

ANY THING BUT WHAT YOU EXPECT.

BY JANE HARVEY,

AUTHOR OF MONTEITH—ETHELIA—MEMOIRS OF AN  
AUTHOR—RECORDS OF A NOBLE FAMILY, ETC. ETC. ETC.

In Three Volumes.

VOLUME I.

“Alle day  
“It is both writ and sayde,  
“That woman’s faith is, as who sayth;  
“Alle utterly decayed.  
“But nevertheless right good witness  
“I’ this case might be layde,  
“That they love trewe, and contynewe.—”  
*Nut Browne Mayde.*

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CHAPTER I.

IT was one of those soft and shadowy evenings, in the early part of spring, which awaken in the soul those emotions of tenderness which have been chilled by the rigour of winter, and dispose it to receive new and similar impressions, when a hired chaise drove rapidly up to one of the principal inns at St. Albans. The party it brought consisted only of two ladies, attended by a female servant; the elder lady, who appeared to be about thirty-six, was eminently distinguished by that dignified yet easy behaviour, and that sweet expression of countenance approaching to seraphic, which are the striking and genuine characteristics of an English lady, whose mind is regulated by the gentle precepts of feminine duty, and whose manners have been formed in the circles of elegant and polished society: her companion was a lovely girl of seventeen, her form was light and graceful; her hair a fine auburn; the rose of health bloomed on her lovely cheek; and every emotion of her soul spoke in her sweet blue eyes; in one word, her beauty was of that exalted description, which the longer it is known and studied pleases the more. They were shown to an apartment, where the senior lady ordered tea, and having discharged the chaise which had brought them the last stage, requested that another might be prepared to take them to Holleyfield, the seat of Sir Charles Walpole, in the adjoining county of Bucks; to her great surprise she found that a delay of some hours would take place before this order could be executed, every post carriage being in actual service from various temporary causes, one of which was the approaching Lent circuit, and another a great anniversary dinner in town. Mrs. Emerson (so the lady was called) not having anticipated such a contingency, and being very anxious for the termination of her journey, was both surprised and disappointed, while the expressive face of her lovely young friend spake more than participation in those feelings; the most liberal offers could not induce the post-boy who had driven them to St. Albans to proceed to Holleyfield, as he alleged that it would be such a deviation from his road as he dared not to make: "Can no other mode of conveyance be obtained?" questioned the young lady with earnest anxiety, "could not a person be found to go on horseback to Holleyfield, and request them to send a carriage from thence? perhaps it would be more certain than waiting here the return of one of the chaises." She subjoined an inquiry concerning the distance, which the landlord informed her was about eight miles; "My dear," said Mrs. Emerson, "it is not to be thought of; the evening is now closing, and it would be quite dark before a horse could reach your father's; I fear we must make up our minds to wait here till the morning." "I am sorry for the necessity," said Miss Walpole; "So am I," rejoined her friend, and she added in a low voice, and with a repressed sigh, yet with emphasis of manner, "such a necessity ought not to have existed; your father's carriage should have met you *here*, if not before." What could be distinguished of these words, aided perhaps by some previous knowledge of the Walpole family memoirs, induced the innkeeper to regard both ladies very attentively as he was quitting the room; but in somewhat less than

a quarter of an hour he returned to it, the bearer of a polite message to Miss Walpole and her friend, importing that Lord Lochcarron being in the house, and informed of the circumstance which detained the ladies on their journey, requested permission to solicit the honour of being their escort to Holleyfield, which (the landlord added as his own information) was quite in his lordship's road, and within three miles of Ravenpark, whither he was going.

“Lohcarron!” repeated Mrs. Emerson, “that is one of the baronies of the earldom of Dunotter, is his lordship the son of the earl?” An expression of surprise passed over the features of the host; “I understood, madam,” he observed, “from what you said, that this young lady is the daughter of Sir Charles Walpole.” “And does that,” questioned Mrs. Emerson, with a smile, “include the necessity of my being acquainted with Lord Lochcarron?” “No, certainly not, ma'am, but as Holleyfield is so near Ravenpark”—“But it may happen,” the lady replied, “that I have never been at Holleyfield, consequently cannot boast any perfect knowledge of its environs.” “Oh, to be sure, ma'am, I beg pardon for not explaining at first—my Lord Lochcarron is the only son of the Earl of Dunotter.” Much he added in the personal praise of his lordship, more of that in the noble fortune he was heir to, though he admitted, in the same breath, that the expenses of the present earl had impaired it as much as could be without touching the entail; Mrs. Emerson seemed abstracted a few moments, then as if recollecting that a more prompt return was due to Lord Lochcarron's politeness, she hastily said to Miss Walpole, “I perceive, my dear, you are too anxious to see your father to have any hesitation about accepting the escort his lordship so very kindly offers.” Cordelia expressed her ready acquiescence in whatever Mrs. Emerson thought right, and sincerely glad of such a termination to her present difficulties, made arrangements to pursue her journey; a suitable message was then sent, and in a few minutes the young nobleman entered to escort his fair charge to his carriage; he was above the middle height, and combined all the captivations of graceful form, elegant features, and refined manners; beyond which, he was introduced to the ladies under circumstances the most advantageous and propitious for conciliating regard, that of rendering them a service; as they proceeded on their journey Lord Lochcarron and Mrs. Emerson kept up that animated conversation which an established intercourse with society on the part of his lordship, dignified good sense and experience on that of the lady, and highly polished manners on both, at once dictated and rendered easy; but Miss Walpole felt the pensive influence of the hour, and spoke little, listening however with interest to the remarks which her companions made on the comparative advantages and disadvantages of travelling on the continent and in England. The shades of evening deepened, and the general aspect of the weather became more chilling and wintry; Mrs. Emerson mentally wished for the termination of their little journey, upwards of one half of which they had passed when a man on horseback, hitherto neither seen nor heard, rode up to that side of the carriage where Lord Lochcarron sat; Miss Walpole mechanically raised her eyes, but it was to behold a pistol levelled at the head of the young nobleman, while his money was imperiously demanded, with imprecations which, as they accord only with wicked actions, may be supposed their usual accompaniment, whether uttered aloud or not; his lordship, with at once prompt alacrity and collected fortitude, replied by drawing a pistol from the pocket of the carriage; but before he could use it, his groom, who attended on horseback, fired another

at the robber; he made an attempt to ride off, but in the next moment groaned and fell to the ground; the danger of Lord Lochcarron, the blasphemies of the villain, the report and effect of the weapon of death, all seemed to pass with the rapidity of lightning: Miss Walpole felt a sensation of alarm and of horror beyond the power of description to paint; for, new to life and its varied circumstances, educated in retirement, and inured only to scenes and sounds of tranquillity and peace, her every faculty, attribute, and operation of nerve and of soul were vivid, elastic, and unblunted in the most extreme degree. Mrs. Emerson, on the other hand, viewed the passing transaction with calm unshrinking courage: this was a *trait* of character which Cordelia had ever admired in her friend, and believed that her own inability to copy it proceeded from greater imbecility of mind; but she had yet to learn that this apathetic rigidity of feeling has not always its source in reason, however exerted, or in philosophy, however cultivated and studied; alas! no, it is the sad growth of years and sorrows; and as the chill dews of autumn, and the keen blasts of winter, take from plants and flowers their exquisite odours, so do the storms of life, aided by the benumbing hand of time, correct and allay that exuberance of feeling which vibrates with such easy pliancy to hope and to fear—to pleasure and to pain. Lord Lochcarron ordered his servants to take care of the wounded ruffian; “If he recovers,” said his lordship, “he must answer for his violation of the law, but do not treat him with inhumanity;” he then directed his attention to his fair fellow-travellers, saying and doing all that a polished mind could suggest to cheer their spirits after the alarm they had sustained; Mrs. Emerson fervently congratulated him on his escape, and Miss Walpole, though too much agitated to express herself in words, felt a joy more ardent, and a degree of gratitude to Providence more strong and powerful, than she ever remembered to have experienced on any former occasion; the two ladies were certainly not insensible to the danger themselves had escaped; while the goodness Lord Lochcarron displayed towards the wretch who had the moment before threatened his life, combined the highest respect and admiration with the flattering advantages under which he had so recently been introduced to their acquaintance; the course of attention was, however, soon diverted from the late occurrence; for the carriage entering a gate, the noble mansion of Sir Charles Walpole broke at once upon the view, though now seen imperfectly through the deepening shades of evening, which the lights from the windows conspired to render more obscure. “I presume we are now at Holleyfield, my lord,” said Mrs. Emerson; to which Lord Lochcarron replied in the affirmative; Cordelia felt a chill tremor creep over her frame; her spirits were oppressed almost to fainting, and tears, which would not be checked, dimmed her beautiful eyes; she was now approaching the house of her father, beneath whose roof she had never yet been sheltered; summoned to attend that parent whom she had not seen half a dozen times in her whole life, under the certainty that he was dying; and about to meet a mother-in-law hitherto scarcely known, yet so much so as to have made an unfavourable impression;—she shuddered, and clung to the side of Mrs. Emerson, as to the only stay and support she had in life. The carriage drew up, and Lord Lochcarron, with sweet and graceful politeness, descended to assist the ladies in alighting. The hall-door was thronged with obsequious domestics, whose submissive attentions scarcely veiled the ardent curiosity with which they regarded Miss Walpole, who, unwelcomed by the glance of tenderness, or the voice of affection, felt her agitation redouble, and involuntarily she clasped the supporting arm of Lord Lochcarron as he led her up the steps; here he paused; Cordelia struggled to subdue emotion; there was no one

else present to do the honours of her father's house, and her high sense of propriety urging that the office rested with her, she sweetly invited his lordship to walk in; this he declined, with much politeness indeed, but upon a plea which, however ostensible, seemed trifling and inadequate—the lateness of the hour; for it could not be supposed that his detention would be long, and the remainder of the journey was less than three miles. Mrs. Emerson, a quick observer of all the rapid and varied turns of the human countenance, saw with deep surprise, that while Lochcarron made his apology he wore an expression of features which, though she could clearly perceive, she could not define; true, it might be that he made this apparent departure from the laws of good-breeding from disrespect, or at least inattention, to the ladies, who were total strangers to him; or from fear of remaining out later in consequence of the recent occurrence. But a rigid scrutiny of his expressive face conveyed a conviction that to neither motive could his refusal be with justness ascribed; in short, to sum up the matter at once, Mrs. Emerson could not help thinking that he looked as if slightly surprised that the invitation had been given, and steadfastly determined to decline it; he received the thanks of both ladies, and disclaimed all merit to them, in the style of genuine and unaffected politeness, and having, with every possible expression of respect, given and received the parting ceremonies, he returned to his carriage, which instantly drove off. To add to Mrs. Emerson's astonishment, she saw that the surrounding domestics regarded Lord Lochcarron with what seemed to be the gaze of vacant wonder: Miss Walpole, it may be, felt more of pique than of any thing else when his lordship refused her first request; but she made none of those observations which presented themselves to the more experienced mind of her friend; and while she was occupied with them, Cordelia was anxiously inquiring concerning her father; Sir Charles, she was told, was rather worse, though not considered to be in immediate danger; she had no reason to expect more consolatory intelligence; but the light spirits of youth are seldom prepared to meet such with fortitude, and with augmented dejection she followed Lady Walpole's maid into a highly-decorated drawing-room, where a cheerful fire, brilliant lights, and every inanimate organ of welcome awaited her; but of animated ones—the pressure, the kiss, and the voice of affection, alas! there were none to greet her arrival.

Mrs. Dobinson having seen the travellers seated in this apartment, went to inform her lady that they were come; Lady Walpole, she added in answer to Cordelia's inquiries, was much indisposed; she never quitted Sir Charles's room, nor suffered his food or medicines to be administered by any other hands, of course she sustained incredible fatigue; had Cordelia been unaided by any experience greater than her own, this marked attention to her father, this exalted display of virtue and of duty, would easily have gained on her susceptible heart; but Mrs. Emerson, though she had never been much in the society of Lady Walpole, had easily penetrated her character, and knew that self-interest was at all times her only end—the *suaviter in modo* her favourite means; persons of this description need only to be thoroughly known to meet the contempt they merit; but it requires a vigilance unwearied, and a prudence rare in the extreme, to guard entirely against their arts.

The term of Mrs. Dobinson's absence, was filled up by the entrance of the butler, who brought refreshments suited to the hour and recent fatigue of the ladies; in a quarter

of an hour the waiting-woman returned, the bearer of a note to Miss Walpole, couched in the following terms:

“Too certainly, my sweet, my excellent Cordelia, I need not seek an apology for denying myself the happiness of embracing you and our respected Mrs. Emerson to-night—alas! an incumbent one too fatally presents itself in the increasing illness of your dear, inestimable, suffering father;—my beloved girl! I cannot conceal from you the distressing truth that he is materially worse; with a reluctance which needs no aid of description from me—your own sympathy will paint it—I have (pursuant to the advice of Dr Heslop, his attendant physician, grounded on apprehension that the surprise might prove of melancholy consequence) deferred informing him of your arrival until to-morrow morning, when I hope—oh! how fervently—to find him able to support a communication which will give him so much pleasure.—Of myself I say nothing—our sacrifices to duty, however severe, ought not to be reckoned in the class of sufferings. Adieu, my beloved Cordelia; for my sake take care of your precious health; say every thing for me to your highly-estimated friend, who I anxiously hope will consider herself as much at home in the house as she ever is in the heart of your most affectionate mother,

Harriet Walpole.”

Cordelia having read this epistle, silently presented it to her friend, and during the perusal contemplated her countenance, to glean from its well-known expression her sentiments upon it; Mrs. Emerson’s only comment was, “My love, I feel obliged to Lady Walpole for the consideration she expresses, but I cannot help being of opinion that her ladyship’s tenderness for your father, and her regard for yourself, would both have been better displayed by not suffering a moment to elapse before he was informed of your arrival; putting your feelings out of the question, your interest is most materially concerned;—it is too late this evening to take any further steps—we will retire to rest, and, if Providence permits, act more promptly in the morning.”

## CHAPTER II.

SIR Charles Walpole, baronet, was the descendent and last male representative of an ancient and respectable family in the county of Kent; their landed inheritance, though extensive, had not been managed with any great degree of agricultural skill, and of course was found to belong to that description which is more capable of future improvement than productive of present profit; a considerable part of the estates were unentailed; and the grandfather of the present Sir Charles was exactly a character to alienate them from his rising family, and reduce it to that most comfortless of all situations, degraded gentility; yet was he a man "More sinned against than sinning;" censured, yet respected; beloved, though condemned; his failings approximated with his better qualities, as the colours of the rainbow blend with each other; and his virtues were all of that wavering class which are ever overflowing their hallowed bounds, and verging into vice; he was eminently gifted with good-nature; but, unsupported by any firmness of mind, it was only a pliant tool for designing persons to work with; he was called generous and hospitable; but when the unlimited expense with which he supported his claim to those attributes of goodness was taken into calculation, they might rather have been termed prodigality and profusion; he was charitable without discrimination, magnificent without taste, and, beyond all, he was the slave of a party, and carried on a contested election at what might, even in those days, be deemed an enormous expense; practised in such modes of lavishing money, it will not be thought surprising that by the time his eldest son was of an age to enter on a regular course of education, his affairs were so much embarrassed that it was found necessary to sell the chief part of the family estate; he did so, and by satisfying his creditors to the utmost of their demands, maintained the same character for probity he had hitherto enjoyed. He now found himself reduced to a situation replete with straits and difficulties, deprived not only of all the elegancies, but many of the absolute comforts of life; such a state of circumstances, with its attendant prospects, roused Mr. Walpole as if from a dream; but he glanced only on the wrong side of the picture, and, forgetful that the foundation of his ruin might be traced in his own improvident mismanagement, he attached the whole blame to what he termed the narrowness of his fortune; and never admitting, even to himself, that his expenditure ought to have been proportioned to his income, he only regretted that his resources had not been more adequate to the claims he made upon them; his mind, by dwelling constantly on this subject, became ardently desirous of wealth, but neither his time of life, his established habits, nor the still more formidable barrier of his having been educated to no profession, would now allow him to seek its acquirement; could he have reversed all these impediments, he would most sedulously have devoted himself to the pursuit of riches; but what he could not effect, his son might; he was now of age to begin the career of life in any line he might think eligible; but what should that be? the church, the bar, the navy, and the army were, no doubt, the direct roads to honour—that they were also those to fortune appeared to Mr. Walpole to depend on a thousand contingences; but in the mercantile walk he could trace more instances of rapid, uninterrupted, easy accumulation of wealth, than in all others combined; these considerations decided the fate of the young gentleman; he was placed with an eminent merchant in London, and, eventually, though his father did not live to see it, realized his most sanguine hopes; he united talent with industry, and integrity with

application; these qualities may not, in all cases, insure success, but certain it is that being unfortunate in a man is frequently but another term for being indiscreet; to be brief, the age of fifty saw him a widower, with one only son, and possessed of eighty thousand pounds, as a stockholder and in mortgages, beyond a large capital embarked in lucrative and increasing commerce; there is frequently found in men a fatality—or perhaps that is not an appropriate term—which leads them to despise the means by which they have attained wealth, however highly they may value the attainment itself; thus it was with Mr. Walpole; he was in most respects a very sensible man, but his chief pride and boast was the antiquity of his family; he was the first merchant that had represented it, and resolved to be the last; he determined that his son should enter into life with all those requisites of a gentleman which are included in being of no profession, possessing a title and a very large fortune; he employed part of his wealth in the purchase of a baronetcy, and became the first Sir Charles Walpole.

Thus armed at every point with claims to consequence, his heir prepared to set out on the tour of Europe; but Sir Charles deeming it a glaring folly to send young men to learn the state of foreign countries in civil and political matters, while profoundly ignorant of the actual position of their own on these subjects, he arranged his plans so that his son should visit the principal places in Great-Britain before he passed over to the continent: whether the reverend gentleman who attended Mr. Walpole in the capacity of tutor, wanted energy to restrain all the exuberant and eccentric pursuits of youth; whether he deemed his own interest so far concerned in bowing to the rising sun, that he made no attempt at such restriction; or whether the pupil himself was too self-willed to obey control, or too artful for vigilance to restrain, does not appear upon record, neither is it material to inquire; but thus much is certain, that the gaities of Bath and Bristol were more subjects of Mr. Walpole's research, than the natural or civil histories of those places; and that he found the races of York more attractive than its antiquities. In the north he deviated from his road to Scotland to visit the beautiful lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland; and in the last-named county found a gem buried, as many a treasure, both animate and inanimate, may be supposed to be, in mountain solitude; to drop metaphor, he fell deeply in love with the beautiful and amiable daughter of a worthy clergyman; at least he imbibed for her that romantic sentiment which, amongst young people, passes current by that name, though its transient existence too frequently proves that it never had a more solid base than the effervescence of imagination. The lady, though an only child, would only inherit a very small fortune, exclusive of considerable expectancy from a very rich maternal aunt; of course the consent of Sir Charles Walpole to their union was not to be hoped for, and without it, Miss Lancaster well knew that her father would never permit her to enter his family; but too much attached to her lover to support the idea of being separated from him for ever, she listened to his persuasions, placed duty and decorum in the back-ground, and was prevailed upon to pass the border, and exchange vows with him at Gretna Green. Mrs. Emerson, the cousin-german of Miss Lancaster, and at that period as young and romantic as the lovers themselves, was the companion of their flight. The first act of Mr. Walpole after his marriage, was to acquaint his father with the step he had taken; Sir Charles thus at once, and without preparation, disappointed in the hope he had cherished, that his heir would form a splendid alliance, was pained and irritated beyond the power of description to paint; yet were his paternal

feelings too tender to throw his child entirely from his heart; for the present he refused to see him, settled on him a small annuity, cancelled the will which he had made almost solely in his favour, and stopping the measures which were taking for settling his recent purchase of Holleyfield and its domains on his direct posterity, he resolved to be guided by time and circumstances in his future conduct as it respected his son.

Mr. Lancaster, less dazzled by his daughter's elevation in society, than grieved by her departure from what he deemed the line of female rectitude, yet loved her too tenderly not to extend the olive branch; he cemented her union with the husband of her choice, and gave them a home in his house and in his heart. Wedded love, in a mere every-day character like that of Mr. Walpole, is soon shorn of its blossoms; its thorns often appear, but in his case they never did so, for twelve months, which was all of life that remained to Mrs. Walpole after her marriage. His behaviour to her, though never harsh or unpolite, was little marked by ardour of attachment or strength of esteem; the sports of the field engaged the husband, and the wife returned to those domestic and feminine occupations which had been the habits of her youth; but the close of the period just named, produced eventful changes; a rapid decline following the birth of Cordelia, opened an early grave for Mrs. Walpole; and the same month which terminated her existence, closed that of her father-in-law, who expired suddenly, without any previous indisposition; as he died intestate, his vast property descended unquestioned to his son, who thus found himself at once emancipated from his matrimonial ties, and in uncontrolled possession of a large fortune; it is not to be supposed that the claims of a yet unconscious infant could restrain Sir Charles from seeking the world and its allurements; he held himself as amply fulfilling every duty of a parent by settling on his daughter a sum, certainly not suitable to his rank in society, but adequate to her every want in that early stage of existence, and in that remote situation; and leaving her in the protection of Mr. Lancaster and Mrs. Emerson, then the wife of a very worthy physician at Penrith, he arranged his affairs in England, and took his departure for the continent, in visiting different parts of which he passed upwards of seven years, and had been returned about two, when, in a summer excursion to Wales, he met with his present lady, the younger daughter of a gentleman in the vicinity of Caermarthen, who, tracing his illustrious descent through a long line of ancestors, was richer in genealogy than in more substantial wealth.

The face and person of Miss Harriet Lewis formed a combination which, possessing neither the commanding force of one description of beauty, nor the attractive softness of another, was yet such as could not be ranged in the ordinary class; such persons have frequently been styled *showy*, and in her case the term was extremely appropriate; she was gifted with great powers of understanding, but it is often seen that enlargement of mind is joined to contraction of heart, and with Miss Lewis it was eminently so; her every wish, hope, aim, and purpose centred in self; and for her own aggrandisement, interest, and advantage, her every faculty was perpetually at work, and each action of her life had those for its objects; she was an everlasting schemer, and though, like most artists of that description, her schemes frequently failed, that did not deter her from framing new ones, which were usually laid with as much art, and through as many intricacies, as a train of gunpowder to blow up a citadel; a prodigal in promise,

but a niggard in performance, she could flatter to deceive, and smile to betray; and holding in the deep recesses of her heart, though never admitting in her conversation, the jesuitical maxim that all means are lawful where the end is desirable, she had masks of all sorts, of deep austere piety, of high, polished courtly breeding, of universal benevolence and philanthropy, which were worn for a season, and then thrown aside as it suited her purpose. At the time her acquaintance with Sir Charles commenced, she was under an absolute promise of marriage to a young officer who was quartered in the neighbourhood; he possessed little besides his pay, but being respectably—rather highly—connected, he had a prospect of rising rapidly in his profession; of course Miss Lewis thought him a conquest worth securing; but when the baronet appeared, the son of Mars vanished as a star before the sun; many ladies would have felt troublesome scruples of honour, of conscience, of delicacy, about breaking an engagement so solemn, she had none of them; she soon managed so as to make her lover jealous of the preference she showed Sir Charles, and when he remonstrated with her on the subject, disowned the charge with asseverations so positive, and a countenance of such fascinating candour, that scepticism might have been won to belief; but when the young gentleman sought oblivion and reconciliation, she barred all approach to the latter by declaring, whilst reason appeared to be struggling with love, and fortitude with tenderness, that she could not now, in justice to herself, ratify her promise: with deep reluctance she must say, that Captain —— by doubting her faith and affection, had himself weakened her esteem, consequently she could no longer think so highly of him as she had done, and to marry him, with such sentiments, would be doing an injury to both; he was at liberty to pay his addresses to any other lady, and she must teach her heart the severe but unavoidable task of forgetting how fondly it had cherished his image. Two months after this she gave her hand to Sir Charles Walpole, over whom she soon gained such absolute ascendancy that his every act, nay, his every intention, was under her control; yet she did not appear to exercise any such dominion, but managed with such consummate art, that even those who were in daily habits of intercourse with the family did not easily perceive it, still less did Sir Charles himself feel such sway; for being a man of an indolent turn, he habituated himself more and more to rely on her in the management of all his affairs, until every step she took seemed his own. She made him the father of two sons, one of whom died in early infancy, and the other in his fourth year, to the great grief of Sir Charles, who had ever been ardently desirous of male offspring; neither had his lady any occasion to feign affliction for the loss of her children; yet let it not be supposed that her tears flowed from the tide of maternal anguish, mourning the death of its bosom treasures, far from it; her philosophic mind would no more have deplored the destruction of her whole kindred, than that of Priam's race in the sacking of Troy; but her sons would have been the undisputed heirs to the greatest part of their father's wealth, and of course by their deaths the prospect of much future greatness, and many embryo advantages which she had pencilled out in imagination, passed away from her for ever.

Since the return of Sir Charles to England, more especially since his second marriage, all the notice he had taken of Cordelia, was little more than sufficient to mark his remembrance that he had a daughter; her maternal grandfather died before she completed her third year; and when she was about twelve, Dr and Mrs. Emerson removed to Leeds in Yorkshire, where Dr Emerson soon after paid the debt of nature, leaving his

widow without any family, in easy, though not very affluent, circumstances; Sir Charles Walpole so far augmented the allowance of his daughter, as to enable Mrs. Emerson to obtain for her the first masters in every branch of education; but during the long interval of full nine years, he had only visited them twice, once soon after his marriage with his present lady, who he carried on an excursion to the lakes, taking the residence of Mrs. Emerson in their way to present Cordelia to her new parent, and once since they were settled at Leeds. Sir Charles certainly never proposed to his lady the taking Cordelia home to live with them; he left that point to be decided by her ladyship, but she was the last woman in the world with whom such a proposal would have originated; yet she was much too politic to pass it over in silence, and leave it in the power of others to say she did not desire the society of her daughter-in-law—she steered another course, and to appearance, taking it for granted that Cordelia could not be removed from the protection of Mrs. Emerson, feelingly deplored the deprivation which Sir Charles and herself must suffer in such an estrangement from their beloved amiable child; if Sir Charles gave the matter a second thought, he was too studiously acquiescent in all her decisions to breathe even a hostile hint; with regard to the world at large, some, it is probable, gave her ladyship credit for no great degree of sincerity on the subject; whilst others were imposed upon by specious cant; but Mrs. Emerson clearly saw through and despised such selfish policy.

Lady Walpole, both when personally conversing with Mrs. Emerson, and in her letters, used many a flourishing harangue to impress her with a belief that in suffering her daughter to remain under her protection, she was at once actuated by a benevolent apprehension of wounding her feelings, should she take from her a charge so dear, and an anxious solicitude for Miss Walpole's real interest, who would find in her the best and brightest example of all female excellence; but the mind of Mrs. Emerson was not formed to be won upon by such compliments as these; alas, she knew human nature better, and was aware that instances of abstract virtue are phenomena to be ranked with black swans and white ravens: Miss Walpole might, indeed, continue to reside with her, but what should have hindered them both from passing a part of each year beneath the roof of Sir Charles; such a plan was never once proposed, or even hinted at; no, she saw that it was to estrange the parent from his child, to retain her uncontrolled sway over his property, and to secure to herself that probable reversion of the whole, or the greatest part of it, that Lady Walpole acted thus. The health of Sir Charles had always been delicate, and a few months prior to the events recorded at the commencement of these disorders, which baffled the powers of medicine, warned him that his life would not be of long duration. Lady Walpole perceived his decay before his own feelings had whispered the awful truth to himself; it was not in her nature to grieve for the event which she anticipated, but true to her leading principles she redoubled her every attention and assiduity; in the hours of pain and languor, the image of that lovely and amiable female who, in early life, had been the partner of his bosom, frequently revisited the memory of Sir Charles, and with it came the associated idea of her daughter, now entering upon the world, a stranger to the house, and too nearly so the heart of her father; he felt, or fancied, that the presence and endearments of Cordelia would sooth his sufferings, and hinted a wish to Lady Walpole that she should be sent for; it was not in her ladyship's nature to comply, but it was to procrastinate; "No, my dear Sir Charles," she replied, "we will not shade the first visit our

charming Cordelia pays us by sending for her at so inauspicious a period as when you are ill; strive to get better, my love, and the moment you are able to travel, we will go down to Yorkshire and bring our sweet girl home with us." This plan changed the course of Sir Charles's intentions; or, to speak more properly, diverted him from the subject for some weeks; in the interim he was visited by a young gentleman, nearly related to him in the female line, a captain in the navy, who had been absent from England on a three years' station in the Mediterranean. Captain Thornton, when a boy of fifteen, had once seen Miss Walpole, then a little girl of eight or nine years old, and still retaining a pleasing and partial remembrance of so lovely a relative, was much disappointed, on his arrival in Holleyfield, to find that she was not an inmate of that mansion; Lady Walpole he had known very imperfectly previous to his leaving England; but a few days' residence beneath her roof enabled him to penetrate the atmosphere of flattery and compliments which enveloped her ladyship's manner, and to discern her character in its true light; he perceived all her designs, and, with that open kindness of heart so characteristic of his profession, resolved to give his friend a hint which should, if acted upon, at once promote the father's comfort and the daughter's interest; "My dear Sir Charles," he said, in his frank way, "why is it that my fair cousin is always secluded in Yorkshire; do, dear Sir, prevail on Lady Walpole to introduce her to life." The baronet replied by stating the plan which had been resolved upon; Thornton had a belief, amounting to a conviction, that his friend would never recover; but his was not a heart which could embitter the waning hours of existence, by breathing such an opinion: "Oh, we will all take a journey together when your health permits it," he responded, "but do not in the interim deprive yourself of Miss Walpole's society, nor her of the advantage of your protection." This advice was consonant to his own wishes, and the concluding hint spoke home to paternal feelings, awakened by illness, and its consequent reflections, to a sense of duty; he renewed the subject to his lady with more earnestness than before; and she, aware that the former mode of evasion would not do again, urged a new one with great plausibility: "My beloved Sir Charles," she said, "you are well aware that your every wish is my law; I will, if you please, write the next post, but there is one circumstance which renders our Cordelia's residence here exactly at this time ineligible; I will just hint it to you," she added, smiling, and laying her hand on his, "Captain Thornton is an elegant, graceful, well-informed young man, but he is poor, and our child is too dear a treasure to be hazarded so rashly."

The baronet paused upon this intimation; the recollection of what Thornton had said to him seemed to establish her ladyship's fear as a well-grounded one, and accustomed to bow down before all her suggestions, the sending for Miss Walpole was again delayed; the lady, it may be supposed, felicitated herself on having achieved her purpose, but she was not long left to such enjoyment. Thornton received a sudden order to leave England, and quitted Holleyfield, with little prospect of revisiting it, for some time; he departed in the full conviction that he should never again see Sir Charles; but before he went, he took an opportunity, when Lady Walpole was from the room, to express an energetic but respectfully conveyed wish, that his friend would consult his own happiness as a parent, and Miss Walpole's interest as a daughter.

The very next day Sir Charles became materially worse; no subterfuge now remained, and Lady Walpole was compelled to write the invitation which brought Mrs. Emerson and Cordelia to Holleyfield, as has already been related; but by no means choosing to make her daughter-in-law an object of so much consequence as to send a carriage, either to Yorkshire or to meet the two ladies at any part of the road, she left them to travel in a hired one.

### CHAPTER III

THE unhappy and afflicted are never so sensible of their own misery as when first awaking from sleep; the faculties are refreshed, and the spirits tranquilized by rest, and, for the few moments that intervene before fatal remembrance rushes in, the soul may be said to enjoy a portion of bliss; it may, perhaps, be inferred, that if the bitterness of grief be thus increased in the suffering mind, that which is placed in more fortunate circumstances will feel its joys redoubled; but the fact is not so: the one is only an augmentation of the same feeling—the other is an exchange for one which possesses all the power and force of contrast. Miss Walpole, who had hitherto known only the calm and uniform tenor of a life unmarked by incident, awoke in her wonted frame of mind; but short was the period which intervened until the situation of her father, the conduct of Lady Walpole the preceding evening, and all those transactions in which Lord Lochcarron claimed a share, presented themselves with a force proportioned to their novelty, and to the ardent and vivid feelings of the heart they had taken possession of. New scenes are yet more powerfully attractive to the youthful mind than new circumstances; Holleyfield, and indeed the whole of the south of England, was an unknown region to Cordelia; the fineness of the morning drew her to the garden, where the richness of prospect, the variety of cultivation, and the number and excellence of the trees, shrubs, plants, and flowers, both exotics and English, and the skill with which they were disposed and contrasted, as well in the greenhouse and conservatory as in the open air, proved so many exhaustless sources of wonder and delight.

Holleyfield was a most noble mansion, beautifully situated on a hill, surrounded by a park of vast extent, planted with valuable timber, and possessing many advantages of both nature and art. To this was added every charm of season and of weather, the time of the year and the hour of the morning; the fresh breeze of opening day waved the woods, stirred the waters of the spacious basin, on the margin of which Cordelia stood, and breathed around her an atmosphere fraught with ten thousand sweets; but herself was the loveliest of nature's surrounding objects: when or where does she present one equal to female grace and beauty, combined with feminine gentleness and goodness?

At the hour of Mrs. Emerson's rising, Cordelia attended her to breakfast, after which they were honoured with a visit from Lady Walpole; the wide-spread arms, and the fervent embrace, were so much in the routine of her ladyship's habits, that they only who had gleaned experience in the heart-parching school of the world, could read in them the internal evidence of insincerity. The filial bosom of Miss Walpole grieved to be told that her father was materially worse; her ladyship added that she had prepared him to see their dear Cordelia, and would herself conduct her to his apartment, when the physicians, then in attendance there, should have withdrawn.

While waiting for their departure, conversation turned on various topics; Lady Walpole, conscious no doubt that her daughter-in-law ought to have travelled in a different style, and with a better escort than she had done, did not once inquire into the circumstances of their journey; but Mrs. Emerson, profiting by a pause, entered on them

herself; detailing the events of the preceding evening—their meeting with Lord Lochcarron—the obligation his politeness had conferred on them—and the danger they had all been exposed to from the attack of the robber. Her ladyship listened with visible interest, blended with emotion; “My beloved Cordelia,” she exclaimed, “this is very unfortunate, as I am certain your father would rather you were obliged to any person breathing than Lord Dunotter or his son.” Miss Walpole, with surprise amounting to dismay, her heart beating with quick vibrations, and the eloquent blood mantling on her cheeks, looked the inquiry her lips could not utter; while Mrs. Emerson, more collected, but not wondering less, asked the question in words, “Why the Dunotter family were objects of such particular dislike to Sir Charles?” “My dear Mrs. Emerson,” returned her ladyship, “can you possibly have been so long connected with the Walpole family, and yet not know that a bitter hereditary enmity subsists between them and the Dunotters?”

The friend of Cordelia, with equal energy and truth, declared her ignorance of it; and Lady Walpole subjoined the information, that the breach originated in a political dispute between the respective grandsires of the present earl and baronet, and was widened in the succeeding generation by a lawsuit concerning some contiguous land. “Those,” replied Mrs. Emerson, “are very inadequate causes for dislike so deeply rooted, and of such long continuance; I am truly sorry to hear that at this advanced period of society, and in a country possessing such advantages, animosities are cherished at once so repugnant to the precepts of religion, and destructive of polished manners.” “Aye,” replied Lady Walpole, “people of sense make it a point to conceal those little piques and jealousies, for if discovered, they are sure to stand in the way of their interest—and indeed the one in question has been dormant several years; Lord Dunotter having, for the last six, been on the continent in an official capacity, as you perhaps know, he returned a few months since, and soon after came down to Ravenpark; as he did not notify his arrival in the neighbourhood to us, Sir Charles of course inferred that the old feud was remembered, and felt himself highly, I must say justly offended.” “Perhaps where no offence was meant,” said Mrs. Emerson, with a faint smile; “I think had I been in Sir Charles’s place, I should have had a pleasure in showing myself above resenting the affront, had it indeed been a studied one, and should have called on Lord Dunotter to welcome him to England and to Ravenpark.” Lady Walpole smiled, but did not express either assent or dissent in any other way.

Cordelia felt a shuddering sensation: her sense of rectitude could neither extenuate the unforgiving temper of her father in this instance, nor the courtly duplicity of Lady Walpole, which would teach to conceal that unforgiveness from motives of interest, not to correct and abjure it according to the dictates of duty, and she determined that on her side at least the quarrel should no longer be hereditary; but the expression of Lord Lochcarron’s looks the preceding evening was now accounted for, and the escort and protection he had afforded to herself and Mrs. Emerson seemed doubly kind. The last named lady, it appeared, thought so too, and she again mentioned the young nobleman to Lady Walpole in those terms of guarded panegyric which, with her, constituted high praise, adding, “I fear I must relinquish the pleasure I had promised myself of half an hour’s conversation with him this morning; for after what your ladyship has told me I can scarcely hope that he will think of calling to inquire after Cordelia and myself.” “I

imagine not," said Lady Walpole, adding, "he is, I understand, a highly-gifted, accomplished, well educated young man; but it requires all the vigilance and authority of my Lord Dunotter to curb those eccentricities and propensities which, sanctioned by fashion, are perhaps, too generally adopted." What this implied could not easily be defined, but Mrs. Emerson answered with a sigh, "It is a pity; a youth of dissipation gives but a bad promise for the exercise, in after life, of those patriotic virtues which men of rank ought to consider as the first earthly duties they are called to fulfil; he whose examples has helped to destroy public morals is ill qualified to act as their guardian; and where the extravagance of a landholder has made money his most desirable good, his tenants will too probably be the sufferers."

Lady Walpole was beginning to express acquiescence as a matter of course, when she was interrupted by a summons to Sir Charles's apartment. When they entered the room he was sitting in an easy chair; his form was wasted, and his features so changed, that Cordelia could scarcely recognize the slightest trace connected with the remembrance of her father; the evidence of approaching dissolution was visibly written on his countenance; his eyes were closed, but at their approach he opened them, and they rested on the form of his daughter, who, with spontaneous emotion, threw herself into his arms, and burst into tears; thus anticipating the cold and studied introduction of Lady Walpole, who was beginning, "My dear Sir Charles, I present our beloved child to you!"

The baronet, weakened by illness, and, it may be, having his feelings blunted by the soporific and narcotic remedies he had taken of late, did not reciprocate the sensibility of his daughter; he returned her embrace, indeed, but in a way which seemed rather a mechanical bodily impulse than any mental emanation; yet he drew a deep and heavy sigh as he gazed on her face, and said, feebly, "My sweet Cordelia, I rejoice to see thee;" he then held out his emaciated hand to Mrs. Emerson, and saluted her with a faint welcome; she gave a glance of retrospection to former years, and as she mentally compared the figure and the face of Sir Charles Walpole, as they then were, with the appearance he now exhibited, sighed involuntarily at the contrast.

The party was hardly seated, when Lady Walpole, addressing her husband, told him that his daughter had accepted the escort of Lord Lochcarron the preceding evening; narrating also their escape from the attack of the highwayman, and several particulars connected with the event. It is difficult to say, whether Cordelia felt most surprise, or Mrs. Emerson most indignation at this conduct; the former attributed it to an inexcusable thoughtlessness and want of caution in her mother-in-law, at once to acquaint Sir Charles, in his present state, with the danger she had been threatened with; and to mention a man who, as she herself had just said, was his decided aversion; but the latter, in proportion as she acquitted Lady Walpole of inconsideration, condemned her on a much worse score; that of deliberately and designedly bruising the broken reed, agonizing a dying heart with vain terrors, and calling up passions which ought to be banished for ever from a soul just entering the verge of eternity.

But still more was Cordelia surprised, yet more deeply was she affected, on witnessing the effect which these communications had on her almost-expiring parent; it

was not her narrow escape from a peril which threatened death—*that* had not the power to rouse him from the apathy into which he was rapidly sinking; no, it was hatred—hatred of Lord Lochcarron—in its darkest, deadliest form; those lips which ought only to have been opened in prayers of meekness, and ejaculations of piety, breathed an imprecation on his name; those eyes so lately closed in the languor of departing life, seemed starting from their sockets with wild and blasting fury; and that cheek, so lately wearing the pale hue of the grave, was alternately inflamed, yellow, and livid; the rage which possessed him gave strength to his voice, while, turning to his daughter, he inquired in tones which indicated the deepest displeasure, why she had accepted the protection of the son of Dunotter? malignant triumph was visibly portrayed on Lady Walpole's features; she made no effort to sooth an agitation so every way unfitting, but tried to veil her observance of it by busying herself in preparing a medicine which Sir Charles took every two hours.

Cordelia, who had never before beheld such fury in any one; who was sensible that it ought never to have been exhibited by such an object, at such a time, and on such an occasion, and who from the appearance of her father but a few minutes before could never have anticipated the scene which had taken place, was absolutely incapable of replying to his question. Mrs. Emerson, not less astonished, and scarcely less distressed, but more collected, urged their defence on the broad ground that both her young friend and herself had, till the preceding evening, been ignorant of all that related to Lords Dunotter and Lochcarron, beyond the bare existence of their titles, of course could not surmise that any cause existed for declining a civility so seasonably and so kindly offered.

Lady Walpole had by this time returned to her chair, but she did not speak—only listened with an aspect of calm curiosity as a mere spectator would have done. Sir Charles's anger appeared to subside, not as if from conviction, but because his exhausted state could no longer furnish spirit enough to keep it alive; he was, however, beginning to charge Cordelia as she valued his affection, and her own duty, never to have any future intercourse with Lord Lochcarron, when a faintness, the effect no doubt of his own violence, came over him, and claiming the joint assistance of his lady, and the servants who attended him, Mrs. Emerson and Miss Walpole retired; the latter labouring under a perturbation of spirits, an oppression, a grief, an anguish such as, till then, she had not even formed an idea of. Much they said, and more they thought on the subject of what had just passed, and were still commenting on this painful interview, when a note was put into the hands of Mrs. Emerson signed Lochcarron, inquiring in terms of friendly and polite attention after her own health and that of Miss Walpole; but offering no apology for not making his bow in person, thus evidently leaving such to be traced in that family feud, to the history of which they had just been listening.

Cordelia, it may be, would have felt shocked at this conviction that all intercourse with Lord Lochcarron must be at an end, had not the idea of her father's danger absorbed every other feeling; Sir Charles very probably had hurt himself by his violence on the subject of Lord Dunotter and their hereditary discord; at all events he altered materially for the worse, and continued so ill through the day as to preclude all possibility of Mrs.

Emerson's having any private conversation with him, to which she had been prompted by a desire of seeing Cordelia's interests effectually secured before her father's death, which every day seemed inevitable; but six wore away without producing any material change.

During this period Lady Walpole passed the chief part of her time in the apartment of her husband, rarely seeing either Mrs. Emerson or Cordelia, and even then but in a way of constrained ceremony; the domestics appointed to wait on the ladies were (with the exception of one) such as they could place no confidence in; Miss Walpole's female attendant was the niece of Lady Walpole's woman, and was, as Mrs. Emerson clearly perceived, commissioned to be a spy on their conduct, and a reporter of their conversation; their footman was a simple rustic; but old Sherwin, the butler, who usually waited at table, and who had been many years in the service of Sir Charles, was a truly worthy character; they had been about five days at Holleyfield when this man told them, in a modest and feeling tone, as if aware the communication would prove distressing, and yet afraid they should be told it with less caution by any one else, that the robber who had attacked them on the evening of their journey to Holleyfield, was dead of his wounds; and that the servant by whose pistol he had fallen was of course acquitted, on the joint testimony of Lord Lochcarron and the postillion. Mrs. Emerson was shocked, but accustomed to look forward to consequences, and to analyze her own feelings, she received the information with calmness and collection; but with Cordelia it was far otherwise; as usual, when any thing new and striking occurred, her whole soul rose in arms, like a tempest which scatters and dissipates lighter bodies at the mercy of the winds and waves, but throws the more massy parts of the wreck on shore; so when the tumult of her mind subsided, the ideas of the animated courage of Lord Lochcarron, of danger providentially warded off, and of the awful and unprepared termination of a life of guilt, remained fixed and indelible, the root and foundation on which to rear future principles, affections, and rules of conduct.

In consequence of some inquiries from Mrs. Emerson, which Sherwin seemed well qualified to answer, the ladies gathered, that Lord Lochcarron really possessed all those talents and acquirements which Lady Walpole appeared willing to concede to him; but those eccentricities and propensities which her ladyship seemed disposed to charge upon the young nobleman, and which, according to the spirit of her speech, might be supposed censurable at least, if not positively criminal, were, according to the glossary of Sherwin, the propensities of benevolence, and the eccentricities of an independent mind; the last, he said, had kept him out of parliament, much against the will of his father; for as the earl was a decided partisan and supporter of ministers, he wished to make an implicit support of their measures, one condition of his son's having a seat in the house of Commons; and as Lord Lochcarron would not pledge himself to any such constant and undeviating support, his country was deprived of the benefit of very promising talents.

Sherwin, having talked himself into a communicative mood, proceeded to say, with a smile, half-diffident and half-assured, "And it seems as if the young lord would be equally obstinate in having a wife of his own choosing; for, though it cannot be supposed his father likes it, they say he has taken a great fancy to ——" Here the narrator was suddenly called to assist in lifting Sir Charles into bed, while Cordelia, thus left without

hearing the sequel of his information, experienced a sensation she could not define; the moment Sherwin began to hint that Lord Lochcarron had an attachment, she dreaded to hear further; but now that the door of intelligence was closed, she felt a restless wish to know the name of its object; this, however, she found she might wish in vain. Mrs. Emerson did not notice what Sherwin had been saying about Lord Lochcarron, any further than to express her satisfaction that he was not of the number of worthless young men who disgrace the present day; but as to the addition which the old man was making to his intelligence, she either had not noticed it, or passed it over in silence; and when Sherwin again attended, he had either forgotten that he left his discourse unfinished, or deemed it presumptuous to renew it.

Cordelia revolved what had been said over and over, dwelt upon it, and considered it in every possible point of view; it might be that in such an exercise of her mind she felt some relief from the anxiety she was in on her father's account; but be that as it will, whoever feels inclined thus to ferment themselves into an artificial interest in what does not in reality concern them, will do well to check the rising propensity, more especially if it be connected with an object or a subject which may hereafter make war on their peace; if the adder which ought to have been strangled in infancy, be nourished in the bosom, its sting will be certain, and may be fatal.

## CHAPTER IV.

SIR Charles Walpole expired, rather suddenly at last, about a week after the arrival of his daughter at Holleyfield, worn-out nature exhibited few struggles, and as he had never been distinguished by that piety which irradiates the bed of death, there was nothing in his departure either peculiarly shocking to sense, or edifying to mind. Cordelia could not be greatly grieved, having been little with her father, and never having experienced from him that affectionate tenderness which winds about the soul. Lady Walpole was represented as so much afflicted, that for the first few days she could not see either her daughter or Mrs. Emerson; but it being deemed requisite to open the will before measures were taken for the internment of the deceased, it was read in the presence of the three ladies: a more extraordinary testament could scarcely be devised; and if, as was generally supposed, the new-made widow was indeed governed by the triple passions of ambition, avarice, and love of sway, it seemed to promise them transcending gratification: the entire of Sir Charles's landed property, as well the splendid domain of Holleyfield as several smaller estates, were bequeathed unconditionally to Lady Walpole during life; at her decease to go to Cordelia or her heirs; to her, he only left the inconsiderable sum of two hundred per ann. during her minority; ten thousand pounds on the day of her becoming of age, and ten thousand more if, before that period, she married with the consent of her mother-in-law.

Mrs. Emerson and Capt. Thornton were named in the will for one thousand pounds each, together with several legacies of five hundred and less; ten thousand for charitable purposes, and the sole residue of his monies, as also his personal property of every description, to be at the absolute and uncontrolled disposal of his widow, with proviso, that the plate was to remain in full value an heir-loom of the estate for Cordelia.

The guardianship of the young lady was vested in Lady Walpole; true, Mr. Crompton, Sir Charles's man of law, was joined in the trust, but he was known to be at all times enough the slave of his own interest to become that of Lady Walpole, or of whoever else possessed power and money.

Mrs. Emerson made no attempt to either check or conceal her indignation at this strange testament; but inveighed, with a severity that added poignancy to truth, against the absurdity and injustice of Sir Charles's will, so far as it respected his daughter; this, as may be supposed, was by no means agreeable to Lady Walpole, whose grief for the loss she had sustained was not quite heavy enough to prevent her from retorting with more than correspondent acrimony. Much was said on both sides; and every reply tended to widen the breach which all Miss Walpole's efforts could not heal; not to enlarge needlessly, Mrs. Emerson made arrangements for quitting Holleyfield the day after the baronet's interment; nor could the entreaties, the tears, the endearments of Cordelia, change her purpose; the poor heart-rent girl, new to the world, ignorant of life, surrounded by strangers, left solely in the power of a mother-in-law whom she certainly had little reason to love, and having never known a friend but Mrs. Emerson, could not support the idea of a separation, and wept in all the bitterness of anguish: she was, it is

true, very much attached to Miss Walpole, and could not see her grief without correspondent emotion; but strong in intellect, firm in principle, undeviating in purpose, she could no longer, consistently with what she owed to herself, remain the guest of Lady Walpole; "Oh! then take me with you," exclaimed her distressed young friend; "take me back to Leeds—let me live with you always." "With pleasure would I do so, my beloved girl; but I am too well aware that your newly-constituted guardian would put a decided negative on such a step," was the reply, "Oh! ask them," exclaimed Cordelia, her fine countenance irradiating with joy, "I will implore Lady Walpole to let me go home with you."

Mrs. Emerson shook her head; already she was enabled to penetrate in part her ladyship's designs, and saw she was determined to retain her daughter-in-law with her; but unwilling to augment her distress, she permitted her to urge the petition as at once their mutual wish and request; as Mrs. Emerson had foreseen, it was decidedly rejected; "No, my love," said Lady Walpole, embracing her with tears, at least her eyes were wiped more than once during the interview, "I cannot cede my right in you to any one; bereft of my own children; delegated by your dear father to the sacred trust of watching over your inexperienced youth; and acquainted with all the plans and wishes he formed as they respected you, can it be supposed I shall be at once so regardless of his memory and injunctions, and so negligent, so culpably negligent of my own duty, as voluntarily to resign such a charge to any one, or so blind to my own happiness and comfort as to deprive myself of your sweet society? beyond that, my best love," continued her ladyship, in the most tenderly fascinating accents, "your education has been sadly neglected—neglected, no, that is not an appropriate term; I will do Mrs. Emerson every justice—she has made you beyond accomplished—good, amiable, kind, gentle, affectionate; but it is not to be expected that a remote provincial town could afford such professors in languages, arts, and sciences, as are requisite to polish the acquirements of a young person of fashion; and not only must what has been already taught you receive a much higher finish, but much is yet to be learned, without which, in the present age of elegance and refinement, you cannot be presented to the world."

Had Miss Walpole been a year to two older, had she seen more of life, been better entrenched in self-opinion, and less the victim of grief than she was at present, it is probable that in all or any of these cases she might have resented the implied contempt and degrading strictures of her mother-in-law; but young, diffident, and dejected, she in part believed herself deficient in many of those graces with which a fashionable female ought to be endowed, and in part bowed to the more matured and experienced judgment of Lady Walpole; however she made one more effort to carry her petition, and that one also proving unsuccessful, she returned in tears to her friend; Mrs. Emerson, prepared for such a result, was more pained than surprised; but unwilling to say or do any thing which might tend to sadden her lot, and make it less supportable, she soothed her with attentive kindness, exhorted her to bow to circumstances, and since she was thus, by the will of her father, sanctioned by law, thrown upon the protection of Lady Walpole, counseled her to cultivate her regard by every mode of conciliation which did not interfere with higher duties, on the subject of which she continued to speak as follows: "You are now, my beloved Miss Walpole, about to enter on a scene of life totally different from the quiet

domestic circle you moved in while with me; I think I can in part develop the designs of your mother-in-law; uncontrolled mistress of an immense fortune, and sole directress of yourself, she wishes at once to veil the odium of thus usurping your rights, by an ostentatious display of engaging and captivating qualities in those points which concern you: by retaining you under her own roof she evinces her regard for the memory of your father, and her superiority to that narrow jealousy which might lead many ladies in her situation to dread, and remove to a distance, such a rival; oh! how I tremble for you, Delia, exposed, as you will be, to so many temptations, gifted with great attractions, led by fashion and example, spurred by ridicule, and perhaps by reproof, to a compliance with modes and follies which duty, reason, and even inclination, grounded on early habit, may unite to condemn; I see you are indignant, my love; I see you think yourself secure from ever falling into those fashionable levities which you and I have sat in retirement and censured; but bear with me, my sweet Cordelia, while I remind you that my acquaintance with the human heart, and my experience of its instability in youth, are of rather longer date than yours; on your own strength you cannot rely; it must be a power superior to that which will keep your heart and your mind; but you can only hope for that holy assistance by continuing, as you do now, earnestly to pray for it; if you once grow languid and remiss in the duties of public or private devotion, if you perform them either carelessly or not at all, from that moment you become the slave of the world; and however you may flatter yourself with a false security, because you are surrounded by thousands who do not act better—it may be in some respects worse—than yourself, be assured you are no longer in the path of duty. I know, my dear girl, that your partial affection pays such deference to my opinions that you will seriously consider yourself as bound to any obligation which I shall think it for your good to impose; resolve then, solemnly, to observe this three-fold injunction—never comply with any modes or fashions, however enforced by the command, the example, or the persuasions of other people, which either in their own nature, or in the excess with which they are pursued come under the denunciation of religion, reason, delicacy, or true taste;—never neglect, or suffer to languish that homage of the Deity, both outward and mental, which is the first and best criterion that distinguishes the human species from the brutes; and lastly, if you are indeed drawn into the vortex of unbounded dissipation—if you feel that dereliction of your sacred and social duties which will follow, and in some degree precede, such a warping of your ingenuous mind, write to me freely, candidly, and without reserve; place before me the state of your feelings, and the habits of life you are pursuing, and leave it to me to develop the motives by which you have been biassed, nothing fearing that my partiality will extenuate your errors, and my experience lead you gently back to the right path.”

Cordelia readily accorded the promise required; but she did it in a way which clearly indicated that she deemed such an aberration from the strict line of rectitude, such a departure from the principles in which she had been educated amongst the impossible things which could never take place; her friend was evidently more sceptical; however she professed herself satisfied with the solemn assurance she had received, and the conference ended; but when the hour of parting arrived, Cordelia’s tears were renewed in the extreme of bitterness.

The adieus of Lady Walpole and Mrs. Emerson had much of formal ceremony on both sides; but such was the dexterous management of the former, that any one ignorant of the reality of matters, would have concluded this abrupt departure from her hospitable roof to be the sole act of Mrs. Emerson, without cause or provocation on her part, and indeed against her wish; one circumstance might, however, be observed, though her ladyship evinced this reluctance to parting with Mrs. Emerson, she never once asked her to repeat her visit, but left her without the power of saying, with Shenstone,

“So sweetly she bade me adieu,  
I thought that she bade me return.”

Lady Walpole and Cordelia, left to the seclusion of Holleyfield during the early period of her ladyship's widowhood, and seeing no company, but two or three neighbouring families, of course passed much of their time together; and that with more harmony and cordiality than, all circumstances considered, might have been expected. Lady Walpole, in addition to all those motives which Mrs. Emerson had truly stated as influencing her, considered that when she should emerge from the first gloom of her sables, and consequent seclusion, the blooming Cordelia would prove a patent magnet of attraction, to draw the young and gay into her circles; while the heart of Cordelia, gentle, artless, and affectionate, sought her mother-in-law at once as an object to love, and a guide and monitor to lead and advise her; beyond which she was obeying the injunction of Mrs. Emerson to court assiduously the good graces of Lady Walpole. The last named lady, so well supported the character of dignified sorrow, excepting once at church, not even to air in a carriage; of course Miss Walpole, so young, and a total stranger in the neighbourhood, could make very short excursions alone; but accustomed to a great deal of exercise, and at once a graceful and excellent horsewoman, she sometimes took short rides in the park, but oftener long walks in different parts of the beautiful grounds; nor had she any one to make a companion of in those excursions, but the servant appointed by Lady Walpole to attend her, who did not rank very high in her estimation; for besides that Mrs. Emerson disliked her at first, Cordelia on a further knowledge found that she combined some of the worst attributes of low birth, pride, servility, cunning, loquacity, and adulation; and inexperienced as Cordelia was, she could easily perceive that she sought, by flattering her, to promote her own ends of self-interest, and that she often artfully tried to draw forth her sentiments and opinions of every one, even Lady Walpole herself, while she not unfrequently assumed the privilege of telling her, unasked, all, or at least a great deal, of what was going forward both in the mansion of Holleyfield and its vicinity. It was a lovely evening, the sun was setting in splendor, and air, earth, and water displayed all those captivations of beauty and of sweetness which, in the season of early summer, are so congenial to the mind, when Miss Walpole, attended by the young woman just described, set out on a long ramble by the banks of a rivulet, which traced a diversity of course through great part of the extensive domain of Holleyfield park; the last rays of day, beaming through broken clouds which presented every richness and variety of form and colouring, shone on the lofty woods, displaying their varied and elegant hues in beautiful contrast; the soft warbling of the brook responded to every rural sound in the animal and feathered tribes; and the scent-fraught zephyr, now dying away amongst the trees, and now rising as it were in playfulness, kissed the fair cheek of Miss Walpole,

who thus surrounded by all that is lovely in creation, thrilled with every emotion that the season and the scene, so finely in unison with feeling and with taste, were calculated to inspire; her loquacious companion chatted with high volubility, bolting forth her common-place remarks in the weather and prospects, interspersed with adulatory compliments, to all of which Cordelia, entirely given up to her own contemplations, replied, and scarcely replied, in monosyllables, secretly wishing her endless clack a thousand miles off; and had it not been that she deemed it not quite safe to wander alone so remote from the house, at that time of the evening, she would indubitably have dismissed her; but Lucy, neither awed by silence, nor intimidated by reserve, chattered on, until their ramble was interrupted by reaching the utmost boundary of the park in the direction they had traced, it being the point where the high road alone separated the domain of Holleyfield from that of Ravenpark; to the right, lay that ground before-mentioned as having, by the litigation which took place concerning it, in part produced the animosity which subsisted between the families of Dunotter and Walpole; the law had adjudged it to the former, but part of it, a narrow winding vale, watered by a rivulet, with a foot-path leading along its banks, had been by prescription for time immemorial a common way to a neighbouring village; this was a pleasant rural walk, and Lucy undertook by it to conduct Miss Walpole a nearer way home; they crossed the bridge, and had proceeded about a hundred yards up the vale, when two figures were seen imperfectly through the combined gloom of evening and of foliage advancing on their path; while female habiliments soon became visible, and not all the surrounding and increasing shade could conceal from Miss Walpole that the light form which wore them was graceful and attractive beyond any she had hitherto seen; neither would the force and strength with which circumstances had impressed on her memory the stature and air of Lord Lochcarron, allow her to remain for a moment in doubt, that the arm which supported this lovely being belonged to him; a simple, trivial, casual occurrence is found often to be the pivot on which the axis of life turns for ever after; this was the case with Cordelia; it was the first time she had seen Lord Lochcarron since the affair of the robber; but she had never been able to hear his name mentioned without a vibrating emotion, which now betrayed itself to her companion, on whom she leaned as they traced the winding and uneven road: the young nobleman paid the passing compliments to Miss Walpole with a grace of manner peculiarly his own; neither the hurry of reply nor the dusk of evening would allow of Cordelia's clearly distinguishing the features of the lady; but as far as she could form a judgment of her countenance, it was delicate, beautiful, and in unison with her form. Lucy, sly, and observing, marked well the emotions of her lady, and walked prepared to answer the inquiries she expected to be made; but finding Miss Walpole remained silent, she began with, "Good gracious, ma'am, what a beautiful spencer, I never saw such a rich, *lustresome*, charming satin in my life;" as the article had quite escaped Cordelia's observation, she could neither assent nor dissent, confirm nor deny on the point; when the pause of a moment had elapsed, Lucy finding her say unnoticed, resumed, "but that hat is not fit to wear with it; a close cottage is not suitable for evening dress; a pink lining makes the complexion look fine, to be sure, and a handsome face seems any thing, to be sure; not that she is so extraordinary beautiful, to be sure—I have seen ladies far charmer than she, whatever she may think, or Lord Lochcarron may think, or any body else may think."

Either Miss Walpole was abstracted, and did not much mind what reply she made, or it might be she chose to ask the question; whichever was the case, she said in a hurried tone, "Pray, who is that young lady?" Lucy, like many people when applied to for information, bridled up on the strength of her own consequence; "She is a young lady, to be sure, ma'am," she returned, "but no such great personage of a lady, for all that, though to be sure my Lord Lochcarron does *idle-ize* her to such a degree, that most people think he will marry her if any thing should happen my Lord Dunotter soon, or else——" but what else was effectually suspended by the sudden appearance of Mr Crompton, who came to inform Miss Walpole that the dowager Lady Hootside, the earl, her son, and the two young ladies, her daughters, were arrived at Holleyfield; and that one of the gardeners having accidentally seen which road she took in her ramble, Lady Walpole had sent the carriage to the end of the bridge, and deputed him as an escort, being all anxiety to present her daughter to her noble guests; Cordelia was a good deal surprised by this intelligence; she knew Lady Hootside to be the intimate friend of her mother-in-law, and knew also that they were shortly expected to make a visit at Holleyfield, but not, she had supposed, so recently after Sir Charles's death; however, she made no open comment, but accepted the offered arm of Mr. Crompton; and as to her valuable attendant, Lord Hootside's valet, Lady Hootside's woman, and the important question of whether peach-blossom or pomona would be the most becoming colour for the evening dance in the servant's hall, took instant possession of her brains, and drove Lord Lochcarron and his fair companion at least a hundred toises from them. Arrived in the drawing-room at Holleyfield, Cordelia beheld such a group as no combination of ideas derived from her previous intercourse with society could have assisted her to frame an idea of: Lady Hootside, to whom, of course, she was first presented, was then about fifty, with a person which would have been called fine had not its effect, so far as pleasing was concerned, been totally destroyed by a self-importance, a self-opinion, a self-adulation, for they are all adequate terms, though none of them singly is sufficiently expressive; and when combined, their operation was such that a form and features which with graceful condescension, suavity of manners, and feminine gentleness, would have been termed elegant, and dignified, were never spoken of but as large and robust; her eyes were black, and still retained considerable fire, which was augmented by the rouge on her cheeks, the contrasting shade of her dark curled wig, and the mingled plumes and roses which crowned it; her teeth were regular and brilliantly white, and she smiled much to show them, but that smile had nothing in it of benevolence, of courtesy, or of good-nature. Lady Hootside had practised it so often, and studied it so long, that it was become the mere action of feature without one emanation of mind: as to her moral qualities, she was charitable sometimes, but ostentatiously so, for the fame of her good deeds of that sort generally spread abroad; and added to all this, she was much accused of being proud, vain, avaricious, and sarcastic, with some truth and some exaggeration.

The attention of Miss Walpole was next directed from the countess to Lady Melissa Mannark, her eldest daughter, who sat on the corner of a sofa, in such a costume that it was difficult to ascertain whether or no it concealed a human form; she had superadded to her Merino travelling habit and furred cap, a mantle calculated for the meridian of a Russian winter, open indeed before, but closely enveloping her shoulders; her right hand rested in her bosom, as if to seek warmth from her heart, and her left was

immersed in a muff as large as a young bear of Nova Zembla; when Lady Walpole led her daughter to this seeming native of Tobolski, she half rose, half bowed, half yawned, but no beam of her eye rested on either the presenter or the presented; the gentle sympathies of Cordelia's nature were awakened; she believed her very ill, and looked with all the commiseration which such a belief inspired; when in consequence of Mr. Crompton's moving his massy frame, a stronger light fell on the young lady's face, and disclosed a pretty blooming countenance; but the shut eyes barring all expression, the next conclusion was that either insanity or idiotism prompted an appearance so unsuited to the season and the weather; pity now became Cordelia's predominant feeling, and she would perhaps have betrayed a degree of surprise and curiosity rather beyond what good-breeding allows, had she not been recalled by an introduction to Lady Caroline Mannark, the younger daughter of Lady Hootside; astonishment now changed its object, and all the power of contrast aided its force; she beheld a form so thin, so fragile, so attenuated, that it could hardly be supposed that of an inhabitant of earth; a complexion dazzlingly fair, yet so pale that scarcely any ray of life seemed to animate it; dark blue eyes of the most languishing softness; a small mouth, with lips of coral; teeth of the most brilliant whiteness; and a countenance modelled by affectation to the most studied, delicate, die-away sort of expression; over her luxuriant flaxen hair was thrown a veil of the finest lace, which, together with her thin white robe and azure scarf, waved with every breath of air, and gave her—at least it might be inferred, she hoped it gave her—the appearance of being beyond mortality; she had, by study and practice, modulated her voice to great softness of expression, which, combined with her youth, and with a certain elegance of address, rendered her, at first sight, very pleasing and attractive; Cordelia, however, thought her amiable; and, far from feeling that envy and rivalry which too frequently torture young ladies when first introduced to contemporary beauty, contemplated in idea a delightful companion, and looked forwards with pleasure to the time they should pass together. “Though last not least,” of this delectable assemblage, was the earl himself, a little smart looking youth in his twentieth year; at the moment of Miss Walpole's entrance he was kneeling on one knee—not in homage to a lady, but before a large spaniel dog, who was reared on his hind legs, his fore-paws resting on the shoulders of his noble patron, their faces in close contact, and Leo bestowing on his master those rough but honest caresses which his nature prompted.

When Lady Walpole presented her daughter, Lord Hootside quitted the paw of his shaggy favourite with a cordial shake, and took the fair hand of Cordelia, without seeming at all sensible of any incongruity in the proceeding, or that the familiar pressure, and unceremonious “How d'ye do?” were freedoms not quite sanctioned by a first introduction.

## CHAPTER V.

AS the travellers had taken an early dinner at the last stage, they declined having any other refreshment than tea, and while it was preparing, the ladies retired to adjust their dress; “My dear creature,” said Lady Melissa to Cordelia, as she rose from her snug corner, “they tell me you have been taking a long ramble, how could you possibly endure such a freezing thing as an evening walk at this time of year?” “What time of year is it, sister?” asked Lord Hootside, stifling a giggle. “February, is it not?” she gravely returned; the earl broke at once into a loud laugh, and Lady Hootside said, “My dear girl, you positively grow so very abstracted, why it is June;” “June!” re-iterated the young lady, viewing her own habiliments with well-counterfeited surprise; “and you have all been cruel enough to see me distil myself to a tincture with heat, and never told me it was summer;” as she spoke, she threw off her mantle, unbuttoned her habit, and snatching the cap from her head converted it into a fan, and used it with such vehemence, that her luxuriant hair waved about in all directions as she flew away to her dressing-room.

“Dear mamma,” exclaimed Cordelia, when the door closed upon their guests, “is that poor young lady deranged?” “My love, how can you ask such a question?” returned Lady Walpole.

Cordelia, under the impression that it was the obviousness of the young lady’s malady which induced her mother to wonder she should think such an inquiry necessary, proceeded to express the pity she really felt, but was interrupted with “Go, child, can you seriously suppose Lady Melissa mad?—why, you egregious goosecap, her ladyship is one of the most elegant, highly-accomplished young women in the whole circle of fashion—her absence of mind, I allow, sometimes leads her into little eccentricities, but they only render her the more charming.” “O dear, mamma, can it be a charm not to know June from February?” exclaimed Cordelia, laughing; Lady Walpole gravely said, “Yes,” and proceeded to explain the principles on which a defect becomes tantamount to a beauty, by saying, “We are all sensible of the value of admiration, and all wish to gain it, but that admiration which is the meed of manifest, decided superiority, not being voluntary homage, is paid unwillingly, and detracted from whenever that can be done; now inferiority of any kind (by which, however, you are not to understand common every-day deficiencies, but studied, acquired, becoming ones) if *judiciously* managed, always claims indulgence; if *gracefully*, it has, as I said before, the force of a charm; I have seen the occasional lameness of a beautiful woman exhibit a handsome foot to as much advantage as the most perfect dancing could have done, without exciting the envy which would have attended the display of that accomplishment; as to people pretending to be deaf and blind, who can recover their sight, if a beau appears at twenty yards’ distance, or their hearing, if a tale of scandal be told, their folly is an antidote to itself; but many deficiencies—ignorance for example—if becomingly expressed, and evidently the result of youth and inexperience, is very fascinating; for by appealing to others for information, we tacitly pay a homage to their vanity which finds its way to the heart.”

Lady Walpole was proceeding to panegyryze her other guests, when she was interrupted by their return to the drawing-room: Cordelia remained not quite convinced that there is either beauty or propriety in not knowing summer from winter; neither did she become a convert to Lady Walpole's general reasoning; but her ingenuous mind felt an impression equally new and dangerous; she saw that the genuine unadulterated modes of simple nature in which she had been educated, and to which she had hitherto adhered, were not only little practised, but neither valued nor admired where they were.

Lady Melissa was now completely metamorphosed; her thick travelling vestments were exchanged for the most light and elegant drapery; her hair was arranged with care and taste, and her hands and arms, released from their furry incumbrances, displayed every suitable ornament of fashion, very well assorted, excepting that the fair wearer, not to be quite out of character, had placed a valuable ring on the thumb instead of a finger of her left hand.

Lady Caroline was even more *bizarre* than at first; her airy sylph-like garments were disposed in the first fantastic forms; her eyes, as if unable to support the glare of vulgar objects, were shaded by preservers; her ears, annoyed, no doubt, by the sounds of a strange habitation, were carefully stuffed with the softest wool; and her sense of smelling was guarded by a case of the most curious India fillagree workmanship which she carried in her hand, and which held sal volatile, otto of roses, and various other articles of olfactory celebrity, contained in bottles suited to the strength and organs of a fairy; Lady Hootside was habited like all juvenile ladies of half a century, and her son like a fashionable nondescript, half beau, half groom.

Though the whole party consisted only of seven persons, six of them created more bustle than is usually occasioned by twenty; Lady Walpole talked a great deal, and alternately dispensed her attentions to all, in her wonted style of flattering florid compliment: Lady Hootside chatted, laughed, exhibited her teeth, and encouraged her daughters in the display of their assumed characters: with the manners of her son she was evidently not so well satisfied, and however ignorant Cordelia had hitherto been of the artificial modes of life, she could easily perceive that her ladyship wished him to gloss over his roughness with a studied behaviour, like that of his sisters; but he was completely emancipated from her control; her commands he disregarded, and her remonstrances he laughed at, though conveyed in the gentle terms of, "Now, Hooty, my dear creature, don't be absurd;" but all that the genius of mischief himself could have invented, seemed to have a home in the brain of his lordship; his sisters were the chief objects on which his wicked wit displayed itself; and now as they sat sipping their tea, Lady Melissa taking sugar when she meant cream, and committing a hundred other well contrived blunders; and Lady Caroline so celestialized that she could hardly eat as much bread as might have been contained in a nut shell, availing himself of the absence of mind of the one, and the refined sensations of the other, he handed to each a beautiful nosegay, composed of the choicest flowers, and arranged with great taste; he paid a similar mark of attention to Miss Walpole, who was smelling to and admiring the collection of sweets, when the two ladies Mannark were seized at the same moment with such fits of sneezing, that their features were convulsed, their dress disordered, and every

thing about them thrown into the greatest confusion; the cause easily discovered itself by the loud laughter of the young nobleman, who had perfumed the two bouquets intended for his sisters so plentifully with snuff, that his mischievous purpose was fully answered; nor did the consequences end here; the agitation of the ladies roused a favourite dog of Lady Caroline's, which couched in her ladyship's lap, and the terrified animal in shaking his shaggy ears, contrived to plunge one of them into a cup of hot tea; dire now was the scene which ensued; Lady Hootside scolded; her fair daughters alternately screamed and sneezed; the lap-dog howled; the china rattled; the tea trickled in a stream on the beautiful carpet; Lady Walpole was red with apprehension that it would be spoiled; Cordelia strove to sooth and console all the sufferers in turn; the author of all the mischief measured his length on a sofa, and laughed himself into complete exhaustion; and Mr. Crompton quietly seconded the efforts of the servants who were endeavouring to cleanse the carpet; wisely considering it as the object which Lady Walpole was most interested about.

Lord Hootside's frolic effectually destroyed the comfort and harmony of the evening, and the party separated at an early hour. It was long before Miss Walpole could abstract her mind, or even feel as if her senses were clear from the annoyance of the rattling party she had left; but though every incident of the past day wore the stamp of novelty, neither the incidents themselves, nor those who had been actors in them, possessed interest enough to arrest attention, except the meeting with Lord Lochcarron—on that she dwelt long and earnestly, and contemplated its positions in every possible point of view; she of course inferred that the young lady who accompanied him was the same whom, as Sherwin had hinted, he seemed resolved to unite himself to; and as it appeared from the hints of both Lucy and Sherwin, that Lord Dunotter disapproved of the connexion, it remained to draw the conclusion that she was deficient in the qualifications of rank, fortune, or character: so far as appearances might be admitted as a criterion to judge by, she fell short in none of them, for her dress was expensive, and her air noble and graceful, though modest; yet money might purchase the former, and education and art combined bestow the latter; and as Cordelia, restricted as her knowledge of life had hitherto been, had seen elegant and beautiful, yet unworthy women, she was compelled to admit the fear that she might be one of that class already living under the protection of Lord Lochcarron: such a thought was too painful to be contemplated, and turning away, she endeavoured to lose it in a thousand vague conjectures; it was, however, a subject on which she was not long fated to remain in uncertainty.

The next day passed with the Hootside party in a repetition of follies similar to those of the preceding one: after rambling over the beautiful grounds, Lord Hootside asked Cordelia to ride with him in the park; she cheerfully complied to the evident pleasure of both mammas; Lady Walpole was offering her horse to Lady Melissa, and her ladyship was graciously signifying her acceptance, when her unceremonious brother exclaimed, "No, indeed, you sha'n't be of our party, you would be over all the hedges and into all the ditches in the place, and in your stupid fits would gallop over corn, meadow, and pasture, without being conscious that you were off the road."

Lady Melissa pouted, and muttered much about her brother's rudeness, but was forced to submit withal; and Lady Walpole, in her insinuating way, transferred the offer to her sister; but Lord Hootside barred her accompanying them by a negative, "No, no;" "Why," he exclaimed, "you would faint if the mare happened to hit her foot against a pebble, and scream your senses away if a swallow flew across the path, or a deer bounded by; no, no, nobody shall ride with me but Miss Walpole."

The decrees of Lord Hootside were as immutable as those of the Medes and Persians; none of the family dared to demur; but had Miss Walpole heard all this sooner, she certainly would not have rode, nor have outraged the feelings of the young ladies by seeming to be a party in their disappointment; as it were she felt herself compelled to keep her promise without interfering between them and their brother; for aware that his lordship was perfectly acquainted with the foibles of his sisters, she had no inclination to have her horse frightened, and perhaps her life endangered by their flights. Their excursion was very pleasant; Lord Hootside, freed from the self-imposed task of annoying his relatives, displayed himself to an advantage which Cordelia had not conceived possible: true, he was not gifted with any great portion of either parts or acquirements, but he had much good-nature and some wit, and though too proud to *seem* making an effort to please, he was in reality doing so unknown to himself.

The environs of Holleyfield presented nothing new to the young earl, for he had frequently visited them before; but Miss Walpole was totally unacquainted with the scenery of the neighbourhood; Lord Hootside pointed out every object and every view, and time flew delightfully, till in passing beneath some trees which grew by the side of the brook, Cordelia observed her companion looking steadfastly down on the grass; suddenly he dismounted, and telling Miss Walpole that his stirrup had got wrong, begged her to ride forwards and he would follow when his groom had replaced it; she complied, and had proceeded but a very little way when she caught a glimpse—unperceived, but a perfect one as to certainty—of Lord Lochcarron and the lady she had seen with him the preceding evening, walking in a wood on the left, which belonged to the domain of Ravenpark.

"Surely," Cordelia thought, "the society of that young lady possesses a powerful charm;" but little time was allowed for either conjecture or reflection; Lord Hootside galloped up, and they soon reached Holleyfield.

The ladies had not been unemployed in their absence; Lady Hootside's good genius had suggested to her, that as every thing connected with the dominions of Spain in America was becoming popular, her daughters could not devote themselves to any study so likely to attract and bear away the palm of fashion as the languages of that immense continent; the dances of the Mexicans, as they have been transmitted to us in description, the manners, the customs, the dresses, and the arts of the once-extensive empires of Peru and Mexico; with the addition of whatever in more recent times has become known in Europe concerning that country; the young ladies were charmed with such a field for variety, novelty, and display; Lady Melissa reflected how admirably her characteristic absence of mind would veil the blunders which her ignorance of a part of the world so

remote would perhaps betray her into; and Lady Caroline was already practising the attitudes and studying the dress of a virgin of the sun; Lord Hootside slyly watched her, and easily penetrating her thoughts, exclaimed, "Caroline, did you ever see a representation of the dress of a native of Chili?" "O, no;" she replied, "I should like to see it of all things." "Lend me a pencil that I may sketch it for you."

She caught up her reticule to seek one there, but the moment she opened it, out leaped an enormously large frog; the ladies screamed and skipped as if vying with the unsightly animal, who should leap highest; Lady Hootside frowned and remonstrated; the strange young nobleman broke into a boisterous horse-laugh, and Cordelia readily conjectured that he had picked the frog from the grass by the brook-side, when he pretended his stirrup wanted adjusting; Lady Melissa, as the trick was aimed at her sister, chose to be diverted; and the mischievous earl said with mock gravity, "Dear Caroline, this may prove a very fortunate incident for your plans; present this nondescript to the British Museum, by the title of the Montocuzco frog from the banks of the river Orellana, and your fame is up at once."

A small party had been invited for the evening, and Cordelia, short as had been her intercourse with society, was already become sufficiently one of the world to be more than amused with the scene of gaiety, and to be at least pleased with the attentions of Lord Hootside, who, boisterous and annoying as he was to every one else, was to her gallant, polite, and even tender, evidently to the great pleasure of the two dowager ladies; but as to the fair absentee and the elegant sylph, Miss Walpole was too interesting, too attractively lovely not to be an object of their envy, dread, and dislike. In the course of the evening Miss Walpole's curiosity was so powerfully awakened by some words which a Mrs. Delmore was addressing to Lady Walpole, that she involuntarily, at least almost unconsciously, listened to their conversation; and as listeners seldom hear what is agreeable to themselves, she heard that Lord Lochcarron had lately become very much attached to a Miss Borham, the orphan unportioned daughter of a clergyman, niece to the deceased wife of Lord Dunotter's steward; she was, Mrs. Delmore added, transcendently beautiful, and highly accomplished, but, of course, nobody in the points of rank and fortune; and as to the qualities of her mind and heart, opinion was equally divided; some ascribing to her every possible female virtue, and others the deepest and most consummate art: Lord Dunotter, however, was, as might be expected, bitterly averse to the idea of his son's forming so degrading a connexion, and had threatened him with his severest displeasure, if he did not immediately decline all acquaintance with Miss Borham; report, Mrs. Delmore added, said that the earl's displeasure against his steward was still deeper; and it seemed reasonable to conclude that his lordship would take speedy and effectual measures to remove his heir from so dangerous an acquaintance. Thus far Cordelia heard without once recollecting the impropriety of listening to a private conversation; it then struck her, and with a blush of conscious shame she raised her eyes, and met those of Lady Walpole regarding her with deep and searching attention, yet not so absorbed but that she was manifestly and powerfully interested by Mrs. Delmore's communications; while Miss Walpole, too much oppressed by the idea of having been caught in an act of meanness to follow up her mental remarks on the expression of her mother-in-law's countenance, shrunk away to a card-table, where Lady Caroline was so

deeply intent on her game, that she did not even feel the gentle breath of a pair of little pocket bellows, with which her brother was contriving to agitate her waving drapery, and giving it that airy and sylph-like appearance which it was so much a point with her to assume; indeed he was rendering her no trifling service, for the rest of the party, diverted beyond all power of attending to their cards, were yielding up every post to her ladyship, and leaving her triumphant mistress of the game.

Weeks wore over at Holleyfield, and every individual of the party pursued with ardour and ceaseless attention their separate designs; Ladies Melissa and Caroline studied the languages, sketched the scenery, practised the dances, and sung the songs of South America: their brother became the devoted lover of Miss Walpole, and being neither by nature nor habit formed for disguise, took no pains to conceal his passion from either its object or any one else; but whether it were an attachment founded on such a basis as would insure its durability, or merely a transient liking, which would fade with time and yield to circumstances, it remained for the future to show. Cordelia—painful is the task to the biographical pen to trace the errors of its subject, but the duty which truth imposes must be performed—Cordelia was already become sufficiently a disciple of the world, and a votary of fashion, to be pleased with his attentions, to encourage them—or at least to give him no negative by either word or look; yet in acting thus, she had no motive that might be avowed, and certainly no aim that could be defined; for had she been asked if her heart had made its election of Lord Hootside, or even felt a bias in his favour, she would unhesitatingly have answered no, and perhaps have manifested some degree of resentment at the supposal; however, her behaviour gave Lady Hootside evident pleasure, and even an indifferent spectator might see that she regarded Miss Walpole as the future bride of her son. It was much more difficult to trace Lady Walpole's plans on the present occasion; Cordelia had now been so much in her society, that although not always capable of penetrating her motives of action, she yet could often see the operation and effect of those motives on her manners, and even her countenance; and though she overwhelmed the Hootside party with a profusion of attentions; though they had been the selected guests of her own inviting; and though she had at first taken all possible pains to cultivate for Lord Hootside an interest in the good graces of her daughter-in-law, she now gave the latter frequent, though private hints, not to entangle herself too far with the earl, but to keep at liberty to break with him entirely, should circumstances demand such a line of conduct; yet she was to all-seeming the decided friend of Lady Hootside, ready to promote her plans, and assist her wishes; so much so, that when the last-named lady proposed to pass the autumn at Brighton, Lady Walpole declared herself ready, and even eager, to be of the party, and made the requisite preparations, though Cordelia could not help thinking that

“She practis'd falsehood under saintly show.”

From Lucy's prating loquacity, Miss Walpole learned that Lord Lochcarron was absent on a tour in Scotland, where Lord Dunotter had extensive possessions; and that Miss Borham was shortly going with a friend to pass a few weeks at Tunbridge. Occupied with the prospect of her own excursion, Cordelia paid little regard to all this; but yielding her mind to the fascination which renders novelty and pleasure so attractive

to youth, she was all cheerfulness and gaiety, anticipating, with mingled delight and impatience, the day which should whirl her to Brighton, and show her, what she had never yet seen, the spirit, splendor, and variety of exalted and fashionable life.

About a week before the appointed time, Lady Melissa, Miss Walpole, and Lord Hootside, set off one morning to take an excursion on horseback; the air was sultry, and the little party had not been long out, when heavy clouds began to rise in a direction opposite the wind; the breeze died away, and the blackness increasing, threatened a storm; Lady Melissa, to be characteristic, said it looked like snow; her brother laughed at her folly, and willing to see whether the thunder, which was evidently approaching, would bring her to recollection, he so far indulged his proneness to mischief, as to neglect Cordelia's gentle request to take the nearest circuit to the house, and took a very pleasant one, but considerably further about; they had still nearly two miles to ride, when the war of the elements began at a distance, and each succeeding peal, sounding louder and louder, indicated a rapid progress; a vivid flash of lightning startled Lady Melissa's horse, and so far assisted her ladyship's languid perceptions, that she exclaimed, "Bless me, I declare it is lightning, do let us get home as fast as we can." Lord Hootside levelled much pointed ridicule at her absurdity; had only themselves been concerned, he would have kept her out on purpose; but it was beginning to rain fast, and fearing lest Miss Walpole should take cold, he urged his horse forwards, and struck into an avenue which led to a small but very pleasant house at the distance of two hundred yards to the right, saying at the same time to Cordelia, "I don't know who lives there, but we'll make our quarters good for the present."

Cordelia had a vague guess who did live there; and felt no repugnance to such a place of shelter; the exterior wore striking evidences of recent and expensive improvement; the style was rural, but it was the style of fashion; of studied taste, measured elegance, and a kind of simplicity where the artist's hand was prominent in every object; Lord Hootside's steed was the fleetest of his party; his sonorous knock was answered by a servant in livery, and he had just requested permission to wait until the storm should subside, and was leading Miss Walpole into the house, when a gentleman advanced from an apartment on the right of the entrance hall, and with much courtesy invited the fugitives to walk in; he was about the middle period of life, with nothing of dignity in his person or address, to attract regard or inspire respect; his features were harsh and unpleasing, but his manners ever ceremonious in the extreme; his bows were profound, his smile so marked that it lengthened into a grin, and every response was a monosyllable of studied acquiescence; in one sense he might be termed the prototype of his habitation, for the ravages time had made on his hair and teeth, were remedied with the same costly and fashionable pains; while his efforts to appear the easy man of the world, through the trammels of modish clothing, made him look as stiffened as Billy Button, in the old play of the Maid of Bath; and, to finish his portrait, he had that remarkable winking averted eye which, shunning contact with that of the person its possessor is conversing with, is too frequently a harbinger that all is not right within.

The apartment to which Mr. Pringle (so he was called) ushered his visitors, was both tastefully and splendidly decorated; the windows, which descended to the floor,

were shaded by curtains of the most beautiful chintz; and in the balconies a profusion of plants, both native and exotic, exhaled their sweets; the carpet was Persian, the furniture after the Turkish model, and the paintings, imitations (probably purchased for originals) of the second class of Italian artists; two, however, were exceptions—the portraits of the master and mistress of the mansion, in very gorgeous frames; the former has just been described, and in the latter

“Commission’d by the name of niece,”

Cordelia, with some emotion, but no surprise, because she believed her to be resident here, recognised the beautiful form of Miss Borham; she rose, on their entrance, from a splendid piano, on which lay open, “The Harp that once thro’ Tora’s halls;” and bending over its fascinating page was a gentleman of a graceful figure; as they approached, he looked up, and the perfect resemblance of his features to those of Lord Lochcarron, except that they were marked by a longer acquaintance with time, told Miss Walpole that she then for the first time beheld his parent, the Earl of Dunotter.

The dress of Miss Borham combined all that taste could invent or fashion authorize in morning costume; but like every thing else about these people, it seemed too studied; all ornamental dress, all that is beyond the mere purposes of decorum and neatness, is intended to display and set off the person of the wearer to the greatest advantages; but excess in this, as in every thing else, destroys every good effect; and by drawing the attention of the beholder from the *adorned* to the *adornment*, leaves her person without that admiration to which it is, perhaps, truly entitled, and exposes her dress to wonder in the first instance, and, very probably, to censure in the second: if ladies of rank chuse to “O’erstep the modesty of nature,” and to depart from that simplicity at all times so becoming and alluring, the error they commit is only in the example they set; in those whose only distinction is riches, it is at best a vulgar mode of exhibiting their wealth; but when they whose claim to consequence are neither to be found in honours nor fortune, seek to create such claims by dressing in a style too expensive for their means, and too fantastical for their station in life, they give much room to question not only their good sense, but even their prudence and honesty.

Miss Borham received the two ladies with every attention and politeness that the occasion demanded; Lord Dunotter (in all respects the travelled man of the world, and already personally, though slightly, known to Lord Hootside and Lady Melissa, their equal in rank, and their superior in age, and the near neighbour of Miss Walpole, though hitherto estranged from all intercourse with her family) was at once with them all as if their acquaintance had been sealed and sanctioned by the lapse of years; to Cordelia his manner was soft and insinuating; not that half stately half courteous notice which men at his lordship’s time of life usually deem sufficient for a girl; nor yet that way of turning all she says to jest, and treating her like a baby, which is still less bearable to a young woman of sense and education; no, to an uninterested and even discerning spectator, it must have appeared that he was anxious to conciliate her good opinion, because he was sensible of her value in society from her situation in life, and her personal and mental accomplishments; but Cordelia, new to the world, and, like every ingenuous young

person, willing to form the most favourable opinion of those she conversed with, knowing how peculiarly they were circumstanced, hereditary enemies for so long past, imagined that, now her father was dead, Lord Dunotter, regarding her as the head of the family, was willing to bury all animosity in oblivion; and that such was her own earnest wish, she strove by her manner to convince him; yet even in the moment when their looks and words were the most friendly and conciliating, the sad scene when Sir Charles Walpole was dying, when the last energies that his emaciated countenance and expiring voice could muster, sunk under his own efforts to adjure her never to have any intercourse with the family of Dunotter, rose to memory, and a sad feeling, a feeling so complicated that she could not define it, filled her heart.

Lord Dunotter's plans none but himself could know; but if it was any part of them to impress his own idea favourably on the gentle mind of Miss Walpole, he certainly succeeded; he asked of Lady Walpole's health with much seeming respect; and Cordelia, in answering, subjoined an inquiry after Lord Lochcarron; the earl replied that he was well, and then travelling in the highlands; and as he spoke, Miss Walpole observed him steal a glance at Miss Borham, which that young lady did not seem to perceive; and if she felt any thrill of the heart, at least no discomposure of countenance was visible.

Lord Dunotter's behaviour to Miss Borham was marked by at once so much respectful tenderness and distinguishing politeness, that Cordelia felt convinced in her own mind either that what she had heard from Mrs. Delmore, old Sherwin the butler, and Lucy, concerning his lordship's high disapproval of his son's attachment was incorrect; or that, convinced of the young lady's merit, his objections existed no longer. Though Miss Borham was well-bred, according to the forms which at present pass current in the world for that quality, there was yet a something in her manner rather repellent than attractive, which seemed to have its origin—as such behaviour generally has—in a too high rate of self-estimation, which, like what has been said of a *vigour beyond the law*, would claim more than its due, and be jealous of that scrutiny which should examine its pretensions, and perhaps expose their futility; to have done with metaphor, Miss Borham was one of that numerous class of persons who, having frequent opportunities of intercourse with the great, and forgetting the wide disparity of their situations, wish to be thought on a level with them; but not having sense or judgment enough to profit by the example of condescension which they set, imagine that to be affable will lower their consequence, and that to support it they must be formal to their superiors, frigid to those of equal rank, and haughty in their carriage towards those whom Providence has placed in a humbler sphere: as to station and fortune, thus in addressing Lady Melissa Mannark and Miss Walpole, both so greatly above her, Miss Borham lost sight of that winning sweetness which in so lovely a woman would have been most attractive; and though she was perfectly polite, it seemed rather the result of study, force, and affectation, than the genuine unsophisticated good-breeding which is the emanation of real and habitual elevation of mind, and suavity of disposition.

Mr. Pringle, however, made ample amends for his niece's want of urbanity; he took the tone from his patron, who it was his present purpose to please; and seeing, by his lordship's manner towards Miss Walpole, that all family animosity was at an end, he on

his part overwhelmed her with civilities. Refreshments were brought in, all excellent in their kinds, served with parade at least, if not splendour, and pressed on the visitors with cordial hospitality; Miss Borham, in doing the honours of the house on this occasion, was particularly and evidently attentive to Lord Dunotter, consulting his taste as if previously well acquainted with it, and ratifying whatever he approved by her own approbation; the party soon became very social; Lord Hootside and Mr. Pringle chatted in one part of the room about game and field sports, and Lord Dunotter, Miss Walpole, and Miss Borham, formed a cheerful group in another; the thunder had ceased, at least its sound was so remote as to be no longer perceptible, and Cordelia was uttering a remark on the warmth and beauty of the day, when Lady Melissa, chagrined that the prevailing grace of her character had not yet been noticed, started from one of her fits of *attentive absence* and complained of cold; Miss Borham begged permission to attend her to a room where there was a fire, and as Miss Walpole of course accompanied them, it broke up the party, and the gentlemen were left by themselves; Lady Melissa was not more social in female than she had been in mixed society; she sat retired within herself, and either made no reply, or one quite foreign to the purpose, to the observations which her companions addressed to her. Cordelia was now so much habituated to her absurdity, that she had ceased to wonder at it; but she saw with surprise, that a mode of behaviour which had at first so greatly astonished herself, had no such effect on Miss Borham, who seemed to regard it as a matter of course; and though a thousand times more lovely both in form and face, was evidently charmed into imitation of Lady Melissa's lounging vapid air, though certainly not of her forgetfulness, for she talked to Cordelia on various topics; she tried very artfully to draw forth her sentiments of Lady Walpole; but Cordelia, though she had many reasons for not being pleased with her ladyship's conduct as it respected herself, particularly in the instance of her having secured to herself the greatest part of Sir Charles Walpole's fortune, had too much good sense and refinement to pour her wounded feelings into the bosom of a stranger; she spoke of her mother-in-law in terms of guarded praise, panegyricizing her accomplishments, and though she was silent concerning the qualities of the heart, doing ample justice to those of the head.

Miss Borham knew better than to press the subject further; she changed the discourse, and talked of new music, dances, novels, and plays, parading, though with great affectation of modesty, what she thought her own fine taste and critical skill, till Lady Melissa, determined to display her newly-acquired South American knowledge, which she would have done to Lord Dunotter, had she not been restrained by the dread of her brother's pointed satire, started up, and inquired if they were not talking of Paraguay. Miss Borham, with laboured politeness, corrected her mistake, and stated what was the subject of conversation; her ladyship found easy means to make a translation to her favourite theme; Miss Borham either listened with interest, or was complaisant enough to wear the appearance of something like it; and Cordelia sat in dread lest her ladyship, thus gratified in an auditor, would do as she had more than once seen her under similar circumstances, affect to forget that she was in the house of a stranger, and lengthen her visit beyond all proportion, for who, after such an infringement of the laws of good-breeding, could doubt her absence of mind to be real. The rules of ceremony seemed to demand that the proposal to go should originate with Lady Melissa; but Miss Walpole, aware that in her ladyship's present frame of mind, it would be vain to expect that such

should be made, at length ventured to notice the time of day; Miss Borham observed that the distance was short, and the road safe, and it seemed as if she introduced this remark solely for the purpose of mentioning Lord Lochcarron, and the now almost forgotten circumstance of the attempted robbery; for she immediately subjoined, "Perhaps you do not know, Miss Walpole, that something had occurred lately which induces Lord Lochcarron to suspect that the postillion who drove his carriage, was an accomplice of the robber; I am but very imperfectly acquainted with the circumstances; Lords Dunotter and Lochcarron have interrogated him, but he of course denies any knowledge of the transaction; the latter seems, I think, to have little doubt of his guilt, but the earl inclines to believe him innocent, and says, that appearances unsupported by any shadow of proof, will not warrant him in discharging a valuable servant; it is very strange, is it not?" Cordelia replied in the affirmative, and thought it not only strange, but truly astonishing, that any person should retain in his service, even for a single hour, a person who there was the smallest atom of reason to suspect had been accessory to an attempt on the life of his only son; more might have been said, but Lady Melissa, as herself had ceased to be the sole object of attention, grew weary of her party, and rose to go; they found Lord Hootside, whose patience was by this time somewhat exhausted, ready to depart; after taking a very polite leave of Miss Borham and Lord Dunotter (the former of whom Miss Walpole could not avoid inviting to visit Holleyfield, when herself should return thither) they resumed their saddles; and as for Mr. Pringle, he was so busied in assisting the ladies that he capered as if he were dancing a hornpipe.

## CHAPTER VI.

NOT the least disagreeable consequence of Cordelia's forced dependence on Lady Walpole, was the constant necessity she was under of accounting to her, for not only every particle of her time that was passed out of doors, but also of mentioning whoever she happened to be in company with, whether by choice or accident; indeed the events of this morning were of a nature which no one would have thought of concealing; neither, had Miss Walpole been so inclined, would it have availed, for though Lady Melissa would very probably imagine that she had been at Ravenpark instead of the house of Mr. Pringle, Lord Hootside would not be so forgetful, but would both say where they had been, and describe the party they met there; what Cordelia felt embarrassed about was the light in which Lady Walpole would regard her interview with Lord Dunotter; she well remembered the marked manner of her ladyship, when she first listened to the communication of Mrs. Emerson, that Lord Lochcarron had been their escort to Holleyfield; the malignant, revengeful cruelty—for it seemed to deserve no better epithet—with which she detailed that communication to Sir Charles Walpole on one of the last days of his life, but for which Cordelia would never have heard that bitter half-finished interdict of all communication with the Dunotter family, which was ever sounding its dread response on her mental ear; and she also remembered the scrutinizing look with which her ladyship regarded her, when Mrs. Delmore was talking about the two noblemen, which she had never been able to ascribe to any other cause than the family quarrel: true it is, few girls in Miss Walpole's situation would have troubled their heads with the thoughts and feelings of a mother-in-law, under such circumstances; or if they saw her annoyed by their acquaintance with the Dunotters, or any other people, they would have cultivated it the more sedulously; but Cordelia was gentle, nor had she an atom of spite, revenge, or contradiction in her character; and what was most to be regretted, whatever she might become hereafter, she had not yet acquired any of that firmness and decision which, aware that the intention and not the issue, the means, but not what they bring about, are in our power, is satisfied with the consciousness of acting from the best motives, and candidly, heroically, avows them.

Swayed by these refined feelings, she revolved in her mind, as she rode home, how she should disclose the events of the morning to Lady Walpole; but she soon found, that she might have spared herself all this racking stretch of thought. Lady Walpole was in the drawing-room, dressed for dinner, surrounded by the rest of her guests, and under much seeming apprehension for the absentees; Lord Hootside told where they had taken shelter, and who they had seen, humorously describing Pringle's eccentricities, and extolling the good cheer of his house; Lady Melissa peevishly pronounced him a disagreeable animal, his niece a fright, and Lord Dunotter one of the strangest beings she had ever met with; her brother flatly contradicted her in both the latter instances; spoke of Miss Borham as an angel, and the earl, as the finest old fellow in England; "Lord Dunotter cannot be an old man," said Lady Hootside, unwilling to think him so, because he had blazed at court, a cotemporary meteor with herself; but Lord Hootside, finding he annoyed his mamma, was more peremptory in his assertion; and indeed with people of the young nobleman's age all who have attained to thirty, are classed with Methuselah.

During this conversation, Cordelia watched the looks of Lady Walpole, and read, or thought she read, there a very powerful degree of interest, but no trace of displeasure; still she felt reluctant to any explanation taking place before company on the subject of Lord Dunotter's behaviour to herself; and when she saw Lord Hootside, in the vehemence of his dispute with his sister, about to appeal to her decision, she affected not to perceive his intention, and rose to retire to dress; Lady Melissa did the same, and when they returned, the party, which was that day rather a large one, they went to dinner; new subjects were discussed, and no further reference made to the events of the morning.

Cordelia had been some time retired to her chamber for the night, had taken off the ornamental parts of her dress, dismissed her maid, and was seated with a book of evening devotion, a mode of closing the day to which she had been early habituated by her excellent friend Mrs. Emerson, but which, immersed as she now was in gaiety, she rather continued from habit than inclination, when a gentle rap at the door was succeeded by the entrance of Lady Walpole. Cordelia, with much surprise and some trepidation, having never before been visited by her ladyship at so late an hour, closed the book, and started from her chair; "I apologize for alarming you, my love, but not for interrupting your studies, because it is too late to read," said Lady Walpole, with a gracious smile, advancing to the table, on which she placed her light, and caught up the volume, as if in the eager hope of detecting her daughter-in-law in some improper pursuit, at least so Cordelia (who was now become an adept in translating the countenance) thought; she obeyed the impulse of the moment, and looked up in the face of Lady Walpole with conscious dignity; her ladyship replaced the book with even more quickness than she had taken it, and said with a very gracious smile, "You are an excellent girl, Cordelia, and it is the consciousness that you are so which has brought me here to-night, for I could not go to rest until I charged you to take proper care of yourself, after having been in part exposed to the storm to-day." Cordelia made proper acknowledgments for this maternal solicitude, and Lady Walpole, as she took possession of the chair which she placed for her, proceeded to say, "But tell me, my dear, how did Lord Dunotter behave to you? I would not ask you before the Hootsides and the Melvins, who all know so well what an animosity has subsisted between the two families for such an immense length of time; and standing as you now do, in the character of the future representative of the Walpole family, I have been in pain for you all day, lest his lordship should either have forgot what was due to you, or you should have made any departure from what you owed to your own dignity."

These few words amply confirmed to Cordelia what she before suspected, that this midnight visit from Lady Walpole had another motive besides that *consciousness of her excellence*, which made her an object of such importance; that motive now stood avowed to be her interview with Lord Dunotter, and all her fears of Lady Walpole's displeasure again recurred; but the reflection of a moment convinced her that she ought, in justice to herself, to banish such timid apprehensions; the energies of her mind rose with the occasion, and determined to leave nothing to chance, or the Hootsides to bring out hereafter, she candidly related all that had passed; described the urbanity and politeness of Lord Dunotter's manner, and the way in which she had felt it incumbent on her to reply to his civilities. Cordelia, in making this recital, naturally expected to trace in

the countenance of Lady Walpole the lines of displeasure, vexation, and every other uncomfortable feeling of a mortified mind; but, to her unspeakable surprise, as she proceeded in her narrative, the looks of her ladyship gradually brightened from a gleam of approbation to a cordial smile; and as she described her own manner towards Lord Dunotter, frequent ejaculations of "Right, my love;" "Oh, that was so perfectly the woman of the world," encouraged her to proceed; but when she had closed her story, by saying that the earl had made very polite and respectful inquiries after Lady Walpole, her ladyship embraced her in a transport, and said, "I cannot describe, my beloved girl, how much I am charmed by the display you have made of your good sense, good breeding, address, and knowledge of the world, so greatly superior to what might have been expected from your youth and secluded education; nothing could have been more gothic, vulgar, illiberal, and foolish, than the appearance of remembering an old rusty family quarrel; and Lord Dunotter knows life so well, that your slightest word, nay look, on such an occasion, would ground his opinion of you for ever after. I will not detain you another moment to-night, but just to ask what you think of that girl, the steward's niece." Cordelia, in reply, passed high and certainly just encomiums on Miss Borham's beauty; but yet such as few women would have had the candour to make, and related what she had observed of her attention to Lord Dunotter. Lady Walpole listened profoundly to all this, and then said, "They tell me she is in very bad health, does she appear so?" Miss Walpole replied that she certainly looked very delicate; and her ladyship, without another word of comment, kissed her cheek, pressed her hand, bade her a very cordial good night, and retired. Cordelia sought her pillow, but the great astonishment she was in, that she should so entirely have mistaken Lady Walpole's sentiments, would not permit her to sleep; all she could decide with certainty, was, that her ladyship in the former instance had humoured Sir Charles by flattering his animosities, a mode of conduct in her opinion still more criminal, and not less weak than would have been any show of resentment, she could have kept up against the Dunotters; but Cordelia, like most young people, gave herself credit for much more penetration than she possessed, and might as well have fancied that she knew what was passing in the court of the Emperor of China, as in the mind of Lady Walpole.

Nothing very remarkable occurred the next day; it was Sunday, and Lady Walpole, accompanied by her daughter and some of their guests, went to church: to Cordelia's surprise—for she seemed fated to be surprised on her ladyship's subject—she had even thus early made an alteration in her mourning; her style of dress was becoming, and though now far from young, she still looked lovely; added to which, she was in a very gracious humour, and so particularly complaisant to Lord Hootside, that Cordelia was almost tempted to think she intended to act the rival mother. Lord Dunotter was at church, and after service honoured Miss Walpole with a very graceful bow; and though Lady Walpole did not notice the circumstance in words, Cordelia thought she looked pleased by it.

The following morning as she was sitting by the window of her own apartment, she saw a servant in the Dunotter livery ride up to the house, and deliver a letter; very much surprised, and, to own the truth, tormented by a degree of curiosity, which would not suffer her to rest, until she knew who it was addressed to, she descended to the

drawing-room in the hope of gleaning something either positively from who was present, or negatively, by finding who was absent; Lady Hootside and Miss Addington, endless votaries of play, were even at that unusual hour quietly seated at backgammon; Cordelia, so far satisfied, apologized, made a quick retreat, and proceeded to the library, where she found Lady Caroline Mannark, reading the "Pilgrims of the Sun," quite lost in ecstasy and admiration. Miss Walpole having no wish to interrupt the young lady in studies so consonant to her taste, courtesied, retired, and went to the apartment of Lady Melissa; here

"Long she knock'd, but knock'd and call'd in vain;"

but whether she was absent in person, or only chose to be so in mind, Cordelia could not determine, and not choosing to resolve the question by the actual rudeness of opening the door, she was compelled to depart without knowing whether her ladyship was the receiver of the letter, which, however, did not seem very likely. She expected to have found some of the gentlemen at their usual morning recreation of billiards, but she was mistaken—none of them were there; Mr. Crompton was then at Holleyfield, and for any thing she knew to the contrary, the letter might be addressed to him; whoever it was, it certainly did not concern her, and reason, or propriety, or some such faculty, told her so; but curiosity happened to be the stronger motive, and, as is usually the case with persons who yield themselves slaves to the impulses of that dangerous guide, desire grew stronger in proportion as there seemed less chance of gratifying it.

In passing Mrs. Addington's apartment (the sister-in-law of the lady who was playing at backgammon) the door stood half open, and its inmate was seated opposite, reading a letter; she heard Miss Walpole's step, and, looking up, beckoned her to come in; she demurred on the plea of giving interruption; but Mrs. Addington said, her letter was of no consequence, folded it up, placed it in one of the toilet boxes, and introduced some trifling subject; Cordelia wondered much whether that could be the letter she was so anxious about, but could not determine, for she did not know whether the Addingtons had any acquaintance with the Dunotters; she was sorry Mrs. Addington had seen her passing the door, as politeness would not allow her to leave her immediately to go to Lady Walpole's apartment, whither she had intended next to direct her scrutiny; and the conversation of the lady she was with, made little amends for the suspension of any pursuit, for she was one of the yes and no fraternity, who can neither start an idea of their own, nor pursue those of others; after sacrificing a quarter of an hour in this way, she wished Mrs. Addington a present good morning, and was hastening to assure herself, whether Lady Walpole were indeed the recipient of the letter, when she heard her ladyship's bell ring, and in the next moment saw her pass quickly to the drawing-room; there now remained no way to ascertain who was the correspondent of Lord Dunotter; for as to questioning her own loquacious servant, it was a mode of inquiry she did not choose to take, neither, had she been so inclined, could she now have done it, for the girl was absent on an errand she had sent her, and only returned time enough to assist her in dressing for dinner.

The evening passed in the wonted way; none of the party seemed more gay or more gloomy than usual, and nothing transpired on the subject of the letter; Lady

Walpole was even more than affable—she was flattering, to not only her guests, but Cordelia: the Addingtons were to leave Holleyfield the following day, and Lady Walpole proposed a party to escort them a few miles on the road, and then to turn off and take a view of a neighbouring mansion, which, together with its furniture, library, paintings, and stud, was advertised for sale; it had been the residence of a distinguished character lately deceased, a man of great wealth and taste, and contained numerous articles of real value, and many more to which the whims and caprices of fashion attached an importance beyond their intrinsic worth; the proposal was eagerly embraced by the whole company, and Lord Hootside instantly became a candidate for the pleasure of driving Miss Walpole in his curricle; Cordelia remembering Lady Walpole's admonition not to entangle herself too far with Lord Hootside, would not promise to accept his escort till she had glanced her eye on her ladyship's face, and reading there a look of approval, signified her acquiescence. The young earl was delighted, and his mother yet more so, and after the rest of the party had arranged their respective modes of travelling, they adjourned to the music-room for the remainder of the evening.

The next morning, Miss Walpole, Lady Caroline, and Lord Hootside, formed a trio at breakfast; they were chatting with social gaiety, even Lady Caroline, descending from her altitudes, and talking like a common mortal in the prospect of much pleasure from their approaching excursion, when Lady Walpole's woman entered, and addressing Miss Walpole said, loud enough to be heard by all present, "My Lady, Madam, begs to see you immediately; her ladyship has had the misfortune to sprain her foot violently, in rising hastily to receive Mrs. Addington, who breakfasts with her."

Cordelia, in great alarm, hurried away, and found Lady Walpole with only Mrs. Addington, her foot on a stool, and wearing a countenance which at once expressed great pain and a degree of patience which was unwilling to either annoy others or betray its own weakness by complaints; Miss Walpole expressed her concern, and earnestly begged that a surgeon might be sent for; Mrs. Addington said she had already urged the propriety of having advice, but without effect; Lady Walpole professed her obligation to their affectionate tenderness, saying in her courtly style, "that such kind solicitude was worth a hundred sprains, but that she could not even bear to think herself so much hurt as to need surgical assistance, having no doubt that the application which Dobinson (her woman) had already tried, would be attended with the happiest consequences; however, my love," she added, smiling yet more graciously on Cordelia, "it has cruelly disappointed the very great pleasure I promised myself in this morning's excursion, and you must make my regrets and excuses in your own sweet and winning way to Lady Hootside and the young ladies; beg them to remember that I participate in all their amusement to-day, and whatever interests any of you at Orton-abbey, consider me as sharing it with you." Miss Walpole replied, very affectionately, that she should deliver her ladyship's message, but as to herself, she would on no account join the party to Orton-abbey; but, when they had taken their departure, would come and sit by her ladyship and read to her, aware that Mrs. Addington's kind consideration would, at such a time, release her from the promise she had made of attending her part of the way home.

Mrs. Addington of course most readily acceded to her excuse, and applauded its motive; but Lady Walpole would not suffer it to be named a second time, declaring, that if she were instrumental in depriving any one of a promised pleasure, she should feel herself the most unhappy creature breathing; Cordelia, who well understood that this seeming disinterestedness and attention to the feelings of others veiled a positive command, made no effort to disobey, and, to own the truth, though she would willingly have given up her excursion, she was glad to be excused doing so; Lady Walpole was visited and condoled with by all the other ladies, when they were informed of her accident; each tendered the sacrifice of her own pleasure to remain with the invalid, an offer which, it is probable, had in it more of politeness than sincerity, and was declined with every proper expression of gratitude, for none knew better than Lady Walpole how far to appreciate, and in what language to acknowledge civilities of that class.

Cordelia, habituated to search for motives beyond the avowed ones to the greatest part of Lady Walpole's actions, did not obey her injunction of joining the party to Orton-abbey without reflecting on what might be her probable reasons for consulting her feelings with such a parade of consideration; over their guests, she certainly had no control, and to have accepted their offer of remaining, would have seemed an unwarrantable tax upon their politeness, but Cordelia's attendance she might have commanded; and all she could conclude upon was, that it must be a desire to oblige Lady Hootside and her son, though why she wished to do it in this way, seeing she had herself cautioned Cordelia not to give the young earl too much encouragement, was one of the many unfathomables which attended Lady Walpole's actions.

The day was brilliant, and the excursion truly delightful; the rest of the party took leave of the Addingtons about five miles from Holleyfield, and proceeded to Orton-abbey; the house and grounds, both possessing every embellishment which the refined taste and travelled experience of their late owner could bestow, amply recompensed the trouble of walking over them; the plants were beautiful, well arranged, and in excellent order; the stud—so Lord Hootside, who aspired to great skill in horses and horsemanship—pronounced, was very fine; but the admirable collection of paintings was the grand object of attraction to every visitor who either possessed or pretended to taste; those were not, as is seen in many old mansions, dispersed in different apartments all over the house, but their collector, who had expended all the interest and much of the capital of a very splendid fortune, in thus decorating his dwelling, had built a superb gallery for their reception, and here the eye might riot on their varied beauties without ever being weary; might compare and comment on their separate excellence, and decide on the chief merits of not only each artist, but of each individual picture.

Such was Orton-abbey and its appurtenances, both of which merit a more particular description, if other circumstances more immediately connected with this history, did not press powerfully on attention; but the company whom Miss Walpole and her friends met there, though few in number, must not be passed by with equal brevity; just after they entered the house, they saw in one of the drawing-rooms, two ladies, who appeared to be mother and daughter; "Originals, I'll stake my life," whispered Lord Hootside to Miss Walpole, at the same time glancing his eye on the strangers; this

induced Cordelia to examine them with more attention than hitherto, and she could not but be of the earl's opinion: the elder lady was tall, extremely thin, and sallow complexioned, circumstances, which she seemed to be so far from regarding as disadvantageous, that she appeared to have taken all possible pains by her mode of dress to render them more conspicuous; she wore a gown of black sarcenet trimmed with amber colour; the ribbons of her hat were the same, and a long veil of green crape depending from it shaded one side of her face; and either influenced by a false taste, or an ostentatious passion for display, she had added as many ornaments of topaz as her neck, ears, and fingers could be loaded with; her waist, lengthened beyond the fashionable dimensions, was adorned with a clasp of the same; and her whole person was as upright and formal, as one cannot help supposing Pygmalion's ivory bride to have been. Such was the mother; her daughter bore no resemblance to her in person, for so far as the mere outline of form and feature were concerned, she was neither distinguishable for beauty nor for the want of it; her dress was composed of splendid and costly materials, but in other respects it seemed a strange and whimsical medley of the costume of all the nations that do exist, or have existed, in the civilized world; her hair was arranged in the style of some old portraits about the reign of the first Charles; her hat and plumes were decidedly Spanish, under which, as if to make the incongruity more striking, she wore a French cap; to complete her head-piece, she had attached to her hat a long veil, like that with which Penelope is sometimes delineated; this shaded one shoulder, and from the other depended a rich and elegant eastern shawl; the bosom of her gown was intended for Roman, but the effect was spoiled by a Turkish girdle; and her boots, made in imitation of the buskins with which Diana is painted, were marred by a tier of French flounces at the bottom of her dress. Cordelia, who thought she had never beheld an object so gorgeously fine, peeped and peeped again through the long lashes of her beautiful eyes. Those little interchanges of civility, which are unavoidable amongst well-bred strangers, who meet together in such a place, passed on both sides; the elder lady looked very pleasant and good-tempered, but the younger, certainly with very little attention to the party who entered, exclaimed, "Come, mamma, come, will you go back to the picture gallery, I am sure there is nothing here worth looking at." This she spoke in the tone of a spoiled, petted girl, and the lady replied, "We will go, my dear, but I very much want your father to see this beautiful china." "Humph," said the obliging daughter, and tripped away to the picture-gallery; her mother followed, and Lord Hootside, diverted as he always was with whatever seemed eccentric, would neither remain behind, nor suffer the ladies of his party to do so. Cordelia, who had enjoyed few opportunities of seeing pictures, though a passionate admirer of the beautiful art to which they owe their existence, was struck, on entering the gallery, with a mingled sensation of surprise and delight, to which hitherto she had been a stranger; she would have yielded herself entirely to the fascinating novelty, and regarded no object but the paintings, had not the voice of Lord Hootside, exclaiming in his lively way, "What, Harrington! I am glad to see you in England, when did you arrive?" attracted her attention, and turning round, she saw the hand of the earl clasped in that of a very graceful and elegant young man, whose air and dress seemed those of the clerical order; near them stood a gentleman about fifty, short, plump, and habited in an olive-brown coat and a white waistcoat, who, after the pause of a moment, Mr. Harrington mentioned as his uncle Sir Roger Cottingham, and the two ladies who had preceded Cordelia and her friends to the picture gallery, as Lady Cottingham and her

daughter. Lord Hootside introduced his mother, sisters, and the rest of their party in form, and these introductions gave Miss Walpole an opportunity of observing them all to much more advantage than she could otherwise have done; but the beauties by which they were surrounded, all of them works of great, and some of eminent merit, claimed at first too much attention to be rivalled by any other objects: the collection was not very large, but perhaps on that very account made the deeper impression, as not having too great a variety to distract the mind; Cordelia, obeying the impulse of a naturally fine taste, was attracted towards a Virgin and Child by Guido, on which she stood gazing, wrapt in mute wonder and delight; Lady Caroline Mannark, who possessed genuine taste and feeling, though they were, in many instances, obscured by affectation, was rivetted to a fine picture of our country-man, Howard, visiting a foreign prison; the almost seraphic dignity and goodness displayed in the countenance of the philanthropist himself, was contrasted with the bitter miseries of the captives, by whom he was surrounded; in the elder sufferers, that sickness of the soul which seems emphatically to say, "I dare not hope," was finely pourtrayed, and joined to that debility which time, famine, confinement, and sorrow have conspired to bring on; and in the younger, the alternatives of hope and fear, at the same time preserving the preponderance of the former, were expressed with a justness and effect which cannot be described; these, with the grim and savage features of the guards, the dismal grate through which no sun-beam can penetrate, the straw couches of the prisoners, their tattered garments, the poor remains of their scanty meal, or rather the jug and crust left to indicate what it had been, and the colouring so exquisite, that the dismal gleam of the lamp seemed to rather conceal than display all those objects of horror, formed on the whole a most exquisite picture, and wrought so powerfully on the nerves of Lady Caroline, that she could not restrain her tears, and was compelled to have recourse to her essence-box. Lady Hootside, as usual, triumphed in the display of her daughter's refined feelings, which, it must be allowed, on this occasion did her honour: Mr. Harrington, charmed with a taste so congenial to his own, quitted his station before a St. Jerome, copied from Raphael, and advancing to Lady Hootside and Lady Caroline, pointed out, with respectful timid grace, the various beauties of the prison piece; Miss Walpole joined their group, and regarding Harrington with more attention than before, discovered, or fancied she discovered, in his stature, air, and manner, a resemblance to those of Lord Lochcarron.

They were all expressing their admiration, and doing ample justice to the merits of the illusive canvass, when Miss Cottingham, glancing her eye over Miss Walpole's shoulder, and turning on her heel with quick contempt, exclaimed, "Pshaw, it is English!" "And certainly not the less to be valued on that account, dear Ellen," said Harrington. "Humph, I think nothing of English pictures," returned his fair cousin; "now here," she proceeded, running up to a landscape, copied from Salvator Rosa by an Italian artist, "see here, how true to nature; look at the design, the composition, the colouring, the expression, the grouping, the background, how finely blended the light and shade, oh! how true to nature—or rather, it is nature herself; I sadly want papa to purchase it, the price is only five hundred guineas." "Pho, blockhead," said Sir Roger. "It would be a pity it should ever bring one fourth of the money," said Harrington; "if compared with the original, oh! how inferior would it prove; the design is, to be sure, that of Rosa, but the expression is lost, the colouring is a vulgar glare, and the back-ground—believe me,

Ellen," he proceeded in a softened voice, "your own fine taste would, on comparison, instantly retract the eulogium." The compliment to Miss Cottingham's taste arrested the frown which was kindling on her brow; "Is the original of the landscape in England, Sir?" inquired Caroline; "No, madam," he replied, "it was in the gallery of the Louvre, and Miss Cottingham," he added, with a playful smile, "saw it there after the peace of Paris." "You may as well tell me of what I saw the day I was born," said the young lady, with a blush of anger, at the insinuation that she could, at the period of the peace of Paris, be supposed capable of discussing the merits of pictures. Lady Cottingham seized the ensuing pause, the first she could find to say to her husband, "I wish, Sir Roger, you would walk down stairs and look at the beautiful china; it is real old, oriental porcelain, and the most splendid and elegant I ever saw." "Eh?" said the baronet; Lady Cottingham repeated what she had been saying; Sir Roger complied, but muttered by the way, "Pho, nonsense, what signifies going to look at a parcel of old earthenware!"

Lady Hootside accompanied Lady Cottingham, and the younger part of the company followed; Lady Cottingham triumphantly exhibited her favourite curiosities; descanting most learnedly on their several beauties, pointing out in what each separate piece excelled, and classing them with all the precision of an adept in any science; Lady Hootside, either from congeniality of taste or politeness, joined in her admiration; "Pho," said Sir Roger, "I think nothing of these foreign things; our own manufacture beats them hollow; I would not give our last set of Wedgewood, which only cost me twenty pounds, for all the stuff that is here." "Oh, fie! Sir Roger," said Lady Cottingham, with a smile, "I really am ashamed of your want of taste——" "Taste!" interrupted the baronet, "what taste can there be in admiring such ugly things; you talk of pictures, but I should be glad to know what design, what expression, what grace, what perspective you can find here."

Miss Cottingham, who thought this looked rather like a relaxation of the purse strings in favour of her darling objects, eagerly rejoined, "None at all, papa; the groups are hideous, and expression and perspective quite out of the question; but Wedgewood's designs are so classical, and the figures so graceful." "But the English colours never did, and, I imagine, never will rival those of the east," said Lady Cottingham; then holding up a pair of large coloured vases, she said, "I should like to be the purchaser of these if they do not go too high." "I would not give five shillings for them," said her spouse. "Dear Sir Roger!" rejoined his lady, "don't you remember that Mr. Searcher, the antiquarian, gave ten guineas for an old saucer?" "Because he was a fool," responded the baronet; "Well, my dear," said the lady, "but I think you will allow that those have rather more utility in them than an odd saucer." "Eh!" said Sir Roger. "I say," replied Lady Cottingham, in rather a louder key, "that those vases are useful as well as beautiful." Without giving her father time to reply, Miss Cottingham took his arm and requested him to go back to the pictures; he complied, and the rest followed in procession; when there, the young lady said, "Now, papa, if you won't have this Salvator because it is a copy, promise to buy that Guido" pointing to the Virgin and Child, "and then you know you will possess one of the best originals in England." "Eh!" said Sir Roger; Miss Cottingham repeated what she had been saying, but the reply was, "Go, puppy, I shall do no such thing." "If I might venture to recommend a purchase to my uncle," said Harrington, "it should be this Summer's evening by the sea, by Mr. C——; the beautiful clearness of the sky is, I think,

little inferior to Claude Lorrain; the contrasted tints of the water and the sand are very fine; the reflection of the setting sun on the ocean, is superior to any picture I remember to have seen; and the figures on the shore are sketched with the grace of Guido, and coloured with the delicacy of Titian.”

The fine blue eyes of Miss Cottingham glanced in anger on her audacious cousin, for having ventured to praise British genius; and again she expressed her contempt of its efforts; but her father silenced her with “Pho, nonsense, how can you pretend to know; your cousin, who has seen so many pictures, must be the best judge;” then addressing his nephew, he added, “if I buy any, it shall be this, Tom.” Miss Cottingham finding there would probably be a purchase made, became in a moment a convert to English pictures, and found a thousand beauties in the piece which had before escaped her notice; Miss Walpole and Lady Caroline, with whom Cordelia was much more intimate than with Lady Melissa—were passing from picture to picture, admiring each in turn; “If Rembrandt had lived now to paint from Lord Byron’s poems,” said her ladyship, “how well, in my opinion, the picture and the text would have assimilated.” Miss Walpole acquiesced, and their conversation, which was overheard by Harrington, drew him into their party; Miss Cottingham, provoked that any lady but herself should pretend to criticise pictures, said, with rather more of pet than politeness, “Perhaps your ladyship forgets that the piece from which you draw that inference is only a copy of Rembrandt;” with more gentleness than such petulance merited, Lady Caroline replied, that “she was aware it was so, and had often contemplated the original with great pleasure when at Devonshire house.”

Miss Cottingham was blushing a glowing scarlet, on finding that her attempt to expose what she thought the ignorance of Lady Caroline had thus turned on herself—when Sir Roger, who had been some time absent exploring the premises, came bustling into the gallery, exclaiming, “I have seen something which I think is worth the whole of the pictures and china in the house; I beg you will all do me the favour to come and see it;” the pictures were deserted in an instant; Sir Roger led the van, and the rest followed out of the house by a back way, across the shrubbery, through a gate, down a very long walk, which then branched into a contrary direction with so many turnings and windings, curves and angles, that Lord Hootside pronounced they were certainly going to visit some enchanted beauty, as they had already passed a labyrinth which seemed a prototype of Fair Rosamond’s bower; the walk was terminated by tall and branching trees, and, suddenly emerging from their shade, they found themselves in a large yard, peopled by such a multitude of every species of domestic fowls, usually reared in England, that their united notes created a concert, which for loudness of tone and variety of sounds at least, could scarcely have been equalled by all the instruments in the world; and such an augmentation of clamour did the appearance of so many strangers call forth amongst hens with their chirping brood, and geese with their goslings, that all the ladies, except Lady Cottingham and Miss Walpole, flew across the yard and got out of hearing as fast as they could; the last mentioned ladies lingered a moment to admire their varied and beautiful plumage, and their instinctive tenderness for their young; Sir Roger gave his hand to Lady Hootside to assist her in mounting some steps, and they found themselves in a large kitchen-garden, very well cultivated; Lady Cottingham looked about, but seeing no

object, except the herbs and plants usual in such places, she said, "Pray, Sir Roger, where is this great curiosity?" "We are just at the spot," he replied, and led on to the bottom of the garden; here he ushered his party into a large shed stocked with spades, rakes, hoes, rolling-stones, and various other implements of horticulture, in the midst of which, like the dragon guarding the Hesperian fruit, stood a monster more dreadful than any of those which provoked the prowess of the valorous knights, whose achievements were treasured in the capacious memory of Don Quixote, only it neither was nor ever had been animated by the springs of life, but was sculptured in grey marble, and, all circumstances considered, was not ill executed, whether it was ill designed was another question, for certainly it was a complete nondescript, and not the likeness of any thing on earth; the dimensions were large to enormity; the head was that usually painted for a dragon; the jaws were extended to a terrific wideness, for the original use of this beautiful object had been to serve as a mouth-piece for a small fountain; it had besides the wings of a griffin, widely extended, the tail of a dragon, the scales of a crocodile, and feet armed with long talons; "Now," said the baronet, turning exultingly round to his friends, "this is my purchase, if I make any!" a pause of mute astonishment, but certainly not of admiration, pervaded the whole circle, and continued some seconds; it was at length broken by Lady Cottingham, who said, "Dear Sir Roger, can you possibly be in earnest?" "In earnest," reiterated her spouse, "certainly I am; who that pretends to either taste or judgment would permit any thing of such value to slip through their hands." "Dear papa, it is so ugly," said Miss Cottingham; "Ugly, blockhead," cried her father, "I—I appeal to Lady Hootside, whether there is any thing ugly in this piece of workmanship." The countess, thus called upon, though not a very rigid adherent to truth, would not so far violate it as to deny Miss Cottingham's position; she therefore only said, that "the figure was extremely well executed, and if Sir Roger intended it for its original destination, it would look much better than when viewed at its present nearness." The baronet signified that such was his intention, observing, that "he had a very fine piece of water in Cottingham park, from which, at a small expense, a fountain might be made to play in the garden." "Fountains," Miss Cottingham said, "were out of fashion, and at all events, the figure for such a purpose ought to be a mermaid, a dolphin, or something of that description." "And you ought to be a goose," said her father; "Well, my dear," said Lady Cottingham, with a smile, "when it comes to be placed in its proper situation we shall see how it looks, but I must be allowed to observe that I think the figures on the china are rather handsomer than this."

Lord Hootside and Sir Roger both begun to speak together, and both paused in compliment to each other; Lord Hootside resumed, and saying, with a smile, that he had seen a figure very like the one in question, which he would show them, quitted the shed. The baronet then said in reply to his wife, "Now, Lady Cottingham, you talk of china, I should be glad to know from what point of view you can draw a comparison between earthenware and marble statues; you will hardly contend that the exertion of labour requisite to make a teapot, can be put in competition with that which must be exerted to carve an image; then as to durability, the wear of ages will not injure this, but your china may be gone in a moment; besides, there is an air of antiquity about this figure which stamps a high value upon it." "That is exactly the reason why I prize the old china," said her ladyship; "beyond that, the beauty of the colours exceeds any thing of the kind that

art can produce; and if more labour be requisite to form this grotesque image, I think you will grant at least that there is an infinitely greater display of genius in the figures which ornament real oriental porcelain.”

While Lady Cottingham was yet speaking, Lord Hootside returned, followed by the woman whose business it was to show the house, bearing in her hand one of the china vases which her ladyship admired so much; this, when they entered the shed, the earl took from her, and holding it beside the marble monster, exhibited one of the figures portrayed on it, so like the nondescript, that any indifferent spectator would have affirmed the one to be the original, and the other the copy. All present unanimously declared that no likeness could be more striking, and even Lady Cottingham smiled an assent to the general opinion; “Well,” said Sir Roger, “as every body sees so great a resemblance they shall not be separated; we will purchase both on the day of sale, if the price is not altogether out of the way.” Lady Cottingham looked delighted, but her daughter declared “she thought nothing of either of them; the paintings were a thousand times better worth buying.”

Sir Roger at length graciously accorded his promise to bid for the “Summer’s evening by the sea,” and the day being now far advanced, they all prepared to quit Orton-abbey; the Cottinghams were going to dine at the village inn, and drive home in the evening, and Sir Roger very cordially pressed the Hootsides and Miss Walpole to pay an early visit to Cottingham park; this they readily promised to do at a future period, but excused themselves for the present, because they were to set out for Brighton in a few days; this brought on some conversation; the Cottinghams were to make a tour in the autumn, and Harrington guaranteed that Brighton should make a station in it, of course they would all meet there and enjoy each other’s society; but those who form plans would do well to consider whether the execution of them depends on their own free will or on the caprice of others.

## CHAPTER. VII

WHEN the party reached Holleyfield, they found Lady Walpole in the drawing-room; to the inquiries of her friends, her ladyship replied, "Oh, I feel no mitigation of pain, but I wish I had braved its utmost terrors, and gone with you to Orton-abbey, for I have been put to ten thousand shames this morning with this ugly sprain—I have had a visit from Lord Dunotter on business; my blundering fellows admitted him, and to send down a message pleading lameness as an excuse for not seeing him, would, I thought, look like an insult, as such an unhappy animosity had so long subsisted between the families, so I was compelled to limp and totter into the room to his lordship, leaning on Dobinson, and stammering out awkward apologies."

The letter of the preceding day instantly rushed to the mind of Cordelia, and with it came a train of suspicions, certainly rather odd ones, but yet so immediately connected together that one seemed naturally to spring out of the other:—that the letter had been addressed to Lady Walpole;—that it had requested permission for the earl to make this morning call;—that Lady Walpole did not wish Cordelia or any of their guests to have a previous knowledge of his lordship's visit; that the drive to Orton-abbey, which had been proposed by herself, was only a scheme to get them all out of the way for a time;—and lastly—though Cordelia felt repugnant to admitting the idea of such gross duplicity—that the sprained foot was but a pretence for her ladyship to remain at home. All these suppositions, whether true or false passed rapidly over Cordelia's mind; but Lady Walpole allowed little time for either her or any one else to form mental conjectures; she chatted with wonderful volubility, and asked a hundred questions about their excursion, and when the Cottinghams were mentioned, gave a short abstract of their family history; for though not personally acquainted with them, she knew them well by report. Sir Roger Cottingham, her ladyship said, had succeeded to the title and estate of his brother, Sir Sedley Cottingham, previous to which he had been an eminent West-India merchant, possessing great wealth, and married to a woman of a very ample fortune, his present lady; Miss Cottingham was their only child, and what is usually termed a spoiled one; young Harrington, the son of Sir Roger's deceased sister, had been left by his parents to the guardianship of his uncle, and educated for the church; the family estate must, at Sir Roger's death, devolve upon him; but Miss Cottingham would be heiress to her father's personal property, and eventually to her mother's ample jointure; Harrington was esteemed a fine young man in every respect, and, it was generally supposed, was intended by his uncle for the husband of his cousin; "a report," added Lady Walpole, addressing Lord Hootside, with a smile, "which I warn your lordship not to be terrified by, as it very probably has no foundation but in the imaginations of its propagators."

Such was the history of the Cottinghams, and that subject dismissed, Lady Walpole did not suffer conversation to flag, but again reverting to the visit of Lord Dunotter, said, that his lordship having a desire to possess a field contiguous to, or rather surrounded by that land which had been adjudged to him by the award of the lawsuit so often mentioned as one ground of the quarrel between the families, had offered to exchange it for another field, leaving her the choice of three, all of them more valuable,

and in the near vicinity of some of her farms: Lady Hootside, Cordelia thought, seemed very attentive to these communications, both this about Lord Dunotter, and that which related to the Cottinghams. Soon after dinner Lady Walpole complained very much about her foot, and was obliged to retire early to bed; the next morning, when Cordelia visited her, she said she was much worse, and no longer opposed a surgeon being sent for; the pain, her ladyship added, was so violent that she had not been able to sleep; but when the part was examined, nothing appeared but a small degree of redness, which, however, Miss Walpole thought might as easily be caused by the tight bandage which Dobinson had wrapped about it as by any affection of the part; but when Mr. Herbert arrived, and had made proper inquiries into the case, he pronounced a very different opinion; this gentleman had a method of peculiar delicacy in the treatment of his patients which seldom failed of success; some raw matter-of-fact practitioners examine only the outward symptoms of their patient's disorders, watch for their prognostics according to the established rules of medical science, and tie the poor sufferers down to a severe and certain regimen; but he pursued a much wiser course; he felt the pulses of all who consulted him in both senses of the expression, kindly consulted their wishes, and paid a proper deference to their motives; and instead of rudely and vulgarly insisting that people shall be better when they choose to be ill, he very considerately assisted them to discover fresh signs of indisposition, and tokens of danger which had, till then, escaped their notice; when therefore he had inspected Lady Walpole's foot, and asked a few preliminary questions, and her ladyship observed that it was extremely strange she should be in such agonizing pain without any swelling, and with so little appearance of inflammation, he replied, "Not at all, my lady; the invisible symptoms are often more acute, more dangerous, more severe, and more obstinate than the visible ones; the tendon is very much injured, and I am afraid it will require time, ease, and proper treatment to restore it." Lady Walpole mused, or appeared to muse, for a few seconds, she then said, addressing Mr. Herbert, "I see, my good Sir, you are about to condemn me to a very severe martyrdom; we had arranged to set off for Brighton the day after to-morrow, is it not, Cordelia?" "Yes, mamma," she replied; her ladyship resumed, "Certainly if I thought that rest and quiet for a few days, or even—" she did not finish the sentence, but added, "would remove the ill-effects of this unfortunate wrong step, I would, however reluctantly"—again her ladyship broke off, and again resumed, "but I would rather sacrifice myself in any way than disappoint my dear Lady Hootside;—my love," (to Cordelia) "pray request her ladyship will do me the favour to step hither, that she may hear Mr. Herbert's opinion." Cordelia obeyed, and Lady Walpole, left only with the doctor and Dobinson, said, addressing the former, with a very gracious smile, laying her hand on his arm, and speaking in a tone which implied confidence, "Now, my good friend, I am sure you will give me credit for the highest desire to oblige every one, but the fact is, if I go to Brighton, I shall be wearied with company, racketed to death, and have no proper advice, for I cannot rely on the skill of a Brighton practitioner as I can on yours."

Doctor Herbert paid most grateful acknowledgements for her ladyship's favourable opinion, and took his cue like a man of sense. When the countess and Cordelia entered; "My beloved friend," exclaimed Lady Walpole, "come and advise me what to do; Doctor Herbert is of opinion that I cannot travel with safety to myself; but I think if I

am disappointed of the pleasure I had promised myself of accompanying you to Brighton, my vexation will be more likely to bring on a fever than the pain of my foot; I wish you would try your eloquence, which is always so powerful, to persuade him to take off his interdict." Lady Hootside listened attentively, and replied, with seeming kindness and playfulness, but (so Cordelia thought) with real satire, "Now, my dearest Lady Walpole, you have indeed assigned me a cruel task, for if a gentleman of doctor Herbert's skill has pronounced it unsafe for you to travel, should I display either my affection for you, or my deference for his judgment, by selfishly asking him to sanction what may prove so very hurtful." Scarcely suffering her ladyship to finish the sentence, and without waiting to see whether she intended to add more, Mr. Herbert said, "Certainly, my lady, I have no hesitation in saying that it would be attended with the highest danger;—it might bring on an inflammation, or terminate in a confirmed constriction of the sinews;—I remember a case in which the patient—" "My good Sir," interrupted Lady Hootside, "what a hecatomb of horrors are you raising up! I beg I may not be suspected of intending to dispute your skill, but I have the vanity to think, that I also possess a little in cases *like the present*, and shall therefore take upon me to prescribe that Lady Walpole remain *at home*, as the best means of preventing constriction, *restriction*, inflammation, *mortification*—and all those sorts of things."

The tone in which the countess spoke was pointedly sarcastic; but Lady Walpole, far from even appearing to notice it, warmly thanked her ladyship for her kind prescription, which, aided by such applications as doctor Herbert should judge proper, would, she doubted not, remove the excruciating pain she laboured under, and enable her to follow her dear friends to Brighton; "and," she added, "as I trust your ladyship will allow my daughter the honour of accompanying you, for I know she cannot be separated from Lady Caroline, I shall have *every* inducement to be with you as soon as possible."

This well-timed turn seemed to have a very tranquillizing effect on Lady Hootside, who said every thing that could evince how sensible she was of the precious charge committed to her care. Cordelia, though like other young people, impatient for the novelty of a pleasurable excursion, mildly said, that "Though truly grateful for the flattering kindness with which Lady Hootside had promised to protect her, she could not think of leaving Lady Walpole in her present situation, but would, if she pleased, remain with her until they could travel to Brighton together." "You are very good, my love," said Lady Walpole, "but I can do very well with Dobinson, and I trust, when you consider a little, you will see the propriety and advantage of accepting Lady Hootside's kind offer." She then hastily changed the discourse to another subject; Mr. Herbert, after giving some general directions to Dobinson, took leave; Lady Hootside retired, and Cordelia sat reading by Lady Walpole; soon after a card was brought in from Lord Dunotter, which her ladyship replied to in her own hand; she made no communication of its contents, but seemed highly pleased, and said, "Lord Dunotter is an amiable, excellent man, I find him all you told me, Cordelia; you did him justice in your description of your interview with him at the steward's, and I can assure you he is highly pleased with you;" she then noticed the striking resemblance between the earl and his son, and frankly inquired what opinion Miss Walpole had formed of the latter on the evening of their short journey from St. Alban's to Holleyfield. Cordelia said, "that she had been so shocked that evening by

the dreadful catastrophe of the robber, that she was unable to form any opinion;” but while she spoke there was a glow on her cheek, and a tremor in her voice, which were neither of them lessened by the sly, playful, scrutinizing glance of Lady Walpole. “Now, Delia,” she said with a smile, “I doubt you are inclined to fib a little; don’t you remember overhearing Mrs. Delmore telling me a long nonsensical story about a supposed attachment between Lord Lochcarron and that girl, the steward’s niece?” Cordelia scorned a falsehood, and though her face glowed a vivid crimson, she replied, “Yes, mamma, I do recollect hearing Mrs. Delmore tell you something to that effect.” “Now you are a candid good girl,” said her ladyship, taking her hand, “and I am going to prove myself your best, and your very best friend; my observation at that time enabled me to see that you had formed a favourable opinion of Lord Lochcarron;—I do not mean to insinuate that you had fallen in love with him—no well-educated young person now cherishes such vulgar gothic notions—they are only solicitous to marry above their rank and expectations—when they do otherwise, they not only lessen their own respectability, but give cause to their unfortunate offspring through life to deplore a union which has called them into an existence replete with difficulties and degradations; the chief, and indeed only care of a young lady, when she is about to settle in life, must be to rise, and not sink; all other considerations are of trifling importance; some silly romantic girls picture to themselves the three epochs of love, courtship, and marriage, as naturally following each other as morning, noon, and night; were I as new to life as I have been I should expect no such thing; but, contented with the choice which my parents, in their wisdom and care for my future aggrandizement, had made, should conform to it whatever it should be in other respects; for instance, I might be the selected bride of a man who had formed an attachment, perhaps connexion, which his friends did not approve; some ladies under such circumstances might choose to pout and wear the willow, I should do no such thing; but satisfied that I was fulfilling my purport in life, which is to perform a part with spirit and *eclat*, should glory in being made the instrument of saving the heir of a family from degrading himself, and injuring his posterity. And now, Delia,” she added, speaking with more animation, yet in a lower tone of voice, “would it not be at once a most meritorious action to prevent Lord Lochcarron from degrading himself, by marrying the niece of his father’s steward; and a stroke of high policy, a contingency to be selected from a thousand, to make you Lady Lochcarron, and to unite the noble estates of Ravenpark and Holleyfield.”

Any attempt to convey an idea of the feelings of Miss Walpole at this moment, would only be waste of words: a thrill of pleasure so sweet, so exquisite, that no anterior feeling had ever been like it, pervaded her frame; but there was also a sensation so sadly painful, that the conflict between such opposite passions was almost too much for her gentle nature to support; to be the wife of Lord Lochcarron appeared a blessing of such magnitude, that the parade of high rank, the union of estates, and such earth-born matters, seemed in comparison but as the feeble twinkling of the smallest stars to the glorious rays of the sun; but at what a price was this inestimable happiness to be purchased, and how dreadfully hazardous was the part allotted her to act! it was to be inferred from the words of Lady Walpole, that Lord Lochcarron had positively engaged himself to Miss Borham; and Cordelia—strange as the metaphor seemed—could contemplate herself in no other light than that of a sword destined to sever this engagement, however binding and sacred

it might be; and if she felt herself that such would be her position, in what a light would Lord Lochcarron regard her? could it be supposed, that he would yield that passive obedience to paternal authority, which the words of Lady Walpole seemed to imply he would be expected to do? the train of ideas became painful, and the effect so powerful, that it was apparent in her trembling and agitated frame. "My dear girl, what is the matter," said Lady Walpole; "do get the better of this leaven of your country education; you know I am only talking of possibilities; but Lord Lochcarron is coming home soon, and—" she smiled in adding, "you don't know what may happen, when he sees you, Delia." "You know I shall be at Brighton, Madam," she replied, struggling for at least the appearance of composure. "Pooh, my dear," said her ladyship; and then added, "I hope you obeyed my injunction, and have never admitted any attention from Hootside, which might look like sanctioning his addresses?" "Certainly not," Cordelia replied. "Then what necessity exists for tacking yourself to their retinue?" resumed Lady Walpole; "frame your excuse for remaining with me from the message which I shall send down after dinner, for the earlier, and the more positively, you make your refusal, the better." Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say, that if at least one fourth of the errors which gloom the path of life were traced to the source, and laid bare to the root, they would be found to originate with those who, possessing influences over the minds and authority over the actions of others, employ that influence and authority to promote purposes and ends of their own: Lady Walpole was one of the most prominent of this class, ever ready with sophisticated arguments and a winning persuasive manner; and Cordelia, it must be confessed, though too wise for a dupe, and too clear-sighted to fall into her ladyship's snares, was but too ready to precipitate herself thither headlong: in youth, the passions are strong and the judgment weak; the vanity of eighteen mustered again in full force, and was not very likely to reject the glittering and fascinating baits held out to its contemplation of an impending coronet; numerous attendants; dashing equipages; pleasure the most exquisite and alluring; all that is splendid and expensive in jewels and dress; and all that adulating homage which is so generally, nay, universally paid at the fourfold shrine of youth, beauty, rank, and wealth; nor could the susceptibility of that early period assume enough of the stoic to say, "You shall not endeavour to make me the wife of one of the most elegant, graceful, and accomplished young noblemen of the age;" ah, no; poor Cordelia had no such philosophy, no such self-denying heroism; few young people want arguments—such as they are—to persuade themselves, and endeavour to convince others, that what they like to do, comes within the lines of some duty, either personal or relative; submission to the advice, the judgment, and the direction of her mother-in-law, Miss Walpole argued, was a duty, and a duty doubly enjoined her by the will of her father, which constituted Lady Walpole her guardian, and the counsel of Mrs. Emerson, before she left Holleyfield; and in a moment Cordelia became convinced that Lord Lochcarron ought also to submit to the authority of his father, and that it would be in the highest degree laudable and meritorious to prevent him from degrading himself by a union with a proud low-born girl like Miss Borham, and direct his choice to ——— whom she thought was best known to herself. But Cordelia did Miss Borham injustice, at least in the latter instance, her descent being similar to that of her own mother, for Mr. Borham was a very respectable, though not richly beneficed clergyman; and whatever might be the qualities of her mind, so far as those of person and accomplishments were concerned, she would have done credit to any station. Yet though thus inclined to play

the jesuit, there were points which Cordelia could not prevent pressing strongly upon reflection; that Lady Walpole was taking all this pain, and carrying on this intercourse with Lord Dunotter, solely in the hope and with the endeavour to effect a union between her daughter-in-law and Lord Lochcarron, required a believing faculty on such subjects beyond what the daughter-in-law possessed; it remained then to look for it elsewhere, and what seemed so likely as that Lord Dunotter was full as ready to seek an alliance for himself with the widow of Sir Charles Walpole, the present possessor of his wealth, as one for his son with the daughter and heiress of it in reversion; but when such an idea had first struck his lordship, and whether Lady Walpole had received any intimation of it before the preceding day, were questions which she could not determine; those who dispassionately and uninterestedly revolved the subject, would probably have expected that a sort of sympathy, resembling animal magnetism, had, much at the same time, pervaded the earl and Lady Walpole; the rank of the former and the fortune of the latter acting as attractions; such conclusion was certainly warranted to be drawn from many points of Lady Walpole's conduct, and Cordelia did in part draw it; but her youthful mind was as yet only half opened, and as occasional flashes of sunshine illumine the sky on a cloudy day, so did casual gleams of penetration and discernment discover to her, though but partially, the plans and designs of others. Yet though she seemed now in possession of a key to the motives of Lady Walpole, for regarding her with such looks of scrutiny, when Mrs. Delmore made Lord Lochcarron the subject of conversation, and for making such pointed inquiries about Miss Borham, after Cordelia had been an hour or two in her company on the day of the thunder, there was one circumstance which no faculty of discernment or discriminating, no stretch of thought within the compass of her powers could aid her in accounting for—it was the studied assiduity, politeness, almost tenderness of manner which Lord Dunotter displayed towards Miss Borham, and the watchful solicitous attention with which on her part it was repaid; this point she revolved over and over in her own mind in vain; and when convinced of her inability to unravel what seemed so mysterious, she had recourse to Lady Walpole; much to her surprise her ladyship, far from viewing the subject in the same puzzling light which she did, only laughed and exclaimed, "My dear girl, will you never know life? would you have a man of Lord Dunotter's experience and knowledge of the world, at once assist the schemes of his adversaries and betray his own plans, to counteract them by seeming aware of their designs; no, no; trust me, my dear, the great secret of life is to foil every one with his own weapons, and to conceal your dislikes beneath a veil of kindness."

Perhaps Lady Walpole, with all her penetration and self-confiding infallibility might be somewhat mistaken; be that as it may, the very nature and inmost soul of Cordelia recoiled from such duplicity; but the words of Lady Walpole, "It is a contingency to be selected from a thousand to make you Lady Lochcarron," operated like a spell of magic, all wish of going to Brighton, all desire for the society of the Hootsides, faded and vanished away, and she resolved to obey in every point the injunctions she had received. Lady Walpole was too ill to join the dinner party, and when in the course of the evening Lady Hootside sent up a message of inquiry, the answer was, that her ladyship had retired to bed in increased pain and fever; this was the signal for Cordelia, and though her face and neck were covered with the deepest scarlet, and her voice became tremulous and faltering through consciousness of the part she was acting, she said, that

“Though her own disappointment must be proportioned to the honour and pleasure she should have enjoyed in attending Lady Hootside to Brighton, she yet could not reconcile her sense of duty to leaving Lady Walpole while she continued so ill, and begged to solicit from the countess’s goodness permission to remain at Holleyfield.”

Cordelia might very possibly felicitate herself on the adroitness with which she had performed her part; but such a novice, both in years and duplicity, could not for a moment impose on Lady Hootside; well could her ladyship translate the burning blush and tremor of voice, which are the emanations of a violated, but yet unhackneyed conscience; with a strong expression of sneering irony, in face and speech, she replied, “I commend your dutiful attention, my dear; I dare say you must be very reluctant to leave Lady Walpole, for you improve so rapidly under her tuition, that you will soon be a paragon of young ladies in the points of *candour*, *truth*, and *sincerity*. Since we cannot have the *pleasure* of Miss Walpole’s company,” she added, addressing her daughters, “the sooner we set off for Brighton the better, for our noisy vicinity can *now* only disturb Lady Walpole.”

A *vulgarly-modish* lady would, in Cordelia’s case, have retorted Lady Hootside’s bitter sarcasms—and repaid them in kind, but this her polished manners, and the native sweetness of her disposition alike forbade; neither could she, as a woman of the world would have done, affect not to understand her satire; but, taking her compliments in a literal sense, endeavour to conciliate her with flattery; Cordelia only strove to appear unembarrassed, and when Lady Hootside announced her intention of leaving Holleyfield the next morning, pressed her ladyship and the young ladies to remain, at least till the time originally fixed for their departure, but the invitation was declined with such a cold ceremonious sort of politeness, as looked more like a mock than a reality. “Bless me,” said Lady Melissa, awaking from one of her trances, “what are you all talking about? I thought Lady and Miss Walpole were to accompany us to Brighton.” It had now to be explained to her ladyship, as if she had never heard it before, that Lady Walpole was ill; and while this was doing, Lord Hootside came in; when he understood what was going forward, he told his mother in his blunt way that she *should not* leave Holleyfield for a day or two; and Cordelia, that she *must* then go with them as already fixed; but he wasted his rhetoric in vain, and though he descended from vociferation to expostulation, then urged, begged, and at last entreated, he could obtain no concession from the countess; and as to Cordelia, bound down by the magic spell contained in the words, “Lord Lochcarron is coming home, and you don’t know what may happen,” she was most dutifully determined to remain with Lady Walpole. Before she retired for the night, she went to her ladyship’s apartment, and related all that had passed; “Never mind,” she said, “let them go; Lady Hootside only wants to draw you in to marry her son; but I hope you will convince both them and the world, that your taste and sense are better qualified to discriminate between a booby who is only fit society for his own grooms, and one of the most elegant, fashionable, distinguished young noblemen in the kingdom; and between a title of yesterday, and one which for three hundred years has descended in the male line without taint, forfeiture, or blemish on its representatives.”

Lady Walpole's speech had all the good effect intended on Cordelia; but her ladyship, like a skilful lawyer, produced all the arguments *for*, and none *against* the cause she was pleading; what she said concerning their respective titles was strictly true, that of Dunotter—a Scotch peerage—was very ancient, and that of Hootside, the creation of a few years back; neither could it be controverted that Lord Lochcarron was greatly superior to the young earl in every accomplishment, both natural and acquired; but title, the sound of a name, and those attainments whose chief end is to embellish life, cannot be in their nature, and therefore ought not to be looked up to as the foundations on which the fabric of married and domestic happiness must be reared: of much more importance are the moral qualities and pecuniary circumstances of the parties, and those Lady Walpole had passed over in silence; but the fact is, nature had sown good seed in the breasts of both the young noblemen, and it remained for time and circumstances to call it into blossom, or crush it for ever in each: as to fortune, the balance was decidedly in favour of Lord Hootside; his estate was clear and unincumbered, and his funded property, in consequence of a long, though, perhaps, not very well managed, minority, pretty considerable; while the estate of Lord Dunotter (as the reader will recollect was hinted by the master of the inn, where Mrs. Emerson and Cordelia first became acquainted with Lord Lochcarron) had been injured by its present proprietor as deeply as the law would permit: as to personal fortune, very little remained; but his lordship had of late years supplied the deficiency by dedicating very splendid talents to the service of the public—at least, of the ministry—if that be always synonymous; he had been much on the continent, had seen man—human nature—society—life—in all their various modes, and had gleaned much knowledge of the world; but it is to be feared that in his application of that knowledge, he reversed the prayer of Desdemona,

“Heaven me such usage send,

“Not to pick bad from bad; but, by bad, mend!”

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE bulletin of the following morning announced no change for the better in Lady Walpole; but the countess saw plainly that a very great one for the worse had taken place in her ladyship's mind, as it respected a marriage between Cordelia and Lord Hootside; this she had been very anxious for, not because any immediate advantage could be derived from it, but in the shrewd though secret hope and belief that Sir Charles Walpole's will might be litigated, and the dowager reduced to the state of the jackdaw in the fable. Lady Walpole, when she seemed to favour (and perhaps did so in reality) the addresses of Lord Hootside to Cordelia, had no suspicion that her dear friend Lady Hootside harboured any such counterplot against her; but it may serve to exemplify an observation frequently made, that there is no real friendship amongst people destitute of principle.

When the countess presented herself in Lady Walpole's apartment to pay the parting adieu, the latter, with an outstretched hand, and a countenance of the most kind and anxious solicitude, inquired the reason of this sudden removal; Lady Hootside, not to be cajoled, replied, with cold sardonic expression of voice and countenance, in nearly the same words she had used to Cordelia; while Lord Hootside, never much in the practice of concealing his feelings, and taught by his mother to regard Lady Walpole as the intriguing spirit, who had by her machinations steeled the heart of her daughter against a union with him, could scarcely command himself so as to pay the compliments of departure with some degree of politeness: Lady Walpole saw all this, and was not backward to make her advantage of it; with studied kindness, and gentleness of voice, manner, and aspect, she again expressed her regret at losing their society; but forbore to give the most distant hint of joining them at Brighton, and thus the engagement was dissolved. The carriages were prepared, the baggage deposited, and at length the party drove off, to the great relief of Lady Walpole, and certainly not much to the regret of Cordelia, who with the light spirits of youth, and with renovated delight, returned to numerous little employments and amusements which had been interrupted by the long residence of the Hootsides at Holleyfield.

The course of the morning brought another note from Lord Dunotter, couched in terms of such respectful tenderness, that Cordelia, enlightened as she was, could no longer doubt that his lordship was indeed an ardent candidate for the favour of her good mother; and the various hints which her ladyship dropped in conversation with her daughter, left no room to apprehend he would prove an unsuccessful one. When Mr. Herbert made his visit, asked a few questions of his patient, and examined the affected part, he expressed himself happy to pronounce that the symptoms were greatly altered for the better, and that Lady Walpole's recovery would now be rapid; the event verified the doctor's prognostic, and established his skill and judgment beyond all controversy, for by the time dinner was ended, her ladyship was able to walk across the room; to rise to breakfast the next morning; in a few hours more to descend to the drawing-room; and in the evening to receive a visit from Lord Dunotter, who, during the hour he sat with the two ladies, biassed them both in his favour more than can be described; indeed, he

possessed every requisite and advantage for doing so; the attentions (not those of love, but such as accord with the present state of polished society) which women of sense receive from men of rank and talent are always acceptable, and the more pointed the more pleasing; but where such attentions can be supposed, those of a lover and future father, needs it be said how doubly they charm? There did not remain a country in Europe which Lord Dunotter had not visited, and that with every possible chance of improvement; to constitute a well informed and informing traveller (that is, one who is himself acquainted with his subject, and possesses the talent of making it known to others) many things are requisite, but three absolutely necessary—first, a mind prepared by habits of observation, and a due union of natural and acquired talents to select and bring home the prevailing excellencies he meets with; secondly, such introductions as may best assist his researches in whatever may be his objects, whether politics, antiquities, arts, sciences, manners, or customs; and thirdly, such an arrangement of ideas, flow of language, and grace of delivery, as may convey this knowledge to others in a pleasing and perspicuous form; in all these qualifications Lord Dunotter pre-eminently excelled; he had, if the mode of expression may be permitted, from infancy drank information of every kind at the fountain head, and on such points as he selected to amuse his present auditors—the architecture, sculpture, paintings, music, and dramatic representations of the continent, he spoke with such grace of language and force of description, that it was difficult to say from which source they derived most pleasure; but to the narrator himself, all such topics had long since failed to impart any; his eyes and ears from being so frequently gratified with all that the world contains to charm those two senses, had become so exquisitely, so fastidiously refined, that only superiority of the very first order in any of the fine arts could rouse his feelings to the slightest degree of interest. Though ambition was the only passion which he could now be said to cherish, and with him it was unbounded, he yet had many other faults which time had hardened into habits; over these, however, he wore a veil, and though Lady Walpole could not be altogether a stranger to his general character, any more than to the embarrassed state of his fortune, she regarded neither point, thinking, no doubt, that a coronet counterbalanced both.

Matters went on in this way for nearly a fortnight; Lord Dunotter was a constant visitor at Holleyfield, where he was received as the declared lover of Lady Walpole; he escorted the ladies in their drives and little excursions in the park and environs, and joined in their amusements within doors; and as few persons of rank or opulence were then at their seats in the vicinity, they were spared the task of receiving and paying many visits, a circumstance not at all regretted by Lord Dunotter, to whom joining in the dinner or evening parties of the neighbourhood, was a mode of passing time extremely irksome, disagreeable, and unpleasant: this was his first residence at Ravenpark for ten years, the whole of which time he had been a widower, and in that period his habits, both moral and physical, were greatly changed; he had lost all relish for field sports; his constitution could no longer endure the fatigue attendant on them; he could gain nothing by conversing with his neighbours; their best modes of acquiring knowledge could only be called gleaning; but he had reaped its full harvest from the first professors of each science in Europe: neither was he at all ambitious to impart this rich treasure; he had no desire to figure as a *clever man*, or a man of letters; his claims to consequence were founded on a

much more wide and glittering basis; politics, on which all were eager to hear him speak, was exactly the topic he chose to shun, aware how eagerly all would catch the slightest matter of state affairs that might fall from his lips, and in retailing it, say, with triumph, "I had my information from Lord Dunotter." He had little inclination to drone over cards or billiards for five guineas a game, accustomed as he was to parties, where the stake was hundreds—perhaps thousands; their convivial meetings were still less to his taste; he was no great votary of Bacchus, and only the exhilarating influence of champagne could tempt him to sacrifice at his shrine; indeed he had now little relish for any pursuit unless urged by a powerful stimulant, and one of the strongest that he found in the vicinity of Ravenpark, was the fortune of Lady Walpole; in her good graces the earl had made all the progress he could desire, when Lord Lochcarron arrived at Ravenpark, in consequence of a summons from his father, who received him with much seeming cordiality and affection; indeed the earl had never been a stern parent, and might be supposed much attached to this only child, whose graces of person and endowments of mind shed more lustre on his rank in life, than he had received from it.

Lord Dunotter made no immediate communication of the motive which had induced him to send for his son; they dined together in his lordship's library; when the attendants had retired, the young nobleman said, with an air half-sportive, half-embarrassed, "I had a rather singular piece of news obtruded upon me this morning at St. Alban's, my lord." "And from the word *obtruded*, I should suppose not more singular than unwelcome," returned Lord Dunotter, smiling; "pray what was it?" Lord Lochcarron replied, "I did not mean that the word *obtruded* should refer to the intelligence itself, but to the manner of the person from whom I received it; the matter," he added, smiling, "cannot be otherwise than pleasing to me, since, if true, it assures me that I shall soon be honoured with a new tie of relationship." "In consequence of my marriage with Lady Walpole, I suppose!" said the earl, with the same expression of countenance; Lord Lochcarron acknowledged that such was the tenor of his information; and his father resumed, "That is an event which may probably happen; but there is another relative connexion to which I look forwards, at least with hope—" the earl paused; his son's eye glanced inquiry, and he resumed, with a look of insinuating tenderness, "it is that which shall give to you a wife—to me a daughter!"

The cheek of the young nobleman flushed a crimson hue, and his pulses seemed to beat with renovated celerity; he was about to say something with animation, then checked himself, and with a smile, which did not appear genuine, said, "There is little probability of my marrying, my lord;" and then in a half-suppressed tone, and with averted eyes, added, "would your lordship wish it?" "Unquestionably," said Lord Dunotter;" "I am an advocate for early marriages, all circumstances duly considered." Lord Lochcarron looked anxiously in the face of his parent; "Oh, my father," he said, "would you but sanction—" "I would sanction whatever could conduce to your happiness, and your interest, Alexander," said the earl, gravely; "indeed," he added, "our interest and happiness are so closely bound together in this life, that they cannot well be separated." The countenance of Lord Lochcarron fell beneath what he deemed the cold-blooded, apathetic maxim of a man of the world; but resolved that a question of words should not lead him from a point he was approaching, he said, "In marriage, perhaps, my

lord, an exception may be found to the general rule; in a union for life surely interest ought to be the last thing thought of.” “My dear Lochcarron,” said the earl, “endeavour to think justly and rationally; leave romance to girls and visionaries; on what point can a regard to interest be so essentially requisite as in forming a connexion, on which not only the fulfilment of our own best hopes in life, but the welfare of our descendants must so greatly depend? if affluence and its attendant respectability and comforts, contrasted with poverty and its consequent contempt and deprivations, be matters not thought of, I should be glad to know what are.” Lord Lochcarron half smiled, and repeated,

“Before true passion all those views remove,  
“Fame, wealth, and honour! what are you to love?”

“It was the saying of a very great politician,” observed Lord Dunotter, “that he cared not who framed the laws of a nation provided he were allowed to write its ballads; I have sometimes been inclined to doubt whether the popular poetry of any country possesses the influence which the cardinal seems to have ascribed to it; but I must cease to be sceptical when I find erroneous opinions justified by theorems in rhyme.” Lochcarron looked rather abashed, but, recovering himself, he said in a firm yet respectful tone, “If I placed my chief good in living for the world and posterity, I should seek an alliance with rank and fortune; but preferring as I do the shades of life, independence of conduct, and peace of mind, I only wish in the woman I marry, such qualities and endowments as may accord with my limited plans and hopes.” “I have no hesitation, Alexander,” said the earl, “in telling you, positively and decidedly, that you have imbibed a very erroneous way of thinking, but it is not a singular one; I have known very many men in different countries who thought as you do, form similar plans, and acted upon them, and the consequence invariably was, that at forty, they awoke from their dream of folly, asked themselves what they had been doing through life, and finding how wretchedly they had mispent their time, fretted down the remainder of existence in vain regrets after what was irretrievable: picture to yourself a nobleman droning away the best of his years at his country seat; botanizing or breeding sheep; hunting or playing with his wife’s lap-dog; for it matters not which, mankind will be equally benefitted by his labours. I imagine we may address such a man as queen Elizabeth did her god-son, Sir John Harrington, when exhibiting some of his poetical effusions;” ‘When creeping Time shall knock at thy gate, thou wilt have done with these fooleries.’ Now contrast this with a man of rank, who has devoted his talents to politics, the only proper study for a nobleman; see him at the age I have mentioned, wise in the cabinet, irresistible in eloquence, profound in negotiation, the admiration of both his own country and of Europe, the friend and adviser of his sovereign, the dread and envy of his enemies, and possessing the certainty that his name shall descend with glory to the remotest posterity; this is what the representative of a great family ought to be, and such, and such only, do I wish to see my son.”

Though there was unquestionably some sophistry in all this, there was yet so much truth that Lord Lochcarron could not attempt to controvert it; he only said, that “he thought a nobleman, though living in retirement at his country seat, might be a truly useful character both as a landlord and a magistrate.” “He *may* be, but the odds are great

that ever he *will* be so,” returned the earl; “a constant residence in the country rusts the soul, petrifies the mind, and unfits the whole man for any high and noble purpose; however,” he added, laying his hand on his son’s arm, and again looking with insinuating earnestness, “I will give your arguments their full scope; but you know, my dear Lochcarron, how heavy my expenses have been on my embassy, and how ill they have been repaid me; I cannot regret what I have done, it was to serve my country, and what has been lost in wealth is gained in honour; however we shall feel the effects of it for some time; now,” and he spoke with animation, “by marrying Lady Walpole, I shall secure ample wealth, at least if her ladyship be the survivor, which in the course of nature she most probably will; and, Alexander, it only remains for you, by becoming the husband of Miss Walpole, to unite the noble estates of Holleyfield and Southwood to Ravenpark, and be the greatest landholder in the country.”

The countenance of Lord Lochcarron betrayed the greatest surprise and agitation; “Marry Miss Walpole!” he repeated, “no, never!” then rising from his chair, and walking about with increased emotion, he said, “Oh, my lord, you know my heart is already attached.”

The face of the earl flushed with deep anger, but he struggled for composure, while he replied, “Alexander, this is neither a moment nor a subject for trifling; you have perhaps been too little accustomed to hear the command of a parent, but you cannot have forgot that before you went to Scotland, I positively interdicted all future mention of your disgraceful attachment; Heavens! you certainly have not now to learn that one of the first obligations a nobleman is under, is to support his family dignity, and, if possible, to raise his family consequence, and I think you will scarcely assert that an alliance with your father’s servants will have a tendency to do either.” In a gentle voice, Lord Lochcarron ventured to say, “Mr. Pringle stands high in your lordship’s opinion; and Miss Borham’s beauty and accomplishments I have never seen equalled in the first circles.” “She is an artful gipsey,” exclaimed the earl; “I have now seen enough of her to know that; she would draw you, or any other man of rank, in to marry her if she could, and as to Pringle, he is an infernal scoundrel!”

The young nobleman looked astonished, for this was a mode of expressing himself very unusual with Lord Dunotter, who resumed, “Your childish folly, Alexander, for it deserves no better epithet, has drawn from me what I intended, for the present at least, to have concealed—Pringle has cheated me of upwards of six thousand pounds.” When Lord Lochcarron heard these words, he was so overwhelmed with shame and confusion, that he was ready to sink to the ground; not for a moment could he doubt their truth, for though too well aware that his father, courtier like, would not have hesitated on some occasions to violate the strict rules of veracity, he well knew that he would not for any earthly consideration have uttered a word which should falsely impeach the honesty or integrity of any man breathing; but had any shadow of disbelief remained, it must quickly have been dissipated, for Lord Dunotter, opening his escrutoire, took out a parcel of papers, and spreading them before his son, entered into such details as established the fact of Pringle’s guilt beyond all possibility of doubt.

By the time these were inspected it was nearly dark; Lord Dunotter perceived that his son was much agitated, and kindly taking his hand, said, "I am going to write letters, my dear boy; retire to your own apartment and compose your spirits, and come back to me in an hour; I have more to say on these subjects; at all events I cannot bear to think you should mar the good fortune which smiles on you; Miss Walpole is a fine girl in every sense of the expression, and—I ought not to blab—but," he added in a playful whisper, "the gallant knight who protected a fair damsel on her road from St. Albans will not need to sue in vain."

There is nothing so potent as truth—except vanity, and poor Lochcarron was thus assailed by these two powerful principles at once; that the hint his father had just given, originated in something which had fallen from Lady Walpole he could not doubt; and few young men of three-and-twenty would be stoical enough to hear they were an object of interest to a beautiful girl, without feeling some thrill of the heart; and as for truth, he felt a full conviction of its predominance in nearly the whole of what his father had been saying; when in the solitude of his own room, he revolved it over in his mind; not but that there were parts of the conversation where he could plainly see the earl's glossing, particularly when he hinted that the impaired state of his fortune was to be attributed to the expenses attendant on the distinguished situation he had held abroad, when Lochcarron knew too well that the true cause might be found in his taste for parade, and for pleasures which could not be termed innocent; though like a dutiful son, he drew a veil over the faults of a parent, and had not replied when the earl mentioned the subject. But Lord Dunotter had a yet more powerful auxiliary than any of those to plead the point which he wished to carry with his son, and that was *shame*; when he considered and re-considered the proofs he had seen of Pringle's guilt, he blushed and shuddered at the thought of forming any connexion with the family of such a man, and in this frame of mind, he returned to his father at the appointed time; the earl, as might be expected, renewed the subject, and skilled in all the workings of the human mind, easily perceived and followed up the advantage he had gained; he painted with all the force of his commanding eloquence the various ways in which they would be benefitted by the double union he was labouring so arduously to bring about; telling his son that Cordelia, independent of all she would inherit on the death of Lady Walpole, had great expectancies from an old and rich aunt of her mother's; and working on the filial affection of Lochcarron by hinting, that should he slight Miss Walpole, her mother-in-law would very probably retract the sort of tacit consent she had already given to become Lady Dunotter; in short he made so many appeals to the duty, the reason, the pride, and the feelings of his son, that he wrung from him a promise to pay a visit at Holleyfield the following day—and yet more, to be guided in this most important step in life entirely by the advice of his parent, a promise with which the earl who knew, or at least believed he knew, the firmness of his son's principles was entirely satisfied. Lord Lochcarron had been deeply enamoured of Miss Borham from the time of their first acquaintance, which was now about eight or nine months; he took little pains to conceal his admiration from either its object or any one else; but he had early covenanted with himself never to marry without the consent of his father; he perhaps believed their attachment mutual, but we sometimes deceive ourselves.

When the young nobleman reflected next morning upon all that had passed the preceding evening, he felt dissatisfied with himself, and repentant of the promise he had given Lord Dunotter; all that was said concerning the pursuits and modes of life of men of rank and fortune ceased to make any impression; on that point he returned to his old maxims about patriotism and the corruption of courts, and became once more a Cincinnatus in idea; as to the hint his father had given, that his addresses would be acceptable to Cordelia, he could only suppose that it originated in some oblique intimation from Lady Walpole, and her character for art and finesse stood so well established in the neighbourhood, that he regarded it in no other light than as one of her manoeuvres to carry a point: he could find no sophistry with which to elude the conviction of Pringle's breach of trust, but that, he mentally thought, could not attach to the niece of his deceased wife. What Lord Dunotter had said about Miss Borham's levity and duplicity, had given him a severe pang at the time, because it accorded but too well with that secret opinion of her character which not all the mists of passion could prevent his own excellent judgment from whispering to his soul; in short, the romantic attachment which he had so long cherished, made him see every thing through a distorted medium, and in this frame of mind he was preparing to accompany his father to Holleyfield, when an express arrived from Lady Charlotte Malcolm, the sister of Lord Dunotter, who wished for the society of her beloved nephew to sooth the tedium of illness in a complaint—the least supportable of all others to a person of sedentary habits—an inflammation of the eyes. Lady Charlotte had in early life been a sentimentalist, and as romantically in love as such ladies usually are, with a young clergyman, one of the chaplains of the earl her father, who, as might be expected, frowned an anathema on such an attachment, and effectually separated the lovers by getting the young gentleman appointed to the charge of a small episcopal congregation in a remote part of Scotland, where in a few years he died of a consumption, originating, some said, in intense study, but according to others in the deprivation of Lady Charlotte's society, to whom, it was affirmed, he was privately united; be that as it may, her ladyship's heart had never owned another sovereign; and now, at the age of fifty-five, there was no earthly object so dear to her as her nephew, Lord Lochcarron; she was a woman of a polished rather than a strong understanding; more well-meaning than wise, and having all the original romance of her character less mollified than it is found to be in those persons, who possessing a much more stinted portion of the good things of the earth, and having the real evils of life to struggle with, are glad to relinquish the visions of fancy, and make the best of sober—sometimes bitter realities; many of the resources of single ladies for passing time were none to her; music and drawing she had long since relinquished, as is usually the case where no real genius aids instruction; she disliked needlework; was neither a shoe nor box-maker, straw-weaver nor bobbin-twister; cards, when long pursued, wearied her; lapdogs were too frisky, and parrots too noisy: she wrote much; sentimental epistles, and diaries of occurrences, and read more: poetical romances, tragedies, reviews, and translations from the Hindoo and Persie; disliking the continual racket of high life and bustle of London, she seldom resided there, but passing half the year at Bath, and the remainder either in Scotland, or at least a beautiful retreat which had been bequeathed to her by a relative of the family in the vicinity of Canterbury: as she had never lived up to the full extent of her income, her fortune was known to be considerable; and the earl, her

brother, no doubt with due regard to interest, and certainly not without some feelings of fraternal affection, had ever been studious to oblige her.

Such was the lady, who since the death of the countess of Dunotter—a truly excellent woman—had (at least in her own idea) had supplied her place to Lord Lochcarron, who, during his vacations when at school and college, had generally made the house of his aunt his home; she had ever treated him with boundless tenderness and indulgence, which on his part had produced a respectful and affectionate attachment: he was unquestionably one of the best informed and accomplished young noblemen of the age, but from associating so much with this romantic relative, and, in consequence of his father's long residence abroad, looking up to her on most occasions as his guide and monitress, he had not only imbibed a taste for her pursuits, but her opinions had, in some degree, biassed his mind: with his love for Miss Borham, she was well acquainted, and though she had invariably cautioned him against the indulgence of a passion so unsuitable, she had yet done it in such a way, reverting to it far too often, sometimes jesting about it, and at other times lamenting that destiny (as she called a vague idea, floating in her mind, which she could not bring to any determinate point) should so often place a bar by disparity of fortune, where equality of merit and union of hearts would otherwise have afforded so fair a chance for happiness.

When Lord Lochcarron had perused the letter of Mrs. Pemberton, the humble friend of Lady Charlotte, and read her description of the invalid's sufferings, and the anxious wish she expressed for his society, he would gladly have excused himself from attending Lord Dunotter to Holleyfield, and have started off immediately for Shellmount Lodge, certainly with real anxiety on his aunt's account, and probably with a wish to impart to her the views of his father, and a latent, though not well founded, hope that her remonstrances might induce the earl to absolve him from the promise he had given to marry Miss Walpole, and at least permit him to remain single, if he would not sanction his union with Miss Borham, which, all circumstances taken into the question, his own good sense now told him plainly was a measure too replete with disgrace and degradation to be thought of. The earl, however, would not permit him to recede in the least from what he had promised; he insisted on his going to Holleyfield, but consented that their visit should not exceed half an hour, and that he should set out the moment he returned, to which he was induced, because it accorded with his own plans and views to remove his son from Ravenpark at present.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE curicle was brought to the door, but Lord Dunotter continued slowly to pace the apartment, while Lochcarron, not with the greatest expression of happiness on his countenance, stood by the window, glancing over a newspaper, and waiting his father's pleasure; the earl saw there was yet something to be done before he could trust his son at Holleyfield, and made up his mind how to act; putting on his hat, he said, "Now, Alexander, shall we go?" then, as if struck by a sudden recollection, he added, "remember, my dear boy, that in this visit you must acquit yourself as the affianced husband of Miss Walpole, for such in fact you are." "My lord!" said Lochcarron, with a start of surprise. "Certainly," pursued the earl, with the most perfect calmness; "the settlements are drawing, and every thing is concluded upon." "What, my lord!" exclaimed Lochcarron, evidently and deeply indignant at thus being trafficked with, "without once consulting me!—without my having any, the slightest knowledge of the woman I am expected to make my wife!" "This half hour will suffice for that," said the earl; "she is innocent as a child, new to the world, unhackneyed in its ways, and so good-tempered, that you may mold her to any thing you please!" "So I should suppose," said Lochcarron, somewhat sarcastically, "since she can thus suffer herself to be disposed of at the caprice of a mother-in-law." "It will become you, Alexander," said Lord Dunotter, gravely, "to speak in rather more respectful terms of a lady whom I am about to make my wife;" "My lord," said Lochcarron with dignity, "I mean no disrespect to Lady Walpole; I am sure I shall rejoice in every accession of happiness or interest to your lordship, but I really do not perceive how my making a sacrifice of my peace in the way I am required to do can promote either; I desire nothing beyond my present allowance, and time at least both to become acquainted with Miss Walpole, and to *endeavour*—" he spoke the word with emphasis and sighed in doing so—"to erase from my heart the image of the most beautiful woman I have ever seen." Whether he had finished all he was going to say is uncertain; but Lord Dunotter, with not only displeasure, but something beyond it, which cannot be defined, on his countenance, exclaimed, "Once for all, Alexander, I *command* you to mention that girl no more; attend to what I say, and I think you will not be absurd enough to urge another word of objection; you *must* marry Miss Walpole, and that immediately; Lady Hootside has for months past been at Holleyfield flattering Lady Walpole, and straining every nerve to bring about a union between her son and Cordelia, and was all the while secretly taking counsel's opinion whether Walpole's absurd will might not be set aside; there is not a doubt that it might be so; and now, Alexander, you will perceive in what way it is in your power to promote your father's interest and happiness; my marrying the mother will be of no avail, unless you also marry the daughter; delay would destroy all; I understand that hot-brained fellow, Thornton, Miss Walpole's relation, whom I told you I saw at Naples, is coming home, and may very likely take it into his head to assert his cousin's rights, perhaps become a candidate for her favour. So now, Lochcarron, say at once, for I am weary of argument, will you exert your reason, and save your father and yourself from positive ruin, for I confess we are on the verge of it; the tenants are racked beyond their ability to pay, and curse me for an unfeeling landlord, a character I detest, and should never incur did not circumstances, not the least of which is Pringle's villanous mismanagement, compel me to measures I blush

at.” What could Lochcarron oppose to such an appeal? nothing: his mind admitted the conviction that duty and reason were on Lord Dunotter’s side of the question, and, without a word of comment, he said, “I am at your disposal, my lord, do with me as you please.”

Lord Dunotter pressed his hand, and Lochcarron’s spirited bays soon conveyed them to Holleyfield. Cordelia, when she understood that Lord Lochcarron was returned, expected this formal visit as a thing of course; and though by no means aware that matters were so far concluded upon between the earl and Lady Walpole as they really were, felt her situation so awkward and embarrassing, that she made it an absolute point with her mother not to receive the two noblemen alone, who, in consequence, requested the company of Miss Addington at Holleyfield for a day or two, and the three ladies were sitting together when Lords Dunotter and Lochcarron were announced: the earl, with that travelled experience which seldom fails to confer on its possessor the franchise of the whole world, was always at home and collected in all companies, and on all occasions; with a grace quite his own, he presented his son to Lady Walpole, who gave him a reception so flattering and polite, that had he not received a very unfavourable impression of her ladyship’s general character from Lady Charlotte, Miss Borham, and other people, he could not have been otherwise than pleased; as it was, he thought it dictated rather by time-serving principles than sincerity, and repaid it in kind. This ceremony over, Lord Dunotter advanced to Cordelia, and smiling, said, “I believe, my dear Miss Walpole, it is deemed supererogatory to introduce where the parties are previously acquainted; *Lord Lochcarron* has already the honour to be known to you; but in presenting *my son*, I venture to solicit for him that friendship and regard, which a partial parent hopes he will ever merit.” With these words, he placed the hand of Cordelia, which he held, within that of Lochcarron, pressed them affectionately, and leaving him to deserve the favourable report he had given, turned to Miss Addington, with whom he was well acquainted, and drew off her attention by engaging her in conversation with himself and Lady Walpole.

If Lochcarron, in this interview with Miss Walpole, succeeded in inspiring her with any thing like a partial opinions of his merits in any respect, it was rather because she wished to realize that picture of his good qualities which was already drawn by her own imagination, and the good report of others, than by any thing which he now said or did to confirm it, for he certainly acquitted himself very ill; he expressed himself most “happy in having now an opportunity of declaring to Miss Walpole the high respect with which she had impressed him on the evening she honoured him by accepting his escort from St. Albans, and how much he wished to improve their accidental acquaintance, had he not been deterred by a fear that his presence might be deemed an intrusion.”

Cordelia could not but understand this as referring to the old family quarrel, and had her positive knowledge of his attachment to Miss Borham been out of the question, it might have passed well enough; but that knowledge rose in array, and added tenfold to all her other sources of confusion and embarrassment: while on the other hand all the arguments of Lady Walpole, which pictured it as right, and even meritorious, to snatch Lord Lochcarron from the degrading consequences of such an attachment, remained in full force, and aided the secret wishes of her own heart.

Lohcarron, conscious that he was violating truth in what he was saying, spoke with some degree of hesitation, and looked confused; and as to Cordelia, oppressed by the peculiar circumstances of her situation, too well aware that if this union should indeed take place she must be the *obtruded* and not the *solicited* wife of Lohcarron, and agitated by the feelings of the moment, she never appeared to less advantage, but bending her head to conceal her blushing face, she looked lovely; but yet it was not exactly the attitude and expression of loveliness to convey a very favourable idea of her understanding to those who could not enter fully into her mind, which none present could. Lord Dunotter introduced the subject of his sister's indisposition, and explained that his son was going immediately to Shellmount Lodge. Miss Walpole could not feel very highly gratified that Lady Charlotte's distempered eyes possessed more attraction than her own brilliant ones: either Lohcarron was seized with a sudden fit of gallantry, or else he was resolved to please his father at the expense of truth; for when the earl ceased speaking, he subjoined an expression of regret at being compelled to leave Ravenpark. At this moment a party of morning visitors were announced, and the limited time of Lords Dunotter and Lohcarron's stay soon wore over, and when they took leave, the presence of strangers precluded all conversation beyond the common forms of departure; but it must be confessed that no two well-educated young people ever acquitted themselves worse on such an occasion than Lohcarron and Cordelia.

Lord Dunotter, very well satisfied with the conduct of his son, because it was as much as he expected at first, did not stay to make either comment or inquiry, but hurried him off to Shellmount immediately; on his arrival he found his aunt sitting in a dark room, and not much better in spirits than in bodily health; she listened to his unreserved detail of the passing events at Ravenpark and Holleyfield, with less surprise than emotion; she had for some time past, and for many reasons, suspected that her brother's affairs were much deranged, and her good sense could not but admit that he was taking the best possible method to free himself and his posterity from the difficulties which threatened them; but general report had prepossessed her against Lady Walpole; and as to Cordelia, the voice of public fame having before given her to Lord Hootside, she supposed her a mere simpleton, and in that light she appeared to Lohcarron himself; he considered his projected marriage as a sacrifice at the shrine of interest, or rather of absolute necessity, and very heroically made up his mind to the duty of submission; replying to all his father's letters, and never objecting to any of his arrangements, which could not be otherwise than rapidly completed; for the ardent impatience of Lord Dunotter, the ready acquiescence of Lady Walpole, the meek submission of Cordelia, the zealous activity of Mr. Crompton, and the steady undeviating attention of the earl's lawyers, all co-operated to the same end.

Meantime Lady Charlotte's malady baffled the skill of her physicians, and threatened a total loss of sight, and as she was very desirous to retain her nephew with her, until his presence became absolutely necessary at Ravenpark—as Lord Dunotter, for more reasons than one, did not wish for him there—and as Lohcarron had no very restless anxiety to be near his destined bride—he remained at Shellmount; however, it is probable that his quick sense of propriety would have induced him to return home on

purpose to visit at Holleyfield, had he not heard from one of his domestics that Miss Borham had arrived at her uncle's from Tunbridge, in a worse state of health than when she left Buckinghamshire; and with a sort of indefinite feeling, between a supposition and a belief, that her illness had been caused, or at least augmented, by his approaching marriage, he sympathized too much in her situation to risk a meeting with her in his present frame of mind. Cordelia too heard the same intelligence, and assigning the same cause for it that Lord Lochcarron did, felt something like a pang of self-reproach, as the murderer of another's peace; but all Lady Walpole's arguments again came in aid to console her; and now too thoughtless, became too happy, to reflect on consequences, she chased away reflection, and only looked forward to joy. In the midst of her smiling prospects, her old revered friend, Mrs. Emerson, claimed some part of her attention; she wrote to her at great length, detailing all events, but varnishing them, it must be owned, as highly as they would admit, and throwing a veil over that part which would have discovered that she was "won unsought." In one respect, however, Cordelia must be done justice to: independent of what might be her own feelings and wishes, she believed that the double union was, in point of interest, rather advantageous than otherwise to both Lady Walpole and herself; for her ladyship had studiously concealed from her all that she knew of the state of Lord Dunotter's affairs.

This letter was hardly despatched when new scenes opened; the settlements were now ready for signing, and the earl, when alone with Lady Walpole, exerted all his winning persuasive arts to induce her to consent to an immediate solemnization of the nuptials: charmed with his person, dazzled by his rank, won by his eloquence, and, it may be, awed by the superiority of his mind, her ladyship at present saw but, heard but, thought but as Lord Dunotter did; and in every thing, even the settlements and disposition of property, was guided by his opinions and modes of reasoning; true, she was aware that these were by no means the methods by which she acquired such an ascendancy over Sir Charles Walpole, reigned for so many years uncontrolled mistress of his actions and fortune, and eventually secured the latter to herself; but she "laid the flattering unction to her soul," that, when perfectly acquainted with his temper, she would manage the earl with the same facility; of that as hereafter shall chance; however, at present she could refuse him nothing, and named the following Thursday for her own marriage day, and that of Cordelia; but when these arrangements were submitted for her sanction, she earnestly and vehemently protested against any such haste, and positively refused to receive Lord Lochcarron as her husband until their acquaintance had been of longer date, and more frequent opportunities of intercourse had made them better known to each other: this delay suited none of Lord Dunotter's plans; it was now Saturday, and, determined to carry his point, he sent off an express to Shellmount to summon his son immediately home, telling Lady Walpole that to him they would delegate the task of persuading Cordelia: meanwhile every arrangement was made, and every preparation got in readiness for the approaching occasion; the earl procured special licenses; the honourable and reverend Gordon Malcolm, a near relation of his lordship, came down to perform the ceremonies; Lady Walpole invited the Addingtons to Holleyfield, as the only additional company necessary. Mr. Addington being upon very intimate terms with the earl, who had hinted his wish that the double marriage might be celebrated as privately and with as little parade as possible, his wishes were, at present, laws to Lady Walpole,

who, there is not a doubt, would have preferred all the splendour and public display possible, had the choice rested with her; but at all events the choice of her dress did, and that she resolved should indeed be dazzling; on such an essential point, Mrs. and Miss Addington were most ready to contribute their taste and assistance; while Miss Walpole, though she continued to protest with real sincerity of intention that she would not be married yet, was wearied and teased by their importunities into fixing on her own dress also.

Lord Lochcarron made it late on Tuesday night before he reached Ravenpark; his father had already said every thing by letter, and had little additional explanation to make; they were to dine at Holleyfield the next day, when the settlements were to be signed. Lochcarron felt like a desperate gamester, who, having already involved himself past all means of extrication, resolutely ventures his last stake; he hazarded no opposition, attempted no remonstrance, but submitting to his father's will, and obeying his injunctions, promised to use every effort to prevail on Cordelia to give him her hand on Thursday. He retired to his apartment, but the singularity of his situation banished repose from his pillow; that sun of happiness which usually dawns on a bridegroom-elect, penetrates with its beams every avenue to his heart and mind, and gilds even the distant prospect of futurity with the rays of hope and joy, was far from Lord Lochcarron; he believed himself about to be allied to a woman of imbecile understanding, unformed principles, and trifling frivolous habits; and compelled to sacrifice, at the shrine of fatal inevitable necessity, every chance of comfort in domestic life: in this frame of mind, but wearing a mask of great outward gaiety and satisfaction, he accompanied his father and Mr. Malcolm the next day to Holleyfield, where they were received by Lady Walpole, arrayed at once with every female ornament, and with her most seducing and captivating smiles; and by Cordelia, dressed with the most graceful simplicity, and shrinking from even the appearance of any wish to attract admiration. Lochcarron taught, or rather endeavoured to teach, his eye to wear an appearance of rapture, and in the few words which he spoke, tried to convey an idea of voluntary, not forced attachment; while Miss Walpole, in whose ear his voice had been thrilling ever since she last heard it, was more inclined to self-deception, than to that degree of self-torment which might have attended a too rigid scrutiny into the truth of those appearances.

Lord Dunotter, aware of the state of his son's mind, took care that he should neither betray himself, nor be fatigued with an over-attempt to act the lover, and relieved him by addressing much of his own conversation to Miss Walpole throughout the day, the chief part of which was necessarily occupied by its great business—the reading and signing of the settlements, a ceremony conducted with unrivalled propriety by Lord Dunotter, whose intimate acquaintance with the routine of conventions, and meetings held for more important purposes, qualified him most admirably to govern every individual of the present assembly in the way best suited to his own ends.

In the evening Lochcarron, seated by Miss Walpole, breathed into her ear a host of those patent nothings which, from time immemorial, men in love have felt, and men out of love have feigned; and which all ladies, from the days of Eve to the time present, are suspected of a proneness to believe; but whatever impression it makes in reality, few

young ladies are at a loss to carry on this sort of badinage till it becomes an imitation—perhaps a humble one indeed—of Benedict and Beatrice, conducted with such different degrees of spirit, such varied display of intellect, that sometimes it assumes the character of the highest, most refined, and elegant wit; at other times of the keenest satire; and much more frequently it degenerates into a pert, flippant, or even vulgar bandying of words and phrases. It was not poor Cordelia's forte to shine in any of those ways; wit, by no means the brightest gem in her diadem—it was, at least it might hereafter be, judgment, should circumstances call forth and establish the native energies of her character; still less was she qualified to be satirical; and least of all did the mild dignity of her manners, and the secluded yet elegant mode of her education, accord with the bold unblushing garrulity of some modern fine ladies: she listened to her lover—if indeed he could be called such—nearly in silence; her downcast eyes and glowing cheek spoke the language of her soul, but her lips made scarcely any response; yet even this silence, which properly understood would have constituted one of her greatest charms, operated to her disadvantage on the prejudiced mind of Lord Lochcarron; when we are predisposed to think ill of any one, their actions and inactions, speech and silence, are all brought to the bar of judgment, and too frequently wrested to support our unfavourable opinion; there is besides, more in the male than the female sex, a keenness of observation which is oftener pointed to discover the mental than the moral qualities of those they converse with; and as this is not always accompanied with a correspondent rectitude of judgment, the consequence must be that erroneous estimates are frequently formed, in which case he who forms them is very reluctant to admit the conviction of his mistake, for the simple selfish reason that it calls into question the infallibility of his own penetration, upon which principle nine persons out of ten will admit your good qualities, but deny your good sense. At Lord Lochcarron's left hand hung a very beautiful drawing of Hope nursing Love; his lordship taking it for granted, or choosing to do so, that it was the production of Miss Walpole's pencil, gave it all due praise, and delicately complimented the supposed fair artist, who joined in the former, but disclaimed the latter, by telling him it was the performance of Lady Caroline Mannark; and finding his lordship totally unacquainted with that young lady, praised her with a warmth and energy which convinced him that if his bride-elect had no other good quality, she had at least the absolute one of candour, and the negative one of freedom from envy. No one proposed music, for Cordelia, diffident of her own powers, because too humble to appreciate their extent and value, dreaded exhibiting them before Lord Lochcarron, and had implored Lady Walpole and Mrs. Addington that it might not constitute the evening's amusement. Cards Lady Walpole had not introduced, because she knew Lord Dunotter disliked them, and the party was too small for any other mode of passing time; but Miss Addington, who hated sitting still without cards in her hand, and had besides no very great pleasure in witnessing the earl's attentions to Lady Walpole, and those of Lord Lochcarron to Cordelia, observed that it was a beautiful evening, and proposed a ramble; Lady Walpole, so lately recovered from a sprained foot, did not choose to risk a relapse by walking out of daylight; Lord Dunotter of course remained in the house; Mr. and Mrs. Addington chose to do so too, and the little party, consisting only of Miss Walpole, Miss Addington, Lord Lochcarron, and Mr. Malcolm, passed out upon the lawn: though it was now near the close of September, the weather was so mild that all the luxuriance of vegetation and freshness of verdure which belong to an earlier period of the summer were preserved; the

moon was shining, though not with quite uninterrupted brilliancy, but the light clouds, which at intervals passed its disk, threw a softness over the scene which added to its interest; after a few turns, Lochcarron and Cordelia, almost imperceptibly on the part of the latter, but certainly not without design on that of the former, got to a little distance from their companions; it was an evening of singular beauty; the air was soft and mild, no object was stirring, and no sound broke the silence except the reverberations of Miss Addington's loud-toned mirth, as she hurried Mr. Malcolm forwards from place to place, and from scene to scene. Lochcarron made a few observations on evening landscape, to which Cordelia replied, and then a pause ensued; the clock of a distant village-church sounded on the ear; Lochcarron sighed, it might be involuntarily—it might be a sigh dedicated to Miss Borham—but Cordelia chose to think otherwise: the peculiarity of her situation became so oppressive that, unable to bear silence, she determined to speak; and aware that Lord Lochcarron had been in Italy, she mentioned that country, and begged to be favoured with a description of the effect of moonlight on the shores of the Mediterranean: Lochcarron, with great force and elegance, immediately detailed the observations he had made, and described what had been his feelings when he had passed evenings like the present in the bay of Naples, or on the Adriatic. Cordelia listened delighted, too much charmed with both the subject and the narrator to venture an interruption; but when he paused, she expressed a vivid interest in the descriptions he had given, and, certainly without design, but perhaps too thoughtlessly, said how much she should like to visit Italy; “And what should prevent us, my dearest Miss Walpole, from passing the ensuing winter at Naples?” said Lochcarron, in a tone of soft insinuation, taking the hand which rested on his arm and pressing it tenderly to his heart. Cordelia, in nearly breathless agitation, was incapable of reply, and Lochcarron, resolved to make an end of the matter at once, proceeded, “Forgive me, my beloved Miss Walpole, if a diffidence inspired by you, and which till this moment I have not been able to combat, has prevented me from giving utterance to the first feeling of my heart; though truly—perfectly sensible of your merits, and of the inestimable felicity I aspire to in being permitted to call you mine, I yet have not dared personally to solicit an event on which I rest all my future hopes of happiness; Lady Walpole and my father, in their kind anxiety for that happiness, have done all that I ventured to ask of them; but they have not succeeded in gaining that dear assent which alone can relieve me from the most painful of all earthly situations—suspense; to-morrow will witness their union, and I fervently hope they will be happy; oh that it might also witness—may I, dearest Miss Walpole, say *ours*?” The moonbeams as they fell on Lochcarron's countenance, showed Cordelia

“The pleading look,  
“Downcast, and low, in meek submission drest,”

which accompanied his words; she could not, and, to speak truth, she would not suppose it “full of guile;” she hoped Lochcarron loved her till she believed he did so: whether his rhetoric did in reality make any impression cannot be determined, but at all events not choosing it to appear, she said, though in a very low and hesitating voice, “Precipitate measures, my lord, are seldom justified by subsequent circumstances, and you must allow me to observe that both reason and propriety demand an acquaintance of much longer date.” “In our case,” returned Lochcarron, with emphasis, “both are propitiated, nor can

the most rigid votaries of either accuse us of violating their rules, when acting under the sanction, and following the example of our parents.” This was so powerful an argument, that Cordelia was at a loss how to parry it; her reason was not convinced, neither were the softer attributes of her character won to recede from the determination she had made; but she felt that to defend her objection to an immediate marriage would be to indirectly censure the conduct of Lady Walpole, who was acting with still more indefensible precipitancy, having so lately lost her husband, and who had not been acquainted with Lord Dunotter longer than Cordelia had known his son; she was hesitating on what new plea to ground her persistence in refusal, when they heard the quick step of Miss Addington near them; Lochcarron thought he had gained an advantage, and tried to follow it up by saying, “Allow me, my dear Miss Walpole, to hazard one more observation; why should the event of to-morrow place us in a degree of relationship, as it respects each other, approaching to fraternal, when a far dearer tie might—” he paused, but Cordelia felt the full force of his plea; she had never before contemplated the subject in this light, but clearly saw that it would be more within the pale of delicacy at once to become his wife than to reside under the same roof with him as the son of her mother-in-law’s husband; her hesitating manner, downcast eye, and blushing cheek, told Lochcarron her thoughts; “Will my dear Miss Walpole bless me with her consent?” he whispered; silence, it has always been said, gives it; and Lochcarron understood the tacit compliance; he had scarcely time to thank her with a tender pressure, when they were joined by their companions, and they all returned to the house; here Lochcarron soon found means to convey to his father a whisper of his success; this was as speedily communicated to Lady Walpole, who had already read it in the countenance of Cordelia; and before the earl and his son returned to Ravenpark, all parties so well understood each other, that every remaining arrangement requisite for the solemnization of the two marriages the following day was settled.

Miss Walpole retired to her apartment, but enjoyed little repose; her feelings were in a tumult, and shrinking alike from reflection and anticipation, she rose in the morning at her accustomed hour, and busied herself in preparations for the important event which was about to take place.

END OF VOLUME I.

Henry Mozley, Printer, Derby.