

SIMPLE FACTS.

VOL. I.

SIMPLE FACTS;
OR, THE
HISTORY OF AN ORPHAN.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY MRS. MATHEWS.

VOL. I.

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SIMPLE FACTS, &c.

CHAPTER I.

IN the county of Devon, about two miles from Torrington, lived Mr. Harcourt, a gentleman of respectable family. He had an estate of about two hundred a year, which he farmed himself. He married at the age of twenty-two, the daughter of a neighbouring Clergyman, a very amiable young lady, with no great fortune, but that Mr. Harcourt did not consider as an object to be put in competition with the many valuable qualities he discovered in his lovely Maria:—He had no reason to repent his disinterested choice. The prudence of Mrs. Harcourt, in the management of their domestic concerns, made ample amends for the smallness of her fortune. Their mutual attachment encreased with their years, and they may with propriety, be numbered amongst the favourite few,

“Who in each other clasp whatever fair
“High fancy forms, and lavish hearts can wish.”

In the first two years after their happy union, they were blessed with two sons; and twelve years after the birth of the youngest, Mrs. Harcourt, was, to the great surprise of every one, delivered of a daughter, who was named after her amiable mother. Though Maria came so unexpectedly, she was not the less welcome. Mrs. Harcourt had long wished for a girl, to complete her happiness, and now that she was blessed with one, she had not another wish. She considered her little Maria, as a blessing from heaven to comfort her declining years.—How little do mortals know the designs of heaven?—Could that tender parent, have foreseen the distresses her beloved child was born to undergo, how different would have been her feelings? But,

“Heaven from all creatures hides the book of fate.”

Mr. Harcourt, had prudently made it a rule from his oeconomy, to lay by a small sum yearly, for a provision for his second son; and the year before Maria was born, he purchased a small estate, which was immediately settled on him. He had now another to provide for; and he cheerfully determined to pursue the same plan. Maria grew a beautiful child, and early discovered uncommon abilities; her tender mother undertook the delightful task

“To teach the young idea how to shoot.”

Mr. Harcourt, had finished the same charge with his two sons, much to his credit and satisfaction; they were very fine lads, and appeared to be well disposed. The youngest, who was now fifteen, he put apprentice to an attorney. His eldest being comfortably provided for, Maria, remained their only care.

They were under no great apprehension concerning her, as Mr. Harcourt enjoyed a good state of health, and was not much above forty. Hope is a powerful passion in the

human breast; they fondly looked forward with pleasing expectation to the time when they should behold their beloved child, the admiration of all, and the delight and comfort of their old age.

It is sometimes a misfortune to be too secure. Had Mr. Harcourt experienced some of those ills, which are the lot of thousands of his fellow creatures—Had he been afflicted with any of those complaints, so incident to human nature—He would not have delayed making that provision for his child; the neglect of which, exposed her to so many dangers. Such was the happy state, Mr. and Mrs. Harcourt enjoyed; reflecting on the past, with a satisfaction which none can feel, but such as make virtue the guide of all their actions; and looking forward to the future, with the most flattering expectation.—When Mrs. Harcourt went one day with her eldest son and little Maria, to pay a visit to Lady Palmer, who had a seat about two miles from their house; Mr. Harcourt could not accompany them, having some business to transact, which detained him; but promised to join them in the evening, and they set out cheerfully without him.

They were received at the Grove with their usual welcome. Lady Palmer had a great respect for Mrs. Harcourt, and her children were doatingly fond of Maria. They clung about her, and strove which should shew most attention. They were all happy; Maria with her play-fellows in the nursery, and Mrs. Harcourt in the conversation of Lady Palmer, until the hour arrived when Mr. Harcourt promised to join them. That past, and almost another; but no Mr. Harcourt! Mrs. Harcourt could no longer conceal her uneasiness. She began to be seriously alarmed, and expressed her fears to Lady Palmer, that something of a very serious nature must have happened, or Mr. Harcourt, who was always punctual on the most trivial occasions, would not, she was certain, have forfeited his word.

Lady Palmer endeavoured by every possible means to persuade Mrs. Harcourt her fears were groundless; but to no purpose. She grew more uneasy, until it was resolved to send her son with one of the servants, to know the cause.

Lady Palmer, was the widow of Sir Thomas Palmer, who had been dead about two years; her elder son, the present Sir Thomas, was at this time at Oxford. She had two other children who were then at home; a daughter, who was about eleven years of age, and little Charles, who was only nine.

Lady Palmer, was one of those few amiable women, who after the death of their husband's, devote the whole of their time to the education of their children. She lived in a very retired way: Mrs. Harcourt and two or three of her old friends, were all the visitors she received. Young Harcourt entered the parlour pale and trembling; "my poor father" said he— "Heavenly God! preserve him," cried Mrs. Harcourt! "What has happened? tell me all?" "Be not so frightened my dear mother" said he, "it may not be as we fear"—but on my enquiry at home, the servants assured me he set out to come to us at the time he appointed; and coming by the river we found this cane; which, I immediately knew to be my father's. "Oh!" cried Mrs. Harcourt, he is then lost! he is gone for ever! and dropt on the floor. Every means were used to recover her, which for some time, proved ineffectual,

but at last coming a little to herself she exclaimed, "is he then lost?" and again fainted. Lady Palmer advised young Harcourt to take some of the servants and search the river—and likewise to send people different ways about the neighbourhood to endeavour to get at the real state of what she began now to dread to know.

Poor Mrs. Harcourt still continued in a state of almost insensibility—Lady Palmer, at her intervals of reason, begged her to compose herself—pressed her to take an apartment in her house; adding, "if things should be as we fear, (which heaven forbid) your own, will by no means be a proper place for you, at least for some time." "Oh! Lady Palmer," cried she, wringing her hands, I am in a state of distraction! "if I have lost my beloved husband what place will be proper for me—none in this world—but let me entreat your ladyship to send me home—I must see him dead, or alive—dead! repeated she, with a wildness in her looks, can I then live, if all I have to live for is gone—what will become of me?"

Lady Palmer was extremely alarmed at seeing her friend in such distress; begged her to consider her health, "if only for the sake of your dear child" said she. "My poor Maria," said Mrs. Harcourt (in a softened tone) "what will become of thee, if thou hast indeed lost thy father? but pray let me go home; even the certainty of what I dread, cannot be worse than what I now suffer."

Lady Palmer then entreated her to leave Maria, which she at last consented to. The carriage was ordered to be got ready, and Lady Palmer's woman to go home with her. Lady Palmer advised her not to take leave of Maria, as the child would be frightened to see her in such a distressed state; "indeed I am distressed," said she, "I am distracted"— "Oh! cried she, as they were told the carriage was ready, "what will become of me."

CHAPTER II.

LADY Palmer was deeply affected at her friends distress.—She offered up a sincere prayer to the Almighty, to comfort her under her suffering—and went to the nursery to poor little Maria. She took the little innocent in her arms, kissed her, and could scarce conceal the tear which stood in her eye. “My dear sweet child” said she, “will you like to stay with your play-fellows, two or three days? your mama has given me leave to keep you.” Maria, answered “she should like it very much; but if her ladyship pleased, she would wish to bid her mama a good night.” Lady Palmer then told her, her mama was gone home—she stood a few moments in a very thoughtful attitude; at last recollecting herself, “I wonder” said she, “what my papa will say, to see my mama without me.” Lady Palmer turned her head to wipe her eyes. Miss Palmer and little Charles, were delighted to have their favourite some days. It was settled for Maria to sleep with Miss Palmer. Lady Palmer embraced them—wished them a good night—and returned to the parlour full of anxiety, for her woman’s return. She soon entered the room. “Oh! my Lady,” said Mrs. Harris, “such a scene of distress at poor Mrs. Harcourt’s.” “It is then as I feared” said Lady Palmer; “but let me know the particulars.” Mrs. Harris then told her, that Mrs. Harcourt supported herself pretty well, till the carriage came within sight of the house. Then on seeing such a number of people about the door, she screamed out, that all was lost. Her dear husband was brought home dead; “her fears were too true,” continued Mrs. Harris, “for on searching the river, Mr. Harcourt’s body was found, and on examining the bank, they discovered the place where his foot had slipt.” Poor Mrs. Harcourt was taken out of the carriage quite insensible, and carried to her apartment. Doctor Johnson, who happened to be amongst the number of spectators, had ordered her a composing draught but she very much feared it would answer no purpose, as she did not think Mrs. Harcourt could live.

“Her two sons are nearly in as bad a state” said Mrs. Harris, “Poor Henry the youngest, is laying over the body of his father, and raving like a distracted creature: his brother seems in a state of stupid dejection. I desired Dr. Johnson to call here in the morning, as I concluded your ladyship would wish to know how Mrs. Harcourt did.” “You did very right,” answered Lady Palmer, deeply affected with the distressing scene her woman had described. “Poor Mrs. Harcourt—how I pity her—who but a few hours ago, was one of the happiest of women; the Almighty will, I hope, give her fortitude to support this great trial. Poor little Maria, a beautiful girl only eight years old, to be left at the mercy of a brother—to lose her father, and perhaps her mother, who adored her! who watched every turn of her growing genius, to find out where to improve, or where to check.”

Mrs. Harris put her lady in mind of the hour, and advised her to go to rest; she retired—but not to sleep—her thoughts were too much taken up with the sorrows of her friend to admit of any. She rose earlier than usual the next morning and went to the nursery. She was surprised to find the young people up and dressed; the thoughts of their new companion had awakened them. She found them in high spirits. She embraced them all tenderly—but when she took Maria in her arms, she could not conceal the tear which

started in her eyes; which Maria perceiving exclaimed “My dear Lady Palmer, you weep, and it seems about me—what have I done? I shall be very unhappy indeed, if I have been so unfortunate as to have offended you:” and burst into tears. Lady Palmer’s tears flowed now without restraint. She pressed Maria to her bosom; “You sweet innocent” said she, “you have never offended me, be not alarmed.” By this time her companions began to share in the distress of Maria and their mama. Little Charles took Maria by the hand, “Oh?” mama said he, “I cannot bear to see Miss Harcourt weep, indeed I cannot; it makes me weep too.” Lady Palmer felt extremely distressed how to act, she thought it would be proper, to prepare her for the sad news; yet feared to shock her sensibility, of which she appeared to have an uncommon share, for one of her years. “You must not be frightened at what I am going to say”— “but I am told your papa is very ill, and you know he may die: if he should, you must not make yourself more uneasy than you can possibly help; as God Almighty acts in those cases as he thinks best; and we must all submit to his will, or we cannot be considered as christians. You see, my dear, your companions have lost their papa, and they are not unhappy.” Maria now sobbed, as if her little heart would break— “but my papa” said she, when she was able to speak, “has always been so kind and good to me, I am sure I cannot live if he should die.”

Lady Palmer after endeavouring to convince her of the impropriety of such a thought, left her with her companions, who joined in her grief.

CHAPTER III.

DOCTOR Johnson was soon announced, he gave a most alarming account of Mrs. Harcourt's state; declared it was his opinion, that if she survived, it would be with the loss of her reason—but added, a few days will determine her case. "Never," said the Doctor, "did I behold such a distressing scene. Poor Mrs. Harcourt is really distracted, her second son almost in the same state, and the eldest melancholy; the poor labourers all lamenting the loss of a good master—indeed I have not seen one soul who is not affected at the news of poor Harcourt's death."

"His poor daughter," said Lady Palmer, "will, I fear be the greatest sufferer; I very much fear she is totally unprovided for." "Good God!" said Dr. Johnson, "Mr. Harcourt cannot surely have neglected so material a business as taking care of his child: but his death being premature, may in some measure excuse such a neglect. Joseph seems to be a good lad, but it is hard to be a dependant on a brother." Lady Palmer entreated he would call every day to acquaint her with the state of Mrs. Harcourt's health, which he promised to do, and took his leave.

She now acquainted Maria in the tenderest manner possible, with the death of her father. She was deeply affected with the loss, but after the first transports of her grief had a little subsided, she supported her sorrow with a fortitude, superior to her years; which gave Lady Palmer a high opinion of her understanding. She expressed a great desire to see her mama; but on Lady Palmer's assuring her she should, as soon as her mama was in a state proper to receive her—she readily submitted.

Mrs. Harcourt remained four days totally insensible; her fever was so high, that Dr. Johnson declared there must be a change in a few hours. In the evening she fell into a deep sleep, and continued in it twelve hours. The Doctor waited with great impatience for her awaking, in hopes of a favourable turn; he was not disappointed. When Mrs. Harcourt awoke, she lay a few minutes as if just recovered from a trance: she looked round, and on seeing the Doctor, who stood by the bed-side, without attempting to speak, till he saw what state she was in—she exclaimed, with her hands and eyes lifted up, "God Almighty is just! I have deserved all that has befallen me. I have, Doctor Johnson," said she, "for twenty years past been so happy, I had almost forgot I was mortal; I even dared to measure out the length of that happiness to a period, when I vainly imagined I should sink with my beloved husband gradually to the grave; after experiencing nothing but the blessings of this life. Wretch, that I was, what right had I to expect, to be exempt from the distresses my fellow creatures are subject to?" The Doctor begged she would not talk, or she would hurt her health; she answered she was perfectly composed, "Nothing can now change the state my mind is in, I am so thoroughly convinced of the justness of my suffering; I shall never utter another complaint, but be thankful to the Almighty for the many years of uninterrupted happiness, I have enjoyed."

The Doctor was very much surprised to see her so calm; he offered her some refreshments, which she consented to take. She enquired after her children, but expressed

no desire to see them. "This fatal blow, Dr. Johnson" said she, "has taught me a lesson I have never till now known; which is, not to be too much devoted to any thing in this world. I have had more than my share of the comforts, blessings I may say, of this world; it was time for me to experience the reverse, which I hope I shall support as becomes a christian." The Doctor again repeated his request, that she would not fatigue her spirits by talking too much; she promised to obey him, and he took his leave.

Lady Palmer was very happy when Dr. Johnson acquainted her Mrs. Harcourt had recovered her reason. The doctor being fearful she might fall into a state of stupid insensibility, advised Lady Palmer as soon as the funeral was over, to take Maria to her, in order to awaken her attention, which she agreed to do. Maria and little Charles then entered the room, she ran to Dr. Johnson, with a face expressive of the greatest anxiety, to enquire after her mama, and brothers, the tears ready to start from her eyes. He took her by the hand, and assured her, her mama was a great deal better, and that she should see her in a day or two, and her brothers were pretty well. She sighed— "God bless and protect you, sweet innocent" said he, "I wish you may not be the greatest sufferer." "But Miss Harcourt shall not suffer," cried little Charles; "you know Mama when I am seventeen, I shall go to India to my uncle, the Governor—where I shall make a great fortune, and I will give the half of it to her:"— "do not cry, Miss Harcourt," said he, taking her hand, "I cannot bear to see you." Lady Palmer looked at the doctor; her countenance expressed the satisfaction she felt at her son's generous sentiments—she took him in her arms, and kissed him.—Her feeling can only be conceived by a tender parent.

The day came, on which Maria was to be taken to her mama; her companions shed tears at parting. When Lady Palmer entered the room where Mrs. Harcourt was sitting, she was, notwithstanding what Dr. Johnson had said, greatly surprised to see her so composed. They embraced each other in silence— "I have brought Maria to see you," said Lady Palmer, "bless my child," said she—and ordered the nurse to bring her up—on her entering the room she run and fell on her knees;— "Oh! my dear mama!"—was all she could utter.—Mrs. Harcourt now began to discover some signs of returning sensibility: the tears which had for some days forsaken her eyes, now began to flow.— She pressed her child to her bosom, when she was a little recovered— "Call my sons," said she, to the nurse,—they entered the room with dejected looks.— "Joseph," said she, taking him by the hand, and putting one of Maria's into the other— "behold your child— you my dear children," addressing her sons, "have had the blessing of both your parents to watch over, and instruct your youth: you are at present such as I wish you to be— continue the same, and you will be an ornament to society, and reflect honour to the memory of your dear deceased father. But this dear child, has too early lost one parent; and God only knows, how soon she may be deprived of both. I therefore commit her to your protection, and as you act by her, so may the Almighty deal with you."

This solemn speech, struck them so powerfully, it was some time before there was any reply made to it—the brothers at the same instant fell on their knees; vowed solemnly, Maria should never have cause to complain of them. Joseph assured his mother he would pursue the plan his dear father had adopted of laying by a sum yearly for her,

until she was of age. Mrs. Harcourt was very well satisfied with her son's behaviour, embraced them, and they took their little sister in their arms and kissed her, with great affection. Lady Palmer, who was equally pleased and affected with this tender scene, now began to hope Maria's case was not so bad as she had feared. She concluded, Mrs. Harcourt would be the better of a little rest, got up to take her leave; she asked if she should take Maria back to the Grove. "No, my Lady," replied Mrs. Harcourt, "I will have her with me whilst I am in this world; it may not be long—and then my Maria will stand much in need of such a kind friend to guide her young mind." "Let me entreat you to think otherwise," said Lady Palmer, "you will I hope, live to see her happy beyond the reach of fortune." Mrs. Harcourt sighed, and shook her head; but continued Lady Palmer, "should she, which Heaven forbid, ever stand in need of my assistance, I shall ever be ready and willing to give it;" and then took her leave.

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. Harcourt seemed every day to recover more tranquillity: she was soon able to take short airings in Lady Palmer's carriage, which was every day sent to take her out. But her health had received such a visible shock from the late accident, that she grew extremely thin, and had entirely lost her appetite; and though she appeared calm, and sometimes rather chearful, it was very evident her mind was but ill at ease.

She paid more than common attention to the improvement of Maria's mind—she set forth in the strongest colours, the advantages derived from an early attention to piety and morality. "Let nothing, my dear child," said she, "tempt you to do a mean ungenerous action, or to deviate from the strict rule of propriety; remember this—that vice, however it may deceive you by appearance, is always attended with misery.

"To be good is to be happy.
"Angels are happier than us; because
"They are better."

One thing, Mrs. Harcourt charged her particularly to observe; "when you grow up," said she, "make this a rule; whatever you observe in the behaviour of your companions, that does not exactly agree with your own idea of right, impartially examine yourself—and you will perhaps find on a strict scrutiny, you have some time or other been guilty of the same fault; if you have the pleasure to find yourself free, this will imprint it so strongly in your mind, that you will be in no danger of falling into the same error." Such were the instructions Mrs. Harcourt gave her beloved daughter, and Maria lost not a word—she treasured them in her heart—and determined, whatever was her lot, never to deviate from them.

Mrs. Harcourt grew every day weaker, and on consulting Dr. Johnson, he discovered she was in a deep decline, and that it was not in the power of medicine to save her. She called her son Joseph to her, one day, and said, "my dear son, I find my dissolution fast approaching: indeed, there is nothing to induce me to wish to live, only if it had pleased the Almighty to have spared me till my poor Maria was provided for. But *his will be done*;—"you will, I make no doubt, be a kind father to her"—Joseph was really affected at his mother's words; assured her, Maria should be his sole care.

She then sent for her sister, Mrs. Young, and after acquainting her with the state of her health, and the natural consequences which must soon follow—she consulted with her concerning the disposal of Maria after her death. It was at last determined that she should board with her aunt, and go to school with her children. Mrs. Young was married to a linen draper, at Torrington, she had four children, two sons and two daughters; the youngest of whom was the same age of Maria, but very different both in person and disposition.

Mrs. Harcourt having settled this important business, now turned her thoughts wholly on her approaching fate, which she met with a calmness, that shewed she rather wished than feared to die. This second shock, which happened about twelve months after the death of Mr. Harcourt, was too much for Maria's tender nature—she was in hysteric fits for some days, and her life was despaired of. After every means had been used to reconcile her, to no purpose, Lady Palmer entreated Mrs. Young to let her pass a few days at the Grove, adding, "the society of her old companions might divert her melancholy." Mrs. Young agreed to the proposal, and Maria went home with Lady Palmer.

From the attention she received at the Grove, she by degrees recovered her health. Little Charles strove by every possible means to amuse her; and when he could not succeed, lessened her sorrows by sharing them—his sympathetic soul joined in her distress; which she perceiving, would often conceal, for fear of giving him pain; thus by assuming a cheerfulness, she soon became really so—Mrs. Young came for her, this was another trial to Maria, but she knew, she must submit, and therefore determined to do it with a good grace. She summoned all her resolution, and thanked Lady Palmer with great composure for her kindness, but, when she took leave of her young friends, her fortitude forsook her, they were all in tears.—Lady Palmer entreated Mrs. Young to let her pass the holidays at the Grove, which she consented to, and they took their leave.

Maria was received by her uncle and cousins with great pleasure, they at first shewed her every kind of attention, and Mrs. Young took a pleasure in hearing her praised. But her youngest daughter soon discovered a jealousy at her superior abilities, which she considered as a reproach to herself, and therefore conceived a violent hatred against her. She practised all those mean insinuations which little minds are capable of, to prejudice her father and mother against her—and Maria saw with sorrow her arts succeed, but too well. She soon discovered the progress she made in learning, which instead of gaining her the approbation she hoped to receive, would gain nothing but some ill-natured sarcasm, such as, "Ay to be sure, you are cleverer than any body." This affected her exceedingly, her situation became very uncomfortable, but she thought the most prudent method would be to bear it without complaint, as those little disagreeables would make her brothers unhappy without answering any other purpose. She mourned in secret the loss of her tender parents—the only comfort she ever enjoyed was in the holidays, which she always spent at the Grove—Maria had spent two years in this unhappy state, when Lady Palmer fancied she saw a settled dejection on her countenance, and kindly enquired if she was happy. She answered, "she was as happy as she could expect to be, without a parent." This negative kind of reply, and the dejection which accompanied her words, Lady Palmer was by no means satisfied with; she concluded Maria was not so well treated as she could wish, and therefore determined to get at the truth, as she loved her, both for her own sake and her mother's. She again repeated the question, respecting her happiness, and got nearly the same answer.—She took Maria's hand, "my dear child" said she, "I think you have no reason to doubt but I have a sincere regard for you, to suppose I should ask questions merely out of idle curiosity; I very much fear you are not happy; tell me truly, are you kindly treated? and be assured of this, if I cannot serve you, I will do you no injury"—Maria bust into tears, Lady Palmer,

pressed her to answer her— “I must not my dear Lady Palmer” said she, “expect to be so happy who have no parent as those who have—how can I suppose, but my aunt will be fonder of her own children than of me—I have nothing material to complain of, but I confess I every day feel more sensibly the loss of my dear mother—Oh! Lady Palmer! what a sad thing it is for a young girl to lose her mother.” Lady Palmer thought it unnecessary to enquire farther into the cause of Maria’s dejection, she could easily judge the rest. She began to consider how she could serve her. She consulted Miss Palmer, and they determined to take her wholly to live at the Grove. “She can attend,” said Lady Palmer, “whilst the Governess gives you lessons in French and Geography—and to music and dancing from the masters who come twice a week to instruct you. By that means she will save her brother Joseph, the expence of her board and schooling, which will be a sufficient inducement for him to consent to the change, and I shall have the satisfaction of seeing her happy.”

CHAPTER V.

LADY Palmer lost no time to put her scheme in execution. She sent for Mr. Harcourt, and acquainted him it was her wish to have Maria wholly at the Grove—but concealed from him the idea she had of her being uncomfortable; Joseph very readily consented to her proposals; indeed, he was rejoiced to have his sister taken, as he thought, off his hands. He had, after the death of his mother, taken a farmer's daughter to superintend his house, a girl of no education, and very few natural abilities; however, she had a very pretty face, and a great deal of artful insinuation, which prevailed with Joseph—he in a short time after Maria was settled at the Grove, to the great surprise of every one, married her. This gave Maria great uneasiness; she had flattered herself her brother's house would prove a comfortable asylum to her when she grew up; her hopes on that score were now entirely lost. Her brother Henry now remained her only hope; he had just finished the term of his apprenticeship with great repute, and was advised to settle at Bath. Before he set out, he came to the Grove to take leave of his sister, of whom he was always very fond. He expressed in the strongest terms his disapprobation of his brother's conduct; assured Maria, she should never want a protector whilst he lived; that when he was settled, if she liked it, she should come to him, and if he should marry, it should be such a woman as would love and be kind to his sister.

He then paid his respects to Lady Palmer; took an affectionate leave of Maria, and set out for Bath. Maria seriously lamented parting with her brother, he was the only relation she had, who for some time past had paid any attention to her; and now he had left the country, she very much feared he would soon forget her.

She applied herself with uncommon assiduity, to those improvements which she hoped might prove of advantage to her. She was soon able to speak French pretty well, and write it grammatically; her genius received no check; her companions were too liberal minded to entertain any of those little jealousies, which had caused her so much uneasiness at her aunt's; they all took a pleasure in instructing her; Charles was her writing master, a task he undertook with great pleasure, and Maria felt no less in studying under so agreeable a master: her happiness received a check when he was sent to school at Exeter; however, as he always passed the holidays at home, she consoled herself in his absence, with the pleasing expectation of seeing him soon again; and in the mean time, strove to improve in her studies, in hopes of surprising him with the progress she had made during his absence. Charles had the same motive for emulation; he had always his Maria before him—and his constant thoughts were how he should merit her approbation. Thus they imperceptably formed each other's mind; and their little hearts were united, before either of them were sensible they had one.

One thing surprised Maria exceedingly, which she endeavoured in vain to account for;—Charles and his sister met, and parted with such indifference—she observed his sister never shed tears at parting, or seemed to feel that tender emotion at his return, which she was so sensible of — “it is strange,” said she to herself, that his mother and sister should not love him better than I do!”—there was only one way she could reconcile

this. “Miss Palmer never knew what it was to be unhappy; she has always had a tender mother to comfort and cherish her;—therefore, she is unacquainted with those emotions which arise from kindness, shewn on such occasions. I should be very ungrateful indeed, if I did not love Charles—how kind he was to me when I lost my dear mama!” This seemed clearly to account to her why she felt more for him than his sister, and so far from conceiving there could be an impropriety, she thought it would be next to impiety not to adore him.

“By what thin spun threads, our affections are wove together.”

She often regretted he was not indeed her brother.

CHAPTER VI.

SIR Thomas Palmer having finished his studies, left Oxford, and set out on the tour of Europe; Charles who was now fifteen, was taken from his school at Exeter, and sent to that University—when he returned at the vacation, he had acquired such a manly appearance, as struck Maria with uncommon emotion; when he, all animation, seized her hand—she blushed and an unusual trembling seized her, she found it impossible to appear easy—an involuntary sigh escaped her. Charles, as if he had caught the infection, turned pale, he fancied she received him with too much indifference—and endeavoured in vain to account for this change: he grew thoughtful, he shuddered at the idea of having offended her.—He examined himself with the most scrutinising attention, to find out if he had imperceptibly imbibed any of those follies so frequently learnt at the University. “Perhaps,” said he, “I have been so unfortunate, instead of attaining accomplishments which I flattered myself would render me more agreeable to her—only to have acquired some disagreeable manner which is disgusting; if so, how shall I regret ever going to Oxford. But how is Maria changed! if that is the case, how freely did she use to tell me of any action she thought wrong, and how readily did I attend to her.”

Thus with doubts and perplexities did Charles rack his imagination, to account for this change, which gave him so much uneasiness. Maria was far from being easy; her rest was disturbed; Charles occupied her thoughts more than ever, yet she could less support his presence—whenever she caught his eye, she would blush and turn away, as if she had committed a fault. A sigh from him, upbraided her for her cruelty.

This was all strange to Maria, she could not find out the cause of her extraordinary conduct; and more extraordinary sensations—the real cause never once entered her head. She had, indeed, heard of love, but had formed no idea how it affects—she saw Charles uneasy, and fancied it was at her strange behaviour. “My God!” said she, “what shall I do?—how shall I act?—ought I to make him unhappy, who has almost from my infancy shared in my sorrows, and greatly alleviated them.—She determined to appear as chearful and easy as possible to him in company with his mother and sister; but she studiously avoided being alone with him.

Charles, who watched every look of Maria, felt greatly revived at this favourable change; he began to flatter himself, whatever was the cause of her reserve at their first meeting, he should soon recover her good opinion, and only wished for an opportunity of a conversation with her, to remove any little prejudice which he fancied she had formed to his disadvantage; but he found it no easy matter to get such an opportunity, as Maria, as carefully strove to avoid it. Fortunately, for him, the family received an invitation to dine where Maria was not asked; Charles pleaded indisposition for not accompanying them, and had the pleasure to find he should dine with Maria alone.

This was the very height of his wish, how did he long for the hour,—how tedious was the time until the bell summoned them to the dining parlour; Maria felt strange emotions at the thoughts of being alone with Charles, she trembled—she blushed—she

could not tell why—she wished to look better than usual, and spent more time in dressing that morning than common.

The signal Charles had so impatiently expected, at length arrived; they both blushed, and looked extremely confused. Whilst the servants continued in the room, they talked on indifferent things; but as soon as the cloth was taken away and the servants gone, they were both silent.

Maria, after setting a little time, made an effort to retire. Charles now started and caught her hand, “am I then become so very disagreeable,” said he, “that Maria cannot sit in the same room with me,—let me entreat you, at least to condescend so far as to acquaint me, wherein I have been so unfortunate as to offend you, unless you wish to see me unhappy.” He ceased to speak; he had still hold of her hand; she trembled—his looks were expressive of the tenderest anxiety; it is difficult to say, whether hope or fear was most predominant in his heart.

“Offend me, Mr. Palmer,” said Maria, “no, indeed, you have never offended me—I do not think it is in your nature to offend any one.” Charles felt a little revived at these words— “then let me conjure you to tell me why this change in your behaviour—why Mr. Palmer,—am I not the same Charles as ever?”—Maria sighed— “Oh, Maria,” continued he, if you knew what I have suffered from your cold reserve, you would not keep me in suspense; but freely tell me, what part of my conduct is disagreeable to you, that I might endeavour to become every thing you could wish.” “I think,” said Maria, “you are such as the most sanguine of your friends must approve. But— “but what, Maria—Oh, do not chill my very soul,—what is the approbation of my friends, no! it is your good opinion alone must make me happy: if I no longer have the pleasure to find my improvements, as I hoped they were, prove agreeable to Maria, I have no motive to continue them—to what purpose should I labour for accomplishments, if I have lost the end I flattered myself would recompense me”—Good God! what would you have me say?” said she, “if my poor approbation will afford you any pleasure, I will not withhold it—you are every thing I could wish to see in a beloved brother.” Charles kissed her hand and pressed it to his heart, with a rapture which surprized her. She was still more sensible of the impropriety of being familiar with him. “But,” continued she, a deep blush overspreading her face, “the same familiarities now, which in our childhood appeared innocent, would, in my opinion, be deemed improper; and you would not, I am sure, wish me to do any thing improper.” “Oh! my dear Maria,” exclaimed Charles, “If to love your Charles with the same warmth of affection he does you, is an impropriety, I am the most miserable of beings.”— “Love,” cried Maria, starting, and endeavouring to withdraw her hand;— “Yes, my sweet girl,” answered he, “I have long endeavoured to deceive myself, with an idea that it was only a strong friendship which had united, I hope our hearts, but I find friendship too cool a phrase to express what I feel; it must be, then love—the most pure—the most tender, and disinterested, that ever possessed the human breast, and only wants the assurance of a mutual return to make me the happiest of mortals— “What ails my Maria!” observing the colour forsake her cheek, and her hand turn cold, “I have said too much,”—Maria fainted—he caught her in his arms, and used every method to recover her, without calling the servant; in a little time she revived.

She begged he would permit her to retire to her room, as her spirits were very much flurried—he pressed her hand to his lips—“Will my dear Maria allow me to hope what I have ventured to disclose, is not disagreeable to her,”—she sighed,—“I wish,” said she, “we may not both be unhappy;” she promised to return to tea, and left the room. When Maria reached her room, a flood of tears came to her assistance, which greatly relieved her: “Then” said she, “this is love, which I have so long felt, and I am beloved by Charles, why then should I feel unhappy? he is amiable as lovely,” a thought of Lady Palmer came across her—she trembled—“Ah! what will be the consequence if Lady Palmer should discover our attachment, she had, no doubt, higher expectations for her son—I am a poor unprovided orphan—she is my only friend—no, I must not think of Charles, otherwise than a dear brother; it will surely be no crime to love him as such, he has always loved me better than either of my brothers; yes, I will always love him as such, and I will persuade him to think of me in the light of a sister.” These were Maria’s reflections when she was called to tea, Charles took her hand and led her to her chair: after tea, he, respectfully taking her hand, said, “Will my sweet Maria forgive me if I repeat the question which she left unanswered?” she blushed, “There is” said she, “but one way that I can dare venture to say I can love you”—Oh! cried he, “name it: whatever it is, I shall be satisfied, if I am only assured I am so happy as to be beloved by my Maria.”—“I will,” said she, “promise to love you as long as I live”—Charles fell on his knees, “Thank you my sweet angel” said he—“But” continued she “it must be as a brother”—“A brother!” exclaimed he—“no, my Maria, I cannot think of you in that light; my love is of a very different nature from that of a brother.” “Why,” said Maria, “will you deprive me the only pleasure I could ever promise myself—I never dare think of you, but in that light—I am a poor orphan, who have nothing to entitle me to you: even though you are so disinterested, your friends will despise me; and I should be very unhappy indeed, if I were to offend Lady Palmer, she has been so kind to me.” “Do not” cried he, interrupting her, let such thoughts give you a moment’s concern—you will be an ornament to any family; mine are, I am persuaded, too sensible of your worth, to object to you—you are—you must be adored by all who know you: but should they, from interested motives, endeavour to prevent our happiness, I shall no longer consider myself as bound to abandon mine to such mercenary views. I shall go to India, there to make my own fortune, which I shall have an undoubted right to dispose of as I shall think proper—to make my Maria happy! Oh, my love, with what pleasure shall I bear every fatigue, with a prospect of such a reward? how, with your dear image ever before me, shall I double my honest endeavours to shorten the tedious absence. But nothing shall ever induce me to leave England until I am well assured of your affections. If you refuse me that—what is the riches of the East to me? Let those seek them, whose selfish minds can find pleasure in wealth alone; any little corner of the earth will suffice me; there is an end of my ambitious views, all my romantic hopes of happiness must for ever banish, if you deny me a place in your heart.”

He took her hand, and was going to press her to make him happy, by confessing a partiality, when the carriage stopped at the door with her mother and sister—“how unfortunate,” said he, “but, Oh!—say, am I to expect happiness, or eternal misery.”—“God send,” said Maria, “you may be as happy as I wish you.” Lady and Miss Palmer

now entered the room.

CHAPTER VII.

MARIA'S mind was now occupied by a variety of ideas all new to her, that Charles loved her with the purest, and sincerest affection, she made no doubt—that she was no less attached to him was equally clear; her heart, in spite of all the difficulties her reason suggested, exulted in the prospect of her future happiness—the fear of offending Lady Palmer gradually diminished, and all other difficulties with it. All were trifling, when placed in competition with her Charles.—She regretted the lowness of her situation; and for the first time in her life, wished for riches.

Novice, as Charles was, in affairs of love, he began to entertain favourable presages from Maria's behaviour:—he now no longer supposed the reserve which had so much alarmed him, proceeded from dislike, but the effects of a growing passion, which she was herself insensible of. He determined not to shock her delicacy by pressing his passion too precipitately, but trust to some favourable juncture to discover what he so much wished to know;—he therefore treated Maria with the tenderest respect, but did not seek earnestly for an opportunity to renew the subject, which had been interrupted by the arrival of his mother.

Three days had elapsed since Charles had declared the state of his heart.—When Lady Palmer had some company, Maria was not disposed for any society—her heart was too full of what had lately passed between her and Charles. Seeing them all pretty much engaged, she slipped out and strolled into the garden, there to indulge her reflections.—She got to an arbour, and run over in her thoughts the hopes and fears which naturally arise in a susceptible mind, in such a perplexed situation.—She exclaimed aloud, “My God! why am I not more deserving, or he less amiable?”—Charles that instant entered the arbour, and throwing himself at her feet, “Who,” cried he, “that was less *amiable*, could dare ever to indulge a hope to possess so much perfection. Oh! my Maria, if I may presume to flatter myself, your last words alluded to me, I am the happiest of beings.”

“I could not,” said she, a little recovered from her confusion, “have supposed you capable of such an action, as to surprise me thus:”—“Do not,” said he, “my dearest life, regret having made me happy. It was chance alone which kindly directed my steps hither: I came merely to indulge my reflection, on the most perfect of the Creation.—I came, O! Heavens! just in time to hear, that already more than human voice declare a wish, she was still more deserving—could I then resist the sound; no, I must be indeed more or less than human, if I had:—never shall you have cause to accuse Providence for this happy removal of my fears—only assure me I was the subject of your thoughts, when I entered the arbour.” “To be sure,” said she, with great simplicity, “You could not surely believe I thought of any one else.”—“Bless you, my angel,” cried he, in extacy,—“Oh! I am the happiest of human beings; now fortune, I defy all thou canst do! My Maria has confessed herself mine, what more can I ask?”

“Ah,” said she, “Charles, if your happiness depended wholly on me, you would have nothing to fear—but I still tremble, when I think on Lady Palmer, and your other friends; you know I am no way intitled to such an alliance.” “Do not,” said he, “let me

entreat you not to torment yourself with these unnecessary fears; you know my resolution; should they be so cruel as to wish to separate us, I shall no longer consider them as friends; let us, my love, endeavour to keep our attachment a secret, until I return from India, when I hope I shall be in a situation to declare my love, and boldly assert my independence.”

Maria saw the propriety of this request; all reserve would have been now affectation; they exchanged mutual vows of everlasting love, and looked forward to the time when Charles would return with riches and honor—with an unbounded confidence in each other.

Providence, fortunately for youth, so ordaineth, that they shall only view the best side of things—or where would be that commendable spirit for emulation—that noble thirst for glory, were their generous minds damped by the many and probable chances there are against their success. The misfortunes of others, which every day present themselves to their view, no way affect their aspiring genius;—hope, kindly takes them by the hand, and leads them on with fair promises, that they shall escape such dangers.

Charles set out for Oxford, happy in the certainty of his Maria’s affections; and she was no less so, with the idea of being beloved by the most amiable of youths—she trusted to that Power, who knew the purity of their hearts, to protect them for each other. Four years of Maria’s life had passed at the Grove, in peace and happiness; the only thing which gave her uneasiness, was the indifference her brother Joseph had lately treated her with: his wife had never been received at the Grove, which did not a little hurt her pride; and add to the dislike she evidently shewed, whenever Maria went to pay her respects to her brother. Mrs. Harcourt never failed to wound her sensibility, by some ill-natured sarcasm—as “such a fine lady as you” or “I hope Lady Palmer intends to provide for you, since she has brought you up such a fine lady.”

Maria, with sorrow, saw her brother but too much inclined to join with his wife; her visits therefore became seldom and short. Her brother Henry wrote to her frequently; his letters were dictated with all the affection of a tender brother, to a much loved sister. In his last, which she received soon after Charles set out for Oxford, he acquainted her with his marriage to a young lady of a respectable family at Bath—that he was comfortably settled—and if she should ever want a home, begged she would consider his house as such; as he should never forget the promise he had made to his dear deceased mother.

Maria at the same time received one from his wife, expressing pretty much the same sentiments; she shewed them both to Lady Palmer, who, to her great astonishment, expressed much joy at the prospect she had of a comfortable home, at her brother Henry’s. “You will, my dear,” said her ladyship, “find Bath a most agreeable place; and under the protection of your brother, and your own prudent conduct, you cannot fail of being soon well settled.”

This speech from Lady Palmer, struck Maria motionless; she had long considered herself one of the family; every part of which was dear to her. Lady Palmer, observing her confusion, said, “you must, my dear, suppose both myself and Mary, will greatly regret the loss of so amiable a companion; but your leaving us, will, I hope, be to your own advantage; your brother is in a respectable line—he will introduce you into genteel company, and let me assure you, there is nothing in this world would give me more pleasure than to hear you were well married.”

The tears which had stood sometime in Maria’s eyes, now made their way down her cheeks.—Lady Palmer continued, “I will write to your brother, to prepare him to receive you, and likewise send for Joseph, to know what you are to depend on—I am sorry to say your expectations must not be too sanguine from him—if I may judge from his late behaviour, but I will try what I can make of him.”

Maria was too deeply affected with this discourse, to make any reply to it. All her agreeable prospects in a moment vanished. She saw herself going to be thrown a dependant on her brother.—Lady Palmer’s eagerness too for her departure, gave her great concern.

CHAPTER VIII.

LADY Palmer lost no time to accomplish what she had proposed.—She sent for Mr. Harcourt, and acquainted him with her intentions respecting his sister—her brother Henry was ready to receive her; and as Maria was a beautiful accomplished girl, she thought it would be a pity not to introduce her into life; but it would be necessary for her to know, what she had to depend on.

Joseph, with great seeming humanity, lamented not having it in his power, without injuring his own family—which her Ladyship, or any other person could expect from him—to do much for his sister, circumstanced as he was. He was persuaded, had his mother lived, she would have been satisfied with his giving her a trade, whereby she would be enabled to maintain herself:—he was willing to advance fifty pounds, to apprentice her to a milliner or mantua-maker, or whatever she liked; and to allow her ten pounds a year for cloaths, during the term of her apprenticeship.

In vain did Lady Palmer argue the injustice of such a proposal, or represent how inadequate it was, to what Maria had a right to expect, either from the promise he had made his dying mother, or in proportion to his father's estate.

Joseph answered coolly, “he did not think it more disproportioned than her Ladyship's family were provided for; For instance,” said he, “Sir Thomas, enjoys an estate of two thousand a year; whilst the younger branches of the family have only one thousand pounds each to their portion.”

Lady Palmer was not prepared for this retort, she only answered, “That from the solemn promise he had made, in her presence, to his mother, she had conceived hopes he would have acted more generously: but if he could reconcile such actions with himself, it was more than she could have believed him capable of.”

“But suppose your brother Henry, or your sister should object to the scheme you propose,” said Lady Palmer, “what are you willing to advance to Henry, should he undertake to provide for Maria?” “He was willing,” he said, “to give her twenty pounds, by way of paying her expences to Bath, and at any time when she and Henry should think proper to draw on him, he would advance one hundred more, which was all he could do.”

Lady Palmer seeing it in vain to argue any farther with him, accepted this offer; he left the twenty pounds with her, and took his leave without expressing a wish to see his sister, either then, or before she left the country.

Maria heard the account of her brother's unnatural behaviour with concern; she lamented the loss of his affections more than his want of generosity—but her thoughts were employed on an object nearer her heart—her beloved Charles—that she must leave the country without seeing him, was a severe trial to her fortitude.—She visited every walk about the house and gardens, and shed tears at the remembrance of the happy hours

she and her dear Charles, had past in them.—On her entering the arbour where they had changed their innocent caresses, she fell on her knees—and vowed whatever should be her fate in the world, no power on earth should prevail with her to forget him—and then, after recommending herself to that Power, who was alone able to give her fortitude to support her afflictions, she became more composed.

She regretted leaving the rest of the family; she remembered, with gratitude, the tenderness, protection, and instruction, she had received; “Certainly” said she, “I had no right to expect Lady Palmer was always to maintain me: how thankful ought I to be, for the many advantages I have derived from this family. Wherever I am, I shall love Charles as much as here! and my heart tells me, no change of place or time will alter him.”

With these reflections Maria soon recovered her spirits: and she heard the day fixed for her departure, without any visible sign of uneasiness. Indeed she now appeared the most composed of the three; Miss Palmer was very much dejected, and Lady Palmer felt greatly at parting with the amiable Maria—but she had such reasons, as were, in her opinion, sufficiently urgent to make such a step necessary.

The parting between Maria and her friends was very affecting; they were all in tears. Lady Palmer gave her some very excellent advice, and some rules for her general conduct in the great world. She again hinted that the accounts of her being well settled for life, would afford her the highest satisfaction: this was the only part of her discourse, Maria paid no attention to.

Lady Palmer’s carriage and servants took her to Exeter, where she took the Bath Coach—Maria had just entered her seventeenth year, when she left the Grove—her stature was rather above the middle size, elegantly proportioned, with a regular set of fine features, beautiful auburn hair, and fine blue eyes, she had a peculiar sweetness in her countenance, a sort of tacit resignation, which at once interested and gained the respect of her beholders. She was, as Thompson describes, his Lavinia,

“Thoughtless of beauty, she was beauty’s self!”

Thus was Maria, when she entered that great stage—the world; one of nature’s master-pieces. She had heard of vice, but knew no more of it than the name.

The company in the coach consisted of an elderly respectable looking gentleman, who appeared about sixty years of age, a young officer, and a decent middle-aged woman. After the usual opening for a general conversation in a stage coach, such as a fine morning, the roads are pretty good, this is a good easy coach, and such like, which is a sort of introduction to each other: the old gentleman, addressing himself to Maria, “So Miss, you are going to Bath”—Yes, Sir, “it is a charming gay place, I can assure you—you will, I dare say, be quite delighted with it;” “of that,” said Maria, “I am not so certain—and I confess its being a gay place is in my opinion no recommendation. “It is very singular,” said the Captain, with a great oath, “for a young handsome girl, not to be fond of gaiety; but you will soon, I make no doubt, be of another opinion.”

Maria scarce heard this last speech, her attention being engrossed by a small hut at a little distance from the road, and the coach going slowly up a hill, she had time to examine it minutely.

It appeared so small as not to admit of more than one inhabitant; the door was almost concealed from view by the ivy which had made itself master of the outside, and seemed to be making its way to take possession of the inside also without opposition. She was still more surprised to see working in a little garden before the door, a tall figure of a man, who, notwithstanding the evident neglect of his person, did not appear to be above thirty.

“I do not wonder,” said the old gentleman, who observed Maria’s attention so engaged, “at your curiosity being raised by that strange character; you must know I have made some enquiries about him, but all that I can discover, is, that about twelve months ago he came to this country, a stranger to every one, and after searching about for some time, he at last found this hut, which he immediately purchased. He had, I was told, then very much the appearance of a gentleman, and a very elegant man they say he was, but he has never shaved himself, or dressed his hair, since he took possession of his hut. I was told he employs a boy belonging to one of his poor neighbours to get him provision once a week—and to carry his shirts, which are of the finest cloth, to be washed. One thing I must not forget to observe, it is thought he has changed his name, as his linen is marked W. S. and he calls himself John Moor.”

“He suffers no woman to come near him, and is very shy of any well-dressed man, but converses freely with the lower sort.—There are various conjectures concerning him; some think he is crossed in love.”—Maria sighed— “others are of opinion he is an American Spy”—and others— “that he has killed somebody in a duel, and has taken this method to evade justice.”

“I confess, I think it strange, for a fine young fellow to forsake the world and turn hermit, as one may say, just at a time he should be most attached to it;” “By G—,” said the Captain, “I will venture a good bet he is a highwayman, and belongs to some gang:” “No Sir,” said the Gentleman, “that cannot be, he would soon be found out, as the eyes, I may say, of the whole country are on him.” “I dare say,” said Maria, “he is crossed in love.”

“Perhaps,” said the Gentlewoman, “he is doing penance for some great sin; if so, he will, if he is a good Catholick, profit by the mortifications his director inflicts on him;” this caused a loud laugh from the Captain, and a smile from the rest. “He must be a poor stupid fellow,” said the Captain, “that wants a director at his time of life,” swearing a great oath, “I should like to see an old priest pretend to direct me, to mortify myself in that manner.” The Gentlewoman answered very gravely, “She thought he stood much in need of such a director,” he affected another loud laugh, although it was evident he did not much relish the reply.

Nothing worthy notice happened the remainder of their journey. Maria was met by her brother at the White Lion, who received her with great joy, and conducted her to his house.

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. HARCOURT appeared no less happy to receive Maria, than her husband; she rather exceeded him in expressions of joy, congratulated herself on the acquisition of such an agreeable companion, and assured her, with great appearance of sincerity, that nothing on her part, should be wanting to make her situation comfortable.

Maria, whose heart was ever sensible of the smallest kindness bestowed on her, felt most gratefully for those attentions, the more so perhaps, as she had been so differently treated at her brother Joseph's. Indeed Mrs. Henry Harcourt, was a genteel, well-bred woman, and might be called rather handsome, though not a striking beauty.

Henry exclaimed with great indignation against his brother's unnatural behaviour— "But my dear sister," said he, "never you be uneasy, you will live to see him, or I am very much mistaken, in a state to deserve your pity. Such actions must sometime or other meet their punishment." Maria answered, "she never wished to see it, she only regretted his behaviour had put it out of her power to respect him as she ought."—They resolved to draw immediately for the hundred pounds which he had promised to Lady Palmer.

Maria then consulted her brother, what plan he would advise her to adopt for her support, adding, she had a great aversion to those her brother Joseph had proposed. Both Henry and his wife strongly objected to her forming any other, than that of continuing with them until she settled for life; as with such a person and accomplishments as she possessed, she could not fail of soon having advantageous proposals.

Maria entreated her brother not to form any such expectations, as she was much too young, and inexperienced to think of such a charge, as she considered the duty of a wife and mother required; that if ever she entered into that state, it would be many years hence. Her brother smiled and said, "she would soon be of a very different opinion."

The next day Mr. Harcourt resumed the conversation with his sister, "I have been thinking," said he, "when Joseph sends your hundred pounds, I will, if you please, take the charge of it for you; and whilst it remains in my hands, allow you twenty pounds a year, which will find you in clothes."

Maria thanked him with unfeigned tears for his generous offer, but assured him at the same time, she should not feel happy until she was in some way to provide for herself, without being totally depending on him. "You will, my dear brother," said she, "no doubt soon have a family of your own, who will have an undoubted right to all your earnings; let me not deprive them, and by that means render myself disagreeable, and with reason, to my sister. I have studied, I hope with some success, those accomplishments, which will, I flatter myself, prove useful, and enable me to support myself in a genteel line. I am pretty well acquainted with the principles of Music, French, and Geography; and, if I could get recommended to some genteel family, as Governess, I

flatter myself, by assiduity and attention, I should establish myself—I should then have the happiness to find, I should be no incumbrance to my brother.”

Henry begged she would make herself easy, at least for the present, adding, if she continued in that mind, something might perhaps fall in his way, which would probably suit her. In the mean time he endeavoured to render every thing as agreeable to her as he possibly could.

Mr. Harcourt lived in rather a comfortable, than splendid style; his friends were mostly professional: He had often little musical parties, where Maria was the principal performer. Dr. Curtis, a brother of Mrs. Harcourt, who was just established in great repute at Bath, played the bass, and Mr. Harcourt the violin.

The Doctor was a very handsome, agreeable man, about thirty years of age, much esteemed by every one for his affable and engaging manners: he soon saw in Maria, all he had figured to himself, as requisite to make the marriage state happy.—He discovered that her beauty, which at first surprised him, was by no means her principal recommendation:—that sweetness in her countenance, which he could perceive, proceeded from the innocence of her heart, charmed him; his visits to his sister, which used to be seldom, now became frequent.

This was observed by all but Maria; she could admire the Doctor’s good qualities, and even allow him to have a fine person, beyond which, her heart was too sincerely devoted to her beloved Charles, to bestow a thought.

Mr. Harcourt saw the Doctor’s growing attachment for his sister, with infinite pleasure, and formed to himself the most agreeable presages. He considered that the Doctor’s person and character was such as no woman could object to, and in his profession, there were very few to equal him. How fortunate did he think his sister in making such a conquest.

The Doctor now became a daily visitor, and appeared particular in his attention to Maria; which she, from the innocence of her heart, attributed to the respect she conceived he had for her brother. She therefore received his attentions with an unaffected openness, which he mistook, and considered as assenting to his addresses. He had, as he thought, no obstacle to surmount, no rival to supplant; he should, he vainly imagined, be the first that ever caused her tender bosom to feel the sensation of love; no wonder then he suffered love to take full possession of his heart.

CHAPTER X.

DOCTOR CURTIS communicated to Mr. Harcourt the state of his heart, and begged him, as a friend, to be sincere with him respecting that of his sister. Mr. Harcourt assured him with truth, he had every reason to believe Maria's affections were disengaged, as he was very certain she had no correspondence, or received any visitors but what he knew of. It was concerted between them, that Mr. Harcourt should endeavour to find out how he stood in her opinion, before he should openly declare himself to her.

When Mr. Harcourt saw Maria alone, he began a panegyric on the Doctor, which she artlessly joined in; she allowed him to be all her brother described, and ended with saying, she thought there were very few men so deserving.

"How happy," my dear Maria, said Mr. Harcourt, "you make me, to hear you are so sensible of his merit. He is the only man in the world, I should wish to see you united to; and I have the pleasure to tell you, he adores you: yes, Maria, you will be one of the happiest of women." She blushed, and appeared greatly confused.

"Do not be ashamed to acknowledge an affection for a worthy man. Come," said he, taking her hand, "I hope my sister will prove superior to those little arts of the weaker part of her sex, who take a pleasure in tormenting a man, for no other reason, than because they know he loves them; let me intreat you generously to confess your partiality for the Doctor, and make him happy."

"My dear brother," said she, "let me intreat you, not to press me to what I must refuse. I acknowledge all you can say in behalf of Doctor Curtis, but at the same time, declare, it is not in my power, to make any other return to his passion, than my sincere esteem, and I am extremely sorry, he should ever have felt more for me."

This answer, which was delivered with great earnestness, and appearance of sincerity, greatly surprised and confounded Mr. Harcourt. "Is it possible," said he, "you can seriously determine to refuse Doctor Curtis? Let me beg of you, to consider what you do—allow me, let me intreat you, to give him hopes, that your esteem may in time ripen into love; he is a man who deserves your affections; he will, I know, make you happy; or I would not, believe me, my dear sister—I would not, for the world, wish you to encourage him, come," continued he, "I know you will not refuse me."

Maria burst into tears—"let me beseech you my dearest brother," said she, "If you have any love for me—not to press me to what I cannot, grant. I never can love Doctor Curtis; therefore it would be treating him very ill to give him any such hopes. There is nothing in this world I could refuse you my only protector—my ever dear brother, but the disposal of my affections—that is not in my power to grant."

"Not in your power," said Mr. Harcourt, "are they then already disposed of?" Maria's tears flowed a fresh—"I mean," said she, endeavouring to evade the question, "it

is not in our power to command our affections: they must, so far as I am able to judge, be voluntary: and I am sensible, I never can command mine for him. Indeed I have determined not to marry any one, for some years to come.”

“Suffer me, my dear Maria,” said Mr. Harcourt, “to represent to you, the impropriety of keeping such a resolution; you have, I may say, no protector in this world but myself, and whilst I live, you shall never want one; but the uncertainty of human events are such, as I think, ought not to be disregarded; you have but too much reason to fear them. The melancholy accident of our much loved father, has thrown you unprovided for in the world; and should any thing happen to me, you will then be exposed to such dangers, as I tremble to think of. You are such, as the designing part of mankind pursue as lawful prey. Oh!” continued he, “if you have any value for the peace of mind of a brother who adores you, give him the satisfaction of bestowing you on a worthy man, who will protect your innocence, and make you happy.”

“Oh! my brother,” cried Maria, throwing herself at his feet, and bathing his hand with her tears— “Spare me, let me entreat you, to spare me the painful task of refusing you any thing you can ask; if you knew how it wrings my heart, you would not, I am convinced, you would not, urge me, to what I must still deny you.”

Mr. Harcourt was deeply penetrated with the distress he saw his sister in—he caught her in his arms, and raised her to her feet;— “My dear Maria,” said he, with great tenderness, “I would not, for the world, be the cause of a moment’s uneasiness to you; but I thought it necessary to represent the dangerous situation you may be in; I will not distress you farther at present, you know my wish; think deliberately on it, and you will see I have nothing more at heart than your interest and happiness.” He then embraced her with great affection; “Go,” said he, “to your room, and compose yourself.”

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN Maria reached her room, she threw herself into a chair, and with her hands clasped, exclaimed, "Oh my Charles! could you but see my heart now, you would be convinced how sincerely it is devoted to you. This is indeed a severe trial of my affection; but no earthly power shall prevail, to eradicate thee from my heart. Even all the dangers my kind brother has described, I would brave with the prospect of being at last recompensed with one year—one month of happiness with thee. That would repay me for all my unhappiness."

Her heart exulted in the thought, it revived her dejected spirits; she dreaded, indeed, a second meeting with her brother. His kind and tender concern for her happiness, had penetrated her heart: she feared he would consider her refusal of the Doctor, if she assigned no reason, to proceed from obstinacy; she could not support that idea—"No," said she, "my brother deserves I should act openly with him, as he is gentle and kind hearted—he knows my Charles too, and therefore cannot be surprised at my partiality."

Dr. Curtis met Mr. Harcourt with a countenance full of hope, which was in a moment succeeded by fear. On observing strong marks of disappointment on Mr. Harcourt, "Oh, Harcourt," said he, "I see I have flattered myself too far—but tell me, has your sweet sister really rejected me? if she has, I am an unhappy man indeed!"

Mr. Harcourt then related as faithfully as his memory would permit, the whole of the conversation which had passed between him and Maria, and ended with saying, he still hoped, she would soon see the propriety of making them all happy, by consenting without reluctance to his generous proposals. "Reluctance," repeated the Doctor, "my dear Harcourt, not for the world would I receive your sister's hand, if I was not well assured she gave it willingly. My affections are of such a nature, as not to be satisfied with her barely consenting to be mine. I must be well convinced of her affections. If I have not the good fortune to be such, as she can love, I may be unhappy—I confess I shall be miserable, but I shall not make her so. No, Harcourt, so far from forcing your sister's inclination, you must promise me not even to use your influence to bias them in my favour. Maria says true, affections must be voluntary."

Mr. Harcourt answered, "he hoped there would be no occasion, as his sister was so sensible of his merit; he doubted not, but in a little time, her heart would be inclined to love, which at present she seemed frightened at the very name of." They agreed to trust to time, and the Doctor's assiduity for the accomplishment of what they all so much wished.

Maria joined them at tea. She summoned all her fortitude to appear tranquil; the very idea of even being in company with a man, who she knew wished to make an impression on that heart, which was so sincerely devoted to another, was, in her opinion, a deviation from the sincerity which she had determined to observe. She therefore could no longer feel cheerful and pleased with the Doctor's conversation, which used to be so agreeable to her.

Her heart revolted at the attentions she received from him: they appeared injurious to her love. Her situation became very uncomfortable: his connections in the family entitled him to her politeness, at least, and she could not, without doing violence to her inclinations, appear even easy, in his company. She determined, once more, to solicit her brother to look for a situation for her; being certain, she could no where be more uncomfortable than at present.

When Maria made this request, Mr. Harcourt answered, “He was extremely concerned, after the conversation which had passed between them, she should still persist in such a resolution. I should, Maria,” said he, “be glad to hear what your objections to the Doctor are. He is in my opinion, such as no woman, of the nicest delicacy can object to; unless her affections were previously engaged, which is not the case with you; as I flatter myself, you would have favoured me with your confidence.” Maria blushed. “I should hope,” continued he, “if you had disposed of your heart, it would have been, to an object so deserving, you would have had no occasion to be ashamed to acknowledge it,—but I will not press to know any thing you wish to conceal from me.”—She burst into tears—“My dear brother,” said she, “there is nothing I wish to conceal from you—you are so kind, so good, and affectionate, it distresses me beyond measure—I cannot comply with your proposals: but you shall know the real state of my heart, and then judge yourself, how I could have acted otherwise than I have done by Doctor Curtis.”

She then related, in the simplest manner, all that had passed between her and Charles,—she dwelt on the little attentions he paid her when a child—painted in the strongest colours, the tender sympathy he shewed on the death of her mother, and ended with,—she was sure, Providence must have designed them for each other, as their hearts were united by such imperceptible degrees,—their affections had indeed grown with their years; and she was sure no power on earth could prevent their ending but with their lives. Mr. Harcourt heard this with great concern—He saw the many and probable chances there were against his sister’s happiness; but he saw at the same time, her heart was too deeply engaged to admit him to make any attempt to oppose her inclinations,—he knew any such attempt would only render him disagreeable to his sister, without answering any other purpose: he likewise knew Charles Palmer to be such as she described him, and therefore was not surprized at their mutual attachment—indeed they seemed formed for each other,—what gave him the greatest concern, and which he did not forget to represent to his sister, was: Charles he considered a man of family, living in gay dissipation, as he undoubtedly would, in the East Indies, might forget an engagement made at so early a period: but this had no weight with Maria; she judged of his heart by her own, and therefore had no fears. She felt greatly relieved in having made this discovery to her brother; again repeated her wish of changing her situation, which he now made no very strong objection to.

“There is a lady,” said he, “who I do business for, who has spoken to me about you:—she is a very agreeable woman, and wants a companion. If you are determined to pursue such a plan, I think you cannot be more comfortable than with her.” Maria thanked him, and expressed a desire to be introduced to the lady, which her brother

promised to do the next day. Mr. Harcourt then communicated to Dr. Curtis the insurmountable obstacle to his hopes, and advised him to endeavour to forget his sister. He answered, "that was more than he feared he should for some time, if ever, be master of himself sufficiently to do. The impression was too deep to be soon effaced.—Ah! said he, with a deep sigh, what a happy man is Charles Palmer."

Maria was introduced by her brother to Miss Scot, the lady he had mentioned.—She was struck with the elegance of her person, which was so majestic and commanding, it was impossible to behold her, without being impressed with awe, which the benignity of her countenance soon removed, or joined to a more pleasing sensation, that of respect and love. Maria found these emotions succeed each other so rapidly, that the former was soon lost and she only remained sensible of the latter. Miss Scot appeared delighted with her, and soon settled on the terms for her immediate removal to her house.

Maria had not been long with Miss Scot, before that lady conceived a sincere friendship for her, and testified it by the attention she paid her in all companies wherever they appeared together; unlike the generality of ladies who keep companions, merely to exercise their ill-humour on; she found more pleasure in seeing her happy and chearful; she treated her more as a favourite sister than a dependant.

Maria was so sensible of her happiness she began to fear it would not be permanent—she had experienced a little of the fickleness of fortune, as her being obliged to leave the Grove, at a time, when she found herself most happy; and again the disagreeable adventure at her brother's which had rendered his house unpleasant to her—these made her fear to depend too much on its continuance.

She was now introduced into a higher sphere of life: Miss Scot was visited by most of the nobility who frequented Bath. The first time Maria appeared at the play with her, was at the representation of the School for Scandal: the house was very much crowded, it was with difficulty they got in—In passing through the lobby a gentleman addressed himself to Miss Scot, and begged she would permit him to conduct her to her seat, she readily accepted his assistance, and they soon got to their box. "I fancy, Sir Richard," said Miss Scot, "we can make room for you, here seems to be a seat unoccupied"—he took possession of it, and made one of their party.—The play now beginning, engrossed their attention. Maria was greatly surprized to see it was not sufficient for the whole of the audience—two ladies in the stage box seemed to vie with the performers, and with each other, who should draw the attention of the house most: one of these ladies talked incessantly, and the other seemed to listen, but it was evident with no other motive than to exercise certain airs, which she fancied set off her person to advantage.

"I see," said Miss Scot to the gentleman, "Mrs. Prattle and Miss Andrews are still inseparable companions, which I am rather surprized at, as they are such very different characters." "That," said he "is the very reason of their intimacy; If they were of similar dispositions, they would never be seen together, for Mrs. Prattle is satisfied to let Miss Andrews pass for a very fine woman if she will not attempt to be clever, and Miss

Andrews is very happy to compromise the matter, as she thinks her person quite sufficient without rivaling her friend." Another act of the play now beginning put an end to their remarks. Maria was very much entertained with the performance; she was particularly struck with the two lovers, Charles and Maria, "how strange," thought she—"but how much happier am I than she, my Charles has all the good qualities of her lover, without his vices."

After the performance, the gentleman handed them to their chairs, and with a respectful bow, wished them a good night.— "Well, my dear," said Miss Scot, when they got home, "how do you like Sir Richard Harlow?—but you scarce looked at him—tell me sincerely, was not that a little artifice in you, to give him an opportunity of looking more at you? I can assure you, if it was, it had the desired effect, for his eyes were never off you, and he has begged my permission to call in the morning, to be introduced to you,—what do you think of that—if you should have made a conquest of the young Baronet,—what a delightful thing that would be."

Maria answered, She had not the vanity to suppose any such a thing, but if it was the case, so far from being pleased at such an event, it would give her great uneasiness, as she did not wish to attract the notice of any one.

"Come, come," said Miss Scot, "I think that is going a little too far; I have heard, indeed, you refused Doctor Curtis, which surprized me exceedingly, but should Sir Richard Harlow offer, I can scarce believe you would be quite so mad as to serve him the same—He has three thousand a year, my dear, in his own possession—He was the only son of the late Sir Richard Harlow of Nottinghamshire, who has been dead about two years—he is lately returned from his travels and taken possession of his estates—he has, as you must have observed, a fine person, and his morals are as good, I fancy, as most of his neighbours—I have not heard he is given to any particular vice—The ladies are all mad after him, I can assure you: so you see the conquest, if you have really made it, is not an inconsiderable one." Maria answered, she had no ambition to dispute the conquest with those ladies, who from their high rank were better entitled to it; for her part, she did not aspire so high. "But," said Miss Scot, "if Fortune should, without looking for, throw such favors in your way, I see no reason why you should refuse to accept her bounty." "It will be time enough for me to refuse when I have the offer," said Maria, "so if you please, we will change the subject. I am impatient to know who those two ladies in the stage-box were, who attracted the eyes, and I may say ears of the whole house."

"That was Mrs. Prattle and Miss Andrews," said Miss Scot, "two ladies very much in fashion at present; one for her great abilities, and the other for her beauty." "Tell me," said Maria, "if her abilities are really so great, as I confess I rather doubt it from the loudness of her vociferation in public."—"That you shall have an opportunity of judging of yourself," said Miss Scot, "they will be here on Tuesday at my rout, I will introduce you to them; I will not give you my opinion of them, until I have heard your's, as your observations are generally drawn from Nature, I will have them genuine."

“But I do not think it fair,” said Maria, “to give an opinion of a person at first sight, it requires time and intimacy to know a character thoroughly.” “I agree with you,” said Miss Scot, “in most cases, but not the present; you will know these ladies as well in one hour, as in years.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE next morning, before the ladies had well finished their breakfast, a loud knocking at the door announced Sir Richard Harlow. Miss Scot immediately introduced him to Maria. He enquired anxiously if they had caught no cold the preceding evening, and thanked his good fortune for being so lucky as to join them. The conversation then turned on the new play and the performers: "You seemed to pay particular attention to the piece, Miss Harcourt," said he, "will you favor me with your opinion of it, or which part you prefer." Maria answered, "so far as she was able to judge, it was altogether excellent, but she could not but acknowledge, she was most pleased with the character of Maria, as the other ladies of the piece were entirely without sentiment." Sir Richard applauded the justness and delicacy of her taste.

He then enquired if the ladies should be at the ball that night. Miss Scot answered, "she intended it,"—he looked at Maria, who said she should not go; he looked disappointed. "I think," said Miss Scot, "You had better go, Miss Harcourt," she replied, it was not in her power, as she was engaged at her brother's. He talked on different subjects as long as he could, without being particular, and then took his leave, saying, "He should have the pleasure of seeing them on Tuesday, as he had the honour of a card."

"Why," said Miss Scot, "you foolish girl, did you not say you would be at the ball, I am certain he came on purpose to engage you to dance with him."

"You know, Madam," said Maria, "I wish to go as little into public as possible, particularly to balls. I think, in my dependent state, it would be by no means prudent for me to assume the fine lady, and be dancing with Sir Richard Harlow." "I fancy," said Miss Scot, "you will not long be in a state of dependance." Maria took no notice of this speech. In the evening, Miss Scot went to the ball, attended by her uncle, Mr. Worthy, who was at that time at Bath, and Maria to visit her brother. She found him still kind and affectionate, but she saw, with concern, Mrs. Harcourt, although she behaved with politeness, did not receive her with the same cordiality as she hoped and expected. Indeed, Mrs. Harcourt considered Maria's refusal of her brother as a sort of an affront to her family: she was one of those women who know very little of what is meant by fine feelings; she possessed none of them herself, and therefore could form no idea of their influence—Maria thought it most prudent not to notice this change, as she saw Mrs. Harcourt endeavour to conceal it from her husband—she was extremely sorry to hear from her brother, that Doctor Curtis was in a very dejected state. She took her leave of them about eleven o'clock, and got home just before Miss Scot returned from the rooms. "Well, Maria," said she, as soon as she came in, "it is just as I wished, as sure as you are alive, you have fairly conquered the Baronet—He was at the ball, but quite out of spirits; he took an opportunity of joining me, and talked of nothing but you; enquired particularly about you, and when I related your little history, he really sighed, and said you was a sweet girl, and would be an ornament to any family:—so I will, by way of accustoming you to your new honors, ask your ladyship if you have supped, or if you will do me the honor of taking a bit with me.—You do not seem to rejoice at your good fortune; well

really this is too much, I may venture to say if I had communicated the same to any single lady in the rooms, she would have thanked me, almost on her knees, and have had very little sleep to night for thinking on her good fortune. Come Maria, I shall begin to suspect you of insincerity, if you do not freely confess you are pleased with this piece of intelligence.” “I should,” said Maria, “be guilty of it indeed, if I said I was. But I am willing to believe, Sir Richard may have talked in the manner you describe, with no other motive, than merely to satisfy his curiosity; therefore, it would be absurd to make any serious reflections on it.”

“Well,” said Miss Scot, “you are right not to be too sanguine—but if I have any judgement in those matters, and I think I have a little, I may venture to prepare to accompany your ladyship to Nottinghamshire.” Maria felt greatly relieved by the entrance of a servant, with Miss Scot’s supper.

CHAPTER XIII.

NOTHING worthy notice past until Tuesday, when they were all busy preparing for the rout. Mrs. Prattle and Miss Andrews were among the first of the company. Miss Scot introduced them to Maria. "I had the pleasure," said Miss Andrews, addressing herself to Maria, "of seeing you at the play the other night: Was not you quite delighted? It is a most charming thing, it is not?"—Before Maria could make any reply, she went on,— "Did Sir Richard Harlow go in your party?" "No," answered Maria, "he joined Miss Scot by chance." "You were very fortunate," said she, "Is not he a charming man? Will he be here to night?" "Yes."— "La, that is delightful." "You look beautiful, Miss Harcourt, what a fright I am," looking in the glass, "I wish I had not put on this frightful dress, how yellow it makes me look, don't you think it does?"

Maria saw she was very well satisfied with herself, and only wanted to have the pleasure of hearing herself admired:—she answered coolly, she did not perceive it, but as she had only the honor of knowing her then for the first time, she could be no judge. "Oh," said she, "I look horrid." She turned from Maria to some ladies, who just then entered the room, and repeated the same lamentable story of her frightful dress and yellow looks; but they soon put her in conceit with herself, by assuring her she never looked to more advantage, and that her dress was beautiful—another view of herself in the glass, put her in perfect good humour.

The rooms being pretty full, Miss Scot began to settle the card tables. "You will have the goodness, Miss Harcourt," said she, "to entertain those ladies who are not engaged at cards, with a tune on the harpsichord." Maria, who had never exhibited before such a large party felt a little confused; however, she sat down, and after playing two or three airs, she went on with great ease. Just as she had finished a very pathetic air, which she had been singing, a deep sigh from behind her chair caused her to look round—she was greatly confused on seeing Sir Richard Harlow.

"I could not," said he, "be so cruel to myself and the rest of the company, as to interrupt you, Miss Harcourt, to pay my respects to you before." He then politely, and with great tenderness, enquired after her health. "You are very cruel, or very charitable, I know not which, to seclude yourself from the public; I have in vain looked for you every where, but find you are unlike the generality of your sex, only to be found at home." "You must not, Sir Richard," said Miss Andrews, before Maria could make any reply, "deprive us the pleasure of hearing Miss Harcourt sing—Come, Miss Harcourt, do favour us with another song." Maria obeyed.

Sir Richard kept close to her, much to the mortification of Miss Andrews, who used every method, without effect, to get him to take notice of her. Miss Scot addressed him, and asked if he would wish to play a rubber. "If you can do without me," said he, "I would wish to be excused, as I confess I am much more agreeably entertained."—She excused him, and he continued his station.

After Maria had played her favourite airs over, she offered her seat to a lady who stood by, and seemed to be a judge of music. She accepted it, and performed with great taste and judgement.

“I wonder,” said Miss Andrews, in a loud whisper— “Where Miss Harcourt buys her rouge?”— “At Jolly’s, Ma’am,” said Maria. “By the Lord,” exclaimed an Irish gentleman, who heard both the whisper and reply, “that same Jolly sells the only rouge in the world, that ever had, or ever will have, the power of animation; for I’ll swear, I have seen it turn high and low coloured about a dozen times to night:

“—————Her pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheek, and so distinctly wrought,
That one would almost say, her very body thought.”

“Faith, I should like to purchase a few boxes, to make a present of to some ladies of my acquaintance, who go to the wrong shop.”

By this time the eyes of the whole room were on Maria and the Gentleman—Her face was perfect scarlet;— “there is rouge for you, ladies,” said he, “long life to that said Jolly, who has brought it to such perfection.” “No,” said Sir Richard Harlow, “Miss Harcourt wants no assistance from art, Nature has been more than sufficiently bountiful to her.”

Miss Andrews left her seat, and walked to the next room. “I vow and protest,” said Mrs. Prattle, as she came from the other room, “it requires the patience of Penelope, to play such cards as I have held to night.” “Have you had a bad run, Madam,” said Sir Richard, “Run, Sir Richard—If Socrates had been a card-player, and held such cards, he would never have kept his temper.” “I think,” said the Irish Gentleman, “begging your pardon, Madam, that after he shewed himself proof against a scolding woman, he might defy the Devil, and all the cards in the universe.”

“I wish,” said Mrs. Prattle, “he had tried; I am very much inclined to believe, they would have overset all his philosophy. I think I have as much command of my temper, as most people, and I confess I am fairly ruffled.” “Entreat one of those ladies,” said he, “to play a soft air, and if that will not set you to rights, you must be very much ruffled indeed.” “O, no,” said she, “I am too much out of tune, to relish harmony; I am afraid it would not have the same effect as the Pitch-pipe Julius Caesar made his slave use, when he spoke too high, to turn his voice to a proper key.” “I never understood,” said Mr. Worthy, “Julius Caesar ever stood in need of such a pipe.” “O, yes, Sir, he did.” The Gentlemen looked at each other with a sort of smile, at her ignorance, and the ladies with surprise, at her great learning. She run on at a great rate, brought in the ancients, of whom she only knew the names, and ascribed indiscriminately, the actions of one to the other.— In talking of eloquence, she was very unfortunate. “Cicero,” said she, “acquired his by dint of perseverance, he had originally an impediment in his speech, which obliged him to labour hard to get the better of, he used to speak with pebbles in his mouth.” “I fancy, Madam,” said Maria, “you mean Demosthenes, the Grecian; he was obliged to use that

method, but I believe Cicero had never any occasion.” “O! no, Miss,” said she, “you’ll find I am right, it was Cicero.” “Certainly no, Madam,” said Mr. Worthy, “it was Demosthenes, Cicero had never any occasion.” “Bless me,” said she, “How came I to be mistaken?” The ladies looked surprised, that Mrs. Prattle should be mistaken, and that Maria should be able to set her right. Maria felt a little confused; in a moment it occurred to her, she had said too much—she dreaded the imputation of affecting to be learned, and as there were so many gentlemen present, she considered it would have looked better, if some of them had set Mrs. Prattle right: she determined in future to be more cautious.

This did not check Mrs. Prattle, she went on, spoke of all the new Publications and with great confidence pointed out their faults and perfections.

“By St. Patrick, Madam,” said the Irish Gentleman, “I begin to be as much out of tune as you were, when you left the card tables; and if I cannot prevail on this lady,” to Maria, “to relieve me with the melody of her sweet voice, I am afraid I shall get so low, it will not be in the power of my slaves pitch-pipe to raise me to a proper key.” Maria then went to the harpsichord, and played until most of the company went away.

Sir Richard Harlow staid till the last, and then enquired if the ladies would be at the next dress ball. Miss Scot resolved to do Maria a little violence; thinking it would be to her advantage, answered, “Yes. Miss Harcourt,” said she, “seldom goes, but she has been so obliging as to promise to accompany me on Friday.” Maria looked extremely confused. “May I,” said Sir Richard, “hope for the honour of your hand Miss Harcourt.”— “You know, my dear,” said Miss Scot, “you are not engaged.” She said she did not intend to dance. “In that,” said Sir Richard, “you shall do as you please, only allow me the honour of attending you.” She gave a silent assent, and he wished them a good night. “I did not think,” said Maria, “you could have been guilty of such a piece of cruelty.”— “Cruelty,” replied Miss Scot, “I know the time when I should have been very much obliged to any friend, who would have had the good-nature to have practised the same sort of cruelty on me. I see I must force you to be happy—they then parted for the night.”

CHAPTER XIV.

“WELL,” said Miss Scot, the next morning at breakfast, “now tell me what is your opinion of the two ladies?”— “You expect a sincere one, I suppose?”— “certainly”— “why, then, sincerely, I would prefer real ignorance to the one, and ugliness to the other—Miss Andrews is undoubtedly, a very beautiful woman, she has one of the finest faces I ever saw; but she is, in my opinion, one of those beauties which excite admiration more than love: her face, though perfect, has nothing interesting in it—she seems entirely without sensibility, but what renders her disagreeable is, although she is quite certain, she is beautiful, she is not satisfied if she is not constantly put in mind of it—she courts admiration from both men and women.”— “So much for Miss Andrews,” said Miss Scot, smiling, “now for Mrs. Prattle, if you please.” “She has just learning enough to make her ridiculous—she has taken enough of the waters to intoxicate her poor weak head, but has unluckily neglected to drink again to sober herself—she talks disgustingly of the ancients, and her opinion of the moderns, I am convinced, she takes from the Monthly Review, and gives it as her own; what surprizes me is, how she can possibly pass for sensible.”

“I will tell you,” said Miss Scot, “how it is: most of the ladies of Mrs. Prattle’s acquaintance never read any thing, they are easily imposed on, they take all she says for granted, and by that means save themselves the trouble of study,—the opinions which Mrs. Prattle takes, as you observe, from the Monthly Review, they take from her, and by that means, most of her acquaintance become very intelligent. Those who think her clever, always tell her so, and those who have understanding enough to see her as she really is, are content to laugh at her, without taking the trouble of setting her right.—She married early in life, and had the misfortune to match with a professed wit; you may conclude they did not long agree—they were continually at variance which was most entitled to pre-eminence; they had not prudence enough to reserve their disputes for their private hours, but were constantly the butt of each other in all companies wherever they appeared together; this soon brought on a mutual aversion, and there remained but one thing they could agree in, which was—a separation—that soon took place.—Mr. Prattle soon found all women were not so insensible to his great abilities as his wife—Mrs. M——, who he took off the stage, consoles him for his disappointment of conjugal happiness; and Mrs. Prattle consoles herself with lamenting his want of taste and judgement.”

Maria’s mind was not easy; the thoughts of having consented to Sir Richard Harlow’s accompanying her to the ball, although she was in some measure forced to give it, shocked her. She regretted her want of resolution to contradict Miss Scot; yet she still hoped he meant nothing, and if that was the case, how absurd it would appear in her to shun him. “No,” said she to herself, “it would be ridiculous for me to appear distant and reserved with a man, who certainly can have no design to trouble me with his addresses. His wishing to dance with me, implies nothing more than a wish to dance, he must dance with some-body.” These reasonings gave her some ease; she determined to give Sir Richard no reason to suppose, from her behaviour, that she hoped or feared any thing

from him.

“But you intend to dance to night,” said Miss Scot, “don’t you Maria.” “I should wish not,” said she; “but I am afraid my declining may deprive Sir Richard the pleasure of dancing, and I should be very sorry to do that, as he has had the politeness of choosing me for a partner.” “Now that is talking like a rational girl,” said Miss Scot, “I begin to have some hopes of you.—I advise you seriously not to neglect to avail yourself of this opportunity, which I think offers of making your fortune; Sir Richard is a man of some consequence, therefore is little accustomed to refusals. He would feel his pride hurt, from any dislike to his person, knowing his fortune to be such, as to tempt almost any woman.” “I assure you, my dear,” continued she, “It is from friendship alone, I am induced to give my advice.”

Maria felt greatly alarmed when she found Miss Scot seriously thought Sir Richard had some intentions: “My dear Madam,” said she, “tell me sincerely, do you think he has any other motive for asking me to dance with him than mere politeness?” “Why—yes,” “and do you think, my accepting, any ways implies an encouragement to him to make proposals; for I confess, I am rather unacquainted with the etiquette of those matters?” “Why, no,” said Miss Scot, “it does not absolutely imply anything, unless, indeed, he had been more particular—but why do you ask?” “because” said Maria, “I would not for the world, go, if it had.” “Can you be serious? is it possible you should determine to discourage his addresses, should he be inclined to make them?”

“Why, my dear madam,” said Maria, “should you be surprized? what advantage has Sir Richard Harlow over Doctor Curtis, besides fortune, which has no weight with me, and if I had resolution to withstand the earnest entreaties of a beloved brother, who I knew had nothing more at heart than my interest and happiness; what great difficulty will there be in refusing Sir Richard Harlow?” “than I must conclude your affections are engaged,” said Miss Scot,— “does that follow?” said Maria, blushing,—“may not I have an aversion to matrimony?” “Oh, no,” “but I really have determined not to marry for some years to come, if ever.” “Then you must have some very substantial reasons, which I am unacquainted with,” said Miss Scot.

“Allow me, Madam,” said Maria, “to ask, if it may not be from choice? As I am almost certain there are instances of ladies giving the preference to a single state, and I cannot but observe, you are one.” “You are exceedingly mistaken,” said Miss Scot, “if you think so.” “Do not from my being single infer, that I have an aversion to the marriage state, for I freely declare, I have the highest opinion of it, though I fear” with a deep sigh, “I shall never experience its blessings. I see,” continued she, “I have raised your curiosity, you shall hear the particulars of my story some morning, when we are at leisure, for it will take up some time to relate: Although you do not honour me with your confidence, I will not withhold mine from you.” Maria felt this reproach very sensibly: “Let me entreat you, my dear Madam,” said she, “not to misconstrue my silence, on any of the little incidents of my life. If I have omitted to relate them, believe me it has not proceeded from want of confidence, but from an idea they were too trifling to merit your attention.”— “Well,” said Miss Scot, “I forgive you the past, but if in future, you suppose

I can be indifferent to any thing which concerns either your interest or happiness, I assure you you wrong the friendship I have conceived for you."

Maria's heart felt gratefully sensible of this kindness: she thanked Miss Scot in the warmest terms for such goodness, and then related much in the same manner she had done to her brother, the mutual attachment which subsisted between her and Charles Palmer. Miss Scot paid great attention to her simple narrative, which so clearly accounted for her conduct: Maria finished with saying, "Now, my dear Madam, let me entreat you, not to suffer me, through inadvertency, to give Sir Richard Harlow cause to think I should be pleased with his addresses." "You will not," said Miss Scot, "I fancy easily persuade him to think otherwise;—but how are you sure your Charles, for whom you make such a sacrifice, will reward you for such constancy?" Maria answered, she had no fears on that head, she knew their hearts were united by such irresoluble ties, as neither time nor absence could effect. "But," said Miss Scot, "should he go to India without seeing you and renewing his assurances of constancy, I think you would be to blame to think more of him." "He may be so circumstanced as not to have it in his power;" said Maria, "but that should have no effect on me—Indeed if I had, which I am certain I never shall, reason to think he had forgot me, I should still continue my affection for him, pure and unvariable.—I never knew what it was to have a heart, it was so early disposed of to him, and his it shall remain until it ceases to beat." "Do not you think that a little romantic?" said Miss Scot, "I do not know," said Maria, "but I am sure it is sincere." "I sincerely hope you will be rewarded as you deserve," said Miss Scot: they then parted to dress for the Ball.

Sir Richard was early in his attendance; he was elegantly dressed, and in high spirits. Maria's dress was simply elegant, which set off the beauty of her person to great advantage—Sir Richard appeared delighted—he gazed on her with rapture, which he no longer endeavoured to conceal.

As this was the first time of Maria's appearing at the rooms, she was very much struck with their elegance, and the brilliancy of the company; but her heart would not allow her to feel any enjoyment—She shuddered at the idea of being there by the means of Sir Richard Harlow,—her spirits were depressed—she sighed often, which he attributed to a wrong cause. Miss Scot and Sir Richard danced a minuet, which they performed to the admiration of all the company; the gracefulness and dignity of her person appeared to such advantage as even to surprize Maria. "How delightfully Sir Richard dances! what an elegant man he is! do not you think he is? Miss Harcourt," said Miss Andrews, addressing herself to Maria, "He is very well," said Maria, "but I think Miss Scot the most elegant woman I ever saw"— "Is she engaged to dance with Sir Richard in the country dances?"— "No, Miss Scot is to dance with Lord D. her brother-in-law."— "Why, did not Sir Richard attend her to the rooms?"— "Yes"— "Perhaps he is to dance with you?"— "I am not sure," said Maria, "whether I shall dance at all."— "But if you do, shall you dance with him?"— "Yes, I believe so."—She looked chagrined, but kept close to Maria, in hopes of shewing herself to Sir Richard; who, as soon as the minuet ended, handed Miss Scot to her seat; and then taking Maria's hand, respectfully pressed her to do him the honour of only one dance. She answered, "she

should be extremely sorry to prevent him from dancing; but it would be much more agreeable to her, if he would choose another partner, and she would sit with Mr. Worthy, and look on." "No," said he, "I have no inclination to inflict such a punishment as that on myself: I should have more pleasure in being permitted to attend you, than I could possibly have in dancing with any other woman in the rooms."—Miss Andrews hearing this, and being convinced she only lost time in attempting to gain Sir Richard's attention, turned away to join her own party.

"I am afraid, Madam," said Sir Richard, addressing himself to Miss Scot, "you have more influence with Miss Harcourt than I have—will you have the goodness to use it for me? she will I am sure refuse you nothing—and it would afford me infinite pleasure to go down one dance with her." "O! she will I know," said Miss Scot.

Maria thought there could be no more in dancing than in sitting still; as she saw it was impossible to avoid Sir Richard, gave him her hand, and they took their places. Sir Richard and his lovely partner soon drew the attention of the company.— "What an elegant man!" said the ladies, and "What a beautiful girl," said the gentlemen. "Who is that sweet girl?" asked a gentleman, addressing himself to Miss Andrews, "I saw you speaking to her.— "La," said she, "what a fuss is made about that girl, I do not see she is so handsome."—The gentleman smiled. "But you do not answer my question, as to who she is." "Why, she is some poor orphan, whom Miss Scot has taken out of charity, a sister of her attorney. "I am surprised at her bringing her into public"—and turned away scornfully.— "It is a very extraordinary circumstance," said the gentleman, turning to Mr. Worthy, (who stood by) "that you cannot affront a fine woman more than by praising another; I think, if they would practice a little disguise, in that particular, it would give them a more amiable appearance, at least; but I am happy," continued he, "there are exceptions to this, I believe, too general a rule; and your niece, much to her honour, is one. It would have been a great pity for so beautiful a girl to have remained in obscurity: she will, I make no doubt, make some noise now she appears in public." "I fancy," said Mr. Worthy, "that will not be often, as it was with great difficulty she was prevailed on to appear to night." "That is rather singular," said he, "for one of her years, with so much beauty." "Her beauty," said Mr. Worthy, "is the least of her valuable qualities;—indeed, she does not seem sensible of having any. She is one of the most amiable girls I ever knew; and I hope she will be as happy as she deserves." "Sir Richard pays her great attention," said the gentleman, "she will be a lucky lass if she can make a conquest there." "In my opinion," said Mr. Worthy, "he will be lucky if he succeeds with her." "He has nothing to fear," said the other. "I would venture a good bet, there are not two single women in the rooms who would refuse him." "I am not certain of that," said Mr. Worthy.

Sir Richard having finished the first dance, now returned with Maria to her seat.— "Ah!" said he, "Shirley, how happens it you are not dancing?" "Faith, Sir Richard," said he, "I have had a great deal more pleasure in admiring your partner than I could have had in dancing myself.—You are in luck;—but I do not wonder at it.—You have the choice of the Bath beauties—and you have shewn great taste to-night." Sir Richard answered, "He was so sensible of his happiness, he would not exchange it with

e'er a gentleman in the rooms." Miss Scot now joined them, and the conversation became general.

Mr. Shirley entreated Mr. Worthy to introduce him to the ladies; which he did, and he took his tea with them.

Maria attracted so much notice, the gentlemen gathered about them, and a continual enquiry of, who is she? and, what a sweet girl! She grew so extremely embarrassed, that when Sir Richard solicited her to favour him with another dance, she readily consented, to avoid the gaze of some impertinent fops, who took a pleasure in putting her out of countenance, and continued dancing until Miss Scot expressed a desire of leaving the rooms. Lord D. pressed them to go home with him, to sup. As Miss Scot had not seen her sister that day, she agreed to go. He then gave Sir Richard an invitation, which he accepted, and they all went in Lord D's carriage. Maria had never seen Lady D. She having been confined with a slight indisposition, had not visited her sister since she had been with her.

She found her much such a woman as Miss Scot, elegant and affable. Lady D. though she was prepared, by her uncle's account of Maria, to expect to see nothing but sweetness and a lovely person, appeared surprized, and confessed to her sister, that she surpassed all which her imagination could form. She paid her particular attention, and at parting said, "I cannot allow you, Amelia; to keep Miss Harcourt to yourself; you must be content to share her with me. I shall be satisfied to have her whenever you are engaged, and she does not accompany you. I hear she has a dislike to going much into company, and as I go very little, she cannot oblige me more, than to bestow on me as large a portion of her time as she can spare."

Maria thanked Lady D. and promised to avail herself of her kind invitation. "Upon my word, ladies," said Sir Richard, "you seem inclined to make a very pretty monopoly.—I could not have suspected you of so much cruelty. What will become of Miss Harcourt's other friends, if she is thus to be shared, as you call it, between you two? I think her too valuable to be shared, and too great a treasure for any one mortal to possess."

These profusions of compliments confused Maria exceedingly, which Miss Scot perceiving, relieved her, by hastening to her carriage.

CHAPTER XV.

“HOW do you like the rooms, Maria?” said Miss Scot. She answered, “They were elegant, beyond her conception! and if she was a woman of fashion, she should take great pleasure in frequenting them; but as it was, she should never go again.” “What is your objection?” said Miss Scot. “I am sure you had your share of admiration; but I will do you the justice to say, you have less vanity than any girl of your age, I ever knew.” “You may be mistaken,” said Maria. “I am not without my failings; and if it is one, to feel a pleasure in being admired, I confess, I have that. But it is not public admiration which gives it; yet if it is a weakness to wish for the approbation of the deserving, those, whose superior understanding, will not, I know, allow them to judge from a fine outside; that weakness is mine. I was more flattered to night by the attention I received from Lady D. than Miss Andrews could be at hearing herself admired by the whole of the company at the rooms, and you must allow that is saying a great deal.”

“Upon my word,” said Miss Scot, “you pay a very handsome compliment to those whom you wish to make yourself agreeable to: you are an unaccountable girl, that is certain.—So good night.”

The next morning, soon after breakfast, they had a visit from Sir Richard Harlow. After the usual compliments, and enquiries, he addressed himself to Maria, and said, “I hope, Miss Harcourt, now you have once been so good-natured as to honour the rooms with your appearance, we need not despair of having that pleasure repeated. But you will please to remember, that it is on condition you do me the same honour; for to see your hand in the possession of another, if only for a few hours, would be too great a mortification for me to support.” Maria thought it best not to notice this speech; and only answered coolly, “She did not intend to frequent the rooms. That she was induced, partly by curiosity, and partly by the entreaties of Miss Scot, just to go once; but she believed she should never go a second time.” “I see,” said he, gaily, “I must have recourse to my old stratagem, which assists me on those occasions, and petition Miss Scot to use her influence. May I hope, Madam, for your interest.” Miss Scot, knowing the state of Maria’s heart, only answered, that “Miss Harcourt must use her own will in those matters; she would by no means wish her to do any thing contrary to her inclination.” He looked chagrined. He then enquired if they would be at the play that night? and was answered, No. He lengthened his visit as long as he could, and then took his leave, saying, “He would, with Miss Scot’s permission, do himself the honour of paying them another visit soon.”—He went away dejected.

Lord D. and Mr. Worthy dined with them, and were to accompany Miss Scot to a party in the evening. After dinner, “I have,” said Lord D., “a petition to present to you, Miss Harcourt, from Lady D., praying, if you are not engaged, you will have the goodness to pass the evening with her,—we will set you down.” Maria answered, “Lady D. did her a great deal of honor,” and accepted the invitation.

Lady D. and Maria were equally pleased with each other on a nearer intimacy; Maria entertained her ladyship with some little airs on the harpsichord, after which they entered freely into conversation. Lady D. was a woman, with great natural abilities, which she had improved by studying the best authors, both ancient and modern. She was greatly surprized to find Maria pretty well acquainted with both. She was so pleased with her society that she expressed great regret when Miss Scot returned to take her home, repeated her request that she would give her as much of her company as she could possibly spare, which she promised, and then wished her a good night.

Maria's situation was now so agreeable, she had nothing even to wish for—nothing but the uncertainty of the state of her beloved Charles, gave her uneasiness; she knew the time drew near, which was fixed for his leaving England: what surprized her was, that in all the letters she received from his sister, who kept a correspondence with her; his name was never once mentioned.

One morning, Miss Scot went out without her, to pay some visits. She had just taken up Cecilia, and was deeply engaged in a very pathetic scene, when a knock at the door took her attention. A servant entered, saying, "A gentleman enquires for Miss Harcourt." Before Maria could ask his name, Charles Palmer entered the room. "Oh! my Charles," cried she, letting fall the book, and nearly falling herself. "My ever dear Maria," exclaimed he, catching her in his arms, "do I once more see you? Do I once more embrace you?—Oh, my love! How!" said she, a little recovering her surprize, "to what miracle am I indebted for this unexpected happiness? I fear it will be attended with great inconvenience to you." "What inconvenience, my beloved, dearest girl!" said he, "can there be, that the sight of you will not compensate. Could you suppose I could leave England without seeing you?—No!—no power on earth should have forced me to it. If my Maria knew what I have suffered, on her account, she would indeed pity me," "Suffered on my account—God forbid!"—"In the first place," continued he, "you may guess my surprize when I returned from Oxford and did not see you, for I had never been made acquainted with your leaving the Grove,—I could not help enquiring of my mother where you were: she said you was at Bath with your brother, and continued she, 'I expect every day to hear she is settled for life: her brother writes me word, she has received the addresses of Dr. Curtis, a very amiable man; and he hopes she will soon make him happy.' Conceive, my love, my confusion at hearing this, she went on, without paying any attention to me, saying, there was nothing in the world would give her more pleasure than to hear you were well married. I could scarce contain myself to hear her out. I went immediately to my room, to consider what I should do.—I could think of nothing but to set out immediately for Bath, to prevent, if possible, your being for ever separated from me. I was certain some means had been used to force you to such a compliance—I feared you might want resolution to withstand the entreaties of your brother. I thought I had no time to lose, and was actually preparing to leave the Grove that night. When I saw the postman at the gate—I trembled.—Ah! said I, it is too late—I am undone;—this is a letter from Mr. Harcourt, to give my mother the intelligence she so much wishes for, and which will inevitably prove the utter destruction of her son.

“I flew to the parlour, more dead than alive to hear the dreadful tidings.—I watched my mother’s countenance whilst she read the letter, which was indeed from your brother, and found myself a little relieved, by observing on it some marks of disappointment. When she had read it, she exclaimed, with displeasure, ‘What can possess the foolish girl, she must sure be mad!’ I now recovered myself sufficiently to enquire if you had refused the gentleman proposed by your brother? ‘Yes,’ said she, with a look of anger, ‘she has; and it seems has assigned no reason, but a determined resolution not to marry for some years to come.’

“She was going on; but I had heard enough. I returned to my room with very different emotions from those I had when I left it. Oh, my Maria! you cannot possibly form an idea of what I felt from the sudden transition of the deepest despair to the very height of my wishes. I fell on my knees, and returned thanks to that Almighty Power, who had supported you with fortitude sufficient to act with such spirit. I was even thankful for the event which had proved your steadiness.—Your love I never doubted.—I shall now go happy to India; having this assurance of your being proof against all solicitations.

“I could now rest satisfied without seeing you until I left the Grove, to set out for London; from thence I am to embark for India. I took leave of my mother and sister yesterday, and they supposed I should take post at Exeter for London, but I took the Bath road. I soon found your brother, who behaved kinder than I expected, and offered to send for you; but my impatience to see you would not brook that delay.

“It is but just,” said he, “my Maria should have a companion in my absence, one whom she may look at with pleasure—press to her heart, and love.”—She looked surprized.—“I beg,” continued he, “you will take one of my choosing.”—On which, he presented a miniture of himself.—She took the little likeness—kissed it, and placed it in her bosom;—the tear starting in her eyes,—she was incapable of speech. Charles felt her distress; caught her again in his arms. “Oh, my beloved dear girl!” said he, “how do I long for the time when I shall have it in my power to reward you as you deserve for such goodness; but the time will—it must come.—My stay shall be no longer, than to acquire a sufficiency to support you in the style you ought to appear in. Then your Charles will be, indeed, happy. Oh, my Maria! How constant, how great, will be my bliss, when I have no other care than that of blessing you!” He ceased to speak.—Maria pressed his hand to her heart.—They continued silent some minutes.—Their silence was of that communicative nature, which spoke a language not to be expressed by words.—They understood each other.—How long they might have continued conversing in this way cannot be ascertained, had not a knock at the door interrupted them. “It is Miss Scot,” said Maria. Miss Scot entered the room. “Oh, my dear Madam!” said Maria, taking her hand, and pressing it, “give me leave to introduce Cha—a—Mr. Palmer.”—Miss Scot smiled.—“This is Mr. Palmer, Miss Scot.” She received him with her usual gracefulness.

Charles felt the same emotions as Maria had experienced at the first sight of Miss Scot, which was awe, succeeded by respect.

She was not less struck with his person. He was, at this time, not eighteen. His stature above the middle size, elegantly proportioned. His countenance manly and engaging. His eyes spoke the feelings of his heart, which was generous and sincere. She was no longer surprised at the mutual attachment which subsisted between him and Maria; on the contrary, she saw it would have been next to impossible for two such, to see, and converse freely with each other, almost from their infancy, without forming such an attachment. She became interested in their happiness, and determined within herself to do all in her power to promote it. She gave Charles a polite invitation to stay to dinner, which he readily accepted.

CHAPTER XVI.

AFTER dinner, Charles addressing himself to Miss Scot, said, "I know not, Madam, whether Maria has made you acquainted with the particulars of our story or not; but I think it necessary you should be made acquainted with it, as she is in some measure under your protection."

Miss Scot answered, "she was not ignorant of it, and sincerely hoped they would be one day or other united, and make each other happy." "You are very good, Madam," said he, "I shall leave with you all my hopes of happiness. My very existence, indeed, depends on her safety. If, continued he, I could have called her my own before I left England, I should have gone happy; as in that case, she could, with propriety, have received such remittances from me, as would have supported her comfortably, until I returned; but that, the cruel laws have put out of my power. All which now remains is, that I may be permitted to hope, she will find in you, Madam, a protection for her innocence. Oh!" said he, "if you knew how sincerely our hearts are united, you would, from your own goodness of heart, I am persuaded, find a pleasure in protecting my Maria until I return, to claim her as my own."

Miss Scot answered, that from the friendship she had conceived for Maria, she was sufficiently induced to afford her every support and protection in her power. "She shall," continued she, "remain with me until you return; and I will love, and treat her as a sister." Charles fell on his knees; and Maria, having no words to express her thanks, followed his example. This was too much for Miss Scot;—she entreated them to rise.—"I am no way entitled to your thanks, as I confess, I have my own happiness in view. I have a sincere regard for Maria, and find a great pleasure in her society. If, indeed, it had been to make her happy, I would, although I confess it would have caused me some uneasiness to part with her; but I own, it affords me a satisfaction to know I shall enjoy her society for some years to come, without any prejudice to herself." "Words are poor, Madam," said Charles, "they are very inadequate to what I feel at this moment; but if the thanks of two hearts, overpowered with the sense of your goodness, will any way repay you, I can assure you of mine, and my Maria's. If I suspected myself of so much ingratitude, as to be ever capable of forgetting your kindness, I should for ever despise myself."

Miss Scot was not less pleased with Charles's sentiments than with his person. She again assured him, he might rely on her protecting Maria; and then enquired when he proposed to leave Bath. He answered, he was under the necessity of setting out early the next morning, as the ships were ready to sail for India, his mother too would be impatient to hear of his getting safe to town. "I will not," said Miss Scot, "take my leave of you, as I expect to find you here, at my return from the cotillion ball." Mr. Worthy came to accompany Miss Scot to the rooms. "I cannot, my dear uncle," said she, "deny myself, and you, the pleasure I know it will afford one with your generous sentiments, of seeing two people, whom Providence has so nicely formed for each other as those in the parlour." On which, she opened the door, and introduced her uncle.—Maria blushed.—

Mr. Worthy looked surprised.— “Give me leave, Sir,” said Miss Scot, “to introduce you to my uncle, Mr. Worthy; and when you do Maria’s other friends the honour of thinking of them, you will not forget his name, as he is not the most indifferent of them.” “Mr. Worthy and Miss Scot,” said Charles, “shall be joined, with my Maria, in my prayers.”

After Mr. Worthy had chatted about an hour with the two lovers, he wished Charles all the success he might reasonably expect; adding, he could not fail of making a rapid fortune, as his uncle was governor of so capital a place; took his leave of him, and wished Maria a good night.

Maria sent a servant, to request her brother to do her the favour of his company for an hour. When Mr. Harcourt entered, Charles addressed him in pretty nearly the following words:— “As I am under the necessity of leaving England for a considerable time, I would wish you, Sir, to conceive the nature of the affection which subsists between your amiable sister and me. I must entreat you, Sir, to believe it is not the effects of a sudden fancy, which sometimes possesses the brain of youth, and they mistake for love; nor is it the fever of an over-heated imagination, which takes its rise from the desire of possessing a beautiful object, which they pursue, without giving themselves any further consideration, till the disorder abates of itself, and leaves them to wonder at the strange infatuation which had so bewildered their senses. Our loves are of a different nature from such as I have described: and although I cannot ascertain when I first loved your sister, or from what particular motive, you will not, I hope, believe it less sincere, when I declare, all I know is, that I remember no time of my life that I did not love her. We have never had but one heart, and one mind; and if I may be allowed, without being accused of too much vanity to say it, it is the similarity of our sentiments that has united our hearts. I would not, Mr. Harcourt, be assured I would not, had I taken a fancy to your sister from the beauty of her person, have so far relied on myself, as to have answered that time, or another person equally beautiful might not have altered my sentiments; but being well assured my affections, though I am unable to explain them, are of such a nature as cannot end but with my life; I may venture, with the firmest confidence in myself, to entreat your approbation of our continuing in the same reliance on each other, which I am persuaded our hearts are fixed on; and that she will not want a protector in you. Sir, until I shall have it in my power to claim her as my own, and make her happy.”

“I am going to India, where I have every reason to hope, Fortune will soon favour my honest endeavours, to gain a sufficiency to support her properly. My uncle is governor of —; he will forward my wishes; and as far as depends on myself, there is nothing in human nature consistent with my honour, that I will not undertake to shorten the tedious absence. Let me, Sir, but be assured you will protect her for me; for in her is centered all my hopes of happiness; and whatever expence you may be at, on her account, I will then, if it pleases Heaven but to spare my life, most thankfully repay.”—Maria wept.—Mr. Harcourt wiped his face, and then answered, that his affection for his sister was alone sufficient to induce him to afford her every protection in his power; that her safety and happiness were his two principle concerns; that if he could only be assured, he should live to see her beyond the power of Fortune, he should be completely happy.

Charles answered, that he hoped he should, one day or other, have it in his power to express his thanks otherwise than by words, which was all he could then offer, and those fell very short of what he felt. "I shall now leave England happy," said he "as Heaven has provided two such friends, as you and Miss Scot, for my Maria."

It was settled, that Charles's letters to Maria should be addressed to her brother. Mr. Harcourt lost his fears, on finding how sincerely Charles was attached to his sister; he began to flatter himself, he should still see her one of the happiest of women. He took an affectionate leave of Charles, for whom he felt the affection of a brother.

Miss Scot now returned from the rooms. Supper was brought in; but other concerns occupied the attention of Charles and his Maria. After supper he summoned all his fortitude, and took his leave of Miss Scot. He then took his Maria in his arms. "May," said he, "the Almighty bless and protect you—my beloved girl!—my wife!—and all that is dear to me!—Oh! be careful of your precious health, for the sake of your Charles, for his life depends upon yours!" Maria was unable to speak;—tears were denied her;—she pressed him to her heart.—Charles went three times to the door, and as often returned;—he thought there was something he had forgot to say.—Maria got to the door.—Miss Scot's tears flowed.—Charles made a strong effort.—"It must be," said he;—clasped her once more in his arms, and then—unable to articulate the word—farewell—shut the door. Maria dropt into Miss Scot's arms—her soul had followed her Charles;—and, for a little time forsook its old habitation. Miss Scot, by her tender soothings, soon called it back, and she revived. Tears now came to her assistance; Miss Scot, by joining hers, lessened her sorrow. How did this sympathy at once endear and exalt her to Maria. "Ah, Madam," said she, "your goodness at once flatters and distresses me. I am not ashamed of my weakness, since you can deign to share it; but you are as gentle as you are great." Miss Scot took her hand.—"Go, my dear," said she, "to rest; endeavour to compose your spirits; you will, I make no doubt, one day or other, be as happy as love and a worthy man can make you. You deserve each other, and that Power, who delights in innocence, will comfort and protect you."—Maria pressed her hand.—"How much happier are you," continued Miss Scot, "than your friend, who has not the most distant prospect of ever beholding the object of her affection again.—Ah, my poor much injured William!" cried she, with fresh tears, "where art thou." Maria looked as if she wished to know the meaning of Miss Scot's words. "I am afraid," said Miss Scot, "your spirits are too much fluttered to hear the particulars of my story to night; but to-morrow morning your curiosity shall be satisfied. You must now go to rest."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE HISTORY OF MISS SCOT.

AFTER breakfast Miss Scot gave orders for no visitors to be admitted, but her uncle, and then began her story, as follows:—

I was, as well as you, left an orphan; with this difference, that I had twenty thousand pounds to my portion. My mother died in bringing me into the world; and my father soon followed her. He left me and Lady D. who was then only two years old, and heiress to fifteen hundred a year, to the care of my uncle, Mr. Worthy, who has been so kind a parent to us, we have never felt the loss we sustained. He, as soon as we were capable of receiving instruction, took a neat house, a few miles from London, and provided a proper governess to superintend our education and morals; and when we were old enough, she provided masters for us, as my uncle had a great aversion to public schools. When Lady D. was seventeen, he took us to London, and she was presented at Court. This ceremony was no sooner over, and she appeared in public, than a number of candidates offered for her heart; many of whom, as you may suppose, were in love with her fortune, though they all swore it was only for herself.

My uncle took as much care as possible not to allow us to be introduced to improper people. He assured us, he trusted so much to our discretion, that in the matrimonial way, he wished us to be guided by our own inclinations; as he rightly judged that was the only way for him not to be deceived. He entreated us to promise him, that before we disposed of our hearts, and as soon as we were inclined to favour the addresses of any one in particular, we would favour him with our confidence. This we promised him, and he was satisfied.

Lady D. about a year after we were introduced into public, declared in favour of Lord D. which my uncle was very well pleased at, and she made him happy.

Our house in the country was now disposed of, and it was settled for me to live with them until I became of age—as I had no inclination to marry;—indeed, I had never seen the man I thought I could love.

My uncle was appointed governor of an island in the West Indies, and, therefore, obliged to leave England. He invested his brother and Lord D. with his power of guardianship over me; with particular instruction not to use it in the disposal of my heart, farther than giving their advice, as he said, “He had so good an opinion of my

understanding, he was certain I should not make an improper choice." My twenty thousand pounds brought me a number of admirers;—some wanted to pay off old mortgages;—others wished to discharge their debts of honour;—and some, no doubt, thought it would enable them to keep the best race horses, and most expensive mistresses. I found no difficulty in discarding those. But, a Sir Wm. Warren applied to my uncle, and made such proposals, as he thought were worthy notice. When he communicated them to me, he said, "Although my brother wishes you to be guided by your own inclination, still I think it my duty, to point out the advantages of such a connection;" which he did not fail to do, in the most flattering colours. I thanked him for his care;—assured him I was sensible of his good intentions—but did not hesitate a moment to give him a downright refusal; at which he appeared greatly disappointed, but urged me no farther.

This refusal likewise surprised Lord and Lady D. as Sir William Warren had a very good estate, and had the address to impose on the world, who allowed him to be a man of good morals. But I thought I saw something;—a sort of disguise.—His sentiments did not appear to be the dictates of his heart. In short, I was sensible I could not like him, and that was, in my opinion, a sufficient reason for me to give him a plain, but polite refusal. He had artifice enough to receive it perfectly easy, and begged he might be permitted to continue his visits, as he had, he professed, a sincere friendship for Lord D. This, I answered, I was no way concerned in, as my objection to him, as a husband, did not go so far as to prevent his being a very agreeable acquaintance. He availed himself of this, and was very frequent in his visits, until we left town, to go to Lord D's country seat for the summer.

The November following, I received an invitation from Mrs. Hartford, a very particular friend of our family's—to accompany her to town for the winter. As my sister's situation was such, as to prevent her going that season, it was agreed for me to go with Mrs. Hartford. This being the last year of my minority, my uncle and Lord D. made no objection to trusting me to my own discretion.

Mr. Hartford, who was then in town, being a member of parliament, had taken a house for us in Pall Mall; they lived in great style, and their house was frequented by most of the nobility. Sir William Warren soon made an acquaintance with Mr. Hartford, and became a constant visitor. This gave me neither pleasure nor pain; we behaved to each other with politeness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I HAD not been long at Mrs. Hartford's when she had a rout. The rooms were, as is generally the case on these occasions, very much crowded. I was standing chatting with some company, who were not at cards, when a young gentleman entered the room. I was struck with his person, which I fancied was the most elegant, and graceful, I had ever beheld. I followed him with my eyes, to observe who he conversed with, that I might, by that means, form some idea how he was connected. I confess, I felt a strange desire to know, though I had not the confidence to make the enquiry. I was not displeased, when I saw him coming to that side of the room where I stood, or to observe he looked earnestly at me. I caught his eyes more than once.—We both blushed.

Mrs. Hartford now seeing him, paid her respects to him in so attentive a manner, as gave me reason to believe he was not an indifferent visitor. She addressed herself to me, and asked if I would play a rubber. I answered in the affirmative, and had the good fortune to cut-in at the same table, and likewise to get the elegant stranger for a partner. I soon found, by his conversation and the respect which was paid him, he was a man of family; and a gentleman addressing him by the name of Spencer, I immediately concluded he was son to Lord F——, who, I had heard, was lately returned from his travels. This conjecture was not unpleasing to me; I began to wish to make myself agreeable to him: and this was the first time in my life I had ever formed such a wish. I likewise flattered myself he had the same desire, and fancied he paid me more than common attention for a stranger. After the company went away, I enquired of Mrs. Hartford who he was; and she confirmed my conjecture of his being the only son of Lord F——. I confess, I got very little sleep that night, for thinking of him. My mind was agitated between hope and fear; hope, however, was the most predominant.

The next morning, just as Mrs. Hartford and I were preparing to go out to pay some visits, to my great joy, Mr. Spencer was announced.—I felt myself extremely confused.—She immediately introduced us to each other.

He chatted a considerable time on various subjects. If I was pleased with his fine person, I was much more so with his understanding. His opinions were just and liberal, and delivered with modesty; indeed, I saw in him all I had formed to myself as the height of perfection in a human being. It would be needless to recite all the little particulars of my hopes and fears; I will only tell you, that in a very short time I was relieved from the latter, by his openly declaring himself. You may imagine I did not endeavour to find out frivolous objections to his generous proposals. He immediately wrote to my uncle and Lord D. for their consent, and likewise to his father, who did me the honour of a letter, expressing, in very warm terms, his approbation of his son's choice—and with what pleasure he should receive me into his family. He likewise wrote to my uncle and Lord D. and offered such a settlement, as even surpassed their expectations.

I now thought myself one of the happiest of mortals—that I had disposed of my heart to a man every way so deserving. I justly supposed he would reflect honour to my

understanding, in making such a choice. I pleased myself with the idea of what my uncle would feel, on his return from the West Indies, to see me so happy. All these, and a thousand other emotions, which are better imagined than described, filled me with rapture for my ever dear William, who appeared, no only to love, but adore me. The time which was necessary, from decorum, for us to be apart became tedious to both; and, I confess, I was not displeased to see the preparations for our nuptials making hasty steps to a conclusion.—When, one fatal morning,—She paused, to give vent to her feelings by tears.—And Maria, though she knew not the cause, wept too.—After Miss Scot had a little recovered herself she proceeded.—A young woman, neatly dressed, with a very pretty face, enquired for me. I was sitting with Mrs. Hartford in the parlour, and desired she might be shewn in. I thought she was a young beginner in some business who wished me to employ her. She said, she wished to speak a word to me. I answered, she might, as that Lady, Mrs. Hartford, was my friend. She said, what she had to communicate was of such a nature, as only to be proper for my private ear.—I observed she trembled exceedingly, which excited my curiosity, and I took her to my dressing-room.—As soon as she entered, she threw herself on her knees. “In the first place, Madam,” said she, “you must promise, on your honour, never to reveal what I am going to disclose to you, or I never can make the discovery, though your destruction, as well as my own, depends on it.”

I was, as you may suppose, very much surprised at this; and without hesitation gave the promise she required,—made her rise.—Her countenance turned pale.—She could scarce speak.—I did all I could to revive her, as I really pitied her.

When she recovered herself, she exclaimed, “Oh, Madam! you are too good to be made for ever miserable, which you must be, if you marry Mr. Spencer.” I now began to tremble. What do you mean? cried I, greatly agitated. “I am,” said she,—“his wife.”—Heavenly God!—said I,—Is it possible?—“It is, indeed, true,” replied she, “I was a farmer’s daughter, at Oxford, when he was at that school;—he brought me to London, where he married me; but as he has a father, who is a great man, he made me promise not to disclose the secret till his death, and then he would acknowledge me to the world.

He allowed me a sufficiency to support me comfortably whilst he was abroad; and since he came home he has sent me enough, and promises, if I am a good girl, and keep his secret, I shall never want. But when I heard he was going to be married, I could not help, in justice to you, as well as myself, coming to acquaint you with his villainy, although I know he will allow me to starve, if he knows I have made this discovery.” Do not be afraid, said I, no one living shall ever know it from me. I think myself extremely fortunate, in knowing it thus timely; it has saved me from endless misery. She then wished me a good morning, and walked away.

I cannot describe to you the situation of my mind on this occasion. All my delightful prospects, which I had, in so high a degree, indulged, were, in a moment, lost. That Mr. Spencer should be capable of such actions; he, who did not appear to have a thought which ought to be concealed; he, whose pure sentiments seemed to be only the dictates of his still purer mind, was more than I could reconcile. I gave immediate orders,

if he came, to be denied, and likewise any other visitors. I sat down, and wrote a note to him; telling him, that his calling on me again would be unnecessary; that I would never be his; and when I acquainted him I was not ignorant of every transaction of his, during his stay at the university, his own heart would tell him my reasons; but that was all the explanation he must ever expect to get from me; that his crimes were of too black a nature; that his writing, or any effort to see me, would be ineffectual, as I would seclude myself from the world for ever, sooner than have the chance of meeting him. I likewise wrote to Lord D. and my uncle, and begged them to acquaint Mr. Spencer's father, in order to stop the preparations from going on, and to let them know, I should leave London the next morning.

I now determined, in my own mind, never to think of marriage again. I sometimes regretted letting the young woman go without giving some proof of what she had asserted, as I wished, at those times, to think him innocent; but when I reflected on the agitation she was in, and the simplicity of her manners, that thought, in a moment vanished. No, said I, it must be so, or what motive could she have to prevent our union.

I told Mrs. Hartford there was an insurmountable obstacle to my being ever united to Mr. Spencer, therefore she must not be surprised at my leaving London the next morning. She was very much concerned at this, and earnestly entreated me to explain my reasons, and by that means, give Mr. Spencer an opportunity of vindicating himself. I answered, I was well convinced of the truth of his villainy; but nothing should force the secret from me, as I had pledged my honour, never to disclose it.

I set out early the next morning for Lord D's seat; my heart torn almost asunder with various passions; love still was the strongest. Notwithstanding the proof, which I thought I had, of Mr. Spencer's baseness, I was often inclined to pity him. I imagined, the inadvertency of his youth might have led him into this folly, and that he now repented; then the injustice of such actions occurred to me, and turned my pity into rage; then I would regret his loss, being certain he was the only man in the world I could ever feel an affection for; again, I was thankful for my escaping from such a villain. In this state I arrived at Lord D's. You will not be surprised, when I tell you, the agitation of my mind brought on a fever, and I was for some days deprived of my reason; during which time, it seems, I let drop the words, his wife! Are you his wife? This clearly proved to my sister my reason for rejecting Mr. Spencer.

When I recovered, a deep melancholy seized me.—I shunned company.—I sought the most lonesome walks, where I might indulge it to the full. My sister carefully avoided mentioning Mr. Spencer. She concluded, from the state I was in, and from what she had collected when I was in a state of insanity, I had some very substantial reason for refusing him, and therefore declined to press me farther; but strove by every possible means to divert my melancholy. She forced me, in some measure, into company, and always followed, and joined in my walks. This I was very much displeased at, and watched every opportunity of stealing out, as it were, unperceived, that I might enjoy my dismal reflections; and my sister as studiously endeavoured to prevent my being a moment alone. They received more company than usual, and were constantly contriving new

schemes of amusement, which at first was extremely unpleasant to me, but it had its desired effect. I, by imperceptible degrees, became more tranquil, and my love of solitude a little abated; but I still found a pleasure in it, which, in order to indulge unmolested, I frequently rose early, and strolled to my favourite seat, which was under a great tree, facing a cascade, at the end of the park.

One morning, as I was indulging myself in this way, I was surprised at seeing a tall man, with a wooden leg, wandering amongst the trees in one of the avenues; he appeared in great distress, often lifted his eyes to Heaven, and clasped his hands, as if in the agonies of despair. I could not resist the desire I had to know the cause; and addressing myself to him, Friend, said I, do not imagine I am induced by impertinent curiosity to trouble you with enquiries of any thing you wish to conceal; but if your distress is of a nature to come within my power of alleviating, it will afford me great pleasure;—and I took out my purse.—“Ah, Madam!” said he, “you are very good!—I do not want money; but if you could restore me peace of mind, you would indeed be an angel; but that I must never hope for more. I justly suffer, from being too credulous, and too strictly adhering to a mistaking notion of false honour. May you, Madam, never know the pangs I feel from pledging my word of honour to a villain, who deceived me.”—I startled, and turned pale,—which he observed, and continued. “I was,” said he, “betrothed to a young Lady, amiable and lovely. Our affections were mutual; and the day was fixed which was to have made us happy; when a villain, who had been disappointed, came to me one morning, and told me, he had a secret to disclose to me; but I must first pledge my honour never to reveal it on any account. I foolishly gave him the promise he required. He assured me nothing but his concern for my honour could have induced him to discover what he was then going to do; which I should be convinced of. He then imposed a tale on me, which I too readily gave credit to, of the falseness and infamy of my intended wife. I was bound not to explain my reasons for breaking with her; therefore, I only wrote her a letter, saying, I was but too well convinced of her unworthiness; and immediately left the country, and set out for London.

I kept a correspondence with some friends, who acquainted me, the young lady, whom every one supposed I had injured, was at the point of death; she could not support the idea of my thinking her dishonoured, and her life fell a sacrifice to my credulity. The villain who had imposed on me did not long survive her. He took a fever, which soon put a period to his existence; but not till he disclosed his treachery.

“You will not now, Madam, be surprised at my distress. I wander from place to place, in hopes to find rest; but in vain. The innocent victim is constantly presenting herself to my imagination, whom I consider myself as the murderer.”

I was exceedingly affected with this story—it bore so strong a resemblance to my own—and he appeared so much affected.—I looked at him with a mixture of pity and concern. You have not so much cause, said I, to reproach yourself, as you have acted from a point of honour—that ought to reconcile you.—I do not see how you could have done otherwise, circumstanced as you were: you might, indeed, have regretted giving the promise; but it was not in your power, as a man of honour, to revoke it.

Ought I not Madam, said he, to have considered the probability of the lady being innocent, and have put it in her power to have justified herself? Impossible, said I, after you had pledged your honour to the contrary. I should, under the like circumstances, have acted just the same—and I let drop a tear.—If you, did, said he, you would feel endless misery.—I answered, that was possible; but it could not be equal to the misery arising from a breach of honour.

I asked if he lived in the neighbourhood? He answered, no, he only past that way in his rambles; where he should be to-morrow, he could not determine; but it was immaterial, as he was now fully convinced his happiness was for ever lost,—and struck his forehead in the utmost agony.—I was almost as distressed as him, and for a few minutes we were both silent.

And you would, Madam, said he, have acted as I have done? Most certainly, said I. I am well convinced I should; even were I assured such a conduct would have cost me my life. This answer, instead of reconciling him, as I expected it would, to himself, very evidently agitated him more, which surprised me exceedingly. I perceive it is not in my power, said I, to afford you any consolation;—I am extremely concerned for you,—and got up to walk to the house. He appeared unable to answer me. I looked back, and perceived him standing in great disorder; following me with his eyes, until I entered the house.

I cannot describe to you the situation of my mind on this adventure. I regretted more than ever letting the woman go without producing some proof of her marriage, or at least letting me know where she might be found; again, I considered, this proceeded from my own neglect; there was no doubt of her being able to produce such proofs, or she would not, I thought, have dared to venture such an assertion, as she might naturally have expected I should have required them; besides, the story was not impossible, and the simple manner in which it was told, served to convince me she must be some way connected, if not absolutely married to Mr. Spencer.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.