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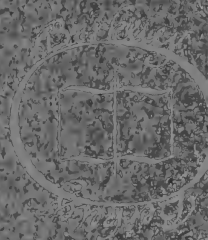
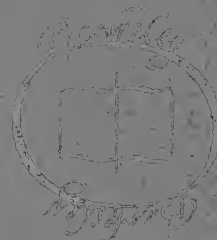
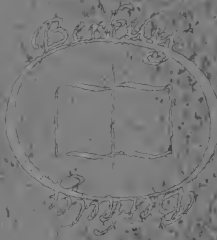
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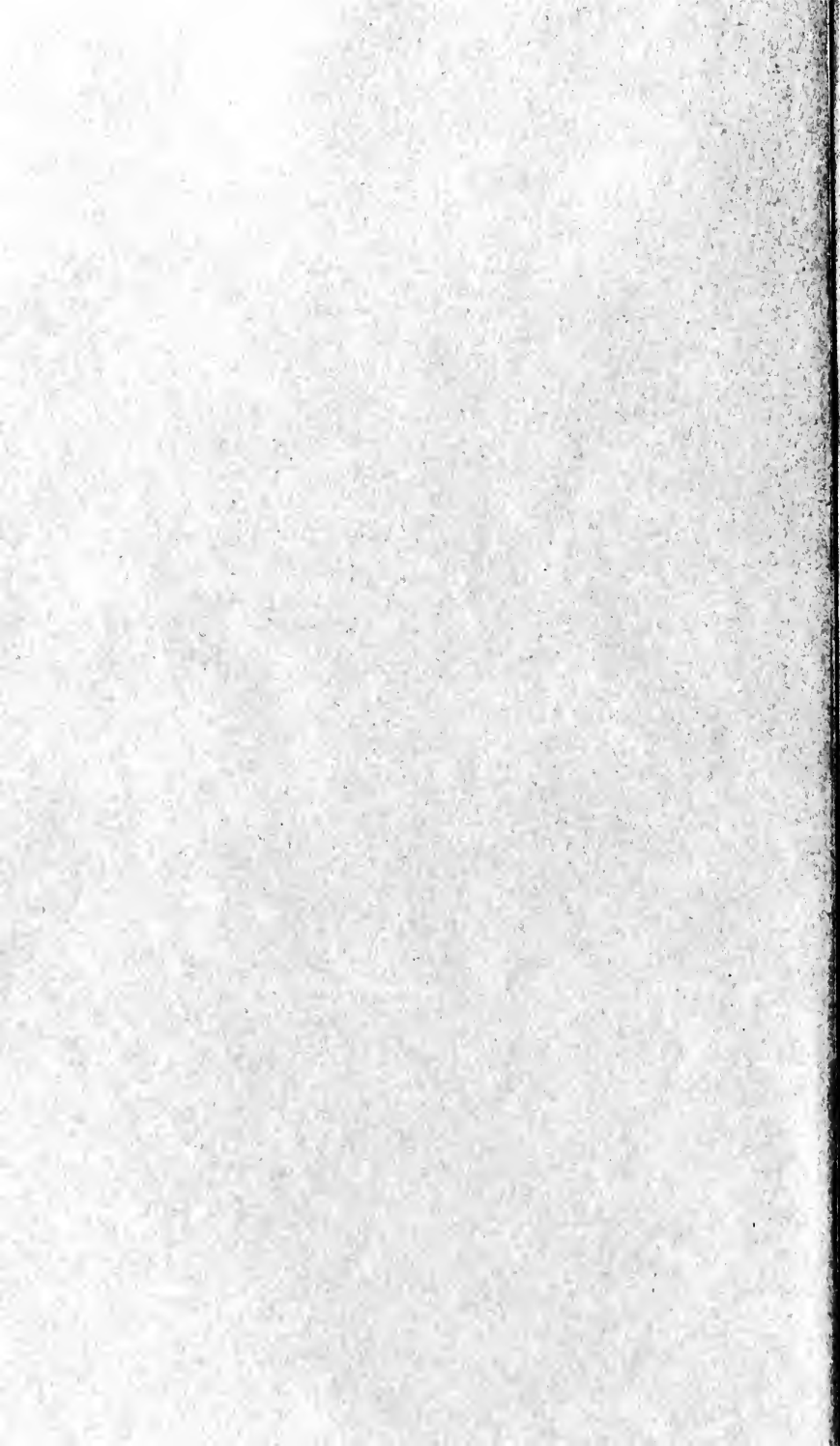


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THE
F A R M E R
OF
INGLEWOOD FOREST.

BY ELIZABETH HELME.

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1841.

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THE FARMER OF INGLEWOOD FOREST.

CHAPTER I.

UNDER an aged oak, that grew on a pleasant but lonely part of Inglewood Forest, one fine summer's evening, sat the venerable farmer Godwin, reading to his family, with a dignity that might have graced a more distinguished rank; but it was a subject that ever raised his heart to the Most High, and made him feel that, however humble the state of probation, a life spent in innocence and integrity would one day entitle him to a place where virtue alone claims pre-eminence. On his knee lay the Bible; on his right hand sat his wife, who, though grey hairs shaded her temples, the beam of youthful affection was not extinguished in her eye; on his left sat his sons, William and Edwin; and at her mother's feet was placed their sister Emma, trimming a straw hat with pink ribbons for the ensuing fair.

The lecture concluded, they adjourned to their humble mansion, which, though appertaining to some rich and highly-cultivated land, was nothing more than a spacious, convenient farmhouse; yet to those to whom cleanliness and comfort constitute luxury, this dwelling possessed every attribute. The frugal meal was soon prepared, and seasoned with innocent mirth, and the happy cheerfulness of hearts unconscious of guile might have outbalanced in pleasure far more sumptuous entertainments; for labour had given health, and health appetite; and for the corroding passions of envy, jealousy, pride, or malice, that so frequently embitter the feasts of the great, their hearts were too humble to entertain such overbearing intruders.

The suppers removed, and the farmer's pipe, with a pitcher of ale, being placed on the table—"I wonder," said William, with a half-sigh, "whether Fanny Bernard is yet returned home?"—"Suppose we step down the lane and inquire?" replied Edwin; "it is a fine night, and Emma can go with us; we shall be back before my father has smoked his pipe." This motion was immediately adopted, as farmer Bernard's was only a quarter of a mile down a green lane, that was separated from a forest by a high-road crossing its entrance. It would hardly be possible to paint three more interesting figures than the brothers and sister tripping by a clear moonlight over the green. William had just attained his twenty-second year, his face and person forming a model from which a statuary might have envied to copy an Apollo, yet with a cast of reflection over his animated features, which to a common observer made them less striking than those of his brother Edwin, who was a year younger, and whose person, though less elegantly formed, was yet more fascinating, from the continual sprightliness that enlivened his features; Emma, innocent as the dove, playful as the lamb, and fair as Milton's Eve, holding of each a hand, and chatting a hundred little *minutias*, to themselves only interesting. On reaching Bernard's farm, they entered without ceremony, the lifting of the latch alone announcing visitors. "Welcome, my lads," said the old man; "what, and my little girl too! are you there? Hark ye, Agnes," addressing his daughter, "replenish the pitcher, and look what hast got in the cupboard,"—"We have supped," replied William; and looking anxiously round the room, "Fanny, I see, is not yet returned."—"No; Agnes and I have been wishing for her—she will be back in a day or two, I suppose; but, pies on't! I wondered what brought you here to-night—now the murder's out; however, sorrow's dry; here's to you, my boys, and may Fanny and Agnes make as good wives as their mother; Why, Agnes, I say there's no ale in the pitcher;

prithce draw some, and court afterwards. I think Edwin and you can't have much to whisper, for you had a plaguy long gossip to-day, when you carried the meat to the reapers."—"Lord, father, you are so odd!" answered Agnes, blushing; "indeed the basket was very heavy, and Edwin carried it for me, for I was quite tired."—"Yes, yes," replied the old man, "I suppose so, for when I came up, you were sitting on the stile to rest. Never blush, girl—many a time thy mother has detained me, heaven rest her! and thou art but a chip of the old block." Agnes broke off the discourse by hastening to draw the ale; during her absence—"Indeed," said Emma, "as Fanny and Agnes are to be my sisters, I think the sooner the better. Why, Fanny's almost nineteen, and Agnes is two months older than me, and I was seventeen last Midsummer."—"I care not how soon," replied Bernard; "but where shall we find a husband for thee, Emma? Why, William," shaking him heartily by the hand, "what art dull for, man? I dare be sworn Fanny is as anxious to see thee as thou be'st to see her—so drink about." The old clock, which stood in the corner of the kitchen, and on whose tall case were depicted the loves of Henry II., together with the death of Fair Rosamond, at that moment striking ten, the visitors rose to depart, Agnes accompanying them to the gate.—"Goodnight," said William, shaking hands with her.—"Good night," repeated Emma, saluting her—"and heaven bless thee!" concluded Edwin, kissing her ruby lips! "I shall see you before breakfast, as I go a-field." Such was the behaviour of these uncorrupted children of innocence, who acted as their pure minds dictated, being strangers to the refinement with which art and good-breeding conceal the emotions of the heart. They had just reached the end of the lane, when several voices struck them from the high-road: fear they were strangers to—it could only, they thought, be people returning from the market town to a village about three miles farther; or it might be as William's heart prompted, Fanny under the care of a party of friends. With such ideas they advanced; but instead of countrymen riding cheerfully homewards, found two domestics and a post-boy endeavouring to raise a chaise that had been overturned, and whose owners, a gentleman and lady, sat by the roadside; the first in great pain, from a broken arm he had received in the fall; and the latter heavily lamenting the accident. "Thank heaven it is not Fanny!" said William, with a sigh. "But it is people in distress," replied Edwin, quickening his pace; "what can we do for them?" "Assist them to the utmost of our abilities," returned William, in a tone yet more animated than his brother's, at the same time hastening forward to execute his purpose.

On their reaching the chaise they found one of the wheels broken, so that to proceed was impossible; therefore, while William and Emma were aiding the strangers. Edwin ran home to inform his father of the accident, and to entreat him, as there was no house of entertainment within four miles, to offer the stranger with the broken arm their spare bed, till he could be moved farther with safety. The virtues that warmed the heart of farmer Godwin would have dignified the bosom of a prince; from his humble roof the wanderer ever departed satisfied, wishing that his means were as extensive as the charity of his heart. Edwin's request was therefore instantly granted, the good man himself accompanying his son to make the offer, while his dame, as he frequently called, her, with the assistance of her maid Margery, prepared the spare bed, in case the stranger should accept her husband's offer. On Godwin's reaching the spot where the disaster happened, he immediately went up to the sufferer, whose arm was now supported by the trembling Emma, William and the rest being still employed about the chaise, at the entreaty of the owner, who anxiously wished to proceed—"My good sir," said Godwin, "in your situation the distance to the village is too far; therefore, if you will accept the offer of an apartment in a farmhouse, where we will endeavour to render you all the service in our power, we will lead you there instantly, while one of my sons shall ride to the next market-town for a surgeon. The lady we can also accommodate; and for your domestics, after some refreshment, those you have no service for can proceed to get your carriage repaired, which in the mean time will be perfectly safe here." The stranger immediately accepted the farmer's offer: for which the lady also expressed her thanks, and they proceeded towards Godwin's dwelling; the lady,

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who had not yet recovered her fright, leaning on Edwin's arm, and the gentleman assisted by Godwin and his son William. On reaching the farm, their arrival was announced by the furious barking of the great dog, whose noise was, however, soon silenced by the musical voice of Emma, and the more commanding voice of his master. The stranger being immediately put to bed, and Edwin dispatched on horseback for the nearest surgeon, the lady began to recover her fright, Mrs. Godwin having prevailed on her to take a glass of currant wine, and conducted her to the parlour, which, though its furniture was as simple as the minds of the owners, yet also, like them, possessed that real utility that strongly contrasted the folly of gaudy grandeur, which, while it bewitches the eye, is deficient in that general comfort which unadorned convenience ever bestows. Here was no fear of soiling the costly colours of the Persian carpet, though the white scoured floor far more plainly showed the mark of dirty footsteps; no gilding to be injured by the touch, the chairs, tables, and even glass-frame, being of walnut-tree, which vied with the mirror in brightness. No pictures graced the walls; but, in their stead, numberless odoriferous bouquets, in white earthen jars, placed on shelves round the apartment; and to complete the whole, the glittering steel stove, with brass knobs, filled with large branches of the hawthorn and wild briar in blossom. Wearied with travelling and the subsequent fright, Mrs. Delmer (for so was the lady called) looked round with a complacency and satisfaction which splendid drawing rooms had not always been able to inspire.—“It is fairyland,” thought she “and the ideas of my fifteenth year are realized in the inhabitants of this mansion.”

Mrs Delmer was a widow, about the age of twenty-eight, and possessed of a large independency, by the death of a husband she hated. She was now hastening to the capital with her brother, in order to enjoy those pleasures she had been debarred during the last ten years; the greatest part of which time she had been confined to the country by her spouse, whose greatest pleasure had consisted in hunting and drinking. On her first entrance into public life, her fine person had procured her the affluence she enjoyed; and she had no doubt it would secure her a husband, calculated to make her happy, and repay her for the disgust she had entertained for his predecessor. Wealth had been her first incentive; but she found its inefficacy of giving happiness, and therefore determined to make love alone the motive of a second union. Her brother Mr. Whitmore, was about twenty-six, and had been some time married, but experienced little happiness in that state, having, like his sister, consulted convenience more than affection. or even esteem, in the disposal of his hand. His lady was young, handsome, lively, and too fashionably educated not to return the coldness with which he treated her, and, as all the gay world admired her, thought the affection of a husband a mite in the great scale, and easily dispensed with. Her fortune being large her settlement was also liberal, and sufficiently enabled her to pursue her inclinations without control; Mr. Whitmore was too well bred to interfere with her pleasures, while she was polite enough to be blind to his. Ever engaged in different pursuits, they seldom met above once or twice a-week at dinner, and then usually surrounded with company; a matrimonial *tete-a-tete* was by both declared the most wearisome thing in the universe. Mr. Whitmore had been on a visit to his sister, who had passed the first six months of her widowhood at her country-seat in Cumberland; and was returning with her to his own villa near London (where he had left his lady) when the accident happened, Whitmore was only son to a banker, who, at his death, had left him what he thought a sufficiency to decline business. In his person he was handsome and graceful; in his disposition generous and brave; but born to affluence, and accustomed from his childhood to command his wishes without control, his passions knew no curb, his inclinations no law but gratification; highly accomplished and insinuating in his address, he had been uncommonly successful in his amours, addressing indiscriminately both married and single that chanced to please him, or where he could flatter himself with success; frequently declaring that both sexes were free agents and those only fulfilled the end of their creation who made the most of life, and enjoyed it to the utmost of their power, so they injured no man's purse or property—women, in his

opinion, not coming under that denomination, being a kind of fair game, and their persons transferrable, as their affections, to him that pleased them most.

Such were the new inmates at Godwin's Farm, where every individual was busy in preparing for their ease and convenience until the return of Edwin with a surgeon, who having set Mr. Whitmore's arm, and assured them there was not the least danger, being only a simple fracture, the females retired to take a short repose, William and Edwin to their morning occupations, day being already broke, and the venerable Godwin to watch by the side of Whitmore.

CHAPTER II.

WHITMORE, after a slight repose, which was disturbed by the pain he experienced from his arm, entered into conversation with his host, expressing his thanks in the warmest terms, which subject, however, being only distressing to the farmer, who thought he had done nothing more than what, in the same circumstances, almost every man would have done for him, he changed the discourse, and began to inquire about the vicinity. "The parish church," said Godwin, "is not more than two miles off, and almost close to it is a good house and extensive grounds, belonging to the lady who inherits great part of the land around. As yet she is a perfect stranger to us, having always lived with an uncle near the capital, who has left her heiress to his whole estate. The nearest market town is about four miles from hence, so that I regard the chance that threw my sons in your way as fortunate, for such a distance in your situation must have been dreadful. Whitmore was now again attempting to repeat his thanks.—"My good sir," interrupted the farmer, "you see so trifling a service in too strong a light. In such a misfortune would not you have acted the same by me?"—"Indeed I would," answered Whitmore, after a momentary pause, and then remained silent. To confess the truth, though he had answered Godwin's question in the affirmative, yet there was a monitor within his own breast which, by knowing mankind better, was not so easily satisfied; he therefore said no more, but remaining quiet, could not avoid repeating to his own heart the question of the farmer—"Would you not have done the same by me?"—"I should, perhaps," replied he mentally, "have left him in charge with my footman, and ordered him a surgeon; or if the accident had happened in town, given him a guinea had he wanted it, and sent him to the hospital; but to make him a bed in my own house, nay, to wait by his side, while all my family were employed in his service, I should never have done it." This idea gave transitory awkwardness to the feelings of Whitmore; but the pride of birth, and the complacency which superior wealth usually bestows on its possessors, soon dispersed the cloud, when they presented to his mind the difference of situation in life from that of Godwin's—the one a simple farmer, and the other possessed of three thousand a year, a place in the senate, and universally courted and admired. This considered, there was no comparison in the case; for though he felt that the bones of a gentleman were as brittle as those of a peasant, and that he was as vulnerable to pain, yet he could not divest himself of the idea, that superior rank and fortune demanded particular cares, even from those persons whom he would have blushed to attend in the same situation. Mr. Whitmore's valet now entered; he had been employed in moving the baggage out of the chaise, which was refitted in such a manner as to be removed to the next town to be thoroughly repaired. Godwin, thus relieved, adjourned to his kitchen, where he found his wife, Emma, and the maid assembled, all inquiring how the stranger had rested.

Mrs. Godwin then ordered Margery to pick out the best baked cakes, while herself made the tea; and pouring out two breakfast-cups, sent one to Mrs. Delmer, who was not yet risen, and took the other herself to Whitmore, entreating him to make free, and command whatever their house afforded, with that characteristic goodness of heart which peculiarly distinguished her, and that had made her doubly amiable in youth, and respectable in age. Whitmore, after a proper return to her civility, said—May I not be permitted some time

to-day, my dear madam, to see and thank my young friends for the services of last night?" Mrs. Godwin assured him her sons would not fail to wait on him on their return from their morning avocation: then wishing him speedily better, she returned to breakfast, where the party was soon augmented by William and Edwin, who, after a hasty meal, retired to pay their compliments to Whitmore, while Emma repaired to Mrs. Delmer, whom she assisted to dress.

Mrs. Delmer, in her manner, possessed much of her brother's affability, and by her good humour gained an almost immediate interest in the heart of Emma, who declared, when she afterwards joined her brothers, that she had never before seen so beautiful and engaging a woman. To this, however, both brothers dissented; the elder declaring she was not near so handsome as Fanny Bernard; and the younger, that was Agnes dressed the same, there would be no comparison between them. "As to dress," returned William, "Fanny is always so exact and neat, that any alteration must be for the worse; and I protest I should think her fine hair disfigured by powder and grease—then that hateful hat, with a great cockade and feather, gives an air of harshness and boldness, which I cannot endure; Fanny's straw bonnet, with the blue ribbon, is a thousand times more becoming."—"No such thing, William," replied Emma, "for I tried it on and looked quite a different creature the feathers made me so tall, and look so well, that I am sure I never liked myself so much before. Then her shoes—why I thought her feet were as little again as mine, yet it was only their make and the smart heels, for they are larger; but the shoe-makers about here are so awkward, that they make one's feet quite clumsy! I declare I shall now have no patience with them."—"Yet your mother," said William, gravely, "who was reckoned one of the finest girls in the whole country, was always satisfied with them."—"All that is very true," interrupted Edwin, "yet you cannot persuade me but Mr. Whitmore's clothes are more becoming than ours, even though I am perfectly satisfied with my situation in life, yet was fortune, by any unforeseen event, to favour me, I should certainly think it no error to adopt my dress to the fashion." "Certainly not," replied Emma; "but William is so grave, that I am sure had my grandfather (the rector) lived, and he might have made him a parson; nay, you know, my father says he is the very image of him,"

"I accept your compliment," answered William, with a smile; "for surely it is one to be told I resemble a man who was a blessing to his neighbours, and an honour to his profession; and, in return, Emma, I wish thy temper may resemble thy mother's as much as thy person." "Thank you, my dear William," giving him an affectionate kiss on the cheek; "but, indeed, I fear I shall never be so handsome." "I rather fear you will never be so unconscious of it," replied William; "for, as to beauty, you have as great a share as I think you can be safely trusted with." "Oh! how ill-natured!" exclaimed, Emma; "I protest you grow worse and worse; I will stay no longer—I promised to walk with Delmer, and must go this instant." With these words, away flew the sprightly girl to perform the promise; while her brothers returned to their usual occupation in the field, overlooking and occasionally assisting the labourers: calling, however, at Bernard's, where William had the vexation to learn that Fanny had written to inform her father that she should for some time prolong her stay, as her aunt, whom she was visiting, still continued ill, and entreated her presence; concluding with a modest but tender remembrance to her lover. William then perused the letter with a sigh; and informing the farmer of the particulars of the last night's adventure, the brothers soon after took their leave.

Emma had joined Mrs. Delmer, who, however, previous to her walk, called at her brother's apartment, where she had passed the morning; and, finding him perfectly cheerful, and without fever, easily acquiesced in his desire of not sending for more assistance, which she had at first strongly pressed. In this visit she was accompanied by Emma, who Whitmore, in spite of his pain the night before, had thought the most lovely creature he

ever beheld, and who now, divested of the pallid hue and tremor occasioned by his accident appeared a thousand times more charming. "My dear brother," said Mrs. Delmer, "as you seem tolerably easy, and I do but disturb you, my young friend and myself are going to take a walk." "Indeed," replied Whitmore, "though I prefer your recreation before my own, yet, in this case, I must truly confess I should be more easy, and less disturbed, by your company, than left to my own thoughts. However I wish you a pleasant walk, and regret that I cannot accompany you; yet before you go, give me leave to thank Miss Godwin for the trouble I gave her last night, in supporting my arm—a trouble," continued he with great softness, "that made even such a situation enviable." "Indeed, sir," answered Emma, "I trembled so much, that I could not hold it as steadily as William desired me; and though you did not complain, I am sure I must hurt you." "Good heaven! hurt me! Such support could alone enable me to bear the pain with becoming patience; but I detain you; yet, might I entreat a favour, it should be for half an hour of your company on your return. Charity, my dear sister, you know, is strongly recommended to us; and can you show yours more effectually than on such a miserable invalid?" "Well, we will endeavour to exert it," replied Mrs. Delmer; "but for the present, adieu."

Emma then conducted Mrs. Delmer, at her own desire, to their harvest-field, the first objects that presented themselves were William and Edwin, divested of their coats, in shirts white as snow, foremost amongst the reapers. William respectfully moving his hat, continued his labour; but Edwin, a deep blush covering his face, to be thus caught, hastily put on his coat, and joined Mrs. Delmer and Emma. "What a delightful scene!" said the lady, before he reached them. "I know not how it happens, my dear girl, but in one day you have almost delighted me with rural life, which I ever before held in abhorrence; but the reason is obvious—your family are so totally different from all I ever saw who reside constantly in the country, that the contrast became doubly striking." "If there is any difference," replied Emma, "we derive it from my father, who has had a very good education, being son to the rector of the parish, who, however, as my father declined pursuing his fortune in the church, had it only in his power to settle him on this farm, purchasing the house, and about 14 acres of the adjoining land. The remainder we hold on a long lease for a long term, and at an easy rent."

Edwin at that moment joined them, and was received by Mrs. Delmer with a smile. After some cheerful conversation, she walked up to the reapers, and gave them a guinea to drink. Then turning to Edwin, she said—"We should intrude too much on your time to ask your company home; but we shall see you in the evening in my brothers apartment, who has made us promise to pass an hour with him." Edwin bowed; and Mrs. Delmer and Emma bidding him farewell, they returned home.

In this manner passed the first day, and several succeeding ones, until Whitmore's arm began to unite, and he was able to sit up. The pillow which supported the fracture would indeed be frequently uneasy, and seldom could be rendered otherwise, but by Emma, who, he affirmed, ever placed it smoother than any one else, thanking her, with a glance from his expressive dark eyes, in a language which, though new, was intelligible to her unexperienced heart. Twice, as she placed his arm, he had ventured to kiss her hand; but the confusion this had occasioned, and the tremor with which she afterwards approached, him, determined him to desist, rather than give an alarm that might prove detrimental to his passion.

CHAPTER III.

WHITMORE gained strength daily; and at length, with his arm in a sling, came down stairs, though the surgeon affirmed he must not yet venture the shaking of a carriage. On the

second day after he had left his chamber, finding himself at home with Godwin, after some conversation, in which he expressed his warmest thanks for the favours he had received, he took his hand, and with the ease of good breeding that particularly distinguished him, entreated his acceptance of a bank-note of a hundred pounds, as a small retribution towards the obligations he had received.

"My good sir," said the farmer, returning the note, "you are heartily welcome to the asylum your unhappy situation rendered necessary. To me it has been no inconvenience, but rather a gratification, as it has enabled me to fulfil one of the greatest duties commanded us—'Do unto others as you would they should do unto you.' Your own servant has taken the fatigue on himself, shall you then pay for your mere shelter and a little food in such a calamity? Heaven forbid! If any debt, not to me is it due, but to those in similar circumstance, and to whom, I doubt not, your own heart will lead you to pay it." Whitmore was abashed; he felt all the dignity and force of virtue: he remembered Emma, and her heart smote him; but recovering his confusion, and reflecting for a few moments, he replied—"My dear sir, at least give me some way to show my gratitude. You have two sons, well-informed, sensible young men: permit me to take on myself to charge one of them. From my situation in life, I flatter myself that I can introduce him to the world with success having it in my power to place a person immediately as clerk in one of the public offices; which situation, till we can procure a better, will at least afford a genteel competency."

Godwin returned his thanks for this offer, answering, that in a matter in which themselves were so materially concerned, he would certainly inform them of Mr. Whitmore's generosity.—"But for my own part," continued he, "were I to consult only my wishes, I should rather they would settle in the spot where they first saw the light. Great towns, I have heard and read, are full of danger; and though I depend much on the virtuous education I have given my sons, yet I should tremble to expose them to temptations which youth and constitution could ill withstand."

The entrance of Mrs. Godwin with her sons here broke off the discourse, which, however, was soon renewed by the farmer's informing them of what had passed. The anxious mother, trembling with dread at the bare idea of being separated from her children, was, at the same moment, elated with their probable success, and their future elevation in life; she therefore remained silent, tears glistening in her eyes, which, fixed on the loved companion of her youth, appeared to wish to read his sentiments on the occasion; but he simply repeated Mr. Whitmore's offer, without expressing, even in the most distant manner, his own thoughts on the occasion. He had hardly concluded, when William, addressing Mr. Whitmore, replied—"I know no terms, sir, in the plain untutored language I have been accustomed to, that appear strong enough to express my thanks for your generosity; but for myself, must beg leave to decline it. My father's increasing years demand the assistance of a son, both as a comfort to his age, and to take from his hand the weight of business, trivial to youth, but fatiguing in advanced life. I am also affianced to a young woman, who, like myself, would, I am sure, prefer this cottage, labour, content, and peace, to all the bustle that grandeur or wealth could bestow; and, lastly, unfit, from indisposition, for public life, I can but again express my thanks for your kindness, of which I shall ever retain the most grateful remembrance." Here William ceased. His father smiled with satisfaction, which sentiment was as instantly conveyed to the features of his mother whose heart, however hung doubtful on the answer of her younger son. Edwin was silent, and appeared lost in thought: the struggle was hard, and, for some moments, forbade utterance. Greatness and wealth for the first time appeared within his grasp; but then to leave Agnes, though even for a short time, was distraction yet, perhaps, soon to return, and place her in a position in society she was fitted to adorn, was enchanting, and, after a moments pause, mastered the first consideration.

"I will be guided by my father, sir," at length hesitated Edwin: "he is the best judge of what is fitting for my welfare; and whatever is his determination I shall submit to

without repugnance.”—“My dear boy,” replied Godwin, “by the agreement with Bernard, yourself and your brother will equally share what we possess, except the trifle I have saved being transferred at your mother’s death to Emma. You must therefore, in the present case, judge for yourself, and answer accordingly.” Edwin again, after a pause, replied, that as he knew his father would not feel his loss, from the attention of William, with his permission he would think of it till the morrow, and then give a definitive answer. Whitmore approved of this resolution, as did also Godwin; and being soon after joined by Mrs. Delmer and Emma, the conversation ceased; William and his brother quitting them to go to farmer Bernard’s.

In their way thither, William remained silent until Edwin resumed the discourse respecting Mr. Whitmore’s offer, which he spoke of with all the warmth and energy natural to youth—“I am young,” said he, “and perhaps may be successful enough to acquire sufficient wealth to fix my Agnes in a state equal to my wishes—to assist my parents and Emma—and place my beloved brother above labour.—What happiness. “I can know no greater,” returned William, calmly, though with great affection, “than the prospect before me appears to promise. I am young, and able to labour; Fanny Bernard will be my companion, and share with me the pleasing employ of soothing the declining years of our parents. With such a wife, and such relations, what can I wish for more? The farm has ever been sufficient to gratify all our wants and wishes; what then should we seek for, my dear brother? Under the specious covering of wealth and grandeur, frequently lurks care; and though I would not advise, yet I must confess I had hoped, that as our youth had passed together, our age might do the same. Virtue, justice, all the claims that distinguish manhood, unite you to Agnes, whom, if you forsake, fascinated by the delirium of grandeur, you are unworthy to live.”—“Forsake Agnes!” replied Edwin, recoiling with horror at the idea; “abandon Agnes! No, William, do not think so ill of me; with her I would rather encounter all the calamities that fortune could inflict, than accept a throne without her.” This discourse brought them to Bernard’s door, where they were met by Agnes.—“What is the matter, Edwin?” said she, fixing her eyes on him with inquiring tenderness; “you look unhappy!—nay, and William too! Tell me, are all well at home?” William replied in the affirmative; then asking for her father, hastily passed into the house, leaving her alone with Edwin. “Agnes,” said Edwin, hesitating, “will you walk with me into the orchard? I have much to consult you upon.”

Agnes gave him her hand with silence, which he felt tremble within his own. “Why this alarm, my love?” said he, putting his arm round her waist. “What do you fear?” “Alas! I know not what,” replied she; “but your features first gave me a shock that I cannot account for, and which was increased by William’s looks and behaviour. Well do I know his temper, Edwin: he is never moved by trifles—something very material must have happened to change him thus.”—“Nothing material, my love, only Mr. Whitmore has been offering my father to take charge of either my brother or myself, and to settle us in some situation that may lead to make our fortune. William first replied, and—” “Declined it!” scarcely articulated Agnes. “Yes, my dear girl; nor have I accepted it. I wished to consult you, and shall abide by your determination. If you approve, and think it may be the means of our future welfare, by placing me above sharing our parent’s property with William, I shall accept it with pleasure; if otherwise, relinquish it: for you well know, my Agnes,” continued he, kissing off a tear that had fallen from her cheek, “that my greatest happiness consists in giving you pleasure. In a few months, perhaps, I might be settled to my satisfaction, and able to return to Inglewood, and fetch my betrothed wife. Would to heaven you had already borne that name! for as it is, I fear both our parents will object to our union until they find how I am placed. Oh, Agnes, they say we are too young to marry! How false that notion, when we are old enough to love!”

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Helme, Elizabeth. The Farmer of Inglewood Forest. 8vo. (unbound,
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Agnes was too full for utterance; and, with her face reclined on his shoulder, she gave vent to the anguish that overwhelmed her. "I will not go then," continued Edwin. "I cannot see you thus. I will, with thanks, decline Mr. Whitmore's offer: yet, Agnes," added he, pressing her to his bosom, "to have placed thee in a state I should glory to view thee in, what would I not endure! Heaven witness, that was my strongest incentive! but it is past—I renounce it; it gives thee pain, Agnes, and I will remain through life in the humble situation to which I was born."—"Not on my account, Edwin," sobbed Agnes, endeavouring to master her tears: "go where your wishes lead you—I have no desire for grandeur; Inglewood, with your company, contained all I ever wished to possess: but go—go to that hateful city, whose vices I have trembled to hear repeated; where men scoff at the ruin of innocent maids, and vile women walk the streets at noonday with unblushing cheeks; where power overcomes right; and where affection is bought and sold! Go, there, Edwin, and forsake all the rustics of Inglewood: but remember, that those covered with silks and embroidery do not always contain hearts so true as mine."—"Cruel, ungenerous Agnes! what are their hearts to me? Am I not thine? and I will ever falsify that vow, even though we should be separated? No; I repeat it—should I become that villain, may I be abandoned of God and man! may the *wealth* I seek become my bane! *cursed* by my parents, *despised* by my brother; and by thee, Agnes——" "*Forgiven!*" interrupted she, laying her hand on his lips.

"No, Agnes, I would have said hated, but cannot bear the thought! Hated by thee!—impossible!—that curse alone would drive me to despair! To-morrow I will decline Mr. Whitmore's offer; smile, then, my love, and let it be forgotten."—"Not for my persuasion shall you relinquish it," said Agnes; "for as I am sure your inclination prompts you to accept his proposal, might you not hereafter reflect on yourself for having let an advantage pass that you could never regain? Consult, therefore, with your father and mother; and be sure I will acquiesce in whatever they determine, convinced they are the best judges how you should act." With such discourse Edwin and Agnes passed the first *tele-a-tele* they ever found painful; however, his repeated vows and tenderness, in some measure, contributed to soothe her; and, pulling her bonnet lower over her eyes, they returned to the farm, where a scene of a very different nature had taken place in their absence. They were hardly out of sight, and William had just time to have informed Bernard of Mr. Whitmore's offer, which the honest farmer did not seem to disapprove, when the trampling of horses was heard in the lane.—William listened a moment—"It is, perhaps, Fanny!" exclaimed he, regardless of what Bernard was saying, and hastening to the gate with the utmost eagerness, his eyes sparkling with expectation, when a moment presented her to his sight, with a young cousin, who had escorted her home. William rushed to meet them; while Fanny, seeing his approach, threw the bridle on the neck of the old mare, and was caught in his arms in an instant, each only articulating the name of the other; the young farmer hallooing his greetings, the old mare continuing her sober pace till she reached the well known stable-door, apparently as pleased as any of the party.

Bernard by this time was at the gate, where he received his daughter from William; and giving her a kiss, shook his relation heartily by the hand, exclaiming—"By my truth, I am glad ye be come! for, i'faith, I believe, if you staid a week longer, we should have had a burying. Take care how you fall in love, cousin, for look at William there: he used to be as likely a fellow as you would see on a summer's day," continued he, pointing to him; "why, pies on the fellow, what a change has taken place! a quarter of an hour ago his face was as long as my leg, and his eyes as dead as a stale mackerel's; now, I protest, they look quite bright, and his cheeks plump! Why thou must be a plaguy good doctor, Fanny, to make such a speedy cure!"—"She is the only one I ever intend to employ, if she will undertake the task," replied William: "but your cousin must be fatigued, and needs refreshment."—"Good troth, you may as well be my cousin at once, for that will be the next

thing I suppose. However, come in, my lads; you shall have the best the cupboard and cellar afford." With these words he led the way into the house, where they were soon joined by Edwin and Agnes. "Pies on't!" cried the old man, "here comes another pair of turtles. Heaven help the poor fellow that has likely daughters!—sigh here, kiss there; and then my poor apple-trees, what with true lovers' knots, F. B. and A. B. if the girls don't get married soon they won't be worth a farthing."

William smiled at the farmer's humour; his cousin applauded it with a hearty laugh; but Edwin, distracted between the contending passions of love and ambition, hardly knew what passed; while Fanny, ever gentle and observant, caught the gloom that hung on her beloved sister's features, by whom she was seated, her eyes tenderly fixed on her face, and anxiously inquiring after her health.

CHAPTER IV.

WHILE William and Edwin were engaged at Bernard's, Mrs. Delmer, her brother, and Emma, had taken their evening walk, during which he had informed them of the wish he entertained of Edwin's accompanying them to town. Mrs. Delmer expressed the highest satisfaction at this intelligence, saying, that she had no doubt but that, with the natural gracefulness of Edwin, his fine person, and a proper introduction, he would soon make his fortune. Emma also testified her pleasure; though, at the same time, her face was a perfect index of an April day, alternately exhibiting tears and dimpled smiles. "Why these tears, lovely Emma?" said Whitmore: "your brother's preferment and happiness shall be my peculiar care: think you not," added he, in a lower voice, "but he must be dear to me?" "I am sufficiently convinced of your goodness," replied Emma; "but we have never yet been separated for a day—a circumstance which must plead an excuse for the weakness I now show. Then Agnes, too, whom he sincerely loves, will be quite overcome by his absence; for though both my father and farmer Bernard object to their marriage for a twelvemonth, on account of their youth, yet they have promised to consent at that time." Emma was too intent on the subject, and Whitmore was too intent on Emma, to pay much attention to the countenance of Mrs. Delmer, which, on this intelligence, was overspread with a deep crimson; and interrupting Emma—"It is to be hoped," said she, "that the different situation in which he will be placed, will inspire him with ideas more advantageous to his fortune."—"As to that, madam," replied Emma, "Fanny and Agnes are perfectly worthy the affection of my brothers; for, exclusive of sharing all their father's possessions at his death, they are reckoned among the best, as well as handsomest girls in the country."—"Perhaps so," returned Mrs. Delmer, petulantly; "at a country fair, a small stock of beauty will go a great way." "You will not say so when you see them, but at once allow my brothers' affections well placed," replied Emma. "Indeed I don't know how it could be otherwise; they are our nearest neighbours; and their mother dying when they were very young, they have been as much brought up at our house as their own."

Whitmore here interrupted the discourse by saying—"Should your brother, Miss Emma, accept my offer, which I confess I greatly wish, would not the dread you appear to feel at the idea of parting with him be greatly lessened by returning my sister's visit for a short time in London, where we would endeavour to show you the kindness we received at Inglewood was not lavished on insensibles?" Emma for a moment made no reply; for though such a project had never entered her thoughts, it was too congenial to her inclinations to suffer her to entirely decline it; and to acquiesce without the consent of her parents was impossible.

"You do not speak, Miss Godwin," said Whitmore. "My dear sister, will you not

assist me in persuading your young friend to favour us so greatly?" Mrs. Delmer, who though she liked Emma very well for a country companion, had no intention of carrying the acquaintance farther, yet in a manner thus pressed to make an offer, replied—"As soon as I have fixed on a house, I shall be happy to be favoured with Miss Godwin's company, if her friends will consent."

Mr. Whitmore, who clearly saw that his sister was far more warm in the interest of a handsome young man than a beautiful woman, replied—"True, my dear madam, we both speak provisionally of what we wish; for Edwin, influenced by his passion, may perhaps decline my offer; and my own heart is too sensible how much such a sacrifice must cost him to press it strenuously though for his future welfare,"—"Ridiculous!" cried Mrs. Delmer; "and to suffer an elegant young man to throw away his life in obscurity, at most the master of a farm!" A blush, partly of anger, but more of shame, dyed the cheeks of Emma; and, for the first time in her life, she felt it derogatory to be the daughter of a farmer. "Though I think he might be very happy in that state," said Emma, "yet I cannot but wish he may be sensible of the favour you design him; for though I shall be sincerely grieved at his departure, yet, when I consider it is for his future benefit, that idea will console me, as I hope it will Agnes."—"And to my sister's request you say nothing," replied Whitmore. "Yes, sir, I am truly sensible of your condescension; and if my parents would permit, should be very happy to accept it for a short time." Mrs. Delmer replied in a manner that fully satisfied the unsuspecting Emma. Whitmore, by a glance, only expressed his thanks; but that glance, more expressive than words, declared utterable things, and sunk at once into the heart against which it was directed.

On their return to the farm, they found Mr. and Mrs. Godwin waiting supper; during which Mr. Whitmore's servant entered with a letter which he had brought from the market-town. A momentary suffusion crossed his cheek as he received it, and he was on the point of putting it in his pocket, had not Mrs. Delmer said—"From Mrs. Whitmore, I presume, brother?"—"I know not," replied he, after a moment's hesitation, "but will peruse it, after supper. My last letters say all our friends in town are well." Mr. Godwin, who had no idea that any one could be so careless about those he denominated his friends, entreated that politeness might not deprive him of the satisfaction of reading his letter. Mr. Whitmore bowed his thanks, but again declined it; when Mrs. Delmer, as if actuated by a spirit of contradiction, seconded Mr. Godwin, by saying—"Do my dear brother, oblige me; I long to hear what company you have at Twickenham."

Mr. Whitmore, who now found that opposition would only make the affair worse, and at the same time as effectually disclose what he had wished to conceal, made a virtue of necessity; and breaking the seal, glanced his eyes carelessly over the contents, then reached it to his sister; at that moment heartily wishing her, in his own mind, in the bosom of her departed spouse. While she was reading Whitmore fixed his eyes on Emma, and saw, with secret satisfaction, an air of anxiety overspread her countenance; but finding she observed him, immediately withdrew them. "There, take back your letter," said Mrs. Delmer; "Mrs. Whitmore, I find, is as gay and volatile as ever. This, I think, is the second you have been favoured with since your accident."—"Had she now," replied Whitmore, peevishly, "saved herself the trouble of reminding me of my misfortunes, I had been infinitely more obliged to her."—With these words he arose, and left the room in evident discomposure, though, at the same time, so apparently overwhelmed with melancholy, that the honest farmer and his wife were deeply concerned for him. Emma, during this discourse, had endeavoured to appear, nay, to persuade herself, that she was not interested in it; but her heart beat, her hands trembled, and an involuntary sigh escaped her. "Bless me!" cried Mrs. Godwin, with much surprise, "I never entertained the most distant idea that Mr. Whitmore was married. I presume his lady was not acquainted with his misfortune till he was almost able to return home."—"Oh, yes," replied Mrs. Delmer; "one of the servants who attended us went off the day following; but she is too gay to be easily alarmed. Indeed I never saw my brother so affected at her indifference before."

“My good dame,” replied the farmer, “thinks every one should possess a heart as susceptible as her own. Had I broken my arm, I should have experienced more anxiety for her tenderness than from the pain, and been in continual apprehension of seeing her sink under the fatigue of attending me.”—William and Edwin at that moment entered, and apparently seemed to have changed characters; the first being all gaily, the latter depressed and lost in thought. “I think I might venture a good wager,” said Mr. Godwin, “that Fanny Bernard is returned: is it not so, William?”—“Yes, sir, she will call to see you in the morning; she would have come to night, but I prevented her, as she must be fatigued.” “She will be welcome as thyself, my son, and Agnes too; we shall see her more frequently as Fanny is returned to share the domestic cares.”

Mrs. Delmer changed the discourse, by addressing Edwin respecting his going to town.—“I hope,” said she, “you will not give my brother the vexation of refusing his offer, as I am convinced he will exert his utmost interest for your promotion: nay, to his shall be added mine; and as the late Mr. Delmer had powerful friends, I can entertain no doubt of your success.” Edwin bowed his thanks; after which Mrs. Delmer wished them a good night, and retired with Emma.

The farmer thus left alone with his wife and sons, Edwin's affairs were the sole topic, “I can neither persuade you to accept nor decline it, my child,” said the good man; “you alone must judge what you think conducive to your happiness. Equal possessor with your brother, both of my affection and property, there is no need to seek a greater fortune, if you can be content in the state in which heaven has ever been pleased to keep me, without a desire to change it; but if your wishes lead you to endeavour to gain wealth, make the attempt, and if you fail, my son, return;—under this humble roof you shall find welcome, and a parent's arms open to receive you: but, my Edwin, if you determine in favour of the turmoils of the great world, beware of the intoxication of pride and pleasure, which inevitably destroy the seeds of virtue; beware of being too suddenly elated, or too soon depressed; the first shows a weak head, the second a pusillanimous heart, seek reputation and honour openly and boldly; but flatter no man's vices or foibles to gain them. Let truth be the invariable guide of all your actions. Give no promise without deliberation; but when once given, hold it sacred; and finally, remember God, and in the hour of need he will not forget you.”—“Oh, my father!” cried Edwin, sinking on his knee;—“but Agnes, my beloved, Agnes——” “Is your betrothed wife—a tie sacred, my son, in the sight of that Power who records all our vows and actions. I have wished to delay your marriage on account of your youth; but if you determine for a country life, I am willing to retract my opinion, and press Bernard to join your hands at the same time that Fanny and William are united: but if you resolve on a journey to London, such a step would be the height of imprudence, as the care of a young, handsome, and inexperienced female, in a great city, must naturally take up more time in your first pursuits than you could prudently spare; in that case, it is my opinion, that you leave her with her father until you are properly settled; for if you love her, you cannot wish her to partake of those difficulties you may necessarily meet on your introduction.”

The offer of an immediate union with Agnes, for some moments appeared to preponderate the scale in the mind of Edwin, and determine him in favour of a country life; yet, when reflection presented the resigning almost certain wealth to live for ever in obscurity, nay, to condemn Agnes to such a state when he might raise her to affluence, he paused, and determined to struggle with his passion, and rather relinquish for a few months the rapture of calling her his, than do both himself and her so material an injury.—“My dear father,” said he, after some hesitation, “I think, that is, if you approve, I will at least try my success; chance appears to have thrown this opportunity in my way, which it might be folly to neglect. Bless me, then, my respected parents; I feel I shall be successful, and soon, very soon, trust to return and claim Agnes.”—“Mayst thou be blessed, my son! yet let me conjure thee not to be too sanguine; hope frequently leads us to flatter ourselves with fallacious expectations, which redouble the pangs of disappointment. Nothing is certain

in this transitory state. Even I, who have been blessed above the common lot of mortals, far from the bustle of the world, nappy in a partner to share my joys and cares, and children, whose duty can only be equalled by their affection, yet even I have met with sorrow; think then, on the turbulent sea of public life, how much greater must be the trials. I mean not to depress, but the night is far spent—let us retire; and heaven resolve thee for the best!”

Mrs. Godwin had not spoken during this discourse, though at the conclusion would also have blessed him; but pressing him in her arms, she followed her husband to his chamber—William remained silent while they were preparing to go to rest. The conduct of Edwin had astonished him, for he had not the most distant idea but that every scheme would have been relinquished for an immediate union with Agnes: what then was his disappointment when he heard him resign it! He could scarcely credit the evidence of his senses, nor could he even yet arrange his thoughts: but bidding his brother good night, in apparent uneasiness, he ejaculated—“Unhappy Agnes! Ah, Edwin! thou hast either less love or more philosophy than me!”

CHAPTER V.

THE next morning farmer Bernard, on William and Edwin's calling there, renewed the discourse of the preceding evening. His heart was equally honest as that of Godwin; but his understanding being inferior, he was more fascinated by the offers made to Edwin, whom he warmly pressed to accept them, priding himself in the idea that he should hereafter look up to a son-in-law who would not only constitute the happiness of his beloved daughter, but also be the wealthiest man in either family. Under this persuasion he rallied his daughters on their dislike to his departure; for Fanny more openly expressed her disapprobation than Agnes, who declared, though tears falsified her words, that she was perfectly content to acquiesce in whatever Edwin might think would conduce to his advantage. Edwin, though wounded by Agnes's tears, was notwithstanding so strongly borne away by the infatuation of acquiring wealth, that it mastered every other consideration; and reinforced in this opinion by Bernard, after tenderly repeating his vows to Agnes, it was determined he should declare his acceptance of Whitmore's proffer in the afternoon.—This business settled, Fanny, who had not yet seen the elder Godwin, proposed a walk thither to Agnes, who readily agreed to accompany her.

If Agnes had passed a disagreeable night, that of Emma had not been more pleasant; she could not forget, even for a moment that Whitmore was married. “Yet what is it to me?” said she. “I shall never see him more, without my parents give me leave to visit Mrs. Delmer; and indeed I have scarcely any wish they should: yet, to be sure, Mr. Whitmore's being married is no reason to prevent me. Poor man! he appears very unhappy; he seems deserving of being beloved. So sensible, good-tempered, and handsome, his wife must be a strange character not to endeavour to conciliate his affections; nay, her neglect of him, when she knew his arm was broken, shows she must have an unfeeling heart; for, had he been my husband,” concluded Emma, “I would even have walked twice the distance that separated them, sooner than any others should have taken those cares that properly belonged to me.”

In the morning, Whitmore was the first in the parlour, where he was soon joined by Mr. and Mrs. Godwin. “My friends,” said he, “I know not how to apologize for my behaviour of last night; yet, if you knew my unhappiness, I think I should be excused, though in truth my misfortunes have no right, even for a moment, to cast a gloom on our happiness; yet, when I contemplate the bliss possible to be enjoyed in the marriage state, and compare it with my own misery, I cannot forbear accusing Fortune of unkindness.”—“My dear sir,”

interrupted Godwin, "I entreat you not to mention it: and am extremely sorry you do not enjoy that happiness you appear so well to merit."

Whitmore replied only by a sigh:—he thought the pique he could not avoid showing the night before, required some apology, and therefore had determined to persuade the good farmer that his matrimonial discontents totally originated in his lady—a circumstance which, he thought would excuse his conduct to the family, and perhaps inspire the gentle breast of Emma, to whom he judged it would be repeated, with pity—a sentiment he had no doubt, some time or other, to improve into feeling more congenial to his wishes. The entrance of Mrs. Delmer and Emma prevented more conversation on Mr. Whitmore's family discontents; but he saw with secret exultation that the lively features of Emma were overspread with an uncommon cast of seriousness: a circumstance that, not a little flattered him with success in the plan meditated, in recompense for the hospitality he had received. Indeed, in this case, he conceived that no injury could accrue; for could he gain Emma's heart, the obligation would be mutual; she should share his fortune, and, from the prejudices of a country life and narrow education, be raised at once to be the envy of the woman, and the desire of the men. Had her brothers been affluent, they might have been expected to resent such an insult; but Whitmore feared no man—his sword was ever to defend the vice, of its owner; and in this case the anger of two simple youths, the curses of an aged father, or the anguish of his innocent partner, never intruded on his imagination. Slave to his passions, they bore him like a rapid torrent against all impediment, redoubling by obstruction and difficulty; so that when once resolved on any purpose, the vivacity of his temper, and the errors of his education, represented the pursuit he was engaged in as dependent on his honour to be accomplished.

Breakfast was hardly over before William and Edwin entered, accompanied by Fanny and Agnes, unconscious of beauty though fair

"As op'ning flow'rs untained yet with wind."

Fanny, with a frankness that peculiarly distinguished her, regardless of the strangers, flew to salute Mrs. Godwin, then threw her arms around the venerable father of her lover "Bless thee, my child!" exclaimed the good man, kissing her with the affection of a parent; "may heaven hereafter reward thy duty and innocence with children faultless in mind and form as thyself!"—"Amen," involuntarily articulated William, viewing his father and intended wife with a rapture that gave redoubled animation to his fine dark eyes. A momentary blush suffused the face of Fanny; but silently thanking Mr. Godwin with a kiss, she hastened to testify her affection to Emma, while Agnes, equally lovely, but more timid, replaced her in the arms of the respectable pair. "What a scene!" said Whitmore, in a low voice to his sister, who had withdrawn towards the window; "what enchanting women!" "Passable," replied Mrs. Delmer, carelessly viewing Agnes with scrutinizing attention, in vain endeavouring to discover defects in a face and form that envy itself must have pronounced faultless. The family congratulations over, Whitmore advanced with his natural ease and good breeding, and joined in the conversation. Emma, an hour before, he had thought a finished model of innocent beauty; but now, though he could not allow her eclipsed, he saw her at least equalled; and had there been the smallest room for hope of gaining an interest in the bosom of the fair sisters, his heart would have cherished passion; but, as it was, each fortified by an affection that precluded his flattering himself with success, he contemplated only Emma as equally lovely and doubly desirable, as her heart was not prepossessed, or if otherwise, only partial to himself.

Mrs. Delmer, who, in spite of pride or wealth, found a strong inclination to love Edwin, was not quite so secure. In Agnes she beheld a beloved and much to be dreaded rival; and though she could boast affluence, accomplishments, and a person generally allowed handsome, she was by no means certain whether the weak prejudices of Edwin might not lead him to prefer the humble village maid, unadorned but by nature, and rich only in worth and innocence. She, indeed, flattered herself that the partiality she felt for the

handsome rustic, was merely the effect of being immured in the country, where no pleasing objects had been presented : yet a number of circumstances might have proved to a curious observer, that Edwin, however unintentionally, had a firmer hold of her affections ; she had been satisfied, nay, apparently happy while at Inglewood, though deprived of all those fashionable amusements and gratifications that she had considered during the life of her husband so essential to her felicity, and which she had been in haste to partake as soon as *etiquette* would permit. The idea once started of Edwin's going with them to town, she warmly espoused it and anxiously wished to see him placed in a manner she considered more respectable, without examining her own heart for the real motive. Whitmore was not blind to this partiality, though it was far from being suspected by any one else ; now and then it gave him awkward sensations, but which were quickly vanquished by his favourite tenets—that all were free agents, and passions were given to be gratified ; and so his sister preserved the respect of the world and her rank in society, for he had not the most distant idea of her sinking it in an ill-suited marriage, he cared little about a transitory amour, though, had any one reflected on his sister's chastity, he would have defended it with his life ; yet not from any affection of her person or virtue, but merely because custom demanded such conduct in a man of *honour*. In short, affluence, and the concomitant evils of having it in his power to gratify all his foibles and vices, had perverted a soul naturally noble and brave, to render him merely a modern man of fashion.

After a stay of two hours, Fanny and Agnes took leave of the family, and returned, accompanied by their lovers. Mr. Godwin withdrew to his fields, his wife to superintend her dairy, Mr. Whitmore to his apartment, and, soon after, Mrs. Delmer to hers, complaining of a slight indisposition ; though, in reality, her only sickness was the beauty of Agnes, and the fear of supplanting so dangerous a rival. Emma, thus left alone, for some time indulged a thousand melancholy thoughts she had formerly been a stranger to, and all which had only existence since the introduction of Whitmore at the Forest. At length, weary with unprofitable thinking, and in no humour to resume the little domestic cares that used to amuse her, she carelessly took up a book that Mrs. Delmer had accidentally left on the table. It was an elegantly written fiction, in which the hero, unable to combat his passion for a married woman, had terminated his existence. Emma's heart was not formed of unfeeling materials, and the catastrophe cost her many tears. The heroine was represented virtuous, yet she apparently loved the suicide—circumstances that Emma had thought incompatible, for how, had ever before whispered her innocent heart, can a good woman love any man but her husband ? The hapless lover, too, was mentioned with pity and tenderness—sentiments in which the humanity of Emma coincided ; but no one deplored what she had ever been taught to believe, that suicide was everlasting perdition ; nor was she displeased at the omission of this circumstance—the tenderness of her disposition leading her to sympathize with the sufferer, and pity those errors her education had taught her to abhor. Thus did the dangerous elegance of the pathetic tale at once undermine “ all that the priest and nurse had taught,” and which her father had never contradicted ; leaving those ideas implanted on the mind which he thought might tend to the general good ; or otherwise, trusting to time and reason to develop in the breasts of his children sentiments which he found inexplicable, consonant with the philanthropy which actuated all his thoughts and actions ; for his heart, like uncle Toby's, would not have damned the devil himself to all eternity, much less the errors of fallible mortality. Weakness and folly he considered with pity, and, when in his power, he endeavoured to reclaim ; but vice and cruelty he saw with an abhorrence that made its perpetrators ever shunned by him.

Whitmore, who had loitered from his apartment to the garden, passed the window, and perceiving Emma alone, pushed by the woodbines that almost obscured it, and entered into conversation with her.—“ Good heaven !” cried he, with insinuating tenderness, “ you have

been weeping my lovely friend! Pardon my intrusion; but surely, after the kindness I have experienced, I may be allowed to feel an interest in the sorrows of one whom numberless circumstances have contributed to render dear to me."—"Indeed," replied Emma, "I believe few people have less real cause for them than myself, blest as I am with kind and affectionate relatives; but to confess the truth, this book of Mrs. Delmer's has affected me greatly, though I suppose it is not true; nay, I hope not, for the idea is dreadful; and though our curate says there is no pardon for suicide, I trust he is mistaken."—"Can you doubt it?" replied Whitmore. "God is too merciful to punish errors which fatal necessity obliges us to commit: priests indeed, of all ages, have promulgated doctrines to keep weak minds in awe; but can you, gentle Emma, for a moment suppose that sentiments, which are the result of reflection and reason, culpable? surely not. The unhappy suicide there represented loved, it is true, a married woman, but one whom a number of untoward circumstances had made such, without her heart being consulted, and in which situation she might, perhaps, have remained passably content during life, had not that inappreciable attraction, which unites some hearts, convinced her of her mistake, and her lover of his misery, for nothing to hope," added he, with a sigh, "an insuperable bar being placed between him and the object of his dearest wishes, who can condemn him for throwing off a load which he found insupportable? Believe me, there are situations which demand more fortitude to sustain than falls to the share of weak mortality. You, my fair friend, who are made to be only seen and for ever idolized, can form no idea of the torments of despairing affection."—The entrance of the old servant to lay the cloth, here broke off the discourse, and Whitmore withdrew from the window, to join the hospitable party at dinner.

The cloth was no sooner removed than Whitmore, who could not possibly frame any excuse for a longer stay, mentioned his intention of quitting Inglewood in two days, expressing his wishes that Edwin would accompany him. The young man accepted his offer with modest thanks, saying—"As he had his father's permission, he would attend him, and endeavour to deserve his kindness." Mrs. Delmer's eyes at this reply sparkled with pleasure; while Whitmore expressed his satisfaction in the warmest terms, declaring—"That however successful he might be in attempts to serve Edwin, yet the obligation must ever remain on his side.

CHAPTER VI.

NOTHING material passed intervening Whitmore's departure, the whole family being much dispirited; even Edwin, though at times elate with a flattering prospect before him, could not, unmoved, think on a separation from parents so beloved, and the woman whose happiness had heretofore been his first and dearest consideration. The evening previous to his departure, in presence of William and Fanny, he renewed his vows to Agnes, who could only answer with her tears, concealing her face in the bosom of her sister; while he articulated an adieu scarcely audible, then forced himself away, goaded on by ambition, though at the same moment he was more than half inclined to relinquish all for love. In the morning, after repeated farewells, the travellers took their way towards the metropolis, leaving the anxious farmer and his wife, with Emma, watching the carriage while it remained in sight; the aged pair in silent prayers for the safety of their son, and Emma, though her eyes overflowed with tears, exulting in the future prospect, that Edwin would return, possessed of that wealth her heart had lately thought so essential to human happiness. William had risen at the earliest dawn of day, and taken an affectionate, though melancholy adieu of his brother, whom he entreated not to be displeased that he did not stay to see him depart, as he thought his presence at Bernard's might, in some measure, alleviate the sorrow, with which the gentle sisters appeared overwhelmed.

Edwin having acquiesced in the propriety of this measure, William immediately repaired to Bernard's, where he found them already risen, their swollen eyes sufficiently bearing testimony of their having passed a restless night. William exerted all his endeavours to soothe the mind of Agnes, representing the absence of Edwin as trivial, and which would be greatly alleviated by the weekly receipt of letters. He also urged his flattering prospects; and, finally, what appeared to have still more weight, that he had no doubt but that in a few months Edwin would return, and claim her promised hand. True friendship seldom fails of its effect, especially when assisted by such welcome arguments. By degrees, Agnes became more reconciled to the separation; and though she still continued to sigh, her grief was neither so agonizing to herself, nor so painful to others. On her quitting the room—"Generous William!" said Fanny, "will you ever thus kindly share my sorrows? for in alleviating those of Agnes, how have you calmed mine! but why do I ask, when I know you will? All I fear is, that my utmost efforts will never be sufficient to show my gratitude." While the tears still flowed for Edwin's departure, Mr. Whitmore, with his sister and *protege*, by easy stages arrived at his elegant villa, where he was received by Mrs. Whitmore, not with the inquiring tenderness of a wife, but with the refined politeness of an accomplished but common acquaintance. Whitmore having coldly saluted her, first presented his sister, then Edwin; the former she received with a genteel compliment, but the latter only excited a stare of astonishment; for though Edwin might have been classed among the most finished of Nature's works, he still wanted numberless appendages to make him a fine gentleman. such as a fashionable tailor and hair-dresser, an unblushing confidence, together with a long train of *et ceteras*. These fashionable introductorys being wanting, Mr. Whitmore was obliged to find a substitute.—"To this young man's father," said he, "I am under the greatest obligations, and have, therefore, taken the care of his fortune on myself; his *mauvaise honte* will evaporate daily; I have no doubt, in a single year, to see him so metamorphosed, that his nearest friends will not know him."

Mrs. Whitmore coldly bid him welcome, and retired with her sister to dress, where she more particularly inquired concerning him.—"What a rustic!" exclaimed she; "surely, when Mr. Whitmore had paid for the trouble he had given, it was unnecessary to encumber himself with this lad, for what can he possibly do with him? it is plain he don't intend him for a domestic by his introduction; and, with his curled locks and rosy cheeks, he is fit for nothing else."—"I cannot agree with you," replied Mrs. Delmer; "I think his person, when rendered a little more fashionable, might grace any situation; besides my brother had no other way of showing his gratitude to the family, as they refused all pecuniary recompense; for, though farmers, their situation is perfectly easy: for the young man, he has really had a good education, and, I think, has the finest hair, eyes, and teeth, I ever saw." "My dear sister," returned Mrs. Whitmore, laughing, "your long residence in the country with your late spouse may have given you a taste for the uncultivated beauties of nature; but for me, who have been bred and wedded in the highest degree of fashion, I must confess I prefer the exotic sweets of the orange-flower to the uncultivated fragrance of the woodbine; besides, he is a mere nobody, a peasant, a farmer's son; and, did all the graces that ever poets feigned centre in this Corydon, what would it avail, when he knows not how to use them? Why, he can neither walk, dance, nor talk like a man of the world; however, I confess he has an able master, and, in a short time we shall be able to judge of his genius." Mrs. Delmer, glad to change the subject began a number of inquiries, which her sister was necessarily obliged to answer, and that soon drove the rustic Edwin from her thoughts. The behaviour of Mrs. Whitmore to Edwin in future was polite, but distant, as if fearful that, should she be more condescending, he might forget the distance fortune had placed between them; that of Mr. Whitmore and Mrs. Delmer, on the contrary was friendly and warm: but as no mention was for some time made of the situation designed for him, it gave him uneasiness, as he was too clear-sighted not to view the behaviour of Mrs. Whitmore in its proper light. In his letters to his father and Agnes he expressed himself perfectly satisfied; but in one to his brother William he was more explicit.

"MY DEAR BROTHER,—

"ALTHOUGH I have to my father and Agnes declared myself content, yet to you I will not disguise that I almost repent leaving Inglewood. The manners of the people here are so totally different to ours, that they both disgust and distress me. I am frequently laughed at for blushing; and candour which I have been taught to prize so highly, is banished from among them; while religion is treated as a jest, and scarcely ever mentioned but with a ridicule. All this, my dear brother, is very disagreeable to me; yet the hopes of that advantage which influenced me to leave those so dear, must enable me to bear it. How often, William, do I wish my temper was more similar to yours! the arrows then that might be thrown at my country education and manners might fall harmless, for you would disregard and despise them; while, on the contrary, I am humiliated by ridicule, and almost ashamed of being a farmer's son. I blush to relate this, even to you, though in your bosom I know my weakness is safe. We are yet at Mr. Whitmore's country-house, where we have much company. His lady is also here; she is very handsome and accomplished; but her insufferable pride to me makes her totally disagreeable. He is equally kind as when at the Forest, and, I have no doubt, will strictly keep his word in respect to me; therefore hide my discontents from my affectionate parents and my beloved Agnes, a separation from whom hangs heavy on my heart.

"Adieu, and believe me ever yours,

"E. GODWIN,"

The happiness of his worthy parents, and that of the gentle Agnes, was too near the heart of William for him to show the foregoing letter, not even Fanny being trusted with the contents, while, in his own bosom, he execrated the hour that Edwin left the Forest: nor did he fail to write speedily, and entreat his return; or if he determined to stay, conjured him to preserve his morals unimpaired, to beware of ill examples, nor suffer himself to be too soon elated, nor yet weakly depressed. "A noble mind, Edwin," said he, in the conclusion of his letter, "is not degraded by the scorn of the unworthy. Art thou not an honest man? a name superior to the vain distinctions of wealth. Believe me, I would not exchange it for any unmeaning sound that fortune could bestow, even though pride should add the choice of all the monsters that heraldry ever created. Edwin, we are the sons of a virtuous and honest farmer, a man respected by his neighbours, and beloved by the poor; for the labour of no execrating slave enriches him, but wholesome industry and independence, hand in hand, accompany him through life. Sacred then in the trust reposed in us: let it be our glory to preserve his name unsullied, and transmit it untarnished to our descendants.—Return then, Edwin; the farmer's son, though scorned in polite circles, is here beloved, and his absence hourly lamented: no degrading concessions will be expected; on your return all will be joy and harmony—the only contention who shall caress you most." Before Edwin received this letter he was, however, more reconciled to his situation, the kindness of Mrs Delmer and her brother in some measure compensating for the *hauteur* of Mrs. Whitmore; he therefore wrote an immediate reply to William, affectionately thanking him, but declining to return, as Mr. Whitmore was soon to remove to London, where he hoped to be placed in the promised independence.

CHAPTER VII.

THE information Edwin had given his brother was verified in a few days after, for Mr. Whitmore, already weary of the country, and his lady no less so, determined to hasten to town. Indeed, he had never borne the country with any degree of patience until he saw Inglewood, and there the charms of Emma alone had rendered it pleasing; indeed the innocent Emma had at once given and received an impression not easily effaced. Whitmore could not avoid contrasting her in idea with the modish *belles* he daily beheld: her soft

blue eyes sparkling through their dark lashes; her luxuriant ringlets, wantonly agitated by every wind, waving over her lovely forehead, and falling in untaught elegance to the small of her fine turned waist; the glowing blush of her cheeks, the sweet dimple and enchanting smile which played round her lovely mouth, all returned with redoubled ardour on his warm imagination, and increased his desire to again gaze on them, and, if possible, obtain them.—Edwin's promotion he thought the most probable means; for he then should be regarded as the distinguished friend of the family; and gratitude will give additional softness to the susceptible heart of Emma, in whose bosom he strongly suspected he had already an advocate. To combat her prejudices he knew would be difficult; but these difficulties, if he succeeded, would enhance his victory. With such an incentive, the active mind of Whitmore could enjoy but little rest, until he commenced his plan of operations; the removal to town was therefore the first step, and immediately put in execution.

In the mean time, the family at Inglewood were also forming their future plan of happiness—the good farmers had consented to the union of William and Fanny, as soon as the bans could be published. All therefore was preparation and impatience until the event took place; for never before did William experience three such tedious weeks. Fanny had declined going to church the two first Sundays; but on the third, her father insisted on her accompanying him, as the new lady of the manor had arrived in the country two days before, and was expected at church. It was in vain she attempted to excuse herself—the old man was peremptory. “What a pies, girl, art thou ashamed of?” said he. “If thou art ashamed of William, turn him off—it is not too late. All the tenants will be at church in the morning, in compliment to the new lady, and why shouldst thou wish to be particular? I shall have no right to command thee after Monday; so prithee give me this proof of thy obedience.”—“My dear father,” replied Fanny, “you shall be obeyed; but why will you say that you have no right to command me hereafter? Have I ever shown by my actions that I thought your commands painful?”—“No; thou wert always good and considerate; but thou knowest, Fanny, that my lease is nearly expired, and I should be sorry to appear wanting in respect.” Fanny, thus pressed, determined to obey her father; and accordingly, on Sunday, accompanied by Agnes, Emma, William, and their respectable parents, attended the church, where they were scarcely seated, when (their new lady of the manor) Mrs. Palmer entered. All eyes were turned on their new comer, until the curate, in an audible voice, demanded, for the last time—“Whether there was any lawful impediment against the union of William Godwin and Fanny Bernard?” This at once changed the object of curiosity, all eyes fixing on the intended bride and bridegroom; nor did Mrs. Palmer need any one to point out the parties—the downcast looks and blushing cheeks of Fanny, the eyes of William, “with love illumined high,” fixed with rapturous, yet chastened expression on his future wife, claimed at once the happy pair.

Never before had honest Bernard imposed so painful a task on his daughter as that of attending him to church in so critical a situation; and was sincerely rejoiced when she reached Mr. Godwin's where, with her father and sister, she had promised to pass the afternoon. In short, seated by her beloved William, and surrounding by approving friends, she had almost forgotten the disagreeable sensations of the morning, when Bernard, who was nearest the window, suddenly exclaimed—“Why as I live, here comes our new lady! what can possibly bring her?” Before any conjecture could be made on the reason of this visit, the lady had approached so near the gate, that the politeness required Mr. Godwin should advance to meet her.—“You are welcome, madam,” said the good man. “Will you add to your condescension by accepting a seat after your walk?” The lady having acquiesced, followed him into the parlour, where the whole party instantly arose to receive her.

“I pray you be seated,” said she, taking her place. “You will give me pain if you treat me with so much ceremony; for though not personally acquainted, Mr. Godwin is well known to me by the means of Mr. Burton, my late uncle's steward.” Godwin bowed,

then introduced his family—not forgetting Bernard and his daughter. All were received in a manner that marked true greatness, undisguised by affectation; for she loved to confer happiness, and pride had never yet prevented her from gratifying so praiseworthy an inclination. “My good friends,” said she with a smile, “though in this first visit I come an uninvited guest, I trust hereafter I may not prove an unwelcome one. As your daughter’s marriage is the first after my arrival in the country, I entreat it may be celebrated at the Hall.”—“I scarcely know how to express my gratitude for your condescension, madam,” replied the farmer; “but my future daughter is anxious to have her marriage as private as possible; and as it is to take place to-morrow, we should be but giving your family a world of unnecessary trouble.”—“It will be none,” replied Mrs. Palmer. “My table needs but little preparation; therefore my good girl,” continued she, taking the hand of the trembling Fanny, “shall it not be as I say? My own family, and any guests you choose, shall constitute the whole company.” Fanny stole a look at her father; for though she would willingly have been excused, she well knew his temper, and remembered his anxiety for a renewal of his lease.—“My father and Mr Godwin shall decide for me, madam,” replied Fanny, modestly curtsying.

“Nay,” hastily interrupted Bernard “if my opinion is asked, I think it will be the height of ingratitude to refuse madam’s offer; and as to the wedding being private, had I my own way, I should have invited half the country. I think a good action cannot have too many witnesses; but Fanny is so sheepish and bashful, that she cannot bear one to mention it to any body, though she loves William as her own life, and is never happy but when he is tied to her apron-string.”—“Well, madam,” interrupted Godwin, “as our good girl has referred herself to us, and I see it will gratify her father, with your leave we will avail ourselves of the honour you intend to confer on us; and our young folks will hereafter, I hope, show they do not disgrace your kindness.” Mrs. Palmer expressed the utmost satisfaction at this determination, and after some general discourse, bid them farewell, having first desired them to breakfast at the Hall previous to their going to church, where she meant to accompany them. Mrs. Palmer was scarcely out of sight before Bernard gave way to the transport that almost overpowered him.—“There, girl,” said he, “this comes of my advice. I have no fear of my lease now, and that will be so much the better for thee. Well, well, thou be’st a lucky girl, Fanny; and so will my Agnes too, never fear. The next thing will be, I suppose, our having news that Edwin is quite a gentleman, and coming down to fetch her.” William sighed involuntarily, while Agnes silently dropped a tear. Ambition she had none, and would willingly have relinquished all the flattering prospects of future grandeur, to have been seated by Edwin’s side in similar circumstances with her sister Fanny.

All the parties were loud in the praise of Mrs. Palmer: her person of affability furnished discourse for the whole afternoon, except when the subject gave way to the pity excited by her uneasiness; for she had lately buried an uncle, whose fortune she inherited, and to whose memory she was said to be most tenderly attached. At an early hour they separated; William attending Bernard and his daughters home; where he lingered some time before he could bid them farewell, though only for the night. At length, tenderly saluting his destined wife, he whispered in her ear—“Thank God, my beloved Fanny, this is the last night we have to separate!” Then, without venturing another look, he ran from the house, and hastened home. William arose with the sun the next morning; excessive happiness had kept him hours with impatience, and beheld with rapture the stars give place to the dawn of day. He was soon equipped—a plain superfine drab suit constituting his whole bridal finery. His father was not yet risen. “He has surely overslept himself,” said William. The clock struck. “Pish!” continued he, “that clock has stood during the night; yet, if it has not, I should be sorry to disturb my father.” With such ideas he descended the staircase, though far less cautiously than usual; nay, when he had reached the bottom, he was seized by a cough, which being heard by the farmer, he called aloud

from his bed—"What are you stirring already, my son? it is much too early, to go to Bernard's." William was of a different opinion; and after having answered his father, that he should take a walk, hastened thither, predetermined, however, not to disturb his Fanny. This determination was however unnecessary, for in a short time she appeared at the window, and presently after, with Agnes, joined him at the gate.

After conversing for two hours, the party was augmented by the arrival of some relations; and soon after came the venerable Godwin, his wife, and daughter, accompanied by the guests who were invited to witness the ceremony. Mutual congratulations having taken place, the company repaired to Mrs. Palmer's where they found every thing prepared for their reception—the lady presiding at the breakfast-table in a manner that delighted her guests. At length the moment arrived that called them to church. Mrs. Palmer, with Mrs. Godwin and Bernard, in honest exultation, led the van; next followed Fanny, escorted by her future father-in-law and husband, whose

"Speaking eye
Express'd the sacred triumph of his soul,
With conscious virtue, gratitude, and love,
Above the vulgar joy divinely rais'd."

Then came the bridesmaids, Agnes and Emma; and lastly, in pairs, the different relatives of both families. On entering the church the service immediately began; and Bernard presenting his daughter to William, a few minutes fixed her irrevocably his.—"Fanny," said he, saluting her when the ceremony concluded, "thou art mine for ever, ever, mine; and the study of my life shall be to deserve thee." "And mine," whispered Fanny, "to repay your affection, William." He then advanced with her towards their fathers.—"Even here, oh! my parents," exclaimed he, "bless us at the altar!—so shall your blessing be registered with our mutual vows, and doubly sanctify our union!" Bernard, moved even to tears, could only sob his blessing as he saluted his children; but Godwin, firm and collected, advancing, said—"May the benediction of your Father who is in heaven be added to that of a weak old man! Blessed may you be!—May every morn bring to ye joy like this! May ye live in honour and happiness, and die surrounded by your children's children, whom I cannot wish worthier than being just representatives of their parents. Mrs. Palmer now congratulated the new-married pair, as did also the rest of the party; they then returned to the Hall, where an excellent but plain dinner was provided; after which the day was passed in innocent mirth and festivity, and the evening concluded with a ball; after which all parties retired to their respective homes—Mrs. Palmer, at their departure, presenting Fanny with a ring, in token of her future friendship.

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. PALMER was about thirty-six, her fortune large, and entirely at her own command, being bequeathed her by her lately-deceased uncle, whose death had spread a gloom over her natural cheerfulness; but nothing could obscure the philanthropy of her disposition: she had felt misfortune, therefore knew how to compassionate it in others, while to diffuse happiness was her highest gratification—"Ah!" exclaimed she when her guests departed, "how have these honest folks beguiled me from myself! What a respectable character is Godwin! How forcibly does he bring my uncle to my memory! It is not in the bustle of public life my mind can regain its wonted composure—it is in the calm exercise of domestic duties, in the society of a chosen few, in acts of beneficence, which my fortune demands, and my heart applauds." As such was the disposition of Mrs. Palmer, it may easily be supposed that her partiality for the Godwins increased daily; for joined to uncorrupted honesty, they possessed a degree of understanding that made them agreeable and conversable companions. Her superior rank had at first caused some little restraint; but her con-

stant affability soon banished all reserve ; and though they continued to look up to her with respect, it was soon softened by affection and esteem, that her presence ever increased their cheerfulness, and redoubled their enjoyments. William had, immediately on his marriage, written to acquaint his brother, who had returned his congratulations. Edwin was now in London ; but the situation Mr. Whitmore mentioned had been disposed of previous to his application ; he therefore was as yet unsettled—a circumstance that Mr. Whitmore treated so lightly, saying the loss would be soon supplied, that it greatly contributed to alleviate the vexation Edwin would have otherwise experienced. Mrs. Delmer, on her arrival in London, had immediately taken a house ; and Mrs. Whitmore's perpetual engagements left Edwin under the entire guidance of her husband, who introduced him every where as his *protege*. This condescension did not fail of its effect. Edwin looked up to Mr. Whitmore as a masterpiece of perfection, for his fine person and vivacity made him universally admired ; and as for the spots of libertinism that shaded his character, they sat so easy, and appeared so little regarded by the gay part of the world, that Edwin began to think such errors not so very heinous as he had once imagined—a doctrine which Whitmore never failed to inculcate as often as occasion presented. This sophistry was proportionably dangerous as it was pleasant ; the curb of education and religion had hitherto kept the passions of Edwin (which were naturally strong) in subjection ; but he was now become a pupil to a declared votary of pleasure, who disdained to be withheld by the contracted bounds of reason. Thus Edwin's morals insensibly gave away ; for though his heart still revered virtue, yet he began to regard the practice as more difficult than he had ever before experienced.

One evening, after having dined with Whitmore at a tavern, among a mixed company, where the glass was freely circulated, and Edwin, ashamed by the ridicule of his friend, had forgotten his usual temperance, as they adjourned homeward, Whitmore suddenly seeming to recollect himself, said, with a half-smile—“ *A-propos*, I had forgot an indispensable engagement which I made for to-night—you must accompany me.” They then entered a hired vehicle, and soon reached an elegant house, where Whitmore appeared perfectly acquainted, introducing Edwin to an elderly lady and three young ones as his friend ; at the same time desiring him to cultivate the acquaintance of his cousins. Edwin bowed, and blushing, replied, “ he was to much honored by the condescension of Mr. Whitmore to neglect showing his respects to any of his relatives.” The ladies smiled archly at Whitmore, and seemed to demand an explanation, when taken the youngest by the hand (a beautiful girl of eighteen), he presented her to Edwin, saying, “ Here, Sophy, take charge of this young man ; he is as bashful as you were twelvemonths since, and blushes as frequently. Cannot you give him some advice how to get rid of such troublesome appendages ?” “ I do not know,” answered she in a lively accent, at the same time fixing her eyes on his face, and taking his hand ; “ let me first consider his features : why, yes, I believe he will do in time. What say you, sir, will you be my scholar ?” Edwin was confused, he knew not what to reply, he trembled, his cheeks were dyed with crimson : even unacquainted as he was with the world, he could make no doubt, from the manner of the ladies, that they were of the number his education taught him to abhor ; yet fearful of displeasing his friend Whitmore, and ashamed of avowing his sentiments, he remained silent ; his hand locked in that of the youthful Circe, who appeared in no haste to resign it. During the evening, mirth, even to licentiousness, prevailed over the whole party, except Edwin. He, pressed by the caresses of his select companion, and withheld by the recollection of Agnes, knew not how to act, and alternately underwent paroxysms of both fever and ague. At length an elegant supper was served up ; the wine went briskly round, the most lascivious songs were sung, Whitmore and the ladies repeatedly pressing Edwin to drink, until his natural timidity began to give away ; Whitmore then pretending first to recollect the hour, exclaimed.—“ It is pass two—we shall but disturb my family ; can we intrude on you ladies, for this night.” The elder answered in the affirmative, desiring two of her daughters (as she styled

them) to show the gentlemen to their respective apartments. Edwin hesitated; but his head giddy with wine, and his heart intoxicated with a vicious inclination, his wanton companion soon gained the ascendancy, and led him to his chamber--where Inglewood, Agnes and Virtue were soon forgotten!

 CHAPTER IX.

As opium can for awhile deaden the anguish of the body, so may vice for a short time stifle the pangs of conscience; but, as in the first instance, when the effect ceases, the pain returns, so in the latter, reason no sooner regains her empire than the delusion vanishes, and we view our deeds simply as they are. Thus it was with Edwin--with the morning came disgust and calm reflection--in the bitterness of his regret he cursed Whitmore, detested his companion, and despised himself, resolving to hasten back to Inglewood, and endeavour to repair the error he had unwarily been drawn into, by the future prudence of his conduct. On his meeting with Whitmore he was serious and reserved, being fully determined to inform him, on the first opportunity, of his intentions. Whitmore, on the contrary, was even more than commonly cheerful, exerting his utmost vivacity to entertain him, but in vain; and he had undoubtedly declared his resolution, had they not been joined immediately on their quitting the house by a friend of Whitmore's, who accompanied them home. Edwin, on his arrival, immediately retired to his apartment, where he, for some time, had given way to the vexation that overpowered him, when he was interrupted by the entrance of a servant, with a packet that had been left during his absence--"It is from my brother," said he, as the man quitted the room, without regarding the address, "and contains others from my father, from Agnes--and to whom? to a drunkard, a debauchee, a perjured, execrable villain, whose contaminated soul ought for ever to be deprived of such blessings! Oh, Agnes! accursed be the hour I left thee! and doubly accursed that in which I was proof against thy tears! I dare not open the letters--they will contain nothing but expressions of kindness, and sooner at this moment could I face death." As he spoke, he pushed the packet from him, but his eye involuntarily glancing over the direction, he perceived it was neither William's nor his father's hand. As he had no other correspondents a thousand fears at once agitated him; and curiosity mastering every other sensation, he hastily broke it open, and to his infinite surprise, instead of letters, found a commission for an ensigny filled up in his own name, and a bank note for a hundred pounds, but no line to infer from whence it came. Amazement kept him for some moments silent; he could scarcely believe his eyes; and every other idea being banished by the present occurrence, he started up, and hastened to Mr. Whitmore, whom he had no doubt had chosen this method to surprise him. Whitmore was alone, and, if the astonishment of Edward had been great, his, if possible, was yet superior. The army he had never thought of; nor had the most distant idea of such a measure ever taken place in the mind of Edwin, though to Mr. Whitmore he was convinced he owed it; for unknown to any one in London, to whom else could he suppose himself indebted? Mr. Whitmore at first strongly denied it; but a few moments' recollection made him change his manner into simple congratulations on the event, neither absolutely denying, nor yet positively acknowledging it; then, after some slight discourse, taking his hat, left the house. Edwin remained alone some time, bewildered in a multiplicity of different ideas, the errors of the preceding night only lightly intruding on his mind; the return to Inglewood was also forgotten, or at least delayed, until he should go to claim Agnes as his bride, which he had now no doubt of being soon able to perform; for imagination had already raised him from an ensign to a colonel at least.

In the meantime, Whitmore hastened to his sister, on whom his suspicions immediately glanced; nor did he hesitate to disclose them. Mrs. Delmer, at first firmly denied any knowledge of the business; but Whitmore's eyes and interrogatories were too penetrating

for him to be long deceived. At length, said he,—“You well know my sentiments in general; yet I hold the good opinion of the world of some moment, particularly when relative to women, and more particularly when they are young and handsome; consider how this business, should it ever be known, would be canvassed by the old and envious. I have, indeed, myself for some time suspected you had a partiality for Edwin, but hope your pride will prevent an improper step.” “I need not tell you, Whitmore,” said she, laughing at his unusual gravity, “that I am twenty-seven, a widow, possessed of an affluent fortune, and independant spirit; having well considered all those matters, I am predetermined to act according to my own inclination. As for the commission, if you will father that brat for me, I shall be obliged to you, as I would not wish to encounter Mrs. Whitmore’s railery on the occasion; therefore, my friend, I am willing to resign to you all the merit of doing a generous action without the expense. In the army, the meanness of Edwin’s origin will be the most effectually concealed, as I have no doubt he may speedily gain rank; now, as to my having entertained a partiality for the young man, admitting the supposition, who has a right to restrain me? have I not fortune enough for both?” Whitmore not being able to combat the force of such *irresistible* arguments, thought it the best policy to take the commission on himself, leaving her in other respects to act without controul, as he well knew that contradiction would rather strengthen than extinguish her predilection; besides, were she as partial to Edwin as he suspected, he was yet unacquainted with her weakness, and strongly attached to Agnes.

Whitmore, on his return home, though he still denied sending the commission, gave Edwin every reason, from his vague answers, to suppose, at least, that it came with his privacy. Edwin would fain have returned the note; but this Whitmore strenuously refused, saying “that he would want that sum at least to equip him for his new employ,” for which purpose a capital army tailor was immediately sent for, to decorate his outside with the usual *insignia* of valour. While these exterior marks of a soldier were in preparation, Whitmore did not fail procuring other necessary appendages, viz. a fencing master, and a skilful teacher of military tactics.

The occurrences of this busy, and, to Edwin, pleasing day were no sooner over, than he sat down to write to the family at Inglewood, acquainting them that “Mr. Whitmore had procured him a commission; and likewise had, with unparalleled delicacy and generosity, presented him with a sufficient sum to equip him in a manner that should not disgrace it.” He likewise wrote to Agnes. As usual he lamented the separation from her, and vowed to see her as soon as possible; but, alas! in the exultation of the moment, even love appeared to hold but a second place in his heart—ambition, like an impetuous torrent, bearing all before it.

CHAPTER X.

EDWIN’S letter reached the family at Inglewood as they were seated in high glee in Godwin’s parlour. Bernard had some days before ventured to the Hall, and mentioned his wish of renewing his lease; in which Mrs. Palmer had immediately acquiesced, granting him a long term at his usual rent—a circumstance that exceeded Bernard’s most sanguine expectations, who, amidst a profusion of thanks, concluded with saying—“I have one more favour to beg madam, which is, that the lease may be drawn in my son-in-law’s name; but he shall know nothing about it until it is signed; for he is such an obstinate fellow, I should never get him to consent.” Mrs. Palmer, pleased with the blunt integrity of the farmer, dismissed him, saying,—“she left the whole business to himself, and would sign it whenever he was prepared.” Three days after, all being in readiness, Bernard called on his son-in-law, desiring he would accompany him to witness the completion of the lease—a summons he immediately obeyed. Mrs. Palmer, having ordered her steward to be summoned, the parchments were produced, and William directed where to set down his name, in the supposition

of witnessing the deed. The other parties having likewise affixed their names, and the whole concluded, Bernard could no longer conceal his exultation; but, bowing to Mrs. Palmer, said—"I thank you, madam: William, I trust, will show himself a worthy tenant to so kind a lady." "I do not doubt it," replied she, "and had I changed you for any other, I should have felt dissatisfied; but, as it is, I am rather inclined to congratulate you, as the business will now fall on one more able to support it."

William, after a moment's recollection, comprehended the whole affair; but well knowing that all remonstrance would be vain, he simply returned his thanks to both parties, concluding by saying to Bernard—"Though you have in this business acted in a manner contrary to my wishes, I shall still regard the farm as yours during your life; and, should I survive you, as held in trust for my sister Agnes; a dependance on my father I by no means wish to shake off, nor does my Fanny find it painful; why then, my dear sir, would you wish us to change?" "You are too proud, William," replied the old man, with emotion; "you do not like to be obliged to me, though I love you as well as your own father." "And do I not revere you equally?" answered William. "He gave me life, and with the most tender care watched over my childhood; but you, in giving me Fanny, bestowed a treasure far superior to the whole world without her." The farmer's reply was a hearty shake by the hand, saying—"A good lad, a brave fellow, I can never do enough for thee." Then making his obeisance to Mrs. Palmer, again repeated his thanks, and with his son-in-law returned to Godwin.

As they walked, the old man's heart seemed full. At length, "William," said he, "Agnes and I lead but a dull life since thou hast taken Fanny from us; the foolish girl does nothing but sigh, and her eyes are ever red with crying after Edwin, though she knows, and I am for ever telling her, it is all for his good; now, if thou and Fanny were with us, we should be as happy as the day is long." William replied, "It was a case in which he should be entirely guided by the joint agreement of himself and Mr. Godwin; that he truly confessed he should be much grieved to leave his father, and equally so to refuse the parent of his wife what would give him such apparent satisfaction." This conversation brought them home; where neither Bernard nor William appeared in haste to disclose the manœuvre at the Hall, until Bernard, after dinner, ventured to inform them what he had done, and which, to his great vexation he found all disapproved, except Agnes. Godwin, indeed, consented that William should reside with Bernard; but the gloom which overspread his venerable features, on the idea of his son forsaking his paternal roof, plainly showed how reluctantly the permission was given. Emma had sat for some time a silent observer, when starting up with great liveliness, she cried—"Though no one has asked my opinion, I shall give it notwithstanding; I hate this division of families: we all love one another, why then cannot we all live together? Our house is far larger than Mr. Bernard's, and here is plenty of room for us all." Bernard made no reply, but fixing his eyes on Mr. Godwin, appeared to wait his opinion with anxiety.—"Indeed Emma," replied Godwin, "I know but few things that would give me greater satisfaction than the constant company of my friend Bernard, if—" "If what?" interrupted the farmer. "Why, if you and your good dame like on't, it's a bargain; for I lead but a moping life yonder. With you I shall be as happy as a prince. We can smoke a pipe, and drink a jug of ale, and envy no one under the sun. Old age will steal on me unperceived, and I shall die surrounded by those I love best." Among a party so determined to act in unison, an agreement was soon made, and Emma was embraced and caressed as the author of the present happiness; for though it was apparent to all how much satisfaction the proposal had given, yet, had not her vivacity started it, in all probability it had never taken place.

"Nay, nay, Fanny," exclaimed Emma, "don't kiss me; you only do it to conceal your tears. Here, William, pray comfort her. I have other business to mind," throwing her arms round Bernard's neck, and saluting him with affection of a daughter—"You are a good-natured man, and I love you dearly." Here the sound of the postman's horn at the gate, broke off their mutual greetings; and William hastening out, soon returned with a letter

addressed to his father. All equally eager to hear from Edwin, Godwin began to read the contents aloud, but had no sooner communicated the intelligence of Edwin gaining a commission, than Agnes fell from her seat, deprived of sense or motion. Every other idea was now lost in her situation, until at length slowly reviving, she was led to Emma's chamber, and laid on her bed; where, after some time, she entreated to be left alone, which being complied with, and the party again assembled, Godwin concluded the letter, and each gave their respective opinions. Bernard was in raptures; Edwin was already a gentleman; for his part, he had no patience with Agnes, who could suffer herself to be depressed by what ought to give her the highest pleasure.

"Yet when you consider, my dear father," interrupted Fanny, "that Edwin, by this step and in all probability Agnes, will be for ever estranged and distant from us, yourself will not see it in so flattering a point of view. Should we not have been happier, think you, altogether in our original destination?" "True, true, girl, I can't say but it would have been very comfortable; but then only think, when he comes to fetch Agnes, how the whole country will stare—how I shall enjoy it! besides every man has not the same luck; and many men, many minds; Edwin was born for a gentleman, and William for a farmer." "So truly do I feel what you advance," answered William, "and so thoroughly sensible am I of the blessings I enjoy, that were it in my power to choose my situation, I would reject a change. Nature, in giving me a constitution able, and a heart willing to labour, has done her part; and, never in my person, shall the active farmer degenerate into the useless gentleman. Edwin has chosen a more distinguished part in the business of life—a defender of his country, and a minister of its vengeance. Oh! may equity guide him, and success and honour attend him! For me, no aspiring thoughts find place in my bosom; let kings defend their possessions and treasure—sufficient to me is the defence of mine to shield those I love from care, to cultivate my lands, to guard my flocks, and to shelter them from the wintry blast. Thus let me live and die; too humble to excite envy, and too happy to envy one. Can riches give more? or rather can they give so much? my heart says no; I am peculiarly blest, and can look down with pity on kings, and the painful, uncertain splendour that surrounds them."

"Ah! would to heaven," exclaimed Mrs. Godwin, weeping, "that my beloved boy had never left us, to fall perhaps in a foreign land! no careful mother to soothe his dying hours, no tender father to see him laid in the earth! Miserable woman that I am, why did I consent to his departure?"

"Be comforted dear friend of my youth," said the venerable Godwin, taking his wife by the hand; "never can my heart know peace while thou art sad; neither can it be completely overwhelmed while thou art spared to bless me. Look," continued he, affectionately viewing his family, "consider the blessings that surround thee, and canst thou repine? Like thyself, I could have wished Edwin's destination otherwise; but as it is, heaven speed him in the just cause; and God's will be done!" "My dear mother," said Emma, drying her tears, "our Edwin will I hope be safe from danger, and an honour to us. I think I already see him so elegant and handsome in his fine scarlet clothes, his hair powdered, and his sword by his side! Oh! I am sure I shall love him a thousand times better than ever." "I pray ye Fanny," said William, smiling, and wishing to enliven the discourse, "if the old tailor should call when I am absent, bespeak me a scarlet coat; and when you go into the cheese-chamber, bring down the rusty cutlass, it shall no longer be employed against the rats, but hung to my side; for I am determined that Emma shall love me a thousand times more than ever, since her affection is so easily obtained." "You may say what you please," replied Emma, "but he will look delightfully. Oh! how pleased I shall be when he comes back! the very first Sunday he shall go with Agnes and me to church! Lord! not one of the girls, I'll be bound, will know the text." "I fear," answered Godwin, "that you judge of others by yourself, Emma; but, for the present, drop the subject, and go to Agnes, whose unassuming heart, like my own, I fancy, would prefer a russet frock to a scarlet coat and cockade." Emma obeyed: and, during her absence, it was agreed that, as

the subject apparently gave so much uneasiness to Agnes, it should be touched upon as little as possible, and that the whole party should appear to view the change in Edwin's affairs in a promising light.

The next day Godwin took the opportunity of being alone, to write to his son; never before had he found the task so painful. He wished not to lessen the pleasure Edwin appeared to experience from his success, yet could not congratulate him upon what overwhelmed his heart with sorrow. "Merciful Creator!" exclaimed he, laying down his pen, "what words can I use? my son a soldier! a man licensed to shed blood—the blood of those who never wronged him!—nay, perhaps, to lose his own in quarrels in which his heart has no share!—a heart so tender, kind, and dutiful, to become at once so hardened as to triumph in the destruction of his fellow creatures. Congratulate him!—ah! no it is impossible: I will simply tell him that I am glad he is satisfied, but that for myself I should have preferred any other situation. Fascinated as he appears, I will not openly show my disgust, but by lenient methods endeavour to awaken his real disposition, which for some time has appeared clouded by ambition, or he had never left his family and betrothed bride to follow a vain and empty shadow."

Godwin's letter was, as he expressed, mild, yet energetic. He did not command his son's return, but introduced subjects which he thought might encourage it; as the happiness of William—the kindness of Mrs. Palmer—uneasiness of Agnes—the new arrangement between the families—and, finally, if he did not find a very particular attachment to the new profession he was engaged in, Bernard's farm was entirely at his command, as William only held it in trust for Agnes, and would rejoice to relinquish it. The letter concluded, he showed it to no one, that in case he was disappointed, they might not judge of his vexation, nor yet too harshly of Edwin; he then joined Bernard, who was seated with his jug of ale before him. Filling a bumper, he drank to Edwin's health, concluding with a wish that "he might live to be a general." "Heaven forbid!" involuntarily ejaculated Godwin; for how much carnage must he wade through before he could arrive at that height!"

CHAPTER XI.

EDWIN's letter had reached the family at Inglewood as they were in the midst of innocent joy and friendship. Godwin's answer was also received by Edwin in a moment of exultation, for he had entered upon and assumed the dress of his new profession—gaudy distinguished scarlet. Strange, that the ministers of a business so replete with horror as that of war, should wear so triumphant and gay a habit, while those of religion are clothed in mournful black, which appears to denote their profession gloomy, mysterious, and sad! Hateful prevarication! True religion is simple, clear, and open as truth, and needs no habit of assumed gravity to implant it on the human heart.

"Since God is ever present, ever felt,
In the void waste, as in the city full;
And where He vital spreads there must be joy."

Whitmore had introduced Edwin in his new decoration to his lady, saying—"There, madam, what do you think of my pupil? I don't believe there is a handsomer fellow in the regiment." To confess the truth, Edwin's natural good person showed to advantage in his military accoutrements, and which may be easily surmised by the answer of the lady, who viewing him from head to foot, with more than unusual kindness, coincided in her husband's opinion; as did also Mrs. Delmer, who soon after joined the party. Thus treated with uncommon kindness by Mrs. Whitmore, and encouraged by general approbation, Edwin felt a self-satisfaction that he had never before experienced; and afterwards, when alone, as he passed the large glass in the drawing-room, could not avoid stealing a glance at his own figure, which appeared both new and delightful to him. At this moment his

father's letter was presented to him; its contents at once gave both pleasure and pain: he rejoiced at their happiness and success, but grieved at the uneasiness of Agnes, tenderness and gratitude for a moment obliterating ambition. "I will leave all," said he, "to show my affection—I will relinquish my aspiring hopes, and once more sink into a plain and humble farmer." As he spoke he raised his eyes from the letter to the mirror, and vanity again resumed her sway. "Fool that I was to leave the country! unless I had courage to pursue my fortune, it is but to taste of the cup of prosperity, and then to dash it from my lips!" With what pleasure could I resume my labour, when I recollected how dear it cost me; to drudge through the day in a coarse clumsy habit, and at night to return to a mere cottage, compared to the elegant mansions I am now accustomed to! Agnes cannot require such a sacrifice,—it would involve herself in the consequences of my folly: No; rather let me redouble my efforts for advancement, which, once obtained, I will fly to claim her, make her partaker of my happiness, and force her to confess I took the most effectual means to show my affection."

With such a resolution, it may easily be conjectured what answer he returned to his father: it was affectionate and grateful, but at the same time expressed, in the warmest terms, his satisfaction at his change of fortune, his sanguine hopes of perferment; and finally, entreating him to console his beloved Agnes, and to assure her of his unalterable fidelity. For the farm, he denied all present or future claim to it; adding, "he hoped to gain both honour and fortune, without intruding on the little property so justly his brother's." Such was the purport of Edwin's answer; after which he joined the family at dinner. Whitmore was that evening particularly engaged immediately after, and consequently the young ensign was left with his lady and Mrs. Delmer. The behaviour of the former was striking, the utmost distance and *hauteur* were now changed into polite and attentive kindness; and being that evening engaged to accompany Mrs. Delmer to the play, after the removal of coffee, she said—"What say you, sister, shall we take this young soldier with us?"

Mrs. Delmer acquiesced with pleasure; and Edwin, at once astonished and delighted at such uncommon condescension, which he could only account for, by attributing it to the favourable alteration his person had undergone, bowed his thanks, and accompanied them with the highest pleasure.

Mrs. Whitmore was too much the *ton* for her party to pass unnoticed; her new *cicisbeo* attracted universal attention; nor was his vanity a little gratified by some whispers he heard addressed to the ladies respecting his fine person. The question of "Who is he?" was by no means so flattering, and gave him great embarrassment, until he heard Mrs. Whitmore reply—"A young gentleman, whose friends residing constantly in the country, have entrusted his introduction into life to Mr. Whitmore."

After the play, they adjourned to Mrs. Delmer's, where they supped; and soon after Mrs. Whitmore and Edwin returned home. Whitmore was yet absent; and his lady, apparently in no haste to retire, proposed a game at piquet. Edwin was overwhelmed with shame: he simply knew it was a game at cards; but was totally unacquainted with that as any other, save a little at whist, and that he had sometimes humoured farmer Bernard, by suffering him to beat him at cribbage or all-fours. Mortifying as it was, he was forced to confess his ignorance; at which Mrs. Whitmore laughing heartily, said—"Well, I must teach you then; but how, in the name of wonder, did you contrive to stupify your evenings in the country? Oh! now I remember, Mr. Whitmore told me you had a true love, so I suppose you spent them with her, vowing eternal constancy, setting old age and ugliness at defiance, then trudging home at nine o'clock, you drank a glass of ale, asked your mother's blessing; and bid adieu till five next morning! Nay, never blush, Edwin, I am sure I have guessed right; but times are changed; what might do very well for Edwin Godwin, farmer, would be highly improper for a young officer, whose fortune depends on his person and his sword; but enough, take your cards, we will play for nothing to night; next time I shall not let you off so easily." Edwin was too much confused to reply; but the silence was

short, for Mrs. Whitmore was too lively to suffer her companion to be thoughtful; and the time flew pleasantly till the clock struck two, when Edwin apologized for breaking so long on her rest, and soon after retired, Mrs. Whitmore saying, as he left her—"You have hitherto not considered me as your friend; dream to-night that I am truly such, and perhaps you may find your dreams realized." Edwin retired too well satisfied to fall immediately asleep; and when he did, it was but to retrace the objects that during the day had afforded him such exquisite pleasure. At an early hour Whitmore entered Edwin's apartment, and hastily awakened him. He had been up all night, and his dress in consequence was disordered; but the animation of his features was redoubled. "Edwin," said he, "I could not retire without informing you of my success; I have all night been engaged at hazard, and have brought off two thousand pounds, notes and cash, and shall to-morrow receive four hundred pounds more, which makes the whole of my winnings two thousand four hundred. You shall accompany me when I go again, and try your fortune." Edwin congratulated his patron on his success; who soon after retired to rest, leaving Edwin possessed of an idea that, could he but be lucky enough to learn this charming science, his fortune was indubitably made. Whitmore was true to his promise; he introduced Edwin the following evening, insisting that for all that night they should be partners of their success. Edwin would have declined it, but Whitmore was peremptory, for avarice was not among his vices; and fortune again favouring him, he, the next morning, presented Edwin with two hundred guineas, the moiety of what he had won the evening before. Edwin now considered gambling a never-failing resource, and became indefatigable in learning its arts and mysteries, now playing on his own funds with various success, but for the general part successful. Whenever he was engaged from Whitmore, he was a constant attendant on his lady, or Mrs. Delmer, flattered by their attention, and through their introduction universally well received. Mrs. Delmer he had ever regarded with gratitude and esteem, as her behaviour had been uniformly kind; but his sentiments for Mrs. Whitmore were of a different nature—he owed her no gratitude, nor could he in his heart esteem her; yet such was the beauty of her person, and the fascination of her manners, that he frequently could not avoid envying Whitmore the possession of so charming a woman: nay, initiated as he now became daily into life, he perhaps would not have scrupled to tell her so, had she pertained to any other man; but his heart was not yet sufficiently vitiated to attempt to debauch his friend's wife, though the lady by no means appeared inclined to cruelty; and Edwin was frequently obliged to fly a temptation so hard to be resisted. Whitmore, in the mean time, was perpetually devising methods to get Emma into his power; for though the ardour of his passion was somewhat abated by the length of time he had been absent from her, yet her charms were not obliterated from his memory. He endeavoured to persuade Mrs. Delmer, and also Mrs. Whitmore, to invite her for a short space to town; but both ladies had received the proposal so coldly, that, of necessity, he had been obliged to relinquish it.

Ten months had passed since Edwin left Inglewood, and in that short space he had so far improved, that little was wanting to constitute him a complete "man of the world." A few glasses of wine no longer discomposed his head, he could swear, and retire occasionally with a kind fair one, without feeling such acute remorse as he had at first experienced, though, to confess the truth, these errors, even yet, gave him some compunction, and were as constantly forsworn as committed, but the barrier of probity and truth once broken the violation of an oath was a trifle, and therefore in this case frequently forfeited. He still maintained an uninterrupted correspondence with the family at Inglewood, and determined to visit them in a short time, preparing presents, which he thought might be acceptable; that for Agnes was a miniature of himself in his uniform. One evening, having repaired to the gaming-house as usual, fortune was peculiarly unkind, he lost, doubled his bets, lost again, redoubled them, but in vain every effort, he was stripped of all his ready money, and before he left off, found himself considerably in debt. Whitmore had also been very unsuccessful, therefore he could not think of applying to him, and the stranger requested

either the payment or an acknowledgment for the debt, which Edwin was necessitated to give, though he knew not how to discharge it.

Distressed what to do with himself, for it was not yet his hour to retire, and well knowing Whitmore and his lady were both abroad, he called at Mrs. Delmer's, whom he found at home and alone. She received him with her usual kindness; but gently upbraided him for so seldom visiting her, expressing her fears that he was not more properly engaged. Edwin defended himself with great gallantry for so young a beginner, promising that hereafter she should have no reason to complain, except it was of his too frequently troubling her. "You will do well," replied the lady, "it is time to know your friends, I have been indefatigable for your promotion, while you have hardly bestowed a thought on me, nay, I can with certainty assure you, that you will be raised on the first vacancy that happens in your regiment, which I have great reason to believe will not be long." "Generous Mr. Whitmore!" exclaimed Edwin, "how shall I ever repay such unbounded obligations? But, my dear madam, when did he inform you of this? for he never mentioned it to me." "It would be very strange if he should," replied the lady, "as he is totally unacquainted with it himself. In short, Edwin, not to keep you in suspense, your entrance into the army was my device, as I thought it the most speedy means of raising you to notice. My first design was never to let you know to whom you were obliged; but when I hear that you are constantly engaged at the gaming-table, or else with other loose company, I think it but friendly to warn you of your danger, and to tell you I do not approve your conduct." Edwin was too much astonished to reply for some moments, but threw himself at Mrs. Delmer's feet, where, as soon as he could articulate his thanks, he was profuse in his promises to act in a manner as should hereafter deserve her favour. As we easily believe what we wish, Mrs. Delmer's was not inexorable. Edwin vowed his everlasting gratitude; Mrs. Delmer, in return, promising her friendship and protection. In fine, the conversation became almost critical before they parted for the night, Edwin promising to breakfast with her the next morning. On a review of what had passed, he was not now such a novice but to discover that he might at once step into an independent fortune, without further trouble—the only encumbrance a wife, and that, too, a handsome, amiable woman; but then to Agnes, though absence and dissipation had weakened his affection for her, yet his promise, as well as his inclination, bound him. What would his father say—William—every one? they would reprobate and despise him, while Agnes herself might perhaps die with grief. On the other side, what did gratitude demand? He now saw Mrs. Delmer as his best friend, through her he could discharge all his obligations, and realize his most flattering prospects. Such was the conflict in Edwin's bosom when he went to rest, still honest enough to feel the pang of acting wrong, yet too weak to relinquish grandeur, though at the expense of probity, justice, and perhaps happiness.

CHAPTER XII.

EDWIN waited on Mrs. Delmer at an early hour, and found her already prepared to receive him. After breakfast, the discourse of the preceding evening was renewed. As before, it became unavoidably interesting; and Edwin, urged by ambition before he was aware, had prostituted vows of love at Mrs. Delmer's feet. The lady's partiality was too obvious to suffer her to reject them. In short, her affection made her regardless of what was due to herself, as ambition had made him of every sacred and moral tie; and a mutual promise was exchanged to be married the first opportunity, the lady stipulating that the marriage should be kept secret until his promotion took place. This resolution was too agreeable for Edwin to contend it; he renewed his vows; and by agreement it was at length resolved, that he should, even that very day, apply for a license, and that their hands should be joined on the morrow. Whitmore was by no means apprized of this manœuvre, as he might eudea-

your to prevent it; which, though not in his power, might give trouble. A momentary thought struck Edwin that this concealment bore the appearance of ingratitude; but his conscience had become daily more accommodating; and when he reflected that he should soon have it in his power to repay all pecuniary obligations, he presently stifled the idea. The family at Inglewood gave him more pain. "I will see them once more," said he, "before my marriage is announced; after which I will hasten abroad, until they are reconciled to the step I have taken, and Agnes is perhaps married. D———n is in that thought, why did it interfere? I would sooner see her dead than in the arms of another. Every thing being prepared, on the appointed morning Mrs. Delmer ordered her carriage to the Green Park, where she dismissed it with the servants, ordering them to return in a couple of hours. Here she, as appointed, met Edwin, who led her to a hackney coach, in which they soon reached the church, where she plighted him her true faith, for which he returned her a counterfeit, the real not being in his power to give. The ceremony over, they separated; and she returned to her coach, where she found Edwin already waiting for her. The morning was passed in forming plans for the future. Mrs. Delmer was half inclined, in defiance of her first resolution, to declare her marriage immediately, that she might no more be separated from a man she tenderly loved; but Edwin was by no means agreeable to this alteration, for, though it would have gratified his pride to have proclaimed his alliance without delay to the world in general, yet he wished to protract the discovery for some time from Inglewood; therefore, calling hypocrisy to his aid, he declared that, though to be perpetually with her was the first of his wishes, yet, for her honour, which was dearer than his own happiness, he determined to relinquish it, until his promotion took place, which would render her condescension the less conspicuous; that in the mean time he should see her daily, and pass every hour with her he could steal from her brother. "But will not your constant visits," replied she, "give more disagreeable room for conjecture than even a public avowal? There is, indeed, one way: if your father would permit our sister Emma to pass some time with me, the visit then might be attributed to her. Suppose you write, and request it, informing your father of our marriage, and our reason for concealing it some short time?"

"My father," replied he, "is so great an enemy to all concealment, that he would never consent to keep our secret, but immediately accuse me of deceit to Mr. Whitmore, and dispose it to him. As to Emma," continued he, "if you condescend to receive her, the best way will be for me to fetch her, as I am certain he will not otherwise suffer her to come." His plan was by no means agreeable to Mrs. Delmer; she knew she had a beloved rival at Inglewood; and though Edwin had given her a proof that Agnes had lost her power over his heart, yet she feared, though he was irrevocably her own, to throw him in the way of so dangerous an object, she therefore dissented from this proposal; but Edwin, who ardently wished to see his friends once more while he could appear before them with the semblance of probity, pressed the business so strenuously, and declared himself so totally devoted to her, at length he obtained her hard-wrung permission provided he remained at the forest no longer than two days. Whitmore was at that moment announced. "Where the devil, Edwin," said he, "did you hide yourself all day yesterday? I sought you half over the town." Edwin, who was now become an adept in falsehood, replied, that he had been engaged the day before with the army-agent, and likewise that morning; and calling on his turn on Mrs. Delmer, she had detained him by a kind proposal of sending for Emma to pass a few months with her. Few subjects could have given Whitmore so much satisfaction. He applauded his sister, and was on the point of offering to accompany Edwin; butudence soon pointed out the folly of such a step, as it would only tend to awaken suspicion; therefore simply congratulated him on the approaching meeting with his friends, adding, with a significant glance at his sister, "*A-propos*, you may, I think, as well wed Agnes, and bring her to town with you; there is no doubt but you will soon gain promotion; I have patience to see you at liberty while I am fettered." "Surely," replied Edwin, colour-

ing deeply, "it would be highly imprudent for me to marry. I—I have no such intention." "Well said, prudence," returned Whitmore, laughing; "and to confess the truth, though the girl is devilishly handsome, she has such an air of melancholy, that it is enough to give one the ague."

A sigh involuntarily escaped Edwin.—"Agnes," said he, "used to be reckoned a very cheerful girl." "Perhaps so," replied Whitmore; but when I saw her, you know she was on the point of being separated from her lover. Fanny now is more to my taste, though perhaps not so critically beautiful; but your sister Emma is certainly much handsomer than either." "Impossible that you should think so!" interrupted Edwin; "Agnes, past all dispute, is—" "Not so handsome as Emma," exclaimed Mrs. Delmer, hastily; there is no comparison between them." Edwin quickly saw his mistake: and gulping a provoking sigh that had nearly escaped him, he said—"We seldom can judge so perfectly of our relatives as those who have not been so accustomed to their features." Whitmore now proposed to depart; and Edwin, as he left the apartment, followed him; but pretending to have left his glove, he returned, whispered a soft adieu to his bride, and promised to see her again as soon as he got rid of Whitmore. During the day Edwin was thoughtful and absent. Whitmore observed it, and inquired the cause. He complained of the headache, making it a pretence for retiring early; leaving Whitmore engaged at play, while himself kept his appointment with Mrs. Delmer. At this meeting the subject of his intended journey to Inglewood was renewed, and fixed to take place in two days. Mrs. Delmer gently whispered her fears that his attachment to Agnes was not totally effaced. He vowed to the contrary on her lips: in short he strove to deceive; and she loved him too well not to believe an asseveration so congenial to her wishes. He left her early, that no surmises might take place; but before his departure she presented him with a pocket-book, desiring him to peruse it at his leisure. On his return he retired immediately to his apartment, to examine the contents, and on the first leaf found the following words: "By the will of the late Mr. Delmer, I cannot alienate any part of my jointure, which at my death returns to his family. The ready money I possess is near sixteen thousand pounds in the funds, and may at pleasure be transferred. Enclosed are bills for one thousand, with which, my Edwin, discharge any obligation you may have contracted, All I ask in return is an undivided heart, and an affection as sincere as my own." Edwin was transported: for some moments he thought himself perfectly happy, until "busy meddling memory" presented the disclosure of his marriage at Inglewood. This idea put all his happiness to flight; and replacing the notes, with a sigh he retired to bed. He was so totally engaged the next day with Whitmore, that he found it difficult to see his bride until evening, when he framed an excuse, that as he meant to set off early, he would sleep at an inn, that he might not disturb the family. He accordingly bid Mr. Whitmore adieu about nine o'clock, bearing with him a thousand remembrances to his parents, and receiving a strict charge to return in the course of the ensuing week. From Whitmore he hastened to Mrs. Delmer, who received him with unfeigned satisfaction. With her he passed the remainder of the evening; then retired—not to rest, as he told her, but to a chaise which he had in waiting, and in which he immediately set out on his journey.

CHAPTER XIII.

EDWIN was too impatient to reach the Forest to spare either money or horses, and accordingly arrived on the third evening after he left London. As his friends were unacquainted with his journey, he promised himself great pleasure in taking them by surprise; therefore leaving the chaise at some distance, walked up to the house, Edwin's courage and spirits as he approached appeared to forsake him: his legs could scarcely support his weight.—"I

feel," cried he, with anguish, "that I am a villain! a mean, perjured villain! and shall but contaminate by my presence this seat of innocence and virtue; yet they know it not, they think me honest as themselves; let me than, once more, enjoy the pleasure of their artless caresses." He had reached the kitchen window, and over the shutter saw the family sitting round the table, supper having just been removed, and replaced by a jug of ale. Agnes sat opposite where he stood. He contemplated her with keen self-reproach—her pale and altered features. He heard Bernard drink his health, and saw the expressive blue eyes of his daughter raised in silence, as if entreating the same of heaven. He could bear no more, he forgot all but the present scene before him; and rushing into the house stood before them, For a moment all gazed in silent wonder; but the next all was rapture and confusion; the mugs and glasses were upset, the chairs thrown down, and surrounded on all sides, tears, congratulations, and embraces bespoke his welcome. Agnes, fixed in her chair, appeared unable either to speak or weep. Tearing himself from the circling embraces of William and Fanny, he flew to her, and pressing her to his bosom, forgot every other object in the creation.—"Speak, my beloved Agnes," exclaimed he, "speak, and bless me with thy voice: I am but half welcome till I hear it from thee!" "Ay, do, my girl," cried Bernard, "bid the good lad welcome; I'll wager he's come to claim thee for his own." This simple speech affected the guilty Edwin like a stroke of lightning, and at once awoke him from his transport; his strength forsook him, and unable to support the almost fainting Agnes, he was obliged to reseal her in her chair, for some moments remaining to much confused to reply. The general joy was however so great, that his disorder passed unnoticed. Agnes also began to recover her surprise, and at length tranquility resumed her place in the mansion. Behold him now seated at his paternal board, between his venerable mother and Agnes, holding a hand of each, and alternately pressing them to his lips, Emma leaning over his chair, with one arm encircling his neck, while Godwin, Bernard, William, and Fanny, sat round contemplating the change a few months had made in his person.

"Zooks!" exclaimed Bernard, "how the boy is altered! I scarcely knew him when he came in! If I did not wonder what fine gentleman we had got; I thought to be sure he came from the Hall; but egad find me a likelier, come from where he will! What say you, Fanny? To be sure he is rather pale, but that don't signify." "I think," replied Fanny, "that Edwin looks very well, though not better than I have seen him. If ever in my eyes he looked particularly so, it was on Whitsuntide twelvemonth, on the day our parents gave their consent he should address Agnes, and promised in a year or two to unite them.—Never shall I forget his appearance when he came to tell her! we were seated under the great Walnut tree; he leaped the gate, flew to her, the utmost animation enlivening his features, hair in disorder, curling round his face; he caught her in his arms, breathless with haste, while his eyes told his success before his speech returned." "Pshaw," cried the old man, "thou wert always a fool, Fanny. As to his curls, when did you ever see a gentleman wear natural curls, except here and there a parson? Why, his head's powdered now and pinched; and as to his eyes, for aught I see, they are just the same as ever; eyes may do very well for girls to understand, but plain English for me. But, Agnes, what sayest thou? dost not like him better than before." "No, sir," answered Agnes, timidly; "Edwin, as a farmer, or a prince, will be equally dear to me; dress can make no difference, I love him for himself, not for his Clothes." "Did ever man see such foolish jades? Why, the wenches have no more pride than my grandmother's cat; but prithee, Emma, what think you?" "Think?" repeated she, "why I think what I told you before, that I love him a thousand times better than ever, though he has not got his red coat on. I declare it was very ill-natured not to come in it." Edwin now produced the picture he had brought for Agnes, who received it with a pleasure that found vent in tears; all admired it even Godwin applauded the gallantry of his son. "Why, to be sure," said Bernard, "it is very pretty, and very like; but I'll lay you five shillings to fivepence, that Fanny will show you one, ten times more natural, of William, in the course of a month or two." Fanny's blushes

immediately discovered the secret to Edwin.—“I thought, brother,” said Godwin, with a smile, “you had promised me never to mention that subject.” “Why, no more I ever will among strangers, nor among friends neither, if it vexes her. God bless it! boy or girl, how I long to see it! Egad, I shall think I am grown a young man again as I dandle it in my arms.”

Godwin, put a stop to the discourse, began to question his son respecting his expectations. Edwin painted them in a most advantageous light, representing his promotion as certain in a short time. Mrs. Delmer he spoke of with the highest respect, saying that her interest had been employed equally with her brother's; and that his present journey was principally at her instigation, to entreat that Emma might be permitted to pass a short time with her in London; that himself would see her daily; and accompany her into the country on her return, which he meant to do as soon as his promotion took place. “Ah! that's right, my lad,” replied Bernard, “kill two birds with one stone; bring down Emma, and take back Agnes. Is it not so, Edwin?” “Agnes is dearer to me than life!” exclaimed Edwin; “and I can never know happiness without her; but say, my dear sir, do you grant Mr. Delmer's request in respect to Emma?” “I cannot spare her, indeed I cannot,” cried Mrs. Godwin; “to part with any more of my children would kill me.” Emma could not restrain her tears; she had long since given up all hopes of Mrs. Delmer's promised invitation, and indeed she had almost forgotten it; but now, to find she remembered her, and that it only depended on her parents' consent, she knew not how to bear the disappointment, particularly when she contemplated the improvement that (in her eyes) had taken place in Edwin, and had no doubt but her own might be equally successful. William looked at her reproachfully, and apparently was on the point of expressing his thoughts on the occasion, had not a beseeching look from Fanny at once checked his design, and softened his features into a smile. “Emma,” said her father, “do you grieve because your mother loves you too well to part with you? Is that a requital for her tenderness?” “No, sir,” replied she, weeping; “I love my mother and yourself beyond the whole world; but my affection for Edwin for a moment overcame every other consideration, and I wished to accompany him.” This conciliating speech reconciled all parties; and they continued conversing far beyond the usual hour. Edwin was already too deeply plunged in guilt to extricate himself; he therefore determined to enjoy the present hour at all events, though it was not to be done without additional hypocrisy and falsehood; he had therefore recourse to both; and his father, who observed he had given no direct answer in regard to Agnes, again pressed the subject, he replied, with assume boldness—“On my promotion I will return and make her all my own.”

In the morning, William, who was obliged to go out on business, asked Edwin to accompany him. If possible, he would have excused himself for he dreaded both the penetration and affection of his brother; he could not however deny, and determined to be doubly on his guard.—“Edwin,” said William, “I cannot express the pain I have felt on your account; my father, too, I am sure, has been equally unhappy; though I carefully concealed whatever I thought would increase it. Your entrance into the army was I am convinced, totally repugnant both to his feelings and principles. I had once hopes, my brother, that you would have been sickened of grandeur and folly, and returned to the bosom of your family, for you appeared dissatisfied; whence then this alteration? are your new friends changed, or are you so?” “Whatever change may have taken place,” replied Edwin, “at least my affection for my family has undergone no variation. When I first went, unaccustomed to the world, I perhaps judged too harshly; at present I view things through a different medium: to live with the world, it is, in some measure, necessary to give into its manners.” “It may be necessary,” returned William; “but, believe me, I would prefer the meanest situation, with liberty of word and action, to affluent slavery, however dignified. I once thought your opinions the same; but say, Edwin in adopting these manners, it is not also frequently necessary to adopt their vices, or at least countenance them?” “We certainly

are not obliged to adopt them. People, William, accustomed to the great world, have undoubtedly a fewer prejudices than those secluded from it, yet may possess both probity and honour." "From a long continuation of giving into manners, we insensibly imbibe them; and if those manners are not pure, may I not tremble for my brother's morals? Sacred to me are even the prejudices that tend to the general good. You, perhaps, Edwin are divested of your former prejudices; but are you the happier or more virtuous?" Edwin could not repress a sigh. "As we are alone," continued William, "I frankly speak my fears and wishes, though, except to yourself, they shall ever be buried in my own bosom. Nothing is wanting to complete my felicity but your company; yet not for myself alone, but for your sake, do I wish you could relinquish these hateful hopes of wealth that have lately possessed you. Oh! Edwin, you know not the bliss of possessing a tender, gentle companion, in whose bosom you can repose all your joys and sorrows, or you would not hesitate to give up all, take Agnes to your arms, and fix your future home at Inglewood, where surrounded by your family in your youth, and in your age by your children, you would live respected and die beloved, after experiencing as much happiness as falls to the lot of mortals. Do not, my dear brother, decline—it may hereafter be impossible." "It is impossible!" exclaimed Edwin, involuntarily. "Impossible!" repeated William, starting; "impossible, Edwin!" "Yes, impossible!" replied Edwin, recovering himself. "Would you have me return Mr. Whitmore's favours with ingratitude; and when I have almost succeeded to the height of my wishes, relinquish them? No, William, it is indeed impossible. Had I, perhaps, never left the country, it had been as well; but as it is, I am determined to pursue my fortune." William signed, and withdrew his suit, walking some short way in silence, until they were joined by Mr. Godwin, when Edwin's task was renewed by the parental admonitions of his father. Thus, more and more in need of hypocrisy, he plunged deeper into falsehood; and though his heart stung him as he proceeded, his face was become so accommodating as not to have disgraced an adept.

While the male part of the family was absent, Emma was endeavouring to influence Agnes to second her views, in persuading her mother to permit her to accompany Edwin to town; nor was the proposal at all ungrateful to Agnes; she loved Emma, and would have done any thing to give her pleasure. In this case she had also another incentive; her beloved Edwin would have an affectionate sister near him, and herself a friend, ever mindful of their mutual interests. Agnes proposed consulting Fanny, who was the darling of her mother-in-law; but Emma declined it.—"No," said she; "William, I know, is against it, and she has no will but his. I saw him frown last night; he was never like other young people, and therefore can be no judge of their feelings." "Nay, now you speak too petulantly," replied Agnes; "William, I am convinced, possesses a most susceptible heart; and though I love all our family equally, yet I look up to him with an esteem and reverence I know not how to express, and which I feel for no one else, except your father." Mrs. Godwin at that moment entered; and, after some little conversation, Agnes, to oblige her friend, said—"Indeed, my dear madam, I could have wished that our Emma had obtained your permission to have accompanied Edwin to town. He must, I am sure, pass many heavy hours, which Emma's company would help to beguile him of. He will, doubtless, come when Fanny gives us a little one, and she could then have returned with him; in the mean time, I would have been doubly assiduous that you might not miss her. Besides, Edwin looked as if it would greatly oblige him; perhaps he fears Mrs. Delmer may think us ungrateful." "My good girl," replied Mrs. Godwin, "Emma well knows it pains me to refuse any thing that gives her satisfaction. Edwin's absence has caused me constant uneasiness; yet, as she is so earnest, I know not; I will consider—I will consult her father." "Thanks, thanks, my dear mother," cried Emma, in a transport; "I only ask until Edwin returns." "Your thanks are too warm on this subject to be pleasing, Emma," replied Mrs. Godwin, gravely; "I flatter myself, neither Fanny or Agnes would express so much joy on the thoughts of leaving me." With these words Mrs. Godwin

quitted the apartment, before either her daughter or Agnes could reply. "How cruel!" cried Emma; "I protest I don't think I'll go now, though even she should give me leave." "I cannot advise you," replied Agnes; "it distresses me to see her uneasy; and were she my mother, I would not go to London on such conditions, though my heart was disengaged, and I was sure to be made a queen when I arrived there." "Oh, heaven, what an idea!" exclaimed Emma, the seriousness vanishing from her features in an instant. "Consider in such a case how soon you could make her amends—power, grandeur, wealth." "They would not all compensate," said Agnes, "for my breach of duty, nor yet call back the tears she had shed for my absence." Fanny here joined them, and the conversation ceased. At dinner, Edwin informed them how extremely he was limited in point of time; promising, however, to return at the period Agnes had before mentioned, and again renewing his entreaty concerning Emma. In the afternoon he found himself alone with Agnes; and, though it was what he ardently wished, yet, when obtained, conscious duplicity for some moments rendered him unable to articulate a syllable. At length, regardless of all but the present, he renewed his vows of everlasting truth, forgetting as he sealed them on her lips, that he had prostituted them at the altar. The guileless lamb is but ill prepared to withstand the subtilty of the serpent. Agnes's words were the pure dictates of uncorrupted innocence; she vowed her affection, and promised to follow the unworthy object, in wealth or poverty, throughout the world. His expected promotion, and the advice of Mr. Whitmore, were the excuses fabricated to delay his marriage. He affected to deplore them; nay, at that moment, he perhaps did deplore the fatal bar his pride and avarice had everlastingly placed between him and Agnes, as he contemplated her beauty and innocence, and reflected that he might with honour have possessed them, respected by his friends, and applauded by his own heart.

In the meanwhile, Mrs. Godwin had consulted with her husband respecting Emma. He by no means approved of her going to London; but the subject had been so warmly pressed by Edwin, and so earnestly desired by Emma, that at length he gave his consent, on condition she should return at the appointed time. The next morning Edwin and Emma prepared to depart; the good farmer first drawing his son aside, and strongly recommending him to be careful of his sister: he then drew out his pocket-book, and presenting him with some notes, said—"My dear boy, your obligations to Mr. Whitmore are great, as he has assiduously endeavoured to serve you according to your own ideas of happiness; your pecuniary obligation must however be painful; he advanced you a hundred pounds—with these repay it; the money I can well spare, I have reserved it for this purpose, therefore no words, receive it as freely as I give it." Edwin would fain have declined this present, but could by no means without declaring the truth; he therefore was necessitated to put it in his pocket, though with no very pleasurable sensations, every fresh instance of affection he received from his deluded family adding a pang to his bosom. "Accursed wealth!" exclaimed he, as his father left him, "that first induced me to forsake the paths of rectitude; and doubly accursed pride, that tempted me to sacrifice both probity and happiness!—Ah, Agnes! thou wilt be sufficiently revenged; misery must be my portion if I lose thee, yet how shall I obtain thee, without plunging still further in deceit and villany!" William at that moment entered. Among a thousand kind wishes, he recommended him to watch carefully over his sister Emma.—"I fear for her," said he, "because her heart is disengaged, and her natural thoughtlessness may lead her to fix it on some unworthy object." All was now prepared, and the travellers departed, bearing with them the ardent wishes of their friends for their speedy return.

CHAPTER XIV.

EMMA soon dried the tears she shed at parting from her parents, and would have entered

into conversation with her brother; but he, lost in thought, was not sufficiently collected to amuse or yet be amused. He had planted the seeds of discontent and remorse in his own bosom and they every moment gained fresh strength; the sight of Agnes had revived his half-extinguished passion, and made him determined to possess her, though at the loss of that wealth for which he had sacrificed all those ties which rendered life desirable. His marriage, he well knew, could not be long concealed; it was therefore necessary that on whatever he determined he should be speedy, as that once declared, he, in all probability, must take an eternal farewell of his native home. Fearful that Emma might divulge any thing relative to his promise of returning to Inglewood to espouse Agnes, he entreated her to be silent on the subject, as it must, at least, be kept secret some time; both Mr. Whitmore and his sister having dissuaded him from such a step, though he had foreborne to mention it, fearful of giving Agnes uneasiness. On the third day they reached Barnet, where, to their great surprise, they found Mr. Whitmore and his sister waiting for them. How flattering this compliment to the unexperienced heart of Emma! Whitmore could not conceal his pleasure, it was expressed in every word and action, and sparkled in his eyes. Mrs. Delmer's satisfaction was scarcely inferior, though obliged to dissemble her tenderness; she however endeavour to make herself amends, by representing to herself the pleasure Edwin would doubtless experience at this proof of her affection and attention; but she in vain sought to find it expressed either in his eyes or words; the first were averted from her; the latter cold, distant, and merely complimentary, love had stifled gratitude in his bosom, and he now regarded her as one who had deprived him for ever of his dearest hopes. The party reached town in Mr. Whitmore's carriage, and were set down at Mrs. Delmer's, where an excellent supper was provided. Emma had never before seen any thing so completely elegant; for though since Mrs. Palmer had fixed her residence among them, Emma, with her parents, had frequently dined there, yet her table, though plentiful, was remarkably simple, and though served with peculiar neatness, was totally devoid of show and parade: the repository of her silver was not the side-board, but the pockets of the poor; the former, therefore, was but thinly furnished, while the latter were frequently replenished sufficiently to procure all the necessaries of life. Emma, naturally volatile, was charmed with all around her; no cloud, save one, obscured her satisfaction. Whitmore was married; that indeed cost her a sigh, and she dreaded, she knew not why, the sight of his wife. Edwin also became more cheerful; he contemplated all around as his own, when he should please to acknowledge his right, and ambition once more began to resume her seat in his bosom. In short, before evening closed, all parties appeared perfectly satisfied. Mrs. Delmer's view in sending for Emma to town, was to ensure herself, without scandal, the company of her beloved Edwin; but, although gratified in that point, it by no means answered her expectation, as Whitmore ever accompanied him; at home he was of the party, and abroad their constant escort, ever ready by the side of Emma to render those nameless attentions which insensibly steal on the female heart.

Emma, though she had at the forest been always accustomed to be perfectly neat and well dressed, yet had never possessed any of those useless appendages that distinguished well-dressed women in great towns, but with all of which Mrs. Delmer soon supplied her; for as she now, in some measure, considered her as a sister, she would have been gratified to see her elegibly married, and was therefore anxious to make her appearance as respectable as possible. Emma had always been partial to Mrs. Delmer, but this kindness rebouled that sensation, and in a letter which she wrote to Agnes, and sent inclosed in one of Edwin's, she said, after expressing the highest satisfaction at her situation—"Indeed, my dear girl, it is impossible to describe to you the kindness of Mrs. Delmer; I am equally well-dressed as herself, and accompany her to every public place, where I cannot frequently avoid hearing compliments on my person, enough to make me vain. Last night I heard a gentleman at the opera say to his companion, that my complexion was too glowing for a *blonde* and too fair for a *brunette*, but a happy mixture of both. You may be sure I did not rightly com-

prehend this, until Mrs. Delmer, who likewise overheard it, explained it to me. I am convinced myself I look much better; for dress, Agnes, makes a great alteration: my feet in silk shoes are not like the same; they appear almost too small to bear me; and my arms seem quite a different shape, from the addition of a beautiful pair of bracelets, which Mr. Whitmore presented me. Edwin is equally favoured as myself; and I can assure you, when in his regimentals, I think I scarcely ever saw so handsome a man! I have been introduced to Mrs. Whitmore; but indeed, Agnes, I can't love her; she is very handsome; but so hatefully proud, that I am uncomfortable whenever we meet; for she stares at me with such contemptuous expression on her countenance, that I am ready to sink. Oh, Agnes, how I pity Mr. Whitmore! how happy might his wife be were she so inclined! for he is really one of the most amiable men I ever saw; but he is so unhappy at home, that he is almost perpetually with his sister. Not a word of this, my dear Agnes, to any one, not even to your sister Fanny: you know my parents and William would say I should be ruined with pride and hateful vanity, and perhaps send for me immediately home, and that, before the promised time, would break the heart of your

“EMMA GODWIN.”

Emma had, on her arrival, as she informed Agnes, been introduced to Mrs. Whitmore; but that lady had treated her with the most forbidding distance; nay, even Edwin appeared lately to have lost the ground he had formerly gained in her good graces; to confess the truth, the lady had felt herself piqued at the particular attention he had lately paid to Mrs. Delmer, and had been at some pains to learn how frequent his visits were; and that he often staid to a very late hour; not, however of a temper for such trifles to give uneasiness, she immediately transferred the transient spark of inclination she had felt for Edwin to a captain in the guards, called Darleville.

Notwithstanding the charges Edwin had received, both from his father and William, to be careful of Emma, he was too much employed in his own pursuits, and divising means to get Agnes in his power, to pay her any particular attention: to the gallantry of Whitmore he was too much accustomed to think any thing particular; and as long as his sister was under the protection of Mrs. Delmer, he had not the most distant idea of danger. One evening Whitmore joined them in apparent disorder; his wife, regardless as he was of her, had forced him to notice her conduct, as it became public enough to be censured in a paragraph in the newspaper. Mrs. Delmer endeavoured to palliate it; while Emma in her heart reprobated her conduct, and dropped a tear on the vexation Whitmore experienced from being so unhappily married. At that instant Mrs. Delmer's lawyer was announced: he came on business relative to a suit she had lately gained, and to pay into her hands a considerable sum. “For heaven's sake!” cried Whitmore, “do not bring him here; I cannot at present bear the loquacity of the law; besides, it is the old rascal that drew my infernal marriage-articles. Prithce, my dear sister, see him below.” Mrs. Delmer readily acquiesced, and leaving her brother with Emma, attended her lawyer. Both remained for some time silent: at length Whitmore said—“you pity me, enchanting Emma; you feel for your unhappy friend; ah! why did we not meet when I might with honour have offered you my hand and fortune? nay, turn not from me, I cannot bear your displeasure, tied as I am to one whom my soul justly abhors, and doomed to love where I can never hope a return! yet you wept for me, Emma,” continued he, sinking at her feet; “you do not hate me—you will I know pardon even the frenzy of this moment.” “For heaven's sake, sir, rise—nay, Mr. Whitmore, I entreat—consider, should Mrs. Delmer, or my brother, surprise you in this posture——“What if they should?” replied he warmly; “they will not hear me disavow my love; no, they shall hear me proclaim it—glory in it. Mrs. Whitmore's conduct will entitle me to a divorce; then say, Emma you will not refuse me, when in my power to lay my fortune at your feet?” “I cannot bear this!” replied Emma, weeping; “I will return immediately to Inglewood.” “Go, then,” said he, “leave me to despair; yet Emma, you may hereafter repent not having spoken comfort to a man who

idolizes you!" "Alas!" replied Emma, "what comfort can I speak? If my good wishes could make you happy, you would have no reason to complain." "Charming angel!" exclaimed he, rising and kissing her hand. "I will no more alarm you, but conceal my sufferings in my own breast; time and fortune may perhaps relieve them." "For heaven's sake then drop the discourse; your emotion distresses me!" "Your desires shall ever be my commands," replied he, resuming his usual serenity. "Pardon my behaviour this night, and I will offend no more." Whitmore was true to his word, or at least for that time; he was fearful of alarming Emma, should he press the subject farther, and, fully satisfied with having broken the ice, determined to leave the rest to time and continued assiduities. When Mrs. Delmer returned, both parties were tolerably composed, and Edwin joining them soon after, they all adjourned to the play.

Two months had thus passed with Emma in a continued succession of amusements, when Edwin received a letter from William, informing him that his beloved Fanny had made him the happy father of a lovely boy, concluding with pressing his return with Emma to be present at the christening.—Neither Whitmore nor Mrs. Delmer appeared to approve this invitation: the former, looking at Emma with supplicating tenderness, said—"Do, Edwin, devise some means to excuse your return; surely a few months might be allowed your sister: I was in no haste to quit Inglewood." "Indeed," replied Mrs. Delmer, "I think the request very ill-timed; Edwin cannot get leave of absence for more than a few days, and surely it is not worth while taking such a journey for that period." "I have obtained a fortnight," returned Edwin, with a pleasure he could not entirely suppress. "I expected this event, and was prepared for it; for my father would hold it unpardonable were I not to attend." Mrs. Delmer appeared so highly dissatisfied at this information, that Edwin, after having accompanied Whitmore home, again returned. Mrs. Delmer was still up, but Emma had retired to her apartment. He now exerted all his influence to persuade her of the necessity of his paying this one visit to Inglewood, and which he firmly declared should be the last, unless accompanied by herself; that though he knew his father would be highly displeased, he would venture to leave Emma, hoping that, in a short time, he should gain promotion, and all restraint be naturally removed. This discourse was mingled with so many caresses and protestations, that at length Mrs. Delmer consented though against her real inclination. She had not a wish that he should think jealously prompted her refusal, though inwardly determined to declare her marriage in a short time, whether he gained preferment or otherwise.

The permission granted, he left her, and returned home, determined to set out on his journey the first moment he decently could. He ardently wished to be at the forest, and as this was in all probability his last opportunity to strike some bold stroke that might give him possession of Agnes—"I know, said he, as he reflected on the subject, "her heart is mine, and in some happy, unguarded moment, could I but gain possession of her person, I might afterwards be able to divest her of her prejudices, and persuade her to share my fortune. My pay, if I gain preferment, will amply supply us; and for Mrs. Delmer's wealth, let her keep it—accursed be the hour in which I was infatuated enough to barter happiness for gold!" The next morning Emma was consulted respecting her continuing in town, and very readily gave into a concerted falsehood, that Edwin should excuse her absence under a pretence of Mrs. Delmer's ill health; and that she particularly entreated her company some time longer. Whitmore came in during this discourse; he expressed the utmost pleasure that Emma was not yet to leave them; he had the whole night been resolving on some means to prevent it, and was delighted to find the business settled to his hand. Edwin's departure was fixed to take place in three days, the intervening time being dedicated to pleasure and dissipation. Emma's conduct was weak, without being intentionally wicked. She rather suffered than approved the behaviour of Whitmore; she pitied him on account of his wife; and that sentiment, strengthened by the affection she undoubtedly felt for him, induced her not to repulse him, as she ought properly to have done.

Mrs. Delmer could not at times avoid observing the attention which Whitmore paid to Emma; but totally employed by her own passion for Edwin, and, naturally unsuspecting, the idea of seduction never entered her imagination; attributing his behaviour, therefore, merely to his usual gallantry, she thought it not necessary to be noticed; for as Emma was perfectly apprized of his situation, she could not think her in danger; and, to mention the subject to Edwin, would be only awakening suspicions that had perhaps no real foundation, and the cause of which would naturally cease as soon as Emma was removed. Edwin, at the appointed time, set off for Inglewood; and on his arrival there, was received with the utmost pleasure by the whole family; William presenting him his infant son, with as much exultation as if he had been heir to a diadem. The absence of Emma at first greatly displeased her parents; but Edwin's excuses of Mrs. Delmer's ill health were so adroitly fabricated, that they could not fail being admitted. The venerable Mrs. Godwin at length observing that, though it would have increased her satisfaction for Emma to have been present on so joyful an occasion, yet she should have been so sorry for her to have quitted Mrs. Delmer under such circumstances.

Thus situated were the innocent family at Inglewood, seated round the social board, recounting old tales of past pleasures, and looking forward in happy expectancy of new ones. Edwin was alone an exception: he looked back with disgust, and forward with horror; but he had gone too far to recede, and therefore boldly determined not to be half a villain. "I think," said Godwin, looking round him, "that I want nothing but the presence of Emma to call myself perfectly happy—we shall miss her cheerful humour at our christening. Mrs. Palmer being absent too is another misfortune; however, many are the blessings we enjoy, to repine at what we have not, is to be unworthy those we possess." The discourse then turned on Mrs. Palmer, who had for some time past been at Bristol on business relative to her late uncle; all joined in her praise, wishing they had been favoured with her presence, as she was, by her own desire, to be godmother to the young stranger. Three days after, began the preparations for the ceremony; the relations and friends were invited, and, as some lived too far distant to return the same evening, Bernard's house was aired, and the beds prepared for reception. Geese, fowls, turkeys, and pigs, were slaughtered, pies and plum-puddings prepared, the ale and made-wines tapped: and, in short, all that could contribute to the festivity of the day, which was fixed for the Sunday following, the month of Fanny's lying-in being then complete, and herself thought able to accompany them to church.

CHAPTER XV.

WHILE all parties at Inglewood were busy in preparing for the christening, Whitmore's mind was equally, though less innocently employed; he had now an opportunity, such as, in all probability, he might never again obtain to address Emma; her brother was absent, and Mrs. Delmer, for some reason which he did not give himself the trouble to endeavour to develope, was frequently engaged for several hours. At another time, it might have excited his curiosity, as she had, to his knowledge, sold out a considerable sum, which she had in the funds, the very day after Edwin's departure; but his mind was too much occupied about Emma for any other subject to engage him. Mrs. Whitmore's conduct, too, became more glaringly abandoned, and he was endeavouring to procure a legal separation; for as to a divorce, whatever he said to Emma, he had no wish for it, could he avoid it with honor, as her fortune was very large, and would greatly straiten his finances to repay; besides, it certainly was in the lady's power to recriminate, in which case all his attempts would prove fruitless. In the meantime, he profited by the opportunities his sister's absence gave him with Emma; he was for ever offending, and as frequently begging pardon; yet constantly ending with vowing to be only hers, that the conduct of his wife had broken every tie be-

tween them, that the law would soon pronounce it void, and he should be the happiest of men. The unthinking Emma had suffered this tale to be so frequently repeated, that it insensibly became less offensive to her ear; and, as she really loved Whitmore, could not avoid wishing the event he appeared to desire so ardently, might speedily take place. One afternoon, after Whitmore had passed the whole morning with Emma, Mrs. Delmer came home in particular high spirits, and, after dinner, sat down and wrote a letter, which was addressed, to Emma's great amazement, to her brother Edwin at Inglewood. Emma was at that moment alone with Mrs. Delmer, who, perceiving marks of curiosity on her features, said—"I have been writing to your brother, Emma, on a subject that at present I cannot disclose, but which, I am convinced, will give you pleasure. I shall send my letter by this night's post, and, on his answer, which, by the way, I expect he will bring himself, shall be able to treat you with a surprise."

Without farther explanation she rang for a servant—delivered the letter to be put in the post—and ordered tea. Whitmore had left them soon after Mrs. Delmer's return, with a promise to join them early in the evening: it was now, however far beyond his usual time, but Mrs. Delmer was too much accustomed to such disappointments for them to give her any great surprise. Emma, on the contrary, felt uneasy though she endeavoured to conceal it.—Whitmore had that morning, when alone with her, promised to pass the whole evening there, and in such promises he had ever before been strictly punctual. It was near eleven before he joined them, and then apparently discomposed. He pressed Emma's hand between his, and turning suddenly to Mrs. Delmer, said—"Is it true, madam, that you are married to Edwin?" For an instant the lady was too confused to reply. At length she answered—"Suppose it is so, sir, who has a right to control me?" "Not I, by my soul," replied he, "nor would I if I could; but surely I might have been trusted; it had better have been disclosed by you, than by my wife's gallant, Darleville, in a public coffee-house." "Merciful God! my brother Edwin married!" exclaimed Emma. "I have neither acted by Edwin or you, madam," said Whitmore, "in a manner to make secrecy needful. You are the undoubted mistress of yourself and fortune; but Edwin, methinks, should have consulted his friends." "Agnes will die with grief," sobbed Emma; "he has treated her cruelly." "At least, Emma," interrupted Mrs. Delmer, "I expected your approbation. Do you think your brother could have married better? I first procured him the commission, and have by purchase now got him promoted; that has been the business which lately has so totally employed me, and that will be completed to-morrow. We agreed to keep our marriage secret till that event took place, and I have this night written to inform him that all restraint is removed." "You cannot but be sensible," replied Emma, "that I rejoice in my brother's good fortune; and must indeed myself be unworthy your kindness, did I not feel both affection and gratitude for you; yet, when I reflect on the confusion this will occasion at Inglewood, I protest it frightens me; I fear they will think I was in the secret." "Suppose you were," answered Mrs. Delmer. "Your father will surely be satisfied with the prudence of his son's choice?" "My father, you well know, madam, is extremely partial to Bernard's daughters, and though he will undoubtedly be sensible of the honor you have done us will resent the insult offered to Agnes." "Farmers are plentiful enough in your country," replied Mrs. Delmer, "she will soon supply her loss. For the present, however, let the business rest; I am perfectly satisfied with what I have done, and trust Edwin is the same." Vexed as Whitmore really felt, he was too politic to quarrel with his sister at a moment he regarded so critical in his success with Emma; he therefore only replied—"You say well, let it rest: I again repeat, I do not blame you, except for your want of confidence in me, however, let even that pass, I will lay the fault to love, and excuse it, for, perhaps, in that same case I might have been equally blameable."

Mrs. Delmer was astonished at her brother's moderation, while Emma was charmed with his goodness in thus calmly bearing so unequal a marriage in respect to fortune; and

though in her heart she could not avoid lamenting the falsehood of Edwin to Agnes, yet her pride was gratified to find herself so greatly allied. Edwin's behaviour, when last at Inglewood, confounded her; that he was married at that time she could hardly believe; yet she had been almost constantly with Mrs. Delmer since she returned to town with him, and had no reason to imagine their union had taken place since that period. In short, the more she thought on the subject, the more she was bewildered; and soon after Whitmore retired, withdrew to her apartment. Mrs. Delmer was engaged early the next morning to conclude the business she had before mentioned; therefore, after taking a hasty breakfast with Emma, during which little discourse passed, she left her. Edwin's marriage now entirely employed Emma's thoughts. His reason for desiring her not to mention to Mrs. Delmer what had been proposed at the Forest, was now accounted for; her heart revolted at his duplicity, while she pitied and wept for Agnes. "Yet, after all," said she mentally, "the temptation was indeed hard to resist—grandeur, wealth, and pleasure.—Heigho! I myself once thought Inglewood the finest place in the world, at present how different! I know it to be only a mean, inconsiderable spot, with a few scattered houses, for the most part covered with thatch, and am almost ashamed to say I was born there! I am sure I shall never be able to endure it now; therefore how can I so much wonder at Edwin? Poor fellow, he is at once to be condemned and pitied!"

These deliberations were broken upon by the sudden entrance of Whitmore, whose whole appearance announced that some extraordinary event had taken place. He threw himself in a chair, and after some moments silence, his eyes fixed on the astonished Emma, he said, taking her hand—"I have sometimes flattered myself that you regarded me with kindness, Emma; now is the time to prove it. I have this morning fought with Darleville, who, not content with the injury done with that infamous woman who bears my name, but whom I despise too much to seek revenge, he last night dared to speak disrespectfully of my sister and yourself; but his life will pay the insult—I have left him past hope. The friend who accompanied me already think me on my way to Calais, where he wishes me to stay till I learn the event, but I cannot go; I will sooner await the worst than leave you." "Great God!" exclaimed Emma, trembling, "let me conjure you to fly this instant; every moment increases your danger. Would to heaven you had never known us! My brother's imprudence has, I fear, involved you in this trouble." "My proofs are, no fear, strong enough to procure a divorce; pardon, then, Emma, a proposal which nothing but the necessity of the moment should force me to make. Would you," continued he, throwing himself at her feet, "nobly show yourself above vulgar prejudices, and condescend to accompany me, I will go when and where you please, and the first moment in my power make you mine for ever; but I cannot, will not, quit you, though death itself should be the consequence. I ask no return to my affection but what modesty may grant, until I have a legal right. Oh! then, my beloved girl, for once step over those narrow bounds of cold prudence, and show your friendship; your brother already is the husband of my sister, and you are the chosen of my heart. Speak, then, my love! shall I owe my life to your kindness, or will you suffer me to be taken at your feet?" "Oh! Mr. Whitmore, what do you ask?" replied Emma, weeping: "consider my parents—my brother." "Your brother Edwin, however, cannot blame you; it is in his quarrel, unkindly as he has treated me, that I have incurred this misfortune; and for your parents, when I present myself as their son, all animosities will cease: resolve, then, my Emma, and let me owe a debt to love, which cold duty never yet formed an idea of." At this moment a loud knock at the door alarmed Emma. "Oh! hasten, hasten!" she cried; "perhaps you may be sought for even here! fly, or my apprehensions for you will kill me." The cause of Emma's alarm was Whitmore's valet. He came to press his master's departure; he said he had a chaise in waiting, and had just heard that Darleville could not survive the day. "Begone," replied Whitmore, "I care not; I am not ready; I am prepared to meet the worst." The man appeared surprised, and would have ventured to expostulate; but Whitmore interrupted him,

again commanded his absence, in a voice that demanded obedience. Whitmore still persisted in pressing the alarmed and half-wavering Emma to accompany him. For sometime she only answered with her tears; at length she said, "Let us consult Mrs. Delmer; I will be guided by her." Whitmore, who dreaded nothing more than the return of Mrs. Delmer, however replied, taking out his watch—"Well, be it so; but what time do you expect her?" "Oh!—no—no!" exclaimed Emma, "it is impossible; she will not return till near dinner-time, and your safety demands that you depart this instant." "My safety, or even my life, is to me of no value. Independent of you, Emma, therefore, I will wait the return of my sister; yet has she not shown, by the choice of your brother, that she thinks a small share of the world's opinion is worth sacrificing to obtain happiness?" "Ah!" sighed Emma, but she is married!" "Well, my love, and shall we not also be married as soon as possible? Even with all the bigotry that country education has implanted in your mind, you must allow, that a woman who has acted so shamefully as Mrs. Whitmore, is no longer in the eyes of Heaven, or the world, my wife. My marriage with her was merely a joining of hands; ours, Emma, will be a union of hearts. To ease your delicate scruples, am I not content to wait for all the formalities of law and the jargon of priestcraft? though neither, Emma, can make me more securely yours, let me only, my love, have to boast hereafter, that you nobly showed your affection in the hour of my danger, and accompanied in his exile a man who would glory to place you on a throne." Emma, weak and irresolute, knew not how to consent, yet feared to deny; she loved Whitmore too well for his safety not to be dear to her: duty for awhile, indeed, struggled with passion; but Emma's mind was too feeble to bear the conflict. Whitmore saw his advantage, and pressing his suit with redoubled ardour, prevailed in an unhappy moment, on the infatuated Emma to demolish the fair structure of virtue her parents had so many years been endeavouring to rear in her heart, by weakly yielding to accompany him. Delighted with his success, he hurried her instantly to the chaise which he had in waiting, ordering the postboy to use the utmost speed.

Had Whitmore given Emma time to reflect, it is probable she might have escaped the destruction that awaited her; but her sensibility awakened for the safety of the man she loved—no friend near to advise, or snatch her from the impending ruin, she forgot all but his danger, regardless of the dagger she was striking into the bosom of her parents, or the never-dying anguish she was implanting in her own! They had hardly reached the end of the first stage, when, even though supported by the encircling arm of Whitmore, his vows still sounding in her ears, that silent, but never-failing monitor, Conscience, awoke, and at once presented the reverse of the fascinating picture that for awhile had intoxicated her senses. "Oh! my dear parents," exclaimed she, in an agony of grief, "must I then never see you more!—the lost, the abandoned Emma has forsaken all, and for whom?—Great God! a married man! Oh! Mr. Whitmore, if you really love me, let me return: it will be the strongest proof of my affection, and never shall it be forgotten." "Well, then," replied he, reproachfully, "let us return, for I cannot see you thus; I will resign myself, and wait the event of Darleville's wounds; at least, you shall not accuse me, Emma, of want of affection." "Ah, no!" returned Emma, weeping, "let me return alone. Have I not shown how dear I hold your safety?" "And after such a proof, think you it is possible to tear myself from you? No, Emma, any thing else I may be able to accomplish: but by all my hopes of happiness, we will not part! If you insist, I will accompany you home, let life or death be the consequence." Emma again became irresolute;—again, for awhile, love overcame reason. In the meantime the chaise proceeded swiftly, and momentarily made her return less possible—Whitmore alarming her feelings, and soothing her by turns, until at length they reached Dover; where, the wind proving fair, a packet was immediately procured, and all return entirely cut off for the lost Emma. To divert her thoughts from dwelling on subjects he wished her to forget, Whitmore related the cause of his quarrel with Darleville: he had in the public coffee-room declared, that if Mrs. Delmer

was not married to Ensign Godwin, they had a perfect good understanding ; as he was frequently with her at very unseasonable hours (information he had received from Mrs. Whitmore) ; as was also Mr. Whitmore *tete-a-tete* with Emma. Whitmore on his entrance had been jested with on the business, and congratulated on his good fortune with the fair rustic ; but not being naturally of a temper to hear the character of any one he professed to esteem treated lightly, he immediately took fire, and insisted on the author of the scandal being declared ; which proved to be Darleville, he determined to quarrel ; and walking up to him with assumed coldness, he said—" I hear, sir, you have taken the liberty to speak very freely this evening of my sister and Miss Godwin ; I must therefore advise you in future to be more cautious, or your want of prudence may put your valour to the hazard—a circumstance that will perhaps prove inconvenient, as the *reality* of courage, as well as the reputation of gallantry, is necessary for a soldier." This affront, given in a coffee-room, was too gross to let pass unnoticed ; an appointment was therefore instantly made ; after which Whitmore supped at Mrs. Delmer's, when he questioned her on her marriage, though he avoided particulars.

The next morning he met his opponent, whom, on the first fire, he shot in the side, and left with his friend, who had acted as second, while himself hastened to Emma, determined, as he had such a favourable pretence, to make a bold essay to get her into his power, and in which he unhappily succeeded. Such was the real state of the quarrel, and its subsequent consequences ; but which were alternately heightened or softened on Whitmore's relation to Emma, as might best suit his purpose. So great had been Emma's confusion, that she had not even thought of clothes ; but Whitmore, on their arrival at Calais, soon removed that inconvenience ; and they continued their route to Paris, where he supplied her with a profusion and elegance that marked the power he supposed *show* to have over the female heart. Emma unfortunately was not insensible to it. In contemplating the splendour that surrounded her, sorrow gradually decreased, and her gratitude to the donor augmented, until at length, in an hour of unguarded folly, she bartered her honour for the gaudy and useless trappings of pride and vice. Mrs. Delmer, on her return home on the day of the duel, wondered at Emma's absence, or for what purpose she could have accompanied her brother ; yet had no idea until late in the evening of the real truth. She feared Edwin would blame her, and knew not what measure to pursue, but determined to give him immediate intelligence, and accordingly wrote that night, expressing her vexation at what had happened, and entreating his immediate return

CHAPTER XVI.

WHILE the unthinking Emma was flying from her friends, and sacrificing her honour to gratify the licentious wishes of her betrayer, all was joy and festivity at Inglewood. The young stranger was baptized by the name of Reuben, after his grandfather, and the subsequent entertainment having lasted until late on the second day, the guests had taking leave and returned home. Had it not been for the tormenting pangs of conscience, Edwin would have felt himself perfectly happy ; for though he could some times forget every thing but love and Agnes, yet reflection was sure to return with redoubled violence. He was a constant witness to the happiness of William and Fanny, and, like a fiend infernel, their innocent pleasures increased his torments, for in them he contemplated what himself might have possessed. The venerable Godwin sometimes suspected that his son was not happy, but attributed it to his being necessitated to quit Agnes, and therefore wished their union to take place as soon as possible ; it indeed gave him some surprise that Edwin himself did not press it more warmly ; but waiting for the expected promotion was the reason given, and readily believed by Godwin ; for his heart was too guileless of him to suppose his son a

lain. After the departure of the guests, as the family were sitting in cheerful conversation, the post-boy's horn gave notice he brought letters, and a moment after, Margery entered and delivered one to Edwin, whose eye had, however, no sooner glanced over the direction (which is Mrs Delmer's) than the blood for a moment forsook his cheeks, but as instantaneously pain returned, and suffused them with crimson. Without knowing what he was about, he was instinctively going to put it in his pocket, had not his eyes met those of his brother William, in whose face he saw, in legible traits, the strongest marks of surprise.

This discovery at once called him to recollection; he endeavoured to conceal his confusion, and opened the letter; but had scarcely read two lines, when it again visibly increased; for it was Mrs Delmer's first letter, in which she began by informing him that all restraint was now removed, and that their marriage might be declared, as she had obtained the promotion for him.

The joy Edwin experienced at this news in some measure overbalanced his confusion. "I am preferred," exclaimed he, in rapture, "and have a prospect of yet farther advancement." He then continued reading the remainder of his letter, which he had no sooner concluded, than he put it in his pocket, and simply relating what he thought necessary of the contents to his friends.

"And from whence comes it, Edwin?" said William, looking on him fixedly.

"Comes—why—why, from Mr Whitmore, to be sure," replied Edwin, hesitating, and his own cast eye avoiding the scrutinizing gaze of his brother; "you know I long expected this event, yet it came so suddenly that it quite overcame me."

William, unwilling to make a reply that might awaken suspicion against his brother, and which, perhaps, in truth might be groundless, remained silent; while Edwin received the congratulations of the family, but particularly of Bernard, who now thought his hopes of Edwin's becoming a General half verified.

When Edwin had recovered his first surprise, he informed them he should be obliged to leave them almost immediately, as the business required his immediate presence.

"Pies on that luck!" interrupted Bernard, "I thought you would have staid to take Agnes with you; and though I should be sorry to lose her, yet, as you seem never happy apart, I am willing to consent when you please; on condition, however, that you let me have my girl with me two or three months every summer."

"Alas!" said Edwin, with a hypocritical sigh, "I would to heaven I could now stay, or that I had known my advancement was so near; but it is in vain to wish, for I must inevitably depart, either to-morrow night, or the morning following; yet there is one way, though I fear to propose it, if my beloved Agnes and our parents would consent."

"Consent I why to be sure we will," answered Bernard.

"It is," replied Edwin, hesitating, "if I might be permitted to take Agnes to town with me, we might there be married without delay. I have made Mr Whitmore a sort of promise that he should be present at the ceremony; and as Emma is already there, she would have a female friend to accompany her."

It may be easily surmised that Edwin had no design to conduct Agnes to his sister; he simply wished to get her from her parents, as he had then no doubt but he should be able to deceive one so innocent of guile, and in a short time bring her to his wishes.

"My brother Godwin shall determine the business," returned Bernard. "Then I by no means approve it," said Godwin. "Had Emma been here to accompany her, the objection might have been less; but even then the step would have been imprudent—what say you, William?" "I am astonished that Edwin could ask it," replied William; "he surely did not consider the impropriety of Agnes's leaving the country with him unmarried. I think Fanny is, and ever was, as dear to me as her sister can be to Edwin; yet passion should never transport me so far as to suffer her to take a step that might subject her even to a temporary humiliation. Edwin surely can again get leave of absence; and, if Mr Whitmore wishes to be present at the ceremony, he has nothing to detain him." "I did not request your permission, nor yet your advice, William," said Edwin, with an emotion of anger which he could not conceal. "The permission is alone in her father's power to grant," replied William. "As to my opinion, my father asked it; and it coinciding with his own, I freely gave it—nay, had it not, in this case I should not have scrupled to differ from him. Agnes has no brother but myself,

and I hold her fame too dear to suffer it to be sullied, however unmeritedly." "It is enough," cried Edwin; "if frustrating my happiness gives you pleasure, you have accomplished your end." "Nay, nay," interrupted Bernard, "do not speak so harshly. William is a good lad; whatever he says is for the best. I do not know how it is, but he always brings me over to his opinion, and it is generally right." "I am sorry, in this instance, that he has such power with you," replied Edwin, sulkily. "And why so, my brother?" said William; "on calm reflection your own reason will applaud me; and now, to prove how dear I hold your happiness, I have a medium to propose. If you should find it inconvenient to return, prepare all for Agnes's reception, and Mr Bernard and myself will accompany her to town. I think he would take such a journey to oblige you; and I can assure you I would, though I should leave my heart at Inglewood with this witch and little sorcerer," patting his young son on the cheek as he lay at his mother's breast. "There, there, now!" exclaimed Bernard, exultingly; "I told you he would bring you round; his is the best plan after all, though I do not much like your long journeys; however, for once I do not care. Come, then, do not look so glum, all is settled; you know, if the mountain cannot come to us, why we must go to the mountain, as the folks say." "I hope to spare you that trouble," replied Edwin, after a short pause, during which he endeavoured to collect himself; "I trust I shall be able to return. I certainly did not wish to be again separated from Agnes; but I must submit."

Mr and Mrs Godwin now declared themselves of William's opinion, as did also Fanny, who added—"Though, like my father, I do not approve of long journeys, yet, in such a case as this, I shall willingly spare you."

The conversation now took a livelier turn with all but Edwin; his scheme frustrated of getting Agnes in his power, he knew not what measures to pursue; the intelligence of his promotion had been unexpected, and when the conditions annexed were reflected upon, unwelcome; to declare his marriage was to lose Agnes for ever. His uneasiness was too visible to be overlooked; all tried to enliven him, and particularly Agnes, who, by a thousand little artless caresses, endeavoured to make him forget his vexation; but in vain; the soothing of Agnes, like oil on a flame, served but to increase the distraction that overwhelmed him. At length the family retired to their apartments for the night, and undisturbed by guilt or sorrow, the greater part soon fell asleep.

Edwin, however, felt he could not rest; the attempt he knew would be fruitless, and for some time he sat in all the gloom of despair. "Is it not possible to see Agnes again this night?" exclaimed he; "at least I shall take her unprepared; it is my last resource, and if I succeed, William and Virtue, I laugh at ye—I can hereafter make my own conditions; if otherwise, at all events, it can but hasten my departure a few hours from the Forest, of which I must take an everlasting farewell."

This resolution once formed, he determined to endeavour to accomplish it; and leaving his own room, advanced to that of Agnes with the cautious soft step of a night-robber. At the door he paused—a momentary pang of remorse seized him. "Monster!" said he, mentally, "what villainy art thou about to perpetrate? Art thou not already sufficiently guilty? Thou wilt next be capable of murdering the innocent as they sleep, that neither their power nor persuasion should defeat thy purpose."

As he spoke, his feet involuntarily turned from the door. "And can I," resumed he, "give her up for ever? Have I it not in my power to make her amends for this one deviation from rectitude? My fortune—my life—all—are hers; then let me not weakly abandon an opportunity which can never be recalled."

With these ideas he determined to proceed in his purpose, and gently opening the door of her apartment, fearful of alarming her, lest she should awake the family, he said in a soft voice—"Be not surprised, nor displeased, my beloved Agnes; I have a few words to say to you, which I wish to repeat without witness; for William, I see, is willing to protract my happiness as long as possible."

CHAPTER XVII.

AGNES had retired with a mind too much disturbed by the visible uneasiness of Edwin to fall asleep, and immediately started at his entrance; for she heard him not until he opened the

amber door and addressed her, so cautiously had he stepped along the little passage that separated her room from the other apartments. For a moment she felt displeas'd at his intrusion, but her heart was too guileless to suspect his purpose, and affection and pity mastering every other sentiment, she replied to his address—"Retire, I entreat you, Edwin. Were you not so visibly uneasy I could not forbear to chide you; we will speak more fully to-morrow. You are displeas'd at William without cause; he is at once a kind brother, and a prudent and interested friend. Banish, then, these thoughts that disturb you; all, I doubt not, will be for the best."

Edwin, who was charmed to meet with so gentle a rebukè, replied, "And can you, Agnes, so easily adopt his unfeeling maxims? But why do I ask, when I see you do? Absence has weakened your affections for me, and it costs you no pang to doom me to misery!" "Cruel, unjust surmise!" replied Agnes, ready to burst into tears; "had your affections been as great as mine, you had never, Edwin, sought a change. No preferment, no greatness, should have tempted me to quit you; but I am wrong to speak in a manner you may construe upbraidingly. Your mind, my Edwin, is disturbed. Retire, I again conjure you, to your rest; this is no place. In the morning you shall be convinced that you are offend'd without cause." "And will you not, Agnes," replied he, "allow me a single half hour's conversation alone this last evening I have to remain with you? Will you suffer me to depart, overpowered as I am with anguish?" "Good heaven! what would you request? You know, Edwin, your uneasiness distresses me more than my own; but go down, if you desire it, I will rise and join you in a few minutes." "No," replied he, "we shall but awaken the family, which will prevent me from disclosing what I wish to say to you alone. Can you not, my love, suffer me for a few minutes to converse with you here? You were not wont to distrust your Edwin; have I, Agnes, deserved suspicion?" "No, heaven forbid!" replied the unsuspecting victim. "Withdraw, while I dress, and we can converse for a short time at the window."

Edwin, though he scarcely knew how to command himself, immediately obeyed by retiring to the passage, where he remained some minutes, then joined her at the window of her own apartment. Persuaded it was his last resource, he redoubled his former vows, until he thought his heart sufficiently softened to his purpose, then entreated her, though with some cautious preliminaries, to prove her affection by accompanying him to town.

"Why will you ask me what you know is impossible?" replied she. "Do not our parents think it wrong? and you, as well as me, Edwin, used to be satisfied with their decision: but you are grown strangely impetuous. A little time cannot surely make much difference, and then it will be my duty, as well as inclination, to accompany you wherever you go." "Ah Agnes," replied he, "if you loved me, you would not thus calmly speak of a separation, though even for a short time. My first leaving the Forest was, I can truly swear, to procure you additional happiness as well as myself. Our hearts, my beloved girl, have long been united; you can neither doubt my honour nor my love. Consent, then, to go with me to town, and let us never more be separated." "How can you press what you know is impracticable? Has not been expressly denied?" "But—but," hesitated he, "could we not, my beloved, find means to go without their permission! It surely, Agnes, would be a very venial trespass. We could be married immediately, and you cannot doubt but we shall be forgiven."

"And do you think I would be guilty of so cruel and despicable an act?" replied she, indignantly, endeavouring to withdraw her hand. "No, Edwin, my love for you, I confess, is interwoven with my life, but neither love nor life itself shall make me so ungrateful and unworthy of the best of friends and parents, for yours, Edwin, are already mine; and shall I wound their venerable features with sorrow, and wound their worthy hearts? No—you are not yourself, or you could not have propos'd it."

Though Edwin found his scheme completely frustrated by this reply, yet he determin'd not to relinquish his purpose, and summoning all his arts, by soothing and protestations, he at length removed the uneasiness his proposal had given, and his pardon was seal'd on her lips.

"And now, Edwin" said she, "retire; forget all vexation, and believe me entire yours."

"Yet a moment," replied he; "in what haste you are to banish me; are you not my wife all but the name? Suffer me then, my love, to place this ring upon your finger,"—drawing

one from his own, which had been presented him by Mrs Delmer, and putting it on hers—"and swear, Agnes, you will never give yourself to another."

"Alas!" said Agnes, "I know not what strange idea has possessed you! Have I not frequently given you that assurance, and can an oath be more binding? Surely not. I never repeated one in my life, and have frequently wished you not, for they ever leave an unpleasant sensation on my heart."

"You refuse me then, Agnes," replied he, striking his forehead with his hand; "and I shall—accursed thought! lose you for ever."

"Good heaven, how you terrify me!" said Agnes, trembling at his agitation; "how can you doubt me? But dictate what I am to say, and I will repeat it, if that will restore you calmness."

Edwin now proposed the oath, and the gentle Agnes, sinking on her knees, exclaimed "Heaven forgive me for an act against which my heart recoils! but here I call God to witness, never to have another love, and if you are not my husband, to die unmarried!" "Enough enough!" cried Edwin exultingly; "my heart is now satisfied—you are my wife, and from this hour I claim you as my own."

Her gentle spirits were overpowered with the scene that had taken place, her head sunk on Edwin's bosom, and she could scarcely preserve herself from fainting. In that fatal moment the guardian angel of virtue and innocence for a short time left the unhappy and susceptible Agnes, and the villain Edwin succeeded in his infernal purpose. Daughters of chastity, condemn not—but pity! May example warn you that secrecy and temptation are ever to be avoided.

The triumphant miscreant had now no doubt but that all his desires would be complied with; he therefore again pressed her to accompany him unknown to her parents, but in vain.

"No!" cried she, weeping bitterly. "It is true you have rendered me unworthy of your friends and yourself, yet will I not add ingratitude to vice. Begone, Edwin, nor tempt me further: am I not already sunk enough in your opinion?—hateful folly—despicable weakness! Would to heaven I had died yesterday—innocent and happy!"

Edwin exerted all his art and influence to calm her spirits; and disappointed in his view of persuading her to accompany him clandestinely, changed his plan, sparing no vows to convince her of his fixed intention to return in the course of a month and espouse her, being determined, if possible, to keep his marriage for that time private, and in the interim fix some scheme to get her into his power.

His repeated promises in some measure calmed her agitation; but she still pressed his absence, with an earnestness that all his arts could not overcome; and he was at length necessitated, though sorely against his will, to return to his chamber, as the only means to keep his sorrow within bounds, for he dreaded lest it should be heard by the family.

The remainder of the night was passed by the unhappy Agnes in self-reproaches and tearing her heart weakly endeavouring to exculpate her betrayer. For the first time the dawn of morning was displeasing to her; she shuddered to appear before her friends, and dreaded every eye, lest her conscious face should disclose the weakness she had been guilty of.

In the morning her disorder and confusion were visible to the whole family; but all attributed it to the same motive,—the approaching departure of Edwin, and endeavoured to console and cheer her, but in vain; she felt herself unworthy of their caresses, and shrunk from them. Nor was Edwin more calm, though actuated by very different motives; triumphant villain, it is true, sat enthroned within his heart; but yet he was uncertain whether he might not for ever lose Agnes, of whom he was now more passionately enamoured than ever.

Edwin, though he ardently wished to assume his new honours, could hardly determine to tear himself away, and therefore determined to protract his stay until the following morning in order to exert his utmost endeavours in reassuring Agnes, whom, as he found he could by no means persuade her to leave the Forest clandestinely, determined to return himself as speedily as possible, seduce her to some distance, then carry her off in spite of opposition trusting to her affection to plead his excuse.

In the evening arrived Mrs Delmer's second letter, containing the intelligence of Emma's elopement with Whitmore. This was delivered to Edwin when he chanced to be alone with

William. Astonished at receiving another so speedily, he hastily broke it open, but had no sooner glanced over the contents, than art, and its attendant dissimulation, for a moment forsook him. "Damnation seize the villain!" exclaimed he, aloud, regardless of William, and almost insensible he was present; "I will pursue him to the verge of hell; am I thus to be immediately punished?" "Good heaven, Edwin?" replied William, starting, what do you mean? What has happened? Speak, brother; why are your features thus disturbed with mingled rage and anguish? Are we not both the fruit of one kindly shrub? Why will you then unkindly have a separate interest? for surely withholding your thoughts must be thus interpreted. My whole heart is yours; read it, it is open as my speech to a beloved brother." Alas, William!" replied Edwin, shrinking within himself, "what do you ask? I—I—I have secrets, or if I had what could it answer to rack your bosom?" "If you are so insensible to the consolations of friendship," returned William, "to prize them so lightly, I will endeavour, though reluctantly, to withdraw my claim; my heart has hitherto forced me to be an intruder upon your interest; I will, however, hereafter strive not to hold it so inseparable with my own, until, at least, you are cured of this delirium of folly and grandeur; then, my brother, will I forget your unkindness, and again open my arms and heart to receive you. Only one thing, Edwin, would I wish to ask; if you have a subject for unhappiness, is London a place for Emma? Can she be prudently left there alone?" "D— her!" involuntarily replied Edwin.

William made no answer; he was unequal to any: he cast an eye of anguish on his brother, and dropped on a chair in silence.

At that instant entered Godwin, with his wife and Fanny, when both brothers endeavoured to conceal their uneasiness, though from different motives; Edwin to hide his own villany, and William to prevent their hearts being agonized with he knew not what, and what he wished, but dreaded to hear.

Edwin was a far better dissembler than his brother, and first overcame his confusion, simply informing his friends that he had received another letter pressing his immediate return; that that he hoped to see them again in the space of a month at farthest; that he would now take one of their horses to the next market town, from whence he could immediately procure conveyance.

His venerable parents would have questioned him respecting his repeated and peremptory refusal; but Edwin appeared so inclosed in reserve and caution, that the good man, with a sigh, withdrew his suit, and observing his son's impatience to be gone, told him to take any of the horses he approved; and fearing his uneasiness might proceed from want of money, pressed him with a supply, which, however, Edwin declined, even to obstinacy. He then left the party, and hastened to take leave of Agnes, who was locked in her chamber, for the first time, perhaps, in her life; but she wished now to conceal herself from herself; but her conscience, doubly poignant from sensibility and wounded virtue, had fixed a barbed arrow in her bosom, which she could never withdraw, nor whose anguish she could palliate.

Edwin calling, she however replied—"I will attend to you directly below;" and opening the door with a sigh, passed him and descended the stairs, he in vain attempting to detain her.

By this time he had entirely recovered his confusion; and renewing his promises, he received their affectionate farewell, departing in two hours after the receipt of his last letter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

EDWIN was no sooner departed, than William, drawing his father aside, with caution informed him of Edwin's discomposure at receiving the letter. "Believe me, my dear sir," said he, "I should not have mentioned it, had I not thought it for his happiness. Edwin's good nature, and, if I may call it so, constitutional cheerfulness, may, I doubt not, have drawn him into some difficulty, from which he cannot extricate himself. I almost fear to speak my wishes, but why should I hesitate? You have frequently honoured me by calling me your representative; would you condescend to make me such now, I would go to London, and examine to the immediate situation of Edwin; if he has any pecuniary difficulties, remove them; and, finally, bring down Emma, whom I well know you wish returned."

Godwin for a moment regarded his son, unable to reply, tears falling down his cheeks. At length, embracing him, he said, "My son, my son, surely thou art the favourite gift of God;

thou anticipatest my words, but not my wishes. I am not blind to the cloud that hangs over Edwin, but for thy offer should have suffered in silence, unable to develope it; let us, therefore, find some excuse for thy absence to thy mother, Fanny, and her gentle sister; as for Bernard, I will tell him our intention; and, I doubt not, he will applaud our honest deceit."

Bernard entering in the height of the conversation, was informed of the whole, under promise, however, of not revealing it to either of his daughters, which he firmly promised; in the meantime good-naturedly endeavouring to laugh them out of their fears, observing, "he was sure Edwin was both a good and a prudent lad; and for any difference in his behaviour they should consider his change of situation, and that gentlemen had frequently more to ruffle their thoughts than farmers, though they might choose to keep it to themselves."

William, with his father's approbation, determined to depart on the following morning, and join his father in London; and accordingly, at supper, Bernard, by agreement, asked him if he could contrive to set off on the next day to York, as he had a relation there who was sick and that he was unable to ride so far on horseback himself?

William immediately expressed his willingness, and the affair was soon concluded, unsuspected by either Mrs Godwin or Agnes; but the keen and attentive eye of tenderness was not so easily deceived; Fanny read the unusual gloom in her William's features, though determined to conceal her suspicions.

On their retiring to rest, William could not avoid observing Fanny was unhappy. She was silent, and appeared to press the young Reuben with redoubled affection to her bosom while a tear would now and then escape her eye, and fall on his dimpled cheek. "What is the matter, my love, my wife?" said William; "you are unhappy, and I have a right to claim a share." "Forgive me," replied she, weeping, "but you are not, I think, going to York. Suppose I am not, where can I go that the remembrance of your tenderness and virtue will not cheer me? Dry your tears, love, and you shall hear my destination, for I know you will not disclose it to my mother or Agnes, whom I fear to alarm." He then informed her of his determination of hastening to London, as he was rather uneasy at the behaviour of Edwin and yet more concerned at the protracted stay of Emma.

Fanny entirely coincided in the prudence of his journey, while she grieved at its necessity yet hoped all his fears were groundless; then promised to conceal her own uneasiness for the sake of his mother and Agnes; and, finally, entreated him, in such a great and hateful city (as she had heard it represented) to be careful of his own safety, and by no means to hurry back on her account, until his heart was fully satisfied in respect to his brother, "as," concluded she, "an inconsiderate haste might leave you still unhappy, and uninformed in respect of him. In the meantime, I will doubly caress Reuben, trace your features in the lineaments of his little visage, talk to him of your absence, of your return, while the unfeeling little varlet," concluded she, fondly kissing her babe, "will smile at both."

William caught her in his arms, alternately embracing her and the infant, then he retired with her to rest, happy as the first created pair, before guilt had banished peace from their bosoms.

William rose at the dawn of the day, and having taken an early breakfast with his family departed on horseback for the metropolis, which he reached five days after his brother, who rode post the whole journey.

Edwin, on his arrival in town, had immediately gone to Mrs Delmer's, who confirmed the vexatious tidings she had before sent him. At first his rage knew no bounds; he execrated Whitmore, Emma, and himself, nor did he spare Mrs Delmer in his passion; then rushing from the house, hastened to Whitmore's, where, however, he could hear nothing more than he already knew respecting their departure, but was presented by one of the domestics with a letter which had arrived three days before, and which bore a foreign post-mark. On opening it, he found it came from Whitmore, and contained these words:—

"DEAR EDWIN,—You have stolen my sister; and, as I hate to be undone, I have stole yours—but it is a mere exchange; yet I wish to act generously, and must confess that I have the best of the bargain; you are welcome to my wife to make up the deficiency. In the meantime, I wish you all the happiness attendant on the marriage state. You pleased yourself, so have I; and I trust you have too much sense and knowledge of the world to be angry at the step I have taken, particularly when I assure you, that your sister is dearer to me than life

and that her happiness shall be my particular care. I presume you have heard of my affair with Darleville. I was too much of a philosopher to notice his amour with my wife; but to speak disrespectfully of my sister and my beloved Emma, was too much even for philosophy bear. Adieu! I shall make the tour of France and Italy before I return, but if settled in any place for a time, you shall hear from me.

“Calais.

“WHITMORE.”

Edwin's rage was redoubled by this epistle, with which, open in his hand, he flew to Mrs Whitmore's apartment, expecting, that although the lady was faulty, she would, in this case, be as outrageous as himself; but he was disappointed—she only laughed at his emotion, ridiculing him for being so vehemently exasperated at an occurrence which was so common in the world, and that, if he had had the least penetration, must have foreseen. “But what, in the name of wonder, does he say?” added she. “Does he congratulate you on your marriage?” “On my part, I knew of it a week after it took place, though I did not mention it to him, and give you credit for an apt scholar, a pupil worthy your preceptor. But tell me, does the letter contain any secret; or may I see it?” “Take it,” replied Edwin, sullenly, “the letter at least is worthy the writer.”

Mrs Whitmore received it, but had not proceeded far when she began laughing immoderately. “By my life,” said she, “Whitmore is a delightful fellow, notwithstanding he treats me so cavalierly; were he not my husband, I should certainly be in love with him. Take my advice, Edwin, and do not, when you meet, quarrel about trifles. Believe me, you have, whatever he may say to the contrary, the best of the bargain, have not only the woman but the fortune, he the woman only. Which, I pray then, in the eye of common sense, has the advantage, even though I should not be thrown in to make up the deficiency?” “But suppose,” replied Edwin, half rallied from his vexation, “I should refuse anything short of the full compensation?” “Why, in that case,” returned she smiling, “I should say you were an arduous wretch, and as bad as your patron.”

This discourse was for some time pursued with the same degree of spirit, until the subject came so far realized, that Edwin at length departed, impressed with the idea that he was fully revenged on Whitmore.

On Edwin's return, he found the domestics at Mrs Delmer's (who hereafter must be called Godwin) prepared to receive him as their master, the lady having declared her marriage. Though his promotion and this distinction would at any other time have gratified his pride, and overbalanced every other idea, yet he now accepted their attentions with coldness. His heart was torn with contending passions, which even wished-for wealth could not alleviate—the departure of Emma, which almost drove him to despair, and the distempered frenzy of desire (which he called love) for Agnes. To pursue Emma without any certain route he knew would be in vain; besides, his marriage in the meantime might reach Inglewood, and Agnes be lost for ever. This idea soon banished all thoughts of following Emma, whose absence he, however, determined to keep secret as long as possible, at least until he got Agnes in his power.

Thus resolved, he endeavoured to conceal his discontent under the specious guise of dissimulation for his sister, his unsuspecting wife viewing him with too partial an eye to suspect dissimulation.

Five days after, as before mentioned, arrived William, who repaired immediately to the house he thought Mrs Delmer's, intending first to visit his sister, supposing Edwin still resided at Whitmore's. Though a stranger in London, as his direction was clear, he had not much difficulty to find it; and, tying his horse to the rails, knocked at the door, and inquired for the lady. William's good person and natural affability was with every one a powerful letter of commendation; and the domestics immediately showed him into an apartment, and requested his name. “William Godwin,” replied he, “tell her, from Inglewood, and that I request to pay her my respects.”

When the servants announced this unexpected visitor, Mrs Godwin was alone; she was amazed, as she was certain Edwin knew not of his journey. He had told her that he had dissolved his marriage to his father and William only, who were to declare it on his departure, and he had no wish to distress Agnes, who, he said, she feared was yet rather attached to him.

As for the elopement of Emma, that he informed her he could not resolve to mention, until at least he heard more of the business.

The parties were thus in mutual ignorance when they met, Mrs Godwin shuddering that fell to her lot to disclose the flight of his sister, particularly as it was with Whitmore.

Mrs Godwin met him at the door, and holding out her hand, bade him welcome, and expressing her sorrow that Edwin was gone out. This declaration struck William as nothing uncommon, as Edwin, he surmised, might just have paid her a visit. Having returned his compliments, his eyes wandered round the room in search of Emma. "And my sister, madam," said he, "has long intruded on your kindness; I am charged with the thanks of my parents, and mean to take her home with me. At some future period, perhaps, you will condescend to honour us with a visit, as you pass to your seat." Mrs Godwin bowed; she felt awkward that William did not congratulate her on her marriage, and knew not how to reply to him respecting Emma. "You are silent, madam," said William, with an emotion he could not entirely suppress, observing she made no answer. "May I not see my sister?" Thus urged she could not avoid a reply. "For pity's sake, Mr Godwin," said she, "do not press the subject until Edwin's return; I expect him momentarily. You may believe me, whatever happens to disturb your family is distressing to me." "If anything has happened to my sister, for Heaven's sake disclose it instantly; my soul cannot bear suspense on a subject so near us all. I truly confess I suspected something on Edwin's receiving the last letter, and could not rest satisfied until I hastened to town. Speak, madam, my distress is not immaterial; is Emma sick—dead? I can hear of either as becomes a man—what I dread far more, disgraced herself and family?" Mrs Godwin still hesitated, until again pressed with an earnestness that almost shocked her, she replied, "Indeed, my dear Mr Godwin, this unhappy business you may believe has greatly distressed me, particularly as the aggressor is my brother." "Enough, madam," interrupted William, impatiently; "I have heard enough to plunge my unhappy parents into an untimely grave." "My husband," resumed Mrs Godwin, "would instantly have pursued them, but his absence, and the uncertainty of their route, made such a step fruitless; they can be traced no farther than Abbeville." "Abandoned, deluded girl," exclaimed William, his voice choked with contending passions; "is this the return you make for eighteen years' watchful tenderness—parents who never regarded you but with a smile. Ungrateful wretch! I will, however, if possible, find you; and if a spark of virtue remain in your bosom, endeavour to revive it. Pardon me, madam, I scarcely know what to say; I think that you kindly mentioned that your husband would have pursued them—excuse me, I did not know you were married; but why is Edwin supine in this cruel business?"

William's answer increased Mrs Godwin's perplexity; he expressed his ignorance of her marriage, and spoke of her husband and Edwin as separate persons. "You—you are, I fear," said Mr Godwin, "under some mistake." "For Heaven's sake, then, madam, condescend to set me right; if you can lessen my tortures, I will bless you; at least," concluded he, "I am sure you cannot increase them." "I would it were in my power to remove them," replied she. "What I have to say will not, however, augment them. I surely misunderstood Edwin when he informed me that he had divulged his marriage to his father and yourself. "His marriage!" said William; "his marriage!" repeated he again, after a moment's pause. "Whose marriage?—not surely my brother Edwin's?" "Yes, sir, Edwin is my husband: we have been married these three months." "Your husband! then you are married to a villain!" exclaimed he, throwing himself into a chair from whence he had just risen. "Great God! how blind is man! I thought my miseries incapable of increase, and they are now fallen fourfold on me. Parents—Agnes—Fanny—all—all will sink beneath this cruel stroke!" "Surely, sir," interrupted Mrs Godwin haughtily, "Edwin's marriage with me cannot have increased your unhappiness?" "You, perhaps, did not know of his engagements to Agnes; yet I thought you had. Excuse me, madam, I cannot stay; my mind is too much torn with anguish. Favour me with all you know respecting my unhappy sister; I would, if possible, seek her but fear my labour would be vain. We will, if you please, banish all other subjects."

Mrs Godwin then briefly related all she knew respecting the elopement of Emma with Whitmore; saying the advantage was taken unsuspected by her, and in her absence; and finally, that to pursue them would be useless, as their route was unknown.

When she concluded, William rose, and was about to take his leave, saying he should set off again immediately for the Forest, being uncertain what step to pursue until he had consulted with his father, as he dared not trust to writing, knowing the stroke would fall so heavy on him to need all his precaution and care in divulging it.

"You will not, sure," said Mrs Godwin, "depart until Edwin's return? Let me entreat your stay—he cannot be long, and would, I am convinced, blame me for suffering you to leave so hastily." "No, madam, he would rather thank you, had you even pressed my absence; but I must be gone," continued he, advancing towards the door, "and wish you more happiness than I have now to expect." With these words, in spite of her entreaties, he left her, and mounted his horse, first requesting the servant to direct him to Mr Whitmore's. "I will call here," said he, mentally, as he rode forward; "perhaps the villain belied his wife; from his conduct, it is more than probable he did. Edwin, too, confirmed his assertions; but what are the words of such men? I will go, and doubt not to find their character of her false! Perhaps she was too virtuous to countenance their villany, and possibly from thence arose their dislike of her."

Impressed with this idea, he rode to her house, determined to procure from the lady more certain information, not doubting but he should find her overwhelmed with sorrow; and firmly persuaded that all he had before heard to her disadvantage would prove false. On his arrival, fearing she should refuse to see him, from his consanguinity to Emma, he simply desired the servant to inform her, a person on particular business desired to speak to her.

The man led the way into an apartment, and desired him to be seated; then proceeded to announce him in the adjoining room, and presently returning, informed him his mistress would wait on him presently. William, now left alone, was, for some moments, lost in thought. The partition between the rooms being, however, slight, his meditations were soon interrupted by two voices, one of whom was singing—

"Come, come, bid adieu to fear,
Love and Harmony live here!
No domestic jealous jars,
Buzzing slanders, wordy wars,
In my presence will appear;
Love and Harmony reign here!"

"But I will neither sing nor say any more till I have dispatched my visitor," continued the same voice. "By his nameless modesty, it is, I suppose, one of Mr Whitmore's creditors, with a bill as long as my arm; but I shall dispatch him in an instant."

With these words, the lady opened the door, and assuming more gravity, said, "If you please, sir, I will now attend to your business."

William, more overpowered than before with vexation to find he had called on so despicable a wretch, yet determined to advance and question her; but had no sooner entered the room, than he became fixed as a statue, with surprise and horror; for on a sofa, lolling, his brother Edwin, apparently quite at his ease. "Amazement!" exclaimed Edwin, starting from his seat, hardly less astonished than William. "Is it possible—my brother!" "No, you mistake," replied William, putting him back with his hand, for he had advanced towards him; "you have no brother; you lost him when you became a villain!" The first idea that struck Edwin was, that his seduction of Agnes was discovered, and that he should lose her forever; anger and distraction at this thought mastered every other consideration; and humiliated to be thus treated before the haughty Mrs Whitmore by his rustic brother—"A villain," echoed he, seizing William by the arm; "dare not to repeat it, lest I indeed forget our relationship." "Yes," replied William, with equal heat, "a false and most despicable villain, destitute of honour and honesty! Nay, unhand me," continued he, shaking Edwin off, who appeared almost ready to strike him, "lest I should be tempted to chastise you on the spot."

Mrs Whitmore, by this altercation, discovering her mistake in respect to the stranger, and fearing some mischief, screamed aloud, and violently pulled the bell; on which three servants rushed into the room, and in some measure calmed the impetuosity of both brothers. "Edwin needs no protection," said William, "he is beneath my resentment. I came to inquire of my unhappy sister, whose fault is already lessened when I see what dangers her inexperience has been exposed to."

Mrs Whitmore would, if possible, have adopted her usual haughtiness, but her behaviour like an arrow drawn against an impenetrable target, only rebounded without injury to the object. He did not, it is true, return scorn for scorn, but appeared to feel her efforts little as doth a giant those of a pigmy. Edwin, too, after the first exertion of passion seemed sunk within himself, and blushing in spite of all his pride, to appear to owe his safe to the domestics, entreated Mrs Whitmore to command their absence; which being at length complied with, unable to bear the presence of his brother, he rushed out of the room.

William, who was anxious to gain some intelligence of his sister, on Edwin's leaving the apartment, made a cold apology to the lady for what had passed, and began the discourse nearest his heart; but finding he could procure no information, soon left her, and remounting his horse, with a heavy heart took his way towards Inglewood.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN Edwin left his brother, he hastened home, where he was soon informed of all that had passed in the interview between William and Mrs Godwin, the lady not sparing her reproach for his duplicity. Edwin was not in a temper to bear, much less to palliate, and high words and consequence ensued. To a charge of ingratitude he replied with a thousand curses against his own folly, until at length the lady retired highly displeased. Edwin neither endeavouring to detain nor soothe her.

No sooner was he alone, than he gave way to the mingled passions that overwhelmed him. "It is now complete!" exclaimed he; "I have gained the points on which I fixed my happiness—wealth, and the possession of Agnes, and yet am plunged in the depth of misery—misery too great for human nature to bear, for have I not lost all that made life desirable? Parents—Agnes—brother—that brother whose friendship was once so necessary to my happiness; he spurned me—despised me; that temper I never before saw ruffled with passion, was now ungovernable! By hell, vice has made me a coward! Had he even struck me, I think I should not have returned it. My sister dishonoured too! Accursed Whitmore, thou shalt pay for all, for thou art the original cause; the tempter that first seduced me from home, happiness, love, and virtue—that first taught me to laugh at vows, and gratify my passions at the expense of innocence and honour, mayest thou be accursed as I! then annihilation will be mercy; yet had I but Agnes to soothe my cares, I could yet be comparatively happy!—happy!" continued he, after a pause; "by Heaven, I will! they already hate, despise, and curse me—they can do no more; and such a prize is worth a bold effort."

Towards evening he returned to Mrs Whitmore, as he was curious to hear how his brother's visit had concluded, having no doubt but that he had immediately set out on his return for the country; he likewise wished, if possible, to escape from himself, and Mrs Whitmore's levity was the most speedy palliative he could think of. As for his wife, now she began, as he surmised, to suspect his villany, she became almost hateful to him; so true it is, that not unfrequently the aggressor finds it most difficult to pardon.

Mrs Whitmore rallied him on the whole transaction; his brother's behaviour she construed to proceed from his displeasure respecting Emma, and a supposition that Edwin had not been sufficiently attentive to her, for anger at his marriage she had not the most distant idea of. Nay, she was astonished that the satisfaction she supposed he must feel from that circumstance had not obliterated all other ideas. "I think," said she, "he might, at least, have behaved with more politeness before me; but what, in the name of wonder, would the handsome rustic have had you done;—keep a duenna to guard her?—cry your mercy, she had one, though, confess, not sufficiently vigilant, for she was engaged in her own affairs;—or did he wish you now the mischief is done, to set off, like another Quixote, in search of the ravisher, and rescue the damsel? Nay, never look serious. Have I not equal cause, when I have lost my dear spouse, yet bear it with patience? Why did not you answer your brother in the scriptural language he is accustomed to, making *free* with the words of Cain—'Am I my sister's keeper?' "Damnation, madam!" replied Edwin, "you go too far!" then throwing himself on a sofa, he muttered between his closed teeth, "I am indeed Cain, cursed of God and man."

Edwin's compunction was, however, far from being permanent; before the night closed the company of Mrs Whitmore had greatly alleviated it, though reflection, when he was alone returned with redoubled poignancy. He certainly did not love her; but she was a voluptuary in pleasure, and fascinated his senses at the expense of his reason. Her passions were b

ture violent, and, untaught by education to subdue them, they had gained fresh strength the neglect of Whitmore, whom she had long regarded with indifference, and amused herself as best suited her inclinations; but as, until very lately, she had been cautious in her outward conduct, was universally well received. The affair with Darleville had been the most blisful, probably from his vanity; for she certainly felt no particular affection for him, having missed him before the duel took place, expressed no uneasiness when she heard he was wounded, nor pleasure when informed he was out of danger.

While Edwin was endeavouring to dissipate his merited uneasiness, William, as he advanced on his journey, was forming a thousand different plans to lessen the weight of the news he had to communicate to his friends, while his own heart was distracted with grief and vexation. He had made the journey to town on his own horse, but found that unequal to the speed with which he wished to return, and therefore left it to be brought down by the wagoner, and returned post.

William, by this means, reached the Forest much sooner than either his father or wife, who knew his real destination, could expect; for Mrs Godwin and Agnes had no suspicion of the truth. As he advanced towards home, the tidings he had to communicate became so painful, that he slackened his pace; and the pleasure he would have otherwise felt at the idea of embracing his dear wife, smiling babe, and family, was lost in the agonizing thought, that it should fall his lot to disclose events, whose effects, he much feared, would have a fatal tendency. It was the close of day when he reached home. Never before had he thought it painful to cross a threshold; he reflected with vexation on the speed he had used on his journey. "It is," said he, "as if I was in haste to distress them as deeply as myself." He then, not meeting any one, turned his horse into the stable, and with an irresolute step advanced towards the door; when in the kitchen, he heard Fanny, whose voice was wild music, singing to her infant,—

"There's nae luck about the house,
There's nae luck at a';
There's nae luck about the house,
When our gude man's awa.

"Sae sweet his voice, sae smooth his tongue,
His breath like caller air,
His very tread has music in't,
As he comes up the stair.

"There's nae luck, &c."

"Oh, it is too much," exclaimed William. "Inhuman, barbarous monster! for I cannot tell him brother who rends asunder such ties, and agonizes those he is bound, by every sentiment of honour and gratitude, to protect. Alas! I have now no brother—no sister! would to heaven I never had, or that they had died in infancy—innocent and happy!"

He now entered, and found his parents and Fanny seated together; all leaped up to receive him: Fanny depositing her charge in the cradle, and flying into his arms, Mrs Godwin unsuspectingly inquiring after Bernard's friend, while Godwin fixed his eyes in silence on the altered and pale face of his son, and already shuddered at the expectation of what he had to repeat.

"—— His brow's the title page
That speaks the nature of a tragic voume.

Thou tremblest, and the whiteness of thy cheek
Is apter than thy tongue to tell thy errand.
E'en such a man, so faint, so spiritless,
So dull, so dead in look, so woe begone,
Drew Priam's curtain in the dead of night,
And would have told him half his Troy was burnt;
But Priam found the fire ere he his tongue."

William gave an evasive answer to his mother's question, and, having returned his wife's caresses, anxiously cast around his eyes, and inquired after Bernard and Agnes.

"My father," replied Fanny, "is out, and our dear Agnes has been very indifferent ever since you went away, and is now retired to bed;—but how pale you are, William! indeed you're sadly altered—I am sure you are ill. Perhaps you have hurried too much. I did not expect you yet."

Mrs Godwin expressed the same idea respecting his appearance, while the venerable father remained silent and lost in thought; for William's speedy return without Emma confirmed all his fears. At that moment entered Bernard, singing, blithe as a hale constitution and an bright mind could make him.

"What, William!" cried he, "art come, my lad? Nothing but good news, I know. My kinsman is got well, I hope?" winking significantly, "and thou art satisfied." William sighed and wrung his hands in silence. "Why, what ails? art tired or sick?—thee lookest quite ill! And what poor horse is't in the stable?—'tis miserable thin, and as weary as a dog thee used to have more mercy on a dumb beast. I looked in as I came round, and could not think whose half-famished creature it was."

Before William could reply, Mr Godwin took his wife by the hand, and said, "My beloved friend, we have been married these six and thirty years, in all which time I never used deceit and perhaps it is, even in this instance, unjustifiable. William, my love, has been to London, and I am amazed at his speedy return; he appears ill, too. I myself fear all is not there as we could wish; but we are Christians, and will endeavour to receive the evil as become us in this transitory state." Mrs Godwin made no reply; maternal tenderness swelled in her bosom, and was too poignant to be relieved by words. "Speak then, William," continued Godwin; "we are prepared—certainly cannot be more horrible than this suspense."

William, though thus pressed, appeared in no haste to reply; even Bernard's features were marked with alarm; while Fanny, as if William's affection could secure her from sorrow, drew her chair closer to his, and pressed one of his hands between both hers.

"Oh my father!" at length hesitated William, his voice hardly articulate, "pardon your son for being the messenger of tidings which must wound you even more deeply than they have done me. Edwin, anxious for independence and wealth, has—"—"Gained it at the expense of honour and rectitude!" interrupted Godwin. William's affirmative was a sigh. "No, no!" exclaimed Mrs Godwin, hastily; "it is a mistake: you believe too easily—William is misinformed. Edwin is young and lively, and may err, but not grossly." "Ay, ay," said Bernard, "it is only so: William is so good himself, he cannot make proper allowance for common frailties. I am glad, however, Agnes is not here. He has made a trip I suppose—some girl, I doubt. Never mind, we must keep it a secret; but what has that to do with wealth and independence?" "I will not believe it," replied Mrs Godwin; "he loves Agnes too well to be guilty in the manner you allude to. But where is Emma—my child—why is she not returned with you? She will next be scandalized—suspected; not the world shall not keep her from her mother." "Alas, where shall she find her?" cried William involuntarily. "Find her!" screamed Mrs Godwin; "is she dead?—for, living, who shall hide her from me?"—"None but herself, my mother," replied William; "alas! she is unworthy of you—she has fled with a vile betrayer."

A friendly insensibility for some moments deprived the wretched mother of her sense of anguish, and all remained silent; but recovering, by the aid of Fanny, tears, in some measure, eased her overcharged heart. "And what remains, William," said she, "fear no more to speak—the blow is struck. What of Edwin—is he, too, lost? I charge you, by your love and duty to me, speak. I will know the worst, and pray for patience to support it." Godwin repeated the command.

William, thus pressed, with the utmost agitation, related all he knew respecting Emma, concluding with the marriage of Edwin to Mrs Delmer, but suppressing his finding him at Mrs Whitmore's. All remained, for some time, lost in astonishment, until at length Godwin exclaimed—"Cruel, deceitful boy! Is this the return for my anxious care for your happiness?—alas! I feared even to refuse what my heart could not approve, and, by a false indulgence, have undone you. Miserable man that I am, how shall I bear this stroke, or comfort this unhappy sufferer," looking with anguish on his wife, "when I cannot myself support it? Oh, God of mercy!" exclaimed he, raising his clasped hands, "how did I pray for my children, and in thy anger thou gavest them." Fanny dropped on her knees at his feet. "Oh my father," replied she, looking tenderly at William, "all your children are not the gifts of anger." "No, my daughter," replied the old man; "William and thyself, nay, and my Agnes too, have virtues to overbalance the other's errors, for ye are all mine; and from this hour, if my heart is capable of distinction, Agnes must claim it; for who shall comfort her? William, I doubt not, will endeavour to requite thee, for his love is sincere, and worthy its object." As he spoke he raised his weeping daughter-in-law, and pressed her to his bosom, while she hung round his neck, and watered his grey hairs with her tears. "Oh, Bernard!" cried Godwin, "let not this divide our friendship—condemn not all for the errors of one."—Bernard held out his hand and grasped that of Godwin, exclaiming, while sorrow

most choked his speech, "Condemn you! may heaven condemn me if I do! No, my part bleeds for you. Ah, William, thou wast right when thou blamest me for applauding his going to town." "I will retire," said Mrs Godwin, rising, but sinking again in her chair; "I am not well, my head is giddy, and my heart is cold. Give me your hand, Fanny, and lead me to bed. Oh, my children!—my children!"

Fanny and William led their unhappy mother to her chamber, where the former insisted on attending her for the night, but was refused by Mrs Godwin. "No," said she, "you will hereafter, my child, I fear, have to attend your suffering sister; surely she already suspects something, for her health droops daily." Fanny again pressed to stay. "Will not my beloved husband be with me?" replied Mrs Godwin; "we will pray and comfort each other. How often have we passed the hours in exultation over the growing virtues of our children—tonight we will weep over their vices!"

Fanny retired and joined the unhappy father and William, who were devising means how to disclose Edwin's perfidy to Agnes; Godwin at length taking the task on himself. The parties then withdrew to their respective chambers, not to sleep, but to deplore the depravity that had banished happiness from their bosoms and converted the mansion of peace into a house of mourning.

CHAPTER XX.

In the morning all met at breakfast but Mrs Godwin, who appeared too much indisposed to leave her bed. Agnes, apparently lost in melancholy, was not, however, insensible to the stress that hung on every face, and with a fearful energy entreated to know the cause.

Godwin at length informed her of Emma's flight, adding, as he concluded, while tears streamed down his venerable cheeks, "But I will endeavour to tear her from my heart, thou, Agnes, shalt supply her place, and become doubly dear to me." "Oh, my beloved, my unhappy Emma," cried Agnes, weeping, "how sincerely do I feel for you! She has been deceived, deluded; and if she can but be regained, forgive, my father, and receive her to your bosom. Oh, she has a thousand virtues to counterbalance this one error; and will, I hope, behave hereafter in a manner to make you even forget it." As none seemed willing to continue the discourse, it ceased here, and the breakfast passed in silence, being removed almost untouched, each appearing to shun the eye of the other—even little Reuben's smiles being disregarded.

The visible anxiety that already hung on Agnes, made Godwin doubly unwilling to disclose the unhappiness that yet awaited her, yet he thought it justifiable to lengthen her delusion; therefore, after breakfast, being alone with her, he began the painful task. As he proceeded, his tenderness redoubled his emotion, and he was frequently for some time inarticulate.

Agnes's behaviour, on the contrary, was even painfully calm; she shed no tears, vented no reproach, but listened in silence as one on whom neither joy nor sorrow could any longer make an impression. "Oh, my beloved child!" concluded the old man, "how shall we be able to obliterate from thy memory the unworthiness of the ungrateful Edwin? Yet it shall be my daily prayer to heaven to effect it, and the constant endeavour of us all to love thee with redoubled affection, particularly of mine, my child." "Oh, I am unworthy," exclaimed Agnes, breaking silence. "I am unworthy!—call me not your child—I am vile, abandoned, wretched. In an evil hour I forgot virtue, and heaven has forsaken me!" "Impossible, my love! thy mistress has impaired thy senses; thou wert ever virtuous as lovely, the delight of the eye, and darling of every heart." "Oh no, my more than father!" replied she, falling at his feet, the scalding tears flowing in torrents down her blushing cheeks, and concealing her face on his knees; "I cannot deceive you—you are too good to be deceived; your kindness pierces my heart, and forces me to lay it open to your view; yet do not hate—do not banish me your presence; I cannot bear your displeasure. Though I am not the virtuous Agnes you once knew, do not spurn me—my life will pay the forfeit." A gloomy presage seized the mind of Godwin, and transfixed his soul with horror. "It is impossible," said he; "yet speak, my Agnes—fear me not; Edwin cannot have been such a villain! he did not surely attempt thy innocence!" Agnes for a moment made no reply, at length exclaimed—"Oh, my father, Edwin is not more guilty than the abandoned Agnes!"

Godwin gave a cry of surprise and mingled horror; resignation and patience appeared equally to have forsaken him. In speechless agony he threw himself on the floor, and tore

from his head its venerable honours. The affrighted family heard the noise, and rushing in found him on the ground, Agnes, trembling and ready to faint, endeavouring to raise him.

"Oh, my father!" cried Fanny, "why are you thus? you will alarm my mother. Alas! I fear she is already convulsed." "May the villain who occasioned it be accursed!" replied he, with vehemence, despair in his voice, and his features distorted with anguish. "Ah, whom do you curse, my father?" exclaimed Agnes; "recall, recall the cruel words—Edwin cannot exist under a parent's malediction." "It has involuntarily passed my lips," replied Godwin; "I cannot recall it. Merciful God! and have I lived to curse my son? But give me your arm, my child—lead me to my wife; I am sick with sorrow—we will die together."

William and Fanny raised their father, and led him to his wife's apartment, Fanny remaining to attend her mother, while William, who had no suspicion of the last intelligence his father had received, returned to Agnes, whom he endeavoured, by every means in his power to console; and perceiving that his father having cursed Edwin hung on her spirits endeavoured to remove the impression.

"I am equally displeased as my father," said William, "yet I cannot curse, nor yet hate him, though I despise him beyond the power of words to express. Nay, weep not, Agnes, he is unworthy your tears; he merits only your disdain, as he has mine." "Why will you speak thus?" cried Agnes; "why recall a scene I have frequently endeavoured to obliterate from my memory? Unhappy Edwin! would to heaven thou hadst not sworn so rashly! yet I trust thou art not *abandoned* of God, though, alas, thou art *curled* by thy father, *despised* by thy brother, and by thy Agnes—*forgiven*."

William knew not that she alluded to the curse Edwin had called on his own head, should he break his vows, and still continued endeavouring to soothe her, when a cry of sorrow struck on their ears, and banished every other idea. Both flew in haste to Mrs Godwin's apartment, where a sight presented that at once struck them with grief and horror; she was struggling in a violent convulsion that had just seized her; the terrified Fanny, with the servant endeavouring to succour her, while Godwin, in speechless agony, was on his knees by her side.

William remained in the apartment but a moment, then hastened away, and mounting his horse, rode off at full speed for the nearest medical help, with whom he returned in little more than an hour. Mrs Godwin was still in the same situation; and though at length in some degree recovered, yet was so weakened and low, that the assistance they called in pronounced her recovery very doubtful; the shock she had received from the conduct of her children had impaired her understanding, and her constant dwelling on their names, showed the impressions still remained, in spite of agony and even delirium. For three days little alteration appeared in the unhappy family fluctuating between hope and despair; and, to add to their sorrow, Agnes, though she forced herself to attend on Mrs Godwin, yet it was plainly perceptible that she was not equal to the effort. At this period the convulsive spasms increased; and, in two days more, the unhappy mother became at once both speechless and insensible, and was declared past all hope. Who, at that fearful hour, can paint the agonies of the afflicted family? Edwin and Emma were forgotten in the greater sorrow, or only at periods remembered as the cause of all. On the bed, supported by pillows, and the arms of a husband whose affection had increased with growing years, sat Mrs Godwin, placidity on every feature, her half extinguished eye raised alternately with confident hope, or turned with soft compassion on her weeping family. On his knees, on one side, was William; on the other, Fanny and Agnes; at the feet, Bernard, and at some distance, the old servant, who had lived with them ever since their marriage, nursing Reuben, and bathing his face with her tears. Mrs Godwin beckoned her to approach, and taking the hand of Margery, put it into the hand of Fanny, as though she commended them to each other.

"I understand you, my mother," said Fanny, "I will regard the happiness of Margery as one of your last commands, and hold it sacred; she is too old to labour—Reuben shall henceforth be her only care."

Mrs Godwin bowed her assent, and drawing Reuben close to her, kissed his smiling mouth, and, by her raised eye, appeared to ask a blessing on him: then holding a hand on each alternately, she saluted all—Bernard, as he received this last token of her friendship and affection, sobbing aloud, and wringing his hands in agony. His emotion distressed her; she endeavoured to speak, but the effort was fruitless, and only brought on a fresh convulsion in

ich she struggled for some moments, but at length recovered, though with increased weakness and additional symptoms of approaching dissolution; her speech too, though almost articulate, was returned. "Bless ye, bless ye, my good, my dutiful children!—forgive, ye, for your deluded brother and sister. Agnes, be comforted: Edwin is most to be pitied, you are virtuous—he is——" Then turning to Godwin, "Friend, husband, companion, be comforted; we shall meet again." As she spoke she extended her arms, and was received into his, where, after remaining some moments, apparently in silent prayer, she bowed her head, and articulately said—"From these arms, which have led me in innocence and peace, oh, receive thy servant! Blessed!—blessed——" her voice failed, respiration grew weaker, and a few minutes she expired on his bosom.

"And art thou gone for ever!" said Godwin, after a long pause, at the same time laying his wife's head on the pillow, and fixing his eyes upon her lifeless face—"I am indeed left to deplore thy loss, to mourn thy untimely death! Devoted children, how will ye hereafter answer for me? Edwin, thou hast gained wealth, but lost thine own soul!"

William and the family were unequal to the task of administering comfort, and stood around weeping in silent anguish.

"But shall I selfishly repine, blessed saint?" resumed the old man, kissing her hand. "Forbid it, heaven! thy cares are past, and thy reward prepared. Be comforted, then, my children, and bless the power that spared her thus long. Methinks she smiles upon us all. Let us kneel around her—our prayers will ascend to the throne of mercy, where we have now our blessed mediatrix."

The family obeyed; the old man prayed long and fervently, until at length that resignation which true piety ever inspires calmed the acuteness of their feelings, and left them able to perform the last attention which duty demanded for the honoured clay.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHILE SORROW and death had been busy at Inglewood, Edwin, who carried a vulture in his bosom, which, in spite of all his efforts, he could neither silence nor destroy, was endeavouring to forget reflection by plunging yet deeper and deeper in error. His wife, who had seduced him to what he once thought the pinnacle of happiness, was neglected, and almost forgotten, for being the means of placing an insuperable bar between him and Agnes; while the lascivious and wanton Mrs Whitmore, with whom he spent the greater part of his time, was caressed, not from affection, but because she possessed all the art of intoxicating the passions, though at the expense of reason and judgment. The idea of Agnes was, however, a constant intruder; he reflected with horror on the agonies he supposed she suffered, nor was he more easy on account of his family; in spite of vice and folly, he loved them, and his wealth did not half its charms, as they could not share it.

Eager to find excuses to his own conscience for his conduct, he regarded Whitmore as the cause of all, and determined, should he ever meet him, to take a full revenge. In the meantime, getting Agnes into his power was his constant determination, though he could not as yet devise by what means. At first he expected to meet her anger with resentment, but had no doubt that he should be able to calm the storm, especially as he had so strong an advocate in her own heart.

Edwin, as soon as his marriage was acknowledged, had hired a servant particularly to attend him—a shrewd and intelligent fellow, one whom he thought he could venture to trust on such an occasion; he therefore disclosed such part of the business as was necessary for his purpose, and that could be unfolded with honour to himself; and determined to send him disguised to Inglewood to endeavour at least to inquire into the health of the family! if possible to speak to Agnes and declare his business, which was to entreat her to form no decided opinion of Edwin's conduct until she saw him, as he had been grossly misrepresented, and could vindicate himself from the imputation but by a personal interview.

This message was to be delivered verbally, as Edwin feared that, should he write, it might be produced as fresh evidence of duplicity against him; while, in the first case, there was no danger, as he could easily, on occasion, forswear both the message and messenger.

Thus determined, accompanied only by his servant, he departed, and reached a small village at about fifteen miles distance from Inglewood, where he remained, while his servant waited alone to the Forest, from whence he did not return until the second day.

Edwin had waited for him with impatience; and so numerous were his questions, that the man knew not how to reply, but entreated his master to suffer him to relate the whole methodically.

"It was," said Harris, "near four in the afternoon before I got there. I meant to remain in the vicinity until the evening, then, as I was on foot, pretend to be benighted, and inquire at your father's my way to the next market town; never doubting but they would have humanity sufficient at least to offer me some refreshment, if not a lodging for the night, as I had all my story ready, and thought in that case I should find an opportunity to deliver my message. As it was far too early to appear, I kept walking about at some distance, fearful being noticed, and at length came to the little church, and for awhile passed my time reading the gravestones until the bell began to toll; and I saw numbers of people coming from all sides, and thronging the churchyard. As I had plenty of time, I thought I might well stay and be a spectator; not doubting but it was the funeral of some nobleman, and much beloved, as almost every one wept."—"D—n your funeral! come to the point; they have lost their paragon, I suppose. I have forgotten her name, though I heard her praises sufficiently sounded while I was at Inglewood; but my mind was too much engrossed with Agnes to think of aught else."—"It was not the person you allude to," replied the man, in a voice that alarmed Edwin; "the loss concerns you more nearly."—"Distraction!" exclaimed Edwin, starting from the chair, a cold sweat bedewing his forehead, and his knees knocking against each other. "Say not it is Agnes, unless you would lay me dead before you."—"It was your mother's funeral," replied Harris; "I saw her laid in the earth."—"And art thou gone, mildest, best of women?" exclaimed Edwin, weeping bitterly, regardless of his servant. "Any vexation I may have given her, surely could not be violent enough to occasion her death. Emma's conduct must have wounded her far more deeply. She was in years too near sixty, I think, yet hearty, and apparently likely to live much longer."

Thus did he industriously endeavour to exculpate himself from any share in his mother's death; and finding the uncertainty respecting the rest of his family painful, strove to calm his agitation, and ordered Harris to continue his narrative from where he had left off, without the least reserve.

"Well then, sir," said Harris, "I mingled with the crowd, and inquired what great personage was to be buried, that caused, in such a scattered neighbourhood, so great a number of people to assemble? 'It is neither lord nor lady,' replied an old man, 'but the wife of an industrious farmer, who was born and ever dwelt among us, easy in his circumstances, a universally beloved and respected, as you may judge by the people assembled at the funeral. Ah! well,' continued the old man, 'do I remember their marriage—he was the son of a rector, and she the daughter of a neighbouring farmer; she might have matched higher, but Godwin alone was her choice, and truly a worthy one; for the longer they lived together, the more they appeared to love one another.'—'And what children have they?' said I, carelessly, thinking the question might lead to some other respecting Mr Bernard's family. 'Two sons and a daughter,' replied he, 'fine grown, handsome young folks; the eldest married, and accounted one of the best men, as well as farmers, in the county; everything thrives with him, and everybody loves him, and that is a bold word.'—'And the other two?' said I.—'Are of late become Londoners,' replied he, 'more's the pity; but I know little of them—they went out of the country worthy their parents, and, I trust, will come back the same.'

"Our discourse was here interrupted by the approach of the funeral; the corpse was carried into the church, a sermon preached, and a psalm sung by those whose tears would permit them to sing. On bearing out the body, I observed the mourners, and asked my communicative friend (whom I kept close to) their names.

"'The first,' says he, 'is Mr Godwin, supported by his son. How the youth weeps, while the father's eyes are raised in anguish to heaven! God give them comfort;—he can alone comfort. The next is farmer Bernard and his daughter, an excellent girl, and as handsome as good, not a tongue but blesses her.'

"He then mentioned the names of several others, all relations or neighbours, and among them an old grey-headed woman-servant, whom, he said, had lived with them six or seven and-thirty years.

ered by every one of the distressed family on the body being laid in the grave, each endeavouring to sustain the other, though unable to support themselves. At length, all being included, the people began to separate, and the sorrowful party retook their way homeward, the old man who had been so communicative joining one of the mourners, and accompanying him—a circumstance that greatly disappointed me, as I wished much to question him further. The night was dark and rainy, and I ventured to walk several times round the grave, where, however, I heard so many voices, that I relinquished my first purpose, of pretending to be benighted, lest I should meet among them the old man I had conversed with; besides, from the badness of the weather, I had no doubt many would stay all night. I therefore proceeded about four miles, where, at a little alehouse, I procured a bed, and early next morning measured my steps back, walking carelessly at a distance from the house, which the horsemen were just leaving, and passed me on the full gallop. Soon after I saw your messenger, with Mr Bernard and your brother, whom I instantly recollected, come out, and take the road to the church. I determined not to lose this opportunity, and walked up to the grave, where, to my good fortune, it was opened by the beautiful girl I saw at the funeral, whom I instantly knew again. Oh, sir! you will forgive my being the messenger of such tidings, as I have succeeded in my errand. She was alone; I therefore declared my business, which, when she had heard, she withdrew, desiring me to stay, as she would write an answer.—“Charming angel!—and how dared you keep me thus in suspense? By heaven, I will never forgive it? Haste—haste! Why did you not begin by delivering it?”—“I kept so long to make my peace after my bad news,” replied Harris, “with the freedom of a servant who is fully in the confidence of his master’s unworthy secrets, and hope it will fully answer your expectation.”

Edwin received it with a trembling hand, tore it open, and read as follows:—

“INHUMAN EDWIN,—Was it not enough that but yesternight your mother was laid in the grave, but you must seek to redouble the blow, and pursue the devoted Agnes to the brink of the grave! Oh! before it is too late, repent of the death of your mother; and soon that Agnes will plunge you in guilt beyond all hopes of pardon! With these riches you have so dearly obtained, if possible, be happy, and by numerous good actions endeavour to obliterate your past errors; respect the woman that has bestowed them, nor seek to injure her peace or ours, by insulting those you are bound to honour; for every affront offered to Agnes or father and brother will look on as their own.

“As for your pander, I have left him in his mistake—he thinks me Agnes. Alas! I have no words to throw away on such wretches, but would advise you, for his own sake, to send him no more, as the husband of Mrs Delmer can have no correspondence with Agnes; and shall not fail to declare his error to your father and brother. Farewell, Edwin: review your actions and their consequences, then can you not fail to repent, and your mother will have died in vain.

“F. GODWIN.”

“Hell and destruction!” exclaimed Edwin: “you have mistaken my brother’s wife for Agnes! the letter is from her, and my father will be doubly incensed against me. Fool—dolt that I was, to trust you! How could you mistake, when the direction I gave you was so plain?”—“If there is any mistake, it cannot be my fault,” replied Harris. “Did you not tell me a fine-formed, elegant girl, remarkably handsome, about nineteen, with blue eyes, and auburn hair falling in ringlets down her face? Besides, sir, did not the old fellow tell me she was Bernard’s daughter? Surely, after all, I could not be mistaken.”—“You were mistaken,” cried Edwin, impatiently; “Fanny is the model of her sister, though not so lovely. Oh, you have ruined me beyond all hope! But tell me—relate the whole infernal story of what you saw and heard in the house.”—“Why, sir, on my knocking at the door, a handsome girl, whom you say I mistook, opened it: I asked if her name was Bernard’s daughter, and bowed slightly, and replied, viewing me with curiosity as I thought—‘My father’s name is Bernard.’ Now, sir, you may recollect, that though you told me your brother was married, you did not say to a daughter of Mr Bernard; how, therefore, should I suspect it? I then mentioned the business, declaring how unhappy you were, how greatly you had been misinterfered to her, and finally entreating her to give you an opportunity to exculpate yourself. She heard me through with tolerable patience, though I now recollect she bit her lip, which, at the moment, I thought no very good symptom: but when I concluded, as she replied, ‘I have nothing to say to you, but will write my answer to your employer,’ I thought all was

well, and waited accordingly. While she was absent, I cannot say but I was under some apprehensions lest your father or brother should return, and suspect my business; and egad sir, I should not much like a controversy with the latter, for he seems a powerful man, and one that don't look as if he would be trifled with. From the former my heels might have saved me; but against your brother, I am conscious none of my efforts would have availed.—"Cease your digressions—what care I for your fears or his prowess!" cried Edwin, impatiently.—"Sir, I have just done. She soon came down with the letter, and said, 'Take this and give it to your master; but beware how you come any more here; next time you may not escape so well.'

"I protest, sir, I thought she meant kindly, and thanked her accordingly; for if she meant otherwise, and her voice is such music when she chides, what must it be when she is pleased. Her eyes, to be sure, were red and swelled with weeping, and she spoke particularly serious; but that I attributed to her recent loss."—"Enough, enough!" exclaimed Edwin: "I will hear no more! Begone—I will call when I want you. Totally ruined with my father!" resumed he, mournfully; "detested by my brother—my mother dead, and her death laid to me—that of Agnes too, her raven-like sister has predicted!—distraction is in the thought; that alone is wanting to complete my crimes, my misery—at least, it should be the signal for the conclusion," continued he, looking at his pistols, which were hung up in the apartment, "for I have not plunged thus far in guilt to live without her."

Edwin could not be long absent from his regiment, nor yet could he resolve to live in continual uncertainty respecting Agnes; he therefore at length came to a determination to leave Harris in the country, to send him constant intelligence, which he determined to obtain by means of the landlord where they then were, Edwin telling him he was Godwin's son, under some displeasure with his father, and on that account particularly unhappy, and interested to hear constantly of his family.

Old Godwin, though not personally known to the host, was too much respected for his name to be a stranger; he therefore lamented that there should be a difference between him and his son, especially as Edwin's appearance and behaviour much delighted him, wondering within himself how the farmer could be displeased with so fine a gentleman, whom the servant assured him had a very handsome fortune; all which finally operated with him to promise he would procure the wished-for intelligence, and keep the whole a secret, as particularly recommended him.

Accordingly the farmers who were continually passing to Inglewood, or returning, were questioned respecting the Godwins, who were so generally known and beloved, that every material occurrence respecting their health or welfare usually transpired, the recent death of Mrs Godwin furnished a pretence for the landlord's inquiries.

The whole family, they informed him, were said to be in the deepest affliction, not only for the loss of Mrs Godwin, but for the present unhappy state of Bernard's youngest daughter, Agnes, who was seized, on the death of Mrs Godwin, with a delirious fever, which had increased to so great a height that her life was despaired of.

With this intelligence Edwin was forced to set off for London, not being able to procure any more satisfactory; leaving, however, strict charge with his servant to write by every post.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE intelligence of the farmers respecting the Godwin family was strictly true. Agnes's spirit, exerted to the uttermost, had supported her until the death of Mrs Godwin; but the blow, added to the preceding distress, was more than her nature could sustain, and a fever and delirium was the almost immediate consequence. Her cruel seduction by Edwin she had alone revealed to his father, who had not the heart to disclose it to any one, though the secret preyed on his vitals, and redoubled his sorrow. He was continually by her side, praying with her, administering her medicines, or endeavouring to calm her frenzy; every exclamation she uttered adding an additional pang, as they usually respected Edwin and her own happiness.

At the beginning of her illness, the ring she had received from Edwin she put upon her finger, saying she was his wife, an asseveration no one would deny, the least contradicting making her outrageous. For two months her life was declared in the utmost danger, and for

considerable time longer continued in a very precarious state; but at length the fever gradually decreased, though the effects still remained, her understanding having received a shock the more alarming, as, though her bodily strength slowly returned, her mental faculties remained equally deranged, though more calm, her ideas still dwelling on her faithless lover, usually concluding every subject with—*I am Edwin's wife.*

Mrs Palmer, who had been absent from Inglewood, returned at this period, and was both grieved and shocked at the distress her favourite family had experienced, though she knew not to what extent. Eager to endeavour to alleviate their woes, she immediately hastened to them, and did not refuse a friendly tear at the alteration that had taken place in so short a time; her eye, whichever way she turned, that was wont to meet placidity and happiness, how now changed! Mrs Godwin's seat was vacant; Godwin much thinner, and his form, which used to be perfectly upright, bent forward, with the appearance of an added twenty years, and his fixed eyes constantly on the ground; Bernard with his arms across, his head sunk on his bosom, his jollity fled, his pipe neglected in the chimney corner, and his jug empty on the shelf. William endeavouring to conceal his distress, fearful of increasing that of his father and wife, while the sighs that frequently escaped him, and the looks with which he viewed them, bespoke the acuteness of his feelings; the once cheerful and lively Fanny, pale and melancholy; while Agnes, unconcerned at all, sat in a corner amusing herself with flowers, a faint flush spread over her cheeks, the mild lustre of her soft blue eyes changed to a dazzling, but less pleasing brightness, and perpetually cast around, as in search of some object, which, failing to meet, they usually fell on the ring upon her finger, with a sigh, and—*I am Edwin's wife.* In short, little Reuben was the only one who smiled; he appeared to thrive in domesticity, laughing while his mother wept, seizing his grandfather's buttons, or sometimes his grey hairs, until he had forced him to notice him, and for a moment beguiled him of his sorrow. Mrs Palmer appeared particularly interested for Agnes, and that with such sympathizing tenderness, that she became more estimable than ever; they saw her compassion, as well as her anxiety, was not a little excited by the constant allusion to Edwin and the ring. She had frequently heard the family say that they were affianced to each other; but no word of inquiry escaped her; she only endeavoured to soothe and prevent the attention of Agnes from being too much fixed on one object.

"My dear child!" said Godwin, addressing Fanny, "my brother Bernard, William, and myself, are going out for a short space: our good and condescending friend will excuse us; our absence open your whole heart to her: spare not my unworthy son, nor yet my more happy daughter: a female friend, of her judgment, will not only be a comfort to you, but a blessing to us all, for she will not deny her advice where she has not refused a tear."

When Godwin ceased speaking, Mrs Palmer arose from the side of Agnes, and taking his hand, replied—"Believe me, my good friend, not only my advice, but anything else in my power, is entirely at your service in this unhappy juncture, which I hope will, however, terminate happily, and more speedily than you expect. The derangement of Agnes I regard as merely the effect of fever: and that once totally removed, the other will naturally cease."

Godwin bowed, repeated his thanks, and, accompanied by Bernard, left her alone with Fanny and Agnes.

Fanny was too much distressed to be in haste to obey her father-in-law, and was likewise strained by the presence of Agnes; but on her retiring to rest, with a few words and many tears, she related all that had passed, the goodness of her own heart prompting her to palliate the whole as much as truth would allow.

As she concluded, Mrs Palmer embraced her, saying—"Fear not, my amiable girl, your piety and sisterly affection will meet its reward; the present trials are severe, but will, I hope, succeed by a calm. In the meantime, regard me as your friend, mother, sister, or any title that best accords with your own heart. I, alas! Fanny, though enjoying wealth even more than I wish, have room for all those claims, as I am literally (though possessed of relations) alone in the world, my dearest connexions being torn asunder."

Fanny pressed the hand of Mrs Palmer to her lips, and bathed it with her tears.—"Oh, how truly, madam, did my father speak, when he said you will comfort me! Alas!" said she, sitting, "I have secrets that I cannot reveal to men, however dear."—"If necessary to disclose them, my dear girl," replied Mrs Palmer, "fear not to trust to my prudence; yourself all only withdraw them from my bosom."

Fanny wept and seemed irresolute; but the kind assurances of Mrs Palmer at length, some measure, reassuring her, with tears and glowing blushes she owned that she had a story on her sister's account that overwhelmed her with shame and confusion; in fine, that during the latter part of her illness she could not avoid perceiving an alteration in her shape, which but too truly corroborated what she revealed in her frenzy, frequently speaking of an occasion and ever at the time viewing a ring (which was a diamond set in the shape of a heart and surrounded with rubies and brilliants alternately), repeating her favourite adage—*I am Edwin's wife*.

Mrs Palmer, though shocked at this intelligence, endeavoured all in her power to console her young friend, representing it was very possible she might be mistaken in her surmise; but if not, thought the unhappy Agnes so greatly to be pitied that she would devise means (she survived) to conceal the misfortune from the world.

Fanny could not speak her thanks, but threw herself at Mrs Palmer's feet, expressing her gratitude in a language far more emphatic than words.

Mr Godwin and his companions, on their return, were pleased to find Fanny more composed than usual, and returned a thousand thanks to Mrs Palmer, who, however, delighted more in doing a good action than hearing it acknowledged, and cut them short, by saying "You will fright me from my purpose of visiting you daily if you treat me thus."

Mrs Palmer was true to her word; not a day passed but she called at the farm, and her kindness and attention alleviated the sorrows of all but Godwin, who, though he owed her kindness, could not forget the ingratitude of his children, whose conduct, like a corroding poison, was continually preying deeper on his heart.

Mrs Palmer, with the characteristic goodness that peculiarly distinguished her, on being informed by Fanny of Emma's flight, and that if William could have discovered her route he would have pursued her, wrote to several correspondents she had abroad, requesting them privately to inquire after Whitmore, and, if possible, send her information. The only account she gained was from Paris, where she learned he had remained a month, and that he had been with a lady with him, remarkably handsome, who was said not to be his wife, but apparently happy in her situation! that he went from thence privately, and it was uncertain what route he had taken. As this account contained nothing satisfactory, Mrs Palmer communicated it also to William, who could only thank her for the interest she took in their affairs.

The health of Agnes, in the meantime, continued in the same precarious state. An eminent physician who had been consulted, advised a perseverance in their own lenient methods, together with music, exercise, and conversation, by pursuing which means, he entertained no doubt but time would restore her reason; but had far more fear for her health, which he pronounced had consumptive symptoms, very alarming at her age. Her situation, which confirmed all Fanny's fears, became weekly more conspicuous, though unsuspected by any of the male part of the family, until, unable to conceal it much longer, Mrs Palmer persuaded Fanny to suffer her to disclose it—a step she thought the more necessary, as Fanny herself was pregnant, and in such perpetual anxiety respecting her sister's situation that it materially injured her health. Godwin and William received this intelligence like a fresh strike of thunder—Bernard, the big tears chasing each other down his own cheeks in vain endeavouring to speak comfort to them.

Mrs Palmer proposed that Agnes should be removed to a house of hers on the borders of Yorkshire, where she had a person she could safely trust: and that Fanny might accompany her with any other of the family they thought proper. This generous offer was, after some consultation, accepted, but delayed as unnecessary for two months at least. Mrs Palmer, in the meantime, as if the good of her fellow-creatures was her nearest concern, was constant in her visits to the farm, where she had caused a harpsichord to be brought—an instrument on which she was an adept, and played to Agnes daily. At first she tried sprightly music, but it appeared to increase her derangement, and was therefore immediately changed for the *penseroso*, which had a more happy effect, attracting her attention and calling forth her tears. This success encouraged Mrs Palmer to continue; and one day, after having played Pope's Ode of 'Vital spark of heavenly flame,' and accompanied it with her voice, Agnes, for the first time since Mrs Godwin's death, appeared to recollect her, and starting up, holding both hands to her forehead, she said—"I will go to my mother's grave, for *I am Edwin's wife*."

Mrs Palmer desired she might be gratified, and sending for her carriage, Agnes was lifted

and accompanied by Fanny and her generous friend. When they arrived at the church-d, leaning on Fanny's arm, she walked to the grave, and sitting upon the ground, kissed sod that covered it, saying—" Ah! my dear mother, I am ill, very ill, but do not forget, though you are in heaven, for *I am Edwin's wife*. I will bring flowers and set them e," continued she, "flowers for summer, autumn, winter, and spring; nothing but ers shall cover her grave: and who so proper to plant them as me—for *I am Edwin's* ??"

Fanny wept bitterly, and though Agnes had never paid any attention to her tears, she noticed them. " Why do you weep, Fanny?" said she. " If it makes you uneasy, you plant the flowers for spring and summer yourself, for you are William's wife, and your rt is warm. I will set those for autumn and winter, for my heart is cold—*I am Edwin's* ."— " Oh! I cannot—cannot bear it!" cried Fanny. " Inhuman—barbarous—degeate monster!"—" Of whom do you speak, Fanny?" replied Agnes; " not of Edwin, I hope; igh now I remember," continued she, pausing for some minutes, as if endeavouring to ollect herself, " his father cursed him, and his brother despised him; I, however, forgave ; so you may all do as you please, though it does not become me to hear it, for *I am vin's wife*."

Mrs Palmer, who perceived the effect this scene had upon Fanny, by gentle means drew es from the grave; and placing her with her sister in the coach, returned home with n.

From this time Agnes went daily to the churchyard, usually accompanied by her brother Margery; for the whole family had joined commands to entreat Fanny to keep from nding her thither.

During the first two months of Agnes's illness, Edwin's servant had remained at the inn, uring intelligence by various means; but after that period, being assured by the country ple it was a regular insanity, which they attributed to her lover being false-hearted (though situation was a profound secret), he returned to his master, leaving it to the landlord to them information by letter from time to time, in which he did not fail, as he was quite s wife's opinion, that Captain Godwin (as she called him) was a very handsome man, and enerous as handsome.

In this state passed the time for near seven months after Mrs Godwin's death, when vin received a letter from his correspondent in the country to this purport:—

HONOURED SIR,—I think fit to inform you that, three days ago, farmer Bernard's two ghters left the Forest in a postchaise, attended only by an old black servant, whom I never before. As our house is the first stage from Inglewood upwards, they changed horses, never got out of the chaise; nor should I have known them but for the post-boy, who rmed me who they were. As the black came into the house, I thought he might have en me an answer like a Christian servant, and therefore asked him to take a glass, which, he accepted, I said (not pretending to know them), ' You are going to London, I pre- e?' To which he replied, ' No.'—' Cross country?' ' No.'—' To the races, mayhap?' ; and throwing down the money for his liquor, mounted his horse, and followed the se like a pagan as he was. I am sure, sir, you will allow with me, that it is a wicked sin refer blackamoor heathens to good white servants, who know how to give a civil answer; as my wife says, it is all owing to their want of education, for they run wild before they taken and tamed by us Christians, and know no religion but what their own foolish are prompts; nor have any laws to restrain them, which, however, don't much signify, hey have no property to secure, but would make sad work in a Christian nation, where ple know right from wrong, and act accordingly. But all this, good sir, is from the pose. I was willing to oblige you, and so by the post-boys traced them two stages, where y were met by a plain chaise and pair, in which they continued their journey, but I know whither.

' I have no more to add, but my best wishes for your welfare, and thanks for your kind- and remain,

Your obliged humble servant,

" JEREMIAH JENKINS."

This intelligence added curiosity to the other displeasing sensations which possessed Edwin. ere could Fanny and her sister be going, while the health of the latter was in so precarious ate? Their attendant, too, what could he be? He appeared bound to secrecy, and

equal to the trust. In short, the more he ruminated the more he was perplexed, and as length came to a determination to entreat leave of absence, and endeavour to develop the mystery himself. The death of his mother, nor the subsequent illness of Agnes, had not been able to awaken him to a proper sense of his errors; he felt, but it was a momentary sensation for, scared at the very idea of reflection, he fled to dissipation, and soon obliterated, or at least protracted, the pangs of retrospection; by debauchery, luxury, or gaming, neglected his wife, and added ingratitude to the catalogue of his crimes. Mrs Godwin, whose only incentive to marry Edwin was love, had alternately recourse to tears, entreaties, reproaches, and anger, but equally vain; he fled from all; home he thought hell, and his wife the commissioner of torment him; while he had constant recourse to the sprightly, wanton Mrs Whitmore, who laughed at his scruples, and gave occasion for fresh ones; yet Agnes was still dear to him, and he would willingly have relinquished all he possessed to have been reinstated at Inglewood, as he was before his acquaintance with Whitmore.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHEN Agnes was supposed to be about seven months advanced in her pregnancy, accompanied by her sister, she was moved to a small house near Richmond, that appertained to Mr Palmer, but in which she had lately settled the widow of a sea officer, who had been left in indifferent circumstances. Here Fanny and Agnes were received with true tenderness and respect. Mrs Palmer having prepared Mrs Smith, the lady of the house, for their reception, and also sent them attended by her favourite domestic, Felix, the negro mentioned by Mr Jeremiah Jenkins. The separation was painful to the whole family, though allowed by all to be the most prudent plan to conceal the unhappy situation of Agnes, whose intellects, though rather more settled, were yet far from right; and, to their future uneasiness, her bodily strength apparently weakened as her mind recovered its vigour. Mr Godwin's health, too, daily declined since the death of his wife, and the effects of the misery that continually preyed on him seemed hastening to a crisis.

The change from Inglewood to Richmond, after some little time, appeared to have a happy effect on the senses of Agnes; she frequently inquired for her father, William, and particularly Mr Godwin, pressing Fanny to let her return to him, in a manner that pierced her heart; she apparently too began to be sensible of her situation, and frequently wept for hours.

William, who had not attended them on the journey, joined them soon after with his father, and after some stay returned to the Forest, leaving Mr Godwin behind, as Agnes appeared rejoiced to see him, and was so greatly distressed when they spoke of his departure, that she determined to remain and wait the event.

About a month before the delivery of Agnes her senses became perfectly collected; but that event, which they had so earnestly desired, served but to increase their sorrow; her self-reproaches were continual, and the kindness of her friends apparently increased her distress. Thankful for their constant attentions, but ever declaring that, though they forgave her, she should never forgive herself. Fanny was likewise advanced, though not so forward in her pregnancy; and the fatigue and uneasiness she had undergone on account of her sister had greatly impaired her health, though she carefully endeavoured to conceal it, lest it should increase the general uneasiness.

Mrs Palmer, before they had been moved a month to Richmond, came to see them; her general philanthropy easily accounted to her domestics for her conduct to the sisters, the only one of them who had any knowledge of the real situation of Agnes being Felix, whose attendance Mrs Palmer had judged necessary, as Mrs Smith kept but one female servant, and it was thought most prudent, at the present period, not to increase the number. The chaise in which Mrs Palmer travelled was the same that had met and conveyed Fanny and Agnes to Richmond, at which time the latter was wrapped up in a long cloak, that her shape was by no means discernible, had the man who drove the vehicle been curiously inclined, which was not the case; for he had long resided with his mistress, was satisfied implicitly to follow her commands without question, and loved her better than any other object except his horse. On her arrival at Richmond, not choosing more inmates than absolutely necessary, she sent this servant with her carriage to an inn, Felix going with orders when they were given, thus there was no apparent secrecy affected in the retreat of Agnes, Mrs Palmer simply saying among her own people, that she was moved to try the air. Felix had replied to Jenkins in the

anner he did, merely because he conceived his questions impertinent; for to every other person who inquired, Bernard and William, by agreement, answered truly, that the sisters were at a house of Mrs Palmer's, in Yorkshire, though without signifying the immediate spot. Mrs Palmer, in the kindest manner, endeavoured to cheer the depressed spirits of Agnes; and having no musical instrument, strove to divert her attention by various relations, some amusing, others melancholy; and observing that she sometimes appeared to regard Felix with a emotion of fear, said to her one day, with a smile, when he was absent, "My dear girl, I think I can tell you a story that will make you forget Felix's colour, or at least reconcile you to it; besides, it will pass the time this long evening, and banish more painful thoughts." Agnes bowed; all subjects were immaterial to her but that nearest her heart; while Fanny, had of any attempt to divert her sister's melancholy, returned thanks for Mrs Palmer's condescension, as did also Godwin, who declared he was totally regardless of the complexion of Felix, when he conversed with him, as he appeared at once well-informed, and possessed a good heart. "Well, then," said Mrs Palmer, taking her seat between Godwin and Agnes, "I will simply relate to you the events of my own weary pilgrimage—Felix had some share in them; or am I the only one of my family on whom he has conferred obligations; but the occurrences before I knew him will be the best related by himself. I am the only daughter of an affluent merchant, called Somerton; my grandfather, by the mother's side, possessed a considerable estate in Jamaica, and had only a son and daughter, the younger of whom, my mother, was educated in England, and by that means, in all probability, her life was saved, for both her parents were killed in an insurrection of the negroes, and from which fate her brother was only preserved by the affection of a slave. My mother, at this unhappy period, was nineteen, and her brother a year older; both were left in the guardianship of a merchant, with whom, as soon as her brother could reach England, they took up their residence. The only son of this gentleman, in about a twelvemonth after, married my mother, by whom he had several children, all of whom died in their infancy, except myself, who was the youngest. My uncle, whose name was Walters, in the mean time, disliking an inactive life, and being disgusted with the West-Indies, had sold off the greatest part of his possessions there, and commenced merchant, in which profession he was uncommonly successful. From the death of a young lady to whom he was contracted, he had formed the resolution of remaining a bachelor; and, to divert the melancholy occasioned by his loss, he frequently took long voyages, so that he seldom remained in England for any length of time. He was tenderly attached to my mother, who was equally so to him, and myself the darling of both; my uncle, whenever he was at home, loading me with presents, and gratifying my wishes even to profusion.

"In this manner passed my childhood until my fourteenth year, when my uncle departed for India, leaving my father the entire care of his whole property in his absence; and tenderly embracing me before his departure, seeing me weep, he said, 'Cheer up, my girl, I am only getting rich for thee;' and pulling out a valuable watch, he presented it to me, adding, 'there, let me see how carefully you will preserve this for my sake; and on my return I will change it for one double the value.' He soon after departed, leaving me very melancholy, though, I must confess, my grief was rather lessened at intervals on contemplating the present he had made me; it was a gold watch, with the cipher of my name enamelled on the case, and the case surrounded with pearls. His business, it was expected, would detain him near three years, during which time my father had a young man articulated to him; he was an orphan possessed of a decent property, which his guardian wished him to better by trade, and therefore placed him for instruction with my father. This young man was about five years older than myself; and, by his engaging manners, before I was seventeen had made an impression on my heart, which, however, at that time was not suspected by any one. At this period we received a letter, informing us that speedily we might expect to see my uncle, as he purposed returning to Europe by the first ship that sailed; but how great was our sorrow and disappointment, when some time after, we learned that he had indeed sailed, but that the vessel had been cast away on the coast of Caffraria, and what became of the crew that escaped the waves was uncertain. This news was a heavy blow to my mother, who loved her brother with unfeigned affection; yet for two years we flattered ourselves with the hope of his return, at which period our expectations began to decrease. For my own part, I confess I loved my uncle better than my father, for he was indulgent to all my whimsies, while, on the contrary, my father could not allow for the errors, or even the playfulness of childhood; you may, therefore, readily

judge my tears were sincere for his loss. My father still continued the management of my uncle's property, as in the case of his death my mother was heir-at-law, he imprudently having left no will.

"I was just nineteen when young Palmer's articles to my father expired, and he settled for himself. He lamented with me the loss of my uncle, as that event would apparently increase my fortune beyond what he could expect, especially as my father was rather addicted to a love of wealth, and my mother's will was ever subservient to his.

"Thus we were situated when I unhappily lost my mother in an apoplectic fit, by which means my uncle's property became totally vested in my father. I shall pass over my grief for this loss, which, however, I assure you was great, as was also my father's for a considerable time, he applying himself with redoubled earnestness to banish thought; and settling my uncle's affairs on the most lucrative principles, the estate, which remained unsold in Jamaica, he disposed of, together with the negroes that cultivated it, and who, during my uncle's life, indeed until this period, had been so happily situated as to have no wish to change, being only under the command of the negro who saved my uncle's life, and who had from him received his liberty, making him also overseer of the plantation he reserved—a trust he executed with justice to his employer, credit to himself, and the universal satisfaction of his fellows.

"My father was enabled not only to do this, but also to make what other changes he thought necessary, as, previous to my uncle's departure, he had given him a letter of attorney to act, in case any alteration should be found necessary in his absence. He had been gone five years at my mother's death, and a year had elapsed since that period, when my father formed a connexion unworthy either his understanding, situation, or age; in short, it was with the servant who immediately attended me, and who was about four years older than myself. I was involuntarily a spectator of some little freedoms that passed between them, but which I thought it most prudent not to notice for some time, though she grew negligent of her business, and was frequently absent at those hours when she knew I should particularly want her.

"I was not weak enough to suppose I had power to break this connexion, but on mature deliberation concluded it would be less vexatious to me, if pursued in any other place, than immediately in the house where I dwelt; and accordingly one evening, after her remaining out very late, I gave her a dismissal, desiring she would seek another situation, as I had no further occasion for her services. I am not naturally passionate, and gave this discharge in my usual manner, and without entering into the cause of my displeasure; yet she answered me with uncommon insolence, saying, 'You mistake, madam, you will have more occasion than ever for my services, and must likewise learn to deserve them, or you may find yourself uncomfortably situated.' With this she bounced out of the room, leaving me both distressed and astonished, as her threats appeared to imply a greater power over my father than I could either suspect or dread.

"The next morning, at breakfast, my father was uncommonly serious, and continued to treat me with a kind of gloomy reserve for some days, without, however, mentioning the subject of his displeasure, until one evening, after supper, first increasing his courage by two or three glasses of wine extraordinary, he ventured to tell me he had been very uncomfortable since the death of my mother. I naturally expressed my sorrow at this information, hoping no neglect of mine had added to it; declaring he had only to name what had given him displeasure, and I would be particularly careful to remedy it. Before I could proceed he interrupted me, saying, 'No, no, I cannot accuse you of neglect, but I have thoughts, Anna, of marrying again, and therefore would prepare you to receive the woman I shall choose with the respect becoming my wife and your mother.'

"The business was now plain; but endeavouring to conceal my dissatisfaction, though a bad dissembler, I replied, 'As the object of your choice, sir, will doubtless be respectable, I must necessarily esteem her, though I cannot flatter myself with meeting the tender affections of a first parent.'

"'I possess the means of making her respectable,' answered my father, drinking another glass of wine; 'and I have no one's inclination to consult but my own.'

"I bowed my acquiescence. He soon after retired for the night; and the first news that reached me the ensuing morning was, that at an early hour he had taken Mary with him in the postchaise, and set off for the country.

"Two days after, their marriage was publicly declared, though they continued for a fort-

ht out of town. I leave you to judge the uneasiness I experienced. I was totally dependent my father, whom I had every reason to fear would be a slave to the caprices of the woman had married, and whom I naturally concluded would be my enemy, were it not only that I s apprised of her conduct before he espoused her. I can truly aver, that had he married a tuous and worthy object, whatever had been her situation, my pride would never have come me so far as to forget what was due to my father's wife; my heart recoiled both at former conduct and insolence, so that I knew not how to receive her. Deliberating on this ject two or three days after the marriage, Palmer was announced, and immediately admitted. er the usual salutations—'I will not congratulate you,' said he, 'on your father's marriage; ough I will, my Anna, truly confess it has given rise to hopes I before dared not cherish, as ink he may now be the more inclined to part with you.'

"I have already said I was partial to Palmer, and was yet more, for I sincerely loved him; I though possessed of nothing romantic in my disposition, had determined, that if ever I rried, he should be my husband. Little persuasion, therefore, obtained my permission that should apply to my father, as I had judged he would, as well as his wife, be pleased at my oyal. I was, however, mistaken; my father desired time to consider; and consulting my y mother, an absolute denial was the consequence. I could attribute this but to one cause, ch was, that she suspected my affection for Palmer, and took a malignant pleasure in rarting my inclinations.

"After this refusal, Palmer wrote to entreat me to accept his hand without the consent of father; his business, he said, was prosperous, and my fortune never an incentive; and t he was convinced I was unhappily situated at home.

"Pleased at the generosity of this offer, I however declined it, at least for the present, as anted ten months of being of age, but promised at that time to answer him more fully. I uld but weary you by relating all the despicable methods my father's wife put in practice ender my situation unpleasant, while he, who was absolute in my mother's lifetime, had no but what this woman pleased, and was blindly subservient to all her arts. We seldom met at meals. I was polite, but cold, familiarity being as much avoided by me as absolutely leasing her, as in the first place I must have been obliged to suffer perpetually the empty arity of her conversation, and in the latter all the vindictiveness of narrow ideas and fined education. My father's fondness was entirely founded on her person, which, indeed, good; his was likewise flattered by the show of affection, which she was continually and ustingly bestowing on him; and if he had a grain of paternal love left for me, it entirely ished, when, six months after her marriage, she declared herself with child.

"My father came from Change one day, accompanied by an elderly man, who was a dry- er of considerable fortune, but had risen unexpectedly to his present affluence by the death relation; stepping at once into a great fortune, but destitute of understanding, education, ven common politeness. This man honoured me with his good liking, and made proposals y father, which his wife approving, were immediately accepted, and I was desired to urd Mr Brewer (which was his name) as my future husband. I have already told you I not romantic, therefore I neither wept nor threw myself at my father's feet, but before his , simply desired him, on my part, to thank Mr Brewer for his good opinion, but that I d not accept his offer.—'And pray why not?' said my father; 'what are your objec- s?'—'In the first place,' replied I, 'he is low-bred and illiterate, which, I think, my dear is a powerful objection, and sufficient without any other.'

"Mrs Somerton looked as though she could have struck me, while my father gave a hem, took a pinch of snuff. 'And pray what other great objection can you make?' said my er.—'As great a difference in age as disposition,' replied I.—'You, perhaps,' resumed father, 'have forgotten the change in your circumstances, and consider yourself as my ediate heir. I would wish you to recollect the alteration which has taken place—I may have a numerous family to share my property.' I could scarcely suppress a smile, but ied, 'To prove to you, sir, that I have not disregarded that circumstance, it was in order erson your family that I consented to Mr Palmer's entreating your approbation to our n.'—'So then, miss,' said Mrs Somerton, 'it is not matrimony you object to, but the .—'Exactly so, madam,' replied I, forgetting my usual coolness; 'there are some men ell as women whom I view with peculiar dislike.'

"Mrs Somerton at once applied his answer to herself, and choosing rather to interest my

father by her softness than by her spirit, pretended to burst into tears, and be ready to follow my father in the meantime entreating her to be pacified, and vowing that no one should offer her with impunity, concluded with telling me that he regarded Mr Brewer's as an unexceptionable offer, and which, if I did not accept, he would totally disclaim me, bidding me consider what he had said, and on the morrow return my answer. 'It needs no time, my dear,' replied I; 'to-morrow can make no difference: grieved as I am, and ever must be, at your displeasure, yet Mr Brewer shall not be my husband.'—'My dear love,' said Mrs Somerton addressing my father, 'give way a little, Miss Anna is in love with Mr Palmer, and your severity may make her regardless of consequences, and elope with him.'—'Do not trouble me, madam,' replied I, 'provoked at her duplicity, I will ever forget what is due to my father while he recollects I am his daughter; nor will I ever form a connexion so serious as marriage without his consent, unless absolutely forced to it. In that case, madam, I will neither run out of the window, nor fly to Gretna Green, but wait until I am of age, which will be in twelve months, then walk into the first parish church I meet with, and give my hand where I have already bestowed my heart.'

"My father was so much provoked at this reply, that he ordered me to leave the room at a command which I instantly obeyed.

"My situation from this period was, if possible, ten times more irksome than before. My father refused to dismiss Brewer; I therefore took that task upon myself, and was soon freed from his persecutions, though his acquiescence redoubled the rancour of Mrs Somerton towards me, and consequently the ill-will of my father. The old servants, many of whom were grown grey in our service, were discharged on various pretences, the smallest particle of attention me being certain to procure their immediate dismissal.

"Thus disagreeably passed my time, until I completed my twenty-first year, when Palmer once more, at my request, pressed my father to consent to our union, nor did I scruple to second the entreaty; but fruitless was the attempt, though Palmer's prospects might have entitled him to a fortune superior to what my father now declared he meant to give me, had he married with his consent, which was ten thousand pounds; but if I disposed of myself without his concurrence, I was to expect nothing. Mrs Somerton being likewise present when my father gave his final determination, appeared to exult in thus crossing our wishes, while Palmer stood overpowered with disappointment and vexation, declaring that his solicitation was with an interested view, but merely to procure my father's approbation. As he well knew that his concurrence necessary to my happiness, he entreated to be informed if there was anything in his conduct or circumstances that operated to his disadvantage, as he would endeavour to remove it; or if that was impracticable, should at least have the satisfaction of knowing why he was refused.

"All these concessions, however, were productive of nothing more than a repetition of refusal, Mrs Somerton adding, with her usual insolence, 'That as matters stood, his visit to our house would be dispensed with.'

"I kept silence until the whole conversation was concluded, and Palmer was advancing towards the door, when, calling him back, I said—'I have listened with uneasiness through this disagreeable business. Had my father any reasonable objection to you, and would he descend to explain it, far be it from me to act in opposition to his wishes; but as he advances none, I naturally conclude it proceeds not from himself (looking firmly at Mrs Somerton) and therefore set it aside, and freely offer you my hand, if, poor as I am, you will accept it. The niece of Mr Walters should indeed have brought her husband some fortune, but what if you can overlook, I will never regret, and in its stead endeavour cheerfully, with prudence and affection, to make up the deficiency.'

"To describe what followed is beyond my power. Mrs Somerton endeavoured to appear shocked at my undutifulness and ingratitude, while Palmer expressed his transports, as though I had a throne to bestow with my hand; my father alternately soothing his wife, and uttering vows of vengeance against me; finally declaring, as I had formed my resolution, the sooner I left the house the better.

"In this temper we separated, and I retired to my own room for the remainder of the day, during which I received a letter from Palmer, entreating me to be prepared at eight the following morning, at which time he proposed to call for me with a licence, and accompanied by his late guardian, who would act as my father on the occasion at the parish church.

"In the evening I wrote to my father, inclosing Palmer's letter, entreating him, by every-thing he held most sacred, and by the beloved memory of my mother, not to cast me off; my writing was equally ineffectual as my prayers; for he simply returned for answer, that he had chosen my fate, and must abide by it—all he desired was to hear no more of me.

"The next morning Palmer was true to his time, and, accompanied by his friend, we reached church, where I was united to a man whom I loved living, and whose memory must be dear to me—the man who won my virgin heart, and never gave me cause to repent its disposal."

Mrs Palmer's voice became tremulous, and suddenly rising—"I will relate the remainder tomorrow night," said she, "it is now almost supper time."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE following evening Mrs Palmer resumed her narrative.

"As I brought my husband no fortune, I thought it my duty to be peculiarly economical, and had the satisfaction, at the end of two years after our marriage, to find our expenses kept considerably within our income; add to which, I thought myself the happiest of wives and mothers, for that time had given us a lovely boy. My father's unnatural behaviour, and the collection of my uncle, were the only subjects that gave me pain; the former had a son born in about two months after my marriage; and the death of the latter was no longer doubted.

"My felicity had continued for two years, when a capital banking house at Amsterdam, and an eminent commercial one at London, in both of which my husband was nearly concerned, stopped payment, and gave at once a blow to our prosperity and happiness, for every effort to retrieve the loss was tried in vain; my husband was unavoidably a bankrupt, and all our effects were barely sufficient to pay twelve shillings in the pound. So highly was my husband respected, that had he but possessed a sum to have enabled him to wait the returns of trade, he might have obtained credit to any amount, and surmounted every difficulty; but we had given up all without reserve, and had no resource—my father, to whom I, unknown to my husband, applied, refusing to advance a single thousand pounds; and to add to my calamity, Palmer's health had received a blow, in consequence of his misfortunes, that I much feared might terminate fatally. Thus situated, we determined for some time to remove a little distance from London for change of air, which I hoped might prove salutary, and accordingly took lodgings in the most private part of Islington; the few valuables I possessed, and my household furniture, which had been spared by the kindness of the creditors, being our whole fund, and all the reserve we had to trust to. Though we lived with the utmost frugality, and kept but one servant, yet our means daily decreased, and I considered with anguish the poverty that was ready to overtake us: determined to protract it as long as possible, I yet more retrenched our expenses, moving to a cheaper lodging, and discharging the only servant I kept.

"In this manner passed the first year of our misfortunes; Palmer's malady, by almost imperceptible degrees, undermining his constitution, and rendering him unable to make any exertion to extricate us from our unhappy situation, or even to soften its asperity.

"One day, that he had been yet more disordered than usual, he walked out for air into the fields, leaving me engaged in my domestic concerns, but had not gone far when he was seized with a pleuritic pain and shortness of breath, that rendered him unable either to proceed or return.

"Hoping it would abate, he sat himself down in a field where some haymakers were at work, but in a short time became so much worse, that his illness was perceptible to the labourers, several of whom came and spoke to him; and, among others, a negro, whom perhaps you will truly surmise was Felix.

"Mr Palmer by this time was almost unable to speak, and could not faintly signify his desire to get home; but his pain was too violent for him to be able to walk, and in the middle of the fields no conveyances could be obtained.

"In this dilemma Felix flew off with the utmost speed, and reaching the town, ran into the first apothecary's shop he could meet with, entreating the master, for the love of heaven, to come into the fields; for that a man had been seized with so violent a pain in the side, that he feared, without immediate assistance, it would prove fatal. The apothecary, who doubtless surmised, from the appearance of Felix, it was one of his fellow-labourers, replied

by desiring him to lead the sick man to his shop, and he would bleed him, which he did no doubt would afford relief, but that himself had not time to go so far.—‘Not time!’ replied Felix; ‘then the poor soul must die, for I am sure he cannot walk hither; besides, I thought it was your profession to attend the sick, not the sick to attend you.’—‘You are an impudent fellow,’ answered the apothecary, ‘to suppose I should walk about a mile to bleed a man for sixpence, or perhaps for nothing: but go about your business—there is a barber a few doors farther, that will perhaps suit your purpose; for my part, I never step over the threshold of a let blood under half-a-crown.’

“Felix paused, then fumbling for a moment in his bosom, pulled out a dollar, in which a small hole had been drilled, and a piece of ribbon drawn through. ‘Here,’ said he, ‘I have no money but this; keep it till to-morrow night, and I will redeem it if the sick man cannot pay you; for he must not die for want of help. I have then my week’s hire to receive; all I beg is, you will be careful of it.’

“As he spoke he held out the dollar; but the apothecary, doubtless ashamed to be outdone by this simple child of nature, putting back his offered hand, replied, ‘No, no!’ and snatching down his hat, bade Felix lead the way.

“On their arrival at the spot where Mr Palmer still sat, he immediately bled, and in half an hour was so greatly relieved as to be able to walk home, attended by the apothecary and the friendly Felix, the former being now as assiduous as he was at first careless; for though we were in reality very much reduced, Palmer had still an appearance of respectability.

“‘Had you told me,’ said the apothecary, as they were helping Palmer home, that it was a gentleman who was taken so ill in the fields, I should not have hesitated a moment; but as you spoke, I protest I thought it was one of your comrades.’—‘I was not sufficiently acquainted with European customs to know that such a distinction was necessary,’ replied Felix, drily; ‘but you may depend hereafter I will not fail to remember it; and every man in want of assistance shall by me be styled a gentleman.’—‘Thou art an odd fellow,’ said the apothecary: ‘have you been long in England?’—‘Long enough,’ replied Felix, ‘to convince me of the erroneous opinion I had formed for the first forty years of my life of Englishmen, whose hearts, I had persuaded myself, were as good as their faces, but have learned, to my cost, the only difference between many of them and us is, we wear the black without—they within.’

“Palmer, in spite of pain, could not suppress a smile.—‘I am sure,’ said he, ‘you do not include *all* in your account, as it seems to imply you have met some few who deserve approbation.’—‘Approbation,’ replied Felix, ‘is a cold word—I could almost say adoration—but it is past: meteors are not frequent, nor in your country subjects of worship. I indeed knew one, whose virtues made this land dear to me, but he is gone to heaven, as you call it, or the land of souls—it is the same thing, and where even negroes will rejoice to meet him.’

“This discourse brought them home, and was repeated to me both by Palmer and the apothecary, the latter declaring it made an impression on him never to be effaced, and which would oblige him henceforward to attend sufferers without questioning their pretensions to gentility. Palmer was much better in the evening, at which time Felix did not fail to come, and inquire after him with great respect.

“Recovered from my first alarm, I was not yet so destitute but that I had it in my power to offer him some small compensation for his trouble and the time he had lost; but declining it, he drew back, saying, ‘No, madam, I labour for hire—I have not laboured for your husband.’—‘But your labour,’ said I, ‘is not, I fear, sufficient to support you in the necessities of life: stranger as you are, you cannot be supposed to possess the resources of a native.’—‘Industry, madam,’ replied he, ‘is universally understood; and, with health, fully adequate to sustain the wants of man, it procures me bread, and sometimes meat, this habit to shelter me from the weather, and at night a place of rest for my wearied limbs.

“I put my money back into my pocket, at once humiliated and pleased, saying mentally, ‘A diamond is equally precious, whether enclosed in a casket of ebony or ivory.’

“From this time our friendly negro, by my desire, frequently called, and was ever anxious to render us a number of little services that he thought we might feel derogatory. My little boy, who was now turned of two years old, had at first been frightened at his appearance, but by the gentleness of his manners had grown so attached that he never failed to cry after him.

“Three months had now passed since we knew Felix, whom I frequently determined to question respecting his former life, but was so entirely occupied by my domestic concerns and the still declining health of Palmer, that it was ever neglected; besides, the name of *master* never escaped him unaccompanied by a tear; and I could not bear to gratify my curiosity by renewing his distress, which must apparently have been the case; his stay, too, whenever he called, was short, as he constantly laboured in the fields or gardens, in the neighbourhood of Islington, his visits being merely, as his conduct showed, to endeavour to do us service, as fetching me coals, cleaning Palmer's clothes, or any other little office he could devise, ever refusing money—at most accepting the remains of our frugal table, and a draught of beer.

“At this period my little darling was seized with the small pox, of a most malignant kind; and for three weeks my heart was alternately torn with anguish, or revived by hope, as the symptoms increased or abated: regardless of my poverty, so I could save my child, I spared no expense, employing every able physician I heard recommended, but in vain: I was doomed to be childless, and to survive those ties dearer to me than life.”

Mrs Palmer ceased for a moment, and perceiving both Fanny and Agnes wept, she said, crossing her own eyes with her handkerchief, “I rejoice, Agnes, at this proof of your sensibility; it is a plain demonstration that your own sorrows have not selfishly narrowed your heart, as they yet leave you a tear to bestow on others.

“I shall pass over the death of my son,” continued Mrs Palmer, “for the subject even yet is painful; suffice that I found myself not even possessed of money to lay his beloved remains decently in the earth; all our little valuables and linen had been disposed of; the watch given me by my uncle alone remained, and which had been preserved merely from affection to the giver. My husband, depressed by a long illness, on the loss of his son, appeared totally to sink under his calamities, and to regard everything around him with an insensibility that cruelly alarmed me. To consult him, then, in this dreadful crisis was useless, and could answer no end but increasing his distress. To apply to my father would be unavailing; nor could I bear the thought of giving his unworthy wife the pleasure of triumphing over my misery. Felix had been daily with us since the child's sickness, and, in spite of all opposition, had frequently sat up with him, attending him with a kindness that, even young as he was, he was sensible of; for the evening before he died, he said, as he held Felix by the hand, ‘Dear papa and mamma, always love Felix, for he loves me.’ But I wander from my subject, which was to pass the child's death,” continued she; “but the fond partiality of a parent involuntarily beguiled me. Unable, as I before observed, to consult Palmer, and without any resource but the watch given me by my uncle, I determined to part with it, and for that purpose calling Felix into the garden, I disclosed my intention, and asked if he could take it to London and sell it for us, as I really myself was unable. Felix had been too much with us to be ignorant that we laboured under difficulties, yet seemed distressed at this proof of it; but promised implicitly to obey me, and repair to a capital watchmaker, whom I specified, and return with the money as speedily as possible. This settled, Felix took the watch, and left me about nine o'clock in the morning. As he had only to go to Cheapside, I naturally supposed he might return in about a couple of hours; but five had passed without his appearance, and I began to be uneasy. I did not doubt the honesty of Felix, but dreaded some accident had befallen him, yet did not venture to declare my fears to Palmer. At length I heard a knock at the door, and hastening down, met Felix in the passage, but at the house door discovered a man apparently waiting. Wishing to speak to him unheard, I stepped into the little parlour, and was upon the point of questioning him, when, raising my eyes to his face, the animation of his features astonished me. ‘What has happened, Felix?’ said I; ‘surely you have met with something uncommonly pleasing!’—‘Uncommonly pleasing!’ repeated he, ‘oh! I am too happy!’ But suddenly appearing to recollect himself, and to struggle with his feelings. ‘The man, madam,’ continued he, ‘that is—the watch, madam—the gentleman waits.’—‘For heaven's sake, what do you mean, Felix?’ replied I; ‘surely you do not drink? Tell me, what said the watchmaker?’—‘Say, madam,’ answered he, apparently lost in some other subject; ‘why, he blessed God, and said ten thousand pounds! Again, suddenly endeavouring to recall his mistake, he added, ‘The gentleman waits: do let me call him in.’

“Distressed for the loss of my child, and my heart torn with anguish from my unhappy situation, I replied peevishly, ‘What do you mean? What gentleman? Where is the watch?’

“Felix then gave me to understand, though in the same incoherent manner, that the

watchmaker would not purchase it without seeing the owner, lest it should be dishonestly obtained, and had sent a gentleman with him for that purpose.

“Convinced that Felix was in liquor, I advanced towards the door to call in the stranger; but regardless of compliments, he rushed before me, saying, ‘Walk in, sir, pray walk in, heaven bless you!’

“The stranger immediately entered; he was a man in the decline of life, and of a very respectable appearance. ‘I am sorry, sir,’ said I, ‘that you have taken the trouble; but the watch is mine; a cruel emergency obliges me (heaven knows how unwilling) to part with it.’ As I spoke I could not restrain my tears, nor was the stranger unmoved.—‘As you appear, madam, to value it so highly,’ replied he, ‘pardon me, but can nothing else supply this emergency, as trinkets, rings, or other female decorations?’—‘Alas! they are all gone,’ cried I, weeping; ‘this only remains: it was the gift of my more than father, and nothing but the distress of the present moment could force me to part with it, to lay the beloved remains of my infant in the earth, and to nourish the expiring spark of life that yet remains in the best of husbands.’—‘And what, madam, do you ask for it?’ replied he, turning aside his head.—‘Alas!’ answered I, ‘I am no judge; I see you feel for my mistress, and will not, I am sure wrong me; I am willing to abide by your decision.’

“On his first entrance he had drawn the watch from his pocket, and laid it upon the table that stood between us. ‘Well, then,’ said he, after a pause, and with increased emotion, ‘I think thirty pounds is nearly the value; it has apparently been carefully kept.’

“His offer was double what I expected; for the price obtained for the things already sold scarcely amounted to a third of their value. ‘I am content,’ said I, weeping; and taking it as I thought for the last time, in my hand, could not refrain pressing it to my lips. ‘Farewell,’ cried I, ‘last token of the best beloved of friends! Could he even see me in this hour of anguish, I should obtain his pardon.’—‘Thou hast it, my Anna—my child,’ exclaimed the stranger, clasping me in his arms; ‘henceforward doubly endeared by thy misfortunes.’

“I was so lost in astonishment, that I had not the power to repulse the stranger, had I been so inclined; but fixing my eyes in silence on him, I eagerly endeavoured to trace the person of my uncle Walters, but in vain; my uncle was fair, lusty, and wore a brown wig, while this stranger was uncommonly dark complexioned, thin, and wore his own hair, which was as white as flax.

“‘And have ten years totally obliterated thy uncle Walters from thy memory, Anna?’ cried he. ‘Indeed I believe my person is changed, but my heart is still the same.’

“My pleasure and amazement were too great for words; I threw myself on his neck, and wept in silence. Felix, who had withdrawn as soon as my uncle entered, had in the meantime been with Mr Palmer, to whom not being charged to keep silence as he was to me, he had disclosed the happy meeting that was taking place, and returned down stairs with him at the moment I was weeping on the neck of my uncle.

“In a few minutes Mr Walters seated me in a chair, and affectionately saluted my husband, telling him his pecuniary difficulty was over, and to look forward to health and happiness.

“In the mean time, the behaviour of Felix was still far from calm, and might have alarmed an uninformed spectator of his intellects; he walked round his master (for Felix was the identical slave that had before saved his life), examined his face, touched his hair, rubbed his own hands in an ecstasy of joy, and finally snatching up my uncle’s hat that lay in the window kissed it with transport.

“Our tumults being a little subsided, my uncle bestowed a tear to the memory of my child, but peremptorily insisting that all the care of the funeral should centre in himself, thus kindly endeavouring to spare me what he truly surmised must increase my sorrow.

CHAPTER XXV.

“A FEW days after the remains of my infant were consigned to the earth, Mr Palmer and myself at the express desire of my uncle, removed to his house, which he commanded me henceforth to consider as my own.

“The first emotions of grief for the loss of my son, and the joy of meeting my uncle, were no sooner subsided, than the mutual inquiries took place of all that had befallen us during a ten years’ separation.

“My uncle informed us that he had, as we truly heard, been cast away on his return from

dia, on the coast of Caffraria, about three years after he left England; that the greater part of the crew had perished in the wreck, twenty-four only escaping, twenty of whom had endeavoured to explore their way to the Cape of Good Hope, but had doubtless perished, either by hunger or from the natives, as they had never reached it. For the others, two were my uncle's domestics, and a third, a young man, his clerk, who attended him on his voyage, of whom determined to share his fortunes when he refused to accompany the party who sought the Cape, being convinced it was impracticable without knowing the country; and a store of provisions, the small stock they had procured from the wreck, being soon expended.

"The inhabitants of the coast had at first behaved with ferocity, but finding the unhappy traders too few in number to give them alarm, and likewise unarmed and willing to part with anything they possessed, as their clothes, watches, or money (the two last mentioned of which they converted into ornaments), they soon became familiarized, and supplied them with milk, rice, and venison, sufficient for their support. My uncle's design was, if possible, to gain their confidence sufficiently to persuade some who were best acquainted with the country to accompany them to one of the Dutch settlements; for to undertake to walk such an extensive tract of land, penetrate the thick forests, cross such rapid rivers, and climb the almost perpendicular mountains, without a guide, was at once vain and impracticable. None, however, of the inhabitants of the settlement had ever been at any great distance from home (as they informed them when they began to comprehend a little of the language), nor would, for any reward, undertake such a journey. Thus circumstanced, my uncle thought his destination fixed, and endeavoured to comfort his companions. With the approbation of the natives they erected themselves a hut, and surrounded it in the manner of the Caffres, with a plantation of rice. The clerk, who was a youth, and one of the domestics, who was likewise young, by infinite perseverance learned to throw the assagay with so much skill, that it not only procured them plenty of food, but raised them much in the opinion of the inhabitants, who saw them with pleasure give into their customs, and adopt their weapons.

"In this manner passed three years, my uncle and his eldest domestic convinced they should draw their last breath in this country, and the younger people only withheld from the wild undertaking of exploring their way to the Cape, by affection for their companions. At this period two brothers (natives, who had been made prisoners in a contest with some neighbouring nations), returned, after five years' absence, the greater part of which time they had resided in the distant country of the Auteniquas. Travelling, or perhaps the difficulties they had endured, had enlarged their minds, for they treated the strangers with more humanity than any of their companions, and after holding various discourses with them, as they now perfectly understood the language, said, that affection for their father had alone induced them to return, being much better pleased with the inland country than the coast; and that, was their parent no more, for a proper reward they would not scruple to risk their journey, but that, during his life, nothing should tempt them to forsake him.

"This discourse again revived their hopes, for the travellers' father was very old and infirm, which gave them daily expectation of their wishes being soon fulfilled; but, to their great disappointment, he lingered two years. He was no sooner dead than my uncle renewed his promises of reward, and in short, soon obtained what he had so long solicited, they agreeing to accompany him to the first Dutch settlement, where he had no doubt but, by making himself known, he could obtain credit for the promised reward, which was to consist of iron, tobacco, and other articles, considered by them as particularly desirable.

"The difficulties they encountered during this journey were innumerable, and would have been impossible for them to support, but for the resources which necessity had taught the natives, whose skill at their weapons constantly procured food, the country abounding in elks, &c. They were likewise well versed in the necessary precautions to secure them from the attack of wild beasts. Some days they could not advance more than four or five miles, from the obstacles they met with, as thick woods and steep mountains; at other times were detained by waiting the reflux of prodigious rivers, which they were obliged to cross, or to coast along the banks at the expense of both time and fatigue. At length, however, they reached a Dutch settlement, where their appearance caused no small surprise, for my uncle, as well as his companions, were naked, the small remains of covering the natives had left them having been so long worn out, that they were grown perfectly familiarized to the omission, and their skins changed to the complexion of copper.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“THE Dutch factor received them with tolerable kindness, but did not appear willing to advance a reward my uncle thought adequate to the services of the Caffres; he therefore, without much difficulty, persuaded them to accompany him to the Cape; and after some stay there resumed their journey, and to their great satisfaction, at length reached it.

“My uncle was well acquainted with two capital merchants there; one, to his great disappointment, he found was dead; but was more fortunate in his second inquiry, though his friend at first did not know him; but after some few preliminaries, acknowledged, and readily embraced him, insisting that he should take up his residence at his house, and draw on him for what sums he found necessary.

“My uncle at first thought to write to England, but after a short time determined to surprise his friends. The merchant's offer he willingly accepted, his first care being to reward his guides to the utmost extent of their wishes, dismissing them with four oxen loaded with what they thought most valuable.

“The business settled, he waited for a homeward-bound Indiaman, and at length embarked with his three faithful companions for Europe, which he reached after a pleasant voyage.

“On his first landing he immediately repaired to my father's; though his appearance was now very respectable, yet the change his person had undergone rendered him perfectly unknown; he, however, soon made himself acknowledged, and then learned, to his grief, that his sister was dead, and myself, his great favourite, married to a worthless man, who had lately become a bankrupt, and with whom I was now withdrawn, no one knew whither. It was not my uncle's custom to condemn unheard; he therefore determined, if possible, to see me, for he found no great predilection for my father's wife, and even declined taking up his residence with them. He had been but a fortnight in England when he met with Felix, who had already advertised three times, desiring me, if alive, to apply to his attorney, or if any one could give intelligence respecting me, offering a reward. This kindness had, however, been fruitless, for we never saw the newspapers; nor did any one, since our last removal, know where to find us, as we wished to conceal our miseries from the world.

“That morning my uncle fortunately met with Felix, he had accidentally, in passing along Cheapside, recollected he wanted a watch, and walking into a shop, the man had shown him several, and they were on the point of making an agreement when Felix entered. My uncle recollected him at once, but astonished to find him in England, stood for a moment lost in surprise, and seeing him offer a watch for sale, determined, if possible, to remain undiscovered, and wait the event; but what was his astonishment, on taking the watch from the hand of the shopkeeper, to recognise it for the same he had formerly given to me. ‘How came you by this watch, my friend?’ said my uncle, addressing him in a kind voice; ‘it appears to be a woman's, and of some value.’

“Though my uncle's person had totally escaped the notice of Felix, yet the sound of his voice startled him, and viewing him for a moment with fixed attention, he answered, with a sigh, drawing his eyes with a sigh, ‘Bless your voice, it is like music to my heart. The watch is not mine, but a lady's, who must sell it to pay those rights which your country's customs demand, before the body of her child can be permitted to mingle with the dust; to hire me who assume the semblance of sorrow with a black coat, and pay for a peculiar spot of earth as if all on which the sun shines was not equally hallowed.’—‘And what is the lady's name?’ said my uncle.—‘Palmer,’ replied Felix.

My uncle made no reply, but seating himself by the counter, remained lost in thought.

“‘And what do you ask for the watch?’ said the shopkeeper, addressing Felix.—‘She leaves it to yourself,’ returned he, ‘she is no judge; but I conjure you, by the God you profess to serve, consider her distress, and do her justice—a dead infant!—an almost dying husband!—weigh these sorrows ere you speak. Ah, had you seen her part with it, you could have judged of its value. It was the gift of my best friend, said she, then pressed it to her lips and wept: it is yet dull with her tears.’—‘I will kiss them off,’ cried my uncle, snatching the watch, ‘ten thousand pounds shall not purchase it.’

“The shopkeeper looked astonished, while Felix again fixed his eyes attentively on the face of my uncle with visible agitation.

“‘Have ten years hardship and grey hairs made such an alteration, Felix,’ said my uncle, at I have lost a friend, the preserver of my life?’

“Felix gave a loud cry, and fell senseless at his feet.

“By the care of the master of the shop, Felix was soon restored; but his effusions were governable; he could neither ask nor answer questions; all was genuine transport, mixed with form or restraint, and spoke the unadulterated language of nature.

“At length, being somewhat calmer, my uncle informed him that he suspected the owner the watch was his niece, and desired to know how he became acquainted with me.

“Felix disjointly related what he knew, mixing the whole with encomiums on myself and Palmer, not forgetting a tear to my little one.

“My uncle then determined to accompany him back, charging him to say nothing of what passed, but to introduce him as a person sent to conclude the bargain for the watch.

“Felix certainly obeyed him to the best of his power; but nature in him was superior to and, in spite of all his endeavours, could barely be restrained.

“I have now informed you how my uncle and Felix met, and have only to tell you that, when surrounded with affluence, I was to feel yet more acutely than ever, for in three months after finding my uncle I lost my beloved husband; his misfortunes had made an impression never to be erased, and which totally ruined his health. Bath, and the various watering places in the kingdom, were tried in vain; he died in my arms, one of his hands clanked in that of my uncle, blessing the Almighty that he had lived to see me secured from, and perfectly resigned to his fate. Pardon me, my friends, though time has also taught me resignation, yet I cannot forget that I was once a wife and mother—tender claims! yet written on my heart in traits never to be obliterated.

Mrs Palmer ceased, and for some time gave vent to the emotion painful recollection occasioned; nor were her auditors unmoved—all bore silent sympathy; Godwin rose and walked to the window; Agnes had involuntarily laid hold of her hand; and Fanny instinctively drew her chair close to hers.

“‘It is past,’ said Mrs Palmer, ‘I will conclude a narrative that I am not sorry to see you interested in; it will teach you, Agnes, that there are others equally unfortunate with yourself.’—‘Equally unfortunate,’ replied Agnes, ‘they may be; but few, I hope, have equal cause for self reproach.’

Mrs Palmer, to prevent further discourse on the subject, resumed her narrative.

“Though I by no means aggravated the behaviour of Mrs Somerton, and totally endeavoured to exculpate my father, yet my uncle came to an immediate settlement with him, reimbursing him for the trouble he had taken, and having a prodigious sum to receive, the interest having accumulated on the principal for ten years.

“A coldness had subsisted between them ever since my uncle discovered me; and the business between them was no sooner completed than an entire alienation took place, which my father’s wife did not fail to attribute to the influence my art had gained over my uncle.

“He next settled his domestic economy, giving me the entire command, and retaining Felix, by his own desire, about his person, rendering him first independent, that in case his mind should hereafter change, he might be under no restraint.

For the faithful attendants who were shipwrecked with him, the clerk he retained as steward to his estates; and for the other two, the elder retired upon a comfortable provision, and the younger married, and was by my uncle settled in a lucrative business.

“I have now but little more to tell you. My friendly kind uncle survived his return ten years; in him at once I lost a tender parent and a sincere friend; nor could his whole fortune, which he left me without restriction, have any effect but in making me more sensible of my loss, as it plainly proved how truly he esteemed me. The disposal of my uncle’s effects, as you may suppose, was very displeasing to my father, whom, however, I have never seen, though he is still living. On my uncle’s death, I endeavoured to banish my melancholy by travelling and change of place. Inglewood I had frequently heard him speak of, but never seen, as it was purchased before he went abroad, and had not been visited since his return, his precarious health usually confining us in the neighbourhood of the capital, for the advantage of medical assistance. The situation particularly pleased me; and disliking a town life, I determined to fix my residence there—a resolution I do not think I shall change, as I esteem my neighbours, and hope they do the same by me.

"Mrs Palmer ceased, and received the thanks of Godwin and his daughters, the former of whom said—'Esteem, madam, however flattering the term may be when applied from you to us, is not comprehensive enough to express what we owe to you; add to it gratitude and affection, and it will more nearly declare the sentiments your kindness has inspired.'

"Ah," said Agnes, "I shall never more, madam, look on Felix's face with dislike; I shall consider him as attending the little sufferer, and forget his complexion."—"I always liked him," added Fanny; but from this day he will be yet more estimable to me."—"I shall leave you to-morrow," replied Mrs Palmer, "and will desire him, in my absence, to relate to you how he saved my uncle's life, the reason of his leaving Jamaica, and his subsequent distress in England. I should not neglect to tell you, that his grief on my uncle's death was equal to my own; and though I offered to double the independence my uncle had left him, he declined it, entreating that he might never leave me."—"Do not banish me, madam," said he, "I am almost sixty years old, and shall die with grief if I am again driven into the world." "You will easily suppose he was not necessitated to press his suit; I assured him he was free to choose, and in consequence he remains my confidential servant, and I do not blush to add—my friend."

Fanny and Agnes then retired to their chamber; after which, Godwin and Mrs Palmer conversed for some time, both coinciding in their fears that Agnes would hardly survive the event that was now almost daily expected—a thought that wounded Godwin to the soul, and grieved the friendly Mrs Palmer.

CHAPTER XXVII.

On the morning following, Mrs Palmer arose early, and taking leave of Godwin and the sisters, returned to Inglewood, leaving Felix to execute any commission they might want, or in case of any alteration, ride over to the Forest; for though he was in years he was strong and able to undertake a far longer journey. She likewise desired him to relate such events as might illustrate her own story, and pass the time in her absence.

The evening after her departure, Fanny reminded him of the promise, desiring him to take a seat among them, which, however, he declined until much pressed; then drew a chair at a respectful distance, and began as follows:—"I was born on the coast of Guinea, and kidnapped from thence when about twelve years old, and brought to Jamaica, where I was exposed to sale. Among others, my late master's father, Mr Walters, came to view me, but thought me not fit for labour; his son, who was about my own age, was with him, and looked upon me with such compassion, that, sensible of my situation, I could not avoid saying, 'I must be a slave, I had rather be so with you than any other.' I was however, not understood; my melancholy rather interested him than my words, for running up to his father, he pressed him so warmly to purchase me, that he at length consented. The bargain concluded I was ordered to follow them home, and introduced to my mistress, who was a West Indian by birth, but had married Mr Walters, who was an Englishman, when on a visit in that country, where her children had likewise both been born. Education and example had rendered Mrs Walters harsh and unfeeling; as she was so to her husband's son, you may therefore readily believe the slaves were not exempt. I know not whether you are acquainted with it, but it is the custom to mark the newly-purchased slaves just above the shoulders with the initials of their owner's name—an operation that is performed by heating a piece of silver, on which the letters are engraven, over a flame of spirits, and pressing it on the back. This ceremony Mrs Walters always performed herself, affirming that the slaves never pressed the stamp sufficiently to make the letters legible. After finding numberless faults (at least I judged so by her actions and countenance), she made ready to give me the usual mark, which, though in reality no more than a common burn, appeared doubly horrid from the preparation. My young master, who was called Henry, was not present, but entered at the moment; I knew not what he said, but could plainly understand by his gestures that he was pleading for me, for he was crying bitterly from the mere dread: but I afterwards learned from an old slave who was present, that he insisted to his mother who, in spite of her temper, was extravagantly fond of him, that his father had bought me for him, and that he had determined I should be marked with his own initials only. A short contention ensued; but my young master got the better and bore me off with my back unmarked, but his goodness engraven on my heart in far more indelible characters. From this time I can say I truly loved him; wished to learn his lan-

age to express my gratitude. He was sensible of my endeavours, and would frequently descend to teach me my letters; and finding I was not dull, persevered, with an attention uncommon to his youth, until I could write to make myself understood, and read passably well. At this time I was fourteen, and perfectly understood my situation, which I considered fixed for life, yet I cannot say the thought on my own account gave me much pain; so true it is that kindness and humanity may make even bondage bearable. About this time my mistress, who was extravagantly fond of china, had a present of a valuable set from England, and which was placed on a table in the saloon. One day that my master and mistress were gone some miles on a visit, Mr Henry and myself were trying who could leap the farthest in the same apartment, when unfortunately he fell against the table, and totally demolished the whole. For a moment our fears kept us silent; to conceal it was impossible; and we well knew that our rage would exceed all bounds. At length we agreed to retire to a pavilion in the farthest part of the garden, until the first storm should be blown over, and that Mr Henry should present himself, and express his contrition. We accordingly went thither; I could not but see that this silly accident made him uneasy, and racked my mind how to exculpate him from any share of the blame. At length, having remained until we were assured my mistress must have been sometime returned, and have discovered the mischief, as she always sat in the saloon, I proposed that I should repair to the house, and discover how she bore the loss; if with calmness, I would wait for him at home; but if, on the contrary, she was outrageous, I was to return in the course of an hour, and let him know. He consented to this conditionally; I was, as the secret was entirely between us, not to confess I was even present when it happened, but to say my young master had told me of the misfortune, and was under great concern for it.

“This plan settled, I returned home: but I know no terms strong enough to paint the confusion I was witness to: all the slaves had been called, and accused with the mischief, but their innocence alone had been a poor defence; she had buffeted and struck them with her own hand, Mr Walters in vain endeavouring to pacify her. I entered at this moment. I was a new object: screaming with passion, she exclaimed—‘It is this young villain that has done it! I see it by his face! I will have him flayed alive.’ Summoning all my courage, which I confess was inferior to the love I bore Mr Henry (for had not the latter supported me, I could certainly have relinquished my purpose), I replied—‘If I have done it, madam, I am willing to pay the forfeiture.’

“‘And pay it you shall,’ furiously exclaimed she; and without further question, ordered me to be taken into the court, and severely whipped. Had not my pride supported me at that moment, I know not what might have happened; but the idea of showing my young master what I was capable of bearing to screen him from blame, rendered me equal to the effort, and I accompanied the men who were to punish me without resistance, tears, or entreaties, my mistress, with an inhumanity unbecoming her sex, placing herself at a window to see her commands properly obeyed. I was tied to a post, my crime proclaimed aloud, when Mr Henry rushed so suddenly between myself and the executioner, that he could not withhold his hand; the blow fell on his shoulders, and died his cotton waistcoat (which, except a shirt, was his only covering) with blood. Distracted at the sight, I cried aloud, and struggling with violence, broke the cord that held me, covering his body with my own; but there was no occasion; the man who inflicted the punishment stood aghast, without attempting another stroke, my mistress at the same time making the colonnade resound with her screams. ‘Strike,’ said my young master, ‘I alone am guilty: think you I will see another punished for me? If the paltry china must have a victim, let it be me. I am the offender, and if blood must be the expiation, it shall be mine.’

“The behaviour of my young master put an entire stop to the business; my mistress was shocked, and ordering me to my work, called Mr Henry to attend her to her chamber, where seeing her weep as his shoulder was bathed with spirits, he said—‘Ah, madam, hereafter remember, that the unhappy men whom fortune has placed at your command, have also equal feelings, and perhaps parents who may contemplate their wounds with as much anguish as you mine.’

“Mr Henry, almost immediately on my leaving him, had followed me; he feared I should incur his mother’s anger for only bearing the news, and throwing off all fear, generously deter-

mined to meet the storm himself. In a word, he arrived in the critical moment I noticed, saved me from the stroke of the whip, and wrote a fresh obligation on my heart.

"The favour of my young master procured me the kindness of the slaves; and from this time until I was near twenty, at which period my master and mistress were unhappily killed, my situation was far from unpleasant.

"The estates adjoining my master's were very extensive, and belonging to two gentlemen particularly disliked; the one employed about two hundred negroes, and the other a yet superior number. These men, from repeated provocations, had formed the design of rising and revenging themselves on their persecutors, and accordingly, seizing a favourable opportunity, they joined, and executed their purpose, killing the tyrants, and deluging the estates with the blood of their oppressors.

"This event had been planned by the slaves of both plantations, and who, having satiated their vengeance at home, hastened to the estate of Mr Walters, which they reached by break of day (and whose wife, I grieve to say, was particularly disliked), and removing all opposition, rushed in, and sacrificed her and her too complying husband to their resentment.

"My young master's apartment was on the other side of the yard, and I, by his own desire, lay in the antechamber; the noise awakened us, and hastening to the window, what was our alarm to see the carnage that had taken place! Mr and Mrs Walters dead, naked and disfigured, were carried and exposed in the open court, together with several oppressors. The sight was too much for an affectionate and dutiful son; he fell on the ground in a state of insensibility, which, dearly as I loved him, I at that moment thought happy. After hastening to fasten all the doors of the outward apartments, I returned to the window, where I had the mortification to see that many of our own slaves had joined them, and though not absolutely active, were at least passive in the mischief. Throwing up the window, I cried aloud to be heard, but the general confusion for some time rendered it impossible. 'Give up your young master,' cried the strange slaves; 'we have dug up the root, and will cut down the branch.'

"With these words they advanced to the outward door, and all hope nearly forsook me when calling aloud to several of our own people by name, said—'Hear me but a moment; I have something material to say; I will then throw open the doors, and leave you to act as you please.'

"I have already said I was fortunate enough to be beloved by the companions of my slavery, and the present instance proved it; for, crying aloud, they stayed their companions and entreated I might be heard, saying, I was their countryman, and a desirable ally, as I not only understood the use of fire-arms, but could also decypher the thoughts of Europeans, and they expressed them in black characters on white paper, and by that means might forward them of threatened danger, if any such communication should fall into their hands. Fortunately this reason procured a short cessation from violence, and I was permitted to speak when, addressing particularly our own people, who were about two hundred, I said, as nearly as I can recollect—'Friends, countrymen, and fellow-sufferers, it is an European saying, that time and chance happeneth to all; in you it is verified; the present time is yours, and your enemies are crushed beneath your feet; but may not hereafter the same chance make you the vanquished?—for what so variable as fortune?—not even the moon itself is half so inconstant; then may they not redouble our hardships, and plead for excuse that we set the example of blood, and are only to be ruled with a rod of iron? Their powers and resources in this island are numerous: what are ours?—a herd of naked, unarmed men, whose sole defence against their numerous engines of death is bodily strength and undaunted courage—poor auxiliaries to ward off the thunder of their cannon, or yet more certain musket shot. You have been cruelly oppressed, I confess it, but your tyrants have paid the forfeit; their blood rest upon their heads! To the slaves of this plantation I would simply direct a question—what has Henry Walters done? If he is the son of one of your oppressors, is that his fault? Is he to suffer for the errors of his parents? Let the man speak whom he has injured and here I pledge my truth to him, to yield him instantly into his power. It is not you, Peter for I remember he saved you at the expense of blows from his mother; nor is it you, Cæsar for when you were ill, how tenderly did he visit you, supplying all your wants unknown to the family! You, Juba, I think, he purchased with money given him to expend in pleasure

because with your former master you were harshly treated; it is not, therefore, you; nor yet Stephen there, for I remember when his wife and child lay dying of the smallpox, though he had never had that infectious distemper, he came to see them, brought them wine, and when they died he wept.'

"I here paused a moment, but all being silent, I resumed—'If none answer, I must then presume none have been offended; why then do ye seek the life of one who has never wronged you. For me, my friends, I freely declare my own safety is not dearer than his. Ingratitude is not a negro vice—it is the produce of colder climates. He is my friend; his shoulders yet bear the scar of the whip that would otherwise have marked mine; pain, with him, was not put in competition with truth—he saved me at the expense of himself. I have no more to say—he is in this apartment; vain would be our struggles against a multitude—we will make none. I will, as I promised, unbar the doors, and, if your hearts will let you, kill the truest friend you have among the Christian men, and stab the bosom who would willingly bleed to give you liberty, happiness, for I will not survive him—we will die together.'

"With these words I opened the doors. My master, who had recovered the first shock, advanced to meet them, presenting his breast, and saying, 'I am prepared—strike.' My countrymen, at these words, set up a loud cry, exclaiming, 'Live, white man—live to conquer black man by humanity!'

"Soon after this, the strangers began to disperse, our own men who had been in any means instrumental to the mischief accompanying them, the rest hanging their heads in mournful silence, or falling at my master's feet, and entreating his compassion and pardon.

"My master, soon after this event, sailed for England, and settled there; the melancholy scene that had passed had disgusted him with Jamaica; he therefore sold off the greater part of his possessions, reserving only one small plantation, whose situation he was particularly fond of.

"At the earnest entreaty of the negroes, he made me the overseer, first giving me my liberty, and investing me with the entire command.

"I was very unwilling to be left behind; but my dear master so clearly pointed out that my stay nearly concerned his interest and the quiet of the plantation, that I consented. For twenty years I fulfilled the duty he enjoined me, with great satisfaction to him, and, also, to those over whom he had given me command; and if I have anything in the world to boast of, it is, that by mild measures, fifty negroes on our plantation did as much labour as double that number on most others. During the period before mentioned, I had seen my master four times, in the last of which he informed me he should, in the year following, go to India. Alas! you know the event of that voyage. I even now tremble at the recollection; the news of his being cast away, I can truly assure you, was sincerely lamented by all his dependants; but now much more, I leave you to judge, was their sorrow increased, when, the year after, they received the dreadful tidings that the plantation was to be sold, and the labourers disposed of to the best bidder! For myself, I was ordered to England, to render up my accounts. With a heavy heart, I bade adieu to my faithful companions; and, on my arrival in England, I immediately repaired to the house of my master's brother-in-law; but what a difference in manners: Mr Somerton was narrow-minded and avaricious; and, having examined my accounts, which he found perfectly just, he discharged me entirely from his employ, presenting me with five guineas in recompense for my services. I well knew my master had a niece, but what had I to expect from her, when her father had treated me so inhumanly? for had he only empowered me to go to Jamaica, many gentlemen would have been glad to employ me. Thank heaven, however, he did not, for by that means I not only met my generous mistress, whom I did not even know by name, but also my revered and lamented master.

"Stranger in England, new to the customs and manners, I at first found it difficult to get employ; but, after some time, was seldom at a loss, the gardeners and farmers about Islington almost constantly employing me. Here it was, as I believe you are informed, that I first met with Mr Palmer, and had some difficulty to persuade an apothecary to walk into the fields to bleed him, and which I verily believe he would not have done, but from shame of offering him a dollar to keep until he was paid for his trouble. Alas! nothing but the distress of a fellow creature could have forced me to make the offer, for the dollar was presented me by Mr Walters, on the day he rescued me from being marked on the back, since which period I had ever worn it in my bosom, having drilled a hole, and fastened it to a ribbon for that purpose.

“When I met my long-lost master at the watchmaker’s, his person was so altered that it totally escaped my recollection; yet the sound of his voice attracted my attention, and made me anxiously examine his features, which, though I found exactly formed like those of the person I lamented, yet the difference of ten years, complexion, and grey hairs, deadened my hope, until he blessed me with a certainty by calling me the preserver of his life.

“To paint my joy is impossible; let it suffice that I confess it the most happy day I ever experienced, save one, that on which I enjoyed the pleasure of recalling to the minds of my countrymen the virtues of their master. Often has he flattered me by naming me the preserver of his life; but it was his goodness and gratitude alone that gave rise to the idea. His virtues alone preserved him; they wanted only to be remembered, to operate in their full force.”

When Felix ceased, Mr Godwin arose and stretching out his hand, said—“To express the sentiments your narrative has inspired, would, I am sure, be displeasing to you; I can therefore only say, that for the time I have to live, I shall be much gratified by being ranked among the number of your friends.”

Felix took the offered hand, pressed it to his bosom, and expressed his gratitude.

“Ah!” said Agnes softly to Fanny, “I would compound for all men’s faces to be like Felix’s, to make them equally virtuous.”

Fanny too expressed the satisfaction the narrative had given her, after which the conversation took a more general turn, the favourite topic, however, being Mrs Palmer’s goodness, numberless instances of which Felix repeated; and among others told them, “that not only Mrs Smith, where they now were, but also her brother, the surgeon, were totally indebted to her for their present happiness, which,” he concluded by observing, “they were perfectly deserving of.”

From this evening Felix rose considerably in the opinion of the family, Godwin even assiduously seeking his company, and frequently beguiling his sorrow for an hour by his conversation.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

At length the hour arrived when the unhappy Agnes was to feel the pangs of a mother; her strength, before exhausted, and her spirits sunken, she was ill able to bear the struggle of nature, which was long and dreadful, being attended with repeated faintings and returns of delirium, that left little hopes of her recovery, should she even live to be delivered. The kind and attentive Fanny, almost equally agonized, kept close to her side, praying, whispering comfort, and entreating her beloved sister to support her spirits; and forgetting everything but that on her recovery depended the happiness of her friends.

At length the practitioner, who was particularly skilful, delivered her of a living daughter which he gave into the hands of the trembling Fanny, who, pressing it to her bosom, wept over it in agony, Agnes being insensible for several hours that she was a mother.

When the child was presented to Mr Godwin, he received it in his arms; and, raising his eyes to heaven, exclaimed—“May the blessing of an old man, offspring of sorrow, hover over thee! may thou never feel the ingratitude of a beloved son, nor the shame of a deluded daughter! may peace and innocence attend thy steps! and,” to conclude, “may thou be more virtuous than thy father, and happier than thy mother!” As he ended, he pressed its face with his lips, and returned it to Fanny, who, laying it tenderly to sleep, was soon after obliged to retire to her own bed, which was in the same room with that of her sister.

Agnes slept long and heavily during the night after her delivery; but the effort had been too much for Fanny, who grew so ill, that Mrs Smith, who sat up with them, thought it necessary to call in the medical practitioner, who declared that the emotion and fatigue she had sustained, had brought on a premature labour, and in two hours delivered her of a dead child.

Agnes was perfectly collected when she awoke, though disturbed by the general confusion and sensible of what had passed, the pangs of her sister redoubled her own. Weeping over her sleeping infant—“Alas! child of sorrow and shame,” cried she, “thy birth has cost the life of one who might have been the pride of its parents, and produced to the world with honour while thou, unhappy babe,” continued she, “if thou livest, will be scorned by the righteous, and pitied by the gentle. Ah, may the same hour that closes thy unhappy mother’s eyes, close also thine! and in my bosom thy innocent shame be buried with my weakness.”

Fanny, who was declared in no danger if kept quiet, ordered her bed to be placed close to that of Agnes; and taking the infant to her affectionate bosom, soon forgot she had given birth to a dead child.

Mr Godwin, on the first alarm, had sent Felix to Inglewood, and who returned the next day with William and Mrs Palmer.

William at once felt the sorrow of a dutiful son, a tender brother, and an affectionate husband. His father's health was visibly on the decline; Agnes grew daily weaker; his beloved Fanny was confined to her bed; and he had lost the second pledge of her affection.

Godwin led the way into the apartment, and casting his eyes mournfully around, said in a low voice, "Alas! Edwin, couldst thou but see this—thy work, it surely would awaken thee to repentance."

Mrs Palmer drew near the bed of Agnes, and seeing her overcome with confusion, took her hand, saying,—“Banish your fears, my good girl—I came but to endeavour to speak peace to your wounded spirit; I have long learned to distinguish between guilt and weakness; yours is forgiven by your earthly father, and I have no doubt by your heavenly one; bear up, nor sink under calamity; your life is dear to your friends, and necessary to this little one; endeavour then to overcome the unhappy sensibility that destroys you, and live to fulfil those claims which friendship and paternal care have on your heart.”—“It will not be,” replied Agnes; though sensible of the kindness of my friends, I rejoice that my dismissal is at hand, and, like a tired traveller, look forward to the hour of rest. For the little unfortunate I have no fears; if it survives, it will not miss a mother's tenderness,” looking on Fanny. “Would you believe it,” continued she, “she gives it suck; and, although a child of shame, lulls it to sleep in her virtuous bosom!”

William, who was leaning over the bed of his wife, dropped a tear on her face, and pressing her hand to his lips, said in a low voice—“Oh, Fanny! how is it possible you can love Edwin's brother.”—“Because I love virtue,” replied Fanny, warmly, “and revere her in William Godwin.”—“One thing alone,” continued Agnes, after a long pause, during which no one broke silence, “hangs on my spirits; my unhappy child, should its birth transpire, may be claimed by Edwin; and Edwin, though, alas, he must be beloved until my heart shall cease to beat, is not, I fear, virtuous enough to educate a daughter; but what is education, or even example!” looking at Fanny: “all I would therefore ask is, that, as she cannot be produced at the Forest, without divulging my shame, and incurring the danger I dread, that she may be put to nurse under the guidance of Mrs Smith, who is a good woman: my Fanny will at least see her yearly, or perhaps, oftener; and when time shall have obliterated my memory from all suspicion, she will perhaps condescend to take her under her own care, and at a proper age tell her the story of her unhappy mother: but conceal her father: for Edwin's child, though unknown, ought to respect him.”

Fanny attempted to reply, but Mrs Palmer prevented her, by saying—“Warmly interested for your family from the first moment I saw you, I flatter myself I have a proposal to make which may be yet more agreeable. Fanny has already the cares of a mother, and from her age, those claims may be greatly increased, and sufficient for her to fulfil. I have none of those cares, no fears to apprehend, no scandal to dread, and have frequently wished, as I am fond of children, for one whom I might rear from its infancy, and be witness of the growing virtues I would endeavour to inculcate; for if I failed, at least my heart should exculpate me. I propose then to adopt this little stranger—will hire her a nurse—take her home with me in a short time—guard her during my life with care; and, at my death, place her above those temptations which prove so fatal to poverty.”

“Best of women!” exclaimed Godwin, bending his aged knee, “accept an old man's thanks; but that God, whose precepts you follow, can alone requite you.”

Mrs Palmer raised him. “Speak,” said she, addressing Agnes, “do you approve of my offer.”

Agnes clasped her hands, but could only articulate an almost incoherent blessing.

“I know not,” said Fanny, “whether gratitude should compel me to silence, or affection force me to speak; but, sure of favour from all, affection for once shall get the better. From the hour I found my little one was dead, I formed a plan, which, I trust, will meet the approbation of all; it is to substitute this infant for my own, and to take it home as such. My pregnancy,” continued she, a slight blush crossing her cheek, “was visible, and known long

before I left the Forest; who then can suspect the deception?—surely none. The secret will rest with ourselves and Mrs Smith, whom we can trust. To your proposal, madam," added Fanny, "I would also make a reply, but am unequal to the task; to refuse your generous offer would be to be unworthy of it; let the cares of the first year or two be mine, the rest will more worthily fall on you; and may she live to prove her gratitude!"

Agnes raised her eyes to heaven, and, after struggling a moment with her emotion, exclaimed, "Merciful God! I thank thee; thou forgivest me, or blessings would not thus be multiplied upon me!"

Mrs Palmer applauded Fanny warmly, saying, "Be it as your tenderness has best devised, most exemplary of sisters! To ask the opinion of either your father-in-law or husband would be superfluous; their eyes sufficiently speak their sentiments; the little one shall be baptized here, and on your return, acknowledged your child and my goddaughter, which will, in some measure, account for her hereafter residing with me."

The preliminaries thus settled, Mrs Palmer, as Agnes appeared exhausted, proposed to retire, and was accompanied by Godwin and William, the first in silence contemplating the arrangement that had taken place, and the latter, in exultation which he could not suppress, blessing the hour that allied him to Fanny.

They were soon after joined by Bernard, who had just arrived, anxious to see his daughters. He was informed of all, and expressed the highest satisfaction of the arrangement, repeating his unpolished thanks with a sincerity that politeness cannot always boast of.

On being introduced to his daughters, he scarcely knew which to caress most, and was not a little delighted to find Agnes better than he had dared to hope, the return of her senses being regarded by him as a certain symptom of recovery, embracing both his children, kissing the infant, and assuring the weeping Agnes it was as dear to him as herself.

He then observed that the absence of Godwin and William from the Forest made more inquiries than that of his daughters, and pressed them to return with him the following day, observing, with Mrs Palmer's leave, the babe might be baptized that evening, and all settled: and when he reached home, he should give out that Fanny had misreckoned her time, and had been unexpectedly delivered: and that Agnes was somewhat recovered, and with her sister, expected to return speedily.

"Ah, my father!" cried Agnes, "I shall indeed speedily return; but never more shall these eyes behold the Forest of Inglewood. Lay me by Mrs Godwin; living, she would not have despised me, nor have forbidden my dust to be mingled with hers. Fanny, my beloved Fanny, shall return with my unhappy babe drawing life from her bosom; hers shall return to moulder in mine."—"Why wilt say so?" said Bernard; "thou art better, I am sure, and do not make thy father unhappy,—all will yet be well."

Mrs Palmer changed the discourse by giving her approbation to Bernard's plan of immediately baptizing the child, that they might return, at least all but Godwin, whom Fanny and Agnes both entreated might remain.

The curate of a neighbouring village was then procured, and the child, by Mrs Palmer's express desire, baptized after her, Anna Palmer, and truly registered as the daughter of Edwin Godwin and Agnes Bernard, the generous sponsor first taking the clergyman aside, entrusting him with the unhappy state of the mother, and entreating his secrecy, which he promised.

The ceremony was just concluded, when the medical practitioner entered, and pronouncing Agnes, on the whole, better, and Fanny almost recovered, entreated both might be kept quiet, and soon after took his leave.

The following day Bernard and William departed for the Forest, and soon after Mrs Palmer first bidding an affectionate adieu to the sisters, and promising to see them again speedily.

CHAPTER XXIX.

EDWIN, as before observed, had determined to get leave of absence, and endeavour to develop all that was passing at Inglewood; he had no doubt but Fanny had revealed to his father the business of Harris, and immediately surmised that the health of Agnes was restored, and removed from the Forest to be out of his power. Full of this idea, he prepared for his departure; neither the entreaties of his wife, nor yet the fascination of Mrs Whitmore, having power to alter his purpose, or even to procure intelligence where he was going, Harris alone being in the secret. Mrs Godwin, whose temper was naturally violent, and whose conduct

had proved how much she was attached to Edwin, could ill brook such constant neglect from a man she had raised even to the height of his own wishes ; and having in vain tried entreaties, could no longer conceal the sentiments his conduct inspired, and gave free vent to her anger, reprobating her own folly and his ingratitude in the strongest terms, all of which had no effect but increasing his dislike to her, and forcing expressions that wounded her in proportion as she loved him. In short, the agitation of her mind brought on a fever, which raged with such violence that her life was pronounced in the greatest danger, and Edwin's journey in consequence stopped, not from affection, but merely to preserve appearances. Harris, however, he immediately sent off to Mr Jeremiah Jenkins, to procure all possible intelligence, and endeavour to discover the retreat of Agnes. Mrs Godwin's fever, from its first appearance, had been declared of the malignant kind, and on the tenth day manifested the most alarming symptoms. Edwin was, therefore, with all due preliminaries, desired to prepare for an event which might give him the highest pleasure in expectancy—the death of his wife. His conscience would, indeed, in spite of all his endeavours, be troublesome, and present his ingratitude in strong and glaring colours ; but these qualms were more than counterbalanced by the rapturous idea of being at liberty to address Agnes, whose forgiveness he could not doubt, circumstanced as they were ; and he possessed a fortune which, even disinterested as she was, could not fail of having its proper weight.

The cold severity of his father, and the warm resentment of William, gave him some uneasiness ; but even these he thought could be easily surmounted ; he should represent his former conduct as an error he was unwarily drawn into, and throw himself totally on the mercy of Agnes. Notwithstanding these meditations, he was so good an adept in the art of dissimulation, as to conceal his pleasurable sentiments under the specious guise of concern and tenderness, attending his wife with an unwearied care, which was applauded by the spectators, and highly grateful to the unhappy object, who still loved him well enough to believe every excuse he chose to advance for his past conduct, and every asseveration for the future, if she was spared to him.

Thus, for her own satisfaction, happily deceived, she forgave all, and expired as he was seated by her side, the unhappy victim of a misplaced affection, to which she had first sacrificed her person and fortune, then her life.

Though this event was more wished than dreaded by Edwin, yet, when it arrived, it made an impression which he could not immediately shake off, particularly as he had no pleasurable resources in his own mind to banish the uneasy sensation, nor could in such a case seek them abroad.

Mrs Godwin had particularly desired to be carried to the family vault of her parents, in Leicestershire ; and partial, even in her last moments, to the unworthy object of her affection, had requested he would attend to her remains, all which he faithfully promised, and as truly performed.

During Mrs Godwin's illness Edwin had heard twice from Harris, but nothing satisfactory, except that it was reported that Agnes's unhappy malady was rather decreased, and that she had only been removed for change of air.

Possessed of this intelligence, he attended his wife's funeral, which was no sooner over than he returned post to London, determined to settle his affairs with all possible despatch, repair to Inglewood, procure his pardon, abjure his errors, and wed Agnes, as soon as her consent, and decency, would allow.

He felt the influence wealth had on his own heart, and doubted not but it must also have some on that of Agnes, and therefore determined on what he thought a master stroke to silence all reproaches. This was no other than causing a deed to be properly executed, by which he endowed her, on their marriage, with the entire command and disposal of the sum of ten thousand pounds, which was more than the half of his property ; and that he thought a full compensation for past errors, and what must effectually silence all present objections.

Thus prepared he determined to depart, and join his servant at Jenkins's, make every necessary inquiry, then act accordingly ; but the evening previous to his journey received the following letter from Harris :—

“ Sir,—I have been indefatigable in the business in which you have employed me, and hope this time to retrieve my error at Inglewood. All my inquiries to discover the retreat of the sisters were fruitless until yesterday morning, when I saw a chaise pass the inn at full speed,

followed by your brother, and soon afterwards by the negro whom Jenkins mentioned. I lost no time, but mounting my horse, kept them in view the whole day ; and towards evening saw them stop at a small house near Richmond, where your brother handed out a lady and dismissed the chaise.

“ As this plainly proved it the place of their destination, I rode into the town, entered an inn, and having ordered supper, asked several questions, and among others, describing the nouse, and pretending to admire the situation, inquired to whom it belonged? The waiter replied, it was originally purchased by a lady of great fortune, but who was supposed to have given it to a Mrs Smith, the widow of a sea-officer, and sister of a surgeon in the town, whose name having enquired, I ceased my questions, fearful of incurring suspicion. The next morning, being for your service, sir, conveniently seized with a bilious complaint, I walked to the doctor's to procure a medicine, or rather intelligence, but found that the principal was engaged with his patients, and a deputy, exactly suited to my wishes, left in care of the shop. After drinking one of his infernal potions, which nothing but my respect to you, sir, could have made me swallow, I retired, entreating he would call on me at my inn in half an hour, as I assured him my disorder sometimes increased very suddenly, and required immediate assistance. The fellow was punctual ; but being quite recovered by the first salutary draught, I generously, sir, as I knew you would approve, presented him with a couple of guineas for himself, and called for a bottle of wine. In short, sir, the money and my elocution charmed him ; and the wine warming his heart, he grew communicative, and before we had finished the second bottle, perfectly understood each other—he answering my questions as readily as I asked them. His master, he said, was a close old fellow, whom it would be useless to interrogate ; and that for his own part, he knew little of the ladies at Mrs Smith's, except that one had just recovered from a melancholy state of insanity, but was supposed to be in the last stage of a consumption ; yet, on the whole, she was, he heard his master say the evening before, better than he had seen her. Not being able to procure more satisfactory information, I dismissed him, having first finished another bottle, and obtained his promise of calling on me again in the evening. I was, however, much vexed and disappointed, for he returned in an hour miserably drunk ; and, with a melancholy face, informed me his employer had discharged him, in consequence of his being in liquor.

“ Sincerely vexed at this, I entreated him to go back, and endeavour to make his peace ; but he assured me his master was so obstinate a dog, it would be of no avail ; nor did he, as he said, much care, as he had long proposed to go to London. Thus obliged to acquiesce, I made him farewell, and sat down to give you this information, waiting your orders at the Angel Inn, in this town, not venturing near Mrs Smith's, lest I should be discovered by your brother's wife, and give suspicion. Wating your answer with impatience,

“ I am, sir, your humble servant,

“ EDWARD HARRIS.”

Edwin had no sooner read this letter, than instantly ordering a postchaise and four, he departed, travelling day and night until he reached Richmond, rejoicing at the intelligence that Agnes's senses were restored, and never doubting but, as her malady proceeded from his falsehood, his return, ready to espouse her on any terms, would remove it.

At first he thought of writing to his father or Agnes, but soon relinquished that project, saying, as he considered on the subject—“ No, no, a personal interview, and that unexpected, will be the most decisive for me ; a letter would be only productive of a consultation, in which cold prudence would be predominant, and our meeting protracted ; while on the contrary, if I take them unprepared, on my knees entreat to be heard, plead for pardon, and promise never more to err, nature will at once incline my father to pity, and love force my Agnes to forgive, and once more receive my vows—vows which I henceforward mean to hold sacred, for where can I find such another angel? Methinks I already feel the exultation I shall experience on presenting her to the world—she universally admired, myself universally envied ; thus at once gratifying both my pride and love.”

The ill state of health of Agnes would now and then intrude, but elated with the flattering picture ardent fancy had painted, he endeavoured to cast off all uneasy reflections, and think alone of the pleasure that awaited him.

On his arrival at Richmond, he ordered the post-boy to the inn Harris had mentioned, and found him waiting for either the letter or his arrival ; he could, however, inform him

nothing farther than what he before knew, except that he believed there were none of the male part of the Inglewood family at Mrs Smith's, as William and Bernard had passed him on horseback on the high road the afternoon he wrote the letter which brought Edwin with such speed, and who arrived at Richmond the seventh day after Agnes's delivery.

This news was not unpleasing to Edwin; he flattered himself he should be more successful by taking Agnes alone, or at least only supported by Fanny; and therefore, regardless of fatigue, he determined to lose no time, but visit them that very evening.

Harris would have dissuaded him from this step, as it was late, and he apparently much fatigued, but in vain; he ordered him to show him the house, which before they reached, it was nine o'clock, and the night completely dark.

Arrived at the gate, Edwin dismissed his servant, and entered the court before the door. An unusual tremor seized him as he raised his hand to pull the bell; and withdrawing it without the effort, he paused a moment to reflect and recover his emotion. "Why do I tremble thus?" said he, "what have I so much to dread, or whose frowns need I fear? An hour's anger will be the most of the business, or a few reproaches, which I shall long to silence, while uttered from the beautiful lips of my Agnes; away then with this childish folly; I am determined to conquer, and triumph over every difficulty."

During this soliloquy he was walking round the house, the garden of which joined the fore-court, and completely surrounded the dwelling.

In the back front was a door; and what gave no small pleasure, it was half open. Determined, if possible, to determine whom he had to expect to meet with, he cautiously entered, and for a moment stood still to listen; but all was dark and quiet, except on one side, in a parlour fronting the garden, where he perceived a light under the door. Emboldened by the solitude around, he advanced, and lent an attentive ear, but no sound reached it. His eye was next applied to the keyhole: but the apartment was apparently deserted, though he could not see to the farther end, but plainly perceived two large candles burning on a table in the centre. At that moment he heard a walking over head, and was on the point of retiring hastily; but again all was still, and he regained his post.

He now repented that he had not written first to Agnes, to inform her of all that had passed—his contrition and intention—but it was too late. "Yet," continued he, after a pause, "as I am so ridiculously weak to-night, I am half inclined to retire, first leaving on the table in this apartment the deed which makes the greater part of my fortune over to Agnes; I have it in my pocket. I will show her I am free to offer her my heart, and prepare her for my reception to-morrow. It is sealed and directed, so there can be no danger of leaving it; or should it by any means fall into other hands, it would be useless—fortunate thought! it will save me a world of explanations, nor can she be insensible to it. I am to-night overpowered with fatigue, and shall to-morrow urge my suit with redoubled ardour."

Thus resolved, he opened the door with caution, and convinced that the apartment was empty, advanced; but a scene at once presented that struck him with astonishment and horror, for on the side of the room he had not before seen, stood on trestles a coffin, simply decorated with the usual insignia of death. A cold sweat bedewed his forehead, his knees knocked together, and for some moments his feet seemed rooted to the ground. At length—"What business had I here!" exclaimed he; "yet what is this to me? Cannot people die without causing me this alarm? I blush at my folly to be thus startled at the sight of a mere wooden case; yet, merciful God! should it contain my father, for he was said to be ill; but, fool that I am—he is doubtless at Inglewood. Distraction!" continued he, viewing the coffin, without approaching it, "I can bear no more? Away, foolish fear! I will be satisfied, whatever be the consequence."

With these words he approached, and, with a forced courage, snatched one of the candles from the table, and advanced towards the object of his terror, twice raising his hand before he could find strength to remove the lid; which at length pushing aside, regardless of the inscription, he discovered in the calm sleep of death, the beautiful and once blooming Agnes, with an infant on her bosom.

CHAPTER XXX.

EDWIN gave a cry of horror—his strength forsook him—the candle dropped from his enervated hand, and he fell senseless on the ground by the side of the coffin. The noise alarmed the

house; and Godwin, leaving Mrs Smith with Fanny, ran towards the apartment, being joined on the stairs by Felix, who had heard the noise, and who was also hastening to learn the cause. Though astonished on their first entering the room to find a man extended in all appearance lifeless, on the floor, yet that sensation was speedily banished by humanity, curiosity, and every other idea, giving way to the sensation of the intruder.

Edwin was in deep mourning, and had fallen on his face, which circumstance, added to his dress, totally concealed him from the knowledge of his father. Felix, most alert, ran to raise him, and turning him from the position in which he had fallen, at once discovered to Godwin the face of his guilty son.

"Execrable murderer!" exclaimed the old man, withdrawing the hand he had stretched out to assist him, as if it had touched a serpent, "dost thou persecute her even in death?"

By the application of water to his temples, and the care of Felix, Edwin began to recover. "Cease your attention," continued Godwin, gazing on him with a countenance impressed with mingled grief and resentment; "let him die, lest he live to commit more crimes, and swell the account beyond the reach of mercy."

Edwin slowly revived; and though neither fear nor superstition had any share in his character, yet his eyes first fixing on the figure of Felix bending over him (so powerful was the sense of guilt), that striving to disengage himself, he exclaimed, shuddering with horror, "Merciful God, who art thou?" His eyes at that moment met those of his father, and the emotion occasioned by the person of Felix, as the lesser evil, instantly vanished, and hiding his face on his shoulder, he cried—"Hide me—save me—my father's presence is to much! all else I can bear."—"Unhappy, guilty wretch!" exclaimed Godwin, "if you shrink thus from my sight, how will you meet that of a justly offended God, from whom neither your crimes nor murders are hidden? The longest life spent in contrition and penitence can scarcely atone for parricide, perjury, the violation of innocence, and the fell consequences of your depravity, the death of one whose only fault was her misplaced tenderness; and finally, that of an unhappy babe, doomed even in its mother's womb to fall a victim to your offences! Can such deeds, Edwin, hope for mercy? If they can, delay not, but repent; and with a sincere contrition seek for pardon."—"I dare not hope nor ask it," answered Edwin; "I am forsaken of God, and ere this you must have cursed the day in which I received my being."—"Alas!" replied Godwin; "in an unhappy hour of distraction, I indeed did more—I cursed thyself: but what is my curse—seek to deprecate that of heaven—guilty, that I was, when the mild angel most injured, forgave, and even with her latest breath entreated pardon for thee!"—"Enough," cried Edwin, "it is complete; my own curse is fallen on my devoted head; repentance and contrition are vain; can they recall the past—reinststate me in innocence and your affection—bring back my mother from the grave, or awaken Agnes and her infant to life?"—"Her infant!" replied Godwin; but instantly recollecting himself, and giving in to Edwin's mistake, he added, "Thank heaven, her infant is beyond the reach of its inhuman father!"—"Oh God!" cried Edwin, in an agony of grief, as he gazed on the lifeless form, could I have suspected this!—a child!—Oh! Agnes! Agnes! what must have been thy sorrows! This babe, that might have been a pledge of love between us, is but a fresh weight to plunge me yet deeper in perdition! Oh, had she but lived to hear my penitence, to know my sorrows! or had even the infant been spared, that I might repair to it the wrongs done to its unhappy mother! But it seems as if all the avenues of mercy were closed against me! yes, I feel the hand of heaven is upon me, and to struggle with my fate is vain. You weep, my father—but what do I say? I have no father, no brother—I am alone—cursed even in existence! Could tears of blood obliterate my offences, yet what would they avail? Oh, that look of innocence, his face falling on the bosom of Agnes, will sentence me to everlasting perdition."

The distress of Godwin was too powerful to be expressed in words; he leaned against the foot of the coffin, and appeared ready to sink on the floor from the violence of his emotion.

"You have called me your friend," said Felix, addressing Godwin; "at this time permit me to use the influence of one.—Withdraw from this scene; consider the situation of your daughter-in-law, and the anxiety she is now labouring under."

With these words Felix gently took the arm of Godwin, who made no reply, and led him from the sight of Edwin's unavailing sorrow.

Edwin, now left alone, gave way to the most frantic grief; he called aloud on Agnes—exc-

rated himself—wept over her—kissed her cold lips and her right hand; then raising her left hand that was his surprise to see on her finger that ring which he had placed there on the fatal night of her undoing! This silent but painful remembrance redoubled his anguish and distraction; he started, the hand dropped from between his, and striking his forehead with his clenched hands, he rushed out of the apartment, exclaiming—"Hell! hell! thou canst not give extremere torture!"

Felix, in the meantime, led Godwin to his daughter-in-law's chamber, where he forced him to swallow a glass of wine, then hastened down to the room where he had left Edwin, who was gone, as already related, and in such confusion, that his hat still lay on the floor where it had first fallen.

Felix had but just communicated this intelligence to Godwin, when a ringing was heard at the gate, and which proved to be William, who was arrived from Inglewood. His sorrow for the loss of Agnes was not inferior to that of his wife and father, and was greatly increased by the scene which he heard had just passed. The news of Agnes's death had reached him two days before, but the distress of Bernard had rendered him incapable of attending them there; the particulars of the unhappy event were therefore unknown to him.

Agnes had died on the third day after her delivery, the flattering symptoms so frequent in deceits having suddenly disappeared, and given place to the immediate prognostics of approaching dissolution. Calm and resigned, she endeavoured to speak comfort to her weeping sister, and the still more unhappy Godwin; gave the kindest remembrances of duty to her father, and gratitude to Mrs Palmer and William; and, finally, in the broken snatches of her breath, fervently prayed for her infant and Edwin.

"Oh, Father of Mercy!" cried she, "by the peace thou hast designed to shed on my soul, I trust I am forgiven! Oh, extend the goodness to the partner of my crime! awaken me to repentance and virtue; his faults are not beyond thy power to pardon; error to man is as inherent as mercy and forgiveness are to thee. Bless my babe; may every sorrow she have felt be repaid by a blessing on my child! Make her worthy those friends thou hast promised to shield her from the opprobrium that must have otherwise fallen on her helpless innocence! At some distant time may her father love her as I would have done! so shall my spirit, if permitted to look down on earth, be gratified." Agnes ceased for a few moments, and appeared to struggle for breath; but recovering in some degree, she resumed, addressing Godwin—"Oh, my dear, my honoured parent! for so I will call you for this last time, give me a way to sorrow; weep not for me; Fanny will repay my debt of love and duty. Fanny, my beloved companion, sister, friend, what words can I find to address thee, or what blessings equal to my wishes! The strongest I express is, thy own deeds hang over thee! Assist my worthy brother in comforting my father; tell him I wished to fix my last looks on him. Then turning her expiring eyes towards Godwin, she added, after a painful and convulsive pause—"Bless all my friends! Pardon, my father, pardon the deluded Emma! tell her I remembered her at this awful hour: and, oh, God of Mercy, hear my prayer! forgive my unhappy Edwin."

This sentence she pronounced with energetic earnestness, her eyes raised with fervent hope, and a sweet smile of placid happiness enlivening her features; then gently bowing her head forward, as she pronounced the last word, expired without a groan, struggle, or any convulsion that might mark the final separation of the active spirit from its earthly tenement.

Though this event had long been expected, yet the shock it occasioned was dreadful; had it Godwin's grief been diverted by the situation of his daughter-in-law, he had undoubtedly sunk under it; but her sorrow, in some measure, beguiled him of his own. She had been delirious the whole night after her sister's death, calling aloud on Agnes, and struggling to get out of bed to go to her; but exhausted by the exertion, towards morning had fallen into a heavy sleep, during which Mrs Smith had persuaded Godwin to have the body of Agnes removed, as the sight at a future period would but increase her grief. Fanny, after a few hours' rest, awakened, relieved from the fever, and resigned to her loss, the acuteness of her first sorrow sinking into a serenity that at once bespoke her fortitude and religion.

At first she seemed dissatisfied that Agnes was removed, but her father's reasons were admitted with a sign of acquiescence, and pressing the babe to her bosom, she exclaimed—"Agnes, if ever I forget thy worth, so far as to love any child more than this thy sacred deposit, may the Almighty shew me my error and ingratitude by depriving me of it!"

In the morning a man had been sent off to Inglewood by the surgeon, as Felix could ill be

spared, in the general distress, to convey the news by letter to Mrs Palmer, entreating her to break it to Mr Bernard and William, the former of whom had been so violently shocked at the intelligence, that William, however distressed, and anxious to attend his wife and father, could not determine to leave him until he became more calm.

Agnes, in this interim, had been put into the coffin, and the babe of Fanny, conformable to what she had herself expressed, placed by her side. This arrangement had likewise another incentive; Fanny wished her infant to be buried at Inglewood, and by this means she was conveyed thither, without the questions which a second coffin would doubtless have occasioned.

On Agnes being placed in her last receptacle, Mrs Smith had attempted to draw the ring from her finger; but either from the stiffness of death or its swelling, had found this difficult to effect, and therefore had referred the task to her brother, in which interim Edwin had arrived, and added redoubled anguish to the yet bleeding wounds of the family.

William, on his first arrival, hastened to the chamber of Fanny, whom he found employed in endeavouring to restore his father to some degree of calmness. He looked at her in silent admiration; traces of the most poignant affliction sat on every feature, yet she evidently endeavoured to suppress her own feelings, fearful of adding to the general unhappiness. Having first embraced his father, he advanced towards her, and throwing his arms about her as she sat up in bed, could only express his sorrow by speechless agony. For some time she joined her tears with his; but soon recovering her emotion, she said—"Is this, William, the way you should teach me fortitude? We both love Agnes, as our actions to this little one shall prove, but we have also other duties to fulfil—to comfort our parents, by conquering our own grief and enabling them to bear theirs by shewing them they have children yet left to soften the sorrows of their age."

"Matchless woman!" cried Godwin, "with such a monitor should William ever err, how heavy must be his condemnation!" Then struggling with his emotion, he had entered into the particulars of what had passed, expressing his concern at the outrageous grief of Edwin, and his surprise how he could enter the house, and also depart so privately.

This mystery was, however, soon explained by Felix, who informed them that the glass door to the garden had been left open, and that he had doubtless entered and departed that way. His discovering their retreat was also a subject of wonder: but his apparent ignorance respecting the infants convinced them that his intelligence could not give them material uneasiness, as he would not fail to keep secret the share he had in Agnes's death.

"Good heaven!" cried Godwin, "should the unhappy boy, in this hour of anguish, rush into the presence of his Creator! Alas; I even yet tremble at the remembrance of the horror and despair which distorted his features!"

William made no reply, but soon after leaving his father and Fanny, he, with Felix, walked into the town, and inquired at the various inns for his brother, both by name and describing his person. At the last he called, he was told that such a gentleman had that very evening arrived about seven o'clock, and inquired for a man who had resided there for near a week—that both had gone out together, but returned separately; the first returned in a short time, and the other, after some stay, in a state of frenzy; that he had struck his companion, and ordered a chaise and four almost instantly after his return, and, finally, had gone, accompanied by the man, who was apparently his servant, near two hours.

With this intelligence, William hastened to his father, to whom he disclosed it, being more reconciled, on the reflection that Edwin was not, at such an hour of deserved punishment, left entirely to himself.

William, before he retired for the night, stole alone to the receptacle that contained his sister Agnes, and kissing her cold lips, cheeks, and forehead, bade her a final adieu.

"Merciful God!" exclaimed he, as he gazed on her, "is this all that is left of the beautiful and blooming Agnes, who two years since was hailed the Queen of May, whose lively harmonious note was most distinguished in the song, and whose active step was foremost in the dance? Cruel Edwin, what hast thou done! grasped at a shadow, and cast from thee a treasure never, never to be regained!"

By Fanny's desire, the burial was delayed until she should be able to return to Inglewood; the coffin, therefore, on the following day, was closed, the surgeon first taking off the ring, which was now removed without difficulty, the swelling having entirely subsided. A few

enings after arrived the friendly and humane Mrs Palmer ; William now lost no time, but saying an affectionate farewell of his wife and father, delighted to leave them in such hands, hastened away, in order to administer comfort to the distressed Bernard.

CHAPTER XXXI.

EDWIN, on his rushing out of the house, had, as the man truly told William, returned in a state little short of frenzy, and having no other object on whom to vent his rage, had struck Harris, and cursed him in the bitterest terms, accusing him of twice drawing him into the most horrible dilemmas. Harris, however had borne all with temper, endeavouring to persuade his master to bed, but in vain : he insisted on a chaise being instantly made ready, and setting off immediately for London.—“ I will fly,” said he in a paroxysm of rage, “ I will fly, and forget them all!—a father too ! Accursed night, in which I purchased a momentary gratification at the expense of years of pain !—infernal villain that I was, to take advantage of the alarm and emotion my arts had created ! But I am justly punished—the pangs of hell cannot equal those I feel. My wife, too (accursed name), died, as if on purpose to mock my eyes ! Another murder ! Well—well—well ! is not my number yet complete ! For what have I now to live ?—nothing ! My dearest hopes destroyed, and by whom ?—fool, knave, scoundrel, miscreant, that I am—by myself !”

The chaise being prepared, he threw himself in, and had advanced three stages towards London by the next morning, when he found himself too ill to proceed, and was unwillingly obliged to give way to Harris’s entreaty, and retire to bed. Rest, however, was not to be procured, even by the fatigues he had undergone, the horrors that distracted him redoubling his inquiet and inaction : in a few hours his overcharged brain lost the faculty of distinctly thinking, and he was bewildered in frenzy. Harris immediately called in medical assistance, who pronounced him in a high fever, and used the necessary means to relieve him : but all their cares were unavailing : for three weeks his delirium continued with short intervals, the paroxysms being not only dreadful to the sufferer, but also to the beholders, dashing his head against the bed posts, striking his forehead, gnashing his teeth, and calling perpetually on Agnes, his wife, and mother.—“ Take them away,” cried he, “ drive them back to the grave, they torment me to death—my wife has poisoned me—my mother has shot me through the head—and Agnes,” exclaimed he, with redoubled emotion, “ has struck a poignard through my heart. Murder—murder—who has committed murder ? Not I. I can kill without poison, pistol, or dagger—my love can do the business. Now see—see—they all laugh at me ! nay, then I’ll laugh too—ha, ha, ha ! Oh, oh !—Agnes, Agnes.”

These paroxysms were usually followed by insensibility ; nor was his delirium always abating, but frequently partook of the melancholy cast, yet always referred to the same objects. “ Hark !” said he, “ they are letting Agnes’s coffin down into the grave—they are placing it on my mother—the worms that will devour the first will now feast on the last. See—two already fixed on her ruby lips, and one in the dimple of her downy cheek !—will no one move them ? Call my wife—she can take them off, for she helped to fix them there. Tell her I’ll give back all her wealth. What ! cannot ye find her ? Seek her then in the charnel house : bid her take all, but save my Agnes.”

Such was the unhappy fate of Edwin, a victim to his own crimes, and a terrible example at the pangs of conscience can render even this life a hell, though possessed of youth, strength, beauty, understanding, and wealth.

At length he began slowly to recover, but was for above three months unable to leave the room where he was taken ill. When he gained a little strength, he made short excursions into the country, carefully avoiding all correspondence with his family, whom he could now not bear to think of, as he was convinced that they must regard him as the cause of all their misfortunes, and hate him accordingly.

A month after Agnes’s death she was removed to Inglewood for interment ; Godwin, Bernard, and William, preceding the hearse on horseback, in deep mourning, and with hearts yet more gloomy than their habits. At a short distance behind was Mrs Palmer’s chaise, containing herself, Fanny, and the little one, attended by Felix on horseback, in which order they reached the Forest in two days, the scattered inhabitants of which, being informed by the distressed Bernard of the time the body would arrive, having collected to receive it at the distance of a mile from home ; the elders on horseback, the youths on foot, in their best habi-

liments, attending, the maidens in white gowns and muslin hoods. On meeting the cavalcade the hearse was stopped, and six young farmers drawing the coffin, proceeded with it to church, two young girls walking before strewing flowers, eight supporting the pall, and the remainder following, with the youths singing a funeral hymn.

The whole family, together with Mrs Palmer, had so strongly urged Fanny to be taken immediately home, that she consented, though with difficulty, the lady accompanying her.

The alteration that three months had made in little Reuben, who was now near a year old, his artless caresses, the jealous curiosity with which he appeared to view the young stranger, all conspired to blunt the acuteness of her grief. He viewed the infant's hands, touched its feet, chuckled, and finally held up his chubby face to kiss her. Fanny pressed both to her bosom, wept over them, and her tears having eased her overcharged bosom, by the time the mourners returned from the funeral, she calmed her emotion and received them with composed firmness.

It was happy for Fanny that she had been dissuaded from attending the burial, for Godwin's distress had deeply affected the spectators. The earth had been removed from Mrs Godwin's coffin in digging the grave of Agnes, who was placed by her side; which sight redoubled his grief to such an excess, that his son could scarcely support him, Bernard wringing his own hands, yet sobbing words of comfort to his brother-in-law.

"Oh, Agnes, Agnes!" cried Godwin, "would I had died for thee! how much better would my age have become the grave than thy youth and sweetness!" "Be comforted, my best friend," said Bernard, taking his hand;—"it breaks my heart to see you thus lament a child of mine. God gave her, and has taken her back; but he hath left us other children: therefore be comforted."

All stayed until the grave was closed, when Bernard taking the right arm of Godwin, William holding the left, they proceeded homewards, accompanied by the friendly villagers, who saw them safely enter their own house, and then departed in silence to their respective homes.

For some weeks the family remained absorbed in grief; at length the lenient hand of time began to reconcile them to their loss, and the living rather than the dead caused their tears to flow.

By Mrs Palmer's bankers in town they had made inquiries concerning Edwin, and learnt his lady's death—but of himself nothing; as to Emma, all respecting her was silent; the family therefore would have thought themselves more happy to weep on their graves, than continually to deplore the errors of their lives.

Godwin's health, in the meantime, appeared by almost imperceptible degrees to recover, but his former muscular strength was gone, and he was reduced into a thin old man.

Felix, whom he had introduced to Bernard, was their favourite companion, and frequently helped them to beguile their long winter evenings with tales of his former days, the unhappy state of the negro slaves under inhuman masters, and numberless other subjects, all new to Bernard, who, on the relation of any exertion of cruel power, would clench his fist, scarcely refrain an oath, and wish he had the fair breaking of the oppressor's bones.

Reuben at first, on the appearance of Felix, would hide his face in his mother's apron, but soon grew familiar; would run to meet him, climb on his knees, or explore his pocket for an apple, which was usually deposited there.

William, by his activity and good management, took the whole care of the farms on himself, Fanny being equally diligent in her department.

Margery, according to her promise to Mrs Godwin, was only employed with the children, two strong girls, as the family was large, being taken for the household work.

CHAPTER XXXII.

EDWIN had in some degree recovered his health, as before observed, but his spirits had received a blow not easily overcome; he determined to hasten to London, dispose of his commission, retire abroad, and endeavour by travelling to conquer his melancholy; but, before he went, resolved to ride over to the Forest, visit the grave of Agnes, and take an everlasting farewell of the spot. One fine morning he accordingly executed his purpose, having been for some days within a few miles; and leaving his horse at a house of entertainment at the village.

walked forward to the well known churchyard. A plain stone, with his mother's name, marked the spot where she was laid, and by its side stood one equally simple, with this inscription :

AGNES BERNARD,
DIED SEPTEMBER 10, 17—,
AGED 19.

His mind, though inured to sorrow, was not proof against this trial ; he threw himself on the ground, and wept aloud for a considerable time, until a labourer coming over the stile histling, disturbed him from his posture, the man, by his spade and shovel, showing he was going to make a residence for some new inhabitant.

The fellow, who had only come to the Forest to assist the sexton, who was a man in years, since Edwin's departure, seeing a fine gentleman, pulled off his hat, made a leg, and said, "Mayhap, sir, if you be a stranger, you may wish to see our church?" Edwin conquered himself sufficiently to reply in the negative, and was about to depart when the countryman cried—"You ha' been reading the gravestones belike : I used to read them myself before I was so much among them. Many a time have I spelled over them till I cried again, but now think little about such matters, or if I do, I sing or whistle to drive them out of my head."

Edwin made no answer ; he wished to tear himself away, but could not remove his eyes from the grave of Agnes.

"Ah, master ! you be looking at that there new stone," said the man. "If you had but seen the girl it covers, you would have owned you had never met her like. Poor soul ! she went mad for love and died : "D—n the fellow" say I, "that occasioned it ! he could never have the heart of a man, for had I been king of England, member of parliament, or even lord mayor of London, I would sooner have took her with a single smock, than any far-fetched richness, though she brought her weight of gold and diamonds."

This simple eulogium struck Edwin to the heart. He could bear no more ; so hastily throwing the man a crown, he covered his eyes with his handkerchief, and precipitately departed.

He had not proceeded far when he perceived a woman and two children at some distance, and soon discovered it to be Margery. He would feign have avoided her ; yet a thousand fond remembrances rose on his heart, softened as it was by the foregoing scene, and determined him not to shun her.

Anne, now four months old, was in her arms, while Reuben, holding up her apron, trotted by her side. Margery gave a cry of surprise : her master's children had all been fondled in her arms, and were as dear as though they had been her own. She was shocked at the wan and rigid countenance of Edwin, and readily agreed to sit down and converse with him.

"Lovely children !" said he, caressing them ; "I did not know my brother had a second. Happy William, thou art blessed while I am cursed !—thy virtue is indeed rewarded, and my vice is punished. This little one, I think," continued he, with a sigh, "has the features of a lion, born, I suppose, in the height of calamity." "She was born," replied Margery, "three years before Agnes's death—my mistress was frightened into labour by her agonies ; but, thank God, the child is strong and hearty."

Edwin gnashed his teeth in anguish, and for some moments was unable to reply. At length he uttered in a tremulous tone—"Well, well, say no more ; I am punished, even sufficiently to gratify the most rancorous hatred." "And who hates you?" said Margery. "If wishes for a repentance are hatred, then do they indeed hate you, for prayers are never said at night about you and Emma being particularly remembered." "I thank them," replied Edwin, lightly, pride for a moment overcoming every other sensation. "But let us banish the subject. Tell me, Margery, all that relates to my Agnes, and I will sit, while I have life, to hear you ; you, I am sure, know every secret, and are acquainted with all my follies." "Follies !" replied Margery, "that is the London name, I suppose, for wickedness. Little did I think, when I nursed you in these arms, that you would turn out such a bad man."

Sickness and sorrow had depressed the spirits of Edwin ; he therefore bore the reproaches Margery with more temper than he usually possessed ; and at length conciliated her so far, that she related to him the whole process of Agnes's illness, her delirium, and constant allusion to the ring, with the repetition of—"I am Edwin's wife !"

Edwin's heart was pained with the recital ; he wept aloud, but entreated her to continue.

"I have no more to say," answered she; "by what I have heard, you know the rest too well. How you could seduce her I never could devise, for surely a better or more modest girl was not under the sun. You must have used some of your London potions, I suppose for I have heard of such things, or surely she never could have been overcome."

Edwin denied the accusation. "No, Margery," said he; "I am sufficiently guilty without that crime. But relate to me every circumstance;—why was my beloved removed from Inglewood?" "Why, marry, to hide your shame, for I cannot call it hers; she was removed to lie-in privately, and there ——" "Died!" groaned Edward. "Alas! too well do I know that." "Her pangs were so heavy, that they frightened your brother's wife into labour. Agnes died in three days, and the child was buried with her." "Enough! cease!" exclaimed Edwin, "unless you would drive me to distraction. Methinks I see them now; never will the remembrance be effaced from my memory."

Margery was, as Edwin truly observed, in all the secrets of the family; a faithful servant of thirty-seven years had entitled her to confidence, and she was most worthy the trust. Her answers to Edwin were strictly true, yet they disclosed nothing she was bound to conceal.

"And now, Margery," said Edwin, after a pause, "I will now bid you farewell—a long farewell, for heaven only knows whether we may ever meet again."

"What! without seeing any of the family?" replied Margery. "Surely you cannot mean it."

"I would sooner face death than either Bernard or my father," answered Edwin; "and for William, even when he was in town, and did not know the extent of my follies, he shooed me from him like an adder, whose very touch was venomous; what, then, should I expect now? No, Margery, they all hate me, and I will leave them for ever. Had Agnes lived, might have sued for pardon, and they perhaps bestowed it; as it is, all is now immaterial, my destiny is fixed. I will seek that villain that seduced my sister, and on his accursed head revenge the misery he has for ever entailed on me!"

"God mend us all!" sighed Margery. "I wish you would not be so passionate, but vengeance to God; you may be sure it will overtake him; besides, the scripture says, 'Pluck the beam out of thine own eye, before thou takest the mote from thy neighbour's'—or word to that purpose; but I suppose you have forgot your religion since you turned a rich gentleman. Your fine London wife too (God rest her soul!) I hear is dead; she was surely great to blame, for she well knew you were engaged to Agnes. I have seen enough of Londoners to make me dislike them as long as I live. They well repaid your father's kindness; but for them, all had been right—your mother alive—Emma virtuous—Agnes a blessed wife and mother—and you, instead of being an unhappy fine gentleman, a plain, honest, cheerful farmer, like your father, beloved by the whole country, and almost adored by your family."

Edwin was for a few minutes too much affected by the reflection to reply, and wept bitterly; while little Reuben, who had stuck himself between his knees, peeped up in his face with mournful sympathy, and, taking up his frock, wiped off the falling tears.

"It grows late," said Edwin, "and I must be gone. Tell my father and William that you have seen me, and that, if I hear of Emma, they shall know it. Say to Bernard, that woe my life and all I possess recall the past, I would rejoice at the forfeiture. Say also to Fanny that if she knew what passes here (laying his hand on his heart), though she must hate me yet her pity would so far surpass her hatred. Farewell," continued he, kissing first Reuben and then the little girl, who chuckled at the pressure of his lips; "by heaven!" cried he, "she has the smiling mouth of Agnes, and the beautiful dimple of her cheek. Oh, may they hereafter tempt no villain to destroy them! or, if they should," continued he, after a pause "may he, if possible, be still more cursed than I am!" With these words he ran hastily from the turf on which he was sitting, and waving his hand as he ran, ere Margery could make reply, was almost out of sight.

What had passed seemed to Margery almost a dream; she however, as speedily as possible returned home, and related all to the family. Edwin's pallid and altered person she did not fail to describe, together with his apparent contrition and sorrow for the past, observing the likeness between the infant and Agnes, his vowed vengeance on Whitmore, and his firm conviction that he was too much abhorred by the whole family ever to meet their pardon.

"We hate him not," replied Godwin, "but abhor his crimes; to expiate them is impo-

, unless repentance could awaken the dead. Let him, by the most exemplary conduct, avow to make his peace with heaven, which is far more material than the pardon of an old man, which, however, shall not be withheld if he returns to virtue ; for shall an immortal deny to his fellow-sinner what God hath promised to all ? But, for my part, I will scruple to say that this frenzied sorrow and contrition appear to me rather the effects of disappointed passion than sincere repentance ; penitence is calm and humble, and by the blameless conduct endeavours to obliterate the errors of the past by the innocence of the re. It is not so with Edwin ; did he not say he meant to seek revenge on Whitmore ?—and what ? a crime that he has himself more than doubled, for no promise or expectancy of marriage could seduce Emma ; she was acquainted with his situation, and voluntarily rushed into ; while Edwin's was a premeditated and cruel seduction, rendered doubly atrocious by repeated perjuries, when even at the moment he was the husband of another. Is he, then, an to draw the sword of vengeance ? Surely not !—his heart must fail him in such a ren- re, and his guilt-struck conscience enervate his arm. Had he indeed said, I will leave e scenes which first seduced my unsuspecting innocence, fly from pride and ambition, c Emma, and by my own repentance and conduct, endeavour to influence hers, or, if il, retire to some peaceful retreat, and dwell in inoffensive obscurity—then indeed might heart have cherished hope ; but, as it is, I fear this contrition will wear off, and his vitiated d, like a rank soil, produce fresh thorns to wound us.—“ Though I am convinced,” re- l Bernard, “ that your opinion is usually better than mine, yet in this case I must differ a you ; and I cannot say but he would make a great step towards my forgiveness, if I d he had fairly killed that villain Whitmore.”—“ Would murder, then, think you, lessen his es ?” answered Godwin ; “ for a duellist is at once a suicide and a murderer ; if he falls, s he not rush uncalled into the presence of his God ? or if he conquers—hateful alterna- ! has he not sought and spilled the blood of his fellow ? There does not live the man, ard, no, not even Edwin, who has most injured you, that you would slay ; nor, on calm ideration, would you approve the action in another. Reason disclaims it : it is merely the ring of false honour, which sacrifices the nobler feelings of the soul at the altar of pride ain glory—a mask of bravery to cover cowardice, big words and rash actions frequently ealing a trembling and dastardly heart. True courage, in my opinion, consists in bearing ommon ills which attend human nature with calmness, not suffering my own temper to be ed at the folly or knavery of others ; to be able to repulse violence or insult with a firm ness : to defend the weak and oppressed with steadiness : in fine, to seek the life of no y, but if our own is attacked, to defend it as a sacred trust deposited in our hand by the t Creator, and not to be pusillanimously surrendered. Oh, my friend ! can the blood of itmore recall the past ? can it restore us peace, or her innocence ? Ah, no ! it can do e of these ; it can only plunge his corrupt soul beyond all repentance, and heap fresh es on the head of Edwin.”

“ With your approbation, my father,” said William, “ I will write to Edwin, and give him joint opinion on the subject ; a letter will doubtless find him at the house of his late wife.” The action will become you, my son,” replied Godwin, “ and acquit you to your own t, whatever may be its success.”

William, in the evening, wrote to his brother, not, it is true, with the same friendly spirit formerly dictated his letters, but with manly firmness, and without reproach, conjured him abstain from every action which might contribute to increase his father's uneasiness ; and if by any means he should meet with Emma, to endeavour, by lenient measures, to draw from guilt, and leave vengeance to that power who had called it his own peculiar province.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

VIN had no sooner parted with Margery but he hastened forward to the little public house ere he had left his horse, and mounting him, set off at full speed, in vain endeavouring to ish the uneasy reflections that oppressed him. At night he slept at the distance of thirty s from the Forest, and next day joined the servant, who waited for him at Ferry-bridge. rdered him to prepare to depart the next morning for London ; and, upon the whole, ris considered him as more calm than before his journey.

On his arrival in town he repaired to his own house, and for the first time sincerely lamented wife. “ At least, had she lived,” said he, “ I should have had one friend ; unhappy woman,

she proved how much she loved me by the sacrifice she made ; and I requited her as I did the rest ! Henceforward I must live for myself alone ; if life is desirable on such conditions money must purchase substitutes for happiness, for the reality is for ever vanished from me.

Three days after his arrival he received William's letter. "They have not quite cast off," said he ; "but how altered ! William's letters used to breathe nothing but friends ; this contains only cool advice ; and that given, methinks, as if he felt the superiority of virtue : and is rather dictated to preserve the peace of the family than out of affection to I will therefore simply thank him in his own style, and act as my fate shall direct, for mine is neither valuable to myself nor to others."

He then sat down and replied to William's letter, thanking him for his advice, saying "That though he had been heretofore unfortunate enough to cause his father great unhappiness, yet he hoped in future to give no fresh subject ; that he meant to relinquish his commission, and go abroad ; from whence, if his present disposition continued, he should in all probability, return ; concluding the whole by expressing his best wishes for the happiness of his family, and duty to his father."

His next care was to settle his money concerns, dispose of his house, and relinquish his commission. His favourite companion (Mrs Whitmore) had been gone two months to the Continent, but her place of destination was uncertain, nor had Edwin the most slender hope to be apprised of it, for the hearts of neither had any share in this connection. On Mrs Whitmore's part it was only to gratify her pride, by having so handsome a fellow in her train ; but after in vain expecting his return for six weeks, her patience was exhausted, and she sought amusement in the gayer scenes of France.

Edwin's attachment was merely licentious, and consequently the sentiments she inspired on calm reflection, rather caused disgust than pleasure. During his stay in the country he had scarcely thought of her ; and even now, on his return, felt no inclination to renew his acquaintance, had she been even on the spot.

All this business settled, he set off for Paris, which he reached in safety, where a new scene of dissipation presented, and sometimes, for a short season, banished the cruel remembrance that destroyed his peace ; his fortune procured him admittance into the most fashionable parties ; and his pride was gratified at the expense of large sums, which he was perpetually obliged to pay. One evening that he happened to be at the French Comedy, he discovered Mrs Whitmore in the opposite box, who also perceived her recreant lover, and gave him a smiling invitation ; but he only replied by slightly bowing, without offering to move from his situation.

"And is it possible," said a sprightly Frenchman, who was present, and spoke English, "that you can be insensible to so charming an invitation ? The lady, however, will be consoled ; she is universally admired as an English beauty with French manners."

Soon after, two gentlemen of distinguished rank entered Mrs Whitmore's box, and appeared to pay her the most marked attention. "There now," said the Frenchman, "I told the lady you would soon be revenged on your coldness ; you have missed an opportunity to be regained ; for Dumaresque is at once the most gallant as well as the most handsome man in Paris."

It has been before observed, that vanity was one of the most predominant passions of Edwin ; therefore, though his heart was totally indifferent in regard to Mrs Whitmore, he resolved to show the Frenchman his mistake, and immediately repaired to the lady's box. At first she received him with coldness ; but after a time with her usual indulgence. He observed he was much altered, and uncommonly dull ; a circumstance he accounted for by informing her of his illness. In short, the meeting, after some little discourse, appeared rather agreeable to both ; Edwin's vanity being gratified by showing the Frenchman that he could easily regain the opportunity he had apparently lost.

At the conclusion of the piece Edwin waited on the lady home, where she ventured a few questions respecting the business that had so completely concealed him since the death of his wife : but he was in no humour to gratify her curiosity, and she soon changed the discourse to more lively subjects. After supper, having drunk plentifully of wine, he grew cheerful, and, for the first time since Agnes's death, a smile enlivened his features. Before he separated for the night they agreed to keep house jointly ; for who could presume to scandalize a lady who was under the protection of *her brother* !

Edwin now no longer felt his former compunction ; he was rejoiced that he had met

who could help to divert his chagrin, and sometimes banish painful remembrances from fancy; his temper, however, had suffered beyond the fascination of Mrs Whitmore to move; to his domestics he was harsh and unkind, was frequently inebriated, and gave way the most outrageous passions on the most trifling subjects.

After four months' stay at Paris, Mrs Whitmore expressed a wish to see Brussels; to which Edwin having no objection, they departed, and reached that city, where they entered with avidity into the various amusements; the lady from a natural love of dissipation and pleasure, and her companion as a kind of soporific, to lull the torments of reflection.

Harris being sent for, had hired apartments in a large furnished hotel; and in about a fortnight after the remainder of the house was engaged for an English family that were daily expected, and who accordingly arrived late one evening, after Edwin and his companion had retired to rest.

The following morning, as Edwin was descending the stairs, he was surprised by the sight of Whitmore's valet on the lower story, and the moment after, by Emma herself, who came to one of the apartments to give orders. He immediately hastened down, opened the door of the room she had re-entered, and presented himself before her. An exclamation of mingled astonishment and pleasure escaped her, and opening her arms to embrace him, she cried—"Is it possible, my dear brother, that I meet you here?"—But putting her back, he answered, "I have nothing to say to you, infamous girl; with your paramour I have a long account. How is it possible, at your age, to have so soon forgotten the precepts inculcated in your youth?"— "Ah, how is it possible, indeed, Edwin," answered she, "to forget the lessons of whole years in an instant? To confess the truth, my dear brother, (for I cannot adopt your coldness or anger,) I but followed your lead; your marriage to Mrs Delmer but paved the way to my sight, as it furnished opportunities too difficult to be resisted; but smooth your ruffled brow, and tell me all the news; your wife, we have heard, is dead. Are you prepared to do justice to Agnes? Ah, Edwin, that was a bad business! How are all the dear family at Inglewood? though I have learned to laugh at their prejudices, I have not learned to forget them; but I fear they have forgotten me."—"Your mother, at least, has forgot you," replied Edwin, "and your conduct has—"—"Oh God!" interrupted Emma, trembling, "do not speak that I dread to hear! for though I am convinced that I have acted right by following the dictates of reason and nature, unshackled by the ties of priestcraft, yet I cannot bear to think that should be fatal to her."—"The dictates of hell and damnation!" exclaimed Edwin. "The infernal sophistry of Whitmore has plunged your family in misery, and your mother in a grave; and by her side lies—"—"Who?" demanded Emma, with a look of horror.—"Agnes," cried he, with scarcely less emotion.—"Alas, Agnes," repeated Emma; "cruel Edwin! has my conduct caused her death too?"—"No; the cause was the natural depravity of your own heart, aided by the accursed maxims of Whitmore; ambition first beguiled me from my home, and the wealth of Mrs Delmer tempted me to falsify my vows; but unable to live without Agnes, I, in an accursed hour, seduced her! Her death has been the consequence; she is now an angel, and I, living, bear the pangs of hell!"—"Oh, my dear mother! my sweet Agnes! and are ye both gone?" cried Emma, weeping. "Ah, Edwin; such cruel consequences are enough to force us to lament not following the precepts implanted in our infancy."—"May the villain be accursed," replied Edwin, "who taught us to despise them! But where is he? say, is he in the house?" "He is not," answered Emma, "if you mean Whitmore. But why, Edwin, will you speak thus of a man to whom you have been so highly obliged. You will not surely raise your hand in anger against the father of the infant I bear, particularly when you remember he is the brother of a woman who has made your fortune."—"Say marred it rather," replied Edwin; "for can paltry gold recompense me for what I have sacrificed to obtain it—parents—brothers—Agnes—all? But tell me, Emma, will you return to Inglewood if the family consent to receive you?"—"Never," replied she, with energy; "I would die for their service, but never more will I behold them. Think you, Edwin, I could meet the eye of my father, or even that of William, prejudiced as they are? how despicable—how sunk must I appear before them! No, Edwin, I have chosen my fate, I will abide by it."

At that moment Whitmore entered. "Ah, Edwin? well met," said he, "I have just heard you were in Brussels, from my servant; you have a fair companion too, I find; hope you behaved well to my sister, for aught else I am your humble servant."

"We are, indeed, well met," cried Edwin, "for we have a long account to settle on pecuniary subjects, and yet a larger on the score of honour."—"Honour!" repeated Whitmore with an ironical laugh; "you will remember that it is through me you were first entitled to use the word *honour*; but as these are subjects on which I never balk any man, nor talk before women, let us for the present banish this discourse. Come, tell us what is passing in England."—"For your pecuniary favours," replied Edwin, taking a draft on his banker for three hundred pounds from his pocket-book, and throwing it on the table, "this may repay them, for I acknowledge no other; to your sister were the rest due. Would to heaven I had perished before I accepted of either!"—"I have indeed heard it whispered," said Whitmore, "that you were not altogether so sensible of her condescension as might have been expected, but could never believe it until this confession."—"For goodness' sake do not quarrel," cried Emma; "my heart is already almost broken. My mother and Agnes are, Edwin informs me, both dead!"

Whitmore endeavoured to banish her fears, and comfort her; while Edwin, casting a look of rage at both, left the apartment.

About an hour after, Harris, by Edwin's order, found an opportunity to give a note privately to Whitmore, containing an appointment for the next morning, which was immediately accepted.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE following morning, Whitmore, attended by a gentleman of considerable fortune, with whom he had formed an acquaintance since his residence abroad, met Edwin at some distance from the city, who, on his part, was accompanied by a young officer whom he had known in England, and accidentally encountered at one of the places of public amusement. The weapons chosen by both were swords, as their skill was pretty equal. The first passes were made without effect on either side, but the second essay was more fatal, for Whitmore received a thrust in the side, and instantly fell. "The chance is yours, Edwin," said he, with his usual levity, "and in faith I deserve it for substituting a sword for the dungfork; but why the devil could not you have rested as satisfied with your sister's chastity as I was with my wife's? Confound all new candidates for honour," say I; "they take such a d—d deal of trouble to establish their fame, that a man is never safe with them."

A surgeon, who was in waiting at some small distance, was now called, and stopped the effusion of blood, but declared that he entertained the most alarming doubts respecting the wound; Edwin therefore determined to lose no time, but hasten back to France.

On his licentious companion (Mrs Whitmore) he hardly bestowed a thought, simply giving Harris orders to follow with his baggage, first leaving a letter to be delivered to Emma.

Whitmore was immediately carried home, where his wound was pronounced mortal; and he was informed that, in all probability, a few hours would terminate his life. Though this information could not fail of being particularly displeasing to a man of Whitmore's character, yet he received it with his accustomed carelessness. "If," said he to the gentleman who acted as his second, "I had fallen by the hand of a virtuous man whom I had injured, it would have forced me to believe somewhat of retribution; but, as it is, this convinces me that chance directs all, for Edwin is certainly as faulty as myself. To be sure I found him virtuous, but he was as ready to learn as I to teach; and if I seduced his sister, has he not returned to favour with my wife, and, by my sister's folly, stepped into an easy fortune? One thing only concerns me; my estate is greatly entangled, and if I die, will immediately be seized by the next heir; nor have I it in my power to make any provision for Emma; a circumstance that gives me great uneasiness, both on account of her situation and future comfort."

"Let not that disturb you," replied his friend, whose name was Hartford; "I give you my word to protect her."

At this moment Emma entered, in a state little short of distraction; she wrung her hands in agony, and in the bitterness of her grief cursed her brother Edwin. The letter which he had sent her, and that simply contained his desire she would join him at Paris, with a note of five hundred pounds, she tore in pieces. Whitmore, as well as he was able, endeavoured to comfort her, but in vain; her grief knew no bounds, until, nature exhausted, she sunk into a fainting fit, which she was removed from the apartment, and a few hours brought on abortion.

Whitmore passed a dreadful night, and on the following morning death was legibly painted

his countenance; but firm to his accustomed tenets, he appeared to treat its approaches with contempt, recommending Emma warmly to the protection of Hartford, saying, with a sad smile, "Though, by heaven, I would not, living, have suffered a rival in her love, yet I have no objection to a worthy successor; she is too charming a girl to be buried in obscurity, and I cost me some pains to eradicate the follies of country education. Be kind to her, and do not let her grief to weaken itself; it is violent, and therefore cannot last long."

The surgeon entered soon after; his face rather than his words declared his opinion. "Why, man," said Whitmore, "your features may serve as a kind of thermometer to prognosticate the situation of your patient; to me they appear beyond the freezing point. Pish! Pish! Pish! Give up grief, ever live while you can, and banish painful reflection; it has heretofore cost me no little trouble to do it, but I at length came off conqueror, and have enjoyed life as much in my seventy-seven years as many in sixty."

A violent convulsive pang here put a stop to Whitmore's speech, and he struggled for some time in great agony; from which at length he was, in a small degree, recovered, but appeared much weakened, his spirits much depressed, and likewise seemed shocked at the full crisis that was approaching.

Towards the close of day, and just before his dissolution, his attendants declared him delirious; for starting as from a kind of dose, he exclaimed—"The farce is over—the curtain drops—darkness and—doubt! Old Godwin's kindness was ill repaid. I wish I had left Edwin in his native—Emma too—tell her—." A dreadful spasm here for some moments stopped his utterance; at length, faintly struggling, he added,—“Her father!—forgiveness! Inglewood!”—and with another pang expired.

Thus fell, in the prime of life, the gallant, gay, Whitmore—a victim to his own follies, and to the vices he had inculcated.

Whitmore's death was a dreadful blow on Emma, as it not only deprived her of the man whom she had sacrificed everything, but left her in a situation she could not contemplate without horror; a return to Inglewood appeared the only alternative; for the decorations of luxury he had lavished on her, with some trifle of money, was all she possessed. "And how," cried she, "can I ever stand in their presence? they will accuse me with the death of my father, and view me with hatred. The country people, too, will point at me, and say the fine London madam was obliged to come back to her old home. Oh, I can never, never bear it; I will sooner labour in the most menial manner than submit to it. Would to God I had never met them, or that Edwin had died before this horrid meeting! Join him at Paris!—No, never! I am the murderer of Whitmore!—I will perish first!"

At that moment a person was announced from Mrs Whitmore, who laid claim to whatever property might be left at Whitmore's decease, and of which she should, as his wife, render the proper account to the next heir. Emma, in this distress, knew not what method to have recourse to: her distress was almost too great to bear; the man she loved dead in the house; herself confined to her bed; in a strange country, and on the point of being deprived of the petty baubles for which she had bartered both her peace of mind and innocence. Uncertain what measure to pursue, she was lost in the most distracting reflections, when a note was presented her from Hartford, and contained as follows:—

"MADAM,—The fear of intruding on your distress has alone withheld me from offering my services to settle your affairs; but as I understand Mrs Whitmore's conduct has made it necessary, beg you to command me to the utmost.

"I am, madam, your humble servant,

"E. HARTFORD."

Emma immediately replied, by requesting Hartford to act for her as he should think most proper, expressing her thanks for his kindness. Hartford, thus empowered, waited on Mrs Whitmore, and by his rhetoric and well-placed compliments, prevailed on the lady to decline her first intention, and the more easily, as he assured her the effects were of little value. The arrival of Whitmore he also ordered; had him enclosed in lead, and sent to England, to be laid by his parents and sister in Leicestershire.

Emma in the meantime had recovered from her indisposition; and her grief, at the end of two months, began to lose its bitterness. To Edwin's letter she wrote an answer, and sent, according to the address he had specified, to Paris.

"Though at the first receipt of your hateful letter I had determined not to answer it, yet,

on mature deliberation, I have resolved for this last time to address you, though only to say how much I despise you. What had I ever done that you should seek to make me wretched? Or why was Whitmore's friendship to be repaid with murder? I remember when we met at Brussels, you said that your errors were owing to his pernicious tenets: how weak you must naturally be to blindly adopt principles that your own heart told you were erroneous; or surely, if *they* occasioned the death of Agnes, the effect must have been easily foreseen. Seek not, then, such paltry subterfuges to palliate your vices—they but add the name of fool to that of villain. Did the example of Whitmore influence you to forsake Agnes, wed his sister clandestinely, and afterwards offer the most sacred promises to your deluded victim?—No, I taught you none of these—the depravity of your own heart alone prompted them; and now coward like, you would fain cast the opprobrium on another. Think you, woman as I am that I will have recourse to such despicable evasions?—Never, my follies be on my own head. I imbibed Whitmore's opinions from reason; and though, when I fled with him, I certainly expected he would procure a divorce from his wife and marry me, yet, when I found that step was impracticable, and must materially injure his fortune, I readily relinquished it, preferring the man I loved in defiance to the weak censure of a few; and though you were pleased to say that my conduct occasioned my mother's death, I have no doubt but your own hand had at least an equal share in it.

“You ask me to return to Inglewood.—I answer you definitely, No. The dear inhabitants I love and honour, for they act up to the principles they profess, while you have behaved with constant duplicity, and been a slave to the most unpardonable avarice, not only deceiving your parents, but falsifying your vows both to your wife and Agnes—a girl whom a monarch might have gloried to obtain! Then, to complete all, you have basely shed the blood of a man to whom you owed your advancement; and what is your excuse?—the seduction of *your* sister, while you are enjoying in the wealth of *his*, and living in bold adultery with his wife!”

“I have nothing more to add, but that, whatever may hereafter be my destiny, my firm resolve is, to avoid you as I would a pestilence; not from fear, but hatred. In my father's or William's presence I might shrink, but in yours my soul could feel no sentiment but contempt, aversion, and disdain; therefore pursue me no more. I leave Brussels this day, and my utmost wish respecting you is, that my eyes may never more be tortured with your presence: or if they are, not that they had the power to strike you dead, but to dart never dying anguish into your heart.

“EMMA GODWIN.”

Edwin's rage at the receipt of this letter was beyond all bounds; his sister's reproaches stung him to the heart; and had she been in his power at that moment, he would willingly have sacrificed her to his fury.

He immediately wrote to Brussels to the master of the hotel: and enclosing a gratuity entreated to be informed whether Emma was in reality gone, or had only deceived him on that subject.

By the most speedy conveyance he received for answer, that she had indeed left her lodgings about a fortnight before, and gone away in the company of Hartford, apparently very melancholy and in deep mourning; but that he was uncertain as to the place of their destination. Wearied with France, and determined to take no more heed of his sister, Edwin resolved to return to England, inform his friends of what had passed, and, as he still continued unhappy, to devise some new means, if possible, to banish reflection and recover lost peace.

This resolution was directly put in practice: and the family at Inglewood, three weeks after, received intelligence that the seducer of Emma had fallen, but that herself was totally abandoned; for that she had taken another paramour, and withdrawn herself from the knowledge of her brother.

CHAPTER XXXV.

EDWIN'S letter caused great uneasiness at Inglewood, renewing the wounds that, though far from healed, were at least palliated by time. Godwin by no means approved Edwin's behaviour: he had but increased his own crimes, and plunged Emma into fresh guilt, which would yet more familiarise her with vice, and render prostitution habitual.

“Had he but sent us word when he found her,” said Godwin, “inconvenient as such a journey must have been, William should immediately have undertaken it, and perhaps, by lenient measures, have prevailed on the poor misguided girl to return, for the seeds of virtue

not be totally eradicated from her heart, and would, perhaps, have revived at the sound of forgiveness; but Edwin has rendered all fruitless, and by his violence forced her to have recourse to deeper guilt, rather than trust to a parent's mercy, whose daily prayer is her return to virtue, and a sense of her error."

He then replied to Edwin's letter, totally blaming his whole conduct in the business, and advising him that, if in future chance should throw Emma in his way, he would give them information, without first having recourse to violent measures; lamented that he had added to his former guilt by the death of Whitmore; and finally desiring him to review his conduct and repent.

This letter increased the vexation of Edwin. "I might have been certain," said he, "of meeting their displeasure; it is only for the calm, dispassionate William, to act with propriety; however, in *this* case I am satisfied with my own behaviour, and am careless of their opinion. Emma may hereafter act as she pleases; I have done with her, and, in all probability, with them all; they have no affection to bestow on me, and I do not want their advice."

Edwin, thus resolved, returned no answer to his father's letter, but sought, as usual, to escape reflection in dissipation; but finding it unavailing, and that both his fortune and his health were evidently impaired, in twelve months after his wife's decease he began seriously to repent his giving up the army, as it would at least have served to employ some part of his thoughts, and divert more acute sensations.

These sentiments made him again resolve to seek military promotion; and by dint of application and money well applied, he soon got reinstated in his former rank, but in a regiment which, to his peculiar satisfaction, was ordered abroad. He felt some uneasiness at first in informing his family of his new resolve; but certain that this, as well as his other late conduct, would not meet their approbation, he left the kingdom without even a single line to inform them of his destination.

In the meanwhile the family at Inglewood had no cares but what were occasioned by the thoughts of Edwin and Emma. William was regarded as one of the most prosperous and happy young men in the whole county; his land was highly cultivated, his barns well stored, and his house a little paradise; the satisfaction of the old men, the smiles of his wife, and the cheerful antics of the little ones, repaying all his toils. Reuben was now in his third year, Emma in her second, and a young son, called Edward, after Bernard, again filled Fanny's arms, and shared her maternal tenderness.

Mrs Palmer, who was their constant visitor, and more affectionately attached to them than ever, now proposed to take Anna, who was grown the pet of the whole family, and particularly of Godwin, on whose knee she never failed to climb; while Reuben took the same place as Bernard's. To reconcile Anna to the change of situation, Reuben was for some time to accompany her; and both grew so perfectly familiarized to their new situation, that they appeared to consider it as much their home as the farm. Mrs Palmer taught Anna to call her mamma; and, indeed, nothing but the name was fictitious, for her care and affection were wholly maternal. Anna she had designed for her particular favourite; and Reuben, by a thousand little beguiling words and actions, contrived to share her tenderness. If Anna called her mamma, he was sure to say, and Reuben's mamma too; or if Mrs Palmer kissed her adopted child, Reuben was ever ready to hold up his head, present his ruby lips, and claim the same favour.

Mrs Palmer, whose attachment to the parents increased with the affection to the children, and for some time formed the design of rendering William independent, though she could not actually fix on the means, until one day happening to be at Godwin's when he received a letter to inform him of the death of the person who had hitherto managed his money business, and in whose hands his savings had been constantly deposited, the heir at law requesting to be informed of his pleasure; adding, that he was ready to pay up the sums in his hands at a week's notice. Godwin expressed his sorrow at this intelligence, and immediately had recourse to Mrs Palmer, to advise on the best means of disposing of the sum he possessed, which, though but a few hundreds, was to him too considerable to be neglected.

"Suppose," replied the lady, "you made a purchase, should you meet with a good offer; think that an eligible method of disposing of money."—"I am of the same opinion," said Godwin; "and the only objection is, that it would be extending our property; the money was originally, or at least the greater part, laid by for a little fortune for the unhappy Emma; she,

alas, I fear will never claim it, or still would I regard four hundred pounds as hers, not as marriage portion, but to place her with frugality above want. I have, however, other duties," continued the old man, wiping off a starting tear, and looking fondly on his grand-children; "I would, therefore, willingly place our little all in safe hands, or as you say, madam, make purchase for their future benefit."—"Well then, what say you to buying the whole of the land you rent of me, which, with what you already possess, will be a respectable property." "Madam!" replied Godwin, astonished at the proposal, "we have not half the sum your land is worth, the purchase of which was the farthest from my thoughts; for so kind are you that the most distant idea of a change never entered my mind."—"It is, however," answered she, "as you have asked my advice, the most prudent plan; besides, now I think of it, I may have an occasion for six or seven hundred pounds, and would sooner let you have a bargain than another."—"Pardon me, madam," replied the old man; "if your generosity forces you to be extravagant, it must not make us, the most obliged of your dependants, improperly impose on that goodness. Extensive as are your charities, I have heard you aver that you always lived within your income, and can but regard your offer as an effusion of the friendship with which you have honoured us. Condescend, madam, to place our money with someone you may doubtless have out at common interest—it is the utmost I aspire to. Hereafter, ever it should be in William's power, for he is uncommonly prosperous, to make an honest purchase, I have no doubt, to possess the land which gave his father bread would be the height of his ambition: at present it is as far beyond our abilities as our wishes; a dependence on you, I am convinced, we shall never find painful."—"I have ever thought," replied Mrs Palmer, with a smile, "that you were much unacquainted with the ways of the world. Pray, what business have you to value my land?—to state the price is my business, and you to get it as cheap as you can."—"Not at the expense of your generosity and my own probity," answered Godwin.—"To make your son William independent has for some time been my intention," replied she; "but I could not conveniently before devise the means; I have not discovered them, and shall feel myself offended if not suffered to gratify my inclinations at the expense of what is to me a trifle."

Godwin was unable to reply; sentiments too great for utterance swelled his bosom, and prevented speech; while Fanny, who was alone present at the discourse, remained also silent, overcome at once with pleasure and gratitude. William and Bernard at that moment entered, and Mrs Palmer, in a lively manner, immediately referred the dispute to them. A crimson flush for a moment overspread William's face; but having expressed his thanks, he begged to decline what he must ever consider, should he accept it as an imposition on his generosity.

"Simply, then," replied the lady, "you refuse what would give me the highest satisfaction as I should consider myself instrumental to your welfare, and take delight in it accordingly. If you outlive me, you may chance to have the land at a cheaper rate, but then, remember I shall not have the pleasure of contemplating my own work."

This last observation was too much for all; but Fanny, whose affection was far superior to her respect to Mrs Palmer, threw her arms around her neck, and wept on her bosom. "Never, never, may I live to see that day," said she; "again should I lose a sister, and again would my Anna become an orphan."—"Not so," replied Mrs Palmer, looking affectionately around her, "Anna can never be an orphan while any of these survive; but, however, for a moment attend to me; then, if you decline my offer, I have done, and withdraw it. My ideas on some subjects are singular, and I, perhaps, have ideas of gratification peculiar to myself. What I die possessed of, will doubtless be disposed of to my friends, or for purposes which I may think for the best; but believe me, I had rather bestow living what cannot injure my fortune, and see the effect of my gifts, than have afterwards statues erected to my memory, when I am insensible what fruits they have produced. Let me, then, contemplate your rising prosperity—let me have the satisfaction to think I contributed towards it; nothing but either a false idea of probity or pride can make you decline it. I have no relations who want it, no claims but what my fortune can tenfold repay; and to reconcile you to the business, I offer to take the whole of the money you possess, yet would far more willingly make it a gift. What, then, have you to object? If you accept my offer I shall be obliged and gratified; if you do not, I shall look upon you as a proud family, who despise even the assistance of a friend."

"God forbid that," said Bernard. "Not one here but what loves you dearly, but at the same time are fearful of imposing upon your good nature and kindness. I am an old man, Adam, and simple; but with your good liking, if you accept the ready money, to which I add about three hundred pounds, I think William, by continuing his usual payments, in a few years might be able to discharge the whole."—"I will accept only of seven hundred," returned Mrs Palmer: "if the estate is worth more, to you I will leave it in trust, to pay the surplus to Reuben and Anna, whom I regard as my peculiar charge: the first from the collection of my own beloved boy, the last from both promise and affection. Nay, no reply; it as I have said, or I must regard my friendship as spurned, and act accordingly. The deeds shall be immediately ready, and I expect your concurrence without further hesitation, you value my good opinion."—"May we never forfeit it, madam!" replied Godwin. "Be as you have said: heaven make us worthy of your goodness."

Thus concluded the business that placed the farmer above dependence, and gratified the generous mind of Mrs Palmer.

The writings of the estate were regularly assigned to William in a few days, and seven hundred pounds paid down, which Mrs Palmer declared to be her full demand; while William, on the other hand, protested that he could only regard that sum as one third of the purchase.

From this time Godwin's consequence increased in the county; for though he did not proclaim what had passed, yet Mrs Palmer made no scruple to declare she had sold the estate, and who was the purchaser. The title of esquire now began to be tacked to the name of Godwin; but this was so peremptorily refused that it was speedily dropped.

"The appellation of esquire," said William, one day to a farmer who thus addressed him, "by no means belongs to me. I am, like yourself, a plain farmer, and superior success entitles me to no such distinction. Had I lived, indeed, in the days of chivalry, I might perhaps have imbibed the folly of the times, in thinking the name glorious, and have possibly thrown away my life in the service of some silly knight, who chose to affirm his paramour a miracle of beauty, or constellation of beauty; but these Quixotisms are past, simple reason prevails, and knights are no longer so valorous, nor esquires put to so hard a service. The name now general implies either a fox-hunter, or a man who can live without labour. I am not the best of these, nor can I live without industry. I am therefore plain William Godwin, or farmer Godwin, no squire, but I trust, an honest man, and as such at your service."

Notwithstanding these contracted ideas, William was universally esteemed; not a respectable man in the whole county passed him unnoticed, nor a poor one without a blessing.

In the midst of happiness, anxious for Edwin and Emma, he had by every possible means quired after them, but in vain; and was at length obliged to struggle to forget them in the harmony of his domestic circle.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Thus passed days, months, and years, honour increasing with age in the one part of the family, and reason, affection, strength, and beauty, with the other, until Reuben had attained his fourteenth, and Anna her thirteenth year—a period that had given William two more children, Edward, and a blooming girl called Agnes, all happy as they were innocent, their hearts as free from guile as sorrow.

The education of the boys was now the amusement of Godwin, who, surrounded by his grand-children, forgot the seventy winters that had passed over him. The remembrance of the ungrateful Edwin and Emma alone cast a cloud over the otherwise serene evening of his days, though he now had not any doubt but that both were dead, as no tidings had transpired for so long a time.

Edward was somewhat more than two years younger than Reuben—Agnes in the same proportion from himself, of similar tempers, open, cheerful, and humane, and tenderly attached to each other; but if there was any partiality, it was evidently between Reuben and Anna, who, although they did not live together (Reuben residing at his father's), could not pass a day asunder. Anna, educated from her most tender infancy by Mrs Palmer, knew no difference between the affection she felt for her and her reputed mother; she looked up to both with duty and tenderness, and would frequently, in the overflowings of her little heart, exclaim—What a happy girl am I to have two mothers! an expression that never failed to force a tear from Fanny, and cast a momentary gloom over the party.

Bernard was still strong and hearty, and apparently as happy as his grand-children ; he sur-
with them, played with them, and was ever foremost in devising sports for their amusement.
Godwin and William were his oracles—Fanny his paragon : but the children, yet more than a
were his pride, his delight, and his companions,

“ From morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve.”

About the period before mentioned, Mrs Palmer's steward dying, and having no one she
could immediately appoint, with the assistance of Godwin and Felix, she for some time trans-
acted her own business ; during the course of which a lease of considerable value expiring
she entreated William to take a journey to London, and renew it to the former holder
terms she specified.

William accordingly departed, taking Reuben, who was now almost as good a horseman as
himself, for a companion ; and, after a pleasant and easy journey, reached the metropolis.

The business that brought him to town was his first care, and which completed, he would
willingly have hastened immediately back, but Reuben's curiosity had a number of incentives
which his father chose rather to gratify than, by opposition and uncertainty, leave him to
suppose they were more pleasing or desirable than they really were.

They visited the Tower, St Paul's, the Abbey, and lastly, the Theatre, where, happening to
be late, and on an evening when the house was uncommonly crowded, William, sooner than
disappoint his son, went into the boxes. Until near the end of the fourth act their attention
had been totally drawn towards the scene ; but William then casting his eyes around, dis-
covered, in one of the opposite boxes, a person that at once attracted his whole attention.
It was a person past the bloom of youth, but yet extremely lovely, though art appeared in some
measure to supply the ravages that intemperance had made on her beauty. Her arms were
naked far above the elbow, and her bosom uncovered even sufficiently to have occasioned dis-
gust in any but the breast of a libertine ; nevertheless, this woman entirely attracted William's
attention, and, for the time, not only banished the play, but every other object from his
thoughts. He gazed as if he doubted his sight—sighed—got up—sat down—and at length
unable to bear the torments that distracted him, fondly as he loved his boy, desired him to
remain where he was until he again rejoined him.

The lady, whose eyes had been thrown around in search of prey, had observed the peculiar
attention she inspired, and in her turn had carefully examined the person of William, who was
distinguishable from the surrounding beaux by the plainness of his habit. Though emotion
of the kind are seldom felt by ladies of her description, yet her heart sympathized with the
emotions of William ; her bosom swelled almost to suffocation, her eyes overflowed with tears
and raising her eyes towards heaven with a look of despair she hastily left the box in which
she was sitting the moment after William quitted his.

Unacquainted with the theatre, William mistook his way, and though he hastened round
was too late to meet the object he sought, who had already left the house, and his inquiries
being fruitless to trace her, the only intelligence he could procure was from the box-keeper
who informed him she had been a celebrated courtesan, but was now on the decline, and
usually attended the boxes every night.

William, more unhappy than he had been for some years, returned immediately to Reuben
and though he forced himself to sit out the rest of the play, was so evidently disordered, that
Reuben, wholly interested for his father, saw the curtain drop with pleasure, and attended him
to the inn where they lodged, more concerned at his melancholy than amused with the
remembrance of what he had seen.

The idea of the lady banished rest during the whole night from William's pillow ; and rising
at the dawn of day, leaving his son in a sound sleep, and in the care of the hostess, he inquired
the way to the printers of several newspapers, in all of which he ordered the following adver-
tisement to be inserted :

“ If E—m—a G—d—n, who fourteen years since left her friends, through the artful persua-
sions of a worthless man, and who is now known to be very unhappily situated, will return to
her relations in Cumberland, or inquire for her brother, W—l—m G—d—n, at the Swan Inn
Lad lane, he will receive her with open arms ; and she may yet meet the forgiveness of her
parent before he drops into the grave.”

This advertisement, though repeated a whole month, during which he remained in town for
that purpose, met no reply, nor were his visits to the theatres more availing. At length

was obliged to depart, leaving, however, with the hostess, a very particular message respecting the person who might apply; and an order for any money she required.

During William's stay in London he also made particular inquiries for Edwin; but uncertain where to apply, was obliged to have recourse to the heirs of Mr Delmer, and his lady's fortune falling to them, he conjectured they might be able to afford some information; but they simply knew that Edwin had turned his whole property into money, entered again into the army, and was gone abroad. With some pains William at length found out to what regiment he belonged, and on applying to the agent, gained the further information that Edwin had, years before, a second time resigned his commission, since which he knew nothing respecting him, but recollected to have heard one of the officers who belonged to the same regiment say he was advantageously married.

On William's return to Inglewood he disclosed the intelligence he had received respecting Edwin, but remained totally silent in regard to Emma to all but Mrs Palmer and Fanny, as that information could but unavailingly have given fresh anguish to his father.

Reuben was pleased to find himself once more at home, and hastily embracing his family, inquired for Mrs Palmer and Anna; but had scarcely given them time to tell him that both were well, when he declared that he was not in the least tired, but would go and see them; then, with the speed of a greyhound, flew from home, and took the road to the manor-house.

Mrs Palmer and Anna appeared to participate the pleasure he felt at this meeting. Anna hung round his neck and wept with joy, while Reuben fondly kissed her lips, cheeks, and forehead, saying—"I will never go to London again. Anna; indeed I have been very unhappy."

"Unhappy," replied Mrs Palmer, "pray, my young friend, what made you so?"

"Why, in the first place, madam, my father was uncommonly melancholy, and when we sat down to our solitary meals I looked round, and seeing neither my mother, my grandfathers, nor my Anna, my heart sunk in my bosom, and I was more ready to cry than to eat; then, as I slept in the same room with my father, in the night he would sigh bitterly when he thought I was asleep; but I was as little inclined to forget myself as he was; for when all was quiet, I remembered the pleasures of home, and comparing them with the bustle of London, wished I were safe back, and never more to leave Inglewood."

"But surely, Reuben, some of the pleasures, or at least sights of London, amused you," said Mrs Palmer.

"They rather surprised than amused me, except the theatres," replied Reuben; "for example, the morning, after pushing through numberless crowds and dirty narrow streets, we came at once to that magnificent building, called St Paul's, which struck me in a manner I cannot describe! With my father's permission I walked round it in wonder and admiration, as I had not before supposed such an edifice in the whole world! From thence we proceeded somewhat further, to a place where the noise and confusion of languages brought the tower of Babel so strongly to my mind, that I could not forbear laughing; but my mirth was of short continuance, for a little on one side we passed a place full of the most ill-looking, gloomy beings I ever saw, many of whom were silent, and apparently lost in thought, their eyes fixed to the ground, their foreheads knit, and their eyebrows scowling; others were talking fast and loud, and seemingly, by the little my ear could catch, enumerating."

"Well, but Reuben," interrupted Mrs Palmer, "you saw the Tower, did you not? What did you think you of that?"

"Why, that was among my disappointments, madam: I expected quite a different building; and when I found a mere jumbled crowd of houses, I was disgusted before I entered."

"But the inner part certainly repaid you for your disappointment," said Mrs Palmer. "Did you not admire the armoury?"

"I was astonished at the ingenuity, or rather at the patience of the man who placed the weapons; perhaps I should have viewed them with some pleasure, had not my father given rise to a very disagreeable idea, by saying—'How many widows and orphans, think you, Reuben, those instruments of death have made?' This remark disgusted me with them, and in reviewing them I could almost have fancied the points of the spears were stained with blood."

"But then the other curiosities—the jewel office, and the wild beasts."

"For the first, madam, I am no judge, though I think they would have delighted my

sister Agnes. My father particularly called my attention towards them, by observing how very much to be pitied was the virtuous man whom fate had destined to support such weight of care as must ever accompany a crown. But, madam, pardon me asking you a question:—Of what use are the wild beasts?"

"Indeed, Reuben," replied Mrs Palmer, "I cannot well answer you; but I suppose they are kept either for curiosity or amusement."

"I would sooner keep a lamb or a dove," said Anna; "I am sure such ferocious monsters could never amuse me."

"The beasts, I see, we must give up," added Mrs Palmer; "but the Abbey—were you not charmed with that, Reuben?"

"Yes, madam, it inspired both pleasure and awe; I was delighted to see monuments erected to genius and merit, and reflected with reverence on the once distinguished character that surrounded me. At that moment I could almost have wished I had been born to be a warrior; but my father again called off my attention by pointing to a worm that had been thrown out with some earth, desiring me to notice the difference between that and the worm that fed on plebeians in the church yard at Inglewood."

"And pray what might be the purport of your observation?" said Mrs Palmer, laughing.

"Very trifling, madam," answered Reuben, joining her mirth; "but I was aware why my father advanced the subject. He observed with what pleasure I contemplated the tombs of particular characters I had either heard or read of; I therefore pretended to look carefully at the worm, and replied, the only difference I believed was, that this was rather fatter."

"An excellent incentive for a man to become a hero," returned my father; "yet so far, must confess, heroes are the best friends to worms, as they procure them most food."

"We were then shown the wax-work," continued Reuben: "a number of strange, unmeaning, tawdry, ill-dressed figures, with fixed eyes, and that neither give pleasure nor cause any emotion, one only excepted; this my father regarded with so much respect, that I involuntarily caught it from him."

"Was it General Monk?" interrupted Mrs Palmer.

"No, madam, it was Lord Chatham. My father afterwards, as we passed through the park, related such things of him as made me almost ready to run back and look at him again."

"But the theatres, Reuben," said Mrs Palmer.

"Oh! they delighted me," replied he. "I saw some of Shakspeare's plays; and while my eyes were wet with the sorrows of one scene, the wit and humour of the next made me almost ready to burst with laughter."

"Well, after all," said Anna, "if the pleasures of London are only what you describe, I see nothing among them to be preferred to a dance on the green in summer, or the manor hall in winter."

"Preferred!" replied Reuben; "there are none equal to it, or at least none to my fancy and if my father goes again, it is Edward's turn to accompany him; I am sure I shall not envy him."

The discourse was here put an end to by the arrival of William, and some others of the family, who, after passing a cheerful evening with Mrs Palmer, returned home.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FOR near four years after the journey to London no material occurrence disturbed the harmony at Inglewood. The old men, though now both verging towards eighty, were still able to walk about, their senses perfect, and were neither troublesome to themselves nor others. No news had yet transpired of either Edwin or Emma; and William cherished a hope that his unhappy sister's vices were terminated by death.

Mrs Palmer, who had the newspapers regularly remitted, one day, in reading the content of one, became informed that the estate in Jamaica, which had formerly appertained to her uncle Walters, was to be sold, together with the stock and negroes.—"I have a strong inclination," said she to Godwin, who was present, "to make inquiry whether any of the slaves formerly belonging to my uncle are living; I would freely purchase and restore them to liberty. Though I am unacquainted with them, Felix can direct me on the occasion, and will in this case be the most proper commissioner."

The Godwins all warmly applauded the motive, and Felix being called and consulted, accepted the office with a joy little short of rapture. He was now turned of seventy, but declared, that if it was not possible to transact the business in London, he would willingly undertake a voyage to Jamaica on such an occasion; but which doubtless would be unnecessary, as the estate was to be sold publicly at Garraway's, if not previously disposed of by private contract, and there must necessarily be an agent in town, who perfectly understood the whole, and what negroes were upon it.

Reuben, it has been before observed, was not particularly partial to London; he therefore had no inclination to take a second journey; but Edward, who was now sixteen, felt the warmest desire to accompany Felix, and whispering his wishes to Reuben, they were soon conveyed to his father, who, willing to gratify him, immediately proposed his accompanying Felix—an offer that was accepted with the utmost pleasure.

Furnished with a letter of credit on Mrs Palmer's banker, a few days after they set off for London, travelling by easy stages in a postchaise, for Felix grew too advanced in years to ride far on horseback. After reposing one day on their arrival, they repaired to the agent, who, however, was unacquainted with anything but the gross of the business; but referred them to the lady, of the name of Fitzmorris, who was sister to the owner, who, he observed, was out of town; but that he had no doubt the lady could give every information, as he had resided some years on the estate, and was also now accompanied by the owner's daughter, who might assist her recollection.

Thus informed, Felix and his young companion waited on Mrs Fitzmorris, and were immediately admitted. The lady was not alone; the daughter of Mr Fitzmorris, a tall girl of fourteen, was seated at work by her side, and possessed one of those fascinating countenances that might almost be said to be impossible to be looked on without interesting the beholder. Her features were exquisitely formed, her complexion brunette, but so clear that every variation of the mantling blood was discernible; her eyes were black and sparkling, but, softened by modesty and gentleness, they appeared rather formed to steal into the heart than make it by surprise; her hair was dark brown, and waved in luxurious negligence down her waist, which showed the perfect symmetry that might be expected when its growth was completed.

Felix and Edward were received by the eldest lady with politeness, and being informed of the business, coolly approved the motives; while Miss Fitzmorris applauded it with warmth, and laying down her work, viewed the strangers with a pleasure that sparkled in her eyes.

"I have a list below," said Mrs Fitzmorris, "of the persons, ages, and names, of all the negroes, which my brother desired me to send to the agent; but which I have omitted through forgetfulness. If you please, we will refer to that; and if any of the negroes there are among those you wish to liberate, I will desire the agent to accommodate you, as Mr Fitzmorris is now at Bath, and will not, I am sure, disapprove my obliging you."

With these words the lady ordered the list, and, with Felix, examined accurately the persons and names. Felix, however, only found two of his old acquaintance among them, and those very much advanced in years. While they were thus busied, Miss Fitzmorris had withdrawn for a few minutes, but returned before they had concluded, and drawing near Edward, while her aunt leaned over the table, gave him a small parcel undirected, and that so cautiously, that it was unobserved by any but the party to whom it was presented, who instinctively put it into his pocket, though with a trembling hand.

Felix, furnished with the intelligence he wished, retired with his young companion, who soon told him of the strange occurrence. They immediately adjourned into the first house of entertainment they found for their purpose; and Edward, with an agitated hand, hastily broke the seal, and found, to his utter astonishment, five bank notes for ten pounds each, enclosed in a paper containing these lines:

"As I know neither of you, I cannot address you by name; but my heart whispers you are possessed of humanity, or the good lady, whose charity leads her to liberate those unhappy negroes, would not make you her agents. My father and aunt are both good people, but are too much accustomed to the West Indies to think on those subjects as your employer does, and have therefore refused me the freedom of a woman slave and her son, whom I dearly love, for the woman attended my mother in her last illness. What I would request, therefore, is, that you would condescend to mention this circumstance to the lady, and entreat her to buy

them among her number ; the purchase will, I fear, be more than I have enclosed, which is all I at present possess, and what I have been these two years accumulating for that purpose but tell her, if I live, I will gratefully repay the overplus, ever esteem myself her debtor, and love her dearly for interest.

“EDITHA FITZMORRIS.”

“P.S. Let me know the lady’s name, if she condescends to grant my request. The slave alluded to is called Julia, and her son Scipio.”

The amazement of Felix and Edward at the contents of this letter is easier to be conceived than described. The open freedom of the young lady charmed the old man. “Ah, sweet maid!” cried he, “I am sorry your father is going to sell the plantation; my poor countrymen will not, I fear, find such another kind mistress.”

“Then she is such a lovely girl, Felix,” returned Edward: “I thought she looked like an angel, even before she spoke. I wish she lived near Inglewood; my sister Anna would, I am sure, be charmed with her: as it is, we shall never see her more. But what do you mean to do in regard to the woman and her son whom she has mentioned?”—“Free them, most certainly,” answered Felix; “I am worth more than twice as much money as will do that and will willingly expend it in such a cause. Her notes I will return; she will find many uses for them; and there is no occasion to let her know the address, as it will but put her to straits to endeavour to repay the money.”—“Then,” replied Edward, “we shall not even hear of her again; yet, perhaps, as you say, it would but distress her.”

Felix and Edwin then adjourned to their lodgings, where, on farther investigation of the business, it was agreed that Felix, on the next morning, should again wait on Mrs Fitzmorris pretend to look over the list of slaves, and fix on the two additional ones specified by the young lady.

Felix then enclosed the notes ready to return to her; Edward wished to write a line with them, and sat down to execute his purpose, but in vain. After repeatedly beginning, and tearing the paper, he gave up the attempt, unable to satisfy himself in what he wished to express.

The next day Felix and his young companion waited on Mrs Fitzmorris so early that the lady was not risen, but sent down to request that they would wait a quarter of an hour, when she would attend them.

They were then shown into a parlour, but had scarcely taken a seat when Miss Fitzmorris entered: a crimson blush for a moment dyed the cheeks of Edward, which as speedily communicated to those of the young lady. “Ah!” said she, “I fear you think me a strange, bold girl; but, indeed, necessity forces me to be so; for if my poor Julia and her boy were sold, it would break my heart. The money allowed for books and my pocket I have long been hoarding and I will as soon as possible make up the remainder of the sum.”—“They shall be freed, young lady,” replied Felix, “never fear; but as I am ready to oblige you in this business, you must also, in your turn, favour me by taking back your money—a heart like yours will often find occasion for it. For me, I am an old man, and have an earnest wish to do a good action before I die: let this be it; you look too gentle to be proud, and I flatter myself will not disdain to be obliged by a negro.”—“Disdain!” replied she, holding out her hand with the freedom of an old acquaintance—“no; I will think of your kindness as the kindness of a father. Alas!” continued she, “my father called my request folly, and so did my aunt; but you have complied with it, and made me happy, though, indeed, you must take the money.”—“Not now,” replied the old man, “I will demand it hereafter. If I humour you, you must also humour me.”

Felix now presented the notes, which were with great reluctance received by the young lady; and Mrs Fitzmorris entering soon after, the business was brought forward; Felix again examined the list, and fixing on the mother and son, requested they might be added to his number, saying, that he had some confused recollection of knowing the former when she resided on Mr Walters’s estate, though she then belonged to a different master.

This request was readily agreed to, and Felix departed with a line from Mrs Fitzmorris to the agent, requesting him to suffer the bearer to purchase the slaves specified. Felix and Edward being fortunate enough to meet with him at home, the business was completed; and a sum over and above the agreed price left in his hands, to transmit to the persons liberated, either to assist them in Jamaica, or to enable them to reach their benefactress, to whose lawyer in town they were directed.

Felix and Edward passed some short time afterwards in London, to gratify the curiosity of latter, and then returned to Inglewood, where they were received with delight, though Mrs Limer was grieved that no more of her uncle's slaves survived to experience her bounty.

All were particularly pleased with the behaviour of Editha Fitzmorris, in whose praise ward was never weary. The purchase of her favourites had cost a hundred pounds, which persuasion could make Felix swerve from insisting to pay, though Mrs Palmer would willingly have had the young lady her debtor; she was, however, constrained to resign in his air.

Editha was now the constant theme of the younger part of the family. Anna would frequently wish she was acquainted with her; and Reuben did not fail to express a pleasure at character; but all praise was cold to Edward's, for with him she was at once a miracle goodness and beauty.

'Ah, Reuben!' said he one day, when alone with his brother, "I have often thought our er a lovely girl, but she is not to be compared with Miss Fitzmorris: her fine hazel eyes are superior to Emma's blue ones; and don't you think dark hair more beautiful than light?" "Not I, indeed," replied Reuben, warmly; "I do not dispute but she may be a lovely girl; to say that she is handsomer than Anna is ridiculous. No one can persuade me that any can exceed hers in loveliness—the sky itself is not of a more charming colour: and then naa's hair; can any dark locks equal that? No—surely, Edward, you must be a very bad ge, for Anna's hair is the finest I ever saw; it is the first shade of light brown, and in the looks like threads of waving gold."

Felix at that minute entering, the dispute was referred to him, and he was appointed judge ween them. "Indeed," said he, "young men, you have set me rather a difficult task: ur sister Anna is a lovely fair girl, and Miss Fitzmorris, though brown, equally lovely; there- I cannot give to either the superiority: your opinions of beauty, it seems, are different, l opposite to your own persons; for Reuben himself has dark eyes and hair, yet he admires e complexions; while Edward, on the contrary, is light coloured, and is charmed with the own. My countrymen," added the old man laughing, "are not so puzzled; our beauties e all of a colour."

The warm attachment between Reuben and Anna, while it pleased the family, yet some- es gave them a sentiment of sorrow: Fanny, particularly, would frequently lament that Mrs Limer acknowledged her, as otherwise she might have become the wife of her son.

The partiality of Mrs Palmer for Anna, added to her own lovely form, in the mean time, withstanding her youth, brought her some unexceptionable offers: but as both her reputed wents and Mrs Palmer declared her at liberty on that subject, they were rejected.

"Ah, madam!" said she to Mrs Palmer, "I will never leave you; for where can I be so ppy? Not my mother herself is dearer to my heart; she, heaven be praised, has many to mfort her; but you," continued she, fondly kissing her, "have only your poor, grateful Anna!"

"Far be it from me," replied Mrs Palmer, "even to wish to be separated from you, my love; t, Anna, I cannot but say I should like to see you happily settled."—"And so I am," replied e. "Ah, madam! I always pray that you may live to such a good age as my grandfather, d then, you know, we shall both be old together."

"Six or seven-and-thirty years will always make some difference between us," answered rs Palmer with a smile; "however, be assured, in the article of marriage, you are totally your n mistress."

The affection of Mrs Palmer for Anna knew no bounds; she regarded her as a tender ossom she had reared, and gloried in the expansion of virtues she had inculcated, introduc- g her to those few friends she had regarded, as a beloved child; and ever, when speaking her, using the name of Anna Palmer—an appellation, as it gratified her benefactress, that e was generally called by, not only by the domestics, but even by the whole neighbourhood Mrs and Miss Palmer being the common distinction.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

rs PALMER had now passed near 19 years in the peaceful retreat which her heart approved, en she one day received a letter from her attorney in town, entreating her to hasten to the etropolis, as her father, who was now above eighty, and not expected to live long, had ex- essed the most ardent wish to see her before he died. His son had been some years dead,

since which event, the influence of his wife had been in vain exerted to divert him from the earnest desire he had to once more embrace his now only child. Determined, at all events, to satisfy himself on a subject so near his heart, he had employed her attorney to make his will and likewise requested him to send her word that he wished to see her in town.

Mrs Palmer immediately replied to her correspondent, that she would set off for London as speedily as possible, entreating him in the mean time to procure her either a small house ready furnished, or convenient lodgings, as she did not choose, if even invited, to be under the same roof with her mother-in-law. Anna she proposed to take with her; but her old and faithful Felix was now too feeble to undertake such a journey, the last being almost too much for his strength.

Anna, though tenderly attached to Mrs Palmer, felt but little predilection for the journey and the evening before they were to depart, when she took leave of the family, appeared overwhelmed with grief.

"With no one but your best friend, my love, would I trust you," said Fanny, as she embraced her, "but under her guidance you are safe; for, though bred and educated in that nursery of vice, how spotless and unblemished has ever been her conduct! I shall anxiously wait your return, for my happiness can never be complete while any of you are absent; and sincerely confess I hope to find you as little pleased with London as your brother Reuben was, for I cannot but say I fear my Edward was rather partial to it."—"No, indeed, my dear mother," replied Edward; "I certainly should like to see it once more, though not from any particular attachment to the place; I only wish to hear what Miss Fitzmorris says respecting her slaves, and to know whether she is well; she must surely have a cruel father to refuse her such a request. Ah!" continued he with energy, "I wish she was yours or any farmer's daughter near Inglewood; she would then, I think, be much happier, and I am sure I should never wish to see London again."

Fanny saw with concern that, young as her son Edward was, his heart was prepossessed in favour of Editha; but trusting to time to remove so early an impression, she passed from the subject to some other less interesting to him.

"Mrs Palmer," said Anna, resuming the conversation, "has determined to visit Mrs Fitzmorris when she goes to town, and thank her for the trouble she took concerning the slaves, if it is only to form an acquaintance between her niece and myself."—"Oh! how kind and good!" exclaimed Edward; "how charmed will you be with her, Anna! I am sure you must love her. Tell her we talk of her at Inglewood, and wish her as happy as her company would make us."

"You, Reuben," said Anna, "will write to me, I know, and tell me every particular respecting home; and, in return, I will inform you of every circumstance that happens in town."

Reuben threw his arms fondly round her, a tear trembling in his eye—"Ah, Anna!" said he, "I have frequently lamented that you were brought up from home; had that not been the case, we should not now have been separated."—"It will be but for a short time, my brother," replied she, kissing his cheek, "and I shall return to Inglewood with rapture; for what can make me amends for being separated from such dear friends? I am sure, Reuben, if I had my will, I would never wish to be parted from you."

Fanny regarded them in silence, while a tear stole down her cheek; but Mrs Palmer at that moment joining them, the conversation became general, until the parties separated, after repeated adieus, embraces, and tears.

On the morning following Mrs Palmer and Anna set off for London, where they arrived after a pleasant journey of five days, and found all prepared for their reception, Mrs Palmer's correspondent having punctually obeyed her orders.

CHAPTER XXXI.

It was in the beginning of the month of January that Mrs Palmer and Anna set off for London, leaving the family at Inglewood more oppressed with their absence than the gloom of the season. The weather was particularly severe, the snow had fallen in great quantities, and prevented the poor from having recourse to their usual industry. In this distress William had stepped forth, though without ostentation, and supplied them with corn at a reduced price; and even to many, who were yet more distressed, without payment—a conduct that, if he was before beloved, made him now perfectly idolized.

One night, after being employed during the whole day in these humane and charitable distributions, he retired early to rest, satisfied with himself, and recounting every particular to Fanny.

The clock had struck eleven before either felt inclined to sleep; the wind blew a perfect hurricane, and rain and mingled snow beat against the window, and Fanny, in the charity of her heart, had recommended to the protection of heaven all who were exposed to the inclemency of the night, when in the intervals of the tempest a kind of hollow moan struck her ear. She listened, and again heard the same sound, but so blended with the storm as to render it uncertain from whence it could proceed. Alarmed, she shook William, who was most asleep, and bade him listen; but all was again quiet, except the weather; and William would fain have persuaded her that what she had heard was merely the wind.

"Alas! I fear not," said Fanny, "I rather dread it is some unhappy creature who is lost in the snow, and perhaps by this time is incapable of any exertion, for the voice seemed faint and near, and I am convinced was human."

Nothing more was necessary to awaken the humanity of William. He arose hastily, and rousing on his clothes, as did also Fanny, they descended, calling first to awaken their sons, and to tell the old man, who asked the reason of their rising, that they feared some one was wildered in the snow, as Fanny had heard a voice of distress apparently very near, desiring them to lie still, and they should be informed of their success. Reuben and Edward were roused in a moment, and sallied out, accompanied by their father, in search of the cause of their alarm. After having repeatedly halloed round the house and adjacent grounds without receiving any answer, they determined to return from their successful errand. Fanny in the meantime had not been idle; hoping they would meet with the distressed object, she had kindled up the kitchen fire, and fetched out a bottle of wine and spice, in order to prepare what she thought necessary on such an occasion, when again, in an interval of silence from the storm, she heard the sound that had first alarmed her, but more faint, and, to her imagination, most close to the house.

Fanny was no coward; and placing her candle in a lantern, she went out, and looked cautiously around, but could see nothing, yet again heard a groan. Convinced now that it proceeded from the wood shed, she hastened thither, and holding up her light, said, "If any one is near, let them speak, and they shall have immediate assistance."

Her only answer was another groan; but the light at that moment discovered to her sight a human form lying on the ground, if not lifeless, at least so benumbed with cold as to be almost reduced to the last extremity. Fanny now felt greatly alarmed, though not sufficiently so to prevent her using means to assist the sufferer; and finding she was unable alone to do much service, left the shed to call her servant maids; but meeting with her husband and sons, who were returning from their fruitless errand, informed them of the discovery she had made, and that the unhappy object was a woman. Reuben being first, lifted her in his arms, and carried her into the house, where all were now employed in her service; Edward in kindling piles of wood on the fire, Reuben in warming wine, and their father and mother in nursing and endeavouring to recover the stranger. Her face was distorted by convulsions, the lividness of death appeared to overshadow every feature; and for some time all their cares were ineffectual; but at length the convulsive spasms, being solely occasioned by cold, ceased to decrease, and her features to settle in their regular form.

William and Fanny had their eyes fixed upon her; but as her features recovered their proper symmetry, theirs became imprinted with horror, amazement, and pity; and withdrawing their look from the object that had before totally employed them, they now endeavoured to read each other's thoughts.

"It is impossible!" exclaimed William; "yet surely I cannot be mistaken!—it is—it is my sister—the unhappy, lost Emma!"—"It is, indeed, our Emma!" replied Fanny, "and blessed be the hour that restores her to us; it is a proof that she has abjured her errors; and how can she refuse her forgiveness? You have frequently, my sons, heard us lament her unhappy situation from rectitude, which, from what you now see, has been followed by the most direful consequences. Retire; her senses may speedily return, and it might occasion a relapse to other witnesses than your father and myself; we will call if more help is necessary. In the mean time, let not a word transpire to your grandfather of what has passed; for if he is

informed too suddenly, it may prove fatal."—"Be it as your mother has said, my sons," added William; "her prudence, even in this surprise, I see has not forsaken her."

Reuben and Edward immediately withdrew in silence, deeply impressed with compassion. A few spoonful of warm wine were with much difficulty got down Emma's throat, and her senses began to return; but fixing her eyes on William, she slid from her seat to the ground, holding her hands in a suppliant posture.

Fanny dropped by her side, and pressing her to her bosom, exclaimed, "Fear not, Emma; you are thrice welcome to your native home. Have you forgotten that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety-and-nine just persons who need no repentance? And shall it not on earth be the same?—nay, weep not, nor wring your hands thus."—"Oh, say," at length sobbed Emma, in a voice far from articulate, "is not my father dead? Miserable wretch that I am, I can never receive his forgiveness."—"Not so," replied William; "he is yet spared to afford you that comfort, if you merit it; but for the present, endeavour to recruit your strength by refreshment and rest; our father must not this night be told of your return: his age, and the repeated shocks he has received, might render such information dangerous; he shall simply be told we have succoured some one bewildered in the snow."—"And can you, William," answered Emma, as she yet more recovered, "and you, virtuous Fanny, can you forgive a wretched prostitute. Ah, no! you cannot when you know the extent of my crimes! they are beyond human forgiveness—nay, I fear, beyond the reach of divine mercy!"

As she spoke her head sunk on her bosom, and for some moments she appeared overpowered with anguish.—"Ah! happy abode of my youth and innocence!" she at length exclaimed, gazing around her—"and shall I be permitted to draw my last polluted breath under this roof, stained as I am with a thousand vices? Will heaven permit it! Ah, no! when you know all, you will spurn and detest me, as I do myself."—"Alas!" answered Fanny, "whatever may have been your faults, repentance, and your present misery, will, I trust, atone for them. William, your sister is at present unable to walk—let us bear her to bed; after which go to our parents, and if they are not asleep, relate what has happened, without mention of person."

William now bore Emma in his arms to the bed chamber, where he left her with his wife, who undressed her, and was not a little shocked to see the emaciated state of her body, her bones being almost sharp enough to break through the skin that covered them.

Having placed her in bed, Fanny would fain have persuaded her to take some refreshment, but she declined it. Fanny judging rest the most salutary to her exhausted frame, for a short time retired, and joined William, who waited for her below stairs.

The strangeness of the whole occurrence employed all their thoughts and conjectures. Emma's dress was clean, though of the most simple kind. Her features, though much emaciated, were yet lovely; and notwithstanding she was past the age of thirty-six, might still have been accounted captivating.

Several times during the night did the kind and attentive Fanny steal into the apartment to look on the poor penitent, but constantly found her awake, and listening at the door, heard her always in earnest prayer.

CHAPTER XL.

In the morning, Godwin and Bernard inquired in the kindest manner after the stranger, of whom they had no suspicion, beyond what had been told them, until after breakfast, William having sent his sons and servants on different errands, determined to disclose the truth of the business. "My father," said he, addressing Godwin, "I grieve whenever I reflect on the many sorrows that have embittered your life; it is to me a proof that even virtue is not a security for happiness here below; for whose life has been more spotless, and yet who has felt more calamity? But, my father, you have borne up nobly, have struggled with affliction, and will not, I trust, sink under a surprise which, on the whole, must give you more pleasure than pain."—"My son," replied the old man, calmly, "the Power who has hitherto supported will not at this hour, I trust, forsake me; speak then, and fear not; I feel thy care; thou watchest my age with the tenderness of a parent, and hast been the prop of my declining years; but for thee, William, and thy angel wife, I had long since sunk into the grave; but thy duty and

ation have supported me, and I have lived even to the time when man's days are said to be
our and sorrow; yet it is not so with me; whenever I look round I see blessings; and bow
reverence to heaven, who, though it has afflicted, has also blessed me beyond the common
of man."—"Best of men and parents!" replied William, "our sister Emma is returned
penitent, and I hope worthy of your forgiveness."

Neither age nor time had sufficiently blunted the feelings of Godwin to hear this intelligence
without emotion. The old man turned pale, a universal trembling shook his frame, and for a
moment he cast his eyes anxiously around, then sunk senseless on the bosom of his son. His
situation for some time caused alarm; but by the cares of his attentive children he was at
length recovered: and rising, he said—"Lead me, lead me to my misguided daughter; if she
is indeed repentant, I have but one wish remaining unsatisfied, and that is, if Edwin lives, that
may be the same."—"Precipitation, my father," replied William, "might be fatal; Emma
is greatly reduced; we will first, if you please, inform her you condescend to see her, and that
she may hope for your forgiveness."—"Be it so," replied Godwin; "in the mean time I will
pray, and offer up my heartfelt thanks for this unexpected blessing."

Godwin now took the arm of his son, while Fanny retired to inform Emma that her father
was apprized of her arrival, and to prepare her for his presence.

During the absence of Fanny, Emma, weak as she was, had risen, and sat dressed by the
fire-side; she had apparently been weeping; and on the entrance of her sister, dropped on
her knees, and entreated her to plead for her with her father.

Fanny, in the most gentle terms, told her that he was informed of what had passed; at the
same time conjuring her to be careful of her behaviour as she dreaded any strong emotion at
that time of life might be fatal.

At length the sound of feet on the stairs gave notice of William and his father's approach;
Emma, unable to suppress the alarm that overpowered her, sunk on the bed, exclaiming
in a voice of terror—Open, earth, and hide from the presence of a virtuous father a monster,
unworthy to see the light—a prostitute—a parricide—a——Oh, Great God! my crimes crush
me! and, infinite as is thy mercy, I dare not hope to meet it.

At that moment the door opened, and Emma, with more exertion than she appeared
capable of, threw herself from the bed at the feet of her father, crying—Mercy! mercy! while
Godwin could not speak, and gazed in silence on his once beautiful and innocent daughter.
"Oh; my father," added she, "you cannot forgive me; but crush me even beneath your feet,
as I will bless you."

The old man for a moment raised his eyes to heaven, then turned with a look of compassion,
sobbing aloud, exclaimed—"Oh, blessed saint! if thou art permitted to view us at this
moment, plead at the Throne of Mercy for this thy unhappy daughter, who, I trust has
repented her errors!"—"Oh, my father!" cried Emma, does the slaughtered lamb entreat for
thy mercy for the parricide that plunged her into an untimely grave! Ah! heaven would reject
my prayer, and pour fresh horrors on my devoted head; yet curse me not, my father; my
repentance is sufficient, and my punishment, though perhaps not adequate to my faults, yet has been
severe; the hand of God I am convinced is on me, then add not your hatred to the blow."
"If my forgiveness can soothe thee, thou hast it," replied Godwin; "thy errors have been
forgotten; let thy repentance be exemplary."

Emma was for some moments unable to reply; she clasped her father's knees, and in the
exultation of her heart, kissed the ground on which he stood. At length she exclaimed—
"Oh! you know not the extent of my crimes, or you would not pardon me! vice has brought
me to the very gates of hell; atrocious in guilt, heaven has been exemplary in my punish-
ment."—"Whatever may have been thy errors," replied Godwin, "I trust sincere repentance
will obliterate them; to thy own heart recapitulate, and to God alone confess them. Thy
proud countenance betokens ill health! soon mayest thou, perhaps, be summoned before that
eternal tribunal, from whose justice there is no appeal. The forgiveness of an earthly father
thou hast, Emma: none but thyself can procure that of thy heavenly one.

William, who dreaded to prolong a scene so painful to both, now addressed his father, saying
"My sister, sir, requires rest: suffer me to attend you for a while; in an hour or two both
of us will be more composed, and equal to another meeting."—"Be it so," replied Godwin,
taking his son's arm. "Emma, seek repentance, and thou shalt even yet find peace. Fare-

well! thou shalt not want my prayers.”—“ Blessings on his honoured head!” cried Emma as he left the apartment. “ Alas, how has sorrow changed him.”—“ Time as well as sorrow replied Fanny, “ have contributed towards the alteration ; his health, however, thank heaven is far better than it was some years back ; your return too, will, I trust, add to his comfort. Could we now but hear that Edwin, if he is living, had renounced his vices, we should have but little to wish.”—“ Edwin living !” replied Emma, shuddering, “ Alas! do you not know he lives?”—“ No,” answered Fanny, “ he has not been seen by any of his family since about four months after my beloved Agnes’s death, which is now near seventeen years ago. On that event he quitted the army, but has since re-entered it, as we learned; and also a confused account that he was again married to some woman of large fortune. Oh, may heaven, if it so, inspire her with the power to lead him back to virtue?”—“ To virtue!” repeated Emma wildly. “ No: Edwin is not returned to virtue, except — then becoming more calm,” she continued—“ we began the course of vice together—monsters of iniquity, may our crimes have terminated together!”—“ You know then that he is living !” replied Fanny, astonished at the manner in which she spoke.—“ Too well I know it,” answered she ; yet, for pity’s sake, ask me not how ; nor am I informed of particulars : only that he is rich, and equally abandoned of God as myself!”—“ We will not then name him to our father,” returned Fanny, with a sigh. “ He had better think him dead, or entertain the most distant hope of his reformation, than be told what would lie heavy on his heart.”

As Emma appeared faint and exhausted by the conversation, Fanny persuaded her to endeavour to rest, and soon after left her, to disclose to William what she had heard respecting Edwin, and the emotion she showed at the mention of his name.

“ Alas!” said she, “ I am convinced she is informed of some horrid circumstance, which perhaps we are happier to be ignorant of. Heaven has brought back one wanderer ; in our own time perhaps it may also lead back the other.”

CHAPTER XLI.

EMMA, after she had been returned a week to the farm, so far recovered from her fatigue, and the misery she had undergone, that she was able to leave her room ; but her health was visibly declining, and a hectic cough, with an expectoration of blood, daily reduced her, though by almost imperceptible degrees. The whole family treated her with peculiar kindness and spared no pains to recover both her health and her spirits, a circumstance that evoked forth the most bitter self-accusation. Her person was, even yet lovely, but vanity was dead in her bosom ; her hair, which had been uncommonly fine, was cut off before her return to the country, and her dress she continued equally simple as that she then wore. In the morning she arose with the earliest dawn, and after passing an hour or two in prayer, wrote until breakfast time, when her eyes were usually swollen with weeping. She afterwards, in spite of all Fanny’s entreaties, would assist in domestic occupations until dinner, of which she ate very sparingly, drinking nothing but water ; and in the evening a draught of milk, which concluded the regimen of the day ; then retired very early, though not to rest, two or three hours being devoted to the same duties as in the morning.

The name of Edwin ever caused her the most violent emotion, and was therefore, as much as possible, suppressed by William and Fanny, without giving suspicion to their father. To the little Agnes Emma was particularly attached ; and if ever for a moment she forgot the sorrow that devoured her it was in her company.

In the meantime, Mrs Palmer and Anna were settled in town, were they much feared that should be long detained, as Mr Somerton’s health, was in a most precarious state ; and he had lived to be sensible of the attentions of a virtuous daughter, from whom he declared he would be no separated.

His temper, naturally bad, was now yet more embittered by illness and age ; and though he had some years before left his only daughter, her husband, and infant, to perish from want, yet now expected that daughter to devote herself to him. She frequently lamented having brought Anna to London with her, as she was under the necessity of either confining her to a sick chamber, or leaving her for whole days together. This consideration determined her to hasten to form an acquaintance, if possible, with the Fitzmorris family ; for if she found them agreeable. Editha, though younger than Anna, would prove an agreeable companion.

One morning, therefore, with Anna, she paid the preliminary visit, and was received with particular respect. Mrs Fitzmorris, according to the common acceptation of the word, was a good sort of woman, but possessed none of those humane sentiments that distinguished her as a new visitor; of her niece she was particularly fond, and being pleased with the person of Anna, readily acquiesced with Mrs Palmer to the wish of a further acquaintance with them. The young girls were mutually delighted with each other; nor was Editha less pleased with Mrs Palmer, with whom she wished to converse without the restraint of her aunt's presence, and give vent to the overflowings of her heart.

The next morning Mrs Fitzmorris, to gratify her niece, returned Mrs Palmer's visit, and invited her and Anna to dinner on the day following—an invitation which, though her attention to her father obliged her to decline for herself, she accepted for Anna, whom she proposed to call for in the evening, on her return home.

Anna was delighted with the invitation, and charmed with Editha, who, though not much above fourteen, possessed an understanding uncommon at her years. In the course of the afternoon Mr Fitzmorris was announced, business calling him to his sister's, whom he seldom visited on any other account, possessing none of that parental fondness for Editha, who constantly resided with her aunt, that many persons might have felt for so amiable a daughter.

On his entrance the appearance of a stranger excited only an inclination of the head; but after a few minutes the beauty of Anna more particularly engaged his attention, and he condescended not only to address her, but also to congratulate his daughter on so amiable an acquaintance.

Mr Fitzmorris was apparently not beyond the middle age, but bloated, and bore the appearance of a free liver. In his manners he was haughty and imperious, and in his disposition at once avaricious and prodigal; by every means in his power accumulating wealth, and squandering it in the gratification of every favourite vice.

Such was the father of the artless, open-hearted Editha, who from her tender years had trembled at the presence of a father, and whose youthful mind had received a shock two years before, when she lost a mother, from whom alone she had ever experienced parental affection.

Fitzmorris had also a son, two years younger than Editha, but for whom he appeared to have as little affection, and whom he kept constantly at school, perhaps fortunately for the youth, for, at least, it preserved him from the contagious poison of ill example.

Fitzmorris's ideas were too depraved to admire beauty without wishing to possess it; he therefore contemplated the innocent attractions of Anna as the kite doth the dove he means to devour; and on her leaving the room for a short time with his daughter, questioned his sister respecting this new acquaintance. Mrs Fitzmorris, who judged from the behaviour of Mrs Palmer, and the appellation by which Anna was distinguished, that she was undoubtedly her daughter, replied by informing him that she was actually so.

"And who," said he, "is Mrs Palmer? Have you long known her?"

His sister replied in the negative, saying, "I became acquainted with her merely in consequence of her purchasing, while you were at Bath, those old negroes that I mentioned to you. She is the only daughter of Mr Somerton, and is reported to be immensely rich."

This intelligence was not so pleasing to Fitzmorris as if he had heard Anna was poor and unprotected, for in that case his fortune might have assisted his designs; as it was, he regarded success to be almost impracticable.

Anna and Editha in the meantime were cementing their new friendship by numbers of little interesting communications.

"Ah, Miss Palmer," said Editha, "how happy are you to possess such a mother! Indeed I do envy you; but her tenderness, when she addresses you, brings my own so strongly to my remembrance, that my eyes, notwithstanding all my endeavours, overflow with tears. Ah, if you had known her, you must have loved her—even our negroes idolized her. Their bitter lamentations on her death even yet make my heart sink when I reflect on them: she was ever their mediatrix, and frequently turned the anger of my father from them to herself. How often have I wished I had died with her!"—"That wish is wrong, my dear Miss Fitzmorris," replied Anna, "and almost ungrateful to those dear friends you have left. Have you not a tender father and a good aunt?"—"This is true," answered Editha; "but my father's manner is so distant, that, though I often long to embrace and clasp his neck, yet I dare not, he looks so coldly on me. I hope he loves me, Anna; but I sometimes fear he does not."

"He must love you," replied Anna, warmly; "how can he avoid it, when even I, that know you so little, love you? Mrs Palmer, too, the worthy Felix, my brother, and all, are charmed with you."—"Your brother! Was that youth your brother, then, that accompanied the good old man, who came to purchase the negroes, and to whom I am so much indebted for his goodness?"—"Yes, my younger brother, Edward," answered Anna. "I have also a brother called Reuben, and a sweet young sister named Agnes."—"Bless me," cried Editha, "you amaze me! I understood you were Mrs Palmer's only child, by the manner in which she spoke of you."—"You misunderstand her kindness, my dear," replied Anna; "Mrs Palmer is only my godmother; but, brought up with her from my infancy, the name is more familiar to me than my own: I love her equally with my father, and she, I am sure, loves me as her child."—"That is sufficiently evident," answered Editha. "Happy, happy Anna, to have two mothers, and perhaps a tender father!"—"Yes, my love, a dear, kind, and affectionate one; and who, though only a farmer, is universally respected and beloved."—"Rich, rich Anna!" exclaimed Editha, "I would I were your sister, and my poor brother also yours!"

Thus ended the discourse, but not the impression it made on both. Anna's heart was afflicted for the gentle Editha, who appeared to deserve more tenderness than she apparently met with. Editha, on her part, reflected on the happiness of Anna, and was astonished to find she was not Mrs Palmer's daughter, as that lady always addressed her with *my dear child*, or speaking of her, said Anna, or Miss Palmer. That she was a farmer's daughter did not lessen her in Editha's opinion; but she was too well acquainted with both the disposition of her father and aunt not to know it would have a contrary effect on them; yet, too delicate to mention this to her new friend, she determined to say nothing about it to either, but to leave the disclosure to chance.

After passing a very agreeable day, Anna returned home in the evening with Mrs Palmer, who called for her at Mrs Fitzmorris's; and having thanked the lady for her attention to Anna, obtained her promise that Editha should pass the ensuing day at her house.

From this time the acquaintance became permanent, and the young folks were seldom a day apart. As Mrs Palmer was constantly confined with her father, she was overjoyed to find such amusement for Anna, who, in company with Editha, her aunt, and father, the latter frequently condescending to be of the party, visited several public places; yet such was the coldness of manners natural to Mrs Fitzmorris, and the something still more disgusting in those of her brother, that Anna at most but respected them, and, naturally timid, seldom spoke in their presence more than was absolutely necessary; while, on the contrary, every moment passed alone with Editha was employed in the exchange of their mutual thoughts and observations. Editha, who was less timid, had in the meanwhile insensibly made herself an interest in the heart of Mrs Palmer, whom she would run to meet if she heard her coming; or, when at her house, and only her and Anna present, would steal softly round her chair, and taking her round the neck, kiss her cheeks, saying, "I have no other way of paying the debt of love I owe you, and I am determined you shall take it thus—thus—and thus," repeatedly saluting her.

Anna, though she was truly attached to Mrs Palmer and her friend, yet sighed after the calm pleasures of Inglewood; she wrote frequently to the family, and expressed the warmest wishes that her return might be speedy. One of her letters to her supposed mother ran thus:—

"My dear, dear Mother!—I am sick of this great, noisy, dirty town, and am hourly wishing that my good mamma's duty would permit her to return to Inglewood; but as yet we have no prospect of such happiness, as Mr Somerton's health is still in the same precarious state. We have formed an acquaintance with the Fitzmorris family; and I am quite delighted with Editha, whom I truly believe is one of the best, as she is the handsomest girl I ever saw. Her aunt, Mrs Fitzmorris, is a very good woman, and fond of her; but her partiality is so strangely shown, that it does not reach the heart, like such kindness as my father and you ever express for me. She never says my love—nor Editha—nor my child, as you address us; but Miss Fitzmorris, or Miss Editha, as if she was speaking to a stranger—then holds long, tedious discourses about the distinctions due to birth and fortune. She likewise frequently chides Editha for addressing the domestics as if they were her equals, though, I can assure you, it has no bad effect, for they almost adore her, and are ready to dispute who shall first fly to serve her.

"Mr Fitzmorris has been a handsome man, and appears about ten years older than my father, yet perhaps he is not so much; but he has a fixed gloom on his features, and an habitual frown that keeps one at a distance, and which Editha feels as much as me, though she is his only daughter, and is accustomed to it: yet he is very kind, and I feel myself ungrateful in thus finding fault with him.

"Editha has a brother at Winchester school, who she is very fond of, but whom she sees rarely, as her father does not suffer him to come home except at vacations. Oh, my mother! how unlike you and my father! I am vain enough to think you have as often wished for me at home again as I myself have sighed after it.

"I have seen a great many fine things: but indeed several of them tired me, even at the moment, and would yet more so were I to attempt giving a description of them; I shall therefore omit them until we meet around our dear fire-side; I will then produce them against Reuben and Edward, who have been travellers as well as myself, and the first of whom I will remember, was as glad to get back as I shall be. My dear mamma yesterday made me a present of a purse containing so much money, that I would fain not have taken it, as I had in reality no occasion for it; but she insisted on my obedience, and not only so, but of my buying what was most pleasing to me; I have therefore purchased knee and shoe buckles for my father and brothers—two walking canes for my dear grandfathers—and a gown for you—a frock for Agnes, and what she will like still better, the prettiest doll I could meet with.

"Adieu, my beloved mother. I need not bid you remember me in your prayers. Kiss all the dear family a hundred times for me, and believe me your

"Grateful and affectionate daughter,

"ANNA PALMER GODWIN.

"I had almost forgotten to tell you that I am so fine sometimes when I go out with Mrs Fitzmorris, that I feel uncomfortable; but it has been merely to gratify her taste for show, as I now frequently accompany her in public. Mrs Palmer said the other day, 'My dear Anna, we will throw by all these useless decorations when we get home; and if our unadorned manners and persons cannot procure us respect, we will endeavour to be satisfied without it.'

CHAPTER XLII.

ANNA'S letters were ever received with delight at Inglewood, particularly as they all breathed the pure spirit of a heart uncontaminated by either pleasure or pride.

Fanny and Emma were alone when the former received this last epistle, and having read it, reached it to her sister.—"Charming innocence!" said she, as she returned it, "may heaven at least not be deaf to this prayer—mayest thou walk through life untainted as thou art at present! but I have no doubt thou wilt, for thou possessest not those detested seeds of vanity that brought me to my ruin. Ah, Fanny! well do I remember my unnaturally pressing my mother to suffer me to go to London. Agnes, too, asked it for me; yet she wept to see my mother's reluctance, and said, that, had she been in my place, she would not have made a parent so uneasy to purchase a kingdom. But I was deaf to all but my vanity, though I was then far from thinking of committing evil, and only wished to be dressed, and partake of those pleasures which the unhappy Whitmore and his sister described to me. He had awakened those sentiments of pride that were natural to me, and I longed to show myself, and be admired."—"Alas!" replied Fanny, "how deceived were your father and mother in the character of that unhappy man! His sister, poor woman, was punished, I fear, for it is plain Edwin never loved her."—"Edwin!" repeated Emma, with the usual emotion the name ever occasioned, "Edwin! would to God he had perished in the cradle, or I in my mother's womb!"—"My dear Emma," replied Fanny, "far be it from me to wish to distress you; but the impression the name of Edwin makes on you is almost dreadful! That he was Whitmore's murderer is too true; but the hand of God alone suffered Edwin to become the avenger of his family, and to be the scourge of those vices he had so perniciously inculcated; endeavour then, my sister, to think on him with less anguish."—"Never!" interrupted Emma. "For the death of Whitmore, heaven forgive both him and me; for surely my follies contributed towards it, as much as his false ideas of honour; but there are more latent causes—causes which, once known, would make you shrink, though guileless, nay, spurn me again to misery! Nay, my virtuous sister, can I shock your chaste ears with recitals so horrid as the events of my life! It was, indeed, my first intention, but I found it would be

impossible—I have therefore done as my father advised ; I have recapitulated my errors to my own heart, and confessed them to God. Ah ! would to heaven my present contrition or tears could obliterate them ! but it is in vain—my repentance comes too late. Ah ! how often in my sleep has my mother seemed to stand before me, and reproach me with her death, the vices of my own life, and prognosticate the final destruction that awaited me !”

Though Fanny endeavoured, by every means in her power, to soften the poignancy of the grief that evidently undermined the constitution of Emma, yet all was unavailing ; she grew daily weaker, and at length was unable to leave her chamber, though she still employed herself in writing, and never laid down to sleep without first imploring not only the forgiveness of heaven for her offences, but also of her father. In short, her penitence and humility interested all, giving at once pain and pleasure ; the first from the cruel reflection that her vices had made so severe a repentance necessary, and the last, that her life had not only been happily prolonged beyond her guilt, but that heaven had given her time and inclination for repentance.

At length she was reduced so much as to be obliged to keep her bed, at times was delirious, and so violently agitated, that her sufferings were terrible to the spectators.

Fanny now, even upon her knees, entreated her father-in-law to be absent from such a scene of horror.

“ No,” said the old man ; “ my child is penitent ; and shall I abandon her at this hour ? In her lucid intervals I will pray by her, and endeavour to inspire her with hope. Ah, Fanny ! thou art thyself now a parent, and at once nobly performest the duties of a daughter and a mother ; say, couldst thou, though heaven forbid thou shouldst ever have the trial, couldst thou, at such a fearful moment, refrain from administering all the comfort in thy power ?”

“ Alas, no, my father !” replied Fanny ; “ but my fear for your health makes me thus anxious. The loss of Emma, just restored to us, and as suddenly snatched away, will indeed be hard to bear ; and should it also deprive us of you, we shall sink beneath the blow.”

“ The consciousness of having acted right, even in that case, Fanny, will support you. It is now nineteen years since the happy day that you became the wife of William ; nor have I, in that period, seen one morn or eve without blessing the hour that united you. You are the mother of my old age, and your children the comfort of my second childhood.”

Bernard, who was sitting by the fireside with Agnes between his knees, nursing her new doll, raised his eyes as Godwin ceased speaking, and replied, “ Sure enough, Fanny has ever been a dutiful daughter and a good wife ; but if she is ten times better, William is deserving of her.”

“ They are worthy of each other,” returned Godwin : “ nor, to my knowledge, has one a virtue that the other does not equally possess.”

Godwin then adjourned to his daughter’s chamber, whom he found calm, but extremely weak and exhausted ; kneeling by her, he prayed long and fervently ; then, in a discourse replete with true devotion, pointed out the infinite mercy of God, blessed and kissed her. “ Emma,” said he, “ thy life has been short, and full of sin and sorrow ; mine has been long, and also replete with error ; yet I doubt not, with true repentance, we shall meet again in the land of peace, to part no more.”

Emma was at first too much affected to reply, but pressed her father’s hand, and bathed it with her tears. At length, struggling with her emotion, she exclaimed faintly, “ Ah ! my father, the polluted parricide Emma will never be permitted to share the reward of the righteous !”—“ Desponding woman !” answered Godwin, “ shall thy contracted understanding set limits to God’s mercy ? Never, never yet, Emma, did he reject a repentant and contrite heart.”

Godwin soon after withdrew, and Emma fell asleep ; during which, Fanny was joined by her husband, both anxiously remaining by her until he awoke.

Her strength being somewhat recruited by the rest she had obtained, her delirium on her first awakening was uncommonly vehement, and required all William’s strength and tenderness to at once oblige and soothe her to remain in bed. “ I will go to Inglewood,” exclaimed she ; “ my poor mother commanded it—your paths are the paths of hell—my soul shall never again know pollution—I despise your threats ; what are prisons to me ?” Then looking at William with a fixed horror, she cried, “ Begone, Edwin,—fiend—monster—anything but brother !” Then in a lower voice, “ You are, I know a man

of blood; you murdered Whitmore; but that you may wash your hands from—his wife will forgive you, for she set you upon the deed, I suppose; but who shall forgive you this last, this worst, his detestable——?” Exhausted by the exertion, as she uttered the last word she sunk on her pillow, and after some little time appeared to sleep, while William and his trembling wife looked at each other in silent terror. After remaining tolerably composed for near half an hour, she again woke, but more placid, and apparently insensible of her last delirium. “My kind brother and sister,” said she, “for you permit me to call you so, unworthy as I am, heaven will, I hope, requite your goodness to me. In the little drawer belonging to the table is a manuscript, which contains the fatal history of my errors. I could not have the heart to relate them, but imposed the penance on myself of recapitulating them thus. Oh, do not hate and despise me while you read, nor, unless you hold it particularly necessary, do not show it to my father; not to conceal my own shame do I speak, but because the recital would sink him to the grave. Nay, why do you both weep? My father bids me trust to the mercy of God, and even thinks I may be forgiven. Alas! he knows not half my crimes; his words, prayers, and blessings, have, however, comforted me, and my heart is no longer sunk in despair. One thing now alone presses severely on my spirits, which, perhaps, you will only attribute to the wanderings of sickness, yet which to me always appeared the effect of a divine mission. From the time of my mother’s death, in my dreams I frequently saw her, but always with a severe and angry countenance; and in particular, about a month before I came to Inglewood, heaven alone knows the impression she made on me! Since that time restless has been my nights, I have never since seen her; methinks it seems as if she had totally abandoned me; or though she frowned and chid me, her anger has been salutary to my soul, and I feel I could die satisfied were I, even for a moment, to see her again.”—“My dear sister,” replied William, “the life of error you were wont to lead being, as I trust, contrary to your natural disposition and education, both conspired to give rise to ideas which, however you might wish waking, you could not stifle in those hours when we retrace, with mingled truth and fiction, various subjects. Your mother’s death had doubtless made a particular impression on you, and caused you frequently to dream; she uttered those reproaches which your own heart alone dictated. Since your return to virtue, Emma, those self-reproaches have, in some measure, subsided; and your agonized fancy no longer presents the image of an unhappy, angry parent.”—“It is a natural conclusion, William, for you to make,” replied Emma, “yet you know not how strong, how awful the last injunction, which I strictly obeyed; yet, my mother, she has since abandoned me!”—“We will suppose then, my dear sister,” replied Fanny, “that the errand of mercy on which she was permitted to come is fulfilled, and that she has no further business, until she greets you in a most happy eternity.”—“Blessed thought!” replied Emma; “yet, if I could but once more have seen her, and without that frowning countenance, I confess it would have made me die happy; but God’s will be done.”

CHAPTER XLIII.

For two days after the foregoing discourse Emma yet struggled hard with anguish, but towards the close of the second evening her approaching dissolution became apparent; her senses had been perfect since the last-mentioned delirium, and her death was as edifying as her life had been erroneous. Surrounded by the whole family, even the old men, she joined her prayers and blessings with them, particularly admonishing Reuben and Edward to beware of vice, and tread firm in the paths of rectitude.

The youths listened with pious attention; the dying moralist made an impression more permanent than all the eloquence of learning, or pedantry of books. They beheld a woman, yet in the prime of life, and uncommonly lovely, sinking into the grave, the victim of her own errors, and a striking example of the inefficacy of every human endowment without virtue.

The youths each held one of her hands, already covered with the cold damp of death, and pressed it to their lips, promised to remember her injunctions, rendered yet more sacred by the solemn hour in which they were given.

The friendly Bernard kissed and wept over her. “Ah, Emma!” said he, “thou shouldst have striven against this unhappy illness: thou shouldst have lived to nurse us old men; not thus have hurried to the grave before us. What if thou hast been faulty, thou art not the first: God has forgiven thee, I am sure; and let him that hath no sin throw the first stone.”

Godwin next approached, his venerable form bent to the earth, but his eyes raised to

heaven, and praying, he blessed, and repeatedly forgave, his dying daughter.—“I had a wish,” said Emma faintly, “to see your Anna, but, deprived of that pleasure, say I blessed her Agnes, my love,” turning to the little girl, “ever be attentive to your parents, forget no your duty, and God will not forget you.”

William then approached; his manly cheeks covered with tears, and unable to speak, he pressed her hand to his lips.—“William,” said she, “dearest brother, whose worth, alas, I was sensible of too late, do not hate my memory. My Fanny too, kind sister! nay, weep not: now worthily you have fulfilled the duty which I am ashamed to have neglected! Long may you be happy, worthy pair, and may the blessings of heaven be multiplied on your heads.”

Emma now appeared exhausted, even to almost fainting; Fanny therefore entreated her to cease speaking, and endeavour to sleep—a desire she immediately complied with, first looking kindly, but fixedly, around on every particular object, as though she would impress her person on their memory; then, desiring to be placed rather lower in bed, she, after some time, fell into an apparently heavy sleep, in which she continued without a struggle, or the least convulsion, for more than two hours, all sitting round in silent dejection, and waiting the event of her next awaking, which they feared would be decisive.

At length she began to stir, and the attentive Fanny was instantly by her side. “My sister,” cried Emma, with a smile, which was the first they had seen enliven her features since her return, “oh, you know not how happy I am! I have again seen my mother, and she told me I was forgiven. Ah, Fanny! I have now nothing to wish:—nay, look there,” cried she with exultation, “she comes again; see, she smiles and beckons me! Blessed sight! I come my mother,” stretching out her arms; “receive your repentant—happy—happy daughter!” As she uttered the words her voice died on her lips, her head reclined, and her contrite spirit left its once frail tenement.

“God of mercy and compassion, accept my penitent child!” cried Godwin, falling into the arms of his son, “let her repentance atone for her offences; and may we hereafter meet in heaven!”—“Ah, my father,” replied William, “how few have died like Emma! we will therefore bear our sorrow with resignation. Had she indeed died in her errors, we should have had cause to mourn. As it is, how great the mercy of God, not only to awaken her to a sense of her guilt, but bring her home, that we might witness her return to virtue.”—Godwin raised his head from the bosom of his son, and ejaculated, “Blessed be the name of God!” Then taking his arm, he said, “I will go forth. My presence is no longer useful, and the sight is more than my age will bear.”

William and Reuben immediately accompanied him into another apartment, and were soon after joined by the rest of the family, except Fanny, who staid behind with her maid, to perform the last mournful rites to the once beauteous and admired Emma—to shut those dim eyes whose brightness had frequently been extolled beyond everything human; and to close those livid lips which had been celebrated above the ruby and the damask rose. “Alas, friend, sister companion of my childhood, why has this task devolved on me?” said Fanny, kissing her. “Thy sorrow and repentance have, I trust, atoned for thy errors. Would to God thou hadst been spared! The sister of my beloved husband should have shared all my tenderness, and our kindness would at length have forced her to forgive herself.”—William at that moment entered. “Fanny, my love,” said he, “in our affliction for the dead we must not forget our duties to the living. Suffer me to lead thee from this scene of mortality; thou hast performed all that duty and tenderness require. Oh, Fanny, in how many sorrows have my unhappy family involved thee! When I contemplate thy patience and virtues, how often do I complain of my own unworthiness, and exclaim, that I am blessed above the lot of man.”

“And I above that of woman!” replied Fanny, throwing her arms round his neck, and pressing her lips to his.—“Best of sons, fathers, and husbands, blessed be the hour that made me thine! and may I never be less sensible of my happiness than I am at present!”

William clasping her to his bosom, and placing his arm round her waist, drew her from the apartment with the attentive kindness of a bridegroom. Seven days after, the last remains of Emma were deposited at the foot of her mother's coffin, in the churchyard, the whole family, except Godwin and Bernard, attending the funeral, and who were both so warmly entreated to relinquish it, that they at length consented.

CHAPTER XLIV.

WHILE the foregoing scene was taking place at Inglewood, Mrs Palmer, on her part, was also surrounded with uneasiness in London: her father's health grew daily worse, and his peevishness increased to so great a degree, that he could scarcely bear her out of his sight.

The hours, therefore, she had to pass with Anna were very few; yet she was in some measure consoled by having found her so agreeable a companion as Editha, and so respectable a protectress in her absence as Mrs Fitzmorris. It is true, the lady was one for whom she could never have experienced a tender friendship, as she wanted that similarity of disposition that unites hearts; but was, notwithstanding, a desirable acquaintance, and a very proper person to be entrusted with the guidance of youth, as she was particularly careful of their morals—saw little company; that chosen, and of a description that the most rigid prude could not have objected to.

One evening, after Mrs Palmer had returned from her father's, she received a note from her attorney, informing her, that in the Jamaica fleet, just arrived, was the female negro she had purchased of Mrs Fitzmorris; but that of the other three, two had chosen to remain behind, with the stipend allowed them; that the son of the woman just arrived was dead, and his purchase-money, in consequence, would be returned; concluding his note by entreating her further orders respecting the business.

Mrs Palmer immediately answered, by desiring him to send on board the vessel for the woman, and cause her to be conducted to her the following morning; to pay all expenses, and place it to her account.

The next day early, Mrs Palmer sent a card to Mrs Fitzmorris, requesting the favour of Editha's company for the whole of the day—a desire that was readily complied with; and he soon after entered.

The expectancy Mrs Palmer had of Julia's arrival she resolved not to mention, but determined to surprise her agreeably; and accordingly, about an hour after, on the attorney's being announced, apologised for introducing him. He entered, followed by the liberated female, who no sooner perceived her young mistress than, giving an exclamation of pleasure, she rushed forward, and throwing herself at her feet, embraced her knees, while Editha fell on her neck, unable to articulate a word—"Julia free, missey!" cried she. "Poor Julia free! Come live, die, willing slave to dear missey!"

"My good Julia," replied Editha, recovering her surprise, "how I rejoice to see you here! But where is my poor Scipio? I expected him too."

"Ah, missey!" answered Julia, a tear stealing down her cheek, "Scipio die! Ah, missey! when I see no move, no speak, hand cold—my heart how sink! But when I think again poor Scipio be free widout buy! Gone home—dere no white man whip, no black slave cry: dis comfort poor Julia—dry up tear! Ah, good missey! you cry too—cry for poor negro Scipio!" Then perceiving a tear that had dropped from Editha on her hand, she kissed it off; adding, "White man's smile and tear gain negro heart; missey warm mine—make forget sorrow."

"To this lady," answered Editha, taking Julia's ebony hand within her own ivory one, and leading her towards Mrs Palmer, "we owe everything. You must love her, Julia, as you loved my mother; and must serve her faithfully."

"Julia will serve her faithfully," repeated she, laying her hand on her heart with a sigh.

"And you will love her too," replied Editha, "as I love her. She did not know you; yet she would have bought you, together with your Scipio, and now gives you freedom."

"Julia will give her life! Lady make Julia love; but no promise before now."

"I like your honesty," replied Mrs Palmer, "love me only as you find I deserve."

Editha then explained to her more particularly the obligations she was under to Mrs Palmer, and the necessity there was of neither Mr or Mrs Fitzmorris knowing that she had been instrumental in procuring her freedom, as it might be construed a wilful disobedience of her father's commands.

Mrs Palmer then told her she should for the present remain with her, and attend on Anna; and having already spent more time than she could well afford from her father, she took her leave, and left them together for the day.

Mrs Palmer, on reaching her father, found him yet worse than she had before seen him; but still, notwithstanding his great age, so attached to life, that he had just resolved to try the Bath waters, which had been casually mentioned; and warmly pressed his daughter to accompany him there immediately. This request was particularly unpleasant to Mrs Palmer, as she could not well refuse a parent in such a situation, and yet knew not how to dispose of Anna, whom, if even she took with her, she should not know where to place her when arrived there, as the same objections would hold at Bath, as on her arrival in London.

After repeated deliberations, she at length determined to intrude so far on Mrs Fitzmorris's kindness, as to entreat permission to leave her there until her father could fetch her back to the Forest. Thus determined, she waited on the lady, and apologising for the liberty, proposed her suit, which was immediately granted; insisting, however, that Miss Anna's visit should be prolonged until their return from Bath.

These preliminaries settled, Mrs Palmer found herself more at ease; and on her return home, informed Anna and Editha of the arrangement that had taken place.

This news had at once the most opposite effects; Editha was enraptured to have Anna entirely with her, while Anna was overwhelmed with grief at the idea of being separated from Mrs Palmer.

"My dear child," said the lady, "was I not so unhappily situated, nothing should part us; but, my love, the absence will be short, and your grief, however flattering to me, is ungenerous to your friend Editha."

This gentle reprimand dried Anna's tears; she was hurt to appear ungrateful, and determined to conform to what was most convenient, without showing any more uneasiness, whatever it might cost her.

Mrs Fitzmorris's carriage soon after fetching Editha, they separated for the night, Mrs Palmer promising to take Anna in the morning.

On Editha's departure, Mrs Palmer entered more fully into the business. She informed Anna that her father had insisted on her staying in the same house with him when they reached Bath, and that, thus situated, she had no other feasible measure to pursue, but left it to her own choice whether she would remain at Mrs Fitzmorris's, or whether she should write to her father to fetch her home as speedily as possible.

"My dear madam," replied Anna, "I feel I behave like a petulant, spoiled child, and yet you condescend to humour me! I will not trouble my father to take such a journey at this time of the year, when there is no absolute necessity. I love Editha, and I respect Mrs Fitzmorris, and will, if you please, remain with them until your return. To part with you I confess is unpleasant to me, but I will endeavour not to disgrace your goodness by my behaviour."

"My beloved child," answered Mrs Palmer, a separation cannot be more displeasing to you than to me. You are become essential to my happiness; I am arrived at that age, Anna, when attachments so long cemented are painful to be broken; and nothing but the duty I owe my father could force me to be a day deprived of your company. You are everywhere received, my love, as my daughter; nor, were you truly so, could you be dearer to my heart. Mrs Fitzmorris's hospitality must be requited, for my Anna must not be under an obligation. There are a pair of pearl bracelets in my casket, that I wish you to present to Editha; her aunt is fond of show, and will doubtless be pleased with this mark of attention. I would also wish you, while there, to dress more than you usually do, as it will gratify her to introduce you to her company, while you yourself have too much good sense to suffer your mind to attach itself to such frivolities; you shall therefore, my love, take that casket of glittering toys with you, and wear occasionally such as may best please you, presenting first the pearl bracelets to Editha."

"Oh! madam, how good, how considerate are you for your Anna! Can you wonder I should dread even a week's separation?"

Mrs Palmer then asked Anna's opinion of Julia, and finding it conformable to her own, it was agreed that, if Mrs Fitzmorris had no objection, she should accompany Anna thither as her attendant.

The next morning the separation took place, both Mrs Palmer and her young friend struggling with their own feelings, fearful of distressing the other.

Mrs Palmer conducted Anna to Mrs Fitzmorris, into whose care she resigned her, and finding she had no objection to Julia's attending her, soon after sent her for that purpose.

In the afternoon Mrs Palmer departed for Bath, writing first to Inglewood, and enclosing letter from Anna, informing them of the change that had taken place, and desiring them to be themselves happy on her account, as she was placed in perfect security.

This letter reached them about a week before Emma's death, and when she was judged in most imminent danger. The removal of Anna gave them some uneasiness; but the prudence of Mrs Palmer was so well known to them, that no idea of her being in any danger from change obtruded on their imagination.

CHAPTER XLV.

On the same day that Anna became an inmate at Mrs Fitzmorris's, that lady towards evening complained of a sore throat, and on the following morning found herself so ill that a physician was called in, who declared her disorder a malignant fever. In the course of the morning Mrs Fitzmorris dropped in; and being in expectancy heir to the lady, was by no means the least rested of the family. He was astonished to find Anna a permanent visitor, but too good a tempter to show the pleasure that circumstance gave him; his prudence, or rather his discretion, seldom forsook him, unless he was inebriated, which, however, was frequently the case, on which occasions he possessed more of the brute than the man, giving way to the most unbridled passions, his affrighted family flying before him like sheep before the hungry wolf; at other times his hypocrisy surpassed his other vices, for it was great enough to cover all his rest; and even those who were not thoroughly acquainted with him found an excuse for his excesses, if by any chance they were discovered, being pitied for the unhappy prostration he had to liquor, which could transform so respectable a man into a creature so unlike himself.

For two days Mrs Fitzmorris grew worse, and on the third was declared in great danger; Mrs Fitzmorris in consequence was advised to remove his daughter, as the malady was very communicative, and might endanger health.

Editha had lived entirely with Mrs Fitzmorris since her mother's death, now two years past, and looked forward with horror to the loss of that friend, as she then must indubitably return to her father's—an event she dreaded.

Mrs Fitzmorris loved her as much as the coldness of her disposition would permit—an affection which Editha returned with interest, regarding her as her mother, and obeying her implicitly: her grief, therefore, at this event required all Anna's tenderness to soothe, while Editha's sorrow taught her how keenly susceptible her heart was to the sufferings of a friend, and in her calamity she almost forgot her own grief on parting with Mrs Palmer.

Mr Fitzmorris, apprised of the danger of the malady, immediately determined to remove his daughter and her companion to a house he had, situated on one side of Hounslow Heath, and he informed them, they should remain until the event was known. Editha, though grieved to leave her aunt, yet dared not dispute the will of her father, and accordingly consented to accompany him the next morning, Fitzmorris assuming the utmost complacency, and entreating the removal might not deprive them of Miss Palmer's company.

On his departure, Anna sat down to write to Mrs Palmer an account of what had passed; expressing her satisfaction that, as such an unhappy event had occurred, she was on the spot to console the afflicted Editha; and requested Mrs Palmer's opinion in regard to informing her parents of what had passed, as she was rather inclined to remain silent to them on that point, as it might probably give them uneasiness—spoke highly of Mr Fitzmorris's kindness, and entreated her immediate answer.

On the removal of the young ladies to Hounslow, they found all prepared for their reception, Fitzmorris receiving them with a pleasure which struck Anna as unfeeling, at a moment when his sister was in danger.

The only domestics were his valet and an old woman, who usually kept the house, and Editha, having daily assistance, made other servants unnecessary, especially as Fitzmorris seldom kept there for more than a night or two together, and then usually accompanied by people with whom he could throw off all disguise, and with whom little ceremony was necessary.

Editha, as her father had not expressly commanded it, did not presume to take a servant with her; but was not so scrupulous on account of Anna, and therefore, before her departure, she ordered one of Mrs Fitzmorris's servants to conduct Julia to the stage, and giving a particular direction where to leave her. Fitzmorris, who simply knew that some slaves had been

purchased by Mrs Palmer or her agent, had never given himself the trouble to inquire into particulars, and was the fore not a little astonished, on the coach stopping, to see Julia, whom he particularly disliked, enter his house. Inquiring into the cause, he found she was one of those liberated, and now the attendant of Anna.

In the first paroxysm of his rage he gave his sister, Mrs Palmer, Julia, and the whole ground to the devil, cursing his own folly for vesting any power in Mrs Fitzmorris; but luckily not suspecting his daughter, who, as she was before a stranger to the parties, he could not include in the offence, though he well knew that she was partial to Julia, who had attended his late wife. To shew his dislike would, he considered, only serve to expose himself; he therefore determined to conceal it, and ever treat her with a kindness he had never shown before. Julia in the meantime, was as little satisfied with her old master, at whose sight she even yet shuddered. However, being warmly attached to Editha, and pleased with the gentle demeanour of Anna, she consoled herself with the idea that he had no longer an unlimited power over her.

CHAPTER XLVI.

IN the morning, while the party were at breakfast they received a message from town, informing them that Mrs Fitzmorris was better—news which conveyed the utmost satisfaction to Editha, and also to Anna, who sympathised in her grief; but was totally disagreeable to Fitzmorris, who the day before, had flattered himself he had an additional ten thousand within his grasp.

During the afternoon there was something in the looks and behaviour of Fitzmorris, different from what Anna had been accustomed to, that she shrunk from his ardent gaze, and her face was covered with blushes. Editha too, perceived the change, and well knowing her father was addicted to liquor, trembled lest he should expose himself before her new friend for the alteration she was too innocent to attribute to any other cause, particularly as she remarked he drank uncommonly during dinner.

Until this day, Anna had been perfectly satisfied with her situation; it now began to grow disagreeable; and though, like Editha, she totally attributed the cause to liquor, yet she determined to write to her father on the following morning, to signify she wished to return home.

At supper Fitzmorris was outwardly cheerful but at intervals seemed lost in reflection, sudden gloom at those times overspreading his features. His confidential servant he had sent that evening to town with orders not to return till the next morning, for an account of Fitzmorris's health. During supper he apologised to Anna for the absence of his domestics, who were all, he truly said, at his town-house, presenting both her and his daughter with what they wanted. After supper, as they had drunk nothing but water, Fitzmorris warmly pressed them to pledge him in a glass of wine to his sister's health, at the same time reaching each one from the side-board, and so peremptorily urging them, that they could not refuse. Soon after the young friends withdrew, Editha accompanying Anna to her chamber, in the most delicate manner excusing her father's unhappy propensity to wine, and conjuring her not to let it weaken their friendship.

Fitzmorris, now left alone, his head resting on his hand, for some time remained lost in thought. At length breaking silence—"What am I about to do?" said he; "violate the rights of hospitality, and perhaps involve myself in ruin; for, should it be discovered, what will be the consequence?—Consequences! I defy them—none can arise; in two hours she will be insensible to everything, and I may in safety seize what I should in vain intreat, for well could I read the coldness of her heart in her averted eye and distant behaviour. D—d reflect, enemy to pleasure, begone!" drinking a goblet of wine. "With my fortune, am I to shrink at such a trifle! surely not; if it is discovered, who will believe such a tale? My fortune and character will protect me; besides, I have prudently, in this case, no accomplice, and therefore need not fear discovery."

While the villainous Fitzmorris was thus plotting the most infernal scheme that could disgrace manhood, Anna and Editha were in social conversation in the chamber of the former, who, in the confusion of Mrs Fitzmorris's ill health and their removal, had not until now selected the pearl bracelets that her best friend had desired her to present to Editha. Taking them, therefore, from the case, which she had in her pocket, she fixed them on the arms of

companion, who received them, saying, "Anna, I will keep these for your sake and Mrs Palmer's, and, indeed, on my own account, did I possess all the jewels in the universe, I would give them over to see my father inebriated again."

They then examined the contents of the casket, which contained a pair of ear-rings and a necklace of pearl, a locket, and several rings, on which trinkets, having no more material conversation, they discoursed, trying on some, and admiring others, until at length Anna complained of being uncommonly sleepy, and Editha kissing her, bade her good night.

Anna, when alone, endeavoured to undress herself, but was unable: she fell sick, her hands suddenly became listless, and confused ideas, on different subjects, at once floated on her disordered fancy. "Oh," said she faintly "it is surely the hand of death; the wine hath killed me; it tasted bitter, and my heart recoiled. Fitzmorris's looks frightened me as he presented it, and I scarce knew what I did, or I should not have drank it. I shall never more see my family—parents—mamma, nor yet Reuben. Oh God, protect and guide them! Oh, Editha, Editha! why, why have you left me?" As she concluded she rose from her seat to go, but found the giddiness in head too great to suffer her to make any exertion, and reeling towards the bed she threw herself upon it, convinced she should rise no more.

All was now still throughout the house; lust and villany alone were waking, and in the room of Fitzmorris, stole into the chamber: like the hateful foe of mankind, darkness was best suited to his deeds: he therefore had extinguished his candle before he entered, and was not a little surprised to find a light burning on the table, and Anna dressed, though in a lethargic and death-like sleep, her cap, handkerchief, and the contents of the casket lying scattered on the floor, where they had fallen as she attempted to rise.

He judged rightly, that the strength of the potion had overpowered her, and rejoiced to find the effect so favourable to his wishes. Determined to feast his eyes with her beauty before he extinguished the light, as there was not the most distant prospect of her awakening, he approached, and for a moment contemplated the enchanting loveliness of her face and person, licentiousness adding a deeper crimson to his cheek than even the flush of wine. He attempted to embrace her, but a convulsive smile at that instant overspreading her face, displayed the beautiful dimples of her cheek, which, however they might have charmed any other beholder, appeared to have a different effect upon Fitzmorris, who gave a momentary start; but instantly recovering himself, snatched up her hand, and imprinted it with an ardent kiss; but as suddenly again dropping it, he stood transfixed with astonishment—a voice more than human appeared to sound in his ears—a clammy sweat hung on his forehead—the intemperate power of passion gave way to the cold shiverings of an ague, and desire was lost in amazement and horror.

CHAPTER XLVII.

"INFERNAL remembrancer, what dost thou here?" at length exclaimed Fitzmorris. "Not all the malice of hell could have conjured up such another petrifying, though silent monitor. Is it not sufficient that my whole life has been embittered by my weak contrition, but that I must also be moved thus by the sight of a paltry ring! May no two be alike! Doubtless they may; and though alone, I am ashamed to give way to so womanish a folly."

With these words, he again, yet with the utmost agitation, raised her hand, and drew off the ring that caused the alarm; Anna at the same moment uttering a deep and piercing groan, which added fresh terror to his guilt-struck heart; but soon recovering, he hastily approached the candle to examine the trinket more minutely; but, far from deriving the satisfaction he expected, found, to his yet greater dismay, it was the very identical one he had read, and particularly identified by the initials on the reverse. His first surprise had, in great measure, overpowered the fumes of wine, and contributed not a little to recall some painful and long banished remembrances. Seating himself at the table, lost in thought, he fixed his eyes on Anna, with a curiosity that totally overcame every other consideration; this, however, soon gave place to alarm, for he now perceived her so violently disordered by the action she had swallowed, that her whole frame appeared universally convulsed.

Fear was now his predominant passion; for should she die thus suddenly, it might have serious consequences. Mrs Palmer would be immediately apprised, and might cause her to be opened, in which case, perhaps, the whole villany would be discovered. In short, his suspicions were of that kind, that such men alone could only deserve, or ever experience.

He now hung over her, not with passion, that was vanished, but with the most acute anguish, dreading, as the convulsions increased, that he should see her expire. At length though still senseless, she began to scream, and that so loud that he was convinced it must echo throughout the house, and perhaps awaken Editha or Julia (for he did not much fear the housekeeper), who he had no doubt would immediately hasten to the spot. This supposition made him at first determine to leave the room; but Anna becoming suddenly more quiet, though evidently struggling for life, he listened, and the house appearing perfectly still, ventured to remain and sprinkle her face with water, at the same time vowing, that if she escaped with life, he would never more have recourse to such desperate means; even the horror and amazement occasioned by the ring vanishing on the contemplation of her agonies. While thus employed he was suddenly alarmed by the hasty opening of the door, and turning round, to his still further dismay and vexation, perceived Julia at his elbow, who awakened by the screams, had only staid to put on a petticoat, before she ran to the spot from whence she conjectured they proceeded.

Though Julia started at the sight of Fitzmorris thus employed, and at such an hour yet his confusion more than doubled hers; but passion, assisted by his natural arrogance, after a moment overcame every other feeling; he bade her be gone, demanding what business she had there.

"Business!" repeated Julia; "business! more proper me ask what business you here?—No you slave now, massa. Me dream horrid dream—hear poor missey cry out—so run and see what matter."—"And so did I also," replied Fitzmorris, recovering his usual cunning and smoothing his ruffled brow. "I heard Miss Palmer scream, and not being gone to bed hastened hither, and found her as you see, I fear in the agonies of death. You observed Julia, that I was sprinkling her face with water when you entered."—"Oh yes! me see da sure enough: but, massa, why you no call? Poor soul," continued she, hanging piteously over Anna, "she die. Oh, she never wake more, den her moder die too. Oh! wish never come here."—"Wish you had never come here!" answered Fitzmorris in a rage, which he could not immediately repress; "what do you mean by that, you black devil? Do you think anybody has killed her?" But instantly recollecting the folly of exasperating her, he added—"I am much grieved for her, can you judge what ails her?"—"No, bless heart!" answered Julia, gazing on her; "never see nobody so but once—she die! Poor mulatto you remember pretty Jenny, massa?"—"Damn you!" exclaimed Fitzmorris, rage again overpowering cunning. "Name her again, and you shall have cause to repent it."—"Repent, massa! for what—for speak truth? Dat no harm sure in free country? No slave here—no whipping-post."—"But there are pistols, infernal torment!" replied Fitzmorris "and if you do not hold your tongue, those, or something worse, shall be your portion."

Anna at that moment began to struggle afresh, and to scream more violently than before the dispute was therefore forgotten in her danger, Fitzmorris and Julia both assisting her to the utmost of their power.

In this manner passed the whole night; Fitzmorris, with seeming concern, towards morning calling the housekeeper and Editha, informed them that he had been first alarmed by hearing Anna's screams; and fearing some ill had befallen her, he repaired to her apartment and found her as they now beheld her.

Editha, half distracted at the situation of her friend, was the first that mentioned medical assistance: nor had the frowns of her father, which used to silence her in a moment, the least effect. "Alas!" cried she, "what was night, or the distance from Hounslow! would myself have almost flown in such a case for any human creature, and much more for my beloved Anna."

Fitzmorris, thus pressed, ordered his old housekeeper to go to the town and procure help, as he well knew she would be absent the longest time; judging that, if Anna survived, the effects of the potion must, by her return, be exhausted, and beyond the power of being discovered by the person she brought with her.

Fitzmorris judged rightly, the strength of his infernal dose being evaporated, but not its effects. Anna soon after, with heavy and repeated groans, opened her eyes, and casting them mournfully around, they rested on Editha, who, enraptured to see her a moment free from the dreadful convulsions in which she had so long struggled, threw herself by her side and watered her face with her tears. Anna in a few minutes began to appear sensible of her

entions; and, throwing her arms around her neck, exclaimed, though faintly—"Oh! the wine! the wine!"

Had the sentence of death that moment been pronounced against Fitzmorris, it could have produced a more striking effect: he trembled from head to foot; his face turned to a deadly pale, and his teeth chattered, as if in a paroxysm of an ague.—"She—she—is delirious!" at length hesitated he; "she drank no wine but a glass with you, Editha: that, I know, could not hurt her! Her head is affected, and she merely says what first strikes her imagination."

Fitzmorris's agitation was not lost on either Editha or Julia, but caused different surmises in each bosom; the former simply wondered at his confusion; while the latter found her suspicions corroborated by his behaviour; and she surmised the truth, for she knew her father tyrant capable of similar villany.

At length the old housekeeper returned, accompanied by a surgeon, who, examining the pulse of Anna, declared her in a high fever. Fitzmorris immediately caught at this report, and affirmed that she was delirious, as a fresh proof to strengthen the decision; rejoicing to find himself so apparently safe from detection, he, too, collected his scattered spirits, and appeared as boldly calm in guilt as others are in conscious innocence.

Fitzmorris's assertion that Anna was delirious, was not, however, entirely without foundation; for though she had intervals of recollection, yet her head was greatly deranged.

At length she began to appear more composed; and Fitzmorris left the apartment, ordering the reluctant Editha to attend him, and make breakfast.

The discourse turned entirely on Anna, concerning whom Fitzmorris, more particularly than before, questioned his daughter, who, however, without falsehood, gave simply such answers as she conceived would raise her in his estimation, being well aware of the deference he paid to fortune, showing him also the pearl bracelets which she had the evening before presented her; and asking timidly, in her turn, if he did not think it necessary Mrs Palmer should be immediately acquainted with her illness.

"By no means," replied he, peremptorily; "a few days will, I hope, render it needless; and would therefore be only alarming her to no purpose."

Fitzmorris would fain have introduced the subject of the ring, but guilt made him cautious; he dreaded lest Anna might hereafter recollect she went to bed with it on, and also had no objection that his daughter knew anything respecting it.

"Do you not think it very extraordinary, sir," said Editha, "that Anna's mind should be so affected on the wine she drank last night at supper? I recollect, too, that even before she went to bed, she said the wine had disordered her, and that it was very disagreeable when she drank it; and had not that circumstance better be mentioned to the doctor when he comes again?"

Fitzmorris muttered an oath between his teeth, unnoticed by his daughter, to whom he replied, "No, fool; if the wine had been injurious, would it not also have affected you?"—"I would suppose so, sir," answered Editha, mildly; "yet she, it is plain, attributes her illness to the wine; and I have heard my aunt say that wine is adulterated with unwholesome ingredients to render it intoxicating."—"Dolt! idiot!" exclaimed Fitzmorris, stamping on the ground with rage, "begone! leave the room! No, now I reflect," continued he, calling her to him, "the fever may be communicative; do not, therefore, go into Miss Palmer's apartment; you will only humour her whimsies; and, without being of service, catch the malady."—"Not to Miss Palmer's chamber, sir!" said Editha, bursting into tears. "Oh! do not keep her from Anna! she loves me, as I do her, dearly; and no one's attentions will be so well received as mine. Indeed, I mean no offence; I simply thought the wine—"—"Curse the wine!—again am I to be tormented with the subject! Fool, would you infer that, as I served her with it, she was poisoned?"—"Poisoned, sir!" repeated Editha, shuddering; "oh, my father! how can you thus cruelly treat your poor child?"—"Begone, then, to your own apartment," said he; "I will think—consider—and let you know my resolution in half an hour." Editha immediately obeyed and retired, shocked at the behaviour of her father, and deeply distressed with sorrow at the situation of Anna.

Fitzmorris, on being left alone for some time, walked up and down the apartment in great agitation; he saw with horror that the allusion Anna made to the wine had impressed itself on the mind of his daughter, and trembled for the consequence. At length he, however, resolved to move Editha, under pretence that the fever was communicative; to call in more assistance,

if necessary, to Anna; and at all events, if there was no change for the better in two days send off an express to Bath for Mrs Palmer.

Editha, on leaving her father, had retired to her own room, and sat weeping alone. When Julia entered, she having left Anna for a few minutes under the care of the housekeeper—“Ah, Julia!” said Editha, “what shall I do? my father has forbidden me to come into Anna’s chamber, lest I should catch the fever!”—“You no catch the fever, missey,” replied Julia—“she say only wine make sick. Ah! missey, me see all night long, when massa no let you call—so fast asleep—eyes open—shock your heart—laugh—scream—cry—never wake, missey—“It is very odd, Julia,” said Editha; “I never heard of any one before being attacked so strange a manner.”—“Nor me, only once before. Poor mulatto Jenny, she more worse than missey. Oh! me glad me bad dream last night—make me hear poor child scream—“And could you conjecture,” replied Editha, “what had disordered the mulatto? remember her well; she died about a year before my mother.”—“Ah, missey! me know you well—you moder well know, too, what kill her. Your fader tease, tease poor mulatto, because she pretty; but Jenny love your moder, have no ting to say with your fader. One night your fader make she drink glass punch—den poor Jenny sleep—sleep—no strength, no—den massa use ill. Poor Jenny cry so sadly, and tell me—me tell me—me tell you no—moder try comfort poor Jenny—Jenny have no comfort—poor Jenny die—missey not long—so grieve!”—“Great God!” exclaimed Editha, her face and neck covered with a deep crimson, “you must surely mistake. Did you see Jenny during the time she slept?”—“Sah see, sure enough. Jenny sleep all day; only fit make know she alive; just like missey only more worse.”

Editha’s head now sunk on her bosom, and she only replied by entreating Julia, on no pretence whatever, to leave Anna a moment. She was no sooner alone than she gave free vent to her tears, and recollected with horror some circumstances that corroborated Julia’s story, such as the affection and pity her mother always expressed for the young mulatto, and dislike her father had to hear her named. She also remembered that, on the evening before, he had fetched their wine from the sideboard, though there was a bottle on the table—a table which she at the time thought immaterial, but now assisted to strengthen her fears.

Editha knew not what measures to pursue; she wished to save her father’s honour, determined also, though she should never see Anna more, to rescue her from the danger Julia had imprinted on her mind; she therefore resolved, should her father insist on separating from Anna, to write to Mrs Palmer, though without signature, and inform her that Anna’s health was in a very precarious state.

Fitzmorris at that moment sent for her down stairs; and on her entrance informed her with more than usual kindness, that the surgeon had again seen Anna, and declared the fever yet higher than in the morning; therefore he could not risk her life by continuing her in such a situation, and would therefore take her to a school in Hounslow until the danger was over. He also told her his valet was arrived, and Mrs Fitzmorris was much the same as the day before. Editha courtied acquiescence, though never had her heart felt so cold to the commands of her father; never before had she contemplated him with so little reverence; the sorrows of her mother, the death of the mulatto, and the situation of Anna at that moment, obliterated every other idea.

It may easily be surmised it was the fever Fitzmorris was fearful of; he dreaded even the eye of his own child, and shuddered lest her belief should strengthen the assertion of Anna respecting the wine.

Editha had no sooner returned to her apartment (for the old housekeeper remaining with Anna, she did not dare to enter that lest her father should hear of it) than she sat down and wrote a letter to Mrs Palmer, but without signature, and simply containing these lines:—

“Madam,—Your dear daughter has been taken suddenly ill; I wish you could come to her. I hope, however, she is in no immediate danger. Show this to no one.

“From your friend,

When Editha had concluded and folded her letter, it first struck her that she did not know Mrs Palmer’s address at Bath, not being aware that the residences of all new-comers in that city are easily discovered. For some time she was puzzled how to act, but at length determined to send it at all events, and also to write, in case that should miscarry, one to Godwin, whose address she well knew, having often seen Anna direct letters to her mother and the fam-

CHAPTER XLIX.

LE the innocent Anna was thus in the power of a wretch whose passions knew no control, the family at Inglewood were performing the last duties to Emma, whose request respecting the manuscript had been strictly obeyed.

William and Fanny, truly judging it could contain nothing but what would tend towards giving additional pain to their aged parent, determined to have no auditors whatever to the tale, willing to draw a veil over the errors of Emma, even to their own children.

Accordingly, one night, when the whole family were retired to rest, they, in their own chamber, prepared to begin the narrative—William taking up the manuscript, which in many places was scarcely legible from tears—Fanny, her head reclined on her hand, listening with attention, sorrow, and mingled dread, to the recital of vices that filled her with horror, while William began as follows:—

Confess your sins to God, and recapitulate them to your own heart, were the words of a venerable man to whom I owe my being, and who yet, in spite of my manifold transgressions, has poured balm into my soul, by not spurning my unfeigned though late contrition. I will not, however, prefix his honoured name to this black recital, for a prostitute has no claim to that of a worthy family; to such she is virtually dead, and, like a rotten branch, cut from the parent stock. Emma alone will I then call myself; and may the name be forgotten and obliterated with me; for I have overwhelmed a father with sorrow, and raised the burning blush of shame on the cheeks of a mother.

With a bleeding heart I will truly retrace my crimes. Ah! would to heaven that either my tears or prayers could obliterate them!—but they are too heinous; and though they have preserved life hateful, yet my guilty soul sinks at the thoughts of death, for the fascinating pleasures that first beguiled me are vanished. Horror alone now strikes my guilty mind, and my conscience proclaims, that even the grave affords no peace for such as have wilfully incurred such a punishment of sin and shame.

Oh, painful remembrance of forfeited happiness and the pleasurable days of innocence—could I could recall ye!—but ye are fled for ever, and nothing is now left of the once gay and young Emma, but an emaciated, polluted shadow!—sad monument of the effects of vice! Would to heaven I could persuade one misguided daughter of folly to dash from her lips the poisoned cup which holds the empoisoned draught of flattery, or snatch back one victim from the jaws of destruction; but as I have lived, so shall I die in vain.

When you read this, my beloved friends, I trust I shall be consigned to the silent grave, a victim of the shame that must otherwise overwhelm me, on having my crimes thus laid open.

Oh, William, on you at this awful moment I particularly call, when my guilty soul is pleading before its Creator. Hear my request; hate me not, my brother. Alas! I repent, my sin is ever before me. Remember our days of happy infancy, when hand in hand we walked together. At a more advanced age, you saved my life from the fury of an enraged father.

Oh, William, had I died then, how happy—what guilt had I been spared—what anguish would have escaped! Oh, remember your joy as you bore me home unhurt to my father's arms; how fondly you kissed my cheek as you gave me to my mother's arms; remember my father, my brother, and do not curse my memory.

I will now begin the narrative of shame; but, alas! my hand trembles, and my eyes are filled with tears. Unavailing sorrow! thou art now too late! in the days of my delusion my mind was steady, and my eyes sparkled with the intoxication of vanity! You know all pretence to my going abroad—I will therefore speak from that period; yet no—it is not sufficient; I will probe my guilty heart with the recapitulation of the insensibility I showed to my father's grief at my departure, and the little respect I paid to my father's admonitions. I will separate myself from their encircling arms; pleasure appeared almost to give me wings to reach on. You, William, seemed hurt at my unfeeling conduct, and bade me farewell in a less tender than usual; but I was deaf to all, and leaping into the chaise, soon wiped off my tears that had involuntarily escaped me.

Edwin was uncommonly thoughtful during the whole journey, and I recollect told me

not to mention to Mrs Delmer on my arrival how much he was attached to Agnes, as, he said, she had dissuaded him from the match, and it might, improperly divulged, injure his future prospects.

"On my arrival in town, all contributed towards my undoing. Dress, pleasure, flattery at once assailed my weak mind. Whitmore had the art to persuade me he should obtain a divorce from his wife, and would marry me. I also, by degrees, imbibed his tenets, and became a professed free-thinker, for he used to engage me in controversies that I was not able to defend; and bear down my reason by his volubility and erroneous maxims, dressed in flowery language, until I was forced to yield the point, though at the same time my heart bore testimony of their fallacy. The discovery of Edwin's marriage was first revealed to me by Whitmore, who had heard it from his wife's gallant, and who doubtless gained the intelligence from that lady's having caused Edwin to be watched.

"Alarmed at a quarrel he had in consequence with Darleville, in an evil hour, forsaking God, I consented to accompany him, firmly persuaded that in a short time I should be divorced from my wife. But in France, fascinated by pleasure and dress, I became his mistress; and, by a natural degradation, was soon perfectly satisfied with my situation, having sufficiently imbibed his ideas to pride myself in seeing how much he was devoted to me, uncompelled by religion or law; so that, when he afterwards informed me how great a divorce must injure his fortune, I readily gave up the thought. In short, my only ambition was to reign in his heart; I knew no happiness but his affection, no wish beyond giving him pleasure. All, however, was calm within: my heart frequently reproached me, and I stifled reflection as much as possible. I sometimes wept at the remembrance of my friends, whom I regarded as given up for ever, for I could not bear the most distant idea of a meeting with those whose tenderness I had ungratefully repaid.

"We staid some short time at Paris, and from thence travelled to Montpellier, then returned again to Paris, and from thence to Brussels, where the unhappy Whitmore lost his life in the prime of his days, and in the height of his sins. Oh, merciful Father, have pity on him! Nursed in the school of vanity, he imbibed vices and destructive tenets from those improperly placed around him; had his education been virtuous, he perhaps had been so too. How much greater my crime! Born and reared with beings faultless as heaven ever created, I rushed into guilt, and erred against my own heart!

"The death of Whitmore was to me a severe blow, though it did not awaken me to repentance, my whole animosity resting against Edwin. Heaven, alas! suffered *him* to be the scourge of my offences, and, great God! to be also the terminator of them.

"Perhaps, at the time of Whitmore's death, the voice of gentleness might have recalled me to the paths of rectitude; but Edwin's was harsh and hateful to me; for how could a man who had violated the most sacred duties, who lived himself in open adultery, and who was considered as the murderer of Whitmore, have influence to persuade me to abjure vice, and was equally guilty of? To return home was horror—my mother dead, and I the guilty cause of her death, what reception could I hope? Let me also confess, the thoughts of giving up the grand and luxury in which I had lately lived, had its weight with me.

"A gentleman of the name of Hartford, who attended Whitmore at the meeting with Edwin, endeavoured all in his power to serve me, or rather to gratify himself, by plunging me yet deeper in error; he had, however, art enough to assume merely the appearance of friendship to beguile me—a trap that my youth and inexperience readily gave into; and, to my brother Edwin, I readily agreed to accompany him to Holland, from whence I was to embark for England. Naturally volatile, anxiety soon overcame the bitterness of my sorrow, and Hartford was profuse in his attentions and presents, and plainly began to show his views. My heart was cold to love, but not to pride. I deliberated: and the consequence was, that I was ashamed! I thought his protection preferable to humiliating myself before my family. In five months after Whitmore's death, I became his mistress.

"All thoughts of England were now given up; I strove to banish reflection; and firmly adhered to the doctrines implanted by Whitmore, regarded the life I led as nothing more than acting according to reason and nature. The temper of Hartford was not dissimilar to that of Whitmore; he loved show and pleasure, and spared no expense to gratify my taste for dress, but he was deep, and without skill, and was frequently duped.

"When I had been with him somewhat more than a twelvemonth, we agreed to part.

inter at Paris, and soon reached that city. I was now quite inured in my situation; my appearance usually procured me admiration, and I sought no farther. Character I regarded as a trifle below the consideration of a woman of understanding and spirit. I must, however, confess, that I dreaded to be alone, as a thousand unpleasant ideas were sure to intrude; and even in dreams respecting my family, have I frequently awakened myself with violent paroxysms of grief.

“One evening that Hartford had been in company with some Englishmen, where the play was more than commonly deep, he lost considerably, doubled and trebled his bets, but was still unsuccessful; at length, in a fit of desperation, he made a final throw for the shattered remains of his fortune, which was before this considerably impaired. The cast was decisive, and Hartford found himself in a moment deprived of all, his opponents receiving drafts and securities for the whole he possessed.

“On his return home, his appearance alarmed and shocked me. He threw himself on a chair, uttering an unconnected string of curses; and, I believe, had not my screams alarmed the domestics, he would have terminated his life even in my presence. When he was rather more calm I learned the extent of his loss, and was not a little grieved to find it so heavy, both on his account and my own; for though I could not love him, his kindness and generosity had attached me to him.

“‘Emma,’ said he, ‘you are universally admired in Paris, and I cannot be so greatly your enemy as to wish you to suffer for my misconduct; I would therefore advise, and indeed wish you, to accept the offer of some man of fortune, who might be able to more than repay you for the loss of me: for my own part, I have no resource but returning to England, where, I believe, I can make sufficient interest to procure a commission; but was I even to obtain that, must be obliged to my uncle, who has very rigid notions; I dare not take a female companion with me. I have about fifty pounds in my escrutoir, which we will divide: half that sum will carry me thither; and perhaps, with the remainder, and by the sale of some of your superfluous appendages, you may be able to make yourself tolerably easy until some fortunate circumstance occurs.’

“Prostitution was not yet so habitual to me, but my soul sunk with horror at the idea of another change; and I know not what resolution I might have formed, had not temptation, which my accursed vanity could not withstand, again fallen in my way. I wished to assist Hartford, for I could not bear the idea that he should go to England so slenderly provided; therefore, two days before his intended departure, went in the hired carriage, which we had not yet discharged, to a jeweller’s, and informed him, that, having a new necklace and earrings setting, I wished to part with those I showed him. While we were bargaining, a carriage topped, and an elderly gentleman stepped out to give some orders. He viewed me attentively; and I soon recollected him for a financier, whom I had frequently seen at different public places, and whose name was De Forlaix. As I did not choose to continue my business before a third person, I left the jewels, and desired the man to let me hear his determination on the day following, the financier very politely leading me to my carriage.

“Hartford’s loss was so considerable that it had been much talked of, and in consequence reached the ears of De Forlaix, who, on the jeweller’s informing him of my business, readily surmised the truth, and took his measures accordingly.

“The jeweller called on me in the evening, and having agreed for the jewels, he respectfully took his leave, hoping, as he expressed himself, ‘that they were not going to lose the best woman in Paris.’ Compliments, however gross, were always pleasing to my depraved heart; I therefore complaisantly replied, that I should at least remain some time longer in that city. Having forced Hartford to take about seventy pounds, we separated with concern on both sides, but without anguish; for, as I had never loved him, my greatest affliction was how I should afterwards dispose of myself. Sometimes I thought of parting with all my superfluities, of returning to England, and learning some business by which I might obtain a livelihood: but I had been too long accustomed to idleness and dissipation to form a determined resolution on the subject, though I must do myself the justice to say, that I believe I should have adopted it, had not, as I before said, temptation again beguiled me, as I regarded such a step as a kind of preliminary to a reconciliation with my friends.

“On the morning after Hartford’s departure, my servant informed me a gentleman requested to speak with me on business. Having admitted him, I was not a little surprised

to find it De Forlaix.—‘Madam,’ said he, ‘I have done myself the honour of waiting on you with the new jewels that you expected some days since; I hope they will meet your approbation; if not, any alteration shall be made that you can wish.’

“‘New jewels!’ replied I with astonishment; ‘I expected none; nor can I judge from whence such a mistake proceeded.’

“‘Pardon me, madam, it is no mistake. Did you not say some days past to the jeweller, where I had the honour of seeing you, that you had a new necklace and earrings setting.’

“‘It is true I said so,’ answered I, somewhat confused at my duplicity being discovered; ‘but these are not what I expected.’

“‘Indeed but they are,’ replied he, ‘for I have the jeweller’s receipt in your own name for them, and you would hardly have paid four hundred louis for what you did not approve.’

“He then placed the jewels and receipt, which was in the name of Hartford, before me, adding,—‘He has also commissioned me to return your jewels, as they do not suit him; and there is likewise an acknowledgment for the two hundred which he advanced for them, and which you cannot deny to have repaid, as I know to the contrary, being your agent in the business. I have only to add, that if you have any more commissions to execute, you see before you the most attentive of your servants.’

“De Forlaix’s intentions were too manifest to be mistaken; I however, for the present, declined accepting his jewels; but he was too profuse and assiduous to be long denied by a woman so naturally depraved. In fine, a short month beheld me transferred to a third keeper.

“De Forlaix knew no bounds either in his affection or generosity towards me. He had a wife, but to that circumstance I was too vile to make an objection; and as I had an ample allowance, and was inferior to no woman kept in Paris for splendour, gave myself no concern on any other subject.

“I had lived in this state for near six years, when one evening, in the public walks, I contracted an acquaintance with an English adventurer of the name of Davis. He was about my own age, handsome and accomplished, but dissipated and thoughtless, having, in the preceding seven years, expended a respectable property. For this man I conceived a most violent affection; and, regardless of the kindness of De Forlaix, prostituted my person without any former incentives, for I had no wish for grandeur or dress unsatisfied; it was therefore depravity, and the satisfaction of unbridled passion, that alone led me to this fresh vice.

“Some short time previous to my forming an acquaintance with Davis, I became pregnant—a circumstance that gave the utmost pleasure to De Forlaix, who had no children, but was not powerful enough to prevent me from forming a detested intimacy with a stranger. About two months after this new connection, Madame De Forlaix died suddenly; and some time after, my situation being then visible, M. De Forlaix, as nearly as I can recollect, thus addressed me:—‘Your conduct, my dear Emma, during an intimacy of more than six years, has been all I could wish, and your present situation adds to my affection; I therefore propose, when a decent time has elapsed, to make you my wife; I am rich enough to defy censure; we will retire to one of my country seats, where, I trust, you will make me a happy father.’

“The generosity of this offer overcame me; conscious unworthiness made me unable for some moments to reply: but De Forlaix, resuming the conversation, said—‘You do not answer me, Emma; you change colour: surely my proposal does not meet your displeasure?’

“‘Displeasure,’ cried I, at length; ‘alas! alas! how is it possible? but you do not consider what you say; my former life, before I became acquainted with you, I have openly revealed; and can you be generous enough to make such a woman your wife?’

“‘I can,’ replied he, ‘for a woman who has behaved as you have done for six years I can venture to trust through life; besides, our marriage will legitimize my child, who will by that means become heir to my fortune. Your former misconduct shall be entirely forgotten. I regard your first deviation as an error of youth; the second occasioned by necessity, and but the effect of the first, in which point of view I also consider your complying with my proposals at the beginning of our acquaintance. You have frequently lamented being estranged from your family; this step, I flatter myself, may conciliate them; we will send them a certificate of our marriage; and some months hence, perhaps, I may take you to

land; for they will hardly refuse you their forgiveness when they find you so advantageously married.'

The compunction for my falsehood to so generous a man was too powerful to suffer me to thank him as I ought; but he was too partial to me to attribute my emotion to the right cause; and, repeating his determined resolution, he left me. I was no sooner alone than I began to reflect on what had passed, the advantages I must unavoidably reap from a marriage with De Forlaix, I was by no means blind to; it would at once give me respectability in the world, at least, where my former life was unknown. I should be secure of a competency, my child of a good fortune, and what had also its weight with me, perhaps in my own mind, I might presume to hope for a reconciliation with my friends. My affection for Davis was a considerable impediment to this scheme, but not violent enough to influence me to decline it; for De Forlaix was indubitably the father of my child, as I was pregnant two months before I became acquainted with Davis; I therefore determined to inform him of De Forlaix's generous offer, and in future decline all acquaintance with him; for, abandoned as I was, I could not endure the thought of so grossly abusing his kindness, and bitterly reproached myself with my former misconduct. Thus determined, I wrote to Davis, denouncing my resolution, and entreating him to give up all future thoughts of me, expressing, however, the pain this effort cost me. Davis was of a disposition not easily to be repulsed; he replied, that if I was determined, he must perforce submit; but that he was resolved to meet me at all events once more, and therefore warmly pressed me to meet him at his own house, where, shame to say, I had frequently been before.

Had my intentions been really virtuous, I should have answered this letter by a positive refusal, confessed my unworthiness to De Forlaix, and have thrown myself and expected mercy; but not so did I act; the measure of my iniquities was not complete, the sword of vengeance trembled over my guilty head. For some time I wavered, but at length concluded that one more meeting could make little difference, as I wished to part with a man whom I persuaded myself I loved: I therefore returned him an answer by my own servant, who well knew letters frequently had passed between us, and agreed to meet him on the following evening, provided he would promise to require no future interview. Davis readily acquiesced; and in an hour fated for the commencement of my earthly punishment, I repaired alone to his lodgings, little aware that the treachery of my maid had that day revealed the whole correspondence to De Forlaix. My own conduct had taught her emulation and ingratitude—could I then wonder that she followed my example? Davis lived at about the distance of a mile from Paris, in a house situated in a garden belonging to a widow woman, who with his servant composed the whole family.

The fatal night of this meeting, Davis had sent his man out on business; so that this evening I was alone remained below. I had scarcely been there five minutes before a loud knock was heard at the door, and the moment after, to my inexpressible confusion, the voice of De Forlaix, who exclaimed, in answer, as I suppose, to the woman who had denied my being there. 'It is false—I saw her enter; deny her at your peril!' These words were scarcely articulated, when we heard his steps on the stairs; and a moment brought him to the door, which was only secured by a slight and crazy lock. There was no time for reflection, nor was I capable of any; for, overpowered with shame and confusion, I had sunk into a chair, and covered my face with my hands. Davis, in the meantime, had snatched up a pistol, the report of which, and the forcing the door, were both instantaneous, and filled me with despair and horror starting from my seat, the first object that presented itself was De Forlaix on the floor, bleeding in his blood. 'Ungrateful woman!' exclaimed he in a faint voice, 'is this the return for my partiality and unbounded affection! Was it necessary to add murder to ingratitude? Alas! deluded wretch that I was, I could not believe the evidence of your confidential servant. Alas! conviction has cost me dear! the hand of death is on me!'

Exhausted by the loss of blood, he fainted as he uttered the last word, when, thinking he had expired, I entirely lost all knowledge, and fell on the floor; in which situation Davis took up his arms, and bore me into the next apartment. Seating me on a chair, he returned to the chamber where De Forlaix still remained on the floor, and the woman of the house catching and wringing his hands over him, exclaimed she was ruined for ever, and should be punished as principal in the murder.

Davis, as he afterwards informed me, laid De Forlaix on the bed, bound up the wound, which

was in the shoulder, and when he came to himself, assured him he would have immediate assistance; then left him alone with the woman, securing them both by bolting the door of a passage that separated that apartment from the rest; he then returned to me, who was just recovered from my swoon.

“ ‘Emma,’ said he, in great agitation, ‘we have no time to lose; De Forlaix, I fear, is dying; I have secured him and the woman at least for some time, for the house is too distant from the public road for them to give a speedy alarm; the present moment is therefore ours and perhaps all that is left us is to escape, for certain death awaits us if we remain; let us then fly; my servant will return in an hour, at farthest, and procure assistance, if De Forlaix still survives. Nay, do not hesitate; we may now escape, but the least delay will render it impossible.’

“ ‘I will not go,’ I replied; ‘unhappy wretch that I am, I am still no murderer.’—‘In this case,’ answered he, ‘you will be equally involved; I therefore again entreat you to fly. Say, can you calmly resolve to stay, and bear the torture?’—‘Oh, heavens!’ exclaimed I, ‘I dare not—I will indeed fly; but whither? without friends or money, where can I go?’—‘To Flanders,’ replied he; ‘I myself am but indifferently provided; however, at all events, life is worth preserving.’ More conversation passed; but the distraction of the moment prevents my recalling it to memory; I only recollect that I obliged Davis, before I would leave the house, to go again to De Forlaix, whom he found much in the same state he had left him, except that his binding the wound had stopped the blood. He then again secured him with the woman; and taking my trembling hand, we left the house together, our whole property consisting in about fifty louis-d’ors, which we had in our separate pockets.”

When William reached thus far in the manuscript, he paused, and for a moment laying down, thus addressed his wife:—“I wonder not, my beloved, that you cover your face; such recitals, I thank heaven, we are not accustomed to; even my blood appears to chill in veins, on the reflection that such a woman ever called me brother.”

“Her crimes, I trust, are expiated,” replied Fanny, “and, thank heaven, we alone shall be acquainted with the extent of them; for not for the wealth of India would I ever have a dear parent shocked with the recital. But proceed, my love; we will not break on the peace of another evening, if possible, with even the remembrance of what we hear to-night.”

CHAPTER XLIX.

WILLIAM again took up the manuscript, which for nearly a page was almost unintelligible, letters being in several places effaced by tears, but which appeared to contain bitter accusations and expressions of despair; he therefore passed it over, and began as follows

“We travelled night and day until we passed the frontiers, and even then only staid until we could get safely to England, where we arrived almost without clothes or money. It was now that Davis began to show himself in his true colours; too indolent to exert himself for his own support or mine, he urged me to prostitute myself for both! I had, however, sufficient spirit to resent this proposal in the highest terms; and it completed the disgust I had some time entertained for the man whom I regarded as the author of all my misfortunes.

“The benefits of De Forlaix now returned with double force to my memory; and he who had been deprived of them, enhanced their value. I saw myself also on the point of becoming a mother to an infant who would be bound to curse me, as its birth must now be infamous; where but for my vice and folly, its mother’s shame would have been concealed under the name of a respectable father, and itself heir to a considerable fortune; while now, on the contrary, I dreaded its birth, lest it should share, or perhaps increase, my own miseries.

“Davis, finding his endeavours ineffectual to reduce me to his infamous intentions, he treated me with brutality, and one evening so far forgot himself as to give me repeated blows. Stung to madness by this insult, my rage knew no bounds; I cursed him and myself, calling him by every epithet that passion could dictate, rushed out of the sorry apartment where we lodged, leaving him, doubtless, very glad to be rid of me.

“Behold me now a wanderer in the streets of London, without money, or even a place to rest my head! Suicide was my resolve; and inquiring the road to a village I had heard named, had no doubt but in the way thither I should meet with some piece of water, where at least might terminate my earthly woes; for the reflection of what might happen hereafter never obtruded on my imagination.

"Heaven, however, saved me from that crime; I wandered through the fields in vain, and found only ditches or stagnant pools, too shallow for my purpose. At length, exhausted by fatigue, I sunk under a haystack in a paroxysm of despair, where I sought my pockets for some instruments of death, but found neither knife nor scissors. Tears were now my only refuge; I wept until, like a wearied child, I fell asleep, my late pampered body exposed to the night wind, and my only canopy the spacious blessed firmament. I awoke at day-break, my spirits not only recruited by rest, but also the idea of suicide much weakened. I sat for some time pausing what method I should pursue, but could fix on none determinedly; for poor, friendless, and pregnant, the prospect was cold and dreary before me; all application to my friends, however, I was now more firmly than ever determined against, both on account of my poverty and situation.

"'I will walk,' said I, 'through this great and busy city to-day, and resolve on future prospects; some lucky thought may perhaps occur; if not, I can but again rest here, or adopt the determination of yesterday. Oh, Inglewood! happy residence (why did I ever leave thee), thou hast no grandeur to bestow, but thou hast content: no riches, but peace and an unblemished conscience: no pleasures that leave a sting behind; no pangs of remorse, such as I now feel.'

"The rising of the sun, and the cheerful matins of the lark, I had long been a stranger to. Ah! cried I, 'I once celebrated the return of morn as cheerfully as ye do; but, dead to happiness, the glorious sun has now no charms for me!' I advanced towards London, ruminating on my melancholy situation; for the clothes I had on, and a few halfpence, were all I possessed; I had some few articles of raiment at Davis's lodging, but those I determined never to claim, as it could not be done without again seeing the man whom I now detested.

"After I had wandered some hours, I began to experience the cravings of hunger; and again the idea of self-destruction came strong into my fancy; when passing a shop, containing a variety of articles, I was struck with these words on the window:—Money lent on pledges. This immediately gave rise to a thought that I before had no idea of. I had in my pocket-book a miniature of Whitmore, set with brilliants, that I had for some years always carried about me, and this for two reasons; the first of which was, that he was particularly dear to me; and the second, that the picture being once seen by De Forlaix, he had appeared dissatisfied that I preserved so carefully the remembrance of another man. From this period I had constantly kept it concealed; nor had Davis ever seen it, or he had doubtless deprived me of it, as he had before done of my watch. Drawing it, therefore, from my pocket-book, with a heavy heart and tottering frame, I entered the shop, and presenting it to the man behind the counter, requested him to favour me with the utmost sum he could advance on it.

"The fellow having viewed me with an impudent stare, doubtless taking me for a woman of the town, replied, 'A devilish handsome fellow, egad! you have been crying, I see—one of our old favourites I suppose. Well, never mind—he will be perfectly safe here—worse luck now, better another time—drink a glass, and keep up your spirits; you are too fine a woman not to have plenty of business.'

"Humiliated as I was, I however replied tartly to this insult; and the man, after a number of preliminaries, lent me the sum of ten pounds, declaring he could not advance a shilling more. With this I departed, comparatively happy to what I was before, determined to provide some food immediately, and a lodging before night. Having satisfied my appetite, I walked in pursuit of an apartment, and soon found one suited to my circumstances, being only three shillings per week, and in the house of a widow who kept a shop. I here purchased a change of raiment, and likewise some of the cheapest things I could procure for my expected child; for every trifle I expended made me tremble for the future. One day, that I had been out to buy a loaf, turning hastily round the corner of a street, to my great surprise, I encountered Hartford in regimentals. He expressed at once pleasure and pain to see me, the distress I had undergone being visible both in my person and habiliments. He informed me, that his uncle, with some difficulty, had procured him a commission on his arrival in England, which was all he had now to trust to; and that he was, in the course of a few days, to embark for the West Indies, where his regiment was ordered—desired to know my address—and promised to call on me the ensuing morning.

"Hartford was true to his appointment, and I related all that had befallen me without equivocation. He expressed much concern for my misfortunes, as also at his inability to assist

me as he wished; but, before he took his leave, being to depart on the morrow, presented me with a bank note for twenty pounds.

"In about a month after this, I was seized with the pangs of labour, and delivered of a lovely girl. Oh God! the cruel remembrance yet wrings my heart! with what anguish do I weep over her—with what bitterness did I accuse myself, deprecating my folly and vice, that had ruined her even before she saw the light! She was now all the world to me; and, nursing her at my bosom, I appeared to live for her alone.

"By the strictest economy my money lasted seven months, at which time my babe was uncommonly strong for her age; it was now that poverty appeared to me with redoubled horror, as the slender diet I could obtain likewise deprived her of her proper nutriment. I can truly affirm, that I had no intention to return to a life of prostitution, but rather thought of gaining a livelihood, if possible, by industry; and therefore inquired of my landlady repeatedly, whether she could not procure me any needlework.

"Her endeavours had been, until the period before mentioned, unavailing, when one morning she informed me, that some ladies, who lived fronting us, had inquired for a sempstress and desired me to apply. Taking my infant in my arms, I went immediately, and was introduced to an old lady and two young ones, who received me very politely; but I was not such a novice but I could immediately discover that they were women of loose character. The old woman admired my child, and paid me many compliments on my own person, the old woman particularly inquiring my age; and on my answering I was in my thirtieth year, appeared not to credit me, saying that I did not look more than twenty-two. In short, they kept me all day and before we parted, the old woman had proposed to take me into her society, and furnished me with whatever was necessary.

"I gave no immediate reply to this offer, being determined to try what I could earn by my work; but at a week's end, found it so little, that I began to deliberate on the subject; and going home the same evening with what I had been intrusted, found the old woman in earnest conversation with a man elegantly dressed, but who bore the appearance of an emaciated debauchee. He greatly admired my infant, paid me many extravagant compliments, and finally, presented me with a note for fifty pounds—a temptation which my poverty could not resist; and I promised to sup there the following evening.

"Accursed promise! would I had perished before I pronounced it; or would to God my infant had been nourished with my blood before I consented to support her at such a price. Oh, cruel—deadly—horrid! My brain burns, and I must lay down my pen. I will go and pray; but will heaven hear the contrition of such a wretch as the abandoned Emma?

"I resume my pen. I will probe this guilty heart by recapitulation; I will relate how I murdered my infant—the smiling angel, to whom I, infernal prostitute, administered poison in the salutary form of milk. Enabled by the present I had received, I dressed myself with more care than I had done for many months, and repaired to the old woman, where I found the wretch I had seen the day before, and who received me with peculiar pleasure. In short, temptation again fell in my way, and I purchased a hundred pounds at the expense of what was a thousand times dearer to me than the vital blood that warmed my heart. The old woman could not now bear me to leave her; my child also was the darling of the whole set, and all was riot, which they called pleasure, for three days, when I began to find my health uncommonly disordered, as well as that of my child, and soon discovered (do I live to relate it?) that her pure blood was contaminated as well as my own, in consequence of the acquaintance I had so lately formed. I cannot proceed. I have in vain tried to describe the agonies my cherub suffered, until her once clear and transparent complexion was changed to the deadly hue of saffron; suffice it, she died, and left me the most unhappy—most cursed. Oh my head—my heart! Pardon me—the recollection even yet disorders my brain.

"I was mad for six months after her death, in which state medicines were forced down my throat, that restored my bodily health; but my senses were long imperfect, during which period I can only remember I was frequently cruelly and brutally treated.

"When I regained my understanding, for the first time in my life, I stifled reflection by the use of spirituous liquors, for the old wretch had made me considerably her debtor, and now commanded my obedience to all her infamous demands. In short, I became regardless and hardened to all that befel me. I had been in this situation about four years, when one evening at the play, casting my eyes around, I discovered my brother William, who was so little

changed, that I instantly recollected him; and seeing that he also apparently knew me, determined to fly him, for, degraded as I was, how could I bear his presence? My father too, I had no doubt, must be dead: and reproaches and hate were all I could expect. Had I at that period been fortunate enough to be apprised of his kind intentions, oh, how joyfully could I have submitted to be the most menial of his servants; but I was destined to suffer more miseries, and feel how far guilt and sin may lead their votaries. For six weeks after I saw my brother I never left the house, so fearful was I of meeting him; nay, I believe I could have preferred instant death to standing in his presence, so truly sensible was I of my own shame and unworthiness. At length, driven by the repeated threats of the old woman, whose slave I completely was, I again ventured abroad, and in St James's Park by chance met with the servant whom Davis in his flight left at Paris.

"We recollected each other instantly, nor was I displeased at his rencontre, as I had ever ardently wished to learn the termination of a business to which I owed my final ruin; I therefore entreated him, after common inquiries had passed, to gratify my curiosity on the subject.

"'You may suppose,' answered the man, 'that I was greatly surprised, on my return home, to find the doors fast, and to learn what had happened, from the window where the woman of the house stood watching for me, requesting me to climb to one of the lower casements and release her. I immediately did so, and next fetched assistance to De Forlaix, whose wound, though severe, was not found dangerous; for in six weeks it was completely healed.'

"'Blessings attend you for that intelligence,' exclaimed I, interrupting him in a transport of pleasure; 'you have removed one mountain of guilt from my surcharged bosom. But proceed—I am all attention.'

"'On his recovery, he caused diligent search to be made after you, and soon learned your destination, and how you were accompanied. This intelligence appeared to grieve him, and he retired to his seat in Picardy where he died about five months since; but, before I proceed, tell me, madam, whether the infant you were pregnant with be living?'

"'No,' replied I, with astonishment at the question; 'it is dead, and with it all that could make life bearable to me.'

"'I am sorry for it,' resumed the man; 'you doubtless are unacquainted that M. de Forlaix had left it, on being properly authenticated, a handsome fortune, whether boy or girl, and to the guardianship of his brother?'

"'Generous, noble De Forlaix, what a viper didst thou foster in thy bosom! But proceed, he continued I, in despair.' 'I poisoned my child, the darling of my heart. But go on—let me hear all.'

"The man looked shocked; he doubtless thought me distracted. 'I have nothing more to add,' returned he; 'nor should I have known so much, but that I having no money to bring me to England, procured a service in Paris, where I have remained till lately; for Mr Davis owed me a year's wages when you went away, and his clothes were stopped for arrears by the landlady.'

"This intelligence disordered me too much to hold more conversation; I therefore soon after bade the man farewell. On my return home, I gave way to the anguish of my heart, and after that sunk into a gloom that nothing could overcome; threats of being thrown into prison I disregarded, and grew daily more callous to ill usage, which the old woman was by no means wanting of: liquor alone now reduced me to her purposes and this was not spared; for though no longer young, I was a favourite in the house, my understanding being rather more cultivated than that of my companions, and likewise from some acquirements I had obtained.

"One night, about eight months since, she pressed me so earnestly, that I consented to go to a masquerade with two unhappy girls that were lately become inmates of our house; during the amusement, I sat wrapt in my usual gloom, and at an early hour returned home, leaving my companions engaged in riotous parties.

"I expected to be reproved for my haste; but, on the contrary, the old wretch expressed her satisfaction, informing me that a gentleman who frequented the house had been there that evening, and introduced one of his friends, a man of considerable fortune, but who was so much in liquor that he was obliged to be put to bed; concluding by desiring me to take my place by his side. I had drank a great deal of wine at the masquerade, and made no objection, but prepared to act as she desired, by taking a candle, and going to the apartment.

“The stranger, by his breathing, appeared completely intoxicated, and to sleep uneasily. I therefore determined to undress as quietly as possible, for I wished him not to awake; for, though vice was become habitual, yet it was hateful to me since the death of my child. An uncommon heaviness and dread also hung on my spirits, and the scenes of my youth dwelt strongly on my imagination. Determined to banish remembrances, I went to my closet, and drank a glass of spirits, when a whim seized me to look at my companion; I therefore took the candle, and opened the curtains; his arm was thrown over his face, so that little of it was discernible; but the light causing him to move, I hastily snatched it back, until perceiving he was again perfectly still, I seated myself on a sofa at the farther end of the apartment.

“A dread of futurity at that moment suddenly flashed on my fancy, and made me shudder; but, determined to shake it off, I started up, and had recourse to a second glass of spirits, to deaden the pang of conscience. Powerful as was this soporific, it did not immediately take effect; I resealed myself on the sofa, and for some time remained lost in thought, until the liquor I had drunk overcame me, and I dropped asleep, my head resting on the back of the couch. My eyes were no sooner closed, than either the thoughts that had employed me waking, or the immediate providence of heaven, interposed to snatch me from destruction, to save me from a crime against which nature revolts, and that must have plunged me in yet tenfold guilt.

“In my sleep, which was uncommonly heavy, I dreamed that Whitmore, Hartford, De Forlaix, Davis, and several other men, were pursuing and driving me with swords and different instruments of torture, through a narrow and thorny road, until I reached the top of a prodigious mountain where there stood a monster so horrible, that, in spite of all their weapons, I started back; but the beast advancing towards me, and finding no resource, methought I leaped the tremendous steep, where I must have been infallibly dashed to pieces, had not my mother caught me in her arms, saying, ‘Miserable wretch! is it not enough that you have plunged me into the grave, but you must recall me again to earth to snatch you from destruction?’

“The alarm occasioned by this dream made me cry out aloud in my sleep, which disturbed the stranger, who jumped out of bed, asking what was the matter? This totally awakened me, though I could not for some moments reply; but sitting up, I endeavoured to recover from my terror, relieving my overcharged heart by a flood of tears, and at length exclaiming, ‘Ah! oh—it is indeed too late! shouldst thou even, oh, blessed spirit! be permitted to return to earth, thou couldst not now snatch the devoted Emma from destruction! the doom is passed, and my torments here are but preludes of those to come!’

“The stranger replied by a loud and tremendous oath; and snatching up the light that was burning on the table, presented it full in my face—he at once discovering the wretched Emma—and I the abandoned Edwin!”

At this passage the manuscript fell from the hands of William, who, struck with horror, fixed his eyes in silence on the pale cheek of his trembling wife.

“My beloved friend,” at length cried Fanny, pressing him affectionately to her bosom, “be not thus moved—the mercy of heaven providentially saved them.”—“Saved them!” repeated William, “Oh, God! is it possible that such should be the children of our virtuous father and sainted mother?”—“Alas!” answered Fanny, “virtue is not hereditary; but for Emma all our fears are now calm; she rests, I trust, in the bosom of peace; her errors were indeed great, but their expiation was terrible. Ah, William! the situation of Edwin is far more dreadful, perhaps, even yet revelling in vice, until, like a blast of lightning, it shall strike him without time or preparation. But proceed, my love; you have, I doubt not, heard the last of Emma’s errors. This warning was surely decisive.”

William again took up the manuscript, and continued—“Oh, God! what were my sensations at that moment! Edwin, as well as myself, was unable to articulate a word, but remained for some time with his eyes fixed on me with an expression of horror; for astonishment had overcome the fumes of wine. Like myself, I trust, he felt the hand of heaven upon us, and resolved to tempt destruction no farther: but, alas! if he felt contrition, his expression of that sentiment was very different from what I experienced; for being in some measure recovered from his first surprise, his rage knew no bounds. Never, depraved as were the company I was accustomed to, did I ever before hear such dreadful and tremendous execrations; justly, however, upbraiding me with my infamy, and finally, dressing himself, he hastily

shed from the house, before the anguish and horror occasioned by the foregoing scene had left me sufficiently able to reply by aught but tears.

Midnight brawls were too common in this detestable house for this to be noticed; I passed the remainder of the night alone; and, for the first time for many years, threw myself on my knees, thanking my Creator that he had, amidst my numberless transgressions, at least saved me from so deadly a sin as that, whose very name chilled my blood with horror.

"I remained in this posture until day, and during the time formed the determined resolution to brave the worst that could befall me, rather than have recourse to my usual way of life; my spirits were, however, overpowered with the shock they had received; I found my head dizzy, my throat parched with drought, and, by noon, was in a burning fever, which, for near a month, baffled all the power of medicine, and which, even when vanquished, left me in a state of melancholy, that frequently impaired my senses.

"I had never failed, in my lucid intervals, informing my abandoned hostess of my resolution of embracing death rather than returning to my former vices; but she regarded this merely as the effect of sickness, and doubtless thought she could, as she had before done, induce me to her wishes; her rage was therefore unbounded when she found me determined, and equally regardless of threats as promises, and, above all, strictly resolved to drink nothing but water.

"One day that she particularly pressed me to renew my former infamous course, I hastily snatched up a pair of scissors, and clipped off my hair, saying—'There is one of my tattered adornments destroyed, and know, that if nothing else could save me, I would make myself a spectacle of horror and disgust, sooner than I would again submit; but that is not necessary: I am a free woman; if your conscience will permit you to swear that I am indebted to you, do so; I am willing to go to prison; it will be heaven to this polluted house.'

"'Then go you shall,' replied she with an oath, leaving the apartment; and next morning was as true to her word, for I was arrested, and thrown into the Fleet prison.

"I bore this calamity with thankfulness, as it removed me from such a scene of guilt. Money or valuables I had none, for the old wretch had stopped all, and I must have perished but for the humanity of my fellow prisoners; the virtuous part of whom, however, treated me instantly when it was known from what house I came.

"I had been in this place about four months, when one night I again dreamed of my mother, who I thought still looked with great severity, but presented me with a bible, and putting it into my hand, vanished. I immediately awoke, and determined, as soon as it should be light, to ask all over the prison until I had borrowed a bible; and accordingly, in the morning, applied to several of the prisoners before I could procure one, and which I at length obtained from a poor widow, who was confined for the funeral expenses of her husband.

"From the time I left Inglewood to the present moment, I had never opened that sacred volume, whose doctrines I had learned to contemn, and whose precepts I had derided: I now seized it with avidity, and ran to my own apartment, where, having seated myself, I casually opened it at the fifteenth chapter of St Luke, where these immediate words struck me: 'I will arise, and go to my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.'

"For a moment the book dropped from my hand; but snatching it up again in a transport, I pressed it to my lips, and vowed, if ever in my power, though I should beg my way home, to obey what I regarded as a sacred injunction.

"About a month after this, as I was reading, one of the unhappy girls who resided with my wicked creditor, called to inform me that their house by some neglect had taken fire in the night, and that its vile mistress had been so severely burnt that her life was despaired of; in consequence of which she had sent to entreat the presence of a sister, with whom, for many years before, she held no communication, being as respectable a character as my creditor was the reverse.

"This relation, however, obeyed the summons, as the girl informed me, bidding me hope the best, as she was certain I should not long remain a prisoner—a prediction that was verified that very day week, when I was informed an elderly lady inquired for me, and who, on my attending her, announced herself the sister of my creditor.—'You are free,' said she,

viewing me with a look of pity; 'I have discharged your prison dues, and you are at liberty to go when you please: the unhappy woman at whose suit you were confined is dead, and has left me heir to what ill-gotten wealth she possessed; but never shall my children be enriched by the spoils of prostitution; it shall all be expended in the relief of those wretched women to whose misery she has so largely contributed. I have heard your unhappy story and to you, as a proper claimant, I present the first offering, entreating you to pray that Heaven may grant her that mercy she denied to you.'

"As she spoke, she gave me a paper containing twenty guineas; adding—'You are I hope, fixed in the resolution that caused your removal hither? and should you want a friend, apply to me; you shall meet every assistance in my power.'

"I threw myself at the feet of this generous woman, thanking her as well as my emotion would permit; and when somewhat calmer, recapitulated my intention respecting my journey home, and also the previous events of my life.

"She did not listen to them unmoved; and when I concluded, replied—'By the common course of nature your father is dead. I, however, applaud your motives: but should you find it as I predict, and circumstances render home inconvenient, return to me; I am not rich, but can, with the exertion of your own industry, secure you from want or shame.'

"She soon after left me, giving me her address; and this woman, so generous, disinterested, and humane, was simply the wife of a linen draper, but whose humble virtues might have dignified a coronet.

"On her departure, after returning my unfeigned thanks to the power whose hand had led me through this affliction, I prepared to depart, calling first on the widow of whom I had borrowed the bible, and insisting on sharing my purse with her—an offer she would fain have declined; but in which I was so peremptory, that she at length acquiesced; and I had the pleasure to see her compound the debt with her creditor, and regain her liberty at the same time with myself. As few objects, in respect of raiment, could be more wretched than myself, my first care was to purchase a change of linen, and the gown I wore on my return to Inglewood, in which I went to bid adieu to my benefactress, who received me kindly, and would willingly have advanced me more money; but I declined it, assuring her I had a sufficiency to carry me home.

"From her I went to procure a place in one of the Carlisle coaches, but all were full; and it was two days before any were to set off again. Disappointed at this intelligence, I took a place in one that was on the point of departing to Grantham, as that would at least advance me above a hundred miles on my way. The money paid, I entered the vehicle, my whole baggage contained in a pocket handkerchief.

"I had but one fellow traveller, a woman, and remained lost in thought, resolving on the reception I might meet with at Inglewood, when, a few miles from Barnet, I was alarmed by the cry of 'Stop!' and in a moment after a horseman made up to the carriage, presented a pistol, and demanded our money. The moon shone bright, and reflected full on the face of the highwayman, whom, to my inexpressible terror, I recognised to be Davis!—an involuntary scream escaped me; but he repeated his demands with execrations, and my companion having given her purse, I also presented my little all, which he snatched from my hand, and galloped off full speed.

"Though deprived of the means by which I meant to reach home, I, however, could not avoid looking back with thankfulness to the power who had awakened me to a sense of my errors, and retraced with agony the effects of debauchery and sin, my heart blessing God in silent adoration for having separated me from so infamous a companion, and likewise that I was unknown to him, as I sat in the corner of the coach, with my face totally concealed by my bonnet.

"At length we arrived at Grantham, where I had not even the means to procure a breakfast, and with a heavy heart leaving the coach, my little bundle in my hand, I, pursuing my way on foot, contemplated how my exhausted frame could ever reach the end of my journey, which was yet a hundred and seventy miles. Determined, however, to persevere, I walked until evening, when, being almost frozen with cold, I entered a cottage and entreated assistance, offering the contents of my bundle for a quarter of the money it cost me. The woman of the house refused my offer; but bidding me draw near, stirred up the fire, and soon set meat before me, telling me that I was welcome, and that, poor as she was, she would sooner

re than take from me. In short, this good creature kept me all night; and in the morning fore my departure, gave me a small loaf, a piece of bacon, and a slice of cheese; bidding me farewell in a manner that called forth my warmest gratitude.

"The weather was uncommonly severe, and during the rest of my journey, which I was a fortnight in performing, I met with no similar instance of humanity; so that, though I sold a few trifles, I was almost perished with hunger, as well as overcome with cold and fatigue. At length I reached the entrance of the Forest, and began to retrace the happy haunts of my youth and innocence; but my heart sunk with conscious guilt, and I dreaded to stand in the presence of any of my family. My father I represented to myself as dead, and feared the reproaches of my brother. I had eat nothing all that day, and it was night when I reached the neighbourhood of my nativity; the snow too began to fall in such quantities, that the face of the earth was covered, and it was with difficulty, as I passed the church, that I could find the spot where our family are buried; nor should I, but for the old yew-tree that distinguished it. Concluding that the grave of my mother was not far distant, I knelt and prayed aloud, regardless of the time or the weather that had drenched my garments, until I was almost unable to rise. At length the church clock struck ten; and again entreating the protection and support of Heaven in the arduous scene I had to undergo, I resumed my way; but exhausted with fatigue, and cramped with cold, my limbs refused their office, and I fell several times in my road from the church home.

"When I reached the gate, how can I describe my sensations! In spite of the cold, that had nearly frozen my blood, a genial warmth for a moment seemed to revive my heart; and I can truly declare, I entered it with more pleasure than I had before abandoned it; but soon again my spirits forsook me; I contemplated the dire effects of my crimes, and my heart failed. The house was all dark and silent, nor for worlds could I have assumed the courage to knock. I stood trembling with dread and irresolution, until my wearied limbs would no longer support me; when, making a last effort, I determined to crawl to the wood-house, and here said, 'If I die before morning, I shall at least have the satisfaction of resigning my spirit near the happy dwelling where I received it.'

"This moment I reached the shed; but there soon lost all remembrance. A heavy sleepiness appeared to oppress me, but I felt no pain, nor knew anything more until, blessed moment! I found myself once again in my father's house, with an affectionate and merciful mother hanging over me.

"Oh, William, may this act of tenderness and humanity be rewarded! May thy children see the glory of the present day, and the blessing of thy old age! May they never cause a frown on thy brow, nor a blush on their mother's cheek! May they grow up examples of virtue and innocence, worthy to live, and not afraid to die! May thy unhappy sister be the last, as she is the first, disgrace to her family! and with her death, may both her errors and her sorrows be forgotten.

"Oh, my beloved friends, I have but little more to add! I feel the hand of death is on me; and my short day of vanity is terminating with a long and gloomy night! Oh, pray for me, my brother—my sister, pray for me! Let your pure souls intercede for the wretched Emma! Heaven will hearken to you, though its gates of mercy should be barred against my petitions. Pray too for the lost, unhappy, abandoned Edwin!

"Oh, my father, I cannot close without imploring a blessing on your venerable head!—Though it passes my polluted lips, oh, let it be heard at the throne of mercy! and may the tears you have shed for your unhappy child be the last that may ever wet your cheek! May blessings multiply around you, until the hour you shall be called to a happy eternity! but, oh! here, my beloved parent, must the wretched Emma be for ever shut out. Oh, mercy, mercy! Methinks a tremendous voice sound in my ears, 'Go, thou accursed!' Ah! no, my father, you said it was sinful to despair; I will go pray, and endeavour to hope.

"Another day do I behold the glorious sun! another day is given me for repentance! Merciful God, I thank thee! Something whispers me that I have but few more remaining. Oh that I had profited of the many that I have thrown away! Alas! my eyes grow dim, and weakness pervades my whole frame! Perhaps it is the last time I may be able to hold the pen; if so, heaven have mercy on me, and bless my dear friends!"

This ended the narrative of the unhappy Emma, which Fanny and William bedewed with their tears. At length they retired to rest, shocked at what they had read, and determined, at all events, to conceal it from their parents.

CHAPTER LI.

ON the following morning, when the family met at breakfast, the maternal eye of Fanny fixing on her eldest son, read an uncommon anxiety in his features, and immediately inquired the cause, which, however, Reuben passed off as a trifling indisposition, and soon after accompanied his father to a neighbouring village, where some business called him.

"What is the matter, my son?" said William, in his way thither. "I see, with concern, that your health declines, your usual spirits are fled, and some concealed uneasiness appears to prey upon your mind. I had flattered myself, that in a family so affectionate as ours, one would not have a thought necessary to conceal from the whole."—Nor have I, my dear father," replied Reuben. "I am uneasy almost without knowing why; and frequently, even myself, endeavour to account for the melancholy which overpowers me. I can truly say, that was the whole world laid before me, and I had the choice of my state, I would not change my present one. It is true, I wish that Anna was not in that hateful London. Do you not think it strange, my dear father, that the post brought us no letters last night?"—"Rather so; but we can have no fears for her safety; next post we shall doubtless hear of her. Mrs Palmer is perhaps returned to London, and they may be on the point of setting out for Inglewood."—"May they never again leave it!" replied Reuben, warmly. "Surrounded by my family, I feel myself the most blessed of human beings—not an individual in it but what seems necessary to my happiness; but deprive me of one, and my heart is cold; and though I accuse myself continually with ingratitude to the rest, yet were my life at stake, I cannot banish it."

More conversation of the same sort passed between the father and son, but all of which tended towards confirming the former that the latter had conceived an affection for Anna, which, however it might be restrained within the bounds of reason, would nevertheless embitter the peace of his future life. On their return home, William finding no one present but Godwin, Bernard, and Fanny, began a conversation on the subject, giving his opinion respecting the uneasiness of his son, and asking their joint advice.

"Were it not," said he, "for the unhappy examples we have had in our own family, of the effects of trusting youth in large towns, I should think of placing Reuben where he might study some profession, which might divert his mind from this unhappy inclination—as law, physic, or divinity."

"Nay," interrupted Bernard, "for his soul's sake, never make the boy a lawyer; it would be a wicked action, and you would have it hereafter to answer for."

"Why, surely, my dear father," replied William, with a smile, "you would not infer that all lawyers are wicked? Doubtless there are many virtuous."—"Like enough," answered Bernard; "but they never came within the scope of my knowledge."—"Indeed, my dear father," returned William, "you are wrong to condemn a whole body of men for the errors of a part. Believe me, there are many worthy pillars of the law, whose merits exceed all praise; and that, written in the hearts of their countrymen, will be transmitted from generation to generation, though writing should be prohibited, and printing destroyed."—"I knock under," cried Bernard. "Here is the health of all such in a bumper; and in their journey through life, may they never meet a man that reveres and honours them less than I do. Let the boy be a lawyer then; but as for a parson, his face has not the right cut, and would never do for a pulpit."—"And why," inquired old Godwin, "should you think so?"—"Why! why, because he looks too merry. The dog too has a shy look. A parson's face should be like a standing pool, unruffled by any breeze, except when it creams and mantles with the prospect of a good living. Besides, I do not think the boy would like to be a parson."—"Perhaps not," answered William. "But what say you to physic, or rather surgery?"—"Why, those will never do," returned Bernard. "A fine surgeon, truly!—why, he cannot kill an old hen. Oh, he would cut a *sorry* figure for a surgeon! Then for your physic: it would surely be a sin and a shame for such a strong, handsome fellow as Reuben to waste his time in listening to the complaints of old women (for who the pies would be fool enough to trust him with the young ones!) spreading of plasters, rolling up pills, or making drenches that would poison a horse! Besides, he would have no business in the country; he must go to London; and there we should lose

for good."—"If he must be a profession," said the elder Godwin, "I must confess I see no one equal to the church: for what man so truly respectable as the worthy minister of his pastor—the comforter of the afflicted—the reprover of the wicked—the protector of the low—the father of the orphan—and the friend of all mankind!"—"But where will you find one?" answered Bernard, drily. "I never heard much of our parson's comforting the afflicted; and, for reproving the wicked, I suppose it is for that purpose he gets drunk four times a-week in his squire's Joice; and as for protecting widows, and being a father to orphans—who helped a poor old widow and her children at the mill? Not the parson I throw. Nay, never frown; I have let the cat out of the bag undesignedly; but the widow's prayer and the children's blessing—"

"We will change the discourse, if you please," interrupted Godwin gravely.—"Ay," answered Bernard, "you may hide your light under a bushel; but it will burn through, and blaze out. However, I mean no offence—so let us, as you say, change the subject: I will be for law."—"Nay," answered William, "if we find it absolutely necessary, Reuben must sacrifice for himself. Were it not for this unhappy prepossession, the avocation of his profession is what I would have chosen for him—the profession of man, in the unvisited state of nature, who reaps what he sows, and feels the power of his Creator in every wind that blows, and in his providence in the glorious sunshine. But why are you silent, my love?" continued William, addressing his wife. "Your counsels ever better my opinion, and are desirable to all."—"My advice, then," replied Fanny, "is that you think no more of a change of profession for Reuben. We know him now strictly virtuous, and all our hearts can wish: who could answer for his stability at so early an age, were he thrown into alluring and dreadful temptations? Let him, then, remain at home, a farmer like his father; time may, perhaps, remove this partiality for Anna, if it is so; but if it is not, and we find it mutual, we are not without resource."—"Name it," returned William.—"Bid defiance to censure, which can never injure us; declare the truth, and unite them," replied Fanny. "Think you not, that should my beloved sister look from her seat of blessedness, she would say as I do? for can I suppose that she would doom the son of my bosom, and the child who has cost her dear, to misery? Surely not; my Agnes had a soul superior—she would have stepped over such narrow bounds, joined their hands, and, for their happiness, have been regardless of the finger of calumny, if any such could point at so gentle, and, I will add, so innocent a victim."—"First of women!" exclaimed William, "how truly might I say, thy counsels are bettered my opinion? The disgrace would indeed fall where it is most due—on my unhappy brother, whom, in all probability, it would never reach. But what say our parents? Their advice shall determine us."

"My brother Bernard's opinion shall be mine," replied Godwin. "As the most injured person, he shall decide."

"Well then," said Bernard, "I coincide with Fanny; for what could give us more pleasure in joining the hands of that good boy and dear girl? I am sure it would leave me nothing to wish for on earth; and could my poor lost child rise from her grave, I am convinced she would applaud it."—"And for me," added Godwin, "I truly confess I know no event that would confer equal satisfaction on me as that of seeing the child of our dear and lamented ones united for life to our worthy Reuben. Notwithstanding all the precautions we have taken, I have frequently dreaded lest some unforeseen accident should discover her birth to an unworthy father, if he yet survives, and that he should claim her from us. By this step she would be secure for life, and safe in the bosom of truth and affection! but, my children, the concurrence of Mrs Palmer is also necessary, and should guide us all; she has in our amities been a true friend, and Anna is peculiarly hers."—"Nor would I advance a single step without her advice," said William. "On her return we will resume the business, and endeavour to discover whether Anna's affections are in unison with Reuben's; if they are, with our good friend's approbation, we will then bid defiance to all but their happiness."

Reuben and Edward at that moment entering, the conversation gave way to more general subjects.

The day following was the return of the post. William had his eyes on his son, who could not settle to any business, but ten times in each hour walked to the gate, listening to every noise. At length the sound of the horn struck his ear; and, with the speed of lightning, he rushed to meet the welcome postman, who presented a letter, directed in an unknown hand to his father. An unusual tropidation seized his whole frame; for a moment his heart ceased

to beat; but the next its motion returned with redoubled violence. Hastening to his father, he presented the letter in silence, fixing his eyes on his face, as though he would read the contents there; but though these were not discernible, the effect they produced plainly evinced something more than common; for the flush of health gave place to a sudden paleness, an unusual gravity at the same time overspreading his whole countenance. "For heaven's sake, my dear father," exclaimed Reuben, "speak! Pardon my impatience—you have surely received some disastrous news. Say, what of Anna? I am sure it concerns her."—"Anna is not in perfect health," replied William, with as much composure as he could assume. "We will go to London, and bring her home with us!"

Reuben for a moment made no reply, but at length exclaimed—"Oh, my beloved Anna! my heart sunk at thy departure, and too truly forebode that I should see thee no more!"

"It would better become us as men, Reuben," replied his father, "to consider how we may soften this news to your mother and our aged parents, than give way to anguish that merely interests ourselves. But prepare—we will depart this night, for the manner of the intelligence yet more alarms me than her sickness."

He then gave his son the letter, whose anxiety was redoubled by the perusal. While he was expressing his surprise at the contents, Edward entered, and was immediately informed of the intelligence his father had received. Anna's situation he lamented with truly fraternal affection; he, however, had no sooner looked at the letter, than a loud exclamation escaped him.—"It is—it is Miss Fitzmorris's hand!" said he; "the gentle Editha is alarmed for our sister, and this information comes from her."—"From what reason should you suppose so?" replied William. "How is it possible you should be able to ascertain the young lady's hand?"—"Nothing more easy," replied he, producing his pocket-book, and drawing forth a letter.—"See, there is what she wrote concerning the slaves; compare them—you will find the characters agree."

William did so, and was entirely of his son's opinion; then informing him of their intended journey, was putting up both letters.—"You—you have not returned my letter, father," hesitated Edward, "and may perhaps lose it out of your pocket."

William, thus reminded, gave it back to his son, whose face at that moment was covered with a burning crimson. "And may I not also accompany you, my dear father?" said he. "My heart is anxious for my sister, and I may be of some service."—"You will be most so my son, by using every means in your power, during my absence, to support the spirits of our aged parents and your dear mother, to whom I am going to disclose this disagreeable business. I shall then depart without delay."

Edward made no answer but by a deep sigh, and immediately followed his father to join the family.

The intelligence, though communicated with every caution that tenderness could suggest, fell heavy on all. Even Fanny's presence of mind forsook her, and she lamented with anguish the situation of Anna.

"Oh, fly my beloved husband!" cried she, "fly to the darling of my heart! Oh, gracious heaven! spare all that is left of my dear—restore her to my maternal arms—or never, never will my soul know peace? Where, at this disastrous moment, is our best friend? where is Mrs Palmer?"—"By this time she is doubtless with her," replied William. "Cheer, my love, or indeed I cannot leave you. The next post will, I trust, bring you good news."

Everything being ready, William and his son soon after departed on their own horses for the first stage, and on hired ones the remainder of the journey.

CHAPTER LII.

THOUGH the letter which Editha had written to William Godwin had reached him, yet that designed for Mrs Palmer had failed, as it was addressed to her at Bath, and that lady was removed to Bristol; her father being disgusted with the former place after a week's residence had insisted on repairing to the latter, which he reached in so weak and exhausted a state, as to make it be apprehended that he would have expired on the road.

On his arrival he found himself so much worse, that, unwilling as he was to acknowledge it, he declared it was fruitless to attempt any longer to fly from death, and accordingly began to bustle about the mighty work of repentance, being determined to rub out the accumulating

of four score and seven years between the rising and going down of the sun, for he survived little more than that time after his arrival.

Mrs Palmer left no duty unperformed while he was living, nor yet after his decease; for living by his will that he desired she would see him laid in the vault of his ancestors, she determined to obey him. To his wife he left five hundred pounds a-year, and the bulk of his fortune to his daughter, to whom this acquisition was, until lately, unexpected.

The second day after his death Mrs Palmer had written to Anna, signifying the event that had taken place; also her intention of accompanying the body to Derbyshire, desiring her to write, as she should have left Bristol; and that immediately after the funeral she would return to town post; expressed the sorrow she felt at Mrs Fitzmorris's illness (Anna's father respecting her having reached Mrs Palmer the day before she left Bath); declared her obligations to Mr Fitzmorris, hoping that gentleman would permit his daughter to accompany him the ensuing summer; desired her not to inform her parents of Mrs Fitzmorris's illness, as it would give them unnecessary uneasiness; and, finally, she concluded the whole by saying, she expected to embrace her in a fortnight at farthest.

This letter reached Anna, but not until after it had been perused by Fitzmorris, who had satisfaction to find that, in all probability, the lady was safe for a fortnight, during which time, if he determined to give up Anna, her health would be entirely re-established; or if, on the contrary, he adopted other measures, he would have time to execute anything he might resolve on.

This letter arrived on the sixth day after Editha's removal, and when Anna was sufficiently recovered to leave her bed.

Previous to this event, Fitzmorris had not intruded his presence on Anna; but now secure of Mrs Palmer, and apprized that her health was almost restored, his usual spirits returned, and he determined to lose no time, but to press his suit with all the earnestness he was master of, and accordingly sent his compliments and entreated the favour of personally enquiring after her health. Anna, who felt a repugnance she accused herself with for Fitzmorris, returned to this message an obliging answer, determined, as her health was so much restored, to entreat she might be permitted to go to Editha, whom she longed to question respecting her writing to her parents and Mrs Palmer, as she could not conceive why it had not been done privately, truly-surmising, by the removal of the last-mentioned, that the letter to her had failed.

On Fitzmorris's entrance, he was struck with the alteration his diabolical arts had made in Editha's beautiful face; but, nevertheless, complimented her on her recovery, expressing the alarm he had at first occasioned him, when he rushed without ceremony into her apartment, and enquiring, with well-dissembled curiosity, if this was a first attack, or whether she was subject to fits?

"Never!" replied Anna, "and I trust I never shall again. The wine I drank at supper was particularly disagreeable to me, and to that I attribute my illness."—Fitzmorris, vexed to find that she still persevered in the real cause, endeavoured all he could to divert that opinion, which Anna's timidity did not suffer her to persist in; but, turning the discourse to Editha and her aunt, desired to be informed respecting the health of the latter, and whether she might not now be permitted to see her friend.

"My sister's health is still very precarious," replied Fitzmorris; "and for my daughter, in a few days I shall be happy to present her to you, for then all danger will be over."

Anna sighed.—"I thought, sir," replied she, with great gentleness, "that fits were never communicative."—"But, my dear Miss Palmer, yours were accompanied by a degree of fever that rendered them alarming. I fear you have received some infection from your sister previous to your coming hither. But why does that melancholy overspread your lovely face? Editha the only one in the family for whom you have the least esteem? Command here; I am mistress, and myself the most devoted of your servants."

Such a speech from the gloomy, harsh Fitzmorris, at once surprised and overpowered Anna with confusion.—"I should be very ungrateful, sir," replied she, "not to respect the whole family, to whom I have been so highly obliged."—"Respect, charming Anna, is too good a return for the affection my heart acknowledges for you; so gentle a mind cannot surely be cruel enough to doom me to despair, when I lay myself and fortune at your feet."—"Good heaven! Sir, you shock me. Editha's father! Indeed, you distress me beyond measure?"

—“How so?” replied Fitzmorris. “Is my affection then so dreadful, and is Editha to monopolize all your love?” As he spoke, he attempted to take her hand; but Anna shrunk back, and appeared ready to faint.—“Nay,” said he, “why that averted look? Say, love, girl, will you give me leave to apply to Mrs Palmer? I flatter myself my fortune——” —“Will have no effect on her,” replied Anna, recovering her confusion. “She loves me too well not to leave me, in a cause of so much consequence, to my own choice, and that is never to quit her: I have therefore only to entreat, that while I intrude on your hospitality, you will cease a conversation that gives me so much pain.”—“By Heaven, it is impossible!” exclaimed he, attempting to embrace her: “I must be more or less than man not to resolve to conquer this soft timidity—this childish declaration.”

Anna screamed aloud, and in a moment Julia rushed into the room.—“What be the matter?” cried she; “you fright away my sense! Sure you not drink wine again!”—“Beneath gone!” exclaimed Fitzmorris; “why this insolent intrusion? You were not called.”—“Mistake was,” replied Julia. “Young missey no scream widout want me. Julia know duty, and more from love den fear.”—“I charge you stay,” said Anna; “I have business for you.”—“I then may take my leave,” rejoined Fitzmorris malignantly. “You will consider of what I have said, and I trust will answer me more kindly in the evening.”

Anna made no reply, and Fitzmorris immediately after withdrew.—“What shall we do, Julia?” cried she; “that odious man has frightened me to death. Oh that I had never entered his house! Mrs Palmer, from her removal, I fear, has never received Editha’s letter.”—“But de oder, missey—friends get dat, no doubt—soon be here,” replied Julia. “That thought alone, Julia, enables me to keep up my spirits, for the bare idea of passing fortnight here would kill me. But have you heard where Editha is placed?”—“No; I as footman, for more servants be come now, missey; but no tell me, only laugh in my face.”—“I will go,” said Anna: “I can hire a post-chaise to take us home; there is less danger of the high road than under the roof of this odious man.”

Julia advised her against this step, as by that means she would probably miss her friend whom she might soon expect, adding, “No fear dat, little time, missey; me take care, me warrant; beside, me tink massa no let us go.”

“Not let me go, Julia!” repeated Anna; “you astonish me; he will not surely dare to detain me!”—“Dare!” repeated Julia: “ah missey, you no know what he dare—he fear nothing.”

Anna shuddered at this account, but nevertheless determined to mention her intention when next he should visit her.

Fitzmorris retired to dress in the meantime, and to his trusty confidant declared what had passed, vowing that Anna should not escape him; for he was determined, if all other means failed, to carry her out of the kingdom, and secrete her until she consented to his terms, adding, that the death of old Sommerton (whom he supposed her grandfather) would make a fine addition to her fortune, and concluded with saying—“Between ourselves, such a recruit may not prove amiss, for I have lost considerably since I came to England: had the old woman died, her ten thousand indeed might have made up the deficiency; but I have scarcely any hopes of that now, for she is much better.”

Fitzmorris, to his great vexation, was prevented repeating his persecution to Anna that day by the unwelcome visit of three of his London companions, who, knowing he had a house at the Heath, called to take dinner, and sat drinking with him until the night was far advanced, leaving him in a state of almost brutal intoxication, in which situation, taking up a candle, he declared he would go to Anna’s apartment; but his trusty valet, who saw he was in no situation to recommend himself to a lady, prevented him, by assuring him she had long since retired to rest, and soon after persuaded him to do the same. While Fitzmorris and his domestics had been employed in the entertainment of the guests, Anna had written to Inglewood without, however, mentioning the extent of her uneasiness, but entreating to be fetched home without delay. Julia conveyed the letter to the postman, as she had done those of Editha.

CHAPTER LIII.

FITZMORRIS rose earlier than usual, his head aching from the last night’s debauch—his blood covered with what he called love, and his conscience agonized with all the torment that vice gave rise to.

In order to reduce his spirits to some degree of calmness, he walked into his garden, and was apparently lost in thought when Anna, leaning on Julia, crossed the path before him, and a time banished his unpleasant reverie.—“Abroad so early!” said he; “I am fortunate this morning!” at the same time offering to place her arm under his. “May I flatter myself I will breakfast with me?”—“I came merely to try my strength, sir,” returned Anna, withdrawing her hand, “as I propose going to town to see Mrs Fitzmorris to-day.”—“You jest, rely!” answered he; “you cannot think of putting your health to so dangerous a hazard, or that I am so little sensible of the value of my charge as to permit so improper a step!”—“I was trusted, sir,” replied Anna, “to Mrs Fitzmorris’s care; I am not afraid of fevers; and as Miss Editha is not here —”—“I will, on my honour, fetch her in two days,” interrupted he. But favour me, charming Anna, by dismissing your servant! I have something to communicate which requires your private ear.”—“I hear no subject, sir,” replied Anna, “that needs concealment; and, for myself, would only entreat that you will permit one of your domestics to fetch me a chaise from Hounslow.”—“And will you favour me with no answer to what I requested yesterday?” said he, angrily, “since I must speak before this black devil?”—“You’ll devil black, massa,” interrupted Julia. “Negro call devil white; me believe no colour, only bad heart make devil—wicked conscience hell.”—“D—n you,” exclaimed Fitzmorris, losing his temper; “I merit this for permitting you to torment me after what passed in Jamaica.”—“Ah, much pass dere, massa; if you forget, your memory no so good as Julia’s.”

Fitzmorris raised his hand, and was only prevented from striking her by the presence of Anna. “I see,” said he, “I have nothing to expect, and shall act accordingly; yet must inform you, madam, that to Mrs Palmer will I only resign you: she, perhaps, may be more sensible of my attention than you are.”

With these words he turned away in a rage, and soon regained the house, leaving Anna gazed at his brutality, and shocked to find herself in the power of so bad a man.

Fitzmorris saw Anna in the afternoon in her own apartment; he attempted, as before, to send away Julia, but in vain. Liberty had made her bold, and she now openly despised the tyrant whose frown had hitherto made her tremble.

From Anna he was convinced he had no favour to expect; he saw he was detested; and anger, as much as love, stimulated him to revenge the affront. He had been particularly favoured by the ladies, and was enraged to find her blind to those attractions that had subdued so many, never considering that her heart might be pre-engaged, or that he was no longer so young, or possessed of so attractive a person as formerly; though, to confess the truth, his dissipated life, more than age, had caused the alteration.

“I have no time to lose,” said he to his colleague in vice; “and it is but labour lost to try gentle means; force and fear can only conquer so obstinate a spirit; she will find I am not to be trifled with. ’Sdeath, have I lived until now to be vanquished by a girl? Besides, should I let her escape, she would but relate what had passed, and make me ridiculous. By Heaven, I will bear her to France, and there, wife or mistress, her choice shall determine. I have nothing to fear in this case but the tongue of her mother; and that, until I can make all secure, I will keep at a distance. She has no heroic brothers; but if she had, I care not; my arm never yet failed me, nor do I fear it now.”—“I must confess,” replied the valet, “I am not quite so sanguine in this business as I have been in some where I have had the honour to serve you. Mrs Palmer is rich, and will doubtless spare no pains or expense to discover her daughter.”—“True, nor no expense to heal her reputation; for who will believe she was not consenting to the elopement? Besides, the young vixen will very soon be glad to salve so desperate a case with the old remedy matrimony: but enough of this; prepare me post horses to-morrow night by nine o’clock; I will settle all my business in the day. You must ride forward and obtain relays, and give out, in case of question, that I am conveying an imprudent daughter to France. We shall reach Dover early in the morning, and will go directly on shipboard to prevent all alarm.”—“But what, sir, do you mean to do with Julia?”—“D—n her, if it were not for her infernal yells I would take her too, if it were only for the pleasure of pushing her overboard into the sea. As it is, we will lock her up, and leave her under the charge of my sister, whom you must command, as she values her place, not to release her until the next day.”—“But Miss Editha, sir, and your son?”—“Pish! if my sister gets well, the girl will naturally return to her, and I may make a merit hereafter of sending for her abroad. As for the boy, he cannot be better than at school; therefore no more questions, but

prepare to obey me."—"After so many proofs of my attachment, sir," replied the man, "shall not now forfeit your friendship."—"After so many proofs of my gratitude, I hope you will not," answered the master.

With these words the worthy pair separated for the night.

CHAPTER LIII.

In the morning all was preparation for the intended expedition. Fitzmorris wrote to his sister, who was yet in a very precarious state of health, that immediate business demanded his presence in a distant part of the kingdom; and entreated that, when it would be convenient she would again take the care of Editha. To his son's preceptor he likewise sent, signifying his intention that he should remain at school until they heard farther from him. He also settled his domestic economy for the country with his housekeeper, who was the valet's sister, and remitted an order to his attorney to discharge his house in town, together with his domestics. Thus all was prepared, and Fitzmorris looked on his success as certain.

Julia, whose eyes and ears were attentive to all that passed, was not unmindful of the more than usual business that seemed in agitation, but which, perhaps, had made no material impression, had she not heard the valet and housekeeper in close conversation, the former with a bitter imprecation cursing the new folly that actuated his master, declaring it was the last he would be engaged in, concluding with saying—"The pitcher goes often to the well, but at last comes home broken. Never had man such devilish warnings and hair-breadth escapes, but it is all in vain; they only, I think, make him more daring; and for this attempt on Miss Palmer—"

His eye at that instant met the figure of Julia, who was standing in the door-way; but uncertain whether she had heard, and concluding that if she had, she could make nothing of it, he turned the discourse to common occurrences until her departure.

Julia had but just related to Anna what she had heard, when Fitzmorris sent his compliments, and desired to be admitted. It was now afternoon, and he had been endeavouring to drown thought in wine; he therefore behaved with less caution than formerly, urging his suit with much vehemence, until at length seeing the trembling Anna terrified, and almost ready to faint, he desisted, and left her alone with Julia.

"Oh, my God, protect me!" cried Anna; "what can I do? Surely, if you love me, you will not deny my request. The attempt you heard them mention, and his behaviour, all conspire to show I have no time to lose! Let us then this very night privately leave the house. I am strong, and can walk a great way; neither am I without money; Heaven will, I am sure, protect us, and we shall reach home in safety."—"Wid all my heart," replied Julia. "Ah! me hope some friend come before now."—"It is impossible they could reach here, had they even come post, before to-morrow or the next day; and oh, Julia, what may not happen in that interval! No; I will brave the worst, sooner than remain longer under this hated roof."

They then determined, as soon as the house should be settled for the night, to endeavour to escape, and reach Hounslow on foot.—"From whence," said Anna, "we will, my faithful Julia, procure a chaise, and travel all the way post; by morning we shall be safe from pursuit, should we even be followed; but that I think improbable, as Fitzmorris will be uncertain of our route."

This resolution supported the spirits of Anna during the evening; in the course of which Julia made up a little bundle of necessary apparel, which she proposed to take with them.

At length the clock struck nine, and an instant after a chaise drove into the court. Anna scarcely breathed, though she thought it impossible it should bring any one from Inglewood; but all her hopes vanished when a moment after Fitzmorris desired to be admitted.—"I am sorry, charming Anna," said he, "to be the messenger of bad tidings; but Mrs Palmer is taken ill at Derby, and has sent to require your immediate attendance."—"Preserve her, merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Anna; "I will fly to her; the fatigue she has undergone has killed her, and I shall be deprived of my dearest friend."—"I received the intelligence near an hour since," returned Fitzmorris, "but could not assume courage to declare it to you; I, however, immediately ordered a chaise for your conveyance, and, with your permission, will accompany and deliver you safe to her."—"Julia will be sufficient," replied she, recoiling at his offer; "I have no fear but for my beloved mamma."—"Excuse me, I will not trust you alone to the dangers of the night, for I presume you will depart immediately. Julia can follow

a the morning by the stage. Come, you lose time—all is prepared," concluded he, presenting his hand.—Anna drew back, and paused for a moment, while Julia replied—"No leave missey; ne run after coach sooner den be leave here behind."—"Has my dear mamma sent no letter, or yet her servant to accompany me?" demanded Anna, fixing her soft but inquiring eyes on Fitzmorris.—"No," replied he, "a horseman brought the message, and departed immediately for London."—"It is strange!" answered Anna, pausing; "I should have thought that— But come, Julia, we will go; and I can but thank Mr Fitzmorris for all his kindness."—"On ny life," interrupted he, impatiently, "you shall not go unprotected."—"Heaven will protect me," replied Anna, raising her eyes. "No action of my past life has, I trust, made me forfeit that blessing."—"Doubtless not," answered Fitzmorris, with a sneer; "but in this case t delegates its power to me. Come—come—on my honour I will guide you in safety."—"Slender barrier!" said Anna aside, the discourse which Julia had overheard recurring fresh to her memory: then turning to Fitzmorris with as much firmness as she could assume, she added, "Pardon me, sir, for declining your offer; but, indeed, I will not go without Julia."—"By my soul, but you shall!" returned he, losing his patience, and stamping with rage; "I wished to woo you to love and happiness, but will not be trifled with; and therefore now throw off the mask, and boldly tell you that I am determined; all resistance is vain; you must and shall accompany me."—"Oh God, protect me!" cried Anna, trembling: "Then, perhaps, my dear, dear friend is not ill."—"I neither know nor care," exclaimed he, rudely seizing her hand; "she is an old woman, and fit only for worm's meat, while you, glowing with youth and beauty—"—"Unhand me, monster!" screamed Anna, at the same time releasing herself and flying to Julia, who clenched her fists, and grinning horribly, placed herself before her, bearing no indifferent resemblance of a fury defending an angel.—"No go widout like," sputtered Julia, almost inarticulate with passion; "bad white man—wicked Christian—me die before let take away missey."—"Die then, and be d—d!" exclaimed he, at the same time, with unmanly brutality, striking her over the face (which was instantly covered with blood) with such force as caused her to recoil several paces, and but for the timely succour of Anna, she must have fallen to the ground.—"Monster! villain!" screamed Anna, rending the air with her cries: "murder us together, for we will never separate."—"I have business for you living," replied he, tauntingly; "resistance is useless." With these words, like a fell kite seizing a dove, he snatched up his prey, and in spite of her cries and resistance, bore her down the flight of stairs into the hall, covered as she was with the blood of Julia, who, from the blow, lay senseless on the ground.—"For Heaven's sake, sir," exclaimed the valet, who was waiting in the hall, "cover her with a cloak! it will not delay a moment. See, she has fainted." And, indeed, Anna, exhausted with the exertion she had made, had suddenly become inanimate, and now lay motionless in Fitzmorris's arms. The door of the hall had been opened in readiness, as Fitzmorris descended the staircase. At that instant William Godwin and Reuben arrived and rushed in, having heard the screams as they alighted from their horses at the gate, there being no one to oppose their passage, the postillion alone being on the outside. The first object that presented was Anna, covered with blood, and apparently dead, in Fitzmorris's arms. Reuben, his eyes sparkling with rage, flew to him, and in a moment, with the vigorous arm of undebauched youth, snatched, in spite of resistance, the senseless Anna from the grasp, while his father seconded his efforts by knocking down the valet, and seizing another villain, who came to the assistance of their infamous master.

Fitzmorris, whose fury knew no bounds, finding himself deprived of Anna, hastily drew a pistol from his pocket, and levelled it at William. At that instant their eyes met—they became fixed as statues, the guilty Fitzmorris recoiling a few steps, and dropping the pistol from his enervated hand.—"Is it possible," at length exclaimed William, "that my eyes do not deceive me? Doth the earth yet shudder with thy impious weight? Degenerate monster! guilty of every crime that disgraces human nature! the death of thy own daughter was alone wanting to complete the number! Oh, murdered child of sweet Agnes! I here devote myself to revenge; the ties of blood I tear from my heart, and even here on earth shall thy detested father pay the dues of offended justice."

Daring as Fitzmorris, or rather Edwin, was in vice, he appeared petrified with horror, rolling his haggard eyes around, and gnashing his teeth with anguish.

"She is not dead, my father!—she breathes, and will yet live to bless us," exclaimed Reuben in a transport.—"For that, Heaven be praised! But say," demanded William,

turning indignantly towards his brother, "what does this mean? You cannot surely have been so abandoned of God as to have injured this innocent."—"She, at least, has not been abandoned of God," replied Edwin: "her person is as uncontaminated as it is beautiful. But speak, for I have but little time to lose; did not you say she was the child of Agnes?"—"I did," returned William. "In the horror of the moment prudence was lost, and I now will conceal the truth no longer: she is your own daughter; but build not upon that, for no human power shall snatch her from my protection; therefore attempt it not—I warn you it will be in vain. As soon as she recovers we will be gone. You have my pity, and Heaven forgive you; oh, will no warning move that obdurate heart? Surely the meeting with Emma would have deterred any other but yourself from vice for ever, and made them penitent as she was."

"Well—well—well—you know that too; but enough. Answer me a few questions, and I will swear never to attempt removing the child of my Agnes from you."

"I ask no oath," replied William; "but propose your questions. Anna recovers, and I am in haste."

"And so am I," returned Edwin frantically. "If Anna is the child of Agnes, whose infant did I see dead on her bosom?"

"Mine," answered his brother, "an unhappy innocent, who even in the womb fell a sacrifice to your offences by the anguish they caused its mother."

"Enough!" cried he, striking his forehead. "One more question, and then farewell for ever.—Who is Mrs Palmer? Oh, that subterfuge destroyed me."

"The present owner of the estate upon the Forest, and a more than parent to Anna, whom she received from her dying mother."

"The mystery of the ring is then explained," said Edwin, without regarding his brother. "No warning could, indeed, awaken me!" Then turning towards Anna, who was almost recovered, but in silent terror clasping Reuben's neck, he viewed her with attention for some minutes, then, with a look of despair, rushed out of the room.

William now caught Anna to his bosom, speaking comfort, and tenderly inquiring if she was able to accompany them, for that he was determined to be gone as soon as possible.

"Oh, let us hasten," at length said Anna. "But where is my poor Julia? this blood is hers, and spilled in my defence."

William then asked where she had left her; and being informed, without further question ascended the staircase, and found Julia recovered from insensibility, but so much hurt that she could not leave the apartment without his assistance.

Having led her to Anna, and bound up her head, they were about to depart in the chaise, which had been prepared for other purposes, when the report of a pistol alarmed them. William, prepossessed with the horrid truth, rushed forward into the house, to demand the cause, which was soon discovered; on the floor of the parlour lay extended, in the agonies of death, the guilty Edwin, who had placed a pistol to his ear, and thus, uncalled, rushed into the presence of an offended Creator.

Life, however, had not forsaken him; he fixed his eyes on his brother, and pointed to the table; then grasping the hand of William, who had forgotten the vices of the man in the situation of the brother, with an agonizing pang expired.

Depraved as Edwin had been for years, William was shocked at his death, which precluded all repentance. For some time he remained in speechless anguish, bending over the disfigured body. At length he recollected Edwin's pointing to the table, and, on approaching it, found a paper, wherein was written—

"I appoint my daughter, Anna Godwin, my son, William Fitzmorris, and his sister Editha, joint heirs and inheritors of all I die possessed of; and I leave them in the care and under the sole guardianship of William Godwin, whom I once called brother.

"EDWIN GODWIN FITZMORRIS."

This had apparently been written but a few moments previous to the rash act, and plainly evinced, that however destitute he was of virtue himself, he revered it in his brother, by wishing him to take charge of his children.

Oppressed with the scene before him, William was overpowered with the shock; but, struggling with his feelings, he at length turned to the domestics, who stood around in stupid amazement, and gave the necessary orders, which they immediately showed a disposition to

obey, as the valet, who, as may be surmised, was no other than Harris, informed them he was their late master's brother.

William returned to the hall, desiring Reuben and Anna to depart immediately to an inn at Hounslow, where he would join them in half an hour. Reuben had heard the discourse that passed between his father and Fitzmorris, and by it had learned that he was no other than his uncle Edwin, and to his utter amazement, the father of Anna, and now readily surmised the fatal event that had taken place. As for Anna, her alarm and fainting had rendered her insensible to everything until Fitzmorris rushed out of the hall; she now would fain have questioned Godwin respecting the cause of the fresh confusion, but he only replied by giving her in charge to Reuben, who placed her with Julia in the chaise, and accompanied them to Hounslow. Reuben, previous to his entering the vehicle, stepping back to his father, said, "When I have seen Anna in safety, may I return? My heart recoils at leaving you, even for a moment, in such distress."—"No, my son," replied William, "I will soon join you. Alas! the unhappy man is dead by his own hand; and though nature abhors the deed, as many other of his actions, yet he was my brother."

William now re-entered the house, and calling for Fitzmorris's confidential servant, demanded where the children of his unhappy brother were placed? To which Harris replied, that the boy was at Winchester, and Editha at a school not more than two miles from Hounslow. William then ordered the domestics to attend him, and walking through the house, he placed his seal on the escrutoires on behalf of the children, and soon after left the house.

Reuben in the meantime, with his charge, had reached an inn at Hounslow, where Anna began to look around her without fear, anxious only for the return of him whom she called her father, and whose conduct truly entitled him to that appellation. At length Godwin entered; Anna flew to embrace him, inquiring what had detained him—at whom the pistol had been fired—and what uneasiness oppressed him?

"Ask me no questions to-night, my love," answered Godwin: "to-morrow I have much more to disclose to you; but at present let us retire to rest—the events of the day have nearly overcome me."

They soon after withdrew; and Godwin's horror for his brother's death was for some hours lost in sleep, fatigue mastering every other sensation.

In the morning all met with recruited spirits; Godwin only was depressed and unhappy, and being with Reuben and Anna alone, after breakfast, addressed the latter thus:—"My dear Anna, a number of unhappy circumstances that preceded, and likewise followed your birth, rendered it necessary that I should adopt and pass you to the world as my child; and I can truly say I have loved you as such; but, my Anna, the deception, for many reasons, must now cease, but not my affection—that must remain strong as ever, beyond time or chance to alter."—"Am I not then your daughter?" cried Anna, turning pale and trembling. "On, my dear father, do not disclaim your child."—"Disclaim thee!" repeated he, folding her in his arms, "never; family reasons now require the secret to be divulged; but think me thy parent as before."—"Alas!" said Anna, "if it must be so. But have I a father—a mother?—Ah! my heart will lead me to her!—It is—it must be Mrs Palmer."—"Not so," returned Godwin; "your mother died soon after your birth; she was the beloved sister of my wife, and called Agnes: her loss you have heard us deplore."—"But my father, is he too dead?"—"Alas! I tremble to name him, for I fear he has made thee suffer much; but remember, he knew thee not, and has paid his follies with his life; let us therefore pity the errors of thy father, and my brother."—"Good Heavens!" cried Anna, scarcely articulate; "surely I dream! you cannot mean Fitzmorris?"—"I do, indeed," answered Godwin. "By what means, or what reason he was called so, I know not; but some future time you shall know all."—"Oh! I know too much," cried Anna. "Heaven pardon me, I hated him! I called him names!—but—but—alas! that fatal pistol is explained! Did you not say he was dead too? Did he forgive me?"—"He did indeed," returned Godwin; "for see the paper he has left, does he not mention you with his other children?"—"Oh! I want it not—I do not deserve it," said she; "let me still be your child. I have no wish for his wealth. But is Editha indeed my sister?"—"She is. I am now going to her," replied Godwin. "Reuben shall remain here in my absence. I shall return to dinner."

Godwin then departed, leaving Anna and Reuben; the former of whom, lost in thought,

remained for some time silent, until the latter taking her hand, and tenderly pressing it, said—“Oh! my Anna, is it possible—and are you, indeed, not my sister?”—“Your father hath said so,” answered Anna, weeping. “But, good heaven, how dreadful! he is now no longer my father! I have now lost all those ties so dear and necessary to my happiness, for you are now not my brother!”—“Happy thought!” exclaimed Reuben.—“Happy, Reuben!” repeated Anna. “And can you be so cruel as to say so—you whom I loved so dearly?”—“And do I not love you equally, Anna?” returned Reuben. “Heaven is my witness, that in your absence I have been the most miserable of mankind!”—“I will never leave Inglewood more,” said Anna, “but endeavour to forget all the troubles I have suffered; but Mr Fitzmorris’s death, for I cannot indeed call him father, will ever hang heavy on my spirits; yet I hope I was not the cause.”

Reuben said all he could to comfort her, and they soon after visited Julia she was much better, but had been ordered to be kept quiet for a day or two.

Godwin rode directly to the house of his late brother, and gave Harris the necessary orders respecting the funeral, and other business, particularly inquiring after Mrs Fitzmorris; and being told she was better, wrote a few lines to inform her of the melancholy event that had taken place.

“And now,” said Godwin, coldly addressing Harris, “how long have you lived with my brother; and how came you so readily to know me?”—“I have been his servant near eighteen years,” replied Harris; “and as for knowing you, sir, I had seen you some years back; you are little changed.—“I do not recollect it,” answered William. “Mention the time and place.”—“At your mother’s funeral,” replied Harris; “I brought a letter from my master.”—“And gave it by mistake to my wife. Was it so?” returned Godwin, a flush of anger on his cheek.—“It was, sir, and I beg pardon; but I obeyed the commands of my master.”—Godwin sighed.—“And how,” said he, “came my brother to be called Fitzmorris?”—“By his marriage, sir,” replied Harris; “an act of parliament was obtained for that purpose; but, if you will permit me, I will relate all the material events that happened to him after leaving England.”—“Some time hence I will trouble you,” replied Godwin; “at present you will oblige me by executing the orders I have given.”

Harris bowed, and William walked into the apartment where the remains of Edwin were deposited; he remained for some time alone; when he retired, his features plainly portrayed how much he was affected.

Previous to his visiting Editha, he returned to the inn, and finding Anna more calm, proposed she should accompany him in a postchaise, in which they soon reached the school where Editha was boarded. Godwin was at once struck with her appearance, while Anna throwing her arms around her, in broken sentences called her her dear, dear sister; Editha, with the most lively affection, returning her caresses.

When they became composed, William astonished Editha by informing her he was her uncle—the relationship she held to Anna—and at length, in as gentle a manner as possible, that her father had died *suddenly*; hoping that she would regard him as an affectionate representative of the parent she had lost.

Harsh as Fitzmorris had ever been to his daughter, she bewailed him with unfeigned sorrow, though it was somewhat mitigated by the soothing of Anna and the tenderness of her uncle.—“And shall I indeed live with Anna?” said she, raising her fine dark eyes, sparkling through tears, to his face; “and will you let me be one of your children? and may I be permitted to love as well as honour you?”—“You shall, my Editha, my child,” replied he, tenderly saluting her; “we will all love you.”—“Ah! then you will spoil me; for alas!” said she, “I have not been used to be loved, except by Anna here and my poor brother.”—“You deserve to be loved by all,” cried Anna; “at Inglewood every one will be sensible of your merit.”—“And shall I accompany you thither?” said Editha; “but my poor aunt, she is not yet recovered, and I cannot leave her, for she has been kind to me.”—“We will,” replied Godwin, “persuade her to visit Mrs Palmer in the summer, for my habitation is merely a farm, not fit for the reception of great ladies.”—“Perhaps so,” returned Editha; “but it will please me; for neither fine houses nor fine clothes have ever yet afforded me much satisfaction.”

Godwin and Anna soon after took leave of Editha, promising to see her the next day, and to take her into the country with them, if Mrs Fitzmorris consented.

Godwin, on his return to the inn, wrote to his wife, informing her that Anna was perfectly recovered, and with him; but as Mrs Palmer would be in town in the course of a few days, he did not think of returning until he had seen her.

"I will not," said he to Reuben and Anna, "shock your beloved mother with an account of the disasters that have happened, until we are on the spot to offer her comfort; nor will I, possibly, ever let our aged parents be informed of the real death of my unhappy brother: nature, at my father's age, could not bear so severe a blow: I shall simply therefore say, that he died suddenly, and expect you both to be equally cautious, not only at home, but also to ditha and her brother, from whom, if possible, I mean to conceal the unhappy catastrophe."

CHAPTER LV.

On the following morning, Godwin and Reuben accompanied Anna to her sister's, where they staid for the day; Godwin having determined to go to London respecting Mrs Palmer, and make arrangements for the future with Mrs Fitzmorris.

He found that lady somewhat recovered, but very weak from her illness. She received Godwin and his son coldly, but expressed concern at the death of her brother-in-law, inquiring whether he had left a will?

"I have not, madam, found one," replied he, "but I had rather suppose he had not made any regular one, as this paper was on the table."

Godwin then presented it to Mrs Fitzmorris, who considered it some time in silence. At length, said she, "I have frequently found your brother guilty of duplicity, but never suspected it could extend so far. In the first place, he passed himself on my father as the *only* son of a Scots gentleman, who had left him a fortune of ten thousand pounds. This sum he undoubtedly possessed; but his birth was a falsehood. He likewise, for I know not what reason, concealed his name and married my sister by that of Edwin, which now appears to be a baptismal one: the marriage I therefore conceive not valid, consequently the child must be illegitimate: now, though I should not be inclined to notice this, yet you may be assured my sister will. She married without the consent of my father, who was never reconciled to her, and having a large family, will hardly lose this opportunity of gaining her share of the property; you may therefore, sir, expect a lawsuit."—"Indeed I shall not," replied Godwin; "for I will readily, in behalf of the children, relinquish it, if not indubitably their right; nevertheless, if I find justice on their side, I will defend them with all I possess. They are a legacy left me by an unhappy brother, and are claimants both on my love and protection."—"May I ask, sir," said Mrs Fitzmorris, "whether the ten thousand pounds your brother possessed was his paternal fortune?"—"It was not, madam," returned Godwin; "it was left him by his first wife: his paternal fortune would have been, simply, the reversion of a farm, much integrity, and unblemished honesty. Alas! had he never left us, he had possessed them."—"You do not sure mean to infer that you are at this time a farmer, sir?"—"I am, indeed, madam."—Mrs Fitzmorris paused for a moment, then said, "And pray who is this Anna Godwin, whom he had so liberally made a sharer in my sister's fortune?"

"His daughter, madam. Had she not the honour to be for some time under your protection?" "You cannot surely mean Miss Palmer? The lady who introduced her to me is a woman of family and fortune, and would scorn such a deception."

Godwin explained how he surmised the mistake had arisen, and though Mrs Fitzmorris, in his continuation of the discourse, behaved with increased coolness, still he preserved the equality of his temper; but finding his visit neither likely to prove satisfactory nor advantageous, he took leave, having signified that he should consult his friends, and let her know the result.

Godwin called at the house that Mrs Palmer had occupied in town, and left a letter for her, should she return: then rode back to the Heath, as he wished to obtain what intelligence he could, that he might be able either to defend the claims of the children; or, if he found the business hopeless, to give it up without further trouble. Harris, he apprehended, was thoroughly acquainted with the whole; and therefore sending for him he addressed him thus:—"You will oblige me by relating all you know respecting my brother; circumstances under it necessary I should hear that which I would be excused from; nor will I be unmindful of the trouble I give you."—"Ah, sir," replied Harris, "before I begin, I must entreat you to summon all your fortitude; and also that you would remember, that though I

have not behaved with the strictest rectitude, still I was only a servant, and acted under the influence of a master."—"Renounce your errors, and hereafter you shall not want encouragement," replied Godwin.

Harris bowed, and, after a pause, began his recital.

CHAPTER LVI.

"My master, sir," said Harris, "never, I believe, rightly recovered the death of the lady who died in childbed; for ever after that event he gave into a habit of drinking, and I truly believe, rushed into every other species of dissipation, to stifle reflection.

"On his repurchasing into the army, the regiment was about to embark for the West Indies but a storm overtaking us, we beat about some time, and at length made Jersey, where we staid to refit.

"In the same regiment was a Mr Darleville, who some time before had fought with Mr Whitmore; he knew my master perfectly well, and for some spite he bore him (I suspect on account of Mrs Whitmore) was continually endeavouring to degrade him to the rest of the officers, reflecting on his birth, or circumstances of the like nature. My master had great pride, and resented this so heinously that he challenged Darleville, who not only received a slight wound, but was also obliged to ask pardon. This business, however, disgusted my master with the army, and before the regiment left Jersey, determined him to relinquish it, which he at length did.

"Soon after the ship sailed, and a few days after we embarked for Southampton, where my master unluckily had a quarrel with a gentleman at the hazard table; words ensuing they withdrew, and in the heat of passion settled their differences by the sword, without seconds or witness.

"The consequence of this duel was the immediate death of my master's opponent, and he had no resource but flight; without loss of time, therefore, we set off for Portsmouth, where we arrived in a few hours. On inquiry we found a West India ship, bound to a different part from that where my master's late regiment was destined. My master adopted the plan of going with them, taking his passage by the name of Thomas Edwin, Esq., to prevent suspicion.

"On board the same vessel were Mr Fitzmorris and two daughters, who had been some time in England for the benefit of that gentleman's health; but were now returning to their estate, which lay at some distance from Kingston in Jamaica. The elder of the ladies was Mrs Fitzmorris, now living, and the other Miss Editha, afterwards my master's wife. To this family he passed himself as the only son of a Scots gentleman lately dead; and added, that he proposed to purchase an estate in the West Indies, as his fortune was too small to support him in Europe.

"Few men were more calculated to please than my master at that period; and not only Miss Editha, but her father also, was greatly taken with him; so that before the end of the voyage, the old gentleman had told him that he would willingly give her to him with fifteen thousand pounds, on their arrival.

"Mr Fitzmorris was a man of strict morals, and would as soon have married his daughter to a robber as to a duellist; my master, therefore, did not dare reveal to him the reason of his leaving England, nor yet his change of name; neither was it possible with his own safety, as the man was dead.

"One evening, being alone with him in his cabin, after some previous discourse, he addressed me thus:—"Harris, I have such an opinion of your fidelity, that I shall not scruple to declare my real designs; to confess truly, my heart never loved but once, nor can it evermore; but Miss Fitzmorris's fortune is too great an offer to be slighted: her person too is amiable, and I think I cannot do better than marry her, as such a connexion will at once increase my fortune, and give me respectability in the country. Mr Fitzmorris has a large portion of family pride; should I therefore declare my origin, he would discard me in an instant; I will for that reason still retain the appellation he is acquainted with, which will be prudent, both on that account and in regard to my own safety. My own family, I am convinced, despise and hate me, and I am determined to forget them. Mr Fitzmorris, too, hinted the other day, that, as he had no son, he could wish his daughter's husband to assume his name, for which purpose an act of parliament could be obtained; that circumstance too will also assist in con-

ing me, for the name of Godwin would immediately tend to a discovery, whereas in that of Fitzmorris all will be forgotten.

On our arrival in Jamaica the marriage took place, and my master for the first six months so strict a guard over himself, that he stood highly in Mr Fitzmorris's opinion. At that period the gentleman died; he left ten thousand pounds to his eldest daughter, and the rest to your brother. provided that within the course of one year he assumed the name and arms of Fitzmorris; his other daughter he did not mention, as she had married without his consent.

This event was highly gratifying to my master, who immediately took the necessary steps. Fitzmorris's agent in London was employed, and the business effectually settled within a specified time.

I will not scruple to say, that I believe he considered himself greatly in my power, for he behaved with more kindness to me than to any other of his domestics, and was particularly generous to me. In short, sir, it was no wonder I was attached to him.

Mrs Fitzmorris, who was both a charming woman and possessed of an excellent temper, was ever loved, though he always endeavoured, when sober, to behave with politeness to her; but any one might plainly see his conduct preyed on her spirits, and undermined her health. In a few months after the marriage, Miss Editha was born, and the year following, a son, who was christened William, after his grandfather Fitzmorris; but even these events gave me no pleasure; his conduct became more overbearing and insufferable to his dependents, even the slaves only, who had no resource, could bear it. In his fits of intoxication his passions knew no bounds; and in these moments he has even been known to correct the female slave with his own hand, that, perhaps, the day before he had taken to his embraces! But shudder, sir; shall I fetch you a glass of wine?"

"A glass of water," returned Godwin; "and, if you please, abridge your narrative, if possible." Harris having presented the water, continued thus: "My master had engaged, almost immediately after his father-in-law's death, a surgeon to attend the estate; this young man soon became his favourite companion, and, I believe, was the instigator of much of the mischief that was perpetrated; for, previous to living in Jamaica, he had been surgeon to a sea trader, and held the life of a slave only at the exact price it would bring; the infirm aged, therefore, experienced but little mercy from him; and I sincerely believe, that if our estate perished for want of care, when they were past their labour.

When my master had been married about eleven years, a number of negroes were to be disposed of at an adjoining plantation. At the sale he purchased two, a mulatto boy and a girl, the first about eighteen, the latter two years younger, and remarkably handsome, notwithstanding her complexion. She unhappily pleased my master, and, I believe, he spared no pains to seduce her, but in vain, as she became particularly attached to my mistress, which naturally might assist to baffle his attempts, though both promises and threats were employed. One evening that I happened to carry some wine to my master and the surgeon in the parlour, I heard the latter say, 'You are too scrupulous; I will give you something to-morrow which, administered in a glass of wine or punch, will silence all objections.' I heard no more until two days after, when I was informed the handsome mulatto was dying, and had died; it was occasioned by something administered in punch! It then struck me that the nurse I had heard was relative to it; and in this supposition I was confirmed by the behaviour of my master, who, during the day, appeared half frenzied; and though doubtless every precaution was used, the girl died, but not before she had told Julia that your brother had taken advantage of the stupor in which she lay.

Julia, who was a great favourite with my mistress, did not fail to inform her of this; and as her health had declined from that time, or from any natural cause, or that grief by degrees undermined her constitution, I know not, but she never smiled afterwards; and in less than a year died of consumption; but I believe never complained even to her sister, who lived on a small estate adjoining us.

About six weeks previous to this event, as my master was returning home on horseback on a visit, on passing a small wood, he received a pistol shot in his shoulder, and had doubtless fallen, as the fire was repeated, but for the fleetness of his horse; fortunately, however, he escaped with only one wound, which did not prove dangerous. At first we could not by any means surmise who was the author of this attempt; but we were not long in suspense, for

the following evening the surgeon was mortally wounded, in crossing a plantation, by a mulatto lad who was purchased with the girl, and was said to be her lover. Though the surgeon was senseless when first discovered, he survived some hours, recovered sufficiently to disclose who had wounded him; but notwithstanding all possible search was made, it was without effect; the man having doubtless either made away with himself, or joined the rebellious negroes.

"These events all conspired to render Jamaica hateful to my master; and he talked of returning to Europe, and settling in France, as he might live there in safety. However, after much deliberation, he came to the resolution to send me first to England, to inquire into everything that might concern his return thither; 'for,' said he, 'though I believe I am much altered, yet possibly not enough to prevent my being known by any of my former acquaintance; and then the subterfuge of my name and that accursed duel will be remembered. During my thirteen years' residence here, I have never seen but one person that was acquainted with in England; and he knew nothing of the rencontre at Southampton, nor that I had ever changed my name to any other but Fitzmorris; and that man, I was informed by the newspapers, lived but a short time after he reached England; I have little to apprehend from him.'"

"Yet in all probability from him the agent heard it," said Godwin, "for he informed me that my brother was well married; but he knew nothing further."

"Well then," resumed Harris, "my master continued, 'you shall go to England, and make a particular enquiry after the few people I was known to, especially Mrs Whitmore and Darville; for if either of those are in England, I will not return; but if they should either be dead or gone from thence, I shall not hesitate, as I should be scarcely recognised after such an absence, particularly under another name.'

"This resolution was not suffered to cool; I departed in the first vessel, and reached England in safety, where, on enquiry, I found Mrs Whitmore had been dead two years; that Darville had made interest, and was settled at Madras in a lucrative situation: and finally what I knew would give my master great satisfaction, the man who kept the hazard table at Southampton, and was the only witness of the quarrel, though not of the duel, was dead: that I soon wrote back word, that I believed he might venture to return when he pleased."

"Soon after, he came to England, and determined to return to the West Indies no more, therefore put up the estate and negroes for sale. You know the rest, sir; and I have only to add, that he drank harder, grew more passionate, and seldom slept at home."

"From one of those nocturnal revels he returned one morning in a state of absolute distraction, beating his head against the wainscot, and acting a thousand extravagancies, the cause of which I could never learn; but he once hinted that he had met a relation."

Godwin judged it to be Emma. "Enough," said he; "I have but one more question. Had we not come at that fortunate moment to Anna's rescue, where was she to have been conveyed? Has she suffered grosser insults than I was witness to?"

Harris hesitated: but a stern look from Godwin urged him to proceed—"My master, sir, resumed he, "meant to carry her to France; he was charmed with her at first sight, and would have married her."—"I had," replied Godwin, "this morning a few minutes' conversation alone with the negro woman whom you call Julia, and was enquiring of her respecting Anna's illness. She had said something that at once arrested my attention, and almost petrified me with horror, when Anna opened the door, and she prudently dropped the discourse, but her answers seemed to imply that my brother was the cause of her illness; say, was it so?"

Harris finding by this that all would doubtless be discovered, replied—"I call God my witness, that in this I at least was innocent, for my master had sent me that evening to London, with orders to stay until the morning, and bring back word of Mrs Fitzmorris's health; nor did I know anything of the business until his alarm proclaimed it."—"I have not questioned her," replied Godwin, "because I would not shock her with the remembrance, but shall require the truth of Julia."—"Alas! sir, Miss Anna knows nothing, and Julia only from surmise; for she, as I have informed you, had attended the mulatto."—"Good God!" interrupted Godwin, "you surely cannot mean it. Edwin could not be such a villain he would have said, but the word died on his lips as he recollected the expiation."

"My master, undoubtedly," resumed Harris, "for he confessed it to me in a fright, had administered a dose of the same kind that he gave that unhappy girl; but a most miraculo

circumstance prevented it being favourable to his wishes."—"Be quick," interrupted Godwin—"and relieve my suspense."

My master, when he thought she was asleep, entered the apartment, where he found her completely dressed; but on approaching to gaze on her, a sight instantly struck him, that at once removed all the ideas with which he entered the chamber; for, on her hand, which lay exposed over her bosom, was the identical ring that he had made the pledge of his faith to his love, and which he saw on her finger in the coffin.

This sight had so violent an effect, as he informed me, that he sunk into a chair by the side; the words of my sister-in-law, whenever she looked at the ring during her insanity, which your old servant had informed him of, seemed to sound in his ears—I am Edwin's brother. He likewise told me, that in the frenzied anguish of the moment, he looked round, expecting to see her stand beside him.

After he was a little recovered, he withdrew the ring from her hand, hoping to find he had been mistaken: but the initials of his own name that were engraven on the reverse, confirmed his terror and amazement; in addition to which, at that instant Miss Anna was seized with fits; her screams alarmed Julia, who immediately came to her, and remained during the fit. I must confess, I persuaded my master that the ring had merely come into her possession by chance; and he, to quiet his own uneasiness, endeavoured to believe it was so; I am convinced it caused him great alarm, as well as increased unhappiness." Godwin now arose from his chair, and soon after withdrew, without visiting the apartment where his brother's body was deposited.

CHAPTER LVII.

Godwin returned to the inn, and retired for some hours to his chamber, before he could find time sufficient composure to join Anna and Reuben, the former of whom he could not see upon without execrating the villany which could plot the destruction of such innocence. Two days after, at a very early hour, the remains of Edwin were privately interred in the best burial place, and to the great satisfaction of all, the following evening brought their loved Mrs Palmer. In embraces, questions, and tears, the hours were passed until the night was far advanced, all at length retiring to rest, with minds much relieved by the soothing interference of true friendship.

In the morning following, Godwin drawing Mrs Palmer aside, requested her opinion respecting his brother's children, at the same time acquainting her with all that had passed.

"My heart," said he, "prompts me to relinquish such ill-gotten wealth, even for them; but if you think it my duty to endeavour to defend it, I will do violence to my inclination, and attempt it; but never shall Anna share money thus procured."—"My advice, then, my good friend," replied she, "will, I fancy, be conformable to your wishes. A lawsuit would but avail little against the actions of your unhappy brother, and perhaps be productive of no real advantage. Some way may be found," continued she with a smile, "to recompense them for their loss, if they are virtuous; for you know not how rich I am become since we parted."

The entrance here of the waiter with a letter put a stop to the discourse; it was from Mrs Morris, and contained these words:—

Sir,—Since I saw you I have heard from my sister, with whom, though I have had no communication for several years, yet I thought justice required I should inform her of the business in question; and the result is, that if you do not relinquish it, we shall jointly sue for the purchase-money received for the estate, and likewise what property your brother died possessed of, to make up the deficiency. As you were candid enough to mention your real circumstances when you called on me, I by no means wish to encumber you with the expense which must naturally attend the care of William and Editha, who, though the children of my brother, I must hereafter blush to produce to the world as such. My sister and self shall not proceed until we have your answer.

I remain, sir, your humble servant,

"L. FITZMORRIS."

Godwin presented the letter with a smile to Mrs Palmer, who, having read it, answered—"Poor, narrow-minded woman! I should sincerely pity the children, were they to be dependent on her. I have already given you my opinion; and while you reply to her letter, I will take Reuben and Anna with me to visit Editha."

Godwin being left alone, immediately answered Mrs Fitzmorris's letter as follows:—

“Madam,—Before the receipt of yours, my determination was taken; I have neither the inclination for a lawsuit, and trust I shall be able to provide for my brother’s child without having recourse to such disagreeable means, though I think that justice would give verdict in their favour, their right being obvious. But to have done with this subject, I wish you to send some one, or be present yourself, at the opening of my brother’s escutoire which I sealed up. His papers, of no value, I shall undoubtedly claim; but will give up every other property, there or elsewhere, to whom you shall appoint. Your offer respecting children I must beg leave to decline; the expense of them I shall not feel; and, as you candidly own, you who are the sister of their unoffending mother, that you should blush hereafter to produce them to the world, what reception may they not expect from strangers? I, however, wish to spare both them and you such mortification, as my feelings are fortunately so acute, nor my friends of that class who will blame *them* for the errors of their unhappy father. I have nothing more to add, but to request you would let all business be settled between us as speedily as possible, as I shall send for my nephew from school immediately intending to take him home with me.

I am, madam, your humble servant,

“W. GODWIN.”

Mrs Palmer, who soon after returned with Anna and Editha, whom she had taken from school, approved of the letter, which was sent off immediately.

On the day following, Mrs Palmer went to London alone; and though she had not mentioned it to Godwin before her departure, called on Mrs Fitzmorris. That lady received more coolly than usual, and appeared piqued at Godwin’s reply to the letter.

“I came,” said Mr Palmer, “to thank you for your kindness to my Anna, and also to congratulate you on your recovery from so severe an indisposition.”—Mrs Fitzmorris bowed. “I understand, madam,” replied she, “that the young person you left with me was your daughter, or I cannot say I should so readily have accepted of the charge.”—“Indeed, I am so accustomed to call Anna my child, and to treat her as such,” said Mrs Palmer, “that I do not wonder at your mistake; but I hope she has not disgraced your kindness?”—“She is my daughter,” replied Mrs Fitzmorris, “a natural daughter to that man whom I was unfortunate enough to call my brother, and who had the assurance not only to bequeath her share of the fortune he had no right to, but also to leave my sister’s children to the care of his brother, a farmer.”—“I am indeed informed of it,” replied Mrs Palmer; “but you may fancy, misconceive the real situation in the life of Mr Godwin, or you would not find him inferior to a plauter; it is true he is a farmer, but his farm is his own, and I can give you my word that his children will have very respectable fortunes. As for the father of Anna, I never saw him but twice, and that was here when I called for her; and as he then knew not her parents neither did he, when he wrote that paper, know her connexions and expectancies, which assure you are considerable enough to make her look down on any bequest he might leave her, and transfer it to her brother and sister.”

This was spoken to punish Mrs Fitzmorris’s pride; it did so, and the lady became more condescending, promising to attend the day following at Hounslow, Mrs Palmer replying that she would do herself the honour of accompanying her to the Heath.

The following morning Mrs Fitzmorris was true to her appointment, and with his attorney Godwin and Mrs Palmer went to the house that was late Edwin’s. The escutoire and drawers were opened in her presence, and securities found to the amount of thirty thousand pounds, all of which Mr Godwin surrendered to Mrs Fitzmorris on receiving an acquittance after which they parted good friends, Mrs Fitzmorris proposing to see them in two days, the intention being to depart for Inglewood on the third.

On the morning before, Godwin had sent Reuben, accompanied by Mrs Palmer’s servant to fetch his nephew William from Winchester; and with whom they arrived on the second day after.

If Mrs Palmer and Godwin were pleased with Editha, they were not less so with her brother, who was equally artless and affectionate, and as much flattered by being beloved. Reuben with tenderness had informed him of his father’s death, though not of the means before they began the journey; and though his grief had at first been bitter, yet the man claims that seemed to replace the loss of a parent, who had never treated him kindly, so he calmed his affliction.

The following morning brought Mrs Fitzmorris, who in reality appeared hurt to part with

Editha. At the entreaty of Mrs Palmer, she condescended to promise to visit her the ensuing summer; and, at her departure, presented her nephew and niece with a fifty pound note each for pocket-money.

Godwin then sent for Harris, and taking him apart, inquired how in future he meant to dispose of himself.—“I have wished, sir,” replied Harris, “to retire to my own county, which is Somersetshire; and for that purpose have for some years been endeavouring to realize a sum sufficient to purchase an annuity for my life, that might enable me to live decently.”—“And have you obtained the means?” demanded Godwin.—“I have about five hundred pounds,” replied Harris; “but the purchase will take another hundred.”—“On my return home I will remit what will make up the deficiency,” said Godwin; “and I hope the remainder of your life will make amends for the impropriety of the earlier part of it.”—Harris expressed his thanks; then added, “Mrs Fitzmorris, sir, ordered me to bring my master’s watch to you, and receive your orders concerning the clothes.”—“Give the watch to William,” answered Godwin; “for the clothes, they are yours.”

He then pulled the bell, and desired the waiter to send up his nephew; who obeying the command, Harris presented him with the watch, which the youth received with a moistened eye, and an expressive look at his uncle, then at Harris.—“If I understand that glance aright, William,” said Godwin, “it requires this answer—Your intention is praiseworthy—act as your heart directs.”

William wanted no second permission, but presented the note given to him by Mrs Fitzmorris to his father’s servant. Harris having repeated his thanks, Godwin bade him adieu, and with his nephew joined his friends, who waited his presence to supper.

CHAPTER LVIII.

Five the next morning the party journeyed homewards, Mrs Palmer, Anna, Editha, William, and Julia, in a post-chaise, and Godwin and his son on horseback. On the fifth evening they arrived at home, Godwin at once elated with the thoughts of embracing his family, and depressed how to break the death of Edwin to his father, for every occurrence was unknown to them, as he had only specified in his letter that Anna was with him, and that he only waited for Mrs Palmer to return. The noise of the carriage announced them, and in a moment the whole family were at the gate. Pleasure for some time overcame the curiosity that the appearance of strangers would otherwise have excited, Edward alone being acquainted with Editha, and flying to her with a rapture too great to suffer his welcome to be eloquent. A little recovered, they entered the house, where Godwin taking his nephew and niece by the hand, led them towards his father, saying, as they knelt to the venerable old man, “The blessings of Heaven multiply upon us! Receive those innocents—their claim upon you is great; they are the children of my brother.”

The elder Godwin was for some time too much amazed to reply; at length bursting into tears, he threw his arms about their necks and blessed them.

William Godwin, fearing the surprise would be too much for him, desired the young people to withdraw—a command that was instantly obeyed, and he was left with his father, Bernard, Mrs Palmer, and his wife.

“Oh speak, my son!” cried Godwin; “what means this—what means this? Say—have your prayers been heard? Is Edwin repentant, for you have doubtless seen him? Shall I be blessed before I die?”

“Alas!” replied he, “Edwin is no more. His last hope was my protection of his children, may his errors be obliterated, and may he rest in peace!” ejaculated Godwin. “But say, my son, have not these children a mother?”

William then, in as careful a manner as possible, informed his father of his brother’s change of name, his marriage in Jamaica, and its subsequent consequences, suppressing every thing he possibly could that would give pain, and softening what he could not absolutely conceal; finally, concluding by informing him that Edwin’s death was sudden, and almost immediately after their meeting.

“God forgive him!” replied Bernard, wiping off a tear that hung on his cheek; “I once loved him as my own son; and I dare say he was sorry after all. As sure as can be, it was a surprise of seeing William that overcame him, for I remember when I was young, I used

to feel as if at once all the blood in my body rushed to my heart and head.”—“The effects of surprise are frequently fatal,” replied Mrs Palmer.

Whether Godwin was of the same opinion is uncertain; but he made no observation respecting his son's death, but appeared to decline the subject, and turning to William, said—“Thy family is increased, my son—I trust thy blessings will do the same.”—“I doubt it not, my father,” returned he, “if they admit of increase, which on earth is almost impossible.”

The young people were now called in, and the venerable Godwin saluting them round, retired, saying—“I will leave you this night; to-morrow my spirits will be more composed; the ways of Providence are ever just; but the weakness of man doth not always submit with becoming resignation.”

After some trivial refreshment, Mrs Palmer proposed to go to her own house; but the whole party had so many questions to ask, and so much information to receive, that the night was far advanced before they separated, Editha accompanying Mrs Palmer, and Anna attended by Julia.

William Godwin being left alone with Fanny, related to her the whole that had passed respecting his brother, and also his resigning the fortune that appertained to the children—“a step,” continued he, “that I did not at first propose; but when I had heard Harris's account of my brother, I must confess I thought it at once just and prudent, as Edwin certainly became entitled to it by dishonourable means, which I would rather die than have laid open to the world. His children will, I trust, be of the same opinion; and we must endeavour, my love, to make up to them in affection what they have lost in fortune.”

Fanny, who seldom had a separate opinion from her husband, immediately acquiesced, adding—“If I mistake not, Editha may some time hence become yet nearer related to us, for Edwin has scarcely talked of any one else since your departure; and however highly he has spoken of her, I think he has not flattered her, for she appears to merit all his encomiums.”

CHAPTER LIX.

THOUGH a cloud for some time appeared to hang over the spirits of the family at Inglewood, at length it began to disperse, and cheerfulness to resume its place among them. The sprightly good humour of Editha made her universally loved; and the pains she took to amuse her grandfather, whenever she read a trait of melancholy on his face, even on a less susceptible heart, could not have failed of its effect. “Go along, Anna,” would she say, if she saw her attending Godwin, “you have had a grandfather all your life, and have had your share of caresses; and he can spare no more until he has paid me the fifteen years arrears he stands indebted to me. You have another advantage over me too: you call Mr and Mrs Godwin father and mother, while I say uncle and aunt, which is a very provoking circumstance, and what I shall not allow; for you shall either sink to my level, or I will rise to yours; nay, I will put it to the vote—my grandfather and Mr Bernard will, I know, be for me.”—“You have used bribery there,” replied Fanny, laughing; “for you are for ever courting my father.”—“And are you proof against it?” answered Editha, throwing her arms about her neck, “can you refuse me?”—“Not I, indeed,” returned Fanny, pressing her to her bosom. “Call me henceforward what best pleases thy affectionate heart.”—“My mother, then,” answered she, bending her knees before her; then turning to William Godwin, as he embraced her, she added, “Ah! how happy am I to have a father who suffers me to love him, and boldly tell him so.”

The last sentence brought an uneasy remembrance on all; even Editha's own eyes filled with tears; but hastily wiping them off, she added, “See, I believe they are all jealous, not one congratulates me; truly I believe they all expect to be bribed.”—“Fee them, then,” returned William Godwin, “and you are sure of their suffrages.”—“And so I will,” kissing the old men, and then Reuben; but advancing to Edward, she hesitated a moment, but at length presented her glowing cheek, saying archly, as she replaced herself by the side of Fanny, “I am glad it is over, for Edward looked as if he would have demanded a double fee.”

Some days after Reuben found courage to address his father on the subject nearest his heart, namely, an union with Anna, his father promising to consult Mrs Palmer, and to let him know the result.

A council of the elders of the family was a few days after summoned to meet at Mrs Palmer's, where it was settled that the senior Godwin, accompanied by that lady, should de-

clare on the ensuing Sunday at church, that Anna was the daughter of his youngest son Edwin, lately dead, but from prudential motives had been passed as the child of the elder until the present time—a truth which Mrs Palmer would confirm. It was also resolved, that Reuben should have permission to address Anna; but that their marriage should not take place until he had attained to the age of twenty-one, which was yet two years distant; and that, when it did, the newly-married pair should entirely reside with Mrs Palmer, “as,” added that lady, “in my life I have loved them, so at my death they shall not find themselves forgotten.”

These resolves were communicated to Reuben by his father, who approved all but the length of time; for which, however, he had no remedy but patience.

The declaration was accordingly made the ensuing Sunday after service; and though at first it occasioned great surprise and many whispers, yet Godwin was too much respected, and Mrs Palmer too much honoured, for it to have disagreeable consequences: the old folks only recalling the piteous story of Agnes to their remembrance, who they doubted not was the mother, and relating it to their children; the girls dropped a tear at her fate; and the boys declared that falsehood would have been impossible, had she been as handsome as Anna.

About six months after this event an express arrived at Mrs Palmer's from Mrs Fitzmorris, desiring that lady to request Mrs Godwin would permit her nephew and niece to come immediately to town, as her health, which had never been completely re-established, declined daily. Godwin immediately consented, and Mrs Palmer, with her usual kindness, proposed to accompany them—an event that had much weight with Mrs Fitzmorris, who not only expressed great pleasure at their arrival, but also at the account Editha had frequently given her, by letter, of her situation.

Mrs Fitzmorris was apparently in the last stage of a decline on their arrival, which she survived barely six weeks, leaving Mrs Palmer, to whom, in spite of her former prejudices, she was become attached, her executrix; and William and his sister joint heirs to fifteen thousand pounds she possessed from the death of Edwin, together with her own paternal fortune of ten thousand.

Her funeral over, and the business settled, all impatiently longed to return to Inglewood, where they were received with equal pleasure; William Godwin rejoicing that his brother's children had now their right without the perplexities of law, or exposing the errors of a parent.

CHAPTER LX.

Two years had passed in the calm of innocent delights, when Reuben claimed the promise of uniting him to Anna; and all was prepared accordingly, the marriage being, to the great satisfaction of Bernard, a public one; all the neighbours and tenantry were invited, Mrs Palmer behaving in every circumstance as if it had been her own daughter.

At the altar, Bernard, who acted as father, presented the trembling hand of Anna to the enraptured Reuben, the venerable Godwin standing on the right of the happy pair. On the ceremony being concluded, his emotion was too great to be suppressed, and, dropping on his knees, he softly ejaculated—“Spirits of peace! sainted form of my beloved wife and the gentle Agnes! for a moment may ye be permitted to witness this union;” then, after remaining in silent devotion for a short time, he arose, saluted and blessed them.

During some days all was rejoicing; and Edward, emboldened by the happy scene around him, pleaded his cause so successfully to Editha, who, at her sister's marriage, was in her eighteenth year, that she gave him a sort of half permission to make some proposals to his father respecting a similar event.

“Indeed, Edward!” replied Godwin, “I know not what to say in this case; Editha will have a considerable fortune. However, should it even take place, I must insist on your waiting the same time as your brother Reuben; but, before we speak decidedly, your mother shall talk to Editha.”

Mrs Palmer being consulted on this subject, gave it in favour of Edward—“Reuben,” said she, “I now regard as mine; and Mr Godwin's property, in common justice, ought to revert to the second son: therefore if ever you think of pecuniary matters, I cannot see a reasonable objection.”

Editha was then called, and Fanny gently represented to her, that with her property she

might marry far more advantageously than her own cousin Edward, and desired her to think seriously on the subject before she finally determined.

“I know not, my dear mother,” replied Editha, “how you might like to part with me; but for myself I can only answer you in the words of Ruth—I will never leave thee: but live where thou livest, and die where thou diest; and there also will I be buried. As to Edward,” continued she, with more vivacity, “I would not have you think I care so much for him; not but that I like him better than any young man I ever saw, or in all likelihood I ever shall.”

With these words away she ran, and saw the family no more till supper-time.

Suffice it, the venerable old men, Godwin and Bernard, lived to witness this union; and they were looking forward yet to another alliance, namely, William and the youthful Agnes, for whom a house was erected adjoining Godwin's. The consolations of an upright mind attended both William Godwin and his Fanny; the former had truly spoken, their blessings could hardly admit an increase.

The faithful Margery lived to behold the great-grandchildren of her respected master; and beloved by all in the weakness of age, met a grateful return for her former care from every branch of the family.

Felix was still living; and, though enervated with age, made shift daily to walk to the farm, and drink a glass of ale with the seniors, enjoying life, and not fearful of leaving it.

Julia, happy in the protection of Mrs Palmer, had not a wish unsatisfied; and being particularly fond of children, claimed the office of nurse to the little one, who, she declared, almost comforted her for the loss of Scipio.

The young people, blessed in each other, regarded Mrs Palmer as the immediate instrument, in the hand of Heaven, of all their happiness: while she, looking around on her own deeds, was insensible of the advance of age, which stole on her like a mild autumn, enriched with the fruits of summer.

THE END.

THE CHEATERIE PACKMAN.

BY LEITCH RITCHIE.*

"The beings of the mind are not of clay."

BYRON.

It was yet pretty early in the morning when I arrived at the inn of Skreigh, and never having been in that part of the country before, my heart misgave me at the appearance of the house, and I thought that surely I had mistaken the road—an awful idea to a man who had walked twelve miles before breakfast! It was a huge, grey, dismantled edifice, standing alone in a wild country, and presenting evident traces of a time when the *babees* of the traveller might have procured him lodgings within its walls for a longer period than suited his convenience. On entering the parlour, although the "base uses" to which this ancient mansion had returned were clearly indicated by certain gill-stoups scattered about the dirty tables, yet the extraordinary size of the room, the lowness of the walls, and the scantiness of the furniture, kept up in my mind the associations which had been suggested by the exterior; and it was not till the aroma of tea, and the still more "fragrant lunt" of a Finnan haddie had saluted my senses, that the visions of the olden time fled from my eyes.

While busy with my breakfast, another traveller came into the room. He had a pack on his back and an ell-wand in his hand, and appeared to be one of those travelling philanthropists—answering to the pedlars of the south—who carry into the holes and corners of the sylvan world the luxuries of the city. Our scene being on the *best* side of the Tweed, I need not say that the body had a sharp eye, an oily face, and a God-fearing look. He sat down over against me, upon one of the tables, to rest his pack, and from his shining shoes and orderly apparel, I judged that he had passed the night in the house, and was waiting to pay his score, and fare forth again upon his journey. There was, notwithstanding, a singular expression of fatigue on his yellow countenance. A common observer would have guessed that he had been brim-*fou* over night, and had risen before he had quite slept off the effects: but to me, who am curious in such matters, there appeared a something in his face which invested with a moral dignity an expression that would otherwise have been ludicrous or pitiable.

Ever and anon he turned a longing eye upon the Finnan haddie, but as often edged himself with a jerk farther away from the temptation; and whenever the landlady came into the room, his remonstrances on her delay, at first delivered in a moaning, heart-broken tone, became at last absolutely cankered. The honest wife, however, appeared determined to attend the hospitality of breakfast to her guest, and made sundry lame excuses for not bringing ben his score," while she was occupied in displaying upon my table, with the most tempting liberality, the various good things that constitute a Scottish breakfast.

"Are you not for breakfasting, good man," said I, at length, "before you go forth this morning?"

"No, please God," said he, with almost a jump, "no carnal comfort shall pass my lips on this side the mill of Warlock!"

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"The mill of Warlock!" repeated I with surprise, "that should be at least twelve miles from this—and I can tell you, my friend, it is not pleasant travelling so far on an empty stomach. If you have any urgent reason for an abstinence that we of the kirk of Scotland attach no merit to, you should not have loitered in bed till this hour of the morning."

The packman, at my reproof, put on a kind of *blate* look, but his features gathering gradually into solemnity—

"Sir," said he, "I have urgent reasons for my conduct, and while this weary wife is making out my score, I will, if you desire it, tell you the story." Having eagerly signified my assent, the packman wiped his glistening forehead, and with a heavy sigh began to discourse as follows:—

"Aweel, sir—it was at this time yesterday morning I arrived at the mill of Warlock. The miller was out, and his wife, glad of the opportunity, rampaged over my pack like one demented. She made me turn out every article in my aught, and kept me bargaining about this and that, and flyting by the hour about the price; and after all it came to pass that the jaud (God forgive me!) wanted naething of more value than three ells of ribbon! You may be sure that I was not that pleased; and what with fatigue, and what with my vexation, while I was measuring the ribbon, and the wife sklanting round at the looking-glass, I just clipped—by mistake like—a half ell short. Aweel, ye'll say that was just naething after the fash I had had, and moreover I stoutly refused the second glass of whiskey she offered me to the douroch; and so, shouldering my pack again, I took the way, in an evil hour, to the inn of Skreigh.

"It was late at night when I arrived here, and I had been on my legs all day, so that you may think my heart warmed to the auld biggin, and I looked forward to naething waur than a cozy seat by the ingle-side, or chat with the landlady—a douce woman, sir, and not ay so slow as the now, foul fa' her! (God forgive me!) forbye, maybe, a half mutchin, or twa: and all these things of a truth I had. Not that I exceeded the second stoup, a practice which I hold to be *contra bonos mores*—but ye'll no understand Latin? ye'll be from the south? Aweel—but there was something mair, ye ken, quite as necessary for a Christian traveller and a wearied man; and at last, with a great gaunt, I speered at the serving hizzie for my bedroom.

"'Bed-room,' quo' she, 'ye'll no be ganging to sleep here the night?'

"'Atweel,' said the mistress, 'I am unco wae, but every room in the house is fu. Hout! it's but a step to the town—no abune twal miles and a bittock—and ye ken every inch of the way as well as the brass nails on your ell-wand.' I wish I may be forgi'en for the passion they put me intill! To think of sending me out such a gait my lane, and near the sma' hours!

"'O ye jaud!' cried I, 'if the gudeman was no in the yird the night, ye would crawl till a different tune!' and with that such a hulliballoo was raised amang us, that at last the folks began to put in their shouthers at the door in their sarks to speer what was the matter.

"'Aweel, aweel,' said the landlady, in the hinder end, quite forfaughten, 'a wilfu' man maun hae his way. There is but ae room in the house where there is no a living soul, and it's naething but an auld lumber-room. However, if you can pass the time with another half mutchin while Jenny and me rig up the bed, it will be as much at your service as a decenter place.' And so, having gotten the battle, I sat myself down again, and Jenny brought in the other stoup—ye'll be saying that was the third; but there's nae rule without an exception, and moreover ye ken, 'three's ay canny.'

"At last and at length I got into my bed-room, and it was no that ill-looking at all. It was a good sizeable room, with a few sticks of old furniture, forbye a large old-fashioned bed. I laid my pack down, as is my custom, by the bed-side, and after saying my prayers, put out the candle and tumbled in.

"Aweel, sir, whether it was owing to my being over-fatigued, or to the third stoup in defiance of the proverb being no canny, I know not, but for the life of me I could not sleep. The bed was not a bad bed, it was roomy and convenient, and there was not a wish in the house, and not a stime of light in the room. I counted over my bargains for the day, and half wished I had not made the mistake with the miller's wife; I put my hand out at the

stock of the bed and felt my pack, amusing myself by thinking what was this lump and that ; but still I could not sleep. Then by degrees my other senses, as well as the touch, wearied of being awake and doing nothing—fiend tak them (God forgive me !), sought employment. I listened, as if in spite of myself, to hear whether there was anything stirring in the house, and looked out of the curtains to see if any light came through the window chinks. Not a wish—not a stime ! Then I said my prayers over again, and began to wish grievously that the creature had her half ell of ribbon. Then my nose must needs be in the hobble, and I thought I felt a smell. It was not that bad a smell, but it was a smell I did not know, and therefore did not like. The air seemed close—feverish ; I threw off the bed-clothes, and began to puff and pant. Oh, I did wish then that I had never seen the physiog of the miller's wife !

“ I began to be afraid. The entire silence seemed strange, the utter darkness more strange, and the strange smell stranger than all. I at first grasped at the bed-clothes, and pulled them over my head ; but I had bottled in the smell with me, and, rendered intolerable by the heat, it seemed like the very essence of typhus. I threw off the clothes again in a right, and felt persuaded that I was just in the act of taking some awful fever. I would have given the world to have been able to rise and open the window, but the world would have been offered me in vain to do such a thing. I contented myself with flapping the sheet like a fan, and throwing my arms abroad to catch the wind.

“ My right hand, which was towards the stock of the bed, constantly lighted upon my pack, but my left could feel naething at all, save that there was a space between the bed and the wall. At last, leaning more over in that direction than heretofore, my hand encountered something a little lower than the surface of the bed, and I snatched it back with a smothered cry. I knew no more than the man in the moon what the something was, but it sent a tingle through my frame, and I felt the sweat begin to break over my brow. I would have turned to the other side, but I felt as heavy to my own muscles as if I had been made of lead ; and besides, a fearful curiosity nailed me to the spot. I persuaded myself that it was from this part of the bed that the smell arose. Soon, however, with a sudden desperation, I plunged my hand again into the terrible abyss, and it rested upon a cauld, stiff, clammy face !

“ Now, sir, I would have you to ken, that although I cannot wrestle with the hidden sympathies of nature, I am not easily frightened. If the stoutest robber that ever wore breeks—ay, or ran bare, for there be such in the Hielands, was to lay a finger on my pack, I would haud on like grim death ; and it is not to tell, that I can flyte about ae bawbee with the dourest wife in the country-side ; but och, and alas ! to see me at that moment, on the braid of my back, with my eyes shut, my teeth set, and one hand on the physiog of a corpse ? The greatest pain I endured was from the trembling of my body, for the motion forced my hand into closer connection with the horrors of its resting-place ; while I had no more power to withdraw it than if it had been in the thumb-screws.


“ And there I lay, sir, with my eyes steeked, as if with screw-nails, my brain wandering and confused, and whole rivers of sweat spouting down my body, till at times I thought I had got fou, and was lying sleeping in a ditch. To tell you the history of my thoughts at that time is impossible ; but the miller's wife, woe be upon her ! she rode me like the night-hag. I think I must have been asleep a part of the time, for I imagined that the wearisome half ell of ribbon was tied about my neck, like a halter, and that I was on the eve of being choked. I ken not how long I tholed this torment ; but at last I heard voices, and sounds, as if the sheriffs' officers of hell were about me, and in a sudden agony of great fear I opened my eyes.

“ It was broad morning ; the sun was shining into the room ; and the landlady and her lasses were riving my hand from the face of the corpse. After casting a bewildered glance around, it was on that fearful object my eyes rested, and I recognised the remains of an old serving lass, who it seems died the day before, and was huddled into that room, to be out of the way of the company.”

At this moment the landlady entered the room with his score, and while the packman sat wiping his brow, entered upon her defence.

“Ye ken, sir,” said she, “that ye *wad* sleep in the house, and a wilfu man ma’un hae his way; but gin ye had lain still, like an honest body, wi’ a clean conscience, and no gaen ram-paunging about wi’ your hands where ye had no business, the feint a harm it would hae done ye !” The packman only answered with a glance of ire, as he thundered down the bawbees upon the table, and turning one last look upon the Finnan haddie, groaned deeply, and went forth upon his journey.

THE END.





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