

THE
PARISIAN;
OR,
GENUINE ANECDOTES
OF
DISTINGUISHED AND NOBLE
CHARACTERS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

Fictis meminerit nos non jocari fabulis.

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MDCCXCIV.

DEDICATION.

TO MY READERS.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

I DO not introduce myself to you van-guarded by the illustrious name of a great man, or a great woman, furbelowed and decorated with a long train of the most dignified virtues. What amusement would this afford you? And where would be the satisfaction of reading the most animated panegyrick if you had not a share in it?

I dedicate then to you, and you only, the following pages: and I dare aver, that in imputing to you a few virtues, a few graces, and a few beauties, I shall not be accused of flattery.

Had I been impolitic enough to offer to an individual in the guise of a Dedication, that luscious food which, enigmatic quality, sickens all who do *not* swallow it, I might perhaps have begun thus:

To Her Grace the Duchess of —.

MADAM,

The eminent and conspicuous virtues which enrich your mind, and distinguish your Grace equally with the exquisite and acknowledged beauty of your lovely person,—
—

Or thus:

*To his Royal Highness, or to My
Lord, or to any body.*

How shall my feeble pen presume to trace those steady and heroic principles of rectitude and unalterable honor, which have ever marked your resplendent career of public life? Or how delineate those more private yet amiable virtues, for which you are so justly esteemed, so admired, so caressed, so adored, &c. &c.

Had I *fallen* into this strain, Lady Charlotte and her dear friend, unhappily reduced to the necessity of trying to fill an hour with looking over my petite piece, would have exclaimed—Oh heavens! pass over that nonsense and let us get at the story.

In the perusal of which think well of me, my dear readers, and believe me,

With the most profound respect,

Your obedient and ever

Devoted humble Servant,

The Author.

THE
PARISIAN.
CHAP. I.

IN 179-, Mademoiselle D'Ogimond, entering her eighteenth year, was brought to England, where she had once before been in the course of her education, by Madame la Marquise de Germeil, to whose care she had been entrusted from her infancy, and who possessed over her pupil an uncontrolled power; the influence of a mother, and that authority and free agency which a father only could delegate.

Madame de Germeil had carefully improved the infantine fondness of Mademoiselle D'Ogimond, whom she always distinguished by the appellation of her child, to an affection as ardent and firm as that which this self intitled mother avowed for her: She had indeed devoted fifteen years, without intermission, to the education of Adeline D'Ogimond; she had been the companion of her sports, the directress of her studies, had modelled her manners and understanding, nurtured with the utmost care every virtue, and checked every propensity to vice; while the most judicious attention, aided by experience, had formed a good constitution, on a frame naturally weak and sickly; and this appearance of confirmed health, with the most gentle and pleasing elegance of manners, had given her pretensions to personal beauty, which nature without high cultivation, would perhaps have denied her.

Mademoiselle D'Ogimond had not been brought up alone: In the company of Laure, who was six months younger than herself, she felt most happy. When Laure was first received into the family of the Count D'Ogimond, her origin and former residence were enveloped in a mystery no one could unravel, for the child herself was too young to satisfy the wonder her sudden appearance excited, and Madame de Germeil, who seemed alone able to gratify it, was the person in the world the best calculated to repress the impertinence of idle curiosity. —Laure was then generally supposed to be a poor orphan, procured by this lady to enliven the recreations and animate the studies of her pupil: She had brought the child home one morning, when she had been an unusual long walk; having ordered the carriage to meet her at Couci, a village three miles distant from the Chateau de Verni, the usual residence of Madame de Germeil and the Comte's children.

The surrounding dependants were taught by example, to behave to Laure with consideration; and they observed with astonishment that she was in most respects treated like their young lady; the principal difference consisted in not accompanying Madame de Germeil to Paris, when she carried Adeline to visit the Comtesse her mother, who had procured a separation from the Comte.

Monsieur D'Ogimond appeared much pleased, when he visited the Chateau, with the attention Madame de Germeil had evidently bestowed on the education of the little

stranger: Laure had indeed well repaid her trouble; her mind was quick and intelligent, her understanding solid, and her judgment well directed.

The sweetness of Mademoiselle D'Ogimond's temper, when it was not obscured by too great a timidity, prevented any one from repining at the deference her rank demanded of them; but when Laure appeared, all consideration of rank, fortune, name and title were forgotten, and an involuntary homage, evidently due to a thousand amiable qualities that displayed themselves in her beautiful countenance, was paid without exaction. The elegance of her mind was visible in every look and every motion, the softest diffidence repressed the vivacity of her wit, and tempered that superior excellence, which would otherwise have been too visible to those whom pride or envy forbade to acknowledge it.

For Mademoiselle D'Ogimond Laure felt the sincerest affection, and would almost from infancy, have forborne any gratification to herself, to secure it for her little friend: She loved too Madame de Germeil, but she often reproached herself for not loving her still more. When this lady spoke of her impartiality to the two girls, which often happened, Laure wondered how she could suffer her fondness for Adeline, so much to warp her judgment; for of Madame de Germeil's sincerity she would then almost have thought it sacrilege to doubt; but while she made this observation, she did not repine at it, and indeed it was founded on such minute, though frequent occasions, that while her penetration discovered, and her sensibility made her feel them, had they been strictly related, the hearer would have thought the mind highly irascible, that could be offended at such trifles.

In general the behaviour of Madame de Germeil was in the highest degree guarded; she well knew, that very little attention will be paid to the instruction of those, whose conduct is a perpetual contradiction to their precepts. Madame de Germeil had however a very obvious failing; she was too desirous of being beloved; consequently those who were interested in appearing attached to her, soon learnt to sooth this foible by flattery, and no expressions of fondness and admiration, however unbounded, appeared exaggerated, when they were directed to herself. This was an unfortunate circumstance for Laure; she was capable of feeling all the ardour of gratitude, and her heart was formed for the noblest friendship; but her ingenuousness and delicacy equally prevented the frequent exclamations, and strong asseverations of fondness, which as Mademoiselle D'Ogimond had in childhood found capable of soothing displeasure, and almost atoning for trivial offences, she began to use perhaps from artifice; but in proportion as she grew sensible of the more than maternal attentions of Madame de Germeil, they became, though still habitual, quite sincere: and while the one continued to make demands of praise, the tenderness of the other disposed her amply to pay what the long and extraordinary attachment of Madame de Germeil seemed so well to merit. This circumstance combined with others, to make Mademoiselle D'Ogimond by far the greater favorite; and long before the journey to England, the modest opinion Laure entertained of her own merit, and the high sense she had of the attractions of her friend Adeline, induced her to think the partiality was merely justice.

CHAP. II.

IMMEDIATELY on their arrival in London, they were fixed in a house prepared for them in Park-Lane, where in the beginning of April, the variety, life and beauty of the scene, soon dissipated the idea the young ladies had entertained from their first residence in London, which had been in a less frequented part of the Metropolis, that it partook of the gloom imputed to the inhabitants of this country.

The house was soon frequented by visitors of the first rank. Madame de Germeil was personally known to many, and curiosity led others to visit a lady, who was celebrated even in England as an authoress; but an object still more attractive was the beautiful Laure: In a country where almost every woman is pretty, and many are exquisitely handsome, the young *Françoise* was generally regarded with the highest admiration.

In the number of Madame de Germeil's friends, Mrs. Grenby was the most distinguished: This lady, now no longer in the bloom of that beauty for which she had once been courted and caressed, had still secured pre-eminence by a cultivated understanding, a refined and happy manner, and the reputation of lively wit. To be admitted to her circle, was considered at once as a criterion and proof of intellectual merit, and gave great pretensions to the title of *bel esprit*. She was infinitely pleased with the *élèves* of her friend, and reflected with satisfaction, how much they would ornament and enliven her select parties.

The Count D'Ogimond had resided much in England, and quitted it the first year of Lady Carbreon's *entrée* in the gay world, whose idol she soon became; no one could more admire her than the Comte, from whom she readily admitted a written request that she would some times permit Adeline and Laure to have the advantage as well as the pleasure of seeing her.

Lady Carbreon had now been three years the grand directress and controller of fashion, nor was it to be wondered that her reign had lasted thus long: — Her person was remarkably fine and well proportioned; and giving the reins to a vanity and caprice naturally unbounded, in displaying it to the best advantage, she was careless of violating not only decorum, but even decency; it is true that in her personal decoration she constantly kept nature in view; but she presented her rather too fully to the view of others.

To this lady, in compliance with the wishes of the Comte, Madame de Germeil, with some reluctance, introduced her pupils. She was flatteringly attentive to Mademoiselle D'Ogimond, but the charms of Laure gave her a sensation of envy, her excessive vanity had scarcely ever before permitted her to feel: she had hitherto triumphed in the imagination of unrivalled beauty, but now she evidently perceived that she would be compelled to yield the palm to this intrusive foreigner, a girl who knew not her parents, who had not the advantage of being owned even as the illegitimate child of a

man of fashion: a wretched foundling, who had been cast by the most vexatious of chances into the sphere in which she shone, on purpose surely to obscure the lustre of her brightness.

With these ideas it is not wonderful that the vain haughty woman of rank should not treat her with complacency. Fortunately Laure, who did not find any attraction in the general manners of Lady Carbreon, was therefore the less affected by her particular reserve to her, and was more than sufficiently consoled by the open partiality of Mrs. Grenby: Indeed, when an interested motive or general envy did not interfere, Laure was one of those beings who have the happy power of stealing on the affections, of disposing every heart to fondness and friendship, and exciting universal benevolence. How few has nature thus favored! and of the number some are again disqualified, by absurdly cherishing a ridiculous failing, or habituating themselves to some pernicious vice.

Madame de Germeil was careful to contract as much as possible her society; and though she could not from various motives render it as select as she wished, she found very little inconvenience from its extension, as she had peculiarly the art of being distantly polite, and by no means possessed that weak credulity, with which some people open their arms to all human kind, and make every one a sharer in their breast.

Lady Carbreon, the second Sunday of their residence in London, called in her *vis-a-vis*, for the purpose of taking Adeline to the gardens. Madame de Germeil, though piqued that Mademoiselle D'Ogimond had alone been invited, did not think proper to refuse the request; she had already seen enough of Lady Carbreon to dislike her as a chaperon for the timid Adeline; but acceding with a tolerable grace to the proposal, she added, that as she intended herself to be there, she would spare her Ladyship the trouble of conducting Mademoiselle D'Ogimond home. Lady Carbreon was not much delighted with the intimation, for by excluding Laure from the invitation, she meant to have prevented herself, that morning at least, the mortification of being a secondary object. Her arrangement unluckily occasioned the very circumstance she wished to avoid; for Madame de Germeil was ever unwilling that Adeline should be long from her sight, and concluded, Lady Carbreon could not forbear joining her when they met.

This was precisely the case; and, mortifying sight! as her Ladyship was chatting with the horsemen, from the ha-ha, she observed a wandering in their admiration, as new to her as it was provoking, and turning, beheld in Laure the unconscious author of her vexation: She had for some minutes been gladly discovered by Adeline, whose gay companion having been too much occupied to attend to her, had found herself rather solitary. Lady Carbreon had before seemed rooted to the spot, but now complained of the sun, and proposed turning to the shade.

They were followed by several gentlemen, who had dismounted to take a nearer survey of what had much charmed them at a distance; but by far the greater part, before they would venture to *commit themselves* by such a step, stayed to hear the opinion old General Williams entertained of the French girls.

The General was a man of low origin: In the East Indies he had amassed a splendid fortune, which had enabled him to procure admittance in the first gaming circles, and establish an intimacy with characters of the first rank. No one was more profuse in acts of extravagance, and, to do him justice, sometimes in acts of liberality; but his extraordinary vanity soon grew so luxuriant, as to be a perpetual fund of entertainment, and the General became a sort of privileged person. — Scarcely any one, on the first view of him, could be persuaded that he was not caricaturing the folly of self-created importance, and from being suffered to utter his unrestrained opinions without check or controul, because some were amused with him, and others were silenced by the recollection of a gaming debt, he was at length attended to from habit, and, at last, people accustomed themselves to think that he possessed judgment enough to decide on the appearance and conduct of others, notwithstanding the extravagant absurdity he exhibited in his own.

‘The Comte’s daughter,’ said he, with a contraction of the brows, and a dangle of the jaw, ‘is *very well*.’

This sentence past, his audience unanimously agreed that Mademoiselle D’Ogimond was ‘nothing,’ — ‘nothing’ — ‘quite’ — ‘nothing.’

They now awaited with some anxiety his decision upon Laure; they wished it to be according to their feelings, but if not, they were not at all disposed to throw the gauntlet for her.

‘That Laure, resumed the General, ‘that Laure, what is her name?’ — ‘They call her D’Aubigny.’ — ‘Ay, she will do!’

A confused murmur now arose of lovely! charming! eyes! teeth! dress and tournure! After which they all filed off, to follow the steps of the enchanting Laure D’Aubigny. And the little General reflecting with complacency on the singular good nature and mercy of his decree, stooping his nose almost to the saddle bow, took an immoderate pinch of snuff and rode away.

The gardens were crowded, and as it was soon understood that Lady Carberon’s party were French women of distinction, every body followed to gaze, and were not soon desirous of relinquishing a sight, that engaged their admiration equally with their curiosity. Lady Carberon could not but suspect, notwithstanding the excellent opinion she entertained of her own powers of fascination, that *above* half this homage was not paid to her, and began to feel a violent head-ach, which on observing Lord William Dalvening by the side of Laure, and recollecting he had not uttered a syllable to any one else in the last half hour, threatened to end in a fit of spasms.

These symptoms being communicated to Madame de Germeil, they attempted to quit the gardens, but the crowd without, wishing to get in, and the crowd within, endeavouring to get out, made it utterly impracticable. — They had advanced however so far that they could not recede, and found themselves very unpleasantly situated, from the

excessive thronging of those who joined the multitude, merely to see what was the matter.

Laure was accidentally nearer the door than her companions, and, notwithstanding the protection of Lord William, she was greatly incommoded by the pressure of the mob; ashamed of fears she could not entirely disguise, she observed, as an apology for them, that she had never before been in a crowd.

‘I hope you will not suffer much,’ returned Lord William, ‘and then you ought not to complain, since I believe you to be the principal cause of the evil, by exciting universal admiration, which these good people, in testifying, have not so much consulted politeness as they ought to have done; yet it is a very common, though an unpleasant mode of expressing approbation in this country, and an English lady is too much flattered by the cause to feel inconvenience from the effect.’

‘Your Lordship,’ said Laure, laughing, ‘has very adroitly endeavoured to make me insensible of heat and fatigue, by this extraordinary application to my vanity; but I confess I should be very well satisfied never to be the object of curiosity, were it always to be gratified at the same expence.’

‘Curiosity and consequent admiration,’ replied he, ‘are not the only emotions the charming Mademoiselle D’Aubigny excites, she must be equally accustomed to find herself the object of a more particular and interesting sensation.’

The turn of this speech induced Laure to look round for her party, and with some exertion she soon gained the same situation.

Lady Carbreon insisted that she was too ill to remain where she was, and with great difficulty and trouble was put into her carriage. Madame de Germeil very prudently chose to wait until she could retire in a quieter way, which was not effected before five o’clock.

Madame de Germeil dissatisfied with this début, and not inclined to hazard the repetition of such a scene, resisted for some time any solicitation to another appearance in public; and a fortnight was passed in the same tranquillity that marked their days at the Chateau de Verni: In this time Adeline and Laure applied with much assiduity to remove a slight french accent, which was almost the only thing that could distinguish them as foreigners when they conversed in this language.

But the calm was disturbed by news of the most alarming nature from Paris. The Comte wrote to them, that his situation was no longer a secure one; he had been, he said, maliciously misrepresented to the national assembly, and had been advised to fly; but as this measure would in all probability deprive him of his fortune, he could not think of pursuing it: He added that the young Marquis de Saint Ouïn was unhappily involved in his misfortune, and he greatly feared, the impetuosity of this gallant young man would betray him into some fatal mischance: He concluded with desiring Madame de Germeil

to remain in England, and repeated his *particular wishes* that she would cultivate an intimacy with those whom he had already pointed out to her.

She read the first part of the letter with a terror and astonishment she endeavoured in vain to suppress: Mademoiselle D'Ogimond wept, while Laure felt a pain too acute to allow of such relief. The long experienced kindness of the Comte impressed her mind with more than usual force, now that she believed him surrounded with danger, and the secret suspicion she sometimes experienced that he was her father, by increasing her affection, redoubled her anxiety: But this was not all her grief: The Marquis de Saint Ouïn claimed a share in it. He had been the friend of Adeline and herself from early childhood: How benevolent how generous was de Saint Ouïn! — With what sorrow did he quit the neighbourhood of Verni, when he was obliged to join his regiment; and how often had he relinquished the gaities of Paris for several days merely to pass a few hours with them: How amiable! how gentle! And was it possible to suspect or injure him?

Roused at length from this reverie by the distress of Adeline, she thought for some minutes only of soothing her grief. Madame de Germeil could not assist in this office; she was thoughtful and more dejected than they had ever seen her before: This, in a woman of her firm mind, argued a strong sense of danger, and added new force to their terrors.

After a week passed in the most torturing suspence, they received another letter from the Comte, who informed them he had thought of an expedient that insured his safety, and much extolled the generous friendship of de Saint Ouïn, who was then, he said, executing an important commission for him in the département Du Nord.

This intelligence greatly quieted their alarms, and Mrs. Grenby calling in at that moment, endeavoured to dissipate the impression they had left by her enlivening conversation: She quitted them after receiving a glad acquiescence to an invitation to spend the following day with her.

Here they met with Lord William Dalvening, who was rather a favorite with Mrs. Grenby, and her brother Mr. Cosbyne, who arrived from Ireland but the day before—in person he much resembled his sister, in mind and manners still more; this was perhaps the result of the infinite pains she had taken to render him all her fond partiality wished him to be; and she had so far succeeded that few could converse with him and not be pleased.

He appeared much struck with Laure the moment she entered, a circumstance that did not escape Lord William, who redoubled his assiduities, and seemed to wish Mr. Cosbyne to believe that Laure understood the motive of them. Madame de Germeil had perceived this young nobleman's penchant, and tho' she did not appear to encourage, she was not solicitous to deprive him of any opportunity of expressing it. She acted thus, in conformity to a hint the Comte had given her, in a letter addressed singly to herself.

After dinner Mrs. Grenby observed, that her box happened to be wholly unoccupied that evening, and asked if they had any inclination to call in at the opera: Madame de Germeil readily assented, for she had deferred securing one for herself until she could be assured of remaining in England, and had not visited the Hay-Market since her former residence in London.

Lord William looked very serious whenever Mr. Cosbyne addressed Laure, and contrived to place himself in the box immediately behind her chair, a situation for which he was universally envied. Madame de Germeil was surprised to find the performance fall so infinitely below that she had so much admired a few years before; and the difference was striking enough to be observed by the young ladies, children as they were at that time: At present they found not either singers or dancers capable of exciting the admiration, Pachierotti, le Pique and Rossi had inspired; so far from it, the performance was more calculated to lull the audience to sleep than wake them to delight. Madame de Germeil cautiously expressed her sentiments on the subject.

‘Why yes,’ returned Mrs. Grenby, ‘I must confess I agree with you, for I can scarcely imagine a degree of dullness beyond what these people have arrived at: But I really ought to beg your pardon for not giving you this information before you came here: I heard that we should be presented with something new to night.’

‘I understood too,’ said Lord William, ‘that the new ballet was to come out this evening; I suppose as they are not very fond of trouble, they are trying to make the old one do a little longer.’

‘I cannot forbear admiring the excessive patience of the subscribers,’ observed Mr. Cosbyne, ‘who, charitable creatures, will allow a trumpery burletta to be hurried over, almost every night through the season, that Signora——after strutting her hour here, may run to the other theatre, and in the same shoes that have borne her through the kennels, scramble upon the stage, and perform her part in the farce.’

‘It is impossible,’ cried Madame de Germeil laughing, ‘not to praise the industry that prompts this violent exertion.’

‘Certainly,’ returned Mrs. Grenby, ‘had she any other motive than extreme avarice; but the woman who does this is very rich and has not any children.’

Adeline and Laure compared Signora —— with the Parisian Actresses, many of whom could have vied in magnificence with the eastern Princesses they sometimes personated, and while they readily acknowledged an ostentatious profusion of expence to be at best very ill judged, they thought it more justifiable in the one to appear on the stage adorned with jewels really suitable to an assumed character, than in the other to present herself before her audience in a careless and dirty dishabille.

Lord William zealously assented, and addressing himself to Laure. ‘Signora ——’ said he, ‘presumes too much upon the favor her merit as a singer and an actress gives her

with the public. She has yet to learn,' he added in a lower tone, 'the effect of superior excellence, joined to the inexpressible charm of unconscious modesty.'

So true was what his Lordship meant to infer, that without the least idea of the complimentary allusion contained in his speech, Laure answered gaily; 'It would be kind then in any one, to hint to this superior excellence, to "bear her faculties," as your Shakespear says, "a little more meekly."

'No, no,' replied Mrs. Grenby, 'it is all much better as it is now, you hear she would then be totally overcoming.'

When Lord William conducted Laure to the carriage, he eagerly profited by a momentary opportunity to assail her with a passionate profession of admiration: 'Do not,' added he, 'too lovely Laure, be offended at the apparent temerity of this precipitation, which I would not have hazarded had I not discovered a rival in every man who sees you.'

Laure was much rejoiced to find herself, at the conclusion of this speech, at the side of the carriage, into which she jumped with as little ceremony and as much pleasure as if she had escaped some terrible danger, leaving Lord William so much piqued and chagrined at her alacrity to quit him, that he hardly recollected himself sufficiently to assist Madame de Germeil in after her.

The next morning tickets of invitation were presented to them from Lady Carbreon, who meant to give a breakfast and fête champêtre at a villa, a few miles from town. Lady Carbreon would have much wished the absence of Laure on this occasion, but it could not be effected without displaying a motive her Ladyship's pride prevented her from acknowledging, though the same pride did not prevent her from feeling it. She sent to inform them, she wished the ladies of her party to adopt at the fête a uniform, which she thought would have a good effect, and if they were disengaged, she would the next morning shew them one she had contrived for the purpose. They went with great expectations of seeing something extraordinary, nor were they disappointed. Lady Carberon had resolved to brave the public eye in a cambrick petticoat under a loose floating drapery of sarsenet, which, with the addition of a chemise, was literally every garment that adorned the form they were not calculated or intended to conceal.

When Madame de Germeil and the young ladies were introduced into the dressing-room, Lady Carbreon, with all the conscious complacency of newly inflated vanity, awaited their expected approbation, which they innocently delayed to express, because they imagined the important toilette was not quite finished. The scene soon became rather embarrassing; Lady Carbreon looked, walked, and threw herself into a variety of attitudes; but still not a syllable was advanced in commendation of the dress.

Mademoiselle D'Ogimond had discovered some resemblance between the figure that paraded before her and a very fine statue belonging to her father; an idea to which the disposition of the drapery gave rise. A strict comparison would not perhaps have been

advantageous to the lady, as the statue was the unblemished production of a most capital artist, and few indeed were the women whose persons would have stood such a test.

Laure, to whom the same comparison had occurred, was insensibly carried by it to recollections of a far extended nature, and while her imagination wandered over every apartment of the chateau, and every well-known path of the wood of Verni, Madame de Germeil discovered that the momentous object they had all come expressly to see and admire, had been exposed to their view for ten minutes, without exciting a single comment; but in what manner to communicate this to Adeline and Laure, and repair the involuntary omission without giving further mortification, by acknowledging the cause, was rather perplexing; at length she exclaimed with quickness, and assuming a look of admiration, apropos of this charming dress, it is singularly elegant! and the stile of it explains that it is entirely your Ladyship's invention.'

'Oh quite,' returned Lady Carbreon, her features almost regaining the expression from which they had relaxed, 'but you see it merely pinned up, I will get it run together and send it you for a model.'

'We shall be very much indebted to you,' replied Madame de Germeil, 'but I hope you do not expect chaperons to wear it.'

'Oh je ne vous gênez, pas,' cried Lady Carbreon, 'you shall be at liberty to reject it if you please.'

'For myself then certainly, but these young ladies,' added she, not wishing to offend entirely, 'will be happy to profit by your Ladyship's taste.'

When they were seated in the carriage, 'Pray Madam,' cried Laure, laughing, 'are we really to undress to Lady Carberon's standard?'

Madame de Germeil gravely replied 'you must both certainly wear something like this apology for a covering; but I shall take the liberty of making your appearance more conformable to decency, by which I believe we shall equally ensure general approbation.'

CHAP. III.

THE expected day was ushered in by a most beautiful morning, the sun shone with a genial warmth, and not a cloud appeared in the horizon, to disturb the great expectations every one cherished of the approaching entertainment. There was scarcely one in the number of the guests who was possessed of sufficient malignity to receive pleasure from the vexation Lady Carbreon would experience at a heavy shower, because they would themselves have been sufferers, either from catching cold, spoiling their cloaths, or being obliged to crowd into two or three rooms, and sit until their carriages could take them away, looking at each other in disappointed dulness; consoled only by reflecting that their neighbours were as miserable as themselves; and perhaps the certainty of the deprivation could be the only circumstance in the world to induce many of this assembly to regard the projected fête as an amusement, or regret that it was not to be.

Lady Carbreon having overcome her own sense of propriety without *much* difficulty, was irritated to find she could not conquer that of other people, for many absolutely refused to appear in the uniform; some indeed were absurd enough to exhibit their unweildiness in the attire their hostess had chosen for them, and others were not unaptly compared to those monumental figures where the sculptor has designed death and mortality by a half covered skeleton.

The plan certainly did honor to the refinement of Lady Carbreon's coquetry: She had, not unartfully, suited colours and textures to her own particular figure, and then imposed the same habiliments equally upon the tall, the short, the fat, the lean, the swarthy and the fair. But if, on this occasion, she generally excelled others in her appearance, she was, in return, as much surpassed by Adeline and Laure, who were habited with a *goût decent*. Adeline looked a pretty wood-nymph and was not an unpleasant contrast to the vivacious boldness of Lady Carbreon, who beheld Laure with half suppressed envy and vexation: — She had no ornament but a few flowers in her bosom, placed there by the hand of modesty: part of her hair, which hung in curls round her temples, was confined by a few tresses braided over it, and the rest fell in great profusion down her back; she was adorned with every grace the partial hand of nature could bestow, and all the innocent complacency of youth, not yet blighted by misfortune, and untainted with vice.

The tables and ornaments were disposed with much judgment, the music was heard but not seen, and rustic groups were observed here and there 'dancing in the chequered shade.' But the principal novelty of the day was a magnificent altar erected to St. Swithin, on which a sacrifice appeared to have been newly offered; in the front was placed an inscription, and it was whispered that Mr. Cosbyne had written it.

As Adeline and Laure were approaching to examine the writing, they were met by Madame de Germeil, who presented to them the Duke of Harmington, whose friendship, she observed, the Count D'Ogimond had the advantage of possessing, a benefit he highly prized. Laure would have been very much inclined to laugh at the figure that offered

itself to her eye, had it not been introduced with the support of the Comte's esteem; but now, while she received his compliment, she endeavoured to forget the absurd foppery of his appearance, and think of him with respect.

The Duke however soon contrived to render the task more difficult, by a ridiculous affectation of gallantry. While the politesse of this young old man induced him to address to Mademoiselle D'Ogimond, one of the many *douceurs*, his inclination had prompted him to offer to the beauty of Laure, the latter was discovered by Lord William Dalvening: She blushed, nor did he appear unembarrassed; his mien was less haughty than usual, his voice less elevated: He instantly asked Laure how long she had been arrived. 'About twenty minutes, my Lord.' 'I was accidentally detained,' continued he, 'at the moment I was setting out, for above half an hour, and I figured to myself the whole time, some happier fellow occupying the situation I was so anxious to possess: Have you seen Cosbyne this morning?' 'No my Lord.' 'You must have been among the first of those who are yet arrived, for I am told they began to drop in only a quarter of an hour since; but I shall bless the indolence of the multitude, if it occasions me to be the earliest candidate for the honor for your hand, should any of the party be inclined to follow the example of those rustics.'

As Laure was disengaged, she could not avoid acquiescing in the request; she recollected his peculiar behaviour the evening she was at the opera, and though she considered his speech as an impromptu sally of gallantry, yet she felt an invincible repugnance to the idea of his renewing it.

The Duke had been listening to Lord William with some impatience and now attacked Laure with such a profusion of looks, sighs, and notes of admiration, that Lord William bit his lips almost through, and began to be excessively out of humour.

They proceeded at the request of Mademoiselle D'Ogimond, to examine the newly acquired honors of Saint Swithin: Lord William maliciously entreated the Duke to read the inscription, but the petition was abruptly refused; he then mounted the base of the altar himself, and read the following *jeu d'esprit*.

This day, oh damp and wat'ry saint! forbear
To rattle in our ears a fearful show'r,
Nor make our pensive, uncurl'd heads declare,
With drooping unresisting locks thy pow'r:
Prithee, dread Saint, hurl not thy vengeance down,
Upon our hats and caps so very pretty,
Nor on our *déjeuné* indignant frown,
To give the absent sport, and make them witty:
When of disaster we so little dream,
Let them not say, as was their mock o' late,
Thou turn'st to milk and water all our cream,
And Cocoa mak'st of all our Chocolate.

As he finished the last line, Mrs. Grenby advanced, and after the usual compliments, 'Well ma bonne amie,' cried she to Madame de Germeil, 'what is your opinion of the fair lady of these bowers? I am quite charmed with the extraordinary effects of her genius: Your pretty nymphs wear her livery with a few improvements, I see; but I do not quite think it was intended they should be so lovely in it.'

Madame de Germeil smiled expressively, and made no reply.

'Is Cosbyne here?' asked Lord William. 'He is,' returned Mrs. Grenby, 'but as I have not seen him, I suppose he is seized and confined by Lord Carbreon, and is not to regain his liberty until he has produced some extatic lines on her Ladyship's beauty, and if this is really the case,' continued she, 'it is very fortunate that he was not allowed time enough to cast a pair of glances this way, or he might have been tempted to pop into the panegyrick, the names of Adeline and Laure, instead of the Divinity he was bound to celebrate.'

The Duke of Harmington asserted with some energy, that he would have then had a much happier subject for his muse.

CHAP. IV.

AFTER breakfast the company broke into parties, and General Williams, who had not been there above ten minutes, seized the opportunity of being conspicuously placed; to stretch his hudibrastic figure, and exclaim, with a lengthened yawn, 'What devilish bores these breakfasts are!—I was obliged to rise at twelve o'clock,' continued he, addressing his next neighbour, who happened to be Lady Carbreon 'that I might get here in decent time.'

'I am sorry,' retorted, she with some anger, 'that you took so much trouble without accomplishing your purpose.'

The General, lifting up his eyes, pretended to discover the misapplication of his speech, when in reality, such was the absurdity of this strange being, he had uttered it merely to refresh his memory with a hint of his own importance.

'I thought, General,' said Mrs. Grenby carelessly, 'that you had been amongst the first who arrived.'

The General made no answer, and began grinding his teeth; for he had in his antipathies a wonderful dislike to being classed *amongst* any body.

The Duke of Harmington attached himself so assiduously to Laure, that Lord William, who would willingly have been the sole object of her attention, felt greatly relieved when a set of dancers was formed, to which he immediately led her. Mr. Cosbyne walked up to her, and glancing his eye on Lord William, said with a smile, 'I observe that I must not hope to dance the first set with you; but will you allow me to succeed your present partner when he is obliged to relinquish you?' Laure very readily assented and he went in search of Mademoiselle D'Ogimond, whom he engaged, and conducted to the side of her friend.

The wonderful legereté and grace of the belles françoises, attracted general admiration; the Duke gazed until he was almost tempted to dance himself; but a little reflection soon convinced him of the danger of discomposing his crazy figure, by the shock of a rapid motion.

When Laure danced with Mr. Cosbyne, she was evidently more enlivened than with her former partner: She liked his manners and conversation; they indicated that he wished more to be approved than to be admired, and the good humoured politeness which always induced him to appear pleased with others, had the usual effect of making others pleased with him.

It now became Lord William's occupation to watch Laure; he did not dance, but placing himself near her, followed her with an anxious eye. He was teased by the Duke's professions of admiration, and the attention of Mr. Cosbyne seriously alarmed him; he

dreaded the impression his personal qualifications might make on the heart of Laure, and equally feared the influence of his sister with Madame de Germeil, yet he was re-assured, when he reflected, that Mr. Cosbyne's fortune was much inferior to his own, and that he was himself not without some prospect of a first title, and a splendid fortune, as his elder brother had very declining health; while Mr. Cosbyne, though of a more ancient family, was only the younger son of a younger brother. It had been given out, that Laure would not be portionless, and Lord William imagined the Comte would not permit her to ally herself imprudently.

When the Duke found that his tottering limbs would no longer support him, he seated himself by Madame de Germeil, to descant on the perfections of Laure, and then Mr. Cosbyne laughingly congratulated her on the acquisition of such an adorateur as the Duke. 'He seems to be now enamoured,' added he, 'of an object perfect enough to fix any heart, however inclined to rove, and we shall see whether his former wavering was occasioned by natural inconstancy of disposition, or delicacy of taste.' 'I should suppose,' returned Laure smiling, 'that as he has for so long a time sported with the arrows that wounded him, he can at present be affected only by that potent dart no human being can escape.'

'Oh, what an affront do you offer to his gallantry,' cried Mr. Cosbyne, 'such a sentence, were he to hear it from your lips, would prove to him the fatal dart you allude to.'

The sun piercing through the foilage that had hitherto sheltered the dancers from its rays, soon dispersed them. Mrs. Grenby took a place in Mademoiselle D'Ogimond's carriage, and in the ride to town told Madame de Germeil, that she intended to retire to a cottage she possessed near London, and only visit the metropolis occasionally, as she found the perpetual dissipation she was unavoidably engaged in, too much for her health and spirits.

'Retirement is in your power,' returned Madame de Germeil, 'but not solitude; for you will certainly attract to your dwelling, where ever it may be, all those you have once made happy in your society.'

'To prove what you flatter me with,' cried Mrs. Grenby, 'you must all promise me that I shall sometimes have yours.'

The proposal was made and accepted with equal readiness and good humour, and Mrs. Grenby did not leave them until late in the evening, when Madame de Germeil and the young ladies were engaged to Lady Lillingford's assembly, who having taken infinite pains to insure their presence, would never have forgiven them for neglecting her, and to incur her resentment was not a trifling event.

This Lady was a widow, with a jointure considerably smaller than her situation and mode of life would have allowed any one to suppose it: She would willingly have parted with virtue, nay *even* reputation, to procure the luxuries she had been accustomed

to, and knew not how to live without; but, alas! her youth was fled, and her beauty in its last stage: — A faro bank became her resource, and the plan succeeded: every fashionable wight resorted to her lure, swayed either by interest, intrigue, vanity, or folly; and this ruinous stream of complicated absurdity and villany bore down and overwhelmed many a mind, calculated for far better pursuits. Hither the cautious, the reserved Madame de Germeil was obliged to conduct her pupils.

As the room in which the bank was held, was much too crowded to admit them, they placed themselves in an adjoining one, and were much amused by the strictures they heard on Lady Carbreon and her fête, which were in general very severe; those who had found the most difficulty in procuring a ticket to get there, were the most possitive in asserting the horrid fatigue it had been to them.

But the attention of every individual was soon called to a violent clamour which arose in the faro-room; it began with a loud murmur, which insensibly broke into scolding, shrieking, and the most terrible oaths, uttered with furious vociferation. The alarm easily spread, but the cause was not so soon discovered: At length the crowd near the door was forcibly broken through, and a very handsome young woman carried away in fits.

Madame de Germeil would have retreated, if she had had it in her power, for the heat became almost intolerable, and Mademoiselle D'Ogimond was much incommoded by it. Some ladies who stood near her imagined that the house was on fire, and communicating their fears without reserve or caution, the most horrible confusion ensued.

Laure observing a very old lady almost fainting, to whom no attention was paid, pushed towards her to offer her smelling bottle, but after effecting her intention, she found it impossible to return to Madame de Germeil and Adeline, and was driven the contrary way: To add to her terror, she perceived a violent scuffle very near her, from which she had not power to retire; she could just discern that a gentleman was grasping the collar of another, and kicking him through the room; several others interposed, but as she knew not their intention, it only made the affray appear more terrible. She stood motionless, pale and trembling, 'till Mr. Cosbyne, who had followed the combatants to assist in parting them, flew to her assistance. He begged her not to be alarmed, and assured her the affair would end very peaceably.

When she had a little recovered, he explained, in a low voice, the cause of the uproar. Lady Mary Valner, he said, who had been carried out, was playing at faro, and had received several hints from the marker that she was not so accurate as she ought to be, she had in return haughtily desired he would not be impertinent, and in three minutes he openly accused her of doubling down her card unfairly; her brother, who was present, resented the charge, and threatened to cut off the man's ears unless he retracted. The other replying that he would not retract, Lord Valner immediately knocked him down; and before he could be prevented struck him again several times.

The man irritated by this violent treatment, declared he would bring an action against his noble opponent, whose rage was then increased almost to madness; and Lady Mary shocked and terrified at the scene, had fainted. But the fracas is now nearly over, continued Mr. Cosbyne, 'and I hope to see you restored to your usual serenity.'

After acknowledging herself indebted to his politeness, Laure expressed a fear that Madame de Germeil and Adeline would be alarmed at missing her.

'When you no longer think yourself in danger, and I can procure you a seat,' returned he, 'I will find them out; at present there is no prospect of your being able to get near them, for many people are yet trying to crowd in, while few are endeavouring to get out. But I am sure,' added he, observing she changed colour, 'the heat is too much for you; we will try to reach the anti-room.'

Laure objected to it, as she would then have less chance of returning to the place where she had left Madame de Germeil. Mr. Cosbyne however earnestly insisted that she should try to get a little air, for she became every minute more pale and faint; he drew her through the crowd to a better situation, and then went to procure her some water: Before he returned Lord William Dalvening made his appearance; he had learnt from Laure where she was to be in the evening, and had broken from a dinner party to meet her. He was surprised to see her alone and evidently indisposed; she would have explained the reason, but agitated as she had been, and expressing herself in a language not her own, she could not immediately find words: Before she had uttered many Mr. Cosbyne returned, and offered to seek out Madame de Germeil. 'No,' cried Lord William, 'you are attending Mademoiselle D'Aubigny, and you had better continue in an office that seems to afford you so much happiness; I suppose I can perform the commission almost as well.'

Without waiting for an answer he left them; but the jealous pique that dictated this speech, could not enable him to suffer Mr. Cosbyne to remain long in quiet possession of his post, and before he had advanced a dozen steps he turned back, and said he had found it impossible to proceed.

Laure waited with as much composure as she could assume, 'till a number of people finding that nothing farther was to happen, retired to report in other circles, as much of the event as they could contrive, with the help of a little conjecture, to make out.

An antiquated Dowager, with a chin like the point of a chinese slipper, observed that she was not at all surprised at the indignation of Lord Valner, at a discovery so disgraceful to his sister.

'Neither am I,' replied another, whose little grey eyes shot a gleam of triumphant malice as she uttered the remark, 'for I believe it is pretty certain that he went snacking with her.'

Madame de Germeil was rejoiced to discover Laure, as it enabled her to return immediately home. 'I am sorry,' said Mr. Cosbyne, as he attended them to their carriage, 'that you should have witnessed this scene; I can assure you, that to me it has been a very singular one: Do not let it impress your minds much to our discredit.' 'O ciel' cried the innocent Adeline, with an involuntary emotion, 'quelles mœurs!' Laure thought of them as they merited, in silence.

Madame de Germeil found herself the next day much indisposed with a nervous head-ach, a disorder to which she was some times subjected. Since the Count's last letter, she had cultivated the society of many she had before avoided; to Laure her manner was more affectionate, and she advised Mademoiselle D'Ogimond to endeavour to conquer that extreme timidity, which sometimes giving an appearance of reserve, would often be mistaken for pride.

Madame de Germeil's indisposition increasing, she was for several days confined to her chamber, where Mrs. Grenby still sought her society. She had awaited the recovery of her friend, to quit London as she had proposed, and when Madame de Germeil was convalescent, she urged her to bring the nymphs, as she usually called them, and stay two or three weeks, at her cottage. Madame de Germeil's inclination led her to accept the proposal; but the intelligence she daily expected from the Comte was of such importance, that she did not chuse to delay the receipt of it even for an hour; and another reason, though of less consideration, yet not trivial, was that the Physician who attended her could not follow her out of town, though the distance was only six or seven miles.

Making the last reason the ostensible one for refusing the friendly proposition, Mrs. Grenby was obliged to submit; but it was at last settled that Laure should accompany her to Wincale, the name of her place, and Mrs. Grenby appeared satisfied with her friend for departing from a plan she had hitherto adhered to, never to suffer her pupils to quit her for more than a day; 'Well then,' cried Mrs. Grenby, rising to go, 'I shall rusticate on Thursday, so I give Laure two days to prepare for this terrible separation.'

When Laure bade adieu to her friends, she endeavoured in consideration to Mrs. Grenby, to suppress the regret she felt at her first absence from Adeline: She was uneasy too at leaving Madame de Germeil in the state of weakness and languor to which she was reduced. The affection this lady had lately shewn her, had strongly revived in her heart the fond gratitude her former coldness had rather chilled.

Mrs. Grenby looked on these naïve sensations of an unhardened and uncorrupted mind, with complacency and approbation: She had formerly felt them herself; but such sentiments had been checked, in proportion as experience had taught her, not to expect to find them in those, with whom her situation in life led her to mingle. Her motives for wishing the company of Laure were not entirely derived from the partiality she felt for her: Mrs. Grenby in her retirement was not desirous of leaving the world behind her; she was delighted with the conversation of intelligent people, and was not insensible to the pleasure of knowing, that it was repeated in the circles she left with such seeming

indifference, how many distinguished characters the charms of Mrs. Grenby's wit had attracted to Wincale: She had however too much policy to trust entirely to her own power of pleasing, and was careful to add as many agréments as she could assemble, for the gratification of her guests, in the number, neither the attractions of good wines or good dinners were omitted. The admired beauty of Laure she made use of to assist her purpose; yet she would not have thwarted her own inclination to accomplish it; and had not Laure possessed qualifications to create friendship and esteem equally with admiration, she had never been sought by Mrs. Grenby as an intimate.

CHAP. V.

LAURE met at Wincale Mr. Cosbyne and the sister of Mrs. Grenby's husband; this party was strongly reinforced every day at dinner by visitors from London, who had been either selected for some happy talent, or shone by the collateral aid of distinguished birth or fashion. Miss Grenby had formerly felt a strong prepossession in favor of Mr. Cosbyne; but as the penchant had not been perceived, or returned with too moderate a portion of gratitude, she had wisely endeavoured to conquer it, and had happily succeeded.

Laure, accustomed to a life of the greatest activity, spent several hours every morning in the grounds, and Mr. Cosbyne very often hastened or deferred his ride to accompany her.

Pleased with his conversation, which was always cheerful, Laure sometimes pointed out to him with enthusiastic delight, every spot that had the least resemblance to the woods of Verni. 'Tell me,' said Mr. Cosbyne, fixing his eyes with attention on her countenance, 'whom you have left at Verni to lament your absence?'

'Only old Madame Delverue,' returned Laure with much simplicity, 'who has the Comte's permission to reside there.'

'Are there any seats in the neighbourhood?' demanded he with unusual curiosity.

'Oh yes, that of Monsieur de Saint Ouin's father.'

'Has the father then no other appellation?' said Mr. Cosbyne, with a smile.

'No,' replied she, 'he is likewise called the Marquis de St. Ouin.'

'Are you much acquainted with the son?'

'He was Adeline's companion and mine from infancy,' returned she with a sigh, 'until he left us to join his regiment.'

Mr. Cosbyne inquired no further, and Laure became pensive, from recollecting the danger of the situation into which the young Marquis had been precipitated, by his attachment to the Comte D'Ogimond.

Among the guests of that day was Lord William Dalvening, who soon observed the unusual coldness with which Mr. Cosbyne addressed the unconscious Laure, and evidently received pleasure from the remark: She had regained her vivacity, and made a few efforts to remove Mr. Cosbyne's accidental gravity, and they would probably have succeeded, had not Lord William's attentions which were very pointed, contributed to settle the gloom.

The next morning as Laure was preparing for her walk, Mr. Cosbyne in opposition to his general custom, ordered his horses and rode out. She had not been walking long before she met Lord William Dalvening, who was galloping towards the house: He perceived her at some distance, and flew to meet her. 'It was a presentiment of this fortunate rencontre,' cried he, 'that made me leave town so early this morning; to what exquisite chance am I indebted,' he added, 'for seeing you thus alone?'

'Mrs. Grenby is writing,' said Laure, gravely, 'and her sister is indisposed, and does not quit her chamber.'

'This is happy indeed,' exclaimed Lord William in high spirits.

'For Miss Grenby do you mean?' asked Laure.

'Heaven reward her,' returned he rapturously, 'for being so obliging.' — Perceiving that she looked at him with surprise, he added in a more sedate manner, 'you have apparently forgotten what I ventured to say to you some time since.' She blushed. 'And yet let me hope,' resumed he, 'that you have not—' Laure's colour heightened still more. He took her hand which she immediately withdrew. 'I had forgotten it, my Lord,' she replied with an air of reserve, 'and I do not wish to be reminded of it.' Her pride was involuntarily roused by the air of triumph his countenance assumed, and her timidity alarmed at an attack so precipitate and unceremonious, and she immediately turned into a path that led directly to the house.

The general complacency of Laure's manner had misled Lord William into an opinion that highly flattered his vanity; but he now perceived his error, and rather mortified to find that her heart had not so easily yielded to his attractions, he dismissed his gaiety, and adopted a look of more humility, while he expressed his hopes that she would not forbid his efforts to obtain the honor of her esteem and regard. 'The title of Mrs. Grenby's friend,' said Laure, with increasing gravity, 'insures your Lordship as much of either as I feel disposed to allow you.'

Unprepared for a reply so discouraging, Lord William was for a minute silent; at length, 'Will the lovely Mademoiselle D'Aubigny permit me,' asked he, 'to wait her decision, and receive it when she returns to town from Madame de Germeil?'

Though Laure almost penetrated the motives of this artful proposal, she felt such a repugnance to hear Lord William on this topic, and so averse to his renewing it, that while she gladly acquiesced in referring him to another, she told him she would write immediately to Madame de Germeil, and engage her to give him the proposed answer the next morning.

This was not what he wished, and as he now discovered what her sentiments were, he affected to decline receiving her determination until she had first seen Madame de Germeil. Lord William imagined not unreasonably, that his present fortune and future

expectations would much promote his interest with that lady, and presumed not a little on her influence with Laure.

His purpose was too obvious to escape her, yet she felt no apprehension from it; for she was persuaded Madame de Germeil had too much principle to exert authority on such a point as this. Lord William had no longer any inclination to discuss the subject farther, and too much out of humour to talk on any other, he suddenly left her.

She entered the house, and going immediately to Mrs. Grenby's dressing-room, found Mr. Cosbyne there alone.

'I should imagine from your appearance,' observed he, 'that you must have walked quick; have you been far Mademoiselle D'Aubigny?' 'Only to the north grove,' replied Laure. 'And have you been meditating there alone?' 'No, I met Lord William Dalvening.' 'And why do you blush?' said Mr. Cosbyne, in a manner unlike his own: 'Were you reminded,' he added with a forced smile, 'of your favourite wood, and the Marquis de Saint Ouïñ?' 'No, indeed, Sir,' cried Laure with great quickness, 'nothing displeasing can ever remind me of either.' She was quitting the room after a few minutes silence, when Mr. Cosbyne waking from a reverie, suddenly asked her, if she had not said that Lord William had offended her. 'I believe not, I did not mean it,' replied Laure, in great confusion. Mrs. Grenby at that moment entered the dressing-room, Lord William was announced, and Laure hastily retired.

She instantly wrote to Madame de Germeil the conversation between Lord William and herself, and expressing a strong dislike to him, earnestly entreated that she would have the goodness to prevent him from talking to her again on the same subject.

In the evening Laure received a letter from Mademoiselle D'Ogimond: The first lines gave her a confused sensation of astonishment and pain. The Marquis de Saint Ouïñ, she said, had fled from France with the utmost precipitation, and had sought a refuge, to use his own expression, from the resentment and fury of his countrymen, in England. Mademoiselle D'Ogimond added, that he appeared very absent and uneasy; he had scarcely answered her inquiries concerning her father, had not brought any letters, nor would he give her any account of the events that obliged him to retreat so suddenly from his country. He had had a long conference with Madame de Germeil, whose indisposition had since returned with redoubled violence. 'Our friend, de Saint Ouïñ,' continued Adeline, 'was much disappointed at not finding you with us; I would to heaven you were here, without my sweet friend at any time I could not be entirely happy, but now I am miserable.'

The tears of Laure betrayed that she had received unpleasant news, long before she had finished reading the letter. She felt a dread though she knew not of what, and perplexed herself in vain in trying to assign a motive for the sullen reserve of de Saint Ouïñ, who used ever to be so delighted to diffuse comfort and happiness, when he possessed that power in any degree; his silence respecting the Comte, the relapse of Madame de Germeil in consequence of their conversation, every thing the letter

contained, contributed to her uneasiness, which was too obvious to escape notice, and too serious not to excite curiosity.

Fortunately Mrs. Grenby's family only were present, and as they had each received letters at the same time, the violence of Laure's first emotion had been unobserved. Mrs. Grenby with the kindest delicacy soothed her without inquiry, and Laure apologizing for the concern she had given way to, mentioned the increasing illness of Madame de Germeil. Mrs. Grenby immediately offered to take her to town the next morning if she wished it; but observed that she should hope to find their friend recovered sufficiently to allow of her return to Wincale. Laure was pleased with the proposal; but would not venture to accept it, until she had first written to Madame de Germeil.

Mr. Cosbyne, who with the good-humoured Miss Grenby, had partaken of the distress of Laure, appeared much disturbed at the prospect of her sudden departure, which the small delay occasioned by the letter very little alleviated.

Unable to rest, Laure rose the next morning at day-break, and wrote to Madame de Germeil her request to be permitted to return to town. 'I am too anxious,' she added, 'to give or receive pleasure in any society, while I am absent from you, and know you to be ill.' She was entirely silent on the intelligence of Adeline, for she knew not of what extent her fears were, and how far they were justified.

When she had dispatched the letter, she sat for some time ruminating on every particular she had heard, relating to de Saint Ouïñ; but her ideas were confused and her mind much disturbed: His own words expressed in Mademoiselle D'Ogimond's letter, had given her a shock she could not surmount: What he had done, what he was capable of doing, that should excite 'fury and resentment,' and why he was so unwilling to speak of the Comte, she was utterly at a loss to divine.

After spending two hours in the most tormenting reflections, she attempted in vain to calm her mind by air and exercise; in returning to her chamber she was met by her maid, who scarcely breathing from the agitation her intelligence communicated in a superior degree to Laure, told her that the Marquis de Saint Ouïñ was in the breakfast room, waiting to see her. She heard no more, but flew to him. He started at her entrance, joy animated every feature, and sparkled in his eyes, while he kissed her hand in a transport that seemed for a moment to overpower him; but at length his features relaxed, his countenance fell, and his colour vanished.

Shocked at such a change, Laure anxiously inquired if he was ill. When he could find utterance 'The Comte,' cried he, 'the treacherous Comte has made me suffer what this moment can scarcely compensate.'

The pang these words conveyed to the heart of Laure could only be equalled by her astonishment, and her countenance plainly indicated her consternation.

‘Forgive me,’ he exclaimed, ‘forgive me, for thus making you participate my misery. I wish to justify myself to you. O, Laure! if you knew—but he is your friend—perhaps even—yet, no, it cannot be, he is not allied to *you*.’

‘Tell me,’ said Laure, in a tremulous voice, ‘what has happened, what misunderstanding——’

‘No, no,’ interrupted the Marquis, ‘I could not misunderstand, I know too well—but why do I make you miserable? I came, I believe, only for the consolation of seeing you, I needed it much, to sooth my anguish, and prevent me from publishing to the world a black transaction, that were it known, would be fatal to—your friend.’

‘What can you mean,’ cried Laure with horror, ‘tell me what you have suffered, of what do you accuse the Comte.’

‘He offered me,’ said de Saint Ouïn, grasping her hand, ‘a reward that might have tempted —— but I could not do an action vile, cowardly, dishonorable.’

‘What are you talking of,’ said Laure vehemently, ‘tell me, I beseech you.’

‘I have said too much,’ returned he in a languid voice, ‘I have not slept for many nights, and my mind is much disturbed. You will be told,’ continued he with more quickness, ‘that I am an abandoned villain; you will hear—but I will not render you unhappy.’

‘And do you suppose,’ said Laure, ‘that such intelligence will not make me so?’

‘You interest then yourself in my welfare,’ cried he earnestly, ‘and you would be grieved to think me guilty of the base and deliberate murder of a human being?’

‘It would make me miserable,’ replied Laure, bursting into an agony of tears.

‘Then you shall not think it,’ said the Marquis with vehemence, ‘the Comte, Laure, is a base, a treacherous wretch.’ She started. ‘If I had not proofs of his infamy I could not myself believe it. You should not hear it, from me at least; but that if I am silent, I must be to you an object of horror and detestation, and that I could not endure. Look at these papers,’ continued he, ‘they were preserved by the most fortunate chance; but I will not make use of them to overwhelm him in the ruin he meant for me: I have yet shewn them only to Madame de Germeil.’

‘It is the Count’s hand,’ said Laure, trembling from head to foot, ‘what do they contain?’

‘You must not read them now,’ cried he with precipitation, ‘you are already too much agitated; keep them together with this paper, and when you hear me reviled as an

assassin, you will there find my justification. And now,' added he, 'I must leave you, for I am unfit for conversation. When do you return to London, when shall I see you again?'

Laure told him the purport of the letter she had that morning written to Madame de Germeil. The Marquis was then leaving her, but Laure reflecting on the incoherency of his manner, and that he had said he had not slept for some time, asked him who had accompanied him to Wincale, and was pleased to hear that it was Valain, a servant much attached to him. De Saint Ouin's perturbation of mind was so visible, that she would have doubted his safety had he been alone; she entreated him to take some repose the moment he got home, and he departed highly gratified by her solicitude.

Miss Grenby was the first who entered the breakfast room, after he had quitted it, and was much alarmed at the inanimate and pale countenance Laure exhibited; who half recovering her recollection at the exclamation she uttered, complained of illness, and was conducted to her chamber, where she was left to her own reflections, after having unwillingly endured a repetition of inquiries and offers of assistance. She instantly prepared to examine the letters, intrusted to her by de Saint Ouin; the first she opened was from the Comte D'Ogimond, and her soul was chilled with horror on reading the following lines.

"I have full confidence in the sacred promise my friend de Saint Ouin made before we parted, to destroy immediately all written requests or communications I sent him: His own safety would be endangered equally with mine without this precaution.—I believe you were surprised at the urgency with which I entreated you to hasten your journey, apparently to execute a commission of small importance; but I foresaw at that moment the momentous event, that would necessarily require the personal assistance of one of the most zealous of my friends. Tell me, de Saint Ouin, did I think justly when I placed you in the number?—You have always considered Lamalaige as my inveterate enemy; and others have until lately, been equally deceived. The delusion is over and he is now suspected to have been my agent, and I confess to you that this is in some measure the case. Judge then of my danger when I tell you, he will be brought to the bar very shortly, which I was obliged myself to propose, to dissipate the jealous doubts some of these Catos entertain of the sincerity and disinterestedness of my patriotism. Lamalaige thinks himself sure of my secret protection, and refuses to fly; but by heaven! if he is ever brought before them I am undone: it must not be, I have friends who will free me from an evil so pressing. Briefly then, this man must not be suffered to destroy me by affecting to stand his ground; he must be put out of the way, and that in a sure manner, it must be done quickly so, or there is no time to deliberate. De Saint Ouin, my friend, you must be my preserver; you must entitle yourself to the eternal gratitude of my daughter and Laure, and which ever your heart has chosen, you shall immediately go to England and carry with you your brevet of happiness, in my consent to an union with the object of your wishes."

"Mean time Lamalaige must not live to utter my condemnation, for such the confession that will be extorted from him, must necessarily prove to me. You may if you chuse direct another hand to strike the blow; but it will be better, far better to do it

yourself. Remember that his perdition will be the salvation of many, and thus it will be an act of mercy. I can then safely affirm that the story of his being connected with me, was a calumny raised by——and the deed done to prevent a disquisition.”

CHAP. VI.

TREMBLING and aghast, Laure had read thus far, when the paper dropped from her hand, and she remained some minutes insensible.

When she recovered she looked round her with eagerness, and hoped to find that what had passed was only a terrible dream; but the open letter caught her eye, she examined the characters, they were still the same, and she shrunk from it as from the hand of a murderer. So strong was her horror that she could not overcome it sufficiently to look at the other papers, though she was greatly interested to know in what manner the Comte had injured the character of de Saint Ouïn. At length reflecting that these testimonials of villany ought to be secured from every eye, she hastily deposited them in a place of safety.

A crowd of painful images occupied her imagination, when suddenly recollecting the sentence beginning, "which ever your heart has chosen," she felt indignant at being offered as the reward of infamy, and for the first time in her life fervently wished that there might not exist any natural tie between the Comte and herself. The amiable softness of Adeline heightened the pity she felt for her, at the certainty of her being his daughter, while her own situation of dubious rank, unavowed, and without a natural protector, appeared happy from the comparison.

A painful thought darted across the mind of Laure, when she recalled the perpetual and secret correspondence between Madame de Germeil and the Comte; but she instantly rejected with abhorrence, the idea that she was apprised of his culpable designs. She sympathized in the sufferings of de Saint Ouïn, and wished to be near him to offer consolation: his wrongs, though she knew not of what cast they were, softened her to tears, which greatly relieved the agitation of her spirits.

To quiet the alarm the family had expressed at her indisposition, Laure forced herself to appear at dinner, where she made such efforts to obtain composure, and so far succeeded, that at the return of the messenger with a permission for her to leave Wincale, Mrs. Grenby consented to conduct her to town the next morning.

Mr. Cosbyne's manner the whole day was even beyond its usual complacency and attention; but he was not lively, and the cheerful sallies that used to escape him were no more: Laure would have been too absent to remark the change, had not his sister rallied him upon it, and imputed it *en badinant*, to the approaching departure of her little friend. He admitted the charge with great gallantry; but the sudden alteration of his countenance at the observation, was to the penetrating Mrs. Grenby a more unequivocal proof of the truth of it.

Miss Grenby expressed much regret for the loss of Laure's society; Mr. Cosbyne was silent on the subject, nor did he much expatiate on any other, but in the morning when she quitted him he bade her adieu with tolerable composure.

She found Madame de Germeil seriously ill, though she seemed to exert herself to receive Laure kindly; and Adeline felt her perplexity and distress much alleviated while she embraced her beloved companion: While Mrs. Grenby staid, she contrived to draw Laure aside, and in a low voice informed her, that de Saint Ouin refused to explain the mystery of his conduct; and expressed the most earnest wish to be made acquainted with it. ‘Madame de Germeil,’ she said, ‘avoided her inquiries with such a studied evasion, that it increased her uneasiness and apprehension.’

Laure’s hesitation and confusion would have betrayed more than she intended to discover, had not Madame de Germeil, who appeared jealous of the conference, interrupted it while she was framing a reply.

When Mrs. Grenby was gone, she called Laure to her, and welcomed her return with the most affectionate and flattering expressions of delight: She was either unable or unwilling to speak of the unexpected appearance of de Saint Ouin, and Laure was little inclined to begin the subject. Mademoiselle D’Ogimond, who felt no such restraint, eagerly sought to know her sentiments upon his sudden voyage to England; but Madame de Germeil checked her importunity, which she called childish, and rather peevishly begged that she might not hear any more of it. She detained them both in her chamber until the dinner was announced, examined the countenance of Laure with the most scrupulous attention, nor did she utter a word that escaped Madame de Germeil’s ear.

The young ladies dined tête-à-tête, and the servants were hardly withdrawn when de Saint Ouin was introduced. He appeared more composed, though not less melancholy than he had been the preceding day. When he had sat five minutes, Madame de Germeil sent for Adeline, and he then entreated Laure to forgive the frantic visit she had had the compassion to tolerate at Wincale. ‘I was so much disturbed,’ he added, ‘that I scarcely know what I may have said to you.’

She assured him, she was too sincerely grieved for his distress, to be offended with any thing that was the effect of it.

‘You are, you ever were an angel,’ he exclaimed. After a pause, ‘have you,’ said he, ‘looked at those papers?’

‘I read part of a letter from the Comte,’ returned Laure with hesitation.

‘Part of the first letter? Did you then read nothing further?’

‘No, I had not courage to proceed.’

They were now summoned to Madame de Germeil’s apartment: She was unusually assiduous in paying her court to the Marquis, who received her attentions with reserve, and acknowledged them with remarkable coldness; yet he staid late and departed unwillingly, after having accepted an invitation for the next day.

In the morning Madame de Germeil reminded Adeline to call on Mrs. Grenby, and some other ladies to whom she owed the same attention; and Laure then remaining with her tête-à-tête, she desired her with much kindness, to confide to her as a friend, the opinion she had formed of Lord William Dalvening, and her motive for a rejection so prompt and peremptory.

Laure, who had not very accurately examined the cause of her dislike to this young nobleman, was surprised to find herself at a loss for a reply: at length she said in some confusion, that she had not met with many opportunities of judging of the character of Lord William; but the few observations she had made had been to his disadvantage.

‘What are his errors?’ asked Madame de Germeil.

‘I think they are faults,’ replied Laure modestly, ‘I believe him to be vain and haughty, and has often so little the command of himself, as to be ill-bred.’

‘You acknowledge, my dear Laure, that your judgment is not formed from very deep observation; suppose then you give yourself a little time either to alter or confirm it, and I will in the interim,’ she added, fixing her penetrating eyes on the face of Laure, ‘write to the Comte for his advice, and instruction, upon this, as upon every other important occasion.’

‘His advice, Madam,’ replied she with firmness and composure, ‘I cannot claim, for I reject his interference.’

Madame de Germeil regarded her with amazement;—it was indeed Laure who had spoken. Her eyes were bent to the ground, and her countenance was serene; but it had lost the smile that usually adorned it.

‘De Saint Ouïn,’ said Madame de Germeil, after a long pause, ‘saw you I know at Wincale; he is himself deceived, and has I find misled you.’

‘Ah, madam,’ returned she, ‘can you then restore to the Marquis the good opinion he so well merited of the world, can you restore him his happiness, his fame, and his country?’

‘What has he mentioned to you?’ demanded Madame de Germeil hastily.

‘He has told me nothing; but those letters too well inform me.’

‘Imprudent!’ exclaimed she, then checking herself, ‘Laure, I cannot yet,—I am not authorized—I have already written to the Comte, and you shall be convinced that de Saint Ouïn has misapprehended every thing. He will himself, I am sure, retract his error, and until that time restrain your reflections, which are rash, and incompatible with the respect and obedience you owe the Comte.’

‘Tell me, madam,’ cried Laure eagerly, ‘has he a natural right to those sentiments from me, or does he claim them in return for the benefits he has bestowed on me? Tell me, in short, I intreat you, if you can, tell me who are the authors of my being, and why I was brought into the Comte’s family?’

Finding that Madame de Germeil hesitated, ‘Do not,’ resumed she, ‘be afraid of shocking my vanity by divulging the truth; was I born in a cottage, was I destined for the lowest station in life, and have I been raised from it by the too liberal and mistaken bounty of the Comte?’

‘You ask me,’ said Madame de Germeil, ‘what I cannot answer; but why is all this vehemence, and to what purpose your last question?’

‘I should be happy to learn that it was so,’ resumed Laure, ‘for then perhaps I might think of my father without a blush.’

‘When did you read those letters?’

‘I began them at Wincale; but I finished them only last night.’

‘You have not returned them then,’ said Madame de Germeil impatiently, ‘let me see them.’

Laure hesitated; she would hardly allow herself to form a suspicion that deceit or perfidy were intended, yet she thought the papers of such infinite importance, that she shuddered at the idea of their passing into other hands, and reflected with an anxiety her own probity condemned, that she was delivering an indubitable testimony of the innocence of de Saint Ouin, into the power of the Comte’s most approved friend. Ashamed however of acknowledging her fears even to herself, she went slowly to her own apartment, and insensibly prolonged the time of opening her escrutore, and searching for the letters, until Madame de Germeil impatient at her delay, sent to hasten her.

In returning as she passed the staircase, she heard the Marquis’s voice in the hall, inquiring for Madame de Germeil: Laure waited ’till he was conducted up stairs, and immediately followed him into the room, when going up to him with quickness, ‘Madame de Germeil,’ said she, putting the papers into his hands, ‘wishes to see these.’

Without deliberating a moment, he presented them to her; she took them with apparent complacency, and having looked over them for a few minutes returned them to de Saint Ouin. Laure then withdrew, very well satisfied with the termination of an affair so delicate; and the Marquis did not stay long after she had quitted the room.

When Adeline returned she told Madame de Germeil she had met the Duke of Harmington, who had announced his intention of calling the next day.

‘Imagine to yourself, my dear Laure,’ continued Mademoiselle D’Ogimond, laughing, ‘the poor Duke making the most ridiculous mistake! Mrs. Malvert gave me a written sonnet to read aloud, and when I returned it to her she put it in her pocket, and threw the envelope on the table; the Duke fancying it was the sonnet, took it up, and waving his head backwards and forwards as if he were reading, bestowed on the blank cover all the admiration he meant for its contents.’

Madame de Germeil checked the mirth of Adeline, with an asperity she now practised on many occasions; and desired her to think of the Duke of Harmington as the friend of her father, and not consider him in any other view. Mademoiselle D’Ogimond appeared much mortified at the reprehension, and was silent. The ill-humour of Madame de Germeil was only removed by the presence of de Saint Ouïn, who returned at the dinner hour. Laure’s spirits revived at his entrance, and he too dismissed part of his melancholy at the welcome they bestowed on him.

Madame de Germeil was the whole evening all condescension and courtesy: the presence of Adeline precluded every idea of entering on the hateful subject that could alone have discomposed her. The gloom gradually vanished from the countenance of de Saint Ouïn, and Laure was delighted to see him apparently less unhappy: He stayed until Madame de Germeil prepared to retire, and then took his leave as usual with reluctance.

CHAP. VII.

MADAME de L'ARMINIERE a French lady, who was in the habits of intimacy with Madame de Germeil, and the young ladies, called the next day, and observing that she meant very shortly to make the tour of England, pressed them with earnestness to accompany her.

The Duke of Harmington, who had just entered, seconded the proposal very warmly; he asserted that Madame de Germeil would certainly find a change of air beneficial to her health, and offered a variety of propos en l'air to prove it. 'Should you determine,' continued he, 'in favor of the excursion, I hope to obtain permission to meet you often in your route, and be allowed the honor of directing your attention to such objects as are most worthy of engaging it.'

Madame de Germeil professed herself much flattered with the interest his Grace took in her welfare; but waved her assent to the proposition, until she had given it some consideration. She was far from being the dupe of his pretended zeal for her health, which she properly attributed to the attractions of her pupils; and she chose to encourage his admiration by displaying their accomplishments. — Laure sung in a superior stile, and the old Duke was much captivated with the harmony and extent of her voice, which Mademoiselle D'Ogimond accompanied on the harp.

While they were thus occupied Lord William Dalvening was announced, who was not much delighted with the rapturous expressions of applause that fell from the lips of the Duke. It is true he entertained the modest idea, that there existed but few men whose merits could be placed in competition with his own; but he imagined that the Comte meant to dispose of his daughter and Laure to the best advantage, and he was not singular in this opinion.

Lord William had sent very constantly while Madame de Germeil remained indisposed, and hearing she was better, he went immediately in person to obtain her interest with Laure in his behalf, and was not a little chagrined at finding her so engaged as to make it improbable that he should be heard that morning; he was not deceived in this conjecture, and retired with a discomposure of temper, that was very apparent, and on which Laure and her friend expatiated when they were alone, without much indulgence. In the evening Madame de Germeil received a note from him, requesting a conference the next morning. She assented to his demand, and observing to Laure, that it was not difficult to imagine what would be his subject, desired to learn if she still continued to think unfavorably of him. Laure readily affirmed that her opinion was unchanged. Madame de Germeil then replied with great condescension, that she would acquaint him with it.

The disappointment was softened to Lord William as much as possible; yet he received it with a mixed surprise and displeasure, he was at no pains to conceal, and left the house in sullen discontent.

The Duke became remarkably assiduous, in his attendance on Madame de Germeil, which so much gratified her, that she no longer withheld her consent to the proposed tour, which it was agreed should take place in a fortnight.

Neither Adeline nor Laure were much delighted with the prospect of this expedition: they did not dare to betray the least symptom of dislike to the Duke in the presence of Madame de Germeil, who defended him with very despotic arguments: Madame de L'Arminiere they thought a very good kind of a woman, but not an amusing companion. Adeline felt concerned at leaving her friend de Saint Ouin in London, and Laure was still more grieved on reflecting that he was not in a state of mind to relish its amusements, or enlarge the circle of his acquaintance.

One morning as she was seated in the drawing-room, thinking more upon this subject than any other, he entered: A ray of pleasure illumined his countenance on seeing her alone. 'My dear little friend,' he exclaimed, 'I have been three days anxiously wishing for such an opportunity as this. I have received a letter from my father; will you interest yourself so far about me as to give me your opinion on what it contains?'——

'Perhaps,' said Laure, 'I may not have time to do that, and read it too, before we are interrupted; tell me then as much of it as you think proper.'

'My father insists,' replied the Marquis,——'but I had rather you would read.'

'What does he insist?' asked Laure.

'That I loudly justify myself,' returned he, 'which I can only do by criminating the Comte. He renounces me if I hesitate, and at the same time tells me, he had already begun to clear my character by exposing the fact. What does the lovely Laure advise me to do?'

'How can I counsel you?' she replied much distressed, 'I am the last person in the world——did you not say your father would renounce you?'

'He affirms it most solemnly,' returned de Saint Ouin, 'but will you not hate me, Laure if I obey him?'

'Why should I contemn you for doing yourself justice?' she replied, 'I might indeed hate you, had you been capable of the crimes so unjustly imputed to you.'

'You think then I had better——'

'Oh do not ask me,' interrupted she, 'what can I say?'

'But I must then relinquish the sight of you,' said de Saint Ouin mournfully, 'for Madame de Germeil will keep no terms with me, when I tell her the measures I mean to

pursue. Neither indeed ought I to appear in any degree connected with her; and yet to give up the happiness of sometimes seeing and conversing with you, is an effort that nothing could enable me to make, but the horror of that infamy to which the treacherous Comte would otherwise doom me.'

Laure who had felt some confusion during this speech, now forgot it in her anxiety for the fate of the Comte. 'What will become of him?' she cried.

'I have been informed,' said the Marquis, 'and I have every reason to believe, that the strength of his party is so great and its credit so high in Paris, that it will shield him from any injury or punishment that could be inflicted on him from the discovery, without such a powerful support. But tell me, too charming Laure, will you sometimes spare a thought to the unhappy de Saint Ouin?'

'Why should I not?' she replied, 'do you think me capricious?'

'Oh, no, no,' returned he with enthusiasm, 'you are all goodness, and perfection.'

'I do not recollect,' said Laure with a smile, 'that I called for so high a compliment: Do you know that Madame de Germeil has consented to the travelling plan?'

'No, I did not,' replied he hastily, 'who is your party?'

'Only Madame L'Arminiere,' returned Laure, 'and the Duke of Harmington, who meets us sometimes en route.'

De Saint Ouin appeared thoughtful and made no reply.

'We shall set out I believe in less than a fortnight,' she added.

'I ought to determine,' said de Saint Ouin with a sigh, 'to quit London immediately. Perhaps,' added he, taking her hand, 'I shall then see you no more; and after a time, I am afraid, you will cease to think of me.'

Laure had not fortitude to sustain the idea of a lasting separation, and burst into tears. Such a sight made him forget the restraint he had with difficulty imposed upon himself, and he avowed for her a passion, which he affirmed had begun almost in childhood. This declaration overwhelmed the mind of Laure with a sensation far different from that she had experienced when Lord William had addressed her on the same subject, and she was for some time unable to utter a syllable.

At length when he urged her forgiveness for a discovery so ill timed, her silence, her looks, and manner, all revealed that she had not heard him with displeasure, and his importunity soon induced her to acknowledge it. The idea of his situation and misfortunes was lost in the transport of this confession, and he was ardently thanking her for the

happiness it had conferred upon him, when Laure heard somebody advance from the anti-room, and conscious of an agitation, she did not dare to account for, hastily escaped by another door and gained her own chamber.

Here while she ruminated with a mixture of pleasure and anxiety on what had passed, a reflection arose that embittered her satisfaction, and redoubled her care: Would it not be thought that she conspired with the enemies of the Count to injure him, were it known that she had any correspondence with de Saint Ouïn. She could not support the idea of concealment and intrigue, and yet she thought it would be the utmost injustice to slight and condemn the attachment of the Marquis for no other reason, but that he had been cruelly and basely betrayed. She quickly turned from a subject she could not consider without feeling a horror for the Comte that amounted to detestation.

Laure had ever been attached to de Saint Ouïn with the most lively friendship, and since he had been in England, it was much increased by the tender compassion she felt for his unmerited wrongs. After much deliberation, she determined to apply once more to Madame de Germeil, to be informed of the circumstances of her birth, and the motive of the interest the Comte had taken in her destiny.

Should she persist in declaring that she was unable to answer her inquiry, she resolved to appeal to the Comte himself for information; and if he avowed himself her father, unworthy as he was of the sacrifice, she meant to give up de Saint Ouïn; though the determination was agony to her mind, newly awaken'd to the softest emotions of grateful love. She learnt at dinner by the serenity of Madame de Germeil's countenance, that she was not yet acquainted with the intention of the Marquis, and she was not sorry he had delayed informing her of it, because she could not give up the hope of seeing him once again.

CHAP. VIII.

SCARCELY a day now passed without being marked by some attention of the Duke, or of which he did not spend some part with them: Mrs. Grenby heard of this extraordinary attendance, and wrote to Madame de Germeil to learn which was the fortunate object of his particular admiration; for she observed he had never been suspected of laying so regular a siege to the heart of any woman, as it was now imagined he did to one of the trio in Park-Lane.

The Marquis de Saint Ouïn, not daring to hope that he might again have the good fortune to find Laure alone, put a letter into her hand the first time he called after the tête-à-tête, unobserved by Adeline who was in the room. She opened it, not without fear and trepidation, when she found herself alone. He thanked her with all the fervor of the sincerest gratitude for the indulgence with which she had listened to him, and said that he would only entreat to receive one letter from her, as he should be miserable, were he to involve her in his disgrace and difficulties, from drawing her into a correspondence with him at the present crisis; and he would defer speaking to Madame de Germeil until she had honored him with an answer. He then proceeded to inform her of his plan, which was to leave Valain in England when he left it, that he might sometimes have the consolation of hearing of her, and by this method, if she would allow it, she might learn his fate. He concluded with telling her, that the approaching separation, was softened by a firm and ardent hope, that she might at a future period, find herself at liberty to follow the dictates of the sensibility and compassion she had so sweetly manifested for him.

Though Laure did not comprehend by what means Valain was to communicate to her any intelligence of the Marquis, yet she was pleased with the idea that she should not be entirely precluded from the possibility of hearing of his welfare. In her answer she imparted to him her resolution of learning her origin, either from Madame de Germeil or the Comte, and acknowledged her fears, that it would not be what the Marquis his father would approve in any degree.

When de Saint Ouïn had received this letter, he determined immediately to inform Madame de Germeil of his resolution, respecting the Comte. She was confounded at the firmness he displayed, and earnestly endeavoured by a variety of arguments to shake his purpose. She represented to him the inevitable ruin to which he would expose the Comte, his loss of fortune, fame, and life.

De Saint Ouïn replied, though with much temper, that he had lately discovered but too surely, the strength of the party which the Comte headed, to fear on his account any personal danger from the discovery of his villany, that his ruin could be effected only by the repeated and vigorous efforts of a set of men, whose penetration would discover his duplicity, and whose probity would abhor it, and he would have many opportunities of escaping from justice, provided he did not draw it too suddenly on his head, by a rapid succession of plots and conspiracies.

Madame de Germeil foreseeing in the high credit and power of the old Marquis a formidable source of uneasiness, laid aside the reserve she had 'till now in some measure preserved.

'Come, come, de Saint Ouin,' said she, 'I know very well the reason that you have hitherto temporized. I am authorized to promise you the hand of your favorite Laure, if you will live quietly in England, and take no more notice of this affair.'

He returned to her proposition a look of the highest indignation.

'This offer,' continued she, 'will be made to you no more, if you reject it look to yourself.'

'I shall,' replied he, with a contempt he could not restrain, 'and if your good friend the Comte, a second time, attempts my life, I trust that he will a second time fail.'

As he uttered this he left the room, and Madame de Germeil was too much confounded to make any effort to prevent him. When she recovered her recollection, she instantly dispatched the substance of this conversation to the Comte; and lamenting to him the fatal precipitation with which he usually acted, advised him to pursue such measures as she pointed out, to extricate himself from the effects of what she called his imprudence. Yet she now scarcely hoped that he would have wisdom enough to profit by the coolness of her judgment, as she found her counsel generally counteracted by his weakness and impetuosity, when it was not enforced by her presence.

Her next task was to compose her countenance, and veil her emotion from every eye; in this she so well succeeded, that Laure, who watched every look with the most solicitous observance, could not perceive any departure from her usual serenity; but she judged that the explanation must have taken place by the continued absence of de Saint Ouin: A week had now passed and he had never made his appearance. Adeline had been told that he had left town, and expressed herself astonished at the cold rudeness of his neglect, in not calling to take leave.

Laure, who felt restless and unsettled when she no longer hoped to see the Marquis, found some relief in the prospect of the approaching journey; she was disappointed however in the effect she expected from it: Change of place sometimes alleviated her ennui, but it could never dissipate it; and when she had travelled some hundred miles, she was glad to obtain a respite from continual motion.

Madame de Germeil was prevailed with to make a short stay at Harrogate: it was now the latter end of June, and the place so remarkably crowded that they could only find accommodation at one of the hotels, where every guest dines without discrimination at the same table; and as Madame de Germeil purposed only to stay a few days, she submitted, though with much reluctance to this regulation.

They arrived late in the evening, and used the privilege allowed to travellers of supping in private. Their equipage and suit had awakened universal attention: what at such a place is termed an arrival, is never a slight event to the loungers, with which it is usually over-run; but the new guests caused an unusual commotion, which was not in the least diminished when inquiry had illustrated their rank.

Two or three gentlemen sauntering near the door, when the carriages first stopped, had taken a survey of the young ladies, and made a report which though it was thought extravagant, effectually discomposed the fair-one, who had 'till then been in possession of the apple. Every man who was not soured into apathy by gout, or rheumatism, palsy or dropsy, rose an hour before his accustomed time, in the hope of getting a peep at his new neighbours; and every woman who had the most distant pretensions to youth, or beauty, left her chamber full five minutes sooner than usual for the same purpose; but in vain. The strangers fatigued with the length of their journey the day before, slept very composedly until late, and then breakfasted by themselves. At length when the curiosity of the expectants had been blunted by disappointment, they gave up the point from lassitude, and endeavoured to find out another amusement or occupation.

When Madame de Germeil and her party entered the dining-room, they were greeted with respect by their eating associates, who complimented them with the upper seats, a mark of attention very seldom bestowed; for strangers, however high their rank, are generally permitted to take the last and most inconvenient place in the room, and rise to distinction and ease by seniority alone, a hint which was very probably taken from certain illustrious seminaries of wisdom and virtue.

On one side of Laure was placed the Duke of Harmington, and on the other, a Baronet not less distinguished for the antiquity of his family than for the urbanity of his manners, and the steady rectitude of his character. He was nearly seventy; a little, active, spare man, of a lively aspect, which exhibited the most invincible good humour. He was charmed with the soft modesty with which Laure returned his salutation, and entered into conversation with her with a freedom, his age and inoffensive demeanour amply tolerated.

Opposed to him in situation, as in many other things, was his comely wife, coarse in her person, and immensely fat. She was considerably younger than Sir Edward; but made what is usually termed a good wife, that is, she never intrigued with any other man; probably because the passion of gaming, which she indulged in the extreme, absorbed every other. To this she had sacrificed beauty and constitution. The Duke had attended some of her parties, in the last of the few winters she had passed in town, where her husband notwithstanding his unbounded indulgence in every other respect, seldom allowed her to go: in this, as in a few other instances, he displayed a firmness, that surprised all those who were well acquainted with the natural docility of his temper.

Madame de Germeil in compliment to the Duke, engaged Sir Edward and Lady Lockyer to pass the evening with them: after supper cards were proposed and immediately accepted; and Lady Lockyer soon engaged the Duke to bet with her to a

considerable amount: on these occasions, she would never suffer Sir Edward to play, yet she chose to keep him close to her elbow, and appeal to him when she lost any capital sum, against the injustice of fortune. He would have endured the confinement without repining, had she suffered him to sleep quietly on his post; but the duty was rendered more severe, from being obliged to sooth her anxiety, which was never moderate, and answer to every distinct exclamation. Unwilling to exasperate her, by an omission of these ceremonies, and at the same time unable to set several hours in total inactivity, and not “steep his senses in forgetfulness,” he acquired a habit of hearing and answering her without discontinuing his slumbers; and the better to secure them from interruption, he usually contrived to place himself nearly behind her chair.

Not dreaming of disaster, Sir Edward had began his evening nap, when the Duke made a bet of five hundred pounds with Lady Lockyer, in which the odds appeared much in her favor; but by an unlucky turn of fortune, or the mal-addressed of the lady, she lost it in less than two seconds; stung with vexation, she instantly spread the cards on the table, and insisted upon making Sir Edward comprehend the hardship of the thing, and the several reasons she had to hope it would have been otherwise. Either his sleep at that moment happened to be more profound than usual, and his answer less alert, or her agitation making her turn short upon him in the midst of her demonstration, discovered the unlucky subterfuge at a moment when her patience already very much irritated, gave way entirely to the provocation: she threw the cards in Sir Edward’s face, and reproached him so vehemently with supineness and duplicity, that he was touched with remorse, and paid the unlucky bett to atone for the offence.

The compassion of every individual was so strongly engaged for the poor husband, that it checked the risibility the scene occasioned. He was obliged to set the remainder of the evening with his eyes strained asunder like a newly started hare, to convince his inexorable wife of his determination to sin no more.

CHAP. IX.

THE next morning the Duke proposed to conduct the ladies to Fort Montague, a very high rock on the bank of a river, commanding a charming view; but the natural beauties of the spot, though very attractive, would not have been sufficiently powerful perhaps, to have excited the attention of the numbers that crowded to see and admire it, had it not been disfigured and celebrated by the industry of a poor weaver, who had in the intervals of his work at the loom, by painful and laborious gradations, cut a habitation in this rock for himself and his family.

He had finished the first story when he was seized with his last illness, and conjured his son not to abandon the project; but to finish a second and third, which the height of the rock would very well admit of.

The son had improved on the plan and cut the summit of his castle into battlements, which were accommodated with wooden guns, and decorated on gala-days with a flag. The garden had been formed with equal labour, for every particle of mould it contained, had been carried to it from the distance of half a mile, by the joint efforts of the weaver and an ass: it was adorned with numberless arbours, formed of bent osier twigs, encircled with scarlet beans, for the accommodation of the company from Harrogate, who went in parties to drink tea, and from every set, the happy weaver received a gratification.

As the Duke could not venture to accompany the young ladies who chose to walk, he sent with them one of his servants who was acquainted with the place; Madame L'Arminiere chaperoned them, and the Duke conducted Madame de Germeil in his curriole.

The day was cool and pleasant, and the party on foot delighted at being liberated from the confinement of a close carriage, were much pleased with their walk. When they had proceeded about two-thirds of the way, they were met by half a dozen young men on horseback, and one of them instantly recognizing the livery of the Duke, concluded from his known character, that the ladies his servant attended, were proper subjects for a certain easy kind of conversation, and accosted them without much ceremony; at the same moment the countenance of Laure catching his eye, he alighted from his horse, and with an oath of surprise attempted to walk by her side.

Unused to such familiar treatment, and terrified at the brutal stare of this uncivil intruder, who was more than half intoxicated, though it was yet early in the day, Laure stopt, and the Duke's servant interfered, but with much respect. The gentleman swore at him vehemently, and offered to box him, his companions eagerly seconded this absurd proposal, and surrounding the fellow, insisted that he should strip.

He urged with much propriety, the necessity of executing his master's commands, which must be neglected if he complied with their demand. A young Irishman of the

party now interposed, and asserting that the man's observation was very just, said, he ought to be suffered to proceed.

The frolic, however was found too excellent to be relinquished, they remarked that the ladies had another servant with them, and agreed that *la lanterne*, the name they bestowed on Mademoiselle D'Ogimond's footman, might very well take care of them.

The Frenchman perceiving the inebriety of the adverse party, and finding that they detained his comrade against his will, with more gallantry than wit, attempted his rescue, and was immediately thrown over an hedge into a deep ditch on the opposite side, where he lay up to his chin in mud, roaring with terror and vexation.

The young man who had persuaded his companions to desist, ashamed of appearing a party in so indecent an outrage, advanced to Madame L'Arminiere, and addressing her in french, observed that the aggressors were not in a state to be argued with, and begged that she would allow him the honor of escorting her and her friends, where they wished to go.

By this time *Babtiste* had scrambled back over the hedge, and appeared with a forlorn lengthened visage, scratched with briars, and disfigured with mud; a portion of which he drew into his open mouth and nostrils with his breath, which surprise anger and dismay had almost deprived him of.—Madame L'Arminiere saw that it would be impossible to detain him in this unhappy situation, and Adeline dismissed him with an injunction to hasten home and take care of himself. The loud laugh of his spirited persecutors followed him until he was out of hearing.

The Duke's servant finding he could not disengage himself, prepared to comply with their brutal caprice, and Madame L'Arminiere very much distressed accepted the proposal of the young Irishman, which he again repeated with increasing respect: she thought of returning to Harrogate, but being reminded by Laure that Madame de Germeil would be alarmed if they did not appear at the appointed time, they proceeded to Fort Montague, which was not a mile from the place of their disaster.

By the way, their conductor, eager to avert the censure arising from being found in such company, informed the ladies that he was overtaken by them, on his way to Harrogate: two of them he acknowledged to be his friends, who would be very much mortified, he said, when they recovered their reason, at the disgrace they had incurred. He learnt from them, he added, that they had been to Knaresborough, to meet some officers quartered there, and had set drinking the whole night.

When the ladies reached the place of appointment, they found Madame de Germeil and the Duke looking out for them with much impatience; they had waited half an hour beyond the time which the walk could have possibly taken, and their surprise at seeing them arrive accompanied by a stranger, and without an attendant, was very evident. Madame L'Arminiere explained the cause of the substitution, and the Duke was struck dumb with rage and indignation; but though he lost the use of his tongue, it was

not thus with his teeth, which he unhappily gnashed in the heat of his resentment, with such vehemence, that they were utterly discomposed with the shock, and fell from their station in great disorder; filling his mouth which he kept fast closed, so completely, that he was nearly choaked by a straggler that popt into his throat. The more distressing his situation became, the less was he inclined to make it known; his only hope of escaping a mortification so intolerable, was by a sudden flight.

The young Irishman whose name was Fitzpier, had observed the first flash of indignation that had animated the Duke's countenance, and attributed the succeeding emotion to an increase of resentment: he lamented the insult but gently insinuated its extenuation, from the excessive intoxication of the offenders. Before the conclusion of his harrangue, the Duke was obliged to determine upon an expeditious retreat, and turning his back suddenly on the whole company, marched off at a very quick pace. The ladies astonished at this unaccountable desertion, looked at each other in silence, and Mr. Fitzpier entreated that they would generously endeavour to mitigate the wrath of the Duke, which would otherwise fall heavily on his two thoughtless friends, whose only expectation of promotion in the army, he well knew, was derived from the interest of his Grace's political connexions. He then followed him, to inforce the doctrine of forgiveness of injuries; for he was seriously alarmed lest in the first transports of his anger, the Duke on discovering the names of the aggressors, should blast their rising fortunes for ever.

Fitzpier soon overtook him, for the Duke was obliged to halt a little to recover breath, when he had trotted about a hundred paces; he had just deposited his teeth in his pocket, and the young man's gravity was rather discomposed at the uncommon appearance his face exhibited: it was puckered into a variety of wrinkles, every one of which meeting at his mouth, made the figure of a star with a line directed to every point of the compass. The Duke mumbled something, which he meant as an apology for the abruptness of his retreat, and Fitzpier then began to suspect some part of the fact.

When his Grace arrived at the spot where he had left his carriage, he dispatched a servant to Madame de Germeil, to say he would rejoin her in ten minutes; he then proceeded to a small inn to adjust the inconvenient *derangement* he had undergone, and this ceremony over, he returned to the ladies; Fitzpier had in this short time so well pleaded the cause of his friends, that the Duke consented to wave his resentment and accept an apology, he even interceded with Madame de Germeil that he might be permitted to join the party, which was readily granted at his request. They had no reason to repent their condescension, for they found him sensible and amiable, his manners were polite, and his attention respectful.

Madame de Germeil sent for a carriage, the ladies returned together to Harrogate, and the Duke took his new favorite with him into his curricule.

As they rode up a Lane leading to the green, their attention was very forcibly called to a figure they discovered to be General Williams, who was walking, not in a very soldierly style, though he constantly faced to the right and left alternately at every step, and took up as much space in the road as a baggage waggon: sauntering very leisurely in

a narrow part of it, a ragged sailor, who had found some difficulty in passing him, asked rather impatiently, what the devil he made so many tacks for, when he might run right before the wind if he chose it? The General took no further notice of the question, than by drawing a handful of silver from his pocket, and throwing it in the dirt, at the man's feet. 'I shall take your money,' said the sailor, stooping to pick it up, 'because I want it to mend my rigging; but I think as how master, you might as well have handed it over to me.'

Every body who was in hearing of the reproof, smiled at it, which did not however discompose the solemn importance of the general's countenance. He stopt the Duke's curricule to speak to Mr. Fitzpier, and detained it until Mademoiselle D'Ogimond's carriage came up, which was equally obliged to stop from the narrowness of the road, and disregarding Fitzpier's observation of the obstruction they occasioned, stuck his foot on the wheel, and his hands under his arms, and continued talking, while a formidable string was collecting in the rear; for it was near the general dinner hour, and every body was hurrying home to dress. He then stretched out his neck with some marks of satisfaction, to see how far the cavalcade reached, and Fitzpier provoked at his deliberate insolence, called out hastily, 'fare you well, general, take care of your foot!' The Duke took the hint and drove on, while the general, without moving an inch from the spot, stood until the carriages had gone by, though they were every one actually within half a foot of his nose as they passed.

CHAP. X.

IN the evening there was a dance as usual, at one of the houses, and Madame de Germeil being too much an invalid to bear the heat of a crowded room, entrusted the care of the young ladies to her friend. Mr. Fitzpierz who had been since the morning formally introduced to the whole party, by a nobleman of his own country, well known to Madame de Germeil and the Duke, engaged Laure's hand for the evening, and the vivacity of his conversation, co-operating with her favorite exercise, recalled to his fair partner's eyes some part of the life and gaiety which had lately deserted them. He told her that his friends regretted most poignantly the outrage their ill-chosen companions had led them to commit, and they had commissioned him to assure the ladies they had so grossly offended, of their shame and penitence for what had happened.

'I think,' said Laure with great sweetness, 'that contrition will always entitle a moderate offender to forgiveness: I readily grant them mine, and if,' continued she smiling, 'your intercession to Madame L'Arminiere meets with a success as rapid as that you employed to soften the Duke, your friends may rejoice in having so able an advocate.'

'My argument to the Duke,' replied Fitzpierz laughing, 'had the merit of being quite an impromptu; but unhappily it is of such a peculiar nature, that I cannot make use of it to any other person.' He then related the adventure of the teeth, which he said the Duke could not contrive to conceal from him, and he had made advantage of the discovery, by hinting to his Grace, that if he intended to resent their behaviour, it would be adviseable to prevent this event from reaching their knowledge. 'I must confess,' added Fitzpierz, 'that I believe there was a kind of tacit agreement between us, which I am perhaps infringing, by entrusting *you* with the secret, who are the last person in the world, he would wish to have it known to; but I could not otherwise account for this wonderful effect of my eloquence, which I do not chuse that you should impute to art magic.'

Adeline had been alarmed lest the Duke should propose dancing with her, and did not hesitate to decide that she should much prefer sitting still the whole evening; but he, who was in truth *fearfully* and *wonderfully made*, cautiously eluded every subject that could possibly lead to a proposal so dangerous, and Mademoiselle D'Ogimond was not at all displeas'd at his wary reserve, especially as the young Earl of —— was substituted in his place.

When the dance was over, Laure happened to take a seat near General Williams, who possessing a person very well adapted for the purpose, had stretched himself into the figure of a crucified punch; suddenly however starting from his position, he recollected that he was thirsty, and called for water, which was brought to him; but he found it entirely unpalatable, and not fit to be drank, and desired the waiter to dispatch his groom to London, with orders to convey immediately to his master a dozen bottles of water from C—lt—n—House.

‘General,’ said Fitzpier, ‘when you have once set the fellow going, do let him turn a little out of his way, and dip a flask in the *Ganges* for me.’

The laugh this sally occasioned, was not subsided, when Sir Edward’s notability not permitting him to miss what he thought an excellent opportunity of getting several commissions of his own executed without expence, he called out eagerly, ‘My good Sir, if you send to London—excuse the liberty I take—but it would be of such singular convenience to me—and you know it is so difficult to spare a servant from his particular occupation, let it be what it will he is always wanted in it—now my dear Sir, I give a grand entertainment next week at Lockyer-Place, and my Lady, who is to be sure a very fine woman, — but she leaves all these things entirely to me, and I fancy I may affirm without being vain of it, that I have a tolerable knack of conducting such matters: indeed I have an excellent cook, a very excellent cook! I don’t say a word against the kitchen maids, I believe them to be very good girls: indeed I chuse all the women servants myself, Lady Lockyer will have nothing to do with it, and one and all they are excellent girls, one and all ——’

Galled as the General had been by the shaft Fitzpier had let fly at him, he lost all patience at this tedious harrangue, which branched out in a style that precluded all possibility of its ever coming to a point, and was uttered in the same tone and key used to itinerant bears and dancing dogs. He damned all the excellent girls together, not forgetting however to particularize the cook and kitchen maids; and in the latter part of the ejaculation he included their master, to round off the sentence with proper emphasis and dignity. He then rose from his seat which chanced to be the extremity of a covered bench, that had at the same moment the honor of supporting Lady Lockyer, who placed quite at the other end, was making her cassino party with such eagerness and alacrity, that she was entirely ignorant of the arrangement Sir Edward was endeavouring to make, for the benefit of the grand entertainment at Lockyer-Place. The instant the General moved from his station, the bench losing all kind of equilibrium, fell suddenly with her Ladyship; and the opposite end rising with proportionate velocity, struck him a furious blow on the right shoulder, as he was wheeling half round to take his first step. Good heavens, what excessive indignation trembled on his lip, and darted from his eye! This was not a moment for reflection, so he seized the innocent Sir Edward, from whom he imagined he had received the blow, and retorted it with almost equal violence.

Every sound was now lost in an universal peal of laughter, which incensed the General to continue the exercise; but Sir Edward recovering a little from his astonishment, at this unexpected attack, skipped from side to side with infinite address and agility, and without losing his temper, expostulated, intreated and explained, with such volubility and perseverance, that Fitzpier, when his convulsion was a little subsided, rescued him before he had received a second blow, much to the disappointment of Lady Lockyer, who having been raised from the ground, was making a bett on the strength of Sir Edward’s activity, that his opponent would not be able to strike him more than once in two minutes.

The moment he was released, he joined very freely in the laugh he had himself occasioned, without any resentment against the General, who forgot the ceremony of offering an apology, and not chusing to wait the result of his water embassy to C—It—on-House, left the place early the next morning.

CHAP. XI.

THE second day after the dance Laure accompanied Madame L'Arminiere in a tête-à-tête walk: on their return, they were met a quarter of a mile from the house by Fitzpier and the Duke of Harmington, the former securing the pleasure of escorting Laure, left to the Duke the honor of conducting her companion, and very politely giving them the *pas*, detained Laure a few paces behind.

'I was yesterday at Knaresborough,' said he in a low voice, 'where I met very unexpectedly, a friend of mine who has the happiness of being known to you.'

'Who can it be?' cried Laure, with an emotion she could not account for.

'Who can it be,' repeated he significantly, 'but de Saint Ouïn!'

Laure started, the colour retreated from her cheeks and again returned with redoubled glow, her inquiring eye rose for an instant, and sunk again to the ground in the most painful confusion.

Fitzpier was hurt at the distress he had occasioned; but fearful of losing the opportunity of the present moment, as they were very near the house, he put a letter into her hand, without uttering a syllable.

The reluctance of Laure to receive it by the intervention of a young man, who was almost a stranger to her, was considerably increased by an emotion almost of resentment, which she felt at the idea of having been betrayed to him; and her opened hand rejected the offered letter indignantly.

Fitzpier alarmed for the success of his enterprize, put on an irresistible look of good-humoured supplication, and earnestly entreated her not to aggravate the misery of his friend by such cruelty. 'Resolve to be merciful,' he added, 'and resolve quickly; for if you will not take the letter, I shall be under the necessity of applying to some nymph less fair but more obliging; I shall never have courage enough to give de Saint Ouïn the mortification of seeing it returned to him, so I must deliver it to somebody.'

At this minute the Duke half stopping turned his head, and Madame L'Arminiere mechanically following his example, Laure could make no further resistance, and hastily put the letter out of sight. Fitzpier satisfied with the advantage he had gained, marched up to Madame L'Arminiere, and they all entered the house together.

When Laure retired to dress for dinner, the letter was drawn twenty times from her pocket, and replaced with a repeated determination to return it to Fitzpier the first opportunity. She looked attentively at the address, and was well assured the writing was de Saint Ouïn's. Insensibly the examination was in two minutes renewed, and the contemplation of the seal was still a more fascinating amusement; it produced a very

courageous and firm intention of writing immediately to the Comte; for Madame de Germeil still evaded giving her the information she so ardently wished, of the motive of her elevation into his family.

Laure was much terrified lest Madame de Germeil or Adeline should discover by means of the servants that de Saint Ouin was so near them. The delicacy of her friendship was wounded, when she thought of the impossibility of confiding her anxiety to the unsuspecting Adeline, whose misfortune in having such a father as the Comte, excited her tenderest pity: a minute's reflection on this subject brought the letter back again to her hand, she hesitated; to return it unopened she thought would appear unkind and contemptuous, and yet she could not shut her eyes on the impropriety of de Saint Ouin's conduct, in thus preserving a communication with her, while she was still under the immediate protection of the Comte D'Ogimond. So much time had elapsed in irresolution that before she had decided on what was to be done, she was obliged to appear at dinner.

Fitzpier's manner was the whole day so particularly delicate and respectful, that Laure felt in a small degree reconciled to the idea of his knowing her prepossession for the Marquis, which she had tormented herself with thinking he had certainly guessed.

In the evening when Madame de Germeil's attention was engaged, he seized an opportunity of asking Laure to favor him with a commission to Knaresborough, which he intended to take in his ride, he said, the next morning. 'And pray,' added he smiling, 'let it be a letter; but observe, I shall only be inclined to carry a single sheet of paper, and if the address is not properly written, and should not have the good fortune to please me, I am such a strange fellow that I shall probably not charge myself with it.'

'I beg, Mr. Fitzpier,' said Laure with a deep blush, 'that you will have the goodness to take back the paper you left in my hands this morning.'

Fitzpier made no answer, and suddenly quitting the window at which they had been standing, Laure had no further opportunity of speaking to him. She found he was resolved not to return the letter; and her inability to convey it to de Saint Ouin by any other method, and still more the dangerous circumstance of being again at liberty to contemplate the seal and address alternately, were so much in favor of the Marquis that at length she could no longer resist her inclination to open it.

"Before you condemn me, my too charming Laure," said de Saint Ouin, "let me inform you that I have been two miserable days in this place, without daring to see you, or imparting the anxiety and terror, by which I was urged to trespass once more on that amiable condescension, which has already so sweetly soothed my misery.

Harrassed by disappointment, and fearful of approaching too near, as Valain whom I commissioned to watch, assured me I could not speak to you without being discovered, I yesterday recognised the worthy Fitzpier, whom I knew intimately at Paris. He was surprised to meet me here, and demanded if I was informed of my vicinity to Madame de Germeil and the enchanting Laure. Will you forgive me for making use of his

attachment to me, which I have more than once proved, to convey to you the motives which impelled me to follow you to this place.

I have already hinted to my Laure that I knew Madame de Germeil to be capable of entering on any plan, and assisting in any scheme, to gratify the ambition of the Comte or promote his designs, however unjustifiable: guess then my uneasiness, my distraction, when I every where heard, nay I even read in the public prints, that my Laure and Mademoiselle D'Ogimond were inmates of the Duke of Harmington.

Instead of hastening from England to my father, who expects me with impatience, I flew hither. I find indeed the report is malicious and unjust; but I find at the same time, that this Duke is your eternal companion. O Laure, do not permit the infamous schemes of one wretch, who employs the beauty of an angel to accomplish his diabolical plans, or the shameful connivance of another, tempt or betray you to the misery of uniting yourself to so contemptible a character. Once more I implore you to forgive me; reflect on the anxiety I have suffered, an anxiety founded on a knowledge of the characters of the Count D'Ogimond and this woman.

I have told Fitzpier that I dare not hope for the honor of an answer; yet should you generously incline to grant me such an indulgence, believe me you may confide in him, for his mind is associated with almost every virtue.

Amiable as he is and with such a character, I should be alarmed at the admiration he avows for my angelic Laure, did I not know that he is tenderly attached to an engaging woman of his own country.”

This was the substance of de Saint Ouin's letter. Laure was amazed at the warmth of his expression in mentioning the report he had heard, for she knew not the venom it contained was all directed at her; nor did he chuse to shock her by relating the embellishments with which it was introduced to the public eye. Inexperienced and unsuspecting as she was, she had already thought it strange that the constant attendance of the Duke was so fully permitted, nay even authorized, and was often vexed and confused at his pointed attentions to herself.

Madame de Germeil certainly encouraged his absurd gallantry, without taking the trouble of investigating the effect it might have on Laure, who found consolation from remarking that his expressions of admiration, though usually extravagant and rapturous, were vague and unmeaning. But Adeline pretended to think otherwise, and when alone with her friend, sportively called her *Madame la Duchesse*.

Laure now recollected, that Madame de Germeil had with-held her assent to the dismissal of Lord William, until the Duke became so remarkably assiduous, and reviewing the conduct of Madame de Germeil from that period, acknowledged that it might very well have created the same suspicion manifested by de Saint Ouin, in a less interested observer. She saw however no reason to imagine the Duke was associated in the plan: on the contrary she flattered herself, that all his gallantry and admiration were

grimace, nor would the artful encouragement of Madame de Germeil, she hoped, nurture them to any thing more serious.

She was not however so composed when she considered the consequences of de Saint Ouin's deferred departure from England, when the old Marquis was so eagerly expecting him in France; and to remove him at such a crisis from his imprudent vicinity to Madame de Germeil, she waved her dislike of confiding to the discretion of Fitzpier, and determined, though not without many sensations of confusion and reluctance, to give him the answer he had solicited, and trust to him for securing the means of receiving it unobserved. Nor was she disappointed in this expectation.

The next morning, being the first in the breakfast room, as the day was warm, she threw up one of the sashes, and saw Fitzpier walking on the green before the windows, he immediately looked up. 'I am quite a *solitaire* here,' cried he, 'and if you do not intend to invite me in, do me the favor to throw me out, one of the pamphlets I have seen on the Piano Forte?'

Laure, in great perplexity, assented to the request. She thought he would expect to find her letter in the book; yet she was terrified lest he should accuse her of forwardness, in placing it there. After a minute's hesitation, the situation of de Saint Ouin, banished every scruple, and trembling with emotion, she put the letter between the leaves; but the fear of its being displaced in the fall, occurring to Fitzpier, as well as herself, he opened the door while she was deliberating what to do. She presented the pamphlet with so conscious an air, that he was assured she had comprehended his meaning.

'If on looking it over,' said he archly, 'I find I don't like it, I will return it to you in two minutes, and beg you to select another for me.'

Laure blushed.

'I believe,' added Fitzpier, kissing her hand, 'you are a good creature.'

He then ran down stairs, and left her so disturbed at the idea of his possessing the letter, that she was obliged to retire to her own chamber to compose herself, which she had fortunately time enough to do, before she was called to breakfast.

CHAP. XII.

LAURE in her letter, had entreated de St. Ouïn not to let any consideration prevent him from setting out immediately for Paris. She re-assured him on the conduct of the Duke towards her hitherto, which had been, she said, not offensive but merely absurd; and thanking him for his cautions, begged that he would endeavour to entertain a more favorable opinion of Madame de Germeil's prudence, if not of her principles, than to suppose her capable of rashly incurring the indelible censures that would have followed her conduct, had that report been founded, which he acknowledged to be the cause of his present indiscreet journey. She concluded by affirming, that she could never be so much misled as to entail endless regret and misery upon herself, merely to promote a political intrigue; and at the same time, she could never reject any just or reasonable claims that might be made on her gratitude, for the indisputable benefits she had received at the hands of a certain individual, however unworthy he might be.

Laure waited impatiently to hear that he had complied with her wish, and left the country. She saw Fitzpier at dinner, and however difficult to accomplish it, he contrived to tell her, that de Saint Ouïn could not be prevailed upon to depart without first seeing her for a moment, and besought her with earnestness to be again at the window early the next morning. When she recollected what he had neglected, and the trouble he had been at to obtain this last look, she could not refuse it to him; but the whole intervening time was passed in the wretchedness of a conscious deviation from right, to a mind habituated to obey the rigid dictates of strict propriety.

She arose at day break and waited fearfully yet with impatience until six, and then ventured into the breakfast-room; for her own was on the other side of the house: what was her confusion and dismay to find the window shutters still closed! She made an attempt to unfasten them, and failing from not knowing the spring, returned to her chamber vexed and disappointed.

At seven she made another effort, and then found a woman servant busy in arranging the room, who observing that Laure occupied herself at the music desk, hastened her work, and soon quitted it.

With trembling steps she drew to the window; Fitzpier was already on the green, and the Marquis disguised in an English naval uniform, walking by his side: she just caught a view of them, and stepped back in an agony of terror and confusion, on observing two or three carriages and a number of servants round the door. The Marquis had half stopped under the window; but alarmed at seeing her suddenly retire, again walked on.

It was some minutes before Laure found courage to appear once more: she then saw Fitzpier alone, who directly beckened to de Saint Ouïn, and they continued to walk at a small distance from the window; but whichever way de Saint Ouïn turned, his eyes were still directed to Laure. Fitzpier seemed to be talking earnestly to him, and at length the Marquis rather impatiently broke from him.

Terrified lest he should enter the house and be discovered by Madame de Germeil, Laure waved her hand to him, and then turned away. At this instant Mademoiselle D'Ogimond entered the room, and Laure sunk upon a chair that stood near her, in the utmost consternation: Adeline alarmed at her situation, would have summoned assistance, but she exerted herself to prevent her and declared she was quite recovered.

Mademoiselle D'Ogimond's curiosity was excited equally with her sympathy, by the violent emotion in which she found Laure; who utterly unused to subterfuge and evasion, was much at a loss to account for her indisposition: Adeline's inquiries however soon subsided; but she very naturally mentioned to Madame de Germeil the terror she had been in, on finding Laure so pale and disordered, who felt too conscious to receive the scrutinizing look that followed this remark, with composure; and Madame de Germeil from that moment attended so scrupulously to every word uttered by Fitzpier, that he could not find an opportunity to recount to Laure, the bitterness of de Saint Ouin's disappointment, at the vexatious circumstance that had prevented him from exchanging a sentence with her, and his reluctant departure.

The following day he was alike unsuccessful; and unable any longer to meet her solicitous look of speaking expectation, without removing her fears, and satisfying her doubts, he determined to venture the information in writing; and catching her eye while Madame de Germeil was reading, and the other ladies equally occupied, he pushed a paper gently under the bolster of a sofa. Laure saw the manœuvre, but before she could remove it from the place, Madame de Germeil seated herself on the couch, and Adeline flying with her usual solicitude to arrange the fatal bolster for her support, discovered the note. Laure, who was making bouquets from a quantity of flowers the Duke had presented to her, trembled from head to foot, but was instantly relieved by hearing Adeline exclaim, 'Mr. Fitzpier, this billet is addressed to you.'

'Upon my soul I am very careless,' cried he taking it, 'this is my ticket of invitation to the fête at Lockyer-Place.'

He held out the paper to Madame de Germeil, and commented on the neatness of the writing, which he observed was Sir Edward's.

'Yes,' replied she carelessly, 'I remarked it when we received our tickets.'

Fitzpier soon after desired to assist Laure: 'Come, my gala ticket,' said he laughing, 'shall have the honor of binding up your flowers; but I beg you will not shew it to Lady Lockyer in that state.'

He tore off two slips of the blank part of the paper for this purpose, and folding up the rest, put it into her hand unobserved.

She found on the back of the note hastily written, with a pencil, 'I am heartily chagrined, my lovely friend, at being prevented by the uncommon attention that is paid to

every word I address to you, from executing a commission our friend left in charge with me. You will laugh at my national blunder when I tell you, that it is a circumstance equally singular and unfortunate, that the fair Aurora of yesterday did not condescend to usher in the day, until three hours after sun-rise: and many things remain at this moment unsaid, that were designed to have been uttered then, had she been less tardy. He is departed pleased and dissatisfied, murmuring but not unhappy; with an hundred assurances of loyalty and obedience, a thousand grateful thanks, and a vast number of reproaches. The fact is, you should have presented that charming face at the window, an hour and an half sooner than you did, and then our plan would not have been disconcerted. I shall be allowed perhaps to say ten words to you to-morrow. En attendant command me.

END OF VOL. I.