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ALBERT.



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ALBERT;

OR, THE

WILDS OF STRATHNAVERN.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

ELIZABETH HELME,

AUTHOR OF

LOUISE, OR THE COTTAGE ON THE MOOR; DUNCAN AND PEGGY, PENITENTS
OF GODSTOW, ST. CLAIR OF THE ISLES, ST. MARGARET'S CAVE, MODERN
TIMES, FARMER OF INGLEWOOD FOREST, PILGRIM OF THE CROSS,
&c. &c.

" Amid the roses fierce Repen'tance rears
Her snaky crest: a quick returning pang
Shoots through the conscious heart, where honour still,
And great design, against the oppressive load
Of luxury, by fits impatient, heave."

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A L B E R T.

CHAPTER I.

Modern Honour.

SOME time before the hour of six, St. Austyn called on captain Watson, and walked to the appointed place, where in a short time they were joined by Berners, and a young fellow he had lately formed an acquaintance with. Either a dislike of encountering St. Austyn, or the opinion such a meeting must give the officers of his corps, depressed him; but both Frederic and himself declined the interference of captain Watson, who again offered

ferred it. The ground measured, both fired and missed; but justice pointed the stroke of the second fire, the ball of Berners' pistol grazing only St. Austyn's coat, while that of the latter lodged in his opponent's hip. The effusion of blood was excessive, and staggering a few paces, he fell; while Frederic, however exasperated, ran to assist him, calling aloud on captain Watson to procure help as speedily as possible.

Berners remaining insensible, and as they supposed dying, captain Watson drawing Frederic aside, desired him to provide for his safety.

"Go immediately," said he, "and send us the first persons you meet, to help to convey him to some place where he may have assistance; I will remain for the present, and in two or three hours meet you where you please, and let you know the event, that you may act accordingly."

St. Austyn accepted the offer, appointed a meeting-place, and had not passed the adjoining field before he met some labourers

bourers going to their morning work.—
“My honest fellows,” said he, “hasten on; in the next inclosure is a gentleman that needs assistance; his friends are with him, they will direct you what to do; and there is a couple of guineas for your loss of time.”

If the men had been inclined to hesitate, scruple, or question, the gold banished the inclination, and rushing forward, they soon found Berners, while St. Austyn reached town.

All the uneasiness that Frederic had before sustained appeared trifling to the present: for though he had imbibed the idea that a duel was merely a common occurrence, and frequently necessary in the annals of modern honour, yet taking away the life of a fellow-creature, though his greatest enemy, when he supposed it accomplished, overwhelmed him with concern and melancholy.

On reaching home he gave such orders as he deemed necessary for an immediate

removal, and calling on his solicitor, left him cash and drafts to satisfy his remaining debts; which business accomplished, he found it near the time he had appointed to meet captain Watson.

The gentleman's face was not the harbinger of good news; and to St. Austyn's question respecting Berners he replied—"He is alive, but how long he may remain so is uncertain; the surgeon apprehends the wound dangerous: we carried him to a house adjoining the road, and procured immediate help; I will however send some more eminent assistance from town. He insisted on hearing the surgeon's opinion, and though given with great caution, it appeared to make more impression than I should have expected from his general character. He afterwards remained silent for near a quarter of an hour, when he had another fainting fit; recovered from which by a cordial, he said—"I believe I am dying; notwithstanding what has happened, St. Austyn
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is a good fellow; do you not think, captain Watson, you could persuade him to come to me? I wish, in case of the worst, to see him.' I remonstrated against the impropriety of such a step, and briefly informed him, that I had advised you to go abroad immediately, until the event of his wound was known. For myself,' continued I, 'I am not much concerned, as I know security will be taken for my appearance; I hope however all will yet go well. He replied, that he had little doubt but his wound was mortal—' And in that case,' continued he, 'could wish to have seen St. Austyn, as I had a paper which I should prefer giving into his own hand.'

"Unhappy man!" interrupted Frederic, "I am resolved at all hazards to see him."

"It is unnecessary," returned captain Watson; "give me time, and you shall hear all. I pledged my word and honour that whatever was entrusted to me should be delivered safely; and after some reflec-

tion, and with apparent reluctance, he desired me to take charge of a paper which was in his pocketbook (and which he caused me to seal up before him) and deliver it to you. There it is—I now will bid you adieu; and if I can be of further service, command me.”

St. Austyn returned his thanks, and entreated captain Watson to write to him the state of Berners' wound.

“It is highly necessary,” said he, “that I should go into Yorkshire before I leave England—you will therefore favour me by a line. Should I live to return, I shall be proud of acknowledging my obligations to you.”

On the captain's taking leave, St. Austyn broke the seal of the paper he had left him, but found it a simple envelope to the promise written by Gertrude.—“Infatuated girl!” exclaimed he, “to stoop to such a clandestine step!—yet,” continued he, after a pause, “it is not for me to upbraid; she had no brother to protect her—

no brother whose honour set an example she could be anxious to imitate. Poor Gertrude! she doubtless thought it no crime to love her brother's friend. How just is my punishment in this retribution! I wished to betray Montgomery's sister, and the very instrument I made use of, has endeavoured to return the favour with mine. I shudder when I reflect on the precipice she has escaped; for surely, after what she has heard, she cannot hesitate to give him up for ever. Montgomery too knows all; is acquainted how completely I have been duped by the villain for whom I expended my fortune, hazarded my life, and attempted his. How bitter the reflections of the man who sins against his better judgment, and the warnings of that never-failing monitor, his conscience! Nature and understanding forbade me to esteem Berners, yet I persisted in my folly, and treated with disrespect the man, whom justice, love, and honour, ought to have led

me to seek a friendship with. Oh, Montgomery, how art thou avenged !”

His promise of calling on the colonel then recurred to his memory, and willing to send the paper he had obtained by a safe hand, he hastened thither ; first writing as follows, and inclosing it to Gertrude.

“ Since I wrote to you yesterday, I have made a discovery that has at once filled me with indignation and shame ; nor can I even now scarcely credit the evidence of my sight, when it presents the handwriting and signature of Gertrude St. Austyn to such an imprudent act. That I loved Berners, to my shame I confess it ; for I knew him a libertine, a gamester, and in every respect a dissolute character ; but I overlooked his vices, disguised as they were by the specious name of friend : I have paid for that security, and happy may you consider yourself, that the prudent

dent will of my mother preserved you from the same fate. Let it be a perpetual memento, for I will not even for a moment suppose that you can preserve the least particle of esteem for a wretch, who first drew you into such folly, and then exposed it to forward his unwarrantable purposes with another. Do not think me harsh; my heart has made a thousand allowances for your youth, inexperience, and situation; but where the happiness of a sister is at stake, I cannot forget, however I may palliate, particularly as I also in some measure think myself an accessory, by countenancing so improper an acquaintance.—Farewell! I entreat you to place a proper estimate on Mrs. Stanhope's friendship; her counsel will lead you to honour and happiness.

“F. ST. AUSTYN.”

“I should have been happy to see you before I leave the kingdom, but it is impossible. If, however, you have affection
B 5 enough

enough for me to write to Yorkshire, where I shall pass a few days, it will give me pleasure."

The colonel was much better than the day before; he was alone, nor did St. Austyn's visible uneasiness fail to strike him.

"What's the matter now?" exclaimed he, with his usual bluntness. "I saw you was plaguily in the dumps yesterday, but would not notice it; to-day it is yet worse—you look as mad as a March hare. If it is about your family, I pledge my word that all will go well—if on any other account, confide in me; I am not one of your sunshine fair-weather friends, but rough and bluff, and may serve in a storm where such gewgaws cannot shew their faces."

"My good sir," replied Frederic, "I know not how to express my thanks, though I have no immediate occasion to intrude further on you."

"Come, come," returned the colonel, "don't

“don’t treat me like a stranger. I’ll tell you a story, and, faith, a true one! When I was a young fellow, I was rather addicted to shaking my elbows at the hazard-table, and one evening lost a swinging sum; to apply to my father I knew was unavailing, for if he had the will, he had not the ability to assist me, it being before the death of an uncle, from whom we inherit our present fortune. What to do I knew not, and was at length obliged to mortgage my pay for a considerable time. Now, St. Austyn, I mean no offence—if this should be your case, you may as well borrow of me as of another. I have a large sum I wish to place at a peculiar interest, which I am convinced you are capable of paying; it is friendship with myself and nephew, and a conduct that will constitute the happiness of your family.”

“Great God!” exclaimed Frederic, “I cannot bear this; your kindness overpowers me—I have no necessities of the kind you allude to.”

“What, no debts of honour, St. Austyn? nay then, 'faith! I beg your pardon, you are a better fellow than I took you for.”

“I take shame to myself,” replied Frederic, “when I tell you I have had many such, but they are all discharged; and if I know my own heart, I will never contract another.”

“Well resolved; but though your debts of honour are all settled, excuse me, have you no *vulgar* debts, such as a man cannot help contracting, and that tradesmen will sometimes be pressing for?”

“None, sir; my tradesmen are the greater part of them paid; for the residue I have left money this morning with my solicitor: I can therefore only once more repeat my acknowledgments, and wish you all possible happiness; I shall leave London this night, and in all probability England in a few days.”

“The devil you will!” returned the colonel petulantly; “I believe you are bewitched:

bewitched: don't I tell you that I am convinced your aunt will be reconciled immediately? and now you are going off, just as it were to avoid her."

"I could not now, indeed," answered Frederic, "bear her presence; hereafter, should I be reinstated in her friendship, I will endeavour to merit the distinction."

"Pshaw!" returned the colonel, "don't be headstrong; I have set my heart on seeing you reconciled with Mrs. Stanhope, and in friendship with my nephew, who, in your present frame of mind, I am convinced will meet you more than half-way."

"I have no doubt of Mr. Montgomery's goodness, and entreat you, sir, to tell him, that I now consider it no dishonour to acknowledge my errors towards him—that he corrected a scoundrel I thank him, and that he humbled a fool was also well done."

"Zounds," said the colonel, "leave your metaphors and speak plain English—you have been working your head about some
vagary,

vagary, until, by my faith ! I believe you have turned your brain."

"That Berners is a scoundrel, I think you will hardly dispute," replied Frederic; "and that I am a fool, I have given undeniable evidence."

The colonel stared at him in silence.

"Yet a few words and I have done," continued St. Austyn, after a pause; "condescend once more to apologize for me to Miss Montgomery for the part I have acted, or rather that Berners acted for me. I erred against both my affection and judgment, in the offer he made her. Had she accepted my contrition—it was unfeigned—she might have saved me from destruction; yet what right had I to expect it? Did she not know my character, my pursuits, and connexions? I confess, therefore, I deserved her refusal. Yet," continued he, his voice almost stifled, "though I relinquish her for ever, may every blessing attend her—every happiness yourself and Montgomery! like the good Samaritan,

Samaritan, you would have poured oil into my wounds, but it has only added to my torment, as your friendship convinces me that rectitude might have made my life a heaven; while, on the contrary, folly and villany have made it even on earth a——”

St. Austyn, overpowered by his emotion, was leaving the room; but the colonel, whose heart was interested for him, caught him by the flap of the coat, exclaiming—“By my soul! you shall not go in this frame of mind. But what the plague have you got in your pocket?” grasping his coat between his hands. “Pistols by the feel. Oh! St. Austyn, is this the return to honour I flattered myself I saw in your every word and action? is it possible you could meditate so infernal a deed?”

St. Austyn at once conceived the colonel's mistake, and struggling to appear calm, he returned—“Unworthy as I am, I am not yet sunk so low as to have recourse to suicide; I have deserved what—
ever

ever evils have befallen me, and the least I can do is to endeavour to bear them like a man."

"Why then have you pistols in your pocket?" replied the colonel, fixing his eyes on him with scrutinizing attention.

"They are unloaded, sir," said Frederic, laying them on the table to convince him. The colonel, without compliment, tried them, and in replacing them, exclaimed—"Zounds, one of them is bloody! where the plague have you been this morning? I am convinced something more than usual is the matter."

"It is the blood of a villain then," returned St. Austyn, finding that he had no evasion; "though I sincerely lament that his punishment should come from me."

"Berners?" said the colonel.

"Berners," repeated St. Austyn.

"Hang the fellow!" returned the colonel—"I believe he was sent to you for a curse. His death will do no one harm, yet I had rather a cannon-ball had done him

him the favour: but come, I hope he is not mortally wounded, in which case the punishment may be efficacious."

"I fear he is," replied St. Austyn.

"Then what the devil do you do here?" asked the colonel; "though there is no danger of an acquittal, yet the intervening time had better be passed anywhere than in confinement."

"I informed you I meant to leave London to-night, sir."

"Lookye, St. Austyn, it is no time for compliments; I think you believe me your friend, and you shall not be deceived in the result. Be advised therefore; set off this evening for Blackwood—no one will expect to find you there. Montgomery will, I am convinced, receive you with friendship: I will write and send my servant express in half an hour, in which case he will be prepared for you, and Mrs. Stanhope need know nothing of the business till it is settled."

"Generous friend! till now how have
I mis-

"I misapplied that name!" replied St. Austyn, taking his hand; "whatever fate befalls me, the remembrance of your kindness shall dwell with me, but permit me to decline your offer. I mean to set out for Yorkshire this night, transact my business there, proceed from thence to Newcastle, take shipping in the first vessel that sails; immaterial to me is the port—like Cain, I have made myself a wanderer."

"Yes; but if I remember right," said the colonel, endeavouring to appear cheerful, "Cain killed his brother, a virtuous man—your simile therefore don't hold good. Berners was neither one nor the other, so that instead of wandering to the land of Nod, marrying a wife, and begetting sons and daughters, be advised by me—go to Blackwood. I answer for Albert's receiving you as my—nay, as *his* friend; and for the bugbears of women, you shall not be discomposed with them."

Notwithstanding all the colonel could urge, St. Austyn persisted in his plan; he
however

however promised, to write to him from Yorkshire.

“ I must trouble you with another letter for my sister,” said he, “ as mine of yesterday was merely an explanatory one, and written before I was apprised of what has occasioned this morning’s meeting. You will therefore favour me by saying nothing of the duel until the event be known.”

“ I will act in all, as I hope, for the best,” answered the colonel, shaking hands with him; and St. Austyn having, at his request, informed him where Berners lay, and also where captain Watson was to be found, they bade each other farewell.

St. Austyn returned to his attorney’s, where he had appointed his servant: in his way thither, his heart overflowed with gratitude to the colonel, whose natural goodness shone through the eccentricity of his character in every action. How the pistol had become bloody for some time posed him—but he at length recollected, that on running to assist Berners, he had
dropped

dropped it, and captain Watson afterwards, on leaving the ground, had presented it to him.

CHAPTER II.

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Promises obtained.

AFTER St. Austyn left the colonel, he began puzzling his mind, to devise what villany Frederic had discovered, that could so thoroughly awaken his vengeance against Berners.—“Poor fellow!” said he, “I did not like to question him; his wound is too recent to bear probing. He has, however, banished all my thoughts of leaving London, until I learn the issue of the affair. Should the rascal die, my knowledge of his former behaviour, and my interest, may be necessary to St. Austyn; and though his
affront

affront to my niece was abominably provoking, yet Mrs. Stanhope's nephew shall never want a friend in a just cause, while my name is Maurice O'Brien."

Marian soon after returned, and was not a little surprised to hear that the colonel's journey was again protracted, though she could not devise the reason.

On the following morning, at an early hour, the veteran went in pursuit of captain Watson, and had the satisfaction to hear, that the surgeon who attended Berners from town had extracted the ball, and given a more favourable opinion than the former, declaring the loss of blood he had sustained the greatest danger. He then questioned him respecting the quarrel, but of the cause Watson was nearly as ignorant as himself: he however informed him, that he thought it originated in some affront to Miss St. Austyn, but that he believed Berners had made what atonement he could in a paper he had carried from him to Frederic the morning before.

"Respecting

“Respecting his sister?” returned the colonel—“that I can hardly think; I should rather suppose it concerned himself, for neither Berners nor St. Austyn have seen her since her mother’s death.”

“Perhaps not,” answered Watson; “yet I am convinced I am right in the conjecture; St. Austyn, however misguided and imprudent, is a noble generous fellow.”

He then briefly related what he had heard from his brother the agent; and after conversing some time on the subject, they separated, the colonel promising to call on him the ensuing day, and giving him a friendly invitation to Blackwood.

For the space of a week the colonel inquired daily of Berners, and had the satisfaction to hear, at that period, that he was much better, and deemed nearly out of danger; desiring, therefore, captain Watson to give him information in case of any change, he, to the great joy of Marian, set out for Dorsetshire—Mrs. Mosely being to

to follow with Betsey as speedily as convenient.

In the mean time, ignorant of what had happened, Mrs. Stanhope and her niece passed their hours more pleasantly at the Vale. Montgomery's leisure time was also spent there, and by his liveliness and good humour, made his presence ever welcome; even Gertrude insensibly began to consider him with less diffidence; and though she could not remember, without a blush, his being informed of her imprudence, yet he treated her with so much true delicacy and respectful freedom, that it banished the restraint she had before felt in his presence. The company of the colonel and Marian was, however, wanting in all parties, and their return expected with impatience. At length, to their great satisfaction, one evening, as they sat at tea, the noise of the carriage announced them; and mutual congratulations having taken place, the long stay of the colonel became the subject of investigation.

“ Indeed,”

“ Indeed,” said Montgomery, “ if Marian had not written constantly, I should have been tempted to come to London myself; for two or three times I had my fears that you were ill.”

“ To confess the truth,” replied the colonel, “ I should not have been sorry to have had you with me, as you might have been useful.”

“ Useful, sir !” repeated Montgomery.

“ Yes, sir, useful; I owe my life to a young fellow whom I wished to make your friend; you likewise owe him some obligation, and I should have wished you to express your sense of it.”

“ Owe your life, sir !” replied Montgomery : “ for Heaven’s sake, explain ! you alarm us all ! Mrs. Stanhope, sir——”

“ I should be sorry to alarm Mrs. Stanhope, or any of you, but the simple truth is, that had not the humanity of a young fellow preserved me, I had been killed ; and as my will was then unsigned, the estate
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in Ireland would have gone out of the family."

"Ah, sir," said Marian, "how cruel have you been to conceal this from me! But how," continued she, her mind recurring to the meeting at the play, "came your life to be endangered?"

"Why, the truth is," returned he, "poor Vansitart and myself were so thirsty with fighting the battle of Minden, that we drank more wine than was quite proper, as I had to ride home. My horse threw me on my head; and though you may judge I was not materially hurt, yet I was so stunned, that had not this young fellow by chance rode up, and with some hazard stopped the horses, in all probability a waggon would have settled all my worldly concerns.

"Well might you say, sir," returned Albert affectionately, "that I owed him great obligation; nor will I be backward to express my gratitude, when you inform me where to meet with him."

“ But that is more than I can tell,” answered the colonel; “ the poor fellow is unfortunate and unhappy, and, by this time, I fancy, has left the kingdom.”

“ Ah, sir!” said Marian, “ this then was your headache; yet no one, that night you were last at Mr. Vansitart’s, came home with you.”

“ The young man accompanied me all the way from Kew, where it happened, to London; went with me to the lawyer’s, was one of the witnesses to my will, made me, in spite of myself, call at a surgeon’s, then attended me to my own door, where I wished him a good-night.”

“ Wished him a good-night, sir?” repeated Montgomery; “ surely he was entitled to somewhat more, particularly from Marian and myself.”

“ I have already said he was unhappy; he told me he was so from his own misconduct, and appeared deeply wounded with the reflection. Young and inexperienced, he has been deceived and pilaged;
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his friends, exasperated, have cast him off; and though he has now, as I have learned from very good authority, taken steps which every thinking mind must approve, yet must he become an exile from his country."

"My dear uncle," said Albert, warmly, "pardon me, but would he not have been an acquisition at Blackwood? He would have assisted me in the arrangements you mean to make. I am convinced that you do not want generosity, and you must have some reason not to have offered him that asylum."

"I did ask him," replied the colonel, "but he declined it. Poor fellow! I have seldom been more interested for any one, and know not but I should have forced him hither, but that I considered a man of broken spirits and fortune, severely reprimanding his former follies, and more ready to accuse himself than suffer others, would have been a dull companion."

"Is it possible, sir, that you could think

so despicably of me?" returned Montgomery. "Did I deserve it, I should detest myself. The man to whom I owe the life of my second parent, had he no other claim, would be entitled to my affection and gratitude. We would have endeavoured to heal his broken spirit, and by friendship have attached him to us, and reconciled him to himself."

"I think, colonel, with Mr. Montgomery," said Mrs. Stanhope, "you must have some stronger reason than you express, not to have at least introduced the young man among us, if only to have received our thanks. God forbid that we should judge harshly of our fellow-sinners, or refuse to stretch a hand towards the support of reviving rectitude. I can truly say, that he should neither have wanted my interest or countenance, if, as you represent, he deserved it."

"Indeed we all would have endeavoured to cheer him," said Gertrude, sighing. "I am sure I pity him from my heart: to
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be unhappy, and to be sensible of having deserved it, must redouble every pang."

"And I," said Marian, looking affectionately at her uncle, "would have forgotten all but that he preserved you; and possessed of that idea, I must have loved him."

"As I find all in the mind I could wish," said the colonel, "I shall claim the remembrance of your promises, when occasion may call on you to fulfil them. *St. Austyn* is the man to whom they are engaged—I own him my friend and preserver—he must also be the friend of Albert; nor do I doubt hereafter to see you, madam, acknowledge with pride your nephew."

This disclosure of the colonel's filled all with amazement; universal silence for a few minutes ensued; even the steady features of Mrs. Stanhope were marked with astonishment. Gertrude burst into tears, Marian trembled and turned pale, while,

on the contrary, a burning crimson tinged her brother's cheek.

"What, all mute?" said the colonel; "there is no retracting, however. St. Austyn is a noble fellow, and will, I am convinced, deserve all you have promised for him. You have mutually misunderstood each other; and if he has deviated a little more than Mr. *Joseph* here, why so have I; and I remember reading, that there is more joy over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety-and-nine who need no repentance."

"My good sir," replied Mrs. Stanhope, "though I believe you have made us all feel, yet your motive must excuse you: that Frederic has deserved your praise, you may readily believe, rejoices me; but, before I can give way to hope, tell me, has he forsaken Berners? for nothing permanent can be expected, unless that event has taken place."

"He has, and for ever! though I know not

not what rascality he has discovered : but, pardon me, I have letters for Miss St. Austyn, but was willing first to insure them a favourable reception."

So saying, he presented the letters he had received for Gertrude, whose emotion was so conspicuous, that Mrs. Stanhope desired her to withdraw.—“ Read your letters alone, my love,” said she ; “ I trust they are such as will give you pleasure, and, if so, some portion of it must communicate itself to me.”

Gertrude waited no second permission, but, rising, she said—“ My dear Marian, may I intrude on you ? My aunt will excuse it.”

Mrs. Stanhope, Montgomery, and the colonel, were no sooner alone than the latter gave an account of all that had passed between himself and St. Austyn ; nor did he omit the duel, or fail to represent, in the warmest terms, the information he had gained from captain Watson.—“ How the dispute originated I know not,” said he,

“but I am convinced that it only took place the day after his meeting me; for though he was then separated from Berners, he called him his friend, and spoke respectfully of him: Watson thinks he has said somewhat disrespectful of Miss St. Austyn.”

“I believe him vile enough,” replied Montgomery. “Mr. St. Austyn, I think, has acted properly; but if he has mentioned the meeting in his letter, I fear it may alarm her.”

“He told me,” returned the colonel, “that he had not. Berners, I doubt not, is out of danger; and could I have persuaded him to come for a time to Blackwood, I had been perfectly satisfied.”

“Heaven send that bad man may recover!” said Mrs. Stanhope: “God forbid that Frederic should occasion his death! and as to any pecuniary difficulties, we shall easily surmount them, if he deserves the character you have given, colonel.”

“He does deserve it, madam; but for
pecuniary

pecuniary difficulties, as I told you, they are all settled, though in that case I am not quite pleased with him; for, to confess the truth, I guessed him under such, and entreated him to let me be his sole creditor; but I might as well have moved the Monument—he would not accept that friendship from me.”

The colonel and Albert, after some farther conversation, bade Mrs. Stanhope good-night, leaving their compliments to Marian and Gertrude, who had not returned to the company.

They were no sooner gone than Mrs. Stanhope hastened to join the young ladies. Gertrude was sobbing on the bosom of Marian, who in vain attempted to comfort her.—“Ah, madam!” said she, addressing her aunt, “into what shame and perplexity has my folly plunged not only myself, but those most dear to me! Frederic, from his first letter, I am convinced, has never received either yours or mine; but from the second it is evident that he is

apprised of all. Favour me by reading both; and for that hateful paper, let it be burned—I shall never more look at my own signature without a blush.”

Mrs. Stanhope perused Frederic's letters with attention: the first was written affectionately, and contained the most solemn asseverations of never having received any news from Dorsetshire since the death of his mother, though he was now assured by the colonel that herself and Mrs. Stanhope had both written. He then mentioned Berners being in the army, and his own intention of going abroad; his seeing Miss Montgomery at the play, and his meeting with her uncle; concluding with his warmest wishes for the happiness of the whole party. Mrs. Stanhope then read the second letter.—“It is evident,” said she, as she concluded, “that Frederic was acquainted with Berners' duplicity, when this letter was written; if he has never received ours, I know not by what means, for in his first he appears a stranger to it, yet they

they are dated on two following days. Is it not possible he may have seen Miss Southern? That I think the most probable conjecture."

"I think it is," replied Marian, "for I recollect my uncle was anxious, almost even to obstinacy, to make me go out two mornings with Mrs. Mosely; he expected a gentleman, he said, on very particular business, and though I offered to remain in my apartment, it did not satisfy him; I therefore took a long airing both days. If the visitor was Mr. St. Austyn, it is more than probable he might see Miss Southern, in which case, I have little doubt, she would disclose all, as she strictly avers he did every thing in his power to save her; beside, she might think him already apprised of it from Miss St. Austyn."

"My nephew is at least now sensible what a serpent he has cherished; but I fear he has too long been accustomed to a life of dissipation to relinquish it easily:

but does he not say in his first letter he saw you at the play, Marian?"

Miss Montgomery related all that had passed at that interview, her reasons for concealing it from her uncle, lest any new dispute should arise, and finally she added—"Indeed he almost interested me at the beginning of his conversation; but when he casually mentioned having been engaged with Albert, I looked upon him with horror, and refused to hear a word more."

"I do not wonder at it," replied Mrs. Stanhope; "that meeting then, I have no doubt, was the secret we observed between the colonel and Mr. Montgomery, when they first came into the country."

"Doubtless it was. I recollect Mr. St. Austyn spoke honourably of my brother, and expressed his contrition for what had passed; but I was too much alarmed to suffer him to enter into particular explanations."

"Ah,

"Ah, madam," said Gertrude, suddenly recollecting, "Heaven preserve my dear brother! how was it possible he could obtain that writing from Berners? If my folly should cause them to quarrel, and either should fall, I must regard myself a murderer!"

"Your brother must have been some days in Yorkshire; and Berners, the colonel informed me, is in London," replied Mrs. Stanhope.

"Heaven keep them at a distance!" returned she; "immaterial to me is the way it was obtained, so both are safe."

"You shall now retire to rest," said Mrs. Stanhope; "we will talk further in the morning; but first burn the foolish paper that has caused so much uneasiness, and let us endeavour to lose the remembrance of it for ever."

"Ah, madam," said Gertrude, kissing her hand, and sinking on her knee before her, "disgraced as I am by my former folly, I will hereafter aspire to deserve your goodness;

goodness; then will I consider myself your child, for if ever I enjoy happiness, I shall owe it to you."

"I considered you as such from the moment I accepted the trust from my sister," returned Mrs. Stanhope, raising and tenderly saluting her; "all will, I hope, go well in future. Good-night, my children!" added she, affectionately; "calm your spirits, and retire to rest."

With these words she left them.—"My more than parent," exclaimed Gertrude, "God enable me to act conformably to your wishes!" then taking Marian's hand, she added—"How kind and considerate are you also! would to Heaven my poor Frederic had deserved you! but pity him, Marian, if you cannot do more."

"Indeed," said Marian, "I must confess I do not think it would be a very difficult task for a woman whose heart was disengaged, to grant to Mr. St. Austyn somewhat more than pity; for myself, I am out of the question, but will truly as-
sure

sure you, that if what the colonel says respecting him is true, not even yourself can enjoy more satisfaction than it will afford me, as I know it will contribute to our dear Mrs. Stanhope's happiness."

CHAPTER III

An Explanation—a Letter—a Dispute.

THE next morning the colonel and Montgomery in their morning's ride called at Mrs. Stanhope's, when that lady being alone, related to them what Marian had informed her respecting seeing Frederic at the play, and asked an explanation of the words that had escaped him concerning the duel.

Thus pressed, it was necessary to satisfy her curiosity; but Montgomery did so
with

with such cautious delicacy as considerably lessened Frederic's fault; even the colonel, however proud of the conduct of his nephew, remaining silent, lest a word should drop that might increase her displeasure towards him.

"I look to Heaven with thankfulness," said she, as he concluded, "that the affair ended so happily, and have no doubt but in this account Mr. Montgomery has generously palliated that unhappy young man's conduct. Could we have surmised the colonel's meeting with him, he should have had fuller information than he possessed, but I had no idea of its being of any utility: it however proves to me, that concealment from real friends is erroneous, as he might have entered into some explanations with Frederic more prudently than they perhaps have been done—but first tell me, colonel, did my nephew ever visit you at Mrs. Mosely's?"

"Twice, madam. With great difficulty I persuaded him to call; he did not wish

wish to see Marian, and I purposely sent her out of the way, as I have already told Albert."

"My suspicions are then confirmed; he doubtless saw Miss Southern, and she has discovered to him the treachery of Berners."

"Miss Southern's word is not to be trusted," answered Albert, "if she has acted thus."

"You judge harshly," replied Mrs. Stanhope; "it was not possible she could suppose Frederic a stranger to what had passed, as she related it to his sister. I would certainly much rather the information had come from the colonel, but it cannot now be remedied; you will therefore have the goodness to tell the whole you are acquainted with to your uncle—his friendship demands that confidence: but first let me inform you, that Frederic's letter contains that foolish paper that has given us some vexation, and was perhaps the

the cause of what has happened to Berners."

"I do not doubt it," answered Montgomery; "like my uncle, I think Mr. St. Austyn will yet prove himself a man of honour, and for that promise, the youth and inexperience of the giver will, to every candid mind, excuse it."

They soon after took their leave, and on their return home the colonel reminded Albert of what Mrs. Stanhope had desired, and he related what he knew respecting Berners' seduction of Miss Southern, and deceit to Gertrude.

"You have been plaguy private in the affair," said the colonel.

"I had no right to disclose the secrets of my friends, sir," answered he: "I myself almost wished to forget it."

"Do you think she is partial to that scoundrel?" asked the colonel.

"I should hope not: Mrs. Stanhope regards the whole as a piece of girlish folly,
in

in which the heart had no share—Marian thinks the same; for myself, I can form no judgment.”

“I am inclined to the same opinion,” replied the colonel; “but now answer me one question—had this silly business never intervened, could you have liked Miss St. Austyn?”

“No one can do otherwise,” answered Montgomery; “but while my heart is at peace, I shall be careful how I disturb its serenity.”

The colonel recollected the promise he had made Mrs. Stanhope, not to press his nephew to marriage; and therefore restrained the impatience that would otherwise have escaped him.

Some days after, as the colonel and Montgomery were alone, the servant brought in a letter for the former, with the postmark of Rippon.—“It is from St. Austyn,” exclaimed he; “read it, Albert, and learn to consider him as your friend.”

“I would willingly be such,” answered Montgomery,

Montgomery, breaking the seal, and reading as follows:—

“ MY DEAR SIR,

“ Determined to avail myself of the privilege you kindly allowed, I take the liberty, before I leave Yorkshire, of returning those thanks which I must ever feel I owe you. I have had the satisfaction of hearing that Berners is on the recovery, though in a very weak state—a piece of information that has not a little contributed towards calming the agitation of my spirits, which has been great enough to convince me how acutely I must have suffered had he been a more worthy character. By this same post I have written to my sister, but have avoided mentioning what has passed with Berners, leaving it at your discretion to act as you please, when he is out of danger.

“ I have been making my arrangements here for a long absence, and shall set out
to-morrow

to-morrow on my journey, in search of what I have never been able to find in the bustle of life—*peace*, though I have strong doubts of attaining it, unless I could procure a draught of the river Lethe. Do not, however, my dear sir, think that as I have no longer the means of continuing my follies, I relinquish them with reluctance, or that I am taking the opposite extreme, and becoming a misanthrope. For the first, I can truly say, I resign them with more satisfaction than I adopted them; and for the latter, there is no person in the world, not even Berners, who has most injured me, that I am half so displeased with as with myself. My present determination is the effect of reflection, and some small sparks of rectitude that remained unextinguished in my bosom. I will honestly confess I first conceived the thought in disgust, but the motive (strange as it may appear) was entirely dispersed by my fortunate meeting with you, as it destroyed an illusion that preyed upon my heart, and which totally, independent of Berners, embittered

bittered every hour of my life. The die was however cast, and though a number of circumstances might have endeared England and home to me, yet every principle of justice and honour prompted me to pursue the plan I had adopted; and making a strong effort, I punished myself, that I might be just.

“ My design is to travel three years; at the end of that period, should I survive, and my heart whisper that I merit the distinction, I will claim the name of friend, with which you honoured me; on the contrary, should I relapse, if possible, you shall never see me more.

“ With a mind ill at ease, and without company in a large mansion, you will forgive my egotism; and believe me, if ever my thoughts recur to any thing like pleasure, it fixes its seat near you. Farewell, my dear sir! my best wishes attend yourself and friends, and believe me,

“ Your sincerely obliged,

“ F. ST. AUSTYN.

“ I should

"I should be much favoured with a letter from you, addressed here. An old servant, to whom I shall constantly send my change of place and residence, will remit it to me."

"Well," said the colonel, as he concluded, "what think you now? Can you forgive what is past, and stretch out a hand toward a reconciliation with this poor fellow?"

"Willingly on my own account; but to confess the truth, he is pleasing enough to make me apprehensive for Marian, should he reside among us."

"Well, and what then? you are like the dog in the manger; you will neither marry yourself, nor suffer others. If Marian could like him, I don't know where she could do better, if his good disposition continues——"

"In that one word, *if*, you have spoken all my fears. Though I hope, and sincerely wish, his present temper may last, yet

yet my sister's happiness is too precious to be put to the hazard."

"Sir, it is as precious to me as to yourself. Do you think I would suffer any risk? No; I would be convinced of his reformation, and sooner than fail, he should serve as long for her as Jacob did for Rachel."

"But during the probation," answered Albert, "might not my sister's heart get entangled, which would be a serious evil if we found him undeserving?"

"Fourteen years," answered the colonel, "which was the term I mentioned, will make a considerable difference in St. Austyn—I speak feelingly—at six-and-thirty he may be nearly as tame as your wise worship is now at twenty-three."

"You are pleased to be merry, sir," returned Montgomery. "There are few families I should like to see Marian allied to so well as Mrs. Stanhope's; but I must be convinced of St. Austyn's total change of character before I can consent to it. Yet,"
continued

continued he, laughing, "I must own the time you named quite sufficient; and if the parties will consent, there can be no reasonable objection; and more I will truly confess, to keep them in countenance, that I would undergo the same probation to obtain a woman suited to my wishes."

"Zounds," replied the colonel, almost losing his temper, "then must she be made of ice and snow; for were you not my sister's son, I should swear you was a bastard, for you have not a grain of your father's spirit: if he had been such a stock as you, do you think he would ever have carried off your mother?"

"To hear you speak well of my father, sir," replied Montgomery, "gives me such heartfelt satisfaction, that say what you will of myself, I shall be able to bear it: nor would I forego the reflection of being the son of such parents, to have been born to a diadem."

"Perhaps not; but you could have spared *Old Surly* out of the family com-

pact—ay, Albert, come confess; do you not sometimes wish him at rest with his ancestors?”

“When you are pleased to explain who you mean by that appellation, sir,” answered Montgomery, “I shall be able to reply.”

“What, are you quite innocent of the business?—you never thought me an *Old Surly dog*.”

“That I have in some instances thought your temper warm, I candidly own; but I had a right to bear such trifles from the brother of my mother, even had he not raised me from poverty to affluence; but when he can consider me as a mean dissembler, affecting duty while I wish his death, it concerns my own veracity and honour to shew him his mistake, and that I would prefer the situation from which he raised me, to a dependence on one who could so grossly mistake my character, or wilfully insult my feelings.”

The colonel gave a loud whistle—

“Zooks,”

"Zooks," replied he, "did not you say this very moment, that if I spoke well of your father, I might say what I would of you; but you see your conceit carried you too far—you are not so much master of your temper as you thought for."

"But did I deserve such a surmise, sir?" asked Montgomery, gravely.

"Yes, sir, you did, for provoking me with your *fourteen years* probation; but your vanity surpasses all I ever saw. What the plague woman do you think would stay even fourteen months for you? Not that I want you to marry; it would be reversing the order of things—Nature has cut you out by the right, starched, *squeeze-crab* bachelor's pattern."

Montgomery laughed involuntarily.—
"I have not the vanity," replied he, "to think, instead of months, that any woman would wait, even fourteen days for me; and as to reversing the order of nature, far be it from me to attempt it: but as to the term, *squeeze-crab*, as I comprehend it,

it, it means penurious and sour, which at least I think I do not deserve."

"All old bachelors deserve it," answered the colonel: "yet that's a lie too—I am sour enough; but for penury, I defy even the devil to accuse me with it; you may therefore take after me in that particular."

Montgomery remained silent.

"Come, sir, confess that you are fairly taken in, and that you are not the man of moderation you would pass for."

"I should be sorry to pass for any thing I am not," said Montgomery.

"Well said, Mr. *Split-Text*—I see I must give up the contest, or you will put me in a passion again, and make me forget poor St. Austyn. Call for the horses, and let us ride to Mrs. Stanhope's, tell our news, and learn theirs."

CHAPTER IV.
~~~~~*Surmises—Friendly Palliations—and  
Letters.*

WHEN the colonel and his nephew were announced, they were shewn into Mrs. Stanhope's library, where she soon after joined them.

"My good friends," said she, "I was wishing to see you: Frederic has again written to his sister, and has also sent her some jewels and trinkets he promised her of her mother's."

The colonel then produced the letter, which Mrs. Stanhope having perused, she said—"Indeed, colonel, you have done far more with this unhappy young man than ever I could have expected; and

should his present disposition continue, I shall regard you as the means of his preservation."

"Then," replied he, "you would overrate my services, for his plan was fixed, Berners provided for, and, as I collected from captain Watson, all his carriages ordered for sale, before we saw each other. What he means by my destroying an illusion that embittered his life, I know not, unless he alludes to my informing him that it was very possible for him to regain your esteem, and that he had never forfeited the affection of his sister. Certain it is, his behaviour was gloomy and distant when we first met, but it soon wore off; he would not believe I was Marian's uncle, though by her account he saw us at the play together."

"I cannot think his unhappiness arose from either Gertrude or myself," answered Mrs. Stanhope; "I should rather guess he alludes to Miss Montgomery. As he was unacquainted with your affinity to her, and  
saw

saw you at the play, might he not surmise some nearer relationship?"

"I think it very possible," said Montgomery, smiling; "particularly as my uncle is more polite and attentive to his niece than uncles usually are."

The colonel laughed so immoderately, that for some minutes he was unable to reply; at length he said—"Now would I give fifty pounds to know, whether you have not hit the right nail on the head; for, egad, when I reflect on his behaviour, I think it was rank raving jealousy. Every sentence he uttered was either ushered in or concluded with Miss Montgomery or her uncle, until, like Albert, he put me in a passion that made me explain—Egad, he was almost as bad as Lissardo in the Wonder, whose mind was so impressed with the name of his mistress, that when he gave the partridges to the cook, he said, '*Roast me those Florellas*;' nor should I have been surprised to hear him exclaim, 'Miss Montgomery has lost her hat and  
D 4 wig;



wig;—oh, if this should be true, what a glorious hole have I got in his coat! he shall never hear the last of it, as long as I live.”

“I only speak at hazard,” returned Mrs. Stanhope, “as jealousy makes its possessors act in a very extraordinary manner.”

“I mean to invite him to pass a short time at Blackwood: *Joseph* here is rather afraid for his sister, therefore we must act upon the defensive, until we are convinced he is as demure as himself, though, for my own part, I do not fear he will relapse.”

“My good colonel, I honour at once the charity of your heart, and the prudence of your nephew; nor would I put Miss Montgomery’s peace to the hazard on any consideration. Frederic, in his person, is formed to please; but I am convinced mere outward advantages will never gain her heart; education, precept, and example, have raised her above such weakness.”

“Permit me, madam,” replied Albert, respectfully

respectfully kissing her hand, "to thank you for her, and also for your opinion of those revered parents who formed her mind in a manner deserving your approbation."

"My poor Gertrude," continued Mrs. Stanhope, "did not possess such an advantage; yet I have no doubt but I shall see her all my heart could wish; her brain was heated, and her mind empoisoned with the romantic pursuits she was continually imbibing; but her heart, I am convinced it was ever pure and innocent; had it not been so, she would not have acted with that openness and candour, when, throwing herself in my arms, she related Berners' treachery. Nay, the very avowal was sufficient to convince me that the whole affair originated in her romantic flights, and the carelessness of my sister; for though it was made with the utmost contrition, she neither spoke of Berners with the emotion of grief or warmth of anger, that are undoubted symptoms of affection. A request she has made me to befriend his unhappy victim, Miss Southern, corroborates this

idea; for, in her pity for the poor girl, she forgets how much her weakness was exposed by his shewing that childish promise. To say the truth, she is dreadfully humiliated by her brother's letter, but that time will wear off; and if Frederic answers my wishes, and the hope you give me, we shall yet be a family of peace."

The colonel coincided in opinion with Mrs. Stanhope, speaking highly of Gertrude; while, on the contrary, Montgomery looked through the window and remained silent. The conversation continued for some time, when Mrs. Stanhope informed them, that she meant to add a few lines to a letter Gertrude was writing, testifying her approbation of Frederic's present conduct.

"This amendment as yet is new," said she, "and we must cherish it; should it continue, I hope it will become habitual."

The colonel informed her, that he also should write to St. Austyn; and after a promise of dining at the Vale the ensuing day, they bade her farewell.

On his return home, the colonel sat down to perform his promise; his letter was characteristic of his disposition, at once humorous and replete with the goodness of his heart. He pressed Frederic to join them, and warmly congratulated him on his family being entirely reconciled to him. Montgomery entered as the colonel concluded his letter, and having at his request perused it, he said—"Have I your permission to add a few lines? I would wish St. Austyn to be convinced that I bear him no enmity."

"Do so," returned the colonel, "while in the meantime I take a turn in the garden to awaken me, for I am not fond of writing."

Montgomery immediately added to the letter as follows:—

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"SIR,

"I will not plead any excuse for adding a few lines to my uncle's letter;

for, as I never considered you in your calmer moments my enemy, I flatter myself you will readily believe that I never was yours. If your conduct was impetuous, mine was not calculated to appease; we therefore will mutually obliterate the past, and consider our acquaintance as commencing from your fortunate meeting with my uncle, who expects your visit with impatience: nor will you be less welcome to the man who will think himself honoured to be numbered among your friends.

“ALBERT MONTGOMERY.”

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The same post carried “St. Austyn” friendly letters from the Vale; that of Gertrude was contrite, yet cautiously accusing Berners, fearful of involving her brother in contention, yet finally assuring him that she had given up all acquaintance with so unworthy a man for ever. The addition of Mrs. Stanhope was more explicit,



explicit, as she was informed of all that had passed, palliating her niece's former conduct, and expressing her satisfaction with her present. Conjuring him to persevere in the path he had adopted, and assuring him, in that case, of her friendship—"I do not invite you at present to the Vale," added she; "the presence of Miss Montgomery would render it unpleasant to both parties; but you will not be less agreeably situated at Blackwood, where Gertrude and myself will frequently see you. To the colonel you owe much obligation, for his unwearied endeavours in your favour, and no less to his generous nephew, whose friendship you will do me pleasure, and yourself honour, by cultivating."

Though Frederic had proposed leaving England immediately, he lingered in the country for some days, in expectancy of a return to his letters, and at length received them, in kindness exceeding his most sanguine hopes; yet none so nearly touched him



him as the few lines from Montgomery, which he perused with an emotion which he could not restrain.—“Gracious Heaven!” exclaimed he, “is this the man whose life I sought, and whose sister I endeavoured to reduce to shame, that thus generously steps forth in the hour of my humiliation with pardon and offered friendship—the man that might perhaps have added, but for that accursed Berners, the name of brother to that of friend? Let me not reflect; the retrospection is too degrading for nature to suffer without anguish.—Never, never will I accept these invitations, till I am more satisfied with myself—till I can bear the presence of Montgomery, without shrinking at the comparison. Ah, in the meantime, Marian will be lost to me for ever; nay, she is lost, and all that remains is to bear with fortitude the inevitable consequences of my folly.”

As soon as St. Austyn could calm the agitation of his spirits, he wrote to Gertrude

trude with tenderness and brotherly kindness—to Mrs. Stanhope with contrition, but without servility—to the colonel with the warmth of friendship and gratitude; but to reply to Montgomery was a far more difficult task; frequently did he take up the pen, and as often lay it down, dashing away an intruding tear, that in spite of manhood forced its way.

“How much easier is it,” said he, “for Montgomery to offer pardon, than me to accept it! but away false pride and shame—I did not blush to offer him an injury, let me not blush to make the atonement.” Then snatching up the pen with a forced courage, he wrote as follows:—

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“SIR,

“Your conduct needs no excuse; palliatives are alone requisite for the offender—forgiveness to the injured: yet you do me but justice in the belief, that in my reasonable moments I never could  
be

be your enemy. You call my behaviour impetuous ; it was more—it was infatuation and madness, and deserved to the extent the punishment it received. For my meeting with colonel O'Bryen, it was indeed fortunate to me, and as such shall it ever be remembered, though I must at the present decline his invitation, for reasons which, if known, I flatter myself you would approve ; yet, if either himself or you would condescend to favour me sometimes with a letter, I candidly own it would not only add to my satisfaction, but enable me to submit to a three years banishment, which I have determined upon, as such a proof of confidence would, as it reconciled me to myself, flatter me that I might in time attain the greatest happiness I can now aspire to—the deserved permission of signing myself .

“ Your friend,

“ F. ST. AUSTYN.”

Those letters written, Frederic the ensuing morning took his farewell of the mansion-house, leaving orders with his old and faithful servant Jonathan, if any letters arrived, they should be remitted to him.

## CHAPTER V.

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### *Explanations—Delirium.*

ST. Austyn's letters, when received at the Vale, concluded what had been so happily begun by the colonel, making his entire peace with Mrs. Stanhope, who, as she became more interested for him, wished, with increased ardour, that he had accepted the colonel's invitation: even Montgomery's fears for his sister gave place to his feelings for Frederic; while Marian, as she spoke comfort to Gertrude, insensibly  
dropped

dropped a tear for his former deviation, or smiled in the expectancy of these hopes being realized, with which she wished to inspire his sister.

At length a letter arrived from captain Watson to the colonel, informing him, that Berners was so much recovered as to be able to take an airing. This intelligence resolved Mrs. Stanhope to inform Gertrude of all that had passed; which, though related with the greatest tenderness, her mind, already wounded, was unequal to bear, and for some days she was unable to leave her chamber.

“Merciful Heaven!” said she, “my dear Marian, should my imprudence have occasioned that bad man’s death, or what is yet more dreadful, had my brother fallen, where could I have concealed myself from the opprobrium that must justly have fallen upon me, or from what is yet worse, the pangs of my own conscience? The humanity of Mrs. Stanhope and yourself prompts

prompts you to speak kindly to me; but I feel you cannot esteem me. The colonel and your brother too, how despicable must I appear in their sight! never, Marian, dare I lift my conscious eye towards the latter; he is too perfect to make allowance for such unjustifiable errors."

"Indeed," replied Marian, "you wrong us all; every one esteems, every one loves you; and that no ill will accrue from this duel, I rejoice for the sake of both parties."

"For the safety of my dear Frederic, I return Heaven thanks," returned Gertrude; "and also for that of Berners, whose death by my means would have overcome me."

"I have no doubt you must have severely felt it," answered Marian; "yet I hope, after what has passed, no emotion beyond that of humanity would have actuated you."

"Do not humiliate me, Marian, by the supposition; could you bear to consider yourself



yourself the death of any one, however indifferent? and though Berners perhaps was not always totally so to me," continued she, blushing, "yet the sight of the most noisome reptile is not so repugnant to me as the remembrance. If I have any judgment of my own heart, a love of admiration, and the folly of having so handsome an admirer, first occasioned me to act so ridiculously: for even those emotions of kindness and anxiety which I feel in common for my aunt and yourself, your uncle and Mr. Montgomery, I never experienced for him: if he was present, I was undoubtedly pleased; but if he was absent, my heart felt no void: yet, when opportunity served, he bewildered my head with a rhapsody of romance, that made me in idea as great as any heroine I was ambitious to imitate." I tell you all my weakness, but do not despise me for it."

"Despise you!" replied she, throwing her arms around her; "Mrs. Stanhope is not more dear to me than yourself."

Some

Some days after this conversation, as Gertrude was slowly recovering the shock her spirits had received, Mr. Montgomery was seized with a fever, that gave the utmost alarm to both families; that of the Vale, in their anxiety for the sufferer, almost constantly residing by day at Blackwood, employed either in the care of Montgomery, or that of endeavouring to sooth the colonel, whose grief, though of the silent kind, refused consolation: that of Marian was not inferior, hanging over the sickbed of her brother, taking little nourishment and less rest; while Gertrude, regardless of her former fear and timidity, shared in the common uneasiness, dividing her attention with Marian's with equal sympathy, and almost equal anxiety.

Mrs. Stanhope, though scarcely less concerned, as Albert possessed her sincere friendship, had yet more command over her sorrow; and assuming a composure she was far from feeling, she endeavoured to  
inspire

inspire hope, or in case of that failing, fortitude to bear the dreaded loss.

What rendered the situation of Albert more distressing, was the paroxysms of delirium that accompanied the fever; at which periods Mrs. Stanhope was frequently obliged to use all her authority as well as persuasion to force Marian from his chamber. At other times, when exhausted, he was calm, his behaviour made them but the more sensible of the calamity which threatened them in the loss of so estimable a young man; even speaking comfort to the colonel and his sister, expressing his gratitude to Mrs. Stanhope and Gertrude, and assuring all his danger was not so great as their friendship suggested.

One day, in the height of the fever, as Marian and the colonel were in Montgomery's chamber, in vain pressing him to take a draught that had been prescribed, Gertrude entered with Mrs. Stanhope, who added her entreaties to those of his sister and uncle, but with as little success; for the

the delirium was high, and though at other times he had a respect for her almost bordering on veneration, yet his eyes now glared over her unheeded, and fixed on Gertrude with a wilkness at once piercing and expressive.—“Are you too,” at length said he, “come to assist in giving me poison?”

“It is not poison—it is a draught, which the physician has the greatest hopes of being serviceable,” answered Mrs. Stanhope; “oblige your friends therefore by taking it.”

“Do *you* wish me to drink poison?” added he, not heeding her, and still fixing his eyes on Gertrude.

“Speak to him, my love,” said Mrs. Stanhope; “as he addresses you particularly, you perhaps may persuade him.”

Gertrude took the cup, and approaching, said—“Will you not give us the satisfaction of drinking this? Indeed it is not disagreeable.”

“Not disagreeable!” repeated he; “well then,

then, give me your hand, and you shall see how well I can take poison when you request it."

Gertrude trembled universally, but reaching out her hand, he clasped it in one of his, and with the other took the cup, and smiling, in an instant drank the contents.

"There, are you satisfied now you have killed me? Go, I know your arts, *Circe*—it is the same potion you gave to Berners; but," added he, throwing her hand from him, "my heart is invulnerable—neither your beauty nor philtres can reach it."

Gertrude was oppressed almost to fainting; and Mrs. Stanhope, equally distressed for her, took her hand, and left the room.

"There," continued Albert, "the end accomplished, she is gone—I knew it would be so—I was aware of her artifices—she cannot make me a villain!"

"For Heaven's sake, my beloved Albert," said Marian, weeping, "do not say  
such



such cruel things—Gertrude is among the most innocent of human beings.”

“She is the sweetest girl in the world,” exclaimed the colonel; “and you, my dear nephew, if well, would be the last to insult her.”

“I insult her!” replied Albert; “you mistake—I could not insult her; but I will not love her—there you must excuse me.”

The colonel and Marian soothed him, and in a short time he fell asleep, when both went in search of Mrs. Stanhope and Gertrude: drawing her aside, Marian said—“My dearest friend, forgive my poor brother; in his senses he is incapable of offending you—do not add your displeasure to my sufferings.”

Gertrude embraced her—“What an unjust surmise!” answered she; “but indeed, my dear Marian, however anxious for his recovery, I cannot again enter his chamber.”

Notwithstanding this declaration, Gertrude



trude was under the necessity of breaking her word, for Montgomery being ordered to have the draught repeated, his delirium still remaining, absolutely refused, Mrs. Stanhope's entreaties being as much disregarded as those of his own family, his eyes glaring round the apartment, without fixing on any particular object.

"For the love of Heaven, madam, ask Miss St. Austyn to present it to him," said the colonel; "he did not refuse her this morning; perhaps she might be equally successful now. She is so good, she will forgive——"

Mrs. Stanhope was distressed to make the request, but entreated Gertrude to overcome the fear that oppressed her, and consider the dreadful state of mind under which Montgomery laboured.—"I do not apprehend," said she, "that your persuasions will have more weight than the rest; but as the good colonel thinks so, I wish you to satisfy him."

Gertrude immediately acquiesced, but  
felt

felt reluctance and dread on entering the chamber. Presenting the draught, she could not refrain her tears; which Montgomery perceiving, he gazed on her for a moment with fixed attention, then snatching the cup, drank the contents without uttering a word.

This conduct, though merely the consequence of delirium, gave the colonel suspicions of a different nature, which, however, he communicated to no one; but a few days after, Montgomery becoming more collected, he had the mortification to observe, that in Gertrude's visits with Mrs. Stanhope, he paid her no more attention than to either his sister or her aunt.

CHAPTER VI.  
\*\*\*\*\**Stability—a bad Shot.*

THOUGH the violence of Montgomery's illness had abated, yet its effects for some time remained sufficiently to alarm the sisterly tenderness of Marian, who on no account would leave Blackwood till he was perfectly recovered.

In the interval Mrs. Mosely with Betsey arrived, when the latter readily related, on being questioned by Mrs. Stanhope, all she had informed St. Austyn, though not a little shocked when she learned the consequence.

Gertrude, depressed on account of her brother, and wounded by the remembrance of the words that had escaped Albert in  
his

his delirium, felt a kind of reluctance in accompanying her aunt to Blackwood, and frequently excused herself, but usually, at the hour she returned, walked to meet her, and accompanied her home in the carriage. Mrs. Stanhope was perfectly aware of the cause, but trusting to time, in preference to persuasion, she left her to her choice. Marian was more affected, but knew not how to act: to disclose the reason to her brother was unavailing, as it was impossible for him to apologize without increasing Gertrude's confusion, as he might justly be supposed to be ignorant of what had passed in the height of his malady.

One evening that she had excused herself from attending Mrs. Stanhope, Montgomery being then nearly recovered, she took her book, and attended only by her dog, crossed the Park, where having waited some time without effect, she proceeded through a small copse that led to the high road, which she had nearly reached, when the dog barking violently, and, running

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among

among the bushes, attracted her attention. —“ Fido! Fido!” said she, sharply calling him, “ if you hunt the rabbits, I will beat you severely!”

“ Merciful to animals! how is it possible you can be inhuman to me?” exclaimed a man rushing from the inclosure, and placing himself across the path. “ At length, however, thank Heaven! it presents an opportunity to inform my beloved Gertrude how grossly she has been deceived respecting me—to assure her of my faith, receive hers, or perish at her feet!”

For a moment amazement fixed Gertrude motionless, the book dropped from her hand, and the name of Berners, incoherently uttered, alone escaped her.

“ You have not then forgot the man who adores you; you will hear him exculpate himself; you will not cast him off, without being certain that he does not deserve you.”

As he concluded he attempted to take her hand; but recovering her surprise, she hastily

hastily drew back, saying—"Begone, sir! it is worthy the rest of your character thus to bar my passage; no explanations are necessary—I am perfectly satisfied."

Thus speaking, she endeavoured to pass him; but detaining her, he answered—"Unjust and cruel! Do you then join to oppress me? I entreat, nay, I insist on being heard; you cannot be so totally changed, calmly to give up to despair the man who, in more happy days, you promised to bless with the name of husband."

"Hateful, detested remembrance!" exclaimed she, struggling with him to release herself: "If you have any thing to say, why not openly before my best friend, Mrs. Stanhope, instead of lurking like an assassin to betray the unwary?"

"Like an assassin!" repeated he, colouring with resentment.

"Yes, worse than the vilest assassin! Want may perhaps actuate them, but more despicable motives could alone influence you; therefore release me—I am not so



defenceless as you imagine; I momentarily expect my friends."

As she spoke, with a strong exertion she released her hand, and, with the loss of a piece of her muslin dress, fled as swiftly as Daphne from her pursuer.

Too greatly alarmed to mind which way she took, she ran forward, and turning from the copse into the high road, the first object that struck her, at some distance, was Montgomery, walking pensively along, his eyes fixed on the ground. Timidity, painful remembrance, and all she had ever felt at the sight of him, gave way to the terror of the present moment, and rushing to meet him, she clasped one of his arms with both hers.

The whole was too sudden for him to guess the motive of her alarm; but a moment after he had no cause for doubt, Berners pursuing her from the inclosure, but with an exclamation, started back at sight of Montgomery.

"Be composed, Miss St. Austyn," said  
Albert;

Albert; "I will protect you with my life."

"Do so then!" exclaimed Berners, with frenzied vehemence, drawing a pistol from his pocket; "infernal fiend! that for ever bars my passage, were it to cost a soul instead of a life, this to try if thou art invulnerable!"

As he spoke he fired, regardless of the situation of Montgomery, who was unable to use any precaution against his violence, being confined by the convulsive grasp of Gertrude.

A piercing scream, as the ball reached them, alarmed Albert; yet fearful of a repetition, he disengaged himself from the now-senseless Gertrude, and pursued the villain, who however plunged among the thickets, and soon evaded his search. The whole was but the business of a few minutes; and returning to the road, what was his alarm to find her, though recovering from insensibility, bathed in blood!

"Merciful Heaven!" he exclaimed, as

he raised her, "is it possible the ball should have hit you? I flattered myself it had passed us, and that your cry was but the effect of fear."

"God," replied she, "directed it where it had the most right to fall. Oh, Mr. Montgomery, had it struck you, how much more dreadful!"

"Struck me! Oh, I could have borne it! Would to Heaven it had! but why do I waste time? for pity's sake tell me where you are wounded. I fear your side; let no false delicacy withhold you; not my sister's life, honour, or happiness, are dearer to me than your own."

"I am not perhaps so dangerously hurt as you apprehend," said she, raising her sleeve somewhat above her elbow, and discovering a wound that filled Albert with terror; but struggling to appear calm, though he trembled as if in the paroxysm of an ague, he tore his neckcloth, and with that and his handkerchief succeeded in stopping the blood.—"And now," said he, tenderly,

tenderly, "I know not how to act; I dare not leave you to seek assistance, and the exertion of walking may be fatal."

"I apprehend no danger but that dreadful man's return, and conjure you to remain with me; we will walk slowly; I expect Mrs. Stanhope momentarily."

"Of him you need surely entertain no fear; he is uncertain of the event, and his first care will doubtless be to secure himself. But you are pale and fainting, and I can by no means relieve you."

"Seat me on the bank," said she—"I shall soon be better: but look behind you—who knows—Heaven forbid I should occasion you any injury! for myself it may be a proper expiation."

Overpowered, her head sunk on Montgomery's shoulder, and for some minutes she remained insensible. In a state of anguish not to be expressed he supported her, and chafed her temples, until she at length began to revive.

"Indeed I am very sick," said she;

“should I die, I own the justice of my punishment. Do not forget to be a friend to my poor brother; indeed we have both acted unpardonably.”

“Do not speak thus,” returned he—“you, I trust, have many happy years in store; and for Mr. St. Austyn, nothing shall be neglected on my part to gain his esteem. Would to Heaven our acquaintance had commenced at an earlier period, and not under such disadvantages as Marian and myself then laboured!”

“Then, perhaps, Marian had been my sister,” said Gertrude, innocently. “Oh, how happy would such an event have made me! Frederic, I am convinced, will yet act in a manner to deserve her; and if she could esteem him, you would not surely be his enemy?”

Gertrude’s weakness visibly increased, and overwhelmed Montgomery with alarm; yet to leave her was impossible, and he almost dreaded to see her die for want of assistance.

“Indeed,



"Indeed, Mr. Montgomery," said she, observing the uneasiness that marked his features, "you are too much alarmed; I am undoubtedly in pain, but even in your presence I have suffered far more than at this moment."

"In my presence!" returned he; "I never had the misfortune to see you in pain before."

"You form a very erroneous judgment then of what passed in my mind the morning we met at Mrs. Mosely's."

"I had forgotten it," returned he, confusedly; "why will you remember it?"

At that moment, to the great satisfaction of both parties, Mrs. Stanhope's carriage, though at some distance, appeared in sight.

"Meet my aunt, Mr. Montgomery," said Gertrude; "my presence in this situation might alarm her; tell her I am slightly wounded—it will be time enough for particulars when we reach home."

Albert would not leave her until the coach



coach was within the distance of a few yards, when stopping it, in as cautious a manner as possible, he informed Mrs. Stanhope of what had happened. Though alarmed, she endeavoured to conceal it; and Gertrude being helped into the carriage, Montgomery followed. On their reaching home, surgical assistance being procured, it was found that a ball had passed through her arm; but as the wound was merely in the flesh, no danger was apprehended. This information was a considerable relief to Mrs. Stanhope, and not less so to Albert.

“My niece,” said she, “as soon as the wound was dressed, dismissed the servants, and informed me, that Berners surprised her in the copse, as she was coming to meet me; he attempted to detain her—she fled; and had she not providentially met you, Heaven knows what might have been the consequence!”

“Indeed!” returned Albert—“I regard myself in great measure the cause of Miss  
St.

St. Austyn's misfortune—the blow was evidently intended for me. He doubtless meant by his thus privately stealing an opportunity to see her alone, to attempt to exculpate himself; for that even *he* could be villain enough premeditatedly to design her death, I cannot believe.”

“I think him vile enough for any act of desperation, but know not how to proceed: the servants think the wound received from a common robber, and I am loath to undeceive them, as the business could not be canvassed without entering into explanations I would wish to avoid; yet, to let such a wretch escape is imprudent, as my fears are equal for Gertrude and yourself.”

“Do not bestow a thought on me, I conjure you, madam; I am convinced he will not be forward to attack me; the affair of to-day appeared the effect of madness and disappointment; and as he must, I think, be certain of Miss St. Austyn's termination,

termination, perhaps may cease his persecution."

"We will consult the colonel to-morrow," replied Mrs. Stanhope. "I will now bid you good-night—my presence may be useful to Gertrude."

## CHAPTER VII.

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### *Explanation—Disappointment—and Departure.*

It remains now to account for Berners' sudden appearance before Gertrude, in little more than two months after his receiving his wound from Frederic, and from the consequent weakness arising from which he had scarcely recovered. It has been before observed, that the loss of blood

he had sustained was his greatest danger; but the ball removed, and a favourable opinion given by the surgeons, his spirits began to revive, and cursing the medical man that first attended him for a croaking blockhead, he bitterly regretted his own folly in giving up Gertrude's engagement. It is certain, death considered at a distance, and death considered as near, had totally a different aspect to Berners. In his hours of jollity and merriment, he had derided and scoffed at the idea; but when he heard the surgeon's decision, and felt a weakness he was unaccustomed to, his spirits failed, and he appeared willing to make what little restitution was in his power. Fortunately captain Watson was present at the moment, or in all probability he had never obtained it; for in the evening of the ensuing day, the remembrance of having resigned it vexed him so severely as to increase his fever; and he did not scruple to swear that advantage had

had been taken of his weakness to influence him to give it up.

Revenge was one of the most marking traits of his character, and as his health returned, he resolved to gratify it at any expence. He well knew Gertrude must be incensed against him; but such was the vanity that possessed him, and such the opinion he had of women, that he had no doubt, if he could once see her, that attacking her in her romantic flights, he could persuade her to believe what he pleased.—“In spite of them all,” said he, as he revolved on the subject, “she shall be mine. The pride of Mrs. Stanhope will at all events make ample provision. By my soul! the possession of the girl, handsome as she is, will not give me half the gratification, as triumphing over their paltry prudent schemes. If even, as I have sometimes suspected, she may have taken a whim for that accursed Montgomery, I cannot fear a rival so little calculated



culated to contend with me for a woman's favour."

With such ideas he waited impatiently until his health became sufficiently strengthened to enable him to go abroad; but as more money than he possessed was absolutely necessary to put his scheme in execution, he resolved to sell his commission; and that the more willingly, as he perceived (doubtless from the accounts they had received from Watson) that the officers of his corps treated him with a restrained and cold civility. His arrangements completed, he set off for the Vale, resolved to find some opportunity to see Gertrude alone, and by the dint of effrontery and falsehood, persuade her she had been deceived; and, finally to spare no pains to influence her to accompany him to Scotland.

For some time before his meeting with her, he had taken up his residence at a small public-house about three miles distant, and where he, to his great astonishment, learnt



learnt the present situation of Montgomery; which, added to the intimacy that was spoken of between his family and that at the Vale, could leave no doubt even in the breast of Berriers of their respectability and honour. The recollection of what had passed between himself and Albert, had ever been a barbed arrow in his heart, and now acquired redoubled poignancy, from the reflection that in all probability he was the primary cause of the change in Gertrude. Resolved however not to be easily foiled, he devised numberless schemes to speak to her; but all proved abortive, and he had watched in the environs of the park every evening for near a fortnight before that in which he unfortunately surprised her in the copse.

He had resolved to attack her in the strain he concluded most pleasing to her; but her changed manner convinced him he had nothing to expect either from her love, or that romantic folly he had formerly imposed upon. Stung with the contemptuous manner

manner in which she treated him, and driven even to frenzy by the unexpected presence of Montgomery, he did not hesitate to venture all for revenge; though, as Albert truly surmised, he had no design of that nature against Gertrude.

The direction of the ball, and the piercing cry that escaped her, however, made him conjecture what had happened; and giving way to the dread of the moment, he rushed into the copse, and without waiting to learn the event, returned to his inn, took post-horses, and with the utmost speed reached Southampton, from whence he embarked for Jersey, and from thence to France.

CHAPTER VIII.  
\*\*\*\*\**Female Secrets—Suspensions—Doubts—  
and Diffidence.*

ALBERT, on leaving Mrs. Stanhope, returned home, where, though he related what had passed in the most cautious manner, it could not fail to alarm his uncle and sister; the latter of whom, advanced as it was in the evening, set off for the Vale, insisting on taking her usual place in the same chamber with Gertrude; the gentlemen only making their inquiries, and returning immediately.

At an early hour the ensuing morning, the colonel proposed to send to inquire after Miss St. Austyn.

“I have already been there, sir,” replied  
Albert;

Albert; "she has passed a quiet night, and is free from fever."

"Thank God! thank God!" answered the colonel: "But, zooks, you have been even an earlier riser than usual! and if I may judge by your countenance, *you* have not passed a very quiet night."

"I did not," returned Montgomery—"the confusion of my mind broke my rest; but the ride to the Vale early has greatly relieved me."

"It was lucky," returned the colonel, "that you walked that way last night; though you was confounded complaisant, for you never mentioned your intention to either Marian or me."

"I did not know it myself; my spirits have not yet shaken off the effects of my illness, and I walked forward without scarcely knowing whither, insensible of all that surrounded me, till I saw Miss St. Austyn; nor should that scoundrel have had time for his infernal attempt, had not  
surprise

surprise for a moment deprived me of my recollection."

On a consultation held the following day with Mrs. Stanhope, it was resolved to make a strict though private search after Berners; but as he had taken the precaution to leave the country, it was unavailing.

In about a month Gertrude left her chamber, and had been able to quit it some days before, had not the remembrance of what had passed given her a kind of dread of the first meeting with the colonel and Albert. Mrs. Stanhope, however, seeing no real cause for a longer confinement, informed her she should not debar herself of her company in her amusements at home, or walks abroad.

On Gertrude's first meeting with the colonel and Albert, the former, with affectionate warmth, said—"Pardon me, madam, if I welcome your return among us in my old-fashioned way; I understand  
none

none of your far-fetched modern congratulations, and think an honest kiss worth a thousand of them."

The bluntness of the colonel, though it occasioned a momentary confusion, in some measure relieved her from more painful sensations, until he added, still holding her hand—"There's Albert now, I suppose, will begin to cheer up a little; for with a face as long as my leg, he has been but a sorry companion for this last month."

Gertrude's confusion, though great at this speech, was nearly equalled by that of Montgomery, who, after a short silence, replied—"I plead guilty to the charge, sir; for my spirits, exhausted by a long illness, were scarcely equal to the scene I was witness to; and I must ever take shame to myself, for being so poor a champion as to suffer a lady to be wounded, and I escape unhurt."

"We will omit that circumstance," replied Mrs. Stanhope, laughing, "when we write your adventures; and, *à-propos*, if

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you are not better engaged, you may as well pass the afternoon with us: I wish to talk to the colonel respecting Frederic. In the interim, if more agreeable, Marian and Gertrude may walk—you will be their escort; but I could wish them not to leave the park."

Some time after the ladies, accompanied by Montgomery, left them, the colonel had complained of his spirits, but he had now no symptoms of depression, and with Marian endeavoured by all possible means to enliven Gertrude, who, before they returned, was cheerful and more familiar with him than usual.

They found the colonel and Mrs. Stanhope conversing of Frederic, the uncertainty respecting whose situation gave her considerable uneasiness.

"I purpose going to town in a short time," said the veteran, "and will, during my stay, make every possible inquiry if any of his acquaintance are informed of his route: I can the more easily accomplish

plish this, as I know something of Watson: but in the meantime both Albert and myself will not neglect to write to him, addressed to his seat in Yorkshire."

"If he had no improper companion, I should suppose concealment unnecessary," answered the lady; "if he has, his amendment is a mere evasion."

The entrance of tea made the conversation universal; and after having passed a social evening, the party separated. As Marian and Gertrude were undressing, the former said—"I think I have made a discovery, my dear Gertrude, but know not whether to rejoice or grieve at it—you alone can set me at peace in that point."

"Disclose it then," replied she; "if your peace depends on me, I fancy you need not despair."

"Well then, honestly, and in sober sadness, I think Albert loves you."

"Loves me!—what a ridiculous idea! No, no, Marian, I am too much sunk in

his opinion, and too much lessened in my own, to inspire him with love."

"I am convinced my uncle thinks as I do; indeed, he first gave me the hint: Albert's behaviour in the fever gave rise to his suspicions, and his melancholy during your illness confirmed them."

"His behaviour during his fever rather proves how meanly he thinks of me. Did he not upbraid me with Berners? Indeed, Marian, if I thought he remembered it, I could not bear to see him; nay, as it is, his presence always gives me pain."

"Poor Albert!" said Marian.

"Rather say, poor Gertrude! I sometimes think that if I had acted more prudently, he might have esteemed me, for at all times he has treated me with kindness and attention; but love, Marian, I dare say, never entered his head; and for me, I give you my word I will never marry."

"Heigh-ho!" said Marian, laughing, "no more will I, while my present humour

mour holds; but I cannot say what change might take place, if a man formed to my liking was to put on his best looks and best behaviour, and ask me the question."

"And that man, my brother," said Gertrude: "oh, Marian, you cannot doubt he loves you?"

"Indeed, but I can, unless running away from me be a proof of love: has not my uncle, Mrs. Stanhope, and even Albert, joined to invite him into this country? and has he not declined it?"

"Do not think cheaply of him on that account, my dear Marian, until we learn his real motive, which is, I dare say, the contracted state of his finances. I do not think your brother would be his enemy, if he was found deserving, and I hope you would generously forget the past. With what satisfaction and pride should I acknowledge my sister!"

"Can you devise no other means of making me such?" replied Marian. "To confess the truth, I think Albert a man  
F 3 that

that any woman might pass her life with in tolerable comfort."

"What a word have you chosen!" said Gertrude. "I am convinced, if ever Mr. Montgomery marries, his wife will be more than *tolerably comfortable*, unless it is her own fault."

"And yet, were he to offer, you would refuse him?"

"From one simple cause, Marian; I do not deserve him: but believe me I never shall be put to the trial. Your brother merits a woman free from those follies that have disgraced me. I esteem him above all men; but I dare not venture to love him."

"I should not have said a word on the affair," returned Marian, "were I not convinced that Mrs. Stanhope esteems Albert; and that to see you his niece, would be the extent of the colonel's wishes."

"Why will you, my dear Marian, speak thus? I agree with you that such  
an





fortune will now be affluent, should he offer to share it with you, if you refuse him, I protest I will not only quarrel with you myself, but persuade the colonel to do the same."

"I fancy I may venture that risk," returned Gertrude; "your partiality for me, Marian, makes you too clear-sighted—you have kindly wished such an event until you believe it real."

"You would think as I do if you had the smallest grain of partiality for him," answered Marian; "but he is so indifferent to you, that you do not even notice it. I confess that he is not handsome, but——"

"Not handsome!" interrupted Gertrude; "he is the most elegant man I ever saw in my life; and if expressive features, fine eyes, hair, and teeth, do not constitute beauty, pray what does?"

"He is not fair," said Marian; "his features are not regular, and he is marked with the smallpox."

"Every one of those defects, as you ap-  
pear

pear to think them, are in my idea improvements to the whole. No, no, Marian, there is no fault to be found with his person any more than with his mind."

This conversation continued until they retired to bed, where Marian soon fell asleep; but she had awakened some thoughts in the breast of Gertrude that she could not immediately banish. A number of till then unnoticed circumstances arose to corroborate Marian's suspicions; but they were balanced by so many contrary ones, that she was forced to relinquish the idea.—"At least, if he does love me," said she, mentally, "he cannot respect me; and love without esteem is a poor ingredient toward happiness, and what his understanding will never stoop to acknowledge."

With such reflections she at length dropped asleep, weary with conjecture, and on the whole more satisfied with Montgomery than herself.

CHAPTER IX.  
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*A Secret discovered—a Female left to the  
Machinations of her own Heart.*

A DISCOURSE of somewhat the same nature had, in the meantime, taken place between the colonel and Albert after supper.

“Until this morning,” said the former, “whatever has passed, I always thought you a lad of spirit; but you have given me a convincing proof I was deceived.”

“I am sorry for it, but how it was possible I could forfeit that character this morning, is to me incomprehensible.”

“Why, by not following the good example I set you, in saluting Miss St. Austyn. I dare say the girl thought you a confounded fool!”

“The

"The liberty, in *you*, sir, might be permitted."

"Why Mrs. Stanhope, I am convinced, would have thought nothing about it. You are plaguy conscientious, to be sure, and let that reward you; but to stand like an Egyptian mummy, when you might without offence have given the girl a kiss, is behaviour beyond my comprehension."

"To salute Miss St. Austyn, sir," replied Albert, "is a freedom I should not choose to attempt, lest I should be justly repulsed."

"Repulse the devil! I had not patience at the time, nor can I think of it with any, to see a fellow, almost six feet high, stand gaping like a mute, and longing for a kiss he has not courage to take."

"Are you quite certain that was my situation, sir?" replied Albert, laughing.

"Yes, sir, quite positive. Look ye, Albert, it is no use to deny it—I forgive you all, if you will confess the truth; though that confirmation is not now necessary to

convince me that you love Gertrude; no prevarication—for once to the point, and own I am right.”

“You are peremptory, sir,” said Montgomery; “but, even granting you judge truly, what have I to hope?”

“All that fortune and beauty can bestow,” returned the colonel. “To the first you want no addition; bring the woman you can love, and leave the means to me; and should that woman be Gertrude St. Austyn, where can you employ her fortune better than in repairing the shattered one of her brother?”

“My generous uncle,” said Albert, “it would indeed be unpardonable to have any concealments from you; but, in this case, though perhaps your surmises are just, yet I have scarcely suffered myself to think of it.”

“Why not?” said the colonel; “if you love the girl, and respect her family, what would you have more?”

“Her

“ Her heart, sir ; without that, I am too capricious to be satisfied.”

“ Why,, zounds ! now you will put me in a passion. Would you have her come and make you the offer ? Could you have a stronger proof than her throwing herself into your arms when she fled from Berners ?”

“ It was, indeed, a proof of her confidence in me ; but would she not have acted the same, in her alarm, to any other person whom she might have chanced to meet ?”

“ At least,” said the colonel, “ it has entirely destroyed all idea of her retaining any partiality for that scoundrel.”

“ Perhaps it has ; but I dare not infer from thence that she can love me ; I will candidly own, that, assured as I am of your approbation, I should not despair of Mrs. Stanhope's. Miss St. Austyn, humiliated on account of Berners, and eager to shew her gratitude to her excellent aunt, might perhaps not refuse me ; nay, even her affection



fection for Marian might assist to influence her, and yet her heart never enter the compact. Pardon me, sir, I know you will think me romantic; but I must owe more to love than duty, though I would not accept the one unaccompanied by the other."

"There is my hand," said the colonel; "act as you please—I have no more to say. I don't think I shall ever quarrel with you again."

"And now, sir," said Albert, "as you have discovered the true state of my heart, will you add to your goodness by disclosing it to Mrs. Stanhope? if she thinks it improper, I will endeavour to relinquish the idea; if, on the contrary, she condescends to favour me, beg for the present the whole may be a secret from Miss St. Austyn and Marian: if I succeed, which I can scarcely hope, let me owe all to affection."

"And how many years do you think it may take to surmount all your doubts, fears,

fears, and the thousand *et-ceteras* they naturally beget?"

"Need I say, sir, I should be happy, if they were this instant satisfied."

"And while you are weighing every word, action, and look of the poor girl's, in a golden balance, what would you say if some fine spirited fellow should step in and snap her up?"

"I should congratulate myself on my hesitation, sir; I can never submit to be a secondary object with the woman I love."

"All this may be very clever, fine, and romantic; but, hang me if there is not more sense in two old-fashioned lines, that I will repeat, than in the whole farrago—

"Happy is the wooing  
That is not long a-doing."

However, take your own way, I shall not interfere further than you have commissioned me<sup>d</sup> for the present, I will only drink to your success in a bumper, and wish you pleasant dreams."

On

On the ensuing morning, at an early hour, the colonel rode to the Vale alone; finding the opportunity he desired, he disclosed the wishes of his nephew to Mrs. Stanhope, though not without some sharp expressions against his folly, in wishing to protract a declaration, and concealing his love for Gertrude.

“Indeed, my good friend,” replied Mrs. Stanhope, “Mr. Montgomery possesses a little more of the romantic in his disposition than I expected; though I cannot blame his wish of being assured of Gertrude’s affection, yet I know not how that discovery is to be made. I truly believe the thought of acting agreeably to my wishes would have great influence with her, and therefore the more readily enter into his opinion, for I will never, as I before observed, recommend any party; in a subject in which her happiness is so nearly concerned, she must choose for herself. Mr. Montgomery will therefore visit us with you as usual; he has my good wishes

wishes for his success; but if he gains her, it must be entirely by his own merit, without my interference."

Charmed with having carried his point, the colonel returned the most rapturous thanks to Mrs. Stanhope, saying, as he left her—"By my life, madam! if this event should fortunately take place, I shall be the happiest old fellow in England; you know how anxiously I have wished to see him married, and like a good lad, he has fixed his heart just where I could have wished it."

After the colonel's departure, Mrs. Stanhope remained for some time reflecting on what had passed: she had made the same observation respecting Albert's behaviour as the colonel, though she had never ventured the most distant hint concerning it.

These reflections were broken upon by the entrance of Gertrude and Marian, when, after a short conversation, observing the spirits of the former, were better than usual, she said—"I am rejoiced, my dear Gertrude,

Gertrude, to see you regain a cheerfulness that will add not only to my happiness, but your own. You also, Miss Montgomery, though never subject to depression, appear more lively than common; if not intruding, may I ask what has interested you this morning?"

"Nothing, madam," replied Marian, laughing, "except that I have been engaged in a very deep debate with Miss St. Austyn respecting matrimony."

"Matrimony!" repeated Mrs. Stanhope, surmising they had seen the colonel, "and pray what was the result of your deliberation?"

"That Miss St. Austyn has made, I will not say a vow, but a promise of celibacy; while, on the contrary, I dare make no protestations, lest I should break them."

"It is indeed the most prudent method. I well remember, at somewhat more than Gertrude's age, making a similar resolution, but am a living proof of the versatility of such declarations."

"Had

"Had not the gentleman who occasioned such a change deserved it, I am convinced my aunt never would have selected him; the promise was therefore more honoured in the breach than the observance."

"I thank you, my love, for that compliment to my dear Mr. Stanhope's memory: it indeed deserves a tribute that I have not words to express, but engraven on the tablet of my heart, its characters are indelible. Nay, never look serious, my good girls; to see you cheerful and happy makes me so: therefore, if no infringement on your mutual confidence, tell me from what your conversation arose."

"From some observations both my uncle and myself have made respecting Albert—I communicated them to Miss St. Austyn, as the person principally concerned, but she absolutely refuses to believe a word of the matter."

"Indeed, my dear madam, this wild  
girl



girl has made me feel so ridiculously, that I shall be ashamed to meet either Mr. Montgomery or the colonel."

"That, my love, would be an unpardonable weakness, and only a tacit declaration of your having heard such a report. Marian, notwithstanding her gaiety, is sincerely your friend, and I am convinced would not express a thought to wilfully give you pain. The colonel's suspicions, doubtless, arise merely from his wish to see his nephew married; and those of Marian, from the partiality she entertains for you."

"Yet, madam, of all men to suspect Mr. Montgomery should be attached to me, when he is acquainted with my errors, is surpassing belief."

"Really," replied Mrs. Stanhope, "I can form no opinion in so uncertain a business, and only entreat you not to appear conscious of having heard it, as it would be a mutual restraint on both Mr. Montgomery and yourself."

"But

“But if it should be so, my dear madam, would you not condescend to be my poor Albert’s friend?”

“I can never be otherwise in what concerns himself, but supposing it as you imagine in respect to Gertrude, she alone must decide: Mr. Montgomery is, doubtless, an amiable young man, but it is very possible she may meet with some other more calculated to please her; his expectancies are also as great as prudence could require, but I have already told her, fortune is to be thrown out of the scale; with a man her reason and heart can approve, we have more than sufficient for happiness, though not for the idle pageantry of magnificence.”

“Oh, madam,” said Gertrude, “if ever it is necessary that I should marry, the man whom you approve shall be my choice. I have judged once erroneously, and dare not hazard another trial: but it is time enough to talk of such subjects; even you, my dear aunt, was, I think, you told me  
in

your twenty-third year when you married Mr. Stanhope."

"I was, but we were old acquaintance, and it had long been my fixed resolution, if ever I married, he should be my choice; but some family disputes protracted our union until the period I mentioned."

"Pardon me, madam," answered Gertrude, "though I never heard the subject but slightly named, yet I believe it was not quite agreeable to your parents."

"You are perfectly right; and as I dare say you have some little curiosity, bring your work into the music-room, and to the best of my remembrance I will relate to you the principal events of my life."

Marian and Gertrude entreated they might not trouble her to recall subjects, the remembrance of which time had softened; but waving their excuses, they were no sooner seated than she began her narrative.

CHAPTER X.  
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Mrs. Stanhope's Narrative—an eccentric Character, or Nature before Education.

"I MUST begin by informing you, that in my infancy, possessed of a strong constitution and excellent spirits, I was not one of the most tractable characters. My father used to declare, ten times a-day, that nature meant me for a boy, and as frequently my mother was shocked almost to fainting at my robustness; add to this, as I increased in years, an inclination to ridicule, and a warmth of temper which nothing could restrain, at the idea of insult offered either to myself, or others. In short, I was a sort of universal champion to

to all those I considered dependent, not only of human creatures, but animals; undauntedly braving anger, and even punishment, where I thought I was acting consistently with my notions of equity.

“Your mother’s temper, Gertrude, was more feminine, and education had increased it in some instances to almost weakness. In the winter it was necessary to know which way the wind blew before she went out; and in summer, the cool of the morning, or after sun-set, was the only time she was permitted to walk; while, on the contrary, the freezing wind or scorching sun was equal to me; nothing but absolutely locking me in my apartment could restrain me: notwithstanding this disposition, a love of books, and an ambition to cultivate some of the fine arts, were my chief delight and study.

“My father, second son to an earl, and my mother of equal rank, family pride was among our other household foibles, and to which my sister conformed with a
much

much better grace than myself; and I can well recollect being severely punished when about the age of ten, for an offence offered the family arms of my grandfather. My mother had formed the design of having them embroidered on satin, and the task being assigned me, I was by no means pleased, as needlework was not among the number of my favourite amusements. One day that I was embroidering, my sister, who was two years younger than myself, asked me, among a number of other questions, ‘how my grandfather came to have griffins for supporters?’ Tired with work, I answered, ‘that he had slain two of those monsters in delivering a beautiful princess from the enchantment of a dreadful giant, for which valiant deed he had been allowed to bear them on his escutcheon.’—Some more information equally ridiculous completed the business; and having greatly interested Maria, who was distractedly fond of fairy tales, she lost no time in requesting my mother to relate the

whole of this wonderful adventure. The conclusion was, however, reserved for me: the falsehood I had used, and which alone ought to have been my accusation, was never mentioned, but entirely forgotten in the heinous crime of ridiculing the family monsters. To expiate this, I was sentenced to a fortnight's confinement in my own chamber, debarred of the company of my sister, whom I tenderly loved, and to complete the unfortunate arms that had occasioned my punishment.

“ I mention this affair, particularly as it was productive of one far more agreeable. I had been near a fortnight confined, when one day I was informed my grandfather was arrived; and though I had before shewn no signs of contrition, I now felt not perfectly easy. After some time the good old man entered my apartment alone, and with his usual cheerfulness, said—
‘ Well, fair damsel, I have conquered the griffins, slain the giant, and am come to set you free: but I must first premise you
offend

offend no more; if your mother is attached to the family honours, at least *you* ought to respect them.'

"Had he spoken harshly, I should have borne it with the same unbending spirit I had before shewn; but I was not proof against kindness, and throwing myself at his feet, I sobbed aloud.—'Come, come,' said he, 'be comforted; no gallant champion is able to withstand a lady's tears; I have succeeded in obtaining your release, and shall bear you with me to my enchanted castle in Yorkshire.'

"I must here digress to inform Marian, who is unacquainted with our family connexions, that lord Derwin was my relation on the father's side. He was noble without pride, pious without austerity, and charitable without ostentation. I was confessedly his favourite, and I believe from no other motive, than that he thought me too little considered at home. My peace obtained, I found lord Derwin had en-

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treated

treated that I might accompany him to his seat, where he meant to pass the winter—an arrangement that gave me the highest pleasure, though it cost me some tears to part with my family. My heart was naturally affectionate, and if I loved my grandfather before, as we became more acquainted, that sentiment amounted to veneration. The eccentricity and rudeness which my parents complained of, were to him perpetual sources of amusement and gratification, and as far as the pursuits of a man of seventy, and those of a girl of ten, could assimilate, ours were perfectly in unison: in short, the winter was passed so much to the satisfaction of both, that the idea of parting was mutually disagreeable. Never had I experienced the pleasure of being beloved, and the sentiment I had before been unacquainted with, was now become a necessity; neither did my education suffer by the change, as my grandfather made it his employment to superintend

intend the whole of the instructions I received, and that were far better regulated than at home.

“ At length the dreaded spring arrived, and I accompanied lord Derwin on a visit to my parents, where, not to weary you with a tedious detail, he managed so well that I was suffered to return with him, and prolong my stay to what period he thought proper.

“ For eight years I was as happy as a heart could wish, where every proper desire was gratified, and every improper one combated with a strength of judgment that convinced my reason of the necessity of relinquishing it.

“ During this interval, my maternal grandmother, who had been a widow some years, with unpardonable weakness, degraded herself by marrying a domestic—an event so dreadful to the feelings of my mother, that it had nearly distracted her: on this occasion my grandfather did not

fail to demonstrate to me in the strongest terms the necessity of my observing the utmost delicacy respecting my mother's family.—‘Such an event,’ said he, ‘is dreadfully humiliating to the feelings of any relative, but more particularly so to a daughter, whose attachment to the honour and antiquity of her family is so rooted as is that of your mother; you will therefore, my dear girl, be cautious in this respect. Family pride undoubtedly is a foible, but frequently it is a harmless one; nay, in some cases it may be useful, as where it acts as an incentive on its votaries to emulate any of their predecessors, who were once distinguished for praiseworthy deeds.’

“Some time after, I had the grief to see my venerable parent decline; his estate at his decease devolved to his eldest son, and my father, who completed his family, had been already provided for: he therefore resolved to make some provision for me, but

but in this case his intentions were frustrated; his death was sudden, and his will, though in my favour, unsigned.

“To relate to you my grief at this event, would be foreign to the purpose; it was in truth very severe, nor was the reception I met with at home calculated to sooth it. I never was a favourite, and my long absence had perhaps made me less so than I might otherwise have been. Accustomed to love, and to be equally beloved, my heart felt an uneasy void; my father was distant and severe; my mother’s pursuits were totally different to what I had been used to or approved of; and what grieved me, if possible, worse than the rest, my sister had been taught to consider me as a girl of masculine and boisterous manners, whom she must by no means imitate; to complete all, an ignorant, assuming, provincial French woman was engaged as our governess, whose instructions I was daily necessitated to receive, though I certainly

knew the grammatical construction of her language far better than herself.

“ My disposition for ridicule, which had never appeared while I was with my grandfather, now again was predominant; and though from his cautions, which I held almost sacred, I was very careful in respect to whatever concerned my parents, yet the ill-humour of mademoiselle made me consider her ignorance as fair game.

“ From this sketch you may conclude that I was not very happily situated at home; but that same unbending spirit that never failed to rise in proportion as I considered myself injured, bore me with seeming unconcern through every vexation; not but that I suffered severely when alone, and looked back with regret to those days I had passed with such happiness in Yorkshire. I had also an energy in my disposition, that materially contributed to banish unpleasant reflections; I redoubled my assiduity in my studies, and
thus,

thus, by employing my mind in other pursuits, had the less time to reflect on uneasy subjects.

“ After being at home two years, as I was one day walking alone beyond the limits of my father’s park, I was struck with a disagreeable and dissonant shrieking, which, on advancing, I found to proceed from a pig, that had, in endeavouring to get through a gate, so strongly confined its head between the bars, as to be unable to extricate itself. Resolved to release the suffering animal, I exerted my utmost strength, but in vain, and I received a severe bite: not, however, of a disposition to yield any point calmly I had resolved upon, I continued my endeavours; when a stranger on horseback rode up, and uttering some exclamation of surprise, dismounted, and, more adroit than myself, speedily performed what I had attempted. Though I had bound up my arm with my handkerchief, yet that it was hurt was sufficiently visible, and the stranger in consequence

quence expressed some concern; but I treated it so lightly that he could not suppose it very material, and leading his horse, he entered into a lively conversation with me, respecting the whimsicality of the situation in which he had found me, until reaching the park-gate, I wished him a good evening.—‘If I dare venture a surmise from your entrance here, I have the pleasure of addressing a daughter of Mr. Morton’s,’ said he, bowing: ‘May I be permitted the honour of inquiring after your wound to-morrow? My name is Stanhope, my father has lately purchased the estate of the Grange in this neighbourhood.’—‘You will oblige me,’ answered I, ‘by thinking no more of such a silly business; my arm, I have no doubt, will be well in a few days; I can therefore only again express my thanks, and wish you a pleasant ride.’

“With those words I entered the park, and, shutting the gate, prevented all further conversation. Notwithstanding I had affected an air of unconcern, I really suffered

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ed great pain, and on my arrival at home, the surgeon declared the wound dangerous; and so, I suppose it might be, for it was nearly three months before it was completely healed: add to which, I was perpetually entertained with dissertations on the impropriety and indelicacy of my conduct. As I had no occasion to conceal my meeting with Mr. Stanhope, he did not fail of being, in some measure, involved in my disgrace.—‘That he should stoop to so improper and filthy an act,’ my mother said, ‘did not in truth so much surprise her, as she had heard that his father was only a merchant, who, though he was rich, had acquired it entirely by commerce; as that her daughter, the grandchild of two earls, should act in so derogatory and ridiculous a manner.’

“Notwithstanding the humble idea our family entertained of that of the Stanhopes, they were universally respected throughout the county; from their gate the shivering stranger never went unrelieved; number-

less were the praiseworthy actions that were constantly attributed to them; and that more particularly fell in their way, as the senior Mr. Stanhope had lately been appointed to the commission of the peace.

“About this period, the earl of Seaton, who was also a neighbour, waited on my father, to request his interest in an ensuing election for his brother, and being invited to dinner, passed the day with us, when I had, as it was termed, the amazing good fortune to please him. Indeed, I do not wonder it was thought so; he was just come to his estate, had scarcely reached his twenty-third year, was handsome, accomplished, and of a lively disposition; and to complete all, made the most liberal offers should I accept him. Disagreeably situated at home, my heart free from any engagement, I felt no great dislike to this proposal, and he was admitted, my suitor in due form, though I stipulated, with an obstinacy that neither my father nor mother could conquer, that I would be allowed

lowed at least six months before I returned a decisive answer."

The entrance of the servant to inform them that dinner was ready, here broke on the story; but the meal was no sooner over, than the young ladies entreated Mrs. Stanhope to resume her narrative.

CHAPTER XI.

*The Narrative continued—A great Man
and a poor Man contrasted.*

"A LOVER of such rank and quality as the earl of Seaton appeared to give me a consequence with my family, that I had never before enjoyed; and, pleased to be beloved without seeking too minutely into the cause, I became the more willing to oblige, and, as I saw it pleased my parents, received

received lord Seaton as the man I was to pass my future life with. Five months had already elapsed, and I felt no inclination to falsify the hopes my family entertained, when one evening strolling through the village, as was my usual custom, I met the wife of a labourer, whose husband had some years before been a reputable farmer, but falling into unavoidable misfortunes, had reduced him to his present indigence; though he was reputed by all that knew him to be strictly honest and industrious. As I had done her some trifling acts of kindness, she dropped me a curtsey, and two rosy boys, who accompanied her, bowed as they passed.—‘ You are loaded, Martha,’ said I, observing she was carrying some small articles of household furniture; ‘ you are not moving, surely? If I don’t mistake, your cottage is on lord Seaton’s estate?’—‘ We were, my lord’s tenants, sure enough, Miss,’ answered she, hanging down her head; ‘ but we are unfortunate, and so we are going to live in one.

one of Mr. Stanhope's cottages on the Grange.'—'But will you be more fortunate there,' said I, 'than under lord Seaton? I rather think the contrary.'—'I don't know, Miss; we were obliged to move; we owed a year's rent.'—'You would have acted with more propriety by remaining until you could discharge the debt. Lord Seaton, I am convinced, would have allowed you time.'

"The woman, with some hesitation, that convinced me all was not right, gave me an evasive answer; and, surmising that I had before formed an erroneous opinion of her honesty, I was on the point of turning from her, when the village butcher passed us, driving a ewe and lamb before him. The children instantaneously began crying bitterly, and running to the sheep, who appeared perfectly acquainted with them, threw their arms around their necks, exclaiming—'Oh, mammy, poor old Sue and little Billy are a-going to the slaughter-house! Oh, how cruel to take them from us!'

us! How wicked to kill them!"—"And who has taken them from you, my poor boys?" said I, interested by the children's distress.—"Lord Seaton's great, ugly, scolding steward," answered the youngest, unmindful of his mother, who bid him hold his tongue.—"What is the price of this ewe and lamb?" said I to the butcher, who had been necessitated to stop by the children detaining the sheep.—"Thirty shillings, an' please you," replied the man. "I was sorry to buy dame's beasts, but I might as well have the bargain as another."

"I drew out my purse, paid the demanded sum, and the butcher with thanks pursued his way.—"There," said I to the little boys, "take Sue and Bill, and be as happy as they can make you: but I must know the whole of this business," turning to their mother; "why did you not apply to lord Seaton? He, I am convinced, would not have suffered you to be distressed."—"Ah, Miss, pray do not question me: indeed, indeed, I dare not tell you."

—"Not

—‘Not tell me!’ replied I with increased curiosity; ‘I am sorry, Martha, you have acted in a manner that you are ashamed to acknowledge.’—‘Oh, no, Miss, indeed I have done no harm; but everybody says you are to be lady Seaton; and so, madam, I can’t tell you.’—‘Ridiculous! if I am to be lady Seaton, I shall have it more in my power to assist the deserving; and again desire, except you are ashamed of your conduct, that you would inform me of the whole.’

“The woman still hesitated; by her looking at the boys, I imagined they were a restraint, and therefore added, ‘What you have in your hand is not apparently heavy; give it to the children, and remain a short time with me.’

“Martha obeyed, though with visible reluctance; and the children, followed by the ewe and the lamb, immediately left us; the whole party in such apparent unison, that it would have been difficult to determine, which enjoyed the most satisfaction.

tisfaction.—‘ Now, Martha,’ said I, ‘ we will cross the fields, as there we shall not be interrupted ; tell me the truth, and depend upon my interesting myself for you.’ —‘ Ah, Miss, I have not forgot when my poor children lay ill of the smallpox, how you——’

“ I was out of patience, and rather peevishly interrupted her, saying—‘ Either confine yourself to what I request, or leave me.’—‘ Pray don’t be angry ; indeed you will never forgive us ; but if I could have guessed what was to happen, Sally should never have gone to my lord’s : for though she was poor, she was honest, and it never entered my head that a great gentleman would demean himself with such as she.’

“ If my curiosity was before excited, you may judge that it was considerably heightened by this speech ; but with as much calmness as I could assume, I answered, that I hoped she was mistaken ; but even supposing it as she said, she must think me very unjust to condemn her for
what

what she could neither foresee nor prevent; and that, on the contrary, she should find me ready to do her all the service in my power.—‘God bless you, Miss!’ answered she, ‘you was always good, and I will tell you the whole truth.—About seven months ago, one morning as my lord was returning from hunting, his horse fell suddenly lame, and being before the rest of the huntsmen, and unwilling to ride him home, he rapped at our door with his whip, to ask for somebody to lead him to the great Hall. Sally opened the door, when my lord condescended to come in, and sent one of my lads forward with the horse. He said our house was very comfortable, that he liked to encourage industry, gave me a guinea, and asked how many children I had. On my saying I had six, he answered—; How old is this pretty lass?’ pointing to Sally; ‘she is surely of an age to provide for herself?’—When I told him she was seventeen last Lammas, he seemed to consider a moment,

ment, and then said—‘Send her to the Hall—I will speak to my housekeeper, who will find her some employment.’—You may suppose, Miss, that we thought this a great honour, as we never dreamed of harm, and I thanked my lord a hundred times, and blessed the day he ever came under our roof. So, ma’am, I made Sally as tight as I could, and in about a week she went to the Hall, as blithe and happy as a bird. For about a month she used to come every evening to see us; but after that time she came very seldom, and when she did, always seemed so low-spirited, that she made me quite unhappy; though I could never get her to tell me the reason, until one evening when we were alone, as she stood up, I was surprised to see her look so clumsy, for she had naturally a very small waist. I trembled so I could scarcely speak, and was ashamed to tell the poor creature what I thought, and therefore only said, ‘Dear Sally, how fat you grow!’ Oh, madam, if you had seen her

her

her then, angry as you might have been, your heart would have bled for her: she made me no answer, but turned as pale as ashes, and, clasping her hands, sunk on her knees before me. At that moment my husband came in from work, and surprised to find us in such confusion, I was obliged to confess what I feared, and that Sally's tears soon convinced him was true. He was in such a dreadful passion, that if I had not held him with all my strength, I believe he would have struck her, and insisted that she should tell us who made her act so wickedly: indeed, ma'am, you might have knocked me down with a feather when she said, 'My lord!' and though my husband is not a swearing man, he cursed him, while the tears ran down his poor weather-beaten cheeks, in spite of all he could do.—'Oh, Sally,' said he, 'is this the comfort I promised myself from you as I grew old? Is this the reward for all the toils I have suffered? I have long been poor, but never was ashamed; now
I shall

I shall hate to shew my face.'—'Oh, John,' said I, 'be patient; consider a poor silly girl stood little chance of escaping, when such a fine, handsome, rich man was resolved on her ruin.'—'She shall however never go back to him,' said he; 'she may have disgraced me, but I will never be a party in her wickedness.'—My husband was too much vexed to think of his work, and after tossing about all night, he got up and went to the Hall, and with a good deal of trouble was at last permitted to see my lord, who did not give him time to speak, saying, as he came into the room—'Well, honest Martin, in what can I serve you? Command me freely.'—'Ah, sir,' said my husband, 'fine promises and fine words may befit fine gentlemen; but I'm a poor man, whom God designed to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow: you, my lord, have land and riches to be proud of: I had only children; I was content with my portion; why was you not so with yours?'—'Come, my good friend,'

friend,' answered my lord, 'I will not attempt to misunderstand you. I indeed intended to break the business to you. Your daughter is a heavenly girl! an angel that any man may be charmed with.' Would you believe it, Miss, he was wicked enough to use such blasphemous expressions?—'And was I not going to be married, no consideration could have made me resolve to part with her; but as it is, we must consider on the best means of repairing the damage that has happened.'—My lord's behaviour was so unconcerned, that my husband could hardly believe either his eyes or his ears; he however at last said—'I know no reparation that can be made, unless you could restore her innocence, and that is impossible.'—'I can give her what I think you will allow more valuable,' replied he; 'and to convince you I have thought on the subject, I mean to present her with four hundred pounds, marry her to my Swiss, Bonjou, a very faithful servant, and whom I wish to reward.'

ward. You will on a moment's consideration see the whole utility of this scheme; no one need know when the marriage took place; the child will be provided with a reputable father, and pretty Sally rescued from reproach.'—'I see at once, my lord, that such a step might throw the odium from your lordship; but I am a poor vulgar man, and don't understand the *rewards* great men give to their *faithful servants*; you will therefore excuse me if I decline it on Sally's account.'—'Decline it! you are dreaming, Martin.'—'No, my lord, I am wide awake, and as I don't approve your lordship's ways in this case, I shall follow my own. If you allow yourself the father of the infant she bears, that at least has no right to be punished for either your vices or its mother's folly; allow then a small stipend to provide for its birth, as I am unequal to support an increase to my family.'—'I will act generously, but it shall be in my own way,' answered he, with some warmth; 'for the present,

present, begone; think on the subject, and bring me a proper answer to-morrow.'—
'I have already given an honest one, and it will be useless to trouble you farther. Sooner than suffer my poor ruined girl to form so shameful an alliance, I will work for her; nay for YOUR child, my lord. If such a step don't degrade you, I am sure it will not disgrace me.' My lord was in a fearful passion, and actually raised his hand to strike him, but my husband said, 'Take care, my lord; I am a poor man, and an injured one; but God that gave you riches, has given me strength and spirit to defend myself; therefore beware how you act.' With those words my husband left my lord, almost black with passion.

"I must here, my dear girls," said Mrs. Stanhope, "make a digression, to inform you, that though Martha told her story tolerably well, I some time after heard it far more accurately related by Mr. Stanhope, as he received it from honest Mar-

tin, who possessed a much stronger understanding than his wife. But what say you now to a short respite? I have talked a long while; a little music may be a pleasant relaxation."

Before the young ladies could reply, the colonel and Montgomery were announced. On their entrance, as the latter paid his compliments to Mrs. Stanhope, his animated features sufficiently expressed his thanks for the favour he had obtained through his uncle's intercession, though he was debarred the use of words.

Gertrude, possessed with the idea Marian had given rise to, felt a momentary confusion; but speedily recovering it, the evening was spent as cheerfully as usual, until at an advanced hour the visitors took their leave.

Marian and Gertrude were no sooner alone than the latter said—"I have paid particular attention this evening, and am quite convinced of the fallacy of your judgment. I scarcely ever saw Mr. Mont-
gomery,

gomery, though always lively, in such spirits, and love, I have heard, has a contrary effect."

"Defend me from it then," replied Marian; "if ever I am to have a lover, Heaven send me a merry one! My light heart shall never be mated to a lump of sentimental melancholy."

"But have you not heard," answered Gertrude, "that affection is productive of numberless doubts, fears, and jealousies?"

"I certainly have; but I think such conduct, except in some very particular cases, must originate in the weakness of the party. There can be no occasion of either doubt or fear, where the affection is worthily fixed, and deservedly returned; and where it is not, surely they must have weak minds who do not make a bold effort to free themselves from a disgraceful thralldom: and as for jealousy, were a man to shew me the smallest symptom of so despicable a passion beforehand, I never would marry him."

"It is, notwithstanding, said to be a sincere proof of affection," answered Gertrude.

"In my idea," replied Marian, "it is a certain proof of a mean, narrow, and suspicious temper, which I would particularly avoid. Can a man pay a worse compliment to the woman he pretends to love, or indeed to his own merit, than to suspect her? I cannot think but in such cases the jealous party must ever be sensible of some defect or want of deserving in themselves."

The conversation then turned on Mrs. Stanhope's story; both ardently wished to hear the remainder, until, being weary with chatting, they at length dropped asleep.

CHAPTER XII.

The Narrative continued—Plebeian Obstinacy—A Valet's Sense of Honour.

BREAKFAST was no sooner over, than the young ladies reminded Mrs. Stanhope of her narrative, who, ever ready to gratify them, began as follows:—

“I must, my dear girls, continue my story some time longer, as given me by honest Martha; not so famous, I confess, as an historian, as I afterwards knew her for making cheese and excellent butter. I think I concluded where she informed me that Martin left lord Seaton in a violent rage, and from thence I shall resume it.—
‘When my poor husband came home, he said nothing, harsh to Sally, though his
H 3 spirits

spirits were so bad that he could not do a stroke of work all day. The next morning he, however, went out as usual, and the children being employed, Sally and me were sitting alone, when, about eleven o'clock, somebody rapped at the door, and who should walk in but the steward?—"My lord," said he, "desires to know whether your husband will consent to what he proposed yesterday; if not, I am come for the payment of a year's rent due last midsummer." This demand was like a thunder-stroke, for we had little or no money in the house; and some time before, when my husband had waited on him, he said my lord had told him not to distress us.—Not knowing how to act, I sent for Martin, who said—"Pray tell my lord he must use his pleasure respecting the rent, which I have it not in my power to pay; as to what more nearly concerns me, *I* will act as suits with my conscience, and leave the event to God."—With this answer the steward went back, and we heard no more of

of the business for a fortnight ; when, one day, my lord sent for my husband, and in a more good-humoured manner pressed him to agree to what he proposed, and even offered to give five hundred pounds with Sally. Bonjou was present the whole time, and joined his master in desiring my husband to consent.—“ I will love a your pretty daughter vit all a my ole art ; as to vat as appened, it is a mere bagatelle, not worth the tought of a man of sense. I shall be much *honncured* by loving a ladi my lor as loved, or I should pay a very *mauvaise* compliment to his taste.”—“ And you will love the child the better also for being of my lord's begetting, I suppose ?” said my husband.—“ Doubtless I shall—it will be an *honneur* to my *pauvre* house, to have such noble blood bear its name.”—“ Would to Heaven, then your house had received all the honour, so mine had been exempt ! It may do very well for you, Mr. Bonjou ; but for me, who am a plain downright Englishman, I should prefer

fer a wife of my own choosing, and children of my own manufacture. But I intrude on your time, my lord—my resolution is fixed, neither money nor French rhetoric can alter it.”—With these words my husband left him; and to cut my story as short as possible, madam, this day week the steward seized for the arrears, and sold to the amount of his debt, leaving us nothing but a few worthless trifles, that nobody would purchase. As we had not a bed left, farmer Perry, who is a good soul, and tenant to Mr. Stanhope, made us come to his house, where Sally is yet, being unable to leave her room, nor do I think she will ever live to be delivered, for she justly accuses herself as the cause of all our misfortunes, though she suffers too much for us to condemn her. The second day we were at farmer Perry’s, young Mr. Stanhope came in to pay for some corn, that had been sent to the Grange; and dame Perry, who is fond of talking, being with him alone, told him our whole story: and,

and, would you believe it, Miss, that very night, if he and his father did not send for my husband, and, after some questions, offered him a cottage on their estate. Nay, he said, as we had no furniture worth mentioning, he would order us a few things, which we might pay for when we were more fortunate. I have now, Miss, told you the whole truth; we are moving into our new habitation, where I have no doubt we shall be happy, please God to spare my poor girl; for, if ever there was two angels on earth, it is that father and son.

“Such was the conclusion of Martha’s story,” said Mrs. Stanhope, “and which, had it even been longer, would have arrested my attention sufficiently to have made me regardless of time, or that we were walking during the whole recital.

“I thanked her for the confidence she reposed in me, promised, if ever in my power, to remember her; and, finally, with a small present, for my purse was never very heavy, dismissed her.

"As I walked homewards, I revolved on all that had passed ; custom, and a resolution to be pleased with lord Seaton, had in reality made me so ; but all the energy of my temper awakened for the sufferers, I determined to endure any thing, rather than pass my life with a man who had given such evident proofs of depravity and hardness of heart.

"On my return home, I went immediately to my mother's dressing-room ; she instantly discovered that I was agitated. With as much calmness as I could assume, I informed her of the cause ; my tale, however, met no cordial reception ; she accused me of meanness, said my curiosity was properly gratified ; did I expect lord Seaton to be immaculate ? She had no doubt he was as virtuous, or more so, than most other young noblemen ; nor could she conceive what business I had to censure his conduct before he was my husband : had he indeed been such, she would have warmly resented the affront offered me, but,

but, as it was, she could not have the delicacy to mention it. It was plain, she added, that he was a generous man, by his offering so considerable a sum; and his wishing to marry the girl to Bonjou, an evident proof that he had no longer any improper thoughts respecting her.

“To this speech, which, I assure you, was an elaborate one, though I cannot remember it verbally, I answered, with perhaps more warmth than prudence, that as to meanness, I hoped she mistook my character; but for curiosity, in this case, I readily allowed, and returned Heaven thanks that it had been gratified, as in all probability it had rescued me from misery. As to lord Seaton’s being immaculate, I had not been so sanguine as to expect it, though I confessed that I wished him virtuous; perhaps rather more so than the generality of young noblemen were. For scrutinizing his conduct beforehand, by what other measure was I to judge of his future behaviour, if denied the privilege of

common observation? To her kindness, in resenting any affront offered me, when his wife, I thanked her; but I must have better proof of his morals before I entrusted him with so dangerous a power as that of a husband. For the indelicacy of mentioning the business to him, I would spare her that trouble, by taking it on myself. To conclude, as to his generosity, it was past my comprehension, unless that sentiment consisted in, after seducing the daughter, reducing the father and his family to wretchedness, because they would not voluntarily consent to force her to a second prostitution.

“My mother was so exasperated, that, not content with words, she bestowed on me a few smart boxes on the ear; all which I bore with becoming resignation, resolved to give her no cause of complaint, but in my determination respecting lord Seaton.

“Notwithstanding my mother's anger, I was convinced, from her manner, that she had heard something of the affair before;
I was,

I was, however, allowed to plead no further, but ordered to my own apartment, where I remained until summoned to supper.

“ On our rising from table, my mother retired with my sister, saying, my father had business with me alone. For some moments he was silent, then, with more than his usual severity and stiffness, addressed me thus—‘ I can scarcely believe, that a daughter of mine, and granddaughter to two of the first families in the kingdom, should condescend to the meanness of conversing with vagabonds, and prying into the secret concerns of a respectable young nobleman, who honours her by his notice.’—‘ As to prying into the concerns of lord Seaton, sir,’ answered I, ‘ I had no such intention; and was far from suspecting he held so disgraceful a part in what I had to hear.’—‘ He may, in some measure, have been to blame, but you must allow for youth and constitution. I have no doubt but that he will make a good husband,

band, as I cannot think you fool enough to refuse him.'—'Is it possible, sir, you can wish me to act otherwise?'—'Can you ask so ridiculous a question? Will not such an union give you rank, precedence, title, and fortune, far above your expectations?'—'All those it will give above my expectation, and indeed above my wishes; but happiness, sir, will be wanting, and I have no ambition to be splendidly miserable. Rank, precedence, and title, are to me totally indifferent; fortune is indeed necessary, but I should purchase it too dearly by an alliance with depravity and cruelty.'—'Think better, or expect nothing from me.'

"So saying, he bounced out of the apartment, and I retired to my chamber, not in very high spirits, as you may suppose, but resolved to act according to the dictates of my conscience. I shall now," continued Mrs. Stanhope, "cease until after dinner, when, if we have no better amusement, I will

I will continue my *wonderful* adventures."

"I wish, with all my heart, though I love them dearly, that neither my uncle nor Albert may interrupt us," said Marian.

"They are really very much obliged to you," replied Mrs. Stanhope, laughing; "suppose you send them a message to that purport."

"No; though I wish my own curiosity gratified," answered Marian, with equal cheerfulness, "I do not desire it at the expence such a prohibition would cost them; therefore, madam, I will run the hazard."

CHAPTER XIII.

The Narrative continued—A Lady's Obstinacy—A Countryman's Spirit.

As Mrs. Stanhope knew it would oblige her young friends, she did not wait to be requested, but after dinner began as follows:—

“The next morning I received another sharp lecture from my mother; after which, accompanied by my sister, she went to return a visit at a short distance; my father was in his library, and I was alone reading, when the servant announced lord Seaton. I cannot but confess I felt great confusion; but summoning all the spirit I possessed, I resolved to conceal it as much as possible. He entered with his usual gaiety, for though
I had

I had given no decisive answer, he certainly considered himself an accepted lover, and coming up to me, he said—‘How happy am I to see you! I was almost wearied beyond my patience yesterday by uninteresting visitors; but how greatly am I overpaid by this opportunity of conversing with you alone!’

“As he spoke, he attempted to take my hand, but desiring him to be seated, I answered—‘Like yourself, my lord, I am pleased with this occasion of speaking to you without restraint.’ He endeavoured to interrupt me with a polite reply, but I prevented it by continuing—‘I had never accepted your addresses, my lord, unless I had thought you a man to whom I could, in giving my hand, give also my whole confidence, esteem, and affection. False delicacy I should consider in this case a weakness, and therefore am resolved to speak plainly: I yesterday was informed of an event, which, if true, must prevent my feeling those sentiments for you. Are you informed,

informed, that your steward has seized the effects, and turned out to misery, the unoffending family of one of your tenants—poor Martin?’ His confusion was so great, that a less interested person than myself might have pitied him.—‘Why, no. Yes.—Seized did you say? I think Jenkins mentioned something of the kind—but I never interfere in those affairs.’—‘And why not, my lord? Can any man be above attending to those calls of humanity and justice, which the superiority of his fortune has put into his power?—Should the happiness of your tenants, however poor, be entrusted to a mercenary wretch, whom some sinister motive, or selfish dislike, may urge to destroy them?’

“I rather suspect that, from my reply, he thought me only informed of the seizure, for with more confidence he answered—‘My charming moralist, I confess my error, and will take care Jenkins shall make retribution.’—‘You will do well; but it appears to me that your lordship
only

only can make proper retribution; Jenkins, perhaps, may be able to restore the effects, but is there no *greater* justice, and which honour and humanity should urge *you* to fulfil?

“He appeared wretchedly confused, continued for a moment silent, then answered with some hesitation—‘I do not entirely comprehend you, madam.’—‘I am sorry you oblige me to be more explicit, but does not your lordship’s conscience whisper, that something is due to Martin’s daughter?’

“He arose, walked to the window, returned hastily, and threw himself at my feet.—‘I cannot endure this scrutiny,’ exclaimed he: ‘if I have been blameable, I have at least endeavoured to make all the atonement in my power.’—‘Had it not been more generous, not to have included Bonjou in the treaty?’ His anger at this question overcame even his confusion.—‘Perish the wretch, be who it may, that could endeavour thus to lessen me in your opinion!’

opinion! I confess my error; would to Heaven I had known you sooner! it then had never happened.'—'You knew me, my lord, when you suffered Jenkins to act with such oppression: I own the impertinence of my interference; but I am not of a disposition to conceal what offends me, which having openly related, I must wish you a good-morning.'—'Stay, madam,' said he, 'one word only, I entreat. I do not attempt to extenuate my folly—do not, I conjure you, hold it unpardonable: I swear—'.—'I require no protestations, my lord: I shall ever be glad to hear of your happiness and prosperity.'—'Hear of it!—Oh, madam—do not speak thus; I will be all, or any thing you condescend to wish me; and as the first proof, though I take shame to name it, command how that girl who is now detestable to me shall be disposed of.'—'I claim no right, my lord, to such a distinction; your own honour can best point out the means; she is safe, and properly placed with her father: but
pardon

pardon me, a child of yours should not be dependent on so poor a man.'

"With those words I disengaged my gown, which he still held, and left the room. I afterwards found he had a long conversation with my father, during which, the latter consoled him by attributing my conduct to womanish jealousy—a sentiment I freely confess to you that I have never experienced.

"For three days we received no visit from lord Seaton, but on the fourth he entered, though not with his usual alacrity; and after some conversation, accompanied my father to the library, where, in about an hour, my mother and myself were summoned. As I was not very alert in obeying this command, I hesitated a few minutes at the door my mother had previously entered, when I heard my father say in a haughty tone—'Insolent scoundrel! if men of rank and fortune are to be treated contemptuously, by the dregs of the people, all distinction is indeed lost—
I am

I am entirely of your lordship's opinion, that our *merchant gentleman* must support him in it, or he would never have dared to return such an answer.'

"I did not wait to hear more; I had no intention of listening; and summoning all my courage, which I had no doubt I should have occasion for, I entered the library.—'Mary,' said my father, 'at my lord's request I sent, that I might inform you, *my* honour is perfectly satisfied with his conduct, and I have no doubt yours will be the same; and that I shall have the satisfaction of seeing this ridiculous business forgotten.'—'If your honour is satisfied with lord Seaton's conduct, sir,' answered I, 'no doubt it merits approbation; but for myself, though I was impertinent enough to inform him of what I knew, yet there all my concern ended.'—'Well, then, as a token of friendship, give him your hand,' said my mother.—'As to your friend, willingly, madam; but I cannot deceive lord Seaton—I never have deceived him;

I re-

I requested six months to give a decisive answer; that period wants yet a month of being elapsed; I wish to spare lord Seaton and myself further pain, and therefore give it now—we never can be united.' My father and mother were so displeased, that perhaps it was not unfortunate for me that lord Seaton was present; he entreated them to patience, and addressing me, said—'I fear I have lost your esteem and confidence for ever; yet what was possible to do I have not neglected, and have in return been treated with an insolence surpassing belief. I sent my steward three days since, with an offer of making a settlement for life on Martin's daughter, or, if he approved it better, on himself for her use: need I say, I took this step in consequence of what had passed between yourself and me in our last conversation, for Martin had before treated me beyond the sufferance of a man of my rank.'—'I beg your pardon, my lord; but you had set him the example, or surely he would not have dared.'

“It

“It was evident that neither my father nor mother could longer restrain their anger; they therefore hastily withdrew.— ‘You will not even for a moment forget my folly,’ resumed lord Seaton; ‘from you I have a right to hear, but were it not for the reflection that the step was grateful to you, I could almost hate myself, for the meanness of suing to such wretches.’— ‘No man, if convinced he has acted improperly, ought to be above confessing it; no man, my lord, however great, is above the praiseworthy act of doing justice.’— ‘I acknowledge it: I informed you before I sent to Martin; your father has seen his answer; is it requesting too much of your delicacy to read it?’— ‘I am satisfied, my lord, that you would not request me to peruse it were it improper; and to convince you I am ready to believe every thing I can in your favour, willingly consent.’

“Lord Seaton gave me the letter, and, visibly agitated, withdrew to the window,
“when

when I read, nearly as I can recollect, as follows:

‘ MY LORD,

‘ By your steward this day, I received an offer of fifty pounds yearly, to be settled either on myself or my daughter: for the first I thank you, but can never owe prosperity to my child’s shame; for the second, she never, with my consent, shall receive a reward for what she ought to repent and deplore. So much, my lord, for ourselves; but for *your* infant, should it see the light, I have no right to dictate. I am unable to support properly even those I have; therefore cannot fulfil those duties it may claim, and which more properly fall on you; and that I entreat you to consider, without any thought of the unfortunate mother or myself.

‘ I am,

‘ MY LORD,

‘ Your humble servant,

‘ JOHN MARTIN.’

“ I read it two or three times before I returned it—‘ Indeed, my lord,’ said I, ‘ you consider this poor man’s behaviour with prejudice; could you for a short time forget your rank, you would simply see the language of an honest man who feels himself injured. He requires no hard conditions—nothing, my lord, but what, as a man of humanity, your own heart will lead you to fulfil.’—‘ I confess the justice of your argument: yet, to be constrained to act at the pleasure of such a clown, is beyond all sufferance humiliating. Sooner than submit, I would give in any other cause an annuity of a thousand pounds.’—‘ Pride and improper gratification are frequently attended with disagreeable consequences,’ returned I, with a spirit I could not repress.—‘ I see—I feel you are prejudiced against me,’ answered he; ‘ if half my fortune would reinstate me in your opinion, how willingly would I give it!’—‘ Not more willingly than I would subscribe to it,’ returned I: ‘ this affair, I have no doubt,

gives

gives you vexation; I am above disguise—my heart has not been exempt. On your application to my parents, my lord, I was flattered by your addresses; your person and manners could not fail to please; I felt I could love, but asked for time to be convinced whether your character was such as I could approve. A fault in my temper, perhaps as much as my fears for your future conduct, actuates my present determination. I cannot marry the man whom I *dare* doubt—the man whom I choose must possess my whole confidence, esteem, honour, and friendship, or I will never venture on so hazardous a chance for happiness as marriage.

“Such was the substance of the last conversation that passed between lord Seaton and myself, though it was considerably longer; but from this specimen you may judge he left me in no very agreeable frame of mind.

“To enter into a minute detail of what I suffered from my parents, in consequence

of my positive refusal, is foreign to the purpose; be it sufficient to declare, that it was such as would have forced a less unbending temper to have perhaps accepted any situation that promised a change. Lord Seaton wrote repeatedly to me, but I refused to read his letters; and as no answers were returned, except from my parents, he at length became weary of the pursuit, and departed for London.

“It had been my mother’s intention to pass the winter in town after my marriage, for that business was considered as settled; but though my obstinacy had prevented it, she declared Maria should be introduced, as she was now eighteen.

“Notwithstanding what had passed, I had no doubt but I was meant to accompany them; but as they seldom condescended to converse with me, I did not choose to hazard the question, though, on a strict review of my own conduct, I am conscious of no want of duty or respect towards my parents, except in my refusal of
lord

lord Seaton. Two days previous to their departure, my mother, sending for me into her dressing-room, said — ‘As you have chosen, Miss Morton, to act independently, your father desires me to inform you, that he shall not think of your accompanying us to town, unless you will first give him your word, as that estimable young nobleman yet wishes to obtain your hand, to receive him in the manner we desire: you have surely given enough to anger and obstinacy, therefore, I suppose, will gladly accept this proposal, which will not only reconcile you to him, but to your parents.’ My answer to this was dutiful, but firm; and two days after, without a single adieu, they left me to pass the winter alone in the old mansion.

“I had now again occasion for all my spirit—not that I felt any punishment from remaining in the country; but, convinced that I was treated as an outcast by my family, I had nearly sunk under the reflection. The poor servants who were
13 left

left behind were however attached to me; and what harshness could never force, their unwearied assiduity often effected; for I could not frequently restrain my tears when I received their indefatigable attentions.

“The winter was uncommonly mild, and I frequently walked for hours, for you may well suppose that I was not gratified with a carriage. In one of my rambles the whim seized me to call at Martin’s, of whom I had heard nothing since my refusal of lord Seaton, which was now five months since. As the cottage they were removed to was not more than a mile, I soon reached it, and was not a little surprised at the neatness that was visible in all around; not but that their former dwelling was perfectly decent and proper, yet this had, on the whole, an air of comfort that placed it above poverty. I entered without ceremony, and found Martha seated by the fire; she rose to receive me with a smile.—‘Heaven bless you, Miss,’ said

said she; 'how often have I longed to see you, that, as you knew all my bad luck, you might hear all my good! Many an hour have I fretted about you; for people have reported all round the village, that you refused lord Seaton for his wickedness. Nay, they have not scrupled to say, that it was whispered from your own servants. Not a soul is there but loves you, and prays God may send you not only a richer, but a thousand times a better husband.'—'Indeed, Martha, I am much obliged to their good wishes, but am in no haste to change my condition. I have not been out much lately, or should have seen your new habitation sooner; but tell me, how is your daughter? I have frequently thought of her.'

"She informed me, Sally had, in consequence of the uneasiness she had suffered, been delivered of a dead child, and that, since her recovery, the elder Mr. Stanhope had given ten pounds to a mantuamaker in the market-town to learn her the business,

ness, and where she was now placed.—‘For lord Seaton,’ continued Martha, ‘as the child was dead, my husband would accept nothing from him—though, to say the truth, he sent a note of twenty pounds, but which was returned; thank God, we want no favours from him now!’—‘I am rejoiced to hear it, Martha. May I ask what favourable change has taken place?’—‘That you may, and welcome, Miss; I shall not be so afraid to tell you that, as I was my poor girl’s misfortune. Perhaps you don’t know that my lord offered to settle fifty pounds a-year upon her?’—‘I do, and that your husband, much to his honour, declined it. I saw the letter he wrote to lord Seaton.’—‘Ah,’ Miss, that letter,’ interrupted she, ‘was the cause of our happiness! I always knew John Martin had good learning, but I never thought much of it till then.’—‘And why then, Martha?’—‘I will tell you, Miss. You know we were in sad distress when we came here, and what would have become of

of us but for Mr. Stanhope, God only knows. Well, all of a sudden, my lord's steward came and offered us the settlement; to which, as my husband was out, I made no answer. On his return to dinner he wrote the letter; but having no wafers, he bid me send to the village, seal it, and tell our eldest boy to take it to the Hall. While the lad was gone on his errand for the wafers, who should walk in but that good soul, young Mr. Stanhope! He looked round, asked if we were settled, and if we wanted any thing; and all this so kindly, that I could have knelt at his feet with gratitude. The letter directed for lord Seaton lay on the table: I saw he looked at it, and, as I thought he might suppose it some harm, told him what had passed, begging him to read my husband's answer; but he would fain have declined it, until, seeing I was quite grieved at his refusal, he at length complied. Lord, Miss! I could but look at him; for he appeared surprised at the letter, and seemed

to read it over two or three times, and, as he gave it me back, asked where my husband had been brought up. I told him the truth, Miss: that his father had been in very easy circumstances, and that John, when a boy, had been kept at the grammar-school; but that from a number of misfortunes we were reduced to poverty, and glad to live at an easy rent on lord Seaton's estate, having nothing to depend upon but John's labour for support. Soon after Mr. Stanhope went away; but the very next morning he sent to desire my husband to call on him as soon as he came from his work, and after some questions and discourse, the eldest Mr. Stanhope said—"I am so satisfied with the account my son gives me of your conduct to lord Seaton, that I think it is a pity you should suffer for what does you so much credit; therefore, if you choose to accept the situation of bailiff to my estate, with sixty pounds a-year, it is at your service, together with the house
you

you reside in.”— You may be sure my husband hardly knew how to thank him enough; but Mr. Stanhope stopped him, saying—“ I am convinced you have abilities for even a higher office than what I have to offer, and that being vacant, I am happy to have it supplied by a man I think I can depend upon.”—Since that time, Miss, we are as happy as the day is long; and as it pleased God Sally’s child was dead, we were very thankful, for we have nothing more to do with my lord. She, as I told you, will learn a good business; and for my boys, they are so comfortable and tidy, that I never look at them without thinking of Mr. Stanhope.’ With these words she went to the door, and called them from the garden. I cannot but own I was astonished at the alteration in their appearance; their clothes, though coarse, were clean and tight, and the hilarity of their countenances a convincing proof of the ease that reigned within.

“On my return home, as I reflected, the more I was charmed with the character of the Stanhopes; but the most distant idea of an acquaintance with them was far from my thoughts, much less could I suppose they were designed to pour the balm of consolation into my lacerated bosom—to obliterate all that was unpleasant of my past life—to love me even with enthusiastic fondness—to see all my petulancies and follies with an eye of tender partiality—or, in short, to fulfil all those duties my heart seemed to claim, and was anxious to return. But I will now cease until to-morrow,” said Mrs. Stanhope, “when I shall conclude my story.”

CHAPTER XIV.

*Narrative concluded—An eccentric Lady
and Gentleman united.*

ON the following morning, Marian and Gertrude, instead of requesting Mrs. Stanhope to continue her narrative, entreated her to favour them by riding to Blackwood; but looking at them with a smile, she said—"I feel your attention; you fear to give me pain; but to speak of the virtues of either of the Mr. Stanhopes, though the weakness of human nature may force a tear, yet when I reflect that, this probation over, we shall meet in a better world, my grief is dispelled. Nay, when I can conquer those selfish principles we are all too naturally prone
to."

to, I think with rapture that they are already enjoying the recompence of their merits. I shall therefore continue my story.

“ I had promised myself, in the first effusions of my anger against lord Seaton, never to marry, and the many lonely hours I had afterwards passed, strengthened this determination so completely, that I thought myself invulnerable. Since my father and mother's departure, several of the neighbouring families had invited me; but as I knew that it was designed I should neither receive nor pay visits, I had declined all. At the distance of about three miles lived the dowager countess of Bradford, a woman universally respected—by some for her rank, by others for her riches, and by a third party for those intellectual qualities that can alone make true distinctions. I had always been a kind of favourite; and not satisfied with my declining her invitation, she wrote to town to my parents, entreating their permission that I might
sometimes

sometimes visit her. Though I am convinced this was by no means pleasant, yet she was of too much consequence to be refused; and I was ordered, in a letter from my sister, for my parents did not correspond with me, to receive and return lady Bradford's visits.

"I was pleased with this permission, but had not much time to think on the subject; for the day after she called, and telling me she had gained my parents' consent, she took me home with her to dinner.

"From this period my time was no longer wearisome. I usually saw her daily, and in consequence most of the respectable families in the neighbourhood, who occasionally visited at her house. As it was generally known that I had refused lord Seaton, I found myself at first an object of curiosity; but that sentiment satisfied, I began to enjoy the happiness I was permitted, when one day that I was invited to dinner there, she informed me that Mr. Stanhope and his son were to be of the party.

party. To this hour I cannot explain why, but my thoughts were employed on them the whole morning. William Stanhope I had seen, but his father was totally unknown; yet did both so interest me, that lady Bradford, more than once laughing, asked me, ‘if my reveries were propitious to lord Seaton?’

“At length they arrived, and lady Bradford presented me to the venerable senior, saying—‘Miss Morton, Mr. Stanhope—a good girl, as times go, but a little eccentric and foolish, or she would never have refused a rich, handsome, accomplished young nobleman, and preferred staying in the country to the pleasures of the capital.’—‘Common report is frequently said to be a liar,’ said he; ‘but had that even advanced farther in respect to Miss Morton, I am inclined to believe all, and am happy to enjoy this opportunity of testifying my admiration of a conduct unusual at her years. An old man’s compliments,’ added he, observing I was confused,
‘you

"you may surely suffer: should this young one attempt them, there might be more room for a suspicion of interested motives."

"I know not how I replied to Mr. Stanhope, or received the compliments of his son; but the first awkwardness over, I can assure you, we were by the evening so apparently satisfied with each other, that lady Bradford declared that she should expect to receive the thanks of the trio for bringing about the acquaintance.—

'My father's thanks you have an undoubted claim to, madam,' said William; 'but for Miss Morton's and mine, much as I respect you, I cannot allow, as this is not our first meeting. I had the honour some months since of assisting her in a very perilous situation, and of which I thought very seriously; but with the cruelty of a Spanish duenna, she shut me out of the Park, and forbid me to inquire after her.'

"From this evening an acquaintance was formed with the Mr. Stanhopes; nor did

did lady Bradford, in her cheerful moments, fail to place many of those visits to my account, at least those of William. Be that as it may, I had before admired their characters; and on a nearer knowledge, their general behaviour was calculated to increase my esteem, though love was far from my thoughts. I sometimes indeed wished lord Seaton had resembled William Stanhope in disposition, and took pleasure in recollecting any little anecdote I had heard in his praise.

“ Thus was I situated when lady Bradford, to my great amazement, informed me she had received a letter that mentioned my sister's marriage to Mr. St. Austyn—an event I had no idea of. I cannot but confess I was dreadfully hurt, not at her marriage, but at this confirmed proof of my family's disregard to me. Lady Bradford did all in her power to soothe me; at length having in some measure succeeded, she said, in a jesting manner—‘ You cried this morning because your sister was married

ried first: but do not be inconsolable; lord Seaton is, I dare say, at your command, notwithstanding your cruelty; and the little Mrs. St. Austyn, though her husband has a good fortune, will be a mere non-entity, when contrasted to the superior splendour of the countess of Seaton.'—
'Heaven send she may be happy! I never shall marry; but were I even so inclined, lord Seaton would be the last man I should choose. No, no, my poor heart will never seek a resting-place where it would be so continually wounded, not only with its own sorrows, but those which the tyranny of its proprietor might inflict on others.'—
'What then say you to William Stanhope? Think you the little recreant could fix in peace there?' .

"I know not why I blushed, but I did so.—'I have not thought of him,' answered I; 'when he thinks of me, I will honestly answer.'—'Fairly caught!' said she, laughing: 'The eldest Mr. Stanhope paid me a visit this morning solely on your account.

I will

I will not, my dear, use dissimulation with you; he well knows your uncomfortable situation at home, though he was too delicate to touch upon it. Fortune was beneath his son's consideration with a woman whose value, he was pleased to say, was intrinsic; and would I first consult you on the subject, he should be happy to address your parents, and, favoured with their consent, would subscribe to any settlements they should require.'

"I was too much surprised to reply; not but my heart had sometimes whispered that William Stanhope paid me particular attention, and without defining the sentiment I felt for him, I certainly esteemed him above all men.—'I—I—thank Mr. Stanhope,' said I, hesitating; 'but——'—'But what?' said lady Bradford; 'come, come, my young friend, be above disguise—William Stanhope is the only man I know exactly calculated to make you happy; your temper and pursuits to me appear similar, and his father is immensely rich.'

rich.'—'I do not care for his riches,' answered I; 'wealth never had any weight with me.'—'Not care for his riches! Nay, then you are farther gone than I expected; but, jesting apart, though wealth may have no charms for you, it may for your parents.'

"I sighed.—'Do you forget Mr. Stanhope has been, nay, is now, I believe, in the mercantile line?' answered I.—'I do remember it, yet I think they will not refuse their consent. In the first place, they may be pleased to have you settled: in the next, his offers, I am convinced, will be such as common prudence will oblige them to accept.'

"Of this I was dubious, and therefore requested her to return my thanks to Mr. Stanhope, and entreat him at least to delay his application till my father returned to the country. Perhaps this request was more selfish than I even dared whisper to myself. I certainly did not wish to be prohibited seeing lady Bradford, and consequently

quently the Mr. Stanhopes; and it was not clear to me, but that it would bring on this inconvenience. Certain it is, that on my meeting with William Stanhope, I did not drive him to despair. As the spring advanced, my morning walks were seldom unattended; and I sincerely wished, though I scarcely dared hope, that he might meet my parents' approbation.

“The summer was advanced when the family returned, though without my sister; and I had the misfortune to find, that time had not lessened their acrimony towards me, and, though almost despairing of success, gave Mr. Stanhope a trembling permission to make his proposals.

“To paint the anger of my parents at this unexpected offer, I shall not attempt; it included not only Mr. Stanhope and myself, but also lady Bradford. I was forbidden all converse with either, and upbraided with my meanness in thinking of an alliance with a merchant. I, however, in this case, used no disguise, but replied to

to my father, that I undoubtedly would never marry without his consent, unless compelled by indifferent usage; but at the same time assured him, that William Stanhope possessed my whole heart.

“ From this time I never was left in the country, and for two years or upwards led a life of continual bickerings. I frequently heard from Mr. Stanhope, for I never promised not to do so; and had just attained my twenty-third year, when lord Seaton returned to the country, and again chose to renew his persecutions, which were so strongly seconded by my parents, that I peremptorily declared, that if I was not delivered from them, I must consider myself the agent for my own happiness.

“ This declaration was, however, disregarded; and, in consequence of some severe usage, I withdrew myself from home. Lady Bradford received me; and three weeks after, my marriage took place, with as much respect, and as liberal a settlement,

as if I had brought the first fortune in the kingdom.

“ I have not language to describe the tenderness of both father and son ; no means were left untried to reconcile me to my parents ; but finding all unavailing, they devised a tour through France, Spain, and Italy, to amuse my thoughts. My heart had indeed met its counterpart, or rather a model by which I wished to form myself. Yet were we not, my dear Gertrude, free from those sorrows which are a perpetual drawback on the happiness of mortals, though I am not sufficiently master of myself to enter into minute particulars. My children died in their infancy ; in six years we had the misfortune to lose my ever-honoured and respected father, Mr. Stanhope ; and though my beloved husband did not apparently suffer when in a mild climate, yet his health was so precarious, that I insisted on his entirely resigning his commercial concerns, and residing abroad,
visiting

visiting England, at most, for a short time every second summer, until it pleased Heaven to snatch him from the calm enjoyment of a well-spent life, to those higher rewards which superior virtue claims from that Power who knows and properly appreciates its worth.

“ I have now finished a long story. I, indeed, could have wished to be more explicit respecting Mr. Stanhope's character, but it is a subject I dare not trust myself upon; you will therefore, I know, willingly excuse it.”

Gertrude and Marian had, almost without intending it, taken each of them one of her hands, which they pressed to their lips.

“ I will never consider myself childless,” continued she, affectionately, “ while Heaven bestows on me two girls, who appear to consider me as a parent; and could I but once see Frederic added to our little circle, and such as I wish, my most sanguine hopes would be realized, and I should imperceptibly steal down the declining hill of life

life—the final change only from peace here to happiness hereafter.”

“Far, far distant may that change be!” exclaimed Gertrude. “Though to you it brought happiness, yet to your poor Gertrude it must bring sorrow, the bitterest sorrow she ever experienced, to have learnt the value of such a friend, and then to lose her.”

Marian's reply breathed equal affection; but Mrs. Stanhope, assuming a more cheerful air, answered—“I have, by my weakness, infected you with melancholy, and therefore ought to be the first to set a better example.”

So saying, she took her place at the harpsichord, desiring Marian and Gertrude to favour her with some select airs, which she would accompany with the instrument.

CHAPTER XV.
******A Letter—A Conversation.*

THE colonel and Montgomery did not fail to write to Frederic, addressing the letters to his seat in Yorkshire. Both, however, by the desire of Mrs. Stanhope and Gertrude, avoided mentioning the conduct of Berners, but pressed him to accept the invitation he had before declined.

In about a month they received answers. The letters, however, did not express the residence of the writer, and simply bore the London post-mark—an event that did not a little surprise them, and was particularly unpleasant to Mrs. Stanhope.

His letters, though they no longer bespoke such bitter self-accusation, were tinctured,

tured with melancholy ; yet the pleasure he appeared to enjoy in so unexpected a correspondence was clearly visible, though he again declined their invitation.

“ You ask me,” said he, in his answer to the colonel, “ how I am situated ? and do not disbelieve me when I say, I feel hurt not to answer any question from one I so truly esteem and revere as yourself ; yet, should we ever meet, my whole heart shall be open to you, if you will condescend to examine it. The state of my finances—a shame of past folly—the remembrance of what I might perhaps have hoped, and the cruel reflection of what I had made myself, all conspired to point out the necessity of retirement. Though I no longer regarded myself as open to temptation, yet I resolved to fly even the possibility of it ; and as in my own country I might have been plagued, wherever I hid myself, with some of the loose companions of my former hours, I resolved to leave it.

“ Behold me then in my little home,
surrounded

surrounded with peace, the only anarchy in my own bosom, and which I in vain endeavour to subdue. Do not judge me from this discontented; I am far more happily situated than I could hope; and could I forget some particular circumstances, I should declare I was perfectly so. My fortune is narrow, but far more than adequate to my present expences. My health, from a life of regularity and activity, in spite of uneasiness, is better than ever I remember it. I have not learnt to contemn riches, but I have learnt that they are but a very insufficient means of procuring happiness; for here, with only two poor faithful domestics, I enjoy more real attention than when surrounded with the numbers that the folly of custom imposed on me to keep. My table is plentiful, but frugal. I have no variety of wines, but then I have no headaches; and having no sumptuous entertainments, I have no duns at my gate. In short, my good friend, I find myself now richer with

hundreds than I formerly did with thousands. Wealth is indeed a blessing, when bestowed on those who know its *real* use and value. But I, unfortunately, was not of that number; it merely seemed to increase my unnecessary wants, and redouble the catalogue of my follies: thus it was my curse, and, had not Berners and myself made such quick dispatch at the gaming-table, might have become a scourge to my fellows. I have heard that adversity is useful; I am convinced that it frequently is so; and I could even rejoice at the change in my fortune, were the loss of affluence *all* that my follies had bereft me of, as it has given me to know myself.

“ During the day the cultivation of my garden, some little improvements I am making, and numberless other pursuits, employ my thoughts; but in the calm of the evening, sober reflection intrudes, and in spite of the philosophy I endeavour to flatter myself I possess, I look round for a friend, and (shall I honestly confess?) feel something

something like envy as I consider the happy circle at the Vale. 'To use the expression of our immortal Shakespeare—' in my mind's eye,' I see my aunt, calm and uniform, enjoying the good of the present moment, nor dreading the evil from which conscious virtue secures her—yourself, my friend, cheerful and eccentric, performing the most generous actions as merely matters of course, appropriating to yourself no merit, but leaving impressions on the minds of those you favour, which neither time nor chance can efface. Mr. Montgomery, if I dare characterize him, collected, manly, and commanding—proud and imperious in the cause of honour and undeserved insult; yet, on the contrary, little as I have had it in my power to consider his character, mild to those whom he hopes to reclaim by counsel, a tender brother, an affectionate relative, and a warm friend. My poor Gertrude I do not forget—a good girl, but improperly educated, who, however, I hope, by the example of

Mrs. Stanhope, and the friend she so affectionately speaks of in her letter, will be all the heart of her aunt can wish.

"I cannot finish my picture—one object must be wanting, not because she is less interesting, but because I dare not trust myself on a subject that intrudes and mingles in my every action and pursuit, but which fatal necessity, or rather folly, has forced me to relinquish. Farewell, my dear sir! I look forward until many long tedious months, nay years, shall be elapsed, when I can with more propriety stand before you, and express my sense of all your kindness."

Such were in part the contents of Frederic's letter, which afforded general satisfaction, as it appeared a confirmation of his continuing in his praiseworthy disposition; the concealment alone was a drawback on the pleasure of the whole party, but which they found it was in vain to combat.

Albert, divested of his fears for Marian,
by

by Frederic's repeated refusals to join them, yet convinced, by his own avowal, of his persevering affection for her, was among the most strenuous of his friends—a conduct that not a little endeared him to Gertrude, who, as she was one evening walking with him and Marian, a conversation respecting her brother took place, and of whom Albert having spoken kindly, she answered—"I must thank you for my dear Frederic; the night I received the wound from Berners, I in reality thought myself dying, and the subject most upon my mind was his happiness, which, I am convinced, an entire reconciliation with you can alone effect. Some months since, I was far from expecting such a satisfaction; now I am more sanguine, and hope, that when you meet, all past disagreeables will be forgotten."

"They are already so," answered Albert, "or, if recollected, no sentiment of anger mingles with the remembrance. Mr. St.

Austyn's errors were not natural, but acquired; and had my education been the same, I have no doubt I might have acted far more unpardonably. His voluntary retirement and arrangements prove a mind capable of great efforts; and I will truly own, to use your own expression, that I look forward with hope to the time when a friendship, lasting as our lives, may take place between us."

"Again I thank you," answered Gertrude, with emotion, and holding out her hand to Albert—"I regard this a binding promise. You indeed gave me the same the night I before mentioned: but I have since considered that as extorted from you by my situation; this is free, and therefore doubly welcome."

Few young men, when thus addressed by a beautiful girl of nearly nineteen, could have entirely preserved their calmness: Albert was not among the number; for, pressing the offered hand with energy to his lips, he said—"How could you ever consider

consider a promise you requested extorted from me, when one of the first of my wishes is to see you happy?"

Though there was nothing very particular in the reply, yet Albert's manner was sufficiently marking to certify all Marian's suspicions, and likewise to strengthen some ideas of the same nature Gertrude herself had formed.

Withdrawing her trembling hand from Montgomery, a conscious blush colouring her face, both continued silent, until Marian exclaimed—"A mighty pretty arrangement, upon my word! a peace concluded with Mr. St. Austyn, without consulting the principal personage in the business. Albert, it is plain," continued she, laughing, "cannot withstand a *bribe*; but let your young *philosopher* dare to shew his face, with even all your most sanguine hopes realized, and I will soon convince you how futile are all your schemes, unless they receive *my* sanction."

"I thank you, my dear Marian," re-

turned Gertrude; "did *you* not almost forgive him, you would not speak so cheerfully on the subject."

"Forgive him! Not I, indeed! I grant no unmasked forgiveness. To be sure, if, when I first saw him, he had been such a creature as one could have borne with, I cannot entirely answer but that he might have moved my heart in his favour: but now I am invulnerable—he shall never bear me to his cell, to fill up the vacant seat at his fireside, where we might sit nodding at each other, like two Chinese Mandarins on a chimney-piece."

"My poor brother's fortune is indeed, I fear, much deranged," answered Gertrude, "but not beyond Mrs. Stanhope's power to redress. I am convinced my mother would never have left me her whole fortune, could she have foreseen his situation; I therefore hold myself but as trustee for the moiety to him, and which I have already consulted my aunt on transferring. I can never consider money of so much utility
as

as when it contributes toward the happiness of those we love."

Had Albert been alone with Gertrude, a conduct so congenial to his own ideas would, in all probability, have forced a declaration; but, restrained by the presence of his sister, he could simply applaud a disinterestedness that, in his eyes, gave her charms beyond those of features and person.

"I am now almost seriously offended," answered Marian. "Pray what have you seen in my conduct that could lead you for a moment to suppose that the decrease of Mr. St. Austyn's fortune could influence me? No, Gertrude, had your brother a diadem to lay at my feet, encumbered with his late follies, I feel I could refuse him; but such as I thought him at our first meeting, and such as we hope to find him, if ever we meet again, I can make no resolution; but this I can truly declare, that the selfish consideration of fortune shall have no power with me."

"My dearest Marian, you misconstrued me;

me; I had no such idea; I simply spoke for myself. Never could I enjoy affluence, if Frederic's circumstances were contracted."

"I accept the apology, because I feel the same disposition; but I fancy, as a friend of mine once said," continued she, laughing, "*I shall never be put to the trial, unless I make the tour of Europe in search of the recreant, or cause him to be advertised in all the continental papers, with a considerable reward to that person who shall bring him before me.*"

At that moment Mrs. Stanhope joined the trio, and, after a pleasant walk, they returned home.

CHAPTER XVI.
******A Marriage—Advances of a Lover.*

For several weeks no material event caused any alteration at the Vale; the colonel and his nephew were, as usual, constant visitors: the latter, by his attentions, almost unconsciously became daily more estimable to Gertrude: though no conclusive declaration had yet taken place, she treated him with the distinguished friendship of a sister, and received the repeated proofs he gave of his attachment to her, as though they had proceeded from a brother.

With Frederic they constantly corresponded, but were still ignorant of the place of his residence, their letters being all sent
to

to Yorkshire, and his bearing the London post-mark.

One morning that the colonel and Albert had paid the ladies an early visit, they found them reading the London newspapers, when, on a sudden, to the amazement of all, an exclamation escaped Gertrude, not an exclamation of sorrow or regret, but one that expressed surprise and satisfaction.

"My dear girl," said Mrs. Stanhope, "what can move you thus? I should be alarmed, but that there is more pleasure than concern in your manner."

"Pardon me, madam," returned Gertrude, deeply blushing, "I take shame to myself for my folly; but indeed it was involuntary, and therefore I hope you will excuse it."

Mrs. Stanhope pressed no farther, though the extreme agitation of Gertrude, during the whole of the breakfast, convinced her something had greatly surprised her; but she

she no sooner retired with Marian, to equip themselves for their walk, than taking up the paper, she examined it accurately, and soon read the following ludicrous paragraph:—

“On the twentieth day of last month, was married at the Hague, Charles Berners, esquire, to the widow of the late George Graham, esquire; a lady who, though past the bloom of life, is possessed of every requisite to render the marriage state happy.

“N. B. She is reputed worth twenty thousand pounds.”

“Unhappy, infatuated woman!” exclaimed Mrs. Stanhope; “though I do not know her, she sincerely has my pity. Gertrude’s behaviour is now explained—Berners is married.” In the surprise of the moment, she was not sufficiently master of her feelings to conceal the satisfaction such an event must give her, as it has placed that insuperable bar that must inevitably release her from his persecutions.”

“I think

"I think he would hardly have dared to venture here again," returned the colonel, "had he even not been married; but as it appears to give Miss St. Austyn pleasure, madam, I cannot but rejoice with you."

"Indeed it also gives me great satisfaction," said she; "and you will, I know, excuse my absence, while I speak to Gertrude on the subject."

With these words she hastily withdrew. A silence of some minutes ensued, when the colonel suddenly whistled *Lilibulero*; but the tune being concluded, without any perceptible effect on Albert, his displeasure was no longer restrained to music; for, addressing his nephew, he said—"Pray, sir, are you now convinced that Miss St. Austyn has no attachment that can intrude to prevent her accepting, with all due respect, the honour of your hand, when it shall please your sublime *sultan*ship to favour her by throwing the handkerchief?"

"My dear sir," answered Albert, not apparently noticing his manner, "I cannot
see

see why I have reason to rejoice at this event. Miss St. Austyn may despise Berners, yet that may be no argument in my favour."

"Argument in your favour! I should be sorry if it were. It would be a sin to unite such a charming girl to a lump of living lumber, a mere pillar of nitre, or cake of ice. Egad! I can attribute the long respite I have enjoyed from the gout, to nothing but so frequently coming in contact with your icicles."

"I am glad, sir," replied Albert, "it has had so salutary an effect."

"Zounds, sir, it has had a confounded bad effect! for, in the intervals from my cold fit, I am in a raging fever, as at this present moment. For the honour of my country, I am glad you are not an Irishman; and, indeed, I ought perhaps rather to pity than condemn you, for I am sometimes inclined to think that nature has packed you off into the world without a heart."

"I should

"I should rather doubt," returned Albert, laughing, "that she has given me too large a portion, or why is it so difficult to be satisfied?"

"Because you are a fool! Every one must see how partial Gertrude is to you!"

"Ah, sir! if I were once assured of her affection, I should in future have neither doubts nor fears."

"What better evidence can a man ask than that of her eyes? I never in my life knew any of your suspicious, over-careful folks, but what in the long run made asses of themselves. You will play with your happiness till it may perhaps slip through your fingers: for such a girl is not to be trifled with; and, confound me, if I was her relation, if I would suffer any *jack-anapes* to scrutinize and squint at her actions through the magnifying glass of his own silly brain, like an old virtuoso at the motions of a flea!"

"My dear sir," replied Albert, "to say truth, I sometimes could almost flatter myself

self that I am not totally indifferent to her; that hope once confirmed, my nitre, snow, and ice, would be dissolved in a moment."

The colonel paused.—"Observe me well, Montgomery," said he; "whatever may happen, I wash my hands of the business. It is sometimes necessary to punish men's bodies for the good of their souls—if that should be your case, remember your own folly occasioned it."

With this inexplicable threat he left his nephew, who, after remaining alone a few minutes, was joined by Marian and Gertrude, when, after some little conversation on the subject of Berners' marriage, the latter said—"I am conscious that my behaviour this morning was very ridiculous; but I was totally thrown off my guard by the satisfaction I felt: I am now more calm. Newspaper intelligence is frequently not authentic; and I scarcely dare yet give credit to this."

"Though I consider Berners as too insignificant to give you a moment's pain, I
sincerely

sincerely wish, if it will add to your happiness, that it may be true."

"Indeed," said Gertrude, "it will remove a mountain from my bosom, as I shall, in all probability, never see him more. I know not how it is, but I hope I am not less sensible of my folly than formerly; but I certainly no longer am so deeply wounded by the remembrance. It used to make me, if not hate, shun all mankind; but I now appear to breathe a freer air, and consider every object with a complacency I have scarcely ever before experienced."

"You do your friends but justice," returned Albert, "to consider them, as far as possible, in the same partial light that every one must necessarily regard you."

"On my life, a compliment!" exclaimed Marian; "and from Albert! Treasure it, Gertrude, for it is a scarce commodity: I much question you ever receive another. Will you be obliging enough, brother, to repeat it, in order to refresh our memories?"

"I deny

"I deny the accusation; Miss St. Austyn is above compliment."

"Deeper and deeper!" cried Marian: "Stay a moment, Albert, till I call my uncle, that he may be gratified by learning your improvement. He told me the other day that you had the least gallantry he ever saw a young man possess: now could you not manage to get into favour by paying a few flowery compliments in his presence to Miss St. Austyn's person? for to me he would consider it what he calls *all grimace*."

"I could not compliment Miss St. Austyn's person without begging pardon of her understanding, and must therefore still retain my uncle's bad opinion."

"Pish!" said Marian, "to continue my uncle's own words—'You are a fool!' What has understanding to do with compliments?"

"Truly, nothing," said Albert.

"Nothing can come of nothing. Speak again,"

again," returned she; "are we not two lovely creatures?"

"You are both passing fair," answered Albert; "let that satisfy you."

"Oh, you abominable churl! to select the expression that of all others I detest! old, young, brown, yellow, crooked, straight, are all in their turn termed fair; as fair creatures, fair maids, fair ladies, fair authoresses, fair inconstants, with all the *et ceteras* of fair, that in short include the whole sex. Say we are handsome, and you shall have our best curtseys."

"You are handsome enough to claim the admiration of men, but whether that of the generality of women, I have my doubts."

"How strangely does that answer scent of the old bachelor, who must ever season his discourse, and shew his wit in illiberal sarcasms at women, because, like the fox in the fable, he pretends to despise the grapes he cannot reach!"

"Your observation, in some cases, may
be

be just, but far from general; my uncle, for example—I don't think the ladies have a more devoted admirer."

"I have frequently wondered," said Gertrude, "that he never married; his temper is so cheerful, and his heart so good, that notwithstanding his eccentricity any woman might have been happy with him."

"You pay him but a just tribute," answered Albert; "for, added to the candour of your opinion, you are one of his greatest favourites."

"Indeed," returned Marian, "I am frequently rather jealous; nor should I greatly wonder, as he says Albert is not inclined to marriage, if he was, with one of his best *congées*, to make Gertrude an offer of his heart."

"When he does, I shall certainly accept it, if only for the purpose of teaching you your duty to your new aunt."

"Agreed—I freely give consent. What say you, Albert, to this arrangement?"

"That though I wish my uncle all possible

sible happiness, I could rather it was more independent of my own."

The entrance of Mrs. Stanhope broke upon the discourse; she informed them the colonel was returned home.—“We have had,” said she, “a long conference respecting Frederic; and his opinion is, that if all other methods fail, we should endeavour to discover him by the means of his domestics in Yorkshire, or his attorney in London.”

“Will you, my dear madam,” replied Albert, warmly, “trust to my diligence in this affair?”

“I thank you, my young friend, but for the present will decline your offer; we will yet a little longer try if my nephew perseveres in his concealment; if he does, I think I must take a journey to London.”

Albert soon after took leave. Marian and Gertrude retired to dress, and Mrs. Stanhope withdrew to her apartment.

CHAPTER XVII.

*A Fete—New Lovers—An old Affront
not forgotten.*

THOUGH Mrs. Stanhope declined living in the bustle of life, or being a slave to the punctilios of fashion, yet she was far from rejecting a select and cheerful society: thus she, with her niece and Marian, occasionally received and paid visits to all the respectable families in the surrounding country.

At the distance of five miles dwelt Mr. Willowby, a gentleman of large fortune, who having an only son, on the point of attaining his twenty-first year, it was thought necessary to give a sumptuous entertainment; to which, among the first families

milies in the county, Mrs. Stanhope, her niece, and Marian, were invited, as were also the colonel and his nephew.

On the appointed evening, the ladies found the colonel and Albert at Mr. Willowby's on their arrival, and having paid their compliments to the owners of the mansion, immediately joined the company. Mr. George Willowby, as hero of the fete, opened the ball with a minuet, in which he entreated Miss St. Austyn's hand, which was readily granted; but as he led her to her seat, a request for a continuation of that favour was answered by her pleading a prior engagement to Mr. Montgomery.

"May I entreat then," said he, "for the third and fourth dance?"

Gertrude bowed, retook her place, and a few minutes after Marian was selected by a gentleman, with whom having danced a minuet, she promised her hand for the first country dance.

Albert and Gertrude were by no means
among

among the least cheerful of the set ; and, the first dance over, he requested her to favour him when she should be again disengaged.

“ With all my heart,” replied she, with great *naïveté*—“ I wish we did not change—I hate to dance with a stranger.”

At that moment Marian, with her partner, who appeared particularly attentive, joined them ; when Gertrude casually addressing her by name, he said—“ If I am not impertinently curious, I think that lady called you Miss Montgomery ?”

“ Montgomery is my name,” returned Marian.

“ Would to Heaven,” answered the stranger, “ you may never change it !”

“ In all probability I never shall,” said she, smiling, but with some surprise.

“ That *probability* would be most fortunate for me,” answered he.

“ I know not how it could interest you,” said she.

"I wish you would make me the promise."

"That is requesting too much," answered she, laughing, "as, should I meet with a name more musical to my ear, I might be tempted to break it."

"I am now convinced that cannot be, at least to mine," returned he: "and, *à-propos*, as no one has been spiteful enough to step forward to claim you, may I not entreat your hand for the ensuing dance?"

"By no means. I have a beau ready on this occasion, who will fall in exactly with your idea, as his name is also Montgomery."

As she spoke, she laid her hand on Albert, who, to confess the truth, had been paying more attention to Gertrude than his sister, and did not feel any particular gratification at the marked attention young Willowby appeared to pay her.

"If you are not engaged, Albert," said she, "I bespeak you for the next two dances."

"With

“ With all my heart ; stay till I have spoken to my uncle, and I am at your command.”

As he replied, he crossed the room to the colonel, when the stranger said—“ He must, indeed, be more than man to have declined such a challenge ; but no one except a brother could have accepted it so coldly.”

During the next dance, Marian observed her late partner in earnest discourse with the lady of the house, and a man considerably advanced in years, their eyes directed alternately to the colonel, herself, and brother.

The dance was scarcely concluded, when Mrs. Willowby, joining Marian and her party, said—“ Indeed, Mr. Montgomery, such monopoly is unpardonable, and must not be permitted. I come an humble petitioner from your sister’s partner, who not only begs to be reinstated, but also the honour of being introduced to you.—Ed-

ward Montgomery, son of sir James Montgomery," added she, presenting him.

The surprise of both Albert and Marian was excessive: the former, though he was too generous to condemn the son for the neglect his father had shewn to a deserving brother, could not immediately banish the reflection; therefore bowed with more distance than was natural to him.

"To confess the truth, cousin, for I *will* not forget the relationship," said Edward Montgomery, "I fancy some blame may be attached to my part of the family respecting yours; but as I cannot consider myself an accessory, neither I hope will you."

This apology banished Albert's coldness; and seating themselves in a corner, the trio soon formed an acquaintance.

The second dance concluded. Gertrude joined them; when Albert receiving her from Willowby, she said, curtseying—"I will dance no more this evening, sir."

"Are

“Are you ill?” said Albert, tenderly; “I have seen you dance far longer without complaint.”

Gertrude excused herself, and they chatted until supper; after which Mrs. Stanhope, with her niece and Marian, returned home.

The ball, and the meeting it had been productive of, furnished discourse for the ensuing morning, both at Blackwood and the Vale. The colonel, though he allowed that the son should not be accountable for the actions of his father, yet appeared by no means anxious to cultivate an acquaintance, and did not fail to express his satisfaction, when he found that sir James was only on a visit at Mr. Willowby's, the young gentlemen having been at college together.

In the course of the morning, Edward Montgomery, with his friend, came to inquire after the ladies; and having staid as long as politeness would permit, they called on their way home at Blackwood.

The colonel's behaviour, though hospitable, had not that friendly bluntness that distinguished him among his favourites; the constrained rules of politeness with him always degenerated into coldness; and though he was careful not to wound the feelings of Albert, by any reflection on his father's family, he by no means appeared sorry when the visitors left them.—“What think you of those two bucks?” said he, when Albert returned from accompanying them to the door.

“They are likely young fellows,” returned Albert; “but, if I may judge on so slight an acquaintance, rather superficial than really informed or accomplished.”

“At all events,” answered the colonel, “young Montgomery does not apparently possess the pride and insolence of his father. I hope I shall never meet with him, as I should hardly help giving him a rub of past times; though it could not be done without including myself in the reproof.”

“My

"My dear uncle, why will you distress me by remembering what, could my parents see, they would declare had been so greatly compensated?"

"Perhaps they might; but I have a monitor within not so easily satisfied. How many uneasy hours could I have spared them! how many pleasurable ones, as your mother said in her letter, have I deprived myself of!"

"How many happy ones have you enabled their children to enjoy! how has your kindness supplied all those claims filial duty has on the heart!"

"This meeting with sir James Montgomery has torn open the old wound; for I consider him a mirror that reflects my own faults."

"My father never considered your coldness like that of sir James; he gave the first offence, and not only so, but withheld the property that in justice ought to have appertained to my father, though a regular division had not been specified."

Some days after this discourse, one morning that Albert was out, and the colonel alone, the servant, to his great surprise, announced sir James Montgomery and Mr. Willowby. Desiring them to be admitted, he received them with a civility that he considered particularly due to Mr. Willowby, but bowed to sir James as a stranger; and, after some preliminary discourse—"We are come, colonel," said the first-mentioned, "at once to entreat your favour and your interest. The fortune of our two boys you are sufficiently acquainted with, to render much explanation unnecessary. The happiness of both, they say, depends, the one on your concurrence, and the other on your favourable representation to Mrs. Stanhope, who, we are assured, will pay all due deference to it. Our families, colonel, are both ancient and respectable—our boys are sole heirs—and we so heartily wish to see them married, that our consent was no sooner asked than granted. My son begs your interest with
Mrs.

Mrs. Stanhope to forward his wishes with Miss St. Austyn, and sir James submits to your consideration the same proposal from his son to Miss Montgomery."

Mr. Willowby might have continued longer without interruption, though the colonel felt a sentiment of impatience he was successful in concealing.

"You do me more honour, sir," answered he, "than I have any right to claim. Though Mrs. Stanhope does me the favour to protect my niece, yet in a matter so near to her happiness as the disposal of Miss St. Austyn, whom she regards as a daughter, I will not presume to interfere. For Miss Montgomery I can say little more; she is entirely under the care of Mrs. Stanhope; and though I will be responsible that she shall have a fortune worthy the daughter of *my sister*, I decline all recommendation whatever."

"I am conscious, colonel," replied sir James, with some confusion, "that there have been omissions on my part, that may
perhaps

perhaps justify in your opinion this reply; but you will be pleased to recollect, the error was equally on your side as mine, though you possess the credit of having first made the atonement."

"I claim no merit from that circumstance, sir James," answered the colonel. "I speak freely before Mr. Willowby, because I consider him your friend, and will therefore honestly confess that no restitution I can make to the children will perfectly satisfy me for the neglect with which I treated the parents. I was surrounded with affluence, while my sister, with an affectionate husband and two deserving children, possessed a stipend so slender, that nothing but frugality, and a good conscience, could have enabled them to support life with that credit to themselves, and applause from others, that they must ever justly claim. Yet they were happy, as my sister expressed it not long before her death, beyond the common lot of mortals: *that*, sir James, their mutual friends—
pardon

pardon me, I mean relations—could not deprive them of.”

“All this, however true,” answered sir James, haughtily, “is foreign to the purpose; Miss Montgomery could suffer no disgrace by accepting my son’s hand.”

“Doubtless not; and as I shall give you my honour not to interfere in the affair, so will I also give you my opinion. Both Albert and his sister, sir James, possess a plentiful share of the family pride; and that being the only inheritance on the side of both father and mother, who can blame them? Not I, I confess; my conscience must be clearer before I can enter upon a subject so criminating to myself.”

“All this is no proper reason why Miss Montgomery should refuse my son, unless she is engaged,” returned sir James.

“That, to my certain knowledge, she is not; but are you aware, sir James, of the many humiliations she has suffered, and which being recollected, might reflect on your family? Her mother’s dead body

was arrested; Albert redeemed it with his living one, and consigned himself in the flower of his age to a prison. Marian, reduced to dependence on a deserving woman, whose abilities were however not equal to her inclination, was constrained to seek a service, in which situation she first met Mrs. Stanhope, who, I am convinced, would have preserved both her and Albert from indigence, had they even never seen me. Such are our obligations to that lady; and now known to you, sir James, you will, I have no doubt, acknowledge them, as you think Marian worthy to be your son's wife."

"Though I should be proud of an acquaintance with a lady the world speaks so highly of as Mrs. Stanhope," answered sir James, "I cannot consider *myself* as under any immediate obligation to her; and if any such as you express exist. I should think the honour of the family mutually concerned in discharging them."

"I know not how that is to be accomplished,"

plished," answered the colonel, "if even Mrs. Stanhope were not above pecuniary considerations; and for myself, I regard money as inadequate to repay such obligations."

Mr. Willowby, who perceived little was to be hoped from the interference of the colonel, joined in discourse by saying—"As you decline the affair, colonel, and have generously declared that you will not interfere in respect to Miss Montgomery, we will apply to Mrs. Stanhope. Sir James, I am convinced, will submit all to her judgment; and for myself, if happy enough to succeed in my negociation for my son, pecuniary matters are beneath our consideration. Miss St. Austyn's fortune shall be settled on herself, to which we will add any jointure on my estate her aunt may think requisite."—With these words the gentlemen rose; and a formal leave having passed, the colonel was left to his reflections.

For

For some time he walked about the apartment; then, with his usual vehemence, began whistling an Irish tune; at which instant Montgomery entered, and seeing his uncle's discomposure, though he was far from surmising the cause, took his place in silence, for interference he well knew unavailing. The tune at length concluded, turning to his nephew, he said—"Young Willowby is a fine spirited handsome fellow, not one of your *shilly-shally* uncertain chaps—not one of your *virtuoso* magotty lovers; he is content to take the girl, and find out her faults afterwards. He offers to settle her whole fortune on herself, and a portion of the family estate. You have made a devilish clean piece of business of it, for I have no doubt but that she will accept him; his father has been here to entreat my interest with Mrs. Stanhope."

A sentiment not of the most pleasing kind for a moment prevented Albert's reply; but, struggling with his feelings, he said—"I cannot wonder at such an event.

Miss

Miss St. Austyn is formed to be beloved, and the offer proves at once his honour and discernment."

"And your behaviour proves at once your folly and obstinacy. If you had been ruled by me, all would have been settled by this time; now ten to one but he carries her off! What will you say to that, sir?"

"I know not what I shall say, sir; but I must endeavour to bear the disappointment like a rational creature."

"You lie, sir; you wont bear it like a rational creature; in spite of your hypocrisy, the girl is as dear to you as your own soul; and you will run the fellow through the guts, and hang yourself, before you will so quietly resign her."

"I hope not, sir; I own I love her—sincerely, truly love her; but if she prefers Willowby to me, I hope I shall act with propriety, and resign her without having recourse to such a dreadful alternative."

"D—n

"D—n philosophy!" say I, "what has it to do with love?"

"If I should judge by myself, very little, sir."

"Oh, sir, you will allow that? Well, set off to the Vale then; lose no time, but make the first proposal; Mrs. Stanhope, I am convinced, will favour you, nor do I think that Gertrude will be obdurate."

"Much as I love her, sir, I cannot bear the idea of influencing her conduct. I consider myself as bound to her, from the moment you addressed her aunt in my favour; but let her choice be unrestrained. Should she refuse Mr. Willowby——"

"Refuse him! The girl's not such an idiot. If she had any expectancy of you indeed—but that she cannot have—so let the matter take its chance—(forcing a laugh)—Ha, ha, ha! I hope she will accept him, if only to punish your folly—Ha, ha, ha! Egad, it will serve me for a joke to laugh at you as long as I live!"

"Indeed

“Indeed I hope to the contrary—I do not think she can like Willowby; and if she does not, I am convinced she will refuse him.”

“Confound your vanity! Now the murderer’s out. Do you think she has fallen in love with your sweet face? Albert, don’t be a blockhead; read the fable of The Dog and the Shadow, and make the application.”

With these words the colonel bounced out of the apartment, and Albert was endeavouring to collect himself, when, suddenly returning, he said—“Zounds! you put every thing out of my head! Old *Jem* Montgomery came here with Willowby; he wants to snap up your sister for his son.”

“Is it possible,” returned Albert, “that he could propose such an alliance?”

“Very possible,” answered the colonel. “May I entreat your opinion of it, sir?”

“My opinion is, for I love Marian, that she should be left to her own choice.

Mrs.

Mrs. Stanhope, I am convinced, will advise her for the best, and to her I have referred the gentleman. I need not tell you I don't like sir James; but, if his son was lucky enough to please your sister, I certainly would endeavour to forget whatever might be a drawback on her happiness."

"My dear uncle," replied Albert, with an emotion he could not repress, "never will Marian, who looks up to you as a parent, marry any one that has not your entire approbation."

"Peace, sir!—To use your own words, I cannot bear the idea of influencing her conduct; I therefore insist upon it you make no mention of what you may surmise respecting me."

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