly to distinguish?”

“I have learned from report, that the first is not noble—the second never claimed my consideration.”

“You are very disinterested, Sir; and, for the young woman’s sake, I wish I could, with honour, let you remain in your present ignorance; yet, it would be fruitless, as the publicity of an affair which took place last night ——”

“If your Grace means when Miss Orphan was insulted by a wretch, I will spare you the unpleasant task of repeating it.”

“Indeed! And after a discovery so
I 4 much

much to the disadvantage of the poor girl, can you think so highly of her?"

"Seeing her under your Grace's protection, convinces me she is worthy."

"She is, indeed, a very good girl; yet, perhaps, I may have been wrong in doing so much—to give such an education—bring her up—and introduce her, I acknowledge was a weakness.—I am afraid you think it such, Mr. Delville?"

"Yes, Madam, such a weakness as must command the admiration of every feeling heart—a weakness, which, in my opinion, reflects more dignity on your name, than all the honours derived from your ancestors, noble and brilliant as they are."

"Do you, indeed, think so?—I am flattered by your opinion; and shall be anxious to make my young friend acquainted with her good fortune."

He gratefully thanked her; declaring,
to

to know that Miss Orphan deemed it such, would constitute the happiness of his life. He now took his leave, with permission to renew his visit on the following morning.

C H A P. XIX.



THE Duchess, on Mr. Delville's departure, again hastened to her Lord. It is scarcely necessary to say, her present communication was much more agreeable than the former. His Grace expressed the highest satisfaction; and determined to surprize Mr. Delville, by presenting Geraldwood with a fortune not altogether unworthy his acceptance. This was going further than the Duchess desired, but the events of the day had put her into the best of all possible humours; she, therefore, deferred her objections, and left the apartment, pleased with being spared any further fears, or trouble, on Lord John's account.

She

She was charmed with Mr. Delville's compliment; but, above every thing, was she delighted with the paragraph in the newspaper, which, she imagined, would give her a certain éclat in the world, of which she was particularly fond. Yet, had she known the author of the panegyric to have been her own son, and more particularly had she understood his motives for such praise, she would have had less reason to be vain of the performance. Lord John's knowledge of his mother's temper, led him to fear what effect the public degradation of Geraldwood, joined with his absence, might produce in her conduct to the already suffering girl; he therefore penned the high-flown compliment we have seen, and insured its insertion, before he would consent to quit town, in the hope its early appearance would guard her Grace's heart

from being prejudiced against his favourite.

The Duchess had no sooner reached her dressing-room, than she dispatched a message, desiring the attendance of our heroine. On her obeying the summons, she was congratulated by her benefactress, and informed of the good fortune which awaited her; the relation of which was accompanied with many encomiums on the condescension and generosity of Mr. Delville. When her Grace had ceased from speaking, Geraldwood fervently thanked her for the interest she took in her future welfare, and entreated she would have the goodness to assure Mr. Delville, she was truly sensible of the honour he had intended her, of which she should ever retain the most grateful remembrance, but that her wishes were bounded by her present situation, to re-
move

move her from which must lessen her happiness: that, attached by affection, still more by obligation, to the benefactors and companions of her youth, she could form no idea of any change, however exalted or independent, which could recompence her for the loss of their society.

The Duchess haughtily replied, that she was the best judge of what was most for her interest—that she had commanded her attendance, merely to inform her of Mr. Delville's proposals—not to consult with her on the acceptance of them—that to-morrow he would make them in person; when, if she meant to retain her protection, they would be received with such thankfulness as they merited.

Geraldwood, lowly bending, withdrew to her apartment, where she was joined by her friend, to whom she communicated the intelligence she had received.

Lady

Lady Georgina expressed, as she felt, the sincerest satisfaction in her flattering prospects, but lamented the separation which her marriage must, of course, occasion between them. "Yet," she continued, "it is for your happiness, and I will not be so selfish as to repine."

Geraldwood pensively shook her head, and they obeyed the summons to the dining-room.

Here his Grace added his congratulations, and said much of the family, fortune, and merits of Mr. Delville.

She listened in silence—and taking the first opportunity, retired to her dressing-room. Here she took herself to task on the wayward temper she was displaying; she inquired why that, which every friend she possessed accounted as good fortune, should, to her perception, seem big with evil. Unable to solve the question, she demanded of her heart an explanation.

The

The tale it told filled her with dismay; until that hour, she had not known how entirely it was occupied by another—and that other the son of her benefactor. She reflected on her guilt—the extreme folly of such an attachment;—she reasoned and resolved, until she persuaded herself, that if she had not conquered her preposterous passion, she had, at least, done much toward it.

In this state of mind, she, the following morning, received the declaration of Mr. Delville, with such expressions of gratitude and politeness, as left him no reason to despair, that his perseverance might be rewarded with her affections. The decline, in her usual vivacity, was attributed by Lady Georgina to the novelty of being in love—her Grace ascribed it to the real motive—reluctance to a marriage with Mr. Delville, occasioned by the preference to her son; but
this

this opinion was communicated only to her Lord, who agreed on the expediency of hastening the nuptials.

In this train were affairs when the return of the Marquis announced the safety of his brother from pursuit, which greatly relieved the minds of his family, Mr. Dash being still considered to be in much danger. The first greetings were no sooner over, than Lady Georgina said, "Ah, Charles, poor John's valorous deeds will turn to small account—his Dulcinea has proved false—the perfidious Geraldwood has deserted her banners, and is about to take for her liege Lord, the redoubtable Delville—he whom every quality mama in the United Kingdom, has marked for their son-in-law these five years."

The Marquis made his sister repeat what she had said, when, recollecting some directions he had to give his attendants,

dants, he left the room, whence he was absent some time. On his return, finding Geraldwood there, he coldly saluted her, and with much formality, delivered regards from his brother. She felt shocked at the change in his manner, for which she knew not how to account, unless it could arise from the public degradation she had received, having lowered her in his estimation ; yet, this was so unlike his general character, so different from every observation which she had made on him, that could she have discovered a shadow for any other motive, this she would have abandoned.

Unhappy in herself, and distressed by his conduct, she pleaded an head-ache, and retired ; when Lady Georgina remarked, that if Delville did not return very soon, Geraldwood would nope herself ill, and asked her brother if he had ever seen such a love-sick lackadaisical thing

thing as she had grown. He answered, by inquiring what occasioned Mr. Delville's absence, and was informed, he was gone to settle some affairs previous to his marriage, and prepare his house for the reception of his wife.

The following day, a letter was delivered to the Duchess.—On opening it, she said, “From your lover, Geraldwood; a very few days will restore him to us, when he hopes a very few more will put him in possession of all his wishes.”

During this, the cheek of our heroine had varied from red to pale, and from pale to red, several times.

“I hope so, too,” said his Grace, after having looked over the letter; “what say you, Miss Orphan? I assure you, the young man is very impatient—he has fixed his heart upon the performance of the ceremony on this day week;—I think we must indulge him.”

She

She was silent.

His Grace continued: "Have I your consent to say as much, or will you write him yourself?"

Geraldwood arose from her seat, and pressing her hand upon her bosom, with extreme agitation, said, "My Lord, I am your creature, do with me as you please," and hurried out of the room, leaving those within it variously affected—the Duke and Duchess with anger—Lady Georgina with surprize—and the Marquis with doubt.

Lady Georgina followed her friend, and the Duke withdrawing, the Marquis and his mother were left together, when she asked him what he thought of the conduct of Geraldwood.

He expressed his fears that she had been influenced by the fortune of Mr. Delville, and the well-meant advice of her friends, to consent to an union with the man for whom

whom she felt no affection; in which case, he thought it would be an unfortunate event for both parties.

Her Grace confessed, that Geraldwood had from the first moment, betrayed so strong a repugnance to receiving the addresses of Mr. Delville, that nothing but self-preservation could have prevailed on either the Duke or herself to countenance them. She then proceeded to inform him of her having discovered the attachment subsisting between her and Lord John, and concluded with protesting, she would sooner see Geraldwood, and the whole race of the Delvilles, consigned to misery, than that a son of her's should so disgrace his ancestors. Here they were interrupted, and the Marquis retired, ruminating on what he had just heard.

Of there being any thing more than brotherly affection between Miss Orphan and Lord John, he had no idea, and his
first

first sensations were those of resentment at his unfriendly duplicity; these were, however, instantly checked by that never-failing monitor, conscience, who demanded on what pretence he founded his right to his brother's confidence; certainly, not from any example of candour which he had set him. Had he no secrets to which that brother was a stranger? Might he not with justice retaliate the want of friendship—the duplicity with which he had been charged by him? Yes, too surely he might. Was not the object of his brother's affections dear to his own heart?—Was he not at that moment a prey to the most distracting sensations, occasioned by the knowledge, that she had given to another that which he would have considered cheaply purchased by the forfeiture of friends, rank, and fortune?

Unable longer to endure these reflections,

tions, he sought his sister, whose eyes betrayed she had been weeping.

On seeing him, she said, "Dear Charles, I am quite uneasy about Geraldwood—she is certainly very unhappy."

"Where is she?" asked the Marquis.

"I left her in her dressing-room—she intreated to be alone; and, indeed, her tears fell so fast, and she looked so wretched, I could not endure to stay."

"I will go to her," replied his Lordship.

"Do, dear Charles, and, for mercy's sake, say something to comfort her.—I am convinced she hates this Delville—pray, advise her not to marry him."

He left his sister; and, proceeding to the room, gently opened the door.

She sat at a table, on which she leaned, covering her face with her hands. Several tears, which had trickled through
4 her

her fingers, coursed each other down one of her beautiful arms. Perhaps a more interesting figure, even in the eye of a common spectator, could not any where be found. The Marquis gazed in silence; he feared to break in upon her sorrows, yet his heart refused to leave her to their influence. At length, he ejaculated, "Geraldwood!"

She started, arose, and hastily wiping her eyes, said, "Your sister has left me, my Lord."

He led her back to her chair, and taking another, placed himself beside her. Still retaining her hand, he said, "Geraldwood, I am come to upbraid you with want of confidence in your friend."

"Your friend!" she mournfully repeated—"I have no friend, my Lord; nor could they serve me if I had—my fate

fate is fixed." Tears again burst from her eyes.

"Tell me, Miss Orphan, do you really intend to marry Mr. Delville? I must have the confirmation of this question from your own lips, before I can believe it possible that, with your heart engrossed by another, you will solemnly give yourself to him."

Almost breathless with astonishment, she repeated, "My heart engrossed by another?"

"Yes, Geraldwood, I have discovered your secret; and can pity what I must for ever deplore. Were it in my power, I would render you happy, dear as the sacrifice would cost me: the resentment of my parents, or the certain destruction of my own peace, would not lead me to hesitate, could they prove the means of securing your happiness."

The

The varying countenance, and perturbed bosom of our heroine, sufficiently bespoke her sufferings. She attempted to speak, but could not—her dumb despair alarmed him. After a pause, he said, “Speak to me, dear, unhappy girl—I cannot endure your anguish. Oh! could my pity—my compassion ——”

“With a look of wildness, and a hurrying voice, she said, “Enough, my Lord, enough—I have heard enough!”

Then giving way to a violent passion of grief, she wept aloud; while the heart of the Marquis was rent with contending emotions. At length, recovering herself, she entreated his pardon, if in a moment of anguish she had forgotten the respect which was his due, or had appeared to reject that compassion of which her presumption had rendered her unworthy.

With a voice of amazement he demanded,

manded—"What presumption, Geraldwood!"

"My Lord," she continued, "by what means you have discovered my unhappy attachment, I am ignorant, as it is but lately that it was known to myself; since which fatal hour I have studied to play the hypocrite, and hoped I had succeeded—that hope was the single consolation which I had left me—it is removed, and I submit to your contempt."

He grasped her hand, and would have spoken, but she proceeded:

"Yet, had your Lordship known how I struggled with my feelings—how conscious I was of their impropriety, and that they were to me the source of only hopeless misery, you would not, perhaps, have thought it necessary to augment their bitterness, by reminding me of the meanness of my origin."

"I remind you!—For Heaven's sake, to what do you allude?" "A few

"A few words more, my Lord, and I have done: of this be assured; you shall never have cause to deplore my attachment, nor shall the destruction of your Lordship's peace, or that of your family, be hazarded to secure my happiness. That I have loved you—most tenderly loved you—I will not deny; but that I have never indulged a wish of being more than your friend, I call Heaven to witness."

The Marquis had fallen at her feet, and grasping her hands, exclaimed, "Love me?—Speak quickly—was it me?—Speak, Geraldwood, while I have life to hear?"

"Arise, my Lord—what does this mean?"

"Tell me—was it me you loved, or was I deceived?"

She would have risen, but he clasped her knees.

"Never, never, until I know my fate. Say, but that it is me you love."

“Release me, my Lord ; I do not comprehend you.”

“Then, say you love me.”

“I have said it already ; your Lordship mocks me.”

His head sunk upon her knees, and his faculties were, for a moment, suspended ; at length, pressing her hands to his bosom, and raising his eyes to her face, he faintly articulated, “Geraldwood, you have saved me from despair ; we have misconceived each other ; I thought your affections given to my brother—this error will explain how your union would have been destructive of my peace. But, say, will not my brother curse this hour, so baneful to his hopes ? Will he not execrate the plunderer of his happiness ?”

The rapid transitions which the mind of our heroine had undergone, from hopeless love, wounded pride, and inconceivable transport, greatly affected her.

She

She confessed her inability, at that time, to hold farther conversation than would suffice to assure him, that Lord John regarded her in no other light than as the friendly object of his benevolence.

She now entreated the Marquis to leave her, which he did with a heart relieved from the most hopeless dejection, whilst that of Geraldwood was divided between a feeling of inexpressible delight, and a dread of impending misery. The entrance of her woman, to remind her of the lateness of the hour, compelled her to suspend the reflections to which her newly-made discovery would otherwise have given birth. She hastened to dress, which she had scarcely completed, when Lady Georgina came to summon her to dinner. With a palpitating heart she followed her friend, but, on entering the room, was greatly relieved by the presence of Doctor Mirvan, who had just alighted.

CHAP. XX.

THE bustle occasioned by his arrival, prevented the observation which she dreaded her swollen eyes and confused looks would have attracted. They now repaired to the eating-room—the Doctor, as was his custom, leading in, and seating himself between his niece and her friend. The general good humour of the company—the constant attendant on a visit from their beloved relative—had its effect on the spirits of our heroine. She ventured to raise her eyes from her plate, on which, hitherto, no epicure, who had contemplated the beauties of a well-dressed tench, or snuffed the odour of a slice of

of

of venison, could more intently have gazed. They met the eyes of the Marquis—they beamed with love and gratitude. The gloom which had lately clouded his fine face, was vanished, and hope and happiness had supplied its place: she felt that she had occasioned the change, and her bosom partook of his rapture.

The bliss of Geraldwood was, however, fated to be but of short duration; for, on the removal of the cloth, the Doctor gayly said, “The more interesting business of eating being over, I must now take a survey of all your faces, that I may discover if I am likely to have any patients among you. Neither your Grace, nor my sister, I have already observed, will contribute a single guinea to my expences; and as to my Lord Marquis, there, his looks speak defiance to

my art, and penury to my purse. What says my lady niece?" turning to her.

"Death to *your* hopes," replied her Ladyship, presenting to him her full face, "as it has to a pretty large number of your sex; yet, like them, I will not drive you to despair—you shall have my patronage."

"I must rely on your words, fair lady; for, in truth, your countenance gives me no hopes."

"You shall instantly be convinced of their sincerity, by my recommending you a patient.—Here, Geraldwood, give the Doctor your hand—let him examine your eyes, for your tongue will not afford him any clue; I will tell him your symptoms, and if he is what he pretends to be, he will discover your disorder, which, being done, if he is what I believe him to be, he

he will pursue those measures which cannot fail to promote your recovery."

Doctor Mirvan had turned and taken the hand of our heroine, who had averted her face.

Lady Georgina proceeded: "Don't be alarmed my love—look at the Doctor."

"She were not wont to be afraid of me," he observed.—"Come, Miss Orphan, let me know what your eyes have to tell me?"

She slowly, and with downcast looks, presented her face—the alteration in it struck him; with a degree of anxiety, he said, "Your Ladyship has been faithful to your promise—you have, indeed, given me a patient. How long have you been unwell, my dear girl?"

"Indeed, Sir, I am quite well."

"Doctor," interrupted her friend, "this poor thing has been, for some time, complaining—no, I mistake; not complaining,

plaining, but moping—a kind of lassitude—not caring to eat or speak—fatigued by sitting up, and restless when in bed:—she seems as if her sickness was somewhere near her heart—for she sighs sadly.”

Doctor Mirvan, who had this while carefully perused the distressed countenance of Geraldwood, had seen enough there to convince him that all was not right, and that this conversation added to her embarrassment; he, therefore, endeavoured to relieve her, by giving, what he had before said, a ridiculous turn. To this end, assuming a very consequential look, with much solemnity, he replied, that these were certainly most formidable symptoms; and, but that her youth was greatly in her favour, he——

“I believe,” interrupted her Ladyship, “it has hitherto operated to her disadvantage; in my opinion, had my friend been
but

but forty years older than she is, she would have suffered less—as the case now stands, we must do the best we can. I have reason to think, that in the beginning, she was unskilfully treated; and that, latterly, she has been her own physician, and was either ignorant of her malady, or mistaken as to the method of cure; be this as it may, I now resign her to your care.”

His Grace observing, that he thought Miss Orphan looked ill, inquired how long she had felt herself so, and if she could guess what caused her illness. His daughter replied, she would best answer that question, because she could be very particular as to the time, though not so certain of the cause; two remarkable events having taken place, Lord John's going abroad, and the visit of Mr. Delville to Miss Orphan; but whether her sickness was occasioned by the loss of

one, or the gain of the other, it was quite impossible for her to determine ; but she heartily wished, that either John was come back, or Mr. Delville gone to keep him company ; and yet, after all, both those poor souls might be innocent, and Geraldwood's sighs be given to some flinty-hearted youth, like the Lord Marquis there, or some gentle Romeo, whose savage parents thundered out their anathema on the fulfilment of his vows.

Geraldwood, who had painfully endured the raillery of her lively friend, now burst into an agony of tears, and hurried from the room, whilst her lover, impelled by an uncontrollable feeling, hastily rose to follow her, but was checked by his uncle, who said, " I, too, am engaged, Charles; this rattle has made us overstay our time."

Thus recalled to recollection, he replied, looking at his watch, he was, indeed,

deed, very late, and hurried away; and the now repentant Georgina went to the apartment of her friend, whose forgiveness she entreated, protesting, what she had said was intended as a hint, which might induce her uncle to interest himself with the Duchess to prevent that stupid marriage, which, she was fully convinced, made her so unhappy.

Geraldwood thanked her for her kind intentions, but requested she might, in future, be spared such conversations.

During the three following days, the Marquis's assiduous endeavours were rewarded by several opportunities of privately conversing with the object of his affections. On the fourth, Lady Georgina was confined to her bed by a severe cold, and was attended by her friend, who, during the day, never left her a moment, and would have sat by her bed-side through the night, had not Doctor Mirvan

van forbade it, and insisted on her retiring to her own room at eleven o'clock; on entering which, she found a letter laying on the table. It was from the Marquis, and contained the most earnest entreaty that she would meet him by five the following morning, in the library, as he had something material to communicate, and which would not admit of delay. Anxiously conjecturing what this could be, she retired to rest, and at the time appointed, repaired to the library.

The Marquis was already there; his heavy eyes and faltering tongue at once affected and alarmed her. She expressed her anxious fears for his health.

He conducted her to a sofa, and placing himself beside her, without attending to her inquiries, said, "Geraldwood, the hour is arrived in which I shall put your affection to the test—you have said I am dear to you, above every other

other good ; now is the time to prove that you spoke the truth. Mr. Dash's wound is pronounced mortal ; and his friends are vindictive.—My brother must not return—I am to be the bearer of this intelligence to him ; and it has been settled by our parents, that we shall take this opportunity of commencing our tour through those countries usually visited by young men of fortune. This separation I could have supported, had I left you at liberty to pursue your own unbiassed choice ; but this is not the case.—Mr. Delville returned last night ; and the time already named for your marriage with him, is to be adhered to. Thus pressed, we have not any alternative—you must be mine within this hour, or never.”

The varying countenance of her whom he addressed, had too plainly indicated the agonizing sensations which each circumstance

cumstance had occasioned, to be mistaken by the Marquis. He continued: "I perceive my sudden information has shocked you; yet I must not cease to urge that this hour is the last which we have left to save our future peace.—Give me, then, my loved, my idolized Geraldwood, the only proof of your confidence, and your affection, that can save me from despair. Mr. Daniel waits to join our hands.—A few steps will bring us to the church.—No one is yet abroad. The moment is propitious—and Heaven will smile upon the deed. Answer me, my love; but first reflect, that on your words must rest my future fate—you speak, to bless, or to destroy me! You are silent—you consent. Come, let me lead you hence—the time is precious."

"I cannot, my Lord—indeed, I cannot! The meanness—the ingratitude of such an action! Oh! no, I cannot—
I cannot

I cannot forget that *your* parents are *my* benefactors—I cannot repay their benefits ———”

“By blessing their son,” interrupted the Marquis. “Go, then, ungrateful Geraldwood, and leave me to despair; go, and in the arms of Delville, forget the man whom you have deceived—forget him to whom you gave your vows—whom you cheated with a promise which you never intended to observe.”

“Oh! yes, my Lord,” replied the distracted girl, “I will keep it.”

“Ten thousand blessings on you for that word,” cried the enraptured youth, “it has given me life.—Come, my guardian angel, let me call you mine.”

He was leading her to the door—she withdrew her hand, and assuming a calmness which she did not feel, said, “Listen to me, my Lord; I will never marry Mr. Delville. If I cannot be your’s, I
never

never will be another's. This was my promise—a promise which ——”

“Neglect this hour, and you have not the power to perform:—my parents are determined on your marriage. Should their persuasions fail, their power will be exerted. The only means which will enable you to withstand this double influence, is, by becoming my wife. The knowledge that their entreaty and commands are alike impossible to be obeyed, will give you courage to withstand them. I am to leave you this day—give me the certainty that you cannot be another's, and I shall go in peace. If you refuse this proof of your affection, nothing you can say will relieve my fears, and I shall wander through the world—wretched—a prey to discontent and doubt.”

She held out her hand: “Take it, Charles; and should you ever look back on this deed with repentance, remember,
she

she who gives it, would have saved you from the evils in which, I fear, it will involve you."

He pressed it to his heart, protesting, that he dreaded no evil but the loss of her.

She now retired, and putting on a pelisse and bonnet, accompanied him to the church he had spoken of, and of which his late tutor, Mr. Daniel, was the officiating clergyman.

The day had but just begun to dawn, and the morning was cold and cheerless. The heart of Geraldwood felt unusually oppressed as she approached the altar; the gloomy darkness of the place did not serve to reassure her. She saw, or thought she saw, a person in the gallery. On looking again, the face had disappeared; and she believed it was her frightened fancy which had conjured up a shadow to alarm her. She gave her reluctant hand

hand—the ceremony was performed—and she trembling left the church. The happy Marquis, in vain endeavoured to compose her agitated spirits. She hurried to her apartment, and throwing herself on a sopha, gave vent to her overcharged heart.

After some hours spent in melancholy reflections on the ungrateful return she had made to the protectors of her helpless infancy, she was summoned to attend her friend. Reluctance to meet her loved companion, for the first time in her life, made her slow in complying. On reaching her bed-side, Lady Georgina held out her hand, saying, in a theatric tone, “Geraldwood, thou art my trusty counsellor, and I appoint you my ambassador to the despotic Mirvon; there, kneeling at his footstool, tell him you come to sue for mercy to his prostrate niece, who, trembling at his yesternight’s denunciation,

ciation, is willing to treat with him on terms of amity, and to concede some of the measures then proposed, if he will graciously restore to me the privileges of which his overgrown power has deprived me. Should he reject your suit, then give him my defiance.—Tell this haughty imposer of unjust laws, that war is thenceforth the word.—Tell him, though prostrate, I am not subdued.” Then, dropping her pompous stile, she added, “In short, my dear girl, tell him I am very well, and tired of laying in bed; and if he does not give me leave to get up, I will get up without it—so there is the end of that affair.”

This sally of her friend, called a smile to the face of our heroine, who, in her diplomatic capacity, went in search of Doctor Mirvan.

She was told he was in the library—the very name made her tremble, and she entered

entered it with a feeling of guilt, which she had never before experienced. The first object that met her eye was the Marquis. He arose at her entrance, and eagerly seizing her hand, was conveying it to his lips, but as suddenly dropping it, he coldly bowed, and bidding her good morning, offered his chair. Hastily passing him, she sat down in one from which Doctor Mirvan had just risen, and was on the point of reseating himself on.

“Mark that, young man,” said the doctor, smiling, “Miss Orphan prefers the seat I did not offer, to the one you did.”

She now perceived the rudeness of which she had been guilty, and would have apologized, but Doctor Mirvan stopped her, saying, That he would not have his vanity damped by hearing it had been unintentionally excited. Geraldwood remaining silent, he continued: “It is evident to me, fair lady, that
your

your visit was intended to have been a tête-à-tête, and consequently Charles, or myself, must be intruding; now, as we are both vain men, it would be necessary you should decide to which of us this honour was intended."

"Upon my word, Sir," stammered the distressed girl, "I thought you were alone."

"You hear that, my Lord Marquis," said the doctor; "I am the happy man—Miss Orphan has not any commands for you."

The Marquis bowed, and left the room.

A servant now entering with Doctor Mirvan's breakfast, he took the hand of his companion, and placing her at the table, requested she would compleat her goodness by partaking of his déjeuner. They sipped their chocolate in silence. At length, the doctor said, "Miss Orphan cannot guess how much her oldest friend

friend feels himself flattered by this visit, as he has for some time past feared that he was less esteemed by her than he had formerly hoped he had been." She looked wistfully in his face. He proceeded :—
"That look seems to say, I have been mistaken. To what cause, then, am I to ascribe the unwonted reserve—the averted look—which I have painfully noticed of late? What has become of the smile which used to greet me?—the kiss that pronounced me welcome?—and without which, I feel myself but half at home. Speak, my dear girl, have I offended you?"

She seized his hand, and pressed it to her bosom, then to her lips; eagerly pronouncing, "No, no!" and burst into tears.

He paused a moment; then taking her hand between both of his, he said, in a mild, but solemn voice, "Geraldwood, you

you are unhappy.—I am your friend.—Did I know your cause of grief, I would venture much to remove it.—Open, then, your heart to me—say how I can serve you—dry those tears, they unman me. If my friendship, fortune, or affection, can be the means of restoring you to happiness, command them; their utmost influence shall be exerted—do not fear to try me.”

“Oh! Sir,” sobbed the agitated girl, “you kill me with this goodness; I am unworthy of your care.”

“You talk wildly,” replied the Doctor; “you are not unworthy, and no one else should say you were. Come, my love, compose yourself; take this dish of chocolate—we will talk further presently; you have made me as sad as yourself.”

She did as he desired, and felt comforted by his kindness.

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