# SERAPHINA;

OR,

# A WINTER IN TOWN.

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VOL. I.

# SERAPHINA;

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# A WINTER IN TOWN.

A MODERN NOVEL,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

*BY CAROLINE BURNEY.*

VOL. I.

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# SERAPHINA;

OR,

# *A Winter in London.*

## CHAPTER I.

*A Sketch from Nature.*

"WHERE is Seraphina?" said Dr. Melbourne to his lady. "She ought to be made acquainted with our newly adopted resolution, at least I think so, my dear."

"Certainly, and so do I," said she; "but then what reason can we alledge

for such a determination, without revealing more than is consistent with prudence ?"

" *Reason !*" My dear, how silly you talk !" said the doctor, smiling. " Do you really think it will require any very *weighty reason* to persuade a young girl that a journey to London is a measure consistent with propriety ?"

" Some young girls, I will allow," rejoined Mrs. Melbourne, " would fly any where upon the wing of pleasure ; but Seraphina is not of the common cast ; her mind is too well stored with elegant resources, and her heart too strictly guarded by delicacy, to yield to the puerile temptations of fashion and folly."

" Yes, yes ; no doubt," said the

doctor, laughing, "our girl must be a nonsuch; and how can it be otherwise, considering the advantages she has had above the generality of her sex, both in precept and example, from the bright pattern before me?"

"Nay, you may laugh, if you please," answered his wife, "but I still insist that Seraphina is as superior to the rest of her sex in her mental attainments, as in the exquisite beauty of her form; and I repeat, she is above being caught by the trivial prospect a town life can afford her."

At this precise moment of time, Seraphina entered the room with a neat little basket in her hand. "Look here, mamma," said she, raising a white paper that covered the top of it, "Lock

here—the baby-linen is finished for Hannah Drew, and I am going to take it to her myself, if you have no objection."

"None in the least, my love," replied Mrs. Melbourne; "but let me look at the work.—Very neatly done, upon my word; it does you credit."

"Nay," said Seraphina, smiling, "the credit is not much of mine, I assure you; for, excepting the cutting out, and arranging the different parts ready for sewing, Mary and Betsey have done the whole. You know I cannot bear to sit still, so I shall never make such a nice work-woman as my good mamma."

"Your papa is going to take you to London, Seraphina," said Mrs. Melbourne, "and there you will have run-

ning about enough to tire even your active spirits, or I am mistaken."

"To London, my dear delightful mamma! Surely you are joking," replied Seraphina, setting her basket on the table, and advancing, with an arch look, towards Mrs. Melbourne's chair.

"Nothing can be more certain, my child. Are you glad, or sorry?"

"Oh! inexpressibly glad, my dear mamma, and so I am sure you are, because now your daughter will be *quite* happy; there was only this charming event wanting to complete her felicity."

"As Seraphina spoke, she kissed Mrs. Melbourne's cheek with rapturous expression of joy, and then bounding with a light step, towards Dr. Melbourne, she bestowed the same favor upon him, as

with a book open before him, he pretended to be totally regardless of the conversation that was passing.

"Heydey! what is the matter now?" said the doctor. "Is the girl crazy, or have you been giving her a dose of your cherry brandy this morning, Dame Melbourne?"

"*Intoxicated* I certainly am," replied Seraphina, laughing, "but not with cherry brandy, but sheer joy, my dear papa. Mamma keeps her liquors for poor Mr. Evans, you know, because she thinks he is so *steady* they cannot hurt him."

"Yes," said Dr. Melbourne; "and so she had nearly made him break his neck the other morning, by trusting to so erroneous an idea, as that his stea-

diness and the coldness of the weather were sufficiently strong to cope with the liberal potation she made him swallow so much against his will. Her judgment is not much more correct in regard to yourself; for not five minutes ago, she was boasting that you were such a miracle of prudence forsooth, that nothing could affect your gravity—an absolute milk and water composition, not to be animated or agitated by any trifling contingency; and now, behold, you are absolutely start mad at the bare idea of visiting the wicked town of London. Ah! you are Eve's daughters every one of you."

"When Seraphina has more seriously considered the business," said Mrs. Melbourne, "she will see less cause for such excessive joy. The temptations

and dangers to which young people are exposed in the metropolis, are enough to terrify any reflective mind, and might more properly excite anxiety than pleasure."

"Oh, but I shall be exempt from all dangers, mamma," interrupted Seraphina, "if I go with papa, for he will take care of me, and go with me, wherever I go; so there is no occasion for alarm—is there, papa?"

"Oh! no, to be sure," said the doctor, dryly, "if I am your chaperon; but you don't consider, child, what a pretty employment you have allotted for me. It will be a good joke to see a man of my years frisking about with a young kitten, like you, to every fashionable mart of vanity and folly."

"But then I will not be unreasonable in my expectations," replied Seraphina; "I only want you to shew me every thing *once* each, and that will satisfy me."

"Upon my word," said the doctor, laughing, "you are a *reasonable* creature indeed! Why it would take me the residue of my life to complete the task: but don't despond; nevertheless, you shall see all the pretty sights, without fatiguing old Square-toes. Lady Avondale has petitioned for the honor you were going to lavish upon me, and so she will shew you the lions."

"Oh! that is so charming!" said Seraphina, "for I love Sophia dearly; she is such a dear, unaffected, good

creature—so charitable, so modest, so considerate, so pious."

"Whew!" interrupted the doctor; "where are you travelling so fast, child? You forget that Sophia has been married these two years, and has been initiated into all the mysteries of fashion and nonsense, since you saw her. I am afraid you will be sadly disappointed, if you expect to find her the same unaffected girl as when she was only the belle of the village; there is a great deal of difference between the Countess of Avondale and a country curate's daughter."

"Your opinions are always so severe upon female stability," said Mrs. Melbourne.

"I draw my opinions from experi-

ence," answered her husband. "I am not such a charitable judge as a certain lady who is always making her own heart the test of others, and thinking all women perfect, because she is *almost* so herself."

"That's always your way, Dr. Melbourne; you knock down my arguments with fine compliments, in order to silence me," said Mrs. Melbourne.

"It is the only way to end a dispute with a lady," replied the doctor, laughing. "I have ever found a compliment the most powerful auxiliary I could call to my aid, when I was likely to have the worst in an argument with the fair sex."

"And when are we to go, papa?" ssked Seraphina.

"In about a fortnight, my dear, so make your preparations out of hand; but I dare say you are so sensible, and so serious, that you will go on with your studies, and your usual occupations, as if no enterprize was in agitation."

"Indeed, papa, you are mistaken; for I am sure I shall talk of nothing, think of nothing, nay, dream of nothing but this dear delightful journey, until it takes place," replied Seraphina; and taking her basket, she was of the room in a minute.

"There! I told you so," said the doctor, as soon as she was gone; "I am sure that girl will want as much reining in, as the giddiest of her sex. Why, you see, she is half mad with the bare idea of seeing the world—what

then will she be when she makes one in the busy throng? I wish she was safe home again, and lament the necessity that obliges me to take her into a place of such danger."

"I am not a bit afraid for her," said Mrs. Melbourne; "her heart is so good that she will never wilfully do wrong, and her understanding is too enlightened to suffer her to be easily misled, even by the most plausible sophistry."

"My dear good woman," interrupted the doctor, "you argue so foolishly, that I have no patience to listen to you. I tell you Seraphina's good heart and good understanding will avail her but little, when her innocence and inex-

perience must expose her to the constant attacks of the idle and the vicious, whose views are but answered by the perversion of all around them. If our girl passes the fiery ordeal without contamination, I shall feel a happiness beyond the common lot of humanity."

"Well," said Mrs. Melbourne, smiling, "as your argument is not strengthened by *compliment* in this instance, if I remain unconvinced, it need excite no wonder."

"But tell me, my good friend, what is to be done about this poor girl. She has not been claimed, as her mother's letter promised she should be, and therefore I think, if she remains

in the obscurity she has hitherto lived in, it will be much safer than the Quixote expedition you meditate."

"Nay, my dear," said the doctor, "what can you *fear* from the expedition, whilst so well assured of Seraphina's matchless prudence. But joking apart, I must tell you, I do not look upon my proposed plan in so visionary a light as you do. My suspicions as to Seraphina's real origin, amount almost to certainty, and the trial I propose making, cannot be done without her being present. Do not be angry with me, that I refuse to explain myself fully on this subject, until every thing is ripe for execution. You ladies love surprises, and I shall enjoy the one that awaits you in the

present instance, and so will you I am sure. Exert, therefore, I beseech you, that command of temper upon which I know you pique yourself, for a few weeks longer, and conquer the curiosity natural to your sex, so far as to ask no farther questions upon the subject before us for the present."

Mrs. Melbourne complied with her husband's request, and immediately changed the conversation. But as the reader is perhaps of a less patient disposition, it may be proper to gratify him, by stepping back a few years to explain a part of the mystery before him. We will accordingly, in the next chapter, introduce a retrospect.


## CHAP. II.

*An Invocation.*

In the beginning of the winter, 1787, as Dr. Melbourne was returning from a party at chess, with his patron and old friend, Lord Storrondale, through Albemarle Street, he was suddenly accosted by a genteel-looking young woman, who, hastily seizing his hand, put a folded paper into it, and then instantly disappeared, before he was sufficiently

recovered from his surprise to make the least remark on her features, or ask a single question that could tend to elucidate the mystery.

Dr. Melbourne was a clergyman—not one of the modern school of buck parsons, who preach the Gospel of their Master in the pulpit, and belie it in every action of their lives. He practised the doctrines he taught, and by the purity of his manners, and the strictness of his principles, did honor to the cloth he wore; whilst the natural cheerfulness of his conversation, and the never-failing charity with which he judged the faults of others, rendered religion amiable to those who were the least inclined to order their lives according to her divine tenets.

His aspect was serious, as became his function, but the goodness of his heart lit up every feature in his face with the genuine ray of benevolence, and whoever addressed him, felt the most perfect confidence that they should be heard with complacency, and answered with sincerity.

The law of truth was with *him*, an undefiled law, for he never allowed himself the slightest deviation from her narrow path, in compliment to the received rules of society. A breach of her strict precepts, however slight, was the offence he was least inclined to pardon in others; and although he had kept the friendship of his patron, the Earl of Storrondale, through the long period of twenty years, he had never

concealed or altered his opinion in compliment to his lordship's caprices, or once given even a *tacit* approbation to a single error amongst the thousands that deformed that nobleman's character. Yet was Lord Storrondale so tenacious of his own opinion in general, that he was usually surrounded by the most fawning hypocrites, in the form of dependents, who were merely echoes to his right honorable nonsense, and dutious assistant panders to his truly noble and dignified *vices*.

Lord Storrondale had sense enough to feel the superiority of Mr. Melbourne to the vulgar crew, and still virtue enough to value his friendship on that very consideration; and though he sometimes indulged himself in witticisms

on the *starched parson*, during his absence, he always treated him with such peculiar respect, when in his company, that the other competitors for his lordship's favor felt too much awed by the example not to follow it strictly.

There was certainly another potent claim to his lordship's notice—Dr. Melbourne's skill in the game of chess. It was the only thing in which the good clergyman felt the influence of vanity. He had been a pupil of the famous Phillimore, and considered himself equal to his master in skill.

In the beginning of his acquaintance with Lord Storrondale, which commenced at college, Dr. Melbourne had been his lordship's instructor in the art he prided himself so much in.

As Lord Storrondale took a particular delight in the amusement, he made a proportionate progress in learning it, and to beat Dr. Melbourne soon became the ardent wish of his heart. *Not* to be *beaten* was as firmly the desire of his opponent; and once, when Lord Storrondale had a valuable living in his gift, which it was well known he had destined for his friend Melbourne, the latter lost it by check-mating his adversary, in a long contested game of chess, on the very evening his lordship had fixed upon to impart the pleasing intelligence of Dr. Melbourne's projected induction to the rich benefice. It is true, that soon afterwards, Lord Storrondale bestowed the living of Llanfallen upon his fellow collegian, but he went

no *further* in the cause of virtue and true religion, whilst by his patronage, *two* more *convenient* clerical friends of his lordship's rose to the dignity of lawn sleeves, without one virtue to grace the mitre, unless *pliability* of temper be one.

In the mean time, however, Dr. Melbourne, who was of a very good family, inherited, by the death of a distant relation, a very comfortable fortune, and considering himself the *real* pastor of the flock committed to his care, resided constantly at his rectory, never leaving it, except one month in every winter, which he spent in town, in the transaction of some necessary business; and during that short period of recreation, if Lord Storrondale was in town, Dr.

Melbourne never failed to renew the old contention on the chess-board. To his usual hours of retiring he was always scrupulously exact, in spite of the innovations of fashion, and Lord Storrondale well knew that he could not indulge himself in a game with his old antagonist, unless his dinner hour was altered to one somewhat earlier than the general one.

In the house where Dr. Melbourne always lodged when in London, he had never been known to come home *later* than eleven, a rule which he thought he ought strictly to oberve, lest his absent friend, his well-beloved and faithful Maria, the chosen partner of his heart, should have cause for uneasiness, in the idea of his mixing in the fashionable

orgies of the later hours.—My readers, if they are at all modern, will turn with disgust from such an old-fashioned being as a man who could make an *absent wife* a restraint upon his actions, but I beg they will not throw away the book in a pet, as I can assure them, if they will have the patience and perseverance to wade through a few more pages, they will meet with a set of characters far more congenial to the taste of the present times. All these circumstances combining together, made Dr. Melbourne a very improbable object for an intrigue; and yet even his own sanctity and conscious purity of mind, could not suppress the rising suggestions of self-love in his mind, which made him be-

lieve for a *moment* that somebody had taken a fancy to his bushy wig and three-cornered hat, which, in spite of all his gravity, had determined them to declare it. The illusion lasted only for a moment; his good sense and judgment immediately rejected the error, and though curiosity was still as poignant, the slight feelings of vanity had subsided. He approached a lamp, and endeavoured to read the note he had received, but the faint rays it shed were insufficient to enable him to decypher the very few lines it contained. Impatient to learn the contents, he made the best of his way home, and when the mistress of the house opened the door for him, which was her general custom, he requested her to let him read

the note he held in his hand, by the light of her candle.

She accordingly invited Dr. Melbourne into her parlour, who, approaching the light, read the following words:

"If prudence does not steel the heart of benevolence against the cries of virtue in distress, fail not to be at the corner of Albemarle Street, under the dead wall, exactly at twelve o'clock this night. You will there find a person who will conduct you to the abode of an unhappy creature, whose only hope in this life rests on your compliance with this seemingly strange request. Oh! Dr. Melbourne, if pity dwells in your bosom, deny me not; the agonies of death are on me: by your compassion only can I die in peace. Oh! speak comfort to

my departing spirit. Follow the person I send to meet you, without fear, and start not at having your eyes covered; on secrecy the most profound, depends the life of a cherub."

"Give me a bit of chalk, Mrs. Calder," said Dr. Melbourne, folding the paper, and putting it into his pocket. "I am obliged to go out again to-night, and cannot say exactly what time I shall return; you will therefore be so good as to sit up for me.—Let me see, it is now only a quarter past eleven; I shall not go out therefore for half an hour, so let me have my candle."

"Yes, sir," returned the landlady; "and here is the *wee* bit of chalk you asked for; and to be sure I will wait up for ye with mickle pleasure. But I

must say, I hope ye *keen weel whar* you are *ganging* to, for this is a wicked town, and some *shaith* may befal you."

"I thank you, Mrs. Calder, for your kind caution, and shall take all possible care to avoid the evil you fear for me," said Dr. Melbourne, taking the candle from the hand of his careful hostess, and immediately retired to his apartment.

Mrs. Calder was a Scotswoman, and a rigid presbyterian, and she piqued herself upon letting her house to none but gentlemen of the most regular habits; her formality was therefore sadly disturbed at Dr. Melbourne's intention of going out at such an unseasonable hour. "What *wool* the neighbours think," said she to herself, "when

they hear the knocker of my *hoose* banging in the dead *hoore* of the night? Ah! poor Mrs. Calder! your *gude* name will sink into the muddy stream."

This soliloquy did not tend to soften the naturally harsh features of the good woman, who, with a great deal of acrimony both in look and voice, as she opened the door to let Dr. Melbourne out, hoped his reverence would remember the character of the house he lived in, and not come rapping and ringing in the middle of the night, as if he lodged at a hotel or tavern.

Dr. Melbourne assured her she had no cause for alarm, and proceeded on his mysterious expedition.

The clock of St. James's Palace struck twelve just as he reached the

destined spot; and he had not waited many minutes, when the same young woman came up to him who had before put the note into his hand.

"You are punctual, sir," said she, in a low voice; "God will reward your goodness. You must permit me to cover your eyes, though I hope no offence, sir," said she, putting a thick bandage over Dr. Melbourne's eyes, who quietly submitted to the ceremony.

"I hope," said he, "this blindman's-buff will lead to no folly unbecoming my serious calling; if it does, young woman, I shall not easily pardon it."

"Fear not, sir," said she; "to relieve the distressed, and comfort the dying, are surely the duties of a clergyman, and for these only are you sum-

moned. But we lose time. Give me your hand, sir, and I will lead you."

Dr. Melbourne gave his hand to his guide, and taking the chalk out of his waistcoat pocket, by keeping on the side next the wall, he contrived to make his progress, without being suspected by the young woman.

Their walk was a very short one, for she presently stopped, and pulling a key out of her pocket, opened an area door. She assisted her companion in descending a flight of steps.

Another door was then opened, and after traversing a long passage, they came to the foot of a narrow winding staircase.

Here the young woman paused, and untying the bandage, restored Dr. Melbourne to his eyesight.

His guide placed her finger on her lips, in token of silence, and taking a lamp that stood burning on a stand, began ascending the stairs, mentioning to Dr. Melbourne to follow.

He did so, and they presently arrived at the door of a magnificent apartment; it was partly open, but the interior was inveloped in total darkness. As they traversed it, a gleam of light darted upon them from a door on the other side.

A deep sigh, almost amounting to a groan, struck the ear of Dr. Melbourne, as with tip-toe steps he followed his cautious guide through the dreary chamber.

At the door of the next, she paused. "Stop here a moment, sir," said she, "whilst I tell my lady you are come."

So saying, she pushed open the door, and entered the next apartment, leaving Dr. Melbourne alone in the dark.

A few minutes only elapsed before she returned. "Oh, sir!" said she, wringing her hands, "my poor lady! But come in; when you see her sufferings, I am sure you cannot refuse her request."

Dr. Melbourne followed the weeping servant into a stately bed-chamber, where, extended on a sofa, and supported by pillows, lay a beautiful lady, apparently in the prime of youth, but the paleness of death covered her cheek, and his chilling dews hung on her forehead.

As Dr. Melbourne drew near her, she raised her heavy eyes, which even the languor of death could not deprive of

their loveliness, and casting upon him a look of entreaty so pathetically expressive of distress, that it might have penetrated the hardest heart, she made an effort to speak. Her emotions were too violent for her weak frame, and the words died on her lips ere they reached the ear of the astonished and deeply sympathising Melbourne. A slight convulsion agitated her countenance, but it quickly subsided, and she seemed to acquire a transient renovation of strength from swallowing a potion which her faithful servant administered to her.

At length she spoke. "Your charity, my good sir," said she, "will meet its reward in that heaven, whither I am now going. Oh! how fervently my heart thanks you for listening to my

earnest petition, and venturing through darkness and mystery, to serve one—an utter stranger, for such you suppose me; but I have honored your virtues from my infancy, and in the trying moment of unparalleled distress, could think upon no heart but yours, on whose tenderness and fortitude I could equally rely.—Surely," continued the beautiful sufferer, clasping her hands together with fervor, "Surely Dr. Melbourne—most revered of men! after having so far obliged me, you will not *now* deny me what I am going to implore."

As she said this, the poor mourner raised her languid eyes to investigate the countenance of the worthy man, whose compassion she was endeavouring to excite.

They brightened as they read the benevolent feelings of his excellent heart in his tearful eyes, as with a look of the tenderest sympathy, he exclaimed, "Make your request, dear madam, without hesitation, and rest assured, that if my *power* can perform your wishes, my will is already engaged in the undertaking."

"May Heaven bless you!" replied the lady, in an ecstacy of joy that threatened to be fatal to her. "Oh! how can my poor heart express its gratitude? But the prayers of the dying—of her who had none to help her, will for ever hover round you, and protect you from every evil.—The moments are precious; I have only a few more to live: let me not, therefore, waste them. In me you behold the sad victim of treachery and

hatred—my life is wasting fast away; I am dying by *poison*. Yes; start not, thou good man: a few hours only remain, and my mortal course will be run. A sacred duty forbids my revealing the fatal secret of my destiny. Yet another duty equally binding, obliges me to confide a part of it to some pitying friend. I have fixed upon you, whose worth is well known to me, although I am happy to perceive you do not recollect me. It is better that you should not; but nevertheless, before I entrust you with the sacred deposit, you must solemnly swear never to reveal what you have this night witnessed to any mortal, save the amiable partner of your heart, first binding her to secresy by an oath as solemn, until eighteen years have expired, at which

period your trust will be demanded of you by the Lord Chancellor, and you will then be at liberty to develope the mystery. Are you willing so to bind yourself? Oh! speak quickly, for my fleeting soul hangs on your answer."

Dr. Melbourne hesitated for a moment, but casting his eyes upon the anxious countenance of the dying lady, his benevolence instantly determined him. "Propose your oath, madam," said he, with solemnity; "I am ready to take it, and will perform its most rigorous injunctions, even to my own detriment."

"Heaven! I thank thee!" exclaimed the lady, with energy; "my last moments will then be peaceful."

The oath was then administered to

the worthy divine, and the most solemn covenant of secresy entered into by the words he pronounced.

As soon as it was over, the lady said, "Lucy, bring the cherub hither."

The attendant obeyed, and going into the next apartment, returned with the lovely infant in her arms, wrapped in a rich crimson velvet mantle.

The dying mother pressed the unconscious sleeper to her bosom—imprinted a thousand kisses on its forehead, its cheeks, its little hands, whilst agony, mixed with the most expressive tenderness, was depicted in her countenance.

A profound silence reigned, which was only broken by the groan of anguish which broke from the unhappy parent, as she put her child into the arms of the astonished Dr. Melbourne.

As soon as her agonized feelings would suffer her to speak, she said, in a low voice, " Receive the sacred charge; and as you perform the duty you have incurred, so may you prosper here and hereafter. Then, recovering herself a little, she added, " Forgive a mother's tender anxiety that has dictated, perhaps, too harsh an address. I am sure you will be kind to my darling—my proscribed Seraphina, for be assured, sir, her death would soon follow mine, were she to remain in this mansion of treachery and murder. Save her, then, from the relentless friends that seek her innocent life, and my expiring soul shall bless you.

" Here," continued the unhappylady taking a casket from beneath her pillow,

" is a small collection of jewels, and amongst them her mother's picture: let my child have them, when she is old enough to understand the value of them. You will find also a letter for yourself, which will explain farther particulars to which I am now unequal. The child will not disturb you to-night, as it has taken a sleeping potion, lest its tender cries should have frustrated the plan of escape I had so fondly hoped to see accomplished. The moment of separation is arrived; I have beheld my infant for the last time, and the bitterness of death is past."

As the lady pronounced these words, she closed her eyes, and fell back upon her pillow. Dr. Melbourne imagined she had breathed her last, but she pre-

sently opened them again, and looking wildly around her, "Away! away!" cried she, "why do you loiter? The friends will return, and escape will be impossible. Oh! let not my darling perish!"

Lucy now assisted in covering up the sleeping child, and putting a large French cloak of blue cloth round the shoulders of Dr. Melbourne, entreated him once more to follow her.

The worthy divine was so oppressed by the contending emotions of his mind, that he was scarcely able to obey her request; his legs shook under him, and a chill of horror crept through his whole frame. He trembled lest the innocent babe, whose life seemed to depend upon his care, should be torn from him, as

he traced his way back again, and he felt such a powerful interest in his bosom, by the sufferings of the mother, and the danger of the child, that it would have given him the most poignant anguish to have been deprived of the power of serving them. Extending one hand, therefore, to the dying lady, whilst he held the precious charge in the other, "Receive this hand," said the doctor, "as a pledge that I will not only perform my oath with scrupulous exactness, but that the sweet infant shall from this moment, find a tender parent in her appointed guardian. Let peace, then, lovely sufferer, sooth your dying moments, and rest assured that Heaven will watch over your motherless child, for already has its all powerful, but invisible

influence awakened in my bosom, a father's tender care."

The lady pressed the friendly hand, and turning her lovely eyes upwards, seemed imploring a blessing upon her benefactor, but she was unable to utter a word, and waving her hand, she hastened their departure. The faithful servant led Dr. Melbourne back to the spot where she had found him, in the same manner as at his arrival, when taking off the bandage from his eyes—"May God bless and preserve you, best of men," said she, "and prosper your charitable undertaking; I shall love you as long as I live, for your goodness to my dear lady:" then hastily leaving him, she was out of sight in a moment.

No sooner was the worthy doctor left

to himself, than those reflections which prudence *will* suggest in spite of philanthropy, recurred to his agitated mind; nor could all the enthusiasm he felt in the cause of benevolence reconcile him to the awkward situation he found himself in, with a young child in his arms, at the dead hour of night, in the streets of London, and forbidden by the sacred oath he had just taken to explain so strange a circumstance even to those he must endeavour to interest in the welfare of his little charge.

Dr. Melbourne well knew the starched precision of his landlady, and it was not without extreme reluctance that he found himself obliged to intreat her assistance in finding a proper nurse for his little ward. But in London the doctor had

positively no acquaintance to whom he could confide the secret of his having a child to take care of; for not one of those with whom he had associated during his short stay in the metropolis, would, he knew, give him credit for that purity of conduct he felt would pain him exceedingly to have doubted. He determined therefore to brave all the unpleasant insinuations of Mrs. Calder, rather than seek a confident amongst his nominal friends, whose curiosity once raised, would not easily be again appeased. Homeward therefore he bent his way, and knocking gently at the door, in order to conciliate his landlady, he awaited with sensations the most unpleasant, his admission to his lodgings. Mrs. Calder's shrill voice now sounded

through the key-hole, with the cautious interrogation of "*Wha* knocks?" The reply was satisfactory, and the door cautiously opened.

When the worthy doctor examined the countenance of his hostess, it shewed no lineaments that invited confidence, or promised indulgence. The urgency of the case, however, admitted of no procrastination, and he was therefore obliged to request the favor of speaking a few words with her in her own parlour, although the scrutinizing glance which had been cast upon the cloak that enveloped him, and which Mrs. Calder perfectly remembered was not upon him at his departure, plainly evinced the little mercy he had to expect when the mystic tale was told.

"I marvel greatly, Dr. Melbourne, what ye can have to say to me at this late *hoore*, when I am fain to fall asleep as I stood; but ye'r *greetly* changed of late, and I fear no *gude* will come of all this late wandering about this wicked *toon*."

Dr. Melbourne did not appear to notice these friendly animadversions, but throwing back his cloak, and assuming the courageous aspect of virtue, he produced his little sleeping charge to his astonished hostess, who, starting back several paces, with uplifted hands, exclaimed "*Gude Lord!*"

"Mrs. Calder," said the Doctor, "I beg you will not let surprise supersede every other feeling; this little child claims your humane attentions, for this night at least,

and I trust you will not be such a barbarian as to deny it."

"Who! *I* take charge of your base-born *bairne*, Dr. Melbourne? No, indeed, I hope I know what belongs *tull* my character, better than to be guilty of *sic a thing*. Ye have *greetly* mistaken *yoursel gin ye* take me to be *sic a fule*."

"A truce with your nonsense, woman," interrupted the exasperated doctor.

"*Ye* will please to recollect *yoursel* a little better, I hope, doctor," rejoined Mrs. Calder, bridling up her head with all the haughtiness she could muster, when *ye* speak *tull* me again, for I *dinna* chuse to be called *woman*, I can assure *ye*. It is very unbecoming of

your cloth, to treat a person of family in *sic* a manner."

"Oh, I ask your dignity's pardon," replied the doctor smiling, "I had forgotten all that, but I will endeavour to remember better another time; however, you are a woman I suppose, though you may be descended from David, King of Scotland, for ought I know or care."

"*Hoot awa!*" exclaimed the enraged Scotswoman, "and is it from *sic* an upstart as David King of Scotland, ye think that I can trace my genealogy. Why, my mother was a Magregor, sir, and my father was a lineal descendant of the brave ——. There is no clan in the Highlands that can boast *sic* a pedigree as ours, both for antiquity

and noble *blude*, and we have never disgraced *oursels* by low marriages.—Mr. Calder was of a right noble family by his father's side, and by his mother's, he was a Mackintosh, and ye would talk of David King of Scotland to *me*, sir, but I trust ye will *ken* better manners another time."

Poor Dr. Melbourne was obliged to wait patiently until Mrs. Calder had vented all her spleen, and explained all her genealogy; and when from absolute want of breath, she was constrained to stop, he mildly entreated her to consider, that, however noble her descent might be, she would not be in the least degraded by performing an act of humanity, and that the urgency of the present case admitted of

no alternative. The doctor seconded this argument with a powerful auxiliary, which he had taken from his pocket-book unperceived, during the paroxism of her displeasure; this assistant pleader in behalf of the helpless child, wore the form of a ten pound note, and no sooner did Mrs. Calder's little grey eyes encounter the mystic characters displayed upon its transparent substance, than her harsh features relaxed from their severity, and she admitted, that the case was indeed very urgent; and although her purity recoiled from the bare idea of touching a spurious child, yet as it would be a shocking thing to let the poor little *bairne* perish, she would take the charge of it for that night, but she hoped the doctor would

be too tender of her character, to expect she could keep it any longer in her house. Then taking the lovely babe from the arms of its compassionate guardian, she looked at it, and declared it was the very image of its father; two drops of water could not be more alike.

"Mrs. Calder," said the doctor, in a tone of vexation, "you entirely mistake the case, the dear child is no more related to me than she is to you, and although I am not at liberty to tell you *who* her parents are, you may rest assured they are noble, and rich, and that the infant you hold in your arms is their legitimate offspring. Your care, therefore, will be amply rewarded, as the little specimen I have just given you, may convince you."

Mrs. Calder began then to apologize for her hasty temper, as she called it, and blamed the doctor, for not sooner informing her of such an important circumstance as the legitimacy of the "*bairn*," as she called it.

"My good madam," replied the doctor, "you gave me no time for explanation, you were in the heroics directly; but as you are now calm, and I am weary, I commend the sleeping cherub to your kind care. It has taken a composing draught, and therefore is not likely to disturb you for some hours."

Mrs. Calder, who was now all complaisance, promised to take the utmost care of her charge, and Doctor Melbourne retired to his apartment.—Where, before he indulged himself with

the repose he wanted, his curiosity induced him to examine the contents of the casket. It contained several valuable jewels and the picture which the unfortunate lady mentioned, set round with large brilliants of the finest water, the painting was executed in the most masterly style, and the likeness of the unhappy lady, striking beyond measure. It had been taken, however, at an earlier age, as the features were those of a girl of sixteen, and adorned with all the blooming loveliness of extreme youth. As Dr. Melbourne contemplated the beautiful picture, a vague idea of having seen the original before the late mysterious meeting, crossed his imagination; and yet it was impossible, for the circle of his acquaintance was

too circumscribed to admit of his forgetting so interesting a person, had such an one existed within it. But it might perhaps have been during their infancy, that he had seen her, for the lovely sufferer had said she had *long* known him; the thought was not more instantaneous, than the conviction that followed it. Dr. Melbourne struck his forehead, and exclaimed with an emotion of horror, "Good Heaven, can it really be....."

The words died on his lips, and he hastily opened the letter, which contained a repetition of those tender entreaties in the behalf of her child, which we have already described as uttered by the dying lady, and a reiteration of the injunctions of profound secresy.

"Ask not a question," said the plaintive epistle, "make not one enquiry relating to this mysterious transaction, it might be fatal to the cause you have espoused, and occasion the death of the little innocent, confided to your care; let humanity therefore restrain your justly exited curiosity, my good sir, and your benevolent mind rest satisfied with the consciousness of having performed an act of charity and strict justice."

The letter then gave directions where Doctor Melbourne was requested to call at a banker's in the city, where he would find that he had credit for *ten thousand pounds.* "I pretend not to direct your disposal of this sum," said the unhappy writer; "certain that you will make the best of it for my

Seraphina, it is but a very small part of the fortune that lawfully belongs to her."

The letter then concluded with pious invocations to Heaven, to shower down its choicest blessings on her child, and on them whose benevolent minds should induce them to protect her.

## CHAP. III.

### *A Calculation.*

When Dr. Melbourne had perused the mournful lines, the conviction that had before enlightened his mind, became stronger; he paused and reflected —a thousand concurring circumstances arose in his memory, and he no longer doubted; nevertheless his upright mind instantly determined upon suppressing his conjectures with his curiosity, and

consigning both to oblivion of profound secresy. Nay, although permitted to confide to his faithful wife, the particulars that related to his recent extraordinary adventure, he resolved not to trust even her, with the ideas his own mind had suggested on the occasion. The safety of an innocent creature was intrusted to his keeping, and could he employ too much caution in the discharge of such an important duty.

Full of these reflections, the worthy divine retired to his bed, and no sooner laid his head upon his pillow, than fatigue sealed his eyelids in slumber: not so, *Maistress* Calder, she had undressed the lovely charge, and examined the rich laces and fine cambrics that composed its tiny habiliments.

The velvet mantle, too, that had inveloped it, was richly purfled with gold; in short, there was an air of princely grandeur in every thing about the little stranger, that presently set her active brains to work, and she had soon invented a curious romance, in which she had ingeniously converted her little guest into a sprig of royalty, and herself into a governante of great future consequence. A parcel of fine night cloaths had been wrapped up in the mantle, and as the now highly pleased Mrs. Calder was busied in changing the cloaths of the sleeping cherub, she observed a work upon one of its alabaster arms, and closely investigating it, read the word Seraphina, curiously worked with some indelible composition, beneath the name appeared

a hieroglyphic wholly unintelligible to poor Mrs. Calder, although she endangered the life of the child, by keeping it naked whilst she racked her brains to find it out. At length she gave up the attempt as fruitless, and retired to her chamber, where she made the little Seraphina the partner of her bed; but in vain did her soft pillow invite her to repose, her ambition was awakened, and her mind became agitated by the possibility of a disappointment in her exalted views.

That the child was something very grand she was convinced, by the sumptuous manner in which it was clothed, and if so, who could be so proper an attendant upon her person, or a superintendant of her affairs, as herself, whose lineage boasted an equality with the

proudest, and whose prudence, œconomy, and good management were acknowledged by all her acquaintance; in short, Mrs. Calder had so completely arranged every thing in the course of her nocturnal studies, that when daylight peeped into her window there remained nothing more to do, except realizing her dreams of grandeur. Mrs. Calder was a true lover of the *siller*, like many of her country folks, and therefore the loss of sleep being little in her estimation when put into the balance, with the view of gain, she arose from her bed, as gay as a lark, although unrefreshed by slumber, and immediately set about preparing for the accommodation of her little guest. Her servant was summoned, who, upon entering the apartment, broke out into

exclamations of wonder at beholding her mistress employed in dressing a lovely *baby*.

"*Hoot awa*, you silly girl" said Mrs. Calder, "did you never see a *bairn* before?"

"Troth, and I have," replied Margaret, who was a raw country lass; "but Ise never kenned till now as you had *ane*."

"*Na mair* I have," said her mistress, "This is the *chield* of a great *mon*, and bring *mickle siller tull* you and me *gin* we take *gude* care of it."

Mrs. Calder then began expatiating on the great advantages that must accrue from the confidence that had been placed in her, and descanted on the grandeur of the pretty *bairn*, as if she was perfectly in the secret of its birth.

Whilst she was thus employed, a loud knock at the door, called Margaret away, who presently returned with a large parcel directed to Dr. Melbourne; a porter-looking man, she said, had left it, and instantly disappeared.

Mrs. Calder did her utmost to peep into both ends, but the care with which it was tied and sealed, baffled all her endeavours, and she was obliged to send it up stairs by Margaret, without knowing a tittle of its contents. Her curiosity was, however, soon relieved by Doctor Melbourne who entered her parlour with the parcel open in his hand.

"These things," said he, "Mrs. Calder, belong to your little charge."

Mrs. Calder arose, and putting the child in Margaret's hands, took the parcel. It contained a profusion of

every kind of elegance necessary to clothe an infant; and as the good Scotswoman examined each article with scrutinizing exactness, she felt so thoroughly confirmed in her opinion of the child's royal descent, that she with difficulty refrained from calling it the *little princess.*

Poor Mrs. Calder's golden dream, however, was of short duration, for as Doctor Melbourne wrote immediately to Mrs. Pendant, requesting her to join him in London, on an affair of the utmost importance, that amiable lady obeyed with an alacrity that proved her a wife of the old school, and a letter by return of post, brought an assurance of her having began her journey.

Dr. Melbourne repaired to Mrs. Calder's apartment the instant he read the tender epistle, still holding it open in his hand. "I shall now," said he with a smile, "have it in my power to remove the incumbrance I have imposed upon you, Mrs. Calder. Mrs. Melbourne is so good as to repair to London at my entreaty, and will take the dear child into her own care, I am ashamed to think how long I have troubled you with it."

A thunderbolt falling at her feet, could scarcely have surprised his notable landlady more, than did the speech of her well-intentioned lodger. Dr. Melbourne seeing Mrs. Calder's reluctance to receive the child, the night of its arrival, and hearing the multitude of

objections she started against undertaking the care of it for more than one night, never doubted her willingness to part with it. Incapable of uttering a falshood himself, he rarely, without good grounds, suspected it in others; he was therefore not a little astonished, when, by the fretful contraction of Mrs. Calder's features, he perceived that she heard him with displeasure.

"Ye have done me mickle wrong, Dr. Melbourne," said she; "first of all, ye have persuaded me, sorely against my will, to take charge of your pretty *bairn*, and now, when I have *ta'en* a liking to its winsome face, ye are going to take it *awa fra* me."

"You are very kind, Mrs. Calder," said the doctor, "to my little ward, and

I shall endeavour to recompence your care of her, which has been great indeed, as far as lies in my power, but to continue her in your hands does not rest with me, and although you are so good as to express a wish to keep her, I am sure your good-nature must have suggested it, since a person in your situation must find such a charge extremely inconvenient."

So saying, the doctor left the room, and poor Mrs. Calder burst out into the most violent invectives against the "*crafty loon*" as she called him, who had made a cat's-paw of her by imposing the care of the child upon her just when he could get nobody else, and now he was going to pocket all the "*siller*" by substituting his own wife in her

place. "My situation in life!" exclaimed she, with an ill-natured toss of her head, "I should *nae* have thought of him indeed;" for Mrs. Calder had digested a plan in her own mind, which would have done away all the inconveniences attached to her situation in life. This was no other than forming an establishment for her little sprig of royalty, and placing herself at the head of it; and as a doubt of there being ample means to accomplish such a scheme, never crossed her imagination, she therefore supposed that the sole reason why it was not put into execution, originated in the covetousness of Dr. Melbourne, who certainly intended to pocket the golden mine her vivid fancy had sprung as an inexhaustible source of riches to her beautiful *bairn*.

Under the impression of such ideas, it is natural to suppose that Mrs. Calder felt herself ready to burst with the spleen the disappointment engendered, and although she feared to reveal the secret entrusted to her care, her resentment rendered it impossible for her to keep it inviolate.

Mrs. Calder had an acquaintance of her own country who had lived many years in the capacity of housekeeper in different noblemen's families, and as *Maistress* M'Gregor had a plentiful share of *gude* Scotch *blude* in her veins, there could be no degradation in *Maistress* Calder keeping her company. To this old gossipping mischief-making woman, then, did the proud descendant of ..... impart all her secret vexations, and the little incognita now furnished

an ample field for both their imaginations to wander in.

When Mrs. Calder had related all she really knew, all she conjectured, and all she chose to invent to her wonder-struck auditor, Mrs. M'Gregor desired her to make herself easy, for she would soon find the means of satisfying her curiosity, for she would never rest until she had discovered who the *bairne* sprung from. "Sure, sure," said she, "with all the acquaintance I have got, it will be hard if I cannot dive into such a secret as that!"

"Ye are *vera* right, *Maistress* M'Gregor," answered Mrs. Calder, "and *gin ye* can dive *intull* the secret, there will be little doubt of my being able to keep the *chield*, for Dr. Melbourne will be

afraid of affronting me, lest I should divulge it."

The matter being thus settled between the two cronies, Mrs. M'Gregor set off upon her mission with all the importance of a *busy body*; and Mrs. Calder began preparing for the reception of her unwelcome guest.

Mrs. Melbourne arrived the next evening in a post-chaise, accompanied by a nice healthy young woman, who she intended should act in the capacity of nurse to her little charge, for although the doctor had not fully explained the mysterious charge he had received, he had informed his amiable lady that he had a little orphan bequeathed to his care who must now depend upon her compassion for the tenderness of a mother.

Mrs. Melbourne's heart was the counterpart of the doctor's, only cast in a softer mould, and though she did not possess an equal proportion of firmness of mind with her worthy husband, yet was the weakness rendered amiable by its concomitant feminine softness, and the exquisite sensibility of her gentle disposition. Her excellent heart, therefore, had anticipated with rapture, the power of contributing to the welfare and comfort of a little helpless, friendless being, and when she got out of the carriage, and found that Doctor Melbourne was not within; her next question was, "where is the dear little child?"

Mrs. Calder replied to the question by a significant nod of the head, and

her finger placed across her lips in token of silence; then with all the importance of confidential secresy, she ushered Mrs. Melbourne into her own parlour, where the little Seraphina was reposing in an elegant cot, her attentive nurse had purchased for her.

Without attending to any of Mrs. Calder's significant nods and winks, Mrs. Melbourne lifted up the white curtain that shaded the face of the sleeping cherub, and beheld with emotions of unfeigned delight, one of the most beautiful children she had ever seen.

"Oh! what a lovely creature," exclaimed the amiable lady, "I shall perfectly doat upon it I am sure."

"Ye may *weel* say so," answered Mrs. Calder, with a look of meaning,

"for it is the very model of its *gude* father."

"So you know its father, ma'am?" asked Mrs. Melbourne, with surprise; "I understood it was an orphan."

"I *dinna ken* its father," replied the crafty landlady, but I hope there's *na* harm in just *guessing*; nevertheless it is *vera* proper that you should believe just what your husband told you."

Mrs. Melbourne, who did not at all relish the manner of her hostess, complained of fatigue, and requested to be shewn her apartment.

Whilst she was ascending the stairs, Dr. Melbourne knocked at the door, and the affectionate friends were presently in each other's arms: whilst the happy

couple were making the thousand enquiries so natural between those who love tenderly, after ever so short an absence, Mrs. Calder descended to the kitchen to stare at the servant who had attended Mrs. Melbourne to town.

There was an open simplicity and good nature in the countenance of the young woman that did not at all please Mrs. Calder, and she addressed Betty Evans with an air of asperity not likely to excite very agreeable sensations in the heart of the honest rustic; the numerous questions she asked, were, however, but half understood by Betty, on account of the strong Scotch dialect that disguised the speech of the questioner, there was, therefore, little fear of her giving much information, although

her simplicity was by no means a match to the deep cunning of Mrs. Calder.

As Dr. Melbourne naturally wished his wife should see a little of London, after having been at the trouble of so tedious a journey, it was accordingly settled that she should remain a fortnight in town, and lest the child should suffer from want of air, Betty Evans was ordered to take it every day into the Green Park for an hour. As Betty was a total stranger to London, Mrs. Calder's maid was her guide as far as the gate, the first time or two that she visited that place, but Betty declaring herself capable of finding her way, was suffered to walk thither alone. About a week after she first visited that place, as she left Mrs. Calder's house with the child in her arms,

she observed a man of most unpleasing aspect, standing close to the area rails; as she passed him, he muttered something to himself, and the peculiarity of his manner impressed her with an indistinct sensation of fear, she, therefore, passed hastily along, and reached the Park, without having once looked behind her; as she turned in at the gate, however, she perceived to her no small consternation, that the same man followed her. Alarmed, she knew not why, she quickened her pace, in hopes of losing her disagreeable attendant, but found he still kept behind her, and suited his pace to her's.

At length, having watched an opportunity when nobody was very near, he approached close to her, and attempted

to snatch the child from her arms; terrified as she was at such unexpected violence, the maid had nevertheless presence of mind to hold the child fast, and eluding the grasp of the man, she made her escape with a velocity that precluded pursuit; she was presently at home, when she related the accident to Mrs. Melbourne, whose alarm at hearing it, far exceeded Betty's. When the doctor was made acquainted with the suspicious circumstance he instantly determined to quit London, and ordering Betty to pack up every thing with all possible expedition, and to be silent, as to what had occurred in the morning, he went himself to order a chaise.

The surprise and consternation of Mrs. Calder cannot be described when

she learnt the sudden intention of her lodgers, and she did her utmost to penetrate what could have caused so unlooked-for an event. The mystery, however, was not to be penetrated, and she saw the family depart in a few hours, without having obtained the smallest light upon the subject.

A few days afterwards, Mrs. M'Gregor called upon her, she lamented to her the disappointment she had suffered, and reproached her for not having attended to her request, of finding who the child belonged to.

"You are much mistaken," replied Mrs. M'Gregor, "for I have taken great pains to find it out, and I thought once I was near doing it, but I was disappointed in the strangest way, as you

shall hear. I had been gossiping from house to house for several days, and telling the story with all its wonders, without obtaining the least satisfaction, except what I felt at exciting astonishment in the hearts of all who listened to me; at last I called at Lord Storrondale's, and there I found the family in a great bustle on account of the sudden death of his lordship's eldest daughter, which had happened quite unaccountably, when every one thought she was quite well."

"The old housekeeper was in such a quondary there was no speaking to her, so I was forced to talk to whoever I could get to listen to me; and Mr. Ogilvy, the butler, was lamenting the death of the fine child that had followed its mother to the grave (for Lord Stor-

rondale's daughter had died in child-bed), I thought it a good opportunity to edge in my story, so I wished they had the fine foundling I had just seen, in the place of the one they had lost, and then they were forced to ask me all about it; and so, while I was telling the story, there was an old queer looking man, sat very attentive, and when I had done, he came and asked me fifty questions in broken English, and so as I thought he would tell me something in return, I repeated every thing I knew and then, instead of doing as I expected, he mumped up his mouth, and said it was "Vera strange, vera strange!" and not another word could I get out of him. And yet I am sure, by his manner, he knew more than he chose to tell.

"I waited till he was gone away, and then asking who he was, learned that he lived with Lord Storrondale's son-in-law, I forget his name—that Italian lord, poor lady Emily Storrondale married so much against her will."

"Did lady Emily marry an Italian?" asked Mrs Calder.

"Not absolutely an Italian," said Mrs. M'Gregor, "but much the same: his father was an Englishman, but he went and lived in Italy until he could not bear his own country folks, and so he married an Italian lady, and I am sure any body might take his son for an opera singer; but Lady Storrondale was so wrapped up in him that she never let her daughter rest till she married him, and a sad match it was, but her mother did not live to

know that, and now the poor girl is dead herself; so a fine kettle of fish they have made of it altogether."

"Well, but is this all you have to tell me?" said Mrs. Calder, angrily; "in troth it is little enough; but I *dinna* care now, for the *bairne* is gone from hence, and I am right glad of it."

"Gone from hence!" repeated Mrs. M'Gregor with astonishment; "gone from hence!"

"Yes, and what then?" asked Mrs. Calder with equal wonder.

"Oh, nothing at all!" replied her artful friend, who was not so ignorant as she pretended to be, and was come purposely to get what she could out of Mrs. Calder; her disappointment, therefore, was too sudden to be concealed,

and by being thrown off her guard, she expressed it before she was aware of it.

"I was only thinking," continued Mrs. M'Gregor, "that it was a pity you had lost the care of the child, as you seemed so anxious to keep it; and besides, if it had staid longer, perhaps we might have found out who it belonged to—but I suppose you know *where* it is gone?"

"I neither know nor care," replied Mrs. Calder, with some asperity, for she perceived Mrs. M'Gregor's drift, and determined to disappoint it. "I have enough of my own affairs to mind, and therefore I do not trouble *mysel* about my lodgers when they leave my house."

Mrs. M'Gregor was answered, but she was far from satisfied. The truth was, she had been employed, with the promise

of a great reward, to facilitate the stealing of this very child from under Mrs. Calder's roof. The person who had employed her was the Italian she had mentioned, and who, without discovering his motives for wishing to obtain the child, satisfied Mrs. M'Gregor that it would be highly to her interest to assist him in attempting it; and as she never looked beyond her own advantage in any thing, she complied without scruple. The attempt was, however, fallacious. The innocent victim had escaped the snare that was spread for it. Mrs. Calder's pride had been wounded, and she was determinately invulnerable to all Mrs. M'Gregor's blandishments; and the latter found it impossible to trace even the name of the gentleman in whose care

the child had departed. Had she asked for that information in the first instance, she would have obtained it with ease, but the moment Mrs. Calder perceived her friend was endeavoring to pump her, as she styled it, she became impenetrable as the rocks that sheltered the valley where she first drew her breath.

In the mean time, the worthy Dr. Melbourne pursued his way towards his happy home, and when arrived there, it soon became the delight of his life to watch the progress of the little Seraphina, whose beauty seemed to improve every day, and whose opening mind, as her years increased, presented a still fairer picture to the view.

We will pass over the days of childhood, as the occurrences incident to

that season of life can be interesting to those only who are parents, or substitutes for that tender relation. Seraphina reached her eighteenth year, without any notice having been taken of her existence beyond the circle of Dr. Melbourne's friends. Eighteen was the period fixed by her unfortunate mother for Seraphina's being claimed by the Lord Chancellor, and neither the doctor nor his lady could think upon its approach without the most anxious solicitude. So closely had the sweet enchantress twined herself about the hearts of her parents by adoption, that the bare idea of losing her society filled them with dismay. When, therefore, that eventful period passed by without any notice from the quarter expected, although

their curiosity was excited by the circumstance, they could not forbear rejoicing at it.

At the period when this history opens, Seraphina was far advanced in her nineteenth year; and though lovely beyond description in her person, possessing a mind that eclipsed all outward pretensions to the hearts of her admirers.—Dr. Melbourne had been an able preceptor in all the solid attainments of which the human understanding is capable, and he had found his scholar endued with a capacity equal to his most abstruse studies. To the lighter accomplishments, Mrs. Melbourne had paid unremitting attention; and the pleasing employment had relieved her fair pupil from the tedium of

learned disquisition, and preserved the gaiety natural to her disposition. Seraphina was remarkably lively; in her childish years that liveliness amounted to giddiness; nor was the propensity checked, but by the constant and prudent admonitions of her maternal friend. Mrs. Melbourne, however, possessed no *worldly* wisdom of her own; she was incapable therefore of imparting any to her pupil. Seraphina's benevolence was accordingly unchecked by the cold dictates of caution; and as her fortune, in its most confined state, insured her genteel independence, she was suffered to multiply the objects of her charity as often as her own feelings suggested; and thus, nearly the whole of her allowance was expended on the neighbouring

poor, whose sick *grandmothers,* unhealthy children, and women in the straw, were all in turn, the pensioners of the tender-hearted Seraphina. Dress and its gaudy appendages had never yet interested the heart of this artless girl; her apparel had ever been simply elegant, but totally devoid of ornament: and indeed, had she deeply studied the becoming, she could not have hit on any method so well calculated to set off the finest form in the world. But of personal vanity, Seraphina was happily ignorant; her money would therefore have been a burthen to her, had she not found, in the exercise of her benevolence, the art of making it the source of the most perfect joy human nature is capable of tasting, namely, that of bestowing happiness on others.

To the refined joys of friendship, Seraphina was no stranger; for although the circle of Dr. Melbourne's acquaintance, from its selectness, was circumscribed, the happy girl had been fortunate enough to find in that narrow round, that richest of earthly treasures—a tender and disinterested friend; who, being her senior a few years, was not only capable of loving, but of directing her also. Who this friend was, must be the subject of the ensuing chapter.

## CHAP. IV.

### *A Country Curate's Fire-side.*

At a short distance from Llanfallen, stood the vicarage-house, where resided Mr. Pembroke, surrounded by a numerous and happy family. This worthy man had for many years acted as curate to Dr. Melbourne, and *shared* the duty of the extensive parish with his friend and patron. I say *shared*, because Dr. Melbourne was too conscientious to

leave the care of his flock to an hireling; therefore, whilst he felt himself obliged to have an assistant in the discharge of his duty, he took care so piously to blend his own attention with those of his curate, that no possible neglect could accrue from the division. Mr. Pembroke had several children, and as the house where he resided at his first coming to Llanfallen was small and inconvenient, Dr. Melbourne gave him the privilege of inhabiting the vicarage, which was spacious, and elegantly fitted up by the late incumbent, and which the possession of the beautiful demesne of Rosemount, rendered superfluous to the worthy doctor. In this sweet retirement Mr. Pembroke educated six children; and the habits of intimacy

That existed between the two families made Seraphina appear like a seventh child at the Vicarage, whilst the little Pembrokes met an ample return in the paternal welcome that awaited them at Rosemount.

Mr. Pembroke's family consisted of two sons and four daughters. Robert, the eldest son, chose the profession of a sailor, and entered upon his naval career at an early period of life; whilst Edward, the youngest, being of a more studious turn, preferred following the steps of his father, in the quiet path of divinity; although the little hopes he possessed of preferment might well have deterred him from thinking of such a precarious road to fortune. Never perhaps, did a greater contrast exist between

two brothers, than was exhibited by Robert and Edward Pembroke. The former, bold, sanguine, and ardent, felt no joy but in the prospect of braving danger and encountering difficulties; the distant clime, the warlike enterprize, boasted superior charms in his eyes, to the softer endearments of home; he loved his parents, his sisters, and his brother; but it was the stern love of a warrior, never prone "to the melting mood." He would have sacrificed his life willingly, to have insured them happiness, but he would not have acknowledged a tear upon his cheek, though their united deaths had bid it to flow; his temper was haughty and passionate, but generous and forgiving, and it was difficult to decide whether his

character was most capable of exciting admiration or love, fear or respect.—Edward, on the contrary, was mild, unassuming and placid; no turbulent passions disturbed the serenity of his bosom; no angry emotions ever disfigured his open countenance; severe only to himself, to others gentle and forgiving; his heart the seat of every virtue, every noble feeling of humanity, panted for no happiness beyond the enjoyment of reciprocal affection: in the circle of his family all his wishes centered, for that circle contained Seraphina; who, though always considered by him in the light of a sister, excited in his bosom, unknown to himself, feelings more exquisitely tender than those who were really entitled to that name. This predilection in her fa-

vour was evinced in such a manner not likely to awaken the suspicion of Seraphina; since so anxious was he to render her perfect, that it appeared as if she, of all others, found it most difficult to please him; endless were the corrections he bestowed upon her drawings, her music, and her themes, nothing short of perfection could satisfy him, until Seraphina, wearied with his fastidiousness gave him the name of her "tiresome tutor," and vowed she would never accept of him as Dr. Melbourne's deputy, unless he relaxed in his exactitude. The difference of age between Edward and Seraphina, was just five years, and this rendered him sufficiently her superior in judgment and experience to entitle him, in his own opinion, to become the cen-

sor of her conduct and behaviour as she advanced in life; a task which the lively giddiness natural to her disposition, rendered very necessary, but which the same liveliness made her often unwilling to admit the justice of.

In all these little contests the mild steadiness of Edward's temper triumphed over the vivacity of Seraphina's, and although she would not always acknowledge that she thought him right, her prompt correction of the fault he had censured, evinced the respect she felt for his opinion, and never failed of obtaining for her the approbation she secretly wished for. I say secretly, because Seraphina always affected to laugh at Edward's fastidiousness and to say, she would not be the formal creature he wanted to make her

for all the world. Yet never did even his eye disapprove without giving uneasiness to her heart, nor ever did she slight an admonition that fell from his lips, however lightly she might appear to treat it whilst listening to its precepts. The sweetest smile that ever lit the human countenance was the reward of a task well performed, a temptation withstood, or a sacrifice made to propriety, and Seraphina prized that smile beyond any other, and it never failed of inspiring her with those buoyant spirits, which, although they made her liable to the errors that incurred his censure, rendered her more irrisistibly fascinating, more exquisitely lovely in his eyes; naturally pensive and contemplative, Edward's disposition would have inclined to

melancholy but for the enlivening influence of Seraphina's gaiety, she was the sunbeam that irradiated the landscape of life, and he existed but in the meridian of the divine influence. His love for Seraphina, had, unperceived by himself, become the vital principle of his soul, and the passion that unconsciously filled his bosom was to decide his destiny, and give a colour to his future fate.

Not so, Seraphina; she loved Edward with a tenderness nothing inferior to his own, but wholly divested of passion—he was her friend, her monitor, the first object of her affection, but the idea of a lover had never yet entered her pure imagination. To obtain the approbation of Edward, was her secret ambition, for she considered him perfection personi-

fied, and the day seemed sad, that did not bring him into her presence; but never did his image disturb her repose, or awaken a sigh in her bosom, or a blush upon her cheek; and although she gave him the preference to all his family, nay to the whole world, she acknowledged it in so unembarrased a manner that no one who was conversant in the emotion produced by love, would have hesitated to have pronounced Seraphina wholly exempt from the influence of that passion.

Sophia Pembroke, the eldest daughter, was born a beauty, and notwithstanding the retired situation in which she lived, and the narrow circumstances of her father, Louisa, by the time she was seventeen, was the celebrated toast

of North Wales. It is seldom that girls are very amiable, who hear much of their own charms at an early age, but Louisa seemed to promise to become an exception to the general rule, her temper was excellent, her mind docile, and her heart appeared the seat of charity and universal benevolence. As she was many years senior to Seraphina, though extremely attached to each other, the difference of age was too strongly felt on both sides to render them confidential friends, and when Sophia became the Countess of Avondale, the distance was consequently widened.

This elevated marriage was the effect of one of those accidental meetings that often give colour to the lives of several individuals until then, strangers to each

other. Louisa Pembroke being on a visit to a friend at Conway, during the races, attended the balls with the family where she was staying; at one of these she met Lord Avondale, a young nobleman just come to his estate. He was struck with her beauty at first sight; charmed with her conversation and modest deportment, when admitted to the happiness of dancing with her, and having passed the hours allotted for his repose after the ball was over, in the delightful employment of fancying himself violently in love, he arose, dressed with the precision of a lover, and sallying forth, armed for conquest, he went to pay his compliments of enquiry to his fair charmer. The smile with which she received him did not bid him despair,

and after a few visits, he ventured to declare himself, and lay his fortune and title at Louisa's feet.

A coronet is a bauble not likely to be refused by a young lady who is perfectly disengaged, particularly when tendered to her acceptance by a very handsome, very facinating young man, whose assurances that "*he could not live without her*," seemed confirmed by the very generous proposal of marrying her without a shilling, though he well knew that she was as much his inferior in rank as in fortune. To be brief, the lady was not *inexorable*, and the application to her parents meeting with no opposition, the nuptials were soon after celebrated, and the future prosperity of the Pem-

broke family foretold by all their neighbours.

But Lord Avondale's generosity seemed to expire with his marriage, or to centre only in his wife, for excepting an invitation to Fanny Pembroke, Lady Avondale's second sister, to pass a few months in London, the first winter after their marriage, no notice had been taken of her family by his lordship; and so completely did the gaiety and disposition of her new station engross the time of Sophia, that she had not found opportunity during the three years she had been married, to pay even a short visit to her respectable parents.

Lord Avondale at the time of his marriage, lately acceded to a large fortune which had been accumulating through a

long minority, and having no one whose authority could check him in the disposal of that fortune, he launched out into every species of splendour so generally pleasing to youthful minds to possess. A beautiful wife was a part of his ambition, and when he gratified it by marrying Miss Pembroke, he found in the helpmate he had chosen, a willing partner in all his schemes of pleasure and extravagance. No sooner did she become Lady Avondale, than losing the simplicity which had rendered her so fascinating in the eyes of her husband, she commenced the fine lady in every sense of the word.—At first the surprise occasioned by such a sudden change alarmed the fears of Lord Avondale, but he presently lost them in the bustle of dissipation that

continually assailed his senses, and in a manner absorded his faculties. Too volatile and unsteady by nature to feel a solid attachment, his anxiety expired with his esteem, and once convinced that Louisa was not the angel his imagination at first painted her, he left her to follow the bent of her inclination, and thus a few months only had elapsed after their marriage, when Lord and Lady Avondale found themselves a perfect *fashionable couple.*

Vanity may justly be said to absorb every finer feeling of the heart, and becoming the active principle of the mind, its baleful influence extinguishes every latent spark of goodness, Lady Avondale proved the truth of this position. Educated in simplicity, the virtues had

sprung up in her heart unchecked by the noxious weeds that generally impede their growth in the female bosom. The simple village maid, however, was no sooner converted into the town lady, than opening her ears to the insidious whispering of pride, she became a different creature, and as the progress in wrong is always rapid, there was soon scarcely a vestige of her former goodness to be traced in her character. Yet as we generally retain through life, an instinctive respect for what we have been early taught to reverence, Lady Avondale still continued to *affect* what she *really* no longer felt.—It is easy, however, for the rich and the lovely to gain credit for virtues they no longer possess. Thus the benevolence, the exquisite

sensibility, the sweet humility of Lady Avondale were talked of with enthusiasm in the newspapers long after they had ceased to exist in her bosom.

To the respectable circle at the Vicarage, these praises appeared the just meed of approved virtue, and Mr. Pembroke's excellent heart felt the purest joy at what he thought a convincing proof of his daughter's goodness, untainted by the temptations of high life. Thus when Seraphina received the invitation to visit Lady Avondale, Dr. Melbourne saw no reasonable objection to availing himself of her protection for his ward during her necessary stay in the metropolis, although the doctor, who was more conversant with high life than Mr. Pembroke, was not

quite so sanguine in his hopes of finding Louisa the same unaffected being she was when she quitted Wales.

The joy felt by Seraphina when Dr. Melbourne informed her of the proposed journey, has been already described, and with an eagerness natural to youth she bent her steps to the Vicarage to inform her young friends of the pleasure that awaited her.—Fanny Pembroke, who was just the same age as Seraphina, was the chosen friend of her heart, and with her reposed all the hopes and all the fears that agitated her pure bosom.

When Seraphina arrived at the Vicarage, she found the whole family assembled in the parlour, with the exception of Mrs. Pembroke, who was

always employed during the morning, in the management of her household affairs. It may seem strange that in speaking of the rest of the family, Mrs. Pembroke should have been omitted, but the truth is, that although an excellent woman, she was one of those non-descripts that it is nearly impossible to delineate. She could manage her house, scold her maids, mend her stockings, and make currant wine with any housewife in North Wales, but her ideas never extended beyond such employments; nor did the utmost of her ambition ever lead her to court any higher degree of praise than what attached to the name of a good œconomist.

But to return to the narrative.—

Seraphina at her entrance, found the family at their usual morning employments. Fanny was instructing one of her younger sisters in drawing, whilst the other was writing, under the inspection of her father.—Edward was engaged with a book so intently, that after the customary salutation at her first coming in, he resumed his study, and appeared not conscious of any thing that was passing, until the following words uttered by Seraphina, roused his abstraction. "And what does Edward think of my journey?" asked she, with a smile, "I suppose he will be in fifty frights about my giddy ways."

"Your *journey!*" exclaimed he, rising from his seat in great agitation. "Whi-

ther are you going then, my dear Seraphina?"

"To London—to wicked London," replied she, laughing; "and I think myself, I shall be lost, unless Mr. Pembroke sends *grave Mentor* with me to take care of me."

"However lightly you may be inclined to treat the subject," said Edward, gravely; "I can assure you, Seraphina, I shall not see you depart for the metropolis without some portion of anxiety."

"No, no, I'll be bound you will not; but what then—would you have me vegetate all my lifetime amongst the wild mountains of North Wales, lest I should be guilty of any giddy

sessed of ten thousand pounds in her own right, and that the strongest probability existed of her becoming sole heiress to all the Doctor's fortune, which would make her a match far above the hopes of his son. His own face, therefore, was expressive of a melancholy little inferior to Edward's, when the application of Seraphina obliged him to meet her enquiring eyes.

"Nay," said she, as she observed the gloom spread over his countenance; "Nay, sir, if *you* look grave too, I shall begin to be afraid of this London journey myself; for there certainly must be something truly terrific in an undertaking that excites such alarm."

"My dearest Seraphina," replied the worthy man, "I can assure you with

truth, that my gravity arises from a very different cause. Enjoy, therefore, I beseech you, the pleasure before you, and rest satisfied that I rejoice at, rather than lament your departure. Much as I love your society, and dearly as I shall miss you during your absence, I cannot be so selfish as to wish to detain you, when I feel satisfied that *your* happiness will be increased by such an agreeable change."

"There! there!" cried Seraphina, clapping her hands in ecstacy; "you see how generous Mr. Pembroke is.—Where is that naughty Edward? What a pity he did not hear that. He must have edified by such an example; but you will repeat it to him, won't you, sir?"

"Yes, yes," replied Mr. Pembroke, laughing, "I will lecture him upon his airs; and I doubt not that my dear Seraphina will find him perfectly reasonable at her return from London."

"Oh, but you must make him reasonable *before* I go to London," said Seraphina; "or else all my pleasure will come to nothing. I never could rest in my life, when I thought he was angry with me."

"Well, well," answered Mr. Pembroke," I will see what I can do. I suppose he had been reading some dull book, and that made him so gloomy."

"Let's see, what it is," said Seraphina, taking up the book and opening it. "Oh, 'Strictures on the Manners of the Great.' I dare say the

author has been drawing overcharged pictures of the depravity of the present age, and poor Edward was shocked at the disgusting description of hobgoblins, existing only in the imagination of the writer."

"Authors," said Mr. Pembroke, "are frequently unhappy in their circumstances, and the disappointments they encounter, by souring their tempers, render them severe. We ought not, therefore, to give implicit faith to the pictures they draw of those above them, but whilst taking the caution of their advice, reserve to ourselves the privilege of judging."

Fanny Pembroke and Seraphina now retired together, to talk over the important affair that delighted the one, and

distressed the other, without interruption.

"I fear you will find my sister greatly altered," said Fanny, colouring as she spoke.

"What makes you think so?" asked Seraphina."

"Oh, I don't know—because—indeed I can't tell why I think so, but I *do*."

"Oh, I suppose you are like Edward," rejoined Seraphina, "you think nobody can live in the great world without being contaminated. I wonder *you* escaped the contagion during the three months you passed in London."

"You would cease to wonder if you knew all," said Fanny," but I entreat you not to press me on that subject, my dear Seraphina; when you visit the

great city you will form a different judgment of it to what you do now; and I hope you will find Louisa every thing *you fancy* her, and I *wish* her to be."

"You have cast a damp upon my high raised expectations, with all your grave observations," said Seraphina. "There is nobody gives me any encouragement but your papa, and he seems to *rejoice* at what makes you all *sad*."

"That we feel sad at the idea of parting with what we love so well," said Fanny, affectionately, "cannot be a matter of surprise; but I should be extremely sorry to lessen the pleasure natural to a young heart on its first entrance into life."

"A *young* heart!" rejoined Seraphina,

smiling, "why you talk Fanny as if you were *not* young yourself; but I see Edward has infected you with his gloom. So when I get to London, I shall persuade Lady Avondale to send for you both, and try whether a little dissipation will be of service to you."

"For *Edward*, if you please," said Fanny, sighing, "but not for *me*." And as she spoke a deep crimson mantled on her cheek, whilst the anxious eye of Seraphina would fain have penetrated what her delicacy forbid her to enquire into.

## CHAP. V.

### *A Parting.*

FROM that period, until the day that immediately preceded her departure, Seraphina was busied in preparations for her journey; not in the arrangement of dresses, however for the occasion, my fair readers, but in ordering the management of her various charities in such a manner that no difference might be felt by her dependants during her absence.

Gay, lively, and thoughtless as Seraphina appeared to the casual observer, the exquisite tenderness of her heart precluded the possibility of indifference or carelessness where the happiness of others was concerned. When the news of her approaching departure reached the ears of the poor of Llanfallen, tears of regret filled every eye. "Ah, who will cheer my widowed heart with the sweet benevolence," cried old Margaret Benson, who lived in a small cottage near the park gate at Rosemount; "whose sweet voice will break the silence of my retreat when Miss Seraphina is gone? It is not so much the charity she bestows as the tenderness with which she treats me, the affectionate solicitude she shews for all

my concerns that consoles and revives me."

"Miss Seraphina is an angel," replied Margaret's grandson, who was footman at the Vicarage, and to whom her speech was addressed; and I wish I was the king for her sake."

"Why what would you do if you were the king, Peter?"

"Do, grandmother? why, I'd make a lord of our young Master Edward, and then I'd marry him to Miss Seraphina, for I knows well, that if so be they had got the Indies of gold between them they would give it all to the poor."

"God bless them, so they would," said old Margaret, "but I am afraid that will never be a match; for Betty

has nursed Miss Seraphina when she was quite a bit of a thing, told me that she did believe Miss was quite a grand lady by rights, if every body had their own."

"More's the pity—more's the pity," rejoined Peter with warmth; "grand ladies be nothing to crack of, as you would say, grandmother, if you was to go to London. Lord help me! when I went up with our Miss Fanny to stay at Lord Avondale's, I was ashamed out of my life only to look at them; why d'ye know, grandmother, they ran about with hardly any clothes on them, and their faces painted scarlet red, and such bold looking eyes. Lack-a-daisy! I hopes they won't transmography Miss Seraphina as they have Miss Sophia as

was, for she's as bad as the best of them I assure you."

"Hold your tongue, Peter," cried old Margaret, "and don't speak against your master's family."

"Lord love you, grandmother, I would not do that for all the world; I never mentioned a syllable to a christian soul before, I assure you; but I cried all night after I had seed my lady the first time, to think what a mommet she had made of herself; for you know I was her foster-brother, and she was always mortal good to me. So Miss Fanny she said says she, 'Sophy' for you see she didn't call her my lady then, but fegs she was forced to do so afterwards. Well, 'Sophia,' says she, in her pretty manner, 'I have brought

poor Peter to London with me—won't you like to see him ?'—' Oh, yes,' says my lady, ' let's see the *nimps*, a good laugh will be of service to me this morning; that was her own words, grandmother, 'cause Mrs. Pollard, my lady's woman, was by, and she told me her ownself. Did you ever hear any thing so wicked, grandmother, to make a boast of laughing at poor folks? Well, sure enough she sent for me up stairs, and if I had not been told who I was going to see, I should never have guessed it was our Miss Sophia as was, for lack-a-daisy ! how she was painted, if she had blushed ever so, you could not have seed it ; however blushing was not in her thoughts I fancy, for she stared at me until I was quite

ashamed, and asked me with a laugh, if I liked London, and if I had seen the *lions*. So I said I did not like London at all, I thanked her ladyship—and as for the lions, there was no call to go to see them for every body I met looked as bold as a lion to my fancy; and so then my lady laughed out loud, and turned to Miss Fanny, and called me a *quiz* and a *native*; what she meant by these names I can't tell, but howsomdever it was no good I am partly sure, because the servants when they made game of a body for not being so wicked as themselves, called that *quizzing*; so then my heart was quite full like, 'cause she did not ask after you, grandmother, nor poor father, nor nobody; so Miss Fanny seed my distress, and

she told me I might go down, and I was heartily glad to get leave; and as I was shutting the door I heard my lady say, I hope Fanny you don't intend to make yourself so ridiculous as to let that awkward fellow walk after you in the street, you will have a mob follow you if you do. What Miss Fanny said I can't tell, nor what she thought, but I know I wished myself back at Llanfallen, and I could not help saying to myself, though if my lady was to go there too, she would be a deal more likely to have a mob follow her than poor Peter Benson. And so, grandmother, I have always kept these things to myself, 'cause I did'nt like to do any disparagement to Lady Avondale; but now you talked about Miss

Seraphina being a grand lady, it put me quite out of patience, for I mortally hate grand ladies, and so would you, if you was to see them. But la! how I be chattering to you, instead of carrying Mr. Edward's message to Miss Seraphina; and I wants to see her afore she goes."

"Lord love her heart!" said old Margaret, "She was here about an hour ago to bid me good bye; and you never would think of half the kind things she said to me; and told me not to be down hearted, for that Miss Fanny Pembroke had promised to be her substitute. Miss Fanny to be sure is very good and kind, but then she is not Miss Seraphina, for all that."

"No, that she a'nt!" replied Peter,

"and yet she's mortal good too. But I must run, for Mr. Edward was in a terrible hurry when he sent me off with his message. He little thought I should stand gossiping in this manner. Well, 'twas about Miss Seraphina, so he would not be angry if he knew that."

"Go along, chatterpie!" said his grandmother, "if I had known you had got a message you should not have staid so long."

Away scampered Peter, and in the avenue of limes that led to Rosemount House he met Seraphina. "Well, Peter," said she, good-naturedly, "what have you got there?"

"A letter, miss, from Mr. Edward, and he begs an answer," replied he, bowing, and presenting a sealed note.

Seraphina took it with a smile, and opening it, read the following words:—

"Amidst the bustle of preparation and the delights of anticipated pleasure, can Seraphina find ten miuutes to bestow upon her '*tiresome tutor?*' He has only a few words to say, but they are of serious import; and he does not like to hazard the possibility of an interruption, by leaving the moment of engrossing her attention, to chance. An hour, therefore, before the arrival of the rest of his family, Edward will be at Rosemount, in the hopes of obtaining the desired interview."

"Formal creature!" exclaimed Seraphina, as she folded up the note.—"Tell your master," said she, turning

to Peter, "that I will be in the flower garden at the time he mentions."

"Very well, Miss," replied Peter, "I will be sure to tell Mr. Edward, but I hope you will excuse the liberty I take, when I says as I wishes you all health and happiness, miss, in your long journey."

"Thank you, Peter," said Seraphina, smiling; "I wish you the same till I return."

"I am much obliged to you, Miss, I am sure, and I shall pray for you night and day, that I shall; and I ask pardon for being so bold; but I hopes you won't grow like the rest of the great ladies in London, but that you'll come home just the same as you go."

Seraphina laughed at the serious face with which Peter uttered his wishes for

her welfare, and nodding her head good-naturedly, ran towards the house.

"There she goes," said Peter, "as gay as a lark, and as innocent as a dove. God keep her so, I say; and if I do see her come back again from London as good-natured and as pretty behaved as before she goes, I shall not be so much afraid of that nasty great city as I be now."

As Peter returned to the Vicarage, he met Edward half way.

"Where have you staid so long?" said the latter peevishly, "I have been waiting for you this hour."

"La! sir," replied Peter, "I have been only *half* an hour gone; but you always are in such a hurry about every thing that concerns Miss Seraphina."

"What then," said Edward, impatiently, "have I not told you, sir, that I admit of no chattering."

"I ask your pardon, sir, I'm sure," said Peter; "but when a thought comes into my head, for the life of me I can't keep it in."

"Well, well; enough," interrupted Edward. "Did you see, Miss Seraphina?"

"To be sure, sir, that's what I went for; and sweetly she does look. God send the smoke of London don't spoil her rosy cheeks. No, nor the bad people her heart, that's what I be consarned about; as I told my grandmother just now, says I, if so be Miss Seraphiny—"

"I don't want to hear what you told your grandmother," said Edward.—

"What did Miss Seraphina say to my note?"

"Oh, she did so laugh, sir, when she read it," replied Peter, "and then muttered something to herself, I don't know what; and then she said, tell your master, Peter, I will be in the flower garden at the time he mentions; and then she nodded her head so pretty—just so—and said good bye, Peter, and away she ran, as merry as a grig."

"Well, well, that's enough," said Edward, "make haste home, I am going there immediately. How incorrigibly thoughtless!" exclaimed he, as he turned away from Peter, and with his arms folded across his bosom, plunged into a thick copse that lay contiguous. These lively spirits will inevitably mislead her

when she mixes with the giddy multitude. Oh, Heavens! when I think upon the dangers that will soon environ her on every side, my very brain aches with anxiety. Ah! should that spotless purity be sullied by the contagion of example. Should that unsuspicious candour make her the ready dupe of practised villainy. What then will be the fate of Edward? Even that ignorant rustic is alarmed for the stability of her virtue. What then must *I* feel?—*I* who exist but in beholding her perfection. My sister, too. Alas! were she such as when she quitted Llanfallen, I could trust the precious gem more confidently to her keeping: but I know she is not a proper guardian for such a charge. Dr. Melbourne appears

blind to the danger. My father's implicit confidence in his daughter's prudence, and Mrs. Melbourne's blind reliance on Seraphina's good sense, contribute to mislead him still farther. Thus, every thing seems to conspire against the safety of what I hold dearest upon earth. Oh, Seraphina! happy thoughtless being, how little do you dream of the anxiety that throbs within this bosom upon your account! However, I will warn her of the precipice she stands upon; and if for *one* moment she *can* be *serious*, perhaps the impression may be indelible. Oh! if Heaven should have appointed *me* the happy instrument of her preservation, then never would I repine at the anguish my af-

fection for that lovely creature must inevitably entail upon me."

The whole family of the Pembrokes were to dine at Rosemount on that day, in order to take leave of Dr. Melbourne and Seraphina, whose departure was fixed for the next morning at an early hour. Edward took care to be there before any of the family, and repaired immediately to the flower garden, where he found Seraphina busily employed with her favorite amusement, the cultivation of her flowers. The weather was remarkably fine for the time of the year, which was the latter end of March; and as the situation of the garden was well sheltered, there was already a beautiful shew of the early children of Flora.

"Look at my hyacinths, and my

auriculas," said Seraphina, turning to Edward, as he entered the garden; "is it not a pity to leave them, when they are in such perfection? Do you think I shall meet with any thing in London to compensate for the pleasures I leave behind?"

"Would to Heaven," replied Edward, "that I could flatter you with a hope so pleasing: but alas! my dear Seraphina, to represent the dark side of the picture to your imagination is the purport of my present visit. The office I have chosen is not an engaging one I will allow; far rather would I paint in the glowing colours of youthful fancy, a thousand visions of happiness, to delight and amuse you;—but it must not be. Never will I indulge my own inclinations

at the expence of your happiness. You have always found in me the severe censor blended with the affectionate friend; and although my heart is softened by a thousand tender regrets at the moment of parting, I must not relax in the performance of my duty."

"Well," said Seraphina, assuming a mock gravity; "the prelude is serious enough to excite hopes of much matter. I should be sorry if the mountain should bring forth a mouse."

"Seraphina!" said Edward, and his eyes filled with tears as he spoke; "you may one day know the value of a sincere friend; you will not, then, perhaps feel inclined to treat their anxiety for your welfare with so much levity."

"Nay, now don't be angry," interrupted Seraphina, "you know I cannot bear your *serious displeasure*, nor would I feel conscious of deserving it for the world. My spirits are generally too much for my prudence, that, however, is not the case at present, for I am obliged to *feign* what I *do not feel*, in order to hide what I *do;* were I once to suffer my spirits to flag, I am sure I should cry my eyes out, and have none left to see the *lions* with when I get to London. Only think how shocking that would be!"

Edward could not forbear smiling at the air of mock gravity with which Seraphina spoke, and softening his voice, he thus replied: "When I endeavour to check a vivacity so natural to its

happy possessor, I am far from wishing to eradicate it. No; most devoutly do I pray that when Seraphina returns to bless her friends again with her presence, her heart untainted by the sorrows or the follies of the world, may be as ready to suggest the thoughtless hilarity now censured by her saturnine adviser. But you know, my dear sister, the title of brother with which you have always honored me, gives me the happy privilege of pointing out to your inexperienced heart, the dangers that will surround you at your first entrance into the great world. Dangers that must necessarily be increased by the liveliness and candour natural to innocence.

"How easily will my Seraphina be

led to imagine that the heart of every specious hypocrite who approaches her is formed on the model of her own. How difficult will it be for her unsuspecting bosom to harbour the distrust necessary for her safety, and to listen to every *soi disant* friend as if they had declared themselves her enemy. And ah! how shall I be able to instil a sufficient portion of caution to protect her, without destroying that purity of mind which results from a total ignorance of the world's deceit. The task is indeed difficult, but it must be atttempted, and as it belongs exclusively to anxious affection such as mine, I do not shrink from it."

"In the first place then my loved Seraphina must be told that she must no longer expect to find in the com-

panion of her infancy, a friend on whose counsels she may rely—whose example she may follow—or whose sincerity she may trust; reluctantly do I speak the melancholy truth, but I tremble to withold it, since the concealment might involve the safety of Seraphina. My once amiable and artless sister has thrown off her innocence with her obscurity, and in becoming the Countess of Avondale has assumed that depravity of manners which disgraces at this moment the most elevated ranks of society. She is not as yet what the world terms *guilty*, but when a woman dismisses *modesty*, the handmaid of innocence; when she dares to step to the utmost verge of prudence, she depends no longer upon *virtue* for the safety of

her honor. Accident is then the arbiter of her fate, and may undo her at a moment least suspected of harbouring danger. Every just principle of the heart, every delicate feeling of the mind, is exterminated when avarice takes possession of the female bosom, and in the form of the gambling mania, becomes the ruling passion of the soul. My unfortunate sister has imbibed that dreadful propensity, and the knowledge of that circumstance has destroyed my confidence in her virtue; a *gambler* can be nothing else—the moment they deserve *that* name, they forfeit their place in society, and become a blot in the fair work of creation. By such a woman the unsuspecting innocence of Seraphina would easily be made a means

of her destruction. Confiding in the superiority of Lady Avondale's experience you would have been led imperceptibly to imbibe her principles had you not been warned of your danger. From the lips of a brother you cannot doubt the assertion, render not useless the sacrifice I have made of my feelings in exposing the faults of a beloved sister for your sake, but promise me, my dear Séraphina, to hold fast the principles in which you have been educated, unshaken amidst the blandishments of the world, or in despite of what is often more dangerously irresistible, the laughter of fools. Let not example persuade, or ridicule intimidate you to do what your conscience disapproves of."

Whilst Edward was talking, Seraphina employed herself in tying up a nosegay she had designed for Fanny Pembroke, and placing and replacing the flowers in every possible direction, appeared incapable of pleasing herself in their arrangement; but in fact her mind was not interested by what appeared to engross it. The discourse of Edward had anticipated the sweet illusions of youthful anticipation, and awakened in her bosom a distrust as painful as it was new.

"Oh, my friend," at length said she, her eyes suffused with tears as she spoke. "Oh, my friend, from what a pleasing dream have you awakened me! Farewell confidence! farewell hope! I no longer wish for the journey so ardently

desired—no longer pant to embrace the friend so tenderly beloved. But tell me, Edward, why does not Dr. Melbourne appear alarmed at the idea of confiding me to the care of so improper a chaperone? Why did your good father so earnestly enforce my acceptance of Lady Avondale's invitation?"

"Because they are both ignorant," replied Edward, "of the change that has taken place in the disposition of my sister; and I cannot undeceive the doctor without opening my father's eyes to an affliction which I fear might be fatal to him."

"And how came you so well informed?" asked Seraphina, "you have not

seen your sister since her marriage, I believe."

"I have not," said Edward, sighing, "but"—and he hesitated, "poor *Fanny* has; and from her I have learned the fatal truth. Fear for your safety wrung the secret from her bosom, and incapable of attempting the task herself, she deputed me to the painful office. Her feelings, poor girl, have been so fatally, so incurably wounded by her visit to London, that she trembles for one so dear to her.

"Oh, Edward," replied Seraphina, "what pain do you inflict upon me; can it be possible that my dear Fanny is so unhappy, and I, careless creature that I am, dreamed not of her affliction;

I will reproach her for her want of confidence the instant I see her."

"Hold! my dear girl," interrupted Edward; "I must entreat you as you value Fanny's peace of mind, to be silent upon a subject she is unequal to. It was because she dreaded your interrogations that she forbore to speak to you herself; spare her, therefore, I beseech you, nor question her concerning an affair she would find it equally painful to conceal from, or divulge to you. At some distant period you will most probably become her confident as to the secret cause of her unhappiness, but at present it would neither be prudent nor kind to make you acquainted with it."

"Enough," answered Seraphina, "you

have effectually silenced me. The idea of giving my beloved Fanny an additional pang, will prevent me from committing the slightest imprudence on the subject of her secret grief, and the mournful reflection that *she* is unhappy will act as a check to the vivacity that alarms my kind mentor. Oh, Edward!" added she, sighing, "you have absolutely transformed me; my liveliness is fled, and I shall become, for the future as grave as yourself,"

"Heaven forbid!" cried Edward, with energy; "that the happy Miss Melbourne should become like the unfortunate Edward Pembroke. No, Seraphina, fondly as I love you, I am not selfish enough as to wish *that*."

As Edward spoke, his cheeks glowed

with the crimson suffusion of agitated feelings, for he instantly recollected the imprudence he had committed, as the penetrating eye of Seraphina was raised to his, for an explanation of the dark phrase he had uttered.

"The *unfortunate Edward Pembroke!*" repeated she, whilst surprise and concern were pictured on every intelligent feature, "Are *you* unhappy too, Edward; and am I forbidden to enquire into the cause of *your* sorrow as well as Fanny's?"

"Yes, Seraphina," answered Edward; "the cause of *my* sorrow must be *for ever* a secret from *you*, and I shall never cease to regret the imprudent folly I have committed in betraying the existence of that sorrow. But I entreat

you by the friendship you bear me, to forget the unguarded expressions that have fallen from my lips; remember only the advice I have given you. I have already detained you too long. Farewell; I shall spare myself the anguish of another adieu, by absenting myself from the family party to-day. May guardian angels, pure as her own thoughts, watch over my lovely friend! and should any unforeseen circumstance attack the happiness of my dear Seraphina, let her remember that there exists a friend, who would think his life a trivial sacrifice to insure her welfare."

As Edward spoke, he raised Seraphina's hand to his lips, and pressing it tenderly, he repeated the word "fare-

well!" in a voice of stifled anguish; and was out of the garden before the astonishment that had seized Seraphina, permitted her to make a word of reply. The instant she recollected herself, she followed him, and called upon him to return; but he waved his hand in token of refusal, and quickening his pace, was out of sight in a moment. Seraphina returned to the garden, where she remained until summoned to dinner, lost in a labyrinth of conjecture, on the possible causes of the unhappiness of two people so dear to her.

Deeply did she lament the fate of both, but the utmost stretch of her imagination never led her to suspect the source of the misfortunes she deplored. She felt that there was something

strange in Edward's last speech. His looks too, were different from what she had ever before noticed, but a total stranger to the passion of love herself, it was impossible she should suspect its symptoms in another. That *she herself* was the cause of poor Edward's sufferings, was therefore farther from her thoughts than any thing else; and she would have guessed every affliction humanity is liable to, before the real one would have suggested itself to her fancy.

"Poor dear Edward!" said she to herself, as she returned to the house; "he is unhappy and how often have I unconsciously added to his sufferings by my perverseness and incorrigible giddiness; but I will do so no more: I

will treasure his advice in my heart, and make it the rule of my actions, and perhaps when he perceives that I am grown more steady, he may be inclined to confide his sorrow to his sister Seraphina. Alas! I daresay he thinks I could not keep a secret if it was ever so, and so he will not trust me with either Fanny's or his own; but I will prove that I can, for I will not mention a word of what has passed between us; not even to Fanny. Oh, he shall see that I am become prudent all of a sudden."

## CHAP. VI.

### *A Journey, and an Arrival.*

The cloud that obscured the countenance of Seraphina at her entrance into the dining parlour was unnoticed by any one except Fanny, who, conscious of the communication Edward had been making, attributed the mournful expression to the right cause instead of supposing it to originate in the thoughts of the approaching separation, as the

rest of the company imagined. The embrace Fanny bestowed upon Seraphina at meeting was more tender than usual, and tears trembled in her eyes, as with a faltering voice she made her usual enquiry.

When Edward's absence was remarked by Doctor Melbourne at dinner, Fanny apologised for it by saying that he had been seized with so violent a head-ache that he found it impossible to sit at table; if, however, it subsided he proposed being at Rosemount in the evening. Seraphina's spirits revived when she heard Fanny say this, as she longed for an opportunity of evincing to Edward by the prudence of her manner, the portion of self command she had already acquired by his

instructions. They gradually sunk again, however, when several hours stole away without his making his appearance; at length a servant brought a letter from him to Doctor Melbourne, containing an apology for not bidding him adieu in person, and pleading indisposition as the cause; then followed a long string of good wishes for health, happiness, &c. &c. in which Seraphina was formally included as Miss Melbourne.

"Why, hey day!" said the doctor, taking off his spectacles; "what's in the wind now? I thought if all the rest of the family had apologised for non-attendance, we should have been sure of seeing Edward. Have you and your tutor quarrelled girl?" continued he, looking significantly at Seraphina.

"No, indeed papa we never were better friends," replied she.

"That's strange indeed! how comes it then," said he, "that he cuts you off with a shilling in this his last will and testament? I thought to be sure you would have a packet of ten pages at least. A sort of sermon in form of a letter to read upon the road, or whenever you felt inclined to sin against Chesterfield, by laughing too heartily."

"Oh, no, papa," said Seraphina forgetting her intended caution. "There is no occasion for Edward to *write* his advice to me, his counsels are indelibly engraved upon my heart, and will be effaced from it only by death."

"Phew!" cried the doctor; "we are absolutely in the heroics this even-

ing. Well, my dear," added he, laughing, "I will just allow your" *indelible* impression to last till we change horses the last time before we get to London. The very twinkling of the lamps at Hyde-Park Corner will completely efface every iota of the *wisdom* of *Llanfallen*, I will answer for it, without the assistance of death."

"That's always your way, Dr. Melbourne," said his wife; "you make the instability of female resolutions a part of your creed. Now I will venture to lay any wager that Seraphina will remember every good counsel she received at Llanfallen more tenaciously when at a distance than whilst she felt it in her power to have them repeated at any time.

"And that is always *your* way, my good wify," answered the doctor, laughing, "you make contradiction a part of your daily bread, and as you and I are never of the same opinion, we are sure to have *one* person right in the family, happen what will."

"Well, we shall *see*," answered Mrs. Melbourne, smiling; "time will shew who is in the right."

"Yes," said Seraphina, "and that will be mamma."

"Oh, no doubt, no doubt," rejoined the doctor, affecting gravity, "the *ladies must* be in the right. Tell me when one of your sex was ever in the wrong, in her *own opinion*."

A general laugh concluded the good-

humoured argument. The subject of Edward's absence was dropped. At an early hour the Pembrokes took their leave, and Seraphina could not part from the friends of her infancy without a pang as poignant as it was new; but she could not forbear smiling through her tears, when the doctor exclaimed. "Save your eyes, girl, save your eyes, remember the fine sights, and don't have to blink at them like the sun through a November fog."

When Seraphina retired to her chamber, Mrs. Melbourne followed her thither, and dismissing her maid, desired a few minute's private conference. When they were alone, she embraced her adopted child with affectionate fer-

vour, and seating herself beside her, presented her with a curiously wrought ivory casket.

"This," said she, "my dear girl, contains some jewels that belong to you, together with a miniature of the lovely lady who was your mother; it was her request that it should be given you when you had attained the age of eighteen. Would to Heaven I could add an elucidation of the mystery that involves your fate; but that, alas! is not in my power to give. You have always known that you are not the daughter of those from whom you have hitherto received a parental care. Yet has your grateful heart still repaid our affection with the tenderest proofs of filial love. Yes, my dear Seraphina, it is but common justice

to say that you have fulfilled our utmost wishes, and exceeded our most sanguine hopes."

"My dear mamma," interrupted Seraphina, "how kindly does your partial tenderness over-rate the merit of my poor endeavours to deserve your goodness; deprived in my earliest infancy of my natural parents, have I ever felt the misfortune, except in idea? Cherished with the tenderest solicitude during my helpless years, and in my riper ones instructed with unremitting attention, whilst every encouragement and indulgence you could bestow was held out to me as an inducement to my perseverance in my studies. So situated, dearest madam, can you think any efforts of mine to be grateful, worthy of encomium? Surely not.

As Seraphina spoke, she dropped on her knees before Mrs. Melbourne, and taking her hand, pressed it affectionately to her lips.

Mrs. Melbourne raised the interesting girl from the ground, and tenderly embraced her. "Dearest object of my affection," said she; "continue what you now are, and I shall think myself the happiest of women in having had the care of your education. I have the strongest confidence in the goodness of your heart, and I flatter myself that the delicacy inherent in your nature will prove a better protection to you than all the worldly wisdom acquired by an earlier acquaintance with life. I will still maintain, in spite of all that can be said to the contrary, that *innocence* is the

best safeguard to a woman. I grieve that I cannot accompany my child to London, but that you know the delicate state of my health forbids, as the air of the metropolis is particularly inimical to my consumptive habit. However, my sweet girl will have the society of one of her earliest friends; and I flatter myself that in Lady Avondale you will find an exception to the generality of fine ladies."

As Mrs. Melbourne said this, Seraphina could not suppress a sigh at the fallacy of the hope, whilst her maternal friend thus continued:

"Should I however be mistaken in my opinion of Sophia, should the force of example, the temptations of fashion, have perverted her understanding, or

relaxed her principles, let my Seraphina consult the dictates of her own heart as to the propriety of any action of which she stands in doubt, and I do not fear the result. Trust rather to *that*, my dear girl, than any other criterion; our consciences seldom deceive us, unless we are determined to silence them. And above all things, my child, beware of suffering the ridicule of fools to intimidate you from an open avowal of your religious principles. The danger resulting from a contrary mode of acting is seldom suspected until it is too pressing to be escaped."

"Goody Margaret, are you going to keep the girl awake all night?" said Dr. Melbourne, who just then rapped at the door in his night-gown and slippers; "could

not you have given her this dose of advice at an earlier hour, as well as to make her sit up to listen to it now, with one eye shut, and the other hardly open ?"

"I am coming, my dear," answered Mrs. Melbourne; "but you know it is so natural to have something to say at the last."

"Yes, yes, I know there must be a dying speech at all executions. But come, come, goody, I can see through the crack of the door, that all farther counsel will be wasted to-night, for Seraphina has got on her poppy wreath."

"Indeed papa, you are mistaken," answered she, for my head and heart are so full, that I don't think I shall sleep to-night."

"A good excuse for not being ready

in the morning," answered the doctor, laughing. "Oh, the women! the women! they are all alike.—Come, come, Dame Margaret, leave the girl to her repose, for by eight o'clock to-morrow morning, we must be on our way to London."

Mrs. Melbourne now embraced Seraphina, and bidding her good night, followed the doctor to his chamber.

When her maternal friend had departed, Seraphina threw herself on her knees, and offered up those prayers so acceptable to the Divine Being—the pure effusions of an innocent heart. Her gentle spirit had caught the alarm which the anxiety of Edward had first excited, and which had been increased by the suggestions of Mrs. Melbourne's soli-

citude. But after having preferred her petition to Heaven for its protection, she felt her confidence revive; the transient gloom disappeared, and she sunk to repose with her wonted serenity.

At break of day she was roused from her slumbers by the doctor, who hurried every body concerned in expediting his departure. It was always so unpleasant a feeling to his heart to quit his home, that he dwelt as little as possible upon it, and his hasty farewell to his amiable wife might have been mistaken for indifference by those who were unacquainted with his affection for her, and the tenderness natural to his disposition.

The bustle made by the good doctor, was of infinite service to Seraphina, who felt an unusual depression of spirits when

the moment of parting came, and was therefore relieved by having it shortened. Mrs. Melbourne embraced her beloved ward with a tenderness truly maternal, and the tears flowed in abundance on both sides; but the doctor, who with difficulty restrained his own, called them a couple of fools, and taking Seraphina by the arm, absolutely forced her into the chaise, whither he followed her himself as soon as he had shook hands once more with his *old wify*, and scolded her well for *whimpering*.

When first the carriage moved on, the same sentiment of regret kept both the doctor and his companion silent, as both equally lamented the kind friend they had left behind; but when a turn of the road brought them in sight of the Par-

sonage House, and they beheld Edward leaning over the little wicket that led from the garden into the road, Seraphina started from her reverie, and pointing him out to Dr. Melbourne, exclaimed with a sigh, "Oh, what would I give if Edward Pembroke was going with us to London!"

"*Really!*" said the doctor, drily, "I did not expect to hear that."

"Why, papa, don't you know how dearly I love Edward? And don't you know what a severe censor he is upon every thing I do and say, and don't you think he would be of great use to take care of me in London?"

"A very pretty idea, truly," answered Dr. Melbourne, smiling; "a young lady making her debût in the fashionable

world, attended by a *censor* of *three and twenty* to take care of her *morals*:—well, my dear, there is nothing like *novelty*, and as no doubt you have experienced the insufficiency of your *old* mentor, you do perfectly right to wish for a new one."

"Nay, papa," said Seraphina, "you mistake my meaning—I do not wish to *change* you for another, but I only would find an assistant for you: Edward would not be so soon tired of going about with me as you would."

"I doubt the fact," replied Dr. Melbourne, "for I think such a giddy puss as you are, would tire any body."

Just at that moment Edward who had advanced from the garden gate, came up to the carriage, and putting his hand in

at the window, presented a sealed letter to Seraphina.

"It is the advice of a friend," said he; "but I wish you not to read it until the novelties that await you have awakened those sentiments of pleasure and surprise in your bosom so natural to innocence and inexperience. Farewell, Seraphina! Heaven guard your purity! Dr. Melbourne," continued he, extending his hand to him, "Farewell! God bless and protect you!"

"Thank you, thank you," replied the doctor, returning the pressure, with a smile, "but I think it would only have been civil of you to pray for *my purity too*."

Edward could not forbear smiling, though tears trembled in his eyes at the same moment; "You, doctor," said he,

"have *experience* for *your* assistant, and therefore need not excite my apprehensions."

"Why true," replied the doctor, laughing, "where there is a great deal of *experience*, there is generally less purity to defend."

Edward waved his hand as the carriage moved on, and Seraphina, leaning out of the window, returned the compliment as long as he remained in sight. When she could no longer behold him, she drew back her head, and turning to the doctor, saw that he was observing her with a significant smile. "How happy you are, papa," said she, "you laugh at every thing."

"Why, as we must either laugh or cry," replied he, "the former is certainly

the wisest choice; and I know a little girl that used to be of my opinion; indeed this is the first instance of a different propensity that has come under my observation."

"Indeed," said Seraphina, naively, "the solemn manner in which Edward has taken leave of me, impresses my mind with a correspondent seriousness, which I must own is not natural to me."

"Well, well," said the doctor, "that seriousness will wear off, I warrant it, if the memorial you hold in your hand is not calculated to revive it."

"The hand-writing is Fanny Pembroke's," said Seraphina, examining the superscription; "but I am not to read it yet," continued she, putting it into

her bosom, "and I don't feel inclined to disobey."

"No, no," replied Dr. Melbourne, "sufficient of '*il penseroso*' for the present."

As no accident whatever occurred to retard their journey, the doctor and his fair charge arrived in St. James's Square on the third day from their quitting Rosemount, where they alighted at the magnificent house of the Earl of Avondale, and were received by his lovely countess with the most hyperbolical expressions of delight.

But as it is the business of an author to paint from *life* itself, we will just present the drawing-room of the elegant countess, an hour or two previous to the arrival of her expected guests.

## CHAP. VII.

### *An Expectation.*

The invitation which Lady Avondale had given Seraphina, had been made at the instigation of Mr. Pembroke, who, as soon as he understood Dr. Melbourne's intention of taking his ward to London, felt anxious that she should pass the time she staid there under the protection of his daughter.

It has already been observed that Mr.

Pembroke was entirely ignorant of the change which had taken place in the disposition of Lady Avondale, and misled by the praises bestowed by the hackney writers upon her benevolence, her condescension and amiable manners, the partial father imagined that elevation of rank had improved rather than corrupted the heart of his daughter.

When Lady Avondale received the intimation of her father's wishes respecting Seraphina, the letter was worded in a manner too flattering to her vanity to be in danger of meeting a refusal, and she immediately wrote a pressing invitation to Dr. Melbourne, and entreated the *favor* of his and Seraphina's company with all the fervor of the most perfect friendship, and concluded her letter

with assuring him that she should count the minutes that must intervene until he procured her the pleasure of embracing the lovely friend of her infancy, on whose image she had never ceased to dwell with equal love and admiration.

Such were the sentiments Lady Avondale chose to make a parade of to the world, whilst those she concealed in her bosom were of an opposite kind. The image of Seraphina was indeed present to her recollection, glowing with the rich tints of opening beauty; but the sensations that remembrance excited, were by no means favorable to the lovely girl. Lady Avondale well knew that in the circle of which *she* was now the idol, *novelty* was the most powerful attraction, and that even were Seraphina only pos-

sessed of that one advantage, she might find her a formidable rival. What then had she to expect from a form so perfect as her's promised to be at the moment of Lady Avondale's quitting Denbighshire.

To a finished coquet, what can be so mortifying as the idea of a rival beauty? Lady Avondale hated Seraphina from the first moment she anticipated her triumph; and she determined to take the only probable means of preventing the effect of a first impression by speaking of her expected guest to all her intimate circle, in the exaggerated terms of hyperbolical admiration.

We are generally disappointed when our expectations have been highly raised: Seraphina was therefore described by

Lady Avondale as a perfect angel in form and face; "highly accomplished, and exquisitely graceful; she is besides a wonder of learning—skilled in all the abstruse sciences, and, to sum up the whole, a downright *monster* of perfection." These were her ladyship's words, repeated to the Hon. Mr. Lessingham, in a soft drawling voice, as he leaned over the back of her chair.

The day Seraphina was expected, Mr. Lessingham was one of the *ephemera* of fashion:—of that indefinite order of beings, whose utmost consequence in the scale of existence extends only from the dressing to the drawing-room. Yet, in that narrow sphere, what importance was concentred! For there, like the Emperor of Morocco,

although his territory was small, his power was absolute, and he reigned undisputed monarch in the regions of *ton*. From his decision there was no appeal—*his* fiat determined the fate of rival beauties in the choice of the multitude—and *his* taste alone directed those ever varying changes in attire that contributed to enrich the tailors, and astonish the *natives*. Accustomed to decide where fashion was concerned, Mr. Lessingham listened to Lady Avondale with an air of important gravity.

"You will appoint Seraphina the queen of beauty for the ensuing season —I am sure you will, Lessingham;" continued her ladyship, casting a look of enquiry at her auditor.

"Your ladyship knows my abhorrence

of *monsters*—how, therefore, can you imagine I should raise one to the throne of beauty? This girl that your ladyship extols so highly, *must* be *provincial* in her manners, and totally *new* to every thing in haut ton. How, therefore, can she possess '*les agremens*'—the fascination of *polished loveliness* so necessary to obtain *my* sufferance."

"And without that," said Lady Avondale, "she will be thought nothing of.—Indeed Lessingham you are too cruel, I shall feel quite angry with you if you do not admire my friend."

"Heaven is my witness," replied the fop, "that I would do *much* to oblige Lady Avondale; but always *difficult*, I am now become absolutely *fastidious* in my judgment of beauty. The Circean

witchery of charms displayed by your ladyship, has dazzled my senses, and rendered them tenaciously delicate in their approbation of any thing inferior, and where shall I find them equalled?"

This was said with a grin and a shrug that distorted the poor beau's features into a downright grimace. Lady Avondale smiled at the compliment—for a compliment always made her smile, though paid her at the expence of her good sense, or even her good nature.

"Now I'll be judged," said she, "by Sir Percival Egerton, whether it is not a shocking bore that you should be prejudiced against this lovely girl before you see her."

The gentleman alluded to had just entered the room, and at the moment

Lady Avondale was speaking, had advanced near enough to hear what she said.

"Oh, I entreat your ladyship not to be judged by *me*," said Sir Percival, bowing, "for I never had a grain of judgment in my life; and Lady Avondale is far more likely to deprive a man of his senses, than to add one to their number."

"You are a wild creature," replied Lady Avondale, "but I am determined you *shall* be umpire in this affair, however unwilling to undertake it."

"Make haste then in pity, my dear Lady Avondale," answered Sir Percival, "for I have positively fifty places to go to to-night, and ten thousand things to tell you before I go, so judge of the importance of my time."

"Well then," said Lady Avondale, laughing, "to cut the matter short, we will begin in the middle. Would you imagine it, Lessingham is so impertinent as to tell me he is pre-determined not to admire a charming friend of mine who is coming to London on purpose to eclipse all the ci-devant stars of fashion. Now is it not very hard that he should deny his sufferance to a beauty that *I* mean to countenance?"

"Oh, most egregiously intolerable! and he shall certainly be sent to Coventry forthwith, unless he retract so barbarous a decree. But tell me, dear Lady Avondale, who is this charming creature, and when is she expected, and has she got blue eyes and a Grecian

nose? I am dying to see her. I dare say I shall fall in love with her at first sight; that is if your ladyship will spare me the loan of my heart for about five minutes, for you know it has been in your keeping ever since you sang me that enchanting song."

"A-propos, of singing," said Lady Avondale, "the fair stranger is a perfect syren. I am sure Lessingham will be obliged to admit, at least, that she is a *sweet harmonist.*"

"Sweet harmonist! and beautiful as sweet, and young as beautiful, and soft as young. Is it not so, my dear Lady Avondale?" interrupted Sir Percival; "but you don't tell me what colour her eyes are, nor when you expect her."

"Her eyes are blue," said Lady Avondale, laughing, "and she is expected this evening. Will that do for you?"

"*Cela me tourne la tete,*" answered Sir Percival. "*Blue eyes, and expected this evening!* But dear Lady Avondale do tell me, has she got a Grecian nose?"

"Yes, she has—and what then?"

"Why, then I am her slave, that's certain,, and I will not stir from this drawing-room until I see her."

"And the *fifty* places you are *obliged* to go to this evening, what is to become of them?" asked Lady Avondale.

"Oh, they may go to the devil and shake themselves, for I am a fixed star until the rising of *Venus*," replied Sir Percival.

"And the ten thousand things you have to tell *me*, for Heaven's sake begin them, or we shall never have done."

"All gone out of my head as clean as what I learned at school. I never can think of two things at a time, so if we talk, it must be about the fair expected. Has she fine hair; is it dark or flaxen? Is she tall or petite? Are her teeth good? Do give me a categorical account of her perfections, for I feel that I am dying for her already?"

"What before you have seen her?"

"Oh yes, I always fall in love by anticipation, and that is the pleasantest part of the passion, for then the imagination goes to work, and forms a perfect goddess out of the slightest materials, and whilst you are dwelling with

rapture upon the picture you have drawn, no jealous fears disturb the sweet delirium, nor mortal imperfections mar the beauteous vision."

"But when the reality comes before you, how mortifying to observe the illusion evaporate, and perfection degenerate into common every-day beauty," said Lady Avondale.

"Oh, that's the best of it all," said Sir Percival, laughing, "for when the illusion is dispelled, the passion is cured, and then hey-day for another amour; but the description, dear Lady Avondale, do let us have the description."

"A poetical one?" said her ladyship.

"Poetical, by all means," replied the baronet.

"She looked a goddess, and she moved a queen."

"No, pray give it us in plain prose, Lady Avondale," said Mr. Lessingham, who felt himself piqued that she had appealed to Sir Percival, and wished to put an end to the *badinage*.

"Well, then good folks, you shall hear it in plain prose; Seraphina Melbourne is exactly the proper height for a woman, that is a little taller than *I* am."

"Then she must be *awkward*," said Mr. Lessingham.

"Nay, don't interrupt me, dear Lessingham, you put me out. Let's see, what was the next question. Oh, her hair—the colour of her hair is bright auburn, a few shades lighter than mine."

"Carrotty, by all that's ugly!" again interrupted Mr. Lessingham.

Lady Avondale frowned, but it was evident she was not displeased. The comparison of Seraphina with herself had not been made without design, and she was gratified by the result of the artifice.

"Her teeth, I believe, only remain to be described, and in speaking of them I must be poetical, *malgre moi*, and talk of pearls in a ruby casket."

"Then do add a little more about the fragrant breath of morning," said Sir Percival, "and tell us whether her complexion be fair or brown, and then you shall have a sonnet in the newspaper to-morrow morning, if I sit up all night to write it."

" Her complexion," replied Lady Avondale, " is dazzling fair, and you may fancy what you please about her breath."

" I detest *blondes*," said Mr. Lessingham, yawning as he spoke, " they always give me the vapours." Lady Avondale was a *brunette*, her eyes sparkled therefore as the oracle of fashion decided against the complexion of her dreaded rival.

" What the devil are you cogitating about there," said Lord Avondale, who just then walked up to the sofa where his wife was sitting. " One would imagine you were chusing a Lord Chancellor, by the importance expressed in all your countenances."

" We are merely talking of Seraphina

Melbourne, and anticipating the talk she will make when she is introduced."

"*Another Welch beauty!*" said his lordship, sarcastically. "Indeed, my lady, you are too cruel to mankind, *one Alexander* is enough at a time, unless there were, as he wished, more worlds to conquer."

"Miss Melbourne is not a *Welch beauty*," said Lady Avondale, in a tone of pique, "so at least *she* may hope to please *your lordship*."

"Nay, my dear, you do me wrong," answered his lordship, "you know better than any body what effect *Welch* beauty has upon my heart, and if Miss Melbourne cannot boast of that distinction, there is a better chance that

the new fledged tomtits of fashion may escape the snares that will be spread for them."

Lady Avondale was just going to reply, when a thundering rap at the door announced the arrival of guests, and a few minutes afterwards a servant entered to inform Lady Avondale that Dr. and Miss Melbourne were below.

"How stupid," exclaimed her ladyship, "to keep them below," and she made towards the door.

Dr. Melbourne at that moment entered, leading in Seraphina.

Lady Avondale embraced her with all the fervor of friendship, and then turning gracefully to the doctor—"Thank you, thank you, my revered friend," said

she, "for the treasure you have brought me. Oh, how shall I be able to make you amends?"

"By returning her to me as simple as I bring her, when I shall require her at your hands," answered the doctor with solemnity.

"Sweet simplicity," ejaculated Mr. Lessingham, in a whisper. "It were a pity to spoil it."

When the ceremony of introduction and salutation was over, and the party seated, the doctor asked Lady Avondale with his usual bluntness. "If you are so glad to see us, Sophy, why did you have strangers ready to stare at us on our arrival?"

"My dear doctor, you quite mistake the matter. These gentlemen are the

most intimate friends Lord Avondale and I have, and they were dying to see you, from the description we had given of you."

"But as they are not *our* intimate friends, Soph," answered the doctor, "we were not *dying* to *see them*."

"I see you are not altered, doctor," answered Lady Avondale, smiling.

"No; *semper eadem*," answered the doctor, "is my motto. I am still the same rude bear I ever was, so take care of Bruin."

Whilst Lady Avondale was engaged in talking to Dr. Melbourne, Sir Percival Egerton seated himself by the side of Seraphina.

"I am astonished," said he, in a low voice, "at the impudence of Lady Avondale."

"To what instance do you allude, sir?" asked Seraphina, finding he addressed himself to her.

"To that of inviting a rival so formidable as yourself, into the very shrine where she has long been worshipped; but thousands will have reason to regret her temerity as well as herself."

"You mean then," said Seraphina, naively, "that you are sorry Lady Avondale has made me her guest. Your reason for saying so may be well founded, but the unqualified manner in which you speak it, makes me perfectly easy on the score of *flattery* at least."

"Ah, there is no small portion of mischief in your composition, I perceive," said Sir Percival, smiling. "You disclaim a compliment with an excellent

grace for a novice; but tell me, enchanting Miss Melbourne, what use do you intend to make of the power Heaven has delegated to you? If a *cruel* one—if not satisfied with conquest, you delight in *tyranny*. For pity's sake, instantly reveal your intention, that I may fly the enthralment that awaits me."

"When I have been more used to the great world," said Seraphina, "I may perhaps find its language less unintelligible, but at present you must excuse me, sir, for not replying to what I do not understand."

"What!" exclaimed her persecutor, "can it be possible that you are insensible of your own power. Is there a desert so barbarous—a solitude sufficiently obscure to hide such transcendant

beauty as yours until this moment? If *seen*, its power *must* be confessed. Tell me, lovely creature, is it possible that *I* am the first who ever told you you are handsome?"

"You are at least the first who ever supposed me such a fool as to be pleased with being told so?"

"Ah, I perceive, I perceive how it is," answered Sir Percival, "You have been shut up in some Gothic abbey with yon old father confessor, without either a looking-glass or a chamber-maid; but tell me, for Heaven's sake, angelic Miss Melbourne, is that old gentleman your father?"

"He is not," answered Seraphina, "but I could not love him better if he were."

"Nor I either," said Sir Percival; "for strike me ugly if I could love him if he were my own father—he is such an old quiz."

"A quiz!" repeated Seraphina. "Pray what is that?"

"And is it possible you do not know what a quiz is? Sweet simplicity! what an infinite deal you have to learn! Would to Heaven you would appoint me your Cicerone in this vast metropolis. How soon would your mind become enlightened by the bright rays of fashion! Her eccentricities of form and language would become familiar to your ear and eye, and the blush of surprise no longer mantle on that lovely cheek."

At this moment Lord Avondale came and placed himself on the other side of

Seraphina, and she was relieved from the torrent of nonsense that began seriously to distress her.

"I am afraid," said his lordship, good-humouredly, "my wild friend here is too much for the harrassed spirits of Miss Melbourne. The fatigue of such a long journey is not a good preparative for such a close attack as he has been making upon your patience. Tell me candidly," continued his lordship, "is not Egerton a terrible bore?"

"Nay," interrupted Sir Percival, "I beseech your lordship to remember that Miss Melbourne is but just descended from her native skies, and therefore wholly ignorant of the *jargon* of this nether world. She has just assured me

she does not know what a quiz is—how then should she possibly comprehend what is meant by a *bore?*"

"With such a clear definition as yourself before her," answered his lordship, "Miss Melbourne will, at least, not feel herself at a loss to understand the expression in future."

Seraphina laughed. "My ignorance," said she, "will no doubt be productive of much diversion to the cognoscenti; but as my instructors appear to be both numerous and communicative, it will most likely be but of short duration."

"In future, you will remember, lovely Miss Melbourne," said Sir Percival, "that I am the walking dictionary you are to consult at every emergency,

and that the two first articles stand thus:—Quiz, an old prig of a fellow, like Dr. Melbourne, who, envying the good of mankind, has kept beauty in retirement, which Heaven intended to enslave the world; a bore means an impertinent interruption, such as Avondale just now gave to our charming conversation, and therefore his own name may be a synonymous idea to that term in your mind."

"Let me furnish an errata to the work," said Seraphina, smiling. "For *quiz*, read *friend*—for *bore*, read *seasonable relief*; at least, I *understand* it so in the present case."

"Fairly had, by Jove!" said Lord Avondale. "How are you, Percival,

hey? I am much mistaken, if Miss Melbourne will not soon convince you that there are women who are superior to the jingle of your nonsense."

"Yes," said Sir Percival, with a bow, "Miss Melbourne has done *that already*; and I shall always be most happy to acknowledge that I believe her understanding equals her *beauty*."

"What is that you are saying, Sir Percival?" said Lady Avondale. "I heard your favourite word *beauty*, and I think I can guess the rest."

"Your ladyship knows better than any one my devotion at the shrine of beauty, where you have so long been the presiding goddess."

"*Have been!* Oh, you shocking

creature! *my* reign is then over, I suppose?" answered her ladyship. "But positively, my dear Seraphina, you must not listen to the extravagant compliments of that giddy creature any longer, or they will certainly turn your brain."

"If she has any brains at all," said Dr. Melbourne, "she may listen to his compliments without any danger. *Vanity* only fills up those spaces in women's heads where *brains* are *wanting*."

A hearty laugh from all but Mr. Lessingham, confirmed the truth of this assertion.

That gentleman was, however, too abstracted in his own ideas to attend to what was passing. He stood picking his teeth with one hand, whilst the other rested on the back of Lady Avon-

dale's chair. His eyes were rudely fixed upon the countenance of Seraphina with an impertinent stare which nothing but the arbitrary law of fashion could have authorised, and she who was unacquainted with the prevailing custom, shrunk from his gaze with undissembled resentment.

"There is great expression in Miss Melbourne's countenance," said Lady Avondale, softly, to her oracle.

"Yes; a great deal of the *vixen*," answered he, with asperity, "or I am no physiognomist."

"I think her the most graceful figure I ever saw," said Lady Avondale. "Such sweet simplicity—such bewitching *naiveté*."

"*Ninette a la cour*," answered Mr.

Lessingham, with a sneer. "*Pretty native!* it is plain she has not been long caught.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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