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ISABEL ST ALBE:

OR

VICE AND VIRTUE.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY MISS CRUMPE.

VOL. II.

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“ Virtus, recludens immeritis mori
Cœlum, negata tentat iter via ;
Cœtusque vulgares, et udam
Spernit humum fugiente penna.”

HORACE.

“ When blind ambition quite mistakes her road,
And downward pores for that which shines above,—
Substantial happiness and true renown,—
Then, like an idiot gazing on the brook,
We leap at stars, and fasten in the mud ;
At glory grasp, and sink in infamy.”

YOUNG.

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ISABEL ST ALBE.

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CHAPTER I.

TIME had fled without any event having occurred worthy of record, and about a fortnight after Mr St Albe's departure, "the note of preparation" for the long intended journey to France commenced. The prospect of a total change of scene appeared to invigorate every member of Lady Belville's family with fresh hopes and spirits, except Lady Julia, who, annoyed to the last degree at hearing Lord Langrave's determination to visit Scotland instead of the Continent, continued to play the love-sick maid, *comme à l'ordinaire*, and evinced a degree of increased

coldness towards our heroine, for which the latter in vain attempted to account.

Great had been the disappointment of Lord Langrave at witnessing the indifference, if not actual pleasure, testified by Isabel on hearing his intentions publicly announced; yet vanity, which formed so leading a trait in his Lordship's character, induced him to think that Isabel's coldness was entirely feigned, and a mere subterfuge to conceal her real feelings. Langrave's passion did not deserve the name of love, notwithstanding that, in the course of his life, he had never been so strongly attracted by any woman as by Isabel St Albe. Probably, had she readily admitted his *dévoirs* in the first instance, he would, as usual, soon have become tired of the "idle chace;" but the reserve of Isabel's manners, and the total indifference she manifested to those attentions, which women of the first rank and fashion had been but too solicitous to obtain, piqued his pride, and gave zest to a pursuit that otherwise might have ended in satiety and disgust.

Whatever moral beauty Lord Langrave's character originally possessed, constant intimacy with associates, depraved in principle, and corrupted in feeling, had entirely obliterated ; nevertheless, he still retained sufficient *tact* to appreciate, in some degree, the charms of a really chaste and elegant woman, and with that sort of internal tribute, which we frequently see vice pay to virtue, he respected, admired, and even loved Isabel, with as much sincerity as it was possible a complete man of the world could feel for a being totally dissimilar in sentiment, in thought, and action. Nothing, indeed, short of a process of mental alchymy, by which Lord Langrave's character might have been purified from its dross, and refined in its principle, could have rendered his Lordship congenial to Isabel's mind ; she therefore felt gratified when she heard Langrave declare, that novelty no longer beckoning him "with wreathed smiles" to France's shore, he had resolved to commence his often meditated trip to Scotland, in preference to an excursion to

the Continent. A *cicisbéo* being, however, considered by Lady Belville as indispensably necessary, she willingly accepted Sir Felix Pettito's offer to escort her party, more particularly as her maternal policy had long since speculated on entrapping the sapient Baronet into the halter of matrimony; and so ably had her designs been seconded by the candidate Emily, that, on one occasion, Sir Felix had absolutely stooped to pick up her Ladyship's fan, and on another, had resigned his seat in an immense crowd, when the fair spinster had been threatened with a fainting fit, which extraordinary circumstances were, to the experienced eyes of Lady Belville,

“Confirmation strong as proofs of holy writ,”

that the blind god's influence must have instigated the Baronet, when he so far transgressed the laws of Dandyism, as to think it necessary to sacrifice his own comforts to the softer sex, or, when he was guilty of so great a solecism in aristocratical politeness, as to offer one of those tributary attentions to woman, now

deemed so antediluvian, that the old-fashioned individual who ventures to practise them is considered fitter to be placed amongst the antiquities of the virtuoso's cabinet, than in the distinguished legion of fashionable absurdity; for even the slightest portion of that devotion to the female sex, which was formerly carried to such excess, that the admirable pen of Cervantes was wielded to prune its exuberance, and to caricature its folly, is in this anti-chivalric age esteemed quite as ridiculous as the barber's basin, which served as helmet to "the Knight of the Rueful Countenance." And yet, we confess we are Gothic enough to imagine that a slight tincture of Quixotic gallantry would be an improvement to the manners of the present day; that politeness is preferable to selfishness, good breeding to incivility, and even the stiff studied manners of the *vieille cour*, far more supportable than the impertinent carelessness and absurd affectation of the modern school. We own we prefer Sir Charles Grandison's constant and profound bow to the levelled eye-glass raised to

reconnoitre ere acquaintance is acknowledged, and the drawled "How d'ye do?" subsequently vouchsafed with an almost imperceptible movement of the head, by a creature whose few ideas are resolutely confined to the tie of his neckcloth, and the cut of his coat.

We have, however, indulged in an unpardonable digression, and must now endeavour to atone for its intrusion, by acquainting our readers, that Lady Belville's travelling party at length commenced their journey. Being so circumscribed in number, the barouche was sufficient to accommodate the ladies. Sir Felix accompanied them in his curricule with his servant, who was occasionally banished to the chaise that followed with the domestics, whenever Lady Emily thought proper to entrust herself to the Baronet's care, for the purpose of enjoying his edifying conversation and companionship.

At Isabel's request, Lady Belville stopped at Canterbury, for the purpose of visiting the magnificent Cathedral of that town. Our heroine thought the edifice one of the most

splendid and interesting monuments of antiquity she had ever seen. It presents beautiful specimens of the Saxon and Gothic orders, and contains some very fine old mausoleums. The body of Thomas à Becket was removed there, in the reign, and by the order of Henry VIII. and the place of sepulture is completely worn by the feet of the numerous pilgrims, who resorted thither to perform penance at the shrine. The crypt is particularly fine, and the cloisters are astonishingly perfect, and of peculiarly beautiful architecture.

Canterbury Cathedral is more light in its general appearance than most other ancient structures, and, indeed, it is almost impossible to view its imposing grandeur, rendered interesting by so many associations, without experiencing considerable gratification.

The next day our travellers reached Dover, visited its castle, admired its stupendous white cliffs celebrated by Shakspeare, which form so picturesque a boundary to "the sea-girt isle of the ocean," and from thence em-

barked for Calais. Having already taken the liberty of attempting a description of the pleasures incidental to crossing the briny flood, we shall not trespass on our reader's patience by a second detail, but, leaving Lady Belville to plot her future machinations,—Lady Julia to sigh in sentimental reverie on the faithless and insensible Langrave,—Lady Emily to make love *en chemin faisant* to Sir Felix Pettito,—and Isabel

“ To chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancy,”—

we shall consign our travellers to the care of Neptune and his attendant Tritons, and lead the attention of our readers to other personages and other scenes.

CHAPTER II.

MEANWHILE Albert Tyrconnell had pursued his journey to Switzerland, and with such rapidity, that at the end of a few days he arrived at Geneva. The happiness of Rose at seeing her generous friend, and hearing from his lips a minute detail of his successful interview with Mr Monteith, may be well imagined. Albert, indeed, appeared, to her grateful feelings and ardent imagination, like a spirit of pity bearing the olive branch of peace, and obtaining for her harassed mind an asylum of rest, where her declining frame might enjoy some repose, ere her soul was summoned to quit its earthly tenement.

The family amongst whom Rose had resided, during Tyrconnell's absence, had treated her

with the most distinguished kindness, and business of an important nature requiring Mr and Mrs Haveril's attendance in London, they gladly offered to accompany Mrs Monteith in her purposed expedition to England.

The proposal was accepted with the utmost readiness by Rose, and Albert rejoiced at the circumstance, as her being provided with an escort, so very suitable in every respect, prevented the necessity of his being her *compagnon de voyage*, which office, had she been destitute of friends, he would certainly have performed, rather than have allowed Mrs Monteith to undertake alone, and unprotected, so long a journey, notwithstanding that Tyrconnell was perfectly aware of the confirmation such a proceeding would have given to the unfounded report, which he thought it possible Sir Hugh might have partially circulated. But no selfish consideration could abate the zeal of Albert's friendship; every comfort he provided for Rose's accommodation with the utmost attention and solicitude. By his care the remains of Captain Monteith

were sent to the Abbey, by a different conveyance from that in which his mourning widow commenced her journey; and a very short time after Tyrconnell's arrival in Switzerland, he had the happiness of seeing her depart for England, under the protection of Mr and Mrs Haveril. Many were the tears, the prayers of the grateful Rose, at parting with her generous friend. She felt it was a last farewell, and that idea contributed to render it doubly solemn and affecting.

As soon as the bustle attendant on the execution of so much important business had passed, Albert had leisure to consider his own situation, and to regulate his future plans. He was compelled to acknowledge, that the generosity of his conduct to the Monteiths had materially diminished his slender income, which he now saw reduced to a low ebb. Still he thought that, with proper prudence, the appearance of a gentleman might yet be well preserved, though the idea of living in very high style must in future be abandoned. He had now visited the principal cities in France

and Italy, and gratified his taste by the inspection of their relative merits. During his former stay in Paris, Albert had made many agreeable acquaintances in the first circle of society in that metropolis, and being convinced that, in a large capital, genteel economy can be easier practised, without invidious surmise, than in smaller towns, he determined to bend his course to Paris, and to remain there at least for a few months.

While revolving in his own mind the different plans that alternately suggested themselves to his imagination, Tyrconnell had more than once thought of returning to London. The idea of Isabel still floated in his fancy like an indistinct and beautiful vision; he thought of her with that kind of feeling

“ We sometimes give to forms that pass us by
In the world’s crowd, too lovely to remain,
Creatures of light, we never see again.”

Tyrconnell was not prone to indulging “overweening fantasies unsound;” yet would he sometimes sink into a reverie, and delight in

recalling to mind every tone, look, and gesture, of Isabel, on the evening of the fancy gala. It was "a green spot on Memory's waste," on which he loved to repose in all the luxury of thought. The pure Vestal appeared to imagination like one of those visionary pictures of earthly possession he had sometimes busily conjured up in Fancy's sketch. She was a sort of personification of the *beau idéal*, a bright "creation of the heart," which minds of sensibility are often prone to shape, as if in mockery of the stern realities of life—

"False views like the horizon's fair deceit,
Where Earth and Heaven but seem, alas! to meet!"

Albert Tyrconnell had, however, too much good sense to allow his conduct to be influenced by vain chimeras. He therefore determined altogether to abandon the notion of visiting London, both from the conviction he felt that, if once again within the spell of Isabel's society, he would find it impossible to quit the enchanted ground; and also, because he did not wish to return to England, where

a thousand unpleasant feelings would perpetually haunt him in regard to his uncle, from whom he preferred living far distant in the remoteness of a foreign country. His first determination was therefore finally resolved upon, and he adjourned speedily to that city, to which he little imagined Isabel St Albe was also *en route*.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER a most tedious passage, our travellers landed at Calais, at three o'clock in the morning. All was darkness and confusion. Those persons who have not visited foreign shores cannot conceive the effect produced by hearing a language generally spoken, the tones of which are, in some degree, unfamiliar to the ear, and which, from infancy, the mind has been accustomed to associate with ideas of refinement and education. The pier, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, was crowded with beings, whose noisy volubility was great beyond description ;—some persecuting the passengers to go to Maurice's, others to Dessein's, and many of the incongruous group of-

fering, in the politest terms, to take charge of the baggage.

Lady Julia affected pretty alarm, which the “*N’ayez pas peur, Madame !—il n’y a pas de danger,—Par ici ! Par ici !*” loudly vociferated on all sides, seemed rather to increase than to diminish. Lady Emily laughed, and declared that so much bustle was quite delightful, while she leaned on Sir Felix’s arm, who, scarcely understanding a syllable of the French language, stood gazing in amaze at the motley assemblage, and appeared to have lost the very few ideas with which nature had originally gifted him, as he resorted to his favourite expression, and exclaimed in evident terror,—“Petrify me ! if they are not worse than the wild Irish !” Even Isabel experienced an excitement of feeling she did not attempt to analyze, as she walked close to Lady Belville, and in silence contemplated the novel scene. Her Ladyship alone was perfectly collected, who, having given orders with respect to keys and trunks, calmly moved through the crowd with Isabel, followed by

her daughters and Sir Felix, who, as Lady Belville whispered our heroine, "Thanks to his tailor, had at least the appearance of being one of the lords of the creation!"

Our travellers having presented their passports at the city gates, proceeded to one of the principal hotels, where a good supper soon displayed the excellence of the French *cuisine*, and though the dishes were mostly anonymous strangers to English eyes, yet the superior flavour immediately reconciled their heterogeneous composition to appetites which sea-sickness and a long fast had rendered tolerably acute.

Calais being in no way interesting, except by its antiquity, it was determined that the following day the party should proceed direct to Paris. The travellers then separated for the night, having appointed an early hour of rendezvous next morning. Isabel, as she entered her large gloomy *chambre à coucher*, held up the candle which dimly lighted the extensive room, and contemplated the variety of figures on the paper-hangings; the spacious

fire-place, destitute of a grate, and filled with ashes ; the tiled floor, devoid of carpet ; the little bed, formed in a recess of the wall, with check curtains ; the crane-necked bottle, and its basin, (the only visible appendages to the toilet ;) and the large mirrors, framed in old-fashioned gold carving, which so often reflected her form, that she started at the frequency of her own likeness, and involuntarily shuddered, while imagination suggested how many scenes of horror had possibly been acted in that very chamber during the terrors of revolutionary violence. But, on a little consideration, our heroine smiled at the feeling of distrust she had experienced on first surveying her spacious apartment, and, locking the door, she prepared to retire to rest, which previous fatigue rendered most necessary ; yet she could not forbear drawing a mental comparison between the comforts of an English and a French hotel ; but the novelty of the scene perfectly reconciled her to the inconveniencies of the latter, and, without bestowing another thought on the subject, our heroine fell into a profound

sleep, from which she did not awake until summoned, on the following morning, by Lady Belville's *femme de chambre*.

One of the first objects that greeted Isabel's eyes, on looking out of her window, was a diligence in the court-yard of the hotel. The extraordinary appearance of such a conveyance always strikes the stranger with surprise. The clumsy vehicle, consisting of three different carriages joined together, and drawn by six heavy horses, steeds that seem perfectly independent of the rope traces by which they are harnessed, while they amble in the happy freedom of volition, now to this side, now to that; the grotesque dress of the postillion, with his great boots, fur apron, blue velvet jacket, and immensely long whip, which he manages with incredible dexterity, and smacks with a skill far eclipsing the scientific lashing displayed by many a noble peer in England, who, however proudly he may vie with his own coachman, must yield the palm of superior adroitness to the French Jehu; and *Monsieur le conducteur*, in his green travelling

pelisse, trimmed with fur, his cap to correspond, lolling in the cabriolet, with an air of the most perfect *nonchalance*,—all amused Isabel to such a degree, that she scarcely attended to the hints of her attentive Abigail, who now and then ventured to remind her, that Lady Belville, and the rest of the party, were already assembled at breakfast.

At length our heroine descended, and found Lady Belville's equipage in waiting, and Lady Emily convulsed with laughter, as she surveyed the *grand bottes* of the postillion, so spacious in rotundity, as to resemble churns, and far exceeding in size those "leathern conveniencies" which had already excited Isabel's astonishment. Sir Felix Pettito was inspecting them through his eye-glass, and Lady Julia exclaiming,—

"The French seem to me not to have the slightest portion of *vis inertiae*. Impulse appears to accelerate all their actions, and to impel them with the volition of velocity. Motion is always rectilinear in natural philosophy; but how contrary to its sublime laws are the

constant, diagonal, horizontal, and oblique lines, and semi-parabolic movements, in which the denizens of the Gallic empire indulge, even in the very act of ambulation !”

“ Your language, my dear,” said Lady Belville sarcastically, “ is so semi-perspicuous, that it quite passes my powers of intelligence ; it is, therefore, not surprising that the face of the garçon behind your chair should betray such evident signs of inquisitorial astonishment, for, although he professes to understand English, he, of course, cannot comprehend your Ladyship’s scientific jargon.”

“ Non ! je vous demande pardon—mais je ne puis pas comprendre Madame, de quoi a-t-elle besoin ?” anxiously inquired the obsequious waiter.

“ I want nothing !” exclaimed Lady Julia, with more energy than she usually evinced :

‘ Where ignorance is bliss, ’tis folly to be wise.’

“ I confess I ought to follow Shakspeare’s advice, and ‘ shine not upon fools, lest the reflection should hurt me !’ ”

“Mort de ma vie! Madame prenez garde donc de Monsieur,” said the attentive garçon at the same instant, as Sir Felix Pettito stumbled over Lady Julia’s chair.

The advice was so *à propos* to her Ladyship’s quotation, that Isabel could not forbear a hearty laugh, in which she was cordially joined by Lady Belville, whose maternal policy could not prevent her enjoying the ludicrous apposition of the garçon’s remark.

CHAPTER IV.

EVERY necessary arrangement being completed, our travellers proceeded on the *qui vive* of anticipation to Paris. The commencement of their journey defeated Isabel's expectations not a little. The road was good ; but the scenery, for several miles, presented no view calculated to inspire much interest. Sandy uncultivated plains, with here and there a solitary unpicturesque cottage, conveyed a feeling of disappointment to her mind. The country, however, began gradually to improve, and as she continued to approach Boulogne, the environs afforded an agreeable prospect. The absence of inclosures and hedge-rows, Isabel thought, contributed much to the general effect. 'The eye

wanders over an immense extent of land unrestricted by formal square boundaries, which, although they convey the idea of agricultural security, yet, in a considerable degree, seem to militate against the laws of the sublime and beautiful.

There is, nevertheless, one great disadvantage attendant on the absence of inclosures, which is, that groups of cattle, so necessary to the perfection of landscape, are rarely visible, the domestic animals being fed and kept in farm-yards, and not allowed to roam in verdant pasture as in England. A picturesque tree, which, growing in single luxuriance, has so charming an effect in breaking the tameness of an extensive plain, is also seldom seen in France, where the bright green of Nature's carpet is unrelieved except by large masses of forest, which do not afford the pleasing variety and contrast of detached trees or scattered plantations.

The dress of the French peasantry is singularly picturesque, and aids much the general scenery. Isabel observed that many of the

paysannes were rather handsome. Their high, long-eared white caps, scarlet jackets, striped petticoats, gold crosses, and wooden shoes, to her eye formed a lively and agreeable *tout ensemble*. With the appearance of little social comfort in their habitations, she thought she had never seen peasantry appear more perfectly happy and contented than the cottagers of France. In that respect, they reminded her of the rustics of her own poor country, whom she remembered with a sigh, as memory suggested the squalid misery of their wretched hovels, their ragged garments, and meagre appearance, and as she involuntarily contrasted the debased situation of the labouring classes in Ireland with the general prosperity enjoyed by the more favoured and flourishing population of England, or even of France.

At the end of the third day the travellers approached the termination of their journey. Long avenues of trees formed the grand route as they advanced nearer to the capital. Towards night-fall they entered the town of St Denis, (about six miles distant from Paris,) a

great part of which suffered from the effects of revolutionary fury in the year 1793. It was Sunday ;—and, notwithstanding that Isabel had been in some degree aware how little respect was shown to that sacred day in France, she was perfectly astonished at the spectacle which presented itself. The inhabitants of St Denis were celebrating one of their *jours de fête* ; the whole place was brilliantly illuminated ; and jugglers, rope-dancers, musicians, and theatrical amusements, at once burst upon the view : yet every thing seemed conducted with the utmost decorum. Indeed, on inquiry, she understood that, although the price of spirituous liquors is so much cheaper in France than in England, instances of intoxication are much rarer in the former than in the latter country.

“ My dear Isabel,” said Lady Belville, awaking from a temporary doze, “ I verily believe you mean to publish your travels on your return home, you have been so vastly inquisitive in your interrogatories to the post-boy.”

“ No, indeed !” rejoined Isabel, laughing. “ I really do not harbour any such intention ; for, exclusive of my own inability, (which alone would be sufficient to preclude the attempt,) the volumes of information on continental topics with which our press has teemed in the form of Journals, Visits, Sketches, and Tours, since the peace, have absolutely not left a single spot of debateable ground unoccupied ; novel intelligence it would therefore be impossible to impart.”

“ Dear me !” interrupted Lady Emily, “ I wonder what this great arch is called !”

“ I fancy it is the Porte St Denis,” said Isabel, letting down the carriage window, and inquiring from the postillion, who confirmed her assertion. “ It is quite useless to attempt to form any opinion of Paristo-night,” she continued. “ But pray, observe what an extraordinary method the Parisians adopt for lighting their city. The lamps, I perceive, are hung across the street ; but the present obscurity renders the strings by which they are suspended almost invisible.”

“ Yes, the momentum of light is not brilliantly lustrous. The emanative rays do not strike the crystalline lens of vision with much radiant force, owing to the opacity of the glass through which they diverge ;” pompously exclaimed Lady Julia.

“ Oh ! it has quite a fanciful appearance,” returned Isabel, sportively. “ The lights look as if upheld by some beneficent airy sprite to illuminate the darkness of this lower sphere, but who, jealous of the glories of the firmament, has resolved they shall not be eclipsed ; therefore, those lamps are not allowed to emit much brightness, lest they should seem too

—————“ like those Peri isles of light,
That hang by spell-work in the air.”

“ What a conceit !” said Lady Belville, laughing, and assuming the gayest spirits, to conceal the agitation she experienced at the approaching meeting between her Lord and Isabel. While anticipating the dreaded interview, the carriage stopped at one of the handsomest hotels in Paris.

Lord Belville's valet seemed waiting the arrival of the travellers.

“ Charles, where is your master ? ” inquired Lady Belville in a hurried voice.

“ In his dressing-room, my Lady.”

“ Show me thither directly,” said Lady Belville in the same flurried tone, as she instantly retired ; while the rest of the party were ushered into a magnificent saloon, in which they found Lord Allanby, who, in a timid awkward manner, advanced to receive his sisters and Sir Felix, scarcely daring even to glance at Isabel.

“ Miss St Albe, permit me to present Lord Allanby,” sententiously exclaimed Lady Julia.

His Lordship blushingly gave an unmeaning look and bow in return to our heroine's graceful acknowledgment.

“ Come, Allanby, reach chairs. Does not French politeness exact so much attention to our sex ? ” — said Lady Emily.

“ Oh ! yes,” replied the bashful peer, apparently delighted at having his duty pointed out, and instantly obeying his sister's com-

mands, as with the utmost alacrity he placed three chairs all in a row.

Isabel checked a smile, and ventured a survey. His Lordship was a tall, heavy, good-natured looking young man, with countenance unenlightened by one ray of intellect; his eyes were large and dull, with eye-lashes scarcely distinguishable from their extreme lightness. The contour of his face was not bad, neither were his features, that is, the nose and mouth, for eye-brows he had none. Yet the *tout ensemble* of Lord Allanby was far from being disagreeable, and Isabel, as she contrasted his appearance with Sir Felix Pettito's really pretty figure, thought she much preferred the personification of unpretending stupidity to that of ridiculous affectation. Our heroine had no further time to indulge in mental observation, for the door opened, and Lord and Lady Belville entered. Having affectionately greeted his daughters, Lord Belville advanced to Isabel. She thought his step faltered, and that his colour changed, while his voice certainly trembled as he uttered the

word "Welcome!" and touched her cheek with lips of icy coldness.

The general appearance of Lord Belville denoted extreme indisposition, and to bodily weakness Isabel attributed the emotion she observed her uncle had evinced. His Lordship's figure was tall and emaciated, yet graceful, and his dark manly expressive countenance presented the strongest contrast to his son's fair and florid complexion. Lord Belville's forehead was deeply marked by furrows which seemed impressed by the hand of care rather than by that of time; his lips were thin and usually compressed, while his sunken eyes occasionally glared a sort of unnatural brightness as they fixed on some particular object, with which his internal feelings could have had no possible association.

Lady Belville was even more than usually fascinating. By the exertion of her unrivalled *esprit*, she appeared to inspire her Lord with transient gaiety, and Isabel remarked, that, when animated, her uncle was agreeable, sensible, and well bred. Lady Belville was

the vital spark of society that evening. Never had she appeared to such advantage in Isabel's eyes, as when banishing *ennui* from her husband's mind, and endeavouring to reflect some portion of her own mental brilliancy on Lord Allanby. After a light supper, the members of the party at length separated, and retired to rest in their respective apartments.

CHAPTER V.

“WELL, my dear Isabel,” said Lady Belville, as our heroine entered the *salle à manger* on the following morning, “I hope you have enjoyed ‘rosy dreams and slumbers light,’ and that you are quite ready to commence the grand tour of this celebrated capital.”

“Perfectly so,” returned Isabel with animation. “I trust you do not intend to postpone that gratification a moment longer than is absolutely necessary.”

“Surely not. Allanby, to your special care I commit Miss St Albe during our stay in Paris. Be her attentive Cicerone—an office you must be well enabled to perform, as

by this time, I suppose, you are quite *au fait* in showing off the lions," said Lady Belville.

"Oh, yes! I have seen every thing. The Louvre is a very pretty building, and I shall be happy to accompany you there this morning," his Lordship added, addressing Isabel, on whom the word pretty had had so great an effect, that her tell-tale countenance strongly betrayed her astonishment at such an epithet being applied to an edifice, which she had expected to find absolutely unrivalled in splendours.

Lady Belville bit her lips with vexation, but quickly recovering her usual self-possession, she laughed and said,

"I give you credit for your *ruse*, Allanby. You wish Miss St Albe to enjoy double surprise and pleasure on visiting the Louvre, when she shall contrast its magnificence with the term you have used; I am quite entertained at your having so completely imposed on your fair cousin, who, I perceive, imagined your *façon de parler* to be meant in downright earnest."

Lord Allanby joined in her Ladyship's laugh, though for what reason it would have puzzled any disciple of Democritus to have discovered ; while Isabel, with *naïveté*, declared she had conceived his Lordship to have been perfectly serious.

“ I wonder when Lady Dashton will call. She has been here those six weeks past, I believe.—Dear me ! I wish she would come, for I want to inquire who is the most fashionable *marchand de modes*,” suddenly cried Lady Emily.

A ringing at the *porte cochere* announced an arrival. Her volatile Ladyship flew to the window, and impatiently exclaimed, “ Now, only think, I vow here is Lady Dashton's equipage ! We are at home,” added the lively Emily, turning to a servant, and clapping her hands in ecstasy, as she anticipated delightful discussions on the important subject of caps, ribbons, bonnets, and flowers.

“ Emily, I really wish you had not been so precipitate in admitting that tiresome Lady Dashton ; she always gives me the va-

pours," said Lady Belville, while almost at the same instant the door opened, and the fair object of reprobation entered, superbly dressed *à la Française*.

"I am rejoiced to see you, my dear Lady Dashton. How kind, how friendly to call at this early hour," said Lady Belville, warmly pressing her visitor's hand, whom she greeted with one of her sweetest smiles.

"I was resolved to catch you all before you commenced your morning rambles," said Lady Dashton, as she gracefully passed to the individuals of the party, complimenting each, in the hackneyed phraseology of fashionable politeness. "And now, initiate me into all your plans! What part of dear, delightful Paris, do you first intend to visit, and who are your attendant beaux?" anxiously inquired her Ladyship.

"Sir Felix Pettito, and my hopeful son," replied Lady Belville.

"What! no escort but Lord Allanby, and my friend the Baronet? Bless me! we shall have quite a deserted appearance, and I wish

your party's *début* to be made in good style. How provoking, that I did not think of bringing the Count de Vanzé, the Marquis del Sarto, the Duc d'Abelot ; or, ' though last, not least,' the delightful Mr Tyrconnell, who is quite the *ton*, and has turned the heads of half the fair Parisians, by the superior *éclat* of his fame and beauty."

"Is Mr Tyrconnell here?" asked Isabel, with some surprise.

"Yes.—Last season he blazed in the *rang élevé* of Paris, like a brilliant comet, but suddenly disappeared. No one knew whither he had retired, and surmise was just beginning to subside, when, lo ! he again became visible, and has, if possible, created a greater sensation than ever. Miss St Albe, are you acquainted with Mr Tyrconnell?"

"Not in the least, but his uncle is one of my most particular friends."

"Oh ! true. I have heard of him. There is some strange story in circulation about the old whimsical fellow. I forget the particulars."

“ Sir Hugh Tyrconnell is—Oh! how far superior! to those persons who attempt to ridicule his eccentricity;” said Isabel, with warmth.

“ I dare say,” replied Lady Dashton carelessly; “ but the character of an old beau is of no sort of consequence.”

“ Certainly.—Antiques are quite out of fashion,” said Lady Belville. “ But have you heard that this Mr Tyrconnell is going to be married?”

“ Married!” reiterated Lady Dashton. “ Is it possible? I vow, if you publish such doleful intelligence, all the *élégantes* in Paris will turn *belles religieuses* directly.”

“ No danger. Love, in these enlightened days, is not a killing disorder,” rejoined Lady Belville. “ But seriously, I am surprised Mr Tyrconnell is so much the fashion, for I fancy he has little of that most essential recommendation, fortune.”

“ Which is the *summum bonum* in this degenerate age. ‘ *O tempora! O mores!* ’” emphatically exclaimed Lady Julia, elevating

her hands and eye-brows, with all the dignity of a learned Blue ; while Lady Dashton, suppressing a smile, assumed a more than ordinary air of self-importance, as she said,—

“ I confess, it has often appeared singular to me, that a man, devoid of present rank, and with a limited rental, should eclipse the many endowed with both acquisitions. Yet certainly Tyrconnell’s appearance, manners, and accomplishments, are far above par ; and there is, as the French says, a *je ne sais quoi* about him, that is quite irresistible. You must permit me to present him to you, Lady Belville ; for not to be acquainted with the gallant hero is a penal offence in the established code of fashion.”

“ I have no objection to an introduction,” answered her Ladyship with affected carelessness.

“ ’Pon honour, I already feel half-jealous,” lisped Sir Felix, scientifically adjusting his cravat.

“ That is the first modest speech of which I have ever heard you guilty. Does Sir

Felix Pettito imagine it possible to eclipse his own superior charms?" playfully demanded Isabel.

"Petrify me! if I think such a feat within the scale of practicability," replied the Baronet, taking another peep of complacency at the reflex of his foppish form in an opposite mirror.

"Waste no more time in trifling," said Lady Belville impatiently. "Charles tells me my Lord will not appear until dinner. Allons! Allons! without further delay."

Her Ladyship's summons was cheerfully obeyed by the whole party, the individuals of which immediately commenced their excursion in eager quest of novelty and pleasure.

CHAPTER VI.

AT Lady Belville's instigation, it was unanimously resolved to visit the Louvre in preference to any of the other public edifices of Paris, and Lord Allanby was presenting passports at the grand entrance, while Lady Julia was philosophically attempting to discover if the *Place de Carrousel* was correct, according to the Pythagorean hypotheneuse, when Lady Dashton cruelly interrupted an elaborate digression on parallelograms, perimeters, and quadrangles, by suddenly exclaiming,—

“ There! There is Mr Tyrconnell! I wish he would join our party.”

Every eye followed her Ladyship's direction, as Albert appeared at a little distance, mounted on a prancing spirited steed, which

he reined in with graceful ease on perceiving the vicinity of a female group.

“ How do you do, Mr Tyrconnell ? Are you coming to visit the Louvre for the hundred and first time ? If so, pray be my *cicisbéo*,” said Lady Dashton, who had remained on the entrance steps after Lady Belville’s party had entered the hall.

“ With infinite pleasure,” said Tyrconnell, springing from his horse, and consigning the animal to the care of a servant.

“ We are not to be exposed to the dangers of a *tête-à-tête*,” rejoined her Ladyship sportively, “ for I am going to introduce you to the friends whom I accompanied hither, and who wait for me inside ;” saying which, she entered the Louvre, escorted by Tyrconnell.

Albert started, while the blood mantled to his cheek as he beheld the group pointed out by Lady Dashton. A vision seemed to float before him, the reality of which he could scarcely credit, and he felt a painful consciousness of the surprise and confusion he evinced, as her Ladyship presented him to the indivi-

duals of the party; but quickly recovering himself, Tyrconnell perceived with secret pleasure that his emotion had passed unnoticed in the hurry of introduction; therefore, addressing Lady Belville with his usual ease, (though his flushed cheek, and flashing eye, to an acute observer, might have betrayed his internal feelings,) Albert said,—

“ The Louvre, though divested of many of its former treasures, still contains a magnificent collection of the *chef-d’oeuvres* of antiquity. Is this your first visit to France, Lady Belville?”

“ Yes, and I anticipate a vast deal of pleasure, though, certainly, as you observe, Paris has been despoiled of much of its original splendour by the restitution of the works of art to their respective countries.” They had now reached the entrance to the superb gallery.

“ What a delightful place for a dance!” gaily exclaimed Lady Emily as she tripped inside.

“ A dance!” reiterated Lady Julia indig-

nantly ; “ would you profane the Athenæum of the arts by contortions of the corporeal frame, in the ever varying attitudes of locomotion ?

‘ Cambia se m’ami,
Cambia pensier ! ’ ”

ejaculated her Ladyship, with theatrical declamation.

The *coup d’œil* that broke on Isabel’s sight animated her speaking countenance with the brightest expression, as, heedless of all previous remark, she involuntarily exclaimed,—

“ Oh ! it exceeds all imagination had painted.”

Tyrconnell was instantly at her side ;—with delight he gazed on her mind-illumined features, strongly feeling the contagion of enthusiasm, as he said,—

“ Yes !—a visit to this unparalleled collection can never be forgotten ;—surrounded by the noblest efforts of human genius, who can behold the inspired productions, without experiencing some portion of that divine feel-

ing which must have animated the artists, whose *chef-d'œuvres* we now behold ! I ought not to check the vividness of your pleasure, Miss St Albe, by alluding to the superior glories of the Louvre, previous to the relinquishment of those specimens of sculpture and of painting which conquest had obtained, but which justice commanded to be restored to the lawful proprietors ; for even now it affords an intellectual banquet sufficient to gratify the most fastidious taste. The walls of this gallery, (1332 feet in length,) are, you perceive, closely covered with pictures, many of the very first merit. Indeed, speaking *en masse*, the collection is still excellent, although it cannot now boast the Transfiguration of Raphael, and other equally sublime masterpieces, which formerly rendered the accumulation of treasures in the Louvre perfectly unique."

"Are you, then, an advocate for the doctrine of restitution?" demanded Lady Belville.

"Undoubtedly! Italy, Prussia, and the

Netherlands, had every right to expect their property to be restored on the accession of the Bourbons. But, independent of such a conviction, as a lover of the fine arts, I am happy that the exquisite specimens of painting and statuary, which were accumulated in one capital, are now more universally dispersed; for I imagine that the artist, who is obliged to traverse the magnificent regions of Italy and Switzerland, ere he can behold the Apollo Belvidere, the Venus de Medicis, or the sublimest productions of Raphael or Correggio, will have many feelings excited, during his journey through the splendid scenery of those romantic countries, which may be of incalculable advantage to the genius of his future compositions."

"But how much less trouble and expence would the itinerant artist experience in his search after those celebrated models, had they been all permitted to remain in the metropolis of France," rejoined Lady Belville.

"To a man of talent, the benefits attendant on an extended tour must more than

counterbalance the inconveniencies to which your Ladyship has alluded," replied Albert. "Besides, local association is of infinite importance to the merit of a statue or a picture. For my own part, I never could look upon the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum with the same degree of interest and veneration, as if they still adorned the classic Temple of Minerva at Athens, where the very dust is consecrated by a thousand hallowed recollections; nor without regretting, that it had become absolutely necessary to remove these precious remains of ancient art beyond the reach of barbarian ignorance, to prevent their total annihilation."

As Albert's voice became animated by the fervour of enthusiasm, Isabel thought its tones familiar to her ear. She had also an indistinct feeling of having somewhere seen an expression similar to that which occasionally lightened up Tyrconnell's countenance, and, on further consideration, busy memory sug-

gested the Troubadour's smile;—but when Isabel ventured to glance at the majesty of Albert's forehead, as well as at eyes that beamed from beneath a strongly marked brow, a lustre, perhaps, too brilliant, she mentally argued, “ I am sure Feramorz had a gentler, milder cast of feature. His smile, which reminded me of the playful innocence and softness of childhood, could never have been associated with an expression, heroic, stern, almost awful.” The mellowed radiancy of Albert's look effectually banished the latter idea, and prevented further comparison, as he turned round and sportively exclaimed,—

“ I hope Miss St Albe will not be so cruel, as to prevent her friends from enjoying the benefit of her mental criticism.”

Isabel blushed deeply, as she said,—

“ I do not pretend to the rank of a connoisseur, yet the pleasure I experience in surveying the speaking canvass is so great, that it would be quite impossible to convey its ade-

quate idea in language;—when we feel most, we generally utter least.”

“ Yes, there is eloquence in silence such as yours, so different from the taciturnity of dullness, or the inanition of stupidity,” said Tyrconnell warmly.

Isabel only bowed a reply, as she smiled and walked on to examine the merits of the different paintings, attended by Lord Allanby, who moved in perfect silence on one side, and by Albert on the other, from whose remarks, always dictated by good taste, our heroine derived the highest gratification. She perceived that Tyrconnell possessed considerable *virtù*, and spoke with the air of a man perfectly conversant with the subject he discussed; yet was his conversation so devoid of pedantry, pretension, or the jargon of connoisseurship, that it was always intelligible even to the ears of the uninitiated. In the society of such an agreeable and unaffected companion, with whose general character she had been long acquainted, Isabel felt so per-

fectly unrestrained, that, as she passed on through the splendid collection, stopping at each picture which Tyrconnell particularized, examining its beauties, and discussing the relative merits of the Italian, Flemish, and French Schools, she forgot the recency of introduction, and conversed with a spirited intelligence and familiar ease, which seldom characterized her manners on a first acquaintance.

The mutual animation and interest, that marked the illumined countenances of Isabel and Albert, did not escape the penetrating eye of Lady Belville, who, under pretext of looking a second time at a celebrated picture, separated Lady Dashton from the rest of the party, and, in a low voice, said,—

“ My dear friend, our long acquaintance induces me to confide to you an important circumstance, which, when I disclose, you will I know comprehend my feelings, and all the maternal anxieties I experience.”

“ Undoubtedly, my dear creature,” replied

Lady Dashton, flattered to the utmost degree at being considered in the confidential light of intimacy. "You may depend on my faithfulness and secrecy."

An ironical expression passed over Lady Belville's lip, as she said,—

"Of either I entertain no doubt, and, therefore, hesitate not to inform you, that an engagement subsists between Miss St Albe and my son, Allanby, entered into by Isabel's father and Lord Belville, and ratified by the consent of the young people themselves, who have submitted with the most perfect obedience to the arrangements of *les bons parens*; indeed, no other consideration but the desire of cultivating a closer intimacy between the cousins could have induced Mr St Albe to part with his daughter, to whom he is devotedly attached. I thought it right to initiate you, my dear Lady Dashton, into these secrets of our little domestic arcana, which I feel certain your friendship will not betray."

"Oh never, never! Trust me, I am not one

of those gossiping people, who publish every thing confided to their care and keeping," said Lady Dashton with an air of the most mysterious solemnity, while, bursting with the supposed secret, she only waited for an opportunity to disseminate it most industriously amongst all her acquaintance.

"I have given proof how highly I esteem your discretion by the trust I have just reposed. Let us now return to our party, lest suspicion should arise as to the subject of our conference," rejoined Lady Belville, truly rejoiced at having secured the circulation of the report she wished to have believed, and disseminated by a medium, as certain and as public as that of the *Gazette de France*; for the fictitious story being confided by Lady Dashton to her "troops of friends," under the injunction of pretended secrecy, the wily Lady Belville well knew, would effectually secure herself from the appearance of design in its propagation.

Many reasons had induced her Ladyship

to such a stroke of policy. In the first place, she was anxious that Tyrconnell should be acquainted with the supposed engagement between Isabel and Lord Allanby, from the conviction, that, as a man of honour, he would not attempt to rival his Lordship in our heroine's affections, which, added to the rumour of Tyrconnell's intended union, (a report Lady Belville firmly credited,) was, in her opinion, a sufficient safeguard against the dangers that might otherwise accrue from the association of two persons, congenial in character and sentiment. When she also reflected, that Isabel had been informed that Tyrconnell's faith was pledged to another, she was convinced her niece would not willingly yield to the fascination of his society; and having, in idea, robbed Albert's manners of half their captivating powers, by the reserve which the information of her garrulous confidant would inevitably soon create, the politic Lady Belville thought she might safely accept the services of Tyrconnell, as *cicisbéo*

to her party in future. She was fully aware that a man of his fashion and elegance reflected a sort of *éclat* on whoever he attended, and she knew the value of such an acquisition in foreign society too well, not to feel happy in admitting Albert's acquaintance, when such precautionary measures had been adopted, as she imagined must effectually prevent any injurious consequences. Lady Belville, therefore, determined to give Mr Tyrconnell a general invitation to her hotel ; for having, like a skilful commander, endeavoured to divest her enemy of the power of doing mischief, she fancied that, by a little clever manœuvring, good might be extracted out of evil ; that, through Albert's interest, she might at once step into the first Parisian circle, amongst which polished class, Lady Belville knew Tyrconnell was a distinguished and popular favourite. Besides, she also thought, that, by unreservedly permitting Albert's visits, she would effectually banish the shadow of suspicion from Isabel's mind. Advancing, therefore, with one of her

softest smiles to our heroine and Tyrconnell, who had been permitted to continue their conversation without interruption, her Ladyship said,—

“ Isabel, my love, I fear I must disturb the gratification I doubt not your discriminating taste has this morning derived, for time wanes, and we must retire, without even visiting the sculpture hall. Mr Tyrconnell, you are an admirable Cicerone. Did I not fear imposing too great a tax on your gallantry, I should request your services whenever you happen to be disengaged. Here is a card with my address, and, believe me, I shall feel most happy in presenting Mr Tyrconnell to Lord Belville, as soon as you will permit me to afford my *caro sposo* so great a gratification.”

“ I am truly sensible of the honour such an introduction will confer, and shall take the earliest opportunity to avail myself of your Ladyship’s kind permission to cultivate an acquaintance I have commenced under the happiest auspices, and from which I anticipate so much pleasure in future,” said Tyrconnell,

who, having handed the ladies to their carriage, gracefully bowed an adieu, as it drove off, and swiftly conveyed the party to their temporary hotel.

CHAPTER VII.

ON ascending to the saloon, Isabel was accosted in the kindest manner by Lord Belville. She was happy to perceive that his Lordship appeared more tranquil, and in better spirits than on the preceding day, and, having entered the room alone, our heroine had a short *tête-à-tête* with her uncle.

“ I suppose you have already explored part of the curiosities of this famous city, or at least have visited some of the public edifices this morning. Have you been highly gratified, Miss St Albe ? ”

“ As yet I have only been to the Louvre, with which I am indeed delighted ; but with the general view of Paris I confess I have been disappointed. Its long narrow streets, and the

excessive height of the houses, I think, present a gloomy appearance, particularly when opposed in idea to the spacious streets of the English metropolis.”

“ That is the general feeling which a British visitant experiences on first surveying this celebrated capital. Yet it seems to me that, on a closer inspection, if there is not such apparent cleanliness and comfort in Paris as in London, there is so much more character in the former than in the latter city,—such infinite variety and continued contrast, that the eye of the stranger is amused to a greater degree in the French than in the English capital.”

“ That is very possible ; for there seems a spirit and character in all ranks of society in this country, very different, indeed, from the sober, plodding, mercantile appearance which distinguishes at least the middle class of the British nation.”

“ Yes !—and that *esprit de société* which our gay continental neighbours eminently possess, gives a zest to their amusements, a spirit

and a buoyancy to their general manners, which, although it may be connected with frivolity, yet unquestionably tends to embellish conversation, and enables the French to shine with a lustre perhaps fictitious, but certainly agreeable. I have heard, however, from persons who have been residents in France prior to the Revolution, that that important event effected a considerable change in the national manners of this country; that the extreme *politesse* for which the ancient *régime* was so remarkably distinguished, has been in a great degree abandoned, and that the French people have scarcely yet had time to efface the ideas of *égalité* and rudeness which the Revolution has left in their minds and manners."

"I have heard my father say," replied Isabel, "that the military education which the youth of France received under Buonaparte's government contributed much to diminish the polished refinement which was the peculiar characteristic of former times, and that a sort of martial *brusquerie* is established in its place. But to return to our original topic—

Do you think, my Lord, that the architectural beauty of Paris is equal to that of London?"

"If you mean in regard to the general view which the French metropolis presents, certainly not. The wide streets, and the handsome houses and shops of the English capital, are far superior to the close confined appearance of this city; but in public buildings, as well as in some particular localities, Paris, I think, has decidedly the advantage of London. For instance, there is no feature in the latter metropolis that will bear comparison with the Place Louis Quinze, or the grand avenue of the Boulevards. The splendid palaces of Paris are also, I believe, nearly unrivalled, and the utility of her public edifices deserves the highest commendation."

"Do you consider the French an intellectual people?" demanded Isabel.

"Scientific pursuits are, I understand, more cultivated and encouraged here than historical study. France is, and ought to be, an enlightened nation; for the natural capa-

cities of her people are excellent, and the magnificent literary institutions with which Paris is enriched, must surely contribute to disseminate general information, to encourage the culture of the *belles lettres*, and to promote the improvement of the fine arts. The royal library alone contains about 400,000 printed volumes, besides 80,000 manuscripts, and the other bibliothecal establishments of this capital, though not equally extensive, yet possess admirable collections, in the noblest works of human genius. But do you not intend to visit one of the theatres this evening? You will then be enabled to judge of the relative merits of the French and English stage."

"I should like to do so extremely, if the project meets with Lady Belville's approbation. Should we go, will you not accompany us?" gently inquired Isabel.

"Oh no!" said Lord Belville, heaving a deep drawn sigh. "I seldom go into public, my health is indifferent, and—in short, my dear Miss St Albe, I feel no disposition to

encounter the dissipation attendant on an unwearied routine of gaiety and pleasure.”

“ In preferring retirement to the tumult of the fashionable world, your Lordship evinces superiority of mind and taste. How often have I heard my beloved father say, that he would not forego the delightful meditations of the closet for all the brilliancy of life’s most fascinating scenes.”

“ But his reflections must be of a nature far, far different from mine,” said Lord Belville with a bitter smile, and turning deadly pale ; then, pleading sudden indisposition, his Lordship, with hasty strides, walked towards the window. Recollecting that Lady Belville had told her, that her uncle was subject to sudden nervous attacks, Isabel ventured to approach Lord Belville, as she softly said,—

“ Can I be of any assistance? Oh, my Lord! —or shall I call your valet?”

“ No, no, I am quite recovered ; it was but a temporary megrim, from which I often suffer—Do not mention the circumstance to Lady

Belville, it would only serve to render her unhappy."

"Certainly not—but—take my arm, dear uncle!"

"Isabel, that is the first time I ever heard you call me by that title," said Lord Belville, in a tone of tremulous emotion.

"Does it displease you?" timidly whispered his companion.

"No—that is—but I hear Lady Belville's step—What were we talking of? The French Theatre, I believe," rejoined Lord Belville in a flurried voice, his looks and manners suddenly becoming reanimated, as he hastily and loudly said,—

"Miss St Albe, you positively must go to the Theatre Français this evening;" at the same instant Lady Belville entered.

"Ha! I did not expect to find your Lordship here, *tête-à-tête* with Miss St Albe," said Lady Belville rather coldly.

"I have enjoyed the pleasure of Miss St Albe's society for a few moments this morning, and have just proposed a visit to the theatre

to-night. What do you say to such an arrangement?"

"I can have no objection whatever. Lady Dashton has promised to dine with us; she will, I am sure, chaperon our fair spinsters, and Sir Felix and Allanby can be their guardian escort. As to myself, I prefer remaining at home to spend the evening with you, my Lord; but, 'tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon,' that I have been guilty of so great a crime, as wishing to pass my *soirée* with *mon brutal*, instead of joining your gay circle at the theatre," Lady Belville added, turning to Isabel with an expression captivatingly playful.

At that moment, our heroine reproached herself, for ever having entertained a doubt of her aunt's amiability; with animation, therefore, she said,—

"Although I regret we are to be deprived of your society, dear Madam, yet your motive for seclusion is so truly laudable, that I respect it too sincerely to attempt to alter your determination."

“ Thanks, *ma belle predicatrice*,” replied Lady Belville, drawing Isabel into the recess of a window, as she whispered with a bewitching smile, “ To prove your admiration of my domestic virtues, will you allow Allanby the pleasure of conversing with you to-night? This morning his retiring merit was eclipsed by the imposing manners of Mr Tyrconnell. The man of real worth and sterling value is often obliged to resign the field to the superficial hero of modern fashion.”

“ True—but Mr Tyrconnell appears something far beyond the latter character ; for, although his manners are exquisitely polished, yet his mind seems highly cultivated, and his sentiments refined.”

“ Oh yes ! A slight intercourse with life quickly enables a person to assume that sort of thing, with as much ease as to wear the modest costume of the day ; but, trust me, Isabel, it is the man of solid unobtrusive worth who will constitute the happiness of woman in the marriage state.”

“ I was not thinking of matrimony,” repli-

ed Isabel with surprise ; “ but since you have introduced the subject, permit me to say, that, in that connection, above all others, I should imagine it necessary to unite intellectual superiority with domestic virtue ; for, what can so effectually tend to relieve the uniformity of constant association, or to banish the fatal *ennui*, which, even in the happiest unions, sometimes does intrude, as that elevation of feeling and mental culture, which prevents the mind from falling back upon itself, and precludes the necessity of external excitement to procure its pleasures, or to dissipate an insipidity, of which uninformed commonplace persons so frequently complain, when experiencing that vacuum which folly is always endeavouring, unsuccessfully, to fill ? ”

“ The unornamented stick of the goddess contained gold inside ; and, notwithstanding all your eloquent sophistry, Isabel, I rather think, nay, I am sure, that Mr Tyrconnell would not make as good a husband as my own dear, excellent Allanby. ”

“ I had not an idea of drawing a comparison,” said Isabel, rather coldly.

“ And I but jested,” rejoined Lady Belville ; “ but our little *persiflage* must end, for here comes Lady Dashton.”

A proposal to visit the Theatre was readily acceded to by her Ladyship, who was ever ready to join in any scheme of amusement. Immediately after dinner, therefore, the whole party, with the exception of Lord and Lady Belville, adjourned, to enjoy the pleasures of dramatic representation.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON first entering the Theatre Français, our heroine was considerably disappointed. The dim sombre appearance of the house presented, in imagination, an extreme contrast to the strikingly brilliant *coup d'oeil* which the principal London Theatres afford. But Isabel remarked, that the breathless attention of the audience to the business of the stage far exceeded that which is usually evinced to the drama in England.

The play was the *Athalie* of the great Racine. The first act was concluding as Lady Dashton and her party entered. At its finale, therefore, Isabel had leisure to take a survey of the theatre, in the architectural interior of which she found little to admire.

Our heroine was seated on a hinder bench, and by the management of Lady Dashton, she had the happiness of Lord Allanby's proximity on one side. After a few common-place remarks, conversation languished, and Isabel was anxiously expecting the commencement of the second act, when the box-door opened, and Mr Tyrconnell appeared.

"May I enter? Lady Dashton, have I permission?" said Albert.

"Certainly. We shall have much pleasure in such an acquisition as your society will afford. But I think we can contrive a seat for you on this row, Mr Tyrconnell. Lady Julia, will you have the kindness to move up higher?"

"There is not the slightest occasion for such unnecessary trouble," said Albert anxiously. "I would not for worlds intrude on that already crowded bench, but, if Miss St Albe will allow me the honour of taking a place beside her, I can do so without inconveniencing the rest of your party."

"Oh! there is quite sufficient room here,"

said Isabel smiling, and motioning to Tyrconnell to sit down. He immediately availed himself of the invitation, while his countenance expressed the purest pleasure, as he said with peculiar animation,—

“ This is indeed a gratification, a happiness I little expected, Miss St Albe, for I scarcely dared imagine that my good genius would allow me another treat similar to the delightful one which was my portion this morning ; its only fault was a brief duration ;—mais, il ne trouve qu’un défaut à la rose, qui est son peu de durée ; défaut qui est lui commune avec toutes les belles choses qui nous paroissent toujours passer, et qui passent en effet, toujours trop vite.”

“ Therefore, I suppose your Epicurean motto is this—

‘ Seize Pleasure as she flies.’

How different from the code of morality which your uncle Sir Hugh Tyrconnell adopts !”

“ My uncle ! Do you know him, Miss St

Albe?" demanded Albert with surprise and some degree of anxiety.

"Intimately. His heart is naturally the seat of every virtue; but,—in short, his mind is now a wreck o'erthrown, yet great even in ruin!"

"Yes!" said Tyrconnell deeply sighing. "There is a tide in the affairs of men, the ebb and flow of which we cannot control. My uncle's character is ever to me a peculiarly sombre subject for reflection. I am happy to hear that he is a favourite with Miss St Albe, because it evidently proves him amiable; besides, how great a consolation must have been derived from the culture of her friendship."

"Sir Hugh Tyrconnell has, indeed, many beautiful traits in his character, yet perverted feeling does occasionally exert its baneful influence. It is, however, only like the passing cloud that sometimes obscures the brightness of the glorious sun, but cannot totally darken its effulgence. Since childhood I have known your uncle, and I revere and love him with

the truest sincerity. The ancients, you remember, respected those objects which lightning had blasted !” Isabel added with a smile, half-melancholy, half-playful.

“ Then you are acquainted with the early events of Sir Hugh’s unhappy life ?” whispered Albert in extreme emotion.

“ I am,” replied Isabel in a tone of correspondent feeling.

A silence of some minutes ensued which neither wished to break. At length Tyrconnell, laying his hand gently on Isabel’s arm, said, in a low hurried voice, “ From this moment, I can no longer consider Miss St Albe in the light of a stranger, for is she not acquainted with the errors of those dear beings to whom I owe existence, whose frailties I dare not justify, yet whose faults I fain would cover with affection’s veil ! How often, how bitterly have I deplored that one single spot should stain their memory. Yet did the world combined condemn them, in the sanctuary of my soul must they ever rest respected and revered !”

“ Oh, think not that I censure !” said Isabel in a low and broken voice ; “ but let us wave the distressing subject. I reproach myself for having introduced it even by the remotest allusion.”

“ Do not, do not say so ! The sympathy you testify is grateful to my feelings, which long have been tempered to what Ossian calls ‘ the joy of grief ;’ besides, your knowledge of those events with which the world in general is unacquainted, and with which my fate has been so closely associated, (dare I say it?) forms a sort of connecting link in the chain of mutual sentiment, which I will not say how highly I prize, lest you should accuse me of presumptive arrogance,” said Tyrconnell, affecting cheerfulness as he uttered the last words.

Isabel smiled ; but hers was not the smile of reproof,—it was rather that of reciprocal intelligence ; while, at the same moment, Lord Allanby exclaimed, with the air of a person making an important discovery, “ Here is the beginning of the second act.” The mo-

ment it commenced, the audience testified the most intense interest. Every eye was fixed upon the stage, and every tongue was silent. Indeed, an unprejudiced observer must allow that the French possess dramatic character in a very superior degree. They resort to their theatre, not from a love of display, as if repairing to a sort of *Vanity Fair*, to see and to be seen, as is too often the case in England, but rather for the ostensible purpose of witnessing the representation of their classic drama in all its dignity. The versification of French tragedy sounds monotonous and unnatural to a foreign ear, and the despotic rules of Aristotle are so rigidly observed, that variety of scenery and brilliancy of spectacle are generally sacrificed to the sedulous preservation of the unities of the piece. Although the latter idea may be indulged to an unnecessary extent, yet, undoubtedly, a higher tone of dramatic feeling seems to pervade a French than an English audience. Even the extraordinary length of some of the speeches, in the productions of their best authors, never ap-

pears to try the patience, or to weaken the attention of the spectators, who follow with breathless attention the actors through tedious, formal details, rarely enlightened by flashes of genius, or highly wrought interest. The moral tendency of the compositions that are represented is also generally of the most superior beauty ; and it is amongst the many anomalies of the national character of France, that while vice and profligacy are tolerated, if not encouraged, a certain *tact* which the French eminently possess, renders virtue in the abstract the constant theme of panegyric, though we fear not of practical imitation. The continental managers seldom bring forward

“ A tragedy complete in all but words.”

Their stage is not degraded to the mere spectacle of pantomime, or the buffoonery of farce. A noble bard of poetic eminence draws a very opposite picture of the general state of the British Theatre, when he says,—

“ Their own drama yields no fairer trace
Of wit than puns,—of humour than grimace !”

However, in such a judgment, we rather recognize the severe satirist, than the unprejudiced critic, although with regret we confess, that as long as the ephemeral productions of common-place writers are allowed to supersede the representation of the immortal works of Shakspeare, there seems but too much rational ground for accusation and invective.

Albert watched with pleasure the speaking countenance of our heroine, as, with rivetted attention, she contemplated the performance, listened to the magnificent choruses, and followed the splendid Talma, and the talented Duchenois, through all the eloquent display of their tragic powers, with almost breathless interest.

At length the curtain dropped, and Tyrconnell ventured to renew conversation as he said,—

“ With what infinite pleasure you appear to identify your feelings with the business of the stage ; and yet I suspect, Miss St Albe,

that when you have witnessed the delightful representation of French comedy, when you have seen the fascinating Mars, the polished Fleury, the comic Joly, Potier, and Damas, you will yield the palm of superiority to the votaries of Thalia."

"I understand that the dramatic character of the latter is indeed unrivalled. I have, I confess, been in many respects highly gratified by the performance this evening, yet it by no means appears to me devoid of errors. There is an exaggeration of feeling, a want of nature, and a bombastic violence of declamation which sometimes borders on the burlesque, conspicuous in the enunciation of the very first-rate actors. Even the great Talma himself does not seem exempt from the contagion, and is apparently much shackled by the artificial rules of the French school."

"'Tis most true; although his fine genius occasionally shines forth decidedly conspicuous, when bursts of high-toned feeling enable him to exhibit his sublime conceptions of character in all their imposing deli-

neation, and to break the fetters which restrain his superior talents within their 'duration vile.' As to Duchenois, were her physical beauties equal to her tragic powers, she would equal any actress I have ever seen in exciting the strongest emotions, and the deepest enthusiasm," returned Tyrconnell.

"The histrionic art has here attained the ultimatum of perfection. It would be the height of paralogy to say otherwise. There is as little cognation between the English and the French stage, as between a parhelion and the solar luminary! Oh! thou divine Talma! attired in the classical

'Lana Tarentino violas imitata veneno!'

never, never shall I forget thee!" sentimentally ejaculated Lady Julia.

"Dear me! I never was so fatigued. I think the play was monstrous dull," said Lady Emily with a polite yawn.

"Petrify me, if I am not half asleep!" cried Sir Felix, shrugging his shoulders.

"Somnolence and oscitancy are generally

attendant on intellectual vacuity," rejoined the scientific Julia.

"Well, you may all talk as you please; but give me one ballet at our charming opera, in preference to the finest tragedy Racine or Corneille ever wrote," exclaimed Lady Dashton. "What do you think, Lord Allanby?"

"Oh! I am of Miss St Albe's opinion!" replied the complaisant Peer, happy at being able to shelter himself under the shadow of another's sentiments.

"Now, that criticism is at an end, we had better retire. Lord Allanby, Miss St Albe is your charge," said Lady Dashton, with a sly expression. "Sir Felix, the fair sisters I commit to your care; and for myself, I must request the protection of Mr Tyrconnell."

The arrangement did not quite meet Albert's approbation; however, politeness obliged him to offer his arm to Lady Dashton with apparent resignation.

"Upon my word," said her Ladyship in a whisper as they were getting through the crowd, "you have prettily engaged Miss St

Albe this evening ; you seem already quite *épris* ; therefore, to prevent your becoming *éperdument amoureux*, I think I ought to tell you a secret."

" Respecting Miss St Albe ?" inquired Tyrconnell anxiously.

" Yes, but can I trust you ?"

" Undoubtedly ; it can be nothing to her disadvantage," eagerly replied Albert.

" Not in the least," answered Lady Dash-ton coolly. " She is merely going to approach that goal, which all spinsters ardently desire to reach with breathless haste—the temple of Hymen. Miss St Albe is engaged to be married to her cousin, Lord Allanby, who, poor fellow, is certainly *stupide au dernier degré*, yet quite good enough for a husband."

Such intelligence conveyed to Tyrconnell's mind a degree of emotion, for which he attempted not to account, as he involuntarily exclaimed, " It is impossible !"

" Pardon me, it is downright fact, for I have it from the very best authority !" said Lady Dashton, with a consequential air ; feel-

ing her dignity impeached by the implied doubt. "But, bless me, Mr Tyrconnell, you have absolutely changed colour," she added, with an inquisitive look.

"The heat of the house was overpoweringly oppressive; did you not find it so?" demanded Albert, to whose cheek Lady Dashton's accusation had restored more than its usual "roseate hue."

"Yes, I think this night is rather warm; yet I fear we shall take cold standing in this draught of air. Lord Allanby, is our carriage ready?"

"It waits at the door."

"*Entrez donc sans ceremonie,*" cried Lady Dashton. The party obeyed her injunction, and her Ladyship, as she gaily wished Tyrconnell good night, added, in a mysterious whisper,—*"Remember—silence!"*

Albert assented by an inclination of the head, and merely bowing, instantly retired.

His reflections were of such a confused nature, that, for some time, he vainly attempted to analyse them. On so short an acquaintance,

to imagine himself absolutely in love, he thought perfectly ridiculous ; yet he was obliged to acknowledge the intelligence just received had caused him any sensation rather than that of pleasure. With a sort of ingenious sophistry, however, he soon persuaded himself that the strong emotions he had experienced on hearing of Isabel's intended marriage, had solely originated from the conviction of the sacrifice that would be committed in uniting her with such an uncongenial being as Lord Allanby ; one so totally unworthy of possessing such a treasure, as Albert, with a sigh, confessed Isabel St Albe to be : while, on pursuing still further the thread of mental argument, Tyrconnell, with that sagacity which usually distinguishes those who are even in the slightest degree under the dominion of the little mischief-loving deity, immediately discovered that nothing could be so fortunate for his future peace as our heroine's engagement. He felt that he was not constitutionally prone to the infirmity of falling in love ; yet, if any woman could subject him to

the influence of that passion, a certain something whispered, that Isabel St Albe would be the person ; but now, her being absolutely pledged to Allanby effectually precluded the possibility of Albert's ever regarding the bewitching dangerous creature in any other light than as the bride-elect of another. Besides, he was convinced that, were she perfectly free, the dictates of sense and reason would immediately compel him to leave Paris ; for, ungifted as he was with Fortune's favours, he never could aspire to the glory of obtaining her hand.

“ And could I venture to remain within the attraction of her too fascinating society, without becoming eternally devoted to the most charming of her sex ?” he involuntarily exclaimed. “ Oh, no ! I feel I could not !— But now that I am aware she never, never, can be mine, I may stay without the slightest danger. The certainty of her vows being plighted to another will be a powerful talisman to guard my heart from the witchery of her enchantments. I may still worship Vir-

tue in her loveliest form, and may aspire to the friendship of Isabel, though I cannot hope or wish to share her love ! She will soon be the wife of Allanby ;—of Allanby ! that stupid insensible !—Oh ! wealth, title ! how great is your potent magic over the soul of woman !—If Miss St Albe was going to be united to a man of intellect and worth, I could bear—Pshaw ! I could rejoice at the prospect of her future felicity ; but—to Allanby !”——

Tyrconnell paused from his lover-like, and consequently rational ejaculations,—sunk into a profound reverie,—and ultimately came to the wise decision of remaining in Paris ; to which resolution his unbiassed judgment could see no possible objection : so true it is, that Cupid shrouds the clearest mental optics, and only permits objects to appear according to his sovereign will and pleasure in the seducing, but deceitful region of Love’s atmosphere. Albert at length retired to rest ; but whether to sleep or not, we leave the sapient reader to discover.

CHAPTER IX.

THE mornings were now constantly devoted to the pleasure of seeing the numerous edifices and institutions of Paris, and the evenings to visiting the theatres and other places of public amusement. Time had seemed to fly, not on leaden wings, but with more than his usual swiftness ; for a period of six weeks had elapsed since Isabel's arrival in France ; and to our heroine it appeared as if as many hours had scarcely passed. She had frequently written to and often heard from her valued friends at the Parsonage since her residence in the French metropolis ; but as those letters contained little intelligence of importance, we have not thought it necessary to insert them. The following epistle, however, as it presents

a genuine transcript of Isabel's feelings at the present juncture, may not be deemed intrusive.

TO THE HONOURABLE AND REVEREND MR
ST ALBE.

“ With what infinite happiness was your last letter received by your Isabel. It was a sort of mental elixir to her spirits, and a cordial to her heart. To hear that you and my valued aunt Eleanor were well was precious intelligence, which, together with your approval of my conduct since we parted, traced by a pen that never yet deceived, was so gratifying, so dear to my feelings, that I absolutely wept with delight on the perusal.

“ Smiles we freely bestow on ordinary enjoyments, when the eye and the fancy are merely pleased ; but when the soul is deeply touched, tears speak more eloquently its sensations, for they are the essence of the heart's best affections.

“ You desire me to continue my little his-

tory from time to time, without reserve. Willingly I obey the injunction. My letters shall be the mirrors in which shall be reflected, without disguise, your Isabel's every action; her pen shall record her every thought. Happy, most happy is the child, who, blessed in the disinterested attachment of a parent, reposes unbounded confidence in that bosom, whose every pulse throbs with the tenderest sensibilities of nature.

“ The treasure of possessing so sincere a friend is one of the greatest blessings Heaven can bestow. Under the guidance of such an adviser, the inexperience of youth is assisted by the penetration of riper years; judgment directs, integrity counsels, esteem cements, and virtue approves the holy connection, which will ultimately be productive of the noblest advantages to the child, and the most exalted pleasures to the parent. Such an absolute union of interest and affections cannot be confined to a merely temporary relation, but will embrace perpetuity itself; for, without presumption, may we not anticipate

the full and sublime completion of all virtuous attachments, in that higher and better state, where humanity shall be purified from its dross, where the spirits of love and peace for ever reign in the glorious society of ‘the just made perfect?’ But I dare not dwell on so delightful a theme, else its endless sources of meditation would detain me from the account of circumstances, which, however commonplace, I shall not apologize to my dearest father for now narrating.

“ Since my last epistle, an event has occurred that will, I think, occasion as much surprise to you as it did to me—the arrival of Lord Langrave!—We were all sauntering through the gardens of the Luxembourg, when, suddenly, his Lordship appeared. I imagine he could not have been much gratified by his reception, for every individual of the party seemed rather annoyed than gratified, except Julia, who certainly was not deficient in sentimental demonstrations of pleasure on the occasion. As to Lady Belville, her first emotions were evidently those of asto-

nishment, and, I think, vexation, but quickly recovering her usual air of winning politeness, she advanced and said,—

“ ‘ My Lord, this really is an unlooked for rencontre, more welcome, from being totally unexpected.’—‘ I know not what invisible power directs my movements with magic force, and ever impels me to enter your sphere of attraction; but be it what it may, I never can regret its influence, as long as the results are so agreeable as in the present instance,’ replied his Lordship, bowing to our party in general. I was leaning on Allanby. Mr Tyrconnell was walking on the other side; and, happening at the instant to raise my eyes, I perceived a look of recognition pass between the latter and Lord Langrave of a very extraordinary nature. His Lordship coloured deeply, and darted a glance of proud defiance at Mr Tyrconnell, which he returned with an air of cool contempt, as a distant formal bow was mutually exchanged. ‘ I perceive you are acquainted with Lord Langrave?’ I said in a low tone, as soon as we were unobserved.—

‘ Yes ; I knew him slightly in Italy,’ answered Tyrconnell, thoughtfully.—‘ I believe, I am very uncharitable ; yet, I must acknowledge, I do not rejoice in the accession our group has just received,’ I involuntarily exclaimed.—‘ And why?’—‘ I can scarcely tell ; but fancy the reason is, because I have always understood Lord Langrave to be so complete a man of the world ! Now, in my vocabulary, the explanation of that term is this : A being systematically artificial ; one whose feelings and principles have become vitiated, if not absolutely lost in the pestilential atmosphere of fashion ; and of such a person, aware of my own inexperience, I ever feel a dread.’—‘ A most unusual fear in the present day!’ answered Mr Tyrconnell, laughing ; ‘ and yet,’ he added in a more serious tone, ‘ it is one which I do not wish altogether to eradicate ; for, in an intercourse with the world, distrust may often, to the youthful mind, supply the place of an experience, which is, in general, dearly purchased.’

“ ‘ Would you, then, advise me to be suspicious ?’ I demanded.

“ ‘ By no means ;—the charms of an open ingenuous character no man can prize more truly than I do. The fearlessness of virtue, and the frankness of candour, have irresistible claims on my heart ; but there is a sort of rational prudence in the estimation of character, as practicable as it is useful, which will prevent your being the dupe of shallow artifice, or designing hypocrisy. Such, my dear Miss St Albe, I should wish you to exercise.’

“ ‘ And shall I commence, by trying its effects on Lord Langrave ?’ At my question, Mr Tyrconnell hesitated for a moment, then, in a low rapid tone, he said,—‘ From you I fear not misconstruction. I should not, indeed, be apprehensive of suspicion, because the rectitude of my intention satisfies my own mind, and supersedes the necessity of profession to yours. Sincerely, then, I do wish to warn you against Lord Langrave, with whose character I am so well acquainted, that I feel perfectly justified in guarding your innocent

heart from the danger which might possibly arise from association with an artful one. Will Miss St Albe, therefore, pardon the advice I have been so presumptuous as to offer?—Will she forgive that temerity, which originated but in one motive, the truest, deepest interest in her welfare?’

“ ‘ Thanks, Mr Tyrconnell,—many, many thanks for the admonition your kindness has suggested. Believe me, I am most grateful for the friendship by which it was dictated; more particularly, as I know my own total ignorance of the world, and strongly feel the necessity of a friend to guide me through its intricate paths, until I am safely placed under the protecting care of one who will ever guard me with tenderness, and counsel me with truth.’ And, Oh! my dearest father, how my heart bounded with pleasure, when I thought you were that one, and when I, in fancy, depicted our future re-union.

“ Wrapped in such an idea, I did not notice the strange shade that crossed Mr Tyrconnell’s countenance, until, with an air of

constraint, he said, ‘ It was unnecessary to remind me of what is ever present to my thoughts, but’——

“ ‘ Until I am under his protection, you will be my kind, my faithful monitor ! will you not ?’ I involuntarily exclaimed, eagerly concluding Mr Tyrconnell’s sentence in a way I fear more consonant to my own wishes than to his ; for an indefinable expression lightened his speaking features, as he articulated in a suppressed voice,—

“ ‘ I accept the trust. Heaven grant me strength to fulfil it with fidelity !’ And, on plea of important business, he abruptly retired. My dearest father, I am quite agitated lest my inexperience has led me to commit an unintentional error.

“ Knowing Mr Tyrconnell’s engagement, I of course consider him in the light of a married man ; but surely, though his love has yielded to another, his friendship may be mine. On his advice I place the most implicit reliance, because it must be disinterested ; and also, because his vigorous understand-

ing, and early intercourse with life, must eminently qualify him for the task of directing one so inexperienced in the customs of the world as your poor Isabel. Besides, my knowledge of Mr Tyrconnell's worth, (through the representations of General Montford, which I am inclined to think, notwithstanding the insinuations of the Troubadour, were not exaggerated,) together with my long intimacy with our dear Sir Hugh, contributed, from the dawn of my acquaintance with his nephew, to dispel reserve and awaken confidence. I know not how it is—but I cannot allow Lady Belville to read my heart, although I am positive there is nothing 'in the little foolish fluttering thing' that I need particularly wish to conceal. Yet there is a something about my aunt that always repels me from expressing those slight shades of feeling which to you I display with the most perfect freedom, but which, from her lynx-eye, I should sedulously conceal. For instance, I would not for the world tell her Ladyship that I had constituted Mr Tyrconnell my Mentor during my ab-

sence from you, my first and best of guardians ! although to my loved parent I reveal it without distrust. For I often think, when endeavouring to study the fascinating Lady Belville, that possibly she may resemble those verdant floating islands I have read of, whose soft green might tempt the unwary traveller to tread the deceptive treacherous ground, on which he no sooner treads, than he is engulfed in ruin !

“ If I required advice, to what individual, then, in the immediate circle that surrounds me, could I apply except to Mr Tyrconnell ? Not to either of my fair cousins, for the one would answer me with a philosophical tirade, and the other by humming an opera air ! Not to Lord Belville, for latterly he appears sedulously to avoid my society ; and as for poor Alanby, unless I entertained the predilection of Titania, who, you know, fell in love with an ass’s head, I could not think of consulting him on any subject. By the bye, I cannot credit Lady Belville, when she says her son has ability as well as good dispositions. If he has ta-

lent, it is so completely concealed as never to be perceptible ; and, even admitting its existence, it is scarcely worth the trouble of groping eternally in a mine, even if sure of being at last rewarded with sterling metal. But I strongly suspect, if Allanby does possess any mental ore, it is heavy as lead, not valuable as gold !

“ On glancing at the last paragraph, I am ready to reproach myself for having, even to you, indulged a jest at my noble cousin’s expense, who really is remarkably good-natured in his general manners. Indeed, he scarcely ever leaves my side, and is so very quiet and inoffensive, that I frequently forget his vicinity altogether, particularly when conversing with Mr Tyrconnell.

“ Lady Belville tells me, that our near relationship authorizes my treating her son with the freedom of a brother. I, therefore, often lean on his arm in public, (mules and asses are always sure-footed animals ;) and yesterday, at my aunt’s earnest request, I went out in Lord Allanby’s curricula. In the course

of our expedition we met Mr Tyrconnell, who, however, bowed coldly, and rode on without stopping.

“ Do you think I ought to drive again in his Lordship’s carriage? I anticipate with pleasure that little chilling word No! although it is not usually my favourite monosyllable.

“ I do not attempt any description of all I every day witness, for which I can scarcely find mental storage, or capabilities sufficient to comprehend or to analyze the varieties of these novel scenes; more particularly, as the journal I have kept since my residence in France will more fully convey my ideas of this country, than the most elaborate detail within the limits of a letter.

“ Your account of Sir Hugh was the music of good tidings. I am rejoiced to hear that his health is so good. *Apropos*, shall I tell you a little design which I have planned *in petto*? It is this—to prevail on the worthy Baronet to see his nephew, who is, in truth, a distinguished honour to all with whom he is connected. But such a project cannot be ex-

ecuted until my return to the dear Parsonage.

“ I am surprised, indeed, that Mr Tyrconnell can remain so long absent from a certain happy fair one. Delicacy precludes the most remote allusion to the subject in our frequent conversations, so that I have not an idea when his intended union is to be solemnized. Did I indulge conjecture, I should be induced to think some little speck has lately arisen to dim the bright morning sky of happiness, for his manners are not so gay now as they were a fortnight since. Can the woman who is honoured with Tyrconnell’s attachment coldly return it? Oh no!—One of those light breezes which merely ruffles the leaves of the rose has possibly arisen; not the cruel storm that desolates, destroys, and uproots the flower of Love for ever!—What a sentimental digression! Pray, hide it from aunt Eleanor’s eye, or at least tell her that all her kind strictures on the dangers of romance, in any form, have not been forgotten. Tell her I am convinced that woman’s safety lies in vigilance, in prudence, in

humility, and, above all, in a devout dependence on that Power who is ever ready to assist the unprotected, the weak, or the afflicted ;—on Him who is a sure resource when every human comfort proves fallacious,—who is subject neither to change nor vicissitude,—but is immutable as gracious, and powerful as just !

“ Adieu ! my father !—Aunt Eleanor, are you not included in the tender farewell ? Oh yes—Eternally must you both live united in the heart and recollection of

“ ISABEL ST ALBE.”

CHAPTER X.

LORD LANGRAVE TO THE HONOURABLE
HENRY ALLINGFORD.

“ HAL ! canst recollect how many metamorphoses the cat in La Fontaine’s fable underwent ?—I reckon not. But, were they as multitudinous as the hairs on thy numscull, I tell thee thy friend hath experienced an equal number of transformations in opinion,—hath been the slave of as many hopes, and doubts, and fears, with which every poor devil must alternately be tormented who is ass enough to allow himself to be entrapped by woman !—

‘ That sex was first in mockery of us made,
They are the deceitful glasses, where
We gaze and dress ourselves to all the shapes
Of Folly :’

And yet, with a blush I confess, (if this bronzed phiz of mine can commit such a crime,) that, for the first time in my life, I feel ‘*l’amour dans toute son énergie, toutes ses fureurs!*’

“ Beshrew me, Hal! if I have not come to the very climax of absurdity; the very acmé of insanity; for I am almost, nay altogether, resolved to——To what?—Death and vexation!—to ask Isabel St Albe in marriage! I’ve written the fatal word in which every evil is comprised that ‘*flesh is heir to.*’ And that is one step towards an act of which I feel the madness, and to which I verily believe that all the fiends of Pandemonium incite thy hapless friend, hissing him to ruin! But——

—————‘ Bid a courser, spurr’d,
Stop in his full career,—bid tides run back,
Or sailing ships stand still before the wind,
Or winds themselves not blow, when Jove pro-
vokes ’em,’

rather than attempt to reason with man, when once he ventures on passion’s stormy ocean,

without compass, helm, rudder, or pilot, yielding without resistance to the impetuous billows, and if not sunk into the abyss of infamy, driven into what port?—devils and destruction!—into the haven of matrimony; there to howl, repent, and suffer all the tortures of purgatory, *in æternum vel perpetuum*. But,

————— ‘ Jupiter

Became a bull, and bellowed ;—the green Neptune
A ram, and bleated ;—and the fire-robed god
Golden Apollo, a poor humble swain,’

as I am now. Yet, did one of those amorous deities turn Benedict? Did one of them ever bear the opprobrious name of Husband? (save and except Mr Jove, who, we all know, suffered enough from Madam Juno’s freaks.) Did a spouse, I say, ere deck their brows with sprouting honours?—Pah!—

‘ When you would give all worldly plagues a name,
Worse than they have already, call ’em Wife!
But a new married wife’s a seeming mischief
Full of herself: Why, what a deal of horror
Has that poor wretch to come that wedded yesterday?’

And yet, Langrave, thou wilt be that wretch!

“ Pity thy friend, Hal, but condemn him not; for, by Jove, I cannot help it!—I will, —yes, I will allow this Isabel to wear with me the accursed yoke of Hymen, e’en should I be choked with the first struggle that I make to gain my glorious freedom, when trying to rid myself of that impertinent ‘ familiar, called a Wife!’

“ Methinks I hear thee now exclaim, ‘ *Et tu, Brute!*’—What spell hath ‘witched my friend?—He, the primest of good fellows!—the leader of mischief!—the generalissimo of our choice chosen few!—in a word, Langrave consents to wear the badge of slavery,—the halter of subjection!—But did not Hercules change his club and lion’s skin for a spindle and a distaff?—’Twas even so.—Grant me, then, thy patience, and I will tell thee all!

“ Thou know’st I tried the aid of absence; —it but increased to tenfold violence my passion! Memory would ever conjure up the

dear deceitful image!—and, in short, I came ‘to join the lover’s whining crew!’—to behold the substantiation of that dear image in good honest flesh and blood, which my soul prefers to all ‘the poetic marble’ Phidias ever carved, or Byron e’er described!—I came, and how dost think I found my dulcinea?—Why, not winnowing corn, like Don Quixote’s love; or weaving a web, like sage Ulysses’ spouse; but leaning on that zoophyte, that creature ’twixt an animal and a vegetable, Allanby; and smiling—on who, think’st thou, Hal? On that puritanical piece of stalking morality,—of frozen icidity,—yclept Tyrconnell!—whom, thou may’st remember, we could ne’er entrap into our jovial knot at Venice, and who, with all the powers of my soul, I do detest, yet cannot for my life despise. Still she blushed.—I tell thee, Hal, her countenance did sparkle like the finest, purest glass of genuine red Champagne, when she first perceived me;—but was it with pleasure or surprise?—‘that is the question.’—Why admit a doubt, when it must be the former?—

No longer I'll be shackled with the fetters of suspense. I'll tell my love, and should she spurn it,—demons aid me to revenge!—My cankered heart, let loose thy powers of hate!—Vengeance I'll have, deep, lasting, deadly, should she dare refuse; for, *vi et armis*, Hal! she shall be mine.——But 'conscience doth make cowards of us all!'—What mockery to suppose she ever could resist,—*dubium non est*,—the game is in my hand, and I must say *check-mate*.—Twenty thousand pounds is not to be rejected by a ruined gamester;—'twill stop a commission of bankruptcy.—Yet, send me Darwent; I may want the villain's services.—Adieu! while inclination lasts,

“ I'll be thy

“ LANGRAVE.”

CHAPTER XI.

LORD LANGRAVE was absolutely serious in the intention announced in the preceding letter ; but, on further consideration, he judged it best to have an interview with Lady Belville, prior to the declaration he meditated to Isabel. He wished to ascertain exactly how matters stood, before he committed himself ; for though he knew her Ladyship was so completely in his power, that he could generally bend her to his purpose, yet he also was aware that, *vice versa*, he was himself compelled, by interest, not to oppose materially Lady Belville's wishes ; for, without revealing the circumstance they were mutually bound to conceal, her Ladyship, he knew, was acquainted with many transactions, whose exposure to

Isabel would effectually mar his success, by displaying the depravity of his general character. It was, therefore, necessary to secure Lady Belville's co-operation, even if a sacrifice should be necessary to obtain it; for the siege could never be carried on without her knowledge and perfect approbation.

A note was, therefore, immediately dispatched to Lady Belville, demanding an instant audience, and an answer forthwith received, in which it was acceded. Lord Langrave did not delay a moment, but quickly repaired to her *boudoir*.

“ Well, my Lord !” exclaimed her Ladyship, as she proudly raised her eagle eyes in bold defiance at his entrance, “ what new request ? Doff the robes of hypocrisy, in which we can mutually attire as befits occasion, and if thou canst speak truth.”

“ Such is my intent :—Fine speeches suit not the spirit of my purpose.—Briefly, then, I mean to marry Isabel St Albe.”

“ To marry !—Did my ears deceive, or did

I hear aright?—Langrave will take ‘ a wife, to mortify withal?’ ”

“ ’Tis even so.—Tell me, then, have I your interest ?” —Lady Belville paused. At length she said,—

“ Langrave, deceit would be useless in our present circumstances. Hear me : Thou art on a perilous quicksand, and ere long thou’lt find thyself engulfed in misery. But, let that pass, and learn what was my purpose ; to unite Allanby with Isabel St Albe !”

“ Folly and wisdom, a suitable *melange* !” said Lord Langrave, sarcastically.

“ No matter ; ’tis better far than vice and virtue ; but waste not time in useless reproach. Know, then, that if I do consent to lend my weight in the scale, to incline the beam in thy favour, it must be under certain strict conditions.”

“ Name them.”

“ First, thou must promise—but what can bind a libertine ?”

“ Or a woman !” retorted Langrave.

“ Thanks, gentle Sir ! Thy courteous language commands my gratitude ; and yet, to speak the truth, I’m glad thou dost not treat me like those brainless dolls, to whom, in general guise, thou look’st the demigod, but art the incarnate fiend. I had rather be the veriest worm that crawls, than one of those fair idiots —those useless animalcules of creation, whom Nature in disport produces, to humble intellect, and lampoon sense !—But to my subject, Langrave ! In a word, ere thou canst expect that I will use my influence in thy behalf, thou must give up that cursed scroll, on which the hand of fate hath traced with pen of fire the record of my shame !”

“ Resign the standard ere the battle’s lost or won ? No ! sooner would I unfurl the black banner of iniquity to the wide world’s gaze, although thereon’s inscribed my own stained scutcheon !”

“ Oh that thou wert crushed beneath its weight ! or that I could invoke some power infernal to steep thy senses in forgetfulness, to sear thy tongue, or make it speak my bid-

ding!" cried Lady Belville, in violent agitation.

"Hell knows no fury like a woman scorn'd,"

said Lord Langrave, with provoking coolness.

"Nor imp like thee!" retorted his opponent—her lip quivering with emotion, and her whole frame palsied with rage, as she exclaimed,—“Has not my poor duped Lord for nineteen years supplied thee with the means wherewith to gratify thy ruling passions, until, swoln like the mountain torrent, in their course they would o'erleap each obstacle, nor will enfranchise thee from their impetuous dominion, till thou art plunged into the fathomless abyss of ruin, deep, eternal!—Be warned in time, then, Langrave,” she continued in a gentler tone; “a mild bright planet has arisen to light thee on to happiness; from whose pure beam thy darker shades of vice may yet receive reflected lustre, or be lost amidst its rays! Consent unto my terms, and I will soon prevail on Isabel St Albe to listen to thy suit—will forego the thought of wedding her with

Allanby—will paint thee to her fancy, just, faithful, true, and honourable—will invert thy faults, and make them seeming virtues—will dip the pencil of description in the glowing rainbow's tints, and colour all thy jarring contrasts into harmony.”

“ Ask the poor bankrupt to resign his little all ! the eagle to yield back the prey for which he stooped ! the miser to unlock his treasured hoard, and feed the children of affliction !—as well might such demands be made, and granted, as to suppose that I will give thee back the counterpoise which fate has granted against the evil strokes of fortune, without a succedaneum !—No, Lady Belville ! But I'll tell thee what I'll promise, (nay, smile not in derision ; for self-interest, the only bond 'twixt man and man, shall bind me to fulfil it ;) assure me, that, in despite of opposition from Isabel, her father, or Lord Belville, she shall be mine ere one other month has sped its course, that her original fortune shall be secured to me, and, to discharge immediate pressing debts, promise to pay me on my bridal-day ten thousand

pounds additional, (which shall be the last sum I e'er will ask from thee or thine;) and on that very day I will resign what thou demandest, which will secure thy Lord against the possibility of further claims. Yet, till the prize is close within my grasp, think not I will so act."

"But what security have I, that even then my wishes shall be granted?"

"Canst ask the question? Should I play falsely, hast thou not the power to proclaim me to the world for what I am—a villain?" said Langrave, with a demoniac laugh.

"True, stern fate, I thank thee. The adder yet can sting, and lie in ambush, though concealed by roses. Will you then swear to light the torch of Hymen with the accursed flames of that most hated document?—to let me see the glorious *auto da fé*, which shall consume the blasted record, and disarm thee of further power o'er the destiny of Henrietta Belville?"

"I do consent."

"Swear then."

“ By what ? ”

“ By thy own devilish self, or by the terrors of this world, which I know thou dreadest more than those which priestcraft tells us are to come hereafter.”

“ ’Twere useless. The tongue’s a lying babbling slave, prompt to betray, but temporal advantage chains with iron link ! ”

“ Thou’rt right. ’Twere waste of breath to swear to that, which interest mutually binds us to fulfil, more powerful than aught beside. ’Tis enough, I yield assent unto the contract. Thy hand, then; Langrave. We must henceforth seem friends.”

“ ’Tis thine ! But how will Lord Belville act ? ”

“ It is a creature neither belonging to this world nor to the next !—the prey of sombre fantasies, having the will, but not the courage, to be what the world calls great ! ’Tis better not to trust him till the last moment ; and to prevent suspicion, let Allanby continue his *dévoirs*. Thou canst not fear his rivalry, and ’twill preclude our plot from being guess-

ed at. We must not be too hasty in our operations, else discovery would follow. As to the money,—I must e'en barter some of those gewgaws, with which my Lord's too fond idolatry hath deck'd my person, to pay thee thy last wages of iniquity; and now, Adieu! Resume the garb of thy fair seeming and depart!"

“ 'Twill assist me to adjust the drapery, when I behold how gracefully it sits on thee; but, ‘Hoods make not Monks.’ Lady, farewell!” said his Lordship with an air of sarcastic gallantry, as he profoundly bowed and left the apartment.

CHAPTER XII.

“UPON my word, you all seem vastly sociable and happy,” said Lady Belville, as she entered the general sitting-room, in which were assembled her daughters, our heroine, Lord Belville, and Mr Tyrconnell. “I did not know so agreeable a party was met, else I should not have remained in the solitude of my own chamber, weeping over one of Racine’s deepest tragedies.

“Isabel, I am not a votary to black-robed melancholy. Come! touch the harp, and with the melody of its sweet chords dispel each saddened feeling, and wake our souls to gladness. You see my studies have infected my language with a tone of theatrical elevation,

which I pray you to admire. Mr Tyrconnell, are you fond of music?"

"I am its most devoted slave.—Will Miss St Albe render us all her debtors, by complying with Lady Belville's request?"

*‘Stendi a quell’ arpa la man, che la soave
Dolce fatica di tue dita aspette!’*"

cried Albert playfully, as he placed the instrument before Isabel.

"Certainly," she replied laughing. "My performance is not worth such poetical solicitation. I suppose you prefer L'Allegro to Il Penseroso," she added, turning to Lady Belville.

"Undoubtedly.—Favour us with one of your own country's melodies, in which you particularly excel."

Isabel seated herself at the harp, while Tyrconnell arranged the music, as she struck a prelude strain, and commenced with an inspiring airy lightness, and bewitchingly playful expression, "We may roam through this world, like a child at a feast," in which

the superlative charms of the daughters of Erin are so sportively contrasted with those of the fair maidens of England and of France. As she concluded the last stanza, and with winning feeling and gaiety sung,—

“ When a cup to the smile of dear woman goes round,
Oh ! remember the smile which adorns her at home !”

the room resounded with plaudits ; amidst the noise of which, Albert whispered, in a thrilling voice, and with an animated beaming look, that forcibly recalled the Troubadour to the imagination of Isabel,—“ Can I forget thine ?—Oh, never !” —The tone, more than the words, flushed Isabel’s cheek to crimson, as she rose from the instrument, while, in awkwardly passing the stand, she threw down the music ; then, to hide her provoking confusion, she stooped, and busily employed herself in collecting the scattered pieces—an office in which Tyrconnell was near forgetting to assist, so intently was his fancy occupied in admiring the kneeling form of Isabel, which the excitement of emotion seemed to have in-

vested with more than ordinary beauty—to have surrounded with the bright halo of expression ! Albert's enthusiastic meditations were, however, most unseasonably interrupted by a servant, who, at the moment, entered with two letters.—Presenting one to Lady Belville, (who immediately retired,) he advanced, and handed the other to Isabel.

Delighted at the relief it afforded her embarrassment, she eagerly took the letter, without glancing at the superscription, and was on the point of tearing it open, when, perceiving the word “ Rose ” on the seal, she changed colour, and, turning the back of the epistle, perceived it was addressed to Mr Tyrconnell. The truth at once burst upon her mind. It was from his intended bride !—With an unsteady hand Isabel presented the letter to Albert, as in a voice not perfectly firm, she said, “ There has been a mistake ; this is from—is for you, Sir.” Albert, with indefinable emotion, took the proffered epistle ; an emotion which was not lessened when he perceived by whom it was indited ; and when he recollect-

ed that Isabel had seen the seal. Acting under the impulse of the moment, he hastily retired to read the epistle, which contained but a few lines, to the following purport :—

“ MY VALUED, GENEROUS FRIEND,

“ Think not that I imagine it possible to repay the slightest portion of my debt of gratitude, which the wealth of India could not cancel.

“ Impute not, I beseech you, to such an unworthy motive my present proceeding ; yet permit me the consolation of discharging a small part of my pecuniary obligation, though the more binding one of eternal gratefulness I would not, if I could, erase from the pallet of memory, on which it stands indelibly recorded in the brightest colours.

“ Since my residence in Monteith Abbey, I have been enriched by the unexpected payment of a sum with which my lamented father accommodated a person whom the repentance of a death-bed induced to restitution of the loan. I am, therefore, fully enabled to enclose

you a draft on La Fitte for one thousand pounds.

“ Oh ! do not in mercy refuse to retain your own !—The only pleasurable sensation I have experienced since bereft of him most dear to my heart, has been afforded by the capability of sending you a small portion of the sum you nobly advanced to relieve me from the horrors of a prison. My views are no longer bounded to the confined sphere of this world. I now want not money ; but, even if I did, the generosity of Mr Monteith would supply me with sufficient to defray my moderate expenditure. My health is rapidly declining ; but I enjoy composure of mind, and look forward with comfort unspeakable to soon possessing that peace which ‘ the world can neither give nor take away.’

“ Adieu, my kindest friend !—May every happiness in time and eternity be your’s.

“ ROSE MONTEITH.”

As soon as Albert concluded the hurried perusal of the above epistle in the anti-cham-

ber to which he had retired, he hastily returned to the saloon, feeling the strongest anxiety to explain the nature of its contents to Isabel; but a moment's consideration obliged him to confess the utter impossibility of doing so, when he recollected that any eclairsissement would inevitably betray his own generous conduct, from vaunting which his whole soul revolted. It was, therefore, with a degree of satisfaction that he perceived our heroine had left the room. For the first time in his life he rejoiced in her absence; "and yet," he mentally continued, as in musing argument he leant against the window frame, "how strange Miss St Albe will think my reception of a letter with a female name engraven on the seal, and directed in a woman's hand, for she knows that I have no near relative amongst her sex. But what a coxcomb I am to suppose she will bestow a thought upon the subject. Isabel! the destined wife of Allanby! to her my actions must be matters of cold indifference!" His reverie was interrupted

by Lord Belville, who kindly said, "No bad news I hope, Mr Tyrconnell?"

"No, thank you, my Lord," replied Albert, quickly folding up the letter, which he perceived he inadvertently still held open, and putting it into his pocket-case.

"Then Lady Belville may hope for the pleasure of your company this evening. I shall not myself appear; but you are aware our first *soirée* will be held to-night."

"Her Ladyship has been so good as to include me amongst the expected guests; a pleasure I shall not be my own enemy so much as to forego. Adieu, my Lord," said Tyrconnell hastily, as, bowing to the ladies, he immediately departed.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE bright hue of suppressed and unacknowledged emotion flushed Isabel's cheek with a warm glow, and the struggle of internal feeling which, though not even to herself confessed, yet did exist, and which maiden pride was endeavouring to combat, gave a more than usual animation to her lovely countenance, as she entered the saloon, where many of the expected guests were already assembled. Never had she looked more irresistible than when she deeply blushed and bowed to Tyrconnell, as he rose and resigned his chair.

Lord Langrave at the same moment advanced and stationed himself at her side.

“I understand that cruel fate this morning deprived me of a pleasure which none can

prize more highly than I do, that of hearing ‘the melodious concord of sweet sounds’ from Nature’s loveliest harmonist,” said Lord Langrave with an air of tender gallantry.

“Though far from deserving, I suppose I must appropriate your Lordship’s high-toned compliment. Have you ever heard ‘*Non vi fidate agli nomini?*’ the truth of which advice I now feel in its full force,” demanded Isabel with playful, though not genuine vivacity. But she had not yet sufficiently recovered her embarrassment to converse freely with Tyrconnell, and was, therefore, happy to take advantage of the relief Lord Langrave’s trifling afforded.

“Sincerity !

Thou first of virtues; let no mortal leave
Thy onward path, altho’ the earth should gape,
And from the gulf of hell destruction cry
To take Dissimulation’s winding way,”

sportively declaimed his Lordship. “But, Miss St Albe, what is the order of the night—dancing, music, or colloquy sublime?”

“I really do not know. Have you an idea, Mr Tyrconnell?”

“Not the slightest. A *mélange* of all would be most desirable. But to the happy individual who is favoured with Miss St Albe’s conversation, I should think it a matter of total indifference whether or not inferior pleasures courted his acceptance,” said Albert, as with a look which seemed to say, “Here comes that favoured being,” he resigned the place he had occupied to Lord Allanby, who just then advanced and said, as he quietly seated himself in the chair Tyrconnell had vacated,—

“I think the weather is now settled. I have been looking at the glass, and it is risen since yesterday.”

“I never yet knew a true John Bull who did not commence discourse with that edifying topic,” said Langrave ; a remark that effectually put to flight every idea which poor Lord Allanby had been, for half an hour, endeavouring to arrange *pour faire l’aimable*,—which Lord Langrave perceiving with secret delight, he tried to engross our heroine entirely to himself, and so agreeable was his conversation on the various subjects they discussed, so luminous

his remarks, and so poignant his wit, that for a time he succeeded, and Isabel was amused and even interested, until, chancing to look towards the spot where Tyrconnell stood, she perceived his eyes fixed on her, with an expression so mournful, yet so soft, that for a moment she imagined there was tenderness in their gaze ; but then again the recollection of the letter flashed across her mind, and effectually banished the idea. In vain, afterwards, Langrave exerted all his powers of fascination ; Isabel was cold and inattentive, until at length his Lordship said, in a tone of pique,—

“ Miss St Albe, you are quite *distract* and preoccupied ; your brilliant *esprit* has vanished, and is succeeded by the torpor of indifference. Oh ! tell me, dearest, most charming of your sex,” he continued, in a warmer tone, “ what can have occasioned such a sudden transition ; yet, to me, you are equally dear under every change, for, if the beams of the moon shine brightly on me, I care not for her phases.”

“ Your Lordship must surely be under the influence of that orb, else you would not ven-

ture such an absurd tirade," said Isabel coldly, as she rose from her seat, to join Lady Belville at the other end of the room,—while Lord Langrave, maddened with vexation, and cursing his own impetuosity, felt furious with himself and all mankind, as, to add to his annoyance, the erudite Lady Julia stalked majestically across the saloon, and occupied Isabel's vacant seat, saying, with a smile she meant to be irresistible,—

"My Lord, you seem to be under the influence of Harpocrates,—do you wish to be eliminated?"

"Certainly, since I am to be released from my thralldom by such an enchantress," replied his Lordship inwardly, thinking the fate of Ixion or of Sisyphus preferable to his own at that moment.

"Ah, Miss St Albe! I was just going in search of you, for importunity assails me on all sides; the fame of your musical powers is the theme of every tongue," said Lady Belville to Isabel as she advanced.

"And report says, that Mr Tyrconnell is

equally gifted with the soul of song," rejoined a Gentleman, "I therefore propose a duet."

"Excuse me," said Albert, "I really do not feel well this evening, and should only destroy the effect of Miss St Albe's exquisite harmony, did I unite the raven's notes with those of the nightingale."

Voluble solicitation ensued, and amidst the confused sounds of French and English garrulity, Isabel ventured to say to Albert,—

"Pray do sing; I am not equal to perform alone, and dare not refuse Lady Belville."

"Your wishes are to me laws," said Tyrconnell with animation and a smile, which banished from both all remembrance of previous circumstances—"What shall we sing?"

The beautiful duet, "Believe me, of all those endearing young charms," lay open on the stand, and all present joined in requesting its performance. Isabel and Tyrconnell complied, and immediately commenced and sung that exquisite air with an expression which identity of sentiment with the poetry and music could only have elicited. Every note breathed

the melody of tender enthusiasm,—every tone seemed in perfect unison with the feelings of the harmonists as they concluded with those lines:

“ Oh! the heart that has truly lov'd never forgets,
But as truly loves on to the close,
As the sun-flower turns on her god when he sets
The same look which she turn'd when he rose.”

From the very first note, Isabel felt that no two voices could possess the peculiar dulcet softness, the mellowed richness of Tyrconnell's strains, which touched the chords of sensibility, and made them vibrate to the mystic influence of sweet sounds, with power omnipotent. She was convinced that Feramorz and Tyrconnell were one and the same person; and, under the strong excitement of sensations she did not wish to analyze, Isabel whispered, in suppressed emotion, as she rose from the instrument,—“ The Troubadour !”

“ And Oh! if there be an Elysium on earth,
It is this,—It is this !”

returned Albert in a stifled voice, as he bent down and pretended to arrange some music, while his eloquent look revealed a volume of expression, which language would have found difficult to embody in words, but whose power Isabel felt in all its potency, as her downcast eye, and cheek dyed in "Love's own proper hue," evinced her feelings, at such a confirmation of previous supposition,

"*Ammutis con le lingue, e parlan l'alme.*"

Never was the assertion more verified, that there is solitude in a crowd, than at that moment, for whilst Isabel and Albert were keenly alive to the witchery of the heart's warmest emotions,—while the interchange of one sentence and one look had betrayed what each felt, though neither dared to acknowledge,—while the silent communion of sentiment was sympathetically understood, and while the exquisite magic of passion's mental wand had almost banished from the recollections of Isabel and Albert the heartless crowd that sur-

rounded them,—that crowd, bent on its own selfish enjoyments, and engrossed by its own trifling pleasures, heeded not the little scene that betrayed so much to Tyrconnell and Isabel.

The mutual glow which emotion had kindled—the mind-illumined light which irradiated each countenance,—the glance and the blush which betrayed what maiden modesty had not yet owned even in the breathings of mental confession, were alike disregarded by the unthinking votaries of fashion, who, ever in search of novel amusement, after having commended, with the usual number of *bravissimos*, the performance of our heroine and Tyrconnell, eagerly commenced a new search after some other pastime, to cheat away the lagging hours.

Fortunately for Isabel, a circumstance had called Lady Belville to an adjacent saloon before the duet had concluded, and Lord Langrave had been kept so effectually in “the house of bondage,” by the unremitting attentions of Lady Julia, that the only two persons

whose penetration might have observed Isabel's actions, were happily at too great a distance to witness them. But those bright illusions of sentiment which so rarely lighten the darkness of human destiny, those fragrant flowers which so seldom spring in the briery path of life, are never of long duration. They blossom and they fade almost in the same instant!—ephemeral in existence, though lasting in remembrance! For a few short moments, Isabel and Albert felt the intoxication of happiness, pure, tender, and refined; but soon,—too soon,—memory suggested to the imagination of each, recollections which chased, with the sigh of despondency, the smile of pleasure from the lip, and dimmed the lustre of the radiant eye with the starting tear of disappointment!

Lord Langrave, who was too much a man of the world to allow the appearance of chagrin at Isabel's indifference, now advanced to solicit the honour of her hand in the gay dance which was just commencing.

“ Will Miss St Albe float in a quadrille, or

languish in a waltz?" he demanded sportively.

"In the latter I never exhibit," she replied.

"But in the former, I know you are *au fait*, will you then permit me the honour of leading you to the set that is forming?"

Isabel bowed a cold acquiescence, and walked to her place accompanied by Langrave, and followed by Albert.

With melancholy pleasure Tyrconnell watched the lovely movements of Isabel through the evolutions of the mazy dance, as each varied attitude betrayed some new beauty in the exquisite symmetry of her perfect form. To Albert's captivated gaze it afforded a dangerous delight to observe the harmony of her motions, the chastened vivacity of her light step, the retiring modesty and dignified grace that animated with the purest expression her every gesture.

"Oh thou dear enchantress!" (he mentally soliloquized as he leaned against a pillar, and surveyed the speaking countenance of Isabel, to which the exercise she was engaged in, and

a contest of inward feeling gave unusual brilliancy.) “Thou art indeed unrivalled; how cold, how uninteresting seems every person in comparison with thee! What a soul pervades Isabel’s every look and action. She is a creature glowing in sensibility, yet refined in principle, and warm in sentiment, yet chaste in thought. A being of feeling rather than of passion, she unites the purity of a seraph with the tenderness of woman! But there is no sun without a spot! the brightness of her character is—must be sullied by ambition. What else could induce her to unite with Allanby! Never, never, until now did I regret the want of fortune; yet if her love could be purchased, would it be worth possessing?—I will not, dare not pursue the argument further. Let me at least, while fate permits, enjoy the witchery of her society; until now my life has glided on in that sober certainty, that dull uniformity, to which even the excitement of wretchedness is preferable. Yet my feelings have only been dormant, not dead. Isabel has awoken them to vitality! This evening has withdrawn deception’s veil.

I now experience those touching but unutterable emotions which enthrall the soul in the seductive enchantment of imaginary bliss! for—'tis but imaginary! She never can be mine. I would not if I could unite her unto poverty; yet would I not for worlds resign the influence of that which fills my heart with all the joys, the doubts of passion! My thoughts, 'tis true, are sorrowful, yet full of sweetness. I dare not glance into futurity, but will enjoy the transient gleam of brightness which skirts the clouds of darkness and of misery!"

How powerful is the enthusiasm, the illusion of love! Surely over its temple the motto which Dante inscribes over the entrance to *L'Inferno* ought to be inscribed,—

“Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch' intrate.”

Tyrconnell, the brave, the honourable Tyrconnell, would have shrunk with horror from the idea of premeditatedly supplanting a favoured lover in the affections of his mistress; yet now, although he imagined that Isabel was the

destined bride of Allanby, the delusion of love's all-pervading spell would not permit him to investigate the motives that induced the encouragement of sentiments, which unprejudiced reason, in the coldness of indifference, would have strongly reprobated. But the agitating conflict of his soul's emotions would not allow the suggestions of principle to operate with their usual force, or, at least, represented every object through the medium of a treacherous and deceitful glass, which magnified or diminished objects, as the caprice of fancy directed. Albert imagined, that with his own fate, a web of "mingled yarn," he might freely sport. He dreamed not of involving Isabel's peace of mind in that frail barge in which he was himself embarked, tossed to and fro on the billows of contending passions. No! he rather considered her as the guiding star of destiny, whose ray serene might lighten the terrors of the storm, but could not be affected by its violence.

Albert's was no common mind; exquisitely alive to pleasure or to pain, he felt both

with intensity, but preferred even the influence of the latter to the cold stagnation of negative existence. His feelings, ardent and powerful, delighted to revel in imagination's flowery wilds. He knew they might ultimately lead into a labyrinth of misery ; but the infatuation of love induced him to think, that he ought not to reject present happiness, by the anticipation of wretchedness hereafter. He thought that,

“ One of those rare and brilliant hours,
Which, like the aloe's lingering flowers,
May blossom to the eye of man
But once, in all his weary span,”

ought to be prized in proportion to its rarity. That the fleeting moments should be cherished and fondly treasured ; for that they would prove the future relics of feeling, to which, in the after death of sentiment, memory might revert, as to a hoard of past delights, which, like the leaves of the rose, though dead, are never scentless, but remind us of the warmth and fragrance of summer, even in the cold

blighted season of winter! Banishing, therefore, sadness from his brow, Albert, as the quadrille concluded, advanced to Isabel, whom he found surrounded by numerous candidates, all eagerly imploring her to join the waltz.

“It is too affectionate a dance for me,” said Isabel, endeavouring, by playfulness, to parry the attack of Lady Belville, who was urging her to join the whirling circle.

“Say not so.—It is the only dance that expresses grace, sentiment, and beauty,” exclaimed Lord Langrave, with venemence.

“I do not myself approve of young ladies waltzing with perfect strangers; but to waltz with Allanby or Lord Langrave, Isabel, I really cannot see any possible objection,” said Lady Belville, with an air of extraordinary prudence.

“*Chacun à son gout*;—permit me, on the present occasion, to follow the dictates of my own feelings, which, I confess, revolt against your Ladyship’s advice; besides, I am convinced, that, was my father here, he would condemn my joining in such an amusement,

although I have never expressly heard him declare his opinion on the subject," said Isabel.

"What an antediluvian idea!—My dear girl, you cannot imagine Mr St Albe could be so absurd, as to censure what custom and fashion equally sanction.—Come, Mr Tyrconnell, assist me to break this lovely prude of some of her rustic prejudices," said Lady Belville, with an ironical expression.

"The reason Miss St Albe has alleged is too sacred for me to attempt to controvert," replied Tyrconnell, his countenance beaming approbation at the decision and dignity of Isabel's conduct; "besides, I confess, I am not an advocate for 'the spirit-stirring dance,' at least, in a general point of view. As an individual, I certainly enjoy it extremely; but, at the same time, am of Werter's opinion, who never desired Charlotte to waltz with any one but himself," Albert added with a smile.

"I thought a soldier was always

'The whisker'd votary of waltz and war:'

But I begin to imagine you were intended by Nature for the clerical life, rather than the profession of arms, Mr Tyrconnell," said Lady Belville, with a sarcastic air, as, not condescending to use further entreaty, she took Lord Langrave's arm, and led him into the next room, to concert further manœuvres.

"Was that intended as the retort courteous?" said Albert, as he seated himself beside Isabel.

"I suppose it was meant as such.—Can you bear the implied reproach?"

"With the most perfect heroism.—I may say, indeed, in the words of Romeo,—

‘Do thou but smile, I’m proof against their enmity.’"

"Rather a gallant speech for a Mentor! Pray, to what school of philosophy do you belong?"

"Certainly not to the stoic.—But, badi-nage apart, I can no longer see any necessity for continuing to play the adviser; for, from

the little scene I have just witnessed, I feel that you will always act

‘ Wisest, virtouousest, discreetest, best.’”

“ So soon weary of your delegated trust,— preferring the language of flattery to that of counsel!” said Isabel, reproachfully, and with a smile of insinuating sweetness. “ Nay, then, I will not confess what I was going to acknowledge.”

“ To me?—Oh, say not so! Whatever are your peccadilloes, I promise absolution,” said Tyrconnell anxiously.

“ Well, then, I do confess, that I was on the point of yielding to Lady Belville’s urgent entreaty when you appeared, but, supported by thy approving glance, I then had courage to continue firm in my first resolve.—What penance, holy father?”

“ To remember me, pure vestal!—When surrounded by the cold, the worldly, the heartless, to sometimes bestow a thought on him who never, never can forget who”——Tyrconnell paused—his voice becoming quite in-

audible from excessive feeling, for the *naïve* confession of Isabel had touched him so deeply, that every prudent resolve had instantly vanished, and yielded to involuntary impulse.

Forcibly was the contagion of enthusiasm felt by Isabel ; she wished to speak, yet could not. The painful pleasure of the few rapid moments that followed, it would have been sacrilege to interrupt !—Albert was conscious that he had betrayed too much ; that he had distressed Isabel, whose silent confused embarrassment, he attributed to her fear lest Lord Allanby should perceive the evident emotion that alternately dyed her cheek in the deepest tint of the rose, or blanched it to the lily's hue ; an emotion which Tyrconnell half imagined surprise and pity had occasioned, or else resentment at his own conduct. He could scarcely endure the latter idea ; yet he dared not attempt an apology, for voice and language he knew would inevitably again reveal his sentiments. Without, therefore, uttering another syllable, without even soliciting her hand

in the festive dance, he led her to join the gay group, who were tripping on "the light fantastic toe."

The graceful figures of Isabel and Albert attracted universal admiration, unconscious of which, absorbed in mutual recollections, and inspired by mutual feelings, they moved along. Not a sentence was exchanged; and our heroine subsequently parted from Tyrconnell without a word having been breathed, save the expressive one—Adieu!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE next morning Isabel sat down to address Mrs Eleanor. She experienced a labour in writing for which she could not account. Formerly her ideas flowed so fast, that her pen could scarcely move with sufficient swiftness to embody them in language. Now, after many ineffectual attempts, she was obliged to throw aside the unfinished letter.

“ I cannot write to-day,” she exclaimed ; “ my head is quite giddy from having danced so much last night.” But the real difficulty she felt, was how to mention Tyrconnell, or whether to mention him at all. There was such a superior elevation of mind, such singleness of heart, and genuine candour, united in the character of Isabel, that disguise with those

she loved she found it almost impossible to assume. Yet how describe the nature of her sentiments for Albert, when absolutely ignorant on the subject herself?

It is a long time before a woman of delicacy will confess, even to her own soul, that she loves. She often doubts the existence of passion, when every look and action reveals its influence, and when self-deception is no longer practicable, feminine pride seems outraged, and all those nicer shades of feeling, which peculiarly embellish the female mind, seem violated, when compelled to admit the existence of an exclusive predilection,—for maiden dignity ever revolts at the acknowledgment, but more particularly when uncertain of reciprocal affection. 'Tis true that woman's empire is the heart. To love, and oftimes to suffer, is her general destiny; yet, devotedness is the characteristic of a real attachment, which, when firmly established in the breast of a virtuous and delicate female, becomes a sentiment exalted by generosity and refined by feeling. It is durable, not evanescent; it is

the tenderness of chastened affection, not the delirium of selfish passion, naturally confiding and affectionate, women seldom indulge that violent but transient delusion, which men dignify with the name of love ; a passion in which imagination, caprice, and vanity, have frequently so large a share, that it must infallibly prove short-lived and precarious. Novelty dispels, and (if we are to trust male writers on the subject) possession destroys its influence.

But from the constitution of society, women being denied that unlimited range of choice which the other sex enjoy, find their affections drawn within a smaller focus, and, consequently, they become more concentrated, and less liable to the sudden fluctuations of ungoverned impulse.

Nature and education conspire in some degree to render an amiable female domestic ; her hopes, her sympathies, and her feelings, confined to the magic circle of home delights, are, necessarily, not scattered promiscuously ; therefore, when well directed, they are more profound, steady, and equable, than the fan-

ciful and indiscriminating preferences of the male sex. Divested of the spirit of selfishness, woman's happiness is but the reflected radiance of another's felicity. The eye of a cherished object must beam approval, ere hers can glisten with pleasure, for the joy of man is the key-note to feminine bliss; but his life must first confess prepossession, before modesty permits the retiring shrinking delicacy of a sensitive female to acknowledge the influence of that powerful passion, which, when felt in disinterested purity, exalts and ennobles the human mind to its highest pitch of elevation.

Such a definition of *la grande passion* will probably excite the smile of contempt, perhaps of ridicule. It may be censured as visionary and absurd in these enlightened days, when the exact quantum of feeling, which prudence allows to be indulged, may be calculated with mathematical precision,—when interest forms the main spring of human conduct, and every action may be fairly traced to the sacred commandments of the numeration table, a judici-

ous decalogue, which wisely inculcates the homage of the purse, not that of the heart. Yet we are far from extending such an accusation exclusively to the masculine gender, for, with regret, we confess that the politic views of worldly aggrandizement and mercenary essentials, powerfully influence but too large a portion of the female sex, banishing the antiquated idea that moral virtue, intellectual taste, and communion of mind, are by any means requisite in forming that most important of all human connections, Marriage.

In this most philosophic age, "the knowledge of good and evil" seems condensed into one summary and compendious code of universal obligation, referable to the grand standard of self-interest, and operating with equal force on the enlightened and the vulgar,—on the luxurious son of fashion, and the industrious mechanic,—on the experienced matron and the modish miss but just emancipated from the trammels of a boarding-school. To obtain, indeed, the enviable acquisitions of a dashing equipage, an unincumbered es-

tate, and a spouse not too presumptuously wise, to what lengths do we see fair spinsters venture, who unblushingly pay that worship and those attentions to the lords of the creation, which it is woman's undoubted prerogative to receive. By such conduct her empire is usurped by her former subjects, and, like Harlequin in the farce, she now sways but an imaginary sceptre. Yet we hope that, even in this era of illumination, there are some few splendid exceptions to the foregoing observations,—that there are persons who, if they do not feel love to the extent, and in the purity we have attempted to describe, will, at least, allow that such it ought to be, when pervading the heart of woman. We even go further, when we confess our belief, that many beautiful instances of the devotion of feeling may still be found in both sexes; for we do not wish, absolutely, to subscribe to the little French distich,—

“ Tel fut l'amour dans le siècle d'or,
On ne le trouve plus quoiqu' on le cherche encore.”

To atone for such an officious digression we shall now return to Isabel, who had again resumed her pen. But instead of proceeding with her letter, she began to sketch profiles on the sheet of paper that lay on the table, one of which, we are obliged to acknowledge, bore a striking likeness to Albert Tyrconnell. Laughing at her own folly, Isabel tossed paper and pen into her portfolio, and determining to take a walk, she equipped herself for that purpose, and was descending the steps that led to the garden, when she was accosted by Lady Belville, who, learning our heroine's intention, requested permission to accompany her, which being immediately granted, the ladies commenced a *tête-à-tête* ramble.

“ I think, my love, you look rather pale. I fear you danced too much last evening,” said Lady Belville with an air of the kindest interest.

“ Possibly,” returned Isabel. “ It is an amusement to which I am particularly partial.”

“ *Apropos*, what could have induced you

to decline waltzing? Poor Langrave was quite *au désespoir*."

"To you, my dear Madam, I have already stated my reasons;—to Lord Langrave I should think it quite unnecessary to do so."

"My admirable Isabel! Every day convinces me more and more of the elevation of your character and the strength of your understanding. To say the truth, when first you came to London, it never entered my brain to conceive you so very far superior to the general class of non-descript damsels, and prudential affection consequently induced a proceeding of which I now forcibly feel the injustice. Shall I venture to confess to you my error?" said Lady Belville in a tone of insinuating softness, and gently pressing Isabel's hand.

"There is no greater proof of a vigorous mind than promptitude in acknowledging a fault, when conscious of having committed one. But I cannot conceive to what you allude."

"Simply to this.—Judging you, on first acquaintance, by common rules, and knowing

the fascination of Langrave's manners, I thought it my duty to guard you against all possible danger arising from frequent association with his Lordship, whose taste is so extremely refined and fastidious, that, pardon me, my dear girl, when I say, that I did not imagine even your charms of mind and person could absolutely conquer that heart, which rank, beauty, fortune, and accomplishments, had often idly sought to win in vain !”

Lady Belville paused ; but receiving no reply from her astonished auditor, she continued—

“ I have often thought that, in the appalling catalogue of human misery, there is scarcely any misfortune so afflicting to a sensitive mind as a strong attachment when indulged without a hope of reciprocation ; and wishing to shield you, my Isabel, against the possibility of such a fate, with a blush I confess that, by indirect insinuations, I endeavoured to lower the standard of Langrave's merit, to deteriorate his numerous virtues, and to represent him as one of those common

beings struck off in Fashion's hackneyed mould, instead of a glorious original, possessing the most sterling value united to the most shining qualities, resembling, indeed, in that respect, the rarest precious jewel, which, though polished to the last degree, loses none of its genuine native worth, nay gains additional beauty; for, deprive the diamond of its luminous points, and what remains?—a dull shapeless mass!”

“Amazement has hitherto kept me silent,” said Isabel, in reply to Lady Belville's laboured effusion; “yet permit me to say, Madam, that your precautionary measures were really quite unnecessary, as my poor heart was never in the slightest danger even from such a nonpareil as you describe. And allow me to add, that, if apology must be made, it should rather be offered to Lord Langrave than to me, to whom his Lordship's character is a matter of total indifference.”

“When you study him more you will no longer say so; for, Oh Isabel! he is the

noblest of his sex ! I know the world well, and never met his equal !”

“ Yes—I have heard your Ladyship say, that Lord Langrave was the most agreeable devil you had ever known !” said Isabel spiritedly ; to whom Tyrconnell’s advice at that moment recurred.

“ It is cruel—it is barbarous to remind me of that line of conduct which the warmest interest in your happiness alone induced me to pursue. Oh ! I cannot bear your implied suspicion !” cried Lady Belville with well feigned agitation, applying her handkerchief to her eyes, as she led her niece into a summer-house, where, having seated herself beside Isabel, she grasped her hand, and added quickly,—

“ To the generality of persons I care not in what light my actions may appear ; but the unfavourable opinions of those I love—I cannot—will not endure. Isabel, I am not prone to professions, but, to prove the truth of my affection for you, I will reveal a circumstance which must confirm it indisputably.—Know, then, that, with maternal anxiety, I had ar-

dently desired to connect you to my heart by the closest ties. I had hoped (Oh how earnestly!) to unite you with my Allanby. Nay, start not—you were the daughter of my soul's election! But, on maturely studying your and my son's character, I thought (with you I've no disguise) that Allanby, though good and excellent, was yet not worthy of possessing such a treasure as my Isabel! But there is one in whose favour I have resigned my project, and for whom I trust she is destined;—one who truly deserves to win her love! Whose tastes, whose sentiments, are so congenial to her own, that I suspect her little heart already trembles approval, though her tongue would not for worlds confess, what yet internal feeling warmly sanctions," said Lady Belleville, looking archly in Isabel's face, whose countenance (from what reason we pretend not to discover) the inuendo of her Ladyship had suffused with deepest blushes, and whose whole frame denoted perplexity and agitation.

At that moment Lord Langrave appeared at the door of the summer-house. Lady Bel-

ville glided quickly past him, and, ere Isabel could prevent the action, Langrave was at her feet!

“ Oh, most adored of women !” he exclaimed, “ condemn me not to the tortures of suspense. Consent to be mine !—Speak but one word, and tell me you return my passion ; or, by a glance, permit me to construe your embarrassed silence into approbation of that love which preys upon the vital springs of my existence, and to prove the truth and ardour of which my whole life shall henceforth be devoted !”

As Langrave concluded his impassioned harangue, he buried his face in the folds of Isabel's robe ; then raised his flushed countenance, and gazed on her with an expression of rapture, which seemed to anticipate the acknowledgment of reciprocal transport. But the glow of awakened feeling had vanished from Isabel's cheek ; for the fluttered confusion, which Lady Belville's insinuation had occasioned, was now allayed, or, at least, succeeded by a very different emotion ; and Isa-

bel was enabled to reply to his Lordship's declaration with dignity, as she said,—

“ My Lord, the avowal you have just made was indeed unexpected. Your sentiments deserve my gratitude, which, I must add, is the only return I can offer, in requital for the honour you have now conferred.”

“ You cannot,—will not,—dare not spurn my love !” exclaimed Langrave, in frenzied distraction, as his face assumed the hue of death, while his strong, yet trembling, grasp detained the terrified Isabel. “ Say,” he continued, (his pale quivering lip, and starting eye-ball, denoting the violence of internal conflict,)—“ Speak but those words again !—Say you rejected me !—Ha, ha, ha ! Isabel rejected Langrave !” he impetuously exclaimed, with a laugh, whose hysteric tones rung to Isabel's soul, and filled her with the keenest alarm, as she breathlessly ejaculated,—

“ My Lord, this conduct is unmanly. In mercy calm those transports !—Restrain the expression of feelings it wounds and frightens me to witness.—I am unaccustomed to such

scenes.—“Oh, pity me!” she articulated in a choked voice, and drowned in tears.

The sight of Isabel’s terror and distress even Lord Langrave could not witness unmoved. He released her hand, and, covering his face with his handkerchief, strode with a perturbed step the little apartment.

Isabel now attempted not to escape. She seemed petrified with alarm, and remained immovable on her seat, watching his Lordship’s motions. At length he stopped, and turning round, his countenance, where resentment seemed to have usurped the place of strong emotion, he said, in a low but agitated voice,—

“ ’Tis well, Madam!—I would not, if I could, control your wishes.”—He paused an instant; then, assuming a softer tone, he added imploringly,—

“ Forgive me, Miss St Albe. I have frightened you by a violence, an irritation, for which I abhor myself. Say, can you pardon the terror I have occasioned? And tell me, though

I cannot hope for love, may I not solicit friendship?"

"My best wishes are, ever shall be yours, my Lord!" said Isabel, in a tremulous tone, partially relieved from her fears, yet still dreading a return of Langrave's paroxysm.

"Then, thus let me seal my pardon!" ardently cried his Lordship, as he snatched her hand, which he raised with warmth to his lips. At the same instant, Isabel thought she heard a step, and, raising her eyes, she beheld Tyrconnell at the door of the summer-house! He started, and turned ghastly pale, as he glanced into the interior, and witnessed the passing scene.

Isabel, covered with confusion, and, in a state of pitiable agitation, quickly withdrew her hand, which, almost unconsciously, she had hitherto allowed Lord Langrave to retain, who, prostrate in the attitude of a lover, had not seen Albert; for Tyrconnell's appearance had been but momentary. One look of agony he had cast on Isabel, and the next instant precipitately retreated.

For the recurrence of our heroine's violent emotion Langrave could not account. In vain he questioned her respecting its cause. To all his interrogations tears were for some time her only reply. At length she said, with newly acquired self-possession,—

“ I have really gone through more than I am equal to this morning. Permit me, my Lord, to retire unaccompanied, and unmolested.”

Langrave dared not remonstrate, as Isabel rose, and, with a dignified step, though with a mind tortured with contending feelings, returned to the house, to seek the solitude of her own chamber, there to endeavour to arrange her perturbed thoughts, which the unexpected events of the day had, in no small degree, contributed to disturb.

CHAPTER XV.

To account for the sudden and *mal-à-propos* appearance of Tyrconnell, it may be necessary to state the circumstance which had occasioned his seeking so abruptly an interview with Isabel. On returning to his hotel from Lady Belville's *soirée*, Albert was surprised on receiving intelligence, that a foreigner had just arrived, who demanded instant audience, and who had seemed considerably disappointed, when informed that he was absent from home. Tyrconnell immediately desired the stranger to be admitted. The summons was quickly obeyed by a tall dark-looking Spaniard, who, with the usual formality of his nation, introduced himself as a courier dispatched by Don Diego de Video, as he handed

Tyrconnell a letter, written at the express desire of the Don, which contained a few lines, informing Albert, that his grandfather had been for years in an indifferent state of health, and was so rapidly declining within the last two months, that little hopes were entertained of his ultimate recovery—That he had long felt, though now for the first time expressed, a desire to see the only child of his Elvira—That chance had communicated to Don Diego his grandson's present address, and concluded, by earnestly requesting his immediate attendance in Madrid, and an oblique insinuation, that atonement would speedily be made for previous neglect, by future reparation.

The courier, after having presented the letter, had respectfully retired. Albert had, therefore, perused its contents unwitnessed.

A few months before, the prospect of immense wealth would not, to his high and noble spirit, have afforded any very extraordinary pleasure; but when the cherished idea of Isabel had become closely associated with the

vision of riches and independence, they were hailed with a transport he once little imagined they could ever impart to his mind ; but the opening vista could yield nothing but pleasure, when, in its magic perspective, Isabel St Albe, Hymen, Plutus, and Cupid, all appeared in happy confusion to his elated fancy.

In the first tumult of excited feeling Tyrconnell could anticipate no obstacle to the dearest wish of his soul, a union with her whom he adored ; for was not that greatest of impediments, poverty, now obviated ? How translate the concluding inuendo of his grandfather's epistle, except as a promise of future and ample independence ?

At such a prospect Albert's heart throbbed with rapture. Every propitious word and glance with which Isabel had favoured him since the dawn of their acquaintance was now reverted to with anxious fond delight ! But, amidst Imagination's brightest pictures, the phantom of Allanby arose to chill the glowing atmosphere of Fancy—to chase away vi-

sions of bliss, with the spectral forms of misery !

“ Oh, merciful Providence ! is it—can it be so ?” he exclaimed in mental agony. “ Will Isabel, the peerless Isabel, wed Allanby ? Impossible ! ’Tis true, she does admit his attentions, but with what listless indifference ! what chilling carelessness !—What, if Lady Dash-ton’s information was incorrect ; an idle tale retailed by Folly, and invented by Malice ?—A ray from Heaven beams propitious, and dispels the gathering clouds of doubt and of suspicion ; a bright presentiment pervades my mind, and tells me she may yet be mine ! At all events, I will see, ere distance widely separates, my own heart’s idol.

“ Who loves raves—’Tis youth’s frenzy ;”

and Tyrconnell, from the moment he had formed the decision of seeing Isabel, prior to his departure for Spain, passed the after period in a state of agitating anticipation, anxiously watching the lagging hours, and chiding each tedious moment that must intervene ere

he could visit his beloved, and obtain from her lips, either the blessed assurance of her freedom from any engagement, or else the dreaded confirmation of his own misery.

Under the influence of such feelings Albert passed a restless night, alternately exalted by glorious hopes, or saddened by the suggestions of dismal forebodings.

The next morning he summoned the Spaniard, who, with solemn obsequiousness, obeyed the mandate. Albert informed him, that business of a very particular nature must preclude his leaving Paris until the evening; but that, to atone for such delay, he subsequently purposed travelling night and day, with the greatest possible expedition, to Madrid. On hearing which, the Spaniard retired with an obeisance as profound as that which had distinguished his entrance, professing his readiness to submit implicitly to the grandson of the noble Don Diego de Video, whom Lopez (such was the Spaniard's name) gently insinuated was of the genuine unadulterated Hidalgo breed.

Time at length permitted Tyrconnell to fly to the interview which busy fancy conjured up, and now painted in the vivid colours of delight, now shrouded with the dark sombre hue of despondency. In a state of irritated excitement he arrived at Lord Belville's, and having demanded, in a hurried manner, if Miss St Albe was at home, had been answered in the affirmative by the domestic, and directed by him to the garden to which the servant had seen our heroine bend her steps. What followed has already been related: "Circumstance, that unspiritual god and miscreator," with "his crutch-like rod, turned hope to dust."

Tyrconnell beheld Isabel, her whole frame trembling with emotion—her lovely countenance bathed in tears, while Langrave, the insidious Langrave! (against whose seductions Albert himself had warned her,) lay prostrate at her feet; permitted, unrestrainedly, to press to his polluted lips that hand, whose possession Albert craved beyond all earthly blessings.

Fate seemed to have winged her most envenomed shaft to rankle in his soul, and fester there for ever ! His vision was nearly blighted by the appalling sight—surrounding objects seemed to swim around—two only were perceptible, Langrave and Isabel ! Sense could contain no other ; they filled his soul with agony so intense, desolation so complete, that every idea was concentrated, every feeling condensed into one vast conception of internal wretchedness,—the awful certainty of woe unspeakable.

As the lightning's flash withers instantaneously the fairest flowers, so had that one fatal glance shrivelled the opening buds of Albert's happiness.—They drooped,—they died beneath the sirocco blast of misery !

For a time, inexplicable suffering prevented utterance ; his bosom heaved with a grief too deep for language to express,—

“ The voiceless thought that would not speak,
but weep.”

At length a scalding tear fell down the hero's

cheek. The lustre of that eye which had so often dared the battle's contest, and kindled with additional fire at the approach of danger, blazing defiance on his country's enemies, woman's influence now dimmed with drops of sorrow! Indignantly he dashed away sensibility's tribute as he fervently exclaimed,—

“ Oh Isabel ! and art thou indeed but a deceit—a beautiful mockery ? Did nature form thee in her choicest mould but to embody perfidy—to cheat mankind into a belief that truth, fidelity, and tenderness, could dwell in woman's breast ? And is it but a lovely phantasy, an imaginary idol, that I have so worshipped, instead of a bright, almost celestial being, enthroned in all the light of virtue ? ”

A deep drawn sigh was Tyrconnell's answer. In silence, in sadness, he lamented Isabel's supposed dereliction. With that sort of holy grief, of disappointed hope, with which it may be supposed superior spirits mourned over the fall of our first parents, did Albert sorrow over Isabel ! The purity of such feelings, it is true, was occasionally alloyed by passion's

endless conflict, yet light prevailed over darkness in the chaos of Tyrconnell's mind, and he experienced more agony from the idea of Isabel having fallen from that high sphere, in which he had loved to fancy she would ever shine unsullied in lustre, dispensing happiness, and beaming beauty, than from any selfish regret over his own blighted prospects ; or the demolition of anticipated joys, now fled for ever !

So elevating is the influence of real love ; so refined, so spiritualized is that passion, which (as a celebrated author says) one word expresses,—millions cannot define.

CHAPTER XVI.

MEANWHILE Isabel had suffered agony of mind, scarcely less than that which Tyrconnell endured. On reaching her own chamber she perceived a letter from her father lying on the table, but so violent was the agitation she yet experienced that, for some time, she could not calm the irritation of her feelings sufficiently to commence its perusal. At length she opened the packet, which was to the following purport :

“ MY BELOVED CHILD,

“ To hear from you, to read your every thought, to converse, though seas divide and distance separates us, is most dear to my heart,

and consoling to my spirit. But, Oh Isabel! your last letter (which by some accident was long delayed) did not convey unmitigated pleasure. It created in my breast a vague distrust, an alarm, perhaps unfounded; but who can calculate the endless varieties of feeling, the constant anxieties that continually agitate a parent's mind, which Nature seems to have endowed with peculiar apprehensions, as if to counterbalance the pure delights, the felicitous sensations, with which she fills the hearts of those whose hopes and joys are centered in their offspring!

“ Few, my Isabel, have loved as we have loved. Between us there has never been disguise. The icy barrier, which custom often establishes between parent and child, with us has never existed; yours has not been the ‘*volto sciolto i pensieri stretti.*’ No, your mind has always been a volume open to the inspection of a parent's eye, free to his revision and correction, pure in its pages, and moral in its principle. I know not, therefore, why I should hesitate to reveal that anxiety

with which my breast at this moment trembles ; yet, alive to the sensitive delicacy of your feelings, I anticipate the shock they will receive. I see, in imagination, my Isabel's cheek dyed in maiden blushes, and, in fancy, think I hear the throbbings of her little heart, even when a father talks to her of love ; for, child of my heart, it is on that subject I would now address you. Start not when I say that the perusal of your last letter betrayed to my clear-sighted, unprejudiced, and watchful vision, at least the dawning of that powerful passion. Isabel, question your own soul as to the object, and will it not reply Tyrconnell ?

“ I do not mean to insinuate that you are absolutely in love. Heaven forbid ! I only wish to guard you with solicitous care against all possible danger. At present I will fondly hope, that esteem and respect are the sentiments which Mr Tyrconnell has inspired, and that honour and prudence will prevent their ever strengthening into warmer feelings in your breast. But, Isabel, the shades between the tenderness of friendship and the devoted-

ness of attachment are scarcely discernible, so intimately are they blended, so close is their association, so imperceptible is their connecting link.

“ A woman of sensibility finds unequalled charms in that communion of taste and intelligence, which the cultivation of mental companionship affords ; but how often does the original principle receive a different after direction ?—how often does the preference of the understanding insensibly glide into the omnipotent sentiment of the soul ?—and how frequently does an unsuspecting female unconsciously erect the altar of affection on the foundation of esteem, while gradually the fanciful superstructure rises to an height, of which the fair architect herself is ignorant, till passion’s shrouding mist dissolves, and tremblingly she then perceives, that not to friendship, but to love, her treacherous heart has raised a beautifully fragile fabric, that a breath often destroys or a tone annihilates, and which, if even durable, may yet, hereafter, prove the fatal shrine,

whose first oblation is the sacrifice of happiness and peace.

“ It is inconceivable how much misery the idea of indulging what is called Platonic attachment has produced to your sex. It is a theory which, however captivating in speculation, can never, in the warm season of youth, be reduced to practice, without the greatest danger; for its sophistical ingenuity is but too well calculated to lead the inexperienced and unwary into that flowery path in which it appears a glowing meteor, a bright mirage, enticing progress in the deceptive road, which ultimately leads to wretchedness and ruin. Knowing the strength, the uprightness of your principles, I do not fear that argument, however powerful,—inducement, however plausible,—could materially shroud your judgment, or lead you into the mazes of fallacious sentiment; but I do fear, that, in the inmost recesses of your own heart, you may unknowingly nurture a passion which may hereafter prove your bane, and may destroy the sweetness of that single flower, which

Providence has permitted to bloom in my “path-way of pain,” which I have cherished with tenderness and watched with anxiety. Oh! let it not be nipped in the bud by the breath of passion, which so often blights and corrodes the fairest blossoms!

“Isabel, if my warning does, indeed, come too late—if your heart confesses, though your tongue will not acknowledge, that Tyrconnell’s influence is greater than it ought to be—by every sentiment of religion and virtue,—by the duty you owe your God and your father,—by the sacred tie which unites us in bonds of everlasting affection, I implore, I conjure you to conquer it; banish the seducing image from your fancy—recollect that Tyrconnell’s faith is pledged to another. Conceive what would be her despair, when deprived of that love which she is authorized to indulge, but which honour imperatively forbids you to cherish.

“Let me glory in my child. Let me see her triumphantly pass through whatever trials her all-wise Creator may have destined her to experience. Implore assistance from that

gracious Being, who never refuses aid to those who apply to Him 'in spirit and in truth.' Depend not on your own powers of mind, but solicit that internal strength which 'cometh from above,' and which is mercifully promised to the humble suppliant. Every thing, my Isabel, is hastening to decay; human bliss and human comforts are alike precarious; but these are pleasures unfading, immortal—subject neither to vicissitude nor change, affording scope to the noblest affections of the soul, pleasures sublime in prospect and perfect in completion—May such joys be yours.

“ I desire, I wish not for an answer to my suggestions. I have already intruded too far into the privacy of my Isabel's thoughts, for there are little indescribable sensations, which it would outrage her delicacy to express, even to a parent, and having once warned her of danger, she will herself flee from temptation, conquering every rebellious feeling. Eleanor sympathizes in all my anxieties,—together we offer our fervent constant prayers for your happiness. Oh! may 'we three meet again'

in peace here, and experience an eternal reunion hereafter.

“Farewell, my child!

“Heaven for ever bless and return you unchanged to the arms of

“HENRY ST ALBE.”

“It is too late!—I feel it is too late!” ejaculated Isabel, in a voice of torture, as she covered her face, and burst into an agony of tears.—“Shame on my woman’s heart!—I love, and without return!

“Oh, Father of mercies!” she involuntarily exclaimed, as, with clasped hands, she sunk on her knees, and raised her streaming eyes to heaven, “teach me to conquer this weakness!—strengthen, by thy power, my poor erring thoughts!—assist me in the path of duty!—point my hopes to that future state, that peaceful asylum, where the soul, released from the clogging material of existence, and sublimed by earthly suffering, shall enjoy endless beatitude in the presence of Omnipotence!”

As Isabel concluded her short, but fervent supplication, she rose from her knees, her feelings in some degree calmed by the influence of devotion, though still in an unusual degree of excitement. Gradually she became more composed, and by degrees was enabled to take a rapid survey of that attachment which her heart had formed, and now for the first time absolutely acknowledged.

It was impossible to trace the precise period of its commencement. For the last three months she had been completely domesticated with Tyrconnell, had continually associated with him amidst scenes calculated to elicit mutual sentiment, and to reveal undisguised opinion. The feelings of Albert and Isabel had been, as if by tacit consent, unreservedly displayed. It requires not length of period for congenial minds to coalesce, and in that short time reciprocal affection had perhaps been as strongly established, as if years, instead of months, had constituted the duration of their acquaintance. But Isabel did not belong to those ethereal beings who exist but in

the element of hyperbolic sentiment, and fantastical imagination, and who (if compelled to endure one of those many trials, which all must, more or less, experience, in a passage through this life of probation) imagine themselves predestined to eternal misery, and condemned by fate to undergo those inconceivably exquisite pangs, which none but souls of sensibility can comprehend or suffer.

The first tumult of agitation, therefore, being passed, Isabel resolved, through the assistance of that Power whose aid she had just devoutly implored, to endeavour to vanquish a predilection, which every honourable feeling warned her to subdue. Most bitterly did she deplore that want of discrimination and foresight, that rash self-confidence, which had prevented her from endeavouring to analyse her feelings in the first instance, from trying them by the touchstone of truth, and deciding impartially on their nature and propriety, ere she allowed them an influential power on her happiness; and had proof been wanting to confirm her belief in the weakness, as well as

the deceitfulness of the human heart, she would have found that evidence in the sophistical suggestions of her own feelings, which, when emancipated from the beneficial restraints of self-examination and internal discipline, had infused a pernicious poison into her hitherto well-regulated mind, in some degree perverting those clear distinctions of right and wrong, which form such important land-marks in the course of virtue.

Her delusion, however, was no sooner perceived than reprobated ; for Isabel's sensibility was not of that mawkish cast, which only leads to self-indulgence, shunning the wholesome duties of correction and reform. Her sympathies were under those better regulations which stimulate the mind to vigorous exertion, and active pursuits, as the most certain preventives against the seductions of temptation. She, therefore, firmly determined to conquer a prepossession which honour and generosity refused to sanction. She did not expect immediate victory ; for she knew that time and meditation must unite their influence,

ere a deeply rooted sentiment could be finally eradicated. She felt the duplicity of her own heart, and consequently did not trust to its treacherous impulses ; but, resolving to rouse the latent powers of her mind—keenly to investigate the motives of her actions, and, above all, to constitute principle, rather than high-flown sentiment, the vital spirit of her future conduct, she did hope for ultimate success in her mental warfare.

One thought, one paramount wish, however, she yet strongly cherished, which was to convey, by some indirect method, the conviction to Tyrconnell's mind of her perfect innocence with respect to Langrave. But, how effect such a desire ? For from the idea of betraying the sentiments his Lordship had expressed her whole soul revolted. She conceived it the very height of dishonour in a female to divulge a predilection which, however strongly a man may feel, if not reciprocal, he ever wishes to remain concealed in the sanctuary of that woman's breast, whom, by the offer of his love, he has distinguished beyond all

her sex, and from whom he has every right to expect both gratitude and secrecy, on the subject of an unhappy attachment.

Isabel, therefore, confessed with a sigh the utter impossibility of attempting any exculpation of her conduct, and feeling obliged to allow it to remain unexplained, she could only hope that future events might prove propitious in removing the mysterious veil, in which her character was unfortunately enveloped, but which honour and delicacy equally forbade her to endeavour to remove.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON descending to the saloon, Isabel found it unoccupied, and was on the point of retiring to her own room, when the noise of horses attracted her attention to the window she was passing. Carelessly she glanced into the area of the court-yard, but started on perceiving Albert Tyrconnell, mounted on his prancing spirited charger. He looked up earnestly, and, at the same instant, met her eyes. She thought he changed colour as he recognized her, raised his hat, and bowed an acknowledgment.

Isabel's first impulse was to retreat; but, recollecting that such a procedure would betray a consciousness of embarrassment, and a tacit assent to prior misconduct, she resolved to collect her scattered thoughts, to exert all

her self-possession, and to remain in her present station.

Yet vainly she tried to still the tumultuous beatings of her palpitating heart, or to conquer a trepidation, which was not lessened when she perceived that Albert did not intend to dismount, but had given two letters to Lord Belville's servant ; after having done which, Tyrconnell had once more gazed intently at the window. Isabel's whole frame trembled with agitation as she witnessed that one passionate agonized look, for Albert's countenance seemed suddenly to assume the hue of death, as he wildly waved his hand, drew his hat close over his face, set spurs to his horse, and was instantaneously out of sight !

The throbbings of Isabel's bosom then ceased ; an icy coldness chilled and benumbed her faculties, and almost suspended animation as she sunk into a chair ; yet forgetfulness was denied her !—Her feelings were keenly alive to a sense of acute wretchedness—of internal anguish which she vainly essayed to repress ; for Tyrconnell's last “ lingering look” she

felt expressed more eloquently than words could have pronounced an adieu—perhaps eternal!—Her eye still remained on the spot where, a moment before, she had seen Albert; but now it gazed on vacancy. Not a tear flowed!—And as the servant entered, and presented her a letter, she mechanically took it as she walked to her own apartment. Deliberately she shut the door, and, with a frozen glance, surveyed the superscription. Again and again she read the address—shuddered—but did not break the seal. At length, her wandering gaze fixed on a rose Tyrconnell had given her at parting on the evening when so much had been mutually felt, though so little verbally revealed, and which flower she had ever since carefully, fondly cherished. At sight of that little memento of affection, the flood-gates of misery were unlocked; tears gushed in freedom down Isabel's pallid cheek; fast, brightly they fell, and relieved her surcharged feelings.

“Gone! ere its leaves are withered!” she sobbed convulsively as she regarded the still

blooming flower, pressed her aching forehead, and bitterly wept in sorrow of soul.

“ But it is well. ’Tis better it should be so!—Oh! were he but convinced of my innocence!—Is it a crime to wish that that were known?” she involuntarily exclaimed as she raised her eyes in silent appeal to Heaven. Then, suddenly recollecting the letter, she stooped, lifted it from the spot where it had fallen, and impatiently tearing it open, she eagerly perused the following almost illegible lines.

TO MISS ST ALBE.

“ Pardon!—Oh, in mercy, pardon the liberty I take in presuming to address you!—Could you read my heart, you would there behold the many struggles of feeling I have endured ere I formed the ultimate resolve of once more warning you against the designs of the unprincipled Langrave; but the interest my soul takes in your future welfare is so strong, so overwhelming, that every consideration bows submissive to its influence, and,

regardless of the imputation which may be the possible consequences of my present proceeding, for the last time I play the delegated part of Mentor!—a part which formerly yielded me such pure delight, that, even now, my thoughts revert with sudden joy to that period when Miss St Albe appeared to value—when,—

“ But why indulge reflections which, by contrast, aggravate the bitterness—the torture of this moment !

“ I feel—I know I have no right to complain. My pen shall not again obey the dictates of selfishness. Oh ! yet forgive and pity me !—Though the seducing contagion of example, the corrupting depravity of the heartless world of fashion, may have tainted with their pestilential influence the angelic purity of your former character, though the fine gloss of unsophisticated feeling may have worn off by rude collision with inferior spirits, and Isabel St Albe may have fallen almost on a par with the generality of her sex !—yet I feel she cannot have descended far from her original great-

ness. The pristine beauty of her mind cannot be totally effaced; she will yet listen to the sincere suggestions of the truest friendship—the warmest interest!—Let me, then, solemnly conjure you to abandon all further intimacy with Lord Langrave!

“ My opinion as to the depravity of his principles is not given under the irritation of injury, the injunction of secrecy, or the shadow of concealment. Heaven forbid that Albert Tyrconnell should ever stoop to the degradation of becoming the hidden assassin of reputation or of character! But of neither is Lord Langrave possessed, and that such are my sentiments his Lordship is perfectly aware, though, for reasons best known to himself, he has never thought proper to resent them.

“ Oh, Miss St Albe! allow not the fictitious splendour of his talents, his dangerous fascinations, or his sophistical arguments, to blind your natural penetration. Permit not the coils of the serpent to entwine you in their

folds, for the scorpion will sting even when least expected!

“ There is yet another subject on which I would presume advice, but that my feelings—my——Isabel, forgive such weakness! Allanby is not corrupt in heart, nor vitiated in morals; he may, nay, he must possess virtues far beyond what external appearances bespeak, since you consent to——I ought—but cannot say more! Whatever decision you form, may happiness be the result!—May halcyon days of peace be yours!—May the sun of prosperity gild every hour of your future life! Its reflection will gleam a momentary brightness on the dark gloom of his destiny, whom fate permits not to mingle with thine; but whose spirit will ever joy in thy bliss, and sympathize in thy sorrow! he who nearly forgets his own misery in the anticipation of thy felicity!

“ But I know not what I say,—I am too proud to complain; and yet the hour of separation quite unmans me. For Oh! this day we part! I go—no matter where—all climes are now alike to me,—my fairy dreams have

vanished. The ray which lighted up my path with dazzling, but fictitious lustre, is for ever quenched! For me, 'joy hath no balm, and affliction no sting.'

"Isabel, Adieu! Never wilt thou find a truer, more devoted friend than

"ALBERT TYRCONNELL."

"Oh, never, never!" exclaimed the weeping Isabel, as she concluded her agitated perusal. She paused. Then raising her swimming eyes, while a blush of deepest carnation crimsoned her burning cheek, she whispered almost inarticulately, "Yet I am not now unhappy, for he loves me! His letter betrays what his lips ne'er disclosed!" In that one delightful conviction she forgot all previous suffering. Tyrconnell's upbraiding no longer tortured, even his departure was not remembered. The certainty of requited love banished every painful idea; but swift in transition, the pleasing image fled. Soon she recollected the stern cold reality of her fate, yet the tender dreams of pure attachment

left a glow in the bosom they had warmed, which lightened the gloom of despondency. She felt all the horrors of unjust surmise, cruel aspersion, and subsequent separation, but the assurance of Tyrconnell's affection dispelled many a pang, and filled her bosom with chastened pleasure, till suddenly her thoughts reverted to a baneful theme—to Albert's engagement.

At once every consoling idea vanished. The necromantic touch of memory exiled every hope! and Isabel once more became convinced she had indulged a vain delusion, that joy indeed is but "the harbinger of woe," and that she must again endeavour to conquer passion by the force of principle.

CHAPTER XVIII.

To address even a few hurried lines to Isabel had cost Tyrconnell many a pang ; yet he felt a sort of melancholy pleasure, affliction's pride, in having performed that last duty, and, conscious of having done every thing in his power to warn her of danger, and to save her from the destruction he imagined impending over her devoted head, Albert resigned himself to that loneliness of soul, which a mind of peculiar sensibility keenly feels when disappointed in an object of supreme solicitude,—a sullen calmness, resembling

“ That settled ceaseless gloom
The fabled Hebrew wanderer bore ;”

and, under the influence of such feelings, Tyr-

connell hailed the prospect of a total change of scene with something like satisfaction; for, though restless and unhappy, hopeless in thought, and reckless as to his future fate, he yet fancied any change preferable to remaining in a spot which must ever recall recollections whose sweetness doubly embittered reality. For, as the Italian poet says—

“Nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria.”

And, indeed, any event seemed desirable which could rouse his moody mind into the stimulus of exertion. As he dismounted, therefore, from his horse, he entered the hotel, and turned into the first room that presented itself, determining to summon Lopez, and to order him to make immediate preparations for his journey to Spain.

As Tyrconnell held the lock in his hand, and was on the point of opening the door, he distinctly heard a voice within say, in a low hurried tone,—

“ But, Darwent, will the bank trust St Albe ?” Instantly Albert entered, and beheld Lord Langrave in deep discourse with a dark ill-looking person, a gentleman in appearance, but one whose countenance betrayed a strange mixture of abject cunning, mean servility, and treacherous malignity. Both started as they perceived Tyrconnell, whose ghastly haggard expression might indeed have frightened the most indifferent spectator. Langrave first recovered from the surprise of the moment, as, advancing, he said, with some *hauteur*—

“ To what fortuitous circumstance am I at length indebted for the honour of a visit from Mr Tyrconnell ?”

“ My Lord, I candidly confess that no such honour was intended. But I perceive that, owing to some strange mistake, I entered this hotel instead of my own, which is the very next house. I have to apologize for my present intrusion,” Albert added coldly as he bowed, and was in the act of departing, when

Langrave interrupted his intention as he placed a chair, and gracefully said,—

“ Tyrconnell, I am a proud fellow, and to no person in existence but yourself would I make any overture to acquaintance. But, come, let this (to me) agreeable error be the commencement of our future personal intercourse.”

“ Your Lordship does me an honour which I am at present obliged to decline, as pressing business requires my attendance prior to leaving Paris.”

“ Are you indeed flying all its delights ?” inquired Langrave, from whose brow the assurance of Tyrconnell’s departure had chased the rising storm, and whose whole motive for soliciting a visit was in order to discover whether any part of his confidential discourse had reached Albert’s ear.

“ Yes !—immediately. Good morning, my Lord,” said Tyrconnell, who, wishing to escape farther conversation, instantly retired, and, having quickly made every necessary arrangement, in the course of a few hours, Al-

bert commenced his intended expedition, accompanied by Lopez. The hurry and bustle of departure for a time distracted Tyrconnell's thoughts from dwelling uninterruptedly on those remembrances, which Lethe's fabled waters could not entirely have obliterated; but soon they returned with force increased by temporary suspension. It was then that the words he had accidentally overheard strongly recurred to memory, for the name of St Albe awakened a long train of associations, and roused attention to a circumstance which otherwise would probably have remained unnoticed. But now the longer he pondered on the phrase, "Will the bank trust St Albe?" the more inexplicable it appeared.

"Can the father of Isabel want money, and, Oh! shall I not be permitted to relieve his distress?" mentally exclaimed Albert!—"Of what value will be the useless dross of which I shall soon be possessed, if Fate will ever prevent my applying it as the wishes of my heart would dictate!" Then, again, the improbability of Mr St Albe being in any pecu-

niary difficulty, or at least of Langrave being acquainted with his embarrassments, flashed across Albert's mind.

Though not usually prone to doubt, Tyrconnell could not prevent a vague sort of suspicion from pervading his thoughts, that some mystery existed—some treachery was in agitation—of which Langrave was the prime instigator, and Isabel the probable victim ; and so strong became the apprehension on further meditation, that, more than once, he was on the point of returning to Paris, in order to attempt investigation ; but the recollection of his dying grandfather recalled Albert to a sense of that duty, which nothing short of imperious necessity ought to induce him to abandon ; yet, so powerful were his anxieties on the subject of Isabel, that he determined, as soon as circumstances permitted, again to visit the French capital, there to ascertain, by personal observation, what ground existed for those fears which tortured and agitated his breast with a thousand contending emotions. In an inconceivably short time Tyrconnell

performed his rapid journey. With complicated feelings he entered the ancient city of Madrid. The melancholy history of his parents, how they had loved, and how they had suffered; the implacable character of that relation from whom he had been ever estranged, and who, for the first time, he would soon behold; the probable reception he might experience; all rose to his fevered imagination, and partially distracted his thoughts from dwelling uninterruptedly on those recollections which had previously almost superseded every other consideration.

Albert's travelling companion, who had nearly preserved an unbroken taciturnity, now pompously exclaimed,—

“Here is the hereditary residence of the most noble Don Diego de Video!” as the carriage drove through a triumphal arch, and stopped at the pillared entrance of a magnificent mansion, over whose splendid doorway armorial shields and ensigns were richly sculptured.

A group of domestics in sumptuous dresses

appeared to greet Tyrconnell, as with obsequious bows they hailed the arrival of the young Senhor. Albert, (who was perfect master of the Spanish language,) with gracious dignity returned their salutations, as he inquired respecting the state of his grandfather's health.

“The Don continues still extremely indisposed,” said a grey-headed servitor, in whose breast nature and affection seemed not absolutely extinguished, and whose character appeared superior to that evinced by the general retinue of the grandee's household.

“Shall I have the happiness of seeing Don Diego to-night?” demanded Tyrconnell.

“We go to inquire our noble master's pleasure,” replied two of the domestics, who, with an air of respectful solemnity, instantly retired; while others of the numerous train ushered Albert into a sumptuous apartment, hung with tapestry, which ably represented the military achievements of his maternal ancestry.

In the interior of a recess, at the upper end

of the chamber, Tyrconnell perceived what appeared to be a picture, over which hung a dark green curtain. Advancing, he drew aside its folds, and beheld the full length figure of a beautiful female, which, from the strong resemblance it presented to the miniature he always wore of his departed mother, he instantly recognized as the likeness of Donna Elvira. With subdued feelings Tyrconnell involuntarily kneeled before the portrait of his sainted parent, almost inclined to invoke the spirit of the lovely original. The glowing countenance seemed to beam approval on the youthful warrior, and fondly to bid him welcome to the seat of his ancestors. The lustrous eye, the blooming cheek, the parted lip, spoke happiness and joy; and startling it was to fancy to conceive the beauteous prototype had suffered deeply, keenly,—and was now, alas! no more!

A holy regret—a sacred melancholy—a softened sympathy, filled Tyrconnell's mind with saddened, yet grateful feelings. It was

“ Not harsh sorrow, but a tenderer woe,
Nameless, but dear to gentle hearts below ;
Felt without bitterness, but full and clear,
A sweet dejection—a transparent tear ;
Unmixed with worldly grief or selfish stain,
Shed without shame, and secret without pain !”

Long could Albert have indulged such contemplations, which soothed him into pensive calmness ; but fearing to yield to the relaxing influence of such soul-subduing reflections, Tyrconnell, with a sigh, let fall the curtain, and proceeded into an adjoining Gothic gallery, of considerable extent, closely hung with heraldic scutcheons, and where the armour of generations, long since mingled with their original dust, yet brightly gleamed, and, to imagination, presented the forms of those dauntless heroes, whose memories survive in the records of chivalry, and whose martial array reminded the spectator of “ Palafox’s answer to the French General at the siege of Saragoza—War, even to the knife !”

On the opposite side of the gallery, the painter had sedulously endeavoured to repre-

sent the various exploits of those warriors with whom Tyrconnell claimed alliance, and whose blood he felt tingle in his veins as he regarded the mimic figures of the gallant knights advancing to the spoil of conquest,—

“ With milk-white crest, gold spur, and light poised lance !”

His eye kindled with triumph, and the glow of animation flushed his lately pallid cheek, as he proudly threw back his head, and paced the gallery with a firmer step, for his breast heaved with an inborn feeling of greatness—a nobility of soul, as he surveyed the genealogical pageantry of his illustrious progenitors, and recollected, with pardonable elation, that those

“ Leaders fit to guide a battle,
For the freedom of the world,”

his own deeds had never disgraced, for he, too, had often bled for his country!—The deathless laurel of victory encircled his own

brow ; life had been staked, and fame obtained in the glorious and immortal cause of liberty !

From such meditations Albert was roused by the entrance of a servant, who informed him that Don Diego would give him audience in the course of an hour ; but that, prior to seeing Tyrconnell, he wished him to partake of some refreshment, which the domestic intimated was in readiness. Though Albert would have preferred remaining to indulge those dazzling dreams of glory, which, by their imposing splendour, had for a few moments banished the melancholy tender dreams of passion, yet wishing to comply with any of his grandfather's desires, he followed the servant into a superb apartment, in which a collation of the choicest viands was served. The table groaned under the weight of massive plate, and every pains seemed to have been taken to impress Tyrconnell with a suitable idea of the wealth and grandeur of the Don's establishment. Luxury presided at the banquet, yet Albert could not help reflecting how

little the pomp of opulence contributes to the enjoyment of real happiness, as he mentally exclaimed, “ If Isabel St Albe’s affections had been mine,—if her feelings had remained uncorrupted, and her mind unadulterated, how much greater felicity a mere competence with her would have afforded, than all this display of ostentation, where

‘ Tout parle aux yeux,
Et rien au cœur.’ ”

CHAPTER XIX.

AT length the tedious banquet ended, and Tyrconnell received a summons to attend his grandfather. After having passed through various magnificent suites of rooms, he arrived at the entrance of Don Diego's chamber. With a palpitating heart he heard his name announced, and the next moment found himself in the presence of his relative. The Don was reclining on a crimson velvet couch; his attenuated form, and pallid countenance, denoted extreme indisposition; and, as the glare of large waxen tapers (which burned on the altar of an oratory, visible in perspective) flashed a strong light on his ghastly haggard features, he seemed more like a body from whence the immortal spirit had already taken

its flight, than a living habitant of earth. Beside him sat a Spanish monk, dressed in the habit of his order, whose cowl, thrown back, revealed a physiognomy fraught with intelligence, benevolence, and feeling. With an air of the kindest interest the holy man advanced, and, leading Albert to the couch of his grandfather, he said in a voice, the tones of which thrilled to Tyrconnell's soul,—

“ Don Diego ! behold the child of your Elvira !”

In trembling agitation, the invalid extended his emaciated hands, as he exclaimed in a hollow voice, “ Can he forgive my long neglect?—Will he sooth my dying moments, by assurance of his pardon ?”

“ Pardon !—Oh, sully not the happiness of our meeting by such an expression !—Let my first homage be unalloyed by one single thought calculated to embitter such a moment as this !—Thus, then, let me ask your blessing !” cried Tyrconnell, as he knelt before Don Diego, who, in a feeble tone, ejaculated,

“ Bless thee !” and, exhausted by the effort, fell back, fainting on his pillow.

The physicians of the household were instantly summoned ; but ere the Don was restored to animation, the monk succeeded in drawing Albert out of the chamber ; for, assuring him that his grandfather’s nerves were in that weakened state, that the slightest agitation might prove fatal, and that the sight of Tyrconnell, on his immediate recovery to sense, might be attended with serious consequences, Albert had complied with a request so urged, and, leaving the invalid to the care of his medical assistants, had retired to another apartment, accompanied by the monk. They were scarcely seated, when one of the physicians entered, and pronounced that the Don had perfectly recovered from his temporary insensibility ; but that repose being indispensable, he would postpone the pleasure of seeing his grandson until the following morning, as he was then endeavouring to rest.

“ I shall, therefore, not intrude,” said the

monk.—“ You are right, Father Eugenio ;—’tis better not to disturb the Don in any way to-night,” said the son of Esculapius, as, with an air of solemnity, he left the room.

After his departure, a silence of some minutes ensued, during which Eugenio appeared to study the noble countenance of Tyrconnell with intense interest.

At length he said, taking Albert’s hand, while a tear dimmed the lustre of his dark and eloquent eye, “ Forgive my inquisitorial gaze ! but Donna Elvira’s child I cannot scan with indifference. Oh ! how her smile plays on your lip, and illumines your face with the self same expression !”

“ You knew my mother, then ?” said Albert, in a faltering voice.

“ How well !—For years my breast was the repository of her pure and spotless thoughts.—To me (her confessor) she first revealed that one desperate step, which involved her after life in so much sorrow !”

“ You did not oppose her union with my father ?” anxiously cried Tyrconnell.

“ Young man, I did oppose it by every argument in my power, and thought I had prevailed. I hoped, that the dictates of the holy religion, of which I am an humble minister, had conquered the rebellious inclinations of human frailty.—How were my expectations crushed, my wishes blighted, when, shortly after my memorable conversation with Donna Elvira on the subject of her unhappy attachment, in agony of spirit, she threw herself on her knees before me, and confessed her union with the brother of the man to whom she was betrothed !”

“ He, at least, was faithful to her love !—No stain, save that one misguided passion caused, ever shaded my father’s honoured name.—His memory lives in his country’s records !” said Tyrconnell proudly.

“ I know it,” gently returned Eugenio.—“ Peace to his ashes !—I wish not to revive those flames of discord, now, I trust, extinct for ever !—Think not I was your parent’s enemy.—I did not rashly disclose their marriage ; but assisted to conceal it as long as

practicable, still hoping some fortuitous turn in the course of destiny.”

“ Stop !” cried Albert vehemently,—“ a thought has flashed across my mind.—Say, are you the faithful friend to whom my ill-fated parents so frequently allude, in the few relics of their correspondence now in my possession ?—Are you the nameless being whom they bless as their disinterested benevolent protector ?—He who befriended them in distress ; who shielded them from the wrath of Don Diego ; and who sustained their sinking spirits with constant counsel and assistance ?”

“ I am,” said Eugenio, shrouding his face in the folds of his habit, to conceal the generous blush of modesty, which suffused his usually pallid cheek at such an enthusiastic apostrophe,—at such a confirmation of his own good deeds, which he ever wished to veil in holiest secrecy.

“ Father, forgive my youthful impetuosity !—And, Oh ! in the name of my departed parents, receive the grateful tribute of their offspring’s feelings !” exclaimed Tyrconnell, in

strong emotion, as he bowed low before the monk, who, extending both his hands over Albert's head, pronounced an affecting benediction.—Tyrconnell, for some time, was unable to reply, save by a speaking look. At length, he said,—

“ But did you not suffer, Father, from the indignation of Don Diego ?”

“ I did,” meekly replied the monk.—“ Your grandfather imagined, that I was not only privy to the marriage of Donna Elvira, but that I also had advised the act ; and, consequently, I was dismissed the station which I long had held, as confessor to his family.”

“ Then, how were you reinstated ?” demanded Albert.—“ Simply by the desire of the Don himself ; or rather, I should humbly say, through the interposition of that Divine Power, who sometimes condescends to influence human actions, and to point out to poor erring mortals the path of duty from whence they far have strayed.”

“ For upwards of twenty years after the death of his daughter, Don Diego continued

under the direction of a spiritual guide, whose faults it becomes me not now to particularize. The grave has closed over the remains of one, who, I fear, perverted not a little the mind of your grandfather. Suffice it to say, that, during that period, Don Diego became the most intolerant bigot. He seemed, indeed, to have undergone a complete change. No longer the generous friend, the noble benefactor, the kind master, every fibre of his heart was twisted from its original direction, and, of all his former qualities, ostentation (which had ever been a prominent feature in Don Diego's character) alone remained in native force. Surrounded by dogmatical sycophants, who made his weakness subservient to their own private views, every feeling was chilled, every principle was narrowed, by the selfish suggestions of his artful advisers; yet, in the midst of splendour and of adulation, Don Diego was miserable. Often, in the solitude of his midnight orisons, his spirit longed to meet the child of his departed Elvira!—That last scion of his noble stock,—her, whose memory, not-

withstanding transgression, was yet dear to his soul! Under the secrecy of confession, frequently he revealed those feelings to his spiritual director,—as often were they reprobated and anathematized.

“ At length Father Alvarez (such was the confessor’s name) died. A host of candidates solicited to fill his place; all were refused, and, to the utter surprise of a tribe of flattering parasites, Don Diego recalled me to my former station.”

“ Then it is owing to your representations that I have been summoned to my grandfather?” anxiously interrupted Albert.

“ Say not so, my son, a higher power has influenced him to a sense of justice, I have been but the humble instrument. My arguments, I trust, have been blessed unto his ear, but ascribe the glory, where glory alone is due! I have but done my duty. Albert, it rejoices my aged eyes to see the child of her who was my pride and my comfort, as by her life she beautifully illustrated the doctrines which

my lips enjoined. She was not all-perfect,—what mortal is ! or what human joy is unembittered ! since now, when the first wish of my soul is accomplished, in seeing Albert Tyrconnell restored to the arms of his nearest relative, even now I mourn that the child of Elvira has wandered from what appears to me the straightest path to immortal happiness ; that I dare not try to aim his hopes and elevate his thoughts, far far beyond this groveling sphere. Yet fancy not I mean to unsettle your sentiments, or to attempt your conversion to the faith that I profess. Oh no ! continue steadfast to that church in which you have been educated. It inculcates good and Christian precepts ; it enjoins pious and holy practices. My views are not confined within one narrow circuit—for though we may revolve in different orbits, it is the same ‘ Sun of Righteousness ’ that we adore,—equally may we feel its rays, and enjoy its influences. Many paths lead to the same city ; Albert, may we meet at that celestial one, where unfading happiness shall

be our portion through the countless ages of eternity !”

“ Heaven grant it !” fervently responded Tyrconnell, emphatically pressing the monk’s hand, as, after their long and interesting conversation, they mutually separated for the night.

CHAPTER XX.

IN the meantime, our heroine had been endeavouring, by every means in her power, to attain serenity and banish mournful retrospection. In part she had succeeded. Isabel's mind was of too high a tone to suffer her to waste her time and enervate her thoughts, by dwelling on useless and unavailing regrets. So far from encouraging such feelings, she made it a point of duty sedulously to engage every passing moment in some active pursuits, some rational employment, or intellectual amusement. It is true, she often found it difficult to restrain her wandering ideas within their prescribed bounds; Tyrconnell's image would now and then intrude; yet, on the whole, she had been as victorious in subduing

forbidden recollections, as could reasonably have been expected, and she could only hope that resolution and time would eventually heal her broken spirit, and restore her mind to its original elasticity.

“Surely I can be happy without the illusion of love,” she would sometimes mentally argue. “Filial attachment, that purest and most disinterested of all affections, I may fondly indulge without fear of reprehension, and all those lovely duties in which consist

‘Woman’s domestic honour and chief praise,’

I yet may freely practise. Why then should I peevishly repine at the slightest touch of evil? Why should I expect to be exempted from a partial share in the sorrows of mortality? Should I not rather bow submissive to the chastening rod of discipline, and study to correct that vanity, presumption, or discontent, which it may be wisely calculated to repress and bring into subjection?”

By such reasonings, Isabel succeeded in

establishing a perfect appearance of exterior composure. As yet, she was not quite so victorious in her struggles for internal tranquillity. But, though her manners were not as lively as at a former period, though her cheek did not bloom with the brightest hues of animation, yet gentleness and composure marked so decisively her general demeanour, that, to an uninterested observer, she might have passed for the most contented and happy of human beings—so true is the assertion of the poet :

“ Se a ciasam l'interno affanno,
Si leggesse in fronte scritto,
Quanti mai che invidia fanno,
Ci farebbero pietà.” —

In the farewell note of compliment to Lady Belville, which had accompanied Albert's letter to Isabel, Tyrconnell had announced his intended departure, but had not even remotely hinted his place of destination, or the nature of his future projects. It was, therefore, unanimously pronounced by female politicians

in love, that the gallant irresistible Tyrconnell had fled the delights of the *beau monde*, in order to fulfil his matrimonial engagement—that he who had long preserved a predominating influence in the hemisphere of fashion, had contentedly resigned his envied power, preferring the part of “Benedict, the married man,” to any other in the *dramatis personæ* of life.

Isabel was present when such a report was publicly announced, with a confidence which seemed to preclude a doubt as to its decided authenticity. Since Albert had left Paris, Lord Langrave had uniformly behaved with the most respectful demeanour towards our heroine. He appeared to have too much pride to persecute her with respect to his unfortunate attachment; and Isabel felt grateful for a forbearance which she attributed to the most dignified motives. Lady Belville had also preserved a perfect silence on the subject, which her niece was not disposed to interrupt.

Time glided on in an unvaried tenor that scarcely marked its progress. The season for

tumultuous gaiety was fast drawing to a close—a circumstance which was most grateful to the feelings of Isabel, who could not always vanquish that disposition to melancholy reserve which sometimes infected her spirits, and ill calculated her to enjoy the hollow heartless pleasures of dissipation.

In the midst of fashionable frivolities, her pensive thoughts would often revert to her beloved father and aunt, and she would sometimes, with a sigh, confess how exaggerated were those pictures of ideal happiness which her lively fancy had sketched of the world before she left the Parsonage to mingle in its busy scenes. Often now did she long to return to that peaceful asylum where her childhood had been passed, where the pleasures of maturer intellect had been cultivated, and where her heart whispered she could best regain her original serenity of mind, and calm composure of spirit. One morning she had more than usually indulged in the forbidden luxury of pensive meditation ; she was alone, and taking up a pen, she yielded to the en-

thusiasm of the moment, and hastily wrote the following lines, to the truth of which her own feelings bore the amplest testimony :—

“ When Hope’s gay visions fast recede away,
Nor stand the test of Truth’s meridian day ;
When bright Anticipation takes her flight,
Nor leaves a ray to cheer the mourner’s night,
How desolate the soul !—the veil now rent,—
That glitt’ring veil by cheating Fancy sent
To hide reality !—Th’ illusion’s past ;
A sad and retrospective view we cast
On scenes and images that once had pow’r
To gild with magic art Life’s passing hour !—
Such is the lot of man ;—yet who——”

Ashamed of her weakness, Isabel stopped the hurried effusion she had involuntarily penned ; and throwing, with self-condemnation, the paper aside, she endeavoured to amuse her mind by the exercise of the pencil in copying a very fine engraving by one of the best French masters. She had been a short time so employed, when a gentle knock at the door of her apartment announced an in-

truder. She stepped forward to admit her visitor, who proved to be Lady Belville.

“ My dear love, you really will destroy your health by the sedentary life you lead, always poking over books, writing, or drawing. Your eyes have absolutely lost their lustre, and your cheeks their glowing freshness !” said her Ladyship, playfully touching Isabel’s profile ; “ but come, I am going to tell you a secret.”

“ Really !—Oh ! pray do not keep me in suspense,” replied Isabel, smiling, and dropping her pencil.

“ I will not condemn you to that greatest of tortures. Know, then, that Emily is going to be married *bona fide* to Sir Felix Petito,

‘ Of all beau-kind the best proportioned fool ! ’ ”

“ Indeed !—most sincerely I congratulate you on an event, which (notwithstanding your quotation) I fancy is desirable to all parties.”

“ Indubitably. Never since creation was

there a more suitable union. The same tastes,—the same ideas.—(No! there I am wrong, for I question whether Emily and Sir Felix could between them muster even one of those mental attributes.)—*Mais n'importe*,—the little fluttering giddy creatures, provided they bask in the sunshine of fashion, will always enjoy ‘the bliss of ignorance,’ and *vive la bagatelle!* Sir Felix Pettito is quite as rational as any hero amongst the present dynasty of idle idiots!

‘Such painted puppets!—such a varnished race
Of hollow gewgaws, only dress and face!’ ”

said Lady Belville with uplifted hands and eyes.

“Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel? Surely you do not condescend to hunt down poor harmless coxcombry, from which I have seen you derive such infinite amusement? But seriously, when shall this consummation, so devoutly wished for, be accomplished?” inquired Isabel.

“In the course of a few days. You are

aware the business has been on the *tapis* for a length of time ; but now all preliminaries are arranged, and I am come to tell you all our plans. Early next week, the happy pair commence their journey to Fool's Paradise. You and Julia are to be bride-maids. Immediately after the nuptial ceremony, ' the Queen of Midas' and her gentle spouse purpose a tour through Switzerland in search of the picturesque. The rest of the bridal train adjourn to Lady Dashton's mansion at Versailles, where we shall pass the day in apostrophizing the spirits of Louis XIV. and Madame de la Valliere, (Maintenon is my aversion !) and in the evening, our lively hostess will give a magnificent ball, so that we shall not return to Paris till a very late hour. Now, tell me candidly, do those festive projects meet your approbation ?”

“ Undoubtedly. I must instantly give orders for my bridal finery.”

“ Stay, Isabel !” said Lady Belville, as our heroine rose to summon her Abigail. “ There is yet one other circumstance I wish to men-

tion. Now, pray, spare me all pretty confusion, blushes, and so forth, respecting Langrave, for the unhappy wight has confessed to me what your prudish delicacy led you to conceal. Nay! you need not look so grave, for I am not going to plead his cause, but simply mean to tell you, that, owing to our long intimacy and friendship with Lord Langrave, we certainly wished him to be present at Emily's nuptials. I therefore gave him a *viva voce* invitation, which, lo! he refused. Surprised to the last degree, I questioned him on the subject, and he then confessed that, apprehensive, lest his presence might by you be deemed intrusive, he judged it proper to decline a favour, it would otherwise have afforded him the greatest pleasure to accept. Tell me then, seriously, Isabel, have you any objection to his Lordship joining our party on Emily's wedding-day?"

"It would be extraordinary presumption in me, did I venture to regulate the guests it may be your pleasure to include on that occasion.—Lord Langrave is a free agent.—With

him it rests to accept or to refuse your Ladyship's invitation," said Isabel coldly.

"Thanks, dearest girl!—Then, poor Langrave shall be present at the marriage ceremony; and, as one of Emily's train, he will, of course, accompany us to Lady Dashton's congratulatory entertainment. Now, then, adieu!—You may conceive how continually favours, bride-cake, and all the various *et cætera* of an Hymeneal expedition, float in my *pericranium*, as my erudite daughter would say.—*Apropos*, Isabel, can you imagine what magnet eternally draws Julia to the Louvre?"

"I have not the slightest idea, beyond that which is self-evident. Surely, you cannot be surprised, that the fine arts should attract one who professes herself their fervent votary?"

"True.—Yet, after all this bustle is over, I must investigate the cause of those long visits which she is for ever making, unattended, except by a domestic.—At present, more important business requires my attention.—Thank Heaven, one daughter is at least dispos-

ed of!" cried Lady Belville, as she significantly shook her head, and, in highest spirits, left Isabel's apartment.

Our heroine regretted extremely that Lord Langrave was included amongst the wedding party; yet she consoled herself on recollecting the perfect decorum which his Lordship had evinced since her rejection of his hand; and when she further reflected on his generosity, in refusing to join the gay nuptial train, from consideration for her feelings, she almost accused herself of selfishness, for the wish she still harboured, that Langrave might persevere in declining Lady Belville's solicitation.

CHAPTER XXI.

WE shall now return to Tyrconnell, who, fatigued in mind and body, had retired to rest shortly after his conversation with the Father Eugenio. He deeply felt all his debt of gratitude to that excellent man, and was fully determined, that if ever master of Fortune's gifts, he would testify, by whatever means might then appear most eligible to adopt, the sense he entertained of the unwearied and indefatigable exertions of the monk's friendship. Overcome by previous exhaustion, Albert (after having more than once mentally reverted to her, who was

“The ocean to the river of his thoughts”)

fell into that sort of deep profound slumber,

which extreme fatigue often procures ; but Tyrconnell was not long permitted to enjoy undisturbed repose ; for, a few hours after his senses had been steeped in the forgetfulness of sleep, he was awoke by an unusual degree of noise and bustle, which seemed to denote extraordinary confusion. Springing from his couch, Albert hastily wrapped himself in his dressing-gown, and rushed from his chamber, to inquire the cause of such unwonted disorder. As he swiftly flew down the staircase, he perceived lights flashing in different directions across the corridor, which led to his grandfather's apartment. The idea of Don Diego ill, perhaps dying ! instantly shot athwart Albert's mind, and, not waiting to ask a question of the numerous attendants who quickly surrounded him, and whose looks betrayed the utmost consternation, Tyrconnell seized a taper from one of the stupified domestics, and, with the speed of lightning, darted to the chamber of the invalid. There a scene awaited him, which too fully confirmed previous apprehension. Don Diego ap-

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peared to be in the last mortal agonies! Supported by Eugenio, the dying man yet retained his fleeting faculties, while making a convulsive effort, he extended his palsied hands towards Tyrconnell as he entered. Strongly affected, Albert sunk on his knees beside his grandfather, who attempted to speak; but utterance was impossible. A smile of resignation played across the Don's features, as he piously raised his eyes to heaven, and placed his hand on Tyrconnell's head, as if imparting a final benediction. Then, suddenly turning his glassy gaze on a full-length portrait of his daughter, which hung at the foot of his bed, he extended his other hand towards Elvira's image. That one fond look and action seemed to have expended the last spark of earthly feeling; for, suddenly withdrawing his earnest gaze, Don Diego devoutly pressed to his heart the crucifix, presented to his view by Eugenio, fervently breathed a mental prayer, and without a groan expired! After a few moments passed in solemn awful silence, the monk motioned Tyrconnell to retire. Al-

bert instantly comprehended, that Eugenio wished to administer the last rites his church enjoined, unwitnessed by a member of a different persuasion, and, therefore, without demur, he acceded to the implied request. As he mournfully retraced his steps to his own apartment, he perceived a group of domestics assembled at the end of the corridor. Tyrconnell would willingly have avoided them, but that he found impossible; for no sooner did he appear, than a phalanx was formed by the liveried menials, who seemed to imagine, that the spirit of Don Diego had merely transmigrated from its former corporeal tenement to the body of him whom they conceived his heir; so profound was their obeisance, so obsequious their homage, as Tyrconnell passed. Disgusted by such servility, Albert, with a quickened pace, proceeded to his chamber, where he had full leisure to reflect on the abject meanness which characterizes the actions of so large a portion of mankind;—on the selfish sordidness by which human nature is degraded; and on the instability attendant

on that elevation, and those mundane honours, which, like the devotees of the golden calf, so many grovelling beings are ready to fall down and worship !

CHAPTER XXII.

THE interval between Lady Belville's announcement of the intended nuptials of her daughter, and the day appointed for their solemnization, had now elapsed. The important morning dawned which was to light Sir Felix Pettito and his gay dashing bride to Hymen's altar; and Lord Belville's household was in that agreeable flutter and bustle, which is generally attendant on the delightful catastrophe of marriage! The usual *quantum* of white satin, and undefiled gloves, and favours, and the ordinary portion of smiles, tears, and congratulations which custom enjoins, and etiquette sanctions, were duly displayed. The bride sported a magnificent Brussels veil,

to hide a cheek unstained by a blush, and the dandy bridegroom, “ finished and corrected to a hair,” stood forth the Prince of Fops, the Emperor of “ imitated imitators ;”

“ Sweeter than Sharon in immac’late trim,
Neatness itself impertinent in him.”

Yet, to say the truth, Sir Felix supported with wonderful philosophy the approach of that alarming ceremony, which has blanched many a brave hero’s life, and deterred many a more courageous spirit from entering that well fenced pale, from whose “ durance vile” extrication is almost impossible ; a fold, from whence there is no replevin, except by an edict from death or Doctors’ Commons !

We must confess, however, that Sir Felix Pettito’s heroism seemed occasionally a little on the wane, as he stammered out, in agitated confusion, his favourite “ Petrify me !” —while his head appeared much inclined to indulge that motion, which is supposed to characterize the upper story of a mandarin, were it not for the powerfully stubborn support of his un-

relaxed cravat, which faithfully propped that part of the human frame with which dandyism has in general so very little association, yet which, in Sir Felix's case, seemed threatened with an alarming trepidation, certainly inimical to the dignity of the craniological system.

Lady Julia was more than usually unintelligible, as she descanted with profound erudition on the classic construction of the Greek Epithalamium, and learnedly discussed hexameters, iambics, dithyrambics, and Alexandrines! Lady Belville, all graciousness and condescension, freely bestowed her sweetest smiles on every individual,—listened with exemplary patience to her daughter's scientific disquisitions,—told the bride she had never looked half so lovely,—commended the appearance of her charming bride-maids,—applauded the cut of Sir Felix's coat, which she pronounced to be in Stultz's best style,—enlivened her lord by a thousand little playful sallies,—and occasionally conversed in a lively strain with her son and Lord Langrave. In short, her fascinating Ladyship was the brilliant fo-

cus, where all the rays of wit and polish united, illuminating her admiring circle with some portion of their own dazzling and piquant lustre. Even Allanby seemed less stupid than usual, as a constant unmeaning distention of the lips evinced his anxiety to be agreeable, *malgré* nature's intentions.

Lord Belville accompanied the bridal party to the altar, but after the sacred ceremony had been performed, he retired, pleading indisposition as an excuse for not proceeding with the wedding train to Versailles. Sir Felix at the same moment handed his *cara sposa* into a splendid new chariot, drawn by four prancing bays, and Lady Emily Pettito, after having paid her parting adieus, gaily stepped into the carriage, followed by her lord and master, and rapidly drove off, to enjoy as much happiness, as wealth, folly, and matrimony, could unitedly procure, while the remainder of the group, displaying all the paraphernalia of bridal pomp, pursued the road to Lady Dashton's *maison de campagne*.

The country, which is particularly beautiful

between Paris and Versailles, afforded many topics for conversation. Its picturesque views, and cultivated scenery, yielded various subjects for animated discourse, and prevented insipidity or dulness from infecting the spirits of Lady Belville's party. On their arrival at the place of destination, the wedding retinue were cordially welcomed by their fashionable hostess, and received congratulations, and good wishes, quite as sincere as those which are generally offered, and accepted, in the world of *ton*.

After partaking of a sumptuous *dejeune à la fourchette*, a visit to the magnificent palace, or, as it is now called, the Chateau of Versailles, was proposed by Lady Dashton, a scheme which was instantly acceded to by her guests, to whom the project of passing a few hours in investigating a spot which recalls so many interesting recollections to the mind afforded infinite pleasure. Isabel experienced unusual enjoyment in traversing the splendid apartments of the chateau, and in contemplating the allegorical paintings, which commemorate the most remarkable epochs in the reign of Louis XIV.,

met thought," with all the reciprocation of congenial minds, analogous in taste, feeling, and sentiment.

After having visited the extensive apartments of Louis XIV., the Boudoir of the beautiful and unfortunate Marie Antoinette, the exquisitely chaste and splendid Chapel, the Banqueting Room, Opera House, &c., Lady Dashton and her delighted guests proceeded to ramble through the innumerable bosquets, orangeries, parterres, pavilions, and temples, which so profusely adorn the gardens of a palace they almost surpass in magnificence.

The superb *jet d'eau* and cascades, the admirable statues and groups in sculptured marble, together with the pyramids and sheets of water, which continually charm the eye and diversify the scene, unite in rendering Versailles one of the most charming *séjours* imaginable; and when we add those tasteful and elegant structures the Trianons, (palaces erected at the command of Louis XIV., and where many a festive scene was held, during a reign celebrated in the annals of glory and of gal-

lantry,) to the other numerous attractions which the enchanting scenery of Versailles presents, it would be difficult to discover a spot more calculated to charm the painter's eye or the poet's imagination, than that of which we have just attempted an imperfect sketch.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TIME cautioned the wanderers to return sooner than they could have wished ; but, obeying his imperious mandate, the whole party, at a late hour, adjourned to Lady Dash-ton's. No intruders were admitted to partake of the luxurious banquet, which was served up on the arrival of the wedding group ; but in the evening a magnificent ball was given, in celebration of Lady Emily's union with Sir Felix Pettito. The rooms were crowded to excess, chalked floors, symbolical transparencies, and variegated lamps, decorated the apartments. No expence had been spared, and every pains had been taken to render the nuptial entertainment brilliant and agreeable.

Fatigued from the exertions of the day, Isa-

bel felt inclined to avoid dancing altogether, and perceiving a vacant seat, she quietly took possession of it, not until the next moment having discovered its proximity to a tribe of chattering young ladies, from whom a stand of exotics screened her own figure, but whose unmeaning prattle distinctly assailed her ear, as resolving to atone for want of sense by the overpowering preponderation of sound, the garrulous damsels ably took advantage of the exclusive privilege of insignificance, that of indulging restless loquacity and voluble flippancy.

“ Well ! ” exclaimed one of the fair coterie, “ you may all be as credulous as you please, but I am certain Mr Tyrconnell is not going to be married.”

“ Perhaps you may have private reasons for such an opinion,” returned another of the group, giggling and twitching her neighbour’s sleeve.

“ Me ! not I, indeed ! For my part, I never encouraged his attentions, though, I own, I found it quite impossible to prevent them

altogether. But—poor Tyrconnell!” sentimentally sighed the fair spinster, as she abruptly paused, and left the conclusion of her sentence to the ingenuity of others to complete.

“Is, doubtless, much to be pitied,” exclaimed a gentleman who had just joined the circle; “but, perhaps, Miss Le Clerk, you are not aware that your rejected swain took refuge from your coldness, in laying siege to Miss St Albe’s heart.”

“Who industriously seconded his manœuvres,” squeaked a shrill female voice triumphantly.

“No, no! you are quite misinformed,” said a little lady, cruelly marked with the small-pox. “I assure you it was Sir Felix Pettito whom Miss St Albe was trying to catch. But all her lures proved ineffectual, for the Baronet had too much sense to allow himself to be entrapped by an Irish wood-nymph.”

“But the poor girl, I really pity her!” sympathetically exclaimed a virgin of forty, (en-

deavouring to throw a shade of sentiment into eyes that squinted hideously ;) “for I am told she was so much affected during the marriage ceremony this morning, that she nearly fell into hysterics.”

“And actually did faint when Sir Felix handed his bride into her dashing chariot—at least so I heard from good authority,” added Miss Le Clerk.

“Pretty dear, I dare say she is now playing the disconsolate Ariadne to admiration,” simpered a little pert miss with a saucy *nez retroussé*.

“It is impossible Miss St Albe could ever meet with an ungrateful Theseus,” rejoined the gentleman with peculiar animation; “she is one of the most lovely women I have ever seen.”

“Sir Henry, is it possible you think so? Dear me, I wonder you can admire such an affected looking being; besides, she is by no means critically handsome; her countenance is too strongly marked for feminine beauty.”

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“ Oh yes—and her height is awkwardly tall,” exclaimed one of the damsels.

“ And her eyes are atrociously large,” cried another.

“ And her hair is absolutely red,” screamed a third.

“ And her nose is frightfully straight,” said a fourth.

“ A fault that cannot be found with her figure,” tittered a fifth.

“ She has one capital defect, which even feminine criticism seems not to have discovered,” said Sir Henry thoughtfully.

“ What, what is that?” eagerly inquired a dozen female voices.

“ Miss St Albe is too superlatively beautiful! a fault which women never pardon,” returned the Baronet ironically.

“ *Voilà un insolent,*” cried the little cocked-nosed virgin, “ the fulcrum of her brain” tinged with a portion of the hue with which indignant envy flushed her cheek. “ But, Sir Henry, I did not know you were so particularly partial to a blue-belle, and I under-

stand Miss St Albe lays claim to a shade of the celestial colour, quite as deep as indigo.”

“ Yes—I am told she speaks nothing but Greek and Latin,” contemptuously sneered Miss Le Clerk.

“ What ! does she not condescend to use the living language of the visual organs, in which you ladies are so much *au fait* ?” demanded the Baronet, turning to the squint-eyed vestal.

“ I neither know nor care,” she replied. “ All I can tell you is, that, to my certain knowledge, she reads Locke and writes poetry—only think how shocking—I am sure, some day or other, she will turn author.”

“ Author !” reiterated a terrified damsel, her every feature portraying apprehension. “ Bless me ! I’ll not go near her then, for fear she’d put me in her book.”

“ Therefore, I presume, you do not wish to be immortalized in print,” said Sir Henry sarcastically.

“ Oh ! dear no, the very idea frightens me to death. Indeed, there is nothing upon earth

heroine to the protection of another. Though excessively annoyed, Isabel felt more than ever anxious to reach her chaperon ; merely, therefore, curtesying to Lady Dashton, with a rapid step she crossed the hall, and sprung into her uncle's barouche, which she perceived in attendance.

“ We must atone for delay, Lady Belville, by future speed. Shall I desire the coachman to drive swiftly ? ” said Langrave as he leaped in after our heroine, fastened the door, and without waiting for an answer, vociferated, “ On quickly, ”—drew up the glass, and, seating himself opposite the ladies, leaned his head against the carriage, and sunk into a profound reverie.

A silence of many minutes ensued, which Isabel at length interrupted as she turned to address her aunt, who, wrapped in her large Indian shawl, had hitherto lolled in a corner, seemingly fatigued and disinclined to conversation.

“ The night is very dark, yet we are driv-
1

ing with impetuous speed,—do you not fear so much velocity?” said Isabel anxiously.

“ There is not the slightest danger,” replied Langrave. “ The horses are extremely well trained, and Lord Belville’s coachman is a most experienced whip.”

Silence again reigned, which Isabel observed her companions did not seem disposed to interrupt, while the carriage continued to proceed with the rapidity of lightning. She endeavoured to conquer her timidity, but after many ineffectual attempts, she exclaimed,—

“ Indeed, I cannot help being alarmed! Lady Belville, shall I pull the string?” she cried, extending her hand in agitated haste, which was seized by Langrave, who, retaining it in his ardent grasp, vehemently ejaculated, “ Fear not, my angel, for I am with you !”

Extricating her hand with the indignation of offended delicacy, Isabel again turned to address her aunt, when a sudden beam of light from a house they were passing strongly flashed on the female who sat beside her, and revealed, not the countenance of Lady

Belville, but the diabolical physiognomy of a total stranger! At once all the horrors of her situation broke on Isabel's mind.

“Gracious Heaven! for what am I reserved?” in tortured accents burst from her quivering lips, as, seized with convulsive trepidation, she vainly attempted to let down the glass. Langrave snatched the string from her trembling fingers, while his coadjutor guarded the other window, as he impatiently exclaimed, “Reserved to bless him who adores thee beyond all thy sex! Dearest, most beloved of women, calm those terrors!”

“I fear not,” replied Isabel in a tone of dignity which awed even Lord Langrave, “for my trust is in a power who can ever counteract the designs of the wicked,—a power before whom vice and treachery shrink abashed!”

A transient ray of light at that moment shone on Isabel, and as it passed, displayed the marble paleness of her features—the heaving of her palpitating bosom—the agonized apprehension which shook her frame almost to dissolution; yet it also revealed the more than

mortal brilliancy of her kindling eye, which spoke the confidence, the triumph of religious hope, as raised one instant in mental supplication, it the next moment flashed an expression of contempt on Langrave, so disdainful, yet so elevated, so scornful, yet so dignified, that he felt as if his soul withered beneath that glance.

Never had he so completely acknowledged the meanness, the debasement of guilt, the pitiful lowliness of spirit which characterizes the actions of the libertine, than as internally he adored the superiority he could not imitate, and involuntarily confessed that such saintly purity was its own safeguard; that one so chaste, so noble as Isabel St Albe, the most depraved of his sex should regard as sacred; that even the most licentious of mankind must feel and own the awful majesty of offended virtue! With passionate earnestness Langrave attempted to sooth Isabel, and deprecate her indignation, as he threw himself on his knees before her, and in suffocated accents, cried,—

“Forgive! Oh, forgive an act which the

desperation of wounded affection alone induced me to commit. Isabel, pardon a wretch who is no longer master of himself; who feels but thy power, and who, to gain thy love, would barter every hope here and hereafter!"

"Rise, my Lord, and profane not my ear by such declarations," indignantly interrupted Isabel; "and you," she continued, turning to the female who sat beside her, "Oh! if a spark of woman's feeling animates your heart, will you not assist to deliver me from the snare into which I have been entrapped? Are you a daughter? think on a parent's anguish, when——Oh, my father!" she sobbed convulsively, as, fortitude yielding to the suggestions of filial tenderness, she sunk back in the carriage, and covering her face with her handkerchief, burst into an agony of tears, while the wretch to whom she had appealed as a last resource answered her affecting apostrophe by a demoniac laugh!

"Peace, insulting minion!" vehemently cried Langrave as he rose from his knees. "Pollute not the sacred presence of my be-

loved, by a word or a tone from your accursed lips!" For, softened by the touching anguish of Isabel, Langrave, for the moment, felt elevated beyond himself, and he almost cursed his own villany as he imploringly added,—

“ Do you wish for silence? I will restrain every avowal which my heart dictates. Say but your pleasure, idol of my soul !”

An hysterical sob was Isabel's reply, which Langrave interpreting into an implied desire to desist from expostulation, he immediately forbore any further declaration of his feelings, and the profoundest taciturnity was subsequently observed, while the carriage continued to roll on with unabated velocity.

Morning had dawned, and objects were becoming distinguishable through the grey misty light of early day, when the barouche stopped at the door of a lone farm-house, which stood in the centre of a desolate uncultivated track of country. Isabel's heart throbbed quickly, as she indulged the forlorn hope that some being would yet appear, whom it might be

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possible to interest in her behalf ; but no creature was visible !—Lord Langrave did not alight ; and fresh horses were speedily harnessed, that immediately proceeded at as rapid a pace as that of the former quadrupeds. Not a murmur escaped Isabel's lips. Mentally she endeavoured to attain all possible fortitude, and fervently she invoked the aid of Heaven ; but being aware that recrimination or appeal would be equally useless, she determined to preserve an unbroken silence, until either could be urged with some prospect of success.

The horses were galloping at the same furious rate, and the individuals of the party were absorbed in their distinct and opposite feelings, when suddenly the carriage stopped with a violent shock, which nearly threatened annihilation to its inmates ; while a voice of thunder cried,—“ Stand at your peril !”

“ Proceed for your life !” vociferated Langrave, letting fall the glass, and turning ghastly pale. The coachman attempted to

obey his orders, and violently lashed his terrified steeds ; but instantly the report of a pistol was heard, and the unfortunate man dropped dead from the box !

The plunging horses were restrained by armed men, who quickly surrounded the carriage. Langrave, in a paroxysm of fury, leaped out of one door, while simultaneously the other flew open !—With a sort of supernatural force, Isabel instinctively sprang out, was received, and the next moment fainted in the arms of Lord Belville !

Foaming with rage, inarticulate from passion, Langrave in vain attempted resistance. Overpowered by numbers, he was soon totally vanquished ; while, distracted almost to insanity, he beheld the insensible form of Isabel recline on the shoulder of her uncle, who, not deigning a word of expostulation, cast one look of ineffable contempt and indignation on the conquered Langrave,—hastily lifted the fainting Isabel into his own carriage—was instantly at her side, and, with his recovered

prize, rapidly pursued the road to Paris, with a speed which seemed alike to defy impediment or danger.

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

ERRATA.

VOL. 2.

Page 110, line 6—For ‘deceit would be useless in our present circumstances’—read ‘deceit would now be useless, we know too well each the other’

111, do. 2—For ‘commands’—read ‘needs’

115, do. 15—For ‘will Lord Belville, act’—read ‘will act Lord Belville’

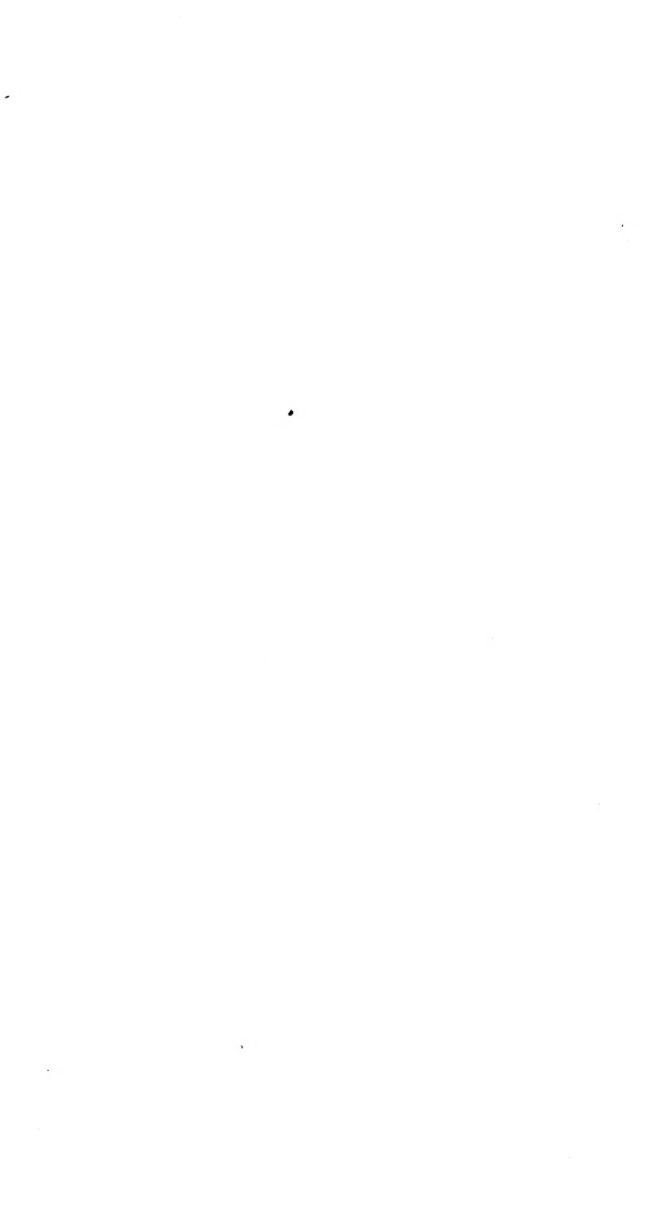
Do. do. 17—For ‘to this world nor to the next’—read ‘to Heaven nor to Hell?’

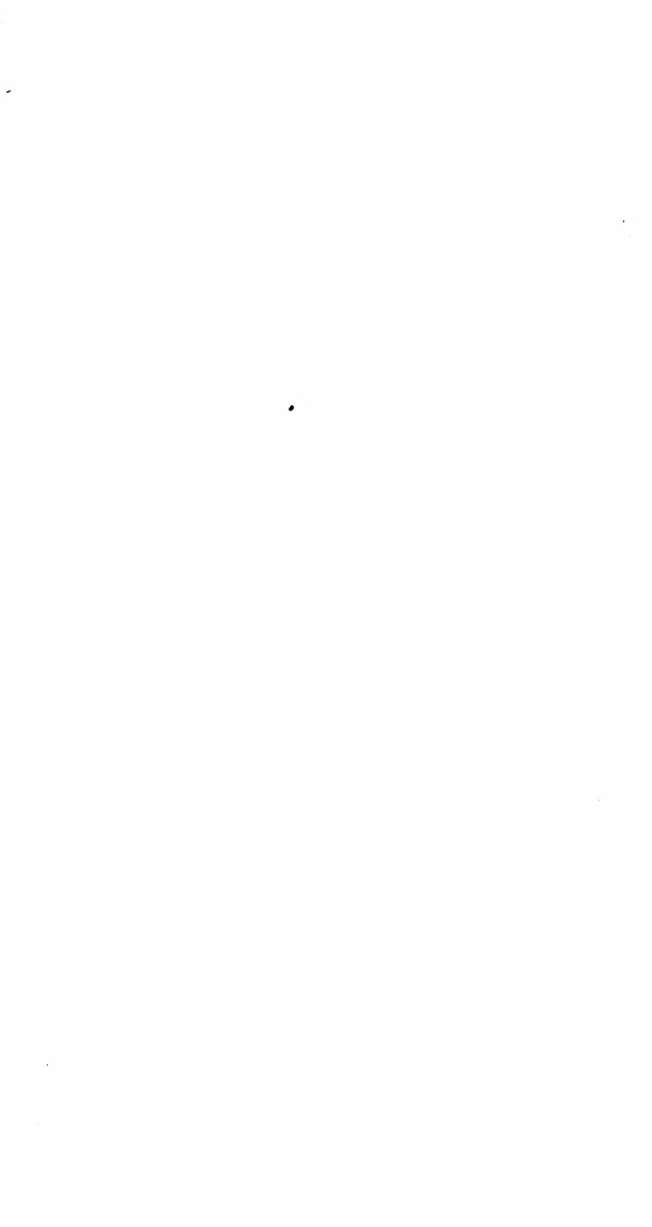
149, do. 7—For ‘life’—read ‘lip’

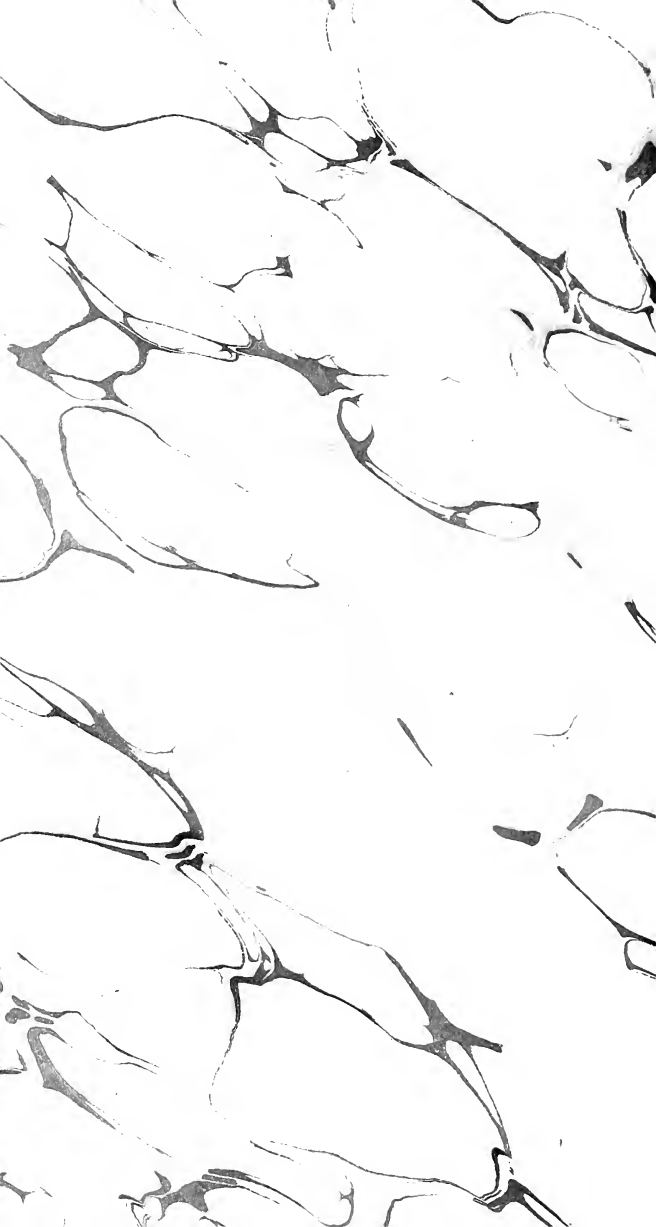
189, do. 6—For ‘sudden’—read ‘saddened’

220, do. 13—For ‘ciasam’—read ‘ciascun’

253, do. 18—For ‘for’—read ‘while’









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