CONSTANCE.

VOL. III.
CONSTANCE.

A NOVEL.

In a word, my work is digressive, and it is progressive too, and at the same time.—STERNE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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CONSTANCE.

CHAPTER I.

Lo! as she enters, the fond infant steals
To touch her hand, and gaze the joy he feels;
Stern labour lightens to the arm of toil,
The woe-worn pillowed head is raised to smile,
Pale, wither’d lips to mutter praises try,
And one bright gleam illumes the closing eye.

Vale of Peace, MSS. Poem.

Whilst the conversation related in the last chapter was carried on, Miss Bouverie had been safely deposited in the hotel, the only respectable or comfortable one then in the place, which her brother had visited a few days previous. Early in the evening he joined her, and they retired to their several apartments.

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Miss Bouverie was seven years older than her brother, and consequently approached to that age, when women are often accused, and sometimes with justice, of becoming selfish and precise. Maria (for so was Mr. Bouverie's sister still familiarly called by those who had known her as a girl) had been a beauty, of county celebrity, and, indeed, the beauty of her family. It was, however, her lot to see plainer, and younger sisters married before her, and to remain the last stay, and only solace, of her parents, during the many separations which gradually thinned the paternal mansion. To those who remembered Miss Bouverie in the lustre of her youth, this circumstance was inexplicable. At a very early age, the neighbourhood had given her to a young student of the law, her elder brother's companion at Cambridge, and an inmate in the house during several successive vacations. He, however, disappeared, and from seventeen to seven and twenty, Maria had tired out the patience of her well-wishers by successive dismissals of various suitors, whom her beauty, her wit, and perhaps, her indifference, had attracted to her, sometimes
in preference, and sometimes in antecedence to her sisters, to whom they had afterwards transferred their affections. She was, indeed, known to have observed, in the jocularity of her familiar converse, that of her four brothers-in-law, two had actually thought it their duty to propose to her, first: one had made her a blind to pay his addresses to another sister; the fourth had kindly destined her for the mother of his nine children, but finding her indisposed to widowers, had chosen, in lieu of her, the young, and blooming Caroline, who had presented him with nine more. She was also prone, most improperly to be sure, to amuse herself at the expense of those gentlemen who had offered her their hands. One commenced his siege by a large folio sheet, or, to speak technically, document, beginning with—"When a man is bewildered, and loses his way, what course would you advise him to pursue? Would you not direct him to apply to some guide to set him on his path rejoicing? To you, therefore, do I apply, having wandered in the paths of love," &c. &c. &c.

"These metaphorical lovers will never do,"
said Maria, as she mercilessly consigned the document, sealing-wax and all, to the flames.

Then there was the bluff country gentleman, who bounced out with—"Yours is a very confining life, Miss Maria, you could not be worse off, if you were married. What do you say to Grove Park?"

Then came the grammatical production of some lettered parson, assigning to himself every good quality that a wife could desire, and insinuating that he considered her the happiest woman in the world to have such perfection at her feet. But all would not do. Maria, from being the wildest and most unmanageable girl in the nursery school-room, from locking up the cat in the closet that it might frighten her governess, abjuring spelling, and rushing into down-right rebellion, touching the French verbs, had gradually risen, no one knew how, into a modest, graceful, and intelligent young woman, and was now, still more marvellously, transformed into a superior, cultivated, and even polished lady. Her taste was proverbially fastidious, her manners unexceptionably correct. Her buoyant, satirical mirth of girlhood, which
usually makes free with the weakness and peculiarities of others, was now chastened, and had, indeed, been improved into that keen, and yet good-natured perception of character without which a person may have a respectable share of sense, but must always prove a dull companion. Miss Bouverie had never been a great reader; she was more of a walker, a rider, a sketcher, a visitor of the poor, than a reader—yet it was observed, that what she did happen to peruse, she turned to more account than any one else; and then her taste in music, in gardens, in dress, was generally regarded as oracular. In short, she was come to that point of perfection, at seven and twenty, that people began to say, "She must have a husband made on purpose for her."

Just as the world, in general, had arrived at this important decision, a grave, gentlemanly looking man, about eight and thirty, was seen occupying a corner of Mrs. Bouverie's seat at church. His dark grey, and somewhat sunken eye, whilst its fire seemed reined in by devotion, had something of talent and vivacity in it, as if the intellect of the man had been strength-
ened, not only by the labours of the closet, but by the collision of society. Such was indeed the case, yet an expression of care dwelt on the brow upon which the indication of integrity, and manly candour rested also. The young had quite forgotten the stranger; yet thought they had seen the face somewhere before. The elderly recognized Mr. Vernon, the former suitor of Miss Bouverie, they cared not to specify how many years back.

It was, indeed, the same person, "a travelled man," who had returned to his country after years of absence, elevated, by a high official appointment in the sister country, to wealth and station; and thus enabled to state that the obstacle to his early union was overcome; improved in manners, and even in appearance, for age, which displays more forcibly the weakness of the imbecile, adds, in its course, to the "high expression of a mind" in the intelligent, and the exactions which society levels upon us, aid in imparting to the manner, and voice, and features, that indefinable grace which is called good-breeding. Maria had parted from Mr. Vernon, a clever, but unformed, and impetu-
ous youth; she found him a finished gentleman, and what is more, an enlightened and communicative scholar.

On the other hand, Mr. Vernon perceived, in the object of his boyish love, no unnatural change, no artificial deportment, no premature wrinkles, none of the stiffness, nor narrowness—-or I should rather say—-imputed to, celibacy. The artlessness and generosity of her character were the same, but, like her person, the graces of youth began to be blended with the tact, and experience of middle age. Her features were, indeed, delicate and refined, as her character: time had sharpened them somewhat, but, if their perfection of outline were impaired, their sweetness was, perhaps, increased. The bloom which tinged her cheek was less permanent than heretofore, but it was the hue of the carnation, exchanged for the rose; and, if the figure had lost its full proportions, it had gained, from the grace of the presiding mind, in elegance. Maria and Mr. Vernon met, therefore, with less of disappointment than might usually be expected in such cases, where the portrait has been coloured, and re-coloured, by the imagination in absence.
And they seemed formed for each other. Yet suddenly, and without explanation to relatives or friends, Mr. Vernon left the residence of Mr. Bouverie, and never appeared in the neighbourhood again.

Whatever were the cause, the effect was not soon recovered by Miss Bouverie. Her garden, her rides, her drawings, seemed to interest her no longer. The distress or mortification of others, ever, indeed, excited her instant attention. She was, at times, the subject of censure to the "unco guid," for that she measured her benevolence not so much by the merits, as by the wants of the afflicted. But she was prodigiously adroit in repelling these charges, and unluckily for the very, very righteous, our Saviour has given us erring Christians a latitude to our forgiveness, of which few are apt to take advantage.

Eight years had elapsed since Mr. Vernon's departure, and Miss Bouverie had given no indications of any intention to change her name. She was still lovely, and by her friends, was every successive year becoming more and more beloved. She seemed to live for others, and
had as much indulgence for the follies, as much interest in the hopes, and as much concern for the love affairs of her young friends, as if she were not herself one of the most faultless, least vain, and now, least susceptible of womankind. Such was Miss Bouverie, at the time that Constance became acquainted with her.

It need scarcely be stated, that with such a being as Maria, Miss Courtenay soon became at her ease, and from being at her ease, went on to intimacy. They were on the high road to friendship, when an accession to their little circle, unhappily for them, arrived. This was General Monckton, the brother of Miss Monckton, and her reputed heir, who having been duly apprized of her death by Mr. Bouverie, came to Malvern for the purpose of attending the funeral, and of hearing her will.

He was a man, who had already too much money, and too much time; no wife, no children, no pursuits, nor any interests in life except a troop of old messmates, every one more lame, more infirm, more blind, and more aged than the other. He was a man, also, whom no one had remembered young; he seemed to have
begun life middle aged: his figure was tall, musket-like and military. He spoke loud, and as if he were giving the word of command, except when, as was often the current of his discourse, his conversation consisted in questions. He was a man of good family, good character, good person, but without the least notion of polite behaviour. He never seemed to recollect that people had feelings: he seemed to look upon the conversation as a sort of combat, in which he, who said the rudest things, was victor: he had no idea of intellectual quarter. Like his departed sister, he had an abundance of prejudices, to which he stood firm, as he would have done to his colours on the field of battle: he had not a notion of an argument; with him all was downright assertion.

The General had never over-much loved his deceased sister, and he knew as little about her, as if she had been an entire stranger; consequently, he had every thing to learn of her habits, arrangements, and circumstances, and if asking questions would have done, he might have been informed; unluckily he never waited for answers.
This gentleman made his appearance just as Mr. Bouverie, and Miss Bouverie, and Constance were sitting down to dinner, the third day after Miss Monckton's death. He stalked into the dining-room from his carriage with infinite sang-froid, saying to the servant in the passage:

"Only don't show me into the room where the corpse is, that's all. But bless me!" he continued, as he entered the sitting room, "who are all these? I didn’t know my sister had a family here. Your servant, sir—you are Mr. Bouverie I presume. Much obliged to you for your letter—no, thank you—don’t eat now—too early, but I'll sit down whilst you eat. I suppose you’ll be able to communicate all particulars of my poor dead sister—hey? dropped down dead? So I understood—a family failing, her two aunts did the same. I'm the only one of the race left standing. An easy death? hey? So I am told. Well, what a queer sort of place this Malvern is, but one inn in the town—What do they call it? What’s the reason of that? doesn’t answer—hey?"

It was in vain that any reply was given. He seemed to be as little enlightened at the close
of his questions as before. Mr. Bouverie looked grave, Miss Bouverie totally unconcerned, though once, upon the frequent repetition of "My poor dead sister," the corners of her mouth began to tell tales, and she was obliged to turn it off upon some mistake of the servant's. The General laughed too—"Devilish awkward, indeed!" said he; "you seem to have nothing but the feminine gender here—better have my man in to help out your damsels—you might be afraid of him among the maidens—hey? Your brother's a parson, isn't he? Then it won't do to joke upon such subjects—hey? But I see you have a man servant too, an occasional waiter—hey?"

"My brother's servant," replied Miss Bouverie, with a glance at Constance, who was still an invalid, and who seemed scarcely able to sit through the insensibility of the General.

"Is that young lady ill too—hey? knocked up with attending upon poor Jane? But no, I forgot, she made short work of it—so much the better—hey?"

Here Constance abruptly left the room, and Mr. Bouverie, looking earnestly after her, seem-
ed as if he could scarcely continue there either.

"Is she worse then?" inquired the General—"hey? Something disagreed with her? Your cookery, here, don't seem to be over good? What's the place to dine at—hey?"

"Anywhere but here," said Miss Bouverie slyly.

"So I thought—hey?"

"That's a fine young woman," observed the General, as Miss Bouverie quitted the room.

"I mean Miss Courtenay," he added, lest Mr. Bouverie should by any chance flatter himself that he intended thus to designate Miss Bouverie. "Your sister has been very good looking I see, but she's some ten years older than you, is she not—hey? What age did you say—hey?"

But getting no reply to this question, he went on. "What capacity did Miss Courtenay fill near my sister—hey? Not a companion, you say, then 'tis very strange that poor Jane took such a fancy to her; but she was mighty odd—mighty odd. Never cared for her own relations, and I don't believe had one jot of affection for me—hey?"
He filled out a glass of wine, and finding Mr. Bouverie somewhat taciturn, he continued; “Then how comes it, that this Miss what-dye-call um’s not married—hey? I had only a passing glance of her in her weeds; (I’m sure she has contrived to get her mourning damned early, that’s grieving post haste.) O, she’s in mourning for her sister, say you? What sister, hey? Ay ti-tye! poor thing! Well, the best thing she can do is to buckle too—has she had many offers, do you know?”

“I cannot say, I am sure,” replied Mr. Bouverie, inwardly writhing.

“No, women don’t make confidants of such young fellows as you. But you don’t seem to me over well, either. This house is close;” and, opening the window as he spoke, “there’s a damned close smell in it, but that’s easily accounted for—hey?”

“Shall we go up stairs, sir?” inquired Mr. Bouverie, sighing heavily as he spoke, for the thought of poor Constance passed across him.

To his great satisfaction, the General declined the invitation. But it was only a momentary gleam of pleasure. “No, thank you;
no thank you;" yet on second thoughts he added, "I should like too, to wish the ladies good night; and perhaps this Miss Courtenay may think it strange if I do not say something to her about her attention to my poor sister—hey?"

"O, there's not the least occasion; I will make her sensible of your kind intentions," replied Mr. Bouverie, advancing to the hall door. But the General's foot was on the stairs.

"So you are afraid of my poaching on your manors, and running off with this fine bird here, are you—hey?" said he, in a stentorian voice, and with a laugh corresponding. Then stopping on the landing,

"God bless my soul!" he added, "how I do feel for the loss of my poor dear sister, as I approach nearer to her. Where does the corpse lie?" he continued, without lowering his voice. Mr. Bouverie was in agony, and, quite in dismay for Constance, said eagerly, "Had you not better defer your entrance into the drawing-room for a few days, General, till your spirits are—stronger," he was going to have added; but the insincere word died away upon
his lips. But the General had now advanced into the drawing-room. Constance was there; and her appearance stopped him short; for the remains of a burst of grief were still visible in the audible but subdued sobs which broke from her.

"Very piteous, poor thing!—very touching, indeed!—Poor thing! Has she ever lost any friend or relation before—hey? It's a new thing, I dare say.—I'll wish you good night, sir. You'll see, of course, that all is right, to do honour to poor Jane's memory. What says Miss Courtenay, has she any voice in the matter?"

But receiving no answer, he walked away, saying, "I wish you better, Miss Courtenay.—Good night to you, ma'am, —Good night, sir;"

"Thank God!" exclaimed Maria, as the front door finally closed. "What can one say of a man, than that he has no taste?"

She looked at her brother, who was seated by Constance, regarding her with an air of deep concern, but without speaking.

"I am better now; I will not distress you again by a display of these feelings," said Constance, raising her head, and extending her
hand to Miss Bouverie. "Henceforward, I am resolved to trouble and distress no one about me. You may rely upon this," she added, looking at Mr. Bouverie, "that the lessons you have given me are not so utterly thrown away."

There was a kindness in her look and voice that might have beguiled a vainer man of hope; but Mr. Bouverie scarcely raised his eyes from the ground.

"Since you are disposed to exertions which must be beneficial to you, and which it is so commendable in the afflicted to make, you may not, perhaps, think me premature or indelicate, Constance, if I now suggest to you a plan for the next few months, which will, I think, aid your endeavours to regain your usual cheerfulness."

"What are they?" asked Constance, deeply touched by the kindness, yet constraint, with which these words were spoken. "Whatever you suggest, I shall be sure to like."

"My mother," said Maria, coming forward, "has desired me to request you to return with me to Clifford. My brother will not be able to
accompany us,” she added; “but with our trusty knight Philip, and your maid Sarah, we shall defy highwaymen, and all similar perils.—She consents,” she added, looking at the thoughtful countenance of Constance.

“He has then relinquished all tie but that of friendship,” was the reflection which passed through Miss Courtenay’s mind. This was her first thought—her second impulse was that of gratitude, which filled her eyes with tears.

“I shall not, cannot refuse such kindness,” she said, pressing Maria’s hand warmly, but looking at Mr. Bouverie. “I am wicked enough to hope,” she added, “that I may never return to Newberry; that if I can find no other permanent abode, the grave will in mercy receive me first.”

“Is this right, Constance?” said Mr. Bouverie, reproachfully; but he added, soothingly, “You shall not return there; I will, if you authorize me to do so, discuss the subject with your guardian, and try to persuade him to let you adopt any plan agreeable to you—till—you are—of age.”

The word seemed to be pronounced with an
effort, and they were listened to with a conviction, on the part of Constance, that Mr. Bouverie thought of her no longer but as a friend.

"And why should this grieve me?" she asked herself when she had retired to her own room for the night. "Alas! had he loved me as I once was loved, he could not so readily have relinquished all hope!" And, with a heavy heart, she began her last act of simple devotion.
CHAPTER II.

"To be sure," said my mother, "love keeps peace in the world."

Sterne.

Mr. Bouverie arranged every particular relative to the arrangement of Miss Monckton's affairs, in so simple and quiet a manner, as to afford the least possible annoyance or excitement to Constance. The chief portion of Miss Monckton's small property was divided among relations, with whom her brother received his share only. She left some valuable remembrances to Constance, in the form of books and jewels; alleging, as her reason for not bequeathing any other legacy to her, that she considered it as a duty to do what "she could for rela-
tions;"—an excellent principle, observing which, people can seldom go wrong in testamentary arrangements. In other respects, Miss Monckton’s dispositions seemed somewhat whimsical: to Mr. Bouverie, she bequeathed a fine copy of Shakspeare; to Sir Charles Marchmont, an old, but well preserved copy of Barrow’s Sermons. This last bequest was duly transmitted to Marchmont, but without an accompanying line, from Mr. Bouverie, on whom the office of executor had devolved.

The last solemn rites having been performed, Constance, with apparent calmness, prepared to accompany Miss Bouverie to Clifford. She had sustained the final separation from all that remained to her of her friend with fortitude; she had even supported a subsequent visit to her quiet grave within the precincts of Malvern’s ancient church, with a composure that resembled resignation; yet, during the few days that she remained at Malvern after these trials, neither her health nor spirits appeared to revive. The paleness imparted by the first shock remained on her altered countenance; the languid voice, the deep dejection which stamped her features,
a sort of hopeless calm, denoted to the anxious and watchful Mr. Bouverie, that her mind had received a deeper shock from past events, than he had hitherto suspected. Maria, too, saw a settled depression stealing over the young, but stricken object of her newly awakened interest, and the grief "that did not speak," appeared of double danger in her eyes. With these impressions, Mr. Bouverie, when he bade Constance and his sister adieu, resolved, that whatever it might be expedient for his own happiness to pursue, he would not long remain at Newberry, but visit Clifford shortly; for he felt that he could not, with the apprehensions which were crowding into his mind, be long absent from Constance. "Good God!" thought he, as they drove away, and left him standing before the little gate of the now deserted house; "what if her fate should resemble Emily's—if the same fatal disease—But no! surely I may trust in a merciful God that such a trial may be spared me."

Meantime the two ladies proceeded on their journey; Miss Bouverie was kind and communicative, but she spared Constance the suffering
of incessant conversation. She noticed with some surprise, however, that Constance could not, in any way, refer to Mr. Bouverie without shedding tears.

"He has been so kind to me," she once said, as if in explanation of this weakness, "and he is now the only—old friend that I possess."

"Well, you will find my mother an old friend," replied Maria; "she is old in years, old in troubles. It has been her lot to be separated by death from every one of her sons, except Henry. My eldest brother married unhappily, and, perhaps, happily was taken away by Providence from a wife whom he neither loved nor respected. My two next brothers, young, high-spirited, and brave, blooming fine fellows, had a turn for the military profession: they both died of fevers, one in India, the other, poor, happy, thoughtless Charles, after two days' illness at Malta. We lost my youngest brother four years since, before you knew Henry: his fate was a mournful one—a passion for travelling seized him, and by his own particular wish, a friend took him to an estate which he possessed in Jamaica. There, the home sick-
ness seized the poor boy: he pined for England. In this depressing state he was attacked by an intermittent fever; he set sail, however, and died on his passage homewards. I think my mother will never wholly recover his loss; but she is surprisingly cheerful, and with all the woes she has endured, will not allow the world to be a scene of misery. She deems it a pleasant resting-place, whence we may have a glimpse, or rather a foretaste, of happier, and of brighter, and purer scenes; and besides, whilst she has in my sole surviving brother such a source of comfort, she justly considers that she has no right to complain."

A pang of self-reproach was conveyed to Constance by this speech. "Have I," she thought, "been the unhappy means of rendering this hope of comfort to the bereaved mother, futile? But no; he has recovered his peace of mind, at least as far as I am concerned."

"Did you hear," said Maria, "the consolatory intelligence, that General Monckton was to spend the shooting season within two miles of us? Ah, my dear Miss Courtenay, you will have need of all your lungs, and all your spirits
to encounter him. He even persisted with me to the last moment, that you were going to be married to Sir Charles Marchmont, though that thoughtless and dissipated individual has been married these nine months.—Does the carriage make you ill?"

"No," answered Constance, in a tone of such real despair, that Miss Bouverie looked at her with surprise.

"My brother," she added, still perfectly unconscious of her auditor's feelings, "used to be much attached to this Sir Charles Marchmont. He described him to me as a man born to be beloved; ingenuous and liberal—Henry really loved him—and I am certain, must have discovered something very reprehensible in his character, or he would have done so still. Did you ever meet with him?"

"I have," replied Constance, struggling to appear composed, but her natural ingenuousness got the better of art. "I have," she repeated, "and I was the unfortunate means of his losing in your brother his best, and only sincere friend, one, too, whom he valued as he ought. He is neither thoughtless, nor yet dissipated,"

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she added, her colour rising, but dying away immediately to a more than usual paleness. "Dearest Miss Bouverie, some day I will tell you all; but do not, do not, mention his name to me before your brother."

"Then we must muzzle the General," replied Miss Bouverie, "for otherwise, there will be no means of stopping him; he has met somehow with a Mr. Manners, or Manvers."

"An odious detractor," cried Constance, indignantly.

"An odious dresser, I am sure," rejoined Miss Bouverie; "I saw him loitering and peering about your poor friend's lodgings, looking very dusty. Those plain, unseemly men must be excused for being a little inquisitive. But here we are entering upon our last stage."

The village of Clifford, where Mrs. Bouverie resided, was a truly pastoral scene, situated to the south-west of Warwickshire, on the confines of Gloucestershire; the neighbourhood around it, had all that verdant, luxuriant, and smiling aspect which Scotchmen and foreigners so greatly admire. The little homeward paths, emerging from the copse wood, enlivened by groups of
fine cattle, and winding sometimes round a sedgy pool, were, on Sundays, varied by the careless, loitering steps of the villagers, among whom the clean, and elaborate smock frock, the red waistcoat, and long knee-ties, were still deemed the perfection of Sabbath attire, more especially if the hat were set on with a knowing air, and the happy wearer carried in his hand a huge posy of the gayest, and gaudiest flowers, that his cottage garden could boast. Smoke, steam, and machinery, were here known solely for their domestic uses, and in their simplest apparatus; and the clack of a water-mill was the only sound that indicated a substitute for manual labour in this poor, but not distressed district.

The ladies had to drive through a ford, and to pass the low, square-towered church, before the gates of the Hall, as it was called, were apparent to their view. These were of such ample dimensions, as bespoke a residence of some antiquity, for our ancestors did not choose to sneak into their dwellings; within them, a wide, and well-kept gravel road, conducted by a sweep around the house to the front door of the dwelling. All here
was neat to perfection, but somewhat stiff; and had not the luxuriance of nature done its utmost to destroy the mischievous intentions of art, it might have been displeasing; but the smooth shaven lawn, studded with junipers, was shaded by a magnificent cedar, and terminated by a grove of flowering shrubs, which partly concealed, but could not wholly impede, a glimpse of the blue distance beyond. The carriage stopped, and in a few moments Constance found herself in the presence of Mrs. Bouverie, and an elderly maiden relative, who, however, sat by the fire-place, almost unmoved by their approach. There is nothing like a warm reception from persons of whom one is a little afraid, and it is difficult for subsequent acts of indifference, or even unkindness, to efface the pleasant sensations which it excites. Constance felt this forcibly, as the warm-hearted mistress of the mansion advanced with a benignant smile on her animated face to greet her. Mrs. Bouverie had been above the middle height, though her stature was now lessened by the approaches of age. Her figure was, however, still dignified, and her address, possessing the grace, without
the formality of the old school, both imposing and prepossessing. Her dark eyes had the brightness and vivacity of youth; and, although in her sixty-fifth year, she had not yet become, and never meant to become, negligent of her dress. It displayed, indeed, the perfection of cleanliness and good taste. "The young," Mrs. Bouverie said, "might be passable without great nicety; but the old became disgusting, if they ventured to discontinue good habits;" and, in spite of all her past griefs, and her present infirmities, the good, lively old lady still enjoyed putting on a new cap. Happy is it when age can avail itself even of trifles to beguile the downward course of time of its melancholy; age, far more than youth, requires the solace of minute enjoyments. Easy employment, relaxation, unimportant details, even novels—aid in preserving the aged and the infirm from irritation and depression, which not only embitter their own existence, but render them a burden upon others. Mrs. Bouverie was, however, the joy and life of her house—if there were one person more sanguine, more contented than another, it was she;—if the speculator in conversational
prowess ventured on a joke, she was the first, provided it were harmless, to reward it with a laugh. She was ever the person to suggest excuses for the weak and faulty, and to give encouragement to the good. Nature had done much to render her this happy and loveable creature, religion far more. She "waited patiently" for her departure from this world, with a confidence, a holy joy in her Maker, which quickened every impulse of benevolence to those below.

"I must love her," said Constance to herself, "for the sake of her son. I shall love her;" she soon began to think.

Contrasted with this fine, rich picture of benignant old age, was Mrs. Martha, or aunt Martha Willis, as she was usually called, although only a half-sister of the late Mr. Bouverie. This elderly lady possessed a strong masculine understanding, which not having been directed to the natural and usual occupations of woman, had been exercised by politics, controversy, and ill-nature—three things which marvellously resemble each other. Most unhappily for herself, and still more unhappily for her relations, she had
of late years become deaf, which infirmity, shutting out from her the influx of general opinion, her conceit of her own wisdom had been magnified, her prejudices strengthened, and her forbearance altogether annihilated. Suspicion was the reigning vice of her character; she would neither enter into conversation, nor let it alone; but when any one was in the midst of an harangue, interposed her shrill, alarming, and unexpected "What?" into the speaker’s very ear. Fortunately, however, the newspaper occupied her one half of the day, and books of elaborate controversy sent her to sleep the other half: it was absolutely a relief to see her dozing bolt upright in her chair.

For a few days after the arrival of Constance at Clifford, the kindness, the change, the home comforts, the religious cheerfulness which gladdened the Hall, seemed to work a favourable change in her spirits and health. She loved old people—there was something in their dependance that reminded her of childhood, and children were her delight. She listened to the long, succinct narratives of other days, in which Mrs. Bouverie took pleasure, with the greater inte-
rest that "Henry" was often the theme of them. He was, indeed, the subject of his mother's hourly thoughts:—when she should hear from him, what she had to tell him when she wrote; how she wished he would think of marrying—but that he had never yet thought of; how nobly he had acted in this case, how prudently in that—in short, he was her hero. Nothing is so infectious as a sense of importance attached to any one, and Constance began to prize the love which she had almost rejected, the more that it was sought by every one besides herself. Fate seemed also to intend that his image should rest upon her eye, his merits in her mind. Wherever she walked, she met with some traces of his boyish sports, or heard some testimony to his maturer virtues. The target at which he used to shoot was still left under the large elm-tree on the lawn—his favourite pony was still in the paddock. His fishing tackle and cricket bat were still in the hall, and a picture of him, when a boy, hung in the lobby near her bed-room. All these little matters have their influence, and when you add to this, that his wishes, his health, his tastes, his opi-
nions, were the anxious yet darling theme of his mother and sister, it was scarcely possible that Constance should avoid imbibing the sentiment which prevailed around her.

She was walking one day in the shrubbery, when a letter was brought to her. She felt guilty and conscience-stricken as she opened it, for it was from Sir Charles Marchmont. Yet there was nothing in its contents that could shock the most scrupulous sense of propriety. It alluded in terms of strong feeling to the death of Miss Monckton, and expressed a deep sense of the goodness which had prompted her to communicate that event to him herself. It conveyed earnest, but of course merely friendly wishes for her happiness; and there was an emphasis in the expression of these wishes which Constance did not understand. It was dated from Marchmont, and had evidently travelled round by Malvern.

Constance had long believed herself to have entirely overcome her unhappy attachment to the writer of this letter. Her griefs had been directed into another channel. She had even learned to consider her alienation from him as a
light dispensation, when compared with what she had since suffered. Yet the measured, and formal, and stranger-like terms in which he wrote, imparted a pang which she strove from herself to conceal. Joy and fear alike seemed to have left her. The grave had closed on what was dearest to her—the world, its sins, and its bonds, had deprived her of one whom she had known but for a brief space, to regret for a long one. Despair, not in its acute, but in its chronic form, began to possess her. If she conversed, it was without interest in what she said or heard; if she read, it was not as it used to be, with her whole soul absorbed in the subject. She awoke in the morning joyless; and often before day-break, lay, and longed, with heart-sickening desire, to behold, even but for a moment, the sister lost—the lover of her happier days—the friend who had died without one farewell. If she walked, the balmy autumnal breezes refreshed her not, nor imparted aught but additional languor to the eye, and lassitude to the frame, of one formerly so buoyant. It was only in prayer that the energies of her enfeebled mind seemed to be drawn forth, and then, she
wept in penitence, that she could not be happy.

This state of mind, which to those who have seen the effects of severe trials upon the young and sensitive, will not appear overcharged, began to make evident ravages upon the frame of the youthful sufferer. She ate to sustain life, but without that pleasure, so salutary and natural, which is ordained by the beneficent Author of good. She strove to occupy her mornings in attending, with the kind Maria, the dwellings of the poor, but was often obliged to rest in the first cottage, and confess herself unable to proceed. Nevertheless, she bore her silent, consuming grief so patiently, and strove to contend with her bodily weakness so greatly, that it was not until Mr. Bouverie visited Clifford, that the eyes of his mother and sister were opened to her condition.

This circumstance took place one night when the family had all resigned themselves to one of those long, unbroken, domestic evenings, of which country life affords such frequent specimens. Mrs. Bouverie was knitting; Maria, who was no great workwoman, was cutting out
bedgowns for some of her numerous pensioners. Mistress Willis was sitting, with the erectness of a grenadier, by the fire, with a pamphlet in her hand, from which she looked off anon, only to make some merciless reflection upon its contents—observations which were received with imperturbable indifference by Maria, and with a few symptoms of impatience from Mrs. Bouverie. Constance had sunk into an easy chair, fatigued, she knew not how, and wretched, she knew not why, and was endeavouring, without much success, to read a volume of "Bampton Lectures," lent her by Mrs. Martha. A ring at the hall-door—that portentous sound in the country—aroused them all from their occupations.

"It is my son!" exclaimed Mrs. Bouverie, starting up, and rushing, followed by Maria, into the hall.

Constance also rose, but sat down again; and Mrs. Willis, looking round, uttered her categorical "What?" resumed her book, and her wonted position.

In a few moments, Mr. Bouverie entered: there was a constraint in his manner as he
greeted Constance, which, added to her own distressing feelings, completely chilled her efforts to receive him cordially. She sunk down into her chair, stung to the quick by the comparison of his affectionate meeting with his mother and sister, and that which took place between him and herself. She fancied that she alone was friendless, where all were so happy and so united.

"Even he," she thought, "has ceased to care for me; and for Mrs. Bouverie and Maria, they are kind to me from compassion only." Too feeble, both in mind and body, to combat with these feelings, she sat for about ten minutes, and then, with the delicacy natural to her, guessing that it would be agreeable to Mr. Bouverie to converse in private with his family, after absence, she rose, and complaining of fatigue, begged Mrs. Bouverie to excuse her retiring for the night; her manner was hurried, and as she pressed the hand of her kind hostess, she with difficulty suppressed the emotions of her wounded and throbbing heart; nor durst she look at Mr. Bouverie, lest she should become utterly unable to restrain her tears. On his
part, hurt, and disappointed afresh by what he thought a new proof of her studied avoidance of his presence, Mr. Bouverie was far more distracted still by the evident ravages of consuming grief upon the form and face which he had known in the bloom of health, and had been accustomed to see in all the animation of thoughtless gaiety. He was shocked, overwhelmed by the change, far greater already than he had anticipated. All comfort in returning to a home which he loved, all joy at seeing his affectionate relatives, faded away before the dreadful apprehensions which now blasted every future prospect; for his love for Constance, like every other part of his character, was so free from selfishness, that even thinking of her in the future as alienated from himself, as having no connexion with his destiny, the thought of her gradual decay was unspeakably agonizing. He stood for some moments after her departure from the room, leaning upon the chimney-piece, his mind occupied with one thought only, and that of her danger and suffering: he looked the very personification of anxiety and alarm.
“My dear Henry,” said his mother, after a short pause, “what has rendered you so unlike yourself to-night?”

Maria had accidentally left the room, and the deaf old aunt was the only person present besides Mrs. Bouverie and her son. It was some moments before he could reply.

“My mother,” he said, his voice trembling from uncontrollable emotion, “I fear—I think—that Miss Courtenay is in a deep decline.”

He turned away as he spoke, that his fond, and easily alarmed parent might not see the agitation which mastered his usual calmness and resolution.

“She is not well,” replied Mrs. Bouverie, hesitatingly, “but it seems to me that the mind, more than the body, suffers.”

“Yes; but will her frame be able to sustain that mental distress? O God! do not the loveliest, the most sensitive, fall victims, by slow degrees, to grief, which they are too delicately organized to sustain? Tell me, dear mother, is there any way of averting this calamity? Will change of climate—can medical
skill—can soothing care—any thing, any thing, ward off this dreadful fate?"

He sat down by his mother, and, accustomed to rely upon her judgment and experience, looked into her face with so eager, so agonized an expression, that some suspicion of the real state of his heart occurred to her.

"Has she had any ill-fated attachment?" asked the old lady, cautiously. "The afflictions which seem to come direct from the hand of Providence, we can best sustain. We deem them inevitable. We have the sympathy of our fellow-creatures, when they assail us. The disappointments, the mortifications which others inflict, sting more sharply, and the more, that we generally keep the wounds that they make secret."

"You are right—too right," exclaimed her son; "it is true,"—and he walked about the room almost distractedly,—"but for that there is no remedy—none! would that there were! Any thing to save her—but no! He is a villain, and has destroyed her!"

He spoke with so much bitterness and emphasis, that the deaf old aunt looked round,
and thinking his speech was addressed to her, interposed her shrill and piercing "What are ye saying?" But receiving no answer, she rose, and taking up a candle, said, "I see now you are both talking at me, and of me. It's very odd, Henry, you have not said a kind word to me to-night. The deaf have ears, and mine are sharper this evening than usual. Good night! I see you both look confused—so I'll not trouble you with my company any longer."

"Happy—happy those—and yet, no—not happy either, who have their own little dignity only to fret them," said Mr. Bouverie, as she closed the door. "My dear mother," he added, "forgive me for having distressed you. Revolve in your own benevolent mind what can be done to avert the progress of—but I will not think—I cannot bear to call it—consumption," he added, his voice sinking into a low and solemn tone as he spoke. "Yet that awful, wasting disease is not unknown to me," he resumed, after a pause of strong emotion. "Alas! my mother, have I not, in my sacred functions, been constrained to watch its devastations, and often to know that it was the woes
of the mind which first called into action the seeds of disease, which otherwise might have lain dormant?"

"My dearest Henry, I see not the danger which you contemplate; and if the fatal malady have once begun, will grieving—"

"I know what you would say—and O my mother, if we are to—if she is to be taken! all that can be done is to soothe and—" he covered his face with his hands, and gave vent to a paroxysm of grief so violent, that the whole truth flashed across his mother's mind.

"Henry," she said, little less agitated than himself, "I see how it is, nor can I wonder. She is worthy of you, and will, I hope, still render you happy. No? What, is it hopeless then? And am I doomed to see my irreproachable, my only son, destined to experience disappointment in his tenderest hopes?" And the afflicted old lady sat down and wept bitterly.

"Mother—dear mother," exclaimed Mr. Bouverie, "do not let that grieve you. I know, and am resigned to it. My happiness is
now not worth a consideration. If I saw her contented, I could even yet be happy. I have never expected that life should all pass smoothly with me; and when I reflect on the beloved ties—when I do reflect,”—he raised her hand to his lips,—“on your affection, my mother—on that of my sisters—my friends—I am contented to resign the hope of other, and perhaps more precarious connexions. No, no; think not of me: advise me only how to save her, if possible, from the effects of her too early trials. O! if you knew what she has gone through! How young, how tender in feeling, how little framed to bear what she has borne! How she has resigned—for principle’s sake—the very cherished hope of her heart. How she tended an idolized sister: yet resigned her so meekly, so piously, to the grave. How she has now lost every friend but—but me; and I—I can never desert her. No! to watch every wish, and mitigate every care—to indulge every desire—to convey her, if it be needful, to a more genial climate—will be, dear mother, my office and my consolation! But I tire you and grieve you. We will talk of this no more.”
"I shall yet see you happy!" returned the sanguine old lady, drying up her tears; "she is ill, but not dying; and if her heart be not otherwise bestowed, will love you ere long, if she does not now, I am certain. Hope for the best, my child, she cannot—she must not—be insensible to an attachment so genuine as yours," she added, as they parted at the foot of the stairs for the night.
CHAPTER III.

Gentle maid,
Have of my suffering youth some feeling pity,
And be not of my holy vows afraid.

Shakespeare.

Morning brought to Constance and her lover brighter views and happier feelings than they had each severally entertained during the preceding night. They both met, before the rest of the party were down stairs, in the library. Mr. Bouverje was reading as Constance entered; she had half retreated unperceived, but hearing her footsteps, he rose, and placed a chair for her. He thought, as he looked intently at her, that a tinge of restored bloom had given an appearance of renovation to her pallid face, and that her attenuated form was less drooping than
on the preceding evening. Constance, on her part, had resolved to overcome the too apprehensive and morbid emotions which had distressed her on her first meeting with Mr. Bouverie: she looked at him with assumed cheerfulness and said, "You know not how happy I am here. I hope you have brought no commands for me to return to my guardians? I do not wish to leave your mother, nor Maria, and O! what an exchange it would be to go home to those whom I must see at Newberry."

"I am delighted to hear that you are happy here, Constance," replied Mr. Bouverie with a tenderness which he could not wholly suppress: "and your residence is now within your own power. I have your guardian's authority to enable you to choose any abode, under suitable protection, until you are of age."

"Then," said Constance, clasping her hands with delight, "I will choose the cottage by the Ford, where the poor curate used to live. I will remain at Clifford till I die—at least if Mrs. Bouverie and Maria are not tired of me."

There was a pause of some moments, when
Constance observed, “You are not well, Mr. Bouverie, has any new misfortune happened? To me there cannot, for I have no one left to grieve for—but to you—can you think that I should be insensible to it?”

She looked at him earnestly:—but he, fearful of exciting her alarms, turned away, and their conversation was almost instantaneously interrupted by the entrance of others. But although no direct communication passed between them, for some days, relative to Constance’s new destination, Mr. Bouverie saw clearly that the permission not to return to Newberry seemed to give her renewed spirits; nor could he, solely on the ground of what she had undergone there relative to Emily—on the void which Miss Monckton’s death would occasion there—on the heartlessness of those with whom she was obliged, in case of her return, to reside, and the frivolity, loquacity, and impertinence of the tea-tables there, wonder at her sentiments.

It was not yet mid-day, when the arrival of a neatly equipped chariot at the door of Clifford Hall, disturbed the inmates of the mansion. The morning had been damp, a circumstance, of
which Mrs. Bouverie, who was always glad of a pretext for a fire, had availed herself to have one lighted in the library, although it was not her usual custom to begin that indulgence until the evening; for she was one of those persons who paid so little respect to Michaelmas, as to venture to enjoy a little warmth before its holy festival arrived.

"It is General Monckton," cried Miss Bouverie, on seeing a portentous looking man descend from the carriage—"Well, he said he would come, did he not, Constance? How wrong of me to wish him to break his promise! This tall, slender gentleman, Henry, who is now getting out, is his host, Mr. Bromsgrove of Bromsgrove—a man," she whispered, "so universally civil, that he is most unjustly taken for a deep, designing person—whereas, his understanding is something like his fish-pond, not over deep. But thank heaven, they are gone into the dining-room.—Constance, do take a sly glance at Miss Murray, as she skips after the General—she is his niece—a young lady of forty, that is a lady, who intends always to be young. No, Henry, do not scold: I must make Constance laugh. She is
of such slight dimensions, Constance, that were her head by any chance cut off, you might put it on either way you pleased:—indeed, I think, shoulderwise would look best. She has never, all her life, been guilty of impropriety, take my word for it—but like a man looking down a precipice, she is always in fear of falling. As people usually consider her secure, they are apt to laugh at her precautions. *Au reste,* if she would but believe that she is out of peril—that the days of chivalry are over—she would be far from disagreeable. But we must go. Henry, will you bring Constance?"

Mr. Bouverie offered his arm.

"May I not be spared this?" asked Constance. Yet she withdrew not her hand, which half rested in his.

"If it will fatigue you—as indeed I fear it will—you had, perhaps, better remain here," he replied, placing a chair for her, and after standing for a moment, seating himself beside her. There was a pause for some moments, when he said, "Constance, I had a different plan to propose to you, to that which you suggested this morning." His voice trembled; she
looked up, but her face was instantly suffused with a deep, though transient blush.

"No; it is nothing relative to myself, Constance; that you need not fear: I have too much real regard for your happiness ever to urge that subject again."

He paused—for he was struck with something unexpected and unusual in the countenance of her whom he addressed.

"Nothing, indeed," he resumed, in accents of soothing affection, "can be indifferent to me, which regards you;—in particular, your health. I have thought that it seems to require some attention: perhaps this neighbourhood is too bleak for you—change of air—nay, even of climate, may be necessary."

She turned, and looked earnestly at him, as he spoke, and saw that his eyes were filled with tears, yet she was calm as she replied—"I know what you mean—and much, very much do I prize the friendship which suggests this remedy. But you are mistaken in your patient. Life with banishment from my dear, my only friends, has no attractions for me. If, as it may be, your apprehensions are well founded—let me die here."
She ceased, and for once, Mr. Bouverie lost all self-controul. He leaned over her in all the agony of redoubled apprehension. He took her hand, and pressed it passionately to his lips. Never had Constance beheld him so much subdued. She saw at once the depth and undiminished sincerity of his attachment. It was impossible, that a heart so susceptible of gratitude and generous emotions as hers, should not be touched: she sought to console him by assurances of her prompt restoration to health: she even ventured to say, "I shall be better now you are come."

She repressed not, but rather encouraged those demonstrations of affection which she had never before received from Mr. Bouverie: affectionate herself, she loved Mr. Bouverie with the tenderness of a sister, and she could not bear to see him grieved. By degrees her soothing, and perhaps too flattering, indications of regard, restored him to more than calmness—to a state of hope which he found it almost impossible, by subsequent reasoning, to dispel. Her hand was still in his, when a voice was heard in the hall.
“But will he not think it so very shocking in me to pay him a visit in the library? You know, Maria, I cannot endure being thought a flirt. Do you think he 'll quiz? For heaven's sake, don't tell the General!” And so saying, Miss Emilia Murray entered the room.

To her surprise, she found one person more than she expected. This was the signal for double caution, and a fresh outwork of modesty to be put forth. Despite all this trouble, she was, as even the good-natured Mrs. Bouverie allowed her to be, undeniably, and even immoderately plain. Living often in London, and studying, with a zeal worthy of a better end, the science of dress, Miss Murray had nevertheless the mysterious art of always looking a century behindhand. It was beyond human ingenuity to guess on which part of her the expense which she was known to bestow, was expended. She was, however, resplendent in ornaments, not one of which suited or set off a complexion, at once pale, muddy, brown, and green.

Stepping gaily into the room, Miss Murray was by no means penetrating enough to see that the presence of a young and beautiful woman.
might relieve her of all anxious fears concerning too minute a criticism upon her own rigidly-preserved decorum.

"I am sure you'll be shocked to see me here, Mr. Henry," she said, after a few preliminaries of affectation; "but I was absolutely obliged to run away from another beau—so attentive,—wasn't he, Maria? I believe he would say black was white to please me. But you know him, Mr. Henry Bouverie—he protests, at least, that he met you at the Foley Arms at Malvern."

Mr. Bouverie was, at this moment too much occupied with other thoughts, to divine to whom she alluded.

"Henry," said his sister, somewhat impatiently, "you must come with us into the dining-room. We really want a reinforcement of wit and spirits to cope with the General, and the gentleman with him, who will never steer near the shores of contradiction, if he can help it. Do come, and take a lesson in affirmatives. Constance, will it be too much for you?"

"O no!" said Constance, rising; for she now became anxious, from consideration for
Mr. Bouverie, to evince her power of exertion, and to prove how much fatigue she could bear. She took Maria’s arm, and followed by Mr. Bouverie and Miss Murray, they entered the dining-room.

Here was prepared one of those ample and tempting luncheons, which good housekeepers in the country know how to summon, as by magic, in a moment. General Monckton, who stood erect near the chimney-piece, was already contemplating it with a peering, criticizing look, whilst in his friend, a hungry-looking gentleman, Mr. Bouverie recognized the thin gentleman at the Foley Arms. Mr. Bromsgrove, of Bromsgrove, had what is called a genteel independence in the neighbourhood, and by dint of being very civil, very thin, and a bachelor, had contrived to insinuate himself into many agreeable parties, by way of fill up. He was so accommodating, that he could be offensive to nobody; therefore when an extra gentleman was wanted he was frequently asked, and was never known to refuse. He took so little room, and was so truly polite, that if a chaperon to a ball
or play were required, "We can make room for Mr. Bromsgrove," was a proposition always acceded to readily.

With all these advantages, he had never contrived yet to be invited to Clifford Hall; therefore when the General proposed his making a third in a chariot to pay a visit to Mrs. Bouverie, Mr. Bromsgrove looked upon the circumstance as a turn of his usual good fortune.

"You have no objection to three in a chariot?" inquired the General.

"Not at all; I am used to it, General—quite accustomed to it—prefer it, actually prefer it, General. It is always my lot to be bodkin, Miss Murray."

Salutations were exchanged, ceremonies dispatched, guests placed, and the party, including Mrs. Willis, seated. It was the General's luck, despite his secret wishes, to be situated next to the deaf old lady; yet never was man, in respect of lungs, more qualified to be proximate to a person afflicted with such an infirmity.

A running fire of laudatory exclamation was kept up for some time between the General and Mr. Bromsgrove, who were both very hungry.
"The General," thought Miss Bouverie, "is going to be agreeable."

"Capital pigeon pie this, Bromsgrove."

"Very good—very good indeed, General."

"Your bottled ale is excellent."

"It is excellent," echoed the man of a small independence.

"But I never take malt liquor. What is that wine? not home-made, I hope?—hey?"

"Capital Madeira, General— not made-here-a,—General."

"Egad! this is capital! Miss Courtenay, this will do you good—bring a little colour to your cheeks. Your good health, madam," addressing himself to Mrs. Willis.

"What?" exclaimed the old lady, starting from her reverie, and looking as if she meant to freeze him.

"God bless my soul! poor thing! But I forgot she was deaf. What an affliction—hey?"

"A great affliction indeed!" interposed Mr. Bromsgrove, in a momentary interregnum between broiled chicken and apricot tart.

"I was saying, madam," shouted the General, "what a great affliction yours was. Infliction
I should have said,” he added, in a lower voice, “but she don’t know that, poor thing.”

“You need not raise your voice to me, sir, I thank you,” said Mrs. Willis, with a sarcastic smile, “I am not so deaf as all that.”

“Is there any news from Malvern? Any scandal, deaths, or marriages?” inquired Miss Bouverie, in rash haste to interrupt the gau-cherie of the General.

“News! why I only stayed at that stupid hole of an hotel a week after you fled thence, Miss Bouverie.”

“Quite long enough, considering he had just lost a sister,” thought Maria.

“But I stayed quite long enough to be bored with a conceited prig, one Mr. Trelauney, who contradicted, in a gentlemanly way, every word I said. Didn’t he, Bromsgrove, hey?”

“Very good—very true, I mean,” replied the latter, who, having a collection of assents always ready, was sometimes apt to apply the wrong one.

“And I wasn’t in spirits to bear it neither,” continued the General, looking at Constance for sympathy. “Miss Courtenay there knows what
a loss I have had—my poor respected sister, Mrs. Bouverie; though, as Miss Courtenay there knows, poor Jane was certainly somewhat peculiar—certainly; yet still, you know, she was my sister—that's a tie—isn't it, hey?"

No one answered; and except a faint "Exactly so" from Mr. Bromsgrove, the General's fraternal ebullition fell still-born.

"That's a capital melon, Bouverie; very cool and refreshing, but indigestible. You don't eat melon I presume, ma'am?" shouting to Mrs. Willis, who sat inanimate as a waxen image.

"I am not too warm, I thank you, sir," replied the maiden lady, a little softened by his renewed attentions.

"Too warm! No, poor thing, she's past the age of warmth. Leave that to Miss Courtenay, who is just at the very climax of youth and beauty. What a taste some men have," he pursued, abruptly turning round to Mr. Bouverie; "now in your random acquaintance, Sir Charles Marchmont, to choose such a piece of lemon ice as his high born wife, whom he left at Malvern?—a white rabbit-looking thing with
pink eyes; and pride enough to provide the whole peerage. Do you know her, Miss Courtenay, hey?"

"What can we do to stop him," thought Maria. But she was unlucky in her attempts.

"Malvern is a very scandalous place," she observed, almost breathlessly.

"Yes! but not worse than other places—hey? Mr. Manvers, a certain underbred sort of genius that I met with at Malvern, tells me, that Newberry, where my poor sister made it her pleasure to live and die—I was going to say—but she chose to die at Malvern—that Newberry's a very scandalous place also—Miss Courtenay must know that, hey? Great talk of marrying, and giving in marriage, hey?—Do you ever deal in such matters, Bouverie?"

"Once a week, when he publishes the bans, I suppose," said Mrs. Bouverie.

"What's that? what?" inquired Miss Willis, who always bustled up when her sister-in-law spoke.

"God bless my soul! I must at it again—must I?" said the General. "I was just asking your nephew here, if he had not had sundry con-
cerns with marriage doings—marriage, —nuptials," he thundered, concluding with, "Poor thing, how hard she is!"

"Who? Henry? Henry?" said the old lady, glancing a half glance at her nephew, of whom she was somewhat fond. But she could not resist mortifying even him when an opportunity occurred. "No, Henry will never marry, he's too grave—too much of the parson, and of the old bachelor, for any one to have him," she continued, with a spiteful laugh.

For once, and once only, she succeeded in ruffling the temper of her nephew—of him whose whole conduct to her had been one of forbearance and kindness; but the colour which flushed his cheeks was heightened by a very different cause, as his eye involuntarily glanced at Constance—and he saw that her cheeks were also tinged with crimson. Mrs. Bouverie coloured too, with a little maternal indignation, whilst Miss Murray's sallow complexion was muddled still more with what she called a blush, to which she attracted all the attention she could by retreating a little from the table, dropping her handkerchief, and drooping so pa-
thetically, that Mr. Bromsgrove's gallantry was diverted from some lobster salad to which he had been paying as much attention, as if he had eaten nothing before. A cessation on his part was the signal for a general move, and half an hour afterwards, the inmates of the Hall saw, without the indulgence of any vain regrets, the post chariot driven away, Mr. Bromsgrove, sitting bodkin, with the skirts of his coat pinned up, for the purpose of saving both expense and room.

"Well Henry! how is your heart?" inquired Maria, as she passed him, standing with his eyes fixed upon the lawn, retired within an enclosure of the window. To her surprise, the question, which she thought would have been returned by a little fraternal badinage, was received with some embarrassment. She stood gazing at him, till her eager stedfast look produced from him a momentary glance. The eyes of the brother and sister met, and met with a consciousness, which revealed to both, without a word, all that was passing in their minds. From that time, for some weeks, anxiety for her brother's happiness, dwelt in the bosom
of the disinterested, and affectionate Maria. She saw, indeed, that Constance entertained, and expressed for him, the warmest regard, the most entire respect—that she paid him, on every occasion, the tribute of high moral admiration: but the experienced, and discriminating Miss Bouverie, doubted, and indeed, at times, more than doubted, if Miss Courtenay felt much more for Mr. Bouverie than she did.

Mrs. Bouverie, on the other hand, sanguine in her disposition, and proud of her son, almost to a foible, would not suffer herself to entertain a doubt, but that, if the affections of Constance were free, they must, in justice, be bestowed on him who merited them so well. She even showed some slight symptoms of impatience towards Constance, for what she thought a blind, and unaccountable tardiness in doing justice to her son; and sometimes—the melancholy apprehension came across her, that there was a previous entanglement—that the poor girl could not control her affections; and that she was to be pitied, rather than condemned.

But, in the course of a fortnight after the arrival of Mr. Bouverie at Clifford, these anxie-
ties, on the part of Mrs. Bouverie and her daughter, were exchanged for others of a still more urgent nature. For a time, the health of Constance had appeared again to rally; her own exertions to appear well, and to be cheerful, the communion with a mind which she had long intimately known, and the inducement to constant exercise in the open air, which Mr. Bouverie's presence afforded; these circumstances, and the assurance of the medical oracle of the village, that there were no alarming indications of disease about her, had tended to soothe the apprehensions of her friends, and even to blind her to the state of her own health. But the amendment which they looked for in her form and complexion, and appetite, never came. Her delicate features were rendered still finer in their outline by attenuation; the hand, once rounded with a perfection of outline which art might seek in vain to emulate, had now that feeble, and almost transparent look, which denotes ill health. Yet still she complained not, and the decay, if such it was, of her vital strength, appeared either to be unmarked
by her, or sustained with indifference, rather than resignation.

Warned, by previous occurrences, of the state of her son's feelings, Mrs. Bouverie had not resolution to impart to him her gathering fears, or to check the hopes in which he had persuaded himself, respecting the final recovery of Miss Courtenay. Whilst the apprehensions of the fond and experienced mother were at their height, a letter, recalling Mr. Bouverie to Newberry, arrived at Clifford. The whole house rang with lamentations at his departure; even Mrs. Willis questioned narrowly into the reasons of his leaving home so soon, and condescended to say that "he would be missed." Constance alone was silent, and felt, perhaps, that the crisis of her fate was at hand.

No explanation had, as yet, taken place, respecting the former terms upon which they had stood, previous to the death of Miss Monckton. Constance was fixed in her determination to take the part which honour and gratitude, and esteem, pointed out to her. She felt that she would rather die than inflict ano-
ther pang on the heart of him, who had been as a brother and a friend to her—than pain his mother—than grieve or disappoint Maria. Influenced by the desire of rendering to them such returns as she could make for their disinterested kindness, she had never as yet, confided either to Mrs. and Miss Bouverie, the history of her early attachment, for she felt, that if that history were revealed in its true colours, they might, too justly, consider Mr. Bouverie's love as ill-placed, and ill requited. With regard to himself, she read, in every word, and look, and action, the depth and unalterable nature of his attachment to her, and she felt that she had encouraged it: yet O! why was it that her heart still shrunk from an explicit intimation of the terms upon which she felt that they ought to stand—from which she knew, in duty, in conscience, there was no retreat?

It was, perhaps, a perception of this which still held Mr. Bouverie silent, or made him impart to the attentions which he too well loved to bestow upon the lovely and unhappy object of his fondness, as much of friendly and fraternal interest as he could give to them. Three
weeks, weeks, to him, of mingled happiness and anxiety, had they now passed together. It had been his delighted office to soothe her when her spirits sank under the influence of sickness, or of recollection; to cheer her, in her better moods, by recurring to those sources of intellectual pleasure in which they both found gratification;—to render those minor services which are all of importance in the eyes of love:—she had hung upon his arm for support, as they sauntered among the shrubberies, or in the fields, and often had found that support almost inefficient to sustain her drooping footsteps. Then returning, he had loved to place the sofa in a favourite nook for her, to arrange the cushions for her aching head, and to watch, with anxious tenderness, the return of bloom to the pallid cheek, of lustre to the languid, though restless eye. Still no "love passages" had passed between them.

It was on the evening before Mr. Bouverie returned to Newberry, that Constance and he sat together in a little music-room adjoining the drawing-room. She had been unusually feeble all the day, and it was only to conceal depres-
sion that she had risen, and moved to the instrument. Mr. Bouverie had followed her to ask for a favourite song: she touched the keys, but the chords seemed to strike to her very heart: she ceased and burst into tears. Mr. Bouverie could never see her grieve unmoved; yet he asked himself the question, had his own departure any share in this sorrow? Could so much happiness be permitted him? He looked at her stedfastly, and, with a solemnity, the result of deep feeling, said to her, "Constance, do we part as strangers, or as those who are to live in future for each other?"

She extended her hand to him, and in a very few minutes, her faith was again plighted to him never to be withdrawn.

From this moment, her health rapidly declined. "The flax of the field withered" not away so rapidly as she did. Her betrothed lover left Clifford the next day, with an assurance of happiness written upon his brow, a smile upon his lips, which had been long wanting there. His mother—Maria—were apprised of his felicity, for without their sympathy his joy could not be complete.
Within a week he was recalled from Newberry. Constance was now pronounced to be suffering from a slow nervous fever, but Mrs. Bouverie had so little confidence in the opinion given to her, that before writing to her son, she had resolved upon moving her, by slow stages, to London, being certain, herself, that the disease was a mental one, and that change of scene, and the advice of London physicians, were essential to the invalid. She had arranged their reception at an hotel, and awaited only Mr. Bouverie's presence to sanction and facilitate the removal.

He hastened to Clifford, with what emotions, those who have known what it is to obtain, at the expense of long anxiety, an object cherished more than life, and who see that object in danger, or suffering, can readily conceive; but in him, devotedly, irrevocably, as his happiness was bound up in Constance, a sense of submission to the Divine will, although borne down at first by human passion, rose eventually superior. He looked upon her as one of those benignant gifts—those blossoms of existence—which are lent to bloom for a time, to be che-
rished, even idolized; but are recalled, as too fine, too delicate, for a sphere like ours, leaving the hearts in which they have been inshrined, not indeed utterly desolate, for such can the heart of the humble believer never be—but too joyless ever to devote themselves to fresh objects. Such was the impression of the afflicted, but unrepining Mr. Bouverie, whilst he contemplated the intelligence he had received under its worst aspect, and he felt that the blow to his happiness, were Constance to be taken from him, would be final: yet in this latter sentiment, time might have taught him otherwise—time, which softens, if it cannot eradicate, the deepest, and direst griefs—time, which obliterates the fondest recollections, and reconciles man to deprivations, apparently intolerable.

Constance had not, as yet, been confined to her bed, and Mr. Bouverie, as he drove to the well-known door, perceived, with an alternation of feeling almost sickening, that lights, and the blaze of a fire, enlivened the apartment in which his family usually sat. He entered the room with a cautious and melancholy step, but
Constance was not there. Mrs. Willis, alone, sat by the fire-side, looking like a monumental figure, unmoved by the anxieties of the living; and, as her young, and prosperous, and admired nephew, stood near her, he almost envied the apathy of age. In a few moments Maria entered; "Constance," she said, "is somewhat better—she cannot see you to-night—nay, do not, dearest Henry, despond—her illness is not dangerous, it is entirely upon the nerves; tomorrow," she said, "she and my mother set out for London—and O how fondly will my thoughts follow you—and O, dear Henry! how truly you have the sympathy and prayers of your sister!"  

She threw her arms around his neck, and Mr. Bouverie felt, at that moment, how benignant is Providence, who gives us, in general, a variety of social ties, each calculated to sustain us, when estrangements, or death, have bereaved us of other blessings.
CHAPTER IV.

And darkness and doubt are now flying away,
No longer I roam in conjecture forlorn;
So breaks on the traveller, faint and astray,
The bright and the balmy effulgence of morn.

Beattie.

Noon, the next day, found Mrs. Bouverie, her son, and Constance, with Sarah, Miss Monckton's former maid, two stages on their road to London. Happily for herself, and happy for all who have suffered, much would it be to possess the same, Constance had habitually, and even now, retained the capability of being drawn from her own thoughts, and from circumstances immediately connected with herself, into the contemplation of objects around her. She was still alive to agreeable impressions: woodland scenery, even pasture or meadow
lands, with their natural associations, rural occupations,—interested and renovated her mind by their simplicity, and by the air of peaceful happiness which pervades them. These pleased her, and with these, chiefly, the traveller through the midland counties of England must fain be content.

As they entered the suburbs of London, on the second day of their journey, how did the lamps, the sounds, the ignominious, unfinished-looking streets, the pallid but eager faces, even the heavy stage-waggons, with their tingling bells, recall her girlish days, and all the occurrences of her childhood. She looked eagerly for the turn from the Kensington-road, which led to the substantial, immured dwelling where she had known no grief but only transitory cares, and the contrast of her past and present condition came across her. But she repelled, as unthankful to the Giver of good, any comparison which might incline her to murmur at her present circumstances, replete as they were with actual blessings. A quiet, and in those days, moderate hotel, in Albemarle-street, received the party from Clifford. For some
days, Constance kept her room to recover from fatigue, and to pursue the system laid down to her by an intelligent and experienced physician whom Mrs. Bouverie had summoned to her assistance. Dr. Stormont was a strong-minded, but tender-hearted man, somewhat beyond the middle age, possessing, what is rare, acuteness, united to great reflection. By long practice, he had acquired a tact in discerning the nature of disease, which practice alone can give; having ascertained that point, he was decided, but neither prejudiced nor inflexible, in adopting the remedies necessary to reduce it. Philo-

sophic, but not chimerical—deeply initiated in the arts of his profession, but not wedded implicitly to its rules—active in his practice, but yet giving to nature her due importance in aiding the effects of medicine, Dr. Stormont was even less prized for his skill, than for the conscientious attention, the kind, but not ful-
some solicitude, the entire honesty, which marked his professional demeanour. If he were sometimes blamed, it was for a certain bluntness of speech, which, however, was never accompanied by any indication of want of con-

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consideration for the feelings or opinions of others; and which, to the sick, and more especially to the sick in need, was generally subdued by the kindness of a benevolent heart.

In the guidance of one so able and experienced, it might have been expected that Constance would have speedily recovered. He reversed, indeed, for the first few days, but without any parade of superior skill, or invidious observation, the treatment of the country practitioner, but no benefit ensued. Other remedies were adopted, but medicine seemed unavailable: yet the opportunity thus afforded to the intelligent physician of becoming acquainted with the feelings, and watching the countenance of the invalid, was not by any means neglected.

At the end of a week, Dr. Stormont called Mrs. Bouverie aside, and apologizing for entering into inquiries which might seem to intrude into the privacy of family secrets, inquired if she knew whether her "young friend had anything upon her mind?"

Mrs. Bouverie coloured deeply, for the suspicion had arisen in her breast, that Constance
was neither happy under her present circumstances, nor easy under the recollection of some passed occurrences, of a more vexatious and rankling nature than the recollection of friends deceased.

"She is engaged," she replied, "to be married to my son—but surely that cannot occasion her evident depression."

Dr. Stormont pondered this answer in his mind. "My art, however," he returned at last, "can do but little for her. Let me recommend you to have recourse to amusement, to drives in the park, even to the theatre, when our patient is somewhat stronger;"—and with this agreeable prescription, he took his leave.

The recommendation answered to a certain extent; for Constance, only in her twentieth year, was capable of being interested, and even excited to the highest degree, by the wonders of art, as well as the beauties of nature. London, even in those times, before the days of Macadamizing and coal-gas, was astonishing, and, in her eyes, splendid. Society, although less refined and more formal than at present, had the charm, in the higher ranks at least, of greater respecta-
bility. There was a wholesome restraint, which upheld propriety, that semblance of virtue, and maintained the dignity of the female sex. Our ancestors, of the last generation, deemed it incumbent on them to discharge their debts, (I speak generally, for of course there were individual exceptions,) and the bluff country gentleman would then have been ashamed to leave town, year after year, without paying for the expenses of his lady's balls and suppers, or those of his own metal-buttoned blue coat and buckskins.

Of the state of London society, Constance could, however, at this period of her life, form but little notion. Shoals of young, be-fashioned ladies, who were spending the season in town, with their well-dressed, well-behaved, mamas, came, indeed, to call on Mrs. Bouverie, who was one of an old and opulent Kentish family, many different branches of which were annually afflicted with the mania metropolitan. Some of these were well educated, and lovely, and even elegant—for the old county families have ever produced the flower of the female creation, in England; their own vigorous constitutions descending to their children, unimpaired by late
hours, and sophisticated dishes; and secured to their offspring, by good air, good food, and the thousand luxuries in the shape of exercise, amusements, and gentle occupation, which a country-seat affords.

Solicited, with an hospitality, not then worn out or evaporated, in the atmosphere of heartless dissipation, Mrs. Bouverie and her son could not always refuse to yield to the intreaties of their friends, that they would not remain wholly secluded in their hotel. It was during one afternoon, whilst Mrs. Bouverie was absent, returning the many long, cruelly long, calls that had been paid to her, that Constance, standing at the window of the hotel, saw a well-known personage knocking at the opposite door. By the air of busy idleness, and the well-washed, highly-shaved appearance of his clear, blooming face, so unlike those of the passers by, Constance instantly recognized Mr. Kilderby. She saw, too, that he was engaged in leaving, at the houses of his acquaintance, sundry newly-bound volumes, which she truly conjectured to be poems of his own recent inditing. With all his absurdity, the sight of the pseudo poet re-
called to her so many recollections of happiness and kindness—he was himself so gentle and friendly—that she felt her heart beat with pleasure, as at the aspect of an old, if not a respected friend. She rang the bell, and desired the servant to run after him, and acquaint Mr. Kilderby that she wished to see him. In a few moments the bard came, in the full blow of a London staircase, his face quite in a suffusion of heat and pleasure, doubting not in the least but that this hasty summons was a tribute from some lady of rank and taste, to his well-known fame. His large light eyes were distended with astonishment when he saw Constance.

"Do you not know me?" cried she.

"Senza dubbio, my interesting and poetical young friend, of Newberry memory—though, I declare, I thought it was Lady Caroline Carr, who has been hunting me from party to party for these six weeks. But really," he said, his native goodness of heart gaining ground on his vanity, "I'm glad, and I'm sorry, to see you—glad to see you at all—sorry to see you looking so much more like the rose of York,
than that of Lancaster. Apropos of roses—did you ever read my—"

"Oh," said Constance, interrupting him, "I am getting well now! But do tell me how you have been, where you are staying, and if you ever hear any thing of Newberry now?"

"Ah, Miss Constance!—a sad vacuum there! I thought I never should have recovered Miss Emily's death—a blighted lily of the valley—and then Miss Monckton's—but she was more of the yellow lily, perhaps—but a most worthy woman. But to digress into my little literary matters—I have been intriguing with those nine ladies lately—coquetting with Melpomene and the rest of them—and if all ladies had been so kind, I should not have remained a widower. But allow me to offer at the shrine of beauty the tribute of my humble rhythm. I have been leaving a few copies with some friends, who were dying for it. And you must know I have been most handsomely praised in the — Magazine," naming some publication of the day, not, like our own pure and impartial periodicals, above venality.
"Indeed! I am so happy to hear it! You have it with you, I see."

"Just brought it out with me by accident—only a few lines, you observe."

"Yes, but the praise is extremely—gratifying:—'The poem with which Mr. Kilderby has favoured the public, is the production of a scholar and a gentleman, and does credit to the pure patriotic principles, and to the elevated notions of honour which he evidently entertains.'"

"Yes, it's all very well; but I think he might have said a little more," replied the man of verse, dejectedly.

Constance looked up, surprised.

"Why, to tell you a little bit of a secret, which I know you will never disclose,—I paid for it," said he, his voice sinking into a whisper.

"I shall never disclose it, I am sure," returned Constance, blushing very deeply for both parties concerned.

"And now, ma belle demoiselle, oblige me by letting it lie on your table—and so adieu! Be assured this will not be a last visit."

"Alas! what have I brought upon myself,"
thought Constance, some symptoms of repentance for her summons, showing themselves on her countenance. But, in so far as related to Mr. Kilderby, she was not so unfortunate as she expected to have been; his "little sociétés de littérature," his sedulous hunting of every reviewer, magazine writer, or newspaper editor, his perpetual applications at the green-rooms of the theatres on behalf of three rejected tragedies, his voluntary contributions to the Sunday papers, his odes, his monodies, his sonnets, and his paraphrases,—occupying him day and night, and meal time, and even church time; for there was no subject so stale, as that he could not, thereupon, suggest an impromptu—no sermon so dull, as that it did not lead to a poem still more prosaic.

As Mr. Kilderby was, however, tripping up the street, after his interview with Constance, he was espied by three ladies, two of them bearing evident marks of country derivation, with overcharged bonnets, over-trimmed gowns, over-red faces, and over-short waists. The third, attired in the last extreme of the mode, seemed to be, or to be thought, a beauty, from
the studied, conscious turn of her head, and the *noli me tangere* turn of her body. The party were not, indeed, unnoticed, as the three ladies passed down the street; for, standing on the steps of a fashionable hotel, were two gay and fashionable-looking men, who were diverting themselves, without scruple, at the expense of the injured, but unconscious fair.

"My destiny is truly remarkable to-day!" thought Mr. Kilderby, as he found himself suddenly arrested by a heavy hand upon his arm, as he proceeded along. It was that of Miss Pearson, who, somewhat enlarged by age, and absence of care or sentiment, had recognized, as one of the very few faces which she knew in the great metropolis, the self-satisfied visage of Mr. Kilderby. The assault particular was immediately followed up by an assault general from all the ladies at once. At first such a din prevailed, added to the noise of carriages, and the internal excitement of the poet's own mind, that he could hardly distinguish, as he declared, whether the ladies "lisped in numbers, or spoke only in plain prose."

At length, Mrs. Crawfurd's drawling voice
was heard: "We thought you would recollect your old friends from Newberry, Mr. Kilderby.'

"And we often talk of you there, I assure you," said Miss Pearson.

"I knew you again, instantly," cried Mrs. De Courcy.

Mr. Kilderby bowed from side to side, squeezed Miss Pearson's large hand, and grasped two fingers of Mrs. Crawfurd's, when his attention was again arrested by a slight tap upon his shoulder.

He turned round, imagining that this time, the tribute must proceed from some votary to his muse's fame, but exclaimed, in chorus, with the three ladies, "Sir Charles Marchmont!"

"You do me much honour," said Mr. Kilderby, bowing low, and taking the compliment of the recognition entirely to himself.

"And we are none of us sorry to see Sir Charles Marchmont, though I dare say he has quite forgotten Newberry," remarked Mrs. De Courcy; a slight blush recalling a little youthful beauty to her face.

"I always remember Newberry, and all its concerns, and all its inhabitants, with the
deepest interest," replied Sir Charles, looking serious, for a moment.

"Ah, so I thought!" interposed Mrs. Crawfurd, expressively.

"You are still remembered there, but we have grand changes there now," observed Miss Pearson to the Baronet, and evidently longing to discharge her budget of news.

"Bless me! how these people push," cried Mrs. De Courcy, who longed, though it could now be of no avail, for the gay young Baronet to offer her his arm.

He did so, and they sauntered up the street, Mr. Kilderby walking on by them, though Mrs. Crawfurd and Miss Pearson were left trudging behind, looking very like country cousins, indeed. But Mr. Kilderby's gallantry, which sometimes effervesced, was dissipated by the greater delight of walking up Bond Street with a Baronet, and one too, not only notoriously gay, and admired, but rising into public estimation as a man of talent and influence. They turned into Bond Street, and both Mrs. De Courcy and the poet felt themselves in heaven:—Sir Charles, despite the ap-
pearance of gaiety, had a tone of sadness in his voice, as he made many and minute inquiries of all his friends at Newberry.

"And old Mr. and Mrs. Cattell? are they still living?" he inquired, after he had asked about every other slight acquaintance in the town.

"O yes! and very comfortable: Mrs. Cattell declares she will never take charge of young ladies again."

"Indeed! did the Miss Courtenays give her so much trouble?"

"O, you know! Miss Emily died in the house—and then Miss Constance, before her sister's death, was always fainting and going into hysterics, and was worn down to a shadow."

"Which she has hardly recovered yet," added Mr. Kilderby, "for I have just seen her—and she looks very—very unlike the youthful beauty upon whom I wrote my lines, entitled 'Hygeia at the Fountain.'"

"She was—very beautiful," said Sir Charles, in a tone which became almost inaudible before he finished the last word. "Is she then in town?" he added carelessly.
"Pardon me—close by—and I can execute any commands you wish," answered Mr. Kilderby, who, among his other virtues, was tremendously officious.

"But perhaps Mr. Bouverie may not like that," observed Mrs. De Courcy, looking up archly at Sir Charles.

"Mr. Bouverie, is he then in town?" asked Sir Charles, stopping at the same time, with assumed indifference before a print shop. "Will you go in? It is a famous lounge."

"By all means," cried Mr. Kilderby, in a transport. "I see the author of the Salmagundi, and other literary friends there." Mrs. De Courcy suffered herself to be led in.

"So you say that Mr. Bouverie is in town" continued Sir Charles, drawing a large portfolio of prints towards him.

"What an interest he still takes in me," thought Mrs. De Courcy, "and how he tries to prolong the conversation; just for the sake of talking to me!—poor man!"

"Yes," she replied, "Mr. Bouverie has been some time in town; and 'tis thought, that the very, very long attachment between him and
Miss Courtenay, is at length to end in what such things usually do—marriage.”

She sighed and looked down, and Sir Charles sighed also; “But,” he rejoined, almost immediately, with a smile which had something bitter in its expression, “then I suppose that Miss Courtenay’s fainting and hysterical attacks, are pretty well cured by this time?”

“I don’t know,” answered Mrs. De Courcy, “but here comes Miss Pearson, who can tell you, for she gossips with Mr. Bouverie’s housekeeper nearly every Saturday, when she is at home.”

Miss Pearson, who was just entering the shop, was saying to Mrs. Crawfurd, “Can we go in, and not buy?”

She waited not, however, for an answer, but taking up the thread of Mrs. De Courcy’s discourse, proceeded to give Sir Charles a whole history of Mr. Bouverie’s past condition, and present prospect. The story, as she told it, possessed circumstantiality, without truth, but, as usual, in such reports, had a shadow of reality in it.

“Why you see Mr. Bouverie was off several
times, first, because his mother would hear of it no wise, and then, because Miss Courtenay was so very odd—and, I suppose, he had no great mind to it. But then, when Miss Emily was ill, she contrived to get him over to her side, for she was always determined to have him, and, I believe, between compassion and honour, the match was made up. And now she's staying with him and his mother in town to buy some jewellery for the wedding. They are at Newton's hotel.”

“Indeed! just opposite to”—Sir Charles began, but checked himself.

“But that is, by no means the best thing that's happened at Newberry, Sir Charles. Miss Hester Tribe is married, and has a baby, six months old, with as wide a mouth as herself. Mr. Thomas and Mr. Edward have been offering all round the country, and I believe, could publish a volume of 'rejected addresses,' equal in number, to those just ordered in, to the Book Club—and—Doctor Creamly, finding all other trades fail, has turned saint!”

“He happened,” interposed Mrs. Crawfurd, with a benignant smile, “to hear the celebrated Doctor Foxcraft—went into the church, as he
himself informed me, at the front door a sinner—and came out at the back door a saint!"

"Enviable man!" ejaculated Sir Charles, "to have so short a distance to go for his conversion. But I must run away. Mr. Cipriani, show the ladies some of those fine mezzotinto engravings you have procured for Lady Marchmont—Mr. Kilderby, adieu."

"Sir Charles, I feel much honoured in your flattering reception of a humble poet—where can I pay my respects to Lady Marchmont? Is she fond of poetical screens, or of those new-fashioned baubles, called albums? Can I gratify her ladyship by my—"

"You are very good—but Lady Marchmont is at present an invalid. Will you dine with me at the Alfred on Friday? Pray do," and, receiving his eager assent, Sir Charles darted from the shop.

"Poor man! poor Sir Charles! How ill he looks," observed Mrs. De Courcy with a sigh.

Miss Pearson, still at her old tricks, ran to the door to see which way he went. Mrs. Crawfurd alone sat composed, turning over the prints, sneering inwardly at her companions;
all agreed that the Baronet's reception of them was most kind, most flattering, and showed so much heart!

It was about a week after this incident, that Constance found herself well enough to go to church, for the first time since her illness. Mr. Bouverie, who had witnessed with unspeakable thankfulness, the amendment which had begun slowly to appear, had been obliged, a few days before, to visit his vicarage for a week. Mrs. Bouverie was indisposed; Constance, therefore, was constrained to go alone.

It was one of those mizzling, drizzling, London days, when the atmosphere presents all the disadvantages, and more than the dulness of extreme foul weather; for stormy rains, and tempestuous breezes have somewhat of the nature of violent tempers, and one hopes for skies peculiarly bright and clear after the gust is over; but the true London autumnal day, like a sullen disposition, forbids all hope of amendment.

The chapel, nearest to the hotel, was one of that numerous order in London, where the greatest care seems to have been taken to exclude all
light. It was afternoon service, and there was but a small congregation, mostly wrapped up with that sedulous care, which persons peculiarly take when they go to church. Renovated, as she always found herself, in virtuous resolutions, by communing with her own heart, during the service in which she had been engaged, Constance was preparing to leave the place of worship, when she was struck with the appearance of a gentleman a few seats from her, gazing intently at her. She could scarcely recover her presence of mind sufficiently to move on, for it was Sir Charles Marchmont. This was the first time that she had actually seen him, since the solemn engagements into which they had each entered—engagements which rendered any cherished recollection of their former intimacy, not only imprudent, but criminal. Casual as the glance was, it was some days before Constance recovered its effects; so difficult is it, when the affections have been, perforce, violently wrested from an object, to prevent the slightest recurrence to that object from producing the renewal of certain associa-
tions which we would fain consider as altogether extinguished. Constance dwelt long on the comforting reflection, that he to whom she had given the devotion of her young heart, was not so wholly corrupted by fashion and its numerous evils, as to neglect his good, and early habits of devotion. She trusted that his errors, his disingenuous conduct to herself, his indifference to the wishes and happiness of his best friend, his meditated breach of honour to his wife, had been reviewed by him with sincere penitence. With tears, she prayed that it might be so.

It was fortunate for her, that Mr. Bouverie remained at Newberry longer than he had intended. Before his return, which was delayed nearly a fortnight, she had recovered from a state of feeling which she justly regarded both as reprehensible in itself, and treacherous to him who loved her so fondly. She met him with unwonted cheerfulness, and assured him that she was now well enough, and was impatient to leave London. But there was a coldness, a seriousness, on the countenance of Mr. Bouverie,
for which she could not account. They were alone; she placed her hand upon his arm, and looked at him in silence.

"Constance, I cannot speak to you," he said, hastily, moving away, "I will send my mother to you."

He turned towards the door, but she flew to prevent him.

"What! Henry!" she said, reproachfully, "is your mother to be a mediator between us? Is such a precaution necessary? What have I done to merit so great a want of confidence on your part?"

"You are right," replied Mr. Bouverie, returning to his seat; but he stood, and placing his hands before his face, appeared wholly overwhelmed by powerful, indeed, uncontrollable emotion.

"Can I be of no use? Can I not comfort you?" said Constance, "Alas! what a prospect is this for us!"

"No, Constance," replied Mr. Bouverie, re-assuming somewhat of his usual calmness, "if we ever are united, you shall have nothing to fear for my want of confidence; have I not been
already too prone to—to deceive myself? I know you are guileless, and generous, as ever human being was—I know, great God! what would be my sufferings did I not know?—that your principles are firm! But, I confess, I have at all times, and of late in particular—doubted whether our mutual engagement has been productive to you of the unspeakable happiness which it has occasioned me."

He paused; but Constance, too ingenuous to declare that it had been, was silent, and her eyes filled with tears.

Mr. Bouverie resumed:—"I will not do you such injustice as to suppose, that your affections have been latterly, for a long time past, swayed by any unhappy recollections of him who"—here his voice faltered—"who betrayed both you and me—"

He walked for some moments about the room, to recover the distress, and perhaps indignation, which shook his frame.

"But, I do know," he continued, "the powerful and lasting influence which an early, and, I fear," he added with a sigh, "a very ardent attachment has on a sensitive and too confiding
mind. Believe me, Constance, I have suffered with you; and I have felt towards him—a resentment, which I hope God may forgive me.

"But I will come at once to the point, Constance—if what I fear be true—if I have been loved from duty, from esteem, alone—you are free."

He spoke with a firmness, the result of a mastery over his passions, for which he had struggled all his life, and not in vain.

"It is no longer criminal for you to love Sir Charles Marchmont, for he is also free. That he will eventually perform the part which honour now points out to him, I cannot, alas! doubt. Lady Marchmont died, suddenly, two days since."

These last words were almost unintelligible, and, having finished what he had resolved to say, Mr. Bouverie sank into a chair, perfectly overcome, and unmanned.

For a moment, Constance wrestled with temptation, but it was only for a moment, and her better genius raised her from the degradation into which she might have fallen. She spoke with a firmness which looked far more like sin-
cerity than any ebullition of passion would have done, as she said:—

"Whilst I have reason, no event whatsoever, no persuasion, no entreaties, could ever induce me to think of Sir Charles Marchmont again, in the light in which it was once my unhappy lot to view him. No!" she continued, her colour rising as she spoke, "that he could deceive me, was enough—that I was weak enough to regret, too bitterly, our separation—that he had, it is true, long, too long, my sole affection—that he has now my sympathy, I will not deny; but, if I know myself, my true affections, all that a husband should prize, all that a woman should feel, are, and have been for some time, placed where my truth is plighted."

"Do not deceive yourself, Constance, for both our sakes," replied Mr. Bouverie, turning towards her. "Think before you finally decide—think, and make me happy, or indeed, too wretched ever to know happiness again. I can but propose one test to you—either reject me altogether, or dispel all doubts and misery by consenting to an almost immediate union."

"I will consent to any thing," replied Con-
stance, "to render you happy and secure—but"—she looked at her mourning garb.

"Well, then, in a month, surely all scruples on that score may be obviated," replied the agitated, but too happy lover. "O, if you but knew what I have suffered, what I would suffer, rather than controul one inclination of yours in favour of another!"

He clasped her in his arms as he spoke; and as he fondly kissed her forehead, she felt it moistened by his tears.

And Constance retired that night, impressed with the determination that her future life should be one of all duty, should pass in the earnest endeavour to render those around her happy, to prepare herself for a state far more holy even than our purest condition here: and to devote herself to him alone, with whom, after so many vicissitudes of feeling, she had decided to pass the remainder of her existence.
CHAPTER V.

Remembrance wakes, with all her busy train,
Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain.

Goldsmith.

Three weeks after the conversation related in
the last chapter, Mr. and Mrs. Cattell prepared
to set out on a journey from Newberry to Clif-
ford. Neither of them had been ten miles from
home for many years, and Mrs. Cattell declared
to old Mrs. Ruding, that she had not slept for
the thoughts of it for a week. "What trouble
Mr. Cattell would have with the post-boys and
turnpikes, what dangers Mitten, perched up
behind, would have with her rheumatism, if it
should rain; how resolved Thomas would be
to have his own way about the luggage, and
what Mr. Cattell would do at Clifford, when he
could not, in politeness, take his nap after dinner.” These, and other magnified difficulties, seen in the magic lantern of Mrs. Cattell’s imagination, for even she had an imagination, occupied her till she went; when she came back she had a good deal more to tell.

“The bride looked very pale, and her dress was a costly-worked India muslin,” which Mrs. Cattell thought was spoiled by “being washed when it was made up in London.” And she wore a veil, which Mrs. Cattell hoped she never would consent “to have washed.” And the bridegroom looked very handsome, as he always did, but behaved too naturally, and too little like a bridegroom to please Mr. Cattell. He made no speeches, drank no healths, and kissed nobody but the bride, his mother, and his sister.

But then that stupid Mrs. Mary Willis spoiled all; insisting upon it that Mrs. Cattell had nine children, and scanning every one’s clothes as if she wanted to steal them; and, in short, Mr. Cattell decided that it was all very well for a compliment, to be asked to give a young lady away, but he was glad he had no more wards to give away.
The bells, at last, ceased to ring, and the ladies ceased to discuss every particular, true or imaginary, of the marriage of their former vicar. He had relinquished the living which, in conformity with his strict sense of right, he determined not to hold, as he could not reside at it; for Constance not only disliked Newberry, but was still too delicate in health and spirits to run any risk of renewing painful associations: besides, probably there were associations there, independent of her lost friends, which Mr. Bouverie might dread her renewing. Several years passed away, but still the recollection of the good Vicar, as he was called, was cherished in the sphere of his former usefulness. Those who could not appreciate the higher excellencies of his character, remembered the kind, gentlemanly courtesy of his manners; the patience with which he had listened to their complaints; the somewhat too lavish bounty with which he had sought to alleviate their sufferings.

The card-players, and other important members of society at Newberry, were not, however, sorry to have his place supplied by a tight,
neat, jolly little man, who ascended the pulpit with a well-defined horse-shoe of powder on his head, gave out one of those well-known texts which seem to serve most preachers as a coup-d'essaie, descanted upon it in terms as old as the hills, and came out from his pulpit exactly a quarter before one o'clock, just in time to allow the elderly ladies to get home to their early Sunday dinner. Then, in the week days, he managed his time so well, that he was regular to the card-table at seven, whither he remained to all appearance glued until nine. Then he was very jocose, and over his glass of cherry brandy, would win, by his conundrums and repartees, such hearts as were to spare. Miss Pearson, in particular, yet hoped, it was said, to be the Vicar's wife; it did not much signify what Vicar, and even Mrs. Crawfurd was suspected, not "to have sworn, like the dove, to die, and own no second love."

But Mrs. De Courcy, who still, like a rosy apple, though a little withered, had a tinge of youth about her, held back in disdain from this new centre of attraction, in expectation, it was suspected, of yet winning the prize, Sir Charles
Marchmont. Some vicissitudes had, in the lapse of time, raised the accomplished Baronet to a dangerous pinnacle of worldly prosperity. In the first place, he had the singular good fortune to lose a proud and peevish wife, a sort of person usually seen to live a long time, wearing every one out but herself. Lady Marchmont died, it was said, by her nurse and doctor, because she would not be contradicted after her confinement, and chose to be placed on the sofa before the ninth day. "The event was awful," observed Mrs. Cattell; "but the cause more so, for of all the deeds of obstinacy and infatuation ever heard of, this was the worst." Every one pitied Sir Charles for having had, and having lost such a wife, and there was a sort of running cadence of condemnation throughout all the mothers and monthly-nurses of the county. The offending and expiating fair one, left a son, who was destined to inherit the honours and estates of her father, the broken-hearted and infirm Lord Vallefort.

Lady Marchmont's large fortune reverted to her husband, who mourned for her, as Mrs.
Crawfurd remarked, handsomely, as a rich widower ought to mourn. Newberry church was hung with black, and mourning was sent down to some former servants and dependants of the family. Sir Charles, though a good deal shocked at first, was observed, as most widowers are, to be peculiarly resigned, and to be looking remarkably well, about three months afterwards. The magnanimity with which he bore his loss, raised him greatly in the opinion of many of his friends, particularly of those who had daughters; and the most amiable interest was displayed among his female acquaintance, respecting his little boy.

The infant was pronounced to be exactly like his father, the very image of the Marchmont family, and it seemed to be forgotten that he ever had had a mother. But poor Lady Marchmont was soon followed to her early grave by her father Lord Vallefort, who had been wholly devoted to this, his only child; and who closed a long course of gout and paralytics, by dying of grief.

The baby, Marchmont, was his sole heir, and Sir Charles, being trustee of his son's im-
mense property, was raised many degrees in the scale of public importance. In the course of time, he became a member of parliament, and by dint of his well-known borough influence, his gentlemanly manners, and a degree of address, and shrewd good sense in what he said, had become more distinguished than men of nine-and-twenty usually are in that formidable assemblage.

Soon after the death of Lady Marchmont, he visited Newberry, and remained about a fortnight at the Priory, but in strict seclusion. He was scarcely ever visible in the town, but once or twice had been noticed sauntering on foot by the Philbrook Water, looking very serious, and often stopping, as if some particular point had struck his view. He went to church on neither of the Sundays that he stayed there; and on a deputation from Mr. Tribe's family magazine calling at the Priory, Mr. Spencer was delegated to excuse him from receiving them, upon the plea of decorous privacy. Every one wondered why he went to Newberry, since he did "not seem to enjoy the place;" and even Mrs. De Courcy was dis-
heartened, and could do nothing more available than intercept the child, and overwhelm him with kisses, which usually sent him home in a paroxysm of infantile rage. At last, on the very day before he left the Priory, Sir Charles did call upon Mrs. De Courcy. The interesting widow was so agitated by the intelligence of this honour, that she found herself impeded in re-arranging her morning costume, by her extreme haste. Meanwhile, the Baronet was conducted into the drawing-room, where, two years before, he had passed an evening for the last time in company with Constance and Emily Courtenay. Time, and the world, and new associations, had wrought a considerable alteration in his feelings, but they had not changed him entirely. He had loved Constance selfishly, but passionately; he had abandoned her as much from motives of jealousy and pique, as from those of necessity and interest: he had never been able to attach himself to his wife, and had consequently deviated into many of the irregularities to which he was by disposition and early example rendered prone, and which he too readily excused to himself. But with all
these circumstances, the object of his almost boyish love had still reigned paramount over his imagination, even, I should say, over his heart. He had never yet seen the woman whom he could compare to her, and he had turned to her image even with a melancholy pleasure, when in comparison with the frivolous, the designing, or the proud. Her beauty, and yet more, her vivacity, her girlish enthusiasm, her deep, yet delicate attachment to himself, were still impressed upon his recollection, united with remorse and vain regret at his conduct to her. Sir Charles had suffered, indeed, real retribution for his heartless and dishonourable deception, in his subsequent and precipitate marriage; yet, during the short career of his wedded life, his sufferings were slight, compared with the bitter pang which was inflicted when he heard that Constance was at last married to Bouverie.

Men, however, throw off, if they do not recover, the effects of disappointed love; and Sir Charles had been diverted from mournful thoughts by a sense of the favourable position in which he now stood in society. He began to
question his own mind, whether domestic ties were really so essential to his happiness as he had once believed them to be: life yielded many other, and perhaps greater attractions, and public importance, public admiration, and the improvement of his large possessions, began to occupy his mind. Still he felt a longing for the renewal of old associations, and a void from the annihilation of old attachments; and at times, the real desolation of his situation, and the thought of what might have been, came across him, with a sensation of pain heightened by envy of the happiness which others might be supposed to enjoy.

He went to Newberry, dispirited, and almost desperate, in resorting to that place as a remedy for low spirits: yet still he hovered round the seat of danger. The experiment adopted for the purpose of regaining tranquillity did not, as it might be conjectured, answer; and Sir Charles was on the point of repairing to one of his other estates, when he took it into his head, before he went, to visit Mrs. De Courcy.

Houses and drawing-rooms in the country alter but little. The general air of the apart-
ment, its finical arrangements, its appearance of by-gone gentility, recalled to Sir Charles's recollection the events of the last evening which he had spent in that room, in the same indistinct but painful manner, as the memory of a disastrous dream is recalled. He seated himself near the window, occupied with such engrossing emotions of almost feminine tenderness and regret, that Mrs. De Courcy's well-executed entrance was unnoticed by him. He started from his reverie upon hearing her voice, with an embarrassment which completely dissolved the melting widow. Sir Charles was the first to recover his habitual ease and volubility.

"It is two years," he observed, "since I had the pleasure of seeing you, Mrs. De Courcy."

"Pardon me," returned the lady; "I met you, par hazard, in —"

She checked herself, from the idea that she was reviving a painful remembrance of his loss—a loss which every man of common humanity must, as she justly thought, feel in some degree.

"How is your angelic boy?" she inquired,
by way of supplement to the half-spoken sentence.

"He is quite well, I thank you," replied the Baronet, with a sigh; "as well, at least, as I could expect him to be, bereaved of the natural cares which—" He paused, and resumed instantly; "but he is my great, my only solace."

"Sweet little darling!" exclaimed Mrs. De Courcy:—"who would not love such a child! How interesting, how fascinating must be the charge of watching over him!"

Thus spoke she aloud: whilst internally she remarked, "that it was evident Sir Charles was sighing for female society, and female attentions."

"I remember this room so well," said the Baronet, looking round him:—"we danced here, I think, but if I recollect aright, we went to supper below, on the night—the night when you so elegantly entertained us."

Mrs. De Courcy's heart beat with rapture. "He absolutely lives upon the recollection," thought she—and she was not far from the truth. No suspicion entered her mind that she
was not to him the heroine of the evening; her face became flushed, through her rouge, and she said, with great softness; "You were a noted dancer on that occasion."

"Yes!" replied Sir Charles, "and I think I have never danced with any pleasure since."

"Indeed!" cried Mrs. De Courcy, in a tone of ecstacy.

Sir Charles rose to depart.

"Will you," he said, "accept my best wishes, and distribute my regards among my former neighbours and friends? It may be some years before I shall visit the Priory again:--but if I can, in London, in any way, at any time, be of the slightest use to my fellow townsmen or townswomen, pray bid them to command my services."

With this friendly, alas! too friendly speech, he retired, leaving Mrs. De Courcy in all the perplexities which a harassed fair one feels, when she cannot divine the ambiguous conduct of a favoured swain.

Meanwhile, Sir Charles slowly wended his way back to the Priory. He had occasion to pass through the gloomy and ancient enclosure,
which formed the burying ground of Saint Michael's. This, although seated in the heart of the town, being surrounded by yew trees, within the low, and broken wall, was yet secluded, and almost solemn, despite the public path which led straggling from one gate to another, at the opposite corner. In the afternoon, also, an air of deep repose characterized even the streets of the town, the little business of the day being finished, and the richer denizens of the place usually at dinner. The sexton, alone, with the noise of his large shears, disturbed the stillness of the spot, as Sir Charles, in a state between sadness and lassitude, entered its precincts. He stood for some minutes, watching the old man, who was snipping off the long grass from the graves, and marking out, as he called it, the "grounds" of those persons, whose relatives paid him an annual stipend for that purpose. The Baronet, finding that he was not known, entered into conversation with the man, who pointed out to him the graves most recently occupied, and one or two which were yawning to receive their dead.
"We have a pretty assortment of graves here, sir," said the man, resting for a brief space, from his occupation, and looking around him, with, apparently, much the same sort of self-complacency as a gardener contemplates his flowers. "There he's old Mr. Cattell's grandfather, and his mother, and four of her uncles," continued the garrulous old man, wishing to point out such monuments as he thought were most interesting:—"and we have all the Marchmonts here, sir, for the family vault's here, and not at Marchmont," he added with an air of triumph. "There's old Sir Roland, with his head out of the churchyard, and his body in it," pointing, as he spoke, to a curious old monument, in which this piece of superstitious humility was actually observed "for he was a great sinner, sir,"—"and there, sir, is old Squire Ruding's mousleum, with a place for old Mrs. Ruding."

"I see," said Sir Charles, interrupting the man, "a newly erected monument yonder, whose is that?" He pointed, as he spoke, to a small white marble tablet, placed upon a buttress of the church, and shaded by some sprays
of young ivy, which had been, apparently, purposely trained round it. A Provence rose-tree, planted by the same pious care, threw up its young shoots, scarcely, at this early season, decorating the tablature, to which its later blossoms seemed likely to form so fitting an accompaniment.

"That," replied the man, "is a monument, erected to the memory of Miss Emily Courtenay, by her sister, Miss Constance Courtenay. I never shall forget the day she died; I could get our Vicar as was then, Mr. Bouverie, no ways to attend to nothing: and there happened to be three christenings, and a wedding, obliged to be done by Parson Wakley, who made quick work of them, and finished them all in three quarters of an hour. And let alone that—there was Sir Charles's peal to ring—seven bells, seven men, as was ordered by Mr. Spencer, Sir Charles's right hand, when he came down to notify about the Hox, and so forth—but you seem lost, sir."

"I will step across, and look at the monument," answered Sir Charles, hastily. "Good God! and was it on that wretched ominous day that poor Constance was destined to undergo
such suffering? And Bouverie, her sole support and comfort! Why were we ever separated? O Constance, was it well to drive me from you?"

He read with a quivering lip, the sad, but simple inscription. Its tale of early doom, and of harrowing bereavement, needed no length of comment, no pomp of language—"Erected by Constance, her sole surviving relative"—spoke volumes as to what the sorrows of that survivor must have been.

"I cannot regret," thought Sir Charles, as he walked away, "that she has at length found a home, and sheltered herself in the bosom of a deserving family. I cannot regret that she could forget so easily, or if, perhaps, not easily, that she could forget eventually all that passed between us: I must strive to forget it also."

This was perhaps his last serious reflection upon the subject, for a considerable lapse of time, during which the social and intellectual pleasures of the world, varied by travelling, and enhanced by the sense of his own importance in society, effectually weaned Sir Charles Marchmont, for some time, from all reflections of a sentimental nature.
CHAPTER VI.

And what is life? the flourishing array
Of the proud summer meadow, which to-day
Wears her green plush, and is to-morrow hay.

Quarles and Hortington.

The reader may, by a very gentle stretch of
imagination, suppose two years to have passed
over the head of my heroine, and to have left
her at their close, a rational, a beloved, and a
happy wife. The first year of marriage is
usually occupied in fulfilling a new station in
the sphere of human importance, and in over-
rating that importance very considerably. A
bride is treated somewhat like a baby: every
thing must be conceded to the pretty pet: no
one is supposed to have any feelings but her-
self. Whatever she does is graceful, is conde-
scending; if she be taciturn, and even a little sulky, she is accounted modest, and lady-like: if lively and boisterous, it is her way, and every one submits to her follies. Her dresses are all fashionable, her furniture modern, her servants are all new brooms, and her husband is obliged in common decency, to be the happiest of men.

During the second year, the young lady's conceit of herself is brought down a little. Reduced from the pinnacle of novelty, and temporary distinction upon which she stood, she comes to her own level of wisdom or folly, agreeableness or disagreeableness. Her marriage garments bear their date upon them, and other younger and newer objects of attraction have arisen among that little world, her acquaintance. The servants, that were such treasures at first, have turned out plagues, and her husband has now the shade of worldly anxieties cast over his countenance. All these vicissitudes in the minor affairs of life have their good effects. The young wife who was so perfect in her own estimation, whose arrangements were so capital, whose influence so irresistible, finds she must
work up her way to domestic celebrity, by the same slow process as other people. The vexations incident to other mortals, assail her; her husband, like other men, has a temper; he has also brothers, and uncles and aunts, who, like other people's relations, are troublesome, indeed never satisfied; and she finds that the defects of her own character, which were of little consequence before her marriage, are now looked at through the microscope of domestic criticism.

Something of this, Constance may have experienced, but she had not her full share of it, until several years after her marriage. The circumstance of having family connexions was so new and delightful to her, that she felt at first, as if she could not do enough for Mrs. Bouverie, Maria, and even Mrs. Willis. The two former loved, and were proud of her; and even the latter has only once been heard to say, that Mrs. Henry Bouverie kept rather an extravagant table, and gardened in light kid gloves: but these were things she had had an example of, in her husband's mother and sister.

With regard to her husband, Constance had an easier part to play, than most persons. It
was not only that he was naturally generous, and good-tempered, and affectionate, and cheerful, and many other things: it was not, either, his religious principles alone, that kept him right, in the small affairs of life, minute, but irritating, as the needle-points with which the devil tempted Saint Anthony:—no, there was one circumstance about Mr. Bouverie, that contributed mainly to his daily, and hourly self-restraint, and consequently, to his peace of mind: he was always employed. In his clerical functions the business of his day consisted, and these being discharged, he was such a reader, such a writer, such a gardener, such a painter, such a botanist, such a mineralogist; he had so much to arrange, so much constantly in progress, that he had no time to pass the dregs of his wife's character through a strainer, or to consider, and reconsider in how many points he was her superior. By degrees, the novelty, and the delight of possessing one whom he had so long hopelessly loved, had become familiar to him, and, after the fashion of all human felicity, was deadened to the sense, by habit, yet rendered more necessary even by the bond which
had lessened its zest. Even her beauty no longer struck him as heretofore, and he began to wonder, why he had ever thought so much of it. Yet he loved her, far more fondly than he had ever done.

Constance had nothing wayward in her disposition: she questioned not the mode in which happiness had been prepared for her by the supreme Giver of good. She came to the conviction that she could not have been so happy with any one, as with the partner whom the hand of Providence had assigned to her. Her past life seemed like a dream of trouble: her present was a reality of enjoyment: she found it scarcely necessary to call in the aid of duty to urge her to study her husband's happiness, for she did so, because she could not bear the idea of his being otherwise. Easy in circumstances, replenished in health, and fortified against the indulgence of discontent, by a constant sense of God's goodness to her, her spirits rose to a height of buoyancy which she had never known before, since her first initiation into the cares of life. Sometimes the thought did cross her mind, how much her happiness
would have been increased, had Emily been alive to share it: but the wish was checked when she reflected upon the disappointments, and errors, and miseries to which life is incident, and when she thought that the fragile bark was safely harbourd into port, she was consoled, and the anxious longing to have that beloved sister restored to her, in some degree assuaged.

Mr. and Mrs. Bouverie, after sundry delays, fixed their abode about sixteen miles from Clifford, at a living presented to Mr. Bouverie by an old college friend.

The neighbourhood was what is called very good, that is to say, the society was very limited, the families were tolerably rich, the individual members of these families were intolerably narrow-minded, and inconveniently exclusive. Constance established herself in her new home with the determination of making as few distinctions as possible, and of cultivating a little easy and friendly society, without encumbering herself too frequently with that species of private manufactory which is carried on, in what are called dinner parties. The parsonage was, however, in the
very centre of the village, and a very slight fence, over which she trained some flowers, separated the lawn before her house from the churchyard. Among the families of parochial importance, were a Mr. and Mrs. Furlong, people of ancestry, but whose consequence had been worn out, by the many generations through which it had descended to them. Their forefathers appeared indeed to have spared them nothing but a tumbling, crumbling old house, some moth-eaten heirloom, the history of which all their acquaintance knew by heart; a pedigree, which served only to fill them with pride—a pride which, like creams and ices, does very well for company days, but does not satisfy the stomach in common; and a heap of ancestral diseases which Mrs. Furlong could trace on Mr. Furlong's side, as far back as Edward the Sixth. This charming couple were originally first cousins.

Mr. Furlong was a man, who looked as if his spirit had been broken, and when you saw Mrs. Furlong, you could easily account for it; she was, as Constance heard it remarked by her maid, of a "sanguinary" complexion,
light sandy hair, inflamed eyes, a little peevish nose, and teeth which grew out as if intended by nature to bite hard, conveyed indeed such an impression, as was found to be fully justified on further acquaintance with Mrs. Furlong.

Unhappily, this lady had a step-daughter; a poor consumptive thing, whom she had worried into a fever, and then doctored into a decline, one of those young ladies who are interesting only because they are ill, and ill-used. This delicate, depressed creature, was the darling of her father, when he was permitted to have a darling, but he was obliged to love her with Mrs. Furlong's leave: whereas, Miss Catherine, the delightful descendant of the Lady Paramount, was forced upon everybody as a beauty, and extolled as the charming placable creature, "so different to my daughter Anne! O that Anne had such a temper! And it was quite a misfortune that Anne could not take a leaf out of Catherine's book."

About a mile from the village, lived a Mrs. Williams, one of those contented widow ladies, round as a daisy, bright as marigold, who
seem never to have known a care to check the exuberance of their lateral growth. This lady, like Noah, had sons, and daughters, and sons-in-law, and daughters-in-law, and had every possible chance of growing thin which a large family affords; still she had grown fat. Mrs. Williams's family were of a disputable breed. They were, and had long been, landed proprietors, yet the sons looked like farmers, and the daughters spoke in a provincial dialect, and had an agricultural cut about them; Mrs. Williams herself looked truly as if she had lived upon pasture land all her life. Constance showed these substantial neighbours every possible civility, but without desiring to be intimate, an intention by no means reciprocal. The Miss Williamses said a great deal about their happiness on having a sociable family at the parsonage, and the Mr. Williamses called several times, and continued talking till dinner was announced, and then walked down upon a very slight invitation: and Mrs. Williams stayed to luncheon after church, and remained until afternoon service, walking Constance up and down the
garden, and saying how convenient it was to her to have a house where she could remain, for she never could manage to attend afternoon church before.

Constance had had no intention of becoming Mrs. Furlong's tool and convenience, or the depository of Miss Furlong's woes, when she paid them some neighbourly attentions, sent them some game, and offered them any fruit they might want for preserving. They were that description of family, who never made a visit together, consequently their acquaintance had to encounter the endurance of a succession of Furlongs. First, in the morning, at an hour when even the most elegant housekeepers have sundry little duties to discharge, came Miss Catherine, obviously upon some errand of mama's, but actually, to intercept any invitations for a drive, or other little recreations, which Mrs. Bouverie might be likely to give her elder sister, if she saw her first, in preference to her. This young lady possessed the assurance, without the ease, of a woman of fashion: a loquacity, for which, as some elderly ladies observed of her, one longed to set her a
task, or put her in the corner; whilst in her person she united decayed finery with disgraceful untidiness, her head looking aristocratic, and her shoes and stockings, plebeian. To her, succeeded Mrs. Furlong, always upon some little design of her own, or to inflict the leisure which her early rising afforded, upon her neighbours, and her discourse generally left poor Constance with a severe head-ache. Then about three, Miss Furlong, who rose late, crawled down to the rectory, and sat talking in a hollow voice about the deprivations and hardships of her situation: the want of fire in her sleeping-room, and the consignment of all the family hereditary jewels and laces to her younger sister, Miss Catherine; and Constance pitied her too much ever to give her a hint that she should like to be alone, and thought, all the while she was talking, that "the poor unhappy thing would not last long;" but, nevertheless, the poor unhappy thing did live on, as those poor unhappy things always do. This afternoon visit generally led to a call recriminatory and justificatory on the part of Mrs. Furlong, warning Mrs. Bouverie not to listen
to, or to credit Miss Furlong, who had just her own mother's temper; nevertheless, the whole family, when they had contrived, or thought they had contrived, to set Mrs. Bouverie individually against each of them, were mightily affronted, if she did not pay to them collectively the utmost deference and respect imaginable. As for Mr. Furlong, he, being devoid both of the caballing, aggravating temper of his wife, and of the discontented spirit of his daughter, was, from the absence of these characteristics, totally uninteresting, their place not being supplied by the existence of any other remarkable features of character whatsoever.

Such was the state of society in this retired village, when Lady Eleanor Lepel, and her husband, Mr. Lepel, became tenants of a shooting box, at about three miles' distance. Lady Eleanor drove herself over to church one afternoon, in a pony phaeton, and Mr. Lepel came on the following Sunday in a chariot. Of course, this vision of greatness produced much sensation in the parish, where nothing at present had been seen more elegant than young
Mrs. Bouverie and her white satin bonnet. Lady Eleanor, to vulgar capacities, appeared infinitely to transcend every thing which either Mrs. or the Miss Williamses, or Mrs. and the Miss Furlongs, had seen in Hollywood before. She was taller, and her features were far more decided than those of Constance. She bore the stamp of high life upon every gesture and movement. Her dress was not less tasteful than costly; and there was an air of intelligence, of dignity, and of grace, that was both imposing and agreeable.

Mr. Lepel was a man whose mind seemed to have ceased expanding, even before his body had done growing. He was a person of most reputable character, station, and attainments; at least his attainments were legitimately classical, and authenticated by a successive residence at Eton and Oxford, where he had obtained as much credit, and as high degrees, as it is proper for a young man of large fortune to desire. Mr. Lepel came of age in suitable style, bought a borough, and married a wife. Why she chose him, no one could guess; but, when almost every marriage is a mystery and a
wonder, to investigate the cause of this union, would be impertinent, and perhaps futile; for who can dive into the unfathomable caprices of the human mind upon this inexplicable subject? Suffice it to say, they were married; and they had hitherto lived together on terms respectably indifferent, and politely dull, and were, consequently, deemed a most happy couple. Nothing could be more creditable than Mr. Lepel's conduct as a husband; his wife had every suitable indulgence, and he paid her every deferential attention enjoined in the code maritale: and whilst Lady Eleanor's heart was burning with disgust and dislike to him, and every faculty of her capacious mind exercised in despising him, their acquaintance, had any unhappy disagreement brought the ill-assorted pair into Doctor's Commons, would have sworn upon the sacred Volume, that they were the most united pair in existence.

Mr. Lepel was one of that small race, to whom the folding of a letter, or the buttoning of a waistcoat, is a matter of vital, perplexing, and enduring importance. He would fidget a
whole morning about the placing of a sofa, and fret a whole evening upon the score of a sick dog. Naturally irritable, the frivolity of his pursuits gave a perpetual stimulus to the workings of his little temper: he never rose into a glorious passion, nor lasted out a magnanimous fit of the sullens: his humours, on the contrary, were like the unceasing dripping of a tiny stream of water, upon the sand-stone below. Happily, Lady Eleanor's nature was of granite; had it partaken of the soft and porous character of the sand-stone, she would have been gradually worn away. She was a woman of a peculiarly enlarged and generous mind. Trifles, especially when they referred to herself, were, or used to be, before she married, of little avail to her happiness. Small concerns she dismissed with the address of a powerful understanding, and perhaps valued their aggregate importance too little. Accustomed to assiduous attendance, and to easy circumstances, she hated to be troubled with the process of any concern, the result of which she could fully comprehend; —she enjoyed society, reading, exercise, —had elegant notions, and habits, and managed
things upon a large scale. She was also a woman of strong, but subdued passions: when she once saw through her husband's character, which had been veiled in the formalities of a bargain-like, aristocratic courtship, she had no scruple in thoroughly despising it, but had far too much delicacy and forbearance to show her sentiments either to him, or to the world. With regard to Mr. Lepel, he was sufficiently afraid of her to leave her alone; and his servants, his birds, his gravel-walks, and his accounts, engrossed that portion of his system which he conceived to be his heart:—consequently he felt no void.

Unhappily for Lady Eleanor, she had once known what it was to love deeply, and to experience all the excitement of angry regret. It was now in vain that she sought for a requital of those banished, and perhaps conquered, emotions, by a participation of domestic affections. Sickened, and chilled, her warm affections poured forth into other channels. Friendship she understood, and she was worthy to enjoy, but she felt it more readily towards man than towards woman. For genius and worth,
she manifested an enthusiasm which, in her ardent nature, always bordered upon love. Unhappily, the early principles implanted within her mind, whilst they raised her above all fear of the contamination of what she deemed vice, did not teach her to check the wanderings of that affection which should have been her husband's alone, or, if it could not be his, should have been devoted to no other man. She entertained that fallacious notion for which our own feelings too often find an excuse, that whilst the conduct remains pure, there is neither impropriety nor danger in married women cherishing an interest in some one male acquaintance, with whom their sympathies of taste and feeling accord, who would have their preference, were not such preference criminal, and on whom, sometimes, their intimate confidence, under the mask of friendship, is bestowed.

Embued with these notions, yet esteeming herself one of the most unexceptionable wives in the world, Lady Eleanor left the scene of her secret and cherished interests, to vegetate for a few months in the country, and to permit her husband to expend his tediousness upon
gardeners and bailiffs. She looked about her neighbourhood, and found no one to interest her but Mr. and Mrs. Bouverie. They were evidently persons of mind, and good taste, and refined feelings. She idolized the virtues of the former, whilst there was a purity and elevation in his character, that would have prevented her from manifesting towards him the enthusiasm which she could not perhaps dare to feel for him, even had not her interest been otherwise directed. She envied Mrs. Bouverie the privilege of loving and being beloved by such a man, and a sentiment of regret for herself often stole across her when she reflected upon their genuine, but unostentatious affection. She admired, and perhaps loved Constance, as a beautiful and intellectual creature, inferior in natural understanding to few women, and inferior to herself only in that expansion of mind, and emancipation from prejudice, which an acquaintance with society is said to impart; but, which it sometimes imparts at the expense of exalted sentiments, and of rigid notions of right and wrong.

Constance, who knew not the sentiment of envy, except from the conduct of others, ap-
preciated with enthusiastic admiration, the talents and fine qualities of Lady Eleanor. She could, without pain, bear to consider herself inferior to any friend; it was an unalloyed pleasure to her to admire and extol. Unfortunately, she was a little too prone to be influenced by the charm of elegant manners, and of intellectual superiority. An intimacy, however, arose, which bore the character, if it had not the intensity, of friendship. Lady Eleanor drove over almost every day to the rectory, and Constance and her husband spent several evenings in the week at Tachborne Grange. Lady Eleanor generally contrived to have one or two intelligent men, either from the neighbourhood, or from London, in the house, and then her own conversation was quite an attraction, so that Mr. Bouverie, anxious to afford Constance pleasure, found that he could with foreign assistance, get through a few hours occasionally, as Mr. Lepel's guest, especially as that gentleman usually fell asleep.

The intimacy, therefore, went on very favourably, surviving the cold blasts of winter, until the following February, when Mr. Bou-
verie was summoned to the north, to attend the sick bed of an early, and valued friend. This was his first separation from Constance since their marriage, and both he and his wife looked forward to it with a degree of dread, which the occasion did not seem to warrant. Never, during the short career of their married life, had their happiness been sullied by the slightest withholding of confidence, on either part, except upon one subject. Naturally open, and guileless, Constance had disguised from her husband nothing except the former depth of her early attachment, and the relenting weakness which made her still think favourably, and with interest, of the object of that attachment. She knew that Mr. Bouverie distrusted, and even disliked him, and she saw well that it would be hazardous to enter upon that subject. By degrees, too, her early prepossessions, which had been relinquished at the dictates of duty, and gratitude, had vanished before the sway of time, absence, and change of ideas. She thought of Sir Charles Marchmont, and, if she saw his name in the papers, or heard him alluded to in passing conversation, had now ceased to turn
again to the paragraph in which his name was mentioned, or to listen to the observations concerning him, with more than a calm, and perhaps a serious interest.

She felt solitary and unsettled on the day of Mr. Bouverie's departure, afraid of sauntering down the village, for fear of encountering Mrs. Furlong, and uncertain whether she were, or were not disposed to drive over to Tachborne. Whilst in this irresolute state of mind, she was enlivened by hearing Lady Eleanor's pony phaeton drive in at the gate, and she ran out to meet her with that very warm pleasure which one experiences at a dull moment, when a friend unexpectedly arrives. Lady Eleanor did not know of Mr. Bouverie's departure, but she was all the more kind, and stayed the longer, and insensibly fell into that sort of confidential conversation, into which ladies diverge, particularly when their husbands are away.

"I do envy you," said Lady Eleanor, as she pulled a branch of Mezerion, whilst they walked up and down the garden. "I do envy you the delightful terms on which you seem to be with your husband: the warm, genuine, yet manly
attachment on his part—the perfect confidence on yours,”—and she sighed, and yet smiled as she spoke.

"I know not how I should exist, were it otherwise," replied Constance.

"And yours, I should suppose," resumed Lady Eleanor, "to have been on both sides, a first attachment—you are both so young—and so new to disappointment, and to that mass of evils which we call the world."

Constance was silent; for, what she could not speak of to her husband, she would not confide to any one else.

"I think no situation so enviable," continued Lady Eleanor, "as that of a woman whose best affections are actually centered in their legitimate object, who finds in that object a sympathy so entire as to leave her nothing to wish for—whose wishes never, never wander from the lot in which heaven has placed her."

"And is this not, ought this not to be the case with all married women?" asked Constance.

"Why, I don't know as to what ought to be," replied her companion, as they entered the house.

"Thoughts, and feelings, and affections must
ever be free, whatever be the necessity that prevents their freedom from being exerted. I myself know many very highly principled, and pure minded women, who have, after an ill-assorted marriage, seen the objects whom they might have preferred; and felt that if such, and such events had combined, they might have escaped regrets, which—but I was going to say, that this is particularly apt to be the case where the mind has been previously unhinged by an early, ill-starred entanglement.”

“I hope not,” said Constance, with emotion.

“Suppose now,” continued Lady Eleanor, as she leaned over the library fire, “a woman of some acquirements, united to a man whom she indeed respects—respects as an innoxious member of society—but with whom she has not one idea in common! I will carry the case farther, and suppose, also, what often happens in the higher ranks, that the wicked considerations of rank and fortune have obliged her to relinquish—that which she once set her heart upon.”

“That happens, unfortunately, in every condition of life,” cried Constance.
“Yes; but it is only, my dear Mrs. Bouverie, minds of a certain stamp that suffer materially in consequence. Well, it happens to be the lot of that woman, seared in her dearest hopes, to marry recklessly, or at least with very fallacious hopes of what would render her happy. In what a perilous situation is she placed! She would not, perhaps, unite herself to the object of her early passion; for I will call it passion, rather than choice; but the warmth of her feelings on that occasion have taught her to know what she can feel. Matured in judgment, and regulated, but not chilled in her feelings, it is her lot to meet with a man, in every way calculated to realize her early and late visions, of the being whom she could have loved. I cannot say how—for it is impossible to devise the reasons why two minds are particularly attracted towards each other. Izaak Walton may unfold it in his own way, but his doctrine will not do for us now.”

“I can suppose such a case as that which you describe,” said Constance, “but I cannot but suppose, also, that a well-principled woman would repel the very faintest notion of applying
such a case to herself—would shrink from the bare idea that her husband could be a secondary object with her.”

“Ah, Constance! you know not the world—I agree with you, that to the pure in mind, what is called temptation, is not temptation; that, to the really modest woman, the thought of evil, the most distant allusion to the possibility of her fall from her high estate, would be, not repelled, for it would never enter her thoughts; but there are many degrees between impropriety and error, and between error and vice. I am decidedly of opinion, that if a woman perform her duty conscientiously to a husband whom she loves not, and maintain him in the respect of the world, she cannot, in the eye of the most rigid moralist, be blamed, if her interest be centered in any other object: provided that her interest be pure, exalted, and partaking more of the nature of romance, than that of love.”

“I do not know—I cannot tell,” answered Constance; “but it seems to me, that in the conscientious discharge of duty the fidelity of the heart is of far more importance than that of
the lips, or than the outward conduct; and, that failing in that, preferring not him whom you have vowed to prefer before all other—cherishing the image of another, are more than improprieties—more than errors, and amount to crimes. I cannot suppose a woman of principle acting thus, at least whilst reason remained to her."

"You are happy in your unconsciousness of such a possibility," rejoined Lady Eleanor, gravely. "For myself, I unhappily do know an instance of a woman, who would lay down her life sooner than dishonour herself either in word or deed, and who would fall under your heavy censure, did you know the condition of her mind."

"Perhaps there are some extenuating circumstances," said Constance.

"The circumstances are these:—she was early attached, and was deceived—deceived in the attachment she had inspired, because it was not strong enough to brook difficulties and mortifications. She married—not from the best motives, but it was a negociation, a bargain, a commercial concern—like other commercial
concerns, the speculation succeeded only to a certain extent: wealth and power were secured, but peace of mind, that sum total which is made up of daily units, was lost, or, at least, a very small portion of it obtained. This unfortunate lady had neither pleasures nor cares, nor knew she what real happiness was, until a source of interest was granted her. Perhaps you may not think it an innocent one, but I do.

"A gentleman, distinguished no less in the great world than idolized in society, replete with intelligence, elegance, and refinement; with a heart no less open to generous impressions than her own, and with a mind peculiarly kindred to hers, chanced to be a distant relation of her husband's. For him she entertains nothing but what she would avow to the world, and what is more, would avow to you—and yet, my severe friend, his friendship constitutes the happiness of her life."

"I am sorry for it," said Constance; "and can only say that these precluded friendships, these unhallowed preferences, must, I think, be visited by disappointment, mortification, and regret, not to say remorse. Were I happy
enough to possess a sister, and that sister were so circumstanced, I should wish her in her grave."

"You misunderstand me," cried Lady Eleanor; "the sentiments which my friend cherishes stimulate her to every virtue — induce her to prefer intellectual pursuits to the enticements of folly. Her friendship to her accomplished relative has rendered her what no other earthly consideration could — humble, forbearing, and self-denying."

"It may do so, but what a motive, Lady Eleanor!"

"Well! you shall see him— you shall know him, and then you will be convinced that no unworthy motives, no grovelling ideas can be connected with him. Every sentiment he breathes is noble, every action irreproachable—"

"Except that— of engaging the too partial regard of another man’s wife," interrupted Constance.

"There let me exculpate him:— nothing but the purest friendship— the most disinterested regard for the welfare of his friend— the highest principles of honour to his relation. No! I
cannot say that by word or look he ever offered me—"

"Me!" thought Constance, as Lady Eleanor, interrupting herself, rose in some confusion to depart; and long after the pony chaise had driven away, the subject of this conversation remained, like the reminiscence of an unpleasant dream, upon her thoughts. She would fain have gone to Clifford to dispel the gloom which she felt at her husband's absence, and the shade of disappointment which she could not entirely banish, respecting Lady Eleanor: it required some days to recover from the impression which that accomplished and attractive, but misguided being, had left upon her mind.
CHAPTER VII.

"O heart of mine!
....... thou hast lost
Interest in the once idols of thy being;
They have departed, even as if wings
Had borne away their morning."

L. E. L., Erinna.

Constance was not afraid of solitude, but she was afraid of that worse than solitude, the restraint of interesting society. The kindness of her neighbours was a positive misfortune to her. First, she was forced to play at hide-and-seek all one morning, to avoid Mrs. Furlong and Miss Catherine, who came in at the front door, whilst she stole out of the back, and sauntered behind the old yews in the churchyard till they were fairly out of sight. Then, just as she had finished her lonely dinner at half-past five, came the two Miss Williamses,
each with a work-bag in their hands, from charity to sit the whole evening with her: they stayed till ten, when their brother fetched them home with a little pocket lanthorn. These two young ladies were the most simple creatures in the world: they knew vice only from spelling-books, and their ideas of virtue were framed from Adelaide and Theodore, or from L'Ami des Enfans. They had no idea that Prince George of Wales, and Caroline his consort, were not the most united couple in the world; they thought married people always were. They had never been allowed to read Shakspeare, and knew nothing more of Addison than the Select Spectator. Of course, they were no adepts in the chit-chat of the day, and they had no acquirements to compensate for that deficiency, no occupation except needle-work, and that of the most elaborate description. The flounces which they began, were out of fashion before they were half finished, and the mind reverted to generations yet unborn who must enjoy the result of their labours, when they talked of their ten-stitch, satin-stitch, open hemming, cross-stitch, and back-stitch. All their ideas were
equally obsolete; and any more enlightened friend, who took them in hand, must feel that she had every thing relative to society in general, to instil into their innocent minds.

Unluckily, a great jealousy of these two amiable damsels subsisted in the mind of Mrs. Furlong, who hearing every thing that happened in the village, heard the next day that the Miss Williamses had drunk tea at the rectory. She hastened, with an aggravated scarlet on her cheek, and a deepened frown upon her brow, to call upon Mrs. Bouverie. She found Constance busily engaged in tying up, and arranging her green-house plants, which the warmth of a genial spring day permitted her to place out of doors.

"I am quite sorry to find, Mrs. Bouverie, that it should be necessary for you to send a mile off for friends to pass the evening with you, when my family is so near," began Mrs. Furlong, her face deepening into the colour of a gilliflower.

"Pardon me—I did not.—Oh, I forgot! the Miss Williamses were here last night—but I did not send for them, they came of their own accord, very kindly," replied Constance.
"And that I, or any of my family are ready to do at any time, also," returned Mrs. Furlong, in a tone which would have frightened away a flock of crows. "We shall not be behind any of our neighbours in showing civility to Mrs. Bouverie whilst Mr. Bouverie is away. I am at leisure, and ready to spend the day with you," she continued, taking off her bonnet, and showing a head-dress of doubtful species, half cap, half turban, of home manufacture. "And my daughters will join us in the evening."

"Good heavens!" thought Constance, "what will become of me?" But woman is never at a loss for expedients: a man might have resigned himself, but Constance could not, whilst a chance of escape remained. She recollected that she had in part consented to dine that day with Lady Eleanor at the Grange. The skies, it was true, were rather threatening, the atmosphere being of that soft and variable temperature, which often forbodes rain.

"I had intended to-day to go to Tachborne," said she, looking upwards, involuntarily, as she spoke.
"What, such a day as this! And in your open carriage too! No, indeed, my good lady—we shall take better care of you than that.—What will the Rector say to us, if we take such poor care of you whilst he is away?" And she took off her shawl, and hung it over some cloak pins, for they were standing close to the door.

Poor Constance stood the personification of irresolution; she knew, however, Mrs. Furlong's selfish, imperative disposition, and resolved to act for herself.

"I feel much indebted to you for your intentions, Mrs. Furlong," she said, "but you must allow me to be the arbiter of my own destiny to-day; my husband will pardon me, even if I do catch cold, and I seldom do——"

"Bless me! but Mr. Furlong would no more let me!—he's fidgetty enough now, at my even coming this distance," returned Mrs. Furlong, the cadences of her voice running all into sharps. "Come, now, stay quietly and comfortably at home. I've brought my work," she pursued, pulling out a yellow pasteboard netting-case, out of which came forth a dirty tangled piece of minute mechanism, which was to shape its
unformed dimensions, some time or other, into a purse.

"I shall dread the sight of work-bags and netting-cases ever more," said Constance to herself, as she sat down, in a state between resignation and ill-humour, the gradations between which are sometimes difficult to be defined.

"Poor thing, she wants advice," thought Mrs. Furlong, elated with her victory.

"Didn't you think highly of that Mrs. James, that lived with you as lady’s-maid, one time?" she asked, by way of beginning the conversation pleasantly.

"Did I, or did I not?" said Constance, her mind running upon other things. "O, I remember!—yes, I think very highly of her."

"Then you were quite deceived in her," cried Mrs. Furlong, who was delighted with this small triumph over any of the domestic arrangements of Mrs. Bouverie, more especially that, for her own part, she rarely kept the dirty, ill-fed, curl-papered damsels, whom she called her cook and house-maid, longer than their month of trial.

"Was I?" answered Constance, with a look
of intense thought, for she was meditating how she should run away without showing the white feather. But fortune favoured her, in the form of an express from Lady Eleanor, written in the strongest terms.

"You must come, my dear friend—we have a charming party to-day:—set out immediately—and remember, you are to sleep at the Grange."

"Must come!" echoed Constance. "You see," said she, scarcely able to control her joy, "that I must go. Lady Eleanor will be so much displeased; and I can have the pleasure of seeing you, you are so near, any day."

"Well then! name your day," cried Mrs. Furlong, bridling up; "Mr. Furlong will be very much surprised to see me back again. I told my cook, indeed, I was going out for the whole day. I wonder Lady Eleanor did not ask you to take a friend with you—shall you not find it lonely now, going all that way alone? It's what Mr. Furlong would not permit me."
"O, but he is a most imperative man then," returned Constance. "My husband lets me do just as I like. Then I will send—I will call and let you know, when I may claim the performance of your charitable offer," she added, wishing to defer the evil day.

"It's a pity she has no one to controul her," said Mrs Furlong to herself, as she put on her deep yellow shawl, which like her character, resembled an infusion of rhubarb and senna, while Constance sprang up with all the buoyancy of a released prisoner, to dress for her excursion.

The drive to Tachborne passed through a diversified lane, in summer fringed with the hedge-rose, and the briony, through the bright frame-work of which occasionally little pictures of the distant country were seen. The Grange to which this arboresque road conducted, was a large and somewhat ancient house, the whiteness of whose stuccoed walls was strongly contrasted with the dark green of the firs, and other evergreens by which it was partly enclosed. Constance saw, from afar off, Mr. Lapel walking up and down a small ter-
race, with his watch in his hand, awaiting the luncheon bell; for he was one of those men who conceived the benefits of exercise to consist in moving over a certain space of ground, for a certain portion of time, never taking into account the importance of renewing and invigorating his ideas, by enjoying the passing scene around him. He advanced to Constance with some cordiality, but looked nervously at the deep ruts which the carriage wheels were making in the damp gravel.

"Is Lady Eleanor within?" asked Constance, springing out of the carriage: but without waiting for an answer, she walked directly into the library. The windows of this apartment were deep and projecting, and in some of them were writing tables and implements; for Lady Eleanor, professing to have a taste for literature, wrote as many notes and letters as a Secretary of State. Constance, however, looked in vain around for her friend, but walking unhesitatingly up to the third window, she came directly opposite to a gentleman who was writing at the table. She drew back a little, on seeing a stranger, for her hair was somewhat blown by the spring breeze,
and her dress had been hastily arranged;—she wore a large cloak, and a bonnet of the simplest form, suitable to country occasions; yet negligent and unbecoming as was this attire, such a glow of health and pleasure had been imparted by her drive, and she always felt so much at home, so happy at the Grange, that she could not have passed unnoticed, even among the gayest, and the most beauteous. A deeper crimson was, however, imparted to her cheeks, as the stranger raised his head. After an estrangement of years, after an absence which had nearly deadened every recollection—perhaps, on both sides—she again found herself under the same roof with Sir Charles Marchmont. For a few moments her confusion was visible: but, feeling what was due to herself, and resolved, that no indication of previous interest should escape her, to lower her own self-reverence, and to increase his, she assumed a composure of manner, which in the momentary desperation of a strong effort, amounted almost to haughtiness. She bowed, and moved towards the fire-place.

Sir Charles, on the other hand, betrayed, with far less reserve, his emotion. On first see-
ing Constance, he rose, and involuntarily stepped towards her; but checking himself, he turned pale, and remained standing, even after she had moved forwards. But, in a few minutes, he recovered himself also: it was evident to him that Mrs. Bouverie desired to give him no other requisition than what the most distant courtesy demanded; and with feelings somewhat mortified, he determined that the degree of civility on his part, should be exactly proportioned to that manifested by her. He made, however, in the tone of a very slight acquaintance, some comment on the weather, and received as polite and unconcerned a reply as Constance could command. She was, indeed, no longer the simple girl that Sir Charles had formerly known her, but having acquired confidence by a free intercourse with society, and strengthened by the advice and opinions of her husband, so valuable to an unformed character like hers, she had gained a degree of presence of mind in trifles, most important to her own comfort, and, on some occasions, involving even her self-respect. Sir Charles beheld her, in all senses, altered: and not the slight, bending, growing girl, scarcely emancipa-
ted from childish errors and fears, but the full formed, and stately woman, matured in mind, as well as in stature, and adequate to judge unbiassed of the line of conduct which she ought to pursue towards others.

"I thought," he observed to himself, "that her beauty would be evanescent; that much of that loveliness was connected with a season of life, always lovely:—but I was mistaken."

On the other hand, the observations which Constance secretly made regarding him were not so favourable.

"He is much altered"—was her first impression. Then—"there is an expression in his face which was not formerly there—a look of care, not of melancholy, for care has somewhat of harshness, and melancholy of sweetness in it:—and he has not the natural, open, beaming countenance which he formerly had."

Alas! why should she be surprised? Is there any condition more likely to engender artificial cares than the life of a man of wealth, and importance, who lives for this world only? How hollow and joyless is his existence!—how devoid of object!—how prone to fancied miseries!
The man whom the world calls gay has often an aspect of anxiety, when he is neither speaking or smiling;—at least, if he possess either sensibility, or reflection.

Their mutual inspection was, to the relief of both, interrupted by the entrance of Lady Eleanor, who introduced them, saying at the same time, "I wonder that you never met before, as you were both residents at Newberry; were you not?" but without awaiting a reply, she added, "Mrs. Bouverie, I have sent your pony phaeton back:—if you will not sleep here, I shall send you home in the chariot to-night."

"Thank you; but I must return," replied Constance, even the fear of Mrs. Furlong vanishing from before her eyes, for she could not endure the idea of remaining a whole day in the same place with Sir Charles. "Perhaps it is not too late for your servant to overtake my carriage," she continued, ringing the bell.

"Well! this is unaccountable!" cried Lady Eleanor—"when the man himself said, he was desired to drive back, and to trust to my sending you home. Sir Charles Marchmont, she must be frightened at you."
The remark was most unconsciously made, but it was instantly combated by Constance, to whom the idea of his presence affecting her in the least, was by no means acceptable.

"It was quite a sudden thought, my coming here," said she; "and I left a lady at home, to whom I ought to return."

"That is a falsehood," thought Sir Charles, "and she feels it so, by that deep blush."

"This is most unaccountable," repeated Lady Eleanor, "Sir Charles, are you wont to be so formidable among ladies?"

"I should be quite flattered, to be considered so, Lady Eleanor."

"Then if it is really quite convenient to you, Lady Eleanor——" said Constance.

"Convenient, my dear Mrs. Bouverie? Sir Charles, have I not been telling you all the morning, that I expected a friend? — O Constance! Sir Charles, do you know, we have a bad habit of calling her Constance, here — O Constance! if you had heard the terms in which I have been describing you — I have no doubt my friend and relation is wonderfully disappointed — are you not, Sir Charles?"

"That I could not be," he replied, deter-
mined to disturb Mrs. Bouverie’s composure if he could—" for I have seen Mrs. Bouverie before."

"Indeed! then how comes it that you were not better acquainted? For I never heard either you, Constance, or Mr. Bouverie, mention Sir Charles."

"I seldom talk of Newberry—and do not wish to renew any associations with that place," answered Constance so gravely, that both Lady Eleanor and Sir Charles were instantly silenced:—for both knew that she had melancholy reasons for endeavouring to forget her former residence: and Constance was determined, however painful to her feelings, to allude to her deprivations, that Sir Charles should have no doubt as to the nature of her allusion. "For the same reason, also," she continued after a short pause, "I dislike Malvern."

"It is very natural—very excusable," said Lady Eleanor: "excuse me, dear Constance, for alluding to Newberry. Sir Charles, I see now why Mrs. Bouverie did not wish to remain here to-day."

"So do I," thought Sir Charles.

"But," resumed Lady Eleanor, "be assured,
dear Mrs. Bouverie, that nothing shall be touched upon to-day, which can at all revive the recollection of former days."

Constance could not suppress a sigh:—"have I behaved ingenuously, thought she, to prevent all inquiry thus? But how could I act? O that I were at home again, even with Mrs. Furlong!"

Her spirits, however, presently revived. Sir Charles behaved with respectful, distant politeness; and neither by word or look intimated any previous acquaintance, nor lingering interest. Lady Eleanor was all gaiety; her most buoyant spirits were excited by the presence of her cousin, as she called the Baronet.

Mr. Lepel was very minute during luncheon time, in detailing his own little grievances against a neighbouring magistrate, and thus kept the conversation veering between sentimentiality and matter-of-fact, to the former of which extremes, Lady Eleanor seemed peculiarly inclined: but it was a latitude in which her husband was never known to sail. The passions, the vanities of human nature appeared to exist within the narrow compass of his mind, like the grand events of the Roman
History in an abridgment. The flames of anger and of envy burned within him, but cast no influence around. No one rose from the table, inflamed by generous indignation, or melted with compassion at "Mr. Wright's saying to his keeper so and so, and his keeper saying so and so to Mr. Wright." Sir Charles listened politely, but listlessly; Constance went through the whole evidence with the patience of an attorney's clerk, because she wished to be absorbed with something. Lady Eleanor seemed not to hear his little fretting voice, and each minute detail, so provokingly authentic. At last the ladies adjourned to the drawing-room; Sir Charles, with his usual delicacy, pleading some occupations which precluded his joining them till dinner time. "Is he not delightful, Constance?" asked Lady Eleanor, as they were going up-stairs. "But you cannot appreciate him at present. And perhaps our tastes may not agree. How strange that he should never have told me that he had seen you before! He pretended to be all curiosity to see the beautiful Mrs. Bouverie. I forgot, however," she continued, musing, "that he did not know you
by that name; and that he may not have discovered who you were, until he actually saw you."

Constance made no reply; but Lady Eleanor was fully satisfied with her own explanation.

"I am happy, beyond all measure," continued she, going to the window, "to see the clouds dispersed, and the roads drying up. I have not been out of doors to-day—Mrs. Bouverie, should you like to walk?"

"Exceedingly."

"And shall we, or shall we not, leave word for the gentlemen which way we are gone, in case they should find leisure to meet us?" asked Lady Eleanor.

"Just as you please," replied her companion, secure that Sir Charles could not, and Mr. Lepel would not, follow them.

"Then suppose we go to Watchberry Hill? I think the soil is light, and usually dry there, and if Sir Charles should follow us, I should like to show him the view."

She left, accordingly, very minute directions for Sir Charles, with the servant, just adding at the end, "in case Mr. Lepel should ask where we are, say we are walking out."
After these arrangements, the ladies set off; Lady Eleanor in high spirits, touching occasionally upon the subject of her visitor; but having the good taste, in general, not to fatigue her less interested friend, as she supposed, by harping too much upon a favourite theme.

A melancholy idea occurred to Constance. "Can Sir Charles Marchmont," thought she, "be then that relative of Mr. Lepel, of whom Lady Eleanor spoke? Alas! how little is she aware of the dangerous insinuation of his character! How too probable is it, that he must be captivated with hers!"

The suspicion, however, restored her to much of her wonted ease in respect to Sir Charles, as far as herself was concerned.

"He is now, I trust," innocently thought she, "interested in another object: and I have long since passed into oblivion, in his mind. My part is therefore easy; and I may surrender myself to a little enjoyment."

They gained the hill, admired the view, and strolled for a little while upon the high-road, which intersected the eminence. Returning however, they saw a gentleman, evidently
not Mr. Lepel, coming towards them. Lady Eleanor's face glowed with pleasure. "My dear Marchmont," she cried, as she ran towards Sir Charles, "were you really tired of writing, or languishing for our fascinating society? Since you are here, I will take you home by a different road, equally dry, Constance; but now, Sir Charles, let me show you the beauties of this landscape."

They conversed together for some time, apparently so much, and so mutually interested, that Constance hoped she was considered as nothing else than a human appendage, whose presence was forgotten. Perhaps the recollection crossed her mind, that it was not always thus, whilst Sir Charles, animated by his walk, and possessing ample resources for conversation, kept up a brilliant discourse with Lady Eleanor.

The fair and lively guide opened a small gate, which led from the road, through a wood, into some fields, and so conducted the foot passenger into the meadows near the Grange. The spring was not sufficiently advanced to decorate the trees with foliage, but the young,
unclosed buds gave to the branches a general hue, the presage of coming verdure. The dark brown of the stems was relieved by lighter shades of their own rich colour, or by little sprays of tender green, gladdening the eye. The walk through the wood had been repaired, and gravelled, by Lady Eleanor’s direction, but it was only wide enough for two persons. Constance managed to fall back, and stopping a moment, Sir Charles, respectfully bowing, passed her, and resumed his conversation with her friend. Constance walked slowly onwards: she heard Lady Eleanor say to Sir Charles—

"I cannot think what is the matter with Mrs. Bouverie to-day—she is quite out of spirits."

She was interrupted by the rustling of the branches of the tree above her. Constance at that moment joined her friend; a red-breast, of tender age, evidently injured by some larger bird, fell the same instant, upon her own shoulder. Constance involuntarily looked at Sir Charles. She met an expression in his eyes—which she would willingly have misunderstood. It seemed to say, "When, and how, did a similar occurrence
take place before?" Constance was not addicted to place much faith in omens, but she could not forget how deeply a similar circumstance had once affected Sir Charles, and by what events it had been followed: she shuddered, and put the little sufferer from her gently upon a blade of grass. "I shall go to Clifford to-morrow," was her secret resolution, "and escape from every recollection but that of him who has never pained nor deserted me." Solaced by this determination, she soon regained her spirits; and, by the time that the party had reached the Grange, she was able to converse, with tolerable ease, even with Sir Charles.

There were at dinner, besides the Baronet and Constance, Mr. Harris, the clergyman of the parish, and his daughter. The pomposity of Mr. Harris was a fine contrast to the insignificance of Mr. Lepel; yet it was remarked, that they assorted remarkably well together. The clergyman was, in fact, as frivolous as the squire; but it was frivolity in a tall person, and with a loud voice. His pomposity was nothing but a petty conceit magnified: he was a man of phraseology, one who never took a glass of
wine without some accompanying speech, nor handed a lady down to dinner, except with an air of ineffable gallantry. He was a widower, and had just passed over that season when some gentlemen thus afflicted think it necessary to talk of "my poor dear departed Mrs. H—," or "the late Mrs. B—." A grown up daughter more than thirty, and a narrow income, had as yet prevented Mr. Harris from being too attractive to his single neighbours. Confined chiefly within the precincts of a retired village, his self-estimation, like a fungus in the shade, had grown out to a prodigious extent; and being combined with a shallow understanding and some good-nature, rendered him rather ridiculous than obnoxious.

Miss Harris was one of those unhappy victims whom the desire of gentility immolates on the altar of constraint. Her voice was inaudible, her feet and elbows rigidly maintained in a certain proscribed condition, her appetite cruelly punished from the fear of appearing vulgarly hungry. Human nature revolted against these tyrannical impositions, and the poor young lady looked genteelly miserable. She, perhaps, en-
vied the insensibility of her father, whom no apprehensions of the great and the satirical deterred from making himself absurd. Mr. Harris, notwithstanding his habitual self-complacency, rested much of his consequence upon a few elevated personages whom he had once known. "My patron, the Duke of B—," was drunk after dinner. "My noble friend, the Earl of A—," was cited, by way of seasoning, at every turn of the discourse; and Lady Eleanor secretly felt, that in her absence, "my friend Lady Eleanor L—" would probably be as frequently summoned to stand aide-de-camp to his greatness.

"Your good man," said the worthy pastor to Constance, "is gone to the North:—the church militant? as my noble patron was wont to call me.—Sir Charles Marchmont, you know Mr. Bouverie, of course."

"I once had that—" Sir Charles began; but his voice dropped, and he seemed to he immediately seized with sudden hunger.

"Let us drink to the health of my absent friend Mr. Bouverie, Mr. Lepel," said Mr. Harris, with an elevated voice. "Mrs. Bouverie,
this in compliment to you. I can assure you, Sir Charles, that not a worthier man exists than the husband of this lady—a man whose friendship is an honour,” he added, bowing graciously to Constance.

“I am sufficiently aware of Mr. Bouverie’s merits to be certain of that,” answered Sir Charles, regaining his self-possession, which rarely deserted him, “and that the loss of his friendship must be a painful circumstance to any one,” he added, in a lower tone, and without looking at Mrs. Bouverie.

“My worthy friend’s merits have reached you then, even in London, Sir Charles,” observed the persevering Mr. Harris. “Would he were among us!”

“I am most thankful that he is not,” thought Constance.

“But he has left us his charming substitute,” continued Mr. Harris, in accents of extreme condescension; “and in addition to that pleasure, we sit, Sir Charles, at the table of one of the most domestic and united couples in the kingdom—in the whole kingdom, Lady Eleanor, I do believe.”
"How unfortunate I am, to be surrounded with so much domestic felicity, without the power of tasting it!" remarked Sir Charles, with a faint smile.

"But it is not too late now, Sir Charles," said Mr. Harris, who knew no medium between lofty compliments and unpleasant familiarity. "I was your age, and upwards, Sir Charles, when I espoused my dear late lamented partner, the deceased Mrs. Harris, with whom I had the happiness of living forty years, and a most estimable, respectable helpmate she was."

There was a solemn pause in the conversation for some minutes.

"Mrs. Bouverie," resumed the man of phraseology, "what do you say to my recommendation; don't you second it for Sir Charles?"

Constance almost gasped for breath as she answered—"I cannot presume to offer Sir Charles advice, in the presence of so experienced a counsellor as yourself."

"But if every individual were to give me the benefit of his or her own experience," observed Sir Charles, now for the first time ad-
dressing her, "I should have a greater chance of improving my opinions upon the subject."

"I should have supposed that they must be already formed, as far as experience can form them," replied Constance; but she repented, ere her words were spoken, the allusion conveyed in them.

No one but Sir Charles felt the sting conveyed in a remark apparently incidental. The colour mounted to his face, and reflections, apparently of a painful character, seemed to occupy him for a few minutes. Constance felt that she was wrong, and that she had not only appeared to wound his feelings, but endangered in him the supposition that she spoke from pique. She began to look with more complacency on the being whom she felt she had aggrieved, by words, which coming from any one else, would have been totally harmless. But, in vain did she seek any opportunity of retrieving her seeming unkindness. Sir Charles never looked towards her; but recovering his wonted spirits, talked gaily with Lady Eleanor until the ladies withdrew.

"You are not happy to-night, my dear
friend," said Lady Eleanor to Constance, as they sat at coffee. "You do not like my paragon, I fear: a matchless person, is he not, Miss Harris?"

Miss Harris poured forth a strain of commendation.

"Why, you are absolutely entering just as we are talking of you," said Lady Eleanor, addressing Sir Charles, who came in at that moment.

"Do you like music, Sir Charles? Mrs. Bouverie sings beautifully."

Sir Charles gave a short but melancholy glance at Constance.

She was resolved to betray neither pique, nor any peculiar recollection of the past. "Yet does it not argue extreme coldness of heart," thought she, "thus to meet him, supposing him the acquaintance merely of my early years, the friend of Miss Monckton, the partial friend of Emily?—does it not argue a proud and cold heart, thus to insult him by the coldness of a stranger? Were it not more generous to obliterate the recollection of past injuries, long, long ago forgiven? and more delicate to show
that no particular recollection of our former intercourse remains? God grant that we may never meet again! But I will not embitter these fleeting moments by unkindness, or unrelenting coldness."

These were reflections creditable to her goodness of heart, but her amiable intentions were unhappily bestowed. Sir Charles, originally a man of infirm principles, although of a warm and generous disposition, had now lived long enough in the gay world to have his early loose definitions of right and wrong, settled in a wrong direction. He was a person of strictly scrupulous notions and conduct, in all pecuniary transactions: a high sense of honour, indeed, actuated him in these. He was a fond father, a generous master, and accounted himself a religious person; but, in regard to the female sex, his opinions were not those of the Christian moralist. He was not a man who would wage an insidious war against female virtue, or plant a premeditated siege to further the ruin of innocence. So far, he could not be termed a depraved man; but he thought it no sin to take advantage of indications of weakness
in women of light conduct, or of failing resolutions. In common with the majority of what are called men of the world, he would be very careful not to hold himself up to public reprobation, nor to offend the delicacy of a really modest woman. But he held the sacred marriage vow but lightly; he believed that few women in the higher ranks remained sincerely attached to their husbands after the first few years of marriage; and he found it easy to excite in the minds of the most irreproachable, an interest more tender than friendship, more enthusiastic than esteem. Whilst, therefore, the material points of conduct continued free from guilt, he considered the gentle liaisons of platonic regards as harmless, and to a man so admired as himself, they constituted a substitute for the only real attachment which he had ever felt.

Sir Charles, now in his thirtieth year, was eminently calculated to be the idol of society. His mind, if not of the highest order, was acute, and it had received, during the last four years, the culture to which a solitary man is forced, in self-defence, to have recourse, and
the finishing touches which a frequent collision with the best society can alone impart. To this general structure of mind were added, a fine taste, a ready but gentle wit, extreme refinement, perfectly distinct from effeminacy, and a good-nature, which so much resembled benevolence, that it appeared almost a scion from her parent stem. What he might have been, had he been blessed with those relations in life, which soften man's heart, and draw forth the kindly and generous feelings of our nature, is problematical: unfortunately, except his child, he was almost alone in the world, and exposed to its temptations, unguarded by any of those bonds which are salutary to the heart, and strengthening to the principles.

A little mortified by the indifference which Constance evidently displayed towards him, Sir Charles had not strength of mind enough to leave her in that apparent state of feeling, without some degree of mortification. "The time may come," thought he, "when she may feel differently. I know that I had once an empire over her early affections, and, behave as she will, I shall never believe that I have been
wholly superseded there." It was not that he seriously wished to wean those affections from her husband, or to implant one sentiment in her bosom which would sully the purity he had ever remembered with undivided admiration; but he had been so spoiled a child of this world, that he hardly knew how far his wishes extended; and, probably, they extended no farther than to the present moment.

"Come, Mrs. Bouverie, do sing," cried Lady Eleanor, with playful impatience. "Sir Charles," continued she, turning round, "what do you like?"

"Oh! do not consult me, Lady Eleanor," replied the Baronet, "lest my appearing in the council should disappoint the whole scheme."

"Nonsense! Here is Mrs. Bouverie's favourite collection, from 'gay to grave, from lively to severe.' Why you were dying to hear her sing this morning."

"I think I can guess Sir Charles's taste," said Constance, who was afraid of his choosing some old Newberry favourite, and sitting down, she sang a lively air.

"No, Mrs. Bouverie; my taste is changed—
that is, it is not lively now. It is even religious; and an old anthem which I once heard, pleased me more than any thing."

"Very proper—highly creditable to you, Sir Charles," said Mr. Harris, who stood with a cup and saucer in his hand, in the middle of the room. "And in furtherance of so commendable a feeling, perhaps Mrs. Bouverie will favour us with Pious Orgies, or the hundredth Psalm."

"I do not think," observed Sir Charles, "that I have heard either since I was in the old church at Newberry."

Mr. Harris took up the speech:—

"At Newberry! where my enlightened friend, Mr. Bouverie, husband of this good lady, was formerly Vicar! You must have profited by his spiritual instructions, Sir Charles! A most able divine, indeed! No wonder you possess those excellent attributes so uncommon in gentlemen of an elevated station!"

He was interrupted in this harangue by the announcement of the carriage for Mrs. Bouverie, a signal for retreat which was accepted by her joyfully. And now came the formidable
leave-taking. She bade Lady Eleanor and Miss Harris good night; but Mr. Lepel chanced to be absent, and on looking round for him, both Mr. Harris and Sir Charles Marchmont stepped forward to conduct her to her carriage. Mr. Harris drew back, however, with much pomposity, exclaiming, "Not in preference to Sir Charles—I retire. Sir Charles, I retire from the field." Constance found herself, therefore, compelled to accept the assistance of the Baronet. But she was mistaken, if she apprehended from him any particular indication of old acquaintance, when they were thus thrown alone together. He scarcely spoke, indeed, as they descended the staircase, and crossed the hall, and placing her in the carriage, retreated with a low bow into the drawing-room.

Constance, as she found herself in the chariot, could scarcely believe the existence of her senses unimpaired. Again had she conversed calmly and as an indifferent person, with one, whose conduct to her had so materially affected her happiness, had dimmed the bright season of her youth with tears, and implanted regrets not
so much dissipated by time, as assuaged by the influence of fresh ties, and new associations Emily, Miss Monckton, the spirits of the departed, seemed to pass in review before her, recalled to vivid recollection by the presence of one whose society they had shared along with her. "When last I spoke to him, she was alive!" was poor Constance's first exclamation. "O how my heart yearned to recall the days of old, their happiness without their delusion. No, I am blessed indeed! to know him in his proper colours—that the halo of virtue which my imagination cast around his character is dispelled. Memory, early attachment, still constitute, alas! a species of bond between us which I can neither define nor entirely annihilate: but it has lost its main props—confidence and esteem."

Such were her reflections as the trees, the hedges, and the calm landscape beyond, passed in rapid review in the clear moonlight. Her eye rested upon the peaceful scene, and for the first time, during some years, it rested upon the face of nature in vain. The repose usually imparted by its contemplation, came not. Her mind was harassed, and even saddened, and
Sir Charles, in return for her cold avoidance of him, was amply avenged. She reached her tranquil home, and her resolution of the night was one founded in the simple good sense and uprightness of her character. She found, upon self-examination, that it was best for her to fly from any chance of further communication with Lady Eleanor and her present visitor. Her resolution was taken, to go to Clifford.
CHAPTER VIII.

A latent fire plays in his feverish veins.

Dryden's Virgil.

Have a care,
Of whom you talk, to whom, and what, and where.

Pooly.

"Fashion without beauty, and beauty without fashion," remarked one young man to another, as two ladies entered the drawing-room of an elderly lady of rank, three years after the incidents related in the last chapter.

The person to whom the remark was made, seemed to be so much absorbed in his own meditations, as scarcely to hear it; he, who had passed the observation was inwardly congratulating himself on his own possession of both the attributes specified. He had not time to notice the abstraction of his companion, when a message arrived through a middle aged gen-
tleman, to say, that Lady Eleanor Lepel wished that Sir Charles Marchmont would step across the room to her. He obeyed, when the younger gallant took the opportunity of making a few inquiries.

"I say, General Monckton, who is that fine woman with Lady Eleanor Lepel?"

He spoke in a whisper, and studiously avoided looking near the place where the two ladies sat. But his precautions were unavailing; the General turned directly round, and stared full at the objects of the inquiry.

"That is my friend, Mrs. Bouverie," he returned, in a voice somewhat above the natural pitch: "shall I introduce you to her? She'll be very happy, I'm sure. She was a sort of young friend and companion to my sister, Miss Jane Monckton, who is now dead, and she feels herself under obligations to our family."

"One of that strange creature, Lady Eleanor's protégées, I suppose?"

"Protégées! what's that? I'll ask her, for I really don't know what relationship there is between them," replied the General, facing to the right-about.
"Good heavens! no, my dear fellow, don't stir. The stupid old dog!" thought the young man to himself. And then by way of diverting the General, he said, "how desolé Sir Charles looks—don't he? Quite picturesque; talking to Lady Eleanor, and looking at Mrs. Bouverie."

"Ay, aye! thereby hangs a tale," returned the General. "He might have married the young lady—for she was a young lady when he first knew her: but he jilted her, and married a damned proud little thing with a large fortune, and a pale face, and pink-looking eyes, something like a white rabbit."

He spoke so loud, that the grave quorum of a whist table raised their heads, and turned their eyes towards him.

"Well, and why can't he marry her now?" replied the young gentleman in a whisper.

"Marry her!—Why not!—because she has a husband, to be sure."

"O yes; I remember, you called her Mrs. Something—but I was in hopes she was a widow—pretty women never happen to become widows, I think: a widow is a grey-visaged,
large-featured, sallow-concern, always, with an unsightly face encircled with a rim of white muslin, or a bonnet like a black coal-scuttle.—A widow is a—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cried the General, turning round and addressing a lady in deep mourning. "Mrs. Delany, what do you say to this dissertation upon widows?—hey?"

The lady having human feelings, blushed, and the young speaker, having human feelings also, walked away from the General in great disgust, and established himself upon a distant sofa.

The General, looking round as if it were for new prey, stalked across the room and addressed Mrs. Bouverie. She was leaning her arm upon a sofa, apparently totally unoccupied by the conversation of those near her, who were Lady Eleanor Lepel and Sir Charles Marchmont.

"There is a gentleman on the other side of the room, Mrs. Bouverie," said he, "who is very anxious that you should become a widow."

Constance smiled.

"But you are almost in that situation," continued the General; "your good man having
deserted you to take one of his old friends into Devonshire, I understand, for the recovery of his health. He will do well to come back soon; London is not a place to leave a handsome young wife in. What say you to that, Sir Charles—hey?"

Sir Charles was most fortunately deaf; indeed, many of the General's acquaintance often were so. The General finding little amusement to be elicited from his present quarters, moved his gigantic limbs to an adjacent coterie. Of this, the most conspicuous and dazzling object was Lady Dartmore, who, seated in an easy chair, and attired in such a style as would be most calculated to attract observation, looked not unlike one of those show actresses who are brought upon the stage merely for the purpose of filling up the scene. The face of Lady Dartmore still retained its fine outline; but its expression was more hardened, and coarse, and alarming than ever. Time and continued intercourse with society, which softens some people, seemed to have added to her manners an additional portion of effrontery, without ease; for effrontery implies effort—the
effort to be disagreeable. Time had robbed Lady Dartmore of the white transparent hue which formerly, although frequently defaced by art, had given some portion of delicacy, as well as of brilliancy to her appearance. To repair this detriment, the fading beauty had, it is true, the most unblushing recourse to every foreign aid. The neck and brow were, indeed, whiter than before; but the natural play of Nature's various and changing hues, the life, the transparency were gone: she looked like a piece of beautiful mechanism. Her dress, her deportment, her attitudes, all partook, even still more obviously than formerly, of that undaunted and voluptuous air to which the respectable females of middle life are strangers, which they would not even tolerate, and with which they would avoid all contact. On the present occasion these characteristics were, however, somewhat subdued; for a considerable jealousy subsisted between Lady Dartmore and Lady Eleanor Lepel; and the spirits of the former were somewhat quenched by the degree of attention and respect which the refined, and yet animated manners of Lady Eleanor, and her real powers
of conversation generally obtained. The difference between these two ladies was remarkable. Lady Eleanor, faulty as were her inmost sentiments, appeared to have culled the graces of gay and fashionable life, without imbibing its poison: Lady Dartmore to have drunk the very dregs of its corruptions, without possessing one of its advantages or charms. Each had her admirers and partizans; young boys of quality, and old military beaux, were ensnared by the accessibility and apparent frankness of Lady Dartmore. The former were flattered by her attentions, which their young hearts appropriated peculiarly to themselves; the latter, not having taste enough to appreciate a fine painting, liked the coarse daub, and found themselves of consequence with Lady Dartmore, who loved to multiply her train, no matter how. Men of thirty or upwards, however, in general abhorred and shunned her: she was not young enough to be excusable for certain freedoms of manner and conversation revolting to those who could amuse themselves with the softness and delicate sprightliness of more youthful beauties. They were
likewise on their guard against snares, whereas the very young had not come to their discretion, and the elderly men had survived it.

"What a dissimilitude of character between the three ladies opposite to me!" thought Sir Charles Marchmont, as his eye passed from Lady Eleanor Lepel to Mrs. Bouverie, from Mrs. Bouverie to Lady Dartmore. "Lady Dartmore's beauty is almost more offensive than plainness: it is the beauty which Charles the Second, or his brother James would have prized. Lady Eleanor is elegant, but artificial; able and cultivated, but haughty; she would have graced the circle of Madame du Deffaud, or, bating morality, suited the ill-fated Madame de Staal, in Louis the Fifteenth's time, as a friend, Constance—Mrs. Bouverie I mean"—but here the parallel was lost amid a variety of emotions which were painted visibly on Sir Charles's countenance, although none, perhaps, observed them.

He had, indeed, studiously avoided speaking to her during the whole of the evening; but had indulged himself in the luxury of watching her varying countenance, on which an expres-
sion of pensiveness this night prevailed. Lady Eleanor was sometime surprised, in the midst of one of her most eloquent conversations, to find the attention of her relative wholly engrossed in an opposite direction, and to receive only a faint "O yes! I understand your meaning perfectly—I agree with you entirely," instead of the playful contest, and skilful raillery in which the Baronet frequently indulged. Yet Lady Eleanor was at present wholly insensible to the real state of Sir Charles's sentiments towards any woman except herself.

Lady Dartmore was, however, as a mere looker on, in a different predicament. Something she had, years ago, surmised of Sir Charles Marchmont's attachment to Miss Courtenay. It passed away from her memory, but it was now revived by what she saw, and seeing, was enabled by her own practice in the worst ways of fashionable men and women, instantly to comprehend, and to build a fabric of mischief thereupon. It never occurred to Lady Dartmore that Constance could be blind, or indifferent to the diffident, and apparently hopeless interest which she excited; she was aware that
Mrs. Bouverie would be too prudent to go absolutely astray; but of a purity and elevation of sentiment which would lead a woman utterly to shun devoted admiration, when it could be received without risk or observation, Lady Dartmore had no notion whatsoever. The idea would have appeared to her coarse mind visionary, impossible. Like Pope, she deemed every woman at heart a rake. Lady Dartmore disliked Lady Eleanor sufficiently to enjoy the detection of any speck upon the whiteness of her friend's reputation: besides, she had never been known to pardon a woman younger and more beautiful than herself. What at first she watched for the sake of amusement, congenial to her own bad mind, she presently sought to descry from deeper and baser motives.

Meanwhile, the unconscious object of her meditations quitted the room with Lady Eleanor, or rather after her; for Lady Eleanor was leaning upon the arm of Sir Charles Marchmont. Constance had in vain endeavoured, during the evening, to conquer the dejection and constraint which she felt in the presence of a man with whom so much of her early history
had been connected. At their former meeting, some portion of wounded pride and irritation had sustained her spirits. Now she saw, or fancied she saw on his part, a sentiment of deep, and long cherished interest towards her, which could not but excite her compassion. She knew he deserved it not: he had deceived, distressed, abandoned her; yet, such is the influence of the persuasion in a woman's mind, that one heart is fondly devoted to her, such is the hold which our early affections have over us, that she could not weigh his deserts with sufficient accuracy to despise him.

At the same time, the greater the degree of generous concern which she felt for him, the more earnestly did she desire in future to avoid him—if possible, never to see him again. "It is impossible!" thought she; "we cannot meet without mutual pain! Wherefore should we meet?"

Unluckily, the hall and waiting-room of the house which they were quitting were thronged with visitants, waiting for their carriages; the bustle of cloaking and shawling separated Lady Eleanor from her escort, and Constance from a
young man who had conducted her down stairs. In the confusion Lady Eleanor took the arm of Mrs. Bouverie's companion, and Constance found herself standing by Sir Charles Marchmont. At this moment, a gust of north-east wind from an open door blew upon them, and Lady Eleanor, looking round, beckoned her party to retreat into a small anti-chamber.

Sir Charles, as he conducted Mrs. Bouverie into the apartment, said, in a low and respectful tone, "Is Mr. Bouverie well? And may I venture to ask you to recall to his recollection an old——" friend—he was going to say, but the word seemed to evaporate into a sigh.

"I will—I will," replied Constance, much moved by this allusion to her husband, and catching at the desire of effecting a reconciliation between them. Yet something in her own mind stayed her.

"I hope you did not suffer from that blast," said Sir Charles, as he found himself standing beside her, at some little distance from Lady Eleanor; "once, you were, I think, subject to——"

"No—it was not I—I was always very
strong," replied Constance, her mind reverting to her sister.

"Will it be allowable to tell you — may I be suffered the indulgence of saying to you, Mrs. Bouverie," continued Sir Charles, "how deeply I sympathized in all the events which the first years after — after my departure from Newberry — produced to you? In the midst of my own afflictions——"

He was interrupted by the grasp of a person behind him.

"Sir Charles Marchmont, pardon me," said the intruder, "I want to reach the lady next you."

The speaker was a stout elderly gentleman, in new black, with a tremendous shirt-frill, to whom even the eclat of a large diamond brooch could not impart the air of being full-dressed. He seemed to suffer from the closeness of a London atmosphere, in crowded rooms, yet to disregard all inconveniences in his earnestness to reach one object.

"Mr. Bamford!" cried Constance, as Sir Charles, moving back, allowed her old friend to come up to her.
"Ah, my dear Miss Courtenay—Mrs. Bouverie, I mean—here I find you, in this hot-bed of vanities, fair, and simple, and sweet, as when I first met you, and last parted from you, at Newberry." He pressed her hand with true paternal affection.

Constance, finally overcome by this rencontre, and all the associations which it brought with it, could not answer him. She trembled, and could with difficulty help bursting into tears. Mr. Bamford was scarcely less agitated, for he had the tenderest heart possible, and the vision of youth, and beauty, and distress, which the Miss Courtenays had presented to his recollection, had scarcely been discarded from an imagination, which had somewhat of a romantic tincture.

But Sir Charles was yet more deeply affected by the obvious distress of Mrs. Bouverie. The tone of her voice, the expression of her countenance, recalled to him the emotion he had formerly caused, and witnessed there. He hung over her with a timid solicitude, almost forgetful that she was no longer Constance Courtenay. But she quickly remembered it.
"Will you take me home in your carriage," she said to Mr. Bamford, eagerly clinging to his arm. "Lady Eleanor is detained, but she will forgive me for going with you first. Will you tell her—tell her how it was?" continued she, turning one moment to Sir Charles, and then rapidly disappearing among the crowd.
CHAPTER IX.

From some distaste
In me or my behaviour; you're not kind
In the concealment.

Ford's Dramatic Works.

Constance wrote, on the following day, to Mr. Bouverie, but she mentioned meeting Mr. Bamford only; Sir Charles's name did not appear in her account of her adventures of the preceding evening. This was the second occurrence only, during her married life, which she had concealed from her husband, for she had never had courage to avow to him her encounter with her former lover at Tachborne Grange. Not that she dreaded any stern or irritating remark from Mr. Bouverie towards herself; but she read in many trifling incidents his distrust of her feelings on one point; his tenacity of an
affection which had not always been his; his sensitiveness to any revival of her early associations of his rival. Of Sir Charles Marchmont, therefore, they never spoke, and Constance had sometimes reflected upon the unalterable and somewhat virulent displeasure of her husband towards the Baronet, as a departure from the usual gentleness, and perhaps justice of his character.

The journey to London had been hastily arranged, for Mr. Bouverie had been entreated, as the last favour to one of his earliest friends, to visit him in a season of peculiarly aggravated distress. The ailment was that of the mind—that instrument which once unstrung, so as to produce mental aberration, can only be re-harmonized by the blessing and aid of Providence. The sufferer was Mr. Vernon, between whom and Mr. Bouverie's family there had once nearly been so intimate a connexion formed. Mr. Vernon was a sufferer from a too highly wrought sensibility. The sublime considerations of religion had operated upon his mind, not as a wholesome stimulus, but as a poison; and he now languished under the severest of all human
calamities—religious despondency, tinctured by incipient insanity. It was, indeed, the mis-guided, gloomy enthusiasm which characterized his religious opinion, which had, formerly, upon his renewed acquaintance with Miss Bouverie, induced her to reject, as inauspicious, an engagement with one, whose sentiments upon so important a point differed so essentially from her own. Whilst performing the pious and most arduous office of endeavouring to soothe the excited and debilitated mind of his friend, Mr. Bouverie had left Constance with Lady Eleanor Lepel, to enjoy, for a short season, the gaieties of the metropolis.

Constance had no reluctance to this scheme, for she could have had but one objection, and a few weeks before it had been proposed, she had accidentally learned that Sir Charles was in Ireland. The period, too, which had now elapsed since they had been any thing to each other, had dimmed the vivid recollection of all painful and pleasant passages of their former intercourse. Both had formed new friendships, fresh associations of interest; and both, perhaps,
thought, that if they did meet, they should meet with the indifference of strangers.

With Constance, this expectation would have been realized, had it been her lot to see the object of her earliest love happy, in an union suitable to his wishes, or even heartlessly surrendered to the gaieties of the world around him. But she was not so fortunate. Sir Charles, wretched in his first marriage, had dreaded encountering the risk of another unpropitious union; and in the constrained intercourse of London society, had not, hitherto, found any opportunity of falling in love, or of even being really interested in any unmarried woman of his own station. Somewhat, perhaps, may be attributed to his early prepossessions, but, with considerable caution; for a long relinquished object, however sincerely beloved, or passionately lamented, seldom, whatever poets may dream, influences to any considerable degree the actions, or controls the destinies of men who mix in the busy scenes of life. Indifferent, however, to fresh thralldom, and placing all the force of his domestic affections in his only child,
Sir Charles, nevertheless, had too large a portion of those affections inherent in his nature, not to feel the utter desolation of life without them, and to regret, as a dream of blissful delusion, the transient and blighted hopes which he had once entertained of sharing the felicity which they impart, when his heart had been, as he flattered himself, uncorrupted by artificial society, or by unhallowed pleasures.

He met her, therefore, who was now not merely nominally, but wholly devoted to another, with feelings which had long since been deadened within him. Her voice, her countenance, every movement recalled to him the enthusiasm of his earlier years; and we have all experienced, in some one respect or another, how cherished such a revival is by us.

He found her, whose image had often been present to him, unchanged, except in matured and increased loveliness, because the influence of mind now aided, in an eminent degree, the attractions of female beauty. He beheld her artless, and truly modest, where all around were, at least, sophisticated, if not designing, and hardened; and he felt as if he had long
wandered upon arid sands, and as if the freshness of the green sward were suddenly restored to him. He saw, also, or thought he saw, that with the purest intentions, the most virtuous resolutions, Constance had not wholly banished from her recollection the fond ties which had once subsisted between them. The remembrance of the former circumstances in which they had stood, obviously gave her pain, and produced constraint in his presence.

Sir Charles, unhappily, was not a man to retire from temptation; besides, he did not consider any interest he could feel in Mrs. Bouverie in that light. He wished merely to revive, during the casualties of their transitory acquaintance, somewhat of the interest she had once felt in him; he knew there could be no danger of leading so pure, and so well-governed a mind as hers astray; he would not, if he could, for all that the world could bestow, have had her estimation in the world lowered, by a betrayal, either on his part, or on hers, of a single feeling which it might condemn.

Constance, on the other hand, for some time after her first meeting with Sir Charles in Lon-
don, carefully avoided his society, notwithstanding the difficulty of doing so; for Sir Charles had the entire privilege of entrance at Mr. Lepel's, whenever he chose to pass an hour there. He used this permission, however, so cautiously for some time, that her apprehension of perpetually meeting him, was tranquillized; and besides, she began now to feel the infection of London indifference to the tendency of daily occurrences, the importance of which seems diminished by their multiplicity. She began to think that with her country notions, she had exaggerated the hazard and impropriety of renewing a friendly intercourse with her former admirer; she felt almost ashamed of her fears, and a conviction that among the number of more attractive objects, she must have long ceased to interest one so generally sought and admired, as that individual. The influence of Lady Eleanor's opinions, also, by degrees stole over her; she saw her friend excellent, and almost faultless in every point of duty; yet she knew her to cherish, without a thought of self-condemnation, a lively interest in a man, who was not, nor ever could be, the legitimate ob-
ject of her preference. Let those who have never known the contagion of error reprobate the infected; He, who taught us to pray that we be not led into temptation, knew the human heart well. Those who have never experienced their own weakness, are not actually strong.

Constance began to deceive herself, but even that self-deception partook of the goodness, and generosity of her character. She saw, that her slightest opinions, her most careless notions, had, or appeared to have, a considerable influence upon Sir Charles. He, indeed, was skilful enough to address himself to her vanity this way, for none but a bungler would have ventured to flatter such a woman, through any other medium than her mind. She represented to herself, how great and beneficial to his character the influence of a virtuous woman might prove:—she beguiled herself with the notion of becoming his friend,—of using the influence of her early hold upon his affections, to impress upon him sentiments which should contribute to his real happiness; opinions which might lead him from a vain world—and to inculcate motives which might induce him to convert his am-
ple means of doing good, into blessings for himself and others. Lady Eleanor had, indeed, entertained similar notions; but Constance saw, that, while Sir Charles respected and admired her, he felt no real interest in her character, nor concern regarding her sentiments towards himself. His conversation with her, seemed to be an exercise of the mind, merely.

Entertaining these notions of her future relation towards Sir Charles, Constance, instead of appearing constrained and passive in his presence, regained the power of conversing with the vivacity and ease natural to her. She had nothing to dread, from him, of indelicate allusion to former times, or of rash familiarity. The most respectful observance, the most quiet, unobtrusive marks of deep, but subdued interest in all she said, and did, the most deferential concessions to her taste, her judgment, her peculiar modes of thinking—these, accompanied by the most obvious respect, when it could be shown, for her husband's name and character, were his only tributes to her; and she, perhaps, felt that they were the more gratifying, as arising
not so much from present acquaintance, as from former impressions.

Some weeks of gay and social enjoyment passed away. Mr. Bouverie was still in Devonshire, and was obliged, by a sense of duty, to remain there, until Mr. Vernon's relations could come, to guard the unhappy gentleman from the effects of his own despair. Constance wrote daily to her husband, and began to deliberate how she could introduce the name of Sir Charles Marchmont—how describe the improvement in his character, and pave the way to a reconciliation, which she earnestly desired to effect, between him and her husband.

Such was her intention, and such was the state of affairs, when, among their other gaieties, Lady Eleanor and her friend were pledged to a dinner party, at which they were to meet the Baronet.

The lady of the house was a considerate, old-fashioned sort of person, who took an infinitude of pains to assort any company at her table, agreeably together. She thought that nothing could delight Lady Eleanor more, than to meet
with so fine, animated, and clever a person as Lady Dartmore; nothing could be a greater compliment to Lady Dartmore, than to be in company with Lady Eleanor Lepel. Then Lady Dartmore had lately taken about with her every where, a Doctor Creamly, who prescribed medicine in a cheap form for her husband and children, and flattered her ladyship in gross quantities. The good lady was sure that the lovely Mrs. Bouverie, about whom every one talked so much, would be delighted to see Dr. Creamly, because Dr. Creamly talked of her as an old acquaintance at Newberry. Sir Robert and Mr. Lepel would do vastly well together, and to balance Sir Charles, she secured a young man of some talent, much idleness, much good-humour, and unbounded effrontery. The good lady, who was no reader of characters, considered the refined and cultivated Sir Charles as one precisely of a similar stamp with this gentleman, giving indeed, in her own mind, a certain portion of preference to Mr. Desmond, as his peculiar agreeableness was more easily hit off in society, and was more accessible to the apprehension of an elderly lady, who had only lately re-
ceived the new light which led her to inquire about people's intellects, or made her think such articles of consequence at a dinner table. To fill up the table, she invited Miss Emilia Murray, whom she knew to be acquainted with the Bouveries in Gloucestershire.

The result was disastrously dull: it was like one of those family cakes, made from a good recipe, in which every requisite ingredient seems to have been carefully introduced, but which wants some fine process to blend it into a relishable composition. Here was rank, beauty, wit, refinement, literature, and respectability, but there was not cordiality: there reigned, in fact, an ill-disguised dislike between some members of the party. Lady Eleanor disliked Lady Dartmore more and more, and intended, at the first convenient opportunity, to cut her altogether. Lady Dartmore saw this, and felt the derogatory influence of Lady Eleanor's low, distant curtsey, and freezing replies, and endeavoured to re-assert her own consequence, by an assumption of loud importance, and by a style of conversation more boasting and insolent even than usual.
She had a delightful auxiliary in Doctor Creamly, of whom she flattered herself she had made a convert, and whom she rallied, with her usual absence of delicate perception, upon his former persuasion Dr. Creamly began, indeed, to find out, that his species of religion was a losing concern. It had, perhaps, obtained for him a local celebrity in a country town, where he had some time adjourned, but was attended with many inconveniences. Praying and fasting, he found, kept his patients, unluckily, in an excellent condition of health. Tea, interspersed with a good deal of cant, and sweetened with self-righteousness; religious luncheons—sacred suppers—and other pious modes of enjoying society without the scandal of mirth—are not only much cheaper, but much more wholesome entertainments than our mundane three courses, profane quadrilles, and Satanic déjeunés. Doctor Creamly, notwithstanding his having put off the old man, sometimes envied his less spiritual neighbour, who doctored the town corporation, a description of men who had apoplexy one day, gout another, and, in fact, all the comfortable old-fashioned
diseases of which medical practitioners ought not to be cheated. The mayor and aldermen almost killed themselves at one feast, nevertheless they went on again, whenever a convenient season occurred, and, if they chose to enjoy themselves, it were folly to prevent it. Arriving to settle in London, it was Doctor Creamly's fate to fall in with Sir Robert and Lady Dartmore. They all three suited exactly: he was the most retiring, delicate minded man with regard to remuneration, that Sir Robert had as yet met with. Whilst other regular, well practised London doctors lingered at the door of the sick room with a well-known glance, that denoted the parting to be "sweet sorrow," whilst others squeezed your hand at the last, with a length and warmth of pressure, which presaged something, whilst the very experienced tipped it off your finger in a minute, and it disappeared in the abyss of their pockets, before they were on the stairs:—Doctor Creamly, on the contrary, seemed overpowered at the sight of a morsel of white paper, coloured, and retreated with the modesty of a country girl, and seemed in short to attend
you for the mere pleasure of doing you good.

At last Sir Robert was kind enough no longer to distress the Doctor by presenting him with any of those mysterious little pacquets which look so little, and mean so much: he had, however, the benefit of their patronage, and the advantage of their superior introduction into elevated society.

Mr. Lepel and Lady Eleanor had, with their guest, arrived at Mrs. Devonport’s a few minutes before the rest of the company. Mr. Lepel had been ready, as he always was, an hour before the rest, fidgetting the servants about the carriage, and looking at his watch, wondering when Lady Eleanor would be dressed; she was always so tardy; nor was his minute soul appeased by the splendid as well as elegant appearance of his wife, or the beaming loveliness of Constance. Notwithstanding a degree of suppressed agitation in the little man, which flushed his cheek with a pettish hue, and some dark looks from Lady Eleanor towards him, their party arrived in excellent time, too soon for a successful entrance,
which demands the observation of ten or twelve of the expected company, at least.

"I wonder," said Lady Eleanor, as they were taking off their shawls; "I wonder that Mr. Lepel has not worn out his tremendous punctuality as yet, seeing that we usually dine out six days in the week. Am I not an excellent wife?"

"Why, yes—no—" replied Constance. "Do not ask me."

"Yet—why," resumed Lady Eleanor, as they walked up the stairs, "should I expect of Mr. Lepel to deviate from his nature? Can the sloth become like the active ichneumon, or the ichneumon like the sloth? His nature is——" but she checked herself.

There was a lack of conversation for some time after they entered. Mr. Lepel, who had been so eager to go, had nothing to say when he arrived at the wished-for place of destination. Lady Eleanor threw herself into an easy chair, with a countenance more serious than usual. Constance alone was cheerful, disposed to converse, and not waiting for the
excitement of other guests to put on the agreeables. Yet she did feel an addition of spirits when a thundering knock was heard at the door. The old lady hostess had not then arrived at the point of real and assumed indifference, now thought essential to a genteel performance of the duties of a hostess; she looked, therefore, unequivocally anxious, and flurried; hoped Lady Dartmore would not disappoint her, and that Mr. Desmond would be there in time.

The door opened, and Miss Murray, after being some moments announced, entered the room. She moved an ambulating mass of flounces, like one of those double flowers, the stamens of which have been transformed by art into petals. Her dress was truly of no style, but of the composite order, with this difference, that the capital of a pillar exhibits the most elaborate ornament, but in her case, it was the base. For, from the redundant garniture of her robes, there was a considerable degeneracy up to the thin, but square shoulders, from the shoulders to the scraggy throat, from the scraggy throat to the still leaner and more
obtrusively plain face. She approached, however, as if combating with her own modesty, which mental contest kept her at a cinque pace, until she finally sat upon, or rather skimmed the surface of a chair. This nymph had scarcely recovered from the necessary evolutions of bowing, smiling, and blushing, when without a minute's space between announcement and entrance, Mr. Desmond walked rapidly in, to the very head of the room. He was a thin, tall man, who had outlived beauty, which had been his ruin, and had rushed into the arms of literature and bon-motism, with the hope of recovering or retaining the admiration and notoriety, which his fine person and animal spirits had once obtained for him. Still, he was not a first-rate wit himself, but he could tell well, and retail voluminously the witticisms of approved and veteran wits. He was like a pedlar, who carries about the wares manufactured by other people, to indiscriminate distribution. If ever he ventured upon an original article, it was sure to be detected as of inferior material and workmanship. Still, Mr. Desmond was thought excessively clever. Elderly
ladies nudged each other when he began to speak, and the young could scarcely hear a sentence out, before they were overwhelmed with laughter. He was therefore expected, poor man! always to play the agreeable, and, like a favourite actor, if he once failed, ran a narrow chance of losing public favour altogether.

Mr. Desmond had the conversation all to himself till Sir Charles arrived. He talked of the theatre to Lady Eleanor, told some good anecdotes, and set the lady of the house off in ecstasies with a parody made by somebody, and repeated to him only from the second hand. Miss Emilia Murray was all smiles and assents, with every now and then a sudden and uncontrollable laugh, as if overwhelmed by the excess of her delight.

"How clever he is!" whispered she to Constance. "But I hope he does not hear me say so. He's extremely ridiculous, isn't he? but I hope Mrs. Devonport won't quiz me about him, for I'm the only young lady here."

"A comfortable mode of reckoning ages for the rest," thought Constance.

"I was so frightened," said the young lady,
"at coming alone. I wish I had known you were to be here, I should have asked you to chaperon me. My uncle was not invited, for he once offended Mrs. Devonport by quizzing her dinner."

"I am thankful for it!" thought Mrs. Bouverie. This inward ejaculation was interrupted by the sound of loud voices upon the stairs. Among these, the clear but somewhat masculine voice of Lady Dartmore was conspicuous. She entered, leaning upon Dr. Creamly, and seeming to bear down his supple and under-sized form with her heavy arm, laden with gems. He looked quite overwhelmed with the honour conferred upon him, whilst Sir Robert, in an old blue coat, which retained nothing of its original gaiety but its metal-wrought buttons;—tights nankeen smallclothes, large family shoe-buckles, and a chapeau bras which had probably figured in the court of George the Second, stepped noiselessly after her ladyship, with an air so pitiful and abject, as if he were creeping in to steal something. Few persons ever heard the Baronet speak: he generally stood in society, one leg a little advanced before the other, look-
ing like a stiff-jointed wooden doll, as if he had been so placed, and could neither advance nor recede. His face was equally immovable, and so devoid of the least trace of feeling, or the least hope of expression, that the physiognomists had no chance of making out anything there. The phrenologists, had such a race then existed, might, indeed, have discovered that he had the organ of acquisitiveness, largely developed.

Lady Dartmore's first observation made all the ladies start, and drove Miss Murray into a panic, which could only be soothed by a fit of fanning herself, which lasted half an hour.

"I always envy men the privilege of swearing," was her ladyship's remark.

"It is a pity she should not indulge herself," whispered Lady Eleanor to Constance, "it would only be in character."

"Why, yes," observed Mr. Desmond, with much apparent simplicity, "we have modes of invigorating our eloquence, which add great expression to our discourse, and would come well from pretty female lips."

Lady Dartmore, who was seated upon a low
chair, looking as full-blown as possible, turned full round, and stared the speaker in the face.

"Any thing is pretty from female lips," began Dr. Creamly, "except—"

"Except—Oh! I know what you are going to say," cried Lady Dartmore. "But I have such a model of patience and propriety in my husband," she resumed, looking at Sir Robert. "Sir Robert is all meekness, and I suppose would skip over an oath even if he met with it in Virgil or Horace. But, Mrs. Devonport, don't you expect Sir Charles Marchmont? Creamly, I shall introduce you to him; he has a sickly child who may want physicking."

"Good heavens!" thought Lady Eleanor, "commit a child of his to her recommendation, indeed!"

"Mrs. Bouverie, you'll recommend my friend Dr. Creamly to Sir Charles, will you not?" asked Lady Dartmore; "for you know something of Dr. Creamly as a physician; and we all know your influence with Sir Charles."

Constance coloured deeply, partly with strong emotion of anguish, at the allusion to
Dr. Creamly's former attendance on her sister, partly with anger and vexation. At this very moment Sir Charles was announced.

"You are just come," cried Lady Dartmore, "to see Mrs. Bouverie blushing about you. I declare the colour has not yet subsided; has it, Doctor Creamly?"

A solemn silence prevailed for a few minutes. Lady Eleanor looked at her friend, surprised and even anxious. Miss Murray, who had really some refinement of character, put on a grave demeanour of offended propriety, and kept those "dim lights of life," her eyes, fixed upon the floor. Mr. Desmond, at Mrs. Devonport's request, rang the bell for dinner, and Sir Charles, notwithstanding his wish to avoid it, glanced at Mrs. Bouverie's flushed cheek, and blushed himself.

"It were a pity but Bouverie knew this," thought Lady Dartmore, whilst the workings of a busy, almost of a malignant spirit, played for a moment over her face. "Sir Charles," cried she, after a few moments' pause, "I perceive you are acquainted with my particular friend, Dr. Creamly. Where did you meet?"
"At Bath," said Dr. Creamly, with a soft smile, "in the house of a literary friend of Sir Charles; and we had the peculiar good fortune to number Mrs. Bouverie among our party."

"But Mr. Bouverie was not there, I dare say," said Lady Dartmore. "What is become of that bore of an old fellow Mr. Kilderby? He wanted to present me with some verses on my eye-brows, I suppose, and I absolutely mistook him for one of those men who go about with petitions."

"And turned him off, of course," said Sir Charles.

"Oh, of course! and I told him, I believe, I had had a hundred such applicants, and that they were good for nothing but the Bridewell."

"The poet's true privileged abode," observed Mr. Desmond.

Lady Dartmore again reconnoitred him, as if to say, "Are you worth taking up with or not?" but turned her head away, as if not quite decided. "Sir Charles," resumed she, "I have been introducing Creamly to Mrs. Bouverie as an old acquaintance. We are all old acquaintance," said she, emphatically.
"Yes," muttered Sir Robert, scarcely opening his mouth, but just stirring one leg.

"What!" said Lady Eleanor to herself, as she looked intently at Constance. Happily for the whole party they were mustered, at this moment, into couples, and, in the mêlée which followed, Sir Charles was happily separated from Mrs. Bouverie, who gladly took her place below the two titled ladies, neither of whom would have willingly, for various reasons, relinquished it, and she was placed near Miss Murray.

Dinner seemed to refresh the spirits of the party. The agreeable were rendered more agreeable, the disagreeable more overbearing by this accession to their animal powers. Lady Dartmore talked, and ate, and drank, quite to the extent of a lady's privilege. Sir Robert followed her example with an air of devotion to his plate as if he were performing a duty.

Mr. Desmond was all gaiety, cut and dried, and tried upon half-a-dozen dinner parties. He knew the success of sallies; could calculate, to a nicety, upon the result of a joke, and had a
store of witticisms of other people's, to aid, if driven to an emergency. By degrees, the conversation took a more serious form, for Sir Charles, whose attraction in society consisted more in an apparently unpremeditated hilarity, than in a routine of regularly seasoned displays, endeavoured, and at length with some success, to divert the discourse, which was general, into a channel which he thought the more cultivated part of the female company would like. Somebody started the subject of female education, and female acquirements. Lady Eleanor was strenuous in upholding the propriety of a masculine cultivation for the female mind; Lady Dartmore equally positive, and much louder, in running down the "regiment of blues," as she called them. Mrs. Devonport, to whose comprehension this raillery was well adapted, quite agreed with her. Miss Murray could not bear ladies to know Latin and Greek; she was sure the gentlemen never liked them: "the beaux" were always afraid of them. Mrs. Bouverie alone did not express herself in the cause. Sir Charles, after waiting a little while for her
sentiments, at length ventured upon giving his opinion. "For my part," said he, "I like literature in a lady, in the same degree, as mushrooms in cookery. The flavour is agreeable, but the absolute introduction of the thing itself to be avoided."

"A very faint taste of it is enough," remarked Mr. Desmond.

"Dear me! I think pedantry, and learned ladies, quite odious," cried Lady Dartmore. "My daughter shall never be one of them."

"Very likely not," said Sir Charles, quietly.

"Although," continued Lady Dartmore, "if my children were to emulate the example of their father, Sir Robert Dartmore—if they had his learning—he's a perfect lexicon, Dr. Creamly—"

"And like all lexicons, dull for general reading," whispered Mr. Desmond to Mrs. Bouverie.

"And then," continued Lady Dartmore, who had a fit of boasting whenever Lady Eleanor was present, "are not all the Dartmores so clever? Was not Sir Robert's father the most distinguished scholar of his
day? And my own son—Dr. Creamly, is he not likely to be as ornamental to society as either his father or grandfather?"

"What age is he?" inquired Mrs. Devonport, in the simplicity of her heart.

"O, quite a child! But then he has the example of his father." Everyone looked at the father, who turned neither to the right nor to the left, but took his wife's praise, as he did her abuse, as a matter of accident.

"She has always some purpose to serve, whenever this fit of civility to her husband comes on," thought Lady Eleanor.

Mr. Lepel here ventured to put in a small observation—"That for his part, he wished ladies were taught to be regular in their accounts."

"Accounts!" said Lady Dartmore, opening the blaze of her eyes full upon him; "what have ladies to do with accounts?"

"I think it far better that they should practise needle-work," remarked Mrs. Devonport.

"Not agreeing," pursued Mr. Desmond, "in the observation of a certain reviewer—you, Sir Charles, read the Edinburgh Review, do you
not?—that twenty pounds a year, spent in employing a sempstress, would enable the fair sex to cultivate the Belles Lettres, even the sciences, with success?"

"I like to see a lady at her work, though, I confess," observed Mr. Lepel.

"And twenty pounds a year would go a very little way," sighed Miss Murray.

"Not with ladies of fashion, but in the middle classes," observed Lady Eleanor, "such a sum would clear off all that horrible nuisance known under the name of plain work, which chains the faculties, imprisons the body, sours the temper, and spoils the complexion."

"And then," added Mr. Desmond, "there are a hundred other nuisances, are there not, under the head of mantua-making, satin-stitch, rug-work, frilling, and flouncing?—things which never get any forwarder."

"Is the immortal soul framed to be so shackled?" said Dr. Creamly, timidly.

Lady Dartmore fired round upon him, for she thought that he was going to join the enemy. As it was, she was, for good reasons, the advocate of all intellectual slavery, the
champion of the prejudices, without the modesty and simplicity of our ancestors. Her fine and finely painted face was therefore overcast with a cloud, as she said, with a look of scorn:

"You would have ladies politicians and linguists then, I suppose, Dr. Creamly; for my part, I detest, abominate them," she shouted forth, casting a glance at Lady Eleanor. "I think such studies calculated to do nothing else but make ladies proud and disagreeable. Thank God! I have never been called a blue; I hate the colour. Give me yellow, red, any thing but cerulean," she added, with her eye resting on Lady Eleanor's shawl.

Dr. Creamly was mute.

"Poor man!" observed Mr. Desmond, in a low voice, "he has not yet received his manu-
mission."

"I think," he said aloud, "that we must all agree with Lady Dartmore, that politics, metaphysics, and dead languages, distort the minds and features of woman, beauteous woman, as much as needle-work, Lady Eleanor. I don't like hard words from a pretty mouth. Upon my conscience I called upon two ladies this morning, clever,
highly principled, fashionable, handsome. But I came away from the visit as much exhausted as if I had ridden fifty miles. They allowed me no repose—the state of the nation—laws of finance—Good God! condition of our moral natures! What care I for the fate of empires, for the difference between power and causation—the laws of gravitation!—Heavens! such women allow one no repose!—one can't keep up with them. Society is not intended for an arena of debate, a college of sciences, an academic garden."

The rising spirit of Lady Dartmore was appeased. What gratitude we owe to those who make us laugh! Conviction, instruction, how inferior are your obligations! The ladies all rose from table, delighted with Mr. Desmond.
CHAPTER X.

Slight are the outward signs of evil thought,
Within—within—'t was there the spirit wrought.

_Corsair_. _Byron_.

The evening was warm, for it was now the beginning of May, and the ladies, by common consent, had had one of the windows which looked into the balcony at the back of the house, opened for general relief. Lady Eleanor, folding her shawl around her, seated herself opposite to the window, and, abstracted from the rest, gazed pensively at the fine, clear, illuminated sky, in a mood seemingly on the confines between melancholy and ill-humour. Constance followed, and addressed her, for she felt that Lady Eleanor had shunned her, unaccountably,
since dinner. Her advances were, however, coldly received. Lady Eleanor simply answered her, without turning her head, and moving from the window, soon afterwards joined the general circle.

It was now that a sadness, apparently infectious, beset Constance also. She knew that Lady Eleanor was considered capricious, but she had never felt it to herself before. One thought produced another, and her mind reverted to the devoted, undoubting affection of her friends of earlier years; to the partial, spoiling preference of Miss Monckton; to the veneration, softened by the tenderest feelings, which Emily had borne to her. O, what is like a sister's love! Her reflections next rambled to Mr. Bouverie: she saw nothing in London like the purity, disinterestedness, and real warmth of his character. No kindness like that of Mrs. Bouverie—no goodness equal to Maria's. She longed to be at home again, and with the virtuous companions of her destiny. She felt, she knew not why, that she was hovering upon the brink of danger. She could not disguise to herself that she had indulged in a new, or rather newly re-
vived interest, perhaps dangerous to her peace. The very wish that she fostered, that she might never come into such intimate collision with Sir Charles again, seemed to imply some strong apprehension and misgiving of the state of her own mind.

"Would I were home again!" was the burden of her thoughts, when Sir Charles, gently moving towards her, stood by her chair. He seemed to await permission to sit down. He talked of the dangers of the night air, and yet offered not to close the window. Constance hoped that he would retreat to Lady Eleanor, and kept her seat, not wishing to betray an appearance of shunning him. Conscious of perfect integrity of purpose, she knew not the eyes which were watching her, the plot which was being matured against her. Still, however, Sir Charles did not retire: after a short pause, he sat down timidly near her. Something there was in his manner, that roused the observation of Constance. A tenderness of tone, like the tone of former days—a look, which reminded her of hours long passed by, and dismissed by her, with solicitude, from her recollection. From
any other man, such indications would have been received with indifference, or perhaps contempt; Sir Charles, unhappily, had over her mind the ascendancy of long association, of an early attachment, so strong, that it had rent her young heart with anguish. Alas! he knew well this ascendancy, and perhaps, deceived by self-love, exaggerated its power to his own mind. Elated by the embarrassment which he had reason to think an allusion to him had produced in Constance before dinner, and forgetting every thing but that the woman whom he had long fondly, but ever selfishly loved, was beside him, he now seated himself by her, full of the remembrance of other times, when she might have been his—when the privilege of loving her was not superseded by an insurmountable barrier.

"May I hope," said he, after a few moments' pause, "that Mrs. Bouverie is still so much of a well-wisher to me, to rejoice that one gloomy passage of my early life has, since I formerly knew her, been happily cleared up? Perhaps it is presumption in me to refer to my own personal concerns, yet I think you—"
think Mr. Bouverie will be rejoiced to learn that one source of reproach and degradation has been averted from one, who has had so much to humble, and to sadden him—who has done so much to merit sorrow and humiliation."

"My husband—Mr. Bouverie, would, I am sure, greet most warmly such intelligence," said Constance, her face glowing with a faint blush at the partial deception of her speech, for she knew not, with certainty, that Mr. Bouverie would ever listen to Sir Charles's name, in friendly guise, again. "And, for me," she said, her eyes filling with tears, "you have ever had my good wishes."

Sir Charles fixed his eyes stedfastly upon her varying countenance for a few moments, and fancied that he read there all the melting softness of former days; but he was mistaken; some portion of self-reproach, regret for the absent, doubt as to the propriety of her own conduct, mingled with the concern and interest which Constance, in truth, did feel for him.

"My mother—," resumed Sir Charles; "you perhaps remember the peculiar and heart-rending suspicions which attached to her memory?"
"I do," replied Constance, with a faltering voice.

"Shall I avow to you, the most faultless and the purest of your sex, that, notwithstanding the early dereliction of this unfortunate parent from virtue—notwithstanding the heavy, the irretrievable penalty and misery, which, by one fatal step, she inflicted upon me, her only child;—though she has ruined all my earthly prospects of happiness, blighted my youthful hopes, and caused me to feel that I have this source of tranquillity alone left—the knowledge that others are happy,—though she has been indirectly, yet assuredly, the cause of all this, and much more, upon which I must not comment;—loss of self-respect—loss of honour—breach of truth—reckless dissipation, to which I never should have been disposed, had I not been disappointed in my dearest hopes—"

He paused in strong emotion; and Constance scarcely felt that she ought to stay to hear the rest. A less pure-minded individual might, perhaps, have seen more deeply into the heart of the agitated speaker than she did; but her thoughts were chiefly engaged for him.
Sincere compassion, excusable towards one whom she had known so long, was her predominant feeling at this moment.

Sir Charles, afraid of interruption, hastily continued:—"In spite of all these bitter considerations, in spite even of her fall, I have always, as a child, and in manhood, fondly loved the memory of Lady Marchmont—my mother. But it was the recollection of her, guiltless, respected, maternal, kind, undefiled by those associations which irremediably degrade woman, which I loved, and from which I could not sever her image. Believe me, Constance,—I mean—but you will pardon this one word to our former acquaintance—believe me, I have mourned far more deeply for that degradation to her, than for the miserable consequences it has produced to myself."

"I do indeed believe it," replied Constance, to whom such an asseveration appeared perfectly natural.

"But I found, too late, that whatever were my wretched mother's errors, or even crimes, they had not injured me in the manner suspected. I found, by indubitable proofs and
documents, transmitted to me in her dying moments, previous to Lord Vallefort's death, that I had a right to the name and arms I bore—an honest right to the lands which I possessed."

"I congratulate you sincerely," exclaimed Constance, looking towards him with much animation.

But the glow of exultation which flushed Sir Charles's cheek had passed away.

"I believe," he said, mournfully, "I am more fit to receive commiseration than congratulation. The boon, indeed, came, but it came too late—too late to save me from the most wretched of all degradations—a heartless and mercenary marriage."

He leaned over a chair which was near him in momentary dejection.

Constance longed to speak, but could not: she longed to incite him to laudable ambition, to generous exertion for others, to self-chastisement, and self-improvement; but she could only say—"Your son—is not he a source of comfort to you?"

"My son is indeed the only resource upon
whom I can lean for comfort. In him I find an object for those strong and natural affections, which I am, with all my faults, I believe, calculated to cherish. The term fondness may be peculiarly applied in my feelings towards him; but there are higher sentiments, dearer hopes, even tenderer associations, connected with other objects, of which I have been irrevocably deprived."

Constance was silent. These observations, but for one remark, might have been as well applied to the deprivation which Sir Charles had incurred in the loss of a young, and recently married wife, as to the disappointment of his early hopes. Yet, in her inmost soul, she knew them to apply to herself. She could not act a part, she could not appear insensible to all that was implied. She felt all the danger to Sir Charles, of cherishing such sentiments; and, if she did not feel in its proper extent the impropriety of their being addressed to her, it was that she was too guileless, too devoid of every idea that the object of her early love could wrong her by an idea derogatory to her, to suppose that the slightest presumptuous hope, or even wish, could cross his mind. Yet com-
mon sense and native modesty pointed out to her the hazard, the real impropriety of any confidential communications under such circumstances. She rose, and angry with herself for having listened so long, prepared to join the circle in the other apartment.

The groupes which presented themselves to her view, were neither in the most placid, nor alluring state imaginable. Mr. Desmond, alone, seemed happy and unconcerned, addressing a coterie of ladies, of whom Lady Eleanor was the centre, Mrs. Devonport and Miss Murray the supporters. The good hostess, overcome with the fatigues of dinner, was already nodding an accompaniment to the remarks of Mr. Desmond, each nod increasing almost to a bow as her evil hour came upon her. At times, she made an effort to smile, for which exertion Somnus punished her by an additional imposition of his power, until, at last, she fell fast asleep. Lady Eleanor was bending a look of apparent attention, but there was trouble upon her brow, and a look of scorn on her lip. Her expressive, and naturally pale face was paler than usual, and a sort of restless
impatience characterized her replies. Miss Murray looked agitated, and had a kind of chocolate coloured flush upon her cheek; for being the only single lady, she could not help considering Mr. Desmond’s attentions as very particular to herself, and no one was so careful of her reputation as she was. Opposite to this little circle were Mr. Lepel and Sir Robert Dartmore, playing at piquet; the former fidgetty, precise, and fretful, even in his amusements; the latter imperturbably intent upon the main chances.

Lady Dartmore and Dr. Creamly sat near the open folding doors which separated the two apartments. Upon the countenance of the former there sat an expression at which Constance almost shuddered as she caught a glimpse of it. It seemed like the exultation which evil spirits feel, when virtuous natures err: it appeared to be a compound of envy and malignant triumph. Her large blazing eyes were fixed fully upon Constance, as the latter stood for an instant near her.

"She seems quite bewildered!" was an observation which Mrs. Bouverie overheard, addressed to Dr. Creamly.
"Mrs. Bouverie, perhaps, finds the atmosphere of this house too warm for her," observed the Doctor emphatically, but with a modest, pious look, as if he were passing an eulogium upon a sister saint.

"Yes! she seems to like the window!" said Lady Dartmore with a loud laugh.

But this was not all that Constance had to encounter.

"Mrs. Bouverie, are you ready?" asked Lady Eleanor with a stern air but in a voice trembling with anger. "I was unwilling to interrupt you;" she added in a lower voice, but with an accent of marked contempt.

"Indeed, I should have been happy to have gone away sooner"—Constance was about to say—but the latter words were not intelligible.

"Mr. Lepel is still engaged," resumed Lady Eleanor, looking at her husband. "We will send the carriage back for him. Mr. Desmond will oblige me with his arm. Sir Charles can conduct Mrs. Bouverie—good night, good night."

Thus saying, she hurried down stairs, leaving Constance, with Sir Charles, to follow.
“What am I about?” thought the latter. 

“What have I done? What am I doing, to have the accents of scorn, and even the reproaches of friendship levelled against me?”

She made a desperate resolution, as she descended the staircase, but the delicacy of her feminine nature prevented her from putting it into execution. This was, to intimate to Sir Charles, that they must not meet again. He seemed to guess that some painful and embarrassing feelings were working a conflict in her mind, for he looked at her earnestly, and with an expression of concern, several times, during their transit. At length they reached the carriage, and Constance was left alone with her friend.

“Lady Eleanor, my dear Lady Eleanor,” were her first words, “who has displeased or grieved you? Is it I?” she continued affectionately, yet not without some degree of irritation in her voice.

But Lady Eleanor had been too early and too long accustomed to attend to her own feelings, and those only, to deal mercifully with those who had offended her. Too proud to betray
all that she felt, and too vehement to conceal all, she was nevertheless difficult to be conciliated, from an innate sense of her own importance, which causes us to undervalue the obligations which we receive, and to consider them as our due; and which leads us also to exaggerate into injuries any thing which militates against our wishes.

"I have no right to be displeased," at length she answered, but in a tone so chilling that Constance's spirit began to rise.

"I think not," she replied with animation; but softening her tone, "at least I am wholly unconscious of any cause of—"

"Unconscious!" broke forth from Lady Eleanor; "unconscious of deception, or at least of a concealment so ingenious, that it amounts to deception. Unconscious of receiving the secrets of her whom you called your friend, and of refusing to give her your confidence—of injuring and supplanting—but no! with that I have no right to accuse you. You knew him long ago. It is the unworthy, ungenerous concealment of which I complain."

"Alas!" thought Constance, "is it not
enough to have incurred my own reproaches, to have passed through years of sorrow for one individual, without this fresh trial?—Supplanting—good Heavens! what must Lady Eleanor's notions of conjugal duty be, when she can talk of supplanting—or of any possible relation between her or me, to Sir Charles? But I will see him no more."

This resolution was scarcely accomplished, before the carriage stopped at Lady Eleanor's abode, which was now, for the first time since the arrival of Constance there, one of gloom and discontent.

The two friends stood in dejected, and perhaps angry silence, before the drawing-room fire, until Lady Eleanor's maid appeared with the bed-room candles. A cold good night was exchanged, and Constance was leaving the room, when her native kindness and generosity of mind arrested her steps. She set her light again upon the table, and paused.

"Lady Eleanor," she said, "will you listen to a short but candid explanation from me? A narrative of very simple facts, occurring long ago, but influencing, it seems, the whole current
of my life. I met," she continued, not waiting for a refusal, or a chilling assent, "I met at your house Sir Charles Marchmont, as a stranger. He, indeed, then stood in that relation to me. Years of absence, and of estrangement, had severed us. It was my earnest prayer on that occasion, never to meet with him again."

She clasped her hands in an agony of mind, which caused the bitterest tears to flow down her cheeks.

"You had then been early attached?" inquired Lady Eleanor, in a tone expressive both of ardent curiosity, and of intense emotion; "before or after marriage?"

"After! Good God! No, Lady Eleanor—our early but hapless attachment was, at least, on my part, innocent, innocent have I at least been of every thing imprudent. And on his— if it has blighted my young days with sorrow, if it nearly brought me to the grave, it was, at least, excuseable, and it has long, long been forgiven."

"Forgiven, I have no doubt," answered Lady Eleanor, turning away coldly
"We met then as strangers," continued Constance, eagerly, "and our former engagement had been productive of so much misery, not only to me but to Mr. Bouverie, that I could never bring myself to enter upon the subject. Even Mrs. Bouverie, and Maria, do but guess it. I could not bear to check their happiness in our union, by imparting how severe had been the struggle in my mind to consent to it."

"You married, then, from duty?" said Lady Eleanor.

"I did—and duty has brought its usual reward. For what was once gratitude and esteem, is now the fondest devotion, the most decided preference."

Lady Eleanor shook her head.

"No, Lady Eleanor, you are wrong—I would not, if I could, be free. Sir Charles, alas! excites too deep an interest still. I will avow it; but it is the interest of compassion, of sorrow for a mind so thrown away, a heart so wasted, because not participating in the only real pleasures, those of domestic affection. It is not possible for long and intimate ties, formed and cherished in very early life, to
be so utterly annihilated, but that some portion of kindly consideration should still remain, in my mind towards him. The fleeting engagement, the delusive confidence I reposed in him, constituted a brief portion of my life—but, perhaps, with all its anxieties, all its delusions, it was the happiest period."

"And—but I will not urge the question—yet tell me—be candid, Constance," said Lady Eleanor, in a tone of deep emotion, "do you believe that interest to have been continued on his part—the remains of that early attachment still to exist, or has he ceased to—to feel it?"

"Alas, alas!" rejoined her companion, turning from her with an expression of extreme suffering upon her countenance.

She leaned for a few moments her face upon her hands, "Yet, I may be deceived," she said; "but I did think—it has occurred to me—that he, the generous, though faulty being whom I once loved, still retains a deep, and fruitless regret for those obstacles which were opposed to our early union. This is my most poignant source of sorrow—my only grief. I never thought that it was so before to-night—I
feel that I have, by the renewal of our acquaintance, been the cause of pain to him."

She wept in real anguish of heart, as she spoke; and so genuine was that expression of sorrow, so free from any lurking triumph at the influence of her own sway over Sir Charles, that Lady Eleanor's heart was touched.

"We are both, and all objects of pity," thought she; "and thus is it ever the case with all those desires and interests, which do not centre in their legitimate objects. Disappointment, mortification, and anguish of heart, succeed delusion."
CHAPTER XI.

Unkindness may do much;
And his unkindness may defeat my life,
But never taint my love.

Othello.

The two friends met on the morrow, with rather more cordiality than if nothing had occurred. Lady Eleanor felt more angry with herself than with Constance; Constance more angry with herself than with Lady Eleanor. She became, however, exceedingly anxious to leave London. She wrote to her husband, earnestly entreating that he would take her home, as soon as ever humanity would allow him. She craved his permission to visit a distant connexion of her own, at a short distance from the metropolis, until he could join her, and remove her altogether out of its precincts. The letter was penned with some tears, and not
without much contrition. "Why did I not at once confide in him?" thought she. "Why have I suffered myself to conceal my repeated interviews with Sir Charles, from a husband so indulgent, so reasonable?" She longed to open her whole heart to one, from whom she scarcely ever hid the most transient thought or wish. "I have much to tell you," she wrote, "when we meet; I long to unburden my whole mind to you? O why were we ever separated!"

Meanwhile Mr. Bouverie heard of her from a quarter, which she little suspected to be occupied with her concerns. Mr. Vernon was surrounded by an order of pious philanthropists, who act as if they considered themselves as vicegerents between their fellow mortals, and the hope of eternal salvation: these are persons whose object professedly is, to lead the stray sheep into the fold of the one heavenly Shepherd: unhappily, they torment their flock, holily no doubt, but pungently by the way; allowing them little peace in this life, severing them sometimes from their dearest ties; sometimes embittering those ties by suspicions, and
enmities, which make one weary of existence, or, at least, rob society of half its charms.

The clergyman who formed the principal spiritual guide of Mr. Vernon at Sidmouth, was a simple-hearted, good man, one of the many professors of especial evangelical doctrines, who are thoroughly sincere, and whose intentions are pure and benevolent, as those of angels. But, as is too often the case, he possessed zeal without judgment—a faith of terms, not of reason, and charity which often defeated its object by injudicious interference.

Doctor Creamly had some time back wound himself round the heart of this religious, but credulous person, who guilelessly trusted in the manifestations of the spirit, and other proofs of regeneration given by the Doctor during the continuance of his election among the saints. He was imposed upon by those silent movements of the hands, those speaking shakings of the head, and those neatly turned, highly pious axioms with which the Doctor's conversation was interspersed; more especially, he was particularly delighted with one favourite expression of Dr. Creamly's, which frequently closed
his more general observations—"The moral elevation of our nature."

It was about a week after Constance and Lady Eleanor had dined with Mrs. Devonport, that the Reverend Mr. Gull, of Teignmouth, received a letter from his correspondent in town, Dr. Creamly, alluding, indirectly, but in terms of the most Christian charity, to the reports which began to prevail touching Sir Charles Marchmont and Mrs. Bouverie, and regretting, with an amiable concern, that he should have been fated to witness in the female delinquent, such indications of partiality to the young Baronet, as could not fail to be understood by others.

It was the resolution of Mr. Gull instantly to communicate this to Mr. Bouverie, to whom, unfortunately, it came not without a precursor, which doubled its sting.

Mr. Bouverie had casually heard of the interview which Constance had had with Sir Charles at Tachborne Grange. Her silence on this subject had not, when he first heard of the circumstance, surprised him; for he had long forborne to touch upon any subjects connected
with her early history, to his wife. He felt, however, considerably moved, when Mr. Bamford, happening to write on business, alluded to having encountered Mrs. Bouverie leaning upon the arm of Sir Charles Marchmont, at a party in Grosvenor-square. Still he would have driven resolutely from his mind, the slightest surmise which could rest upon one, whom he loved no less fondly than he honoured; the guilelessness and delicacy of whose character was far dearer to him even than her varied and cultivated talents, or the remarkable grace and surpassing beauty of a face and form, fitted to convey to the beholder the impression of a mind and heart framed to be beloved. Of these latter attributes Mr. Bouverie was proud; but he loved his wife, as all good men do, chiefly for the feminine purity of her character and conduct; and he would rather surrender life itself, than that his respect for her, his confidence in her, his hopes of her future salvation, should be wrested from him.

It was not possible, therefore, for him to form the most distant surmise injurious to her without a pang, which the fond, and the
sent, and the distrustful, may conceive; but, after some moments of agitation, he mastered the ungenerous suspicions which arose in his breast, and reproached himself bitterly for their entrance there.

Nevertheless, the tone of Constance's letter, which he received on the following day, the self-upbraiding expressions which broke forth in it, the desire to see him, to leave London, re-awakened his fears—not that she had even been imprudent, but that the rash and dissolute object of her early attachment had pained the delicacy of her feelings, or excited the observations of others. He prepared, therefore, in much anxiety of mind, to leave Teignmouth, and to bid adieu to Mr. Vernon, whom he could scarcely ever expect to meet again, on this side of the grave.

He had apprized that unhappy gentleman of his determination, and was completing some hasty preparations, when Mr. Gull arrived at the house, with a letter in his hand. Mr. Bouverie instantly perceived that some unusual event had agitated the amiable, but weak mind of his brother minister. Mr. Gull looked, in-
deed, truly cast down, by some worldly concern. He put the letter which he brought into Mr. Bouverie's hand, and left the room almost instantly.

When he returned, he found the unhappy young man seated, in deep despair, before a table: his face, leaning upon his hands, was partly concealed, but the pallid colour of the forehead, which was visible, and the tremor of his whole frame, plainly evinced that the poison had wrought—that it had reached his heart.

"Are you not on the point of your departure?" asked the compassionate Mr. Gull. "The chaise is at the door."

Mr. Bouverie gave a wild and hurried look around him. "If it is so, why should I?" said he, almost to himself; "why should I ever see her again? Degraded, I cannot, will not see her."

Yet he rose, and taking up a small package, moved towards the door. When he arrived there, however, he turned round, and extending his hand to Mr. Gull, he said, "He who wrote that letter to you does not know her—that is, he knows not the purity of her heart. I will
not believe wrong of her till I hear it from herself. Those who defame her shall rue it," he continued, with a vehemence which shook his whole frame. "Yet, perhaps," he added, more calmly, "I wrong them: she has had many temptations. Farewell! farewell! watch over our poor friend; perhaps I may have reason to envy him, that he is arrived nearly at the term of his pilgrimage." Thus saying, and grasping warmly the hand which he held, the wretched Mr. Bouverie hurried into the carriage.

Two days after this disclosure, Constance was agreeably surprised by a visit from Mr. Bamford. She had heard that he had left London, but he had returned again, and one of his first visits was to her. I say one of his first, for Mr. Bamford had been dining at Sir Robert Dartmore's, where he had encountered Dr. Creamly; a visit which had rendered him more than usually desirous of seeing Mrs. Bouverie. Constance, indeed, could not divine what occurrence had flustered the good fat man so much. His face was red and warm, and his forehead, notwithstanding the frequent applica-
tion of a blue silk handkerchief, redolent of moisture. His cravat was twisted awry, its bow peeping out at the left shoulder; his waistcoat and nether garments, from an original inaccuracy of toilet, seemed to have quarrelled, without coming to an actual separation: one shoe-string was out; but in the moral man, the disturbance was still more obvious.

Mr. Bamford, like many good-tempered men, did not look good-tempered at first sight. His forehead was disfigured by an habitual frown, and he was subject to twitchings. It was only when his kind eye rested upon any object that he loved, that the benevolence of the man was fully visible.

"You are very good to come and see me. It is warm, I suppose, to-day," said Constance, judging by the exterior of her visitor.

"No—yes, yes," replied Mr. Bamford, addressing himself diligently to his blue kerchief. "I am warm—I am hot,—in short, I am—I know not what—out of all order, I believe." He sat down upon a chair, and mopped away fruitlessly, without either becoming cooler, or more composed.
"What is the matter?" inquired Mrs. Bouverie, going near to him. "Why, I think, dear sir, London infects you as it does me, with low spirits. I would we were all at Clifford, or at Hollywood."

"I wish we were, indeed, madam," replied Mr. Bamford, very solemnly.

"Is any thing the matter with you, sir? I hope Mr. Robert Bamford is well? Pray, dear Mr. Bamford, assure me that nothing distresses you."

"I wish I could—I wish I could, madam," replied Mr. Bamford, rubbing away at his forehead, but transferring his pocket-handkerchief quickly to his eyes.

"Good heavens, sir! have you—have you heard any thing about Mrs. Bouverie, or Maria, or Mr. Bouverie?" cried Constance, turning very suddenly round, and looking at him.

"No, madam, nothing that concerns them—that is,—no, madam, nothing at all about them—but about you—about you;" and poor Mr. Bamford buried his face in his large pocket-handkerchief.

"Then I am quite at ease," said Constance,
with calmness, and seating herself composedly; "for nothing that you have heard about me, can be afflicting, either to myself or to others, I should think."

"Mrs. Bouverie," said Mr. Bamford, recovering his serenity somewhat, "I have known you now these six years, I think: you were a fine, happy young lady, without any forethought of the evils of life, when I first saw you—scarce seventeen, I do suppose. And then I traced your course up to womanhood, with the interest which the oldest of us ever feels for a young and lovely, and unprotected female. I saw you bereaved of a fair sister—of a warm and true friend. Yet I esteemed you, after all, fortunate, for you were married to one of the best men that ever wore a surplice."

Mr. Bamford paused, in strong emotion; but after a few moments, he proceeded.

"And now, may I speak to you as an old friend? I have known your husband ever since he took orders, and was the first person to give him his title; and, by all that is holy, if there is a man fit to be a saint in heaven, it is he."
"I believe so, indeed," said Constance, fervently.

"He loved you long, madam—and long, as I well know, without return. Excuse my allusion to another person. That story was not unknown to me—it is not unknown to others; you are surrounded by enemies and eavesdroppers. Be prudent, be resolute; let not your bright name be sullied by scandal. A woman must not only be innocent, but must appear so, if she wishes to be happy."

He paused, out of breath, and timorously; for the violent agitation which affected his hearer could not escape him; but, to Mr. Bamford's experienced eye, it was not the agitation of conscious imprudence, but of strong feeling, from some different source.

Finding no reply, he at length proceeded:

"When I first met you in London, my dear Mrs. Bouverie, I saw you the leading star of the company you were in. I could not wonder that you should be the centre of attraction; but allow me to observe, it were better you had twenty general admirers than one assigned to you, in particular. But I crave pardon—I crave
pardon most humbly for the liberty I am taking. You would forgive me, madam, did you know how this old heart has burned to vindicate you from the aspersions of—"

"O sir! O Mr. Bamford!" cried Constance, raising her head, and looking affectionately towards him; "do not, for an instant, ask pardon of me for performing an act of friendship for which I shall ever thank you. To you I can feel nothing but gratitude, whatever I may think of others, who have put this foul construction upon conduct, unguarded, because springing from an innocent heart. I am so conscious of nothing but imprudence, so clear in my own mind, I can raise my eyes," she continued, looking upwards, "with such perfect confidence to my Maker on this point, that I do not even wish to know the names of my calumniators. It matters little what they can say."

"You are right, madam," replied Mr. Bamford, "for reports without foundation are seldom long lived; only do not give them the fuel of your own unguardedness. Remember,
dear lady, imprudence is generally punished in this world, sin in the next."

"Ah, Mr. Bamford!" said Constance, a few tears escaping from her, "would that Mr. Bouverie were here! How would his generous mind kindle at the thought of such insinuations against his wife! Thank God! it is impossible that they could ever influence him! He will acquit me, I am sure! Acquit me, did I say? Good God! what have I done to apply such a term to? It is strange, Mr. Bamford; but the imputations of others sometimes make one even feel guilty. But to-morrow, I do hope, I shall hear from Mr. Bouverie; and probably, on Friday or Saturday, we shall both travel home again together."

Mr. Bamford earnestly wished that they might; and with much respect, and much kindness, and a thousand self-accusations for having pained her, took his leave.

"Well," thought Constance, as the door closed upon him, "if this be what is called living in the world, give me retirement. Will not the consciousness of rectitude within, defend a
person from the sense of degradation, which dishonourable suspicion of one’s motives creates? I trust it will! But, ah! could they have wounded me in a tenderer part! I have, however, one blessed resource—I will tell Bouverie every thing—every feeling, even my concern, my blameable interest for——. I have been wrong in holding converse with him after every former occurrence; but my husband would amply exonerate me from every thing but a want of judgment. O! the comfort, the blessing of such an adviser, so perfect in the regulation of his own conduct, yet so indulgent to others.”

She arose from her reverie, tranquillized, in some degree, by reflecting upon that tender partiality to her virtues, and leniency to her faults, which had hitherto rendered her married life so happy. She longed to throw her heart entirely open to her husband, secure, as an idolized wife, of his not allowing one shadow of blame to rest upon her; yet, notwithstanding this reliance upon her husband’s confidence and love, she felt irritated, disgusted, and unsettled
by the events of the last ten days. The day was oppressive, and Constance longed for the free egress into the air which the country afforded, and which proves frequently so salutary when the mind is harassed, and the nerves shaken. Lady Eleanor was absent upon business, but Constance had a key to the gardens of a fashionable square not far distant, where she frequently indulged her taste for walking alone. Thither she resolved to bend her steps; for, in addition to her desire of relieving the restlessness of her own feelings by locomotion, she dreaded also the possibility of Sir Charles Marchmont's calling, and the probability that, from his intimacy in the house, he would disregard the dictum of 'not at home,' and walk up to the drawing-room. Stimulated by this apprehension, Constance hastily arranged her dress, and, followed by a servant, went into the gardens. Having secured herself within their aristocratic enclosure, she dismissed the footman, with strict injunctions to return at the expiration of an hour, to conduct her back again to Lady Eleanor's residence.
The hour passed slowly away, and no servant appeared. Constance had been pacing round and round the formal and confined pleasure-ground, oppressed, as well by her own vexatious reflections, as by the wearisomeness of her promenade. At length, the irksomeness of her prolonged imprisonment, and the sameness of the scene, became intolerable to her. She looked again and again, but the faithless domestic was still not visible. She took another round. The tawdry, pale-blossomed laburnums, with their stems encased in metropolitan soot, the sickly Persian lilacs, growing out of the black mould, appeared, at last, quite revolting to her. The thought occurred—"why should I not walk home alone? I may remain here all day." She turned the key, and went forth into the street.

The square was not more than a quarter of a mile from Mr. Lepel's house, but Constance did not very well know the way, for she had seldom moved out except under guidance, and one street to her was just like another. She went, therefore, considerably round, and after much bungling, found herself in Bond Street.

It was just the high time for that fashionable
parade, which twenty or thirty years ago was almost concentrated within that street. Every one knows how unfit a place it was for any young, respectable woman, to be seen in alone. Groups of gay young men, arm in arm, most of them with no object in the day, but amusement, and gay carriages which seemed to have an hundred eyes looking out of them, affrighted poor Constance, and made her wish herself back in the gardens again. She became confused with the noise, and frightened at the observation which she could not but see she excited. Her colour rose, from timidity and hurry, and she heard one very highly rouged lady remark of her in passing, "that she was painted red and white." The young men stared at her, and in some instances turned back; but the elderly gentlemen who were loitering alone with silken umbrellas, and well blacked goloshes, behaved much worse; and one of them actually spoke to her. Alarmed, to a degree, Constance nearly screamed, when a gentleman, turning out of a shop, exclaimed:—"Mrs. Bouverie! Is it you? and alone?" And she saw Sir Charles Marchmont.
For the first moment, she thought of nothing but the comfort of having a protector, and accepted, almost eagerly, his offer of an arm; but in a few moments the recollection of every thing came across her, and she was confused, and vexed, beyond the power of concealment. She explained to him the cause of her present situation, and, for the first time in her life, expressed herself almost petulantly towards a servant. Sir Charles was only too happy to have met her, and to have sheltered her from the notice which, as he delicately hinted, she was sure to attract. He was far more guarded in his manner than usual. Not the slightest trait could be alleged of impropriety against him, in his manner to Mrs. Bouverie. He appeared desirous of leading her home as quickly, yet as gently as possible. Whilst they were moving onwards, a circumstance occurred which seemed as if a combination of the fates had been formed to annoy and injure Constance. A travelling-carriage and four, just come from a journey, stood at the door of an hotel which Sir Charles and his companion passed. Neither of them observed, within this vehicle, a gentle-
man, who was waiting whilst his servant took some luggage out of his way. But by that gentleman they were observed, with sensations which it would be impossible to describe. It was Mr. Bouverie, who had that instant arrived in town. For a few minutes he hung back, overpowered, and stung to the heart by what he saw. Then the unhappy young man stretched an eager gaze after the unconscious pair, but sank into a corner of the carriage, as if he had no power to rise from it again. His servant, and the waiters of the inn, stood awaiting his orders; the horses were nearly taken from the carriage before he appeared aware of what was passing.

"Will you not alight, sir?" at last, inquired one of the attendants.

"No," replied Mr. Bouverie, in a hollow voice. "Bid them put fresh horses to:—I shall go on—quickly—quickly," he added in a tone of impatience, wholly unusual to him.

The servant stood with the carriage-door in his hand, mute with astonishment.

"Williams," said his kind-hearted master, in a gentler tone, "get some refreshment, and
that immediately—I mean to proceed to Clifford."

"Will you not take any thing, sir?" asked the man, timidly, for he was struck by the unusual paleness, and even wildness of his master's face.

"No—no, thank you.—See that they put the horses to—I must get on," replied Mr. Bouverie, sinking again back upon the seat. And he remained in the same position until the carriage drove on.

Mr. Bouverie was one of those persons, whose passions, naturally strong, as those of all really valuable characters must be, had been controlled, but not annihilated by the force of religious precept. As his affections had never been carelessly bestowed, never weakened by a taste for dissolute pleasures, nor smothered by habitual selfishness, they were proportionably deeper, as they always are in virtuous minds. An enthusiastic admiration of the female character had become inherent from his early and perpetual love for his mother; the filial affections forming a fine, propitious soil for the introduction of pure conjugal attach-
The devotion of his heart to one object had been, perhaps, increased by doubts, which had never, until marriage actually took place, been wholly banished from his mind.

Mr. Bouverie had never entirely lost a strong feeling of jealousy, and a very strong one of displeasure and distrust towards Sir Charles Marchmont. It would have required but little fuel to have fanned the spark of suspicion towards him into a flame; but it required a much stronger power to rouse Mr. Bouverie into any thing like actual loss of confidence towards his wife.

Still, he knew that the most virtuous are sometimes not proof against temptation; that a long early attachment, which could not be entirely forgotten, might act as an auxiliary to the snares, which Mr. Bouverie felt no doubt had been laid for her. Considerable perplexity and apprehension had harassed his mind, during his journey from Devonshire. He was in that excited state of feeling when the slightest breath may raise a storm. The effect, therefore, of his sudden glimpse of Constance, leaning upon the arm of Sir Charles, alone—
together in the streets of London, may easily be conceived.

The sun had set some time at Clifford, when Mr. Bouverie arrived there. Mrs. Bouverie had loitered long in her garden, enjoying with pious gratitude the fragrance of the closing flowers, and casting her eyes, from time to time, to that heaven, whose glories speak to the human heart, of God. The dark blue had nearly deepened into an inky gloom, before the happy active old lady retired into the house. She had sunk, somewhat fatigued, in a chair near the window, when the sound of carriage-wheels aroused her. She saw by the beams of the rising moon, a figure like that of her youngest and only son, descend from the carriage, yet he appeared not to move with his usual alacrity, but slowly and languidly.

"Henry, my dear Henry, why have you not brought Constance with you?" was the mother's first question, as her son entered the room.

The gloom concealed his features, but the voice, as he replied to this inquiry, did not seem to Mrs. Bouverie to be like the voice of her son.
"It was impossible," he answered, in a tone harsh and yet tremulous. "I could not—where is Maria?"

He sank into a chair, without seeming to care for, or, indeed, to hear the reply which his mother gave him, that she was gone to visit a friend.

"I am sorry she is not here to welcome you," added Mrs. Bouverie, affectionately pressing his hand; but her son made no answer.

"Tell me, how is Mr. Vernon?" inquired the old lady, her fears taking that direction.

"He is very well—very well, my dear mother!—that is, his troubles will soon be over. I do not think he will live long."

"And is not life, like every gift of the creation, a blessing?" cried Mrs. Bouverie. "To contemplate its close as such is not a natural, not a Christian way of regarding it. Henry, I trust your mind is not imbued with the gloomy precepts of those whom you went to comfort; not to be contaminated by—"

Her son pressed her hand, but was silent. At this moment, lights were brought in, and Mrs. Bouverie started, as she saw the change
which some unknown cause had wrought upon his fine and manly face. A deathly paleness sat upon it, and an expression so bitterly wretched, so utterly devoid even of an air of resigned grief, that self-reproach, or some other moral sting, seemed to be combined with other griefs. It was not like common sorrow.

Mrs. Bouverie had too much discretion and delicacy to probe such a wound. She made tea in silence, resolving to let her wretched son take his own course, and impart his griefs when he would. Something in his looks made her tremble; but still her apprehensions rested chiefly upon Mr. Vernon.

She tried to turn the conversation upon her daughter-in-law, as the subject most soothing to her son's distresses, whatever they were; but he repelled it with a look of anguish, as if his heart sickened at the very sound of her name.

"Perhaps," thought the good old lady, "Constance is ill; but no—he would not in that case have left her. Perhaps she is dead! Good God!—how will he support that blow?"

Some source of grief there was, too deep for
complaints; and the anxious mother dared not sound its depths. She even suffered her son to retire to his own apartment for the night, without venturing upon a question which might aggravate his harassed feelings. But, when she had herself retired to her room, so much of conjecture, such bitter musings beset her, that she found it impossible to rest. She had not undressed, and taking up a light, she went to the chamber where her son slept.

She conjectured that he, also, might not have undressed, and since his infancy, that kind of maternal familiarity had still subsisted, which rendered it no great matter of form and surprise for her to enter his apartment.

The light which Mr. Bouverie had taken with him, was still burning when his mother approached, and stood on a little table near the bed. A prayer-book lay beside it, but that sacred comforter was turned down, open, as if discarded from use, by the pressure of some less calm thoughts, than its contents were calculated to inspire. Mr. Bouverie was not undressed, but he had thrown himself upon the bed, in a mood of such stern reflection, that his
mother stood before him some moments before he observed her. He started, when he saw her, but did not raise his head from the arm upon which it rested. Overcome by the deep wretchedness which his countenance betrayed, and her worst fears confirmed by finding him in this state, the poor old lady sat down near the bed, wholly incapable of making the inquiries which she had intended to commence. Her appearance seemed, however, to bring the grief of her son to a natural crisis. He looked at her for a short time in silence, then the tears started to his eyes—he covered his face with his arm, and wept aloud.

Mrs. Bouverie, accustomed to study the dispositions of her children, knew that some most pressing sorrow could alone subdue the habitual fortitude and Christian heroism of her son. Her heart sank within her, and she sickened at the thought that he was indeed bereaved of all—that Constance was dead.

"My dear Henry," she said, after a long pause, "it is now the time to shew if the principles of our holy faith have, in reality, a proper sway over you. The Lord gave, and the
Lord taketh away. My son, think that your mother knows the pangs you feel; remember her bereavements."

"I do, I do—my mother," replied her son eagerly—"and I would fain avoid imparting fresh sorrows to you," he added, with a burst of uncontrollable anguish.

"I know how you loved her—how long—how exclusively," said Mrs. Bouverie, soothingly—"how we all loved her;—pardon me, my son—you loved her, perhaps, too well, and heaven, in mercy, recalls an object which bound you too fondly to the world."

"No, no, mother; it is not so!" exclaimed Mr. Bouverie, vehemently. "Had it been so, I could have resigned her. O how comparatively easy would have been the relinquishment! Would that she had died before our most unhappy marriage!"

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Mrs. Bouverie, in extreme agitation, for a suspicion more dreadful than that of the death of her daughter-in-law came across her. She rose, and went to her son, grasped his hands almost convulsively, and then sat down again, wholly in-
capable of speaking. It was long before Mr. Bouverie could impart to her the meaning and cause of all his distress; yet he did, at length, acquire resolution to impart to her the source of his anguish: but this communication was given with such reluctance, such real writhing under the tortures of an aching heart, that it was more like an extorted confession, than a willing detail. It was received, by Mrs. Bouverie, in mournful silence; for she, during the engagement of her son to Miss Courtenay had had her suspicions that some lurking distaste to that connection, some hidden cause of secret regret had occupied her daughter-in-law's mind, and occasioned, in a great measure, the slow, but consuming fever, which had long oppressed her. The kind, and well-judging old lady, would not, however, impart to her son any idea which might tend to increase his present distress. She recommended a strict and immediate investigation into all the circumstances, and an interview with Constance herself.

"No," replied her son, as she finished her counsels with this suggestion. "I will not see her—I could not," he added rising, and walk-
ing about the room, in an agony which made his mother tremble—"I could not look upon her whilst that imputation rests upon her."

"Then, Henry, I will go to her—she is young and motherless, and if we desert her, almost friendless. She is not to be left to her ruin; or to the snares of that man. I will go to her to-morrow."

With this resolution, they parted; morning, the freshness of a balmy June morning, breaking in upon them before Mrs. Bouverie returned to her own apartment.
CHAPTER XII.

Good heav'n, the souls of all my tribe defend
From jealousie.

Shakspeare.

Meanwhile, Constance had taken the most desirable and prudent step that could have been devised. On the day after her encounter with Sir Charles Marchmont, she left Lady Eleanor, in order to visit a distant relation of her father's, and to await, in the secluded residence of this elderly personage, the return of Mr. Bouverie from Devonshire. She wrote, at the same time, to him, announcing her intention, and directing her letter, as she had hitherto done, to Teignmouth. Lady Eleanor's friendly feelings were all revived by the parting from Constance, and she promised to call upon
her sometimes, as the easy distance from London, at which Mrs. Dyson, Mrs. Bouverie's relation, lived, would permit such an attention.

By four o'clock in the afternoon, Constance found herself sufficiently remote from the metropolis, to experience that sudden change of ideas, and even of feelings, which is never more strongly felt, than on leaving London for the country. The free and balmy breezes, brought no sooty particles along with them; vegetation seemed to have an unusual luxuriance; the ear sought in vain for the noises to which it had been long accustomed. The perfect tranquillity induced a sense of repose, almost amounting to languor, after the incessant succession of fresh objects, which the streets of the metropolis afford.

Mrs. Dyson's house was situated on the borders of the Thames, called by Londoners its Banks, but presenting not the slightest indication of a rise. The country around it was one continued park; the timber rich and stately; exclusion seemed the order of the day. High fences, strongly barred gates, and invidious
walls confined the plebeian rambler to the dusty road, with only a peep now and then at the perfection of pleasure ground scenery within; whilst the aristocratic possessor of these highly adorned premises might sometimes, perhaps, sicken of the perpetual presence and obtrusive appearance of art, and long for a wild heath, or an untrimmed lane. Such, at least, has often been observed by the unendowed ramblers through the richly-cultured glades of Richmond, or of Sudborne Park. Possession gives, indeed, a zest to scenes, of which the taste, not under the influence of that notion, might soon weary.

Dyson House was a family residence of considerable antiquity, devolving, with a good jointure, upon its present widowed proprietor. It was tall, and square, and spacious; its stone-faced front was garnished with a lawn, and flower-borders, sloping down to the river, according to the approved custom of most gentlemen's seats near the Thames. But, as the lawn approached the water's edge, a sunk fence separated it from a stately avenue of horse-chestnut trees, skirting the river, through which
ran a gravel-walk, granted, by long usage, to
the public, but, strictly speaking, within Mrs.
Dyson's boundaries. This walk, which was ac-
cessible to her family by another approach, was
extremely delightful, both from its own lofty
shadiness, from the glimpse which it commanded
of the house, set, as it were, in a frame-work of
shrubs and flowers, and from its proximity to
the plashing waves, ever and anon disturbed,
pleasingly to the eye and ear of the rambler,
by the pleasure-boat, or fishing-boat, moving
with voluptuous softness upon the waters.
Constance turned out into this tranquil scene
for a few minutes before dinner, and after her
sexagenarian hostess had intimated that there
were two gentlemen expected at dinner. She
soon, however, retired on perceiving a stranger,
with her friend, Mr. Bamford, sally forth upon
the lawn, to take a little breathing time, before
the labours of the social board began. Mr.
Bamford, without his hat, and warm from a
drive down in a stage-coach, privileged to hold
six inside only, looked gay and *degagé* among
the bright accompaniments of garden scenery;
but his companion, a stiff, arched-nosed man,
who proved to be the invincible Mr. Tre-
launey, appeared to have brought the bilious
temperament of the metropolis along with him,
and looked, among the roses, not unlike a
tiger-lily. Mrs. Bouverie did not, however,
encounter either of the gentlemen until nearly
dinner-time, when she received, in the drawing-
room, the warm greetings of Mr. Bamford, and
a stiff acknowledgment from Mr. Trelauney, to
show that she had had the honour of being in-
troduced to him. A melancholy, however, hung
upon her spirits, which prevented her from
being amused by the marked contrast of cha-
racter between these two individuals, who were,
nevertheless, old and intimate friends.

Mr. Bamford was all benevolence, enjoyed
every thing, spoke ill of no one, except now and
then when a little bitterness stole forth against
nonconformists and dissenters. His orthodoxy
showed itself even in his very eating, in a right
appreciation, in general, of the good things of
life. He seemed to enjoy the pleasure of the
table by impulse; Mr. Trelauney by system.
With Mr. Bamford every one was excellent and
highly-gifted; the world had treated him well, and he was grateful to it. With Mr. Trelauney there was no character above criticism, no talents that could not be depreciated, except his own. He threw a damper upon enthusiasm, and was fastidious even in his dearest pleasures. Constance was beginning to feel as if an extinguisher were put upon all her faculties, when she was startled by a measured address from Mr. Trelauney.

"Mr. Bouverie did not remain long in town, madam?"

"In town—when?" replied Constance.

"I was fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of him at Barnet as he was changing horses; and when I was coming into town, he was going out," said Mr. Trelauney, with an air of precision quite irresistible.

"Good heavens!" cried Constance; "did he give you any reason for this—this—"

"Not any," replied Mr. Trelauney, chillingly; "for I asked him if all the family at Clifford were well, and he said he believed that they were."
Mrs. Bouverie turned pale, and Mr. Bamford a most vehement red; for both felt certain that there was something wrong.

"Was he well himself?" asked the kind-hearted clergyman, seeing Constance's perturbation, and wishing to relieve her on that score.

"I do not much know what are Mr. Bouverie's looks in general," answered Trelauney, after he had quite finished what he was in the process of eating; "but he seemed to me to be rather pale."

"He has heard something," thought Mr. Bamford to himself. "But she shall not be the victim of slander."

The intimation which had been received seemed to throw a gloom over all the party, except old Mrs. Dyson, who was one of those persons with whom matters of form are at all times before matters of feeling.

Constance, quite overwhelmed, sank back from notice, her only hopes of comfort resting upon a few minutes' conversation with Mr. Bamford. She felt no less grieved, and astonished, than indignant, that her husband should have treated her with such marked and insulting
neglect, without a reasonable cause. "If he can thus injure me by suspicion," thought she, "poor is our chance of future happiness. I shall not be the first to propose a reunion, nor to beg forgiveness for sins of which I am wholly unconscious."

Unluckily, it was in vain that she sought an opportunity of speaking to Mr. Bamford alone; Mr. Trelauney, with his green, widely-opened eyes, seemed ever to be looking at her, and Constance felt herself too much humiliated by the conduct of her husband, to bear to speak of it, except in the strictest privacy. Mr. Bamford and Mr. Trelauney left her, therefore, a prey to all the miseries of suspense, and of feelings deeply wounded.

Long after the peaceful inhabitants of Dyson House had retired for the night, Constance sat at her bed-room window, and looking upon the moon-lit river, as she caught glimpses of it through the old chestnut-trees, revolved in her mind the various anxious conjectures to which the visit of the day had given birth.

The morrow came, but with it no tidings from Clifford. Constance resolved to wait an-
other day without writing, convinced that her letter to Devonshire must have been forwarded, and cherishing the strongest persuasion that her husband would either write to her, or come. She strove to pass away the long day by pacing to and fro the green lawn; then she grew tired of that, and tried the avenue. The melancholy sound of the trees seemed in unison with the tenour of her reflections; yet, amongst these, much of excitement still prevailed. She had no doubt but that the same insinuations which had disturbed Mr. Bamford's mind, had reached the ears of Mr. Bouverie, and she felt indignant, and astonished that, after four years marriage, he should listen to them; or, at least, not seek for an explanation from herself immediately. She reflected, that when she had sacrificed her own inclinations to gratitude and a sense of duty, in marrying Mr. Bouverie, she had never wandered in her conjugal fidelity to him, by thought or deed, and had studied his happiness in all things; she did, indeed, reflect that confidence, not only in the even tenor of life's road, but in its little storms and breaks, ought to have been allotted to her.
The man who betrays jealousy of his wife, often inspires her with doubts of her own attachment to him, which would never have entered her mind; unhappily also, he induces an unfavourable comparison with others. Constance, in spite of her earnest endeavours to check the reflection, could not help asking herself the question, "Would Sir Charles have behaved thus?" High-spirited, and conscious of what was due to her, she felt the neglect of her husband the more acutely that she had lately been the object of general attention and admiration to others. Her indignation, mingled with deep anxiety, was still at its height, when an incident occurred which put the integrity of her well-disposed, but not faultless character, to the test. She was, according to her daily custom, walking one morning up and down the avenue, when the sound of voices, from a boat upon the river, attracted her attention. The place where she stood was convenient for landing from the Thames, and, indeed, a pleasure-boat lay chained near some steps which were intended as an accommodation to those who wished to row, or sail. Constance, therefore, was not surprised when she
saw a gentleman avail himself of this convenience to gain the land; but her astonishment and dismay were extreme, when she saw that the gentleman who was approaching towards her, was Sir Charles Marchmont. Her first impulse was to shun him, by turning back, and proceeding by another road to the house, but a sense of her own dignity restrained her from putting this idea into execution.

"Of what am I conscious," thought she, "that I must show to him, that I cannot, with safety, encounter him? Yet, O what evil genius guides him here, perhaps to be the source of fresh calumnies to me!"

Impressed with this idea, the reception which she gave Sir Charles was calm, but it was grave and distant. She felt that he had no right by any act to implicate her reputation, and she resolved that their interview should be extremely short.

"Have you brought me any message from Lady Eleanor?" she asked, wishing to place his visit on that score.

"Lady Eleanor will see you shortly," replied Sir Charles, colouring slightly as his eyes
met her's. They walked to the end of the avenue, before another word was uttered upon either side.

"The object of my visit," at length Sir Charles said, "was to know how I could best—could best promote your happiness, and to—"

"My happiness," answered Constance, somewhat haughtily, "cannot in any way depend on you, Sir Charles. I should be sorry that you should ever concern yourself about it. Is the whole world combined to insult me?" thought she.

Sir Charles made no reply for some minutes; but at length, in a tone of deep mortification, he said, "It was my intention to have consulted your wishes, relative to my own destination, with which, most calamitously, your own welfare is connected."

"And how?" said Constance, in a softer key.

"Perhaps I may offend you, if I mention it," replied the Baronet dejectedly. "Perhaps, if you do not know it, it were better that you never should."
Another silence ensued, until, upon their turning again, Constance said, "I fear it were a vain compliment to ask you to the house; and I must return there. Accept my best thanks for your intentions, whatever they were."

She paused for a moment, overcome by the sympathy which Sir Charles's countenance expressed in her fate. "Deserted by others," thought she, "I am constrained to repel the sympathy of one who appears to be the only person who feels for me." She lingered on the walk for a time, and, as she reflected how soon she seemed to have been condemned, unheard, the tears came into her eyes.

Her emotion was not unperceived by her companion, and was attributed, after the fashion of men, to some feelings especially connected with himself. Sir Charles had fondly cherished the notion that Constance, in her heart, still clung to the object of her early affections, although principle bound her to her husband. In his cooler moments, he reverenced the hallowed sentiments which kept her blameless, not only in conduct, but in thought; and was sensible both to the sacredness of
the female character, in its purity, and to the protection which its own attributes spread around it; but this was the admiration of virtue, in the abstract. The principles which might have sustained Sir Charles in the abstract, were too easily borne down by the influence of inclination, and the dictates of selfish gratification. He could not, on the present occasion, resist the temptation of endeavouring to interest Constance's feelings in his behalf; and his intentions in now seeking an interview with her, if they seemed to him of an honourable and chivalric kind, were quickly changed into those of a selfish and dangerous description.

"My object in forcing myself into your presence," said he, taking advantage of Constance's delayed departure, "was to tell you that I had resolved to quit this country for a considerable time. You will ask, and what is this intimation to me? Let me conjure you to listen to me with patience, and not to think that I mean any thing but that which I actually express. You are here, at a distance from your friends, and those friends, are, alas!—"

"Prejudiced against me," said Constance;
“and I know it, I guess it—and I can bear it, because it is unjust.”

“Had they indignantly repelled the slanders of the envious as they ought to have done,” continued Sir Charles, “I had never presumed to offer myself to your notice. But, since I have been the innocent, unhappy cause of alienating—no, not alienating them from you, but of shaking—Gracious God! must I say it?—their confidence in you, the least that I can do is to offer my humble aid in extricating you from a situation so cruel, so painful, so unmerited.”

Constance made no reply, for she felt too much humiliated and overpowered, to utter a syllable. Indignation against those who had brought her to this, flushed her cheek, and elevated her deportment; for with the gentleness of a woman, she had likewise the strong feelings of a proud, and hitherto spoiled and idolized wife. Sir Charles, however, continued.

“For you,” he said, with a softened and trembling voice, “there is no sacrifice that I would not make. I have already been the source of too much distress to you. Could I
see you valued, as you would have been had it been our—my lot, never to have been separated from you—did I believe you happy, it would be a slight sacrifice to me, comparatively, to quit the land where you reside, and where alone I have any chance of ever hearing your name pronounced.”

“Happy I shall never be again,” replied Constance, weeping. “Some one, I know not who, has estranged my husband from me; he has passed through London without seeing me—he comes not, writes not.”

“I know it,” said Sir Charles, with deep concern. “Constance, you should never have been his. Exemplary as he is, he knew how fondly we were once pledged to each other, and it were impossible for him ever to feel any thing but distrust.”

“You wrong him,” answered Constance, angrily: “till lately, he never knew the sentiment. Some artful insinuations, some fatal combination of events, must have placed that scorpion in his bosom; and, believe me, I feel as much compassion for him, as I do indignation towards him—almost, at least.”
“Yet you cannot convince me,” said Sir Charles, too anxious to revert to former times, in the recollections of which, he considered, his strong hold consisted; “you cannot convince me, that it was well to wrench the affections from their chosen object with violence; to force them into channels of duty, or of gratitude. Why did you drive me from you, in the first instance, Constance? Had I not believed you to be under the influence of Mr. Bouverie — had I not felt towards him what he now feels, most ignorantly, towards me — had I not seen you leaning on his arm by the Phillbrook Water, I would never have relinquished the hope of one day possessing you. How different would have been both our lots, at least I think so.—I! Good God! what years of regret should I have been spared! What days and nights of reckless, heartless, joyless dissipation!—With a happier lot, I might have yet redeemed the name I bear from its present degradation, and raised it to something of its former honour. But all hope is now past.”

“And is it to solace, or to wound, or to humble me, that these recollections are re-
called?" cried Constance with bitterness. "You came as a friend. Is it like a friend to revive fruitless regrets, which have long to me been as a dream? If you have misunderstood my interest in your character, my friendly wishes for you, my hopes of you—if, from my ignorance of the world, and my very innocence of heart, my conduct to you has been misconstrued, be undeceived now, and ever. The weakness of my girlish days has long and wholly passed away; and I have no wish nor object in life but to act my part humbly and conscientiously, that I may one day be reunited to the friends I have lost, and if it please God not longer to grieve me here, be reinstated shortly in the good opinion of those still in existence."

Sir Charles was thoughtful for a moment; but he knew well how to cover a defeat, as if it were a voluntary surrender.

"I am happy," at last he replied, "that in this and all other respects, your fate has been more fortunate than mine. I am justly, too justly punished for my dishonourable conduct to you; but, if the penitence of years can atone for having once deceived you, my faults have
been expiated. What I now desire is not to revive faultless sorrows, but to retrieve my errors still further by doing all the little good in my power. I will first tell you who has held the firebrand in all this mischief,—Dr. Creamly;—he whose meek visage would form a fitting frontispiece for the Book of Martyrs, at least. That vile unwomanly woman, Lady Dartmore, from envy, or the wanton love of mischief, I suppose, instigated him to write frequent letters into Devonshire, during your stay in London. She perhaps, observed on my part, (for on yours she could have seen nothing but high-mindedness and purity—too elevated for her to understand,)—she observed, perhaps, that former recollections were not wholly extinguished."

"And is it from such sources as these—so despicable, so transparent in their wickedness, that my husband has learned to distrust me?" exclaimed Constance indignantly. "That Mrs. Bouverie and Maria forsake me? O Miss Monckton!—O Emily!—what would I give for you now!"

She wept with a violence of passion and
of grief, which quite overcame Sir Charles. Perhaps he reflected how base was the endeav-our, how cruel would have been the success, could he have added the sting of self-reproach to this bitter sorrow, and have taken her only support from her. He looked at her with an admiration more sincere, perhaps, than he even felt for her in the days of her youth, when, young and ardent, they were privileged to feel and to express the delights of mutual fondness. Perhaps even her generous devotion to a distrustful husband added to his admiration for her.

"It is not here," thought he, "the triumph of virtuous principles; for there can be no triumph where there is no temptation. If any one could have led her astray, it would have been one who had an early hold upon her heart; but the thought of wrong has never entered there."

"Tell me," he said, aloud, "may I be permitted to suggest how I can serve you?"

"By leaving me," said Constance, impatiently, whilst she still wept.

"But may I not openly justify you? Can I
not call these creatures to account for a slander on both our good names? And having done so, secure your husband’s peace by removing myself from any chance of contact with you?"

"Take what course you please," answered Constance mournfully. "Since my husband can suspect and wrong me, it can be of little avail that the rest of the world should scorn me. I have happily no relations upon whom the shadow of my disgrace might fall."

Sir Charles sighed heavily. "I must then bid you," said he, "a long farewell. I shall, I trust, hear of your happiness. They must—they shall right you!" he added impetuously, as she turned quickly from him, and walked towards the house.
CHAPTER XIII.

Look, what is done, cannot be now amended.

Shakspeare, Richard III.

Constance returned to the house in a fever of spirits scarcely to be described. Perhaps among the other painful emotions to which her conversation with Sir Charles had given birth, compassion for him might enter. She saw him depressed, and at times wretched, amidst every worldly advantage; and she could not but feel that had her lot been united to his, it would probably have been otherwise. It is impossible for a woman ever wholly to relinquish an interest which she has once felt tenderly, and truly; and Constance certainly dwelt with re-
gret upon the griefs of her former lover. But here, all that the most rigid moralist could censure ended. Her most poignant concern was for him who had a right to all her affection, all her interests. Deeply wounded, stung to the very heart by his distrust, and by the cruelty which left her days in gloomy, and almost solitary suspense, she felt irritated almost to the point of proposing an everlasting separation; but her sense of right, her sorrow for her offending husband, and her regard for her own reputation, preserved her from a step so rash. At all events, she was resolved no longer to remain in the neighbourhood of London, where she must be liable to the visits of Lady Eleanor Lepel, who, she could not but think, had acted unlike a friend in not stemming the torrent of slander and insinuation which had been poured forth against her. Above all, she dreaded again seeing Sir Charles; she knew any interview with him to be imprudent and improper, even if the well-conditioned state of her own mind prevented it from proving dangerous. She resolved, therefore, to leave Dyson House on the following day; and writing to Mr. Bamford, to
request him to meet her at a few stages from London, to advise with her.

Having made this resolution, her mind became more calm, and her native sense, uncontrolled by fear or passion, showed her how unlikely it was that her husband should continue to harbour suspicions towards her, when he knew all. Still the stinging reflection that he had once done so—the harrowing conviction that the malicious and designing had been busy at work with her fame, and had sported with her happiness, remained; and Constance, humbled in the solitude of her own chamber, without a single friend to commune with, felt how the prostration of the soul at such times brings us nearer to God; enhances the sense of His ever watchful presence; teaches us to bless with greater fervency the consciousness that He knows our hearts; and enables us, by clinging fast to that hope which centres in Him, to find, that in "bearing, we conquer our fate."

The moon had risen, and Mrs. Dyson had retired to her chamber, when the sound of horses and dogs in the court-yard announced
the arrival of travellers. Constance had not undressed; she had dismissed her maid, and had occupied herself, to prevent inquiries, with making some slight arrangements for her journey on the following day; she had written to Mr. Bamford both at Clifford and in town, for she could not but think that he had gone on a mission of mercy to those who had now, probably, as much need of solace and counsel as herself. She listened with that intensity of oral exertion which the mind imparts to the ear. A knock at her door, and a voice summoning her to descend, were answered with breathless haste. So sanguine was her nature, that she even, expected to hear that Mr. Bouverie was below; but it was only Mr. Bamford. She flew to the drawing-room, and entered, with a tremulousness almost convulsive, that spacious apartment. Mr. Bamford stood there alone, well encompassed in his travelling gear, a large white handkerchief over his head, a silk one almost covering his mouth, his ample person rendered mighty in its circumference by one of those shaggy great coats which seem as if intended to make man look peculiarly ugly. Constance
thought he would never have done unencumbering himself; yet it was by no means a cold night, for June was in all her glory. The notion of breathing the night air was, however, quite sufficient to make Mr. Bamford careful.

Constance could not utter a single inquiry. The thought that this good and kind man was the only person to visit her in her loneliness, disappointment at seeing him unaccompanied, and a sense of injury and of desolateness, quite overpowered the fortitude which she had been building up. She sank upon a sofa, looking as pale as if she had actually been an apparition of the night.

Mr. Bamford took her hand, with old-fashioned respect, but in silence. Constance, as she raised her eyes to his face, saw him, indeed, turn aside, and wipe away a tear.

"Can I be so truly wretched, then?" thought she. "Has my husband, in fact, renounced me?"

But her kind friend, seeming to read her thoughts, hastened to re-assure her.

"Madam," he said, solemnly, "you have been justified. Even your calumniators have
been forced to abandon their allegations, or, as the vulgar say, eat their words. 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay.' What vengeance is not due to those who embroil families, and plunge the just into——”

“But are they satisfied?” asked Constance.

“Is Mrs. Bouverie—is Maria—is—but O, my God, that he could doubt me!” Her whole frame seemed to sympathize with the agony of her mind, as she spoke. The very workings of her hands displayed the agony of the unseen spirit.

“You shall hear all, my good madam,” replied Mr. Bamford, flattering himself that he appeared calm, but looking amazingly flustered. “Now do, my good lady,” continued he, in a tone of parental kindness, “do let us be composed;”—at the same time taking out a large pocket handkerchief, with which he diligently repelled those peccant distillations which, whether they came from eye or skin, betrayed emotion.

“Upon leaving you, my dear lady, the other day, I took the liberty of apprizing Sir Charles Marchmont of what I conceived to be the state
of affairs between you and Mr. Bouverie, and suggested, that what he could do, he ought to do, to remedy the unhappy apprehension. This was by note, but without waiting for an answer, I proceeded to Clifford.”

“What have I done,” thought Constance, “to merit that my conduct, and my misfortunes should be made in this way the subject of discussion?” But she made no remark aloud.

“There, I found an afflicted family, indeed: your good mother-in-law, madam, was on the point of setting out to you, until I arrested her footsteps—your worthy husband had had his mind so strongly embued with direful impressions, that—that—”

“It is of little avail to enter into particulars on that score,” cried Constance, her face reddening with a sudden glow of anger; but it was a mere transitory blush, and was succeeded by extreme paleness.

“Pardon me, my good lady; I think Mr. Bouverie's anxieties not wholly without reason. A man must trust to the evidence of his own eye sight; and when he passed through London, he chanced to see his wife walking, as our
vile continental enemies call it, *tête-à-tête*, with a gentleman of noted gallantry, and one too, not unjustly perhaps, suspected of harbouring a strong partial—"

"Stop," cried Constance, "the fates seem indeed to conspire against me, and for some acts of imprudence, to punish me for involuntary faults. My early acquaintance with Sir Charles has, indeed, been the bane of my life. But where there is no guilt there need be no disguise." And she gave a short, but clear account of the casual manner in which she had met the Baronet, and had been glad to avail herself of his protection.

Mr. Bamford's mind appeared to be considerably relieved by this little narration. He walked up and down the room, in a state commonly denoted by the term "fidgets," stumbled over one stool, shook a table full of china, till it nodded to its fall; and he ended by vanishing, like the ghost of Banquo, at a side door. In a few minutes he re-appeared.

"I was thinking," he said, "Mrs. Bouverie, to persuade you to run off with me to Clifford to-morrow; you know, seeing is believing,
and no one can possibly look upon you without considering you as one little lower than the angels. So you will go with me, will you not, and join your family?"

"Never!" exclaimed Constance indignantly.

"Hum—you have then made up your mind to be angry for the rest of your days?"

"No, but I have been deeply aggrieved, and it requires time, and change of ideas, and the soothing influence of kindness; though where I am to look for that, God knows!—to calm a spirit so troubled as mine."

"But would you not consent to see your husband?"

"I wish to see no one," replied Constance, with some irritation; "I have been suspected by relations—betrayed by friends—slandered by acquaintance. God alone is my refuge. I feel no resentment towards any one—but my heart is alienated from those whom I once loved."

Whilst she spoke, a figure moving in the dark extremity of the room, near the door whence Mr. Bamford had recently vanished, caught her eye. She rose, agitated and speech-
less. To generous minds, seeing an offender, is sometimes next to forgiving: so it was with Constance; and she, who had but a moment before declared herself inexorable, or nearly so, was, in a few moments, folded in the arms of her husband.
CHAPTER XIV.

She came with smiles the hour of pain to cheer;
Apart she sigh'd, alone she shed the tear;
Then, as if breaking from a cloud, she gave
Fresh light, and gilt the prospect of the grave.

Crabbe's Borough.

Some years after the events related in our last chapter, the short, but general peace which gladdened Europe, occurred. It enabled Mr. and Mrs. Bouverie, among many others, to take a glimpse at those continental scenes from which they had hitherto been precluded, so long as the iron hand of war prevailed.

They were returning from a long and delightful tour, exhilarated, not only by the objects which it had presented for memory to dwell upon, but also from the sympathy of taste,
which had enabled them to enjoy those scenes together, without the alloy of jarring feelings, or of petulant discussions. They were journeying, informed, and benefited, to England.

The route which they had chosen lay through Normandy, and they had explored with the deep interest of cultivated minds, the sacred ruins of Jumièges, and the antiquated Castle of Meilleraye. Arrested by the beauty of the banks of the Seine, they had resolved to linger a few days longer than they had before intended, upon foreign shores, and to rest, for a brief space, at the little town of Câudebec.

The sun was declining in his course, when they reached this singular inland port, which serves as a dépôt for most of the provisions brought by the peasantry for sale, and distributed from Câudebec to different parts of the province. The heights above it are covered with wood, not, indeed, like our stately timber; for the devastations necessary for supplying fuel are constantly visible among the young and stunted trees, underneath whose shade the axe of the destroyer is almost incessantly at work: but, although the beauty of the forests
be impaired, their verdure and picturesque growth upon the heights which they clothe, are still refreshing to the eye, wearied with the apple-trees of Normandy. From these heights, the traveller, as he descends to Câudebec, catches frequent glimpses of the Seine, which here rolls in ample majesty; while the town itself, lying as it were within the compass of a nut-shell, so closely is it embedded within surrounding hills, appears from the eminence, to consist entirely of roofs and gable points. Even the rich gothic spire of the cathedral church, fretted with the minute laborious ornaments of centuries gone by, and of considerable height, as well as of remarkable beauty, here seems sunk and insignificant, its summit appearing far below your feet.

Mr. Bouverie and Constance, found, however, that the delusions of distance were never more strongly exemplified than in the nearer inspection of Câudebec. It was closely built and thickly peopled, retained the remains of former importance, and had the characteristics of present bustle and trade. As they passed along a low road, almost on the river’s edge, Mrs.
Bouverie pointed out to her husband the gay, though small villas which decorated an adjacent terrace, with hanging gardens, sloping almost perpendicularly towards the Seine. Vines tastefully trained, trellis work, partially concealed with late roses, for it was now the middle of August, and thick and dark green hedges, spangled with the white stars of the jasmine, gave to the English traveller that impression of light-heartedness, and careless plenty, which is consonant with our ideas of French existence, when not depressed to desperation by disease or famine, or excited into frenzy by faction or bigotry. Many a heavy calèche and cabriolet did they pass, drawn by a wretched horse, with miserable trappings, and containing perhaps one jack-booted sallow Frenchman, whose conversation to his horse seemed far more effective, than the lashing of his long whip. At length they reached the inn.

Here the scene was busy and animated to a degree. It was market-day, and the boats laden with commodities from the adjacent villages, were landing their stores of apples, grapes, cheeses, butter, and the like. Ever and anon,
one of the slight barks was seen scudding, perhaps, with one sail up, in the blue distance, or emerging from behind a wooded promontory which diversified the shore, or wending its aqueous track directly across from the opposite coast, or bending its seemingly feeble exertions, beneath the stately walls of Meilleraye, its importance in the scale of objects being strongly contrasted with the walls of that stately pile, frowning in solitary gloom upon the placid waters. But when the contents were once landed, a jabber of French, in every variety of cadence arose, its peculiar querulous, high key being perceptible even at the window at which Mr. and Mrs. Bouverie had placed themselves.

A slight, but admirably cooked dinner, somewhat au maigre, for it was Friday, Eperlins, a small fish from the Seine, strung and roasted with the utmost delicacy, stewed eels, flummery, fruit, and Gruyère cheese, refreshed the hungry travellers, and their simple repast was enhanced by many a laughing observation upon the figures which passed and repassed before them. At length, Mr. Bouverie strolled out to
view the cathedral, and Constance, sending her maid to enjoy the gratification of curiosity, said that she would go to her own apartment for a time, and supply her place in unpacking.

She had finished her occupation, and was returning down the narrow and somewhat wretched staircase, when sounds of grief reached her ear, from an apartment from which a torrent of loud but good-natured expostulation in French had just before been heard. In a minute, a woman opening the door, with a face of anxiety said, "If you are an English lady, and can speak French, for God's sake come in here!"

Constance complied with the request. There was a bed in the room, upon which lay a sick child, apparently about seven years of age. His curled and chesnut locks had evidently been recently and hastily cut from his head, and lay on the pillow beside him. His eyes were half closed, as if he were in a restless and feverish sleep; his little cheek was flushed with a deep crimson, which appeared unnatural when considered with the emaciated appearance of his limbs. Yet he must have been, in health, a lovely
and noble child. Constance stood for a few moments looking at him, with that tender compassion which the sufferings of infancy never fail to excite.

"Some parent has here cause to mourn," thought she. "Perhaps a fond mother will have to hear of his premature decease; or, perhaps the poor little fellow is an orphan." And she said aloud, "Can I be of any use?"

"Yes, madam:" replied a steady elderly-looking woman; "if you will explain to this person here," pointing to a stout French girl, who performed those multifarious offices which French servants seem to fulfil with so much dexterity "what we want for this dear child." And she began a list of articles, which Constance quickly translated into French for her.

The obliging fille de chambre vanished in an instant.

"And whose child is he?" asked Constance, bending down beside the little invalid; "and how long has he been ill? Pretty boy!—who are his parents? I think I have seen that face before."

"His father, madam, is now gone to Rouen
for advice," replied the nurse; "I expect him back this evening; but I fear it will be of no use," added the woman, weeping.

"Why not? You are fatigued, good woman. Since I can speak English to him, he will be good with me. Do you lie down on my bed, and I will stay and attend to him. I love children fondly, though unhappily I have none of my own."

It was with difficulty, however, that she prevailed upon the woman to leave her young charge even for a few minutes; but at length she was glad to go down stairs to breathe the fresh air, and to take some dinner. Then coming up again, the nurse found the child so tranquil with his new attendant, or perhaps unhappily so unconscious of the change, that she availed herself gladly of the relief to go and change her dress, and refresh herself by a few minutes' quiet. Constance was, therefore, again left with the invalid.

"And why," thought she, as she held his fevered hand in her's, "should I grieve that I have no such objects of painful interest. Poor little dreamer! The mother that has fondly hung
over you in your babyhood, would scarcely recognize her boy again. And so you call upon your papa?” she said gently, as the child opened his eyes and looked at her. But the revival was momentary, and even whilst he essayed to speak, a heavy slumber weighed down his eyelids again.

“He is like a blighted flower,—a rose-bud broken from the stalk,” thought Constance, as she bathed his forehead with some vinegar and water, and fancied that it seemed to do him good.

“I wonder if he has a mother,” was her next reflection, as she looked round the apartment. Some books lay on a table near. She thought she recognized the arms engraved in gilded lines on the cover.

“Gracious Providence!” exclaimed she, “can it be?” and she felt that she would rather not ascertain the fact by opening the book. She looked intently on the child. The form of the head, the glimpse she had caught of the dark grey eye, the pencilled, expressive line of the eyebrow, all reminded her of a face she had once known well.

“Why did I ever wish for children?”
thought she. "If it be so, O what will he not suffer!"

The nurse, probably overpowered by sleep the instant that her cause of exertion had been withdrawn, returned not, and Constance, unable to leave the sick room, redoubled her efforts to relieve, and if possible to benefit the patient. She looked around for medicine, which perhaps ought to be administered, but found none. She endeavoured to arrange with neatness and comfort the disordered bed, and to place the pillows with care; again and again she washed the little burning hands with vinegar, and gently rubbed the aching limbs.

At last the boy awoke, and looked at her. Her mild countenance, beaming with somewhat of maternal fondness, (for that all female natures have within them,) seemed to attract his regards. He betrayed a disposition to rise, but was too feeble even to move. He held out his arms to beg her to place him on her knee, and she could not refuse the piteous request. She took him in her arms, and placed his head upon her shoulder. He seemed relieved by the change, and, as his burning cheek rested on her
bosom, she partook, in some slight degree, of that intense love, that keenest of all anxieties, which a fond mother feels, when she sees her child languishing under disease.

Such was her occupation when she heard footsteps approaching the door. She thought it might be the nurse, and as her back was turned to the entrance of the chamber, some moments elapsed before she perceived her mistake. The words "Where is he?—how is he?" first caused her to look round. Then she saw the individual whom she had thought never to see again; and to whom she owed so many miserable hours. Yet compassion for his distress was in her, paramount to every other feeling; and, in his bosom, the emotions of a parent superseded all others, after the first surprise was over. Constance had the satisfaction of assuring Sir Charles that his child had shown consciousness; had manifested a desire to change his posture, and these were favourable symptoms. She related briefly how she had happened to enter the apartment, and directed him where to find the nurse.

Great emergencies banish constraint, and
bring even foes in close, though passing intimacy. Constance spoke with calmness, and thought she could, without reverting to former times, without a thought of the father, have found it an engaging task to tend upon the child. She placed him on his pillow, and then awaited the return of the nurse, whom Sir Charles had gone to seek. In a few moments, they both re-entered, and she then prepared to quit the apartment.

Sir Charles seemed stupified, overwhelmed; incapable of offering his thanks, or of making a single inquiry. He leaned against the wall, immovable as a statue, his eyes rivetted on the changing face of his son.

"May I," said Constance, taking from the pillow one of the bright locks which had been cut in a moment of keen apprehension from the head of the child.—"May I take with me this, as a little memorial—of your child?" She waited not for a reply, but immediately quitted the room.

This time she had no concealments from her husband; she instantly told him of her interview with Sir Charles; and she had the conso-
lation of finding that Mr. Bouverie went immediately to the sick chamber, sustained the spirits of the anxious father by his advice, and assisted in seeking out the best medical advice near at hand. Twice Constance found him posting off for some kind of nutriment or fruit, which the little patient fancied. One night he sat up in the chamber to enable the nurse and the parent to procure some repose, whilst Mrs. Bouverie's English maid proved eminently useful. How she envied those who were permitted to solace the father, and to attend upon the child! Yet she felt a pride and happiness in her husband's performing this Christian duty, and trusted, that by these good offices, all feuds might be annihilated. She was right; and ere they left Caûdebec, the young heir of the Marchmonts was not only restored to health, but a tacit reconciliation was effected between his father, and his father's early friend.

They met, however, no more. Each had his pursuits in life; Sir Charles, ambitious to retrieve an honourable name, rose higher and higher in the scale of public importance; and had, moreover, the happiness of knowing that
he was no less beloved than admired in his generation. To his son descended his agreeable and generous qualities, without those imperfections of character, which an unhappy education had produced, in his father. Parental duties are highly beneficial to the mind. Anxious that his son should appreciate nothing so much as rectitude and consistency, Sir Charles, in striving to point out the road, learned to follow it himself. The youthful graces of the boy's character threw back their reflection upon his own. What rebuke to pride, to selfishness, to duplicity, can there be, so obvious, as the simplicity and guilelessness of our children?
CHAPTER XV.

Secure us kindly in our native night.

Dunciad.

Reader, if the dramatis personæ of this tale have interested you, you will be glad to see them brought forward in one grand finale. Before the curtain drops, let us give one line to Mr. and Mrs. Cattell. It may be said of them, as of a certain eminent man, "that nothing in their lives became them like the leaving it." For, as they had lived in insignificance, and were little more noted than the insect which creepeth along the wall, a sumptuous funeral bestowed upon each, gave to their last remains an importance which had been absent from them in life. Prancing steeds, nod-
ding plumes, mutes who chattered, and mourners who made themselves comfortable, dignified the last obsequies, and drew out all Newberry to gaze. The three Miss Holloways, new residents, appeared at three different windows, and Miss Pearson's muslin blind was down all day. Alas! that it should require all this trouble to carry the fragile, withered piece of clay, which had once been honoured with the respectable name of Mrs. Cattell, or the bed-ridden form of Mr. Cattell, to their last abodes!

Doctor Clayton lived to a venerable old age, his faculties remaining unimpaired to the last. As life declined, the harsh points of his character were softened: pride melted into vanity, dogmatism into garrulity; his despotism he transferred wholly to Sam; his conjugal spleen he vented upon the world in general. Formerly he could, by his powerful satire, and his vehement eloquence, have embroiled parties, and decided the fate of elections; but now, it was said by both friends and enemies, to be "only the old Doctor's way." If his influence were less, his benevolence became greater. His deeply-rooted prejudices were subdued by the near contem-
pletion of that heavenly sphere where there are "many mansions," for all sects, and all parties; but at whose threshold the furious politician, and the angry controversialist must lay aside the bitterness of disputation, before they may presume to hope for entrance. As his approach to the grave became more certain and evident, the distinction of Whig and Tory, conformist and non-conformist, trinitarian and unitarian, arian and predestinarian became offensive to him; and he was wont to say that he loved none of the "words terminating in ian, except Christian." Whatever were his actual religious tenets upon doctrinal points, and they were much disputed, he was well prepared at last, for that great momentous change, which none had contemplated more in all its relations to human nature than he had done. His literary fame was chiefly conversational; and he, who had been reported to have filled one room with electioneering papers, bequeathed not a single important work to posterity.

Mrs. Clayton long survived him, cherished his memory, honoured his choice with her virtues, and spent the liberal income which he left
her, in deeds of charity, and habits of hospitality. It is said, that she never heard his failings commented upon, nor his peculiarities ridiculed, without the bitterest pang. Yet that he was loved and honoured in spite of these, forms his best eulogium.

Mr. Bamford's career was cut short by an apoplectic fit, whilst he was turning over old books in a book-shop in London. Nota Bene—He had been dining out the day before. But he had not been a fellow of Merton College, Oxford, to no purpose. A better liver, in every sense, never existed. The recording angel, whose office it was to note down his last excesses, might add, that his virtues, as well as his failings, were all of the social character. His very benevolence seemed to be a kind of self-indulgence.

Mr. Kilderby went on writing as long as he had an eye to see with, or a finger to mend a pen. He may be considered as one of the most voluminous, unread writers of the day. Whosoever wishes to have his last work, may buy a whole edition, as he himself has assured me, at half-price. Only one of his poems reached a
second edition; and the wits of Bath were ill-natured enough to say, that he bought up the first at a shilling a volume. He died of an elegy, which he had stayed too long in a damp church-yard to write.

Miss Pearson, Mrs. Crawfurd, Mrs. De Courcy, where are they now? No one can tell me. The Priory is new faced, and new furnished, and let to a large family; and a happy, noisy race of boys and girls have succeeded the rats and mice. Mrs. Dorcas keeps a public-house, Mr. Spencer is the parish clerk, and is generally thought to be far more impressive than his master, the vicar, above. Enoch is grown up into a coachman, and his red ears are buried underneath his huge capes.

Some of the Tribes are gone to colonize Cornwall; Mr. James and Mr. Tom have often been on the verge of marriage, but, when it came to the point, the ladies always found some excuse, a circumstance these worthy gentlemen were used to, from the first country-dance they ever danced, to the last time they were jilted. They lived, however, very harmoniously in duetto; whilst their respected mother added one or
two more scions to the parent stock; the last of which was pronounced to be Mr. Tom in miniature; consequently, not very large.

Captain Powis was killed, leading the forlorn hope at some Peninsular town: he fell, attended by the regrets of all his corps, and full of military honours. His cousin lives still, somewhat after the fashion of a hot-house plant under a glass. The last feat I heard of his performing, was his cutting out half-a-dozen veils of silver-paper, for the benefit of the bright fire-grates at Powis Court.

Sir Robert and Lady Dartmore ran a long course, she growing fatter, rouging more highly, and talking louder, every day. Many people think she would have lost her character, if she could have found any one to run away with. She still drags Dr. Creamly about after her, but his favour is, they say, fast on the decline. It is observed, that he has been very select in his correspondence since Sir Charles Marchmont offered to fight him, for some letters which he wrote; on which occasion, he discovered that he had long been a Quaker, and
did not approve of duelling. He now wears a broad brim.

Lady Eleanor Lepel died early, her mind chastened by a long illness, until the mist of error was dispelled from her intellectual vision, and she saw with the eye of faith, and hope, and charity, the things of this life, and learned to sustain its gradual decline with the patience of a Christian sufferer. Her little husband’s small, vital machinery played on many years after her decease, and the void produced by his death was, finally, as minute as his existence had been unimportant. Such, indeed, may be said of one half of mankind.

Lady Eleanor was interred in Hollywood Church; and Mrs. Bouverie, who had been as a sister to her during her last illness, entreated Mr. Lepel to allow her remains to be deposited just on the confines of the churchyard, where the low belt of laurels separated the sacred enclosure from her own pleasure garden. The monument erected to the memory of poor Lady Eleanor was placed, however, in the chancel. The writer of these
"simple annals" remembers it when a girl, and recollects the melancholy admiration with which she viewed it. It represents, in alto relievo, a beautiful, but attenuated female form, borne by an angel to heaven. The face of the departed rested on the shoulder of the benignant ethereal spirit, whose wings overshadowed the forehead.

There was a gentleman, one of the mourners at Lady Eleanor's funeral, who long after the solemn service had been concluded, and the clergyman had retired, loitered about the grave, wrapped in one of those mourners' cloaks which are calculated to obscure the person; yet the woman who was preparing the church for the Sabbath, deemed him, from his air and manner, to be no humble and obliged dependant but probably some titled relative. Whilst he stood in mute sorrow at the grave, she saw him bend, from time to time, a look of deep and sad interest at the Parsonage, where Mr. Bouverie and Constance lived in happy retirement; but this day, the windows of that usually cheerful abode were closed, and the family had
retreated within. One only straggler from the house of mourning, had, however, escaped. It was a little girl, four years of age, the eldest child of Mr. and Mrs. Bouverie, born about a year after their return from the continent. The little truant, frightened at the aspect of a gentleman in a cloak, ran back, but not before the stranger had scrambled over the laurel fence, and catching her in his arms, had imprinted a kiss upon her fresh and blooming cheek. The people of the village, always curious in such matters, ascertained this gentleman to be Sir Charles Marchmont.

Mr. Bouverie and Constance lived long, and happily at Hollywood Rectory. Life with them had its troubles, but they were troubles mitigated by mutual love, by the innumerable joys connected with a rising family around them, and the tender interests which attach to young dependant creatures, who have immortal souls which must be trained to heaven. The goods of life, as they are usually called, were, indeed, liberally showered upon Mr. Bouverie and Constance. To their surprise,
General Monckton bequeathed to the latter, a considerable portion of his wealth. Consistently with his character, he thought it necessary to apprise them of the obligation before his death. He visited Hollywood, and spent half a day in asking questions. "This the churchyard—hey? Not tormented with rats?—Very common in a churchyard, are they not?—Wish my poor sister Jane had been buried here. How many children did you say? What, only three, how's that—hey? So you've named one Jane, I hear—very kind—very complimentary—though my poor dear sister was certainly very peculiar. Well, you'll find I have remembered you, for which you won't be sorry—hey? And I have employed Mr. Manvers to make my will—you remember him at Malvern, don't you? Very clever fellow that, though he does patronize the French Revolutionists—He tells me he has fallen in love—'not with a fair lady,' he says, 'but with a fair estate;' quite the most natural, isn't it—hey?"
"Exactly so—very true—extremely well put—a capital hit," interposed Mr. Bromsgrove, who happened to form a fourth at the dinner table on this occasion.

THE END.
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