

ASHTON PRIORY.

ASHTON PRIORY:

A N O V E L.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

BENEDICTA AND POWIS CASTLE.

VOL. II.

LOVE is not Sin, but where 'tis sinful LOVE,
Mine is a Flame so holy and so clear,
That the white Taper leaves no Soot behind,
No Smoke of Lust.

DRYDEN.

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M DCC XCII.

ASHTON PRIORY.

CHAP. XIX.

*An excellent Method of directing a young
Lady's Inclinations.*

“I Have sent for you, Eliza, in order to discourse you on a matter of consequence.—Hold up your head: how frightful you look in that beggarly jacket!”

“It is too bad to be worn, madam, and therefore I designed giving it to Jenny.”

“Giving it!—No, no, it will do to cover a bed-quilt for one of the servants. You must not think always to be so squandering; it is high time you should study economy, and know how to make the best of things, which, by the bye, brings me to the subject I want to talk with you upon. Do you know, child, you are to be married very soon?”

Miss Butterfield's astonishment prevented her making a reply, and her mother again resumed, “Yes, Eliza, I have provided a very worthy man to be your husband,—one who is rich enough to keep you a coach, if you can bring him to that point. Indeed, I like for people to make a figure abroad, however they may stint themselves at home.”

“But, dear madam, let me know to whom I am to be sacrificed.”

“You might have found a better word, miss. The person I have fixed on is Captain Overbury.—What! is the ideot got to whimpering? I am astonished; but, let me tell you, girl, that I am determined on the thing; and, if you shew the least resistance to my will, I will never own you as a daughter more.”

“Hear me (cried Eliza, sobbing) at least one word.”

“Not half a one, you undutiful baggage! What! have I taken all this care, and set my poor wits so hard at work for nothing? I won't bear it, and therefore I charge you to prepare for receiving the captain as you ought to do, or turn out of my house immediately.”

It is certain that, had Mrs. Butterfield employed her cogitations for a month together, to discover the most effectual method of defeating her own purpose, she could not have hit on one better adapted than this she had chosen; for Miss Butterfield, being, as before observed, far gone in the romantic taste, no sooner heard her mother propose marriage in so peremptory a style, than her inclinations instantaneously revolted to absolute disobedience. Whatever the *agrémens* of the captain might be, he was the man which parental tyranny attempted to impose on her, and consequently to be rejected with invincible firmness.

Eliza, in the true spirit of romance, retired to her chamber to bewail her misfortunes, and Mrs. Butterfield was somewhat comforted by the presence of Mrs. Martin, who, perceiving all was not right, and burning with impatience for an active part in the matter, whatever it was, addressed her with, "Lack-a-day! my worthy friend, I am afraid something rather unpleasant has happened.—Bless me, how I am distressed!" This sympathetic cant had the desired effect. The angry dame unfolded the whole affair, weeping and raving by turns at the monstrous obstinacy (as she termed it) of her daughter. Mrs. Martin was immediately in the same key, lamented the folly of young women who were averse to submit their inclinations to parental direction, and then, to wind up the farce, joined in a bitter shower of tears, for these she had always conveniently at command. Having wept, and railed, and sympathized, as much as appeared becoming the occasion, she next proceeded to counsel: "To be sure, my dear madam, you are the best of mothers. I have heard so high a character of Captain Overbury, that I cannot but be surprised at the conduct of Miss Butterfield;—she is infatuated surely. Will you give me leave to try what my remonstrances can effect on her?"

"Aye, do, dear Martin, give the simple girl a little of your good advice. Perhaps you may bring her to reason."

Mrs. Martin immediately withdrew for that purpose, and found, as she expected, the young lady in tears.

"My sweet girl, my best Eliza, what can occasion this distress, which cuts me to my very soul to witness?"

Here, as before, an ample explanation took place; the confidante had only to take the other side of the argument to be as acceptable to the daughter as to the mother.

"To be sure, my dear, parents have a right to command their children."

"Not in affairs of the heart, my dear Mrs. Martin."

"Why,—no. I confess nature seems to have limited their power there, and it is a pity that they are so apt to forget those exquisite sensibilities which they themselves were once endowed with. It is true, I am not a parent, but, if I were, I think I should proceed on a different plan."

"Good creature!—I wish you were my mother."

"Why, then, suppose you fancy me such, and unbosom to me all your griefs. Are you acquainted with the captain?"

"Not in the least."

"How absurd, to expect a young woman to love a man she has never seen!"

“Aye, a man she has never seen!—But one may love a man one has seen but once, Mrs. Martin.”

“Undoubtedly. Refined minds are eminently susceptible of delicate impressions.—The captain, I think, is a sailor.”

“Yes,—a vulgar, unpolished, odious, tar!”

“I must say, my love, that, from what I conceive of this gentleman, he cannot be suitable to one of your refined taste and sentiments: besides, it looks so like a Smithfield bargain, that I do not wonder you are hurt at the idea. I pity you from my soul, nevertheless——”

“You would advise me to accept of him,” interrupting her.

“I do not know what to say, my poor girl. If you do, you may probably be miserable, and, if you do not, your parents’ resentment will fall heavily, I fear.”

“And let it, Mrs. Martin.—What is life to love!

Love, free as air, at sight of human ties,
Spreads his light wings, and in a moment dies.
At least, such ties as those my good mother would impose on me.”

Sweet girl!—But, Eliza, listen to me.—However disagreeable this match may be to you, (and such I fear it infallibly will,) you must resolve to submit to it.”

“Can you be serious?”

“Unquestionably so. Consider the duty you owe to your good parents, who, though they may be a little mistaken, can mean nothing but your advantage.—The captain is rich.”

“But, my good friend, am I not also to consider the duty I owe to myself?—Tell me that.”

Here Mrs. Martin thought proper to give the young casuist the advantage of the argument by pretending to have nothing to say in reply. Eliza concluded she had actually foiled her, and it was the intention of the other that she should draw that very conclusion; but, for what reasons, the good reader must be content to learn from some future chapter. At present, we can only say that Mrs. Martin concluded her part by advising Eliza to pacify her mother, for the present, by concealing her feelings so far as not openly to avow her repugnance to the captain. Much (she said) might be effected by such a conduct; whereas, declared opposition could but serve to accelerate the fate she dreaded.

Such a mode was certainly beneath the dignity of romance, but, the age of chivalry being no more, Eliza considered that she had at present no valorous knight to defend her cause, and therefore submitted, (though reluctantly,) to the advice.—In the mean time, Mrs. Martin promised to exert her endeavours with the mother to bring her over to a more reasonable way of thinking; not doubting, (she affirmed,) but that lady would in time be induced to see the cruelty of desiring her daughter to give her hand to a man who could never obtain her heart;—but, as the bond of this stroke of friendship, she insisted that Miss Overbury should never be informed of the conversation that had passed between them.—“It is her brother, you know, Eliza.”——The suggestion implied a selfishness Miss Butterfield could never suspect to be any part of Charlotte’s character. However, to oblige this kind friend, she promised her all the reserve she desired on the occasion.

C H A P. XX.

The Serenade.

ALTHOUGH, pursuant to the advice of Mrs. Martin, Eliza assumed as cheerful an appearance as she could, the penetrating eye of Charlotte discovered more at the bottom than the former chose to avow; but, as she had not the honour of being in the secrets of the family, it was impossible for her to suspect the cause from whence the uneasiness of her companion arose. An incident, however, occurred, which intimated to her a part, though not the whole occasion of it.—Happening one night to make a longer stay than usual in Miss Butterfield's apartment, which lay in a remote part of the Priory, she was suddenly surprized by the sound of a violin played under the window, to which a plaintive voice sung the following stanzas.

Ah! why did Nature form you fair,
Yet gave a heart of steel?
Why was I doom'd those charms to see,
And yet my love conceal?

Deep in my pensive eyes 'tis writ,
Sighs rend my aching breast;
I pine the tedious night away,
Depriv'd of wonted rest.

The sun breaks forth to glad the earth,
Sweet flowers hail his ray;—
Be thou my sun, and let thy smile
Chase all my gloom away.

“The voice (said Miss Overbury,) is more harmonious than the poetry; but, prithee, Eliza, who is this nocturnal serenader?”

Covered with confusion, she replied, affecting an air of indifference, that she supposed it was some village-rustic, not worth enquiry.

“But who, my dear, would take the liberty of approaching your window in such a manner?”

“Perhaps he has mistaken it for one of the maids.”

Charlotte, giving her a look of serious attention, perceived she seemed to shrink from so nice a scrutiny, and in her blushing countenance saw room for a suspicion pretty nearly the truth. She would not, however, discover her thoughts at that time, but wished her good night with more solemnity than was usual to her.—Eliza was not yet so much an adept in dissimulation as to be able to meet her on the following morning without

discovering manifest uneasiness. Charlotte read her feelings, and, with the most friendly intentions, persisted in following her, though it was plain the other industriously avoided her company. At last they met in the garden, where the following conversation took place between them.

“Eliza, I cannot but observe a visible alteration in your manner. You are no longer the dear lively communicative girl you used to be. What is the occasion of it?”

“You distress me, Charlotte, by a mere suspicion of this nature; yet, if you had not anticipated the remark, I should perhaps have made exactly such an one on your own behaviour.—In what manner did you leave me last night!”

“I confess, my dear, it was with some seriousness and much concern, but with a heart animated with the warmest affection.”

“I saw that foolish affair occasioned you to look grave; and, to confess the truth, my beloved Charlotte, I have severely upbraided myself ever since for the want of confidence I manifested towards you, for my poor heart longs to repose itself in your friendly bosom,—assure me but of your forgiveness and pity.”

“The first is unnecessary, as I could have no cause to be offended; the latter I am incapable of withholding, whenever my Eliza’s affairs may be so unhappy as to require it.—Come, come, (smiling,) this looks like so pretty, so tender an affair, that I long to be at the bottom of it. You have an enamorado incog, is it not so?”

“Ah! if you knew my feelings, you would treat them with less levity; but you never were sensible of the power of the soft passion, Charlotte.”

“Not so far as to allow it to disturb my repose, I confess; yet, for all this, I can sympathize with those who believe they do.”

“You think love then an imaginary sentiment.”

“A good part of what is called so I do sincerely; but, dear creature, do tell me something of the charming fellow who has raised such a combustion in that gentle bosom;—his name, I mean.”

“I scarcely know it myself.”

“But you do his family, at least.”

“I am quite a stranger to it. All I know is, that he is a gentleman. Do you recollect, Charlotte, a genteel young fellow, who frequently sits in the next pew to us at church.”

“I do:— but surely this cannot be the lover of my Eliza?”

“And what would there be so extraordinary in the matter if it were?”

“Because nobody knows any thing of him.”

“You, perhaps, mistake. Mrs. Martin has assured me that she has been credibly informed he is of a very ancient and wealthy family, and came hither merely for the benefit of his health.”

“I never heard this village remarked for the salubrity of its air.”

“Nor I neither. You see then that this cannot be the true motive of his stay.—To be plain with you, Charlotte, I saw this young man one morning in a solitary walk, and I verily thought he would have rivetted his eyes on me. He was then at Ashton, on a shooting-party, but since that time has constantly resided at the farm on the hill.—Do you comprehend me now?”

“Too plainly, I fear, my love.”

“What now would sagacious insensibility forebode?”

“To be plain with you, Eliza, there is something in this affair which makes me shudder to think on. Consider seriously, that, if he is thus attached to your person, a man of fortune and respectable connections, there can be no reason why he should not openly make his proposals to your father.”

“How indelicately you judge, Charlotte! Is it not time enough for these odious formalities?”

“Ah! my sweet friend, I doubt you stand on a fatal precipice, from which a too visionary imagination will fling you into ruin. Be not offended, I love you, and therefore would prevent whatever might be destructive to your welfare. Depend on it, this clandestine lover is either too high or too low to become a proper object of your regard. Possibly he is some libertine of quality, who has marked you as the prey of the most abandoned principles; but, if not so, then be assured it is some despicable wretch, who seeks merely the fortune which you possess as the gift of your aunt. At all events, I am convinced there is something in the affair which will not bear the light.”

“My aunt’s legacy is no more than five thousand pounds, too small a sum surely to become a bait to avarice.”

“It would be affluence to a beggar, Eliza. Look well to it, my dear girl, (the tears swimming in her eyes,) for ruin is before you.”

Affected with Charlotte’s emotion, and touched with the affectionate earnestness of her manner, Eliza burst into tears; throwing her arms round her neck, she, sobbing,

exclaimed, "Save me from myself, my best friend, and tell me what you would advise me to do."

"Resolve to put an end to so imprudent a connection at once."

"You know not what such a sacrifice would cost me."

"It will cost you nothing, but the extirpation of certain romantic ideas, Eliza.—I confess there are *agrémens* which might involuntarily interest one in the behalf of particular objects almost at first sight; but is this the sentiment on which you would hope to build the happiness of life?—A permanent passion must have esteem for its basis; and, trust me, my love, all impressions, which are not thus founded, (as your's in the nature of things cannot be,) may be easily managed with the assistance of reason and resolution. Believe me, I advise you nothing which I have not myself found practicable."

"You have been in love then," eagerly.

"I confess I know what it is to feel a partiality for an agreeable man. I also know that pride and reason were abundantly able to surmount so idle a prepossession, as long as there was reason for me to suppose the object unworthy of my regard."

To be short, Eliza, by the remonstrances of her friend, was prevailed on to give up the cause of her incognito, and to resolve never to speak to or hear from him more. Whether this resolution was the effect of momentary conviction or the more permanent suggestions of reason time only must shew. It is certain that Charlotte firmly believed it to be the latter, and, as she was no less charitable in her censures than warm in her friendships, she threw the veil of pity over the weakness of her friend, and resolved to remember it no more.

C H A P. XXI.

A Stranger arrives at the Priory.

WHAT the captain's opinion of Mrs. Butterfield's epistle was, or by what enigmatical genius he discovered the direct purport of it, this history doth not declare.—In a short time after the dispatch of it, Charlotte was made happy by seeing at the Priory an only brother, whom she ardently loved, and their meeting was mutually celebrated with tears of joy. It being several years since they had seen each other, he could not avoid testifying both surprise and pleasure at the singular improvements which, in that time, had taken place in his sister's person. The fine expression of her countenance, together with the proof he had lately made of her amiable disposition, inspired him with a very elevated and pleasing sensation, while, with a satisfaction almost approaching to rapture, she contemplated in him the generous protector and unfeigned friend.

By a certain concatenation of ideas not unusual on such occasions, Eliza had drawn the picture of this young gentleman, in her mind's eye, in a style so totally different from the original, that she felt a sort of agreeable surprise, when, instead of the figure her prejudiced imagination had pourtrayed, she beheld a handsome person, of about twenty-five, with a set of features remarkably regular; a clear brown complexion, animated with the freshness of health; dark expressive eyes, arched with the exactness of the nicest pencil; and, in short, the very reverse of that which she had expected to see. Captain Overbury was certainly an interesting figure, and every glance of the eye spoke the man of intelligence and urbanity. A liberal education rendered him superior to professional peculiarities. He was not necessitated through a deficiency of conversable talents to adopt the affectation of sea-phrases or shocking expletives; but, though on board he was the intrepid skilful officer, yet, on shore, he appeared, in every sense of the word, the polite and accomplished gentleman.

Such was the husband Mrs. Butterfield had pointed out to her daughter; not, indeed, so much from conviction of his merit as a regard to his fortune, and the young lady, on her first acquaintance with him, could not but be conscious that he merited not the repugnance she had felt to her mother's command.—But now a question of some moment was depending between the parents, respecting a proper mode of directing the young gentleman's attention to their daughter. Fortune, however, happily stepped forward to relieve their embarrassment, for the Captain had not been long at the Priory before he discovered something of an attachment, which they had formed a score of ridiculous plans for effecting.

Miss Butterfield (much about Charlotte's age) was a little lively brunette, with so charming an air of naïveté, and so much good-humour in her countenance, as gave additional charms to the symmetry of her shape and features. The Captain had seen much of foreign countries as well as his own, without meeting a woman capable of attaching his affections or exciting the remotest wish of the Hymeneal bond. He sought not beauty, though not an admirer of deformity. He desired not wit in a wife, though determined to

marry with no one who was not capable of enlivening a domestic hour by the charms of a solid understanding and refined mind. In fine, he had long looked for a woman who was devoid of the levity of fashion, the disguise of art, or the caprice of an illiterate and ill-disposed mind, and such an one he imagined to have found in the person of Eliza Butterfield. Yet, before he ventured to drop any thing of a serious nature, he determined, with a most endearing confidence, to reveal his sentiments to his sister, not doubting but she had it in her power to give a more certain information respecting the object of his attention. With this view, meeting her one day alone, he thus accosted her, "It appears to me a little extraordinary, my dear Charlotte, that a girl of your lively disposition should prefer this solitary mansion to the agreeable family of Sir Bevil Grimstone, except (as I must suppose to be the case) you found something more engaging in the company of Miss Butterfield than in that of Miss Grimstone."

"That, indeed, was part of my motive for quitting London, brother."

"I am not surprised at it. She doubtless appears a very amiable girl in your eye."

"And, if I am not mistaken, (archly,) she does in your's also, my good brother."

"You are a girl of close observation, I find, Charlotte. I would have the most latent secret of my heart exposed to my sister, for it is not merely a fraternal affection I boast of bearing you, but an esteem and friendship the most lively and sincere; therefore, to confess a truth, I have sought an opportunity of making you the confidante of my secret thoughts on a very interesting subject."

"And may you ever find me deserving of such confidence!"

"As the first proof of it, tell me with sincerity, sister, what is your real opinion of Miss Butterfield. The intimacy subsisting between you must have given you an unreserved acquaintance with her disposition.—In one word, is it such as your brother might look to for happiness in the matrimonial state?"

"The taste of you gentlemen is so very capricious, how is it possible for me to determine what are the qualifications you require! However, to be serious, I assure you, in the first place, that her character is entirely free from disguise. She is, I verily believe, perfectly artless and sincere."

"And that, Charlotte, I confess, is what I almost despaired of finding in your sex, therefore had nearly bound myself to a vow of perpetual celibacy."

"Come, Sir, (laughing,) no sarcasms on us poor females, or you bind me in sullen silence."

"Pardon me, sister.—But have you nothing more to say in recommendation of your friend?"

“It should seem by your own account I have said enough, for sincerity appears, in your esteem, to comprehend the whole of female worth.”

“By no means. Sincerity, indeed, illustrates all other virtues; but it is not every lady, Charlotte, who would be a gainer by its exercise.”

“Sarcastic again.—However, for your comfort, I can assure you Eliza would be no loser by it, since the native goodness of her disposition would bear the strictest scrutiny. She is gentle, benevolent, diffident of her own merit; in short, every thing to be desired in a wife. Her understanding,—but first give me leave to ask if you are one of those gentlemen who think the latter an indifferent point of consideration.”

“I would have my wife possess at least as much sense as should leave me no room to blush either at her conversation or conduct.”

“Why, then, I think Eliza is endowed with a good natural understanding, but you guess, I suppose, from the character of her parents, that it can have derived no advantages from cultivation; yet, should she happily fall to the lot of a sensible worthy man, I doubt not but it would soon receive its proper lustre. She has, however, one defect, which, as a person sincerely interested in your happiness, my dear Jack, I must not conceal from you.”

“What is that?” impatiently.

“An imagination ridiculously romantic, owing, I conceive, to the little pains that have been taken in cultivating her mind, and directing a lively fancy in its proper bias. This, if left to itself, will, I fear, unfortunately mislead her; but, should you be able to make an impression on her heart, brother, it is probable such a propensity would be no disadvantage to your mutual happiness.”

“I thank you, my dear Charlotte, for the frankness which you have so generously shewn on this occasion. One question more, and I have done.—Do you believe Miss Butterfield’s affections are wholly disengaged?”

This enquiry threw the young lady into some little perplexity. She was not willing to reveal that part of Eliza’s conduct which she had lately witnessed with so much concern, since she firmly believed her to be convinced of the impropriety of it. She had, moreover, so steady a reliance on her integrity, as to be assured she would not accept the addresses of her brother, provided her affections were not wholly disengaged from any other object, therefore replied,

“I will not pretend to satisfy you on a point of that nature, brother; but I think neither Eliza’s honour nor the disposition I have just apprised you of would permit her to give you a favourable reception, should her inclinations be placed on another object.”

Satisfied with the force of this suggestion, the Captain determined on making proposals to Mr. Butterfield, and was by that gentleman referred wholly to his lady. On the application being made to her, it was with difficulty she concealed the joy she felt at finding affairs in so promising a way. Together with every possible encouragement, she gave him an assurance that her daughter's affections were entirely disengaged, and then added, "As you have now broke the ice, Captain, I will tell you what I have been thinking;—we will make a cross-match of it; you shall have Eliza, and my son Arthur shall marry your sister:—will not this be quite the thing?" The Captain replied that he could have no objection to the measure, provided his sister had none. "Why, as to that, a word from you, Captain, will do the business effectually, for I know she has a great *reveration* for you."

"I would by no means take advantage of my sister's kind partiality to attempt the biassing her inclinations. Mr. Arthur, madam, will doubtless be the most proper person to effect that point."

"Well, well, be that as it may. You agree to marry Betsey, so I will set Martin on making out a settlement in readiness."

"But, my dear madam, you forget that I am not yet so happy as to have obtained Miss Butterfield's consent."

"Her consent!—You have mine, and that is sufficient. You may tell her, indeed, of what we have agreed on, but if she should be *refectory*, I shall know how to act."

Eliza, however, when formally addressed by her lover, gave him such a reception as he concluded he had no reason to be dissatisfied with; that is, she heard him with a modest silence, which he interpreted as a tacit permission to continue his suit. As she expressed no repugnance, he naturally believed she felt none. Nor, indeed, did she at that moment. Charlotte's remonstrances on a late occasion had made an impression on her mind which was not yet erased. Besides, the Captain was in every respect so unexceptionable a lover, his address so delicate, (for she did not yet know he had applied to her father and mother,) that, had the first interview been rather more romantically brought about, and she could have put Mrs. Butterfield's stern command out of her head, it is extremely probable she would have indulged for him a most ardent affection. As it was, she was far from appearing out of humour in his company. Mrs. Butterfield was in raptures, Charlotte delighted, and the Captain as happy as a man could be, who saw apparent room to hope he should one day obtain the only woman he had ever regarded with affection.

C H A P. XXII.

A Trial of Sensibility.

IT should have been noticed before, that Miss Overbury, a day or two after the Captain's arrival, acquainted him with the circumstance of William Sanders's death, as also of the situation of the surviving family. Respectfully recollecting that honest sailor, he thanked his sister for her beneficence to the widow, "for which (added he) I consider myself your debtor;" and then, obtaining directions, sat out instantly for the cottage. The road to it laid through the village church-yard, in which, on a rising ground, shaded by an old yew-tree, was a grave, over which the turf seemed newly laid, nor was the verdure of the binding osiers entirely withered. On this spot a boy of about three years old laid crying, in piteous accents, "Daddy, won't you come to us? You sleep here so long, and I am come to awaken you."

"And who was your daddy, my poor child?"

"He was called William Sanders.—You can speak loud, come and make him hear."

The Captain was a man of exquisite sensibility. He put his handkerchief to his eyes with one hand, and with the other drew a shilling from his pocket. "Take this, my sweet fellow, and buy yourself a cake."

The child immediately forgot his infant-sorrow in the view of present gratification, and ran directly to his mother. The Captain sat down on a stone close by the grave,—a tear dropped from his eye. "It is thus, (said he,) I pay the tribute of respect to thy honesty and worth: but no,—(rising with a noble ardour in his countenance,) there are other means of doing so."——Pursuing his way to the cottage, he was soon a spectator of the widow's tears, which he found flowed no less for the disgrace of her eldest son than for the loss of a beloved and faithful husband.

"Had my poor boy, your honour, (said she,) committed the fault from any wickedness of disposition, I could have borne it; but to think that love for a poor dying father should have brought him into this mischief cuts me to the heart."

"Be in no pain on that account, (replied the Captain). Let the lad be immediately got home, for I will myself be his patron, and your's too, my good woman, for poor Sanders's sake."

To describe the widow's grateful emotion would be impracticable. Suffice it to observe, that, in a short time, young Sanders ventured to appear once more in his native village, the Captain having compromised the affair with the farmer as well as purchased his indenture of the shoemaker, his master, after which he took him into his own service. Miss Overbury (it has already been observed) had taken Sally, the eldest daughter, in

quality of waiting-maid; and was so well pleased with her behaviour, that she already entertained a more than common respect for her. Sally was a girl of acute parts, and of a most grateful and affectionate disposition, though rather too pretty, as Mr. Arthur used to observe, for a waiting-maid. "I wish (said he one day to Charlotte) your brother may not run away with her, for I perceive he eyes her very cordially."

"I am sure (returned she, piqued at the suggestion) he has too much politeness to think of supplanting you in a scheme on which you might have set your mind."

One evening as they were sitting at supper, the footman delivered a letter to Captain Overbury, the contents of which appeared to give him sensible pleasure. "It is from a friend (said he) whom I have not seen for a long time, and if you, madam, (addressing Mrs. Butterfield,) will permit the liberty, I will propose a meeting with him at the Priory."

"Dear Captain, (returned that lady,) I beg you will spare such a superfluity of apology. You are absolutely polite in *recess*. But it gives me *inaccessible* pain that you should forget you are quite at home at the Priory."

After a little reflection, the Captain was enabled to pick out of this eloquent speech, that he might take the liberty of inviting his friend, who was then at the distance of about twenty miles to the Priory, and therefore immediately retired for that purpose.

"Pray, Miss Overbury, (said Mr. Arthur, inquisitively,) do you know who this friend of the Captain is?"

"Indeed, Sir, I have not heard my brother say."

"Some jolly tar, I suppose," a little contemptuously.

"Fortune forbid it should be an academician!" returned she in the same strain.

"Why, madam, do you think the character contemptible?"

"My dear Sir, the universe, you know, cannot bear two suns, nor Ashton two scholars."

Mrs. Butterfield, who certainly thought this a very high-raised panegyric on the lustre of her son's abilities, declared it was *perdegis* clever. Mr. Arthur, however, felt the full force of its irony, and retired in sullen silence.—Of this nature were the conversations which usually took place between this young couple, and, in Mrs. Butterfield's estimation, they amounted to a proof that the fond pair were merrily jogging on their way to the temple of Hymen. "We shall have two weddings in the family very shortly, (said she,) and we will have a sumptuous *galley** on the occasion."

* It is supposed the lady meant the word *gala*.

“Why, child, our river is scarcely able to bear a wash-tub, it is so shallow.”

“You do not understand French, Mr. Butterfield, or you would have known that I meant a feast, or entertainment.”

“Truly, sweeting, I never knew that you dabbled in French lingo before.”

C H A P. XXIII.

Interesting Conversations.

EVERY body at the Priory wearing a face of joy, Mrs. Martin thought it convenient to assume one of the same cast, and accordingly seemed to participate in the general satisfaction with the utmost sincerity. She often assured Mrs. Butterfield of the inexpressible happiness she felt in seeing every thing succeeding so desirably. “It is to you, my dear Martin, (replied that lady,) I am in great measure indebted for its being so.—Your good counsel has had its due effect, I hope, on the behaviour of that perverse girl. It is a charming thing to have such a sensible prudent neighbour at hand.”

“Ah, well-a-day! my poor abilities can have done but little service; yet, what is there I would not attempt for the advantage of this dear family!—It will be a match you think?”

“Oh! certainly. I am persuaded Eliza has a sincere regard for the Captain.”

Mrs. Martin wished to have some conversation with the young lady herself, and, understanding she was in the garden alone, followed her thither. Eliza, as usual, was reading in an alcove. The other, affecting not to discover her, fell into the following soliloquy: “Poor sacrificed victim! my heart bleeds.—Oh the cruelty of unfeeling parents!”

“Who are you speaking to, my dear Mrs. Martin?” said Miss Butterfield.

“Heavens, Eliza! (starting,) how you have surprised me! I little thought any one was so near; I was only talking to myself, as I am apt to do when my heart is warmly interested.”

But who, pray, is the subject of so pathetic a soliloquy?”

“Pshaw! it signifies nothing.”

“I know you meant myself, did you not, my good friend?”

“I confess I did. Ah! my sweet girl, when I see you thus heroically determined on sacrificing happiness to duty, I look upon you with admiration and pity.”

“But perhaps (interrupted the young lady with a serene air) I may find happiness and duty go together.”

“Oh that you may! (weeping and grasping her by the hand.) But, my dear child, I see your secret struggles, though concealed from every other eye; and you would, if possible, hide them from yourself:—but friendship is keen-sighted;—I know them all.

Captain Overbury is a mean-souled wretch, to persist in taking the advantage of your mother's partiality in his favour; but, indeed, he looks on you as his purchase.—To be sure, he drove a good bargain with her, and who can blame him?—It is a well concerted affair.”

“He has already solicited my mother, then?”

“Yes, long before he did you. We are not to expect delicacy of sentiment in a sailor. Provided pecuniary matters are well settled, they have no notion of the ineffable union of noble and virtuous hearts. How should they, as they get wives in every port they come to?”

Eliza sighed deeply.

“Nevertheless, (resumed Mrs. Martin,) this gentleman may make a good husband, provided you will not be jealous, and that I know is a weakness you would be superior to.”

“In its grosser sense I trust I should; yet, Mrs. Martin, I doubt I could ill bear a rival in a husband's heart.”

“A fiddle for the heart! that is out of the question. I dare answer you would have as much of that as any other woman; and, if you can overlook a thousand indelicacies which are ever the result of inelegant minds, you will, as you say, find happiness and duty go together.”

Here the young lady burst into a flood of tears. Mrs. Martin threw her arms round her, and pressed her warmly to her bosom. “My poor Eliza, my sweet girl! (exclaimed she,) how my heart bleeds for you! Yet let a friend give her best advice. I know you dislike the Captain, nor can I pretend to say he is a person at all suitable to you; yet it is the will of your parents that you marry him: it is also, no doubt, the wish of your beloved Charlotte. In short, every thing makes for it, and you must have him. The Captain, I hope, has some good qualities, and, if you can only exert a little philosophy, you may be tolerably happy.”

To talk of philosophy to a romantic enthusiast was saying nothing, or worse than nothing.—Eliza, after some time, recovering from her emotion, calmly replied, “My dear Mrs. Martin, I know you would, if possible, promote the happiness of the family, but it must not be at the expence of an individual of it. My eyes are now open to the horrid gulph before me; for, indeed of late, I have been sleeping on the brink of a precipice. The stars had certainly fascinated me, I think, or I never should have dreamt of happiness with Captain Overbury; but my good genius has broken the spell. I see the affair in its proper light, and will sooner die than consent to this odious marriage.”

“What! (with an air of astonishment,) will you tarnish at last the noble heroism for which I just now admired you? Consider, I beseech you, Eliza, what sufferings, what

poignant distress will attend such an imprudent resolution!—Better to lead an insipid life with the Captain than bear the resentment of all your friends; but I see company coming towards us. You shall drink tea with me this afternoon, and we will endeavour to set this matter on a proper footing.’

Charlotte and her brother advanced to join them, and the former in a sprightly tone said, “Here then we have found the little runaway. We have been seeking you, my dear, in every corner and thicket of the park.”

Mrs. Martin made an effort to withdraw, which the Captain by his looks heartily wished she would; but Eliza, with a secret twitch of her gown, desired she would take a turn or two with them, to which she consenting, the conversation of course became general, and that lady, notwithstanding the inelegancies she had discovered in the Captain’s mind, condescended to pay him particular attention, applauding every syllable he uttered, and declaring, at the end of their perambulation, that she had not spent half an hour so agreeably a long time; but this Miss Butterfield imputed to her friend’s excessive politeness. It is certain, that, if she had another motive, the Fates ordained that it should be confined to her own breast, as the Captain, whose penetration probably gave him some insight into her character, mortally hated her, and could never bring himself to treat her with more than distant civility. This was a sensible mortification to one, who, on all occasions, would have had it thought that her interest was of consequence in the family. Had the Captain, therefore, endeavoured to engage her mediation in favour of his suit, she perhaps would not have pronounced him so very inelegant a character.

In the afternoon, Eliza got leave of her mother to drink tea at Mrs. Martin’s. The two ladies had taken their work, and were beginning to revive the conversation of the morning, when a servant brought word that a gentleman at the door wanted Mr. Martin. “Will you excuse me, Miss Butterfield, (said she,) it is a person on business, and I must invite him into the parlour.”

“By all means.”

“I am extremely sorry (said Mrs. Martin on the gentleman’s appearing,) that my husband is from home, Sir; but, if you will take the trouble to call again, or would choose to leave your business with me”—

“It is only, madam, (replied he rather pensively,) to enquire if he has drawn up that paper for which I gave him instructions the other day.”

“I believe not, Sir, (smiling,) and I hope there is no occasion for him to be in a hurry on the business.”

“More than you are aware of, (returned the other angrily.) Tell him, if you please, madam, that I will be delayed no longer.”

The gentleman then withdrew, and Mrs. Martin, turning to her companion, observed she was covered with confusion. She took no notice of it, however, but said, “I pity from my heart that poor young man. He is certainly in a desponding way, and I fear has some fatal design in his head, for he has employed Mr. Martin to make his will, and you see how earnest he is that it should be done.”

“I hope not, (answered Eliza with a tear glistening in her eye;—for, to confess a secret, it was no other than the very gallant mentioned in a preceding chapter, and whom she had not seen since the Captain’s arrival) I hope not.—Pray, Mrs. Martin, do you know any thing of that young man?”

“Very little, (coolly.) They say his name is Wilmot, and that he is of a good family in Yorkshire. Now I know something of such a family there, and I confess, by the young gentleman’s countenance, I should think he belonged to it. They are vastly rich, and the most respectable people in the county.”

“But what should occasion his being here so long?”

“That, I confess, puzzles me. His arrival here was merely accidental; but then his long continuance:—though, whenever he goes, the people where he lives will half break their hearts, they say he is so sensible, affable, and genteel, in his manners;—generous as a prince, and seems to regard money no more than dirt. I never saw such linen for fineness in my life, as some of his which the farmer’s wife shewed me.—He certainly is a gentleman.”

“Poor young man!” exclaimed Eliza with a sigh.

“I fear, indeed, (resumed Mrs. Martin,) he is to be pitied. Something seems to hang on his mind, but what, nobody can tell.—Sometimes he talks of leaving Ashton, and orders his things to be packed up; then he unpacks them again,—swears he cannot stir. It is a most inexplicable affair; however, every body agrees that he deserves a better fate than he seems to have met with.”

“You affect me much,” weeping.

“It is the tenderness of your disposition, my dear;—but let us talk no more of it.”

Tea was then brought in, after which Mrs. Martin proposed a walk in the fields, to which Eliza assenting, they directed their way through a meadow, shaded on one side by a hanging wood. They had not proceeded far, when a person was observed to rush suddenly from a thick inclosure, and walked with remarkable swiftness some paces before them. “There is that poor young fellow! (cried Mrs. Martin.) Bless me, how fast he walks!—Ah! as I live he is making towards the lake which lies by yonder hedge. I was afraid of this,—but let us follow him. Perhaps we may come time enough to prevent so dreadful a step.”

The two ladies immediately quickened their pace, though Eliza felt scarcely able to support her trembling frame. "Let us run, (said she,) or we shall surely be too late."— She had no sooner spoken, than Mrs. Martin, in her prodigious haste, stumbled over a stone, and sprained her ankle so violently, that she was forced to recline herself on the grass.

"How unluckily this happens, Miss Butterfield! I cannot possibly stir a step farther, but do you go on, and I will wait for you here. To save the life of a fellow-creature will be charity."

Without stopping to expostulate, the young lady flew towards the spot, where she found Mr. Wilmot with his hat off, standing pensively on the side of the pond. It will be unnecessary to add the effect of this interruption, farther than to observe, that, in compliance with her intreaties, he desisted from his purpose. What the nature of their farther conversation was will appear in the sequel of this history.

C H A P. XXIV.

Best Method of lessening parochial Expences.

MISS Overbury one evening, returning from a charitable visit in the neighbourhood, found her brother's expected friend was arrived. But how shall we describe her emotion, when, on entering the parlour, she beheld in him the person of George Danby. Nothing could appear to her more inscrutable than did the motives of this visit. The Captain had never mentioned to her his being particularly acquainted with any branch of the Danby family, though the fact was, he had formerly been at school with this young gentleman, and ever since a very strict friendship had subsisted between them. Hearing Mr. Danby was returned to England, and then on a visit at an acquaintance's in the West, the Captain had embraced the opportunity of enjoying the pleasure of his friend's company.

Mr. Danby, on the appearance of Charlotte, seemed no less agitated than herself, for, to say truth, he was very far from expecting to meet her at the Priory. The resolution with which he had gone to France prevented him from making any enquiry after her on his return; and, as he had staid but a few hours in town, the circumstance of her having quitted the Grimstone family was unknown to him.—Fain, however, would she have indulged a very different idea of the case, had not appearances strongly forbid the conclusion; for, as soon as the surprise attendant on the first salutation had subsided, his behaviour rather demonstrated the polite gentleman than the assiduous lover; though, indeed, had he been inclined to treat her with any particular attention, the conduct of Mr. Arthur absolutely precluded such an attempt. That gentleman, if incapable of the weakness of love, was not insensible to the irritation of pride, which stimulated him on this occasion to personate the warm inamorato, rather than give the stranger an opportunity of conciliating the lady's favour, which, without soliciting, he thought he had a right to monopolize himself. During supper, and the remainder of the evening, his civilities to her were so ridiculously excessive, that they could not but be obvious to every body present. Charlotte, who on all occasions saw him with the eye of aversion, was now provoked beyond measure. Without considering what the motive of such conduct might otherwise be, she supposed it only a malicious attempt to crush any secret hopes Mr. Danby might have indulged, whose distant and cool behaviour she immediately imputed to the effect of such design. In fine, she retired at an early hour, much out of humour, to her own apartment.

The next day happened to be what is called a parish-feast; or, in other words, a meeting of the overseers, and others concerned in the management of the poors expences. Mrs. Butterfield, being a woman of economy, would on no account have her husband absent on the occasion; for, as he was the principal payer to the poors rate, she wisely observed he ought chiefly to direct its expenditure. The Justice's convivial temper stood in no need of much solicitation; but he insisted that the Captain and his friend should accompany him, which they both would have declined. He swore, however, it should be so, and they were merely, in point of civility, obliged to comply.

“You may as well go with us, Arthur, (said he,) and wet the whistle, boy. Study, as I take it, is dry work.” The student, as might be expected, superciliously declined the overture, and the magistrate, with his two guests, departed without him.

Every body knows that a village public-house is an appendage to the great house hard by, being destined to proclaim its honours by bearing in front the ensigns armorial of the family. Accordingly, the one at which the company were to dine was dignified by the appellation of the Butterfield-Arms, and contained, if not a splendid, yet at least a spacious, apartment, called the club-room. Here they found assembled all the eminent personages of the parish, viz. the curate, the surgeon, the exciseman, the parish-officers, and principal farmers; the whole consisting of about thirty persons. Dinner not being quite ready, a bowl of punch was brought in by way of exciting an appetite to the feast, over which much learned conversation passed.

“I have heard as how (said one of the company) that the poors rates in this country amount to a larger sum than it takes to maintain some states abroad.”

“May hap (cries another) they starve the poor out of the way.”

Here the company expressed their approbation of this shrewd suggestion by a loud laugh, when the surgeon, with much gravity exclaimed, “The sum which we appropriate to our poor is, to be sure, enormous,—out of all rule, and a disgrace to a commercial people, who ought to make the plebeian order more industrious, rather than support it in idleness, which is the case.”

“You do not consider, gentlemen, (said the curate, who supported a wife and three children on a stipend of twenty pounds per annum,) that, in Popish countries, the poor are generally fed with provisions from the convents and religious houses around them.”

“How the d——I can that be! (cried a wiseacre;) do not these people shut themselves up in those houses on purpose to fast?”

Not to pursue this extraordinary dialogue farther, with which we believe Mr. Danby in particular was heartily tired, we will go on to observe, that the dinner being now set on the table, the company began to take their places in order, unanimously assigning the upper end of the table to the magistrate, who, to say truth, did sufficient honour to the fare, as did also most of the rest; after which, bowls, bottles, and glasses, being ranged in due order, the guests began to prepare for a serious Bacchanal. As they were most of them approved disciples of the jolly god, it was expected every body would prove sincere in the service, except the two strange gentlemen, as they were called, on whom the rest seemed to look with a suspicious eye; but the Justice vowed he would have no flinchers. “As for you, Captain, (said he,) I hope you are not afraid of a bottle.—To tell you the truth; I would not have a milk-sop for my son in law.”—The weather happening to be warm, Mr. Danby soon became sensible of a more exhilarating effect from the wine he had unavoidably drank than he wished to excite. Nature had given him a happy flow of spirits, which could never want the aid of artificial ones to render him an

agreeable companion; and, as he particularly detested that vice of vulgar souls, intoxication, he determined on giving the company the slip, in spite of all the Justice's vigilance. This he soon after effected, and, on his return to the Priory, finding himself more flushed than he would wish to appear before Miss Overbury, he took a turn in the garden previously to his entering the house; but, as it sometimes happens, that what we industriously endeavour to avoid is pushed by malicious fortune full in our teeth, so the very interview, which he then would least have desired, was most accidentally brought about.

Charlotte, desirous of indulging certain meditations alone, had retired after dinner to a private alcove in the remotest part of the garden. Here she was sitting when George Danby reached the identical spot.—He bowed, and retreated a few paces: she arose, curtsied, and would have withdrawn. It was an opportunity not to be lost by a doating lover. The wine had superseded all sedate reflection; it had loosened that firm barrier which reason and honour had imposed on his lips. “No, madam, (cried he,) if the presence of George Danby is so offensive, he will withdraw: it must not be yourself.”

The pensive look, the agitated air, which accompanied that speech, tenderly affected her. “Offensive, Sir! (reiterated she,) that it cannot be for your dear mother's sake.”

“And is it impossible then Miss Overbury you can see me in a favourable light for my own?”

A question so extraordinary, so unexpected, not a little embarrassed her. She looked down,—blushed,—but could give no answer. In an instant he was at her feet.

“Ah, Charlotte! (resumed he,) is it possible you cannot have seen the struggles of my tortured soul,—or, if seen, not to pity them?”

“Rise, Sir, I command you, rise; and give me leave to say I cannot in the least comprehend this discourse.”

“I know too well you ought not to comprehend it. It is not your love I seek, madam. What would I say!—O most divine woman, dare I hope it?—But no! I do not hope it;—you ought not to bestow it.”

Affected by the tender incoherence of his words, she replied, “I must have little discernment, Sir, were I not duly sensible of worth like your's.—I honour, I——”

“Merit, madam, (interrupted he,) I have none. I am a villain,—the basest of mankind; for, though I know you never can be mine, I have dared to love you.—O Miss Overbury, (in a calmer tone,) honour, virtue, every sacred consideration, forbid the fond idea, yet I indulge it! Death only can efface your image from my soul. You may pity,—I know you will pity these distracting feelings, though that is all which I must ask or you bestow.”

It is probable the lady's reply would not have been calculated to drive him to absolute despair, had there been an opportunity for her to pronounce it; but, at that instant, Mr. Arthur, who from the window of his study had observed Danby's return, and, not caring to allow him too fair a chance with his nominal mistress, thought proper to trace his progress, and now appeared in the walk which led to this little recess. Not the visible apparition of her evil genius could have been more horrible to Charlotte's sight than was now the figure of that gentleman moving towards them. Mr. Danby, immediately rising, offered him a seat, which, with the consequential air of a proprietor, he directly took by her side; on which, giving him a look of ineffable disdain, she instantly arose, but perceived Mr. Danby had withdrawn. Arthur, observing her in haste to retire, roughly seized her by the arm, demanding why she could not as well stay with him as that fop, adding, "You women will listen to any nonsense which comes from the mouth of a pretty fellow. I warrant you now he has been telling you a fine story. Come, tell me what was the subject you were upon."

"Your effrontery (struggling to get away) absolutely astonishes me. What right, pray, Sir, have you to ask that question?"

"Why, as matters are between us, I should think I had a right. You may as well be easy, for I shall not part with you yet."

He then placed himself just in the entrance, exactly in the attitude of Colossus, and Charlotte, seeing no way of escaping, went and threw herself on the bench, fretting with vexation and resentment. "You are, to be sure, a very silly girl, (resumed he;) but, to oblige my mother, I have condescended to take some notice of you, and therefore I think it time we should talk seriously together. You know things are in great forwardness, and we may as well agree on a day for our marriage. Come, tell me when it shall be."

"Odious creature! (cried she,) I know not how you can have the audacity, or folly rather, to insult me with this language.—Were I compelled to marry such a being as yourself, I would soon put an end to my existence."

"Mighty well, madam, (replied he,) I shall not be at much pains to induce you to alter your resolution. To say the truth, I never thought you one to my taste, and so (bowing very low) your most obsequious humble servant."

He then, to her great satisfaction, walked towards the house, which she did also as soon as she found him out of sight. It was now plain that she was beloved by George Danby, and that reflection afforded her a sensation which she had never experienced before; but, as the disparity of fortune was never considered by her as an obstacle to their union, she was entirely at a loss to comprehend the motive of his visible embarrassment, unless (which at length she thought very probable) he believed her under an engagement to Mr. Arthur, but this mistake time and expedients might rectify; she therefore returned to the parlour with a much gayer air than she had quitted it an hour before.

Mr. Danby did not appear at tea; he complained of a head-ach, and begged leave to repose himself, which incident Charlotte considered as very opportune to her present situation, for she feared, and perhaps not without some reason, that the aversion she might discover towards Mr. Arthur would appear so palpable an encouragement of the other, as was not consistent with her idea of female delicacy; and, when the Captain returned, which he did soon after, he found his friend so much disordered, as to think it necessary to advise him not to quit his chamber for the evening. Disordered he certainly was, but purely from a mental cause, for he had no sooner recovered the faculty of reflection, than he was conscious of having done wrong in disclosing the secret of his passion; he had violated the earnest injunctions of his mother, as well as his own principles of honour and rectitude; in fine, he appeared in his own eye the most culpable of mankind, and therefore, without assigning the cause, desired his friend's permission to leave the Priory the next morning privately. The intimacy subsisting between these gentlemen was of that nature, that mere etiquette was out of the question; they therefore parted with a mutual promise of seeing each other shortly in town.

When Mr. Danby rode out of the courtyard, Charlotte was standing at her dressing-room window, and was soon informed by Sally, that, having sent his apologies to Mrs. Butterfield, he was now set off for town. Gone, without so much as taking leave of herself!—Astonishing!—yet so it was, and all she could do in so strange a case was to rack her brain in order to extort the most plausible excuse for that conduct. The Captain, without observing the particular earnestness of her enquiries, told her in brief that Mr. Danby was gone to London, and would shortly make another tour to the continent, on some secret service appointed him by the minister, to whom the interest of friends had recommended him. A secret sigh escaped her; she went down to breakfast, however, with as cheerful an air as she could assume, though, had the company been at liberty to make their observations, they had certainly discovered that all was not right within; but things of a different nature engaged at that time their attention.

The Justice, who did not return from the parochial meeting till the morning was considerably advanced, had just produced the landlord's bill of expences, by which it appeared, that, as those worthy personages thought the maintenance of the poor so very enormous an expence, they determined (from public-spirited motives perhaps) to prevent as far as possible the appropriation of the whole sum to so extravagant a purpose, by devoting a decent part of it to their own enjoyment. Now, as these good people professedly met for the good of the poor, no doubt but they eat and drank for the good of the poor also, we see no reason why so beneficent a measure should not meet its due panegyric, which we design it shall by producing a part of this bill verbatim, which, after sundry other charges, ran as follows; and, if the reader remembers that this entertainment was provided in the country, he will be inclined to admire the moderation of mine host as much as the abstemiousness of the guests, who, we have already observed, were about thirty in number.

	£	s.	d.
To six couple of chickens	1	4	0
8 bundles of asparagus		16	0
4 couple of ducklings		18	0

green peas 12 pecks, at 3s.	1	16	0
dish of fish	1	1	0
	£6	5	0

We stop not to mention an innumerable host of puddings, pasties, tarts, and cheese-cakes, as well as other more solid dishes.—But proceed to state the convivial spirit of true Britons by giving a few other items, viz. 200 quarts of sixpenny, 250 ditto of porter, 86 half-crown bowls of punch, 9 dozen of red port. After which, nobody can pretend to deny but that this mode was infinitely better than applying such a sum to the relief of the poor of a paltry village, and it is to be hoped will consequently give it due praise.

C H A P. XXV.

A Pedant in woeful Dilemma.

THAT part of the summer being now arrived which is usually appropriated to the diversion of horse-racing, by which almost every country-town in England, at the present æra, on some annual period is distinguished, the family at the Priory determined on being present at that species of amusement, which was now to be held at the country-town of ——; lodgings were therefore provided for the Justice, his lady, their son and daughter, Miss Overbury, and the Captain, together with a suitable retinue.—The perceiving every body in a bustle was sufficient to convince Mrs. Butterfield that the place was filled with good company, and, consequently, to induce her to overlook the inconvenience of a small inelegant lodging and other disagreeable circumstances, among which we shall reckon the being every day obliged to dine with the two young ladies only, for Mr. Butterfield was determined on taking that repast at the public ordinary of an inn, where he perceived a large number of brother fox-hunters to be assembled, and also insisted that the gentlemen of his party should accompany him.

At this table, on the second day of the races, the conversation, as usual, turned on the sports of the preceding one. Every body declared themselves entirely satisfied except Mr. Arthur Butterfield, who, with a solemn dictatorial air, took upon himself to oppose the common opinion of the company, by declaring that the race was paltry. “I am astonished, gentlemen, (said he,) to hear you speak of so poor a diversion with any degree of satisfaction! What is this race, or what is any race, to those of Olympia, which drew together so many thousands of spectators! where, indeed, the management of the courses was not left, as with us, to grooms and stable-boys, but the greatest personages were proud to contend for the victory.”

Perceiving the company staring at this discourse with silent surprise, our scholar, with much self-importance, went on, “I am persuaded, gentlemen, that not one of you can form an idea of the magnificence of these sports. The poet, with amazing fire, celebrates the skill and agility of a certain prince, who had won the prize.—He says——”

“Where do you say these races are held? (interrupted one of the company impatiently.) I was to have been at Newmarket, but, faith, I’ll take a trip to this place.—What is it called?”

Without condescending to answer so illiterate a question, Mr. Arthur resumed his discourse, “The races were doubtless beyond conception, noble, yet wrestling, boxing, and other athletic exercises, had also peculiar prizes assigned.”

“The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza.”

“Mere poltroons, I assure you! Mere kittens to that phænomenon of Athletæe, Milo, whose strength, my dear Sir, was even beyond imagination. I could relate various instances of this, but one I think will suffice to give you a tolerable idea of his abilities. He was one day attending a course of philosophical lectures, when the pillar which supported the school suddenly gave way; on which this extraordinary man supported it by his single strength, and gave the auditors time to escape unhurt.”

“D—n me, (cried a lively Nimrod,) if I don’t go to,—to—. Where did you say, Sir, this place lies?”

“Near the city of Olympia, bordering on the river Alpheus, in Peloponnesus.”

“I never heard of it.—Pray is it in France?”

“It is in Greece, Sir, (with a supercilious triumph.) I am convinced the moderns never can vie in elegance and taste with the ancients.”

“Oh! damn the ancients,—if you are thereabouts, young gentleman.— Captain, push about the bottle.”

“Aye, aye, (rejoined another,) let us wash down this dry stuff.”

Shortly after the toast-master gave a certain popular orator, which afforded our young pedant another opportunity of displaying his erudition, though probably much more to the satisfaction of himself than the company, which principally consisted of country-gentlemen, who, if they had ever dipped into ancient literature, had forgotten it in the sports of the field and other avocations. What is called taking the ton of one’s company was an art with which he condescended not to become acquainted. He therefore began a florid harangue on the eloquence of Æschines and Demosthenes, compared to whom he affirmed the British senate produced no individual worthy of mention. The Justice, supposing every one must be as much enamoured of his son’s abilities as himself, cried out, “Atty, give us the story you used to tell of these two gentlemen;—’tis a main brave one.” Mr. Arthur, clearing his voice, and making several ridiculous gestures, began thus, “Æschines and Demosthenes had not been on the best terms, on account of——”

Here the auditors could hold no longer. Some affected a violent fit of coughing,—others called for a song, and one in particular exclaimed aloud, “D—n all bookworms, I say! May folios be their fare, and the gout their companion!”—So singular an execration was sufficient to set the table in a roar, during which, the Captain, observing young Butterfield to discover symptoms of a painful sensibility, reminded him that it was time they should prepare for the ball. As they were going out, an elderly respectable-looking gentleman took the scholar by the arm, and, with a smile of benignity, whispered him, “My good friend, remember in future the old adage, Think with the wise, and talk with the vulgar.”

On arriving at the lodging, they found Mrs. Butterfield out of all patience at their delay, the blame of which she very charitably threw on her husband. Affairs, however, being at length pacifically adjusted, and the gentlemen dressed with as much expedition as possible, the party sat out for the ball-room, which was already crowded by a large number of both sexes. Eliza, not desiring a more interesting object among the group, was content to accept the Captain for a partner. As for Charlotte, it is supposed that Mr. Arthur secretly designed her that honour; a smart young gentleman, however, happening to step up to her, she consented to give him her hand for the evening, and, all things considered, began to think the evening not disagreeably passed.

Mrs. Butterfield, at length, quitting the card-room, in order to take a view of the dancers, to her great surprise discovered her son, lounging on a vacant bench, somewhat in dudgeon; yet he could not alledge that Charlotte had treated him ungentlely, as he had not positively solicited her hand.—“No matter for that, (returned the offended mother,) she is your property, and ought to be considered as such. I insist, therefore, that you go, and resent the insult to her partner.”——The young gentleman, more versed in the rules of an academy than in those of a genteel assembly, implicitly obeyed. What he said does not expressly appear. Some lively young fellows, however, over-hearing and recollecting the incident of the tavern-dinner, resolved to have what they called some fun. Charlotte’s partner, in concert with the scheme, soon after stepped out for about five minutes, in consequence of which Mr. Arthur, at his return, found at his lodgings a formal challenge from that gentleman.—Never was woman more delighted than was Mrs. Butterfield at the event, which she considered as the finishing stroke to her son’s character.

“Why, this is quite as it should be, (said she.) It will be the means of making her your own in a trice, for the girls love a man of spirit.—Yes, yes, Atty, you shall fight him.”

“At a boxing-match I make no doubt of overmatching a score of such *petits maitres* as this; but, as to fencing, it is an art which we literati do not study.”

“I am ashamed to hear you talk so much unlike a gentleman. What then did you go to the *university* for, I pray?—But you can manage a pistol, I suppose, and you see your *bantagony* gives you the choice of the weapons. I beg you will sit down to write him a proper answer, and name your time and place, which will be doing things genteelly.”

“Dear mother, there is no occasion for such haste. Surely it is a question that requires some deliberation, whether one shall agree to have one’s brains blown out or not.”

“A fiddle-stick for that!—It is not by dint of scholarship (peevishly) that you may expect to win such a girl as Charlotte Overbury. Here, I suppose, you have been chopping your old-fashioned logic, while that powder-monkey has run away with the prize which it has cost me such a world of thought and care to put into your hands.—I am out of all patience. Let me tell you, if you do not do something to get yourself a character, you will never marry a woman worth a groat.”

Here Mr. Arthur, hearing his father's voice on the stairs, took an opportunity to slip out of the room, and Mrs. Butterfield, running eagerly up to her husband with the challenge in her hand, cried, "This is the charmingest thing in the world!—A real challenge, I assure you. Atty shall fight, Mr. Butterfield, that he shall."

"Z—ds! what a plague has the woman got in her head now.—Fight! with what, I wonder!—No, no, I'll have no fighting, d'ye zee."

After some farther altercation, in which Mrs. Butterfield wept and stormed by turns, finding no likelihood of reconciling two such opposite opinions, the good couple went much out of humour to bed; but they might have spared themselves the trouble of debate, for the student, after mature reflection, concluded the best way of answering the challenge would be to take horse, and quietly return to the Priory, which design he actually put in practice some hours before the family rose next morning; the breakfast-hour was therefore productive of much consternation, till the non-appearance of Mr. Arthur was satisfactorily accounted for by some of the servants. The Captain and the two young ladies, who till now had been unacquainted with the affair depending, secretly rejoiced that no serious consequences were likely to ensue, as did the Justice also; but Mrs. Butterfield was like a fury on the occasion: at length, she declared that she would not stay to become the ridicule of the place, and immediately ordered the coach to be got ready to convey her to the Priory, to which place the rest of the company, glad it was to prove no worse, readily agreed to accompany her.

C H A P. XXVI.

A String of unlooked-for Events.

ON the way home, Mrs. Butterfield could think of nothing but the pusillanimous conduct of her son. Burning with resentment, she loaded him with a torrent of bitter invectives, and declared that, were it not on Miss Overbury's account, he should be disinherited.

Charlotte, feeling herself rather in an awkward situation, though certainly not in the least accessory to the ridiculous affray, replied, a little spitefully, "I beg, madam, you will not suppress your inclinations out of a compliment to me."

"Well, but Captain Overbury, (resumed Mrs. Butterfield), do you not think it a shameful affair? Would you have acted in this manner?"

"Not exactly perhaps; but I would have convinced the world that I despised an assassin's principles."

"What, then, would you never fight?"

"Yes, on a laudable occasion, madam."

"What, pray, do you call so?"

"The honour of my king, the good of my country, or in the defence of my own life or that of my friend."

"And is not accepting a challenge fighting in defence of one's own life?"

"That is not properly to defend it, madam, but meanly to expose it to the folly or baseness of another, and the result of a contemptible timidity, which dares not avow the most sacred principles in the face of arbitrary custom or chimerical honour."

The lady, finding she was likely to get nothing by the argument, prudently declined it, and indulged her displeasure in silence; but the Justice declared that the Captain had spoken his sentiments exactly. "I have not (said he) a knack of wording it, but I think just the same thing."

When the coach set them down at the Priory, they found all the domestics expressing the utmost consternation. Sally Sanders (Miss Overbury's waiting-maid) had disappeared the very evening on which the family had set out for the races, and, after searching all the ponds and rivers about the place, they had been told she was seen on horseback a few miles from Ashton. —Never was an incident more inexplicable. —She had ever appeared one of the most modest and prudent young creatures in the world, and so perfectly was Charlotte convinced of the purity and goodness of her heart, that, in

spite of appearances, she would still pronounce her undeserving of censure. "I wish it may be so, (said Mrs. Martin, who was already there to receive them,) but I thought no good would come of setting those people so much above themselves." As Sally was an universal favourite with the servants, they sincerely regretted the loss of her company, and the young men, who had all of them been emulous of her favour, forgot their rivalry in the general concern. As for Charlotte, she really felt more than she chose to express; however, she consoled herself with thinking that, whatever misfortunes the poor girl might have plunged herself into, it would still be in her power to befriend her.

The Captain, having received letters from town, by which he understood that his presence there was absolutely necessary, became very urgent to have the marriage-ceremony performed, that he might (as he expressed it) have the felicity of his lady's company. Mrs. Butterfield supposed some time since that a sufficient time had been allowed for bringing family-matters to a proper crisis, and, though she despaired of so soon accomplishing her wishes with respect to Miss Overbury, yet she determined that the marriage of Eliza should take place the following week. The precipitancy of the measure gave a serious alarm to that young lady. She was convinced there was no time to be lost, and therefore, as her *derniere* resource, resolved to lay open the state of her heart to her lover. Accordingly, when the Captain with trembling expectation approached her, to solicit her compliance with his earnest wishes, he was surprised by seeing her drop on her knees before him, in which posture, with a face bathed in tears, she intreated him to exercise towards her that compassion which her distress could not excite in the breasts of her inexorable parents. With the astonishment natural to so extraordinary an occasion, he heard her farther declare, that, though, in obedience to parental authority, she had passively admitted his addresses, yet her affections were unalterably fixed on another:— from his (the Captain's) generosity, she had every thing to hope, yet should he unfortunately persist in demanding her hand, he must be content to enjoy only the esteem due to his merit; the feelings of the heart were not capable of submitting to arbitrary controul, and therefore love was not in her power to give him, since her warmest and tenderest regards were and ever must be centered in another person.

After a pause of some minutes, the Captain, with a solemn and tender air, replied, "Whatever my own feelings may be, Miss Butterfield, you have nothing to apprehend from a perseverance on my part, which, after such an avowal of your sentiments, would be incompatible with my sense of the honour I lately aspired to; yet you must permit me to regret that this declaration was not made at an earlier period, before I had so familiarly accustomed myself to the idea of calling you mine. True, (with a sigh,) I indulged the pleasing belief that the favourable reception with which you honoured my addresses was the result of an affection as sincere (if less ardent) as my own. But I design not to upbraid you, though something might be allowed to a disappointment of so tender a nature. Adieu, madam!—May you be happy!—It is the wish of my soul."

"Stay, Sir, one moment, (perceiving he was going;) suffer me at least to excuse my conduct, as well as to express an unfeigned sorrow for the part I am thus compelled to act."

“No, Eliza; the former would be unnecessary, nor would I be the cause of exciting an unpleasant sensation in your breast. You are free;—I can no longer retain a wish of calling you mine.”

One would be apt to conclude the young lady felt her situation at this juncture extremely irksome, but the truth is, the whole of this proceeding was so perfectly consistent with a romantic *dénouement*, that she was reconciled to circumstances which must otherwise have excited a tender and delicate embarrassment.

“This generous behaviour (resumed she) is what I might justly have expected from the magnanimity of Captain Overbury.—O Sir, if you knew the overflowings of my grateful heart at this instant, this delicacy, this elevation of soul exalts you in my esteem even above the high opinion I have ever entertained of your character, and compels me to aspire to the honour of being the first in your list of friends; yet is there something farther I would request as necessary to complete the generous sacrifice you have made.”

“If to promote, in any degree, the happiness of Miss Butterfield be within the compass of my ability, she may command my utmost exertions.”

“This then it is; you know my mother’s inflexible temper, and, should she ever suspect the incident which has now passed between us, I could expect nothing but the extremity of resentment from it, from which you, and you only, most noble of men, can save an unhappy damsel.”

“Inform me, madam, in what manner I can be accessory to your peace.”

“By permitting the grounds of this separation to rest with yourself; or, in other words, to suffer it to pass for your own act.”

“Heavens! to what lengths would your caprice lead! What, madam, would you have me avow myself capable of so base a conduct as that of repaying the partiality and confidence of your parents by treating their daughter in the most dishonourable manner? No, Eliza!—Command my warmest endeavours to serve you in every thing but the affixing such a stigma on my honour:—here I dare not promise my assent.”

“Cruel man! (weeping,) recall then the generous sacrifice you have just made.—Accept my hand,—I offer it,—and would I could give my heart!

“Miss Butterfield, (replied the Captain with a steady countenance,) trifle no longer with the peace you have already sensibly disturbed. Thus far I consent to oblige you, by promising to come to no *éclaircissement* with your parents on the subject: you are then at liberty to represent an honest heart in what colours your integrity may allow you to adopt; but surely you cannot imagine me so weak as verbally to brand myself with infamy?”

This very extraordinary request had struck the Captain as an artful design of playing upon his credulity, insomuch that, feeling himself unable to preserve the temper he deemed becoming the occasion, he made a respectful bow and abruptly retired. A few minutes of deliberation decided his conduct. He immediately took a hasty leave of his sister, and, without acquainting her with the circumstance which had taken place, he only said, as he went out of her dressing-room, "Remember, sister, your brother may be unhappy, but he never can be base;" then, avoiding an interview with any other of the family, immediately quitted the Priory.

A retreat of this kind it might be expected would occasion much commotion among the principals of the family. Eliza, when questioned on the event, thought proper to observe an obstinate silence: sufficient latitude was thereby left for conjecture, and it was soon agreed that Captain Overbury was the most ungrateful and dishonourable of men; nor was it possible for Charlotte to vindicate him in an affair with which she was totally unacquainted; she was therefore reduced to the painful necessity of hearing him accused of the most palpable baseness without being able to say more in his defence than that she was certain there must have been something very mysterious at the bottom, as she was convinced her brother was incapable of acting so culpably as appearances dictated.

"Yes, (cried Mrs. Butterfield,) there is something mysterious indeed at the bottom. The wench, whom you imprudently took to be your waiting-maid, Miss Overbury, is the mystery. Now its out, and my poor child is abused for such a beggarly wretch."

"Aye, aye, (rejoined the Justice,) there goes the hare and the old woman, as the saying is. I zee it plain enough;—the Captain loves a pretty wench, and, in truth, I don't blame him, but then he should not have befooled our poor girl neither."

This surmise was immediately confirmed by Mr. Arthur's observing that he had often surprised the Captain looking very kindly on the young woman; to which Charlotte warmly replied, that she was certain her brother would abhor the idea of seducing a poor young creature, whose father he so eminently respected.

"Why, that is it, child, (cried Mr. Butterfield,) one may now see what all this charity meant, and he has made a dupe of you into the bargain,—for, you know, it looked better for the kindness to come rather from you than himself."

Piqued at so unjust an aspersion, she replied, that, so far from the Captain having any sinister design in the affair, that he knew nothing of the assistance she had given that family till a considerable time after. Nothing, however, which she could alledge was effectual when opposed to prejudice and ignorance. In short, matters had now arrived at such a crisis, that Charlotte declared her resolution of entirely quitting the Priory.

At this intimation, Mrs. Butterfield, tho' not accustomed to stop short in the career of passion, suddenly began to recollect herself, and to suspect she had proceeded

too far; for, since one part of her plan had failed of accomplishment, there was no reason why she should not endeavour to secure better success to the other.—Bursting into tears, the usual resource of angry people when their ill humour durst proceed no farther, she took hold of Charlotte's hand, and said, "I doubt, my dear girl, I have been to blame in allowing this foolish affair to *infect* me so far; but, though you cannot entirely excuse me, I hope my son has not *recited* your displeasure."

"No more, madam, than he has done long since. Mr. Arthur never was nor can be a pleasing object in my eyes."

Having said this, Miss Overbury quitted the room with an air of dissatisfaction which shewed how deeply she resented the injurious aspersions thrown on her brother's reputation.—Mrs. Butterfield, suspecting that the supercilious temper of her son was not very likely to conciliate that young lady's favour, and fearing that all her sanguine hopes were about to vanish into air, now told him plainly, that, except he would resolve to carry himself with that complaisance which the nature of the affair demanded, she wished to see him no more in her presence; to which, with his usual hauteur, he replied, that he never conceived himself bound by any obligations of duty to act with a meanness unbecoming a man of sense, and that, in short, since matters were got so far, he would flatly assure her that he had sooner do penance in purgatory than take a wife of Miss Overbury's cast.—Enraged and disappointed, Mrs. Butterfield's feelings transported her almost to the verge of distraction, when the Justice, to prevent the effects of her excessive rage, took his son aside, and there, as the most prudential step he could advise, persuaded him to make a visit for some time to the university. He could not possibly have proposed an expedient more agreeable to the young man's inclinations, who, for some private reasons, had long meditated a decent retreat. Being properly accommodated with the needful, in which article indeed he had never been retrenched, he sat out the next morning for Oxford, and Mr. Butterfield began to indulge the hope that peace might once more be restored to his abode on the old terms of passive obedience on the one side, and indefeasible right of command on the other.

Two succeeding days were passed in a kind of sullen silence; but, on the third, the gloom was rather penetrated, not by the kindly beams of social conviviality, but by a hurricane, compared to which all that had passed was as the light breeze of summer to the rough Borean tempest. Not to keep the reader in suspence, Miss Butterfield had eloped with her incognito swain. The window of her apartment found open, with a ladder of ropes suspending from it, afforded strong reasons for conjecture as to the nature of her flight; nevertheless Mrs. Martin, who had been summoned immediately on the discovery being made, gave it as her opinion that the poor dear child had been forcibly carried off by thieves, and probably would be found dying, or dead, in some adjacent place. Ridiculous as this supposition must appear on the present incident, it had with Mrs. Butterfield all the force of demonstration. The coach, which had been ordered, was again put up, and all the servant's employed in searching every wood, field, and ditch, for four or five miles round. These fruitless researches took up the greatest part of the day, which certainly ought to have been passed in a very different manner. At length, the chit-chat of the neighbourhood had reached the Justice's kitchen, and by degrees Mrs. Butterfield's

ear also; the substance of which report was, that her daughter was certainly gone to the land of matrimony with a young fellow whom nobody knew, but whom every body saw, except the family, was a suitor of the Squire's daughter.—The coach was again ordered out, and Mrs. Martin having no longer any other expedient to offer, they actually set about what any other people would have done eight hours before,—going in pursuit of the lovers.

C H A P. XXVII.

An Expedition to the North.

AS there could now be no doubt but the runaways were gone towards Gretna-green, the enraged parents took the northern road, travelling with as much expedition as possible, and avoiding even the approaches of Morpheus, except when he slyly took captive the Justice's eye-lids as he lounged in a corner of the coach, and at length arrived at the populous town of B—, where on a change of horses being absolutely necessary, they just stepped out of the coach to take the refreshment of a glass of wine and some biscuits, when Mrs. Butterfield, accidentally casting her eye towards the gallery of the inn, observed some persons in a close whisper at one end of it, who immediately entered the next apartment, and shut the door. With a curiosity which no circumstances could suppress, she demanded of the waiter whom they had got in that room. The lad, rather surprised at the question, appeared to hesitate for a reply, which tended still more to augment her inquisitiveness, till, by a strange concatenation of ideas, it suddenly came into her head that the couple they were in pursuit of were concealed in that very apartment.—“Boy, send your mistress to me this moment.”——The landlady appeared.

“Who, pray, have you got in that room yonder?” pointing with her finger.—
“Really, madam, I have not asked their names,” returned the other with a pert smile.

“Adzooks! (exclaimed the Justice,) what vagary is got in the woman's head now! Do you think, Mrs. Butterfield, they would be such fools as to linger here in the business they are upon?”

“No matter for that. You know I could always see farther into things than you, and therefore I insist on your demanding entrance into that room.”

“Are you actually mad?—What right have I to demand it?”

“Are you not a justice of the Quorum, simpleton?”

“Yes, simpleton;—but dost think my commission extends all the world over?”

The astonishing effrontery, of retorting the very civil appellation she had used, provoked the lady so excessively, that she immediately rose, and gave her husband a box on the ear; after which, turning to the landlady, in a peremptory tone, she ordered her to shew her into the before-mentioned apartment.

“Truly, madam, (replied she,) this is a liberty we never take with our guests.”

“Tell me not of liberties, woman, I will have entrance.”

“Indeed you shall not.”

Unused to be controuled, Mrs. Butterfield here attempted to rush by. The landlady opposed her passage with as much strength as she was mistress of, till, in the scuffle they both tumbled down; at length, the former, being by much the strongest of the two, took the advantage of her adversary's situation, and forced her way to the gallery.—The door of the said apartment not being locked, in she rushed, without much attention to the rules of ceremony, and the first object which struck her eye was her son Arthur fondly reclining on the bosom of Sally Sanders.

As we despair of finding the English vocabulary sufficiently copious to express the feelings of the respective parties on this unexpected rencontre, we shall only say that Mrs. Butterfield bitterly upbraided her son with the meanness of associating with so abandoned a creature, when he, not entirely relishing that epithet, desired his mother to speak less harshly of a person for whom he had the highest regard.

“Hey! (exclaimed she,) what is it come to this!—Art thou so besotted as to profess a regard for such a strumpet?”

“Softly, good mother, this young woman, I assure you, is no strumpet.”

“What then dost thou call her, ideot?”

“What I judge it not prudent to mention at this juncture, madam.”

During this discourse, poor Sally, who well knew the violent temper of Mrs. Butterfield, had crept, trembling, behind an easy chair, where, as she stood half-dead with terror, and resting her left hand on the back of it, she inadvertently discovered a certain small trinket which struck the sight of the enraged lady more tremendously than a flash of lightning.”

“Merciful, merciful!—what, has the slut the impudence to wear a ring?”

Mr. Arthur, perceiving all was discovered, replied, “The perfect perturbation of your mind, dear mother, renders an éclaircissement improper at this time. However, I must say, that, if Sally wears a ring, she probably has a right to do so.”

The Justice was by this time come up.—“Here, Philip Butterfield, (cried his lady as well as passion would give leave,) see what a pretty *perdickity* I have found your son in!—and——”

“Well, well, if this be all, (replied he, impatient of farther delay,) we must pass it by as a trick of youth, and let us be going.”

Mrs. Butterfield, very far from believing that her son was actually married, declared she would never overlook it, except he would promise to return immediately to the Priory, and marry Charlotte Overbury.

“What confounded palaver is this!—You must be blind, wife, that’s for zertain, if you don’t zee that the girl perfectly hates him.”

She could by no means credit the assertion, and therefore still insisted on his going back, in order to compass a matrimonial union.—“Well, well, (eager to get rid of the business,) promise her boy, and get back, and strike up a match with Charlotte by the time we come back.”

“It is now absolutely impracticable, Sir.”

“Why?”

“Because, (falling on his knees,) I have already married her waiting-maid,—Dear father, pardon my first offence.”

“Thou hast not, zure, been such a fool?”

“Condemn me not, Sir, till you have heard my vindication.”

“Whew!” (whistled the Justice.) Come along, wife, we’ll e’en jog home again, and let the other young hopeful get married too, as fast as she can.”

With these words he took hold of his lady’s arm, and led, or rather forced, her down stairs, leaving the fond pair to console each other for the disaster which had thrown somewhat of a cloud over their honey-moon.—As soon as Mr. and Mrs. Butterfield got to the parlour, they sat themselves down in opposite corners of it, without speaking a word,—she weeping, he whistling, which were only different modes of expressing the same feelings:—where we will leave them for a while, to account for an event which we doubt not has a little surprised the good reader.

C H A P. XXVIII.

Which is to serve as a Lecture on over-wise Heads.

HOW much soever absorbed in profound speculation, Mr. Arthur Butterfield was not absolutely insensible to the power of beauty. He beheld it indeed in Miss Overbury, who was incontestibly a very handsome woman; yet the sensation thereby excited in his breast was accompanied by an awe which forbade him to love what he could not but admire. This undoubtedly was owing to the opposition of their characters. Her lively disposition being so unsuitable to the gravity of his, and her understanding above the size of his own, were circumstances not very likely to nourish a tender passion which the severe glances of her eye, the smile of contempt on her countenance, whenever he approached her, tacitly prohibited him from indulging.—The beauty of Sally Sanders was of a different kind, or, at least, it was the same jewel, set in an inferior metal, which, if not so valuable, was certainly less dazzling. From the first interview, he had discovered a sensible pleasure in gazing on her face, where he met none of those frowns which from her mistress caused him often to tremble, and the difference which fortune had made in their circumstances causing that young woman always to behave with a humility becoming her station, he contemplated her charms till he became eminently sensible of their power. In the presence of Charlotte he felt a painful restraint;—in that of Sally, an easy pleasurable sensation, which by degrees ripened into love. In addressing her, he had no room to dread the severity of a repartee, or the penetration of a cultivated understanding. In short, the docility and meekness of her character pointed her out as the only proper wife for one of his cast. He had not, however, resolved absolutely to thwart his mother's inclinations before the garden-adventure which we have mentioned in a former chapter, when Miss Overbury so explicitly declared her aversion to him, that he thought himself at full liberty to give Sally an offer of making her his wife;—in accepting which, she could not conceive she should violate any moral obligation, for she had constantly witnessed her lady's detestation of him, and therefore prudently determined to embrace those offers which another had rejected with contempt.—After that period, the affair went on so warmly between them, that Mr. Arthur proposed her privately decamping, in order to wait for him at a convenient place, in which he solemnly swore he would meet her, and make her his lawful wife. It must be confessed that Sally, in complying with this scheme, had given an unequivocal proof of her confidence in his sincerity and honour; but she really loved him, and had consequently the highest opinion of both. At the time of this unwelcome rencontre with his mother, she was actually his wife, and probably he was then concerting some measures for properly disposing of her till the offence should be pardoned by his parents.

We will now return to the gentleman and lady whom the reader remembers we left in the parlour of the inn. Mrs. Butterfield was the first who broke silence, by asking her husband whether they should proceed to Gretna-green, or set out on their return to the Priory,—to which he replied, that it would now be the height of folly to think of the former, as there could be no doubt but the marriage had taken place, and then added, “The horses are tired, and, in truth, so am I. Suppose, child, we ordered a bit of supper.”

“Do you imagine, Mr. Butterfield, I would sup while I knew those wretches were in another room of the house?”

“May hap then you would have no objection to their sitting here with us.”

“I am astonished at your stupidity!—You cannot be in earnest.”

“Look ye, wife, life is but a vapour,—a snuff of a candle,—a will o’ the wisp,—a bird on a spray,—a—a—”

“And what of all this parsonish stuff?”

“Why, then, I think it all nonsense to make such a fuss about it. The boy has pleased himself, and what signifies you and I making ourselves miserable.”

So pacific a system was not to be readily adopted, and supper being then brought in, Mrs. Butterfield, to express her resentment, flung out of the room, and instantly retired to bed; after which, the Justice, finding himself at liberty, resolved to indulge those lenient feelings with which he felt himself inspired. Revolving in his mind the present posture of affairs, he happened to recollect that his own marriage had been the result of paternal direction, and, having experienced no remarkable sweets therein, was the more easily induced to excuse his son for having obeyed the dictates of inclination; he therefore sent for both him and his wife, and, after some little time, granted a complete pardon; but, as it was probable Mrs. Butterfield would not easily be brought to terms of reconciliation, it was agreed the young people should look out some distant residence, where he promised to allow them a sufficient maintenance till time should effect something more in their favour.

The next morning as the Justice and his lady were pensively taking a cup of chocolate before they got into their carriage, a post-chaise and four drove into the courtyard, in which were Mr. and Mrs. Wilmot, or, to be more intelligible, the late Miss Butterfield and her tender swain, who, having accomplished their business beyond the Tweed, were returning with all expedition, in order to try the force of submissive pleading at the Priory. Recognizing her father’s equipage, she had nearly fainted in her husband’s arms, who carried her into a distant apartment.

Wilmot was a shrewd artful person, who knew, on some occasions, how to turn the passions of others to his advantage, and therefore judged that to take the old folks by surprise would be a better way of going to work than opening a formal negotiation.—The proposals which he made his wife, in consequence of that reflection, required, it is true, no small share of temerity to execute; yet, encouraged by his persuasions, and prompted by the yearnings of affection, Eliza acquiesced in the plan, and, at a moment when such a circumstance was of all things least expected, she rushed into the room where her mother was sitting at that instant alone, and, falling on her knees, burst into a flood of tears. The scheme had even a better effect than had been expected. Mrs. Butterfield’s passions were

meliorated by grief and disappointment; all her favourite projects were frustrated,—her hopes of family aggrandizement levelled with the dust,—and she now could only turn aside her head and weep. Animated by so favourable a symptom, Mrs. Wilmot ventured to plead her engagement to Mr. Wilmot prior to her seeing Captain Overbury. She had (she alledged) married a gentleman, whose merit and fortune were equal to his birth.—Of all others, this was unquestionably the best argument she could have used on the occasion, as it appeared by the sequel that Mrs. Butterfield had not supposed the culpability of her daughter to lie so much in the act of disobedience as in marrying a man whom nobody knew. The probability of its being a different case gave a favourable turn to affairs. In fine, as she had not, like her brother, married beneath herself, the offence might be pardoned.

But the Justice, who had discovered some sympathy with the feelings of his son, could allow nothing in the present instance: it was an act of disobedience never to be forgiven.—It was now his lady's turn to take the moderate side of the question. Archly retorting the very argument he had before addressed to herself, she said,

“Life you know is a vapour,—a snuff of a candle,” &c. &c.

“True, madam, (he replied,) and therefore you ought to have given your daughter such an education as would have taught her to value the little good to be found in it, and not have let her fill her head with vagaries and nonsense.”

“And you, Sir, (she resumed,) should have contrived to have given your son some knowledge of the world, instead of chaining him to a parcel of fusty old books. He would then have known better than to throw himself away upon a beggar.”

“Well, since we have been both in the wrong, it seems, let us for once resolve to be in the right, and give Atty liberty to bring home his wife.”

“Not unless you agree to receive Eliza and her husband.”

“I never will.”

“Nor will I forgive your son.”

Thus, from a spirit of opposition perhaps more than any other motive, this good couple determined severally to forego the wish of their hearts rather than grant any thing to the gratification of each other.

All business being now at an end, the carriage was got ready to convey them to the Priory, and, soon after their departure, Mr. and Mrs. Wilmot sat out for London, where it was agreed their residence should be for the present.

C H A P. XXIX.

An unpleasant Eclaircissement.

DURING the absence of Mr. and Mrs. Butterfield, Miss Overbury had very unexpectedly received a letter from Miss Grimstone, the purport of which was, that, finding herself in a declining state of health, and being advised to try the effect of a milder climate, she earnestly desired the favour of her company on a jaunt to the South of France.

Charlotte's situation at the Priory was now, for several reasons, become extremely disagreeable; she therefore could not hesitate a moment to accept a proposal which promised both variety and pleasure; but to set out in the absence of Mrs. Butterfield would be a piece of rudeness she could not resolve to commit. Her reply to Miss Grimstone, however, contained an assurance of joining her in town at the expiration of a few days.—The Justice and his lady, it might be expected, did not return home in any remarkable flow of good-humour; the temper of the latter, naturally unamiable, had not received any improvement by the late untoward events; perhaps, too, she secretly bore our heroine a grudge, from a supposition that she had treated her son too contemptuously. The intimation of Miss Overbury's departure was therefore received with coolness, and they parted, at length, with distant civility on both sides.

Charlotte directed her course immediately to the capital, where she met her brother, who received her with the warmest affection, but she could not without concern observe that the conduct of Miss Butterfield had affected him much more seriously than she could have wished. He had entertained a sincere regard for that young lady, nor could the treatment he had received from her induce him to discover any vindictive sentiments towards her. When informed of her elopement, he said, with a sigh, "I wish it were possible I could be assured of her happiness."—Charlotte, though not inferior to her brother in real generosity of soul, was yet too sensibly hurt on his account to be able to digest her friend's duplicity, and therefore replied, that, if she should fail of obtaining that point, the blame could only be due to herself.

"True, sister, (replied he,) and therefore a disappointment will be the more galling. There are many arguments capable of supporting a good mind under a sense of injuries undeservedly brought on; but, when we are conscious that the evil originates in ourselves, the bitterness of that reflection must render it intolerable:—never may it be the portion of Eliza!"

Miss Grimstone not being quite ready for her journey, Charlotte was obliged to pass several days at Sir Bevil's house, but she had not the smallest reason to be dissatisfied with his present behaviour, as he appeared entirely to have abandoned that preposterous idea which had formerly rendered her residence in his family so disagreeable; in a word, he was himself, and consequently the same frankness and good-humour which had once subsisted between them was again restored. Gladly she would have prevailed on her brother to make one of the party in the continental tour, but the

posture of his affairs not allowing it, the two ladies, attended only by the Baronet, sat out for Dover, at which place we will leave them to wait the opportunity of wind and tide, while we return to the Priory.

Mrs. Butterfield, when she parted with her daughter at the inn, had advised her to go to her husband's seat till she should be able to soften the vehemence of the Justice's displeasure. Now, though this appeared a very proper measure, it was not altogether a practicable one; for Fortune, in her hurry of dispensing among mankind lands, houses, and noble mansions, had uncivilly overlooked poor Wilmot, and, in fact, left him not so much as a cottage to take a wife to when he should get one. It will be said that it was an easy matter to hire a suitable house: we allow it;—but quite another matter to furnish or pay for it; and therefore this gentleman, not being overstocked with specie, judged it convenient to leave his lady in a lodging in town, while he made a visit to the Priory, where he got himself introduced just as the Justice was setting out on a morning-ride.

“And what, pray, Sir, is your business with me?”

“Only to request an order on your banker, Sir, for the sum of five thousand pounds.”

“Who the d—l are you?”

“Your worship's son in-law, at your service,” bowing with rather more humour than prudence.

Provoked at the insolence of such behaviour, Mr. Butterfield ordered his servants to kick him out of the house. Whether the command was precisely obeyed we cannot say, but it is certain the Justice's son-in-law retreated with less audacity of aspect than he had assumed at entering. The matter, however, was not to rest here. By the will of an aunt, Eliza was legally entitled to the above-named sum on the day of marriage, which, having been a principal object in this matrimonial embarkation, was not to be passively relinquished; accordingly, Mr. Martin, as deputed by Wilmot, soon after waited on the Justice, to solicit payment in behalf of his client, at the same time remarking, as a friend, that a refusal must be attended with disagreeable consequences, since the law would not fail to give sentence in favour of the claimant. All this Mr. Butterfield well understood, and, having had a little time to cool since the unexpected rencontre of the morning, resolved to get rid of the business by giving drafts on his banker to the requisite amount.

But now, for so the Fates would have it, a mystery of a very extraordinary nature came to light. Wilmot, it appears, was to make Mrs. Martin a present of five hundred pounds on the day he should receive his wife's portion, which being the reward of secret services, the cautious attorney, not choosing to appear himself in the business, instructed his lady to get him under proper articles, and Wilmot had really signed to her a deed for that purpose. Now, it not being convenient to that gentleman to part with so considerable a sum, he gave them both to understand that he knew too much of the law to conceive himself bound by an instrument made to a femme coverte, and consequently, if he

expected payment, it should only be obtained by a legal process.—Thus the biter was fairly bit. As Mr. Martin by no means chose to put the issue of the affair on a public trial, all the recompense left was to rail at his own folly and exhaust his breath in invectives, which certainly answered no better purpose than the covenant he held in his hand.

During this dispute, Mrs. Butterfield, having heard the disgraceful circumstance which had attended her son-in-law's first visit to the Priory, and supposing him to be of that class for which she had indiscriminately the profoundest reverence, that is to say a man of family, resolved to send him an invitation to her presence, in order that she might make the apologies necessary on the occasion. Wilmot, as may be imagined, readily obeyed the summons, and, concluding from the terms on which he now stood with the Martins, that they would avail themselves of his absence to conceal the part they had acted in the affair, as well as to employ every means to his prejudice, he determined on revealing the whole of it; therefore, when Mrs. Butterfield, after desiring he would impute the ill-treatment he had received to her husband's ignorance of his rank in life, added, "And I think, Mr. Wilmot, it would now be proper for you to declare what and who you are." He replied, with an effrontery natural to the education he had received, "As to the first, madam, I am not at present of any occupation, though I had the honour of being put apprentice to a hair-dresser."

Rage and astonishment absolutely suppressing the lady's powers of articulation, he resumed, "And, as to the other enquiry of whom I am, be it known to you that I am first cousin to your honest neighbour Mrs. Martin, to whose advice and good offices I am indebted for the dignity of bearing a relationship to your noble family; not that this favour was to be brought about for nothing, for they intended to have made me pay handsomely for it, if I had not outwitted them.—And now, madam, may I tell Mrs. Wilmot you will give her leave to wait on you?"

"Never, never! (actually foaming with rage.) I verily hoped she had married a gentleman; but now, let the idiot know, I will take care her cloaths shall be sent her, which is the last notice she shall ever receive from any one of this family."

"Very well, (returned the hair-dresser,) as you please for that, and so your most humble servant, my very civil mother-in-law."

Such a degree of insolence, on so interesting an occasion, will appear scarcely compatible with common sense; but this was a commodity in which Mr. Wilmot did not eminently abound, though what he wanted of this point was made up by a large share of that impudence and low cunning which mark the manners of the canaille, to which sphere he properly belonged, having been left in his infancy to the care of the parish, and, by the charity of an old lady, apprenticed to the business of hair-dressing, in which occupation he figured as a journey-man, till the genius of Mrs. Martin devised the generous scheme of imposing on the romantic turn of Eliza in the manner before described.

C H A P. XXX.

The critical Appearance.

THE two ladies, with the baronet, were no sooner landed on the other side of the Channel, than Sir Bevil, recollecting some business he had to settle in the Austrian Netherlands, told his companions that it was necessary they should go to Paris, and wait for him there a short time, at which place he would most assuredly rejoin them. To this proposal Miss Grimstone replied, that, for her part, as a change of air was principally prescribed her, she saw no reason why one place might not do as well as another, and therefore wished to accompany her brother.

“It is certain, (resumed he,) that no place can equal Montpellier in salubrity of air, yet, if you are disposed, sister, to make an excursion more to the North, I have this to add for your encouragement, that we could have recourse to the Spa waters, should your malady make it necessary;—but what says Miss Overbury to our scheme?”

“It is a matter of the greatest indifference to me, (she replied,) whether our rout be to the North or to the South;—Miss Grimstone’s advantage is principally to be consulted.”

Without farther hesitation, it was agreed that the whole party should take a trip to the Netherlands, nor can it be denied that Charlotte thought the jaunt excessively pleasant, as the fineness of the weather, the variety of scenes, together with the politeness and attention of her two companions, were conspiring circumstances to render it agreeable. Sir Bevil strenuously exerted those companionable talents with which he was certainly endowed, and Miss Grimstone appeared to have left her envy and her ill humours on the other side of the water. All was high good-humour, in which strain they had travelled through part of Flanders, and were now in the province of Brabant, when, stopping at a certain town to change horses, the Baronet happened to espy the equipage of his old acquaintance Baron Vanhawsen. The recognition was mutual. That nobleman stopped his carriage, and, being told that the ladies were within at the inn, politely determined on paying them his respects.—Miss Grimstone was vastly glad to see his lordship once more, and, contrary to the old spirit of rivalry, introduced him to Charlotte, who received his compliments with graceful civility.

The Baron’s château was not more than a league distant.—Would they pass so near it without doing him the honour of stopping at it?—Should he not have the satisfaction of entertaining his English friends, whom he so greatly respected?

Charlotte was no ways disposed to accept the invitation, but, as both Sir Bevil and his sister complied with it, she had no choice left but to accompany them.

The castle was an ancient building, but magnificent in the extreme. The furniture and ornaments, as usual with the Germans, more splendid than elegant; every thing was

superb and dazzling; the plate, if not remarkable for taste, was massive and abundant: in short, the Baron's house, table, and equipage, bespoke the riches of the owner, who, it has already been observed, inherited the estates and affluence of many branches of his family, and, on this occasion, nothing was omitted that could tend to display the circumstance.

To her infinite concern, Miss Overbury was soon convinced that the Baron had not relinquished his former attachment to her. He now renewed the subject of his passion in terms so ardent and importunate, that she really felt a secret pain in rejecting his addresses, which, however, she constantly did in terms the most serious and positive; but what prodigiously surprised her was to find Miss Grimstone a warm advocate in his favour. "Is it possible (said that lady) you can refuse a man of the Baron's merit, rank, and fortune, who, it is evident, adores you? Will you reject those offers, of becoming the Baroness Vanhawsen, with a revenue more than princely at your command?—with a splendor equal to that of courts, and more vassals ready to obey your will than many crowned heads can boast?"

"Ah! Miss Grimstone, (returned she,) why should I barter happiness for these toys? The Baron, with all his merit and possessions, can never be the man of my choice. Mention it no more, I beg; but rather oblige me by prevailing on your brother to proceed on our journey."

"That is more than I dare promise you, Charlotte. Sir Bevil, as you see, is so agreeably engaged here, that I can perceive no probability of persuading him to remove as yet."

"Let you and I then leave him, and take our rout to Paris, where he will doubtless join us in a short time."

"No, truly, my dear, I am not yet tired of this château. I tell you frankly, I shall not stir till my brother proposes it."

Nothing, at length, could be more disagreeable than was Miss Overbury's situation. Teazed every day, nay, every hour, with the Baron's professions of regard,—advised with the utmost solemnity by Sir Bevil to accept them, and importuned by his sister to the same purpose, there was nothing she so anxiously desired as to remove from the castle; but her companions were immoveable. How then could she quit it alone?—whither could she go, and to whom?—There was no remedy but patience, and to that she would have submitted, had there not been some circumstances to create her a very serious alarm.

Happening one day to be sitting alone in her apartment, a paper, as from an invisible hand, was dropped at her feet. In her surprise she took it up, and found it contained the following expressions in French, "It were best to do that with a good grace which one may be forced to do at last.—A favour voluntarily bestowed demands a grateful return, but, when obtained by compulsion, can merit only unthankfulness."—

This billet she immediately communicated to Miss Grimstone, not without visible marks of consternation, and asked what she thought it could mean.

“I will tell you (said Miss Grimstone) candidly what I think of it. It appears to me to imply a suggestion that the Baron intends to marry you by force.”

“By force!—You jest surely. How can he possibly dream of so chimerical a project!”

“Perhaps it may not be so chimerical as you imagine. Remember, Charlotte, you are not now in England:—the Baron is absolute sovereign here.”

“Ah! Miss Grimstone, how you terrify me! He cannot possibly desire to marry one who dislikes him.—What happiness could he propose to himself by such a measure?”

“You forget that it is not in Germany we are to look for delicacy of sentiment. No doubt he thinks, that, were you once his wife, his rank, fortune, and attentions, would easily reconcile you to your destiny.”

“I cannot suppose you in earnest in all this; but, put the case that it were so, certainly Sir Bevil and you would not be passive spectators of such an outrage.”

“And what could we do to oppose it? We are all the Baron’s prisoners whenever he chooses to make us so.”

Charlotte, though more disposed to consider this discourse in the light of a jest than otherwise, yet saw something in it which she could not entirely comprehend. If Miss Grimstone really saw cause for any suspicion of the kind, then certainly the conduct both of her brother and herself, in resolving to continue at the castle, looked like infatuation, or something worse. Upon the whole, she determined, since they would not remove, to withdraw herself without them, but she soon after had sufficient reason to conclude that all her motions were watched; and one day, on unlocking her travelling trunk, she discovered that her whole stock of bills and cash had been clandestinely removed from thence. This was sufficient to induce a public declaration of the theft. The servants were examined, and the suspicion suffered to rest on a chamber-maid, who was accordingly marked out for punishment, though the thief was certainly a very different person, nor was it really intended the girl should suffer.

At length affairs began to draw to a crisis. The Baron was no more the obsequious lover, but openly declared he neither could nor would live without the privilege of calling Charlotte his wife. Sir Bevil was wholly passive. Miss Grimstone said not a word on the subject; and, in fine, the poor young lady was but too fully convinced that she was betrayed, though from what motives she was still at a loss to determine. The morning, however, arrived which was to decide her fate. The Baron and his guests had breakfasted together, when the former, rising from his seat, vowed he would no longer be without the

happiness which it was in his power to enjoy, and, taking Miss Overbury by the arm, “Come, madam, (said he,) you shall this instant repay with your hand the uneasiness I have suffered on your account.” It was to no purpose that she vowed rather to die than become his wife: regardless either of her tears or entreaties, they took her in their arms, and carried her into the chapel of the castle. Here the chaplain stood ready to perform the marriage-ceremony. Sir Bevil supported her in his arms, Miss Grimstone applied salts to her nose, and the Baron forcibly held both her hands in his, while the chaplain proceeded with the ceremony.

At this dreadful moment, when all hope was lost, her guardian-angel, in the shape of George Danby, rushed in to her deliverance. “Is this with your own consent, madam?” demanded he of the almost lifeless Charlotte. “No, no, save me!” was all she could reply.—“I will save you, or perish in the attempt!”——Swords were instantly drawn, and Mr. Danby had undoubtedly been lost for ever, had not two of his friends, with a servant, at that moment come up to his rescue. Numbers being now on their side, they bore the lady in triumph from the hands of her vile betrayers, and without farther opposition (for the Baron, in order to effect his scheme with the greater privacy, had ordered none of his domestics to appear) they conveyed her to a chaise which waited hard by the castle. Here Mr. Danby, seating his charge, who had fainted through the mingled emotions of joy and terror, took his place by her side, while his two friends followed on horseback, attended by their servants, who, as well as themselves, were properly armed against any pursuit, which it was probable might be made. Fortunately, however, they proceeded without molestation, (for the Baron and his party, either from the timidity of guilt durst not follow, or by good luck mistook the road they had taken,) and at length arrived in safety at Breda, the capital of Dutch Brabant, where, being in perfect security, they stopped, as well to procure the lady the rest and refreshment she stood in need of, as to concert farther measures of procedure.

C H A P. XXXI.

Proves the preceding Incident no Miracle.

HAVING, in the former chapter, dealt a little in the marvellous, it remains that we descend into the region of probability, and convince the reader that all that we have there recorded was brought to pass by means extremely natural and common; and, first, of this marriage, which it was designed so oddly to bring about.

Sir Bevil Grimstone, morally assured that Miss Overbury would never bestow her hand and fortune on himself, began to regret that he had not supported with more warmth the Baron's addresses, from whose liberality and gratitude something might have been expected. After her departure from town, these gentlemen, no longer rivals but friends, continued on very intimate terms, in the course of which the Baron would often declare, that, rich as he was, he should have considered Charlotte's fortune a trifle not worthy his acceptance in comparison of the happiness of possessing her.

These expressions at length suggested a hint to the Baronet, which occasioned him much profound and secret deliberation;—but, not to swell this work with a detail of pros and cons, we will cut it at once, and say that a bargain was finally struck between these two intimates, by which it was covenanted and agreed, that Sir Bevil Grimstone, on the one part, should, either by force, fraud, or persuasion, cause his ward to become the Baroness Vanhawsen; on which condition, the Baron, on the other, engaged to resign to the said Sir Bevil Grimstone all the estates, real and personal, to which he should become entitled in right of the said Charlotte Overbury, then to be his wife.—It being determined, on all sides, that England could not be the proper scene for such a manœuvre, the Baron returned home to wait the event, and the Baronet set himself diligently to watch the opportunity of executing his engagement.

During Miss Overbury's residence at the Priory, he had taken care to have sufficient spies on all her actions, and was perfectly satisfied that he had nothing to fear from the schemes of Mrs. Butterfield; but how to get her once more in his power was a point which, for some time, much perplexed him. He saw the necessity of getting a female into the plot, but his sister, for several reasons, was the last person he could think of for the purpose. At length a most fortunate incident occurred. Miss Grimstone, despairing of ever effecting an honourable connection, had cast her eyes, with some tenderness, on a spruce valet which her brother had newly taken into the family, and, being just of that age when the heart is said by some to become a second time susceptible of soft impressions, it was impossible she could be long insensible to the attacks of love; but pride absolutely forbidding her to make one of mean degree her lawful lord and master, she, for once in her life, stepped over the boundaries of strict prudence, but not quite so secretly as she had hoped and believed.

Sir Bevil had taken cognizance of the *faux pas*, consequently her precious reputation, which she had set so inestimable a value on, laid at his mercy. The matter was

soon settled.—“Acquiesce in my measures, or I will discard you from my house with the infamy you deserve.” What followed has already been related in the foregoing chapter. It only remains to account for the means by which Mr. Danby was so opportunely brought to the young lady’s rescue.

It will doubtless be recollected that this young gentleman was appointed to an employ on the continent. Richard Sanders, who was now become a favourite servant of Captain Overbury, was a young fellow of a shrewd active genius, and exactly such an one as Mr. Danby’s present situation required; to oblige his friend, therefore, as well as to give the young man an opportunity of improving his natural good capacity, the Captain consented that he should attend Mr. Danby on his tour, which necessarily laid through part of Flanders. Here, foreseeing his affairs would detain him for some time, Sanders’s new master gave him permission to make a little excursion with an acquaintance he had picked up on the journey.—Chance, or rather inclination, led them to the town which laid in the vicinity of the Baron Vanhawsen’s *château*; for Richard’s companion being a Frenchman, and of course incapable of living without an amour on his hands, had, it appeared, a secret penchant for one of the Baron’s female domestics, who was his countrywoman. Love, no less than curiosity, being a foe to reserve, the secrets of the castle were confided to the happy lover, who, by the impulse of a certain characteristic volubility imparted the same to his comrade.

Sanders, after due enquiries, being abundantly satisfied as to the truth and circumstances of the affair, felt his honest bosom glow with indignation at the insult and violence about to be offered to his benefactress; yet, unable of himself to obey the dictates of his grateful zeal, in effecting any mode for her instant redress, he left his companion, and returned back to his master with all possible expedition. Mr. Danby was surprised at seeing him before him with tears in his eyes, and all the marks of horror and concern in his countenance. “For heaven’s sake, Sir, (cried he,) save a country-woman from the cursed clutches of these popish villains!—They will force her to marry;—indeed they will:—that sweet young lady who saved me from a jail,—yes, ’tis she herself,—’tis Miss Overbury.”

The name was sufficient to rouse every generous and noble feeling in the breast of Mr. Danby. Apprized of the situation of his beloved Charlotte, he immediately communicated the story to two Protestant gentlemen of his acquaintance, who generously offered to risk their lives with him in the service of the lady. The interposition of the civil power, if obtained at all, must have been productive of a delay which might have been fatal in its consequences. Mr. Danby resolved to effect her rescue by his sword. The two friends and their servants engaged to second the brave attempt. Conducted by the faithful Sanders, they arrived at the Baron’s *château*.—The domestics, intimidated by their resolute demeanour, attempted not to oppose their entrance, and Mr. Danby, foremost in the enterprize as in zeal, entered the chapel as we have seen.

At Breda he proposed to attend his fair charge to Rotterdam, about twenty-two miles distant from thence, where, as his affairs would not allow him to wait on her farther, he would intrust her to the care of a respectable gentlewoman, with whom he had

contracted some acquaintance on his former travels, and where he was assured she would be perfectly safe, as long as she should choose to remain in that place; and, provided she approved of the measure, he would himself return that way, and be her conductor to England. So eligible a proposal met with due acceptance and acknowledgment.

The two gentlemen, who had so generously assisted in this enterprise, now took their leave, and Mr. Danby, having seen his dear Charlotte safe in a respectable lodging, was obliged to retire, in order to obtain a surgeon's assistance in examining a wound which he had received in the contest at the castle, the pain or danger of which he had been utterly regardless of till he had effectually secured her safety. It was found to be of dangerous tendency, and had already excited a fever, which threatened the most serious consequences. On the morrow, therefore, instead of attending her to Rotterdam as was designed, he was absolutely incapable of quitting his bed.

Charlotte, who knew nothing of the circumstance, was anxiously expecting his arrival at her lodging, when Sanders appeared with the alarming tidings of his master's dangerous condition. No consideration in nature could have prevented her from flying to the apartment of her deliverer, whose case she was convinced, by the surgeon's declaration, was extremely hazardous.—What words can now paint her feelings! Tears, in spite of all her regard to appearances, (if, indeed, on this occasion she thought of any,) flowed down her cheeks at the idea of an amiable man expiring of the wound received in her service.

Mr. Danby calmly advised her to lose no time in repairing to Rotterdam, and added, that he had already begun a letter to the lady whose protection it was his wish to procure her.

“And can you think so meanly of me, Mr. Danby, (replied she with unusual earnestness,) as to imagine I would leave you in this situation? Surely those little attentions, which it may be in my power to shew on so melancholy an occasion, are the least return I can make. No, Sir, I will not quit Breda, be assured.”

Mr. Danby's eyes flashed a beam of pleasure at this tender assurance, but he attempted not to reply.

In short, our heroine was his nurse, his companion, his friend, in a place where not one sympathetic acquaintance was at hand to sooth his pain or alleviate his sufferings.—Sanders spent the nights in watching by his pillow, and in the days she constantly supplied that place while he took the necessary repose. Their cares and assiduities were at length rewarded with reviving hope, but not with the removal of all apprehension for a considerable time.

During this period, Miss Overbury had written her brother an account of his friend's situation and her own, urging him, if possible, to come to them; but there needed not that solicitation. Anxious for a man he esteemed,—a sister whom he tenderly loved,

the Captain no sooner received the unexpected relation, than he determined to set off immediately for the Netherlands.

At length, to the entire satisfaction both of Charlotte and the faithful Sanders, Mr. Danby was pronounced out of danger,—was able to leave his bed, and to enjoy the conversation of the woman he adored. What an opportunity was here for the tender sympathies of mutual love!

The liveliest gratitude and the purest passion must (one should imagine) have conspired to give a pathos to those ineffable effusions;—but, at present, nothing like it was the case. Mr. Danby saw,—yes, with rapture too high for expression, he saw,—that he was tenderly beloved by the mistress of his soul; but that conviction, instead of animating his conversation with the ardour of hope, actually froze it to the torpid style of mere civility.

In proportion, as by a thousand unguarded instances, she demonstrated that something more than gratitude lurked at the bottom of her heart, his behaviour became more distant and reserved. The first time she had visited him in his illness, he had said that he regretted not the loss of life in the exulting thought of its having been devoted to her; but, whenever the subject was now mentioned, (and it perpetually hung on the lips of the grateful Charlotte,) he seemed to treat it less cavalierly.—He was happy in having effected any thing to the advantage of a lady.—The impulse of benevolence called for what he had done.—It was no more than what he owed to any other oppressed individual of the human race.

This conduct was absolutely inexplicable to her, when she recollected an incident which happened at the Priory; but, in fact, that very incident was the cause of his restraint. He had secretly and deeply lamented the imprudence of his conduct at that period ever since, and he was now convinced he had excited a sentiment in her breast which she ought never to have felt respecting him. The heart would sometimes exult in the thought, but reason assured him he had been culpable; yet his error, he sincerely hoped, was not totally irremediable, and he resolved, however painful the restraint, to indulge no future sallies of a passion which his principles condemned.

C H A P. XXXII.

Prudential Considerations must be allowed their Weight.

WHILST things were thus situated, the arrival of Captain Overbury was announced.—At any other period, George Danby would have hailed the presence of so dear a friend with unaffected joy, but now he seemed to shrink from it with the consciousness of self-condemnation.

Charlotte, who had as yet discovered no necessity for constraint, behaved with all the openness natural to her character. She spoke of her deliverance in terms so elevated, and expressed her sense of the obligation so warmly, that it fully corroborated a suspicion which the Captain, when at the Priory, had, it seems, entertained.—He was a man of penetration, and it was not long before he fully comprehended the respective feelings of the lovers. He had long known and admired his friend's exalted notions of honour, and, as the reserve he had imposed on himself was obviously unnatural, the Captain entered immediately into the motive of it, and with one glance read the delicate embarrassment he laboured under. He saw two amiable persons, who tenderly esteemed and were apparently formed for each other, about to be miserable by a separation which nothing but a chimerical idea of honour could inspire.—Mr. Danby's family was certainly most unexceptionable,—his personal merit undoubted. The only impediment which the world would oppose to such an union was the want of fortune on his part; but, in this respect, Captain Overbury differed in opinion from the world.—He thought merit the only real fortune either in man or woman; and, as in the present case, there was wealth enough on one side for all the reasonable purposes of life, he readily concluded that pecuniary matters ought not to be allowed any considerable weight.

Mr. Danby was now so far recovered as to be able to prosecute his business; but, as peace of mind does not always accompany corporeal health, so it was easy to see, that, in recovering the latter, he had not with it retrieved the former. "I shall quit this place (said he) happy in the certainty that Miss Overbury is now in the hands of a protector with whom she will have nothing to fear from the treachery with which she was lately threatened."

The Captain and he were alone when this was spoken.

"But do you consider, Danby, (said the former,) that my sister's situation peculiarly requires one of another nature than the relation betwixt us can supply. In fine, her person and fortune will, I fear, prove still inimical to her peace, unless some honest man secures both as his property. Now, from what has passed, I think no person so well adapted to become such a proprietor as yourself."

"And am I so unfortunate (replied he, greatly agitated) as to have deserved these tacit reproaches?—Yes, (with a look of self-accusation,) I have deserved them all, and

much more; but, know, my friend, that my principles are yet untainted, and I have still enough of honour left to blush at a weakness which my soul condemns.”

“You confess, then, (smiling,) that you have been betrayed into some weakness; that is, in other words, you love my sister.”

“I will not add falshood to temerity,—I confess I do; as who, indeed, can see her, and not be sensible of her perfections; but, at the same time, I know that I ought not to ask, nor she bestow, a return of that sentiment.”

“But suppose she does actually return it, what will your heroics say to this? Come, come, my friend, all this is mere chimerical refinement,—downright sentimental nonsense. You love each other, and, to confess a truth, it was always my secret wish that you might do so. I have my sister’s happiness anxiously at heart, and I think I cannot promote it better than by giving her to you.”

“Your partiality, dear Captain, lays me under an everlasting obligation; yet, excuse me in saying, that, in the zeal of friendship, you forget what is due to your honour as well as the interest of Miss Overbury.—What would the world say? Would it not reproach you with having sacrificed your sister to your own private feelings? Her merit and her fortune may justly entitle her to nobility, or at least an elevated rank in life; nor will you be allowed to deprive her of these without falling under the public censure.”

“I assure you, George, (resumed the Captain gravely,) that, were you possessed of a grain of merit less than I know you to be, I would disdain a reply to so ridiculous an argument. In securing my sister’s happiness, I should infallibly procure that testimony of conscience in my favour which I think of more consequence than the applause of a thousand worlds; yet, in urging this point, I take it for granted that you would have loved my sister, had she not been mistress of a shilling. Say but—that she is not absolutely essential to your felicity, and I have done with the subject.”

“I cannot strictly affirm this, Sir; but I will say, that, in seeing Miss Overbury united to a person of equal fortune and merit, I should experience that sensation which, I trust, would balance every selfish feeling.”

“All this I easily believe from the known generosity of your mind, Danby. Since, therefore, you acknowledge that the possession of Charlotte is essential to your happiness, I will take upon me to say that you are also essential to her’s; so that (to meet you on your own ground) you find you are necessitated to accept what you term an honour so far above you.—Thus your scruples are fairly done away, my very sentimental friend, and I will leave my sister and you to talk over it farther at your leisure.—But here she comes quite apropos, I declare.”

Mr. Danby, immediately on Charlotte’s entrance, was about to withdraw; but the Captain, guessing his design, said, “George, I am going out on a little business, and shall commit this lady to your care in the mean time; but, hark ye, (with an arch smile,) she is

an excellent casuist, and, if you think proper to lay your question before her, I know she will answer it in a trice.”

To be short, the lovers, by the Captain’s interference, soon came to understand each other. Danby was the happiest and most grateful of mankind; yet, though he constantly from this time expressed the liveliest sense of the felicity and honour conferred on him, that sentiment by no means hurried him to that servility of conduct which little minds alone are capable of, or caused him to forget in the lover the man of sense and spirit. In a word, under the influence of conscious dignity of soul, his deportment was such as did honour to his mistress’s condescension and his friend’s exalted attachment.

The Captain, exulting, with the honest triumph of benevolence, in the happiness which apparently awaited two persons whom he tenderly regarded, told them, he had yet performed but half the business he had assigned himself; for, as Mr. Danby’s affairs indispensibly demanded a speedy separation, he had it in contemplation to join their hands in wedlock before they took leave of each other.

The lover, who durst not so early have ventured a hint of the kind, looked his friend a thousand thanks; but Charlotte, with an air of surprise, exclaimed, “Surely, brother, you have forgot how short a time has elapsed since——”

“Since what, my dear girl? (interrupting her with a smile;) since you both determined to obey the dictates of common sense, you might have said; but the sentiments now subsisting between you are of a much older date than this:—and why is not the present time as proper for the solemn ceremony as any period seven years hence?”

“Indeed, Sir, I cannot consent to so precipitate a measure, and I should be very sorry to suspect Mr. Danby could be so imprudent as to prompt it.”

“Condemn me not, my dear Charlotte, (replied he,) before you have proof. I dared not, indeed, to have suggested it; yet, since the Captain has thus kindly moved a point so consonant to my wishes, I will take the liberty warmly to second it.”

“Then receive the answer so improper a request deserves,—that is, an absolute negative.”

Mr. Danby saw she was displeased, and therefore replied, that, although her condescension in this respect would render him the happiest of men, yet, rather than offer the smallest violence to her choice, he would be content in this, as on every other occasion, to forego his own wishes when not consonant with hers.

“Why, you will absolutely spoil this sister of mine, George, (said the Captain.) I see that already; however, Charlotte, (a little seriously,) since you will not consent to oblige either of us, have the prudence at least to consult your own reputation.”

“What can the present instance have to do with this, my dear brother?”

“A great deal, I assure you. Here will it be whispered in England, that Mr. Danby has forcibly taken a young lady from the hands of her guardian; that she chose to remain with him, near the space of a month, in a foreign city, where she was not known to a single being, and all this with no other attendant than the gentleman’s own servant; nay, farther, that her brother, informed of the disgraceful incident, went post after her, and, after much expostulation, prevailed with her to quit her paramour, and return to her native country. This, my dear sister, and probably much more, will the foul mouth of slander report to your prejudice, and its having some facts to support it will be an undeniable proof of the whole.”

“You alarm me, indeed, Sir.—Can this be possible?”

“It is very possible, and what in the nature of things may reasonably be expected; for Sir Bevil and his sister, to palliate or conceal their own conduct, you may be morally assured, will improve the smallest advantage afforded them in prejudice of your character; besides, as my situation in life will necessarily call me in a short time again from England, have you not reason to dread the future machinations of this crafty guardian, of whose detestable principles you have already had so dreadful a specimen.”

“I am indebted to your friendly consideration, brother, much more than I was aware of.—What shall I say, but that I resign myself wholly to your disposal?”

Mr. Danby was in raptures at this reply; the Captain’s eyes beamed ineffable satisfaction, “I shall now then have the felicity (said he) of seeing my Charlotte secured from the treachery of avarice and dissimulating meanness, and in possession, I trust, of all which can constitute her happiness.—This hour the Dutch minister shall make you one.”

“This hour, did you say?—Indeed, indeed, it cannot be.”

“But Mr. Danby, you know, is obliged to leave us to-morrow morning.”

“And to-morrow morning I promise to give this gentleman my hand, if he thinks it worth acceptance.”

“O my Charlotte! (exclaimed the enraptured Danby,) had I a diadem to offer, I would lay it——”

“At my feet, (interrupted she, laughing;) I understand you.—But, good people, we have certainly had enough of this subject, and, as it grows late, I beg leave to have a little consultation with my pillow.”

She then bade them good night, and retired with more satisfaction, perhaps, than she chose they should be spectators of.

C H A P. XXXIII.

A Lover's Heroism rewarded.

LONG before the sun had entered on his radiant course, the happy lover had quitted his repose, for excessive joy no more favours the drowsy God than excessive grief. Charlotte, in due time, appeared sparkling as the morning, (and that, it must be confessed, was a very bright one.) The feelings of her heart, on this occasion, gave additional lustre to the charms of her fine person. Her eyes, it is true, were cast to the ground with an agreeable reserve in them, yet the purest love beamed therein, and diffused its animating spirit amidst the blush which glowed on her cheek. The Captain was gone out on some affairs necessary to the approaching ceremony. Mr. Danby met his charming mistress at the entrance of the parlour, and, catching her in his arms, (a liberty he had never taken before,) said, in a tone of chastened rapture, "Joy to my beloved Charlotte on this auspicious morning!—May every succeeding hour augment her felicity and her Danby's gratitude!"

"Mine (replied she, disengaging herself) ought to be the latter sentiment. Are you not the generous, the noble preserver of my liberty, and every dear consideration in nature, for which you risked your own valuable life?"

"No, my Charlotte.—It is only now I feel it such. Existence, at that time, was no desirable privilege to me, and where could be the merit of hazarding that which one puts no value on? I had learned, indeed, to suppress the first wishes of my heart, and to consider the only object of its purest and most ardent affections as a good too supreme for me to aspire to; yet, in this constrained philosophy, (if such it might be called,) the mind had lost its energy; every laudable principle gradually became inert, and I sunk insensibly into an apathy which rendered life itself a burthen. Such, my beloved, is at best the state of human virtue; its lines, indeed, are amply drawn, but it is incapable of soaring beyond the narrow limits of the passions."

"But, George, you had placed your idea of that virtue even at a visionary point of eminence. It was not reason, but a too refined imagination marked the distance betwixt us, and imposed a silence which you own so irksome."

"Oh! say not so, my Charlotte!—Could your Danby's poor deserts, his indigence, and unpropitious fortune, be a proper offering to worth like your's?"

"You are a sorry philosopher, I find, since you thought the goods of fortune so very essential a point to be considered."

"Not quite so contemptible a one neither. Had the woman I adored been like myself, the inheritor of indigence, pecuniary considerations had held up no bar to my felicity; then, in the meanest cottage, blest with my Charlotte's love, I should have looked with contempt on all the advantages of the world beside."

“I readily give you credit for the assertion, and I confess (with an air of pleasantry) it gives me great satisfaction to find you avow so good a stock of philosophy, as, in taking Charlotte Overbury with all her ill humours, impertinences, and folly, you will have plentiful occasion for the exercise of it.”

“If you, my sweet girl, (replied he in the same tone,) do not absolutely annihilate this little stock, it will be very fortunate on my side; for, you know, an uninterrupted course of happiness has spoiled many a good philosopher.”

The Captain, here returning, interrupted the *tête-à-tête*, and Charlotte soon after leaving the room, a conversation ensued between him and Mr. Danby, which might be termed a contest of generosity. As the usual business of settlements, &c. could not properly be transacted here, the latter had before proposed that the lady’s fortune should be wholly vested in her brother’s hands, that it might hereafter be disposed in such a manner as he should deem most for her advantage. This the Captain had refused, and now, when, previous to the sacred ceremony, Mr. Danby re-urged the point, he rejected the proposal with indignation, “Do you imagine, Sir, (said he,) that, in committing my sister to your generosity and tenderness, I am afraid to intrust you with her fortune?”

“Pardon me, dear Overbury, but you know those things are usual even when an equality of fortune is supposed to be the case; and, since I can offer my dearest Charlotte no jointure but indigence,—my natural inheritance, what can I do less than invest her with an entire right to her own? You must indulge my request; nay, I insist on it.”

The Captain, however, would listen to nothing of the kind, and Danby, though reluctantly, was obliged to acquiesce in this proof of unlimited confidence; yet, if any thing could be said to cloud the sunshine of his breast at this blissful period, it was surely the being restrained from demonstrating the disinterestedness of his affection so clearly as he wished to have done.

The happy party took but a slight breakfast, and then repaired to the spot where the Dutch minister waited to perform the sacred office. In receiving the hand of the lovely bride, Danby’s animated countenance expressed the sublimest emotions of gratitude and love, while every exalted sensation beamed through the deep carnation of her blushing cheek. The awful ceremony concluded, the Captain, taking a hand of each, pressed them, locked as they were in each other, to his breast. “Now (he exclaimed) I am completely happy! and so, my dear Charlotte, had he lived till now, would have been that excellent man to whom we owe our being.” A tear, glistening in his eye as he spoke, suppressed his voice, so nearly are the symptoms of excessive joy allied to those of grief.

They returned together to their lodgings for the last time. The bridegroom’s baggage was already set off,—himself necessitated that hour to bid his adorable Charlotte a long adieu. The Captain foresaw the conflict of the parting moment, and wisely determined to evade, in some measure, its force.—Already was the gloom of separation apparent in the countenances of the bridal pair, when, without allowing either to mention

the distressing subject, he called Mr. Danby aside, and thus addressed him, “My dear George, the hour is arrived, and necessity calls you hence. Spare then your own sensibility and my sister’s, by avoiding a painful adieu. May safety attend you, and felicity await our future meeting!—Farewell, my friend. Remember, Charlotte is with her brother.”

Mr. Danby felt the eligibility of the measure. He sighed,—cast an expressive look towards the apartment which contained his soul’s best treasure,—then, in silence, pressed the hand of his friend, (for words he could not utter,) and immediately quitted Breda.

Charlotte could not but be pleased with her brother’s motive in prompting this measure, and, as that city no longer contained any thing estimable in her eye, she was no less impatient than himself to return to England. Every thing being previously ready for the journey, they sat out for their native country by the way of Holland.

C H A P. XXXIV.

Short-lived Satisfaction.

CAPTAIN Overbury, having conducted his sister to England, immediately on their arrival in town, announced the circumstance of the marriage to Mrs. Danby, senior, who received her with tears of joy.—“To embrace you really as my daughter, my sweet girl, (said that lady,) is a felicity I could not have permitted myself to hope for. O may your union be crowned with all the bliss this world can yield!—To have found my son unequal to the trial which his severe fortune had exacted of him cannot surprise me, when I reflect on the imperfect state of all human virtue; yet, though he had not fortitude to abide by his own principles, I trust his future gratitude will veil the culpability of his recent conduct.”

Charlotte was sensibly hurt at hearing the man of her choice spoken of in terms of so much severity, and the Captain said, “Be in no pain, good madam, on this account; my friend has not disgraced the noblest principle you could have wished to inspire him with.—My sister will explain every thing to you, whom I will beg leave to intrust to your protection till I shall have provided a house proper for her reception.”

Mrs. Danby again fell on Charlotte’s neck, and wept. “This is too much, too much! (said she.) To be indeed the mother of my angelic girl, my Charlotte, whom I have constantly loved with the most ardent affection, is a felicity too great for expression.”

Charlotte returned the good lady’s tenderness with every demonstration of gratitude and respect. In the mean time, the Captain sat out on the business in hand, taking his faithful man Sanders along with him, who had attended them to England; for, so much had his conduct endeared him to all, that, as a proof of their regard, they resolved on giving him his choice, either to follow Mr. Danby further on his travels or accompany the Captain and his sister to his native country. Sanders immediately declared that he had seen enough of foreign countries, and wished to return to his own; on which, however useful his abilities undoubtedly were to him, Mr. Danby readily consented, happy in knowing his dear Charlotte would be served by one that had so sincere a zeal for her person.

It was not long before an elegant house was found to the Captain’s purpose at the West end of the town, which he immediately engaged, and then caused it to be furnished in a style of the highest taste. The coach, horses, liveries, and domestics, were adapted in that mode of elegance in which he thought it incumbent on him to establish his sister, to whom (having conducted her thither,) he said, “My dear Charlotte must pardon me if, in the arrangements and ornaments of her house, I have shewn less taste or judgment than she would herself have done. Such as it is, however, I beg she will consider as her own,—a sort of nuptial present from her brother.”

There was nothing, indeed, to be disapproved; and, if there had been, it is probable, that, under the deep sense she entertained of the Captain’s generosity and

affection, she would not have been the first in discovering it. Here they were visited by a large and respectable acquaintance, the names of Overbury and Danby being equally loved and respected by many of the first distinction.

In this manner some months were passed, with the highest satisfaction both to the Captain and his beloved sister, when, most unfortunately for her, he was again called to plough the ocean. The thoughts of that event filled her with every gloomy appresion, to alleviate which was his anxious though fruitless endeavour.

“My dear Charlotte, (said he,) you can have nothing to fear from the machinations of any, in a land where arbitrary power has no existence; and I have so perfect a conviction of your prudence, as to believe you will have nothing to encounter with, during my absence, or that of your husband, but the tender anxieties of an affectionate heart. I would wish you, however, to beguile these as much as possible, by enjoying the amusements which your fortune puts in your power.—Be on all occasions yourself. The character of George Danby, independent of your own merit, is sufficient to insure you respect.—Be happy, then, and let these unavoidable separations serve but to augment the pleasure of future meetings.”

Before his departure, the Captain, taking Sanders aside, presented him with a purse of a hundred guineas, as an earnest (he said) of the friendship he should ever bear towards him, and then added, “The attachment you have already manifested to my sister induces me to believe you will be a valuable attendant on her person during my absence; for this reason I leave you in England. Continue to shew her the same fidelity, and depend on my future acknowledgements.”

Charlotte accompanied her brother to the water side. She saw him received on board with every testimony of joy and respect from the officers and men, and then continued to haunt the shore till orders were issued for weighing anchor, when, with a heavy and boding heart, she returned to her habitation.

C H A P. XXXV.

It was all a Joke.

PREVIOUS to the departure of Captain Overbury, Charlotte had solicited Mrs. Danby to reside entirely at her house, as long as she should be compelled to sustain what she termed her forlorn situation; and that lady, having readily acceded to the proposal, had wholly quitted her own habitation, and was now a constant resident with her daughter-in-law.—As the most unfeigned affection subsisted between these two amiable persons, so the similarity of their tastes rendered them very desirable companions to each other. They had both a relish for intellectual pleasures, and equally despised those amusements which have nothing more to recommend them than their being merely sanctioned by fashion.— Thus qualified for the real enjoyment of life, independent of the caprice of others, Charlotte determined on contracting the circle of her visitants, as well as on appearing less frequently in public than she had done during the time of her brother's residence with her, for she thought, and perhaps not unreasonably, that the nature of her present situation eminently exposed her to calumny, and consequently demanded a greater degree of circumspection and reserve than that of many other young ladies: besides, her disposition, though never a dissipated one, more than ever inclined to domestic scenes, as the void which she sensibly felt in her heart could not be filled by any amusements which the fashionable world had to offer. In short, the only satisfaction she was now capable of enjoying she found in her music, reading, and the agreeable conversation of Mrs. Danby, with, now and then, the company of a few select friends.

One morning, as the two ladies, were out on an airing, a card was left at the house to the following purpose.

“Sir Bevil and Miss Grimstone are much disappointed in not finding Mrs. Danby at home; yet, as they cannot resist an anxious desire of being personally assured of her health, they present compliments, and will do themselves the pleasure of waiting on her to-morrow morning.”

Tuesday Morn.

This being the first intimation which Charlotte had received of the Baronet's being in town, it gave her a sensible concern, for she had fondly hoped to escape the mortification of seeing either him or his sister till the presence of a protector should give her spirits for the dreaded interview. They had not indeed been long arrived; for, after the affair of the castle, they were unable at once to command audacity sufficient to face the circle of their acquaintance, and had, therefore, actually made the tour of France. The circumstance of Miss Overbury's marriage with Mr. Danby was one of the first articles of news they received on their return, but in what manner they were affected by it will be gathered from a future chapter.

Extremely distressed and puzzled how to act on so unexpected an occasion, Charlotte applied to Mrs. Danby for advice. “What is to be done? (said she.)—I cannot really see this vile Sir Bevil.”

“I think you cannot avoid that, my dear, (replied her mother,) as a refusal on your part would be considered as the commencement of hostilities, and it is best to preserve the exterior, at least, of peace with our enemies.”

“But I cannot dissemble, madam;—nor is there any reason to imagine this overture proceeds either from contrition or friendship.”

“That, my dear, is more than you can be certain of. It is possible there may be something of penitence in it; but, be that as it will, you have nothing farther to fear from them, and therefore it may, perhaps, be right to preserve a distant acquaintance with them.”

Mrs. Danby’s opinion had always the weight of absolute command with her daughter-in-law, and therefore, on the following morning, Sir Bevil and his sister were admitted.

Their arrival being announced, Charlotte instantly turned pale as ashes, and it was with great difficulty she could be kept from fainting. “Be composed, my best love, (said Mrs. Danby,) there can be no cause for this agitation. Are you not in the land of liberty?—Assume then the dignity which becomes you as the sister and wife of those who will never suffer you to be insulted with impunity.”

Somewhat reassured, she endeavoured to collect her scattered spirits, and at length entered the dining-room with an air of tolerable serenity. Sir Bevil immediately approached her, and in a polite and affectionate manner expressed his happiness in seeing her so well, to which he added a warm congratulation on the subject of her marriage, hoping it would be attended with all imaginable felicity; to all which (astonished at his effrontery) she returned only a distant curtesy. Having paid Miss Grimstone the attention which mere civility demanded, they all three took chairs, and the Baronet with a gay air resumed, “Pon honour, my dear Charlotte, I hope you were not seriously alarmed at that whimsical joke of the Baron Vanhawsen. I should have thought it excessively droll, had I not been under some apprehensions of the light in which you seemed to consider it.”

“Joke, do you call it, Sir Bevil?” reiterated Charlotte, at once provoked and amazed.

“Surely, my dear madam, no reasonable person could consider the affair in any other light. Could you possibly imagine, that, had I thought there had been any thing serious in the matter, I should tamely have submitted to the outrage intended my amiable ward?”

“I will wage a thousand guineas (cried Miss Grimstone) that she really supposed you capable of such a conduct, and that it was the very consideration which drove her into the harbour of matrimony.”

“A pleasant dénouement, by Jupiter! (exclaimed the Baronet, laughing.)—But were you really married in the Netherlands, Charlotte?”

Concluding that an explicit information respecting that point might secure her a more serious as well as respectful behaviour, she here briefly related the time when, and the place where, the marriage was solemnized.

“And your brother (rejoined he) was one of the happy party?”

“Otherwise, Sir Bevil, that event would not have taken place; at least, at so early a period.”

“Well, I vow there was something excessively laughable in the whole,—that you should run away from the castle in such a fright and fairly leap into Danby’s arms.—May you be happy, my dearest creature! (rising to depart;) I wish it with all my soul.—But I will not forgive you though, except you promise to give us as much of your time as possible during your widowhood.”

Miss Grimstone also joined in the invitation, which Charlotte civilly returning, they took their leave, laughing as they went down stairs at the oddity of the adventure.

C H A P. XXXVI.

The Commutation.

LEAVING our heroine to meditate at leisure on the extraordinary circumstances of Sir Bevil Grimstone's visit and behaviour, we will, if the kind reader has no objection, take a trip once more into Somersetshire, in order to examine the state of affairs at the Priory, for the proper estimate of which, it will be necessary to be somewhat retrograde in our motions, by adverting to that period of time when Mr. Wilmot took leave of the village in order to convey five thousand pounds worth of paper to the capital, where, in an obscure alley, he had placed his bride, the poor deluded Eliza.

Mrs. Butterfield was bursting with rage at the treachery of her quondam friend, Mrs. Martin, at the very instant when, by a most singular address, that lady procured herself admission to her presence. Perceiving how matters were likely to proceed, she judged the best method of moderating this vehemence of wrath would be by counterbalancing rage with rage, and therefore sagaciously affected to be in the height of resentment at the insolence of the wretch who could have the assurance to claim a relationship with her.

“What! (cried Mrs. Butterfield,) is it not true then that the fellow who has ruined my daughter is your cousin?”

“Not a syllable of it, I assure you on my honour!—Never saw the villain in my life till this day.—Surely (weeping most violently) you cannot imagine me so base as to connive at so detestable an act.—I shall never know a moment's peace more.—To be sus—pect—ed (sobbing) of such a thing,—oh! it will be the death of my poor Martin and me too.”

In fine, so effectually was the credulity of the Justice's lady wrought on by the talents of her crafty neighbour, that an annihilation of past animosities succeeded, and Mrs. Martin, before she quitted the Priory, was duly reinstated in all the rights and privileges of a confidante, of which it was now her business to make a proper advantage.

As things had turned out, it was by no means her desire that Eliza should be restored to favour, since, in that case, such an *éclaircissement* might succeed as would rather degrade her in the estimation of the family.—To prevent it was henceforth to be the object of her attention, nor were there any means so likely to answer that purpose as the procuring a pardon for Mr. Arthur Butterfield.—Mrs. Martin already understood the favourable disposition of his father in that respect, nor did she despair of bringing Mrs. Butterfield herself over to the same point.

Now, while affairs were in this posture, the Justice had just knocked the ashes out of his second pipe, one evening, after supper, when the arrival of Sir Bevil Grimstone

was announced. "Why, man, (cried the former,) I should zoo soon have expected snow in harvest, as they zay, as to zee you in this country."

"I dare say (rejoined Mrs. Butterfield) Sir Bevil's calling on us is purely promiscuous; but we are *intensely* honoured by his company, happen how it might."

"You are infinitely obliging, good madam, but I assure you I am not indebted to accident for the happiness of seeing you, having done myself this pleasure on business of a particular nature."

"Well, well, get your supper vurst. Mayhap you are weary, and we will talk of other matters to-morrow."

Supper being a second time placed on the table, the Justice left his guest to replenish exhausted nature, while he took a trip to the land of forgetfulness, or, in other words, fell fast asleep in his elbow-chair; mean time his lady, incapable of repressing the impulse of curiosity, desired Sir Bevil to acquaint her with the purport of his visit, which he did in the following manner: "You are not unacquainted, I suppose, madam, with the imprudent marriage of Charlotte Overbury with that worthless young man, Danby, who, every body knows, is not possessed of a shilling. So preposterous a step cannot but excite the sincere concern of those who have her interest at heart, and therefore——"

Here Mrs. Butterfield, who, for obvious reasons, had not the most cordial affection for Charlotte, interrupted him by saying, that, since Miss Overbury had thought proper to act so imprudently, she did not see that her friends had any reason to be concerned for the consequences.

"That is not the point in question altogether, (replied he,) for you must be sensible, my dear madam, that, as this young man has no fortune of his own, that of his wife must necessarily be appropriated to their support. Now it behoves us, to whom the care of that fortune was intrusted, to prevent its expenditure in so improper a manner."

"How are we concerned, (cried the lady, peevishly,) in what becomes of the girl's fortune now?"

"Here me with patience, good madam. By a clause in Mr. Overbury's will it is expressed, that, in case his daughter marries without consent of guardians, her property becomes forfeited to them."

"That is quite another affair; and, as you say, Sir Bevil, it is recumbent on us to see that her fortune be not unprofitably wasted."

"That is the very thing I mean. Now the question is, whether this marriage was without consent of guardians or otherwise."

"I am positive she never had any consent from us, Sir Bevil."

“Nor from me, I assure you, madam.—Indeed, I suspected she entertained a penchant for this fellow, and did every thing in my power to frustrate it.”

“A *pension* in the case, was there?—Then it’s no wonder.”

At this interval, the Justice, happening to awake, Mrs. Butterfield referred the subject of conversation to him, who, after a pause of some minutes, replied, in a tone of displeasure, “If the poor girl has made a bad bargain, the worse her luck; but it shall never be said that my family were enriched by her ruin. For my part, I will never consent to this thing, d’ye zee; nor do I think it will do you, Sir Bevil, any credit neither. Howsomdever, you may do as you list, but I tell you squarely I won’t meddle in such a dirty job.”

Mrs. Butterfield on this gave the baronet a significant wink, as much as to tell him she knew how to manage her husband, after which the discourse was turned on a different subject, and soon after the family retired to repose.

Sir Bevil being too fashionable a person to quit his bed before noon, Mrs. Butterfield, on the following morning, had sufficient leisure for discussing the topic with her husband, who, for a long time, persisted in his abhorrence of the measure, notwithstanding every endeavour to convince him that it was for the benefit of his family she urged it. “Zooks! (replied he) what family have we now to care for, since we have both agreed on banishing our children?”

“As to Eliza, (resumed she, fetching a deep sigh,) it is impossible that I can ever wish you to forgive her, since I have resolved not to do it myself; but Arthur’s fault might, perhaps, admit of some excuse.”

“Excuse!—Odds my life! why, after all, he has only taken a wife to his own liking, and where is the harm of that?”

“So far you judge not amiss; but then, as the heir of our house, and the *perpetrator* of the Butterfield name, he ought, you know, to have married a woman of fortune. Now this scheme of Sir Bevil puts one in a method of making up for that *efficiency*; so that, if you will be wise enough to come into it, I do not see but Arthur may be allowed to bring his wife home.”

In fine, perceiving there was no other method of carrying the point which he had so earnestly at heart, the Justice at length consented to the division of Charlotte’s fortune with the Baronet, who, in consequence, returned post-haste to town, and the same day Mr. Arthur was informed that he had liberty to bring his wife to the Priory.

C H A P. XXXVII.

Prospect of the Future unexpectedly clouded.

SIR Bevil, on his return to the metropolis, having immediately taken the proper steps for preventing Charlotte from touching any part of her fortune in future, thought proper to send her a very polite epistle, in which he regretted the being legally constrained to a measure which gave him the most exquisite pain to execute, but he was under the disagreeable necessity of acquainting her, that she was no longer mistress of the fortune bequeathed her by her father, which, in consequence of her precipitate marriage, devolved thenceforth to her guardians, agreeably to a clause in the said will.

Charlotte's consternation may here be better imagined than described; but Mrs. Danby, being a person who united great firmness of mind to a solid understanding, her presence, on so distressing an occasion, was highly consolatory. By her advice, a lawyer was directly sent to the commons to examine the nature of Mr. Overbury's will; but the result produced nothing satisfactory, and he delivered his opinion of the matter, in a few words, to the following purport:—That the will of the deceased certainly empowered her guardians to take possession of the said fortune, in case of a marriage entered into, without their consent, previous to her attaining the age of twenty-one years:—that, consequently, it remained for the lady either calmly to acknowledge that right, or, which he thought more advisable, to refer the case to a decision of the Court of Chancery.—The latter was a measure, which, if ever deemed expedient, could not be undertaken in the absence of her husband; Charlotte therefore replied, that, since it was so, she had no alternative but to submit to the letter of the law. The lawyer therefore withdrew, and, flinging herself into the arms of her mother, she lamented her situation with all the warmth of that refined sensibility which had ever made a part of her character:—not that the immediate prospect of sinking from affluence to absolute penury was the consideration which simply afflicted her; this she believed herself endowed with fortitude sufficient to bear, had the evil of it been of a nature to alight singly on herself; but the thoughts of having brought distress and ruin on the man she loved, by involving his narrow circumstances in the additional expence of supporting her, was that which rendered this event the most galling to her imagination.

Whilst her mind was occupied by these torturing reflections, Mrs. Danby had given way to meditations no less painful. She considered the unfortunate affair as the effect of her son's temerity, who, by indulging an improper passion, had involved the amiable object of it in the most complicated distress. In the transports of her emotion she could not forbear exclaiming aloud, "O George! how has thy rashness and presumption ruined this angelic creature!" Charlotte, starting with horror at the reproach, caught hold of her hand, and with great vehemence replied, "No, madam, it is I only am culpable,—I who have ruined your generous son, and rewarded his love with distress and beggary." If ever a contest might be called amiable, that which succeeded between these two exalted women certainly merited the appellation;—the one obstinately appropriating all blame to herself, the other as anxious to place it on the temerity of her own son.—At length Mrs.

Danby observed, that, since there appeared no remedy against the evil, it was incumbent on them to devise the means of rendering it as tolerable as possible. “The income which I enjoy (said she) will be sufficient to support us together, nor can I doubt but that my son’s gratitude and affection will stimulate the exertion of those abilities which, properly directed, will doubtless procure an ample support for you both; and your virtue and good sense, my Charlotte, will, I know, convince you that superfluity is not absolutely essential to happiness,—though, I own, the hint is calculated more for the promoting your tranquillity than my own.”

“And that, madam, will ever be safe while George Danby’s is so.”

“Generous creature! If you can only reconcile yourself to the idea of moving in a less elevated sphere of life than you had a right to expect, George, I am convinced, must glory in the opportunity of evincing that his Charlotte only, independent of her fortune, was the object of his love, and, for myself, I can only say that the daughter of Mr. Overbury would have possessed my warmest affection, though I had never known her the heiress of any thing more than indigence. What then must be my feelings when I know that indigence is the consequence of a generous attachment to my son!”

“O my mother, (cried Charlotte, embracing her with tears) how much are you in every respect my superior!—This exalted goodness makes me poor indeed!”

In fine, pursuant to Mrs. Danby’s advice, she immediately disposed of her equipage, and such articles of furniture as by the bulk of mankind are deemed superfluities, after which it was agreed they should retire together to a small house in the suburbs of the capital, there to wait the arrival of the Captain or Mr. Danby.—The next thing to be performed was the discharging as many of the servants as the mode of life they had resolved on rendered unnecessary; but this was a more painful task than their kind mistress had been aware of. There was not one of them but loved her as greatly as they honoured her, nor could they with dry eyes receive the notice of a discharge from her service, though those tears flowed far less from selfish regard than unfeigned sorrow for the misfortunes of a lady whose carriage had endeared her to them all.

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