

ROMANCE READERS

AND

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ROMANCE WRITERS:

A Satirical Novel.

*IN THREE VOLUMES.*

BY THE AUTHOR OF  
'A PRIVATE HISTORY OF THE COURT OF ENGLAND, &C.'

GNATHO. *Quid agitur?*

PARMENO. *Statur.*

GANTHO. *Video.*

*Numquid nam hic, quod nolis, vides?*

PARMENO. *Te.*

GNATHO. *Crede.*

TERENCE.

M.G. LEWIS, ROSA MATILDA, HORSLEY

*CURTIES, &c. parlent.*

*Hélas, mon Dieu, craignez tout d'un auteur en courroux,*

*Qui peut——* BOILEAU.

VOL I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. HOOKHAM, JUNIOR, AND E.T. HOOKHAM,  
15, OLD BOND STREET.

1810.

THE EFFECTS  
OF  
ROMANCE READING.  
CHAP. I  
THREE BROTHERS.

RALPH.

The bliss of man (could pride that blessing find),  
Is not to act or think beyond mankind;  
No pow'rs of body or of soul to share,  
But what his nature and his state can bear.

POPE.

CHARLES.

Sincere, plain-hearted, hospitable, kind;  
Yet, like the must'ring thunder when provok'd.

THOMSON.

EDWARD.

Slave to no sect, he takes no private road,  
But looks through nature, up to nature's God.

POPE.

"IT is very strange," said uncle Ralph, with evident impatience and vexation, as he threw down on the table with great force a romance of the last century, "that a writer must use so many words, only to tell us, that *a woman got up and sat down again!* No, they must inform us in high-flown, poetic language, that she rose from her mossy couch, and then thoughtfully reseated herself, and resumed her pensive posture! and then, if the wind happened to blow her thin clothes about, and made her ribbons flutter and fly, we must be entertained through half a page with her *silken scarf floating in the wind* and the rude zephyr discomposing her light and nymph-like attire!"

Uncle Charles, who had been studying the last orders of General Wolfe, and who had just brushed away a tear from off his veteran cheek, which the last exhortation of that renowned hero to his soldiers had drawn from his eye, shut the orderly-book, and smiled, 'midst his tears, at the ideas of his brother Ralph; while Edward, busy in reading a newspaper, laid it down and assented to Ralph's opinion by a half-stifled smile, and the word—*humph!* uttered so inwardly, that it sounded not much unlike the grunting of a pig!

But, in order to preserve some method, it is necessary to introduce this trio to our readers, and describe the sort of character which each of them (all originals in their kind) was possessed of.

The eldest brother, Mr. Ralph Marsham, was left in possession of a small paternal estate, comfortable, because clear and unincumbered; but income-tax, property-tax, and land-tax, had rendered him less rich than in the days of his youth: and a most valuable farm being attached to his estate, he resolved to superintend it himself, and indeed to work on it with the same indefatigable toil which his labourers bestowed upon it, in order to ensure to themselves the excellent and plentiful cheer, together with the ample wages which Mr. Marsham allowed them.

Gentlemen-farmers are but sorry tillers of land; and the master's watchful eyes, and even his assistance united, will not avail much, if he is not a thorough judge of that profession which is universally allowed to be the most happy and independent of any in the world.

But Ralph derived one advantage by his perseverance; he made labour easy and habitual to him, by boldly inuring himself to it; and continual and heavy losses, blights in his corn, diseases in his cattle, and the frauds of his serving-men, soon reduced him to that state which rendered exertion on his own part, and unwearied employment about his farm, an indispensable obligation.

He was endowed with a solidity of understanding, good, honest principles, but was rather a kind of every-day character; and was chiefly guided both in the pursuits of his studies, and all his most important actions, by mere matter of fact.

Charles, the second brother, had been bred to the profession of arms, and was, at the commencement of this history, a lieutenant on half-pay.

An early introduction into the world's grand theatre had given, to a prepossessing person, an ease of manners, and a certain address, which marked the gentleman in every movement, and which the society of the army alone is capable of imparting to the well-born officer: the heart of Charles was warm, and might with truth be said, to be seated in its right place—but his head approached to that temperature which is generally known by the appellation of *hot*; which heat often led him astray: his temper and his expressions were both hasty, and in the latter he thought no epithet too energetic to evince his indignation against the person who had offended him: but the principles of revenge and resentment only played upon his *lip*, they never entered his generous and excellent *heart*!

Like his brother Ralph, he affected to despise all romantic enthusiasm: but this in Charles was affectation only; a tale of woe, either real or fictitious, always surcharged his heart, and caused the tender overflow to glisten in his eye.

Edward, the youngest, had just attained his forty-second year; he was bred to the church, and *enjoyed* a curacy of *fifty pounds per annum*! He had been for some years a widower, and was the father of two daughters, the surviving children of five, by an unportioned, amiable, and by him, ever-lamented wife.

As he had a right honourable young rector, who hated the church most cordially, except by those emoluments it brought him, through a considerable living; and who rapaciously seized on every perquisite that his poor curate in the country might have enjoyed, under one more kind and beneficent; Edward, except for the bounty of honest Ralph, would have found great difficulty in bringing up and educating his two daughters on so scanty a pittance as he received for his labours in the ecclesiastical vineyard.

To those who were not acquainted with Edward's real character, there appeared a moroseness about him, which was repellant in the extreme: his manners were cynical, and

his sentences in general short and severe: having in his infancy received a most severe castigation, through the perfidy and duplicity of a schoolfellow, whom the generosity of his heart forbade him to betray, he had taken such an abhorrence to the vice of lying, that he thought no punishment too severe for the offence; and no outward terms that language can bestow, strong enough to express his indignation at so despicable a vice. "I can arm myself," he would say, "against a murderer, I can bar my doors against a robber; but can I guard against the wretch who wounds me in secret with his tongue, or steals from me my friends, by attacking my reputation?"

How much is a man of this candid principle to be pitied, and what dreadful mortifications attend the votary of truth, who is a most profound politician! Such was Edward Marsham, who was seldom seen without a newspaper in his hand; and oh! what an inundation of falsehoods has a newsmonger daily to encounter!

The elder Mr. Marsham had always remained a bachelor, and had now given up all prospects of matrimony. One reason, he urged, was, that having always been bred a gentleman, he could not think of taking as a partner for life an uneducated woman, who could be nothing but the plain country housewife; who, after the occupations of the day were over, could entertain him with nothing but the settings of his geese, how many eggs had been put under the black hen, when the brindled cow would calve; or that next week would be the *great wash*, and then he must not invite the friends he had promised himself; "While she sits," added he, "burning off the end of her cotton, before it goes through her needle, by one solitary candle, to save expence, while she is darning her own or her children's stockings!—else I must be tied for life to one of these modern ladies with a finished education; and how finished? by the *figurante*, the drill-serjeant, and the black-eyed cymbal-player\*! It is true, my gay wife might perform well on the harp and the tambourine; but then, either as the Grecian or the Egyptian habit might prevail, I should see her, in common with every one else, half naked, or laced up in a pair of long stays, the complete figure of an Egyptian mummy: she could never find her keys or her purse, because she wears no pockets; and as she was *shopping* perhaps some whole morning without purchasing any thing, her *ridicule* has been left on some counter or other, but where she knows not, containing, may be, twenty or thirty pounds' worth of cash: then if I should be blessed with children, she has them christened by names I can scarce pronounce; and puts a bar to all comfort of her society and conversation, by continually poring over a set of idle novels and romances: While the woman of real sense and amiability, possessed of sweetness and cheerfulness of manners, united to a well-cultivated mind, I am sure will never wed a man like me; and thus, as I have lived, I will die a bachelor."

Such was the reasoning and determination of Ralph, on his state of celibacy; and on the death of his sister-in-law, he resolved on making his nieces Margaret and Mary his

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\*The education of a fashionable female is by no means complete, unless finished by the above trio. An *Italian figurante* is hired at an immense price, to teach those dances adapted only to the Opera, and which no gentlewoman can ever exhibit in public. The drill-serjeant teaches them to walk well—and this is not the worst part of female education, for dancing-masters always walk ill. But the natural graces of an elegant young female, we think, render unnecessary the voluptuous attitudes taught by the swarthy sons of Asia, in the performance on the tambourine and cymbals.

heirs; his property, when divided between them, would not be great, and he bestowed on them a plain and useful education.

When Edward and Charles became widowers, they united their small property to that of their brother Ralph; and they, with the two nieces of Mr. Marsham, composed the family at the spacious farmhouse.

“I am not fond of fictitious histories of any kind,” said Ralph, continuing his observations on romances, as he leaned his elbow on the dirty, much-used, marble-papered cover of the volume he had just thrown down, and which his niece Margaret had been attentively perusing with very different emotions to those of her uncle. “These works deal so much in the marvellous; in events utterly impossible ever to have taken place.”—“I recollect once,” said Charles, “being confined one day at an inn, when I was travelling, by an heavy fall of snow, and expecting, when I asked for a book, I should have that collection given me which is reckoned amongst “The Miseries of Human Life,” my landlady brought me up a modern romance; and there I read of a young lady who had been some years confined in a dungeon, without *light*, and great part of the time without *food!* yet when she came out, her delicate form and astonishing beauty captivated all who beheld her, and in particular one of her deliverers, who afterwards married her.”—“And yet, I am sure,” said Ralph, “she must, from famine and confinement, have grown as ugly and as sallow as a witch; and from the damps and chills of her dungeon, as they express themselves, her pretty limbs must have been either useless, or grown confounded clumsy, from being swelled with the rheumatism!”

“Ay! ay!” said Charles, “I am sure her person must have received considerable damage, for I well remember that my friend Colonel George Aylesbury, before he was confined for debt in the apartment of the King’s Bench, was as good-looking a soldier as ever I saw in my life; and now he appears older, by ten years, than he really is, and looks more like a *black-diamond* merchant than an officer.\*”

“I wish, brother Charles,” said Edward, “you would not make use of so much *slang* in your conversation, but call things by their right names: pray, is not the word *coals* as easy to pronounce as *black diamonds?*”

“Certainly,” said Charles, “but you interrupted my remarks on the effect of confinement on the person: *you* are fond, my reverend brother, of theatrical amusements; well! was not the once beautiful Mrs. W. quite spoiled from every appearance of elegance? could she ever again reassume on the stage the masculine habit, in which she once looked so well? Her face, it is true, was so lovely, that it required the rudest hand of adversity to disfigure it; but her fine form (though she was always inclined to the *embonpoint*) was totally destroyed; and, had it not been for the *generous Turk* who extricated her, the confined walls of the King’s Bench would have in time given to her such a rotundity, that she could never have appeared on the theatre again.\*”

“Ah! now you have ascended from the *slang* to the novel style,” said Edward, “with *your rude hand of adversity*; but I maintain, that the greatest part of novels ought to be burned by the common hangman; though there are, no doubt, some of those works of fiction, which are both moral and entertaining.”

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\* *Historique.*

\* *Historique.*

“What,” cried the two elder brothers, at the same time, “do *you*, Edward, defend any thing *fictitious*?”—“Assuredly,” replied Edward, “otherwise, I must condemn the excellent fables of Æsop, *Les milles et une nuits*, and many of the works of the ancients: but here,” continued he, while he clenched his teeth and crumpled up the newspaper in his hand, “here is the vehicle of the most daring and most abominable lies that ever human art and malice can invent.”

“Reflect, Edward,” said Charles, “that the editors of these papers pledge themselves to fill this paper daily, for the amusement, as well as the information of their subscribers. A man sees, each day, before him this sheet, which he knows must be filled; and if there is a dearth of home news, and foreign mails are late in their arrival, he must either *conjecture or invent*, to please the public.”

“No,” said Edward, “let him leave the places blank; let the paper appear pure as it is, till stained by man; nor sully his columns by falsehoods, which only serve to encourage the growth of rebellion, or delude the stanch loyalist into a belief of victories obtained, which the same paper will next day contradict; and thus the stings of disappointed hope inflict a double pang to the mind, that had before exulted in the success of his country’s arms, or those of her allies.”

The fascination of habit is not easily done away; and the arrival of the post-boy, with letters and the important newspaper, gave a truce to all other thoughts and conversation, than what the private correspondence of friendship, the bulletins of Buonaparte, the conjectures of home *quidnuncs*, together with all the various subterfuges of the press, gave rise to.

When Ralph and Charles had perused *their* letters, and Edward his few lines from his right honorable and reverend rector, the two former amused themselves in watching the versatile turns of the politician’s anxious countenance.

It exhibited various emotions, but very few of the pleasurable kind: at length, he laid down the paper; and smoothing the journal of the former day, which, in a rage, he had before crumpled up, “Now,” said he, “I am resolved to *keep* all these contradictory sheets of heterogeneous matter; which one day tell me that the French have beaten the Austrians, and the day following, that the Austrians have beaten the French; that Sir Arthur Wellesley is surrounded; or that the whole army of Soultz is taken: one day the Spaniards have taken Corunna; the next they are defeated; the next speaks ill of the Junta: again they are all we can wish, the Spaniards beat the French, drive them out of their country, and carry all before them. And now for home news: some little time ago I read that the Lady Harriet Egmont, after going off with a married man, the father of eight children, and living with him in open adultery, was restored to her home, and her too indulgent and much injured husband: whereas, to my certain knowledge, she remained a short time at an isolated mansion belonging to her brother, and then actually went off with her infatuated lover to an island which has the peculiar privilege of harbouring crim. con. associates, insolvent debtors, and all the other *et-ceteras*, intitled—*indiscretions!*”

“My heart bleeds,” said Charles, “at the domestic misfortunes of the good old Earl, Lord Gresham’s father! one of his sons so lately in the same awkward predicament, and his gallant son, Montague, deprived, by the chance of war, of a limb: and then, Lord Gresham was a character once so highly admired, that it is a thousand pities he should

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\**Historique.*

tarnish all his noble qualities by the fascinations of such a woman! who, I am told, has neither manners nor person to recommend her.\*”

“And yet, I doubt not,” said Ralph, “but that this affair will furnish a foundation for the story of some *free*-minded novel-writer, or, as the new school calls it, *liberal*-minded! and we shall have it some day brought forward, so clouded with romantic incidents, that no one will guess who it means; and have for its title, perhaps, “THE FATAL ATTACHMENT, OR LOVE TRIUMPHANT OVER DUTY!” wherein we shall find Lady Harriet’s face, and even her *form*, extolled to the skies; or perhaps some bookseller’s voluptuous hireling will be daring enough, for a few guineas, to write a pamphlet in defence of the conduct of Lady Harriet Egmont!”

“No one *can* defend their conduct in the smallest degree,” said Edward; “the generous conduct of Lord Gresham, in refusing to fight the brother, shews, however, that virtue is not totally extinct in his once truly noble nature; for, I believe, no one ever doubted his courage!”

“You are a man of peace, brother,” said Charles, “your profession enjoins you to teach what your GREAT MASTER, when he came into the world, proclaimed to all mankind; but I know, if a man had challenged *me*, I should have acted very differently.”

After again taking up the newspaper, and laying it down again, “Now, here,” said Edward, “is another lying business! two days ago there was a current report, that the republican reformist, the old crony and defender of Colonel Despard, had been killed in a duel! and here, this day, I find it asserted to have been a mere fabrication.”

“Come, come,” said Ralph, “a truce to novels, newspapers, and fables of every kind: here,” continued he, “I will set an example;” and at the same time he threw the volume, whose enthusiastic expressions had so much displeased him, into the fire.

This caused an hearty laugh from Charles, and the risible muscles of the cynical Edward relaxed a little on the occasion.

Ralph did not appear a *merry* man, but there was a certain humour in his actions, and sometimes in his expressions, which diverted only, when performed or spoken by himself; it was requisite to know the man personally, to be at all moved by them; in another they would have been flat, nor could the record of them afford amusement.

Charles, like the famous Will Honeycomb, “laughed easily,” and had much shrewdness and quickness about him: Edward smiled seldom, but was possessed of solid sense, untainted religion, virtue, and honesty: and though Ralph was the blunt farmer, Charles tutored but little, except in the field of valour, and Edward often apparently the snarling philosopher, yet they all inherited those unshaken principles of the mind and heart, on which sure basis is built the character of the true gentleman.

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\* *Historique*.

## CHAP. II.

## THE NIECES.

## MARY.

Her form was fresher than the morning rose,  
 When the dew wets its leaves; unstain'd, and pure  
 As is the lily or the mountain snow.

THOMSON.

## MARGARET.

Each nerve was fever'd, and convuls'd her brow;  
 Her unsettled eye  
 Wander'd high, then low,  
 Alternately,  
 As if the pow'r of thought had fled.

*Love and Madness.*

WHILE the three brothers were viewing the blazing novel, Margaret, the youngest Miss Marsham, entered the parlour, and looking first at the table where she had left her book, and next at the grate, from whence a part of the boarded cover had just fallen, she uttered the exclamation of "O heavens! what sacrilegious hand has destroyed the recreative amusement of my leisure-hours, and *impeded* my *itineration* through the delightful labyrinths of imagination?"—"Don't be such a confounded fool, Peggy," said her uncle Ralph, "I am ashamed to hear you talk such nonsense." "What then," said she, "to add to my earthly miseries, am I to be called Peggy? My name, sir, is Margaritta; and to no other name will I, hereafter, give an answer."

The Reverend Mr. Marsham looked at his daughter with serious concern, and shook his head: "But what," continued Margaret, "my ever *revered*, though too *rigid* parent, am I to do? there are *seven* volumes of that delightful work; and the set is spoiled by the fatal destruction of one; the whole seven must be paid for."

"Ah!" said Edward, looking at his brother, "you should not have been so rash, Ralph; I have no money to throw in the fire."

"Make yourself easy brother," said Ralph, "I have no money neither that I would *wish* to throw in the fire; but paying the expence of those books cannot ruin me, and therefore, as the fault *is*, so let the expence *be* mine."

"But can you, sir," said Margaret, "can you restore to me those extatic moments of fond delusion, which that book imparted to my pensive mind? Alas! can you ——" and with the sentence unfinished, she threw herself back on her chair, and cast up her eyes with that would-be-languid expression which portended a fainting fit; and which she would have undoubtedly performed for the amusement of the spectators, had not the glow which she experienced on her cheek, from anger, and the heat from her late vociferation, made her conscious that such an exhibition would then have been impracticable.

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\**Verbatim* expression of a romantic girl, the daughter of a dignified clergyman.

“What is the matter with my sister?” said the sweet voice of a fresh-looking country girl, who now entered the room, and whose arch eye, glancing towards the fire, soon beheld the cause of Margaret’s violent agitation.

“What I hope, my good girl,” said her uncle Charles, rising up and giving her his chair, at the same time drawing one by her for himself, “what I hope will never be the matter with you: I mean a madness after romances, books which I think your good sense will not suffer you to peruse.” “O yes, I read them sometimes,” replied the lively Mary, “but then I do not make myself like my sister, a slave to them; and since our kind uncle Ralph indulged us with subscribing to the library, I very seldom get a novel I like; for Margaret sends for such incredible, such marvellous kind of works, that I shut the books with disgust, and seldom have patience to read them through: but, indeed my dear girl,” added she, affectionately kissing the cheek of her sister, “your health would be better if you did not sit so closely over your favorite studies, which disturb your dreams, and make you unable some nights to close your eyes: would you, like me, enjoy the fresh morning air, which you lose in broken slumbers, after your restless nights, you would soon have done with such idle fancies, which *you* describe by the title of *nervous affections* and *hypochondriac* malady!”

Edward, whose heart towards his children was often at war with his tongue, said, “Come, come, not quite so much talk: what you say is very just, but you know your sister’s health is *naturally* delicate.” “And what is it that renders it so,” said Ralph, “but the very cause my niece Mary has alleged? I’ll tell you what, Peggy, go up stairs, and see if none of your father’s shirts want a wristband or a button; though I believe Mary takes good care of all our linen; but never mind, if you do not find any thing there to do, I have three old pair of worsted stockings, which I wear under my gaiters when I ride over my grounds on a wet morning, darn them for me, if you please, for I know there are two or three great holes in each pair. Do you hear me, Peggy?” “I am sure,” said she, bursting into tears, “if I am called Peggy again I shall go into a fit!”

The Reverend Mr. Marsham took down his hat from the peg on which it hung, drew the arm of his daughter Margaret through his own, and said, “Come, child, we will take a walk, the air perhaps will revive your spirits.”

She appeared desirous to draw away her hand from her father’s, shuddered as he placed it under his arm, and casting up her eyes towards heaven, exclaimed, “Poor persecuted *dove* that I am!”

As they walked onwards towards the meadows, she perceived a coarse ragged shirt hanging on a hedge; she advanced towards it, looked at it, and gave a deep sigh. “Ay, my child,” said her father, “many are the forlorn children of poverty! how few are blessed with a relative like ours! what would have become of you, my poor girls, without your excellent uncle?” “Oh! that barbarous inhuman man!” said she. “Margaret,” said her father, “you make me seriously angry: what, because he threw your ridiculous book into the fire, you can be capable of bestowing on your benefactor such an epithet!” “O no, sir, his whole conduct excruciates all the tender sentiments of the soul; he is so utterly devoid of heroism, refinement, and all the softer sensations of the mind.” “Stuff—nonsense,” said her father, “quit this ridiculous language, this affectation of hard words, this pedantic jargon, so disgusting in the general conversation of a young female: but we must return

homewards, it begins to rain; come, run on before, make use of the agility that youth has given you, and get home as fast as you can.”

Margaret ran, it is true, but not in obedience to the commands of her father; for, almost flying to the ragged shirt, she thus addressed it: “Oh! garment of my beloved; garment that envelopes and embraces the polished and beautiful skin of the fairest of the sons of men: behold! the heavens themselves dissolve in tears at thy unmerited indigence! Oh! when will the much-wished-for day arrive, that thy noble parents will claim thee as their own, and acknowledge thee in the face of an admiring world? when shall thy Margaritta be hailed as thy happy bride, and addressed by the title of *her grace*, as she shares with thee the ducal coronet? Alas! the clouds of fate intervene, and at present obscure our future destiny; one brutal uncle, a rigid father, and a rustic sister, all combine to persecute the wretched Margaritta!”

Edward, who had only *walked* a good pace, now reached his daughter, and thinking that she prest the discoloured linen to her eyes only to dry the effusions of a benevolent and too sensible heart, gave her a tender paternal pressure to his bosom, and put half-a-crown into her hand for the purchase of a new ribbon to her bonnet, to replace that which the rain had much injured.

Mary, the eldest of the Reverend Mr. Marsham’s daughters, was called by every one round about and in the village a very pretty girl; yet, take every feature separately, and they would not be called beautiful: the glow of health and sprightly innocence, in a female of nineteen, seldom fails to attract; but Mary had to boast of *more*; a sweetness, mingled with a playful archness, embellished her countenance, and while they rendered its charms indescribable, made them also irresistible: her eyes, in regard to colour, had no claim to beauty, for they were only a dark grey; but they were lively and sparkling, and received additional attraction from a long, dark eye-lash: her nose was neither *Roman* nor *Grecian*; but it was well formed, and no other would have suited her other features so well, perhaps it might be *Egyptian*, as that is the present fashion of the day; though we have not yet heard of any standard for that prominent part of the face, over which the *snaky* ornament of *Isis*, after having twisted its folds amongst the lovely tresses of Britannia’s fair, sits formidably nodding and darting its forked tongue, to the dismay of those who would dare approach the medusan ornament.

The mouth of Mary vied in colour with the ripe cherry, and her teeth might come in competition with ivory: her form was not *sylph-like*, but it was tall, upright, and of a plumpness approaching to *embonpoint*: her voice was so melodious, and her ear so perfectly correct, that her uncle Ralph often wished to yield to the temptation of having her taught to perform (not on the *harp*) but on the piano-forte; but as all the brothers judged that it would be only an ornamental part of education, which she would in her present and future sphere of life never have occasion to display, they contented themselves with the delightful warblings of her wild notes, with which she often charmed their hours of rural leisure.

Margaret, or as we shall sometimes have occasion to call her, *Margaritta*, was one year younger than her sister; her stature might rather be called short than tall, and not very well proportioned; for her shoulders were exceeding broad, which defect she always dignified by saying she had the true *cleopatra back*: her countenance had some meaning, and would not have been disagreeable, though far from pretty, had she not distorted and

twisted every feature, in order to give to it that expression which she judged was irresistible: her large dark eyes would have been called good, had she not been continually casting them upwards, in a solemn, rolling kind of appeal to heaven: her forehead was much seamed by the small-pox; the rest of her face had pretty well escaped that rueful malady; and her small rosy mouth resembled that of her sister, only with this difference; Mary looked best when she spoke or smiled, Margaret looked best with her mouth close shut; for having one evening, in a romantic reverie, mistaken the hard claw of a fine rock lobster for the fish itself, in her attempts to masticate it she unfortunately broke two of her front teeth, which gave her rather an unpleasant appearance whenever she attempted to "*sweetly smile*."

These defects in her person, her health being not very good, and her nerves weak, and as her mother had, in giving *her* life, lost her own, made the excellent Edward peculiarly careful of shewing that partiality which he certainly could not avoid feeling for her elder sister.

He had indulged Margaret, on account of a long confinement from illness, with the perusal of those novels a neighbouring circulating library afforded; a subscription to which was afterwards continued by good-natured Ralph for his two nieces' amusement.

The effects of this reading, on a mind easily softened and naturally weak, is already perceptible to the reader in the character of Margaret. Mary read only to amuse an hour, and never suffered it to interfere with her more useful occupations; yet she was fond of literature; and her uncle Charles, with whom she was a decided favourite, had presented her with a small and elegant library, from the best approved writers for female improvement.

Margaret, in spite of all her father's indulgent kindness, imagined herself as one languishing under a severe parent's cruel rigidity; while her benefactor, her kind uncle Ralph, she looked upon as little better than a mere brute; toward her uncle Charles she wavered in her affections, and this wavering was, in some degree, mutual: in those intervals, which, it must be said, happened but seldom, when Margaret, by an imaginary new conquest, quitted her reading for the ornamenting of her person, and tried to make herself pleasant and agreeable, uncle Charles began to admire his niece Margaret, and really loved her for her truly compassionate nature; has been in those moments drawn in to *talk sentiment* with her, accompany her in her walks to some of the neighbouring cottages, (for Margaret knew all the heroines of romance did the same); and there Charles would drop a tear, with the ready shilling to the wants of indigence: then her uncle Charles was the only soul in the family congenial to her own, then he was extolled to the skies: the next day has thrown all this romantic edifice to the ground; for this beloved uncle is made the confidant of some ridiculous love-affair, or is condemned to hear her read through two or three pages of absurdity and inconsistency; he then becomes too much disgusted to contain his irritable temper, and he makes use of the same language to his delicate and persecuted niece (according to her account) as he would to a private soldier: Oh! she detests the very sight of uncle Charles, a *man of blood*, fit only to wade through fields of slaughter, or reside in a camp; while duty, inflexible duty obliges her to love her father, on whose grave countenance she seldom beholds a smile; oh! what would she not give could she but see a smile on that countenance beaming upon her! but alas! a

parent's wrath hangs over her head, she says, and she is the most miserable of created beings.

The heroine of a romance, she knows, was never happy, therefore she will yet look forward with hope to the winding up of her adventures, after she has experienced several additional and aggravated sorrows; till she has explored dark *unfathomable* caverns and dungeons, or has been confined in some high and *moss-grown* tower, through whose *subterraneous passages* her lover will enter, *wind up the ruined staircase* which leads to her horrible prison, from whence he will deliver her, and boldly present her to his *stern* and noble father, who will melt with love and paternal tenderness on the discovery of her heroic and intrinsic virtue.

The heart of the lively Mary, though susceptible, was yet her own; she superintended with alacrity and good humour the household affairs of her uncle; nor was she deficient in spinning, or any of those housewifely employments which would render her an useful farmer's wife; but she could unite gentility and industry, good sense and trifling, so happily, that all who saw, admired her, and all who knew her loved and esteemed her.

Margaret was very often in love; though at present there was one who was peculiarly the object of her notice: this was a young man who had come the preceding summer to make hay for her uncle, with some other itinerant labourers from Ireland: the lad had neither father nor mother; was as honest and industrious as he was poor, and gave fair promise of being an excellent under-servant; he could neither write nor read: but Ralph, who cared very little about the erudition of a servant, and indeed would often express his disapprobation of *Sunday Schools*, which only served, he used to say, to spoil those whose lot must be only to labour, and that we had much better servants before they were established; we believe he rather therefore preferred the ignorance of Phelim O'Gurphy, the abovementioned lad; and wanting a servant to go on errands, and occasionally work on the farm, took the Hibernian, to his great joy, to live with him in that capacity: but as Phelim cast his eyes towards the young ladies who were seated in the parlour, when he was called in to receive the welcome intelligence, Margaret immediately discovered homage, love, and reverence, in the eyes of the enamoured youth! Severely did she take herself to task for not instantly acquainting her father and uncles with his temerity in daring to aspire to her beauty; and she resolved to watch every opportunity of exercising her vengeance on the unfortunate and truly unconscious Phelim, till one day an incident occurred which convinced her that he could be no other than a nobleman in disguise!

His complexion, like that of many of his countrymen, was extremely fair, and though his face was burnt by the sun, his arms and bosom were white as those of the fairest female; otherwise his personal attractions were by no means conspicuous; for his figure was short and clumsy, his face broad and vacant, and his hair of a fiery *red*; which furnished Margaret with the idea of "Hyperion's curls," and *ringlets of gold!*

One sultry day, as she strolled in search of adventures over her uncle's meadows, she discovered, reposing at his full length, Phelim O'Gurphy; though it could not literally be called repose, as he appeared to be much agitated by some terrific dream; and as Irishmen, either waking or sleeping, are very apt to utter all their thoughts, the following words escaped him, in the true brogue, and all the native energy of his country: "Oh! help, holy mother of St. Patrick! Arrah! now, where is the good Duke of Tyrconnel?"

Margaret, who was utterly ignorant of the Irish peerage; and what titles were or were not extinct, as she gazed on the snowy whiteness of his wrist and throat, was now fully convinced that he was certainly the *Duke of Tyrconnel* in disguise! and that the *holy mother of St. Patrick* meant no other than the noble dame to whom he (no doubt a Knight of St. Patrick) owed his splendid birth; this noble mother was instantly created, from his calling her *holy*, by the prolific brain of Margaret, into the abbess of a nunnery; and it was most probable she reasoned with herself that she had been canonized by the Pope for a *saint*!

From that moment her whole thoughts became fixed on the high conquest she was convinced she had achieved over the heart of this *noble* and most *accomplished* youth.

## CHAP. III.

## FASHIONABLE ORIGINALS.

O fashion! now a goddess, now a friend,  
 At whose *levee*, pride, folly, vice attend;  
 Thy vot'ries are of ev'ry rank and age;  
 All play the part of fool on *fashion's stage*.

THE AUTHOR.

THE letter which the Reverend Mr. Marsham had received, contained a few lines informing him the Right Honorable incumbent was coming to pass six weeks at his living; and as his retinue, composing his family and *tonish* friends, were weary of the watering-place they had just been honouring with their company, were to come with him, he had *favoured* his curate with the commission of ordering the house-keeper at the spacious parsonage-house to have the beds well-aired, and every thing in order to receive her master, his lady, and her sister; with three gentlemen of rank and fortune, together with an humble female friend.

The first of these gentlemen, Sir Charles Sefton, a wealthy baronet, was the avowed suitor of Lady Isabella Emerson, sister to Lady Caroline Leslie, the Rector's lady: the second was a young gentleman lately come to a very large estate, a Mr. Harrington, whom Lady Caroline, devoted to play, was endeavouring to *pidgeon*, till she *plucked him bare*, and he might then give place to some other who should be more *full in feather*. At present, the money of Mr. Harrington, always readily lent, was very useful to the Honorable and Reverend Mr. Leslie, whose paternal inheritance, and the annual income of two very rich benefices, had been much exhausted to supply the unbounded extravagance of himself and his lady.

The third gentleman was Sir Edward Harrington, who had come down into the country, not from his love for the society of those he had accompanied, but merely to watch over and guard the oft-times thoughtless conduct of a nephew whom he loved as his own child.

The humble friend was a Mrs. Kennedy, the widow of an Irish fortune-hunter, who, after having spent an ample fortune which the lady had generously given him the sole disposal of when she gave him her hand, as she was verging towards the decline of life, left her with only her talents to support her, in that precarious, little-to-be envied occupation of an authoress!\*

By adulatory dedications to the great, her own respectable family, rare abilities, and quickness in composing her *little works*, she had ensured their patronage, and often made one in their country excursions: she was particularly welcome to the Lady Isabella, whose dearest delight consisted in *quizzing*, and who, in Mrs. Kennedy, found a continual *butt*.

Though Mrs. Kennedy was possessed of unusual talents, yet there was an obscurity in the expression of her thoughts which often puzzled the reader, and made him wonder where he was: to indulge a pretty and flowery expression, she would sacrifice all sense,

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\**Historique*.

and substitute for it inexplicable absurdity: to pourtray the “*wings of pity*,” or the humid drop of compassion, she has, in the confined metre of poetry, rendered her meaning wholly unintelligible.

Her general conduct was rather of the artful kind; and she knew well how to preserve her rich and titled friends; and thus never wanted an elegant home or costly presents.

The Right Honorable Rector’s character will be easily discovered by his conversation and conduct; he was far from being a credit to his sacred profession; and often did he execrate the hour which made him wear the cloth: the conduct of his wife, or the example she set, were totally indifferent to him; though he was too polite ever to treat her ill, or deny her one of the many and exorbitant claims she laid on his purse, while there remained in it any thing to give her.\*

Lady Caroline Leslie was the very life of fashion, and gave in to every species of *tonish* dissipation; but gambling was her prevailing fault: she would have been handsome, had not the continual vigils of deep play rendered her complexion too sallow, and her eyes too hollow for any art to restore to their native hue and lustre: she was not averse to gallantry, and so ready to assist it in another, that she has even facilitated the elopement of a sister from her husband, that she might fly to the arms of another *married* lover!\*

But the devotion of Lady Caroline to the gaming-table had hitherto prevented her from taking any part herself in the annals of *indiscretion*, vulgarly called *crim. con.*

Lady Isabella Emerson was like her sister, a great votary of fashion, but detested play, except that kind of play which a love of satire afforded her; and which the modern *quiz* and daily *hoax* were calculated to give to her mischievous abilities.

Like Margaritta, she was very fond of modern publications, but her studies were of a different kind, and all consisted of false systems: the deluding sophistry of some free-thinking German authors, with whose language she was well acquainted, and whose dangerous and delusive principles she imbibed; from whose fascinating descriptions she found vice stripped of its hideous appearance, and wearing an angel’s form; while for her lighter reading she perused the loose sentiments contained in the French novels of *Faublas*; *Le Fils naturel*, and all the dangerous works of Diderot, and other revolutionary writers. The effects of such studies on a mind like that of Lady Isabella’s may well be conceived; marriage she held in utter contempt, openly expatiated on the folly of all the outward ceremonies of religion, and was a very pretty female atheist.\*

These principles her reverend brother-in-law never took any pains to correct, alleging, that perhaps she was right, as far as any thing he knew to the contrary!

Sir Charles Sefton, her admirer, who was turned of forty, and owned to *three and thirty*, took all possible pains to conceal his real age from the quick eyes of his shrewd and penetrating mistress: he had been so much the martyr to the various vices of fashion, that he looked more than fifty-five; but his family and connexions were all *noble*, himself immensely *rich*, and he was therefore looked upon by the friends of Lady Isabella as a most desirable match; and her youth, beauty, and vivacity, made this whimsical *beau* imagine himself to be deeply in love: he really idolized her for her love of ridicule, so prevalent in his own nature; and pictured to himself the happy hours they should pass

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\**Historique.*

\*To our modern female reformist, *Mary Woolstonecroft*, and her husband, she was indebted for these latter sentiments, so uncongenial with our “*national prejudices*,” as she chose to call them.

together, in mutually laughing at the whole circle of their friends and acquaintance; while his consummate vanity would not suffer him to see, that *he* chiefly was the decided mark at which Lady Isabella pointed the most envenomed arrows of her sarcastic wit.

Sir Edward Harrington was a worthy baronet, who had been some years a widower, was at present childless, but had adopted his nephew, Mr. Harrington, as his heir, provided the tenor of his conduct was such as this excellent uncle could approve; otherwise, well and dearly though he loved him, as he knew he was already rich enough, without his assistance, he should leave his own large fortune to better hands.

Sir Edward's character was of a peculiar kind, in this our day: he was the friend of every worthy man! to such, however ungifted by birth, honours or riches, in the midst of the most splendid company, were the thoughts of his heart laid open, and his conversation alone directed: it was a painful sacrifice indeed, to a noble nature like his, to accompany the thoughtless and unprincipled set of beings he now was found amongst; but his too accommodating nephew had intangled himself with them; and as he had so united his fate to that of young Harrington, Sir Edward resolved to watch over, and prevent, if possible, the fatal contagion of example over too easy a nature.

Mr. Harrington, in person was manly and elegant, his manners polite and sweetly fascinating, his heart benevolent, and his well cultivated understanding naturally excellent; but his principles were wavering and inconstant: he loved and courted fashion in her every form; but the nightly admonitions and reflections of his pillow often severely reprehended the conduct of the day. Devoted to the sex, he thought no sacrifice too great for the indulgence of all their little foibles or inclinations, however glaring or capricious. Though he was by no means fond of play, yet he was ensnared by the fine person and polite manners of Lady Caroline, to lose to her immense sums, and sit for whole nights as if *nailed* to her card-table; captivated by the enchanting witcheries of Lady Isabella's wit and playful manner, he had addressed her in a strain of ardour in which his heart had no share.

Early instructed in the purest principles of virtue and religion, he once paid unaffected homage to those sacred names; now he allowed himself to tread in the mazes of scepticism, when he beheld one of Devotion's ministers scoff at her precepts, while he revelled in luxury, and enjoyed, or seemed to enjoy, every species of worldly prosperity; when his pious and virtuous curate, with his narrow pittance, struggled through life with difficulty, and the hand of anxious care had stepped hastily before old age to implant the wrinkles on his forehead.

The fair and captivating atheist would often, with a smile and a look that would have added grace to an Hebe, tell him, and seem to speak certain conviction to his mind, that we certainly know what *this* life is;—but, from the *other*,

“—— No traveller returns  
“To tell us *what* it is!”

Though it was not in the power of Sir Charles Sefton to warm the heart of Lady Isabella, yet she felt the full power of the hood-winked deity, in the fine person and elegant acquirements of the seductive Harrington: how often did she dwell on the fond

idea of the rapture it would afford her, to live with him “the life of honour!” how often has she turned in disgust from her declared admirer, and mentally exclaimed with Eloisa,

“Not Caesar’s Empress would I deign to prove:

“Oh! make me *mistress* to the man I love!”

With much anxiety did the penetrating Sir Edward discover the failings of his nephew; which, though they took their rise from a mind too easily warped by fashion, had yet attained no fixed seat in the heart, notwithstanding he dreaded and trembled for their consequences; he saw, with extreme pain, the partiality of Lady Isabella towards him, and how *warmly*, not to say at times how *licentiously* it had been returned by Frederic Harrington!

Sir Edward was often fearful that Lady Isabella had made a real and permanent impression on his darling Frederic, and he would have shuddered at the bare idea of seeing such a woman the wife of his beloved *protégé*, whose gallantry, sometimes on the other hand, towards Lady Caroline Leslie, had made him tremble; he knew the total want of principle in that lady; and besides, Sir Edward was old-fashioned enough to think, that though all *virtuous* and even *affectionate* friendship between the sexes is allowable, yet, that very pointed gallantry in a young man towards a young married woman is as *reprehensible* as it is *imprudent*, and sets a dangerous example to the ignorant and untaught.

He had therefore often felt much alarm, and had been ready to break through that taciturnity he had determined to preserve, when he had beheld his nephew, as he has won from Lady Caroline a considerable sum, fall at her feet, kiss her hand with rapture, and solemnly declare that permission amply repaid him for all she had lost: and once Sir Edward was really tempted to take him by the arm, and lead him out of the room, when after being a most successful winner, and my lady not being able immediately to pay her losings, he cancelled the debt on her lips.

To *see* Frederic Harrington, was sufficient to *admire* him, and to be often in his company, was to love and esteem him: Lady Caroline grew, by degrees, less fond of play; though it still remained her darling sin: Sir Edward trembled for his nephew amidst this dissipated circle, shuddered at the thought of his sullying the columns of a newspaper by a detail of his trial at Westminster-Hall; and LESLIE *versus* HARRINGTON, darted in terrific vision on his mind’s eye, every time he took up the MORNING POST, HERALD, or other vehicles of fashionable intelligence.

At other times he would blame himself for his anxiety; and think, as he was growing old, and uninitiated in the tenets of the new school, perhaps he might be getting surly and cynical, or had entirely forgotten the bright sunshine of his youth. “No, no,” he would often say to himself, “Frederic can never be so preposterous as to be in love with *both* the sisters at once! but what may not the advances of two fine unprincipled young women be able to effect on a sanguine disposition? God defend him from seducing the wife of his friend, however *pretended* that friend may be; and oh! may I never see him the husband of that mischievous little infidel, Lady Isabella.”

The house of Mr. Marsham had a view of the gate which opened into the front garden of the parsonage; and at the upper windows of the farm-house, Mary and Margaret had stationed themselves to behold the great folks on their arrival.

First, rattled on in high style, the Rector's barouche and four, driven by the Honourable and Reverend Theodore Leslie, habited in a coachman's coat, with three enormous capes; and, as he was an highly approved member of the *whip-club*, he drove in such an admirable style, that, had not the good lady his mother been a truly chaste and virtuous character, people might have thought he owed his birth to a GREGSONIAN *indiscretion*.

In the barouche were seated Lady Caroline, Frederic Harrington, and his uncle: and rapidly darting after, with all the velocity of a charioteer, figured away Sir Charles Sefton, in his lofty phæton, accompanied by Lady Isabella Emerson, arrayed in equestrian *costume*: a small green cap added to all that knowing archness of her countenance which was its peculiar character; while an habit of the same colour, laced with narrow gold binding, as was her cap, and a pair of green satin half-boots, completed the fair-one's livery.

Sir Charles, adopting with true knight-errantry his lady's colours, was dressed in a jacket of the same summer hue; and his white hat, *lined* only with *green*, gave a relief to the *verdant* appearance of the dashing pair: but surely, the noble baronet had not studied Ovid, who advises those *only* who are possessed of the roseate complexion of youth, to wear this symbol of perpetual spring; for the yellow countenance of Sir Charles, in spite of all the cosmetics he made use of, received an additional hue, of the cadaverous kind, from the grass-tinged lining of his superfine beaver.

Wrapped closely in a fine India shawl, which being drawn so tight round her fine form, that it appeared her only covering, skipped out of her carriage, with all the grace and agility of a wood-nymph, Lady Caroline Leslie, disclaiming all assistance from her two attending beaux, who mutually offered their aid; but she was soon persuaded to take the arm of the elegant Frederic, and the trees of the avenue which led to the house quickly obscured them from the eyes of the gazing sisters.—“That,” said Mary, “is the finest gentleman I ever saw! the youngest, I mean, of the two who accompany Lady Caroline.” “Oh!” said the emphatic Margaret, “I can look at no one but that *knight in green*, who I am certain, from his complexion, is some foreign prince: they remind me, dear Mary, of the green night and his lady: happy, happy fair-one, who is seated beside him in his car of triumph!” The laughter which Mary was unable to suppress, highly offended her sister, who regarded her with looks of contemptuous pity. “I declare,” said Mary, “I think the gentleman must be the happiest of the two, for she is really a very pretty lady; and I am sure no one need envy her being seated by the side of such a yellow, unhealthy looking being as the one you have been pleased to dub a prince: what a fortunate event, my dear girl, it would have been for many a needy adventurer, had you been an absolute monarch! How many princes and nobles would have owed their origin to the prepossession you might have received in their favour, from their personal appearance only!”

Margaret made no answer, but gazed after the figure of Sir Charles as long as she could perceive the least vestige of it gliding through the trees; then shutting the window, and heaving a deep-drawn sigh, she accompanied her sister down stairs.

## CHAP. IV.

## A MORNING VISIT, AND AN INVITATION.

Blest with each gift of nature and of art,  
 And wanting nothing but an honest heart,  
 Grown all to all, from no one vice exempt,  
 And most contemptible, to shun contempt;  
 A constant bounty, which no friend has made,  
 An Angel tongue, which no man can persuade;  
 A fool, with more of wit than half mankind,  
 Too rash for thought, for action too refin'd.

POPE.

MR. MARSHAM was truly respected by all the country, as an opulent and worthy gentleman-farmer, and his genteel birth and respectable connexions made all the higher classes of people desirous of cultivating his acquaintance. Ralph, however, disclaimed all general visitors; and, as independent in his manners as in his fortune, he took the freedom of *choosing* his associates, and the society which composed them he determined should be as *small* as it was *select*.

To his brother's Right Honourable Rector, his doors, of course, were thrown open; and Ralph relaxed a little from his usual bluntness, to the great man, out of pure friendship for his brothers.

No being was more beloved than Edward, by all the parishioners; no one more disliked and dreaded than the Honourable and Reverend Mr. Leslie; but the country-folks had wit enough to keep their thoughts of him and his family to themselves.—Charles Marsham, who, though no longer very young, was yet in possession of youth enough, and health and strength sufficient to embark again in his favourite profession; and the constant and flattering promises of the Reverend Mr. Leslie, to procure him, through his interest and influence, rapid promotion, induced the kind-hearted Ralph to be more obliging in his outward manners, than really accorded with his sincerity, to the man he inwardly despised: not so Charles; for him it was an utter impossibility to cringe, in the smallest degree, even to that man from whose favour he hoped to gain an ascendancy in his military career; no, he would contradict the powerful Rector, where he thought him wrong, with all the free impetuosity with which he would rebuke his own brothers or nieces.

The Rector, soon after his arrival, hastened to pay his respects at the farm-house, assuring the honest *trio* that he had really languished to shake hands with three of the best fellows in the universe; and that he now purposely called to request their company to dinner on the following Thursday: the day being Saturday on which he chose to honour them by a call, he thus continued, addressing Edward in particular: "Upon my soul, my dear fellow, I am sadly unhinged by a succession of late hours, and have such a confounded head-ach continually upon me, that I must request you will do duty for me to-morrow."—"With much pleasure, sir," replied Edward, "but I fear your parishioners will

be much disappointed, and particularly Lady Wringham, who has delayed the christening of her infant till it was almost seven months old, in order that it might be baptised by your hands.”—“What,” says the reverend Rector, “has that *old cat* brought forth another child? Well, she gives devilish good *douceurs*, and I know she is so particular, that she will have the dear *cubs* made literally members of the church, by having them brought there, like an honest old laundress as she was,\* —so I’ll e’en try to get through a sermon, because if I give out that I am indisposed, I cannot with any face sprinkle the monkey-forehead of Lady Wringham’s brat; no, no,—hang it, if one has no conscience, one must pretend to a little.”

The virtuous Edward could scarce suppress his indignation, but he was poor and dependent, his Rector *rich* and *noble!* he therefore bridled his thoughts, though with very apparent difficulty, especially from the reply of Mr. Leslie to the following request:

“Sir,” said Edward, “the poor woman’s child, at the second cottage on the right of your park, is so extremely ill, that she would esteem herself under a lasting obligation to you, if you would be so kind to baptize it at home, as the apothecary tells her, the poor infant’s life, by great care, may be preserved; but if taken out in the air, at present, it will inevitably cause its death.”—“Never, never,” hastily replied Mr. Leslie, “will I christen any of the poor at their own dwellings: I insist upon it, that she brings the unhappy little wretch to church; and suppose it should die from cold, so much the better for the parents; she has more mouths now in her dirty hovel than she is able to feed!\* But oh! hang the *shop*, my dear fellow, do not let us, as Lenitive says in the Prize, be “*nailed to the counter like a bad shilling!*” I came to ask you to dine with me on Thursday; I mean to give my parishioners a *hop* in the evening, illuminate the park, and let off a few *crackers*, in honour of the Austrians having beat the French; but you, my good friends, and the divine girls, your nieces, must positively come to dinner.”

“We are highly sensible of the honour you do us, sir,” said Ralph: “on such an occasion, we cannot refuse your polite invitation, and will certainly honour ourselves by waiting on you.”—“Yes, sir,” said Edward, “and now that I hear from you, that the glorious news is really authentic, myself and family will also accept the invitation to a ball with sincere pleasure.” “So then,” said the Rector, as he saw the young ladies enter the room, and giving a very particular glance at Mary, “I am obliged only to Archduke Charles for the company of you and these divine creatures!”—“Pardon me, sir,” replied Edward, “I too well know the distance between me, your humble curate, and that of your noble family; my daughters are destined to move only in the sphere of humble mediocrity; your family glitters in the court of a monarch, the brilliancy of which is only eclipsed by the lustre of his virtues; but, on such an occasion as the present, the grateful incense of humility finds equal acceptance with the triumphs of the high and mighty, at the crush of usurpation and the victory of a virtuous warrior.”

“Pardon me, sir,” said the right honourable Rector, as he gazed on the blushing face of Mary, pressed her hand with ardour, and turned his back upon her sister, “pardon me, my good sir, these lovely creatures would add glory to a *crown!*—do not, pray, my good fellow, do not so depreciate their value.”

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\* *Historique.*

\* *Historique.*

Mary turned from his bold and ardent gaze, then withdrawing her hand with some dignity, she said, "Oh sir! do not think our minds are so untutored or so weak as to be pleased with flattery so very pointed and gross."

Mary then seated herself at the other end of the room, and her father, who felt for her, said, "My girls, sir, are unused to the society of those who move in a sphere like that to which you are ever accustomed; and therefore I have never sought to introduce them, as guests, into that polished order of beings with whom I know it will never be their lot, in future, to associate."

"And why not? my good sir," said the Rector with quickness; "the acquisition of such young ladies as the Misses Marsham must confer honour on society, instead of deriving it."

Margaret was not deaf on this occasion, and neither was she blind; she could see too plainly that the pointed looks of the Rector towards her sister meant that *she* alone was considered in the hyperbolic eulogium.

Unmindful of his sacred profession, or his marriage vows, the Reverend Mr. Leslie certainly beheld, with many a degree of painful comparison, in unison with a softer sentiment, the innocent, blooming, and lovely Mary, and contrasted her with the gay, unfeeling and unprincipled wife of his bosom; and if the conquest over her mind and person was not attended with too much difficulty, it was his settled determination to establish her in elegant lodgings, endow her with a comfortable settlement, and leave her—when he was weary of her! For the other girl, he used to tell his family he thought her confounded ugly, and a romantic fool; but to be too particular in his attentions to one sister, while he totally neglected the other, would be to shew himself even a greater fool than her he despised.

"Well," continued he, resuming his friendly chit-chat, "you promise me, all of you, to come; I hope we shall be very gay, and I will do all in my power to render the day and evening agreeable to these lovely creatures (taking a hand of each, but looking at Mary with much softness and meaning in his eyes): "good morning to you all;" and as he leaped, with wonderful agility, the paling in front of the house, they all remarked at once, "Who would think that was a clergyman?"

And who would indeed think it was one of that serious profession, arrayed in nankin jacket and trowsers, a green beaver hat, and a Belcher handkerchief tied round his throat; but soon a dashing pair of females presented themselves, and turned back with him to the farm-house.

"We were in sight of your house, Mr. Marsham," said Lady Caroline, throwing herself into an easy chair, and extending her pretty foot and ankle, while she discovered a pair of fringed pantaloons, covered only with a thin muslin petticoat, and an open leno pelisse, "we were coming after this stray sheep of mine, and have made him turn back again."

"If my brother *turns back*," said the lively Lady Isabella, "I fear he will have a dreadful path to retread; do you not think so, sir?" added she, laying her hand familiarly on the shoulder of the Reverend Mr. Marsham; "my sister talks of stray sheep; now thank my stars, I am not one, for I never belonged to your pious fold, and,

"Pleas'd to the last, I'll crop the *flow'ry* food."

“And is it not a pity,” replied Edward, bowing with unaffected gravity, “that so lovely a lamb should, unconsciously, be marked out for sacrifice?”—“What do you mean?” said she, somewhat abashed. “Sacrificed,” replied Edward, “on the altar of fashion and dissipation.”—“Oh! no,” answered she with some haughtiness, “I am not *sacrificed*, because I offer myself *willingly*; and am ever determined, in spite of parents, husband, or clergy, to act in every thing as I please.”

Charles looked at her, in spite of her beauty, with disgust; and from that time conceived a dislike against her; for though he hated a cold and tame character, yet he had an utter aversion to what is generally styled a woman of spirit.

But Charles had been himself a handsome fellow, and was so sensitive to the power of beauty in the softer sex, that this sensibility was rather his weak side: Lady Isabella, with great sweetness, advanced towards him, and took his *un*-reluctant hand; “Come now,” said she, “why do you give me that look, just like some American savage!”

Margaret was captivated immediately; the sweet eyes of Lady Isabella, the association of ideas, that the term *American savage* brought to her mind, was wonderful in its operation, and she looked on Lady Isabella as little less than a divinity: the sly lady also viewed the pensive Margaritta; and not only looked upon her as fair game for her satiric talents, but her ladyship’s *penchant* for the elegant Harrington encreasing daily, she had imbibed some soft romantic sentiments with the passion of love, which made her find a *confidante* an absolute requisite.

She twisted the drapery of her long shawl around her with peculiar elegance, and swam across the room to that space occupied by the nieces. “My sweet interesting girl!” said she, pressing the hand of Margaret, and with a soft sigh, fixing her eyes on her countenance, “how happy am I to see you! and what pleasure do I enjoy, in prospect, at the pleasing intelligence of your accepting our invitation for Thursday—oh! my love,” added she, lowering her voice, “I have much to impart to a congenial soul like yours!” At the same time her ladyship looked on the lovely Mary with not only an haughty *sang froid*, but even with a degree of spite; and composed of those expressive characteristics, Lady Isabella’s countenance was the direct index of her mind: for so much did she know of that grand theatre, the world; so often did she make one in the high and splendid circles of festivity, that she easily saw, since her last visit to Eglantine farm, how much the form and face of the then promising Mary was improved, and that she was in full possession of that fascination, that unobtruding, though playful expression, which would decidedly give her a preference with all the males wherever she appeared.

Lady Isabella was sure to be admired; but she had often, not only competitors, but superiors in personal attractions to contend with; this made her carefully improve her talent for wit, in order to render herself irresistible: yet Lady Isabella, by wearing this dangerous weapon, defeated her purpose; she was sometimes so cuttingly severe, that with all the smiling witchery of her countenance, she has been thought ill-natured, and consequently shunned; at other times she has felt herself low-spirited, and her *efforts* at saying smart things (in which she was sure to fail, for all wit should be spontaneous) has caused her to be classed only amongst the *would-be-witty* triflers of quality.

Margaret, at the flattering address of her ladyship, let fall her eyelids, and timidly lifted them again; and while she endeavoured to express, by her eyes, every thing that was

sweet and lovely, she gave them a turn very much like that defect which we call squinting; and smiling, as she was forming a speech to express her gratitude for the honour done her, she shewed the ruins of her mouth, and Lady Isabella with great difficulty suppressed her laughter.

Lady Caroline looked at her diminutive gold watch, and found it was getting late; she had laid an enormous bet upon what time the morning sun would be off the last window of the dining-parlour, and she must absolutely be present at the decision: she therefore instantly rose, and took her leave of the good family with a *condescending* and *protecting* air. Lady Isabella again whispered Margaret, and told her how much she longed for Thursday! gave Charles a familiar nod; a knowing quizzical curtsey to Ralph; and with a bow full of grace and sweetness, pressed her hand to her heart, and regarded Edward, as he opened the parlour-door for the polite visitants.

The Reverend Mr. Leslie seemed to take leave of no one but Mary, gave her a very particular look, and sighed audibly.

And now the *maitre d'hôtel* of Lady Caroline, the house-keeper, and all the upper servants were busied in displaying their taste, and making a most ample use of the purse and credit of their master, in each of which they were lavish to a degree of prodigality; while the subaltern servants were busied in every laborious preparation for the grand gala of the approaching Thursday.

Nor were the girls at the farm-house less occupied in arranging their dresses for the occasion; and though Margaret was most wakeful for the important cause, yet we will not say that Mary had so little of the female in her, as not to lay awake some quarter of an hour or more each night, in reckoning upon that elegant pleasure in perspective which she so seldom enjoyed, and which delightful vision would, no doubt, be realised amongst such a splendid circle. Oh youth! delightful season of pleasure, enhanced by expectation! why are thy hours so fleeting? Why, in the stages of maturity, and even in high meridian, does the sparkling cup, so lately sweetened with felicity, present a draft so insipid? and why stands age so ready and unsolicited to throw in her bitter and unpalatable ingredients? Rash mortal, cease to murmur—wise and beneficent, O Providence, are all thy decrees! the ardour and error of youth is chastened by the still and tranquil pleasures of mature experience and in age the recollection of good deeds performed in the earlier stages of life will turn the noxious draught to sweetness and composure.

## CHAP. V.

## THE DINNER AND BALL.

Up springs the dance along the lighted dome,  
Mix'd, and evolv'd, a thousand sprightly ways.

THOMSON.

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On her rankled soul  
The gaming fury falls; and in one gulph  
Of total ruin; honour, virtue, peace,  
Friends, families, and fortune, headlong sink.

*Ibid.*

ON the long expected Thursday, rather too soon, with shame we confess it, at the hour of *five*, a full hour or more before dinner, arrived at the parsonage Mr. Marsham and his suite, consisting of his brothers and nieces: the footman gazed at them with wonder as he ushered them into the spacious drawing-room, and said, he would inform his lady of their arrival, but she had just then retired to dress after her morning's game at piquet with Mr. Harrington; and his master had not yet returned from his accustomed walk: Mrs. Kennedy was not even at leisure to receive them, as she was finishing the last stanza of a sonnet to Cupid, before she could possibly attend to the frivolous duties of the toilette. However, after the Marsham family had been seated about half an hour, down came Lady Isabella, in a loose, wrapping, muslin pelisse; her hair, on one side, in beautiful ringlets, *en papillotes* on the other. "This is the abode of liberty," said she gaily, "and I am come *en vrai deshabile* to welcome you all: but, permit me, while I put the finishing hand to my toilette, to take my sweet girl with me." But as her ladyship turned to make Charles Marsham some answer to an handsome compliment which he paid her, she took the hand of Mary, instead of Margaret, and running with her up the wide staircase, said to her, "My dearest creature, how I have longed for to-day!" when turning to embrace her, she discovered her mistake, and felt almost ready to push poor Mary down the stairs; however, she put a good face upon the matter, and said, with all the good humour she could assume, "but pray, child, where is your sister? Why did not she follow us? It must be more pleasant for you both to stay with me in my apartment till I am dressed, than be with your father and uncles; you have enough of them *every day!*"

"Your ladyship does us honour," said Mary, "and with your permission, I will desire my sister to come up stairs."—"Do, my dear," said her ladyship, "but do not let me confine *you*, do not come up again unless you like it."

Mary had sense enough to see that Lady Isabella did not wish for *her* company; and also that, from what motive she knew not, she gave a decided preference to her sister; but at this the good-natured girl rather rejoiced than repined.

She not only loved to see her sister noticed, but she also found Lady Isabella by no means of a character to excite either her respect or regard; she tripped down stairs again, but not having minded, in her *ascent*, which way she had turned, she took a contrary

direction when she *descended*, and instead of finding herself in the drawing-room, she discovered she had entered a long apartment, decorated with coloured lamps and various devices, in which an elegant cold supper was laid out on the several tables.

She quitted it immediately, without staying to admire its tasteful abundance, and opened the third door from this spacious apartment: a young gentleman, half dressed, and reading a pamphlet, met her eye; he regarded her with peculiar interest, and advanced forward with a polite freedom, mingled with respect and trepidation (for Mary had imparted to Frederic Harrington

“A new pulse, unfelt before”);

“Permit me, madam,” said he, in a tremulous accent, as he observed the deep confusion of Mary, to which he was fearful of adding, “permit me to conduct you to the drawing-room. If you will pardon,” added he, “the grotesque appearance of such an half-dressed escort, I will do myself the honour of leading you to your friends; for I am much deceived,” continued he, as they walked onwards, “if it is not Miss Marsham whom I now have the honour of addressing!”

The charming and polite ease of Harrington now entirely relieved Mary from her embarrassment, and she chatted with all the unrestrained and charming *naïveté*, which was her peculiar characteristic.

With all the vivacity and heedlessness of youth, she had not observed that she had turned down another staircase than that on which she had ascended to the apartment of Lady Isabella, and was soon made sensible of her mistake, as she took her way with Frederic to that leading to the drawing-room; on which flight of stairs, having descended a few steps, Lady Isabella now accosted her, in a voice almost unintelligible from rage and jealousy—“Is your sister, Miss Marsham, coming up, or no?”

“I have not yet seen her, my lady,” said Mary, with the most tranquil innocence. “Where then, in the name of heaven, have you been?” said her ladyship; and without waiting for an answer she banged the door of her apartment with violence, and threw herself on an ottomane in all the agony of jealousy.

Several minutes had elapsed, each of which had seemed an age to the wretched Isabella, since Mary left her—she had descended two or three stairs to see if Margaret was coming; the first objects that met her eye, were Harrington and Mary! Harrington in his dressing-gown, the powder only half wiped from his face, his feet in slippers, his animated and expressive eyes fixed on the countenance of Mary, who regarded him with more than common complacency. “Shall such a little rustic wretch as that,” thought she, “dare to enter the lists with me, and contend for the heart of the charming Frederic? Never—no, never, without feeling the weight of my severest vengeance.”

During these reflections of the lady, Harrington had nearly reached the drawing-room door, towards which he waved his disengaged hand, and bowing elegantly over the soft one which he held in his, took his leave; while Mary, giving a gentle sigh, secretly thought he had left her too soon.

Lady Isabella, her cheeks glowing with agitation, and her heart palpitating with various emotions, reclined on her ottomane, awaiting the arrival of Margaret; what to make of the scene she had witnessed she knew not: Mary had not reached the drawing-

room since she left her; she had seen her in the company of Frederic, and looking more charmingly attractive than she had thought her capable of: but the *deshabille* of Harrington was a mystery she could not account for; he who was so careful in general of his exterior appearance; she had beheld his *half-powdered* face rivetted as close as decorum would permit to that of the visibly gratified Mary. "Oh!" thought she, "these country girls are so full of intrigue, with all their pretended innocence, that no doubt this seemingly accidental meeting was planned, and Frederic and that little puss have been long acquainted—and shall Isabella Emerson stand forth as a rival competitor with that obscure little creature? No, never! From this moment I cast the mean-spirited Harrington from my heart, and I should not care if I was to marry Sir Charles Sefton to-morrow!"—Presently, at the glad summons she had received from her ladyship, entered Margaret in tears, which she had silently shed, as she affected to look out of a window ever since, what she thought, the caprice of quality had deprived her of the fair Isabella's affections, and had given her sister the preference.

The negligent posture of the afflicted lady, the Turkish *lit de repos* on which she had thrown her lovely form, made the fertile brain of Margaret fancy herself in a Turkish harem; and falling on her knees, she was about to prostrate her face to the ground, when Lady Isabella, raising her up, said, "My sweet, dear girl, what is the matter? Why these tears? Are you, like me, a fellow-sufferer? and does thy gentle and susceptible heart feel the pangs of unrequited love?"

Margaret now recollected where she was, and said, "Is it possible, that the beautiful Lady Isabella can sigh for any one in vain? Such, my dear lady, I trust is not *my* lot: but I wept, because you honoured me with your friendship and promised confidence: alas! I dreaded lest my sister had stepped in to rival me in the place I hold in your affections."—"Never, my dear girl," replied Lady Isabella, with violence and energy; "Oh! sit down, and I will tell you all."—But the first dinner-bell ringing, delayed the important confidence for the present; and Lady Isabella flying to her toilette, found, from the glow on her cheeks, that she must rub off all her *rouge*, if she did not wish to appear as vulgarly red as a country milk-maid. This did not well accord with the romantic ideas of Margaret; all the heroines she had ever read of, were indebted to nature alone for their *miraculous beauty*; however, she knew but little of fashionable life, and thought every thing that was practised by her quality friend must be right.

When the two ladies entered the drawing-room together, they found it filled by the sociable and friendly party which were selected, *sans ceremonie*, to partake of the Rector's sumptuous dinner; amongst whom were the rich Sir John Wringham and his lady: but Lady Isabella cast round her anxious eyes, and found *one* of the dinner-party was yet wanting; this was the culprit Harrington: and she now, with all the negligence of unfeeling fashion left her new friend to shift for herself; and amidst the "how d'ye's," and "what a warm day this is, &c. &c." as she imparted that *important intelligence* to each one separately, she appeared not even to know that her beloved *confidante* was in the room: at length she threw herself into a kind of recess, where a *tête-à-tête* conversation-chair offered a vacant place: Sir Charles Sefton half rose to occupy it, but she almost killed him by a frown, and sent her enquiring eye towards the door, where yet stood the timid Margaret; but the poor girl was totally unnoticed by her, for her eye sought Harrington only, and Margaret durst not take courage to cross the apartment, in order to

take the vacant seat by her ladyship. Lady Isabella, however, soon gave a knowing look to Sir Charles, and spelt with her fingers, on the trimming of her sleeve, the word "QUIZ!"

Sir Charles rose immediately: "Lovely creature," half-whispered he to Margaret, "permit me to hand you to a seat;" and placing himself behind her chair, he poured forth such a volley of hyperbolic, ridiculous compliments, that had not the mind of Margaritta been weak in the extreme, she must have been convinced that the noble Baronet was only diverting himself at her expence: in the mean time all the gaiety of Lady Isabella seemed to return at the mischievous sport; but whenever she cast her eyes on Mary, and beheld how captivating she looked, anger and envy clouded her features; and it was severally remarked, either inwardly, or by the different *duos* round the room, to each other, how very ill Lady Isabella Emerson looked!

Presently the door opened, and Harrington, the elegant Harrington, his person adorned with all the auxiliaries of tasteful and gentleman-like dress, entered the room! every eye was turned towards him; but Mary cast hers down, blushed and trembled, yet she knew not why.

With a grace and ease peculiar to himself, he addressed them all, and was strongly tempted to take the vacant seat by the side of Mary, who was placed by Lady Wringham on a *sofa pour trois*; but,

"Still the world prevail'd, and its dread laugh,  
"Which scarce the firm philosopher can scorn,"

prevailed, for Frederic had the world's pride amongst his several foibles; he thought it would degrade him conspicuously to notice the *protégée* niece of a farmer, the daughter only of a country curate!

He therefore, with little deliberation, took his corner in the recess, by the gratified Lady Isabella, and never turned his head once towards Mary, while *her* eyes often unconsciously wandered towards the seat he filled. Margaret was in high spirits at her imaginary conquest, and all seemed pleased but Mary, who was doomed to endure the conversation and ignorant remarks of Lady Wringham, who declared to the Reverend Mr. Marsham, "If she had no *little ones*, how happy she should be in having *sitch* a companion always to live with her as *Miss!*"

It now wanted a quarter of an hour to six; "The hour," said Lady Caroline, "we generally dine at in the country; though I declare I have no appetite till eight, my usual hour in town."

"Well!" said Lady Wringham, "for my part, I always *dines* at three; and I *thinks* that a *wery* good hour! but every one to their liking; *ar'nt* I right, Mr. Leslie?"

"I am so partial to your ladyship," said the Reverend Theodore Leslie, "that I think all you do must be right; and henceforth I should like to dine at three myself, that I might think that you and I were, at least in one action, employed alike."

"La! well, I declare you are *sitch* a *funny* man, Mr. Leslie: well, I declare, my love," continued she, addressing Sir John, "if our parson is not absolutely making love to me."

"Mr. Leslie, *lovey*, does you and me much honour, I am sure," said the little man of four-feet-eight, rising and bowing profoundly.

“Well, but do you know,” said his talkative rib, “if I *ha’n’t* been talking politics here with our curate and the captain his brother!”

“Yes,” said Charles, “this good lady has been rejoicing with us, that the little usurper is at last likely to meet his deserts.”

“Oh! I don’t know,” said the Honourable and Reverend Theodore Leslie, who was always fond of argument and contradiction, “I yet think,—mind—I by no means desire it,—*au contraire*, I assure you, but I do really think that Boney will beat them all at last. My dear fellow, he has such armies, it is utterly impossible to conquer him.”—“Upon my soul, sir,” said Charles, with some warmth, “I am very sorry to hear any Englishman say so; particularly any one who ranks high in life: in the first place, it looks as if they wished the villain to prosper, for, as the old song says,

“What we *wish* to be true, we are apt to believe;”

and in the next instance, a noble and wealthy man must be extremely weak to wish it, as the success of Buonaparte must, in the end, prove the destruction of all the rich and titled men in Europe.”

The fashionable Mr. Leslie turned on his heel, and only laughed at the energy of the honest Lieutenant, who turning to Lady Wringham, near to whom he was seated in a chair by her sofa, said, “By heavens, I should like to see that Buonaparte tortured for a twelvemonth!”—“And *sarve* him right,” replied his fair companion.

“Pray,” squeaked Mrs. Kennedy across the room, addressing the Reverend Edward Marsham, “have you read *Coelebs in search of a Wife?*”

“Yes, madam,” replied the curate.

“And what is your opinion of it?” said the authoress.

“I revere the fair author,” said Edward, “and all her moral and excellent works; but I must say, for a work of fiction, I think it too religious.”

All the company turned their attention from their own frivolous and general conversation, to look at Edward Marsham.—“Well,” said Lady Wringham, “and that remark from a *clergyman*! who’d have thought it?”

“Yes, madam,” said Edward, “I repeat it, if I find a moral and religious work, I ought certainly, according to my profession, to prefer the perusal of it to a modern novel—but a religious book is *one* thing—a modern novel is *another*!”

“Well, la! who *doesn’t* know that?” said Lady Wringham, winking on the company, and laughing aloud; but finding her wit unnoticed, and Lady Isabella (whose depth of understanding and erudition approached to abstruseness), listening to the curate with profound attention, she suffered him to continue.

“Let the writers of the modern novels,” said he, “like the excellent Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett, hold up a faithful picture of the times they live in; lash vice, in whatever shape it may appear, and applaud virtue in every-one, while they make their heroes not demi-gods, but mere erring men; and let them, like those incomparable authors, intersperse their works with only those *few* religious sentiments, which may serve to shew the orthodoxy of their own principles, and prove to their readers, that there is no trust to be placed on mere moral rectitude and philosophy, without the aid of Omnipotence: these serious interspersions, if I may be allowed the term, are quite

sufficient for a work which is only meant to unbend and recreate the mind; and make those read who are not fond, naturally, of study; and who, if they find these works too serious, will close the book, not read at all, or else fly to the dangerous rubbish of licentious publications. In devotion's closet let me read the immortal works of a Tillotson, a Sherlock, and a Young; but let not such divine breathings as theirs find their way into a tale composed from fancy, or the fertility of imagination."

"And so then," said Mrs. Kennedy, "you really do not like *Coelebs*."—"Pardon me," said Edward, "I cannot but like it; but I speak only of the proper discrimination which an author ought to make in those kind of works; in regard to the theological part of *Coelebs*, few females are so instructed as to be capable of defining religion so abstrusely as the fair author has done."—"Oh!" interrupted the Rector, "I dare say she was helped by her *good friend*, the Right Reverend the Bish—" "Hush! my good fellow, now do," said Sir Charles Sefton, familiarly laying his hand on Mr. Leslie's mouth, "no scandal, you know I abominate it."—"O dear, yes," said Lady Isabella, "besides, what my brother alludes to," continued she, with a drawling voice, and arch look, "was so *purely platonic*!"

"Well, it is wonderful," said Mrs. Kennedy, "how these *pretty* female authors do get on: now, pray tell me, what is there in Mrs. Fielding's works, the new authoress, who is succeeding so rapidly? She has scarce any education, and has nothing but a fine person, a kind of eloquence and a dashing appearance to recommend her."\*

"Where does the divine creature live?" said Sir Charles, "cannot you introduce me to her?"—"Not I, indeed," said the mortified and much nettled Mrs. Kennedy, who had formerly received from the quizzing Sir Charles a copious dose of flattery, but having thrown out hints to Margaret that he suspected her of witchcraft, he found he must flatter no one but that credulous girl for the remainder of the day, who trembled every time Mrs. Kennedy approached her, for fear she should cast some spell around her.

"When you speak of the influence of the person," said the mischievous Lady Isabella, "I am sure no one is more obliged to nature than my dear little friend Kennedy, who has that irresistible *je ne sais quoi* in her *toute ensemble*, that she captivates as much by her person as by the superior brilliancy of her talents."

"I am not very competent to give my judgement on books," said Charles Marsham, "but I must say, that I think Mrs. Fielding's works, like herself, are charming; and there is many a learned fool who pens his *dry* and *obscure* lines, which no one has patience to read through; while the merit of an author, in my opinion, must be in knowing how to make use of those divine gifts of natural judgement and fine ideas of the soul, which all the logic and learning of the schools can never bestow; but if a woman unites to these great unacquired talents, a fine person, then she is always envied by her own sex, especially by the deformed and ugly." And at the same time he fixed his darting and angry eyes on Mrs. Kennedy.

Charles had one defect in his demeanour, which was, that when provoked, he was apt to be personal: the conversation was getting rather acrid, but was sweetened by the ringing of the last dinner-bell; and each gentleman taking a lady by the hand to conduct her to the dining-parlour, the Rector seized that of Mary, drew her back, that they might be the last of the party, and pressed the hand he held, unseen, with ardour to his lips, before he quitted it, then seated her beside himself at the table: Lady Wringham was

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\**Historique.*

disappointed, tossed her head, and audibly uttered a “well, indeed!—for my part—.” However, the excellent cheer with which the table abounded, soon restored the lady’s good humour, and by the ample credit she did to it, she proved her appetite to be as complaisant at six o’clock as at three. Little Sir John put on his spectacles, and never took his eyes off his plate till he had dispatched all he was helped to.

Edward, doomed to the side of Mrs. Kennedy, supported with her, during the intervals of eating, a pedantic conversation: the lady’s discourse consisted of quotations from Johnson and other learned authors; she enlarged also, in turn, on the rapacity of booksellers, the justness of the Critical Reviewers, and the *Esopian* title of author, seemed literally tacked to her *back*.

Sir Charles Sefton, seated opposite to Lady Isabella, contemplated her beauty with infinite satisfaction, while he poured the soft nonsense into the listening ear of Margaret, which he wished to address to her ladyship. Harrington *looked* all that could express admiration and the soft sentiments of a rising passion, whenever he glanced towards Mary; but the deceived Isabella triumphed over her, and thought that by his unremitting attentions and fine speeches to herself, that *she* was the sole mistress of his affections.

The Rector took but little *public* notice of Mary, but now and then *stole* an amorous whisper, while he gently pressed his knee against her’s: her bashful embarrassment heightened her attractions; and Harrington made a sad digression from the rules of attentive politeness, by not hearing the dashing Lady Caroline challenge him to take a glass of Madeira with her; for totally deaf to her ladyship, he bent forward and requested Miss Marsham to honour him by taking one with him.

Seated on each side of Lady Caroline were Sir Edward Harrington and honest Ralph, while Charles was again in the comfortless situation of being placed by the illiterate Lady Wringham: however, his fair partner on the other side of him, Lady Isabella, made him some amends by her polite attentions, her sprightly *jeu d’ esprits*, and all the fascination of highly polished manners; nor could Charles resist the temptation of her arch wit, but joined with her in silently *quizzing* the *ci-devant* laundress.

The ladies retired soon after dinner to receive the numerous guests who had come from the village of Eglantine and its various environs, for about the compass of ten miles, and bade fair to make up a tolerable set for dancing: the gentlemen in the dining-parlour, though not all dancers, promised very shortly to join the female party at their coffee.

Sir Edward Harrington drew his seat near the worthy Curate, and placing Ralph on the other side of him, he cordially took an hand of each, while he filled his own glass and those of the three brothers, to the health of the Misses Marsham: Frederic, who thought of no other Miss Marsham than Mary, devoutly kissed the glass as he raised it to his lip. “I’ll be shot,” says the Rector, who was now well flushed with wine, “if I do not fill an additional bumper to the health of the eldest Miss Marsham in particular;” and rising, he cried aloud,—“To MARY! huzza!—to MARY! with three cheers!” “Pardon me, sir,” said Frederic Harrington, gravely, “the name of Miss Marsham, though it may excite homage, yet should never be toasted with such bacchanalian applause.” Mr. Leslie, who had that morning borrowed a good round sum of the good-natured Frederic, sat down again, saying, “Well, do as you please; but, by heaven, Marsham, if I was single, your daughter Mary should be your Rector’s wife tomorrow.”

Edward forced a smile, and bowing, said, "You do me too much honour, sir;" and then turning towards Sir Edward Harrington, gave a turn to a conversation which was becoming painful to him, by introducing his favourite subject of politics.

In Sir Edward he found the stanch patriot, blended with the ardent and zealous servant of the throne; keenly alive both to the interests of his country and his sovereign; the strenuous supporter of darling liberty, Britain's peculiar privilege, but one of faction's bitterest and most implacable foes: the tear of philanthropy glistened in the worthy Baronet's eye, as he proposed for a toast—that virtuous senator who had so nobly stepped forward in parliament for the relief of insolvent debtors; had unbarred, through his generous exertions, the doors of their prisons, and restored the long confined husband to the arms of an affectionate wife, and many a father to his afflicted children!

Charles was engaged with the Rector in listening to the most flattering promises of military promotion; the disposition of Charles was sanguine, and he believed all his noble patron uttered. Sir Charles Sefton and Ralph were two to one against Sir John Wringham, in favour of the former being a man of more consequence, and a more useful member of society than the lawyer; whilst the little man contended, that without the protection of the law the farms would soon be destroyed, however wealthy, and the rich property seized on by whoever should choose to lay hands on them, and that, without law, might would be sure to overcome right.

Sir Edward Harrington paid no attention to their arguments, but frequently eyed the Honourable and Reverend Theodore Leslie with contempt, and listened to what he was convinced were the most egregious falsehoods; for the situations which he promised to ensure to Charles, Sir Edward knew had been long given away, and that this the Rector knew also as well as himself. On the proposed toast, however, being repeated, Mr. Leslie said, "Oh! aye, I was so engaged with my worthy veteran here, that I did not attend to you, Sir Edward; here's to your old *quiz* of a virtuous Baronet; and come, now for my toast,—Colonel Wardle!" A general silence prevailed, and an unanimous resolution seemed to be formed not to do honour to the toast, which was first boldly declared by Sir Edward Harrington; Sir Charles Sefton, however, and little Sir John Wringham, drank it; the latter, like a cunning lawyer, saying, that whatever dislike any person might have against another, he ought never to object to such toasts as the master of the house pleased to give. "So, sir," said Sir Edward, "then if it is the master's pleasure, I am to drink, perhaps, success to Napoleon Buonaparte, and also to the *public defender* of a woman of a *certain* description, which defenders are vulgarly called *bullies*: no, gentlemen, I never will toast the man I despise; the leader of any thing bordering on faction, I shall ever hold in the most abject contempt:" and seeing his nephew raise his glass to his lips, he added, "If Frederic drinks that toast, I cast him off for ever!"

"Pardon me, sir," said Frederic, "not even you should make me retract a sentiment which my inward conscience approves and assures me is right; and I solemnly declare, that not even you should *compel* me to drink it; and I pressed the sparkling wine to my lip in veneration of your last sentiment."

"I was in Ireland," said Sir Edward, "a short time ago, and it was proposed at a little town a short distance from Dublin, to vote an address of thanks to Colonel Wardle; an honest clergyman, however, an intelligent, loyal, and well-informed man, was against it; but most votes carried the day, and his arguments were over-ruled. "Well, then," said he,

with all that quickness of ready wit which characterises the Irish nation, “I vote that a piece of the finest and *whitest* Irish linen be sent also as a present to Colonel Wardle, with this pious wish, that “HE MAY NEVER SULLY IT IN THE LAP OF INFAMY!”\*

“Aye, you’re all a set of fine fellows,” said the Rector, “and so, come, a truce to this nonsense, curse Wardle, hang me if I care one pin for him.”

Sir Edward seeing the reverend pillar of the church not very steady, proposed that they should all repair to the drawing-room and join the ladies; but in this he was absolutely over-ruled by the Rector, who insisted on their taking one more bottle, and then they would all adjourn together.

There have been instances of a man drinking himself sober; and one of the kind appeared now exemplified in Mr. Leslie, who after finishing the best part of the insisted bottle, followed the gentlemen up stairs, and partook of the coffee handed round to the ladies with all the elegant ease of a man of fashion; and though his cheek glowed with the fever of a bacchanalian, yet his manners in presence of the ladies, though very gay, were by no means indecorous, or wearing the stamp of inebriety.

A turn in the gardens was carelessly proposed by Lady Caroline Leslie, before the dancing began; and the agreeable surprise of a Vauxhall in miniature met the astonished eyes of the guests: coloured lamps, in appropriate devices, were entwined round the ancient oaks, and that defence of Britain, at the entrance of the park, was guarded by three of the Rector’s servants, arrayed in the dress of the ancient Druids! Mary was enchanted with a scene so novel and tasteful, and Margaret now saw realized before her eyes all that she had hitherto been taught to regard as fiction only: “Oh!” said she, as she hung on the arm of the quizzing Sir Charles Sefton, “how often has my *rustic* uncle and *rigid* father declared, that such brilliant sights as these existed only in the poet’s imagination, or in the fanciful brain of the writer of a fairy-tale! Surely, those three venerable beings are the genii who preside over this delightful region! and I tread only now on enchanted ground!”

“Your uncle, my intelligent angel,” said Sir Charles, “your uncle Ralph is a mere rustic indeed; your uncle Charles is very well; your father I must revere, because it is supposed that he gave being to so divine a creature as yourself: I say, so it is generally *supposed*; but oh! incomparable Margaritta, I could say, what indeed I dare scarcely utter to delicacy like thine! but—surely,—surely,—my seraph, those sublime rays of genius which you possess could never have entered the mind of the daughter of a country curate! impossible, impossible; I own, pardon my temerity, I own I cannot help thinking that the child of some noble or royal dame has been exchanged by some vile nurse for that of the curate, and that Margaritta is that high-born fair-one!”

The company were now strolling about in pairs; and but little attention was paid to our two country girls, except by Margaret’s unremitting shadow, Sir Charles Sefton, who had received his instructions from the fair quality idol to whom he was devoted.

Soft music was heard at a distance: Mary, no critical *amateur*, but an untaught enthusiast, was all ear; lost in the sweet reverie which the melodious strains inspired, she suffered herself to be taken by the hand and led towards the place whence the sounds proceeded; she soon became sensible of her situation, and dreaded to turn her head, convinced in her own mind she should behold the libertine Rector, when a voice

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\**Historique.*

addressed her, full of magic sweetness, saying, "Again am I made happy, by guiding Miss Marsham in her wanderings."

"Indeed, sir," replied Mary, "my *wanderings*, as you justly call them, have the appearance of wilful and thoughtless errors: suffer me now, sir, to return to the company, I can easily retrace my way without a guide;" and withdrawing her hand, she turned from him with a grave curtsey; when Frederic, hastily, though respectfully, taking hold of her robe, said, "Oh! Miss Marsham, leave me not thus; I sought you out to explain a conduct to you, which I am obliged this night to preserve, and which gives real anguish to my feelings: I am forbidden to—to pay any attention to you—and requested not to dance with you—by—" "And what, sir," interrupted the half-offended Mary, "could make you imagine that such conduct would be of any consequence to me? The little instruction I have had in dancing, will make me rather desirous of declining it among so polished and scientific a circle; and whoever, sir, chooses to restrict *you*, has, no doubt, justifiable motives; nor can your neglect of me require any apology, as it is a matter of indifference to me." At this last sentence, uttered with an aching heart, she hastily quitted him, and turned down a shadowy walk, which was only partially lighted, to hide her vexation. "It is," thought she, "the proud Sir Edward, his uncle, who has put these restrictions upon him; yet how deceitful are appearances! with how much benevolence, with how much paternal kindness did he look upon me! His smiles bespoke approbation, gentleness, and every thing that was beneficent and amiable, each time he chanced to meet my eyes: oh! world of fashion and deceit, how much I have seen of you, in only the space of a few hours!"

She now heard a mingled tumult of voices, and beheld through the trees the well-dressed crowd moving in various directions; the rockets and fiery serpents whizzed in the air; and as she stopped to gaze at the breaking splendour of the former, she felt herself suddenly clasped round the waist, and embraced with energy and rudeness, by the Honourable and Reverend Theodore Leslie!

With a strength almost supernatural, she pushed him from her, and having disengaged herself from his hold, ran like a frightened fawn along the walk, till she reached a roomy alcove at the farthest end; unknowing where she went, she was hastily about to enter it, when the soft sighs of a female met her ear, mingled with the following words: "Oh! Harrington, you are too dangerous; oh! let us leave this alluring spot; come with me, I intreat you, this instant, to see the fire-works; what will be thought of our absence?"—"Cruel Isabella," returned the inconsiderate Harrington, "think, oh! think only of that ardent *fire* which consumes your Frederic! think of the flame those bewitching eyes have kindled! The mind of my Isabel, rising superior to public opinion, disclaims the world and all its rigid forms."

Shocked, abashed at what she heard, poor Mary knew not how to act; but the pursuing footsteps of the Rector made her resolve to enter the harbour; and oh! thought she, perhaps I shall save the indiscreet Lady Isabella from ruin!

Mary was not one of the fainting kind, but her severe agitation, the conviction of Harrington's being a libertine, the person who laid her arbitrary restraints upon him, now before her, caused an ashy paleness to overspread her countenance: shocked at her death-like appearance, Harrington, in spite of Lady Isabella, flew to her aid; at the same time frantically exclaiming, "For God's sake, Lady Isabella, if you have your *vinaigrette* in your

pocket, give it me to relieve this charming girl; do you see the situation she is in? The explosion of the fire-works, no doubt, has terrified her.”

“Do you think, sir,” said Lady Isabella, “that I wear *pockets*? I leave you, Miss Marsham, in very good hands,” added she, rising, “and will send one of the servants with a glass of water to you, which I dare say will be of more service to a country girl than *aromatic vinegar*!”

Frederic pressed the trembling Mary to his heart; but she, shuddering at his touch, insisted on his leaving her immediately, as she felt quite recovered: he fell on his knees before her, pressed her hand to his lips, and exclaimed, “Oh! how can I ever regain the good opinion of Miss Marsham?”—“*My opinion, sir,*” said Mary, with dignity, “is of very little consequence to any one; and as to your *regaining* mine, I surely, sir, have not known you long enough to form *any* of you; but if you would wish me to think you *obliging*, I desire you will quit me *instantly*, or suffer me to depart: the termination of this walk, I see, leads to another which is crowded with company, and them I shall join, as I see my father and uncles are among them.”

The confused Harrington, not a little mortified, suffered her to depart, and mentally cursed his stars, that had suffered his licentiousness to reach the ear of purity, and had implanted, perhaps, aversion in the breast of that woman (who though only the daughter of a poor country curate) he was most ambitious should think of him favourably.

It has been before remarked, that the bewitching Lady Isabella had made a temporary kind of conquest over the *senses*, and had shaken the *principles* of Frederic Harrington; over his *heart* and *mind* she had no claim. Elevated with champaign, and tied for the whole day and evening at her side, her animation, her beauty, and the opportunities she *carelessly* and almost *purposely* gave him, caused the scene which the pure and spotless Mary had, undesignedly witnessed. The free-thinking Isabella, however, by no means felt obliged at thus being rescued from the destruction of one mad moment; yet though her principles were dissolute, she had refinement in her love, and must possess the heart as well as the person of her lover: her good sense soon shewed her, as conviction flashed on her mind, that the inclination of Harrington towards her, was little more than sensual; the haste in which he quitted her to succour Mary—the scene in the morning—his frequent and animated looks during dinner-time towards Miss Marsham, made her now, as she revolved each circumstance over in her mind, lay plans for a scheme she was determined to put in practice.

The fireworks over, the party were summoned to the ball-room by Lady Caroline: habited as Terpsichore, she tripped with grace and gaiety before her admiring guests, and they entered a spacious saloon, illuminated with wax-lights to a degree of dazzling splendour.

Lady Isabella, entirely mistress of herself, aided as much as possible the reconciliation of Harrington and Mary; but Mary was, at times, either pensive or *distracted*; and not all the soft and delicate attentions of Frederic could reinstate him in her favour: the more he endeavoured to regain it, the more specious and dangerous he appeared to her, and caused her to be the more circumspect. Alas! she little knew the great world, and how often at war with the heart and conscience, is the free indulgence of the senses, from the fatal misfortune of being introduced to that world of dissipation too early: she knew not, that in spite of promiscuous attachments, how deep were the impressions made by

virtue and goodness, though often only at a first interview; she knew not how, actuating on the baser principles and weakness of human nature, refined sophistry and artful fascinations too often succeeded in their aim, without entirely extinguishing the pure flame of moral rectitude.

“I was engaged to dance with you, Frederic,” said Lady Isabella, with the most seducing freedom, and apparent good humour, “but I am a capricious creature; I treat you as one of our family; not for the world would I treat you with rudeness, but I have found an old acquaintance here, whom I promised to dance with at the first ball we should chance to meet at;” at the same moment she gave her hand to a young Major, who was quartered in the village: This young man, of a noble family, but small fortune, had been a great favourite with Lady Isabella, before she saw the all-subduing Harrington; and, till she consented to repair the shattered fortune of her family, by a marriage with Sir Charles Sefton, had been much shunned by all the Leslies; but now he again became a welcome guest at their crowded parties; *en famille*, he was never invited, for fear of Lady Isabella’s former *penchant* returning in the tranquil and interesting conversations of *parties quarrées*, &c. &c.

She formed the ill-natured resolution now, of aiding Harrington’s affections with Mary, raising his expectations to the height of happiness, and then destroying them for ever!

Bewitched by her syren arts, Harrington could not forbear repining at her caprice; and much nettled, said, “I once thought Lady Isabella as *polite* as she is *lovely*! but even to her fancies, she shall ever find me her willing slave,” and bowing obsequiously, he solicited Mary to accept him for a partner.

Mary had ever been fond of dancing, her father and uncles came up to her, enquired the cause of her refusing the honour Mr. Harrington did her? “No,” said Sir Edward, “let me plead for my nephew, for the *honour* will be *his*.” Over-ruled, and not being artful enough to affect indisposition, she suffered herself to be led amongst the gay throng who were just, after having danced “THE SELF,” commencing a second dance. Mary figured not away, with every different *pas à l’Ecossois*, neither did she twist her body about, with all the studied graces of an Italian *figurante*; but the elasticity of her charming form, her own natural elegance, her animation and true ear to every note, gave a kind of skill to her movements, which astonished the scientific dancers, who composed the modern part of the gay assembly.

Margaret did not like dancing, and danced, whenever she attempted it, vilely; but wrought upon by the persuasions of Sir Charles Sefton, to the surprise and vexation of her sister, father and uncles, she stood up; she swam about the room with her head languishing on one side, and put every one out in the figure; for amongst all Margaret’s defects, she had that of never knowing one tune from another; *quick* or *slow*, it was all the same to her: yet Sir Charles, like the fox in the fable, would, had he thought proper, have induced the silly girl, like the vain crow—to sing!

Towards the hour of two, they all adjourned to an elegant supper; and yet Harrington could not (with all his admiration of Mary, and though Lady Isabella gave him every encouragement to notice her,) conquer the pride of birth, and the opinion of the world, sufficiently, to seat himself beside her; notwithstanding, he thought her superior to every female there. His eyes and his willing feet followed Lady Isabella; and his uncle gave him

a rebuke, by taking the hand of the lovely girl his nephew had just quitted, saying aloud, "Will Miss Marsham allow me the honour of waiting on her at supper?"

Lady Isabella accepted all the pointed attentions of Major Raymond, and did not so much as once turn her eyes towards the mortified Frederic: but Lady Caroline said to him, "Harrington, sit by me; here, I will make room for you; I shall not allow you to dance any more, for I just want one to complete my set at *vingt-un*; and must positively lay my commands on you."—"The *commands* of your ladyship are to me *laws*, which I am happy to obey," said Harrington, with forced politeness; and attending her after the supper was over, to the card-table, left the remainder of the company to re-commence their dancing.

Mary danced no more, but was gratified by the pleasing attention of Sir Edward Harrington, with whom she supported a sensible and interesting conversation; and the Baronet felt for Mary all the tender warmth of paternal friendship.

Just after the clock had struck four, a violent bustle was heard in the card-room: Lady Caroline was in violent hysterics; Harrington, pale, and in evident distress of mind, supported her in his arms: some of the party appeared to sneer, and one lady seemed, in a determined manner, to insist on payment.

With this lady, a female gambler of quality, who had come down to her country seat, a few miles off, and had this evening accepted the invitation of the Leslies, Harrington had imprudently entered into a gallant kind of partnership at the *vingt-un* table, and Lady Caroline, in the true spirit of play, had delighted in laying enormous bets of beating two against one: at length she had gambled away infinitely more than she was able to pay; Harrington would willingly have excused her all, but the partnership he had entered into, besides the little money he had left, from the preposterous loan he had made in the morning, rendered it impracticable.

The Reverend Mr. Leslie, however, with the aid of the indignant Sir Edward Harrington, restored a momentary comfort to the mind of her ladyship; but the look Sir Edward gave his nephew, seemed to pierce him to the heart, while that of Mr. Leslie, to his wife, was no less replete with wrath; but for that she cared but little.

The festivity of the scene being now much clouded, and the morning sun having shot its bright rays on both natural and artificial beauty, Lady Caroline retired, and each party seemed desirous of departing.

Harrington was missing at the same time as her ladyship; and Mary, who was doomed to be a spectator of all that could agonize her feelings, beheld, as she passed through a suite of rooms to fetch her shawl from the apartment in which she had left it, from a door which stood half open, Harrington on his knees before Lady Caroline Leslie!

He was pressing her extended hand to his bosom, and these words distinctly met her ear, as Lady Caroline bent towards him, "Oh! too persuasive Harrington, you have conquered!"

Mary had heard enough, not only to be convinced of the licentiousness, but the baseness of Frederic's principles; she saw but too plain, that he was now ungenerous enough to take advantage of the pecuniary distresses of the wife and the friend who were hospitably entertaining him under their roof: she hastened from a scene so painful, and joining her father and his brothers, took the arm of her uncle Charles, while the transported and exulting Margaret was accompanied home by Sir Charles Sefton.

## CHAP. VI.

THE FLYING TEA-KETTLE, AND OTHER  
MIRACULOUS INCIDENTS.

—————In airy vision rapt,  
She stray'd, regardless whither.

THOMSON.

THE ardent sun of a bright summer's morning had arisen with more than common warmth, and the over-joyed birds were loudly tuning their morning carols, when a rude and violent tumult completely drowned not only their melodious notes, but also the soft and amorous whisperings of Sir Charles Sefton.

Presently whirled aloft over their heads, a large black tea-kettle; and Sir Charles, though almost ready to expire with his suppressed inclination to laugh, uttered, as he clasped the terrified Margaret to his breast, "Heaven defend us from the incantations of that witch!"

"Good God, sir," replied Margaret, "has Mrs. Kennedy then followed us? I left her at the bottom of the stairs which led to her chamber, and she wished me a good-night, as she told me a violent head-ach had obliged her to take '*French leave*,' I think she called it, 'of the company.'"

"Art, art, my dear girl," said Sir Charles, "be assured, from me, who will never deceive you, she is no better than a witch; and I will one day convince you of it. What could cause an inanimate tea-kettle to fly about in the air like a bird, except witchcraft and art magic?"

They now walked on a brisk pace before the rest of the party; and Mr. Marsham stayed behind, to enquire at the cottage, on the other side of the lane they had just passed through, and from whence the wrangling noise had proceeded, the cause of this early disturbance! He there found a stout peasant in a violent rage with his wife, for not only drinking her confounded *outlandish slop* herself, but also making her children as fond of it as she was: and that his eldest lads, who were old enough to be fellow-labourers with himself, he could never get out to work of a morning, till forsooth, they had *gotten* their tea! He had sworn the night before, and religiously had he kept his word, that if ever he found the great *tea-kettle* on in the morning, except, *mayhap* on a Sunday, he would throw it headlong to the d——l; and when he came from the field, at half-past six o'clock, where he had been anxiously waiting the arrival of his boys, he found his wife in the act of putting it on the fire, and his eldest son with the bellows in his hand preparing to make it boil.

He snatched it off with a torrent of abuse, unmindful of his wife's and children's intreaties, and threw it with such violence, that it seemingly took a *flight* in the air for some distance, before it gravitated to the earth. Fortunately the water was cold, otherwise our party from the ball might have been much endangered by the scalding shower.

Sir Charles refused to enter Eglantine farm-house, but gave a deep sigh when he parted from Margaret; while the first object she encountered was Phelim O'Gurphy, who

came by order of the servant-maid, to ask them if they would not *be after taking* a dish of coffee? “Or, mayhap,” said he, in a half whisper to the young ladies, “you would both like better a *raking pot of tea*\* ?”

Margaret not attending to his words, only hung down her head, and *endeavoured* to blush at the consciousness of her infidelity towards this *young nobleman*; for Sir Charles, *really* noble, as far as birth and title made him so, had supplanted this *ideal* son of greatness in the place he had heretofore held in her heart.

Mary thought Phelim meant by raking tea, only what was uncommonly strong; and taking Margaret by the arm, thanked him, as she refused it, and accompanied her sister to their chamber.

And now it was Mary’s turn to be most wakeful; in vain she darkened the room, in vain she drew the curtains as close as possible; in spite of all her self-reproaches, or all the remonstrances of prudence, the figure of Frederic Harrington swam before her fancy, occupied all her thoughts, and the certain conviction of being so deceived in the opinion she had first formed of him, brought the vainly repress tear to her waking eyes.

Margaret, elated and happy, certain in her own mind that she was now becoming a heroine of high renown, that not only Phelim O’Gurphy, but also a valiant knight wore her chains, that all Romance was real, and that great adventures awaited her, soon sunk into a profound repose, from which she did not awake till two in the afternoon.

Mary had long left her pillow, and opening the curtain just as Margaret awoke, she said, “Indeed, my dear girl, I believe you were born for the scenes of high life; never did I see you in such spirits as you were in yesterday; and never did I know you sleep so sound.”

Margaret caught her hand, and looked earnestly in her face. “Good heavens,” thought she to herself, “conviction has flashed on the mind of my sister! But I will be silent at present, Sir Charles requested me to be so, and says he has his reasons. “What is the hour, Mary?” said she;—“Past two, my love,” said her amiable sister, “and I have a nice breakfast prepared for you, which I would not touch till you rose, and which only we shall take together, for my father and uncles have had theirs; they are now gone out to take a walk to refresh themselves, and have kindly ordered the servants not to have our dinner ready till five, as uncle Ralph says, for this late scene of pleasure we must lose two days. My dear father said, ‘Ah! my child, how *many* days are lost by the great and affluent, in the pursuit of what they falsely call pleasure!’”

Margaret hastily dressed herself, and as they took their breakfast, said, “We have an holiday to-day, and I shall devote it—” “To reading, I know,” interrupted her sister. “Now you happen, Mary, to be mistaken; but I shall not tell any one how I mean to pass this day.” For Margaret had become very circumspect and reserved in all her words and actions, having so often exposed herself to the ridicule of the servants, the reproofs of her father, and the laughter of her uncles and sister for her absurdities.

“As you please,” said Mary, “I shall sit up stairs and finish the little cap, which I call my holiday work, for poor Betty Harwood’s seventh child, with which she is now pregnant.”—“Very well,” says Margaret, “then, my dear Mary, we shall not disturb each

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\* Those who have visited the several parts of Ireland where all old customs are preserved, will know the meaning of Phelim, by a *raking pot of tea*! otherwise we refer our readers for an explanation, to Miss Edgeworth’s excellent novel of CASTLE RACK-RENT.

other; first I shall go to the little cottages on the right, and then, full of "*conscious rectitude*," I shall devote the rest of the day to that purpose for which I have long wished."

"Will you pardon me, my love, if I say one thing to you," said Mary, "on the subject of your visits to the cottages?" Margaret, who was all good-humour, replied, "Any thing you please, my dear Mary, for I am sure you do not mean to offend."

"Well then, I must say, my dear, that though all benevolence is amiable, and that it is better to relieve *twenty* we may think imposters, than accidentally pass over *one* found among them who may be really a worthy object, yet I think you are too indiscriminate in your charities: the woman, to whom you are so lavish of what little money you are allowed, who lives in the cottage with the broken window, we know is both idle and given to drinking; and her window still remains broken, though my uncle Ralph and Charles have, each of them, given her money more than once to have it mended: then how many gowns have I given her, both of my own and some that were my mother's! she only sells them to buy liquor, and is always the same dirty ragged figure; therefore, I now never give her any thing, for kindness to such an individual is only thrown away. But you still continue her patroness, and she flatters you by saying, that you are the only worthy member of the family; and do you see, with all that is given to her, though she has only herself to provide for, that she is a bit cleaner or better looking; while poor Betty Harwood, with her six children, is, as well as them, always cheerful, always clean and industrious: to do any thing for her, is a real charity."

"Aye, very well," said Margaret, "I do not like Betty Harwood, she often presumes to give me advice, and tells me to rise early of a morning, and not read so much; oh! she has such a common mind, I cannot endure her: while my poor woman has had a very tolerable education, and she can talk upon some novels she has read, with as much judgement (I could almost say) as *myself*!"

After this self-applauding sally, Margaret rose, and repaired to the cottages, where she gossiped with the slatternly object of her beneficence till it was near the hour of five; and hearing, on her return home, that her father and uncles were going the next day to dine with a party of gentlemen and farmers, she delayed the important business she had in contemplation till the morrow, when she should be free from interruption.

Situated at about forty miles distance from London, in the county of Essex, stood Eglantine farm-house, the property of Mr. Ralph Marsham: the mansion was a very ancient edifice, was lofty, spacious, and consisted of a great variety of apartments; some of the large ones on the upper story had been chiefly appropriated to store-rooms for oats, straw, and the winter fruits of walnuts, apples, pears, &c. &c.

In the summer, when the stores were exhausted, the keys were generally left in the doors of these rooms till they were again replenished.

What the farm-house had been formerly, was a matter of doubt; some thought it had been one of the palaces belonging to one or other of those kings who reigned after the conquest; while others, with more probability, believed it to have been, for many generations, a large inn: it came into the family of the Marshams by being purchased by the grandfather of the present three brothers.

In several rooms there were, however, strong *marks of antiquity*; and in many places it was *proved*, in spite of the strength of the building, by their frequent want of repairs. In

two or three of the apartments, were rudely-carved and clumsy figures of shields, in a kind of *basso-relievo* on the painted wainscoat; and over several of the chimney-pieces were arched niches, in which were crosses, old Romish bishops with their crosiers;—friars, some headless, some armless, with mutilated rosaries.

Margaret was sure her uncle's dwelling had been a formidable castle, and that it was also haunted; for, one night, some friends having arrived from London, she was obliged to give up the chamber in which her sister and herself reposed, and sleep in one directly under one of the store-rooms; from whence she heard noises resembling the galloping of horses without shoes, accompanied with dreadful moanings; which proceeded from no other cause than what is very common in such old houses, which was an army of rats, who had encamped there, and were scampering over her head, and essaying to escape from a terrier which Mr. Marsham kept for the sole purpose of destroying such hostile enemies to his grain and fruit: while the moans she heard were from a cat, who having found her way thither, was swearing at the terrier, to prevent his approaching her.

But Margaret was fully convinced that the noises she heard proceeded from the perturbed spirit of some one on whom some fatal deed had been perpetrated; perhaps the spirit of some of her noble and warlike ancestors stalked about to "render night hideous:" and as she always read of her favourite heroines despising fear, and investigating minutely all that bore the appearance of mystery, she resolved, some day, when her father and uncles would not be likely to interrupt her, she would begin her search, and address the immaterial and awful being.

Perhaps, too, even if the spirit should not reveal itself to her, she yet might be able to find, in some hitherto concealed recess, the papers which contained the elucidation of her birth, when the confessions of her guilty nurse, and all the direful scene of her iniquity would be proclaimed to the astonished inhabitants of the farm-house.

As the brothers had some miles to go, they departed early; and Mary and Margaret had the whole day before them: they had not sat long together before they received an invitation from a kind neighbour, to pass the day with them, as Messrs. Marshams had called, and said they were alone. This invitation Margaret positively refused to accept; but at the same time, strenuously urged her sister to go. Mary, who knew that Margaret's chief delight was to sit alone for hours, poring over a romance, feared this was now the cause of her refusing to accompany her; she entreated her to go with her, with all the persuasion she was mistress of, adding, that she could not possibly think of going without her.

Margaret, however, told her, if possible, she would follow time enough for dinner; but desired her sister to tell their friends not to wait a moment, for she would be sure to be there very early in the afternoon; and Mary finding all she could say useless to her obstinate sister, hastened to the dwelling of her friend, Miss Ringwood.

Lucy Ringwood and Mary Marsham might justly be styled congenial souls: in person, Lucy was more pleasing than pretty, yet there was something about her so irresistible, that she was perpetually making conquests; though, with all her mind's perfections, there was such an *etourderie* about her, that she never long retained the hearts of her numerous captives.

She had been left an orphan early, and was now the darling *protégée* of a rich maiden aunt, her mother's only sister; who, though a spinster of sixty, was free from every

caprice and narrowness of idea so often, not to say, sometimes *unjustly*, imputed to that proscribed class of ladies.

Mrs. Susanna Bradbury laughed with all the hearty glee of seventeen, and enjoyed a free jest, and a neat pointed philippic, against prudery, with a pleased vivacity, devoid of all envy, and replete with admiration of the witty person's talents who might have composed it. Her conversation was free and unrestrained, full of good sense and cheerfulness, and she loved and admired the young and handsome. Yet in her figure, the quizzing buck has set her down, the moment he beheld her, as a fair object for sport; but Mrs. Susan has soon made him repent the onset, by the keenness and brilliancy of her repartees, which, though free from all ill-natured severity, have been so full of point, that he has wished he had let her alone.

Her company and conversation were ever considered a treat by the young, the lively, and sensible: she had a fine and retentive memory, a well cultivated understanding, a fund of anecdote and ready wit, and with those select friends, where she knew she was safe, she shewed herself a most excellent mimic.

Her form was tall and spare; her face had been very pretty, and still bore the visible remains of its powers of pleasing; her grey locks, which she took no pains to conceal or disguise, peeped from beneath her fine black laced hood; her long taper waist, pointed before with a diamond stay-hook, her stiff rich silk gown and quilted satin petticoat, under a clear starched apron, and her paste shoe-buckles, in her satin shoes, truly characterised an old maid in the very beginning of the last century.

She loved Mary with the same affection she did her Lucy, and a more happy or more merry trio never sat down to dinner than they, on this eventful day.

Yes, the day was *eventful* to the heroine, Margaret: in order that nothing should hinder her in the execution of the important task she had set herself, she dressed herself in readiness to go out in the evening, before she began her investigations.

She knew Mrs. Susanna Bradbury loved neatness; she therefore arrayed herself in clean and fine white muslin: she had very indifferent hair, of a dull and dirtyish light brown colour. Having been too sleepy to curl it the night before, it hung about in a stringy kind of disorder over her face, and she injudiciously put over it, in that state, a wreath of white roses. Thus equipped, with a deep sigh, she began to ascend the old worm-eaten staircase, which led to the upper store-rooms. Whoever has seen the stairs at the Castle Inn, at Kingston, may form an idea of the numerous, short-ascending and broken steps which Margaret now went up; and large balls of wood, similar to what we see at the above-mentioned inn, were likewise placed as ornaments on the balustrades of Mr. Marsham's staircase; these she regarded a few moments, convinced they must have been the helmets worn by some of her warlike ancestors; and she then, with a reflection on the years and ages that had passed since those brave heroes had mingled with their native dust, proceeded onwards.

She entered the apple-chamber, where a few half-rotten solitary apples were yet lying on the straw. "Such," said she aloud, "such are the uses now, oh! palace of my ancestors, to which thy lofty apartments are assigned!"—"Anan!" said a voice which seemed to come from beneath; Margaret started:—"Oh!" cried she, "as my beloved Shakespear says,

"Oh! speak, perturbed spirit!"

“Anan!” again returned the voice: “Ah! say, speak,” said the agitated Margaret, “was then the name, revered dame, which you bore while on earth, *Anannia*?”

“Why what is’t thee be doing there?” said the rude voice of one of the labourers, as he ascended a few steps of a staircase which led to the back-kitchen; “why, as true as I’m a living soul, if here be’n’t our Miss Peggy, as clean as a *broide*, up i’th’ apple-loft! Why *laws*, miss, there ben’t one there as is fit for a christian to eat.”

Margaret retreated—“Oh! one of these vile plebeians belonging to my uncle,” thought she, “has prevented me from learning the hard and perhaps horrible fate of the beauteous Lady *Anannia*! but I must use stratagem to develop the mysteries which surround me.”

“Thomas,” said she, in a soft voice, “I do not want any apples, I am only come here to kill a little time!”—“Why, miss,” replied Thomas, “if you wants, as how, to be *culling thyme*, there be none up there, but there be a power of it in the garden, tho’f to be sure, ’tis now in flower; so if you will be pleased to come down here a few steps, I’ll shew you the room where un puts the dried *yerbes*.”

Though Margaret saw how much he had misinterpreted her words, yet she thought, as the apple-chamber was so full of adventure, that the herb-closet might have also its share of the marvellous, and she followed the man with trembling feet and a pallid cheek.

“Laws! miss, why you be’n’t frightened, be you?” said he, looking at her. “Oh! no,” said she, squatting down on a bundle of dried sage, “but I wish to be left alone: go.”—“Oh! yes, miss, I must go, for I’ve got a main deal to do; but mind me miss, when you’s done, you’d better go back the way you com’d: you’d better not attempt to set foot on that there little bit of a staircase; for d’ye see, its so mortal *auld*, that a body might break un’s neck if un were to attempt to go down it.” Margaret waved her hand, impatient for his departure, being fully resolved, after such a prohibition, at all events to descend the ruined flight of stairs.

She stepped down several without danger, for her frame and footsteps were light, but to the left she beheld a broken door with a rusty iron bolt, half dropping from the staple: breathless with the ideas of adventure and romantic peril, heated with the phantoms of her imagination, she sprang forward and tore her hand with the shattered remains of the bolt.

The door, which hung but by one hinge, she could only open by so small a degree, that she found she could not obtain an entrance; but a cursory peep at the green damp of the walls, made her resolve, even if it should be with the hazard of her life, to gain admittance: in her efforts to squeeze herself through, she rent her new and best plain muslin gown from the top to the bottom, and dreadfully scratched her arms and face against the broken and rusty iron work of the decayed door: but having, at length, accomplished her purpose, she found herself in a small dark-looking room, which could not, from its appearance, have been inhabited or made use of for a considerable length of time: every rotten board shook under her feet, and imparted the fearful idea, that it would soon precipitate her into some hideous cavern: she heard the most piercing shrieks, and sometimes a sound of mingled voices; presently the shrieks were hushed, and she was certain that she distinguished the voice of her Phelim.

“Alas! alas,” thought she, “dear and constant youth, I am unworthy of thy affections; but oh! what can have brought thee to this remote spot but the intuitive power of almighty

love? Oh! if thou art in danger from the spells of magic, or the influence of evil spirits, thy Margaritta will, by one great and heroic effort of sublime virtue, cast her present noble lover from her too susceptible heart, and fly to succour thee, or share all *thy* perils, as I am assured thou wouldst *mine*. But where can I fly?" thought she, as she again essayed to open the door somewhat wider, in order to effect her exit from this ruinous apartment.

She now exerted the utmost powers of her strength, and by one great effort, the other broken and rust-worn hinge came off the door, and down fell its remains on the poor terrified Margaret, whose weight, with that of the door together, was too much for the fragile boards, and the heroine of romance was precipitated into a noisome and offensive dungeon. A squeaking noise assailed her ears, and she felt herself seized by the remnants of her gown by some terrific kind of being, who appeared, to her bewildered senses, to utter something like a stifled groan: in her endeavours to disengage herself, she trod on something soft, and apparently alive, when a feeble shriek met her ear, and a violent hubbub of shrieking and groaning, or rather *squeaking* and *grunting*; for Margaret had fallen into a dark sty, where lay a sow and her litter of pigs: but that *she* did not yet discover, and dreading to remain an instant where she was, her fears made her desperate, and perceiving a ray of light from a chink in the boards, which surrounded the enraged grunter's dwelling, she forcibly applied her hand to it; when Phelim, in a neighbouring barn, hearing the knocking, undid the wooden fastening on the outside, and discovered his young mistress in a condition which rendered her hardly cognisable.

"Oh! my brave, my generous deliverer!" said she, as she sprang towards him.—"Why how in the name of St. Patrick, came you here, miss?" said he, "and och, as sure as I'm my own mother's son, if you have not killed the *titman peg!* poor little bit of a beast, how it lies there, with not a bit of breath in its body!"

"Oh! God forbid!" cried Margaret, who did not want tenderness or good-nature, "I hope not; do, Phelim, try to recover it."—"Och come, the little beast is not quite cold; I'll put it to its own mother—make yourself *aisy*, miss, these things cannot be helped."

"Oh! Phelim," said Margaret, "what have I not gone through this afternoon!"

"By J—s, miss, I think you *came through* the old loft overhead; and how the d—— did you find your way there?"

"By descending the mysterious and prohibited staircase," replied Margaret.

"Oh! by my soul, and I don't know where that is; it has a *rum* kind of name, however!"

"I will tell you all another time," said Margaret: "but how can I ever reward you for your bravery in unbarring the door of my dungeon!"

"As for that, miss, I see no great bravery in opening the door of a pig-stye; I thought the sow had been in her tantrums, and I looked to see what was the matter."

"Your delicacy, generous youth," said she, "makes light of this matter: oh! that I had but some valuable ring or scarf to bestow!"

Phelim, who now found her, as she often was to his limited capacity, wholly unintelligible, said to her, "But sure, miss, you're in a *broth of a pickle*, and if you'd take my advice, you'll just step into the barn, and be after wiping off the mud with a clean wisp of straw."

Margaret took the advice of O’Gurphy, but turning to go into the barn, she perceived, at a little distance, a pool of a very sanguinary appearance, she started and screamed aloud, “Ah! I knew foul murder had been committed!”

“Why yes, miss,” said Phelim, grinning, “they have indeed been *committing* what you call *murder!*”

“And you laugh, Phelim, and speak of it as if it was no crime to perpetrate so dreadful an act!”

“Holy St. Patrick! why you don’t think such kind of *murder* can be any sin, do you?”

“What,” said Margaret, “did they kill the holy St. Patrick?”

“Och! and I would be glad to know the Irish boys that would have dared to have done that! but, miss, it was as fine a *young peg* as ever sucked, that was *kilt* a little while ago; and the master means to have it roasted on Sunday: it squeaked like any young devil, but I dispatched it as soon as I could, for I hate to see the poor little *lumps of animals* tortured.”

Margaret now finding herself in her uncle’s barn-yard, and somewhat ashamed of her misconceptions, entered the barn, and said to Phelim, “Now, while I wipe off some of this mud, do go and see if the poor little pig I hurt, is alive! If it is, I shall go to rest happy.”

“Och! and I believe it’s as dead as *Julus Caesar*, or *Judas Caret*,” said the Hibernian; “but I’ll go and see, to *plase* you, miss.”

“Oh!” thought she, when she was alone, “how, in spite of his ignoble disguise, does his learning and native dignity discover itself! In common discourse he gives as a comparison the great Julius Caesar, even when speaking of the death of a little pig; and I wonder who he meant by *Judas Caret*? no doubt one of his own high and noble ancestors.”

To the great joy, however, of Margaret, Phelim returned with the glad tidings that the poor little *crater* was likely to live; and she now hastened to her chamber, to see if she could arrange her figure in any kind of way, time enough to keep her promised engagement at Mrs. Susanna Bradbury’s cottage.

How shocked was the poor girl when she contemplated her figure in the glass! The bruises under her eyes portended a rueful blackness, her wreath of roses were full of cobwebs, her gown torn to tatters, and covered with the dirt of the pig-stye; her arms, neck, and hands, made hideous by innumerable scratches, while the pains in her bruised limbs made her feel, that instead of going out she must absolutely go to bed.

Thus ended this day’s adventures of Margaret; pleasing to her, in vision; cruelly mortifying in reality: she dispatched a message to Mrs. Susan, that not being very well, she hoped that lady would excuse her for breaking her promise. They all thought her indisposition was only one of her nervous head-achs, from intense application to her favourite studies; and while they spoke of the ill-effects of such constant reading, on the mind and health of a young creature, and thinking it was no other cause which kept her away, Mary continued to enjoy, with these, her true friends, the cheerful and unrestrained hours till ten o’clock, when Mrs. Susan’s servant saw her safe home.

Mrs. Susanna Bradbury loved both the sisters; she loved them for the sake of their worthy father and uncles, and she often conversed with Edward on the romantic propensity of his youngest daughter; but perfectly agreed with that sensible man, that, to entirely prohibit those kind of books (the morals of which, however absurd their incidents and events, were unexceptionable) would be only to teach the gaining them by stealth;

and then, works of a more dangerous tendency might corrupt the heart and undermine the principles of his girl: while the works she now perused, only ensnared the imagination for a time; and as her years increased, he hoped she would be able to see the folly of giving credit to them, and only draw from them those sentiments and feelings which they were intended by their authors to inspire;—an admiration of their ingenuity, and the grandeur and sublimity of their language; with an abhorrence of vice, and a sincere love and veneration for virtue.

## CHAP. VII.

## FOOD FOR SCANDAL.

Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow,  
Thou wilt not escape calumny.

SHAKESPEARE.

————— Shall one doubtful act,  
Arraign a life of innocence unblam'd?

DODSLEY'S CLEONE.

IT may be a matter of surprise, that a lady of respectable connexions and good fortune, as was Mrs. Susanna Bradbury, was not invited with her niece to the ball given by the Leslies; especially as there was formerly a friendship of the *visiting kind* between them; and the noble Rector had also once highly admired Miss Lucy Ringwood: the independent Mrs. Susanna was herself the only cause of this neglect.

An elegant little villa had been purchased by a gentleman, a foreigner from Switzerland: himself, an English lady, whom he introduced as his *adopted daughter*, and three servants, composed his family, besides the lady's pet birds, dog and cats. The gentleman was between seventy and eighty years of age; his snowy locks waved over his fine high forehead, and candour and benevolence were seated on his brow: the lady, who took the charge of his household affairs, was past the bloom of life, but yet many, very many years younger than himself.

Purity, virtue, and philanthropy, form the basis of the Swiss character; and if ever *one* country can lay a peculiar claim to those noble principles,—it is Switzerland! Her sons, all mind, and not the slaves of sense, can enjoy the chaste platonic intercourse with a different sex which the voluptuous Englishman sneers at, and knows not how to estimate.

The respectable Mr. Rouveau was eminent for possessing the virtues we have cited; how oft has he denied himself the luxuries of life, to impart its comforts to others! How conscious in the rectitude of his own heart and mind, has he gloried in seeing the friend he protected, excite admiration by the superiority of her talents and the charms of her person: nor had he an idea that one impure thought could enter any bosom on his and her account: he knew too well how to render his age respectable; neither did he care for a world narrow in its ideas, however enlightened, and of which he was totally independent: the poor, the indigent, never assailed his hospitable gate in vain, nor left it unrelieved.

Such were the uses this excellent man made of his large fortune: he owed no man any thing; while many owed to him all the comforts of life they enjoyed, and which, before they knew *him*, seemed fled from them for ever! The titled, the rich, were seldom invited to partake of his plentiful dinners; no, his parlour-table was continually open to the worthy gentleman of small fortune, the widow with a very limited jointure, the industrious genteel-bred wife, whose husband, perhaps, languished in a prison for debt; while his kitchen was filled every Sunday by large families of fatherless children and their widowed mothers, whom he knew were real objects of charity. But the noble and warm

heart of this beneficent man had keenly felt the arrows of ingratitude; yet they could never pierce deep enough to stop the continual flow of his benevolence: Oh! *active* christianity, it is thou, and thou alone that *can* hope for the favour of approving heaven!

Mrs. Edmonds, the female friend of this worthy man, grateful, contented, and happy, was proud of the friendship and favour of a mind like his, and which friendship had increased in numberless acts of kindness, during a period of three and twenty years, since the commencement of which term she had been the widow of an officer, and was left with only her pension for her support.

Mr. Rouveau had long known her family; had known *her* from the earliest period of infancy; and his doors and heart were open to receive the distressed and pretty young widow: the idea never entered his pure mind, that there could be any thing amiss in granting an honourable and safe asylum to the daughter of an old friend, because she happened to be a *female*; and because she was in the flower of youth, and her countenance lively and charming, he did not see why *that* should be a reason that she was to be debarred the fatherly care and protection which *he* could afford her!

She had always revered his character, and almost loved him as a parent; and in the heyday of youth and giddy innocence, she exultingly told her friends how happily situated she was going to be! The young fellows laughed, and said, "Aye, aye, let alone these old gentlemen; they are connoisseurs in the sex." While her female acquaintance screwed up their mouths, and looked meaningly on each other: next time she called on them they were not at home; and, for a few years she had not many visitors, except of the opposite sex: the correctness, however, of her conduct, her talents, her skill in music, her fine voice, and a more powerful motive still, Mr. Rouveau's *fine fortune*, gained them many and highly respectable friends of *both* sexes. Mrs. Edmonds had only been *comparatively* happy before,—she was now *completely* so; for her heart was formed for friendship, and she loved society, because she found she always pleased in it: the more her newly acquired friends conversed with her, the more they saw in her to admire, and checked themselves for ever associating the idea of *mistress* with that of Mr. Rouveau's *adopted daughter*.

Change of air being requisite to preserve

"The green old age unconscious of decays,"

of Mr. Rouveau, and the lease of his house in town being expired, he purchased a villa at Eglantine, intending to make a long summer there, and devote only two or three of the winter months to London, in ready-furnished lodgings.

Mrs. Susanna Bradbury, who had in her early years been acquainted with the mother of Mrs. Edmonds, immediately paid her respects to her after her appearance at church: these two liberal-minded women were charmed with each other: Mrs. Susan, who could listen for hours to vocal music, and weep at those fine airs, which the sweet voice of Mrs. Edmonds knew how to sing to the heart, was most happy in those delighted hours she could pass with so captivating a companion, who, instead of setting an improper example, was the gentle and prudent monitor, to correct and kindly admonish the giddiness of her Lucy's youth.

The Rector, from his pulpit, admired the fine black eyes of Mrs. Edmonds, who looked at him from attentive devotion only: but it was impossible, he said, for *his* family to *visit* her! Lady Caroline, who but a few weeks before had aided her sister in an elopement, declared, if ever she happened to fall into company with her, she should certainly quit it *instantly!* and fearful such an event *might* take place, she must beg Mr. Leslie entirely to give up the acquaintance of the Bradburies; which imparted not the least pain to the mind of Mrs. Susan; who never went to church (so much did she abhor to see a man's example eternally at war with his precepts) except when the worthy Edward Marsham performed the religious duty; for though she had formerly been of the Rector's parties, she detested the free principles of his family; and lamented, that with such fine sense, such a lovely person and enlarged ideas, Lady Isabella should glory in infidelity, and be the victim to her false and dangerous opinions. While she knew, also, that Lady Caroline, with all her pretended correctness, clasped to her bosom the divorced wife, and the well-known adulteress, if they chanced to be gifted with title and fortune.

Lady Isabella, who sat the world at defiance, when *she* has been riding or walking with all her sister's high and fashionable party, has stopped at the window, as she passed by the villa, to chat with Mrs. Edmonds, or stop her horse, and condescendingly talk to her over the garden-wall; but this she did, not from any admiration or certainty of the lady's virtue, on the contrary, she told every one, she really believed her to be the *mistress* of Mr. Rouveau; but what of that? if she *chose* to notice her, she *would*: every one had a right to do as they pleased; for *her* part, she found her an agreeable, sensible woman: she certainly, as her brother did not approve of it, would not bring her to his house; consequently she could not call herself at the villa; but as far as *private* notice went, she would not, like Caroline, turn up her nose, and toss away her head, whenever she met her by chance."

A suspicion shot across the mind of Sir Edward Harrington, that she really *was* the daughter of Mr. Rouveau, and he fancied he could discover a likeness between them.

Where not even the severest censor could find any thing bordering on incorrectness, he thought it a cruel deprivation to society, that it should be debarred from those whose talents and merits give to it its brightest ornaments: and while he was charmed with the conversation of this polished and virtuous pair, he longed to introduce Mrs. Edmonds among the circle of his *friends*; not that he could call the Leslies by that sacred name; but he knew the influence they held in the country; and that, where they declared off, few other families of wealth and respectability would choose publicly to visit.

Willingly would these courtly *friends* have delighted in the opulent Mr. Rouveau's company; but he never associated with those who excluded his *protégée*.

Sir Edward hinted one evening, to the Honourable and Reverend Theodore Leslie, his suspicions of a very near relationship between Mr. Rouveau and Mrs. Edmonds. "My good fellow," said the Rector, "why then does he not come forward, and own it? Then we would visit her directly! but, upon my soul, it is impossible that I can introduce to Lady Caroline any woman of *equivocal character!*" Yes,—such is the common-place jargon of impure nobility!—All correct attention to *etiquette* is right—but when it sits on the lip of the libertine; when the immodest and licentious dame of quality pretends to shrink with horror, from a female who perhaps never knew but one virtuous and constant attachment, decorum laughs, and virtue scoffs at the prudish grimace. It is only the few among the

rich and noble, that should dare to be thus precisely correct, who are themselves patterns of purity; but amongst those we find such an outrageous show of virtue least displayed.

A smile of indignation overspread the countenance of Sir Edward, as he looked on Lady Caroline, who had just folded up two letters which she had been writing; one to her worthless sister, who had absconded from her husband, and the other to a near relation she had in parliament, to know if he could not make a proposal, the next sessions, for a tax to be laid on the men who carried milk about, in the different parishes, and have it made an emolument to the different livings in town, being made payable to the clergyman of each respective rectory: this tax, if it *could* be levied, Mr. Leslie had promised to allow her, to fill her card-purse.\*

These two *virtuous* letters she had read aloud, *pro bono publico*. However, Sir Edward resumed his subject.

“There may be family reasons,” said he, “why Mr. Rouveau may not choose to own his relationship to Mrs. Edmonds; I understand he has children by his late wife, whose jealousy might be excited by such a disclosure: at present, they all love and respect her.”

“Only a proof,” said Lady Isabella, who just laid down her netting, “of their liberality of sentiment: why, surely, if my father chose to keep a mistress, do you think I would not countenance her? Aye, and I could love her too, if she was worthy.”

“Or if my husband,” said Lady Caroline, “had *twenty* illegitimate children, by as many different women, do you think he would not own them, sooner than they should be excluded from every high and respectable circle, which they would be entitled to shine amongst, as his *acknowledged* offspring? But of course, if we countenance the children, we cannot the mothers. Let Mr. Rouveau marry this *accomplished creature*, and then we can all visit her, after she has been properly *brought out!*”

Sir Edward bowed and was silent, yet could not help secretly remarking, how very liberal each of the ladies had shewn themselves, except—where *true* liberality was required!

But the real truth was, that Mr. Rouveau, our amiable Swiss, had been very unhappy in an early marriage, and had solemnly vowed when he was again at liberty, never to enter the state again: and, even had he been so inclined, he had too much real wisdom and prudence than to unite himself to a woman whom he regarded only as a child, when compared to himself.

Mr. Rouveau and Mrs. Edmonds spoke, *en passant*, to the Marshams; they had not yet visited; for Ralph, like Mr. Rouveau, was never forward in forming new acquaintance. Charles, a single unincumbered man, and passionately fond of vocal music, passed many of his leisure hours at the hospitable villa; for it was a general and received opinion among all who heard her, that no singer, either public or private, ever could boast of a voice of so much sweetness and pathos, with so much compass, attended with so little exertion, as that of Mrs. Edmonds.

Here, with all the ardent enthusiasm of a true soldier’s feelings, would Charles sit, while she sang to him the sweet and plaintive air of *Rosline Castle*: the expression she threw into her song, made the tear flow down his cheek, to the memory of those many fellow-veterans who had perished, either quietly in garrison, or in the more active field of honour:

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\**Historique.*

“Their bodies lie buried in peace!”

The sweet requiem of *Rosline Castle* followed them to their final abode, and their faithful soldiers, the followers of their fortunes, have fired the last volley over their grave! All the powers of Charles Marsham’s mind seemed to take their visionary flight to the tomb of the warrior. The melody of Mrs. Edmond’s voice carried him there; its melody brought him back to reason.

## CHAP. VIII.

AN APOLOGY AND A DINNER, *EN FAMILLE*.

—To dazzle let the vain design;  
 To raise the thought, and touch the heart, be thine.  
 POPE.

MARY, on her return home from Mrs. Susanna Bradbury's, crept softly to her chamber, and found her sister in a profound sleep: her back being turned towards her, she did not discover the rueful appearance of her wounded face till the morning; when she saw her eyes swelled and black, and her cheeks bearing several scratches; while she complained that her limbs ached to that degree, she could not stir from her bed.

Margaret confessed what had happened to her, yet she was ashamed to divulge, even to her sister, the primary cause of her disaster: but Mary had penetration enough to know that some flight of imagination had carried her sister to that shattered part of the house in search of adventures.

Margaret was prevented going to church by the woeful appearance of her figure, and her sister stayed at home with her, to nurse and amuse her: however, she felt herself able to rise some time before dinner, and when she saw the roast-pig put on the table, she could not forbear blushing, especially as she saw a broad grin on the face of Phelim, as *he* glanced towards it when he was helping the servant (who generally attended at table) to carry in the rest of the dinner articles.

Scarcely had they sat down at the hour of *three*, when the Rector and Sir Charles made their appearance to pay a *morning* visit; both expressing much concern to hear the cause of the young ladies being absent from church, which they had learnt from the Reverend Mr. Marsham. Sir Charles, with great difficulty, kept his countenance, but was the most voluble of the two, while the Rector in evident confusion cast down his eyes, particularly when they met those of Mary, who blushed at the recollection of his improper behaviour to her the evening she last saw him.

"I am ashamed," said Mr. Leslie, "to call at this unseasonable hour; but I came to request your company next Wednesday to dine only with ourselves, *en famille*, quite in the rough; all of you must come positively."

"I am afraid," said Mr. Edward Marsham, "that it will not be in the power of my girls to accept the honour of your invitation; for you see the condition of Margaret, from a bad fall she had yesterday, and I am sure her sister will not leave her."—"And I am sure she *shall* not leave her!" quickly replied the Rector, "because my house is such a short distance, that, she will be well enough to go there; and what signifies her appearance? Not a soul will see her but ourselves." "Besides," said Sir Charles, looking passionately on Margaret, "nothing can diminish the loveliness of Miss Margaritta's countenance, nor divest it of its charms, and——."

"Sir," said Edward gravely, "my daughters have neither of them any pretensions to beauty, and whoever extols that of *this* poor girl," added he, as he leant over Margaret's

chair, “is only, by such pointed ridicule, affronting *her* understanding, and rendering *himself* despicable!”

Sir Charles bit his lips, and felt too much mortified to dare look up to Margaret; who was casting up her eyes, and giving him every meaning glance which might serve to express the hard rigidity of her father: while the Rector sighed, and still hung down his head. Sir Charles endeavoured to stammer out something of *peculiar fascinations*, and that beauty was all *in idea*, that which pleased *one* taste, might not *another*, with all the *et-ceteras* of common-place stuff adopted on similar occasions.

The Rector relieved him, by saying, as he addressed himself particularly to Ralph, “Come, I assure you, my good sir, it is rather an interested motive, which makes me request the favour of your company: I have a pond, well stocked with carp and tench, but I think it wants dragging, will you lend me two of your men on Wednesday, and let them come early; we’ll have a carp feast, and be as snug and merry as possible.” He then with all the ease of a man who knows how to be at home every where, walked to the sideboard and helped himself to a glass of ale.

It gave our farm-house inhabitants, together with the worthy Curate, much consequence in the country, to be so particularly noticed by the Rector and his noble family; and they all consented to go, if Margaret was well enough. The Rector, who was the last to quit the parlour, purposely dropped his glove: *matter of fact* Ralph, who thought it not possible for a clergyman, a man married too, and to a fine young woman, to make love to his niece, said, “Mary, my dear, give Mr. Leslie his glove.” Mary picked it up, and said, “Sir, you have dropped your glove.” He affected not to hear, and Mary had to follow him into the hall; where he said, as he took the glove from her, “Oh, Miss Marsham, forgive my rudeness last Thursday night! Forgive the effects of inebriety, and honour me by only reading that paper,” and hastily putting a small note into her hand, he darted out of the house.

Mary may be accused of imprudence, because she before kept to herself the Rector’s libertine behaviour, and also that she instantly consigned to her pocket the aforesaid note, and sat down again to table, though not without confusion, yet with all the composure she could assume. But Mary by such conduct shewed *exemplary* prudence: she knew the Rector had it in his power, should her father offend him, not only to deprive him of his countenance, but of his present situation as curate of Eglantine; and she knew her parent would not tamely see his daughter insulted, without offending the insultor; and also, that her uncle Charles, warm in his temper to a degree of rashness, would annihilate the being who should dare to take an improper liberty with *either* of his nieces, *particularly* with his favourite Mary. She knew also that every virtuous woman has an impenetrable shield, in the correctness of her own conduct, and without the parade of outrageous chastity, Mary was purity and prudence personified.

After dinner she retired to her chamber, and fastening the door, perused the following lines with great satisfaction, ignorant of, and inexperienced in the arts of libertines.

“MADAM,

“With the deepest sense of my impropriety of behaviour, suffer me to intreat, and obtain from your clemency, forgiveness for the rude manner in which I treated you at the time you was attending to the fire-works last Thursday. What must you think of a man, under the most sacred character, a man wedded to the woman whom *alone* he loves!

bound by the laws of hospitality, at his own house and table to afford comfort to all, nor pain the mind or feelings of one individual. Oh! Miss Marsham, my guests were numerous; wine, that fatal enemy to prudence and virtue, flowed in abundance; and it is the master's task not only to promote, but to do honour to every bumper: the pernicious juice of the grape made me mad! but returning reason brought to my conscious remembrance, my shameful behaviour to you. Assure me, when next we meet, by that sweet freedom, by that enchanting cheerfulness you observe with those you esteem, that you sincerely and readily pardon him, who will ever be, with the most profound respect,

MADAM,  
your most obedient,  
humble servant,  
THEODORE LESLIE."

Mary felt happy and gratified; for she had dreaded a second visit to the rectory. "Mr. Leslie," said she to herself, "sees much of the great world; fashion warps his manners, and often spoils his conversation, but I believe his heart is good: I entirely forgive him, and it behoves me to treat with cheerful respect a person so much above us, and who may be a friend to my father and my uncle Charles."

We will pass over the days till the arrival of Wednesday: the scratches of Margaret's face, being only on the surface, were healed; but under her eyes, the convalescent bruises were turned green; however, her father and uncles, knowing, in her best looks, she never could charm by her beauty, persuaded her to go in a bonnet, or put a green shade over her eyes; but that she positively refused to do.

Mary, with great taste, pinned a veil on her sister's head, which partially hid her eyes, gave a softness to her features, and Margaret never looked so well in her life: but no, she persisted in the resolution she had formed in the morning, which was to go habited as Prior's *nut-brown maid*; therefore, a blue bandeau of ribbon was the only covering she would put on her head, which she brought down a little over the worst-looking eye.

Mary, in spite of a kind of lowness of spirits, which she endeavoured to persuade herself proceeded only from the indifference she felt about going to this chit-chat dinner, yet never was longer in dressing, nor ever took more pains with her person; she drew the little straggling ringlet over the temple, displayed the well-turned arm through a sleeve of cobweb thinness, and

"All was art, that look'd like accident."

Alas! the sisters found, on their arrival at the parsonage, that they had essayed to charm in vain; for, to the disappointment of Mary, Lady Isabella and Frederic Harrington had gone out together, and were not expected home till the evening—this disappointment too, we must confess, was embittered by a tincture of jealousy.

Sir Charles Sefton was gone on a fishing party, and it was quite uncertain whether he would return home that night: the dinner party, therefore, consisted only of Lady Caroline Leslie, who had the vapours, and was consequently very indifferent company; as all the entertainment she afforded was in gaping, and then most politely apologizing for her

rudeness: Mrs. Kennedy was cross and disappointed, from her book-seller having beat down her lately-disposed of work to a few guineas, for which she had promised herself an hundred pounds; Sir Edward Harrington, always amiable, always steadily cheerful, as usual; the Rector, softly insinuating to Mary, and kindly civil to all his guests; Ralph, plain and honest, with now and then a dry joke escaping him; Edward, serious and taciturne; Charles, gay and happy; and poor Mary, desirous of shewing forgiveness with a sweet smile, timidly extended her hand to the seemingly contrite Theodore as she first entered, which he gratefully took, without, however, daring to give it the smallest pressure.

After partaking of a dinner which was given at rather an early hour for such polite people as the Leslies, a walk was proposed by the Rector to the fish-pond at the bottom of his garden, and which was not to be dragged till the evening; and Mr. Leslie, drawing his lady's arm through his, said, "Come, Caroline, you do not seem well to-day, the air will do you good." Charles mechanically took the hand of his favourite niece, who was rejoiced to see so unusual a sight as the Rector and his wife walking together! Sir Edward, who never liked to see any one an object of neglect, took hold of Margaret to escort her, and kindly chatted with her on various subjects: he found she did not want sense, though in his life he had never met so romantic a character; he warned her, with the gentleness of a parent, to be careful of giving way to it: and, though neither his fine manly person, nor his ideas were at all to her taste, yet she plumed herself on a *new conquest*, and dreaded the *persecutions* of this *tyrannical old lover*.

Phelim O'Gurphy chanced to be one of Mr. Marsham's men, who was employed as an assistant to drag the fish-ponds—arrayed in a dirty striped waistcoat, *sans chemise*, but not a *sans-culotte*, he displayed, by a chasm between his waistcoat and the waistband of his *lower* garments, the natural and almost snowy whiteness of his skin; Margaret loosed her arm from that of the Baronet, and

"Sigh'd and look'd,  
"Sigh'd and look'd,  
"And sigh'd again."

Sir Edward walked round to the other side of the pond, with the rest of the gentlemen, to look at the full net which the men had brought to land; and while Lady Caroline condescended to ask Mary a few trifling questions, the most of which she answered herself, Margaret, lost in rhapsodical musings, at length uttered in soliloquy,

"How oft had Henry chang'd his sly disguise,"

when a voice from behind sighed out the following answer—

"Unmark'd by all but *beauteous* Emma's eyes!"

She turned their *bruise*-encompassed orbs, and beheld Sir Charles Sefton, standing close beside her, arrayed in a fustain jacket; a pair of brown leather gaiters, not very clean; a leathern cap on his head, and a yellow silk handkerchief, spotted with black, round his

neck; nor was he, thus “unadorned, adorned the most,” for he really looked *hideous*: yet Margaret directly discovered in the *disguise*, and especially from the words he addressed to her, something strangely mysterious, some great adventure in agitation.

While she stood buried in profound thought, he said, “Will my charming Margaritta excuse me, while I go and arrange my appearance a little? I hastened from the party I was engaged with, in order that I might enjoy the company of the most bewitching among her sex.” He then, bowing, hastened to his toilette.

The truth was, that, fatigued with the angling sport, where he had not experienced the good luck of even one *nibble*, he had returned to the parsonage, vexed and disappointed; but seeing poor Margaret making that rueful appearance, and apparently in one of her enthusiastic musings, his *mischievous* humour returned, and he found himself standing by her at the very moment when she uttered aloud her quotation from Prior.

Sir Charles was apt, and had a good memory; his own *deshabille*, his determination to make a sport of Margaret in every way he could think of, caused him to answer her in that way, which proved most delightful to her gratified vanity, and she turned from Phelim in disgust; who, notwithstanding his ugliness, and even under his present habiliments, was the best-looking of her two imaginary rivals.

She now joined the rest of the female party; and the ladies walked towards an arbour, where, as the evening was uncommonly warm, sat Mrs. Kennedy enjoying the shade, and pensively leaning her cheek on her hand: at her entrance into this arbour, the cheek of Mary glowed, and her bosom heaved with various emotions: here she had witnessed the protestations of love from Frederic Harrington to Lady Isabella Emerson; and here too, she recollected, with not an unpleasurable sensation, how ardent he had been to be reinstated in her own favour, and how anxious at the distress he saw her in!

Lady Caroline kept musing on *pic repic* and *capot*, the four honours, the grand decided cassino, at one deal! the subtle and quickly-gained *reservé*, and all the delightful visions of a run of luck at the gaming-table!

Margaret’s anxious eyes were frequently turned towards the entrance: every minute appeared to her an age, that kept Sir Charles at his toilette; and *many* and *careful* were the *minutes* which he dedicated to his mirror! At length she heard footsteps, which she felt assured were those of a man; but they appeared too heavy for those of her devoted Knight, and she feared they proceeded from some one of more corpulency; however, she consoled herself with thinking that perhaps some other “*sly disguise*” might be the cause, and she ventured to peep out at the flowery arch which opened into this fragrant abode.

Thence she beheld, breathing hard and fanning herself with her pocket-handkerchief, the delectable Lady Wringham; who, entering the arbour, exclaimed, “Dear me, how *hot* it is!” The ladies rose, and Lady Caroline gave her a distant curtesy “Well! my lady,” said lady Wringham, “what does your ladyship think? Mr. Leslie came, you know, on Monday, to ax us to dinner:”—“Did he?” said Lady Caroline. “Why yes, to be sure, my lady, did not your ladyship know that?”—“No,” said Lady Caroline, with the utmost *sang froid*, as she sat picking a rose to pieces: “Well, *howsoever*,” continues Lady Wringham, “we could not come, ’cause we expected a gentleman from London; but Mr. Leslie would not let *me* rest, and there he comes just now, this *a’ternoon*, and absolutely dragged me away, as a body may say, from my company; he said I must come and sup with you, and he would hardly let me stay to make my *’pologies*.”

The polite Lady Caroline forced herself to say, "We are very glad of your company, Lady Wringham, and we hope Sir John will bring his friend with him." "La! I don't know," said Lady Wringham, "Mr. Leslie said, *as how*, if he had but *me*, he did not care;" and she gave a girlish giggle.

Lady Caroline looked at Mrs. Kennedy, and gave a shrug and a sneer, not unseen by Lady Wringham, who giving Mary a jog with her elbow, said in a whisper, "I'll be hang'd if she isn't jealous!" The sentence did not quite escape Lady Caroline; poor Mary was embarrassed at perceiving it; while the high dame of quality regarded them both with scorn. Lady Wringham, was, however, in high spirits, and nothing seemed to embarrass *her*.

"Do you know, my lady," said she, "just as your ladyship's husband came in, I was in the midst of a grand argument with our London friend about titles, and I cannot make it out, my lady, why your ladyship is a *lady*, and your husband is not a lord!"

"Because," replied Lady Caroline, "my husband's near relation, the Marquis, is yet living; besides, if he was not, Mr. Leslie is not the first to inherit the title: now, for instance, if Sir John Wringham had brothers or nephews, would not your eldest son be Sir John, after his father's death, before them?"

"Yes, yes, my lady, I know all that; but then, as you are called my lady, why is not he called my lord?"—"Because," replied Lady Caroline, "I am a lady in my own right; my father was an earl; I therefore still retain my maiden title of Lady Caroline, though I have altered my surname to Leslie."—"Well then, I say," answered the ignorant Lady Wringham, "that I think he ought to be called *Lord Caroline!*"

None of the ladies could forbear a smile; but Lady Caroline was so vexed to find the explanation she had given her so little comprehended, that she said with some degree of sarcastic spite, "Why, Lady Wringham, a woman never can exalt a man to her dignity, but I am sure *you* very well know that a man of title and fortune can raise a woman to the rank of *lady*, though she might be in a *very* low situation *indeed*, before he rendered both *himself* and *her* ridiculous by such disproportioned marriage." The Baronet's lady had understanding enough, however, perfectly to take in the full sense of her ladyship's pointed speech; and a silence commenced, which threatened to continue long and obstinate, when, as the dusky shades of night appeared fast approaching, entered Lady Isabella, gay as Euphrosyne, and looking all that was lovely and fascinating: close, like her shadow, followed Frederic Harrington. And now various sentiments shot like lightning across the breasts of the inmates of the bower. A deep blush mutually dyed the cheeks of Frederic and Mary, though glad to see her ladyship. Margaret was disappointed that her valiant and constant Knight was so long in arranging his dress, and did not yet make his appearance. A gleam of comfort entered the bosom of Lady Caroline, when she reflected that she should be able, with the assistance of her obliging Harrington, to make an excellent whist party. Lady Isabella had hoped that some of the fine things that Frederic had said to her, as he drove her home in his uncle's curricule, had their origin in truth; she was, therefore, in too good a humour, to be given much that evening to her natural propensity of *quizzing*; and, passing Margaret with a slight "how d'ye," and a still slighter one to Mary, she sat herself down by her Kennedy, as she called her, and restored, by her charming conversation and condescending familiarity, some degree of alacrity to that lady's depressed spirits.

On the joyful news that Lady Isabella was returned, Sir Charles Sefton, though he took more pains with his person, dispatched the arrangement of his figure as quick as possible; and highly perfumed with *esprit de rose*, dressed most becomingly, and animated with the unexpected joy of finding her he idolized returned so soon, his glass reflected to his imagination, what indeed he did *almost* look,—a *little bit*, a *very, very* little bit of—*an Adonis!*

Margaret's heart fluttered as he entered the arbour, but, alas! advancing to Lady Isabella, he seemed not even to see "*the most bewitching among her sex!*" but intreated in a loud, though tender whisper, that her ladyship would not risk a health so precious to him, by remaining any longer in the night air.

All the gentlemen were now seen approaching; and they enforced the same request to every lady. The exterior of Sir Charles Sefton, with all its *dissipation-acquired* defects, evinced the man of fashion; Lady Isabella had never seen him look so well as on that evening, and she thought, if he always looked so, she should be, by no means, ashamed of being the rich and dashing wife of such a man: but she had also another more powerful motive for holding out to him every hope, at the present hour,—she thought herself sure of Frederic Harrington's heart, and she was determined to prove it, by exciting his jealousy: she therefore engrossed Sir Charles entirely to herself, and took no notice whatever of either the friend she had before hailed by the appellation of "*sweet interesting girl,*" and whom she promised to make the depository of her most secret thoughts, nor yet of the man whom she really loved, and who, a few hours before, had well nigh drawn from her the confession of her regard for him.

Lady Caroline approved of the proposal of instantly quitting the gardens, and, unasked, took the arm of Frederic. Sir Edward Harrington still walked with Edward Marsham, the former shewing him some pointed epigrams, which he had received from a correspondent, composed upon Mr. W. and Mrs. C.; and he rejoiced with the good Curate, to see faction and enmity to royalty defeating themselves: while Charles, deeply interested in all that could give comfort to the parental bosom of his sovereign, and in each thing that tended to clear the fame of every branch of his illustrious family, looked the happiest of the happy; particularly as news of a private nature had also arrived from this correspondent of the worthy Sir Edward, which materially concerned the brave lieutenant; and Charles, on moving from the arbour, took an hand of each of his nieces, telling them with a smile beaming satisfaction, that he had fine news to tell them when he got home: he then quitted them, wondering at what it could be, to join his brother Ralph.

Margaret sent round "her inquiring eye," but saw Sir Charles looking on Lady Isabella with so much passionate adoration, and so assiduously attentive to wrap her shawl about her fine form, while his *adored* Margaritta was suffered, neglected and unobserved, to pull her *very* small cambric pocket-handkerchief over her bosom, and which did not half cover it, and content herself with the arm of her sister, without any complaisant beau so much as seeming to know they were in the company.

The officious Rector escorted Lady Wringham, who bore upon his arm with a weight he seemed ready to sink under; and in this state they entered the house.

It had not yet struck ten, and it was impossible to think of going to supper! Lady Caroline, Frederic Harrington, Sir Charles Sefton, and Lady Isabella (who hated whist, but yet would play to oblige *him*), made up a whist party; but as it was impossible to

secure the attention of the volatite lady to so serious a game, they changed it to a cassino: she lost there immensely, threw up her cards, and challenged Edward Marsham, who had just finished a game at piquet with Mrs. Kennedy, to a game at chess, which he gladly accepted; while Mrs. Kennedy took the seat of Lady Isabella, and the cassino was again changed to whist. Sir Edward Harrington and Ralph occupied a back-gammon table; while the Rector, Lady Wringham, Charles, and his two nieces, made a party at loo.

Lady Caroline, who never knew when to rise from the card-table, continued at it till near one o'clock, when, after the Rector frequently reminding her, she discovered it was time to go to supper! and they descended to the dining-parlour to partake of an elegant cold collation.

Mrs. Kennedy had been a winner; Lady Caroline, as usual, a considerable loser; she was therefore scarcely civil to Mrs. Kennedy, who was in high spirits, resolving, if her ladyship's ill humour continued, or indeed if she saw any prospect of her borrowing the sum of her, which she had just lost, she would set off for London directly, or pay some other convenient visit.

Mrs. Kennedy had a talent of telling fortunes, by a pack of cards, and that in a very diverting kind of way, entirely out of the common track; and, like the jumble of accidental predictions in an almanack, some things she foretold, had really come to pass. Our farm-house party were moving to withdraw, just before the hour sounded three; but the Rector positively swore they should not stir yet, and said, "Come, Kennedy, give us a shuffle, you understand me!"

Mrs. Kennedy desired a servant to bring her down one of the packs of cards from the drawing-room: "Now," said she, "you must not one of you move, till I have told all your fortunes: I cast a spell around you," continued she, and rising with the most playful and good-humoured *badinage*, she waved her little circular fan round the head of each, and reseated herself.

Margaret trembled, but instantly sent a look across the table to Sir Charles Sefton, but had the mortification of finding it not returned. Lady Caroline, who seemed to revive at only the *sight* of her favourite *book*, smiled and said, "What a droll creature, Kennedy, you are!" and now, with much ingenuity and archness, did Mrs. Kennedy tell that kind of fortune, which she thought would give her rich and noble listeners most pleasure. Lady Isabella was less pleased with what she told her, than Sir Charles; yet, to carry on the farce of the evening against Frederic, who was seated on the other side of her, directly opposite to Mary, she smiled on Sir Charles with much *seeming* satisfaction, while, to the great astonishment of Margaret, he blessed Mrs. Kennedy as a dear witty little angel!

The fortuneteller told Lady Wringham, that though she *was* married, there was a *black man* who sighed for her; and loved her dearly.—The noble and reverend Theodore hereupon gave a soft sigh, and Lady Wringham simpered, and said, "La! Mrs. *Thingummy*, how could you find that out? Well, I declare I never had any faith in *omiums* before, but I do really believe as how you're a witch!" Margaret again looked across the table; Sir Charles never heeded her.

When Mrs. Kennedy came to tell the future fate of the two girls, she had no interest in flattering *them*, and she was guided only by the different appearances of clubs, hearts, diamonds, and spades, as they chanced to follow each other, or be mingled together; and

she told their fortunes, as she had been taught to prognosticate, from the different succession of the cards alone, without deviation from those hieroglyphics.

She told the astonished, convinced, though trembling and horror-struck Margaret, that she loved a very fair man, short of stature; but that she was deceived in him, for if she believed him to be a gentleman, she would find herself very much mistaken, for he was the very lowest of the low-born: that a very rich and great man, much older than herself, would fall in love with her; but she must take care of him, for he had evil designs against her. Margaret eagerly asked, if she had yet seen him? Mrs. Kennedy said, her cards did not tell; but if she had, he was not yet in love with her.

To Mary, she told, that she was a little given to jealousy, but that she had no cause, for a young gentleman loved her beyond all the girls he had ever seen; and that at last they would certainly be united; but they would meet with a great many troubles and obstacles at first: that she would find, or had already found this gentleman rather too free in his moral principles; but that he was only led astray by fashion, and rather an extravagant turn of mind; he would soon love her, and her good conduct and prudence would restore him to himself, and entirely eradicate all his former errors. As Mary accidentally raised her eyes, she beheld those of Frederic Harrington tenderly fixed upon her: it was a moment of electrical bliss that then darted across her bosom! all that could be expressed from every pure and affectionate sentiment of the soul, beamed upon her blushing countenance from the fine, intelligent eyes of the handsome Frederic! love approaching to adoration, respect, admiration, and softness lighted up his visage, and in that one glance, and the accompanying and visible emotion of Mary, their hearts were irrevocably pledged to each other!

The repeated attentions of Frederic afterwards to Lady Isabella savoured more of respect and homage to her beauty alone, than any thing approximate to a softer passion: when trouble was foretold to Mary, though only in childish play, with a pack of cards, Frederic looked anxiously towards her. In vain the Reverend and Honourable Theodore Leslie essayed to “look unutterable things;” in vain he contrived to address her, by name, that she might look towards *him*, when this, her real lover was foretold, by the eloquent Mrs. Kennedy; Mary saw not, nor thought of any one but Frederic Harrington.

How oft had Margaret, during the unfolding of her strange and complicated fortune, turned her supplicating eyes towards Sir Charles Sefton! he had no looks but for Lady Isabella: and when Margaret’s imaginary lovers were mentioned amongst the kings and knaves by Mrs. Kennedy, the poor romantic girl remarked nothing but laughter and whisperings between the noble lovers; but not one look could she gain, not one of her own meaning ones could she get returned, by either her quality friend, or her once *fascinated adorer!*

Trifling as was this last amusement, Mrs. Kennedy knew how to render it extremely entertaining by her witty talents, and her versatility of expression—Edward Marsham, though not particularly pleased with so many falsehoods, yet wondered at her uncommon abilities, which could stamp such an agreeable interest on “trifles light as air.”

Sir Edward Harrington and Charles Marsham regarded the younger part of the merry auditors with pleased benevolence: and there were indeed scarcely any of the party that could be called *really old*: while Ralph, all *matter of fact*, looked excessively serious; and thought within himself, that if she told true, she must absolutely deal in the *black art*, and

if not, she must be naturally very much addicted to lying, to sit and invent so many *off hand*.

At length the clock chimed a quarter to four: Lady Wringham's servants were called, and she declared she had never passed so *niest* an evening in all her life; and that Mrs. Kennedy was the *funniest* and the *most cleverest* woman she ever knew.

The farm-house family then took their leave; the back of Sir Charles was towards his Margaritta, but he never turned when she went away, nor offered now to accompany her home—sad reverse since the ball night! Mary, elated, yet she hardly knew why, (for the scene between Harrington and Lady Caroline, as she again passed through the little anti-chamber, darted its momentary agony across her memory,) took the arm of her uncle Charles with a smile, and endeavoured to drive it from intruding on her mind.

Margaret, sadly disappointed and depressed, took hold of his other arm, and, with Ralph and Edward in their same serious and unaltered state of mind, walked home, by the light of the moon, contending with the beams of the morning.

END OF VOL. I.