

1052

DIURNAL EVENTS.



A NOVEL.

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DIURNAL EVENTS;

OR THE

1052

Antipodes to Romance.

A NOVEL.

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IN FOUR VOLUMES.  
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BY THE AUTHOR OF *THE SAILOR AND SOLDIER BOY*.

Hail, Social Life! into thy pleasing bonds
Again I come, to pay the common stock
My share of service, and, in glad return,
To taste thy comforts, thy protected joys. THOMSON.

VOL. I.

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# DIURNAL EVENTS.

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*Surfacing Royal. 18*

## CHAPTER I.

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LATE in the evening of a beautiful day in June, a barouche, driven by Mr. Montague, and containing his lady and young relation, Elinor Belvington, entered the grounds of Ashgrove, the seat of the former. As the carriage approached the house, several ladies and gentlemen appeared at the windows, watching the arrival of the travellers. Mrs. Montague perceiving them, started up, and touching the arm of her husband, eagerly exclaimed—"Do, pray, my dear, exert a little more spirit; we

are going most terribly slow. I am certain I can see lady Fitzmorton at the window, and what will she say to this snail's pace?"

"It is not more than ten minutes ago that you objected to my pace as too rapid," returned her husband, as he again gave his horses the rein; and the four greys darting forward, soon whirled the barouche around the sweep up to the light portico. The steps were now quickly let down, Mrs. Montague descended, and Elinor followed her conductress to the drawing-room, where five ladies and four gentlemen were assembled.

No sooner were the first compliments over between Mrs. Montague and her guests, and Miss Belvington's name slightly mentioned, than the former lady broke forth into expressions of regret at not arriving in time to welcome her friends, having been delayed in their journey by an accident the carriage had sustained, which had detained them a  
day

day longer on the road than they expected.

Elinor could scarcely refrain from smiling at this account of an accident which, in reality, was so very slight, that had Mrs. Montague chosen it, she might, with a little more exertion to the horses, have reached home in excellent time to have received her visitors. Had Mr. Montague been present, his lady's account would have been somewhat different; but he was detained below by a person on business, who had been waiting some hours for him, and now sent a servant to explain the cause of his absence.

Mrs. Montague soon after inquired of Elinor if she liked to follow her example, and retire to arrange her dress. Elinor, glad of an opportunity to be relieved from the observation her appearance excited, willingly followed her cousin from the room, who, as they were proceeding to their apartments, in a languid tone



said—"You will not, Miss Belvington, I hope, think it necessary to alter your dress this evening; we are only amongst friends, and our omitting that ceremony will not be of much consequence."

"Amongst strangers, you mean," returned Elinor, smiling, "as I do not remember having ever before seen one of the party, and, except that of lady Fitzmorton, am not even acquainted with their names. Have pity, my dear Mrs. Montague, on my ignorance, and inform me, if it is so very *outré* to mention the names of your visitors to each other?"

"If you wish it," replied Mrs. Montague, a little confused, "you shall certainly be introduced in due form; but I thought I had told you who my visitors were. Sir Charles and lady Fitzmorton, their two sons and daughters, and—but I must beg of you now to be quick, and I will wait for you, if you like, before  
I return

I return to the drawing-room; only remember I cannot remain long absent from my friends."

"Surely," said Elinor to herself, as she proceeded to the chamber allotted her, "this cannot be the same Mrs. Montague I have been acquainted with these last six weeks. Till now I have been 'her dear Elinor,' or 'cousin,' at every word; but since we lost sight of Rosebrook Parsonage, 'Miss Belvington' has been the only term; and was I not also very slightly mentioned to her fashionable guests? or is it from recollecting the suspicion my father expressed, of my being treated as the 'country cousin' only at Ashgrove by Mrs. Montague, that makes me so very quick-sighted? At any rate I must not indulge my apprehensions at present, as six weeks must be passed here, whether pleasant or the contrary, before I can escape from this society."

And now, after having as quickly as possible dispatched her toilet, she has-

tened back to Mrs. Montague, who meeting her at the door, took her arm, and hurried her on towards the drawing-room, now brilliantly lighted, which, as they entered, Elinor perceived that though her friend also had remained in her morning-dress, yet its being composed of the most beautiful muslin, and adorned with costly lace, rendered it a striking contrast to her own plain cambric one; but as Mrs. Montague's had been, during the day, hidden by her pelisse, the difference in their appearance had, till that moment, escaped her observation.

Upon Mrs. Montague disengaging her arm as they entered the room, Elinor finding herself unnoticed and alone, drew a chair to a small table, and busily employed herself with her work, whilst the rest of the party found their amusement at the card-tables. Mrs. Montague slightly invited Elinor to join them; but upon her declining the offer, she, without





pleasing a one, that I could not prevail upon myself to withdraw my attention from it."

Elinor, smiling, answered, there was no great merit in her choice, as she had never been in the habit of playing cards; "And I confess," she added, "I am so much a stranger to the game now going on, it would be more a punishment than a gratification to be under the necessity of sitting down to it."

"Have you often visited Mrs. Montague," said general Clarendville, "and yet maintain that opinion?"

"This is my first visit only at Ashgrove Lodge," replied Elinor, "having but lately become acquainted with my cousin."

"Your cousin!" he repeated, in a tone of surprise; "I had not the slightest idea you were related to Mrs. Montague."

"It is Mr. Montague who is my relation, though I am in the habit of speaking

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ing of his wife by that name also, as she has, during her visit to us in Hampshire, insisted upon my doing so."

General Clarendon now inquired if her place of residence in that county was near Willowfield?

"Only four miles distant from lady Neville's house, who, I believe, is the inhabitant of that village you will next inquire for," replied Elinor, smiling.

"I should not have suspected you to have been a student in the science of divination," he returned; "but how else could you have imagined me an acquaintance of her ladyship's?"

"My skill also teaches me," replied Elinor, laughing, "that you not only claim acquaintance, but kindred, there. I have so often heard her ladyship mention your name, while lamenting your never having visited her since she settled in Hampshire, not to be certain my knowledge was accurate; and the first glance of your countenance convinced



me it was the original of the portrait now hanging in lady Neville's dressing-room."

"You are, indeed, perfectly correct," answered the general; "and I feel myself highly flattered at the notice bestowed by so young a lady on a worn-out soldier's resemblance."

They were continuing to converse in the same cheerful style, when they were interrupted by Mrs. Montague's entreating Elinor, if she would not play herself, not to detain general Clarendon, who had promised to take sir Charles Fitzmorton's cards when called upon. Elinor, again left alone, determined upon no longer remaining the object of attention to the gentlemen, whose glasses were levelled at her blushing countenance; therefore putting away her work, and pleading fatigue to Mrs. Montague as an excuse for retiring, she hastened to the comfort of her own room.

CHAPTER II.  
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Mr. Belvington, the father of Elinor, was rector of a beautiful village in Hampshire. He had been the youthful companion and friend of his cousin, Mr. Montague; but marrying at an early period of life, and retiring from the gayer scenes of the world in which he had been in the habit of mixing with his friend, the intimacy which had so long subsisted between them was much weakened, as the latter still continued attached to the pleasures of the metropolis, whilst Mr. Belvington found his happiness centered in the companion he had chosen for life, and in assisting her in training and cultivating the minds of their darling children.

Mr. Montague had suffered many
B 6 years

years to elapse since the visit he made his friend soon after his marriage; and when he again saw Rosebrook, his surprise and admiration were great to find his former companion the father of a fine family—the eldest, a beautiful girl of seventeen, on the point of being united to a young man, the owner of the Rosebrook estate. Mr. Belvington expressed great pleasure at again seeing his old friend, and rallied him upon his preference of a single life, which Mr. Montague persisted in affirming was as much his choice as ever.

About six weeks after his departure from Rosebrook, Mrs. Belvington, in looking over a newspaper, read to her husband the following paragraph—"On Thursday last, Charles Montague, Esq. of Ashgrove Lodge, Surrey, led to the altar the beautiful and accomplished Miss Faulkner, daughter of the late general Faulkner, and niece of the honourable Mrs. Morton of Burlington-Hall."

After the first exclamations of surprise
were

were over, Mr. Coleridge, now the husband of their daughter, said—"I saw this Miss Faulkner last spring in town; she is a very fine, dashing young woman, and many years younger, I should think, than her husband, as she did not appear to be more than one or two-and-twenty."

"Montague is now in his forty-seventh year," said Mr. Belvington; "and I own I thought him possessed of more wisdom than he has shewn in this foolish affair."

Mrs. Coleridge now begged her husband to tell them all he knew of the bride—"And do, my dear Henry," she continued, "justify the choice of our kind, good-tempered Mr. Montague, if you can."

"I greatly fear," returned Mr. Coleridge, "that even my eloquence will there fail of effect, as all I know of the fair lady is not much to her advantage. Her father, when I saw her, had been dead two years; his income died with him;

him; and having unfortunately lived up to its fullest extent, his daughter was left portionless, except the small fortune she inherited from her mother, and dependent on her aunt, Mrs. Morton. Too much accustomed to dissipation, having from her childhood been in the habit of mixing in the highest circles, she could not bend to her reduced finances, and therefore preferred dependence, and a life of pleasure, as she called it, to an elegant, though small cottage, which had been the property of her mother."

Mr. Belvington shook his head at this account, and feared his old friend would not find his happiness augmented by this new connexion, whilst Mrs. Belvington alternately pitied him, and wondered at his choice.

"I must acknowledge," continued Mr. Coleridge, "her manners, when she pleases, are really fascinating, and such, no doubt, they have appeared to Mr. Montague. Perhaps I am a little prejudiced

judiced against her; but do not be alarmed, my dear mother; I can see, by that expressive look, you are afraid of her as a companion to Cecilia and Elinor; trust me, you need not be under any apprehensions on that account; and you will find I prophesy truly, that Mrs. Montague will never waste her precious time in visiting a retired parsonage."

And Mrs. Belvington found her son-in-law was not unacquainted with her new relation's character; during a period of eight years Mr. Montague could never prevail upon his wife to accompany him to so stupid a place as, she was certain, Rosebrook must be, though he himself annually visited his friends there.

In the meantime Elinor, and her sister Cecilia, two years her senior, had attained the age of womanhood, and the gentle, interesting manners of the latter had won the regard of an amiable young man of the name of Willoughby, to whom Mr. Coleridge had presented the
living

living of Beechwood, a village adjoining Rosebrook; and at the time Elinor returned with Mrs. Montague to Ashgrove, they had been married and settled in their snug little parsonage nearly a twelvemonth.

Mr. and Mrs. Belvington had, for a series of years, tasted of as much happiness as mortals are permitted to enjoy, and their hearts were often lifted up to the great Author of all good, in pious thankfulness for the numerous blessings by which they were surrounded; and it was not until Elinor and her twin-brother Henry had attained their seventeenth year, that their happiness received a severe shock, in the sudden and premature death of their only son. The dreadful circumstances attending his loss added greatly to the blow; Elinor's health sunk under it, and for many weeks her parents feared they should have to mourn for another much-loved child. Heaven, in its mercy, spared them this additional calamity;

calamity ; but Elinor's spirits never entirely recovered the high tone they before possessed, although, after time had mellowed the anguish attendant on the death of her tenderly-beloved brother, her natural cheerfulness of temper returned ; and at the period of Mrs. Montague's visit, which was not till four years after that melancholy event, she became that lady's chosen friend, from the ability she possessed of diverting the demon *ennui*.

Mrs. Montague had unfortunately paid her first visit to the parsonage at a time when the inhabitants were under much anxiety, from their youngest daughter, Caroline, having been attacked with a violent inflammation on her lungs, and their attention was too much engrossed by the sufferings of their child to allow them to devote so much of it to Mrs. Montague as she required. The task of entertaining her fell, therefore, on Elinor, and she found it not one of the

the lightest. At length Mrs. Coleridge proposed to her husband to invite Mrs. Montague to the Hall for a week or two; he rather unwillingly consented, his former dislike of her not having decreased by her present behaviour; but fearing Elinor's health would suffer from the fatigue she underwent in the late hours she kept for the sake of her visitor, and the early ones she arose at to assist her mother in nursing their mutually-dear invalid, Mr. Coleridge was induced to consent to his wife's plan.

Mrs. Montague gladly accepted the invitation; but she soon found the reserved manners of Mrs. Coleridge full as irksome as the anxious countenances she had escaped from. As soon, therefore, as Caroline was pronounced out of danger, Mr. Coleridge entreated Elinor to join her friend at Rosebrook Hall, in pity to his poor wife, who was almost distracted with the restless disposition of her guest. Her arrival at the Hall was
joyfully

joyfully hailed by all parties—Mrs. Montague had again a cheerful and ready companion in all her attempts at amusement, and the remainder of her visit passed much to her satisfaction.

As the period of her departure drew near, Mrs. Montague was earnest in entreating Mr. Belvington to allow of his daughter's accompanying her into Surrey. Her invitation was politely, but decidedly rejected, Elinor herself having requested her parents to put a negative upon the proposal. But Mrs. Montague was not to be refused; again and again she returned to the charge, and in so strong a manner, that Caroline, who was now much recovered, remarked, that in any other but a high-bred and fashionable lady, it would have been thought extremely rude. But nothing she urged would have prevailed, had not Mr. Montague gently, though earnestly, pleaded for indulgence.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Belvington entertained

tained a high regard for him, and their refusal appeared so much to wound his feelings, that they were at length induced to comply with his request, and endeavour to reconcile their daughter to it, who was extremely unwilling to leave home, as her heart was deeply engaged in the welfare of her sister Cecilia, whose first confinement was now daily expected. Mrs. Montague lengthened her visit a week at Rosebrook to obviate that objection; but the little stranger not making his appearance, Elinor was unwillingly obliged to leave home, though not without innumerable charges to all her family not to neglect sending her the earliest intelligence of her beloved sister's safety.

The travellers expected to be at Ashgrove on the close of the second day's journey; but an accident happening to the carriage, they were detained several hours at a small village on the road before it could be repaired; yet as the days
were

were now at the longest, and they had the advantage of a bright moon, Mr. Montague proposed pushing on a little, which would enable them to reach Ashgrove that night. This was vehemently protested against by his wife, and she assured him the last stage must be the end of their journey for that night, as the terror and alarm she had undergone from the accident, and the fear her new carriage would be entirely ruined, had made her too ill to proceed.

Mr. Montague gently chid his wife for her timidity, but did not press his proposal, though he reminded her of the surprise their non-appearance would occasion, and that they must press forward quickly on the morrow, to be in time to welcome the guests they expected to dinner.

Elinor arose at an early hour in the morning; but when she met Mr. Montague at breakfast, he told her a violent headache would prevent Mrs. Montague from

from rising for some hours, and he therefore had dispatched a messenger to inform his guests they would not be able to arrive in time for dinner.

Mrs. Montague did not make her appearance till the day was far advanced, and they were unable to reach the Lodge until about nine in the evening, to the great annoyance of their friends there assembled; but Mrs. Montague's purpose was answered; her rival in carriages, lady Fitzmorton, had had a full view of her new-built and highly-fashionable barouche; and by her having persuaded her husband not to overheat the horses, they also appeared to the greatest advantage as they dashed up to the door.

CHAPTER III.

ELINOR had no sooner closed the door after her, than George Fitzmorton, a youth of seventeen, throwing his cards on the table, exclaimed—"That's a famous pretty girl, Mrs. Montague; I never saw so beautiful a mouth; why, her lips shame even your coral necklace, lady Harriet Marsden; and such expressive eyes, and brilliantly-blushing complexion, you scarcely ever see."

"I did not know," said the eldest Miss Fitzmorton, "that George piqued himself upon being a connoisseur in beauty; but I hope, brother, you also admired the style of this fair lady's dress."

"No," returned her brother, "I look only at the 'human face divine;' though
I am

I am also an admirer of beautiful hair, such as Miss Belvington's; and something I would give to be allowed to take out the comb, that I might see it at its full length; I will lay any wager, that when unrolled it would reach to her feet; and I'll tell you what, Isabella, there are more ladies than one, that I know of, who would gladly give eight guineas, instead of four, for such a crop of hair; for I remember, when I was a little boy, hearing a wigmaker mince to a young lady, who was bargaining with him for one of those necessary articles—'Golden-coloured hair, mem, is esteemed far superior, mem, and consequently is much more costly, mem, than either auburn or black.'—'Or *red* either, I suppose,' was my observation."

"This sudden and violent admiration, George, has had the effect of making you more boisterous in your language than ever," returned his sister, colouring violently; and his younger sister, Lucretia, .

cretia, ironically added—"This is quite the beauty of the golden hair."

"A second Belinda, George," said the general, smiling, and repeating from that well-known poem the lines—

‘Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,
And mighty hearts are held in slender chains.
With hairy springes we the birds betray—
Slight lines of hair surprise the finny prey—
Fair tresses man’s imperial race ensnare,
And beauty draws us with a single hair.”

"Exactly so," he replied; "but I question if Lucretia is acquainted with any fair lady of that name."

"You are mistaken," his sister hastily answered; "I know several of that name; indeed lady Belinda Hargrove is my most intimate friend and correspondent."

"Bravo, bravo, my most learned little sister!" cried George, bursting into a hearty fit of laughter, which so infected the rest of the company, that all, except Miss Lucretia and her highly-in-

censed mother and sister, joined more or less in his mirth. "Then pray," he continued, "tell this highly-favoured correspondent, in your next interesting communication, how well you have proved your intimate acquaintance also with nearly the most popular production of one of our best and well-known poets, whose works I heard you profess yourself so great an admirer of the other day."

Lady Fitzmorton darted an angry glance towards her younger son; but she was too well aware of the little regard he would pay to any remonstrance from her to hazard expressing her displeasure; and sir Charles, who had taken the chair Elinor had quitted, wisely appeared to be so engrossed with a newspaper he was reading, as not to have heard the conversation that had passed. Fortunately for the return of peace, Mr. Montague now entered, and in paying his compliments to his friends, and apologizing for his

his

this long absence, allowed time for quiet to be restored.

At length, after having declined joining either of the card-tables, Mr. Montague, glancing his eyes around the room, and not perceiving the object he was looking for, inquired of his wife what was become of Miss Belvington?

"She complained of fatigue," replied his lady, "and does not, I believe, intend returning to us this evening."

"Pray, Mr. Montague," cried the incorrigible George, "what is Miss Belvington's 'Christian appellation,' as Lucretia would say?"

"Ah, my young friend! are you already anxious for intelligence concerning my fair coz?"

"Yes, I am a great admirer of a fair-haired beauty, sir—"

"And I," interrupted general Clenville, anxious to prevent a renewal of the late unfortunate subject, "am as great an admirer of the expression there is



is at times in Miss Belvington's countenance, which makes me fancy I see again an old flame of mine, George; and yet, as I have never been in Hampshire, nor have ever known any one belonging to that county, the resemblance must be merely accidental, I think; besides, the features are very different."

"Well, my good friend," said Mr. Montague, smiling, "it is well Mrs. Clarendon is not by to hear this confession; but as both George and you are such great admirers of beauty, I wish I could shew you Miss Belvington's eldest sister, Mrs. Coleridge, where we have been visiting—she is reckoned much handsomer than Elinor."

"Coleridge!" cried lord Petersbrook, one of the gentlemen whom Elinor had remarked as the most disagreeable of the beaux present; "what the deuce! is my friend Hal's wife, that far-famed beauty, sister to this fair damsel? Egad! the girl made a decent match for herself;

self; an unencumbered estate of four thousand a-year was no bad catch for a rural divinity."

"A good example to set her younger sister, hey, my little girl!" said Mr. Fitzmorton, eldest son and heir of sir Charles, to a pretty, fashionable-looking girl by whom he was sitting.

"But pray, Mr. Montague, did I understand you right?" said lady Harriet Marsden, the fair object of Mr. Fitzmorton's attention; "is Miss Belvington really your relation?"

"Certainly," he replied, in a tone of surprise; "did not Mrs. Montague introduce her as such?"

"I really do not know," said Mrs. Montague, a little embarrassed; "I might perhaps not recollect to say cousin."

"Mr. Belvington," said her husband, turning gravely to lady Harriet, "is my first cousin, and I may add, first friend; he is so exemplary in the duties of his
c 3 profession,

profession, that he is highly respected and regarded, not only by me, but by all who have the happiness of being acquainted with him; and Mrs. Montague has often expressed the pleasure she has received from the society of his wife and daughters, of whom Elinor has always appeared the favourite."

"Elinor is a very charming girl," said Mrs. Montague, in a tone of pique, "or I should not have invited her to Ashgrove; though I also imagined a little change of scene would please her, as she must have but a dull life of it at the old parsonage; indeed, were it not for her sister Coleridge living so near, I should pronounce her in a state of vegetation at Rosebrook."

"When you again visit Hampshire, you will find you have judged very erroneously," returned Mr. Montague; "and had not the dangerous illness of the youngest daughter occasioned a temporary gloom, you would now pronounce them

them the most cheerful family you are acquainted with."

The party now descended to the supper-room; and George, satisfied with having thoroughly provoked his sisters, suffered the meal to pass quietly, and they soon after separated to their respective apartments.

CHAPTER IV.

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A NIGHT of refreshing sleep restored the spirits and frame of Elinor to their accustomed vigour; and as she found, upon descending from her chamber in the morning, that the family would not assemble to breakfast for two hours, she determined to employ that time in examining the grounds around the house, which had appeared, in the twilight of

the preceding evening, most beautifully picturesque; nor was she disappointed, upon a more accurate survey, when, after wandering some time through delightful woods, which, planted on an eminence, sloped down to the brink of a beautiful lake, her thoughts reverted from the grounds to the owners, and she once again retraced the strange behaviour of Mrs. Montague towards her since her arrival—"Can this," she mentally exclaimed, "be the same friend who, so lately as last week, affirmed herself never to feel happy unless her dear cousin was her companion in her walk, no drive pleasant without Elinor at her side? Now, how is she altered? Had I been dependent upon her for every necessary of life, she could not have introduced me, or conducted herself in a more slighting manner towards me, than she did last night; and am I to be subject to this behaviour for six weeks? No, certainly

certainly not; on that I am determined, whatever inconveniences I may expose myself to."

The sound of her own name now interrupted her mortifying reflections, and on looking towards the lake, she perceived general Clarendville and young Fitzmorton, in a small pleasure-boat, rowing quickly towards her. The latter eagerly inquired if she would join them; and on her acceding to his request, he steered the boat to shore, and assisted her into it with the greatest animation.

The gaiety of her companions soon communicated itself to Elinor, and she joined with cheerfulness in the remarks of the general on the surrounding scenery: at length, addressing her more particularly, he said—"Has my sister, Miss Belvington, ever mentioned the name of my daughter to you? I wish you were known to each other. Emma is, I should think, somewhat younger than yourself; yet I flatter myself you



will find in her a companion when she comes to Ashgrove; and I shall likewise hope, in the course of the summer, to see you together at Willowfield; can you tell me if we are expected soon?"

"I have seen so little of lady Neville since she settled near us," Elinor replied, "that I have not heard any of her plans; but I find she has recognised an old friend in my mother, though they have not met for many years; from her I shall hear shortly, and she will, I hope, give me information concerning her ladyship."

"Where then," inquired the general, "did you become acquainted with my sister, if not at Willowfield?"

"I had the pleasure of meeting her last winter at Bath, while with a friend with whom I staid some months; you may perhaps know lady Neville's friend as well as mine, Mrs. Benfield."

General Clarendon had scarcely time to answer in the affirmative when he

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was interrupted by George Fitzmorton suddenly exclaiming—"I do really believe, yonder, in the wood, is my learned little sister, book-in-hand; I would lay any wager, general, she is now busily employed in getting by rote 'The Rape of the Lock;' if she is, you may depend upon it we shall hear her reciting it before the day is over, to give me a hint of her perfect acquaintance with the subject alluded to last night. Egad, I will let her know she is discovered;" and with true stentorian lungs he now shouted "Lucretia!" till echo rang with the sound; but the object of his noisy mirth, though she involuntarily half-turned at the clamour, took no further notice, except retreating from the more open path into the thicket near her.

"I was in hopes," cried George, laughing immoderately, "I should have enticed her to join us; she would have proved a most delightful addition to our

party, and perhaps have had the kindness to impart some of her extensive information to such poor ignoramuses as we are."

"Have you a brother, Miss Belvington," said the general, gravely, "who would be equally gratified by your company as my friend here has professed he should be in that of his sister?"

"I have not a brother alive now," replied Elinor, in a mournful tone, "except," she added, seeing the general look distressed by her answer, "those my two sisters have given me."

"Two sisters married!" exclaimed George; "what a lucky family yours must be! Why, mine will be long enough before they give me an additional brother."

"Mr. Fitzmorton will make you amends," said the general, "by presenting you with a third sister."

"Oh, no more sisters! two are enough in all conscience," he replied.

"What



“What objection can you possibly have to lady Harriet?” inquired the general.

“Do not, my dear sir, mention that lump of affectation and folly,” he returned, “or you will make me jump out of the boat, and wade to the bank in self-defence; I detest her as much as I do her little toady cousin, Miss Marsden, with her mincing—‘Oh, Mr. George, you are vastly polite;’ and ‘don’t you think, Mr. George, lady Harriet sings most divinely?’ These two together would drive any man mad.”

“If you have finished your invective against these poor unfortunate fair ones, George,” said the general, looking at his watch, “have the goodness to tack about, or we shall exceed the hour of breakfast, and you will lose your dozen rolls.”

“We can land here,” he replied; “I will fasten the boat to this tree, and lead you by so short a cut to the house, that

that we shall be in excellent time for the battle."

As Elinor agilely leaped on shore, he cried—"Bravo, Miss Belvington! now lady Harriet would have treated us with half-a-dozen screams before she had even ventured her foot on the plank."

"No more of lady Harriet, my dear boy, at present," said the general; "but fasten your rope and lead the way; remember the watchword is—Breakfast."

"Which I would not lose for twenty lady Harriets," he cried; "so, march."

True to his promise, George ushered them into the breakfast-room in such excellent time that the rolls were still waiting his attack.

Mr. Montague welcomed Elinor with a friendly pressure of the hand; and after congratulating her upon having recovered the fatigue of the preceding evening, entreated her to take the trouble of making him and his guests some breakfast, as Mrs. Montague never  
made

made her appearance at that meal.—  
“By the bye, Elinor,” he continued, “I was desired to say she wished to see you afterwards; and as there is to be a ball to-morrow evening at Lesford, which our party will of course attend, as I have the honour of representing that borough, I think I can guess what the nature of your conference will be. On so sudden an emergency, all your united talents must be called into action, and remember I am at your service if an umpire is required.”

Elinor laughingly promised to avail herself of his kindness; and as soon as breakfast was over, repaired to Mrs. Montague, who was not yet risen.—  
“My dear Elinor,” she exclaimed, on her entrance, “do you know there is to be a ball to-morrow at Lesford? and Montague says we must go to it, or the good folk there will take pet. I suppose it will not be necessary to appear very dashing; and if you agree with me,



me, I shall not take much trouble in dressing merely to be stared at. Are you of my opinion, or do you intend to be very magnificent?"

"You are too well acquainted with my style of dress," replied Elinor, "to entertain any apprehensions of my being more superbly dressed than the occasion requires; and I assure you that I shall not deviate from my usual mode, unless," she archly added, "you particularly wish it."

"I can have no wish to interfere with your dress," said Mrs. Montague, colouring; "indeed I should be fastidious in the extreme, were I to make the slightest objection to what is so simply elegant, and, of course, becoming; what would George Fitzmorton say to my want of taste if I did—he who already thinks you all perfection?"

"Well, I am glad Mr. George Fitzmorton did not think me so perfectly unworthy of notice last night as his sisters

ters

ters appeared to do," said Elinor, smiling; "but I suppose he divined I was nearly related to Mr. Montague, which the young ladies seemed ignorant of."

"Oh, you must not be too severe, Elinor," said Mrs. Montague, colouring still more deeply; "you will find the Miss Fitzmortons very pleasant when you know more of them, though I confess they are too reserved towards strangers. But, my love, I will not detain you any longer, as I know you are anxious to write to your mother; and upon second thoughts, I shall abide by Mr. Montague's decision in regard to ornaments—he may think the subject of more consequence than we do."

"Shall I send him to you?" said Elinor, as she opened the door; "he expects, I believe, to be summoned."

"I would on no account give my *cousin* so much trouble," replied Mrs. Montague, with marked emphasis on the word; "Walker can go down on that errand; and

and I beg you will remember me in your letter to my kind friends in Hampshire."

## CHAPTER V.

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AT dinner, when they again met, Elinor perceived her hint had not been thrown away; for whenever Mrs. Montague addressed her, which she took care frequently to do, it was either—"My dear Elinor, do let me send you some fowl," or, "Mr. Montague, I wish you could persuade your cousin to take some wine;" and Elinor felt happy that she had refrained from mentioning any of her relations in the letter she had that day dispatched to Rosebrook.

When the same party had again assembled in the drawing-room, Miss Marsden most energetically entreated  
lady



lady Harriet to charm the company with her delightful voice; but her ladyship protested the ride she had taken in the morning with Mr. Fitzmorton had so fatigued her, she could not raise a note; —“ Indeed I had rather play at cards,” she continued; “ so come, lord Petersbrook,” starting, as she spoke, from the sofa on which she had been reclining, with more alacrity than could have been expected, considering the languor she had been for the last half-hour so indefatigably displaying, “ I will give you an opportunity of retrieving your losses; five guineas to seven, Miss Fitzmorton holds the highest card first deal.”

“ Done,” said his lordship, placing himself at the table; “ only I must have it an even bet.”

As soon as the card-players were seated at the tables, general Clarendville, who had preferred remaining disengaged, invited Elinor to accompany him in a ramble; she cheerfully consented, and the

the general, after informing Mrs. Montague he was going to point out some of the beautiful prospects to Miss Belvington, gladly escaped with his fair companion from the sharp voice of lady Harriet, who having been unsuccessful, was now vehemently protesting the deal was a false one.

As they left the house, the general said—"From what you mentioned this morning, of my sister having discovered a former friend in your mother, added to the account Mr. Montague has given me of your family, I suspect I also shall prove an old friend of Mrs. Belvington's; pray tell me, was her name Woodley before she married?"

"Her name was Henrietta Woodley," replied Elinor; "yet if you were formerly acquainted with her, I wonder she has never mentioned the circumstance since the renewal of intimacy between her and lady Neville."

"I am not surprised at it," said the general,

general, smiling; "some unpleasant circumstances attending our acquaintance may account for her silence on that subject; I dare say she would not publish her rejection of my suit; and as the history of my youthful disappointment will not be particularly interesting to you, we will wave that subject: and now tell me, in return for my considerate kindness, whether you often heard my sister mention my daughter Emma, to whom I wish much to introduce you?"

"Nothing will give me more pleasure than an introduction to Miss Clarendville," returned Elinor, "as I have heard lady Neville speak in such high terms of her niece; she seems also much attached to your son."

"Yes," replied the general; "Alfred was adopted by her husband, sir Edward, who, when he died, left him all his unentailed property—the entailed estate went, with the title, to his brother.



ther. I could have wished my poor Emma had been his favourite; Alfred could better have provided for himself than I can for his sister."

The conversation was now interrupted by George Fitzmorton calling to them to stop, and entreating they would listen to what he had to say. As soon as he was near enough to be distinctly heard, he began, though nearly out of breath with running—"Oh, we have had such a breeze!—a grand quarrel between lady Harriet and Charles, because, forsooth, he took the liberty of hinting to her ladyship she was too fond of betting, when, poor soul, she learned the foible of him who is now fearful that fortune should be injured with which he has fallen so deeply in love, hoping it will stop some of the gaps he has unfortunately made in that he is heir to; so, like a dutiful son, he has been persuaded by papa to take poor lady Harriet and her thirty thousand pounds into  
his

his own hands, to repair a little the breach he has unluckily made in that of his revered parent; therefore his bride-elect spending her fortune in the same way his was injured does not meet his approbation, which he hinted to her ladyship; and there they are, my lady scolding and raving at his impertinence; he looking half-sullen, half-sorry; and poor Miss Marsden, almost at her wit's end, endeavouring to reconcile the belligerent powers. First it is, 'My dear lady Harriet, let me entreat of you not to agitate your delicate frame in such a manner;' and then, 'I am sure, nay, certain, Mr. Fitzmorton did not mean to hurt you; did he, Mr. George?' Such was the state of their political horizon when I, glad to escape, ran off to you; now take your choice—either return with me to the scene of warfare, or allow me to join you in your walk."

"Then come with us to the grotto," said the general, smiling, "which I  
want

want Miss Belvington to see; we shall find you of use in explaining the names and orders of the shells there collected."

"Oh, hang it, general!" he replied, "you know my genius does not lie that way. I admire their beauty as much as you can do; but as to remembering all those cramp names you and Mr. Montague are in the habit of running over, it is impossible; I should break half-a-dozen teeth in the first attempt to pronounce them."

They now turned aside into a narrow path, which led, by a gentle descent, to the banks of a winding rivulet; across the stream some beautiful weeping willows bent their heads; a rustic bridge led to the woods Elinor had in the morning so much admired. At the root of one of the trees that partly overshadowed the bridge, a few steps cut in the bank were discovered; upon descending these, they walked some paces along the edge of the stream, till they found themselves  
at



at the entrance of a most tastefully decorated cave, hewn also out of the bank, and directly under the bridge; the roof was composed of coralines and sea-weed, fancifully intermixed; and the walls of this circular-shaped grot were lined with the most beautiful shells and fossils, arranged according to the taste of the architect; the pavement was formed of different-coloured spars, upon which the rays of the setting sun, reflected from the clear water, produced a most brilliant effect. In a mossy recess, opposite the entrance, a rude bench was placed, constructed of boughs from the adjoining willows, interlaced with rushes. Upon this seat general Clarendville placed himself and the almost-entranced Elinor, as from this spot the beautiful materials nature furnished and art had combined to decorate this delightful retreat could be viewed to the greatest advantage. The gentle rippling of the water over the leaves of the water-lily, now in

full bloom, which, with other aquatic plants, adorned the surface of the stream, was the only sound that broke upon the ear, save the breeze, which at intervals dipped the pensile branches of the willow into its favourite element; even George Fitzmorton was a few minutes unwilling to interrupt the silence that reigned around; but unable longer to refrain from his natural propensity, he exclaimed—"Now, how much too good this place is for Mrs. Montague and her tribe!"

"Mrs. Montague," said the general, smiling, "seldom, I believe, visits this sweet spot; nor do I suppose she has thought it worth the trouble to inform her present visitors such a place exists."

"Then I hope she never will," cried George; "for if they were ever to come here, their only observation would be, they had seen one quite as pretty at Drury-lane."

"Does Mrs. Montague consider this  
retreat

retreat as too sacred," said Elinor, "to allow every casual visitor entrance here?"

"So sacred," returned general Clarendon, "that after the first visit she never suffered it to be profaned by her own footsteps, from an idea that it must be extremely damp; but though I should not wish to spend a winter in such a place, yet I cannot think it could be injurious in the heat of a summer's day: but I will not allow you to remain here any longer this evening, lest it should be proved so now the sun is nearly down."

"Miss Belvington," said George, as they were leaving the grotto, "do oblige me by not mentioning where we have been this evening, or we shall have the whole tribe posting down to-morrow, and then adieu to comfort."

"Why, George," cried the general, "this retired spot has even tamed your love of noise."



“ Oh, I could stay here for ever !” he with energy exclaimed.

“ Then good-night to you, my friend,” returned the general; “ only remember there is a ball at Lesford to-morrow evening.”

“ The hope of engaging Miss Belvington’s hand for the first two dances would be the only inducement for my quitting this solitude,” he replied, as he hastily darted past general Clarendville to assist Elinor in ascending the steps.

“ You are a second Iphigenia,” whispered the general to Elinor, “ for you have effected an entire transformation in your young admirer. Nay, George,” he continued, on observing the colour heighten on the youthful Cymon’s cheek, “ do not look so angrily at me; I have not been advising this fair lady to refuse your boon; see, she smiles consent; and now, if you like, complete your happy arrangement by engaging  
Miss

Miss Marsden's hand, if yet too early for life, at least for the two second dances."

George recovering his good-humour, now laughing said—"You want to be rid of my company, I know, by your mentioning that lady's name; but as I am curious to know how matters are adjusted within, I am determined to accompany you to the drawing-room."

Lady Harriet was still pouting when they entered, and her lover amusing himself with Mrs. Montague's lap-dog—"Where the deuce have you all been?" he exclaimed, in no gentle tone; "I cannot conceive what pleasure you can find in strolling about at this time of night."

"The pleasure of peace," retorted his brother, "not often to be met with, and therefore more valued from its novelty."

Mr. Montague now entreating one of the young ladies to sit down to the pianoforte, gave a more agreeable turn to the conversation, and lady Harriet,

after repeated solicitations, was at length induced to comply with his request. Fitzmorton having, by a few well-turned compliments, succeeded in restoring himself to favour, the evening concluded in harmony.

## CHAPTER VI.

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AT breakfast the following morning, Mr. Montague inquired of Elinor if she were inclined for a ride, as he was going in his gig to Lesford upon business—"If you will accompany me to that town," he continued, "general Clarendon will be your companion while there, as he has promised, if you go, to join our party on horseback."

Elinor willingly agreed to his proposal; and as soon therefore as their meal was finished, they set out on their excursion,

cursion, and enjoyed a beautiful ride to Lesford. As they were returning home, Elinor observing some remarkably-fine wild roses in the hedge, struck with their beauty, pointed them out to the observation of her companions; upon which general Clarendon, with the true gallantry of the old school, dismounted from his horse, and gathered some of the finest for her. As he was presenting them, and returning with spirit Mr. Montague's raillery on his politeness, the animal he had been riding started from his hold, and in his effort to secure him again the bridle was broken.

As they were not more than a mile from Ashgrove when the accident happened, general Clarendon having given his horse to a countryman belonging to that village, who was passing by at the time, continued his journey on foot. Elinor, thinking herself in some measure the cause of his being obliged to walk the remainder of the way, now told

Mr. Montague she could not bear the idea of leaving her kind friend alone, therefore begged he would excuse her forsaking him and joining general Clarendonville. Mr. Montague, after laughing at their mutual partiality, suffered her to alight, and she hastened back to the general, who, though much gratified by the attention, expressed his fears of her fatiguing herself by it, particularly as she intended dancing at the ball in the evening.

Elinor having succeeded in overruling his scruples, by assuring him she was in the habit of taking a great deal of exercise, persuaded her companion to allow of her proceeding with him; and this point settled, they soon fell into chat. Having asked a few questions about his sister, the conversation reverted to the inhabitants of Rosebrook Parsonage—“And now tell me,” said the general, after again mentioning his former knowledge of Mrs. Belvington, “what family
my

my old friend has at present? I understand from Montague you are not the eldest."

Elinor replied she had two sisters, her seniors in age, both happily married; "but what is still more delightful," she continued, "they each reside within so short a distance of Rosebrook, that not a day passes without our being able to meet. I have also another sister, some years younger than myself."

"And have you any other neighbours near you besides your own apparently-happy family?" inquired general Clarendonville.

"Oh yes, many," returned Elinor; "and as you have promised to make one amongst us this summer, I will name some of my favourite friends to you: first let me introduce you to my most beloved and respected lady Egerton."

"I am already intimately acquainted with her ladyship," said the general, "and revere her as much as you can do,

for the excellent qualities of her heart and mind; so pray proceed to the second on your list."

"I love none other equally with my kind friend and godmother," Elinor continued; "but next to her I must mention Mr. and Mrs. Wardley, who live within three miles of us at Rosebrook."

"I knew a family of that name some years ago," said the general; "and if your friend should prove to be a member of it, I shall not find myself among strangers when I arrive at Willowfield. Is he a clergyman? and has he likewise a brother, a colonel in the army, who four years since married a young lady of the name of Mortimer, a native also of Gloucestershire?"

Elinor answered in the affirmative, and her companion continued—"Then I have an additional pleasure awaiting me on my arrival at my sister's, that of again meeting Mr. Wardley, with whom
I became

I became acquainted at Mrs. Mortimer's, when his brother, the colonel, married my friend's daughter, to whom I performed the part of a father, while your friend read the marriage-ceremony. I fear I must not also expect to see my adopted daughter soon, as she went, almost immediately after her marriage, to India with her husband and brother."

"They are shortly expected back, I believe," said Elinor, colouring, and looking not a little confused.

"Are you acquainted with my friend's wife?" inquired the general, not observing her change of countenance; "and do you know any thing of her brother, who is a major in her husband's regiment?"

Elinor started at the question, and blushing still more deeply, replied—"Mrs. Wardley and herself had been intimate friends long before that lady married."

"And what do you think of her brother?" again inquired the general; when

upon receiving no answer from Elinor, he turned towards her, fearing she was ill; but catching a view of her blushing and confused countenance, he archly added, "Is he also your particular friend?"

"Yes," returned Elinor, recovering from her confusion, on perceiving the construction her companion had put upon it; "he has indeed proved himself a most sincere one; and I should be the most ungrateful of human beings if I ever forgot the almost-unparalleled kindness not only myself, but all our family, experienced from his during that melancholy time in which our acquaintance with them first commenced; and it was at the dreadful period when I lost my only, my fondly-beloved brother, that major Mortimer first stood forth as our kindest and most attentive friend."

"Could I have had the slightest idea that my casual mention of this family would have recalled any afflicting recollections, for worlds I would not have
treated

treated the subject so lightly," returned the general, much distressed by the agitation of Elinor, who could scarcely now refrain from tears, as she replied—"I alone am to blame; it was very wrong in me to answer you in that manner: what right have I to wound your feelings by touching upon so melancholy a subject? I became your companion," she continued, endeavouring to smile away her tears as she spoke, "in order to lighten your fatigue, but I am only adding to it instead."

"Say not so, my dear young friend," replied the general, affectionately pressing her hand, "say not so; believe me, every thing connected with you and your family will prove interesting to me; for although I have not been acquainted with you more than two days, the resemblance you bear to your mother makes me almost fancy I have known you for years, and I grieve to learn you
have

have sustained so great a loss as a beloved brother's must be."

The tears again started to the eyes of Elinor, and as she endeavoured to express the gratitude she felt for his kindness, they, no longer to be restrained, flowed down her cheeks.

General Clarendon, perceiving how much she was affected, now said—"We will renew this subject another time; at present you are not equal to continuing it."

"I ought to have more command over my feelings," said Elinor, endeavouring to regain some composure, "as four years are gone by since that period; but the blow was a sudden one, and I was not so prepared to meet it as I ought to have been; but I will endeavour to relate the event to you now, as I have entered on the subject, that I may not again distress you by referring to it. It was the summer after Mr. Coleridge married

married my sister, that Cecilia, my poor brother, and myself, accompanied the former with his wife to Brighton, where we were to pass a few weeks. The first fortnight fled, oh, so delightfully! Willoughby joined us there, and he used often to accompany Cecilia and myself in the walks we were in the habit of taking before breakfast. One morning, attended by him, we commenced our accustomed ramble; and after having strolled some time in beautiful fields, we proposed returning by the road; but as we entered the last meadow leading to it, I observed at a distance a horse without its rider leap over the gate which separated us from the road. The colour of the animal struck me almost immediately to be the same as that which Henry was accustomed to ride. Cecilia also observed it, and bade me remark it. Too well had I then perceived it was indeed the same, and in another moment I had flown to the other side of the gate.

Oh

Oh God! what a sight did there present itself!—my beloved brother, pale, bleeding, and lifeless, supported in the arms of major Mortimer, then a stranger.”

“Do not dwell on this harrowing subject, my dear young friend,” said the general; “you are not equal to it at present.”

“I ought to be thankful,” continued Elinor, after a pause of some moments, “that my beloved brother did not linger in agony—he never spoke again! Poor Henrietta was thrown into premature labour by the fatal intelligence reaching her too suddenly through a servant.

“Willoughby undertook the mournful task of breaking the dreadful tidings to my father, and then returned for Cecilia to accompany him to Rosebrook, as my poor mother greatly wanted a comforter, my father being completely overpowered by the blow. It was then my Cecilia proved how much superior was her mind to that of her weak sister’s;
for

for while she was exerting every faculty, and was the sole support of her afflicted parents, I had, by the violence of my sorrow, thrown myself on a bed of sickness, and poor Coleridge was nearly distracted by my illness, and his wife's nearly as dangerous state.

“Major Mortimer was now my poor brother's only supporter; and when he found it was Mr. Coleridge's wish to remove his wife from the fatal spot, as soon as possible, he wrote to his mother to entreat she would hasten her journey to Brighton; and when she, with her daughter, arrived, they became my most attentive nurses, for six weeks never leaving my bedside, during which period no ray of reason illumined my mind; and when I was convalescent, Mrs. Mortimer insisted upon my returning with them into Gloucestershire, fearing I was at that time unequal to meeting my beloved parents. But I doubt I was ungrateful

grateful to my kind friends, as my mind was never easy till I was again at Rosebrook; and when I there saw my poor father endeavouring to stifle his feelings in pity to those of his family, could I do less than strive to imitate him?

“ My exertions, assisted by the mild, heavenly precepts of my beloved mother, were crowned with success, and I was at length enabled to visit the grave of my brother with a patient and resigned grief. I will only add, the cause of the dreadful accident was poor Henry’s attempting to make his horse leap the high gate which separated the field from the road.”

“ It was a dreadful blow to you all,” said the sympathizing general; “ but I must not allow you to continue the subject at present. Endeavour now to compose your spirits; remember they will be called upon for exertion before you retire to rest.”

“ Oh that I could be permitted to remain

main at home this evening!" cried Elinor; "what would I not give to avoid going to this ball!"

"I would take nothing you could possibly offer," he replied, attempting a cheerful tone; "no, you shall not be allowed to remain in solitude, I promise you. I only wish my daughter could be your companion this evening; but as that unfortunately cannot be, I intend to be her substitute, and you shall not shake me off, I assure you."

They were now arrived at the house, and Elinor went to her own room, to bathe her eyes, and endeavour to prevent the traces of her recent tears being observed, before she returned to the breakfast-parlour, to inquire if there were any letters arrived from Rosebrook?

"Elinor," said Mr. Montague, as she entered, laying down a newspaper he had been reading, and putting a letter into her hand, "did you not tell me
colonel

colonel Wardley's regiment was the ———, and that your friend Mortimer was a major in the same?"

"Yes," replied Elinor, blushing at the significant manner in which he pronounced the word *friend*; "have you seen any intelligence concerning it in that paper?"

"I have seen," he replied, "that the regiment is arrived at ———, and is safely disembarked; but I make no doubt the paper you have now in your hand," pointing to her letter, "will give you more particular information of their present situation than mine does. Yet remember, Elinor," he continued, as she turned away, upon catching the eye of general Clarendon, who was reading a letter opposite her, "remember, I will not part from you a day sooner than the specified time."

"I have no wish to leave you before the end of my allotted six weeks," she replied, endeavouring to speak with composure,

composure, and angry with herself for the confusion his arch look, and the inquiring one of the general, had occasioned her.

“Who can listen to this assertion, and not believe?” returned Mr. Montague, profoundly bowing, and placing his hand with a mock seriousness upon his heart.

Elinor now hastily retreated, and having reached her own room, she opened her letter, and read the following lines from her mother:—

“Rejoice with me, my dear child; our beloved Cecilia is safe, and has given me a lovely granddaughter, who is already named after her mother, and the exact counterpart of what her dear parent was. Willoughby, you may suppose, all gratitude and delight. The first wish the dear sufferer expressed
was,

was, that her Elinor might be informed of her increased prospect of happiness.

“ I have not yet received a letter from you, my love, but I look forward to another day’s post bringing me the assurance of your safe arrival at Ashgrove, and that you are likely to receive much amusement from your visit. I should have waited to communicate my intelligence till after I had heard from you, had not your father wished me to give you the earliest account of this and another almost-equally interesting event that has occurred.

“ Perhaps you have already seen in some of the papers, which I know at Mr. Montague’s are most numerous, the arrival of colonel Wardley’s regiment in England. Will you then feel much surprise when I inform you, Mortimer has already been at Rosebrook, to renew those addresses which, when he last left us, you declined, on the plea of not wishing

wishing at that early age to enter upon so serious an engagement?

“ And now, my beloved child, answer me sincerely, whether that objection, which time has now removed, was the only one your heart offered? or else candidly tell me, that the fear of appearing ungrateful for the partiality expressed for you by one to whom we are all so infinitely indebted, was the true cause of your not decidedly rejecting his suit? Mortimer has been prevailed on by your father and myself from either writing or attempting to see you, until your return home; by which time he, with our dear friends the Wardleys, will be, I trust, near us, as it is the colonel's intention to visit his brother as soon as his regimental business is concluded, and you will again meet your dear Eliza, and her little girl, who came into the world during the voyage.

“ Let not your decision be a hasty one, my beloved child; you may, if you please,

please, defer answering me on the subject till we again meet, as I am convinced my Elinor will not unnecessarily lengthen the suspense poor Mortimer now endures. That he is most sincerely attached to you I cannot doubt; and in this opinion I am confirmed from what Eliza has mentioned in a letter she has written to Cecilia, which, from motives of delicacy, she addressed to her in preference to her beloved friend.

“ And now, as I am installed head-nurse and directress to my child, I must no longer remain absent from my charge; but after assuring my equally-beloved Elinor of mine and her father’s sincere wishes for her happiness, hasten to subscribe myself

Her ever affectionate mother,

HENRIETTA BELVINGTON.”

Elinor’s heart was too full of joy for her beloved sister’s safety to allow of her
attending

attending for some minutes to the other part of her mother's letter; and it was not until she had poured out her gratitude to that great Being who had preserved her tenderly-beloved Cecilia through her hour of danger, that she could sufficiently compose her agitated feelings to read the cause of Mortimer's visit to Rosebrook. The rapidity of his movements startled her.

"Can it be possible," she mentally exclaimed, "that he should be so very anxious to see me again? and has his attachment indeed survived so long an absence? How truly, my dear mother," she continued, "have you defined what my sentiments were towards him at the time he left England! And this I will immediately confess to you, my kind, indulgent parent," exclaimed Elinor, as taking her writing materials from her desk, she began her letter, when, after having expressed the joy she most truly felt at the happiness of her sister,

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sister, and acknowledged to her mother that her suspicions relative to her conduct towards Mortimer were just, she continued—" You will not, I hope, much condemn me, for indeed I could not bear to appear so very ungrateful, as after the kindness I had experienced in his family, my decided rejection of his offer must have made them suppose me; and I likewise hoped that during the time Mortimer remained abroad, he would, by meeting with some woman more sensible of his regard, cease to remember me, from whom he was so far separated. The event has proved my expectations were erroneous; and founded as they were on the wishes and reasoning of a 'girl of seventeen,' as my dear father would say, it is not very wonderful they should be so.

"But now, my dear parents, if it is your wish that I should not at present reject major Mortimer's renewed addresses, it shall be my endeavour to overcome my former

former principal objection, which still clings a little round my heart; and surely, my mother, you know your child's affection for you too well, to feel surprised at her hesitating to quit her much-loved home, and all the kind and partial friends by whom she has been from her infancy surrounded. Had Mortimer's profession been any other than what it unfortunately is, my scruples would have been much sooner overcome; but if it should appear, on our renewed intimacy, that he does indeed feel the regard for me that you, my dear mother, lead me to suppose, I will no longer give way to such selfish considerations; and, then neither you nor my father need fear my acting contrary to your wishes, as I have always felt the highest regard for Mortimer, and shall never cease to feel the warmest gratitude, whenever I reflect upon his kindness to me at that dreadful period which first brought us acquainted.

“ In six weeks I shall again return to my beloved Rosebrook, and I feel truly thankful Mortimer has consented to defer our meeting till that time, as the observation his appearance would occasion here could not be otherwise than extremely distressing to me.”

Elinor then mentioned her having become acquainted with general Clarendon, and his confession of being once attached to her mother; and after informing her of the ball she was to attend that evening, and assuring her there was no danger of losing her heart to any of the beaux at Ashgrove, except the general, who was unfortunately already married, she hastened to conclude her letter in time for the return of post.

CHAPTER VII.
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WHEN the carriages were announced to be in readiness for conveying them to Lesford, Elinor was agreeably surprised to find Mrs. Montague intended taking her in the one which herself, with lady Fitzmorton and general Clarendville, were to occupy. But her satisfaction at this unhopèd-for attention was considerably diminished, when she overheard Mrs. Montague apologizing to lady Harriet for not having offered her a seat, and assuring her the blame rested with Mr. Montague, who had made such a point of Miss Belvington accompanying her, that, for the sake of peace, she had been induced to comply with his request.

Scarcely could Elinor refrain from in-  
forming

forming her attentive hostess how much she should prefer being left at home; but fearing she might hurt her cousin by refusing to accompany the party, she checked her indignation; and fearful likewise of being separated from her kind friend, the general, she was induced quietly to occupy the station assigned her.

Upon their arrival at the rooms, they found most of the company assembled, and waiting only for the entrance of Mrs. Montague, who, as the wife of their member, was expected to open the ball. George Fitzmorton instantly claimed his fair partner from the protecting arm of the general, and led her to the set now forming. Elinor, in being separated from general Clarendon, felt bereaved of every comfort; placed between entire strangers, an object of curiosity, in being one herself, and coming with a party who were the most remarked, yet without one female amongst



amongst them to whom she could address an observation, as they passed in the dance, except Mrs. Montague, who merely nodded to her in return, felt her courage almost entirely forsake her; she turned to discover if her protector was still near her.

General Clarendon, his back towards her, was conversing with some military gentlemen, therefore did not perceive how much she would have given for one look in return. George Fitzmorton's boyish appearance prevented her from feeling much protection from him; and, unlike herself, she felt, on arriving at the top of the dance, such a total disinclination to begin the figure, that had there been one disengaged lady in the room whose face she could have remembered ever to have seen before, she had entreated permission to remain with her, rather than undergo the misery of going down it, as she could not avoid seeing every movement of hers was ob-

served and commented on by the gentlemen, her face being too interesting to escape notice; it was a novel one also; and many a poor girl's patience was tried by the reiterated question put to them by their partners, of—"Who is that beautiful girl?" Nay, one or two of the most highly-valued beaux went so far in their expressions of admiration as to say—"It was worth while coming to a ball to see such a one, there not being many faces like that to be met with in this part of the world."

At length Elinor, to her great joy, arrived at the last couple; and while sitting down with her partner to rest for a few minutes, she again looked around for her protector, the general, nor did she this time look in vain; and although still too much engaged by those near him to allow of his addressing her, a smile of recognition passed between them. One of the gentlemen to whom  
he

he was speaking now turned towards her, and Elinor's attention was caught by the animated and intelligent countenance now presented to her view; but George Fitzmorton at that moment entreating her to join the dance, being too proud of his lovely partner, and of the inquiries that had been made of him concerning her, to allow of her remaining long at rest, Elinor lost sight of the stranger.

It was not long, however, before she saw the same young man, accompanied by another, again opposite her. George Fitzmorton now addressed them, and they stood conversing together some time; at length the companion of the stranger drew him almost forcibly away, and George, seeing a tray of refreshments now appearing, darted forward to secure a glass of negus for Elinor, which, as he was returning with, his way was impeded by some other gentlemen, who were equally anxious as himself to pro-



cure one for their fair partners; impatient of the delay they occasioned him, he turned aside, and crossed the dance, unmindful of a couple then bustling with all speed down the middle, and who, regardless of him, his negus, or any thing else but the fear of not being up again in time for right and left, fairly overset the unlucky Ganymede within a few paces of his goddess.

Elinor never having missed her partner, and being engaged in watching Mrs. Montague, now in conversation with the gentleman who had been the companion of the stranger, was not aware of his danger, or her own, till she felt herself suddenly drawn back, at the same moment that she heard a violent crash, and saw some one extended at her feet.

General Clarendville's voice beside her, inquiring if she had escaped uninjured, first recalled her scattered senses, and conceiving him to have been the person who  
had

had preserved her from the late impending misfortune, she turned towards him, and expressed her gratitude for his attentive care of her.

"I will not claim any merit where it is not due," returned the general, smiling; "if you will thank any one, it must be my son Alfred, who is here impatiently waiting for me to pronounce the name of Miss Belvington to him."

Elinor, now in increased surprise, returned the graceful bow of Clarendville, in whom she saw the young stranger whose animated countenance had so much pleased her, and, blushing, repeated the thanks she had before offered to his father, who now continued—  
"Have you not one word to spare from pity's language for your poor discomfitted beau?"

"To whom do you allude?" inquired Elinor; "oh, I hope it was not Mr. George Fitzmorton who fell?"

"Yes, but it was though," said

George, who now stood beside her, "and a precious figure I made! it was the first time I was taken in a gallant fit, and the event has pretty well cured me of attempting one again."

"Not the first time, George," said the general, archly; "and if Miss Belvington has any gratitude, she will acknowledge the same. Nay, do not pretend to have so soon forgotten the circumstance, my dear Elinor," he continued, as she looked for an explanation; "how could you possibly have ascended those terribly-steep steps leading from the grotto without the assistance of such an active beau as Mr. Fitzmorton? What use do you think a poor superannuated soldier like myself could be of at such a moment?"

"I am very sorry," said Elinor, not able to refrain from smiling at the general's raillery, though she saw the object of it looked not a little disconcerted, "that I should be the cause of



so much mischief; but if you are recovered," she added, turning to George, "perhaps you will like to return now to the dance."

"What, you will then finish the set with me," he returned, his countenance brightening again; "I was afraid my awkwardness had completely done for me, and that you would not speak to me any more this evening."

"Is Miss Belvington's temper so very severe?" asked Clarendville, smiling; "I have heard a different character of her."

Elinor was interrupted in the inquiry she was going to make, how he could possibly have learnt any thing concerning her, by lord Petersbrook striding up to her, and saying—"I shall hope for the honour of dancing with Miss Belvington the next two dances, as I understand she is disengaged."

Greatly surprised at the honour designed her, Elinor for a moment was silent; but quickly recovering, coolly returned—

returned—"Your lordship has been misinformed; I am not disengaged."

Lord Petersbrook's face flushed noble anger at the indifference with which she had rejected his proposal, as, scarcely bowing, he strode hastily away, while George, rubbing his hands in the greatest glee, exclaimed—"Oh, I am so glad you would not dance with him! He will never forgive you though, you may depend upon it, for he never was so well served before."

"Will you forgive my impertinence," said Clarendville to her, "if I inquire whether you are really disengaged the next two dances? as I, like lord Petersbrook, was hoping for the pleasure of dancing with you."

Elinor blushed, and then looking round, to be certain his lordship was not within hearing, answered—"What will you think of me, when I inform you my assertion to lord Petersbrook was untrue?"

"I shall

“ I shall think myself most fortunate,” he replied, in an animated tone, “ if you will allow me that honour you have refused his lordship.”

“ You will not betray me?” said Elinor to George.

“ Not for worlds,” he returned; “ so now for the dance.”

“ Then,” cried Clarendville, “ I may conclude my petition is granted. And now,” he continued, as he led her to the set, “ rely upon the fealty of your true knights; and while one conducts you in safety through the mazes of the dance, the other will remain beside you, throw his shield before you in the time of danger, and be the warning voice to his co-adjutor in case of attack from hostile foes.”

Elinor now commenced dancing with renewed pleasure; the lively conversation of her new acquaintance exhilarated her before-depressed spirits, and she went down the dance quite a different creature to what she had before been;

Clarendville



Clarenville was in waiting when she arrived at the end of it, and immediately leading her to a seat, placed himself beside her, whilst, in a sportive manner, he congratulated George upon having manœuvred through it in safety.

“And now,” cried George, “having been successful so far, I will again try what luck I shall have in endeavouring to procure you some refreshment, Miss Belvington; and remember, Clarenville,” he continued, as he was departing, “if I fall, you are in honour bound to fly to my rescue.”

“What, and leave my fair charge exposed to peril?” returned Clarenville; “no, no, my good friend, you must this time take care of yourself.”

“You are a shabby fellow, Clarenville, to forsake your brother in arms; and take care that I am not revenged on you,” George laughingly replied, as he departed on his expedition.

“You are not perhaps aware, Miss Belvington,”

Belvington," said Clarendville, as soon as George had quitted them, "that you and I have met each other before this evening, having passed on the road near —, the same day you left Rosebrook, as I was on my way to Willowfield. Mr. Montague's dashing equipage raised such a dust as completely blinded me, and obscured my more humble curricule from his view, so that we neither of us recognised the other; nor did I know who it was that I had passed till I visited in the evening at Rosebrook."

"At Rosebrook!" repeated Elinor, starting in pleased surprise; "have you been down to the Hall there?"

"No," he replied, "I went no farther than the parsonage, whither I accompanied my aunt, lady Neville, who was going with the charitable intention of consoling the family there in your absence; but we found, on our arrival, another gentleman who had preceded us in the office. He told me that you had

had known him for some years; and when I mention the name of major Mortimer, you will perhaps honour him by your remembrance."

Elinor, blushing deeply, replied, she had indeed been long acquainted with him; and then fearing Clarendville should observe her change of colour, hastily inquired how long he had himself remained at Willowfield?

"Mortimer and I left Hampshire together," he replied, "on the third day after we had entered it; he to proceed to London, and I to strike across the country for Surrey. But here is the 'conquering hero,'" he continued, as George now came dancing towards them in triumph, and presenting a jelly to Elinor, said—"I should have been back before now, had I not been detained by two fair ladies, who have been hinting to me, prettily enough, how much they should like to dance with a certain general's son of my acquaintance;



so come now, Clarendville, tell me if you will take compassion on either of these damsels; look, there they both are," pointing to his sisters as he spoke, knowing Clarendville was a stranger to their persons, "arm in arm, parading the room in all due majesty."

"Are they very particular favourites of yours, George?" he inquired.

"Oh no, far enough off that; so do not be afraid of telling me what you think of them," returned George, making a sign of silence to Elinor as he spoke; and she was prevented informing Clarendville who they were, by his immediately answering—"That they are both very fine and fashionable young women no one can dispute; but, at the same time, I must acknowledge they are much too fashionable to please my fastidious taste."

"Excellent!" cried George, laughing heartily; "you agree with me exactly in my ideas of them; and the opinion

you



you entertain of them I will instantly communicate to the Miss Fitzmortons," he added, as he hastened towards his sisters.

As George left them, and Clarendville, unable to forbear laughing, was accusing Elinor of having entered into the conspiracy against him, and she was sportively exculpating herself from the charge, they were interrupted by the gentleman Elinor had before seen in company with Clarendville, who, approaching him, said—"You have treated me very shabbily, Alfred; first in enticing me to come hither, and now leaving me to entertain myself in the best manner I can, whilst you are enjoying yourself to the utmost."

"Poor fellow," returned Clarendville, "you have been most cruelly treated; but I will now make you the *amende honorable* by introducing you to Miss Belvington. Allow me," he continued, addressing Elinor, "to present my friend,

friend, sir Edward Ormsby, to you: and now, sir, if you still feel inclined to quarrel with me, you will be esteemed the most unreasonable man in existence.’

Elinor returned the polite bow of the young baronet; but her eyes fell beneath his piercing ones, as he expressed his sense of the honour Clarendville had conferred upon him, who now said—“If you are inclined to dance this evening, Ormsby, our friend George will introduce you to a partner. What think you of her?” pointing, as he spoke, to Miss Fitzmorton.

Sir Edward, after viewing her attentively for a moment, and significantly smiling, replied—“That lady has bestowed too much attention on her own sweet person this evening to have any to spare for me.”

“Is her sister more to your taste?” inquired Clarendville, as Miss Lucretia joined hers.

“Oh no, no!” exclaimed sir Edward;

“can



“can you not see, by the turn of her little chin only, that she thinks herself far above the common race of mortals? of whom, as I unfortunately happen to be one, not a word will she deign to bestow upon me.”

“This is being even more severe than yourself,” said Elinor to Clarendville, who smiling answered—“My friend Ormsby’s eyes are hoodwinked; therefore you may the more readily excuse his not discerning beauty quite so clear as he ought.”

Sir Edward returned the smile, and did not attempt to deny the charge.

The dances were now again forming, and Clarendville led Elinor to her station near the top, his friend following, entreating not again to be left *solus*—“And will you not, Miss Belvington,” he continued, as he placed himself beside her, “assist me in my selection of a partner?”

“No,” replied Clarendville, laughing; “Miss Belvington can already see it is impossible

impossible to please you this evening, after having rejected so much beauty and fashion united."

"Is there nothing you think superior to these transient advantages?" said sir Edward, his eyes resting upon Elinor, as he addressed his friend; "does not grace, elegance, and unaffected modesty, rank still higher in your estimation?"

"Am I to understand," said Elinor archly to Clarendon, "that these are the united attributes of sir Edward's fair enslaver?"

"I hope you will think so," he replied, "when I can have the pleasure of introducing my sister to you, as I trust will be soon in my power."

"And may I," said Elinor, "look forward to the gratification you promise me at no very distant day?"

"Ormsby can answer that question more exactly than I can," he replied. "Tell us, my friend, what day, and on what hour of the day, or, to speak more correctly,

correctly, on what minute of that hour in the day appointed, do you hope again to meet your fair Emma?"

"As it is not my intention," returned sir Edward, "to make that happy moment a public one, you must at present be content to rest in ignorance; and see, Miss Belvington is waiting for you to begin the dance; therefore do you enjoy the happiness of the present minute, and leave me to the anticipation of a future one."

"First," cried Clarendville, "let me congratulate you on the happy moment being near; perhaps you did not know I was already aware to-morrow is the happy day."

His friend laughed, but assured him his knowledge should not extend farther at present.

Elinor had been very well satisfied with George as a partner; but she now found how much he was surpassed by Clarendville, in the grace, elegance, and  
lightness



lightness of his every movement, as he led her through the mazes of the figure; and so lightly her footsteps pressed the ground, that scarcely believing herself on earth, and becoming every moment more animated by the exercise, her beautiful figure never appeared to more advantage than in this her favourite amusement; to no other was Elinor more partial, and she must have felt herself uncomfortable indeed with the party she was going with, to feel so total a disinclination to accompany them to a ball as had been the case this evening.

General Clarendon watched the returning animation of her countenance with the truest delight; and as he returned the beautiful smile she gave him in passing, he was not the only one who was struck with the loveliness of her appearance; his son could not remove his eyes from the elegant form of his fair partner; but Elinor, perfectly uncon-

scious of the admiration she excited, neither saw the look of approbation which passed between the father and son, nor thought of any thing but the pleasure she was now enjoying; once again her heart bounded with delight, as it was wont to do at her own native home; and no one who now saw her could believe it was the same spiritless creature they had before remarked going down the dance, as an interesting but much too inanimate a girl.

Clarendon and his now universally admired partner, having arrived at the conclusion of the dance, returned to the bench they had before occupied, where sir Edward Ormsby again joined them, and placing himself beside Elinor, said —“ I have had great entertainment, Miss Belvinton, since you left me, in remarking the difference of manner observable between those who are strangers here, and those who are old stagers.”

“ How

"How could you, who are a stranger yourself," inquired Elinor, "discover and separate the two classes?"

"Nothing more easy," he replied: "observe that group yonder—they are strangers; see how they stand in mute contemplation of the scene before them, whilst those young ladies, a little farther off, nearly opposite yon set of sleepy beaux in the corner, are natives, as you may easily perceive by the reiterated loud whisper and accompanying laugh which are kept up amongst them, in the vain hope of either attracting the attention, or rousing the dormant faculties, of those drowsy mortals."

"Are you quite certain your knowledge is correct?" said Clarendville.

"Perfectly so," he returned; "it is impossible, in this instance at least, to be mistaken, for none but such as are in the constant practice of assembling in this room whenever the important evening for exhibition is announced, could



have attained the happy art of appearing so perfectly at ease as the group before us now do, in the quietude they have this evening been destined to; and you would imagine, from the eternal laughing, it was from choice they remained spectators; but trust me, were they now in the 'palace of truth,' we should hear them acknowledge the Lesford balls were, in general, the most stupid of the kind, though now none of them have the courage to avow the fact, dreading they should lose, by this confession, the chance of going down two dances at least with one of those miserable-looking objects, who would make much better figures in the capacity of mutes than as votaries of Terpsichore."

"You are much too severe on your own sex, Ormsby," returned Clarendville, "and far from correct in what you have asserted concerning those young ladies, as amongst the party you have been so unmercifully attacking, is one with whose  
conduct

conduct this evening, even you would have been much pleased. She was standing in company with another young girl, a few paces from me, at the conclusion of the first dance, and I overheard the latter lamenting not having danced that set, 'as,' she continued, 'mamma always leaves the room very early, and I greatly fear there is no chance of my meeting with a partner the first part of the evening, there being so many more ladies than gentlemen.' Presently after I heard a gentleman engage the lady to whom this was spoken for this set, and her companion left her; but to my surprise I observed, as we joined the dance, this same young lady standing up with the gentleman who had engaged himself to her friend; and soon after I heard her express to her mother how very kind Eliza had been in requesting her partner to transfer his engagement. Had you seen the pleasure her young friend's countenance expressed as she watched her down

the dance, you would have been convinced she derived full as much gratification from observing that of her young companion as she could have done in dancing herself, and I am certain does indeed feel quite happy in her quiescent state."

Elinor's eyes beamed with delight as she listened to Clarendville's vindication of one of the party accused, and sir Edward, perceiving their expression, said—"You must excuse me, Miss Belvington, for not being quite so clear-sighted as my friend; but, Alfred, if you will point out your favourite to me, and she will accept me for a partner, it will be her own fault if she has not her full share of dancing this evening. But, my dear friend, you certainly are wonderfully clever, or you would never have observed all this at a time when, I was fully convinced, your attention was directed towards a very different object."

Clarendville's colour heightened, but  
not





not replying to the latter part of this speech, he only advised his applying to one of the stewards for an introduction to the young lady they had been speaking of; and to Elinor's great satisfaction, she soon perceived sir Edward leading his pretty partner to the dance, which having gone done, he conducted her to a seat next Elinor, and introduced her by the name of Benfield, when the former had the pleasure of discovering her to be a niece of the lady at whose house she had been visiting with her friend lady Egerton at Bath the preceding winter.

Mutually pleased with each other, the *partie quarrée* entered into a lively and spirited conversation, till they were called upon to take their stations in the dance; and again Elinor went down it with the same animation as before; but scarcely had she finished it, and sir Edward had engaged her for the next set, as Clarendon also did Miss Benfield,

when Miss Fitzmorton approached her and said—"When you are ready, Miss Belvington, Mrs. Montague will not be sorry to return home, as she is much fatigued, having already deferred her departure, that you might enjoy these last two dances."

This was the first time Miss Fitzmorton had deigned to address Elinor, and the latter would not have been very sorry had her taciturn mood continued a few hours longer; but unwilling to check the first advances towards civility that young lady had made her, though vexed to leave so agreeable a party, in as cheerful a tone as she could assume, assured her she would join Mrs. Montague as soon as sir Edward returned to hear her apology for being obliged to decline the engagement she had entered into with him.

Miss Fitzmorton said she would wait for her; and sir Edward soon returning with some tea he had been to procure for

for his partner, Elinor having made her excuses, introduced Miss Fitzmorton, by that lady's desire, to him and Clarendville, as one of the party they would meet the following day at Ashgrove.

Sir Edward coolly bowed in return to the gracious one now vouchsafed him. Neither Clarendville nor Elinor could forbear smiling at the look expressive of dislike, not unmixed with contempt, which accompanied his freezing salutation. As Elinor took the offered arm of Clarendville, Miss Fitzmorton lingered behind, in the hope of the same attention from the handsome baronet to conduct her to Mrs. Montague, who, she informed Elinor, was waiting for them in the anti-room; but sir Edward, content with having returned the bow of introduction, had now thrown himself on the form beside Miss Benfield, and appeared so much engrossed in ad-  
F 5 miration



miration of an ornament which had fallen from her hair, as not to perceive Miss Fitzmorton was without an attendant. Her brother George now joined her, and after inquiring if Miss Belvington was safe, offered her his arm, and the fair Isabella was fain to accept of him as an escort; but recollecting sir Edward would be at Ashgrove on the morrow, she bore the disappointment of her hopes better than she otherwise would have done.

“You will be at the Lodge to-morrow?” said Elinor to her companion as she descended to the carriage.

“If I thought otherwise,” he replied, “I could not prevail on myself to part from you now, as I have much yet to tell you of Rosebrook; and had Mrs. Montague waited till the next two dances were finished, both Ormsby and myself would have been able to return with her to-night. As it is, I fear—”

“As it is,” said Elinor, interrupting him,

him, "you must return to Miss Benfield, from whom, I fear, you have already been detained too long."

They were now met by the general, who entreated them to hasten a little, Mrs. Montague being all impatience to be gone. Elinor now quickly sprung into the carriage, and while returning the adieus of Clarendville, and listening to the hope he again expressed of meeting her the next day, observed not the cloudy brow of Mrs. Montague; and when the carriage drove from the door, was so totally absorbed in the anticipation of hearing from Clarendville some account of her beloved family, that she remarked not the taciturnity preserved by her companions, who were all separately engrossed by their own thoughts. The ladies' displeasure ran high against herself—Mrs. Montague's because neither sir Edward nor Clarendville had asked her to dance, though both had done so to Elinor—lady Fitzmorton's, from her

F 6

daughter's

daughter's having passed unnoticed by the two most elegant young men in the room, whilst Mrs. Montague's "country cousin" had been the principal object with them, and the admiration of the rest of the company. General Clarendon's thoughts were fully occupied by the same subject, though tuned a little more harmoniously.

At length the silent party arrived safely at the Lodge, and immediately separating, retired to their respective apartments.

## CHAPTER VIII.

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ELINOR arose in the morning with a lighter heart and in better spirits than she had done since her arrival at Ashgrove. The ball on the preceding evening had proved so much pleasanter than  
the



the commencement of it had promised, and she had, while dressing, recalled the remembrance with so much delight to her recollection, that the happy effects were visible in her countenance when she met Mr. Montague in the breakfast-room, and drew forth his congratulations upon the brilliancy of her appearance after her fatigue.

Elinor now looked around for the general, but not perceiving him, inquired if he were too much fatigued to join them at breakfast?

“Oh no,” replied Mr. Montague, “he was off with the dawn to Walford, to escort his wife and daughter back to Ashgrove. Did he not tell you yesterday he expected them?”

“No,” answered Elinor; “but his son informed me last night, though he could not tell me at what hour they would arrive.”

“You should have asked that question of his friend,” said Mr. Montague, smiling;

smiling; "Ormsby could have calculated to a minute."

Elinor repeated the conversation that had passed on the subject the preceding evening, to Mr. Montague's great amusement; and then inquired how the general, who appeared so much attached to his wife and daughter, could suffer them to be so long absent from him?

"It is on the latter's account," replied Mr. Montague; "poor Emma's health has been lately in a very delicate state, and Mrs. Clarendville, fearing for the life of her darling, took her to Bristol about a month back. Particular business prevented the general from accompanying them, but that time has passed unusually slow with my old friend, and I persuaded him to meet us at Ashgrove, to prevent Emma's being hurried back before it was proper; and I am very happy, my dear Elinor," he continued, "that Mrs. Clarendville has been prevailed on to come hither with her daughter, as I think you will

will find in Emma a companion more to your taste than either Isabella or Lucretia Fitzmorton appear to be. Nay, do not blush so cruelly at my having discovered your total want of discernment," he laughingly added; "but be comforted in finding I lack it full as much as yourself, and in my assurance that you will not be much longer tormented by their society, as sir Charles has received a letter which obliges him to hasten to town, where, at the end of next week, lady Fitzmorton, her son, daughters, and ward, not forgetting the latter's echo, join him to proceed to Fitzmorton Hall, where the person and fortune of lady Harriet are to be made over to his heir; therefore we shall only have our friend George remain of that party."

Elinor now confessed she should not be much grieved at their departure; and then finding Mr. Montague had business to transact with his steward, hastily finished her breakfast, and returned to her

own



own room, where she employed herself in writing an account of the ball to her sister Willoughby.

Having finished her letter, and knowing Mrs. Montague would not at present be visible, she determined upon enjoying herself during the heat of the day in the delightfully-cool retreat of the grotto; and as she passed the breakfast-room, deposit the letter in the bag, which was always kept there for that purpose. The sound of voices as she opened the door made her hesitate, fearing Mr. Montague might be engaged there; but receiving an invitation from him to enter, she complied, and perceived him still at the breakfast-table, with Clarendville as his companion. The latter advanced with the greatest animation towards her, and expressed his pleasure at seeing her look so very little fatigued after the ball the preceding evening; and added—"I had not dared to flatter myself I should see you so soon this morning, as I was informed

informed by the servant Mr. Montague only was visible."

"I am equally surprised at meeting you," answered Elinor, "as I understood you too were gone to Walford."

"You *concluded* so, you mean," said Mr. Montague; "for I am certain I never told you he was, and you can have seen no one else this morning who could inform you."

Elinor acknowledged her cousin was right, and then inquired of Clarendville how soon she might expect the party to arrive?

"In less than three hours," he replied, "as Mr. Montague tells me my father was off so soon; it proves he was as impatient to meet his wife as my friend was his fair one.—But you were asking," he continued to Mr. Montague, "whether Ormsby was gone on horseback? I was going to answer—no; he went in his phaeton, thinking it probable Emma would prefer being his companion

nion in that vehicle to mounting behind him on a pillion."

"What a provident thought that was of his, Elinor! was it not?" said Mr. Montague; "would such a one ever have struck you?"

"Only at one of the most brilliant moments," she laughingly replied: "but what other company do you expect, as I see there is a carriage now driving round the sweep?"

"None that I know of," said Mr. Montague, advancing to the window: "can you tell me, Alfred, whose carriage it is, as my eyes, I am sorry to add, are too old to discover? but surely it is coming at a very slow rate."

"Quite a funereal pace," returned Clarendville, as he followed to the window; but discovering, at the first glance, to whom it belonged, he darted from the room, exclaiming, "Some accident must have happened, or my mother would not come so slow."

Mr.



Mr. Montague and Elinor, greatly alarmed, were following his quick steps down the lawn, when they were met by the general's servant, who informed them the carriage had been overturned at the entrance of the village, and he greatly feared his mistress's arm was broken—"My master, sir," he continued, "has sent Robert back to Lesford to bring a surgeon; but poor Miss Clarendville is made quite ill by the accident, and obliged to remain at a cottage till the carriage can be sent for her."

"Had I not better return in it, and accompany her hither?" said Elinor to Mr. Montague.

"Why, no," he replied, "I think your services will be more required here in assisting poor Mrs. Clarendville, and Walker shall go for Emma."

The carriage had now arrived at the door, and the poor sufferer was carefully lifted from it; but notwithstanding all their caution, the agony attending her removal

removal was so great that she almost immediately fainted.

The general was now completely overpowered, and unable to add his assistance to that of his son and Elinor; the former was engaged in supporting his mother, while Elinor was actively employed in fetching and applying proper restoratives, which had at length the desired effect—Mrs. Clarendville recovered, and was persuaded to remain where she then was till Mr. Wallis the surgeon arrived.

Elinor now again inquired if she had not better send some assistance to Miss Clarendville? but Mr. Montague informed her Walker was already gone; “and I have a message from Mrs. Montague to you, my dear Elinor, begging you to act as her representative, in seeing every thing is made comfortable to her poor invalid guest, as she is herself not well enough to leave her room this morning.”

The medical gentleman now arrived,  
having

having fortunately been met and recognised by the servant near the village, and Mrs. Clarenville was conveyed to her room, and the fractured limb reduced before her daughter arrived.

Elinor called her whole stock of courage to her aid, and with Clarenville remained in the room during the operation; and so well did she sustain herself, that excepting her countenance was paler than usual, no one would have suspected how much she underwent in witnessing the sufferings of poor Mrs. Clarenville, who set her an excellent example by the fortitude with which she bore them. As soon as it was over, Elinor, by her desire, went down to inquire if Emma was arrived, and to inform the general the worst was past. She found him in the parlour with his daughter and sir Edward; the two former were in great agitation; but upon her assuring them Mrs. Clarenville was doing well, Emma was prevailed on by her

her



her father and lover to retire to her room, and endeavour to procure a little rest.

Elinor having seen her new friend to her apartment, returned to Mrs. Clarendonville; she found her, worn out with pain and fatigue, sunk to sleep on the shoulder of her son. The lightness of Elinor's footsteps did not disturb her; and having shaded the room as much as possible, she again retreated, and returned to the parlour, where the Miss Fitzmortons soon entered; the elder was delighted again to meet sir Edward, who did not appear more flattered by her advances than on the preceding evening. But the fair lady not perceiving, or if she did, not allowing herself to feel displeased at the reserve of his manner, or the brevity of the answers he returned to her numerous questions concerning the accident, continued her efforts to engage him in conversation, till Mr. Montague inquired how he came to arrive so much earlier  
at

at Ashgrove than could have been expected?

“ Alfred was ignorant,” replied sir Edward, “ that the general informed me last night, he had in the morning received a letter from Mrs. Clarendville, in which she desired him to proceed no farther than Selby, as she intended pushing on during the cool of the evening; and I did not feel inclined, Miss Belvington, to inform Clarendville of this, after those impertinent inquiries he made last night.”

Miss Fitzmorton now turning to Elinor, inquired if sir Edward was a lover of Miss Clarendville? she answered in the affirmative, adding—“ An approved one, I believe, as I understand they are engaged.”

Her companion, now evidently disconcerted, arose, on the pretence of returning to lady Harriet. Elinor followed her from the room, again, at sir Edward's

Edward's request, to visit Emma, and send him intelligence of her health.

"Pray, Miss Belvington," said Miss Fitzmorton, as they ascended the stairs, "how long have you known sir Edward Ormsby?"

"I never saw him before last night," replied Elinor; "but why do you ask?"

"Because you appear on such intimate terms," returned her companion, "that I thought you must have been acquainted for years; but some young ladies have the happy art of making instantaneous friendships with gentlemen."

"There was nothing in sir Edward's manner to make you conclude him very intimate with me," said Elinor; "he merely alluded to a joke which passed last evening between himself and Mr. Clarendville."

"Oh, pray, do not be angry at any thing I have said," exclaimed Miss Fitzmorton; "I was not accusing you of  
being



being a flirt, but only wishing it possible I could attain a little of your *non-chalance* towards the gentlemen; and would, in return, give you a small portion of reserve when in company with the other sex."

A slight noise at the top of the stairs now caused them to look up, and they perceived Clarendville leaning over the balustrades. The cool bow with which he returned Miss Fitzmorton's salutation, and the expression of his countenance as he addressed Elinor, convinced her the ill-natured remark of her companion had been overheard—"My mother, Miss Belvington," he said, "has commissioned me to seek you, and return with tidings, good ones I hope, of our dear Emma."

"I am now going back to Miss Clarendville," she replied, after informing him of what his sister had been prevailed upon to do; "and shall, I trust,

be able to send both sir Edward and Mrs. Clarendon a good account."

"I wish you would bring it yourself to my mother, that I may leave her under your care, whilst I return to poor Ormsby."

Elinor promised compliance, and then, glad to escape from Miss Fitzmorton's ill-humour, hastily proceeded on her commission. Upon opening the door of Emma's apartment, she was immediately entreated by her to say how her mother was going on—"Is her dear arm properly and safely set?" she continued, shuddering as she spoke.

"Perfectly so," replied Elinor, smiling; "I think I can assure you of its safety."

"And can you tell me, Miss Belvington, how my dear mother bore the dreadful operation?"

"With such fortitude, I assure you," returned Elinor, "that both your brother

ther

ther and myself were surprised at her resolution."

"Were you then present, Miss Belvington? How very kind! But it only confirms the account I have before heard of your goodness. My dear mother was very fortunate in meeting with one equal to herself in resolution; for I much fear her daughter, had she been allowed, would not have been of much service."

"You will have acquired more courage when you are arrived at my age," said Elinor, smiling; "I was as great a coward as yourself at seventeen; but my errand here was to entreat you would take some repose, that, on my return to Mrs. Clarendville, she may have the satisfaction of hearing you have followed your dear father's advice."

"Oh no," she replied, "I must indeed see my dear mother first; I cannot rest easy without doing so; indeed, indeed I cannot."

"I must leave you, since my influence  
G 2 fails,"



fails," returned Elinor, " and will send either sir Edward or your brother to you; perhaps they will be able to convince you the least agitation would be highly detrimental to Mrs. Clarendville; and she cannot feel otherwise than much alarmed at the sight of your pale countenance."

" If you think so," said Emma, after a pause, having caught a view of her own haggard and fatigued appearance, " I will not go; but I entreat you to return to her; and do not, my dear Miss Belvington, pray do not allow my mother to be left to the care of servants only, but stay with her yourself till I can relieve you."

Elinor having assured Emma she would not leave Mrs. Clarendville, proceeded to the chamber of the invalid; and after rejoicing the mother's heart by the glad tidings she brought, persuaded her to take the draught Mr. Wallis had sent, the soporific powers of which soon took effect; and Clarendville, satisfied at  
leaving

leaving his mother with so kind a nurse, returned to the party now assembled in the drawing-room, bearing Elinor's excuses for not appearing at dinner.

When Mr. Wallis again visited his patient in the evening, he assured her anxious relatives, that although she would most probably suffer much from pain during the night, they need not entertain any apprehensions of her not ultimately doing well.

Elinor finding it likely Mrs. Clarendon would pass some restless hours, declared her intention of not leaving her till morning; Mr. Wallis highly approved of this determination, and the poor sufferer also expressed her gratitude for the attention.

Mr. Wallis, by the general's desire, likewise visited Emma, upon whose delicate frame the alarm she had suffered brought an attack of fever, which obliged her medical attendant to insist on her immediately retiring to bed, and

taking some medicine he was enabled, from the housekeeper's medicine-chest, to prepare for her directly, with which, by Elinor's entreaties, she was induced to comply.

Mrs. Clarendville, as Mr. Wallis predicted, passed a sleepless and painful night; but towards morning, her attentive nurse had the pleasure of seeing her fall into a gentle slumber; and sending the servant, who had remained with her during the night, to bed, she seated herself in the dressing-room, to be in readiness to answer any inquiries that might be made, and prevent the slumberer from being disturbed. A gentle tap at the door soon drew her to it, which she found, on opening it, had been given by the general, who, with his son, was in waiting to learn how the night had passed. Elinor having closed the door of communication between the dressing-room and bed-chamber, informed them of the sweet sleep  
the



the invalid had fallen into, and trusted the happiest effects would result from it.

“And now, my love,” said the general, “you will, I hope, be persuaded to retire, and endeavour to procure a little sleep, for I cannot compliment you on the brilliancy of your eyes this morning; and rest assured I will not leave your patient till either yourself or Emma, who I hear is much better, can return to her.”

“I cannot leave Mrs. Clarendville,” replied Elinor, “till I have given in my account to Mr. Wallis.”

“He is already here,” said Clarendville, as that gentleman now entered; but upon hearing her account, he pronounced it so very favourable, that he would not allow of her being disturbed; and having promised to call again in the course of the morning, took his leave.

“I will now take your advice, my dear sir,” said Elinor to the general, “as

you promise not to forsake my charge; for I own I begin to feel a little sleepy."

"And take with you," he replied, "an old man's blessing," kissing her affectionately as he spoke.

"Accept also a young man's most grateful thanks," said Clarendville, taking her hand, and involuntarily raising it to his lips, "for the great kindness and attention you have shewn his highly-revered and beloved mother."

Elinor, blushing at the earnest animation of his manner, gently withdrew her hand, and retreated to her own apartment.

The sound of the first dinner-bell awoke her, and she arose to be in readiness for the meal, the servant informing her Miss Clarendville had been with her mother some hours, and that they were both much better. Elinor, fearing her languid countenance would alarm Mrs. Clarendville, determined on not visiting her

her till after dinner; therefore, upon the ringing of the second bell, she proceeded to the drawing-room. General Clarendville, his son, and Mr. Montague, were conversing near the door when she entered, and immediately advancing towards her, inquired, in the kindest manner, whether she had recovered her fatigue? Elinor answered in the affirmative; but the general, shaking his head, said—"Your looks contradict your assertion; but have you seen Emma or her mother since you rose?"

"To tell you the truth," replied Elinor, "I have not, as I feared Mrs. Clarendville would be uneasy at observing what a good-for-nothing-looking nurse she had engaged; therefore I desired the servant not to mention having seen me till after dinner, when I hope to appear more brilliant. And now," she continued, turning to Mr. Montague, "I want to be informed if there were any letters for me to-day by the post?"



"Why, you cannot have the conscience to expect another so soon from Rosebrook," he laughingly replied.

"Not from my mother, certainly," answered Elinor; "but she is not my only correspondent."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Montague, with an arch smile; "why, it is not more than three weeks back since you told me, that when at home you scarcely ever received a letter, as your family were your *sole* correspondents."

"*Nearly so*, I believe, was my expression," returned Elinor; "I am certain I did not omit telling you I sometimes heard from my dear friend in India."

"And as this *dear friend* is now arrived in England," said Mr. Montague, "you very reasonably expect to hear more frequently from—which gender am I to say, masculine or feminine?"

Elinor, blushing, repeated her inquiry for letters; and Mr. Montague, taking

taking out his pocket-book, said—"I will endeavour to satisfy your curiosity; and for that purpose you shall have a full view of all the treasures contained in this *sanctum*. *Imprimis*, first, a letter from my steward, now in town, informing me the timber sold well; second, a letter from my friend, Charles Westall, saying his black mare beat lord Sanderson's brown filly quite hollow; third, a letter from——"

"I can hear no more," cried Elinor, laughing, though not a little provoked; "my stock of patience is quite exhausted; I conclude you have no letter for me, therefore will rest content until to-morrow."

"Your conclusions are always so very hasty," said Mr. Montague, detaining her, "therefore generally wrong; yesterday morning you concluded Clarendonville was on the road to Walford, when he was coming as fast as his horse would allow, though much slower than his

wishes carried him, post to Ashgrove; to-day you as hastily conclude, because I just mentioned in a casual way whom my letters were from, that there were none for you, at the very time when I had put my hand on one directed at full length, ‘Miss Belvington, Charles Montague’s, esq. Ashgrove Lodge, Lesford, Surrey,” putting one into her hand as he spoke. “But before you break the seal,” he continued, “allow the general and his son to admire the device. Look, Alfred, here is the little urchin, Cupid, armed with a pickaxe, hammering at that rock, on the top of which is placed a heart; see, there is a fragment of the stubborn soil already detached; and the motto is, *peu-à-peu*. Oh, the sly dog! Pray, Elinor, who owns this ingenious affair?”

“It belongs to Caroline,” she laughing answered; “you know it does, as you were at Rosebrook when she asked me to give it her.”

“Whose



“Whose then is this?” said Mr. Montague, taking out another letter from his pocket-book; “this epistle is also directed to ‘Miss Belvington,’ though not in so small and pretty a hand as the other; and here is that same mischievous god again—what is he doing there? Lighting a firebrand at a blazing altar, and applying it to the lower end of yonder heart; the motto, ‘Rise and flourish.’ Excellent,” he continued, “and in good plain English too. I like that, and will venture to pronounce the possessor of that little toy is a good, honest, open-hearted soul, whether man or woman. Am I not right, Elinor? You might answer if you would; for remember I am not now asking the question—male or female?”

But Elinor was now unable to answer; the seal she had recognised as one of Mortimer’s, and the superscription of the letter was also in his hand-writing. Fortunately for her, dinner was now announced,

nounced, and Mr. Montague left her to conduct lady Fitzmorton down stairs. Elinor's usual post was by her cousin, and George Fitzmorton generally contrived to occupy the seat next her; but this day Clarendville was her neighbour, the former having been detained answering a question of sir Edward Ormsby's. Some time after they were seated, Mr. Montague, in a low voice, inquired of Clarendville if his pistols were in good order?

"Perfectly so," he replied, not a little surprised at the question; "and very much at your service if you require them."

"No, my good friend, my fighting days are over; but take care of yourself, that's all; the citadel is already besieged."

Elinor coloured, though she knew not why. Clarendville looked for an explanation; but Mr. Montague turning from him to George Fitzmorton, said—

"Come,

“Come, my friend, you must drink a glass of wine with Miss Belvington, as she declares she will not touch any unless in company with you.”

George eagerly accepted the invitation; and Elinor, relieved at the sportive turn he had given to the subject, joined readily in the laugh now raised against her.

As soon as possible she repaired to Mrs. Clarendon's apartment. Mrs. Montague had visited her guest in the morning, and now contented herself with sending a message to her, whom Elinor was delighted to find so much better than she had dared to hope. Her own still pale countenance did not escape Mrs. Clarendon and her daughter's observation, and the former expressed the fears she most truly felt, that her health would suffer from the fatigue she had undergone on her account.

Elinor assured her she was quite well, and ready to resume her place another night,



night, if required; but this Mrs. Clarendville would not hear of, as the general intended to be her substitute, if necessary, which she hoped would not be the case.

Emma now advised her young friend to lie down again for a few hours; but Elinor assured her she did not at all feel to want it, and would only leave them for a short time to peruse the letters she had not yet opened, and return again.

With a beating heart, when she arrived in her own room, did she break the seal of the letter Mr. Montague had last given her; but what a weight was removed from her mind, when she discovered it was written, not by Mortimer, but his sister, her dear Eliza! Delightedly she pressed the letter to her lips; she breathed again without difficulty, and was soon able to read with clearness the contents of her friend's letter. It contained nothing particular, but a hope of soon meeting her in  
Hampshire,

Hampshire, and introducing her little Elinor to her namesake; and she concluded by saying, she must leave her letter to be directed and sealed by her brother, as colonel Wardley was waiting for her to proceed to his general's, at whose house they were going to dine.

Elinor now, with a light step, returned to Mrs. Clarendon, with whom she found the general, who had just taken up a book, which he was going to read to his wife. Elinor begged she might not interrupt him, and seating herself on a sofa, Mrs. Clarendon having been removed to her dressing-room, prepared to listen; but sleep weighed heavy on her eyelids, which that lady perceiving, desired her to recline at her ease, and not reject its influence. Elinor willingly followed her advice; the general continued to read aloud, and in a few minutes she was lost in forgetfulness. The sound of something falling to the ground at length aroused her; and on opening her

her eyes, she perceived Clarendville sitting opposite her, in the chair before occupied by the general, who, with his daughter, had left the room. Starting immediately from her recumbent posture, she hastily exclaimed—"How could you, my dear madam, allow me to be so lazy? Indeed you ought to have waked me before."

"I could not be so cruel," replied Mrs. Clarendville, smiling, "after what you have already suffered for me, as I assure you I wanted nothing, having been well attended by this young man, who, on the whole, has been a very good boy and tolerably quiet."

"Except being so noisy as to wake Miss Belvington," said Clarendville, interrupting her; "but I trust you are not the worse for your nap."

"Oh," said Elinor, smiling, "you always find 'the nurse sleeps sweetly, hired to watch the sick,' particularly 'on the repose the sofa yields.' But what is become



become of the general and Miss Clarenville?"

"I came up by the request of poor Ormsby," replied Clarenville, "to entreat Emma would let him behold her beauteous face, if only for the space of five minutes; she good-naturedly complied with his petition, and my father was soon after sent for by Mr. Montague."

"My sleep must have been a pretty sound one," said Elinor, "not to have heard a word that was passing."

"We were congratulating each other upon it," returned Mrs. Clarenville, "when Alfred unfortunately dropped—"

"The book I was reading," he cried, making a sign of silence to his mother, unobserved by Elinor.

Mrs. Clarenville smiled, but obeyed his signal; and the remainder of the evening was passed by the party assembled in her dressing-room, which consisted of sir Edward, Elinor, the general, and

and his son and daughter, in social and cheerful conversation.

## CHAPTER IX.

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A WEEK now glided away, one of the pleasantest Elinor had ever passed; her mornings were spent with Mrs. Clarendville in her dressing-room, where Clarendville was their constant companion, either reading to his fair auditors, or conversing on various subjects. Sir Edward generally contrived to steal Emma from them; while the general and George Fitzmorton passed^d their mornings in the amusement of fishing. The evenings were occupied in riding, walking, or rowing on the lake.

At the end of a week the Fitzmorton family and lord Petersbrook left Ashgrove; George alone remained. Mrs. Clarendville,

Clarenville, now much recovered, removed from her apartment to the drawing-room.

Mrs. Montague, when her fashionable friends were gone, proved no disagreeable addition to the party; and Elinor found her brother Coleridge's observation true, that "Mrs. Montague could be extremely pleasant."

One very warm morning, as Clarenville was, as usual, reading to his mother, Mrs. Montague, and Elinor, Emma, accompanied by sir Edward, entered, and throwing themselves on a seat, both declared, in a breath, it was impossible to find a cool place anywhere, as both within and without doors the air felt oppressive to suffocation. Elinor inquired if they had tried the grotto? Neither of them had ever heard of it, and now entreated her to shew them where it was.

Though vexed at being thus disturbed, she complied with their request, and accom-

com-

accompanied by Clarendville and George, proceeded thither. The new visitors were equally delighted with Elinor on her first seeing it. Emma and sir Edward seated themselves on the rustic bench, while Elinor and her two companions continued near the entrance, enjoying the coolness and admiring the clear, placid stream before them.

“Oh for Cowper’s clever little dog, Beau!” said George, after having vainly attempted, by means of a stick, to procure some of the double white water-lily for Elinor.

“I will at least emulate the exertions of that sagacious animal,” cried Clarendville, as, springing on one of the lower boughs of the willow near him, he bent over the stream.

Elinor earnestly, though vainly, entreated him to give over the attempt; Clarendville returned not till he had succeeded in procuring a beautiful branch of that remarkably-handsome flower, which
he

he presented to her, at the same time assuring her the only risk he had run was an immersion in the cold bath beneath, and that would have been far from unpleasant in so hot a day.

Sir Edward, as they were retracing their steps to the house, observed and admired the beauty of her flowers—"You should wear them, and give them to your true knight, as an emblem of yourself," he added, "for they only can equal you in purity and innocence."

Elinor, blushing, laughed at his high-flown compliments; but Emma, snatching a rose-bud from a bush near her, said—"No, the lily does not suit Elinor's blushing complexion so well as this roseate bloom," displaying the flower she held, and then sportively adding—

"This little flower, that loves the lea,
May well her simple emblem be;
It drinks heaven's dew, as blithe as rose
That in the king's own garden grows;

And

And as I place it in her hair,
Alfred, a bard is bound to swear,
He ne'er saw coronet so fair."

And as she recited the verses, playfully throwing aside *Elinor's* bonnet, she entwined it among her luxuriant tresses.

"Bravo!" cried sir Edward and George together; "and if *Alfred* were a bard," continued the former, "we should have some fine flaming verses in reply; but as he is unfortunately not gifted with the poetic vein, he contents himself with flaming looks of approbation."

Elinor, now deeply blushing, drew the rose-bud from her hair, and threw it carelessly from her, then taking the arm of her friend, quickened her pace, not a little confused at being made so conspicuous an object; and by this movement did not perceive *Clarendon* hastily stoop for the flower, and place it carefully in his bosom. But sir Edward was more quick-

quick-sighted, and passing round to him, said, in a low voice—"Have a care, Alfred—you know the motto, 'no rose without a thorn;' remember Montague's warning, 'the citadel is already besieged.'"

"Was Cæsar ever known to fear?" said Clarendville, smiling, and breaking from him, again joined Elinor.

"Fair *spinsters*," said Mr. Montague to Elinor and her friend, as with their companions they entered the drawing-room, "if you are inclined to witness a trial of skill, accompany me this evening to the great barn where the fleece of my favourite Merinos is stowed, and you may be spectators of the feats which some old ladies in the parish of Ashgrove will perform on the spindle and distaff; and perhaps when there, you will add to the list of competitors for the prize it is my intention to bestow next winter, on the successful fair one, namely, a comfortable pair of blankets."

“ We shall have great pleasure in becoming spectatresses of the scene,” replied Emma; “ but as for myself, I must beg leave to decline your second offer, as I never could manage a spindle, though I have frequently endeavoured to do it.”

“ And I,” said Elinor, “ am equally certain of never being able to appear with the least brilliancy in the line your good old friends shine in.”

“ My sweet coz,” returned Mr. Montague, “ I am perfectly aware it is not your intention ever to appear in the character of an aged spinster. Emma seems, by her eagerness to disavow any proficiency that way, to be of the same opinion, and I greatly blame myself for the folly of my second request; but will you forgive my stupidity, and honour my select party by your company this evening?”

“ You do not deserve the forgiveness which I read in the looks of Emma,” said general Clarendville, smiling.

“ I cannot

"I cannot say if Elinor's looks express the same," returned Mr. Montague, "as the netting she has taken up engrosses her attention so entirely that not one expressive feature is visible; her fair form and face being so lowly, yet elegantly, bent over her work."

"The expression of my countenance," returned Elinor, laughing, but still unable to raise her eyes, and meet the significant look which the manner of Mr. Montague assured her she would find, "would be merely the reflection of that forgiveness general Clarendon has discerned in Emma's; I shall not therefore, to gratify your curiosity, run the hazard of spoiling this purse, which is so nearly finished."

"Are you quite certain, Elinor," said Mr. Montague, advancing towards her, and taking the purse into his hand, "are you quite certain it is large enough? I fear it is not; but will you let me look at a rupee? I never saw one, and being

entirely ignorant of its size, am very anxious to know if I am mistaken."

Elinor, now still more confused, hastily drew the purse from his hand, and putting it into Emma's, with a forced laugh, said—"If possible, my dear friend, satisfy the curiosity of our importunate host; will it, do you think, hold all the riches sir Edward Ormsby is possessed of? For at Emma's request, my dear madam," she added, addressing Mrs. Clarendon, "I have exercised my skill in constructing this purse, not being herself inclined to undertake so unpleasant a task."

The voices of Mr. Montague and George were now raised to express the disapprobation they felt at this arrangement; the latter, almost angrily, accused sir Edward of monopolizing the attention of both the ladies, and the former declared himself equally displeased with the projector, the executor, and the receiver, of so elegant a gift. Ormsby, triumphantly

triumphantly laughing, displayed with exultation his new acquisition. Emma joined in his mirth; but Elinor, wishing to escape from the dispute, hastily snatched up the flowers Clarendville had given her, and quickly effected a retreat from the apartment.

CHAPTER XI.

AT the appointed hour Mr. Montague, accompanied by his guests, proceeded to the barn, where the distaffs and their owners were already assembled, when the contest for the prize began, which was at length adjudged to the oldest of the candidates, a very clean and respectable old lady, around whom, while spinning, her three grandchildren had crept, with countenances expressive of the

deepest fear and anxiety lest she should fail in her efforts.

Elinor, upon inquiry, found these children were nearly supported by their aged relation. Their mother was dead, and the father had, two years ago, enlisted for a soldier, and had not written to his mother since.

Clarendon and Elinor were delighted with the account they heard, from some of the villagers assembled to see the spinning-match, of the industry of this poor family. Mr. Montague, who had not before known of the circumstances, now promised the poor creature should no longer have occasion to work so hard, as he would have her removed into one of the cottages he had lately built for the reception of such worthy objects, and the children also maintained and properly educated.

Tears of joy and gratitude rolled down the venerable cheeks of the grandmother, as in a faltering voice she called down
blessings

blessings on the head of her benefactor. Elinor caught the hand of her cousin, and pressing it between her own, exclaimed —“ Oh, how like is your conduct to my dear father's !”

“ No, Elinor,” returned Mr. Montague, half-smiling, “ not exactly ; my friend would not so long have remained in ignorance of so worthy an object being a resident in his parish, therefore he never would have had so fair an opportunity of making a display of his generosity.”

The unsuccessful candidates were not allowed to return home unrewarded—a subscription among the little party, who had viewed with the greatest interest the exertions of these poor creatures, was soon raised, and delivered with as much pleasure as it was gratefully received. Among the purses which were drawn out for the occasion, George's eye quickly recognised in sir Edward's hand

the subject of the morning's dispute, and his murmurs were again renewed.

Clarenville was engaged at a little distance, conversing with Elinor and his sister, when Ormsby approached, and having whispered something to the latter, which was answered by a nod of assent, he turned to Clarenville, and said —“ Alfred, are you inclined to become a candidate for a prize far exceeding in value that which the good old lady who now left us is possessed of?”

“Come, Clarenville,” exclaimed George, hastily, “be quick in your decision; will you join in the race sir Edward has agreed should entitle the winner to the purse so unfairly monopolized this morning?”

Clarenville waited not for the question to be repeated, but calling Mr. Montague to act as umpire, the whole party repaired to a spot the latter pointed out. George insisted upon the prize being returned

turned to Miss Belvington ere the race commenced, that the winner might have the happiness of receiving it from the fair donor herself.

This being agreed to, Mr. Montague gave the signal, and the competitors bounded from the spot. Sir Edward had at first the advantage; but soon flagging, George appeared to be rapidly advancing towards the goal, when Clarendville, who had at the commencement allowed them to gain ground, now darted forwards, and passing George with the velocity almost of lightning, flew onwards towards the post, which he reached many seconds before his antagonist, to the great mortification of poor George, who had flattered himself he should be the winner, having been much in the practice of running; but he took not into consideration the mercurial lightness of Clarendville's figure, that in the race had so much the advantage of his,

which promised to be on a much larger scale.

The former now claimed the contested prize; and sir Edward laughed so heartily at the discomposure of poor George, that the latter, finding he could not recover his temper, took Mr. Montague's arm, and proceeded towards the house. The rest of the party rambled about the grounds for some time, until Elinor, fearing Mrs. Clarendon would feel fatigued, persuaded her to return home.

CHAPTER XII.

IMMEDIATELY after breakfast the next morning, Mr. Montague summoned his steward, and gave orders concerning the removal of the good old widow and her three grandchildren; and when the party separated,

separated, he rode out himself to see them properly executed.

Elinor, after paying a visit to the apartment of Mrs. Clarendon, whose *femme-de-chambre* she had always been since her accident, ran down to the breakfast-parlour on her daily errand for letters. George Fitzmorton was the only person there, whom she found hastily pacing the room, and on her entering it he flew towards her, and snatching her hand, vehemently exclaimed—"Oh Miss Belvinton, I am commanded by my father to leave Ashgrove immediately."

"I am very sorry to hear it," Elinor replied; "and from the suddenness of your recall I greatly fear something unpleasant has occurred, as I had understood you remained here till your family returned."

"Yes, indeed you are right," he answered; "something unpleasant has occurred, and I have to thank my spiteful sisters for this harsh command," his eyes

flashing anger as he pointed to a letter he held in his hand; "but they shall not act thus with impunity, I can tell them. Am I to be treated like a boy of seven years old, sir Charles?" dashing the letter to the floor as he spoke; "no, I will beg my bread sooner than submit to such tyranny!"

Elinor, terrified at his violence, was retreating from the room; but placing himself so as to prevent her passing, he continued, in a bitter tone—"You do right, Miss Belvington, in appearing thus apathetic; were my father present, he would be satisfied that in this instance at least his wonderful penetration, of which he so much boasts, is for once at a fault."

"What is it you mean?" inquired the now-surprised and highly-alarmed Elinor.

"Mean!" he repeated—"that you are totally indifferent either to my departing or remaining here."

"I do

“ I do not understand this language,” replied Elinor, gravely, and endeavouring to conceal the agitation his impetuosity occasioned; “ when next we meet,” she continued, “ I trust it will be with more calmness on your part; at present I must decline remaining in this room any longer, therefore will thank you to allow me to pass;” and she was again moving to the door, when George, his irritable temper almost overpowering his reason, exclaimed—“ Yes, when next we meet, it will, I suppose, be to offer my congratulations to you as the bride of Alfred Clarendville, who, every one can perceive, is the happy man of your choice.”

The vehemence with which he had spoken prevented his hearing the door behind him open, or the entrance of general Clarendville, who stood transfixed by surprise at the sentence he had overheard just within the room. But though passion had blinded the youthful lover,

Elinor

Elinor was more clear-sighted; she flew to the general, and hiding her burning face on his shoulder, burst into tears.

General Clarendon supported her to a chair, and throwing his arm around her waist, pressed her affectionately to his bosom, whilst in a stern voice he inquired of George by what right he had dared thus to agitate the feelings of Miss Belvinton?

George, whom the sight of Elinor's tears had completely calmed, now said, as he offered his father's letter to the general—"Read this, my dear sir, and you will not wonder at my forgetting myself in the manner I have done."

The general complied with his request, and read a peremptory command from sir Charles, couched in most overbearing language; for his son's instantly joining him at Fitzmorton Hall, as he had heard, from indisputable authority, he had been foolish enough to fix his affections on the young person Mrs. Montague had brought

brought with her from Hampshire, who, there was no doubt, would endeavour all in her power to inveigle him into some promise to which his father never would consent; and the letter ended with an assurance of banishment if he did not immediately return home.

“Can you wonder,” continued George, when he saw the general had finished reading, “at my being thus violently transported? did you ever see a more insolent letter?”

“I do not wonder at your being much hurt by the manner in which your father has thought proper to express himself,” replied the general; “but my surprise is only equalled by my displeasure that you should address Miss Belvington in the passionate style I overheard on my entrance—was this manly? was this right?”

“Oh no, no, it was not indeed!” cried George, in an agitated tone; “never can I forgive myself for it, nor too sincerely

cerely express the heartfelt sorrow I feel for having acted so ; do you, my dear sir, be my advocate, and endeavour to obtain forgiveness for me—Miss Belvington's forgiveness."

Elinor having now somewhat recovered her composure, raised her head from the supporting shoulder of the general, and extending her hand to the now-penitent boy, said—" You have my most sincere forgiveness ; and as this is perhaps the last time of our meeting, let me, in the presence of the general, convince you the suspicion you expressed, and he must have overheard, had not, nor ever will have, the slightest foundation ; and when you meet sir Charles, tell him also Elinor Belvington, while she considers herself under a promise of union to one man, will never encourage the attentions either of his son or of any other gentleman ;" and now overpowered with confusion, her burning cheek again sought refuge on the

the protecting arm of the general, which hid from her view the expression of surprise George's countenance expressed, and which, mingled with regret, was likewise visible on that of her supporter.

"Are you satisfied now, George?" said the general, after a pause.

"Too well," he replied, as hastily turning away he took his letter from the table, and left the room.

"I could have had no idea," said the general, after a few minutes' silence, "of that foolish boy carrying his nonsense to this extent; you had, I fear, been long exposed to his violence before I entered?"

"Not very long, I believe," returned Elinor, raising her head; "but I fear I have also been carried by the impetuosity of my feelings beyond what the bounds of delicacy prescribed; but I could not," she continued, deeply blushing; "after the sentence you must have heard

heard him utter, bear the idea of your entertaining the same suspicion of me sir Charles, I can perceive, has expressed; and I was hurried on, almost without reflection, to pronounce as positive what is at present only conditional, that I might be able at once to silence this insolent man's fears."

"I grieve most sincerely, my dear child," returned the general, "that you should have been exposed to hearing them; but believe me, had you indeed honoured my son by your partiality, no circumstance could have been more welcome to my heart than that of being able to call one by the endearing name of daughter whom I already love with the affection of a parent. But as I must no longer flatter myself on this point, I will rest content in the hope your happiness is more effectually secured by your present engagement; and will you pardon my curiosity if I inquire whether the

the man of your choice is your long-known and sincerely-attached friend, major Mortimer?"

Elinor, blushing, answered in the affirmative; and then taking her mother's letter from her pocket, she submitted it to the general's inspection, and after he had read it, repeated to him the heads of the answer she had written her mother.

General Clarendville's spirits seemed to revive from the perusal of the letter; and after some little further conversation, affectionately kissing her, he advised her returning to her room. Elinor looked anxiously towards him; and he, understanding the expression of her countenance, said—"The confidence you have honoured me with shall not, be assured, extend further; and George will easily be prevailed on not to mention the information you gave him whilst at Ashgrove, and I shall endeavour to prevail on him to leave it as soon as possible."

Elinor

Elinor gratefully raised the hand she held to her lips, and retreated from the room. In the hall she was met by Emma, who invited her to take a stroll with her. Elinor promised to join her in a few minutes; and after depositing her mother's letter safely in her desk, was returning to her friend, when she received a message from Mrs. Montague, entreating a few moments' conversation with her.

"Elinor," she exclaimed on her entrance, "I have some good news to communicate to you—the earl and countess of Wallingford, with a few friends, intend coming to Ashgrove for a week; so we shall again be a little more lively than has lately been the case—will it not be delightful?"

"To you I dare say it will," replied Elinor; "but for myself, I confess I never passed a more delightful fortnight than this has been."

"I am very sorry, Miss Belvington,"
said

said Mrs. Montague, in a tone of pique, "that the society of my particular friends should appear so disagreeable to you; but yours will not be gone when mine arrive, at least I fear not, on account of being a little puzzled how to accommodate so many persons, the Lodge unfortunately is so very small."

Elinor was not quite certain whether this hint was not intended for her; but she was prevented being confirmed in her suspicions by the entrance of Mr. Montague, who came to inform his wife he was going with his male guests to call on the marquis of L——, who had arrived at his seat of —— some days before.

Elinor now left the room, and looking in on Mrs. Clarendon, found her ready to descend. The sound of Emma's voice directed them to the music-room, and on entering it, Elinor was taxed with a breach of promise, in not returning to walk with her—"But I want you now,"

now," she continued, "to take a part in this song, as the sweet voice my mother and myself heard yesterday in the garden convinces us you can sing, though a few days ago you asserted the contrary."

"I told you I could not sing to the instrument," replied Elinor; "and I spoke the truth, having never attempted it in my life."

"If you have never attempted it, my love," said Mrs. Clarendville, "you cannot know your powers that way. I wish you would comply with Emma's request, for I think it a great pity you should not cultivate the sweet tones nature has given you. Emma is allowed to sing well, and with a little of her instruction you might soon equal her."

"You have now flattered my vanity so effectually," returned Elinor, laughing, "that it will be impossible for me any longer to hesitate trying my vocal powers. But not this morning, dear Emma,"

Emma," she continued, seeing her friend preparing to begin; "for, to own the truth, I am so terribly nervous, that I feel it impossible to raise a note."

Emma was beginning to lecture her for such nonsense, when she was interrupted by the entrance of the general.

"I thought, my love," said Mrs. Clarendon to her husband, "you were all gone with Mr. Montague to the marquis of L——'s?"

"We were on the road thither," he replied, "when I recollected I had not mentioned to you having received a letter this morning from my sister, in which she requests us to fix as early a day as possible for our visit; therefore, if you like it, we will say one in the beginning of next week."

"Oh, how unfortunate!" cried Elinor, her heart sinking within her at finding her only kind friends at Ashgrove were on the point of leaving it; "how very
unfortunate

unfortunate it is, that the allotted period of my visit is not also elapsed !”

“ I will not consent to leave my nurse behind me,” said Mrs. Clarendville; “ if Elinor cannot accompany us into Hampshire, I will not quit Surrey.”

“ This is downright mutiny,” said the general, smiling; “ but have a little patience, my dear friend, and you will find I am not so cruel as to wish to separate either you or myself from our dear child; but you both snapt me up so very short, I really lost, for a few minutes, the faculty of speech. But now let me hasten to my story, lest another interruption should entirely deprive me of it.—I have a message to you, my dear Elinor,” he continued, addressing her, “ which, though written by my sister, comes originally from your mother. It is, that you will, if possible, obtain permission of Mrs. Montague for your returning to Rosebrook under our escort,

escort, as Mr. Wardley has received a letter from his brother, mentioning his intention of carrying his wife, &c. into Hampshire in a very few days; and as their stay will be very uncertain, it is hoped you will return home in time to welcome your friends."

"This is delightful," cried Emma; "now, dear Elinor, if you consent, we shall not be separated."

"Indeed!" said the general; "how very kind this is of you, Emma, to prefer travelling in the carriage with your friend, and leaving me as a companion to sir Edward!"

"I did not promise that," replied Emma, laughing.

"Then I see no chance of your enjoying the society of Elinor much longer, as we shall drop her at Rosebrook, and proceed ourselves immediately to Willowfield."

"Emma has nothing to say for herself," said Mrs. Clarendon; "therefore

let us turn our attention to Elinor, who appears deep in thought profound."

General Clarendon could now very well account for her thoughtfulness, as he justly concluded the &c. lady Neville had dashed under meant no other than major Mortimer.

"Perhaps you object to travelling in a plain landaulet," he smilingly said, "after the dashing equipage you came hither in."

"Oh, no," she replied, returning his smile; "I am only fearful Mr. Montague will not allow of my making my *congé* so soon."

"He cannot make any reasonable objections," said Mrs. Clarendon, "when you inform him of your mother and friend's wishes."

Elinor, now blushing even more deeply than she had done on the first mentioning of the plan, said she would go and inform Mrs. Montague of it, and immediately left the room for that purpose.

pose. Upon acquainting her with it, that lady faintly answered, she should be sorry to lose her, but raised no objections to her departure; and then inquired on what day she proposed leaving Ashgrove?

Elinor having answered, early in the ensuing week, Mrs. Montague exclaimed—"Oh, then, you will see the Wallingforths, who will, I hope, be here on Sunday.—Why do you look surprised, Elinor? Surely you must know that day is the most fashionable one for travelling, and I am sure it is much the pleasantest."

"Oh, do not say so, my dear Mrs. Montague!" returned Elinor; "you cannot think thus, I am certain, as you never yourself pursue so very wrong a plan."

"That is because Mr. Montague will not," she carelessly answered; "but, my dear Elinor, you ought to throw aside this old-fashioned nonsense, or

your visit to Ashgrove will not have improved you. I did hope I should have returned you a little less *outré* in your ideas than I found you."

"Mrs. Montague," said Elinor, gravely, "you may remember when you so much pressed me, whilst in Hampshire, to accompany you hither, I then told you my *outré* ideas and notions of right would not coalesce with those of your fashionable friends; and therefore, as I hoped never to be laughed or led into changing them, I thought you had better leave me quietly at Rosebrook, where all around participated in my sentiments."

Mrs. Montague's colour rising, Elinor fearing she had gone too far, now said Emma was waiting for her to walk; and then, as quickly as possible, retreated from the apartment of her highly-outré hostess.

When she met Mr. Montague at dinner, she informed him of her mother's wish,

wish, and, supported by the general, bore his raillery better than she expected.

Mr. Montague protested he could not think of detaining her a moment longer after such a summons—offered her the use of his carriage to begin her journey that night, and proposed sending a courier forward to prevent any delays on the road.

Elinor thanked him, but said there was no necessity for this haste; and her kind friend, the general, soon contrived to turn the conversation into another channel.

The earl and countess of Wallingforth, with their suite, arrived on the day appointed to a late dinner. Mrs. Montague was now in her element, whilst her former guests congratulated themselves the following morning would emancipate them from these dashing new visitants.

Mrs. Montague's attention was entirely engrossed by her fashionable
1 3 friends;

friends; even sir Edward now passed unnoticed; Clarendville was thrown completely into the background, and Elinor found herself fast sinking into a non-entity.

As the ladies ascended to the drawing-room, she heard lady Wallingforth inquire of her hostess who that pretty girl was that sat next Mr. Montague at table?

“Only a distant relation of his,” replied Mrs. Montague, “whom we brought out of Hampshire with us.”

“Oh, I understand!” replied her ladyship, laughing—“one of your country cousins. I know how to pity you, being myself most terribly bored with a dozen of them.”

Elinor did a little hope Mrs. Montague would have explained her ladyship's mistake; but the former had not forgiven her for the conversation that had so lately passed between them, and therefore only joined in the laugh of her guest.

Mr.

Mr. Montague, when he, with the other gentlemen, joined the party, desired Elinor to pay a farewell visit to her friend, the widow, now comfortably settled in her new cottage. Emma said she would accompany her; sir Edward and Clarendon were, as usual, their companions; and they soon arrived at the neat habitation of the old lady, whom they found enjoying herself at the door of it, in her easy-chair, surrounded by her grandchildren, the eldest of whom, a girl of eleven years of age, was employed in reading aloud a portion of the Bible to her aged grandmother. The good creature was delighted to see the gentry; and having shewn her neat little apartment to them, inquired if they would please to take a glass of new milk? her good benefactor having, in addition to his other blessings, made her a present of a cow.

This offer being thankfully accepted, the little girl went to fetch it, and the

party returned to the door of the cottage, to admire the neatness of the garden before it; sir Edward alone remained in the house, entertaining himself with the pictures that adorned the white-washed walls, consisting of "Courtship," "Matrimony," and "Conjugal Felicity." With this last he was much amused; and calling to Elinor, who was nearest the door, entreated her to come and admire it.

The old lady's eyes followed her, as she rose to join sir Edward; and when she thought her out of hearing, bending forward on her stick, inquired of Emma, in a low voice, whether that dear, sweet young lady was not going to be married to the fine, handsome gentleman within?

Emma blushed, whilst Clarendonville, laughing, answered—"My friend is not so fortunate a man."

"Ah, sir," replied the old lady, "he would be a blessed creature if such had been his luck! for a sweeter face I never set my eyes on; and while it pleases
God

God to spare my old life, I shall never forget to pray for her night and morning; for was it not through her my dear master came to the hearing of my poor state? and I should not deserve his great goodnesses to me, if I ever forgot that kind, good young lady," wiping away a tear of gratitude as she spoke. "But Miss is a-going to be married," she continued; "for old John Thompson told me so yesterday; and he said some gentlemen run a race for her on that so happy day for me, and he heard the one who lost say he gave her up to the other who won—was that you, sir?" addressing Clarendville, whose colour was now fast mounting to a scarlet hue.

It was now Emma's turn to laugh; which she did without control; and her mirth brought sir Edward and his fair companion to inquire the cause of it. Fortunately for poor Clarendville, the girl now returned with the milk, which he busily assisted her in pouring out.

Emma told her lover, in a whisper, she would explain what had so much diverted her as they returned home, which they did, after partaking of their delightful beverage. Clarendville, at parting, slipped half-a-guinea into the old lady's hand, who, as she courtesied her thanks, wished him all happiness with her favourite lady.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT an early hour on the following morning, the carriages were in waiting for the departure of the Clarendville family; Elinor was to be Mrs. Clarendville's companion in the landaulet, which the general was to drive; Emma went with sir Edward in his phaeton, and her brother accompanied the party on horseback.

They

They had all taken their leave of Mrs. Montague on the preceding night; but her husband was waiting for them in the parlour when they met at breakfast—"And this is to be my last sociable morning repast," he mournfully said, as they seated themselves around the table: "how much I regret your leaving us so soon, Mrs. Clarendville! for I have not, for many years, passed so pleasant a fortnight as this last has been; and when shall we all meet again?"

Emma's deepened colour was reflected by that on Elinor's cheek, as, looking up, she observed the general's eyes fixed upon her with an expression she could not account for.

"Oh, very soon, I hope," said Mrs. Clarendville, not observing Elinor's change of countenance, though she did her daughter's; "we shall, of course, meet next winter in town, where I hope we shall persuade Elinor to join us."

“Will you promise to meet me there, Elinor?” said Mr. Montague, archly.

“It is not fair to fetter her with promises,” cried the general, rising; “so come, let us be moving; we are to take our time upon the road, therefore the sooner we are off the better.”

“Why, my dear friend,” exclaimed Mr. Montague, “you have not allowed sufficient time for us to swallow a mouthful; here is poor Elinor not even begun; she shall not go yet, I promise you; so if you will not wait for her, you shall e’en leave her behind; and she wont be very sorry if you do.”

Elinor now declared she was quite ready; and Mr. Montague telling her she was in a wonderful hurry to be gone, they proceeded to the carriage.

“God bless you, Elinor!” said Mr. Montague, as he put her into it; “and much happiness attend you, and a safe passage across the seas!”

The

The carriage now drove off, and Mr. Montague returned into the house. After proceeding a few miles, Clarenville rode up to the door, and entreated his mother to have a little compassion, and admit him as a third, the day being so extremely warm, he found riding on horseback almost insupportable. Mrs. Clarenville calling him a selfish creature, in wishing to incommode others, that he might gratify himself, begged her husband to stop a few minutes, that the spoiled child might be gratified in his whim. The general, though looking a little grave, complied with her request; Clarenville ascended the vehicle, from which he did not remove till they stopped for the night.

They again commenced their journey at a very early hour the next morning, as it was the general's intention to reach Willowfield in time for dinner. Clarenville did not find Elinor quite so conversible as she had been the day before.

The

The nearer she approached Rosebrook, the more thoughtful she became. At length the carriage entered the village; Elinor now leaned forward, returning the welcomes of the inhabitants as they passed. The parsonage next appeared peeping between the trees; her heart now beat almost audibly—the carriage approached the little green gate opening into the shrubbery in front of the house. Elinor, with her hand on the lock, now eagerly called to the general to stop; her brothers Coleridge and Willoughby were standing at the gate in readiness to assist her from the carriage; but Elinor heeded them not; scarcely allowing them time to open the door, she darted past them, and flew rapidly down the walk into the arms of her mother, who was awaiting her on the steps of the house.

Mrs. Belvington, after returning her beloved daughter's embrace, resigned her to her sisters, and advanced, with her husband, towards the Clarevilles, who

who had alighted, and were hastening to meet them.

“You have not quite forgotten an old friend?” said the general to Mrs. Belvington, as he stepped forward, and offered his hand to her.

“My memory is not yet so very treacherous,” she smilingly replied, putting hers into his extended one; “and though we are neither of us grown younger since we last met, I, on my part, assure you I should have recognised you anywhere.”

“Can I do less than aver the same?” sportively replied the general; “and I believe my assertion would approach nearer the truth; for, from not having been exposed to the scorching heats of India, or the frozen temperature of the North, time has not laid so heavy a hand on you as on a poor old soldier.”

“Well, my dear sir,” said Clarendville, laughing, “can you not defer the rest of that compliment till I have introduced my
my

my mother to Mrs. Belvington? and I fancy they will neither of them have any great objection to hearing it, free from the scorching sun."

"This saucy boy is a proof, my dear madam, how much the age is degenerated since we were young," said the general, as they proceeded to the house.

In the parlour he had the pleasure of meeting his sister, who assured him she had preferred remaining snug till the first compliments were over, which she had been certain would be pretty numerous.

Elinor now introduced her two sisters, Mrs. Willoughby and Caroline, to her friends; Mrs. Coleridge not being quite well, had been prevented coming to the parsonage.

General Clarendon was much pleased with the sweetness of Mrs. Willoughby's manners, so like to those of Elinor; but the striking contrast between the latter's style of countenance and that of her
younger

younger sister was most forcible; the soft, dark blue eyes of Elinor lost not their charms in the admiration the large, animated, black ones of Caroline commanded. Though but little more than fifteen, she appeared nearly two years older; her hair, as luxuriant as her sister's, but of the raven hue, shaded her white and polished forehead; the colour on her cheek did not glow and fade as Elinor's did, upon every emotion of her ingenuous mind; and it was there the general and his son thought how much she was surpassed by the latter. Caroline's features, though not regular, were good; and the brilliancy of her complexion (that of a clear brunette) was scarcely ever equalled. She appeared all life and animation; her piercing dark eyes seemed to read the very inmost soul of those on whom they were fixed; and Elinor, as she looked at them, wondered at having ever been afraid of sir Edward's.

The

The general's ached as he endeavoured to follow her rapid movements, as she flew to order and present refreshments to the circle; and they turned again with pleasure on the mild, graceful form of Elinor, as she assisted Caroline in placing her choice baskets of fruit on the table. When the party had gathered round it, Elinor and Mrs. Willoughby, not feeling inclined to partake of them, strolled into another parlour, which opened by glass doors into the garden. Willoughby and Clarendon soon joined them, and after some little conversation, the former, advancing to the entrance leading to the garden, suddenly exclaimed—"Ah, here he comes again! and not this time on a bootless errand."

Elinor turned, with her companions, to discover who the person was, when her eyes rested on the figure of Mortimer, rapidly advancing from the private gate, at the end of the garden, towards the apartment she was in.

Surprised

Surprised at his unexpected appearance, her spirits, before agitated by the meeting with her family, now entirely forsook her; she attempted to leave the room, but her limbs failing her, she caught at a chair, to save herself from falling, and Clarendville flew towards her only in time to prevent her sinking to the floor.

Mrs. Willoughby now hastily left the room to procure a glass of water; but unwilling to create any alarm amongst the party, who were still conversing at the table, she poured one out for herself, and having drank part of it, proceeded with the remainder to the apartment she had quitted.

Elinor was still insensible; but no longer supported by Clarendville, major Mortimer had insisted on taking his lifeless burden from him; and the former was now standing by a window, his arm resting against the frame, and his form trembling

trembling with the most powerful agitation.

Mrs. Willoughby sprinkled the face of her sister with the water she had brought. Elinor soon revived, and started on perceiving by whom she was supported: hastily rising from the arms of Mortimer, she threw herself on her sister's neck, and burst into tears.

Willoughby now taking the arm of Mortimer, and beckoning Clarendville to follow, returned with them to the room they had left.

As soon as Elinor found herself alone with her sister, she exclaimed—"Oh why, my dear Cecilia, did you allow me to be taken thus by surprise? Indeed you should have told me of Mortimer's arrival. How very foolish my behaviour must have appeared to Mr. Clarendville!"

"It does not much signify, I should imagine," returned her sister, smiling, "what

“ what he thinks of it; the question is, what were Mortimer’s thoughts upon the matter? But as to my not having mentioned his arrival, my dear Elinor, recollect I have had no opportunity; and, indeed, so fearful was I of agitating you, that before you came, I begged of Caroline not to tell you of it till our visitors were gone; and now, what will you do in regard to them? Are you equal to returning to the parlour?”

Elinor had no choice left her; the door opened to admit the general, who, suspecting what had been the matter, came to take a private farewell of her; but Emma, not aware of what had passed, followed with sir Edward. Elinor was now obliged to exert herself; and after apologizing for leaving them so long, returned with them to the other parlour. Not daring to raise her eyes, lest they should encounter either Clarendonville’s or Mortimer’s, she seated herself by lady Neville, who expressed the
pleasure

pleasure she felt in her return home, and added—"We shall see you, I hope, very often at Willowfield whilst your friend Emma is with me; and I wish, my dear Mrs. Belvington, you and your family, married and single, would spend to-morrow with us."

"To-morrow we are engaged to dine at my son Coleridge's," replied Mrs. Belvington.

"And will you, lady Neville, with your family, married and single, join our party?" said Mr. Coleridge.

"My family are of an age to judge for themselves on that point," replied her ladyship, laughing; "you must take their own answers."

The general promised for himself and wife to attend; sir Edward answered for himself and Emma; but Clarendville, in a hurried tone, said, he feared it would not be possible for him to accept Mr. Coleridge's friendly invitation, as he must leave Willowfield early on the
next

next morning for London, having some particular business there, which would require his presence.

"Why, Alfred," cried Emma, "you never mentioned this before; surely you need not be so very precipitate."

"Delay will be of no service to me," he replied in an agitated tone; "therefore the sooner I am gone the better."

"And when will you return to us?" inquired his mother.

"Whenever Emma summons me," he replied, attempting a cheerful tone, and looking from her to sir Edward.

"Well, I am most terribly disappointed," cried lady Neville; "I had hoped to have been surrounded by those I love; but this engagement of yours, Alfred, throws a sad damp on my projected plan of happiness."

"And I," said Mortimer, approaching him, and extending his hand, "had hoped we should have cultivated our acquaintance

quaintance till it had ripened into an intimacy."

Clarendville started back as if an adder had stung him, when he beheld the hand now stretched out to him, in token of friendship. Mortimer looked at him in surprise; but Clarendville recovering himself, took the offered pledge, and slightly pressing it, bowed in answer to this speech, which he could not prevail on himself to reply to.

Lady Neville now rising, said it was time for them to proceed to Willowfield; and having engaged the party for the next day but one, called upon her nephew as her escort to the carriage. The general and Mrs. Clarendville affectionately embraced Elinor at parting, the latter expressing, in the warmest manner, her gratitude for her attentive care of her. Emma also lamented parting from her, when sir Edward advancing, said—"We are not going to lose Miss Belvington yet

yet, I hope. When you do intend leaving us," he continued, in a low voice to Elinor, "pray let us have a more timely notice of the event than you have hitherto vouchsafed us."

Turning now from her, he immediately addressed some trifling remark to her sister, whilst Emma again entreated her friend to come very often to Willowfield.

Elinor promised she would, and now was obliged to raise her eyes to those of Clarendville, to whom she had not yet bid adieu; but her surprise was great at receiving a cool, almost a freezing bow to her parting salutation, whilst, immediately placing the arm of lady Neville within his own, he hurried her hastily to the carriage.

Mortimer, while conversing with the general, had preceded them to it, and the rest of the party, except Elinor, followed—she remained rooted to the spot Clarendville had left her on; and now

finding herself alone, sunk on the chair she had been standing by, and concealing her face on the back of it, again burst into tears, which she vainly attempted to check. A returning footstep alarmed her; she started up, and perceived Clarendville standing in mute surprise before her. Endeavouring to recover herself, she inquired if he had lost any thing? but not receiving any answer, she involuntarily looked towards him, and perceived his agitation was equal to her own. She turned away to conceal her confusion, when springing towards her, and seizing her hand, he pressed it more than once fervently to his lips, and then as hastily dropping it, and snatching the parasol of lady Neville from the table, he darted from the room, and was out of sight in a moment.

CHAPTER XIV.
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"CECILIA," said Caroline to her sister, as they were proceeding with Mr. Willoughby to Beechwood, on the evening of the day Elinor had returned to her native home, "I do not think poor Mortimer has any chance at present, for, depend upon it, Elinor does not care a rush for him."

"What reason have you to think his affairs so desperate?" said Mr. Willoughby.

"The perfect unconcern with which she receives his attentions: but, my dear Cecilia, you were present when Mortimer first saw Elinor this morning—how did they meet?"

"With the most perfect unconcern," replied her sister, smiling, "if Elinor's



fainting on the first glance she caught of Mortimer may be admitted as a proof of her indifference."

Willoughby laughed heartily, as he exclaimed—"Ah ha! my little wise one! for once your judgment has proved erroneous."

"Not quite so hasty, my good friend," returned Caroline, joining in his laugh; "I have never yet been wrong in such points as these, though this is not the first time either you or your wife have declared yourselves sceptics to my judgment. Was I not the first to discover and inform you, Cecilia, that you were desperately in love with Willoughby? you stoutly denied it; but when I proceeded to assure you this love was returned, you—I remember it to my cost, for the skein of silk I had just persuaded you to hold for me was entirely ruined by the violent jerk—you started from your chair, and with something between a shriek and a sigh, exclaimed—'Impossible,

sible, Caroline! you can know nothing about it.' Now the event proved I was wiser than you thought me. This is more than a twelvemonth ago, and it is to be hoped I am not gone back in my knowledge; and you will find, in this respect, my words are not less true."

"But, pray, tell me, Caroline," said Willoughby, after another hearty laugh at this account, "why you also call me sceptical? I do not remember ever having ruffled your silk or your nerves by my conduct in that affair."

"Oh! you were ten times worse than Cecilia; she bore all her wounds with patience, compared to yourself. I am sure poor Henrietta's carpet was entirely ruined by the heavy strides you were in the daily habit of taking upon it; and many a time did poor Elinor's needle penetrate an inch deep into her finger by the sudden jar your quick start occasioned, when the footsteps of your goddess seemed approaching the door, which,

if she happened unfortunately to pass without opening, my ears were regaled with at least fifty long-drawn sighs, all brought into being in the space of five minutes, and then away to your old habit of pacing the room backwards and forwards, as fast as you could raise your feet from the floor."

"You will one day be well paid off for all this sauciness, Caroline," said her brother.

"I suppose so," she returned; "according to your maxim, my time must come sooner or later. Well, I wish it was fairly come and over, for folk in love are marvellous stupid, and now it is Elinor's turn."

"Elinor!" repeated her sister; "why, you just now declared her to be perfectly indifferent to what was passing."

"I know what I am talking about," replied Caroline, nodding her head, and looking very wise; "but you have treated my wisdom so very irreverently, that  
nothing



nothing further shall transpire at present; I shall have glorious opportunities of plaguing Elinor, which I am heartily glad of, for we began to grow terribly stupid at Rosebrook; nothing could be made of Mortimer—he bore all my rattle with such a provoking stock of patience, I was quite weary of him, but Elinor will be far better sport.”

“Oh no, let me entreat you not to laugh at her about Mortimer; if my father should hear of your doing so, how very angry he would be!”

“I am not going to do so foolish a thing, my dear Cecilia; so be at rest upon that point. My father has set his heart upon Elinor’s being desperately in love with this noble dragoon; but he is laying up store of disappointment if he flatters himself she ever will be—you may take my word for that.”

“Oh the wonderful wisdom of fifteen!” said Willoughby, as he opened

the door of the parsonage, and sportively carried Caroline into the parlour.

“Fifteen will beat five-and-twenty depend upon it,” she replied, as taking her candle she ascended to her chamber.

Having arisen at an early hour on the following morning, Caroline determined to lengthen her walk back to Rosebrook with taking a round by Mr. Wardley’s, to inquire if his brother was yet arrived; he and his family being daily expected, though Mortimer’s impatience had not allowed of his waiting till the colonel and his wife could leave town. Upon inquiring of the servants, who were the only persons visible, she was informed the expected guests had arrived late on the evening of the preceding day, but, in consequence of the fatigue of their journey, were not yet risen.

Caroline knowing this intelligence would gratify the heart of Elinor, now bounded

bounded quickly forward, and soon reaching the parsonage, sprung hastily into the parlour; but seeing her father and mother engaged in earnest conversation with her sister, she was as hastily retreating, but Mr. Belvington called her back, and saying they had finished the subject they were upon, soon left the room.

"Ah!" thought Caroline, "you have finished, I dare say, but not much to Elinor's satisfaction. Poor girl!" she mentally continued, "you'll have but a sorry time of it, if, as I very much suspect, my conjectures are right."

Elinor now raised her eyes, which had been fixed upon her work, and perceiving her sister's rivetted on her countenance, she faintly blushed, as she inquired where she had been.

"Did you not know," replied Caroline, with a look of mock innocence, and speaking very gently, "that I returned with Cecilia last night to Beech-



wood? dear me! how very strange no one should have told you!"

Elinor blushed a deeper colour, as she inquired—"how she had left Cecilia?"

"Quite well last night," returned Caroline, now unable to refrain from laughing; "how she is to-day we shall hear at dinner, for I have not seen her this morning, as I rose very early, that I might go round by Edgewold, and inquire if your friend Eliza were arrived; and I am happy in being able to inform you she is; and though a little fatigued, quite well after her journey."

"We will call there on our return from Willowfield," said Mrs. Belvington to Elinor, "where I think you will wish to go this morning."

"Oh, by all means!" cried Caroline, clasping her hands in delight, "as Elinor, I know, wishes to see her dear friend the general, and I wish most wonderfully to get another glimpse of his son."

"Caroline,"

"Caroline," said her mother, gravely, "your spirits are running away with you this morning; you must curb them a little if you wish to accompany us, for I cannot consent to take so wild a girl out with me."

"My dear mother, I beg your pardon, but you must excuse me to-day; remember, it is almost the first of Elinor's return, and I cannot help feeling glad to see her again, though she sits there, looking so grave, and as if she did not care a fig for me in return."

Elinor, now compelled to smile, assured her sister she was very happy at her again returning home; and then inquired of her mother if she had seen her veil, which she had thrown off on the preceding day soon after she arrived, and could not afterwards find?

"You left it," answered Caroline, "in the cave of Trophonius."

"Where is that?" inquired Elinor, smiling.

“Why here, to be sure,” returned her sister, throwing open the door leading to the other parlour; “yonder it lies on that chair. I would go and bring it, only I am afraid of the infection; as you have been once, a second visit cannot hurt you more.”

“You have completely puzzled me, Caroline,” said Elinor, whilst a conscious blush rose to her cheek.

“Then you are grown most terribly stupid, my dear sister, for I am certain you were the only person who did not remark the alteration visible on those who visited that fatal spot yesterday—nay, do not shake your head, Elinor, nor affect that incredulous look; ask sir Edward Ormsby if any one who found entrance there escaped the contagion: we both saw Cecilia and yourself enter it with light steps and smiling countenances—Willoughby and Clarendon followed, blithe as larks; but in the short space of a quarter of an hour,  
what



what a change appeared! forth stepped three gallant knights—first came Willoughby, sedate and grave as any learned judge; second, the beautiful, the brave, the noble Mortimer, looking as melancholy as an unbraced drum; then—oh that I were gifted with a descriptive talent! then would I describe the knight of the rueful countenance—black melancholy and despair were seated on his brow—his arms folded—his steps uneven—”

“ My dear Caroline,” cried Elinor, interrupting her, and hastening towards the door, “ we shall keep my mother waiting—you must finish your description another time.”

“ But wont you go for your veil, Elinor? well, I do not wonder at your being afraid of looking a second time the same guilty object you did yesterday, when you issued forth from thence, creeping close to general Clarendville, as

if

if you were afraid of being run away with against your will. But don't be in such a hurry; I am going to be very good, and fetch it for you myself; only do not run away, but be in readiness, if you hear me scream, to come to my assistance. I am not sure I shall not treat you with an hysteric, or some other sort of fit."

But Elinor would not be prevailed on to remain; she hurried out of the room, and after equipping herself for her walk, joined her mother, who, she knew, would protect her from Caroline's overpowering spirits.

"Where is your sister, my love?" said Mrs. Belvington, as she stepped into the parlour for her parasol.

"Here, mamma," answered Caroline, in a meek tone, as, with a demure look and measured step, she advanced from the inner parlour with Elinor's veil in her hand; and throwing it over her sister's

ter's head, she preceded them from the room with the same mock solemnity she had entered it.

Upon arriving at lady Neville's they were shewn into the drawing-room, where the ladies only were seated.

"My kind nurse," exclaimed Mrs. Clarendville, rising to meet Elinor, and kissing her as she spoke, "welcome once again! I have never been myself since we parted."

"What a compliment to your other daughter!" said Emma, laughing, and advancing to meet her friend; "but I have felt almost equally lonely in losing my sister; my brother too is gone—he was off before it was light. I heard him go, for, to tell you the truth, he was a most terrible neighbour; his room was next mine, and I do not believe he was in bed an hour; and he was so extremely noisy, I was kept awake nearly the whole night."

Caroline's arch eye met Elinor's as she  
seated



seated herself by Mrs. Clarendville. Unable to endure the expression, she rose again, and going round the table, placed herself at the back of Emma's chair, who had again resumed her drawing, which, on their entrance, she had risen from.

"Do you think my mother still resembles this picture?" said Emma, shewing her the miniature she was copying; "it was taken," she continued, "when she first married."

Elinor instantly perceived the strong likeness, but it was of the son, not the mother, and blushing, she involuntarily exclaimed—"It is indeed extremely like."

"I cannot agree with you, my dear Elinor," said lady Neville; "surely it much more resembles Alfred."

Caroline was just then seized with a little nervous cough.

Elinor bent her head still more over Emma's chair, as she answered, in a low tone—

tone—"Mr. Clarenville does very much resemble it."

"I never," said Mrs. Clarenville, "could procure a correct likeness of my son, though he has several times endeavoured to present me with one; but the expression of his countenance is too variable for the painter's skill."

"I remember," said Emma, "the last time he sat for it was when mine was taken, as a present for him, and I was to have his in exchange. The artist was very successful in my insignificant phiz; but when Alfred sat down to him, I never shall forget the ludicrous expression of despair his countenance exhibited, as, after many vain attempts, he dashed his pencil on the table, exclaiming—'It is such a queer face, I really can make nothing of it!' nor could all our entreaties induce him to proceed."

Emma's anecdote caused a general laugh; when it had subsided, Mrs. Clarenville,

renville, addressing Mrs. Belvington, said—"Have you any picture of our dear Elinor?"

"None," she replied; "the attempt has never been made, and I much doubt, if it were, it would prove equally unsuccessful with that Miss Clarenville has just mentioned."

"Indeed, I think there are times when it might be caught," replied Mrs. Clarenville, smiling; "do you not conceive it could be taken in a sleeping attitude? What is your opinion of this?" she added, taking a drawing from a box that stood beside her; "does this strike you as resembling any one you know?"

"'Tis Elinor herself!" exclaimed her mother.

"Elinor!" repeated the rest of the party, in one voice; "where, and by whom, had you it taken?"

"Oh, it is Alfred's style!" exclaimed Emma, as she took it into her hand; "and now I can guess when it was sketch-  
ed:



ed: was it not on the afternoon after we arrived at Ashgrove, mamma, when Elinor fell asleep on the sofa? yes, I am sure it was; for I recognise the veil I threw over her head when the sun came too much upon her; and the arm on which she rested is exactly in the same posture, whilst the other was thrown across her, with her work half-dropping from it; I pointed it out to you, mamma, not a moment before I left the room. Oh, give this precious drawing to me!" she continued; "I shall value it so extremely!"

"I value it too highly myself," replied her mother, "ever to consent to part with it, except to Mrs. Belvington, who will prize it even more."

"No," replied the latter, smiling; "whilst I keep the original, you shall not be deprived of the inanimate resemblance."

And now reminding her daughters they had another visit to pay before they  
returned

returned home, she arose to take her leave. Emma begged Elinor would not forget to leave her kind remembrances to sir Edward, which having done, and at the same time added her best love to the general, Elinor followed her mother from the room.

Scarcely had they left the house when they were met by Mortimer. He had been at Rosebrook, and learning from Mr. Belvington where they were gone, had proceeded to join them. Caroline now leaving Elinor, took the arm of her mother, and left her sister behind with Mortimer.

In conscious silence they walked on some minutes, till coming to a small rivulet which they were obliged to pass, he offered his hand to Elinor, to assist her in springing across it; and when she had successfully done so, still detaining it within his own, he drew it through his arm, and, after a moment's pause, hesitatingly said—"Has Mrs. Belvington mentioned

mentioned to my beloved Elinor the hopes I have dared entertain, that my devoted, my most ardent affection, may at some distant period meet the reward so much, so dearly prized?"

"Major Mortimer," said Elinor, exerting herself to speak with some composure, and not without success, though blushing, and keeping her eyes fixed on the ground, "I will answer you with the sincerity your too-partial regard for me deserves. My mother has, I understand, submitted to your perusal the reply I wrote her on the subject she by your wish mentioned. You there became acquainted with the true state of my heart; and I have now only to add"—and here Elinor hesitated a little, whilst her colour varied from white to red—"it still remains the same; and if your sentiments continue unchanged, I will not retract the promise I made my mother, only entreating you will be satisfied for the present with what I in my letter mentioned,



mentioned, and allow us to know more of each other before a positive engagement is entered into between us."

"Still the same ingenuous Elinor who captivated my heart before I left England," returned Mortimer, "and whose image was there enshrined," his colour also changing as he spoke, "in the heat of battle, as on the bed of sickness or repose. I can, I will ask no more at present, only that you will call me, as you were wont to do, by the familiar name of Mortimer, without that freezing title of major before it."

"Your memory is a little treacherous upon that point," said Elinor, attempting to smile; "I have not forgotten the many lectures both you and Eliza were in the daily habit of reading me, for never omitting the title of captain, by which I always addressed you."

"As long as you have condescended to remember me at all," returned Mortimer, "I willingly allow myself to be in the  
the

the wrong on that point; but surely now you might comply with my request."

Elinor shook her head as she hastened forward, and joined her mother and sister, who had now arrived at Mr. Wardley's.

The meeting between the friends was most affectionate; Eliza shed tears of joy, as again and again she pressed Elinor to her heart, and endeavoured to express the pleasure she most truly felt. Elinor was scarcely less affected; the happiness she experienced in embracing her friend was mingled with the painful remembrance of the commencement of their intimacy. It brought her beloved brother most forcibly to her recollection, and heightened the gratitude which the remembrance of the kindness she had received from the family of Mortimer always excited.

Colonel Wardley now entered, with his little girl in his arms. Elinor delightedly

lightedly fondled the little cherub, and soon discovered and pointed out to the mother the likeness it bore to the colonel.

The Wardleys were to meet the Rosebrook family at Mr. Coleridge's, to prepare for which Mrs. Belvington was obliged to summon Elinor to return home, whither they were accompanied by Mortimer, whose spirits had now risen much above their usual pitch, and Caroline declared she had never found him so entertaining.

General Clarendville, when he was introduced to Mrs. Coleridge, could not but acknowledge she was much handsomer than his favourite Elinor; but he looked in vain for that bewitching expression which in her was so captivating. Not a feature in her sister's face could the most critical observer have wished otherwise; they were all moulded to the exact criterion of beauty; yet after the first survey the eye turned with pleasure to



to the less regular, but far more expressive ones of Elinor. Mrs. Coleridge's manners also were more reserved; and a languor, the consequence of indisposition, made her appear careless and indifferent to those around her: yet when known, no one could do otherwise than sincerely love her; for it was rare indeed that any thing disturbed the serenity of her temper, which always flowed in an even stream.

Elinor fancied sir Edward did not meet her in the same friendly manner he was in the habit of doing; but certain she had given him no cause for the change, she soon forgot her suspicion, while conversing with Mrs. Coleridge and Willoughby, between whom she seated herself at dinner.

Before the day was over, sir Edward was as cordial with her as ever; and when they parted at night, he shook her hand in his usual friendly manner, as he said—"I cannot for my life be

angry with you long, though I own this morning I had almost determined on not speaking to you to-day."

Elinor would have requested to hear how she had offended him, but he gave her no opportunity, as he immediately addressed Mrs. Coleridge, and then, with the rest of the party, took leave.

## CHAPTER XV.

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A WEEK had now passed since Elinor's return, not a day of which had concluded without the sociable families around Rosebrook meeting either there or at their respective homes. Mortimer was scarcely ever absent from Elinor, who endeavoured, all in her power, to meet his attentions with the gratitude she knew they deserved. At the end of this time, lady Neville requested Mrs.

Belvington

Belvington to spare her daughter a few days as a companion to Emma, sir Edward having obtained the general's consent to hasten to London, and set his lawyers to work upon the necessary settlements; and he wished likewise to find out what Clarendville was after, as he had never written to any of his family since he left Hampshire.

Her mother having consented, Elinor returned with her ladyship, who gave Mortimer also a general invitation to Willowfield, Mrs. Belvington having informed her how he was situated with her daughter.

The reading and working parties again commenced, though often interrupted. Mortimer, they soon found, did not enter into them with the same spirit as their former companion; nor when he was persuaded to take the book, did any of the party feel much inclination to attend. His voice, unlike Clarendville's, was monotonous to the great-



est degree; he gave the sense of what he read, but it was totally devoid of expression; and often, on the slightest movement of Elinor, he would lay down the book, apparently rejoiced at any interruption, that he might gaze upon her from whose form his eyes were scarcely ever withdrawn.

Emma's thoughts were also so fully occupied, that she entered not, as usual, into her favourite authors, even when her father, who read most delightfully, opened their pages. This amusement therefore languished; and in the conversation that ensued, the loss of Clarendon's observations was most forcibly felt by all.

Elinor had no longer the companion who could understand every thought—one who appeared by intuition to be aware of the ideas passing in her mind, and to catch even the most distant, which he would clothe in such elegant and simple language, she would delightedly dwell

dwell on the recollection of the book or conversation which called it forth long after it otherwise would have faded from her mind.

Mortimer would eagerly listen to her remarks, even the most trifling—would applaud them so warmly, and dwell upon them with such delight, that Elinor frequently felt angry with herself for having made such foolish ones as they appeared when conned over, and repeated as if by rote. Yet Mortimer's understanding was not a weak one; it wanted only cultivation to bring to maturity the seeds which there lay dormant. He had entered the army at a very early age; his education had before been neglected by his father (then alive), and who, though a sensible man himself, had never attended to the culture of his children's minds. This deficiency had been supplied by his wife in regard to her daughter, but her son had left her at so early an age, and when at home

had so often preferred his boyish amusements to joining her and his sister, that he had little benefited by her maternal instructions. The society he had been thrown into had given a polish to his manners, and cast an artificial gloss over his defects, so that a stranger was not often aware of them. His countenance was handsome, and his address prepossessing. Possessed of an excellent temper, with a heart not less good, he was an universal favourite at the different destinations the regiment had been ordered to.

Mr. Belvington loved him as a son; the excellence of disposition he had shewn at the melancholy period which first introduced them to each other, had won his most sincere regard; and he was, in return, highly revered by Mortimer; but there was something in the manner of the former, which threw an awe over those who felt themselves inferior to him in understanding: this reserve



serve Mortimer had never been able to overcome; therefore Mr. Belvington had not discovered what his more penetrating wife and younger daughters had—the rude state of the soil beneath.

The second week of her visit was now commencing, when, one morning, as Elinor entered the breakfast-room of lady Neville, she was startled at the gravity visible not only on her ladyship's countenance, but on both the general and Mrs. Clarendon's. Emma also appeared much agitated; and as Elinor looked towards her for an explanation of the silence that prevailed, she turned from her to a window, and burst into tears.

Unable longer to continue silent, Elinor caught the hand of Mrs. Clarendon, and earnestly entreated to know what was the cause of this gloom—“Have you received any distressing intelligence of sir Edward?” she continued; “surely nothing else could agitate Em-

ma so much; or," her voice faltering, and her cheek turning pale, "is Mr. Clarendville ill?"

"Neither, my love," said the general, now approaching, and kindly taking her hand; "nothing distressing has occurred in our own family; our sorrow is for one in whom we are not much less interested."

"Tell me, my dear sir, at once, what is the matter," said Elinor, struggling to appear calm; "for I now plainly see I am deeply concerned; is it my mother, my sisters, or poor Mortimer, who I am to mourn for?"

"Mortimer is here," answered the general, "waiting to convey you back to Rosebrook, your poor father being extremely ill."

"Why not tell me the worst at once?" said Elinor, her calmness now amounting to desperation; "for that my dear father is no more I can plainly perceive; therefore will you have the goodness, lady

lady Neville, to order your carriage for me, that I may hasten to my poor mother."

"Elinor, dear Elinor!" cried Emma, as she flew towards her, and threw her arms around her friend, "do not talk in this dreadful tone! Mr. Belvington is not yet dead; he may, he will recover."

A burst of tears now came to the relief of poor Elinor, who again earnestly entreated permission to depart.

Mrs. Clarendville said she would accompany her when she was a little more composed, and, in the mean time, gently informed her of Mr. Belvington having, as he was descending from his chamber to breakfast, fallen down at the entrance of the parlour, in what was feared would prove an apoplectic fit. Dr. Morton had been sent for, but was not arrived when Mortimer came off for her.

Elinor now hastened her departure as quickly as possible, accompanied by Mrs.

Clarendville



Clarendville and Mortimer, who had been prevailed on to remain below till they joined him.

Upon arriving at the parsonage, they saw the carriage of the physician at the door. Elinor trembled violently as Mortimer assisted her out of lady Neville's; she paused for a few moments to summon all her fortitude to her aid, and having in some measure succeeded, she preceded her companions to the house. In the parlour they found Mrs. Coleridge, whose situation prevented her from attending the physician to the bedside of the invalid; she informed Elinor their father had recovered his speech before Dr. Morton's arrival, and therefore some ground for hope still remained.

When the doctor again entered the parlour, the seriousness of his manner caused the hearts of those assembled there to sink; but addressing Mrs. Coleridge, he said—"We will not yet despair, my dear madam; some favourable symptoms

symptoms have appeared; Mr. Belvington's age is not very great; and he may perhaps recover."

Elinor clasped her hands together, and again burst into tears, as she fervently exclaimed—"God grant it may be so!"

"My dear young lady," said the doctor, approaching her, "I must call upon you now for exertion; poor Mrs. Belvington wants all the support her children can bestow. We must not give way to lamentation at present; keep up your spirits as much as possible, in pity to your poor mother."

"You need not, sir, entertain any apprehensions of Miss Belvington being deficient in fortitude," said Mrs. Clarendville, hurt at his supposing Elinor was giving way to idle grief; "I can answer for her powers of exertion when they are required. The tears she now sheds are those of thankfulness for the slight hope you have held out to us; in a few minutes

minutes she will be herself again, and ready to perform any service you think requisite."

Mrs. Belvington now entered, and Elinor, thankful for Mrs. Clarendville's vindication, endeavoured to prove her gratitude, by sustaining with fortitude the meeting between herself and mother.

"Go to your dear father, my love!" said the latter, after silently embracing her; "he has inquired for you."

Elinor instantly obeyed; the invalid heard her voice, as she spoke in a whisper to Caroline, and calling her to him, she threw herself on her knees beside his bed, pressed the hand, now extended, fervently to her heart, and kissed it again and again.

"God Almighty bless my child!" said the poor sufferer, in a feeble voice, as he faintly returned her pressure. "Sit by me, my love, and do not leave your poor father!"

"Never, never," she returned, her voice



voice almost choked by emotion; "but you must not speak any more at present, and I will watch your slightest sign."

The father tenderly smiled upon his child; and retaining her hand within his own, closed his eyes, and remained silent.

Elinor left not her parent that day or the following night. In the morning he inquired for Mortimer; Mrs. Belvington, who had also remained with her husband, arose to seek him; but he entreated her not to go, as Caroline would do that for her.

After a moment's pause, Caroline having left the room, the invalid, turning towards his wife, in a low voice said—"Should the great Disposer of all events think fit now to call his servant to himself, I shall resign my breath in thankfulness, for having been permitted to remain below long enough to have  
seen

seen my children educated in his fear and love; two of them also happily settled in this life. My third, my Elinor," he continued, pressing the hand of his weeping daughter, "shall I leave this world in the same hope in regard to you? Tell me, my love, can you return the attachment of our excellent Mortimer?"

"Talk not of leaving us, my dear father," cried Elinor, almost overpowered with emotion; "you will live—live to see your daughter united to the man you approve. Oh, do not speak thus, I entreat you!"

"Elinor," said her mother, "moderate your transports, I conjure you; your father's life depends upon quiet."

"My child, my Elinor!" continued her father, "did I hear you right? Do you consent to become the wife of Mortimer?"

"Oh yes, to that, to any thing likely to make my dear parent happy!"

"Will

“Will this union ensure your own?”

“Doubt it not, my father; only let me see you better, and I shall be quite happy.”

“Elinor,” said her father, raising his eyes to heaven, “the Almighty’s will be done! But now,” he continued, after a pause, in which he appeared engaged in prayer, “whilst I am permitted to remain, let me bless my children.”

Mortimer now entered; and Mr. Belvington taking his hand, joined it to that of Elinor, and pressing them between his own, fervently ejaculated—“God Almighty bless my beloved children!”

Mrs. Belvington, highly alarmed for the consequence of this agitation, motioned Mortimer to carry the almost-lifeless Elinor from the room, whilst she poured out, and presented to her husband, some of the cordial Dr. Morton had ordered.

Overpowered by his late exertion,  
the



the invalid's head again dropped on the pillow, and in a few minutes he was sunk in deep repose.

END OF VOL. I.

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