

THE
CURATE
AND HIS
DAUGHTER;
A CORNISH TALE.

BY

ELIZABETH ISABELLA SPENCE

AUTHOR OF SUMMER EXCURSIONS—A CALEDONIAN
EXCURSION—THE NOBILITY OF THE HEART—
THE WEDDING DAY, &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

..... No mother's care
Shielded my infant innocence with prayer;
No father's guardian hand my youth maintained,
Called forth my virtues, and from vice restrained.

* * * * *

Alone from strangers every comfort flowed.
SAVAGE.

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CHAP. I.

WHILE Matilda remained in London, Sir Charles Dashwood had only thought of her as a lively and interesting young woman, from whose society he derived peculiar pleasure. Perhaps, in the first instance, his vanity had been flattered by the distinction which she had shewn him, and the preference she always gave him in the dance to younger partners. He found, the ingenuous simplicity of her character, united with much good sense, feeling, and gentleness of disposition, that she insensibly excited an interest he conceived to be only friendship, while she was daily winning on his affections. The oblique and malevolent hints Mrs. Aldersey threw out, of her suspicious origin, he did not regard. The mystery that enveloped her birth, was to him a matter of indifference; for, notwithstanding his former opinion on that subject, to which he still adhered, he saw Miss Trevanion an exception.

Sir Charles had carefully watched her conduct; and he found it free from levity, as it was correct,—full of modesty and sweetness. Her mind had been formed under the guidance of one of the most dignified and pious men of the age. Even if her parents were of humble condition, she would adorn the most elevated; and, in his choice, he had no person's opinion to consult. His fortune was splendid; and the prospect of felicity she promised, was too flattering not, if possible, to realize it. Mrs. Aldersey's raillery had first led him to think seriously of Matilda; and Lady Seyntaubyne's indulging smiles and invitations encouraged him to hope that he would not be rejected.

Once, the idea of Matilda's entertaining a secret partiality for Albert Clairville, came across his mind, and the varied emotions of such, struck him at the moment as somewhat extraordinary; but, since that period, his marriage with Lady Julia Penrose, had not only been confidently talked of, but he heard, from undoubted authority, would soon take place.

While Matilda was travelling into the Hebrides, Sir Charles took the opposite road to Pengwilly Hall.

He met with a very gracious reception from the countess, who informed him whither Matilda was gone. He at once unfolded the motive of his visit, made such liberal and disinterested proposals, her ladyship became extremely desirous that Matilda should accede to them. She assured the baronet of her interest in his cause, which would be

warm and sincere; at the same time, she must refer him to Miss Trevanion, to whom she would give twenty thousand pounds; and though certain circumstances prevented her from disclosing, until the day of her marriage, her real name and connections, he might rest assured neither would disgrace him.

Sir Charles, delighted with his reception, told Lady Seyntaubyne, thus encouraged, with her permission, he would lose no time in proceeding to the Hebrides, adding, with a smile, "*delays were dangerous.*"

The countess much approved the zeal of his conduct, and immediately addressed letters (of which he was to be the bearer) to Mr. M'Arthur, of Richmond, and Matilda. Sir Charles, elated with his success, took leave, and, in little more than a week after his visit to Pengwilly Hall, found himself landed in the Western Isles.

In the morning when the family assembled at breakfast, Sir Charles, now a member, was treated with the most cordial kindness by his friendly host.

Matilda dreaded the raillery of Mr. Collin M'Arthur, and was somewhat surprised to escape it; but the laird of Kilnorney, by significant nods and smiles, seemed perfectly to understand the nature of Sir Charles's visit, and no longer encouraged M'Laurel to pay attention to his young guest;—placing Sir Charles beside her at breakfast, while her Scotch admirer, hurt, and somewhat offended, haughtily yielded his seat to the baronet.

Matilda's embarrassment was considerably augmented by the increased indisposition of Mrs. M'Arthur, who was unable to leave her chamber; for though she had the presence of Miss M'Laurel, a good-humoured rattling girl, she was so different from the women Sir Charles was accustomed to associate with, she was concerned he should be led, from her unsophisticated character and unpolished address, to form his opinion of Scottish manners. Most of the women she had seen, during her sojourn in the Hebrides, possessed some claim to elegance and gentleness of demeanour.

When the social meal was ended, (such is always a Scotch breakfast) Mr. Donald M'Arthur requested his guests would choose in what manner they would like to spend the morning. He told Sir Charles, "if he was fond of reading he would shew him an excellent library; or," continued he, "if you like field sports I can furnish you with arms. On these barren heaths there are abundance of patrigans*. Perhaps the ladies would prefer a walk. We do not, Sir Charles, pass our mornings here as you do in England, in playing at billiards, which possible you would have preferred."

"I dislike," returned he, "all sorts of gambling. If the ladies will trust themselves with me in a walk, I should like to look at that cairn situated, I observe, at no great distance."

Matilda excused herself by saying, she wished to sit with her invalid friend. Sir Charles looked disappointed as she hurried away. She was followed by Mr. Collin M'Arthur, who requested to have a few minutes conversation with her in the drawing-room.

"Will you, Miss Trevanion," said he, "pardon my seeming officiousness on so short an acquaintance, in venturing to speak on your affairs? Will you consider me in the light of a brother if I presume to do so with openness and freedom? In truth, were you my sister, I could scarcely feel a more lively interest in all that may concern your future happiness."

* Wild-fowl, grouse.

Matilda coloured highly. She guessed that he was going to name either the baronet or Mr. M'Laurel; and without power to reply she suffered him to go on.

"In my idle raillery," continued he, "I was not aware that what I then predicted would so soon happen, and that I should have two of your admirers to plead for. Mr. M'Laurel, poor fellow, has, I perceive, no chance with this elegant and worthy baronet, or else I should be inclined to enlarge a little on the known worth of my Highland friend."

"Talk not, sir," replied Matilda, very seriously, "of admirers; for indeed I am little inclined to give either of these gentlemen encouragement. It is very painful to me, Sir Charles Dashwood's having taken so long and so fruitless a journey. His distinction, though it does me the highest honour, is quite adverse to my wishes."

"I would not, my dear Miss Trevanion," cried Mr. M'Arthur, "distress you by entering on so delicate a subject, nor to pretend to dictate what you ought to do. You are probably acquainted with Lady Seyntaubyne's having written to me, requesting that I would use my influence in prevailing on you to listen to Sir Charles's addresses. Her ladyship speaks of him in the handsomest terms of his disinterested proposals, and the ardent wish she has to see you properly allied. What am I to say to her? What to you, if you are so repugnant to the subject? I have pleaded many cases for others, but that of love only for myself."

Matilda, overwhelmed with distress, said, in a faltering accent, "Thus urged, thus beset, Oh! Mr. M'Arthur, you cannot guess the anguish it occasions me. Why should I marry, if I repine not at the lot which Providence has assigned me? Why may I not, unknown, unheeded, pass through life unmolested? I was ignorant that Lady Seyntaubyne had written to you on such a subject.—I have not yet read the letter Sir Charles has brought me.—Too well can I guess the contents.—You are no stranger it seems to the subject."

Mr. M'Arthur, concerned to see Matilda so much agitated, kindly taking her hand, said, "Shall I talk to Sir Charles?—Tell him how averse you are to him; and, while I request him to remain my brother's guest a few days longer, intreat he will not distress you by renewing his proposals?"

"O no! That would be treating him unkindly,—unhandsomely. If he is to be rejected, from myself let the rejection come. I will first read Lady Seyntaubyne's letter, and then I shall be better able to judge what is to be done."

"Well, my lovely young friend, you alone must and can decide on this important business. Of this, however, be assured, that you may command my services; and that I take too lively an interest in your welfare to promote your being unhappy, if I can prevent it. My Amelia's gentleness," added he, "is better suited to you than our boisterous young friend. I would therefore advise you to go to her, and I will amuse the baronet."

Mr. M'Arthur left Matilda, who went to her room to peruse Lady Seyntaubyne's letter: it was as follows:

To Miss Trevanion

"Dear Matilda,

"I hope that a little more knowledge of the world has taught you some experience, and you have begun to discover the idle fallacy of cherishing what I call an improper attachment. It is a subject I have talked to you but little upon, because, as you do not want

sense, I flattered myself your pride would predominate over your weakness; and that knowing Clairville was engaged to his cousin, you would see the impropriety (that is too gentle a term), the wickedness of indulging a preference for an engaged man. I therefore suffered you to depart without wounding your feelings on so tender a subject.

“I hope you will now reward my forbearance. I am imposing no hardship, in requesting that you will receive Sir Charles Dashwood as becomes a pupil of Doctor Arundel, and shew that his wise precepts have not been thrown away; and get rid of the love-sick romantic chimeras which have taken possession of your fancy.

“Remember, although I have said, and still repeat, I shall not controul your choice, or insist contrary to your inclination, yet I would fain persuade myself, and build much of my happiness in seeing you so connected as will reflect honour on yourself, your family, and name; which would make me close my days in joyful serenity, in finding my utmost wish towards you fulfilled.

“I remain,

“Dear Matilda,

“Your sincere and affectionate,

“DOROTHEA SEYN TAUBYNE.”

Pengwilly Hall, Sept. 1.

The contents of the countess’s letter gave Matilda much inquietude. Irresolute and distressed how to act, she would have unbosomed herself to her gentle friend Mrs. M^r Arthur, and shewn her Lady Seyntaubyne’s letter, had she not been unwilling to disclose the weakness of her continued partiality for Clairville. Sensible of the truth of her ladyship’s remark, that she was indulging an improper regard for now, most probably, a married man; and remembering with poignancy that Doctor Arundel had also strongly pointed out the dangerous error she was guilty of, in undermining the happiness of that being whom most she valued, if she nourished so ill-judged a tenderness, she resolutely determined to think of Clairville no more.

“If he were really married, why,” exclaimed she, “not tell me so at once? for then might I consent to give my hand with some degree of satisfaction to another, and endeavour to return the affection Sir Charles entertains for me.

“Yet,” continued she, heavily sighing, “why be so selfish to consider merely my own happiness; a few short years will end this transitory scene, and hereafter I shall have the inward gratification of knowing that I yielded to the wishes of my benefactress, and those whom I was led to believe I might render happy, instead of consulting my own inclination; and that by submission to the will of one to whom I owe the numerous advantages and blessing I possess, I shall hereafter have no bitterness of self-reproach.”

Thus reasoning, thus reflecting, Matilda took up the pen, and thus replied to Lady Seyntaubyne’s letter:

To Countess Dowager Seyntaubyne.

“Dear Madam,

“To disappoint the expectations you have formed of me in yielding to your wishes, would be no less unworthy than ungracious.

“I am perfectly aware of the painful truths you have advanced, and though I feel it impossible at once to transfer my affections from one object to another, yet, so far will I obey your ladyship, that at the end of six months, if Sir Charles Dashwood still retains the same tender impressions in my favour, I will at that period consent to confer on him my hand.

“You say such a determination will leave no wish of yours unfulfilled. You, madam, have a right to some sacrifices from me. You have made many on my account; and your maternal care is indelibly impressed on my heart.

“Of whatever degree may be my family, whether elevated or humble, and whatever name they own, of this be assured, that the respected one I bear will prevent my doing any thing to tarnish it; and that the memory of the venerable character who conferred it upon me, will be a perpetual shield from wilful error.

“I have the honour to remain, madam, very respectfully your ladyship’s

“ever grateful and obliged

“MATILDA TREVANION.”

Kilnorney, Isle of Mull,
September 15.

Matilda had scarcely courage to peruse what she had written. She folded up the letter, and watched at the window Mr. M’Arthur’s return from his walk, and when she saw him, hastened into the hall to meet him.

With concern he beheld her cheeks pale, her eyes red and swoln, with weeping. They withdrew into the parlour together, when she put her letter to Lady Seyntaubyne into his hands, and requested he would read it.

“You have acted nobly, my dear Miss Trevanion,” cried he, as he returned it. “If Sir Charles does not know properly how to value so excellent a young lady, he is unworthy the inestimable blessing he will possess. I will add a line to Lady Seyntaubyne in the letter.

“Mr. M’Laurel,” continued he, “has lost a treasure; but he guessed too certainly, poor fellow, the little hope he dared indulge, when the baronet made his appearance.”

“Mr. M’Laurel’s flattering partiality,” replied she, “gives me concern; but if it will be any consolation to him to know it is by the wishes of my friends I listen to Sir Charles’s addresses, tell him so.”

“He perceived he had lost you,” remarked Mr. M’Arthur, “and unable to endure the presence of his rival, he departed an hour since, along with his sister. That you may not be altogether without female society, Amelia will endeavour to come down to dinner; but she is so seriously indisposed, my dear Miss Trevanion, I am quite alarmed about her; and begin to wish I had never brought her to this ungenial climate. If she is not soon better, will you have any objection to remove to Inverness?”

“All places,” answered Matilda, mournfully, “are to me alike. Wherever your excellent lady is I shall feel myself a part of your family, for at least some months to come.”

“Sir Charles,” said Mr. M’Arthur, “is all impatience to know whether you have read Lady Seyntaubyne’s letter. Shall I tell him the result?”

“By no means. Sir Charles will naturally enter upon the subject with me. I have much to say to him, and we must now be sincere, if we would be happy hereafter.”

“Excellent Miss Trevanion! your virtuous and wise intentions require no other monitor than the correctness of your own mind. I leave you to its direction; and may the felicity you deserve pursue you through life.”

Matilda, though by no means happy, yet experienced a secret satisfaction in the sacrifice she was going to make, which cheered her amidst the anxiety she endured.

CHAP. II.

AFTER the conference with Mr. M'Arthur, Matilda hastened to the chamber of her sick friend. She found her dressing to appear at dinner; so pale and languid, she was shocked at her looks, and offered to spend the day with her above stairs.

"No, my dear Miss Trevanion," replied she, "that will never do. What," added she, with a faint smile, "would Sir Charles say to my monopolizing you. Besides, I am not a little anxious and interested to see this handsome and elegant baronet, who has had the spirit and gallantry to proceed so far in pursuit of my fair friend."

"Ah! that he had not," exclaimed Matilda, sighing. "In this remote region I hoped, with you and Mr. M'Arthur, to have spent my days unheeded and unmolested; and if you were but well, I should have been quite satisfied."

"That," observed Mrs. M'Arthur, "will never be. I would not, causelessly, alarm my husband: nor would I, intentionally, distress you; but this climate is destroying me. I am therefore happy, that you will have a kind friend and protector, in Sir Charles Dashwood, who will lead you back in safety to dear England and your English friends.

"I have, for many days," continued she, with much seriousness, "anticipated entering on this subject; but aware that it would frighten and grieve you, I have deferred it until I now consider it incumbent on me to prepare you for the event which is likely to happen. As a stranger here, I have considered, my sweet young friend, your forlorn and distressing situation, without a female associate; but when I am no more, your removal will be speedy from hence."

"If you feel so ill," replied Matilda, much afflicted and alarmed, "why not send for immediate advice? Let us not delay another hour in procuring medical assistance."

"It would prove of no avail, my dear Miss Trevanion. Therefore why, needlessly, distress those around me. A slow wasting fever has long preyed upon me, and at length it must consume me. It were far better, as you will be taken care of, that I should die here; for my husband is in his native country, and with so affectionate a brother, he will console him when I am gone."

Mrs. M'Arthur observing Matilda much affected, added cheerfully, "Come, my dear friend, you have promised to introduce me to Sir Charles Dashwood."

"I will," replied she, "after changing my dress. I shall be with you in a quarter of an hour."

Heavily oppressed with sorrow, Matilda retired to her chamber to acquire some degree of composure and fortitude, to endure the painful scenes which followed so close on each other. She knew Mrs. M'Arthur to be far from one of those fanciful nervous ladies, who, causelessly, tease those around them by imaginary illness. She was, therefore, rendered extremely uneasy by the subsequent conversation, and determined to advise Mr. M'Arthur, without her knowledge, to send immediately for a physician, or else remove her from the island. Yet the rigour of the sea-breezes, and the almost constant drizzling rain which fell, Matilda was afraid, even in the short voyage, would hasten her dissolution, for she appeared much worse since their aquatic excursion to Staffa. During the last fortnight she had remarked the pallid and sunk countenance of her friend, and how languid and thin she became; yet she had no apprehension of any immediate danger, and the shock came like a thunder-bolt upon her.

Removed into a far country, in which she was a stranger, what was to become of her, situated so peculiarly in regard to Sir Charles Dashwood? She had no Mrs. Arundel, no Lady Sophia Clairville, to fly to for advice; and she could not avoid considering her situation as singularly distressing.

Having changed her dress, and bathed her eyes to remove the effect of weeping, she returned to Mrs. M'Arthur, whom she led into the drawing-room.

Sir Charles had been impatiently waiting her entrance for above an hour. Never had he beheld a countenance which gave so little promise of hope to an ardent lover, as the one Matilda discovered. Her pale cheeks, heavy eyes, divested of all their brilliant and playful expressions, with the melancholy of her interesting countenance, seemed to give no promise of felicity, if he judged by her general demeanor. Yet when he beheld the fragile appearance of Mrs. M'Arthur, he attributed her dejection to that cause, rather than to the contents of Lady Seyntaubyne's letter.

When the M'Arthur's joined them, Mr. Donald expressed, and discovered, such unfeigned concern in observing his sister so very ill, as quite alarmed his brother; and all attempts at cheerful conversation, when they sat down to dinner, were in vain. With difficulty Mrs. M'Arthur supported the fatigue of company till tea was over, and then requested her husband to lead her up stairs. Matilda offered to attend her, but Sir Charles entreated half an hour's conversation, and Mrs. M'Arthur begged her to remain. She did so, returning with much embarrassment to her seat.

"I would not for the world distress you," observed Sir Charles, after a pause, "nor intrude on your time from your interesting friend; but it is necessary to my peace, lovely and beloved Miss Trevanion, that I should know your sentiments. Of course, Lady Seyntaubyne has not left you ignorant of the motive of this journey, and that when you quitted London, it became to me little better than a desert. Its amusements I never enjoyed, and they were then most irksome. In no society I took delight; and Mrs. Aldersey's raillery I had not the courage to return;—it augmented the misery I endured from your absence, and I hastened into Cornwall, when you alone were to become the arbitress of my fate. If so inestimable a treasure was not to be mine, it was my determination to take my leave of England, and embark for Madeira. But Lady Seyntaubyne, kind and considerate, bade me follow you to the Hebrides and plead my cause in person. She told me you had no engagement, and were mistress of your own fate.

"O sweetest Miss Trevanion!" continued he, with vehemence, "be so of mine, and bless me with your hand. My whole soul is devoted to you—my life—my fortune. It is you only I require to make me happy. No interested motives guide my wishes; for I should value you even more in being portionless, than if you brought with you the riches of Golconda."

He took her hand, and, while he pressed it respectfully to his lips, threw himself on his knees before her.

"Rise, Sir Charles," exclaimed Matilda, "and hear me; I will be sincere, for by that sincerity you must be influenced. Lady Seyntaubyne told you true, when she said that I had no engagement; yet, I have no present intention of changing my condition. Be assured, however, I am so far from being insensible of the honour of your election, it is only that I may endeavour properly to estimate the distinction you have paid me. I must gain time to return the affection that is due to Sir Charles Dashwood's eminent worth,

whom it would be treating unjustly to bestow my hand upon, under any circumstance than that of estimating him as he deserves.”

“Oh! let not such a plea,” interrupted he, eagerly, “be any objection. Defer not my happiness, if you are not absolutely averse from my addresses. Then shall you find, when one interest unites us, that it shall be my whole study to gain such an interest in your gentle heart as your sweetness cannot resist, and your gentle mind will return a tenderness which will prove as unbounded as my admiration is sincere.”

“I will not, Sir Charles,” cried Matilda, greatly agitated, “listen to you any longer;” at the same time endeavouring to retreat; “confident it is necessary to the happiness of each to form no hasty decision. If, at the end of six months your wishes remain the same, then I shall consider myself bound to fulfil the desire of Lady Seyntaubyne, if my doing so is likely to render you happy.”

“Torture me not,” cried he, impatiently, “with the cruelty of such a long suspense. Why not be mine at once? I will empower Mr. M’Arthur to draw up settlements, and procure one of the Episcopalian bishops of the country to unite us. Lady Seyntaubyne made no objection: why, sweetest Miss Trevanion, should you, if there really exists none?”

“Urge me not,” replied she, infinitely distressed; “my mind is deeply afflicted from a variety of causes, and——”

“Suffer me, then,” interrupted he, tenderly, “to be its soother;—to share your real griefs, as your mind is too elevated to sink beneath imaginary ones; for I have watched, from the first hour of our acquaintance, all its various emotions.”

“And discovered, perhaps,” added she, sighing, “all its weaknesses.”

“All its excellence! It is full of purity and tenderness! Once, indeed,” added he, with hesitation, “I did suspect——”

Matilda coloured deeply, while she hastily exclaimed, “What did you suspect?”

“That Albert Clairville——; but he was engaged;—you knew of the engagement, therefore it could not be. Forgive the suspicion and——”

“Sir Charles Dashwood,” exclaimed Matilda emphatically, and changing colour every moment, “I will not deceive you. God forbid I should be accessory to your misery. If you cannot accept a heart, that once was innocently prone to love Albert Clairville, ere I knew of his engagement to his cousin, and which I now offer to you, and you will find not the less pure in its attachment to you, as it is long since I thought of him, except as the husband of Lady Julia Penrose, relinquish me at once; I shall consider the rejection no indignity.”

Matilda was so much overcome by the subject, she was obliged to cover her face with both her hands to conceal her tears.

“Weep not, beloved Miss Trevanion,” cried Sir Charles, kindly taking her hand. “Oh! forgive the question I am going to ask, and be assured, not for the world would I wound the delicacy of your feelings; but it is necessary to my peace to ask, whether Clairville knew of your partiality?”

“He had too high a sense of honour,” returned Matilda, extremely hurt at the question; “circumstanced as he was, to seek to discover a partiality which could only tend to evil. Though we were for several weeks together at his mother’s, Lady Sophia’s, neither by words nor actions was it ever revealed. His attentions, the moment I discovered that he was engaged to another, he was too generous to insult me by

confessing. I should have spurned them with indignity and abhorrence, for they were due alone to his cousin.

“I have been, sir, thus explicit,” continued Matilda, with dignity and spirit, “because disguise is painful; and this communication was necessary to my justification, after what you witnessed when we all were accidentally assembled at your house. It was highly important, Sir Charles, you should be no stranger to what I have related, that you may be influenced accordingly.”

“Thus then am I influenced,” said he, warmly, as he pressed her hand to his lips. “Noble Miss Trevanion! your sincerity and candour reflect on you the highest honour. No heart, thus feeling, thus acting, can be impure. I value it not the less for once estimating Albert Clairville; and though it did, as Lady Seyntaubyne tells me you still are free, I henceforth, angelic Matilda, consider you mine, and thus I seal the bond,” again respectfully kissing her hand.

Matilda silently acquiesced, afterwards saying in a faint accent, “suffer me, Sir Charles, to depart, for in truth I am quite unequal to converse any longer.”

“Go, then, sweet excellence,” replied he, “and may peace light on your pillow.”

She hurried to her chamber, and throwing herself on a chair, gave unrestrained freedom to tears, which relieved her oppressed heart. The conflict was over—her future destiny was irrecoverably fixed. Fixed too with her own consent. It was true, that for some time she should retain her own name, but she considered herself absolutely engaged to Sir Charles, and no circumstance, in all probability, would now prevent her from becoming his wife.

Matilda having somewhat composed her spirits, stole into Mrs. M’Arthur’s room. She was pleased to find her sunk into a quiet slumber.

CHAP. III.

MATILDA retired to rest; but it was in vain she sought forgetfulness on her pillow. As she courted it she repeated the following lines in one of Charlotte Smith's sonnets:

“Come, balmy sleep, tired nature's soft resort,
On these sad temples all thy poppies shed,
And bid gay dreams from Morpheus' airy court
Float in light visions round my aching head.”

She had fallen into a disturbed sleep towards morning, when she was awakened by the maid standing at her bed-side. She informed her, that Mr. Collin M'Arthur wished to speak to her as soon as she was up. She rose, and quickly dressing herself, in some alarm, went into the breakfast-room. She found him sitting with folded arms, and a countenance of such despair, that she was frightened when she saw him.

“Pardon my sending for you,” cried he, starting from his seat; “but I could not be at ease to depart for Inverness without first soliciting, in my absence, your tender care of my poor Amelia; yet I am sure I need not ask it, for you are full of compassion and kindness.”

“I rejoice,” replied Matilda, “you are at length going for medical advice. Be assured, no attention on my part shall be wanting to the invalid.”

“Would to heaven,” said he, mournfully, “we had never left Richmond. But who could foresee so fatal a termination in this visit to my brother. You too, dear Miss Trevanion——”

“Think not of me, a moment,” interrupted she, “but hasten your departure. I shall be most anxious for your return; and will not leave my friend during your absence.”

“Sir Charles Dashwood will not readily admit of such a deprivation. Indeed he could not have come at a more unseasonable period. The distraction of my mind, even were I to be here at present, would prevent me from paying him the attention I wish. And my poor brother is so much distressed about Amelia, he will depend on you to amuse the baronet. But you, in truth, are his sole object.”

“I wish,” exclaimed Matilda, after a minute's consideration, “you would take Sir Charles along with you to Inverness. Engage his benevolence, and I am sure he will accompany you. His remaining here, situated as we are, is inconvenient and improper. It is impossible for me to devote my time to him; and even were I inclined, without a female companion, though by no means a prude, I should not deem altogether decorous.”

“You are right,” observed he. “Persuade him to accompany me.”

At the instant they were conversing, the baronet came, and finding Mr. M'Arthur and Matilda in earnest discourse, he was retreating, when she called after him, and said, “I have a plot against you, Sir Charles, come and hear it.”

He joined them, when Matilda added, “No sooner are you arrived than I mean to exert the influence I possess by sending you away.”

“What do you mean?” interrupted he, rather alarmed.

“Mrs. M’Arthur is very ill; her husband is going to Inverness for a physician; and I am sure the addition of your company on so melancholy a journey, would prove a desirable acquisition.”

Sir Charles saw at once the propriety of Matilda’s request; and in the most friendly manner immediately offered his company to Mr. M’Arthur. It was cheerfully accepted, and in less than an hour the tide serving, they set sail for Oban, in their way to Inverness.

It was now that Matilda began to experience the inconvenience and distress attending the insular situation they were fixed in. Every surrounding object wore the most gloomy aspect.

The heavy mists which hung in the atmosphere, the chilling blasts which swept

“Wi’ angry sough,”

along the mountains, and the festivity and mirth which before reigned in the mansion, were now exchanged for the utmost melancholy and dejection. Mrs. M’Arthur’s illness affected her spirits extremely, and it required more than common fortitude to prevent her friend from discovering the anxiety and uneasiness which she endured.

Except Lady Seyntaubyne’s letter by Sir Charles Dashwood, it was many weeks since Matilda had received any tidings from England; and she knew no more of her absent friends than if they had been out of existence.

Sir Charles Dashwood’s presence greatly augmented her distress. She hoped to be able to prevail on him to return to England; and she ardently wished to return herself. For whatever might be her future fate in life, she was resolved ere it was irrecoverably fixed, to first come to the knowledge of the name of her parents, and what was the rank they were entitled to hold in society. An innate dignity and pride made her feel repugnant to bestow her hand on any person who was a stranger to her family and connections; and she determined that no time should be lost on her return to her native country, in discovering who she really was. Lady Seyntaubyne had told her that the forgotten packet would disclose the important information. If her father yet lived, she anticipated the hope of being cherished and acknowledged by him.

Mrs. M’Arthur, unable to rise, and wasting hourly with the fever and cough, had brought on a violent inflammation on her lungs, and Matilda saw, with dismay, was evidently dying. She anxiously counted the days which followed one another in mournful succession, until Mr. M’Arthur’s return. But it was a long distance to Inverness, and no skilful aid could be procured nearer. She had seen many melancholy instances since she had been in the island, of persons dying for want of medical advice.

The weather too became so tempestuous, the sea ran mountains high, and the idea of her friends being on the infuriate waves filled her with horror; for there seemed to be every prospect of their being buried in its overwhelming waters.

Mrs. M’Arthur, patient and resigned, expressed no other wish than that she might just live to breathe her last sigh in the arms of her husband. But life was fast ebbing to its last verge, and Matilda was persuaded if a few more hours did not bring him back, she would not have that satisfaction.

The laird of Kilnorney was too deeply concerned, to offer any consolation to Matilda. He almost lived on the sea-shore, watching the few boats which were in sight,

though the violence of the winds and waves seemed to bid defiance to a possibility of landing; and in the most mournful anxiety and suspense a week had elapsed since their departure.

Matilda, who had set by the bed-side of her dying friend for two or three successive nights, now began to feel so much exhaustion and fatigue, Mr. Donald M'Arthur was quite alarmed at the paleness and languor of her appearance. He insisted on her going immediately to bed, in her own chamber. She reluctantly complied, on condition of being informed the moment his brother arrived.

“The wind is now fair,” said he, “and the sea so much calmer, that in the course of the evening I have no question of their being here. Do go to your bed, my sweet lass, for you have much need of rest.”

Matilda having repeated her request, departed to her own room.

CHAP. IV.

QUITE overcome by the anxiety she had endured, together with the unremitting attendance which she had given Mrs. M'Arthur, Matilda sunk into a profound sleep, from which she awoke not till late the next morning:—then did remembrance,

“With all her busy train;”

and she immediately rang to enquire whether Mr. M'Arthur was returned, flattering herself it might be the case, as the morning was serene, and the sun shone with feeble rays into her window.

It was sometime before the bell was answered.

Matilda was almost drest when Jenny came into the room. She was going to ask the cause of her tardiness, when the girl burst into a flood of tears, and ran away. Quickly did Matilda follow. When she reached the door she was met by Mr. Donald M'Arthur, who, in a faltering accent, said, “My poor brother is come, but his Amelia's pure spirit was fled to a better world; and she died unconscious of the pangs of separation.”

Matilda, though prepared, in some degree, for the event, was so greatly shocked, she turned very sick, and so faint, Mr. M'Arthur was obliged to lead her to the window of the gallery, where he bade he stay till he brought her a glass of water.

Stunned, as it were, by the event which had taken place, she was unable to move, and was pensively leaning against the wainscot, when Sir Charles and Mr. Donald waited on her together, while the latter presented her with some hartshorn and water, which he entreated her to take.

“You are come, Sir Charles,” said Matilda, now finding relief in tears, “to a mournful scene.”

“Would to heaven!” exclaimed he, in a voice of the tenderest sympathy, “that my presence could mitigate the anguish of my friends. But the first effusions of a grief so natural, admit not of consolation. To intrude upon it, is only to augment the affliction.”

“True,” replied she, dejectedly. “Yet sympathy alleviates, where the participation is sincere. Where is Mr. Collin M'Arthur? Why did he not come sooner? Was Amelia's gentle spirit hushed into rest before his arrival?”

“Only an hour too late he came. No intreaty,” added Sir Charles, “can prevail on him to leave her chamber. In almost frantic grief he has shut himself up, and the physician whom we have brought, assures me, in the present irritable state of his nerves, a fever will be the consequence, if he is not taken away.”

“I will go to him,” cried Matilda, “for I should like once more to behold my beloved Amelia. Envidable is her state: for so pure was her life, she no doubt is now amongst her kindred angels. Would that it had been Matilda's lot also to have been taken from a world of suffering; and that hand in hand we had ascended to that heaven where I hope to rejoin her.

“Lead me, Sir,” said she to Mr. M'Arthur, “to your brother. I would not intrude upon his sorrow, but I fain would take leave of my lifeless friend.”

While he hesitated whether or not to obey, Sir Charles exclaimed, with much earnestness, “You will destroy yourself, Miss Trevanion, by such an attempt. Indeed you

must not go. If our company is oppressive, let me intreat you to retire, and endeavour to compose your agitated spirits.”

“The housekeeper,” interrupted Mr. Donald, “shall be sent to attend upon you. It is not right that you should be alone.”

He ran down stairs himself for Mrs. Maclean, a sensible, respectable woman. She led Matilda to her chamber, and prevailed on her take some coffee which she made.

After having swallowed a cup, wishing to be alone, she told Mrs. Maclean, that were she to leave her, perhaps she might get a little rest, upon which the good woman withdrew.

Matilda threw herself on the bed, and gave way to the most mournful reflections. She dwelt on the extraordinary situation in which she was placed, looking forward with timid apprehension to what might next happen. The difficulty of returning to England, left now only to the care of Mr. M’Arthur, with the additional presence of an ardent lover, whose perseverance had followed her to the Hebrides, was a very painful consideration. She saw no possibility of dismissing Sir Charles in her present distress, neither did she think that Lady Seyntaubyne would approve of it, were she to make the attempt.

Most of the day passed in the above painful rumination. In the evening, finding Mr. M’Arthur had left the chamber of his deceased wife, Matilda prevailed on the housekeeper to accompany her to visit the lifeless Amelia. The aspect of death struck her not with dismay. Her friend seemed only to be in a gentle sleep. She was rather soothed than appalled by the appearance of so happy a release from suffering.

Before she retired to bed she had a kind message of enquiry from Mr. Collin M’Arthur, saying, that he hoped to be able to see and converse with her in the morning. Matilda dreaded the interview, but it was necessary to determine on what was to be done in arranging some way to convey her to England. She was by no means certain that Lady Seyntaubyne wished her to return to Cornwall so soon; the reason for removing her remained in full force: yet Mrs. Arundel’s house was open to receive her, and to it she could always go. An idea so soothing, she looked forward to with anxious solicitude, as the only likely restoration to her lost peace.

When Matilda met Mr. Collin M’Arthur in the morning, and attempted to address him, her voice faltered, and the words died on her lips.

“We will not,” said he, in vain attempting composure, “speak of the past—God’s will be done! But permit me, my dear Miss Trevanion, to ask what you would wish me to do in regard to your removal. I have,” continued he, “a plan to propose, which appears to me the most eligible I can think of. Doctor Cameron will return to Inverness, the day after tomorrow. If you will allow him to take care of and conduct you to my sister, Mrs. Sutherland, till I can join you at Craignegar. With her you will experience every kindness; and at her house you can wait till you receive a letter from Lady Seyntaubyne.

“If Sir Charles Dashwood,” added he, “insists upon attending you as far as Inverness, as you stand engaged to him, it will be impossible to refuse. My sister being a stranger, he will probably return to England; and I shall, I doubt not, be able to find some lady to make a third in my carriage to accompany you to London.”

“How good, how considerate,” replied Matilda, much penetrated by his kindness, “at such a moment to think of me. I know, dear Sir, no plan that appears so advantageous;

and though I am unwilling to obtrude on a stranger, yet, from a sister of yours, I am persuaded I may promise myself a flattering reception at Craignegar.”

“Doctor Cameron,” said Mr. M’Arthur, “shall conduct you in safety to Mr. Sutherland’s house, after first preparing my sister for your arrival.”

Matilda expressed her gratitude and acknowledgments for Mr. M’Arthur’s kindness, and then hastened to acquaint Sir Charles of the arrangement which was to take place.

He appeared perfectly satisfied; and told her, that he should go with her and Doctor Cameron as far as Inverness, whence he should proceed to Edinburgh, where he should wait Mr. M’Arthur’s arrival, and then accompany them both to England.

Matilda was not quite satisfied with the plan, yet thought it injudicious to dissent, from the apprehension of displeasing Lady Seyntaubyne.

They were not to depart until the last mournful ceremony was performed. In Scotland it is usual to inter the dead the third or fourth day. The solicitude Mr. M’Arthur felt, that Doctor Cameron and Sir Charles should attend the remains of his beloved wife to the grave, induced this humane physician to stay a day longer in the island.

Matilda was surprized, and in some degree shocked, at the little solemnity of form with which the funeral was conducted; and though no long procession

“Blacken’d all the way,”

yet the omission of scarfs and hatbands to dress the mourners, the absence of mutes carrying the staffs, and above all the irregular procession of the company of mourners, as they moved along without even a clergyman in his robes to receive and pray over the body, in the church, was an omission of decorum and sanctity that she could by no means reconcile to her mind. Unsummoned by the deep and solemn toll of the bell, the little group of friends assembled round the grave of the deceased, and after seeing the coffin committed to the dust, they with merely a simple bow departed; for that was the only obsequies performed over the dead.

But while Matilda felt hurt and dissatisfied, she did not revert to the various religious customs and forms of different countries, and that no disrespect was intended to the dead. The zeal of those emancipated from superstition at the reformation, overthrew all the ceremonies, which the Scotch regarded as only a bigotted remnant of popery, and was the means of establishing a religion as devoid of forms as possible. It not only stripped their churches of every ornament, but divested their magnificent cathedrals of all interior grandeur, and of even the solemn music of the organ, considering its strains as too much bordering on the Romish church. While the episcopalians religiously preserved and maintained some of their decorations and forms, the plain Presbyterians gloried as much in the simplicity of their mode of worship.

Mrs. M’Arthur’s remains were deposited in one of the ruinous chapels not far from the laird’s mansion. When the small group of real mourners returned, Doctor Cameron was anxious to take his leave. Matilda having packed and collected the few things she had to carry, took leave of Mr. Donald M’Arthur, who with a thousand tender and kind wishes bade her farewell. His brother had shut himself up in his chamber, but the evening before, he promised Matilda that he would follow her in the course of a week.

As the dreary scenery of Mull faded from Matilda's view, she shed tears to the memory of her deceased friend; and experienced even a transient regret on quitting a spot in which she had been so hospitably entertained.

It was the last week of September when she departed from the Hebrides, and the weather proved favourable for their voyage.

Matilda found Doctor Cameron a sensible and agreeable man. But from the society of Sir Charles Dashwood she derived real consolation. He cheered and prevented her from feeling the unpleasantness she otherwise would have experienced, in being thrown amongst strangers, so far from her native land and the friends she loved.

CHAP. V.

AFTER a quick voyage, the travellers proceeded to Fort William, a very insignificant little garrison. Matilda found it corresponded with the description given by Mrs. Grant, who says, "It is a sea-port, without being animated; it is a village, without the air of peace and simplicity; it is military, without either being gay or bold-looking; it is a country, without being rural; it is high land, without being picturesque or romantic; it has plains without verdure, hills without woods, mountains without majesty, a sky without a sun, at least his beams so seldom appear."

After a miserable accommodation at a miserable inn, they proceeded on the banks of the Lochy towards Fort Augustus. Close on the river stood, in dismal majesty, the ponderous castle of Inverlochy, with its round towers and heavy stone walls, which, from its strength and magnitude, seemed rather to be inhabited by a race of giants than of men. But accustomed as Matilda of late had been to gaze on elevated mountains, when the awful and stupendous Ben Nevis* was pointed out to her, presenting its rugged sides, while its towering summit was covered with eternal snow, she was filled with astonishment, and wondered how it was possible for any person to venture to ascend its tremendous heights, for it hung over the lesser mountains in such frowning majesty, it appeared ready to crush them beneath its gigantic bulk.*

Passing over the barren district of Lochaber, the travellers came into a more fertile country as they approached Fort Augustus, a very neat town, with a regular fortification, beautifully situated on the brink of the lake, and bounded by woody hills. Every mile now to Inverness the landscape improved in picturesque objects; and the change of scenery from the desolate aspect of the Hebrides to the romantic beauties which encompassed Inverness, was one of the first things which renovated Matilda's spirits. She seemed to be once more going into the land of Arcadia. The soft reposing landscape, and its sylvan scenery, mellowed by the tints of the luxuriant trees crowning the hills, hanging their brown and yellow branches in pensile elegance, with the meandering ness, on whose clear and broad waters rode at anchor ships innumerable, with the town spreading in a fertile plain, presented, altogether, objects so novel and pleasing, Matilda could scarcely restrain the pleasure which she experienced, on being once more in a cultivated and luxuriant country.

Sir Charles Dashwood now saw Matilda's character in a new point of view. He had beheld her, some months since, dressed in all the taste and elegance of the highest fashion, moving in the gayest circles, flattered, followed, and admired; this situation had not spoiled her, and he found she would cheerfully abandon it. Next, he saw her placed in one of the most remote of the Scottish isles, banished from the amusements of London, divested of all society, except what Mr. M'Arthur's house afforded, and watching with the most amiable tenderness an interesting friend, whose loss she now had to mourn. In all situations Matilda was the same, equally innocent and unaffected, with a beautiful simplicity of character which no fashion had power to impair, and no circumstance could

* The perpendicular height of this mountain is 4370 feet. *Garnett's Tour.*

* As an ancient Briton, I lament the disgrace of Snowden, which was esteemed the highest hill in the island, but must now yield the palm to a Caledonian mountain. The height of Ben Nevis, from the sea, is said to be 1450 yards. *Pennant.*

conceal. Open, candid, pure in intention as she was in heart, he adored the virtues which she so eminently possessed. The taste she discovered for rural beauties delighted him. Sir Charles was fond of a country life, and he hoped she would not object to spend some months of every year out of town.

Matilda received a very polite reception from Doctor Cameron's lady. After the fatigue and anxiety which she had endured, she was glad, at an early hour, to retire to the neat and comfortable chamber appropriated for her.

Doctor Cameron insisted on Sir Charles Dashwood's spending the following day with him. In the morning, he accompanied Mrs. Cameron and Matilda to view the town and the environs; and she purchased mourning in one of the shops for her deceased friend.

Matilda was much pleased with the capital of the Highlands. She found it a handsome town, possessing an air of elegant neatness. Without the trading bustle of a sea-port, it was rendered cheerful by its traffic and manufactories; and the Highland dress and bonnet, still worn, bespoke its antiquity; but, above all, she was charmed with the purity with which her native language was spoken; and she could almost have fancied herself in an English town, and once more amongst English people.

Mrs. Cameron pointed out a steep hill, about a mile from the town, which she told Matilda commanded a beautiful view of Fort George, if she would like to ascend it. The climate appeared so genial and renovating, after the unfavourable one in the Western Isles, that she cheerfully consented. When they reached the top of Craig Phatric, she was amply compensated, by the fine view of Fort George, standing on a peninsula, and encompassed by an extensive coast.

At the summit, what seemed an extensive earthen mound, she understood, from Mrs. Cameron, was the extraordinary natural curiosity, a *vitrified fort*,* of which Mr. M'Arthur had told her there were many on the tops of the hills in the Highlands. But the greatest part of these extensive ramparts were almost concealed by the turf which covered them. She wished for Mr. M'Arthur to have shewn her of what the rocky substance was composed, and to have explained how geologists account for this singular phenomenon. But neither of her companions having any taste for mineralogical enquiries, she was obliged to defer her curiosity until a future opportunity.

During the two or three days Matilda passed at Inverness, she was shewn by Doctor Cameron the plain of Culloden, where the Duke of Cumberland defeated the rebels, and destroyed all pretensions of the only remaining branch of the Stuart family, in the unfortunate Prince Charles, as he was denominated in Scotland.

The top of Craig Phatric is flat, and has been surrounded by a wall in the form of a parallelogram; the length of which is about eighty yards, and the breadth thirty, within the wall. The most curious circumstance attending it is, that the stones are all firmly connected together by a kind of vitrified matter, like lava, or like the stay or scorïæ of an iron-foundry, and the stones themselves, in many places, have been softened and vitrified.

Considerable masses of vitrified matter are found in the second rampart, under which is the natural rock, chiefly granite, with some breciæ, or pudding-stone, composed of red granite, pebbles, quartz, &c. in a cement of clay and quartose matter. The Bishop of Derry, when on a tour into Scotland visited Craig Phatric, and expressed his opinion that the mound of vitrified matter are not the remains of an artificial work, but the traces of an ancient volcano.

The mound on Craig Phatric is likewise called the Giant's Castle. Mr. William says, the vitrification had been produced by builders unacquainted with cement, in order to make the forts stronger; and refers to the time of Fingal. *Garnett's Tour.*

Matilda's new acquaintances liked her so well they would not part with her for some days; and reluctantly, at the end of that time, suffered Mrs. Sutherland, who came to accompany her, to take her away.

CHAP. VI.

MR. Collin M'Arthur had described his sister as merely an affable, sensible woman, with a benevolent heart; Matilda was therefore surprized when she was announced, to see a lady of an appearance so dignified, that she would have supposed her air somewhat tinctured with *hauteur*, if the grace which lent a peculiar charm to her address, had not set her at immediate ease in her presence. Her figure was tall and commanding, yet by no means *gauche*, like many of the tall Scotch women. Her air was feminine and elegant; and the tones of her voice so melodious and soft, Matilda thought she could have listened to the sweetness of her accents for ever, there was something so soothing in her manner and conversation, which truly indicated the refinement of her mind. Her countenance was highly interesting; and though she was not absolutely handsome, her eyes were so beautiful, they gave a general expression of loveliness to her face. A native pensiveness of character was by some of her enemies deemed cold reserve, which reserve proceeded from an indifference to objects that excited no interest. But she was as warm in her friendships as she was difficult in the choice of her friends.

Mrs. Sutherland was eminently distinguished for the strength of her understanding. It was highly cultivated. Her reading had been extensive, and her knowledge was profound. In most of the elegant accomplishments she excelled. Matilda observed the very superior air of fashion Mrs. Sutherland possessed above most of the ladies she had seen. She dressed with a taste and neatness she rarely saw characterize the Scotch ladies, who attired themselves more gaudily than English women.

Mrs. Sutherland's house displayed the elegance Matilda expected to find, after seeing the lady to whom it belonged. Every thing was conducted with ease and regularity. The pleasure-grounds at Craignegar reminded her of those which adorn the pretty villas in England, from the pleasing taste with which they were laid out. The hospitable table she sat down to was abundant, without profusion, and always surrounded with people of knowledge and refinement. Indeed, during the whole of her sojourn in Scotland she had never met with any silly or trifling characters.

Mr. Sutherland possessed agreeable manners, and like most of his countrymen, he was acute, intelligent, full of integrity and benevolence. He was an excellent husband, and an indulgent father, to a lovely family of eight children.

It was impossible for Matilda not to feel delighted with her new friends. Mrs. Sutherland had the perfect knowledge of true good breeding: she did the honours of her house with a grace that seemed to be peculiar to herself. Matilda had never met with any one who knew so happily the pleasing mode of conferring those delicate and kind attentions, which insensibly steal upon the soul; and the anguish of mind she so lately had experienced was greatly mitigated by this delightful visit.

Matilda had been about ten days at Craignegar when both the Mr. M'Arthurs joined her. Sir Charles Dashwood had previously taken his leave, but not without Matilda's promise to give him intimation of her arrival in Edinburgh. She told Mr. Collin M'Arthur that she was extremely averse to meet Sir Charles in that city, being confident he would insist on accompanying them on their journey to England. For although she had consented to listen to his addresses, yet she did not like publicly to proclaim her having done so to the world, until the period drew nearer of their being united.

“When once, my dear Miss Trevanion,” said he, half smiling, “a man is allowed the privilege of being received as a lover, be assured, he will not easily be dismissed from all due attendance. Sir Charles will be too anxious to look after his prize not to follow you closely. Nor indeed do I see how you possibly can prevent him, as now you are circumstanced. However,” added he, with much kind consideration, “I have a plan to propose, which, while it will beguile the melancholy of my now, alas! desolate home, will, I flatter myself, render your journey agreeable. It is my intention to invite my sister and her husband to accompany me to Richmond, for a few weeks. Marian has never been in London. The governess can take care of the children during her absence; and you seem to have excited such an interest and affection in the heart of each other, that I think it will prove a mutual gratification.”

“Under such agreeable circumstances,” returned Matilda, smiling, “I am afraid I shall have no plea to banish Sir Charles from your inviting society.”

Mr. and Mrs. Sutherland observing the extreme depression of their brother Collin, consented to spend part of the winter with them in England, a circumstance which gave Matilda the truest pleasure, for it not only removed the awkwardness of her situation, had she been obliged to travel only with Sir Charles and Mr. M’Arthur, but it gave her the lengthened society of her new friend, with whom she was so much charmed.

Previous to their departure from Inverness, Matilda received the few following lines from Lady Seyntaubyne.

To Miss Trevanion.

“Dear Matilda,

“The melancholy event of Mrs. M’Arthur’s death leaves no other alternative than your return to England. In the meantime you are happy in the society of such pleasing friends as you describe; and we both stand much indebted to them for their kindness and friendship.

“You do not mention Sir Charles Dashwood, who, I suppose, will attend you to London. Do not be ridiculously scrupulous in declining his company if he offers it.

“You will go to our friend Doctor Arundel’s, at Richmond, where you are to remain until I can send for you. Both he and Mrs. Arundel have been very ill; they are now recovering. I am, dear Matilda,

“Your sincere friend,

“DOROTHEA SEYNTAUBYNE.”

Pengwilly Hall, Sept. 30.

It was not without a sentiment of regret Matilda took leave of the Highlands of Scotland. For though during her residence there, she had witnessed so mournful a scene, she had experienced such genuine kindness, and found the society she mixed in composed of such an enlightened people, who were vivacious without levity, and hospitable without ostentation, that what she missed in the higher polish of English refinement, was made up for by sincerity and benevolence.

She cast a lingering look of regret on those hills which fast receded from her view, amongst which, as a stranger, she had been so warmly received, and kindly entertained.

The laird of Kilnorney accompanied them to Edinburgh; and on bidding adieu to Matilda, he invited her, when she became Lady Dashwood, to make a second visit to the Hebrides.

On quitting Edinburgh it was agreed they were to take the Carlisle road to England, as Mr. Sutherland wished to pay a visit to a particular friend he had not seen for several years, who had a house situated in Cumberland, on the small sequestered lake of Ennerdale Water.

It was the last week of October when the party arrived in Edinburgh. They found excellent accommodation at the elegant hotel recently opened in Sr. Andrew's Square. Mr. Sutherland's connections in that city introduced his brother and Matilda into the society of all those persons of knowledge, genius, and taste, resident in that modern Athens.

Sir Charles Dashwood became one of their party as a matter of course. He shortly wound himself into Mrs. Sutherland's favor. She had rarely seen so elegant and well-bred a man; and Matilda was half angry with her friend for proving so warmly his advocate. She felt an indescribable repugnance to shorten the period of his suspense, for which he was most urgent.

"Why," said Mrs. Sutherland to Matilda, "thus wantonly trifle with Sir Charles's peace. Having once consented to be his, why should you delay his happiness? You have a mind superior to coquetry; and by allowing him to be seen perpetually in your society, you give scope to a thousand idle observations, which the world are too apt to take advantage of making on a beautiful young woman, if she chances to be more unreserved and affable than common. Sir Charles here sees you surrounded by young men of fortune and fashion, who would be glad to aspire to the honor of your hand, did they not understand you were engaged; and while they are allured by your attractions, a tenacious jealousy is excited in Sir Charles's bosom, from the danger of losing you.

"Excuse my freedom," continued she, "my amiable young friend, if I add I should be inclined to suspect you of a little flirtation, if I did not know you better."

Matilda somewhat hurt and offended by Mrs. Sutherland's remark, said, "I did not, madam, expect this severity from you. If Sir Charles Dashwood will be so persevering in his attendance, he cannot expect that I shall give up all intercourse with the world for his gratification."

Mrs. Sutherland was not wrong in suspecting that a little species of coquetry did belong to Matilda's character. She was by nature so full of frankness and ease of manner, that she could not practice cold reserve, if people were not quite disagreeable to her; and she had almost from childhood been so accustomed to admiration, she had no dislike to receive the attentions of the men who flocked around her, without intending to distinguish any particular one by her favor.

During the month they spent in Edinburgh, Mr. Sutherland's universal acquaintance had thrown Matilda into the society of several young men, whose entertaining conversation, added to their taste for music and dancing, had rendered her more free and unguarded than usual. But she would have been shocked if, for a moment, she really had supposed that her innocent gaiety had given any cause for uneasiness, and

therefore was rather displeased at Mrs. Sutherland's surmises, conscious that Sir Charles had no real ground for indulging a moment's suspicion of the want of rectitude in her intentions.

Yet, when Matilda began to seriously reflect on Mrs. Sutherland's speech, she felt, in some degree, alarmed, in remembering how many serious admonitions she had received from her reverend friend on the subject of flirtation, on hearing that she was surrounded by admirers in London. In how despicable a view he had portrayed the character of a coquette. Recollecting how innocently she had destroyed Mr. M'Laurel's peace, by the familiarity with which she had treated him, she felt something like a conscious pang, and determined never more to lie under such an imputation as the one she had been charged with.

Matilda was in this disposition of mind when Sir Charles met her in the morning. Accidentally they were left alone, when taking advantage of the moment, with so much ardour he entreated her to shorten the period of his suspense, and consent to be his. At length he drew from her an inadvertent promise, that on her return to Pengwilly Hall, she would, with Lady Seyntaubyne's approbation, permit him to claim her hand.

It was under this auspicious circumstance the party proceeded on their way to England.

CHAP. VII.

AT Carlisle they stopt to dine, and remain for the night. The three gentlemen were set down about half a mile from the city, having promised to spend the day with a friend of Mr. M'Arthur's, and were to join the ladies at the inn in the evening.

Just as Mrs. Sutherland and Matilda were alighting from the carriage, a post-chaise drove rapidly into the yard, and as Matilda caught a transient glimpse of the person who was seated in it, she fancied that he resembled Clairville; yet the idea seemed so wild and impossible, that he should be in a spot so distant from home, and alone, so lately married to Julia, she tried to dismiss the impression from her thoughts, when the sudden surprize and agitation had subsided.

Mrs. Sutherland, however, quick and penetrating, was in a moment certain something very extraordinary had happened, from Matilda's variation of countenance and total abstraction. Too polite to enquire the cause, as she did not seem to be inclined to disclose it, they each remained wholly silent.

Matilda went to the window, on which she intently fixed her eyes, to watch whether the person she had seen proceeded on his journey, but he did not appear.

When the waiter came into the room to lay the cloth, she enquired, "Whether there were many travellers on the road?"

"A gentleman, ma'am, drove in just as your barouche did, but he has ordered no horses. He asked if I knew to whom the carriage belonged, and to enquire, as I could not tell him. So, ma'am, I took the liberty of asking the out-rider, and he has told me all your names, which I have just communicated to the gentleman."

"Rather a singular piece of curiosity," said Mrs. Sutherland, "however, as we are on no secret expedition, he is welcome to our names. He is, perhaps,——"

The waiter had not withdrawn many minutes, when another one came into the room with a note in his hand. "I was desired, ma'am," said he, addressing Matilda, "to deliver this to you, (presenting it) if your name is Trevanion."

"My name is certainly Trevanion," returned she, with considerable emotion. "Who ordered this note to be given to me?"

"I don't know the gentleman's name, ma'am; he drove into the yard at the same time with your carriage."

"You need not wait," cried Mrs. Sutherland to the man, observing what passed with astonishment. She was going to rally Matilda, till she perceived she trembled so violently as to be scarcely able to hold the billet, which, on opening, contained these few lines:

To Miss Trevanion.

"Mr. Clairville presents compliments to Miss Trevanion, takes the liberty of soliciting the honour of a few minutes conversation with her, when she is disengaged, previous to her leaving Carlisle."

It was, then, actually Clairville that she had seen! What extraordinary event could have brought him on the road so near to Scotland? and what could he possibly have to say to her, to induce the request of an interview, as he was circumstanced?

Matilda, indignant at what she considered so improper a demand, and sensible, as she was situated in regard to Sir Charles Dashwood, she ought by no means to see him, rang the bell and desired the waiter to give her compliments to Mr. Clairville, and she must be excused from seeing any company.

The effort this painful struggle cost Matilda, was more than she could support, without discovering to Mrs. Sutherland the anguish she endured; who, observing how pale she turned, approached, and tenderly taking her hand, said, "I ask no questions, for I guess how it is;—this unfortunate young man comes too late; and, from whatever cause, it is evident you both are wretched."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Matilda, speaking with difficulty from the violence of her emotion, "he rather comes to insult me with his presence; to triumph in his marriage. In discovering that I was here, he ought rather to have shunned, than sought me. O Clairville! is this like the delicacy, the tenderness, I expected to find in your character?"

"Is he then married?" cried Mrs. Sutherland, as she regarded Matilda with a look of the softest pity, faintly aspirating, "poor thing!"

The waiter again entered with another note, which Matilda ordered him to take back, but which Mrs. Sutherland countermanded, and bid him leave it.

"You commit no impropriety," said she, "towards Sir Charles Dashwood, in at least hearing what this poor young man has to say. Allow me to open the note; I will be answerable for the consequence."

Matilda sighed, and making no opposition, Mrs. Sutherland read to this effect:

To Miss Trevanion.

"After so long a journey, cruel, but too fondly loved, Miss Trevanion, you drive me from you in despair, when I was thus far on my way to lay open my whole soul, and to disclose the extraordinary circumstance which has happened. Think you that I would have wounded your delicacy, and treated you with such unbecoming indignity, as to venture into your presence, if I were not free? No; unworthy should I be of possessing a being so pure as Matilda, and with justice might you then have spurned me from you. Surely, after this justification, you will allow me to see you. But that you may no longer have a moment's doubt of the motives which actuate my present conduct, I enclose Julia's letter.

"If you be unwilling to admit me alone, the lady whom you are with may be present at the interview, for I glory in my affection for you!—I shall glory in proclaiming it to the world. But I solemnly declare, that I will not leave this place without seeing you; and if I am to be rejected, from your lips alone will I hear the refusal, which stamps my misery in this world for ever.

"ALBERT CLAIRVILLE."

Mrs. Sutherland next read to Matilda Lady Julia's letter to Clairville. It ran thus:

"The period of our existence here is so short, and our joys so few, that, wilfully, to draw on ourselves evils we can avoid, were, indeed, to deserve the misery which would too probably ensue from a mistaken delicacy of conduct.

“There is no error more common, nor any more fatal, than the misjudging ambition of parents, who, from motives of policy and interest, form alliances for their children in which the heart takes no share; and the very tie by which they wish to unite them is, of all others, the least binding. Probably from an odd perverseness in human nature, which, by fettering the parties, renders the choice at perfect variance with the persons elected to come together.

“From children, these bonds were created for us. Too inexperienced to judge whether our affections were likely to spring from similarity of taste, or were united in one interest; as cousins and play-fellows, we happily assimilated together; and in sport we were called by the endearing names we did not understand, and by which hereafter we were to spend our lives together. But when maturer years should have warmed our friendship into love, the capricious little god, instead of artfully levelling his arrows with success, maliciously withdrew them altogether.

“You have too much penetration, Clairville, not to have discovered long since, that though I have yielded a reluctant consent to fulfil an engagement, in which I am persuaded our hearts were at perfect variance, I have yet continually framed feeble excuses to delay our union, in which I saw you considered your honour too deeply engaged in fulfilling to wilfully break off, though, like myself, you languished to be free.

“Surely, then, dear Clairville, thus to come together, would be bartering away our happiness for a mistaken point of honour. *Julia Penrose sets you free!*

“Not for worlds would I do you so great an injury, as to offer you a hand with a heart cold and insensible, in opposition to a generous and exalted spirit, which so nobly, I am persuaded, would have sacrificed itself to one who finds it impossible to bestow on you that tenderness which you so justly merit.

“No, Clairville, the man I marry must possess more than my esteem; and I will never confer my hand until that happen.

“I grieve that this affair has gone so unfortunate a length; it has rather been occasioned by the warm importunity of your mother, than my indecision. I grieve, also, for her disappointment. My father, marrying himself from excess of affection, remains very passive on the subject. He has of late never wished to influence my inclination; but, on the contrary, has always said, ‘I am sure my Julia will marry no man that I do not approve, therefore it shall never be said that I directed her choice in a measure so important to her happiness.’

“O Clairville! direct your choice where your virtues will be rewarded, where your excellence is known, and where your tenderness will be repaid as it merits; for you are eminently formed to render the married state happy. There is a lovely fair one calculated to make you far happier than I could have done. Seek her out, and tell her, that Julia Penrose promises her the felicity to which she was insensible.”

Mrs. Sutherland having finished the letter, paused in silent interest to contemplate her young friend.

“Clairville then is free!” exclaimed Matilda, almost panting for breath. “Not married to Julia! and he offers me his hand! At an earlier period, perhaps, it might not have been rejected. Now,” cried she, with dignified resolution, “I am in honour bound to become the wife of Sir Charles Dashwood. My promise is passed, and worlds would not induce me to recal it.

“I cannot,” continued she, with extreme emotion, “see Mr. Clairville, neither, as almost wedded to another; can I write to him. I would not, willingly, wound his feelings in the disappointment which he will experience, neither would I awaken in my own bosom an unavailing and improper tenderness.

“You, madam, shall see him instead of me, if you will fulfil so unpleasant an office. Tell him how I am circumstanced;—how situated. Intreat him immediately to depart, if he would not sacrifice my peace ere Sir Charles arrives. They are acquainted with each other; and, with Clairville’s impetuosity of temper and warm affection, I should dread the consequence of their meeting. Tell him, if he ever loved Matilda he will leave her; and if it will soften the anguish of eternal separation, assure him if I had been free ——. No, do not say it:—far better he should not know how tenderly I loved him.”

If Mrs. Sutherland was before charmed with Matilda’s character, the exalted resolution she formed, which discovered the rectitude of her mind, governed by the strictest principles of honour, now excited her warmest admiration. She saw how greatly a good mind can act when called into exertion. Though she perceived the necessity of these young people not meeting, yet, as a stranger to Mr. Clairville, Mrs. Sutherland thought there would be so great an impropriety in her opening a subject of such a delicate nature, she at length, with difficulty, prevailed on Matilda to write to him, as the most likely mode not to irritate and wound his feelings; at the same time assuring her, that it appeared to her to be both unhandsome and ungenerous, after so great a proof of his tenderness and honour, not to afford him so poor a consolation.

Mrs. Sutherland added, with much kindness, “I will undertake to deliver the letter, rather than send so many notes to and fro by the waiters, which naturally will excite impertinent curiosity and idle whispers.”

Matilda, deeply penetrated by Mrs. Sutherland’s goodness, yet distressed how to act for the best, and greatly hurt at the idea of seeming unkindness towards Clairville, though by no means satisfied of the propriety of writing to him, at length, after blotting several sheets of paper, and not pleased with what she said, gave Mrs. Sutherland the following lines to present to him:—

To Lieutenant Clairville.

“I grieve for the disappointment I am sensible you will experience, and ardently wish it were possible to soften the regrets which may arise on my declining an interview; but when you know that I no longer consider myself as having power to act by my own free agency, you are too candid and generous not to admit the propriety of a seeming unkindness, rather than I should be guilty of doing wrong.

“Could I have known, or even guessed, O Clairville! that you were free, before I was induced to enter into an engagement, which no circumstance now can alter, it is unnecessary to say where my choice would have been directed. Yet this confession I almost deem it improper to make, and except from the idea that you might suppose I was insensible to your predilection, nothing should have drawn it from me.

“The circumstance which has occurred to finally separate us, you will be acquainted with from my friend Mrs. Sutherland, for I am quite unequal to such an office. Dear Clairville farewell.

“MATILDA TREVANION.”

When Clairville was desired to walk into the room which the ladies occupied, he was surprised to find only a stranger. As his cheek flushed with disappointment and anger, he exclaimed, after a minute's pause, "Miss Trevanion then, madam, refuses to see me?" And, not appearing to regard the presence of a person he had never beheld, he added, "She neither deigns to allow me a few minutes conversation, nor answers my letter. Though I said you, madam, were at liberty to be admitted."

"Miss Trevanion, sir," cried Mrs. Sutherland, sincerely compassionating him, "has answered your letter; judge not of her so hastily and unkindly. She rather merits your commiseration than your displeasure, which you will find hereafter."

"Why will she not see me?" interrupted he, impatiently. "In what have I offended? and how drawn on myself this unmerited severity?"

"You have not offended," said Mrs. Sutherland, with much feeling; "this letter, which Miss Trevanion requested me to give you, will explain,—will——"

"Confirm," replied he, impetuously, "I perceive her determination not to listen to me. Oh! where," added he, mournfully, "is the tenderness, the gentleness I expected to find in Miss Trevanion!"

Clairville took the letter from Mrs. Sutherland in much agitation. Having ran over the contents, he exclaimed, in a tone of despair, "She refers me to you, madam, to confirm the truth or the fallacy of the ideal felicity which I had created for myself. That Miss Trevanion is lost to me for ever is evident. I was not, indeed, prepared for the event. Yet rather trusted to the ardency of my imagination, that she would be mine, than to the probable chance, with a softness so attractive, and a loveliness which is her least perfection, she would be free.

"Had I considered myself at liberty," continued he, "when on a first acquaintance I became sensible of the various attractions which so eminently adorn Miss Trevanion's character, to have declared my sentiments, I had been spared the anguish of this moment.

"I presume, madam, you are not ignorant of the circumstances which led me to fulfil an engagement formed for me from infancy by my friends, and which my cousin Lady Julia Penrose, had too high a sense of rectitude to allow me to perform, from the indifference with which she regarded me. But, from the period of my acquaintance with Matilda, I never suffered her image to dwell on my mind, until I found it possible we could be united. On the swiftest wings of hope and expectation I flew, and would have done so, to the most remote part of the habitable globe, to have prevailed on her to be mine. I had cherished the fond and fallacious hope, that as I knew not of Miss Trevanion's having formed an engagement, so rare a felicity would be my lot. It is true, that no confession of regard had ever passed between us; yet, still, a something whispered to my ardent imagination, that I should not be rejected."

Mrs. Sutherland was too prudent to discover to Clairville her perfect ignorance until an hour or two ago, of all acquaintance between him and Matilda, by encreasing his embarrassment, in opening his heart to a perfect stranger. Indeed, she so truly sympathized in the adverse fate of each, though sensible that Matilda's engagement could not be recalled to Sir Charles Dashwood, she was almost induced to lament it; and felt much concern, having no idea that Matilda had any concealed attachment, in having rather warmly urged his cause. Trembling for the event, if Sir Charles and Clairville meet, she said, with much earnest solicitude, "As Matilda cannot be yours, is it not far

wiser that you should not meet? It would answer no purpose, but to awaken a tenderness which might prove fatal to the happiness of both. I am sure, Sir, a moment's cool reflection will convince you, that the more distant you are removed from each other, the better it will be. Miss Trevanion urges it, and you cannot refuse."

"It is a matter of indifference," returned he, "whither I go. Yet to drive me away so impatiently, surely there is no necessity; for my being here will not, I suppose, impede her union with another. You have not told me, madam," added he, "to whom —;" his voice faltered, and he could not go on.

Mrs. Sutherland, who thought it best to remove at once the suspense he endured, in as considerate a manner as possible unfolded Matilda's intended union with Sir Charles Dashwood; and closed her narrative, by an earnest repetition of her request, that he would depart before the baronet and her husband returned, which she every moment expected.

During Mrs. Sutherland's communication, Clairville walked up and down the room with hurried and agitated steps. When she had finished, he exclaimed, in a voice vainly struggling for composure, "Sir Charles Dashwood is worthy of Miss Trevanion. Oh great be their felicity! she could not have bestowed her hand on a more excellent man.

"I will not, madam," continued he, "oppress you any longer, by my impetuosity of temper. You possess too much candour and benevolence not to make allowance, and to forgive the various emotions of my mind, which you have witnessed in this, to me, unhappy conference. Accept my warmest acknowledgements for the tender consideration you have bestowed on a wretched stranger. Assure Matilda I depart, though with the most painful sensations, with a perfect consciousness that her sincerity and firmness results from the rectitude of her mind, rather than the coldness of insensibility."

Clairville took leave of Mrs. Sutherland, and immediately ordered post-horses, proceeding to Kendal that night.

Mrs. Sutherland inherited all the resolute firmness of the Scotch character, blended with the engaging softness and sensibility of the English. She had, without yielding to the native tenderness of her disposition, maintained a becoming dignity and gentleness in her conversation with Clairville; she had supported the consequence of her young friend in a most arduous and difficult situation. She had discovered no imbecility of mind, but a sense and discretion which regulated all her actions. Mrs. Sutherland, without knowing the circumstances of Clairville's and Matilda's acquaintance (for she had never heard her mention him) felt the utmost sympathy and compassion for them both. But she was too judicious to allow them to discover it, to weaken their fortitude and resolution.

Whatever vexations or anxieties she endured, she made it a principle never to torment her husband with them. She silently suffered in secret, and if she had not power to overcome them her tears excited no sympathy, for they were always shed in private.

Mrs. Sutherland went to Matilda's chamber as soon as Clairville took leave. She found her waiting in the most painful anxiety for a summons. She related what had passed, dwelling as little as possible on Clairville's distress and disappointment, which she softened as much as was in her power, faithfully repeating the high opinion he entertained of Sir Charles Dashwood, and how entirely worthy he considered him of being her husband.

“Now, my dear Matilda,” added Mrs. Sutherland, “since there are events in life which there is not preventing, so it is our duty to reconcile the mind to them with cheerfulness and content. Your good sense will point out the necessity of endeavouring to banish, as much as possible, all recollection of the occurrences of this evening. Compose your hurried spirits, retire to repose, and in the morning I shall expect to meet you with that firmness which becomes your character.”

She took an affectionate leave; and deeming it best for Matilda to be alone, retired to her chamber, somewhat overcome by the distressing conflict which she had witnessed.

CHAP. VIII.

IT was not until some weeks after Matilda had left England that Julia formed the resolution to put a stop to the preparations which had been making for her nuptials. As she said to Clairville, she had continually framed feeble excuses for delay. But when she found, that without treating him dishonourably, she must consent to sacrifice her inclination to the wishes of her family, she at length took courage to communicate to her father how averse she was to form an alliance in which her heart took no share, and that she gave her hand to Clairville merely from a sense of obedience. Lord Seyntaubyne listened to her with more concern than displeasure. He had rather agreed that his daughter should marry Clairville to please Lady Sophia, than from his own desire. He therefore immediately told her, that she was at liberty to take what measures she chose to prevent its completion. Julia lost no time in writing to Clairville; and though the hopes of his mother in an alliance on which she had set her heart were baffled, and she suffered a severe disappointment, yet she was too noble-minded to desire a union promising so little happiness.

Clairville replied to Julia's letter by at once setting her free. He spoke not of Matilda, nor suffered his thoughts to point towards her, until Julia, when they again met, no longer as lovers, entreated him to seek his happiness where she was persuaded he would not be disappointed.

Thus urged, Clairville without hesitation unfolded to his mother his latent affection for Matilda.

Lady Sophia from the period of their becoming inmates beneath her roof, suspected the mutual partiality which she had always strongly opposed. She loved Matilda with the tenderness of a daughter; she was alive to the engaging qualities she possessed, so likely to ensure happiness in the married state. But she objected to Matilda's alliance with her son. Had she chosen a woman for him, it would have been Miss Trevanion, if the mystery which enveloped her birth could have been explained to her satisfaction, but she positively forbid Clairville to think of her under so disadvantageous a circumstance. Want of fortune she regarded as a paltry consideration, compared with those qualities of the mind calculated to perpetuate felicity. But her ladyship was tenacious to whom her son was allied; and if Matilda proved to be the illegitimate offspring of the Seyntaubyne family (which she strongly suspected) the objection became insuperable.

Lady Sophia had again closely questioned Doctor Arundel on the subject; but he, bound in honor not to disclose the little he knew of Matilda's history, remained resolutely silent on the subject.

Clairville perplexed and distracted at the difficulties and objections which his mother stated, at length drew from her a reluctant consent to obtain Miss Trevanion's hand, on condition that she would disclose to him who were her parents; and if she proved the offspring of an honourable alliance, on that condition she would no longer withhold her approbation.

Clairville immediately on these terms followed Matilda to Scotland; buoyant with hope, and elated with the certainty of finding her not merely free, but obtaining the satisfaction of clearing his mother's doubts of her legitimacy; for he would not allow

himself to believe that her parents would not stand the test of the strictest enquiry; so tenacious did he feel of the least disapprobation being cast on any person with whom Matilda was connected.

When Clairville arrived at Carlisle, as Matilda was alighting from the carriage, he saw, and knew her.

The result of his interview with Mrs. Sutherland spared him the necessity of any enquiry in regard to Matilda's family; and spared her also the embarrassment which it would have occasioned.

That she should not have heard of the alliance between Clairville and Julia being put an end to, was by no means surprising. Mrs. Arundel knowing Lady Sophia's objections to Clairville's coming forward, was of all people the least likely to mention it, and awaken expectations in Matilda. Lady Seyntaubyne had heard the circumstance from public report; but having consented to Sir Charles Dashwood's addresses for Matilda, would, if possible, prevent any information, connected with Clairville, to reach her.

After the disappointment which he sustained, he determined to obtain an immediate appointment, to return to sea, having been exchanged as a prisoner in the last cartel.

When Sir Charles Dashwood and Mr. Sutherland reached Carlisle, the hour was so late, they were not surprized to find the ladies had retired some time.

The contending emotions which Matilda endured, in struggling to banish the idea of Clairville's tenderness, his disappointment, and the anguish she was conscious she should occasion him, were so painful, in the morning when she arose from a disturbed sleep, so much fever hung about her, all her friends remarked her extreme languor, and Sir Charles with infinite solicitude, enquired whether she was ill.

She complained of a violent head-ache, and asked Mrs. Sutherland to take a short walk, to try if the air would remove it, while the carriages were preparing to proceed on their journey.

When Matilda reached the street she became so sick and giddy, she said, with a faint smile, as she held Mrs. Sutherland's arm, "It will not do.—I fain would shake off the illness, but I find it stealing upon me. Perhaps travelling will remove it."

Mrs. Sutherland, who beheld the extreme heaviness of Matilda's eyes with much alarm, proposed to the gentlemen remaining another day at Carlisle, but Matilda was so urgent to proceed, they got as far as Kendal, when she felt such an increase of illness, she thought she was going to die, and with difficulty was led to her chamber by Mrs. Sutherland.

Matilda who had struggled against the anguish of her mind during her attendance on Mrs. M'Arthur, was now, from the late conflict, quite overcome. She was seized with a violent nervous fever, which threatened to terminate her existence.

The physician they sent for from Carlisle immediately pronounced her illness to be the effect of some violent mental agitation, and affliction and alleged, without the cause was speedily removed, he could not promise that her life would not prove the sacrifice.

Sir Charles heard the report with astonishment and dismay. He questioned Mrs. Sutherland so closely, that the integrity and unerring truth, which guided all her words and actions, put her to much difficulty how to reply; but she said, the fatigue and anxiety

Mrs. M'Arthur's death had occasioned Miss Trevanion, was likely to affect a mind of so much sensibility.

"The malady, madam," replied the physician, "is more recent. It is some late shock and agitation which the young lady has experienced. I should guess, something of a tender nature."

"That cannot be," returned Sir Charles. "Has any thing, concealed, occurred, which you are acquainted with, Mrs. Sutherland, which can be removed? Speak, my dear madam."

"There is nothing," said she, "to remove which is not already done. And I am assured, that no suspense hangs on her mind."

"Has the young lady," interrupted the physician, "met with any opposition from her friends where she had placed her affections?"

"Miss Trevanion," replied Mrs. Sutherland, "is engaged, but I understood with her own free consent."

"Well, madam, I only speak to visible effects; the causes, as a stranger, I cannot know."

When Sir Charles retired for the night, his valet, who had the fault common to servants, of being too communicative on some occasions, acquainted him, that a gentleman had arrived at Carlisle during his absence, and that two or three letters and messages had passed between him and Miss Trevanion: at last he was admitted into the room where she and Mrs. Sutherland were sitting; that he staid with them a long time, after which he ordered post-horses, and took the road for Kendal.

This communication did not tend to promote Sir Charles's sleep. He proceeded to his chamber in perplexity and agitation, dwelling with surprize on so extraordinary an event. Before it was day-light he rang for his servant to again hear all the particulars which he had related. He could not tell the gentleman's name, but enquiring of one of the waiters, remembered Miss Trevanion's letter was addressed to Mr. Clair——something."

"It could not," exclaimed Sir Charles, in much agitation, "be Clairville?"

"Yes, Sir, that was the very name."

He dismissed the man, and hurrying down stairs waited with the greatest anxiety and impatience for Mrs. Sutherland's appearance. At once Sir Charles narrated to her all that he had heard, requesting her with ingenuousness to inform him whether it was true.

"All is true," answered she, "this busy tale-bearer has told you, except that I alone was admitted to the conference with Mr. Clairville. You have nothing, Sir Charles, rely upon my word, to fear from him. I know not which of the two has acted most nobly, he or Miss Trevanion. He said, with the warmest generosity, you were worthy of her; while she, absolute in her refusal to see him, spoke of her engagement to you, in a few lines, (which I gave Mr. Clairville) as an event which no circumstance would prevent her from fulfilling."

"Generous Matilda," exclaimed he, much moved. "Rather would I forego my own bliss than witness the terrible conflict which your engagement to me has occasioned. Surely Clairville's intended marriage with his cousin Lady Julia Penrose must be broken off. Yet it seemed so fixed—so certain—had I only known—only guessed.—Madam," added Sir Charles, after a pause, "I take your promise never to divulge to Matilda that I have any knowledge, or even suspicion, of Clairville's visit. We will proceed on our

journey homewards, when Miss Trevanion is sufficiently recovered, as if no such circumstance had happened.”

Mrs. Sutherland readily gave her promise to conceal from Matilda Sir Charles’s knowledge of what could only have produced unavailing regret, had she guessed that he had been acquainted with the late event which had happened.

Mrs. Sutherland, who had no part of impertinent female inquisitiveness in her character, yet felt very desirous to know who Clairville and Lady Julia were, and the first day she was alone with Sir Charles Dashwood, he related his acquaintance with Lady Sophia Clairville, and the suspicion that Matilda was not indifferent to her son, from the meeting he witnessed at his own house. He then spoke of Miss Trevanion in the handsomest terms, and told Mrs. Sutherland how much enjoyment he had derived from her society, even in some of the gayest parties in London.

CHAP. IX.

IT was several weeks before Matilda gained sufficient strength to be able to travel. She felt quite hurt in detaining her friends so long from reaching England, and her gratitude was awakened by the unceasing attention of her friends. The tender care Mrs. Sutherland had bestowed on her had greatly mitigated her sufferings. She had watched her with the fond solicitude of a parent, and Matilda was unable to express the extent of her obligation to a person only so recently a perfect stranger. But Mrs. Sutherland possessed all the fine qualities of the heart, which only wanted to be called into action to display themselves. She had firmness with feeling; and a warmth and zeal of friendship, where she professed it, which experienced no diminution in being put to the test.

Mr. M'Arthur had written several times to Lady Seyntaubyne; and the apprehension and anxiety Matilda's illness occasioned her, would have made her set off immediately for the north, if Mr. M'Arthur had not earnestly requested her to desist from so imprudent a plan; assuring her that Miss Trevanion was paid every attention to, and had most skilful advice.

It was determined, as it was now on the verge of Christmas, the whole party were to accept of Mr. Maitland's invitation, to spend the fortnight of that festival with him and his lady, at their noble mansion on Ennerdale Water. The rigour of winter had not yet set in. The season was unusually mild, and promised to be open favourable weather for the travellers.

Journeying by slow stages, Matilda found her health and strength daily improve. It was only Mrs. Sutherland, who happened to be a witness of her heroic conduct, would have known that any latent uneasiness dwelt upon her mind; so proper was her demeanour towards Sir Charles Dashwood. He could not constantly see her and be in her society, without discovering the tenderness of his attachment, which, however, he appeared to be making every attempt to subdue. He was often extremely absent and silent; and Matilda fancied, though his attentions did not decrease, they were neither so marked, nor full of compliments as formerly, except sometimes, when he was thrown of his guard.

Buried in wooded hills, the travellers at length reached the small sequestered lake of Ennerdale Water, which, although seldom visited by the tourist, they found by no means deficient in the grandeur of scenery, although on a circumscribed scale, which distinguished its neighbouring lakes. Retirement and tranquillity seemed to characterize it as the most inviting haunt of love and meditation.

The clear unruffled bosom of the water, which softly glided at the foot of the alpine hills, was environed with pastoral and arcadian landscapes, which softening the wildness of the steep mountains, conspired to render this spot as inviting as it was lovely.

Mr. Maitland's house stood on the margin of the water, and its picturesque appearance seemed to intimate the owner to be a man of sentiment and taste.

There was no other habitation near, except a low neat dwelling, which appeared above an ordinary cottage, as its white-washed chimneys peeped from amidst the leafless trees, whose summer foliage, would intirely conceal it.

Some days passed away very agreeably with Mr. and Mrs. Maitland. During that period Matilda, more than once, expressed her curiosity to Mrs. Sutherland, to know to

whom the pretty white cottage belonged, which was situated at about a quarter of a mile distant.

“The owner,” said she, “is not, I suspect, of vulgar degree, for every thing around displays such an air of simple elegance.”

“Do, sir,” cried Mrs. Sutherland, turning to Mr. Maitland, “satisfy my friend’s curiosity; what shepherd or shepherdess of your mountains is the possessor of the rural cot which we see from your windows, and which forms no displeasing object.”

“The owner,” he answered, “is called Mrs. Bertie; but whether she is a widow or a wife, I cannot inform you. The little I know of her history, is somewhat romantic. She made her appearance on this lake almost nineteen years ago, without introduction either to me, or any person on the neighbouring lakes. The cottage which she inhabits, was originally a little fishing-house; but the man to whom it belonged fitted it up, thinking it might let to advantage during the summer months; but finding Mrs. Bertie likely to prove a permanent tenant, he allowed her to take it upon a long lease at a very trifling rent, not more than seven or eight pounds per annum. From whence she came, no one could ever discover; and I find she supports herself by works of ingenuity, which she sends to the neighbouring museums. She receives no letters, nor holds correspondence with any one, therefore to trace her is impossible.

“Once, during the series of years she had resided here, we missed her for a short period, I think it was about ten autumns ago: and, on her return, she was seized with a severe illness, during which, Mrs. Maitland conferred on her so many essential kindnesses, as to have since formed something like an intimacy between us.

“When my wife and I,” continued Mr. Maitland, “first saw Mrs. Bertie, which was accidentally, soon after she came into this neighbourhood, she was eminently beautiful; she was fair as the new-blown lilly, and her eyes had a melting softness of expression, such as I have rarely seen. But the increasing languor and dejection of her appearance has, of late, faded that dazzling loveliness which she then possessed. We have derived much pleasure from her society; for though her manners are simple, they are very graceful. She has been well educated, and her principles seem to be founded on piety and virtue.”

“Did she never express,” enquired Mrs. Sutherland, “during that illness, any desire that her friends should be written to?”

“No, on the contrary; when asked by Mrs. Maitland, she said she had taken a final leave of the world, and every person in it, and that she wished to die as she had lived, unknown.

“Once I think she murmured the name of daughter, but the agony the name awakened alarmed my wife, who, for many hours, in vain endeavoured to compose her.”

“How extraordinary!” exclaimed Matilda. “O that it were possible to see this interesting creature!”

“She, generally,” replied Mrs. Maitland, “walks out in a fine day. Perhaps we may be so fortunate as to meet her; but when I have company staying in my house, she always avoids us.”

Matilda could not dismiss the stranger from her thoughts, and felt singularly interested about her.

CHAP. X.

A FEW days after the subsequent conversation, Matilda, strolling with Mrs. Maitland along the gravel walk which led to the cottage, observed Mrs. Bertie at a little distance; but on seeing a stranger she abruptly turned away.

“I will go to her,” said Mrs. Maitland, “and request she will allow you to look at her drawings; they are different views of the lakes; she cannot refuse me.”

In a few minutes Mrs. Maitland returned, accompanied by Mrs. Bertie.

“I understand, madam,” said she, addressing Matilda in a soft and pensive voice, “you have expressed a wish to look at my trifling landscapes; will you favour me with your company to only a rustic cottage, inhabited by a solitary recluse.”

“You do me honour, madam,” replied she, “by indulging my wish. I have always felt an irresistible desire to see the interior of a rural abode which looked so picturesque, as to promise the inhabitant to be of no common order of beings.”

“Ah, madam!” returned she, with a heavy sigh, while tears started in her eyes, “I perceive you have lived in the world by your flattery. People of the world are well versed in it, and know too well how to flatter and to deceive.”

“Pardon me, I spoke but what I thought; and this inviting seclusion would almost make me renounce society.”

“To me,” replied Mrs. Bertie, “this spot has proved the soother of the heaviest sorrow. I have lived here, as Mrs. Maitland has told you, for a length of years, and, except from her friendly society, have passed my days in the perfect seclusion which is my choice.”

“And yet, methinks,” added she, gazing wistfully at Matilda, “you, young lady, would prove an exception to an acquaintance with strangers. There is something so lovely, so interesting, about you, and which recalls——”

“Recalls what?” interrupted she, eagerly.

“Merely,” said Mrs. Bertie, mournfully, “a resemblance to a person I once knew. But pardon the inadvertance of my observation; it is so striking I was taken by surprize. If you please, we will drop the subject. Allow me to shew you the way to my cottage.”

They entered a small room, decorated with much taste. The window-curtains, only of white cotton, were tied up with knots of pale green ribband. The jars on the chimney-piece were filled with lauristina, and bunches of mountain-ash. In the recess, stood a profusion of myrtles and geraniums, and above them hung some painted shelves containing a few books. The walls were covered with landscapes of the lake in various points; and, though not finished with the hand of a master, gave a correct idea of the places they were intended to represent. It was a true English cottage, so beautiful and neat.

Matilda expressed her thanks for the favour which had been allowed her; and when she rose to depart, Mrs. Bertie expressed a hope to see her again before she finally quitted Ennerdale Water.

“Miss Trevanion will, I am sure,” replied Mrs. Maitland, “be happy to repeat her visit; she seems to have fallen in love with your cottage.”

Mrs. Maitland had scarcely finished the sentence, when Mrs. Bertie turned so pale, and discovered such extraordinary emotion, she seemed ready to faint; while in

trembling perturbation, she said to Mrs. Maitland, "Did not you call that young lady Trevanion?"

"Yes," returned she. "Do you then know her?"

"Oh, no!" cried Mrs. Bertie, sighing, "to me the young lady is a stranger."

"Then suffer me not to be so long," interrupted Matilda, "but permit me to see you again soon."

"I not only permit," cried Mrs. Bertie, emphatically, "but I intreat that I may. For the interest which you have excited has awakened, from your name, the remembrance of years and persons which I fancied had long been buried in eternal oblivion."

"Let me hope, madam, that Matilda Trevanion has excited an interest in your bosom in a name, which, if not indifferent to you, she has cherished with the fondest reverence from the earliest period of her existence."

"This interview," answered Mrs. Bertie, "with a stranger, has led to such a coincidence of events long, indeed, passed away, that I cannot but think, though I never saw you before, that we shall hereafter be more intimately known to each other."

"The idea," cried Matilda, as they took leave, "is, believe me, madam, most pleasing."

Mrs. Bertie's sudden agitation had much surprised Mrs. Maitland; while, in Matilda, it produced such an earnest desire for more conversation with her, she determined to slip unnoticed to Mrs. Bertie's cottage on the following day.

"This poor woman," said Mrs. Maitland, as they walked home together, "has, probably, been unfortunately married to some man of the name of Trevanion, who has deserted her, from the emotion it excited when you were mentioned. It will be odd, if your visit here should lead to a discovery, after her living so long an incognito, of who she really is. People who live in so recluse a manner, generally have some romantic history annexed to them."

Matilda made no reply. A thousand vague ideas floated in her mind relative to Mrs. Bertie, which, by turns, soothed, agitated, and alarmed her.

Afraid of being questioned as to the result of her visit, she immediately went to her own room. Cautiously locking the door, she took from her bosom the picture which she always wore of her mother. With eager anxiety she examined the features. It represented a girl of seventeen in all the vivacity of youth, and the full radiance of beauty. But yet every feature, though changed by time, resembled Mrs. Bertie.

The sparkling lustre of the eyes were sunk into a mournful expression, yet the melting softness they emitted was the same; and the contour of the face gave a likeness so striking, that Matilda determined to shew the miniature to Mrs. Bertie.

Lady Seyntaubyne had told her, that her mother was no more. But might not her remote seclusion be unknown; and, that dead to the world, she was dead to those to whom she was related? There appeared to be an extraordinary and mysterious connection between the Seyntaubynes and Trevanions: and so inexplicable were the circumstances attending her own history, the more she attempted to develop it, it became the deeper involved in mystery.

Matilda knew not any one that she resembled, except it was Lady Julia Penrose, and Julia was thought to be very like her father, the Earl of Seyntaubyne; to whom, perhaps, this interesting recluse had been no stranger, from the agitation which her name excited, and was possibly the one which she bore.

Perplexed by the alternate ideas which took possession of her mind, Matilda resolved the next day, as soon as breakfast was over, to make her escape to Mrs. Bertie's cottage.

CHAP. XI.

MRS. Sutherland was so wise and discreet, Matilda thought it most prudent, in case she should be missed, to inform her she was going once more to visit the recluse; begging her to say, if she was enquired after, she was gone out to walk.

Not without some degree of agitation Matilda gave a gentle tap at Mrs. Bertie's door, and was shown by the servant into the parlour. She found Mrs. Bertie lying on a couch, pale as death, with a look of such anguish in her countenance, Matilda was going to retreat, with an apology for her intrusion, when, in a languid voice, she said, "Do not go, dear madam. I have much, very much to say to you, if I can collect fortitude to utter it, and I shall not tire your patience, if you will sit down by me."

"And I, madam," replied Matilda, with earnest solicitude, "have much also to say, if you were not apparently to ill to ear it."

"No; your voice is so persuasive and soothing, I like to listen to you. Begin; and, afterwards, I will take the liberty, although a stranger, of asking some questions, which I hope you will not deem impertinent, so important to my peace, you must have the sweetness with candour and sincerity to reply to them."

"I will, to the best of my ability. In the mean time, look, madam, at this miniature, which you so greatly resemble. It was painted for my mother, whom, alas! I never had the happiness of knowing. And I cannot but regard you, though a stranger, with a tenderness and respect such as I never before experienced. There is something so beautiful in the name of mother, oh! that it really were possible to call you by that endearing title!"

Matilda opened the case which contained the miniature, and presenting it to Mrs. Bertie, said, "Judge yourself, madam, how perfect is the resemblance."

Mrs. Bertie took it from her, and gazing at it for a moment in a sort of wild astonishment, let it drop, and fell back into a state of insensibility.

It was sometime before Matilda could restore her. When she did, Mrs. Bertie feebly exclaimed, "Oh! tell me how you came by this miniature?"

"It was given me by Lady Seyntaubyne."

"Seyntaubyne!" cried she, "Oh name once too fondly loved! source of all my woes—of years of anguish and unavailing regret. Why, why, reverbrate in my ears in accents which were so fatally seductive? Oh look not upon me; go, go—I cannot bear it. Just such the expression of Seyntaubyne's countenance, when with his alluring voice he tore me from my paternal dwelling.

"Don't you know," added she, looking with wildness at Matilda, "that I broke my poor father's heart? that I hurried his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave?—that I bereaved him of his senses;—and that even my cherub girl could not heal the anguish of his bleeding heart?"

"What mean you?" cried the weeping Matilda, "by this incoherence? It speaks daggers, though so wild in the utterance."

"I mean," exclaimed Mrs. Bertie, "what I have uttered. I speak only horrid truths. Truths, written in dark characters on my penitent heart. In this solitude in mourning over the past, I hoped to have died in peace. But you have pointed the arrow with ten-fold poignancy to my lacerated bosom."

“I knew not,” said the afflicted Matilda, “I meant not to distress you. How, indeed, could I guess that in shewing you that miniature——”

“That miniature,” interrupted she with quickness, “was in my father’s house. He had it painted for me when I was happy, and when he was blessed in his daughter, till the enemy came, and like a midnight assassin, bereaved him of what he was pleased to consider his only treasure.

The *Curate* and his *Daughter* were the talk of all the neighbourhood; for though we were very poor, no people were so happy. How came you,” added she, “did you say, by my picture?”

“The Countess of Seyntaubyne gave it to me. I was adopted, brought up, educated, by her ladyship:—she has proved to me a mother;—I have known no other.”

“Once more,” said Mrs. Bertie, with much perturbation, “tell me, if your name is Trevanion, whether it is real or fictitious?”

“That I know not. The venerable man who at his death consigned me to her ladyship, bore the name of Trevanion. I am called Matilda Trevanion.”

“O God!” exclaimed Mrs. Bertie, rising with wild emotion, and clasping Matilda in her arms, “I thank thee, for having preserved my child!—Oh, beloved, but unfortunate Matilda, you are indeed my daughter!—A smiling, rosy infant, I sent you to my venerable father, to sooth, to mitigate the anguish which I had occasioned him—and to steal, with your prattling innocence, into his affections.”

Matilda, overcome with emotion and surprize, could only weep on Mrs. Bertie’s bosom, as she tenderly murmured the word “mother!”

Some time elapsed before Mrs. Bertie acquired sufficient composure to give Matilda the following narration.

“A few years after I sent you to my father, who was the curate in the small parish of Bossney, or Boss Castle, in Cornwall; listless and unhappy, I languished to behold my precious child, and to be restored to the arms of my father, I travelled hence to my native village. Sorrow had so altered me, there was little probability of my being known or remembered as the same person who had left it some years before. I reached the parsonage with an agony of mind which it is impossible to describe. It was in the dusk of an autumnal evening when I knocked at the door of my native home: it was opened by a stranger. I enquired for the curate, and was shewn into what used to be the little library, so altered, I should not have known it, and thought that in displeasure my father had changed the appearance of the room. But, O heavens! what was the shock I sustained, when a stranger came in, and demanded my business? I enquired for Mr. Trevanion. The person informed me that he had been dead above four years. Sinking at the terrible intelligence, with trembling steps, I left the house, and entered one of the cottages in the village, to learn, if possible, the particulars of my father’s death. Drest like the wife of a peasant, the people had not the smallest suspicion who I was, nor, that every word of the ‘round unvarnished tale’ which they told, was a thousand daggers to my soul. The woman informed me, ‘the poor curate, Mr. Trevanion, had a good-for-nothing daughter, who had run away some years since, with a great lord, and what became of them was never known. The circumstance, however, had not only broken the old man’s heart, but for a long while had bereaved him of his senses, and at last sent him to his grave.’

“Almost deprived of utterance at this terrible intelligence, with difficulty I just had power to ask, if she knew what had become of the little girl who lived with him; and

was told, 'that some great lady had taken pity on her, and they were gone to live at that place, a long way off, called London.'

"Thus I lost all traces of you, my beloved Matilda; and in hopeless despondency returned thither to end my days and my griefs together. But the astonishing event of thus discovering and seeing my precious child, is a felicity I never dared hope for.

"Now, my beloved daughter, inform me how you chanced to be consigned to Lady Seyntaubyne's protection; for it appears a most extraordinary circumstance, knowing my poor father's well-founded prejudice against the Seyntaubyne family."

"I just remember," returned Matilda, "the reluctance I felt to leave Mr. Trevanion, when I was forcibly taken from him, by Lady Seyntaubyne. I thought my little heart would have broken, it was so heavy. But what led to her adoption I am perfectly ignorant of. I never had seen her until an hour before she carried me away from the parsonage to Pengwilly Hall. I had scarcely become her inmate, when intelligence was brought of Mr. Trevanion's death; and from that period I experienced the tenderest affection from her ladyship. On comparing dates, it appears to me, that you had come to Boss Castle when Lady Seyntaubyne fixed her residence in London, for the benefit of my education; and great indeed was the advantage I derived from the restraint she imposed on herself, in a town life, on my account. To the Reverend Doctor Arundel, and his excellent lady, I owe the formation of a mind which derives all the good it possesses from their precepts and example.

"But," continued Matilda, with much earnest solicitude, "tell me, O, my mother! who is my father? though I guess, in trembling apprehension."

"Unfortunate child, of a deluded mother," exclaimed Mrs. Bertie, with an agony which pierced Matilda to the heart. "Why seek to know what will only tend to excite your misery, and disclose the weakness of an erring parent. Better far bury the name in oblivion, for it reflects no honour upon either him or upon you."

"Oh, horrible!" cried Matilda, weeping and covering her face with her hands. "Hide, banish me for ever! if such is the truth. Lord Seyntaubyne then, it is evident, is my father. I am a daughter—yet no daughter. Lady Julia Penrose alone claims all his affection, and the poor Matilda is alienated and disowned."

"Lord Seyntaubyne never knew that he had any other daughter than the one you have named; neither has he the least idea of your existence. Deceived by him, under the specious form of marriage, (for the ceremony was actually performed by a clergyman in the town where we were sometime stationary) I discovered, when all redress was fruitless, that he had not married me under his own name. Indignant and dismayed at the great, the irreparable injury I had sustained, I rested not until I reached the wilds of Cumberland. By happy chance this little dwelling was pointed out to me by the honest people with whom I lodged. It belonged to them, and here I fixed my residence. Lord Seyntaubyne imagines me long since dead; and he by no channel ever was informed that he had a daughter; for when I consigned you to my father, it was my ardent request, that he would conceal you from all the world."

Mrs. Bertie ceased speaking. Matilda heard her with profound attention: she, alas! had no comment to make. In finding a mother, she found her a most injured and wretched woman, and the anguish of her own mind required the truest sympathy.

She had spent several hours at the cottage, and alarmed at the idea of her long absence, she promised to see her mother again the next day, and took leave.

CHAP. XII.

THE subsequent conversation which had led to so distressing a disclosure, wholly absorbed Matilda's thoughts; and she found it impossible, from the agitation she experienced, to appear at dinner. She sent Mrs. Sutherland a little billet, requesting to see her in her own room; and when she came, Matilda told her, "She had been hearing such an affecting narrative from Mrs. Bertie, it had quite overcome her spirits, and given her so violent a head-ache, she begged she would make her excuses below."

Mrs. Sutherland, who with concern observed Matilda's unusually depressed and pale looks, readily undertook to be her apologist.

Left to herself, the most mournful thoughts took possession of her mind. The anxiously looked-for period was at length arrived, which had unveiled the mystery of her birth. To be folded to a bosom of a parent had been the fondest wish she had indulged, every earthly happiness she had imagined would be comprised in so blissful an event. But, alas! it had, when realized, been fraught with nothing except sorrow and disgrace.

"And yet," thought she, after deep reflection, "if the marriage ceremony was actually performed, surely, though under a borrowed name, if their persons could only be identified, by those who were the witnesses, it must stand good in law. To secure my respect in the world," exclaimed Matilda, "my mother certainly would not scruple allowing proper measures to be taken, to prove my legitimacy, and endeavour to have me acknowledged by Lord Seyntaubyne as his lawful child."

Matilda believed it also possible, that the important packet, unfortunately left at Pengwilly, might disclose some favourable circumstance, at present unknown, in establishing her proper rank in society, as the Earl of Seyntaubyne's daughter. She was determined when she got back to Richmond, to entreat Doctor Arundel to urge Lady Seyntaubyne to the disclosure, if it were at all possible. Nor would she give her hand to Sir Charles Dashwood until she either was acknowledged as Lady Matilda Penrose, or be obliged to withdraw her claims altogether, to the honour of so noble a title. Thus reasoning and thus reflecting, passed the remainder of the day: one moment sunk to the lowest ebb of despondence, the next induced to cherish higher prospects.

Matilda endeavoured to see her mother some part of every day; but in doing so she did not escape the raillery of Mr. Sutherland, on the romantic preference which she shewed for the society of the unknown recluse. But Sir Charles Dashwood and Mrs. Sutherland, who generally penetrated into the movements of Matilda's mind, strongly portrayed in her sensible and expressive face, easily discovered that some new anxiety and grief dwelt on her spirits.

Sir Charles one day said to her, with a half smile, when she was extremely thoughtful, "I should certainly, Miss Trevanion, be tempted to put a stop to these stolen visits, if we were not going hence in a day or two."

To Mrs. Sutherland, however, without being explicit, she said, as she was regarding her with a sort of enquiring solicitude, "Ask me no questions, my dear friend, for I feel it would be impossible to refuse you, of all people, any thing you might wish to know; but rest assured, when I am at liberty to reveal the interesting events connected

with my accidental knowledge of Mrs. Bertie, you shall know them. Little indeed can you guess how eventful to me has been this acquaintance.”

Mrs. Sutherland kindly smiled upon her, as she replied, “May all the events of your life, dear Matilda, prove happy.”

The party having spent above a fortnight at Mr. Maitland’s, Mr. M’Arthur began to feel anxious to return home, it was agreed they should all part on the following morning.

Matilda, sure when the separation took place it would sensibly affect Mrs. Bertie, thought it best to daily prepare her for expecting the event. To detain her new-found daughter she knew would be neither wise nor politic; and she loved her too well to allow any selfish consideration to interfere with her future prospects. Matilda had related to her mother every incident of her life, except her acquaintance with Clairville, and informed her of her intended union with Sir Charles Dashwood. Naturally anxious to see the person to whom her daughter was to be allied, Matilda arranged it, that when she took her usual morning walk with the baronet and Mrs. Sutherland (for he always made a point of her accompanying them) they should take the gravel path which led to her cottage, and she was to meet them, as if by accident, when Matilda, by stopping to speak to her, would afford an opportunity to Mrs. Bertie of seeing Sir Charles, and a friend of whom she spoke in such flattering terms.

The same day this little plan was agreeably realized, nor was any suspicion excited that they had met, except by chance.

It was settled between Matilda and her mother that she was to communicate to her by a letter inclosed to Mrs. Maitland, what were the contents of the packet which she unfortunately had left behind at Pengwilly Hall; as by it they were to be guided in the necessary measures to be taken for introducing Matilda to her father, which Mrs. Bertie was extremely anxious should be done, although it was her determination not to see Lord Seyntaubyne. Matilda was also to inform both Lady Seyntaubyne and Sir Charles Dashwood, at a proper period, of her mother’s existence, and the interviews which had passed between them. She likewise took her promise, that soon after her marriage with the baronet they were to pay her a visit.

Tender and affecting was the parting between the mother and daughter, as Matilda, with tears of filial affection, bade her farewell.

CHAP. XIII.

THE party once more proceeded on their journey to the metropolis; and as they drew near the termination, Matilda was much struck with the increased dejection of Sir Charles Dashwood, which, for the last week, had gradually been stealing upon him. Nor could she help imagining there was something very strange and unaccountable of late in his conduct. Instead of being elated and gay that they were once more in England, and the period drawing each day nearer when they were to be united, he would sit for an hour at a time beside her without speaking, then sigh heavily, and walk out of the room.

The day before they reached London, and they were accidentally left alone together, he, lost apparently in deep reflection, Matilda half smiling said to him, "Indeed, Sir Charles, you are such melancholy company, you are enough to affect one with ennui. I shall certainly banish you altogether, if you do not promise in future to be more entertaining. I should say you had left your love behind in the Hebrides, if you had not given me the assurance to the contrary."

"With such a prospect of happiness before me," exclaimed he, raised from his reverie, "too charming Matilda, as you have allowed me to hope for in your promised alliance, I seem, indeed, to be making you a strange requital. Trust not, however, to delusive appearances, but trust to a little time, which will unfold all; and of this be assured, angel of a woman, that your generous regard for me, your disinterested and noble conduct, shall not go unrequited, at least it shall not be my fault. My tenderness for you rises superior to my own felicity. There is no sacrifice I would not make, though great will prove the struggle;—only those who have loved like me, can at all imagine."

Matilda regarded him with earnest solicitude; but before she could speak he quitted the room, leaving her in much perplexity and astonishment, wholly unable to explain or discover his meaning.

When they reached London, Sir Charles Dashwood insisted on the whole party's dining with him in Wimpole Street, previous to their departure to Richmond.

With difficulty he seemed able to do the honours of his house, in his usual elegant manner; and when his friends rose to depart, in a faltering accent, as he pressed Matilda's hand, he said to her, "If I do not come to Richmond, you will hear from me in a few days; and may the choicest blessings be showered on your head, too fondly loved Matilda."

There was something so extraordinary, so solemn, so emphatic, in Sir Charles's words and manner, Matilda was more and more confounded and surprized. When she was alone with Mrs. Sutherland, she repeated what had now passed, and also on the subsequent day; but she appeared rather to avoid making any comment, and merely said, "If he comes not, he is to write; wait patiently till then, and see if he has any thing particular to say or explain."

If Matilda had been governed in her actions by selfish principles, she would have gone immediately on her arrival at Richmond, to her maternal Mrs. Arundel. After the various agitating scenes she had gone through, the repose of their house would have been more suited to her present tone of spirits, than even Mrs. Sutherland's engaging society. But so manifold were the acts of disinterested kindness and friendship which she had experienced from Mr. M'Arthur and the Sutherland family, it was impossible to refuse

Mr. M'Arthur's invitation to spend a month at his house along with his sister, who, a stranger in England, had no acquaintance except Matilda. The request had been made to Lady Seyntaubyne, but no answer having been returned, she considered her silence as assent, not doubting but she would see the propriety of complying.

As the sight of all the well-known objects opened upon her view, Matilda welcomed them with new joy and new delight. Richmond had been the scene of her happiest years; no sorrow, no anxiety, no vexations, had broken in upon her peace. But since the first hour of her quitting it, until her present return, she had spent a life of tumult, of distress, of care, all following in endless succession. But with the scenes of Richmond again before her, Clairville and his mother were not absent from her thoughts.

The first thing she did on her arrival was to write to Mrs. Arundel, promising to see her in the morning; but before she, with propriety, could leave Mrs. Sutherland, the venerable doctor and his lady came to wait on Mr. M'Arthur's sister, and to welcome him to his mournful home.

The ladies appeared to be mutually pleased with each other, and Mrs. Sutherland promised herself infinite pleasure in an intimacy with Matilda's Richmond friends.

Matilda did not feel altogether satisfied or happy in remaining absent from Lady Seyntaubyne, for she regarded her with true affection, and never for a moment forgot that every blessing and benefit which she enjoyed she owed to her. She felt, likewise, the greatest anxiety to possess her important packet, and to communicate the contents to her mother; but till she had read it, she did not think it prudent to reveal, even to Doctor Arundel, the existence of her maternal parent.

She had been two or three days at Richmond without being able to discover whether or not Lady Sophia, Clairville, and Julia, were at West Grove, having only seen Mrs. Arundel in company; but when she took leave of her at night, guessing too well Matilda's anxiety on that subject, she said to her, "Breakfast with me to-morrow morning, I have a letter to show you."

Matilda was at the doctor's by nine o'clock. When she was left alone with Mrs. Arundel, she expressed the satisfaction her judicious and proper conduct in regard to Clairville, had given them both. "His journey," added she, "was too sudden and rapid, to inform Lady Seyntaubyne of it, and afterwards, it was as well avoided. He has got an appointment in a king's ship, in which he sailed about a week since for ———. When Lady Julia set aside her engagement, almost immediately after Lady Sophia and she went to Dublin to visit some of her mother's relations; and they intend spending the winter in that city. I shall surprize you, when I tell you, that Julia is going to be married to one of your Scotch admirers."

"I am indeed surprized; to whom may it be?"

"You shall read Lady Sophia's letter."

Matilda took it from Mrs. Arundel, and what related to Julia, was to this effect:—

"A vast number of gay amusements go forward in this city. About six weeks ago, to please my niece, I accompanied her to a private masquerade at the Duchess of N ——'s. It is a motley assembly of persons, which seldom tends to good. But sometimes, in abridging young women of certain diversions they have set their hearts upon, they form erroneous ideas of them, which the reality destroys.

“This masquerade had led to an event which will surprize you. But I have so long ceased to regard my own wishes through life, from having them perpetually frustrated, that in considering the happiness of others, I at least derive the satisfaction from it, of feeling the felicity of those I love, has never been a matter of indifference to me, and that I can readily forego my own gratification to promote theirs.

“Julia having lately read Ossian’s Poems, fancied the character of Malvina, which she determined to personate. Amongst the most conspicuous characters was an Oscar; a tall commanding figure, dressed as an Highland warrior, and who supported the character with so much spirit, Julia became perfectly captivated. At supper all the company unmasked. The stranger had placed himself beside my niece, and when she unveiled her face, he started in a sort of wild surprize, and changed colour. She wondered at his emotion, and without enquiring the cause, felt her interest towards him much engaged, from the insinuating tenderness of his manner, and an expression of sensibility and softness in his fine dark eyes, united with a most animated and manly countenance.

“When he handed her to my carriage, he said, ‘Lady, may I presume to ask your name? You surpass in loveliness the fair being you so strikingly resemble, and seem born to be an enslaver of hearts: for, *“There lies more peril in thine eye”*

‘Than,’ interrupted Julia, sportively, ‘I hope you gallantly mean to say, in all the arrows of Cupid.’

‘Even so: and perhaps, like him, you will maliciously smile at the mischief you have done.’

‘We seldom sport,’ cried she, ‘with what touches us nearly.’

‘Beautiful incognito, tell who, and what you are! that with a captivation there is no resisting, you flatter, while you ensnare.’

‘If,’ replied she, ‘there be any truth in what you utter, the fates will ordain that we shall meet again; and Malvina will not forget her Oscar.’

“The gentleman who personated Oscar, rested not until he discovered the lady’s name that had so intirely subdued him. Julia’s rank and beauty rendered her too conspicuous not to be easily discovered; and the day after the masquerade Mr. M’Laurel, the young laird of Lismore, in the Hebrides, was introduced to us by one of the most respectable families in Dublin.

“My niece’s resemblance to Miss Trevanion, (who I understood rejected him) first excited his particular interest. But soon, Julia’s vivacity, and the tacit preference which she gave him, rendered him so ardent a lover, that in the short acquaintance of six weeks every preliminary is settled for their union, which will have taken place before you receive this letter. Her father has not opposed her choice; and it is determined, after spending the winter months in Dublin, we are to visit him at Penrose Castle in the spring. Mr. M’Laurel will not consent that Julia shall visit the Western Isles, except under the favourable aspect of a summer sky. The Earl of Seyntaubyne would have been present at his daughter’s nuptials, if an unfortunate fit of the gout had not kept him a close prisoner in Cornwall.”

If Matilda was surprized at the whimsical acquaintance between Julia and the young laird of Lismore, she was also much pleased. She knew them worthy of each other; and their romantic attachment, she thought, promised permanent happiness; often having heard Julia declare, in her sportive manner, that she never would marry any man with whom she was not desperately in love.

Under the present situation of Matilda's own affairs, she rather rejoiced at Clairville's and Lady Sophia's absence. She felt somewhat hurt and offended at Sir Charles Dashwood's conduct, for she had been several days at Richmond, and yet he neither wrote nor came. Lady Seyntaubyne's extraordinary silence likewise occasioned her much anxiety, so very unlike her usual punctuality.

CHAP. XIV.

THE following day one of Sir Charles Dashwood's servants brought Matilda the promised letter. "Ah!" thought she, before she opened it, "he comes not; and I suppose this is some feeble apology." Somewhat piqued, she indifferently broke the seal, but not indifferently perused the contents, which were—

"My dear Miss Trevanion,

"When you receive this letter I shall be on my way to Madeira. That within a short space of time I might have claimed your promised hand, was a felicity which you allowed me to hope, but I cannot bring myself to permit you to sacrifice your happiness to one whom you think yourself bound in honour to marry, when, had you been free, you would have bestowed that hand without hesitation on the sole object of your choice,—
Albert Clairville.

"Of your disinterested rejection, I am not ignorant; nor, that your alarming illness was occasioned by the struggle which it cost you. Think not it was from Mrs. Sutherland I gained the intelligence of Clairville's visit at Carlisle; it came through a very different channel. From that period it was my fixed determination not to fetter or compel you to fulfil an engagement, which could terminate only in misery to each.

"Think not, beloved Matilda, it is in pique I make this declaration. Oh, no! could you but guess the struggle it has cost me, loving you with a tenderness almost bordering on idolatry, to arm myself with courage to resign you to another, then would the displeasure with which perhaps you may read these lines, sink into pity, and your native benevolence be extended towards an unhappy man, who will never see you more, until it be as the wife of Clairville.

"Adieu, and adieu,

"CHARLES DASHWOOD."

Wimpole-street,
January 20.

Now then, thought Matilda, is Sir Charles's manner accounted for, as she closed his letter, deeply penetrated and affected by its contents, which she shewed to Mrs. Sutherland.

She was not surprized at what she read, having suspected by some oblique speeches which now and then had dropt from him, it would be so. She was going to congratulate Matilda; but before she spoke, she exclaimed, "What will Lady Seyntaubyne say? she naturally will imagine that I have trifled with Sir Charles's happiness. She knows not of Clairville's visit to Carlisle. Oh! my dear Mrs. Sutherland, advise me what I am to do. Wretched every way; I am bewildered; and truly grieved this excellent man should be so great a sufferer on my account."

"It appears to me," replied she, "that you can at present do nothing. Things are always much better said than written, on matters of difficulty and importance. In letters, meanings are often mistaken, and misapplied. When with truth and simplicity you state the circumstances which have occurred, to Lady Seyntaubyne, I doubt not but she

possesses candour enough to see things in their proper light. I would, however, have you take Mrs. Arundel's advice; she is far more able to give it than me."

"I will do so," said Matilda. "We are going to dine at Doctor Arundel's. I will go an hour before, to have their opinion."

She retired to dress, and while she was at her toilet, the maid came into the room, and informed her, Mrs. Arundel was below, and wished to be admitted to her immediately.

She desired her to be shewn up; and conjectured that, perhaps, Sir Charles Dashwood had also written either to her or to the Doctor. But when Mrs. Arundel entered, the look of deep concern which was spread over her countenance, with the traces of tears, which she seemed to wish to conceal, gave Matilda such alarm, she, in trembling apprehension immediately exclaimed, "Oh! speak—tell me at once what has happened? I am sure it is something dreadful."

Mrs. Arundel desired her not to indulge such sudden alarm, without knowing why it was excited, and requested her to sit down.

"Instead," cried Mrs. Arundel, with as much composure as she could collect, "of having the pleasure of all your company at my house to dinner, you must, my dear child, put on your riding-habit, and prepare to go with me to Pengwilly Hall, without delay. In less than an hour the chaise will be at the door, to carry us thither. I have seen Mr. M'Arthur and Mrs. Sutherland, to whom I have made your excuses."

"Wherefore, madam" exclaimed Matilda, with extreme emotion, "the cause of this sudden journey? Something terrible I know has happened. Tell me at once; I can support any thing rather than this dreadful suspense. Is Lady Seyntaubyne then dead? for your looks bespeak some dreadful calamity."

"No, not dead, but I apprehend that she is dying. An express arrived at our house not half an hour ago, desiring your return to Pengwilly with all possible speed. She had been seized with apoplexy, and could not speak when the messenger came away. It is a fortnight since the melancholy event happened, and no hopes are now entertained of her recovery."

Matilda burst into an agony of tears; and the apprehension of not finding Lady Seyntaubyne alive, affected her extremely. But Mrs. Arundel left her no time to dwell on the terrible shock she had sustained, assisting and preparing her for their immediate departure.

Mrs. Sutherland, with the truest concern, parted from her young friend. She loved her with the affection of a sister. After taking a promise that she would write to her, she gave her a pressing invitation to spend the first summer she could spare along with her in Scotland.

Mrs. Arundel and Matilda had a melancholy journey into Cornwall, and melancholy was the reception which awaited them. The closed shutters announced the event which had taken place, and a death-like silence reigned throughout the gloomy mansion. The housekeeper met them in the hall, but she could only say, "My poor lady!" for the sobs which choked her utterance. Her ladyship had been dead two days.

Matilda looked the picture of woe; and with difficulty could support herself.

"I would speak to you alone, madam," said Mrs. Grey to Mrs. Arundel, as they crossed the hall, and Matilda was desired to go into the breakfast-room.

“What would you wish to communicate, good Mrs. Grey?” cried Mrs. Arundel, as they went into the dining-parlour together.

“Only, madam, that my lord is in the house. I thought the surprize would not be agreeable, if you were not prepared.”

“Thank you Mrs. Grey, it was very considerate. When did his lordship arrive?”

“Thank God, madam, just in time to be reconciled to my lady. She died in his arms blessing him, and blessing his children. Thank the Lord, her speech returned to do so. Yes, madam, he knows that Miss Trevanion, or I should rather say, Lady Matilda Penrose, is his daughter. She is declared to be such in my lady’s will, which has been opened. She is his legitimate child by Anna Trevanion, the poor curate’s daughter. O madam! had you seen the joy of my lord at this news, even in the height of his grief for my lady, it would have made you cry, it was such a moving scene. I had sent off the express before my lord’s arrival, for I was sure my lady wished to see Miss Trevanion, Lady Matilda I mean. She has left her thirty thousand pounds, besides all her trinkets and jewels. But I must go and inform my lord you are come; he desired to be acquainted the moment you arrived.”

Mrs. Arundel found Matilda, when she joined her, in very deep affliction.

“Consolation,” said she, “is always to be found under the heaviest misfortunes. You lose one valuable friend, but you obtain another. Lord Seyntaubyne, your *father*, is in the house; he expects to see you; and to be presented to his daughter *Lady Matilda Penrose*, for such you are.”

Matilda fell prostrate on her knees, as she uttered, “O God! I thank thee that it is so. My mother, my beloved mother, then, is a lawful wife!”

“What mean you, my dear,” exclaimed Mrs. Arundel with surprize, and rather alarmed at her seeming incoherence.

“That my mother lives,” cried she, in a transport, “I have seen her! I have been folded in her maternal embrace. Oh! that it had been permitted for Lady Seyntaubyne to have known this hour.”

“Seen her!” exclaimed Mrs. Arundel, beginning now to think Matilda wandered in incoherence, “she has been dead for years.”

“No, no! she lives to bless her daughter. Another time, rather than this solemn moment, I will tell you all.”

Mrs. Arundel silently acquiesced, little imagining what Matilda said was absolutely true.

Lord Seyntaubyne sent a message, that he was too much disturbed to see his daughter before the morning; but, in the meantime, she was to read the packet of papers which Mrs. Grey delivered into Matilda’s hand.

The present solemn scene was particularly suited for the employment assigned to Matilda; who, after taking coffee with Mrs. Arundel, withdrew to her chamber. Instead of going to bed, with a trembling hand she broke the seal of the packet; the contents of which were as follows:

CHAP. XV.

To my Grand-daughter Matilda.

“HAPLESS child, of erring and misguided parents, attend to the narrative which your grandsire is going to unfold; and, oh! may it prove a lesson through a life, I trust will pass unmarked by the woes which pursued your unfortunate mother, when she withdrew herself from the fostering wing of a tender father. Poor thing! She was self-deluded; and that innocence which should have proved her invulnerable shield, proved the source of all her misery.

“Had it been the will of Heaven to have prolonged my days upon earth, I would, Matilda, have watched over your maturer years as I have done over your infant ones, with a tenderness I am afraid you will not experience. I would have cherished you in my bosom like a delicate sensitive plant, which shrinks from the touch of any rude hand that would chill its existence. Since, however, my days are almost numbered, and shortly the grave will enclose this fleeting form, oh! think that my voice speaks from it with the most impressive and awful admonition. Never suffer your *will* to conquer your judgment, if they prove at variance. Act, not from the impulse of passion, but take the cool and sober moment of prudence and reflection to regulate that important step which is to direct your future destiny in life. Be not impelled by inclination, if it is opposed by duty. It was therein in your mother was guilty, and bitter were the sufferings which followed. Respect, however, her memory, if she exists not; for she was virtuous as she was lovely, and it was not from wilful disobedience she erred.

“In the vicinity of the parsonage, stands Penrose Castle; the ancient and noble seat of the Seyntaubyne family. It was my misfortune to admit the young earl a guest in my family, after he lost a beautiful and an amiable wife whom he idolized. Called on in my official capacity to ‘minister to a mind diseased,’ I thought a change of scene would prove salutary, and his lordship condescended to become the guest of *The Curate and his Daughter*. I introduced him to my precious child.—Your mother, simple, innocent, and beautiful, as the humble and modest violet which courts the shade, required only to be seen to be admired, and at once awakened a tender passion in his lordship. It was as rapid as it was decisive; but I saw it with alarm, as it did not appear of that pure nature to meet with my approbation; for, without being being a man of the world, and unskilled in its arts, I yet knew sufficient of it to be aware of the vast distance placed between the noble earl and my child, in point of rank, and that though he loved, it was not probable he would marry her. But my innocent and unsuspecting girl was the last to perceive it; and, in an evil hour, when his lordship pretended that he was going to withdraw himself altogether, he prevailed on my deluded Anna to elope along with him, and from that fatal day never have I beheld her.

“Two years after that period, one evening when I was sitting in that profound solitude which followed her departure, *you* were presented to me by Margaret, who said a person had left you at my door, and to your neck was tyed with a ribband the inclosed letter from your mother.

“Never shall I forget the impression of that moment. I had sunk into a perfect torpor from the hour of your mother’s departure. Abstracted from the world—insensible

almost of my own existence, I seemed at once awakened from a frightful dream by the celestial creature who stood before me. You smiled with ineffable sweetness, and stretched forth your little arms towards me. I snatched you in a transport to my bosom; I bedewed you with my tears, as you sunk into a balmy sleep, unconscious of my various and overwhelming emotions. Gradually softening and dispelling my anguish, I read my daughter's letter, which had nearly a second time annihilated me. To know that she lived, yet to be unable to trace her dwelling, was a most afflicting circumstance. Stunned by the event of her elopement—rendered by it incapable of acting, I found, with horror, I had lost above a twelvemonth of my existence, unconscious of its having passed away. You, however, roused every stupified faculty, and I was determined to be vigorous to discover her, if possible, and to trace her steps from the hour of her departure. In a remote spot, so novel an event, as a nobleman carrying off an obscure young woman, naturally excited much curiosity and interest. It was therefore without much difficulty, even at an interval of two years, I traced them to a small town, where my child had been detained by illness. But, oh! Matilda, how was my oppressed heart lightened, when I found that in this town they actually had been married. I saw the clergyman who had performed the ceremony—I read the register; and though Lord Seyntaubyne thought fit to drop his title, and assume his christian names alone, by which he is registered, yet as his person can be identified by those who witnessed the marriage, it stands good in law; and I inclose you a certificate, which carefully preserve, for you are the Earl of Seyntaubyne's legitimate daughter, Lady Matilda Penrose, and are entitled to be amply provided for by him.

“My poor child being deluded into the idea of her marriage not proving legal, is beyond my comprehension. But had I lived, Lord Seyntaubyne never would have known the blessing he possessed, in such a daughter, as it was my Anna's earnest wish that you should be concealed from all eyes but mine; consigning you to perpetual obscurity, as the greatest safeguard to happiness. When, however, I found, that in me you would soon lose your sole protector, then did I send for the Countess Dowager Seyntaubyne, shew her the copy of the register of her son's marriage with Anna Trevanion, the curate's daughter, urgently soliciting her adoption of you. For sometime she persevered in refusing; but there was something so irresistibly alluring and beautiful about you, and so melancholy your destiny, that afterwards her ladyship became as indignant at her son's conduct as before she had been positive in refusing my overtures; appearing all at once as much delighted at the idea of avenging your mother's wrongs, as she was in adopting you. I took a solemn promise that she never would desert you, nor resign you to Lord Seyntaubyne; and only on the day of your marriage, or that of her death, to acquaint you with your real name and birth.

“Under these sacred promises, lovely and innocent child of my precious Anna, I now consign you to your paternal grandmother. Love her with tenderness, reward her kindness by your duteous conduct; and after a life well spent, may you gently sink to repose, beloved and lamented.

“FRANCIS TREVANION.”

Parsonage House,
Boss Castle, Oct. 10.

Matilda next read her mother's pathetic letter, addressed to her grandfather.

“Deceived, where alone I placed my confidence, ah, whither shall the lost and hapless Anna fly for refuge! No longer dare she ask it in the fostering bosom of a beloved parent. The ties of parental affection, which she tore asunder, in the fatal hour in which she quitted her peaceful home, can never more be united. Too pure yourself to look upon your contaminated daughter, except it were with an eye of pity, in the profoundest solitude, far removed from those attaching and fond caresses which smiled on the days of innocence and joy, she will pass the remainder of her miserable existence. Dead to my former self, entombed, though yet living, oh! my father, consider me so in reality. Mourn not for my sorrows, they were self-created, and were a just retribution for violating the sacred mandate which you laid upon me. I scorned to listen to the authoritative voice of a beloved parent: I thought it unjust, severe, cruel. Infatuated by the fatal passion which misled me, I found a charm in the persuasive and too powerful eloquence of my destroyer, to think of all the attendant evils which accompany disobedience. Every path before me appeared to be covered with roses. Deluded myself by error, I considered you to be so, believing unbounded tenderness, with every joy under heaven, awaited me; while you, unconvinced, would have severed me from that being who was the idol of my soul, and on whom my very existence hung. Oh, how deep was your foresight!—how profound your penetration! Inexperienced, relying firmly on a character which wore the most enchanting semblance of celestial goodness, and which I believed faultless as the outward form, was it to be wondered at that I fell into the alluring snare, wove with such artful nicety? even the most wary might have been equally entangled. I have however escaped from the man who has wantonly violated the most sacred of all ceremonies, and with an incurable wound rankling in my bosom, slowly journeyed to the banishment which I have chosen, there to meditate, to weep, and to die.

“A hapless babe extends its little hands to implore your pity and protection; at this moment, with cherub face, it smiles upon me. Oh, my father, love not my precious girl the less for being the offspring of your daughter. To you I consign her in her infant years, that she may never know her wretched mother. Instruct her in the paths of virtue; and as my sweet Matilda dawns into maturity, be watchful over her spotless innocence. Hide her from the world as a miser would his treasure. Tell her not that her father is in existence; and if she is solicitous to know her mother, say that she was taken from her ere she was conscious of possessing one; and to you she was bequeathed as the most precious relic of herself.”

CHAP. XVI.

THIS affecting narrative of Lady Seyntaubyne's fully elucidated to Matilda the whole circumstances attending the history of her parents. The close ties of consanguinity between herself and the late countess, as also to Mr. Trevanion, were clearly explained. She saw the fatal rashness of her mother had proved the source of her own misfortunes, which had been extended to her child, in having deprived her of the blessing, till now, of knowing that either of her parents existed. She was greatly moved at such a touching transcript of her mind as the papers contained, and the woe which she had occasioned her venerable grandfather. But the period was now fast approaching when she hoped her mother would meet with just retribution, and that Lord Seyntaubyne would do her justice. Acknowledged in her grandmother's will as his daughter, Lady Matilda Penrose, she longed to receive the earl's paternal embrace, and with timid apprehension anxiously waited for the morning.

CHAP. XVII.

FROM the commencement of Matilda's residence with Mrs. Arundel she had always taken the most lively interest in her concerns. She knew not exactly who were her parents, but she remembered hearing from the reverend doctor, at the time of Lord Seyntaubyne's elopement with the curate's daughter, all the events attending it. And when Matilda was consigned to their care, from the letter which the countess previously wrote, she formed a suspicion the little girl was somehow related to the family. The circumstances which now transpired, in the papers Matilda gave Mrs. Arundel to read, she regarded as the most fortunate incident that could have befallen her young friend, in so auspicious a moment. In losing her kind benefactress she would be immediately received into her father's family, and be acknowledged by him, without being allowed to feel the loss she had sustained in the death of Lady Seyntaubyne. The history Matilda gave of her extraordinary meeting with her mother would also, she was persuaded, tend greatly to her happiness; convinced that Lord Seyntaubyne, sensible of his former error, would now be happy to be able to do her justice, in recalling her from obscurity, and placing her in her proper rank, at the head of his family.

Mrs. Arundel tenderly attached to Lady Sophia Clairville, and her niece Lady Julia, rejoiced these new arrangements, so likely immediately to take place, had happened at a period when they would not interfere with their prospects or plans: for though they both were too noble-minded to be hurt at such new and close connections becoming a part of Lord Seyntaubyne's family, yet it was far better that Julia was to be fixed in a distant part of the world, when it was probable her aunt would remain with her, or spend the winter amongst her relations in Dublin, until Clairville's return to England.

When Lady Seyntaubyne was seized with apoplexy, the physician who was called to her aid pronounced her case to be hopeless, and advised Mrs. Grey to send immediately for her son. Before the earl arrived, a transient gleam of perception appeared, with an attempt to speak, and she just uttered indistinctly, "Send for Lord Seyntaubyne and Matilda." Previous to her dissolution, he had the mournful satisfaction to receive her last embrace, and to learn from her own lips, that Matilda was his daughter. She told him "A packet which he would find in her cabinet, given her by the Reverend Francis Trevanion, the curate of Boss Castle, and addressed to his grand-daughter, Matilda, would explain the reason why she had not consigned her to him before. Along with those papers he would find a certificate of his marriage with Anna Trevanion, the curate's daughter." In the most solemn manner her ladyship resigned Matilda to his future care and protection, requesting that from henceforth he would acknowledge her as his daughter, Lady Matilda Penrose, which she unquestionably was. She also informed him of her engagement to Sir Charles Dashwood, which she wished to be soon fulfilled; and that on her wedding-day she was to be presented with thirty thousand pounds, which she bequeathed her, also the whole of her jewels. Exhausted by this short but interesting detail, which with infinite difficulty she had laboured to utter, her ladyship shortly after breathed her last sigh, in the arms of her son.

The suspicions which Lord Seyntaubyne had formerly entertained, alternately torturing, and then diffusing a gleam of joy, thus confirmed, beyond all possibility of doubt, proved, even in the midst of the present mournful scene, a felicity so pure and

unexpected, he anxiously counted every moment until Matilda's arrival at Pengwilly Hall.

The Reverend Francis Trevanion's papers addressed to his grand-daughter, after what his mother had told him, he scrupled not to open. Therein he found explained the cause of all his woes, originating in his attempt to disguise his noble condition, in his union with Anna Trevanion, by dropping his title; and saw in her touching letter to her father such an instance of the tenderness and elevation of a virtuous mind, he would have given more than all his vast possessions, had it been possible, to have conferred on her a just retribution; for severely as he had been punished, Anna had suffered far more severely, by her rash and unjust impression of his conduct; and little aware that she yet lived, he with the deepest contrition deplored the impossibility of not being able to acknowledge her to all the world, which joyfully he would have done, as his wife—the Countess of Seyntaubyne.

CHAP. XVIII.

MATILDA, after breakfasting with Mrs. Arundel, was desired to go into the library where her father was sitting. With quick and agitated steps she approached him, and throwing herself on her knees, exclaimed, "Is it indeed true, my lord, that you will acknowledge and receive your daughter Matilda?"

"Joyfully do I acknowledge thee!" returned he with much emotion. "Oh, daughter of the hapless Anna Seyntaubyne! Though never seen till now, thus does your father, with just contrition for your mother's woes, fold you in his arms. Rise, Matilda Penrose! equally the child of my tender affection as the absent Julia. Be ye sisters in affection, as ye are in loveliness."

"Oh, my father!" cried Matilda, "may I live to deserve your tenderness. Thus admitted to your paternal bosom, I would fain express the transport of this moment, but it is unutterable."

"Ah!" interrupted he, greatly moved, "that your mother had lived to guide, to bless, to joy in such a daughter! without alloy, then, would my felicity have proved. For the sight of you, Matilda, recalls her injured shade to my mind. In you she lives again before me:—just such the look of innocence, of angelic sweetness which she wore. Bitter the pang you occasion. But, thank God, I am not the villain she imagined me. She was deceived; deluded by the most fatal and cruel error,—Anna Trevanion was my wife! I always meant,—I always intended, at a due period, to acknowledge her Countess Seyntaubyne."

"And will you, my lord, do so yet?" enquired Matilda, in eager anxiety.

"In acknowledging you," replied he, "Lady Matilda Penrose, I establish beyond all doubt, Anna's title to my name."

"And will you give it her?" said she, with continued earnestness.

"To her memory I will give it, Matilda, in a noble monument, sacred to her virtues, in the church at Boss Castle, and her image will ever live in my heart, to the last moment of my existence."

"Lives she still in your heart? Oh! then, not on marble monument shall it be recorded, but to her very self you shall, my lord, declare it. I will make an interest in her bosom which she will not be able to resist, when it comes from the voice of Matilda, your daughter. I will lead you to her; for she lives to bless your succeeding years,—to bless also her Matilda. Lady Seyntaubyne lives! and, oh, may the felicity you once promised yourself with her, now be your portion."

"What mean you? Trifle not with me thus; nor torture me with hopes which have been for years delusive."

"No longer shall they be so, my father, Oh! awake then to new happiness and to new life. Let us go, when the mournful ceremony is passed for my beloved, my respected grand-mother, to that distant spot whither I will lead you, if, indeed, you will promise to receive my mother as becomes her natural right, and acknowledge her as Countess of Seyntaubyne."

"I do promise," answered the earl, "if what you say be true, I promise every thing that can tend to a just retribution. But explain, my child, how you became acquainted with so extraordinary an event, as the seeming renovation of your mother."

Matilda kept the earl no longer in the agony of suspense which he endured, but related to him all the circumstances connected with her visit to the recluse in Cumberland; which, on comparing with her own and Mr. Trevanion's papers, left not a doubt of Mrs. Bertie's being the long estranged wife of Lord Seyntaubyne.

The extacy he felt, when perfectly convinced that Anna was alive, and likely to be restored to him, gave Matilda a very favourable impression of the native goodness of his Lordship's heart. She ardently longed to bring her new-found parents together; and it was fixed, as soon as the funeral was over, they were to set out for Cumberland.

Matilda would have written to her mother of their intention, but it was judged better to take her by surprize, rather than allow her time to dwell on the expected interview.

Matilda, however, was anxious to remove immediately the fatal error she had been in, with respect to her union with the earl not being legal, and enclosed, for her satisfaction, the certificate of the registrar obtained by her grand-father.

Lord Seyntaubyne chose to be present at the last mournful ceremony, and attended the remains of his mother to the grave. Matilda shed tears of sincere regret to the memory of her grand-mother, who had fulfilled in every sense the character of a parent. Lady Seyntaubyne left numbers to deplore her loss. To the poor she had been a liberal friend; to her domestics, a generous and indulgent mistress. Her hearse was followed by a multitude of people, who, by their tears and lamentations, bore testimony to her excellence.

The day after the funeral, the earl left Mrs. Arundel and Matilda for the purpose of visiting the small town where, nineteen years ago, he married Anna Trevanion, that he might endeavour to find out whether the clergyman was alive who had united them, and the two persons who had witnessed the marriage, that on his return from the north, they might, if necessary, identify his person; though it was his determination, for the satisfaction of Anna, to have the ceremony again performed. He had the pleasure of finding the clergyman still resident at ——, and also the man and his wife with whom he had lodged. They perfectly remembered his union with Miss Trevanion, and at once recognized his lordship for the same person.

Lord Seyntaubyne wrote to Lady Sophia an account of the extraordinary events which had happened, and desired his daughter (now Lady Julia M'Laurel) to henceforth acknowledge and consider Lady Matilda Penrose, formerly known to her as Miss Trevanion, as her sister.

Immediately on his lordship's return from his short excursion, he set out for Richmond, accompanied by his daughter and Mrs. Arundel, intending to proceed thence with all speed to Ennerdale Water.

Matilda was delighted in the opportunity of once more seeing her charming and highly valued friend, Mrs. Sutherland, who, with all the warmth of a sincere friendship, felicitated her on the pleasing circumstances which had occurred; and that, in the interesting recluse of Cumberland, she had found so amiable a mother. Mrs. Sutherland insisted on Lord Seyntaubyne and his daughter's promise of making Mr. Maitland's house their home during the period of their stay at Ennerdale, and previously wrote to his friends to prepare them for the reception of their noble guests.

The season was unfavourable for so long a journey, but that had no influence in retarding it: so anxious was both Lord Seyntaubyne and Matilda, to realize the happiness which was in store.

CHAP. XIX.

IN the course of post Lord Seyntaubyne received very pleasing letters from Lady Sophia and Julia, who also wrote to Matilda as follows:

To Lady Matilda Penrose.

“Allow me, beloved Matilda, even at this distance, to salute you by the tender and endearing title of sister. Though I have quarrelled with the name of Penrose, you will reflect on it so much honour, that my father will have no cause to regret the exchange he has experienced in losing one daughter, while he has obtained another in Matilda.

“A certain capricious little god, called Cupid, has been playing a strange game amongst us; and after doing all the mischief in his power, sporting cruelly for some time with our happiness, at length thought fit to direct his arrows at a proper mark, by fully retaliating on those who bid him defiance. The urchin, unused to be treated with scorn, took ample revenge upon me—levelling his darts so surely, that your rejected lover was happy to accept Julia Penrose, who, like another Sappho, was so madly in love, she almost would have been tempted to have plunged into the Leucadian main, if M’Laurel had proved to her a second Pheon.

“What, Matilda, have you been doing, thus wantonly to sport with your own happiness, in consenting to wed Sir Charles Dashwood, while your affections were given to Clairville? Surely it was not in pique you have acted so decided a part against your inclinations. Clairville came home to us in despair; and deeply do I lament, that as you alone can render him happy, you have been so determined in your rejection.

“M’Laurel sends you his fraternal regard. Julia offers you the affection you always possessed, with the now united tenderness of a sister.”

Lady Sophia’s letter contained merely these few lines:

To Lady Matilda Penrose.

“Believe, dear Lady Matilda, that in being declared the daughter of Lord Seyntaubyne, you will possess from every branch of his family their regard; and while Julia salutes you as a sister, I also put in my claim to be remembered by you as a friend, warmly interested in all that attaches to your happiness.

“In spring I flatter myself that we shall meet a large family circle of harmony and love at Penrose Castle; and however widely, at times, distance may separate us, I hope a tender interest towards one another will not cease to be excited in our hearts.

“SOPHIA CLAIRVILLE.”

Dublin, 6th February.

To be thus graciously received into Lord Seyntaubyne’s family, by Lady Sophia and Julia, was a most gratifying circumstance to Matilda, who replied to their letters with the affection which they had inspired.

The earl and his daughter made a rapid journey into Cumberland, and were kindly and hospitably entertained at Mr. Maitland's, during their short but decisive sojourn on Ennerdale Water.

The interview between Lord Seyntaubyne and Anna was tender and affecting.

Matilda, by the description which she gave of her father's anguish of mind, and contrition for what had passed, awakened all the fond partiality which Anna had felt on her first acquaintance. They met as long divided lovers; and their daughter, who had proved the interesting mediator between them, and the joy of seeing her parents united once more in those indissoluble bonds, which death alone could sever.

The earl introduced the fair recluse to Mr. and Mrs. Maitland, as his wife, Countess Seyntaubyne. They spent two or three days with this amiable couple, and then took their final leave of Ennerdale Water, proceeding direct to Penrose Castle.

The variety of scenes which Matilda had gone through in the space of the last six months, appeared rather like an extraordinary dream than events that had actually happened. She surveyed the past with wonder, looking forward with timid hope towards the future. Even the felicity which she tasted was incomplete, while Clairville was absent, and some months elapsed ere she had any tidings of him.

The domestic happiness Lord Seyntaubyne enjoyed, in possessing such a wife and such a daughter, appeared almost beyond the lot of humanity; every wish of his heart being now fulfilled. The years of misery Lady Seyntaubyne had formerly experienced were no more remembered, for the succeeding ones of her life were unclouded by a single anxiety or misfortune.

Late in spring Lady Sophia Clairville, Julia, and Mr. M'Laurel, joined the happy circle at Penrose Castle, where they formed a family of bliss.

Clairville, who had been engaged in a dangerous naval action, which was crowned with victory, was immediately promoted to the rank of captain, and returned to England full of honours.

Transported and surprized to find Matilda free, Lord Seyntaubyne presented his daughter to him. "Accept," said he, "my precious girl, as the noblest reward you can receive for your brave and gallant conduct. May the name of Clairville, as now, in ages to come, be signalized alone as one of the bravest in our British annals."

Clairville in extacy took the hand of Matilda, and replied, "Thus given, oh, my mother! seal it with your blessing?"

"I do from my soul!" cried Lady Sophia. "Be ye blessed, my Albert, and Matilda, in each other."

But it was left to the Reverend Doctor Arundel to unite them, and Clairville and Matilda were married by special licence at Penrose Castle, where for several days rejoicings and festivity prevailed.

Lord Seyntaubyne presented Pengwilly Hall to Matilda for her marriage portion. Julia had determined to live in the isle of Lismore during the summer months; and it was agreed that she and her husband should divide the winter alternately between her father and aunt, at Penrose Castle and at Richmond. Her interesting mother-in-law, the Countess of Seyntaubyne, she loved with the affection of a daughter; and her noble and liberal mind fully partook in the happiness of her father.

In the felicity which Matilda tasted, she gratefully enjoyed the present good, nor repined when Clairville returned to take his command at sea. She had been taught by

Doctor Arundel, and had learnt from experience, that the happiest lot in life is not exempt from temporary suffering; and

“That perils multiply as blessings flow.”

She philosophically balanced the evil with the good; and, if Clairville’s absence awakened anxiety and regret, his return was always hailed with transport.

THE END.

E. Blackader, Typ.
Took’s Court, Chancery Lane, London.