

The Mother's Recompense, Volume 1 eBook

The Mother's Recompense, Volume 1 by Grace Aguilar

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PREFACE.

The domestic story of “Home Influence,” and its Sequel, the present volume, were written in the early part of the year 1836, and the entire work was completed when its author was little above the age of nineteen; and, although no portion of it was published till some years after its composition, but little alteration was made in the original plan.

The labours of my dear child were unceasing, and from the hour when she could read, it may truly be stated that she learned to write; her contributions to the current literature of the day, her valuable works upon religious subjects, and others of a lighter character, most of which have been reprinted in other lands, all testify to a mind of no common stamp; and here, in reply to numerous questions relative to her literary remains, I may state that Grace Aguilar has left many excellent works in manuscript, both in prose and verse; some of which may, at a future day, be presented to the public.

I have been induced to publish “The Mother’s Recompense,” in compliance with the repeated solicitations of many friends, but in doing so I feel it incumbent on me to state that, unlike its predecessor, it has not received the advantage of that correction, which later years and ripened judgment would doubtless have cast around it. A long and fatal illness prevented its revision for the press; the circumstances of which will be found detailed in a short memoir, accompanying the last edition of “Home Influence.” The universal voice of praise, which attended the publication of that work, it was not permitted her to enjoy,—an all-wise Creator called her to himself.

It was ever my dear child’s wish to aid, by the example of her pen, the education of the Heart. It was her desire, in the truthful exemplification of character, to point out to the youthful of her own sex the paths of rectitude and virtue. The same kindly love—the same heartfelt charity—the same spirit of devotion, which breathes through every line in “Home Influence,” will be found pervading the pages of the present work.

If, then, the Home Education of the Hamilton Family be well traced and faithfully delineated in “Home Influence, a Tale for Mothers and Daughters,” its *effect* will be found illustrated in the “Mother’s Recompense;” there, as its dear author writes, will still further be portrayed the cares, anxieties, and ultimate reward of maternal love.

Sarah Aguilar.

December, 1850.

THE MOTHER’S RECOMPENSE

VOL. I.

CHAPTER I.

From Emmeline Hamilton to Mary Greville.

London, January, 18—

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At length, dearest Mary, I may write to you; at length indulge my long-controlled wishes. My conscience has given me permission now, though I once thought I never could again. We parted in August, and it is now January; and except during our little tour, you have not had one line from me, but very many more than one from Caroline and Ellen. I used to wrong them, but I am glad I adhered to mamma's advice and my resolution, painful as it has been; for it did seem hard that I, who consider myself even more my dear Mary's own friend, should not address you when my sister and cousin did. And now to explain this riddle, for though mamma has excused my silence to you, I am quite sure she has not told you the real truth. She would not expose my silly weakness, and therefore prepare yourself for a most humiliating confession, which will, in all probability, lower me ten degrees in your estimation. However, truth must be told, and so it shall be with all the necessary regularity and precision. *You* know, almost better than any one else, how very much I disliked the thought of leaving dear happy Oakwood, and residing any part of the year in London. You often used to warn me, when I have thus spoken, against permitting such fancies to obtain too much dominion; but I did not follow your advice, dear Mary, but indulged them till, of course, they became so heightened that the last month of our sojourn at Oakwood was embittered by the anticipation. I saw you thought me foolish, and I knew that mamma and papa's plans could not be altered to please my fancy, and that my confessed distaste to them would give pain to both: therefore, I concealed my dislike, but instead of doing all I could to conquer it, encouraged every gloomy anticipation to the very utmost. I found, during our delightful tour through the south of England, I could enjoy myself, but still the thoughts of London, and masters, and strangers, and the fancy our style of living would be so different in the metropolis to what it was in Oakwood, and that I should not see nearly as much of mamma, all chose to come, like terrifying spectres, to scare away the present pleasure.

We visited Oxford, although completely out of our way, in order that we might see the residence of my brothers. There Percy's wild mirth and eloquent descriptions partly banished my ill-humour, but as I neared London all my fancied evils returned to me again. When we first arrived, which was in September, this huge city was, comparatively speaking, a desert; for all the fashionables were out ruralizing. Mamma was not, I believe, sorry for this, for she wished us to have full six or seven months' hard study before she entered at all into society. Ellen and I, of course, will have more, but Caroline is to make her regular *entree* in March or April, and therefore must be drilled accordingly. First-rate masters were instantly engaged; indeed, papa had written to many before we arrived, that no time should be

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lost, and as almost all their pupils were from London, we had the choice of hours, which was very agreeable, although at that time I did not feel inclined to think anything agreeable, being accustomed to no instruction save that bestowed by Miss Harcourt and mamma; professors of music, drawing, French, Italian, German (which Caroline is seized with a violent fancy to acquire, and which I deign to learn, because I should like to read Klopstock in the original), and even what I term a lady professor of embroidery, which Caroline has succeeded in tormenting mamma to let her have—*entre nous*, it is only because she has taught Annie Grahame; all these, my dear Mary, presented a most formidable array, and for the first month I did not choose to profit by their instructions in the least. I gave full vent to all the dislike I felt to them. I encouraged indolence to a degree that frequently occasioned a reproof from Miss Harcourt. I could not bear their mode of teaching; the attention so many things required was in my present state a most painful exertion, and I almost made an inward determination to show mamma that all her endeavours were lost on me. I would not learn when everything was so changed. Do not throw away my letter in despair of your friend, dearest Mary; only read to the end, and perhaps my character may be in some measure redeemed. There was a weight on my spirits I could not, because I would not, remove. I became ill-tempered and petulant without cause; before papa and mamma I tried to restrain it, but did not always succeed. Percy and Herbert both spoke to me on this unwarrantable change; and I think almost for the first time in my life I saw Percy seriously angry with me, for I had even shown my irritation at his interference. I told him I had a right to act and feel as I pleased. Herbert looked sorry, and desisted in his reasonings when he found I would not listen. Percy's evident irritation and the reproaches of my own conscience added not a little to my uncomfortable feelings, as you may suppose. I looked back to what I had been at Oakwood, and the contrast of my past and present self really gave me much cause for misery. It was just before my brothers returned to college I wrote to you a long, very long letter, in which I gave more than enough vent to my silly, I should say sinful feelings. Several hours I had employed in its composition, and to obtain these, neglected my exercises, etc, for my masters, and caused more than one for several days to make a formal complaint of my indolence and carelessness to Miss Harcourt. Her remonstrances, I am ashamed to confess, only had the effect of increasing my ill-temper. Well; I concluded at length my epistle to you, which, had you received it, would have been a trial of patience indeed; for it consisted of ten or twelve closely-written pages, in which I had so magnified my feelings of discontent and unhappiness, that any one must have fancied I had not one single blessing left. I was folding and preparing to

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seal it, when mamma entered my room. I must tell you that as yet I had not had one reproof from her lips, though I am quite sure I deserved it long before; I used to see her look very grieved at any burst of petulance from me, but she had never spoken on the subject. I almost trembled when she appeared, for I knew that morning Miss Harcourt had said she must inform her of *Mons. Deville* and Signor Rozzi's continued complaints. Without entering on that subject, however, she sat down by me, and with one of her own sweet smiles, which reproached me a great deal more than words, she asked me if I really were going to seal and send that long letter of confidence to you without having shown or told any part of it to her. She might well ask, dear Mary, for I had never written a line before which I had kept from her; but my conscience told me she would not, could not approve of this, and therefore I certainly did wish I could have sent it without telling her anything about it. What deceit, too! I hear you exclaim. Yes, dear Mary; and before this tale of shame is over, you will see still more clearly how one fault makes many. I did not answer her question, but remained sulkily silent.

"Will my Emmeline think me a harsh intruder on her private thoughts, if I say I cannot let this letter go till I have seen at least some parts of its contents?" she said very mildly, but so firmly I had no power to resist her; and when she asked if I would not, as I always did, read her some portions, I answered, pettishly, if she read any she might as well read all. She looked deeply grieved, and my heart painfully smote me the moment the words were said; but I was too proud at that moment to show any marks of contrition, and all the time she was reading I continued working myself up to increased ill-humour.

"Are you indeed so very unhappy, my dear Emmeline?" were the only words mamma said, as she laid down, the last sheet and looked in my face, with a tear trembling in her eye. I turned away, for I felt too irritated and cross to give way to the emotion I always feel when I see her grieved, and I was determined not to answer. "And do you prefer," she continued, "seeking the sympathy of a young girl like yourself to that of a mother, who has always endeavoured not only to sympathise with, but to soothe the sorrows of her children?" Still I would not answer, and she added, mildly, "Do you not think, Emmeline, Mary would have been better pleased if you had written to her rather in a lighter strain? do you not think, if you were to try and shake off these painful fancies, you could write another and less desponding letter—one that I might give you my full and free permission to send, which, sorry as I am to say it, I cannot with this?"

Mild as were her words and manner, the import of what she said put the finishing stroke to my ill-temper. "If I may not write as I like, I will not write at all," I passionately exclaimed, and seizing the sheet nearest to me tore it asunder, and would have done the same with the rest, had not mamma gently laid her hand on my arm, uttering my name in an accent of surprise and sorrow; my irritable and sinful feelings found vent in a most violent flood of tears.

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Will you not think, dearest Mary, I am writing of Caroline, and not of myself; does it not resemble the scenes of my sister's childhood? Can you believe that this is an account of your Emmeline, whose sweetness of temper and gentleness of disposition you have so often extolled? But it was I who thus forgot myself—I, who once believed nothing ever could make me passionate or angry, and in one minute I was both—had excited myself till I became so even against my nature, and with whom?—even my mother, my kind, devoted mother, who has ever done so much for me, whom in my childhood, when I knew her worth much less than I do now, I had never caused to shed a tear. Oh, Mary, I cannot tell you what I felt the moment those passionate words escaped me. I may truly say I did not cry from anger, but from the most bitter, the most painful self-reproach. I think her usual penetration must have discovered this, for if she had thought my tears were really those of passion, she would not, could not have acted as she did.

She drew me gently to her, and kissed me without speaking. I threw my arms round her neck, and in a voice almost choked by sobs, implored her again and again to forgive me; that I did not mean to answer her so disrespectfully—that I knew I had become a very wicked girl, but that I really did feel very unhappy. For a few minutes she was silent, and I could see was struggling to suppress the tears my unusual conduct had occasioned. I will make no apology, dearest Mary, for entering on such minute details; for I know how you love my mother, and that every word she says is *almost* as precious to you as to her own children—*quite* it cannot be; and I give you this account also, that you may know me as I am, and not imagine I am so free from faults as I know you once believed me. Oh, when I have looked back on that day, I have felt so painfully humiliated, I would gladly banish the recollection; but it is better for me to remember it, lest I should fancy myself better than I am. Every word she said in that gentle and persuasive tone was engraved upon my heart, even as she spoke. She easily and fully convinced me of my sinfulness in thus permitting imaginary evils to make me so miserable: for that they were but imaginary it was easy to discover. Not a single blessing could I say I had lost. All I loved were around me, in health and happiness—every comfort of life was the same; and could it be possible, mamma said, that the mere departure from a favourite residence, and only for a few months, could render me so completely blind to the many blessings my Heavenly Father had scattered around me. As she spoke, a film appeared removed from my eyes, and the enormity of my conduct stood for the first time in its true colours before me. I saw—I knew how sinful I had been; and bitterly I regretted that I had not confessed every feeling to mamma, instead of hiding them, as I had done, in my own heart, and brooding on them till it became a kind of pleasure

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to do so, and till fancied evils produced real ones. I wept bitterly while she spoke, for to find how completely I had created misery for myself was no agreeable matter of reflection, and my remorse was heightened when mamma said, "You have disappointed us not a little, my dear Emmeline; for I will no longer conceal from you that the little tour we took on our way to London was originally planned by your father and myself, to reconcile you to a change of residence. We saw how much you regretted leaving Oakwood; nor did we wonder at it, for such feelings were most natural to one of your disposition; and therefore, instead of travelling direct, and suddenly changing the scenes of our beautiful Devonshire for the confinement of this huge city, we hoped by visiting various places, and giving you new objects of reflection, to lessen your regret, and make the change of residence less painfully abrupt." As well as I could, I expressed my sorrow and repentance, and promised to use every endeavour to atone for the past, and become all that she and papa wished me.

"I believe you, my own Emmeline," my kind mother said, as she again kissed me, and her voice was no longer so sorrowfully grave as it had been at first. "I am sure, now you know all the pain you were inflicting on both your parents, every effort will be put in force to remove it." Did I deserve this speech, dear Mary? I do not think I did; for I often saw by mamma's countenance I had grieved her, and yet made no effort to control myself, and so I told her. She smiled her own sweet, dear smile of approbation, and thanking me for my candour, said—

"If I say that by indulging in these gloomy fancies and appearing discontented, and repining when so many blessings are around you, my Emmeline will be doing her mother a real injury, by rendering my character questionable, not only in the eyes of the world, but of my most valued friends, will she not do all in her power to become her own light-hearted self again?"

"Injuring your character, dearest mother!" I exclaimed, with much surprise; "in what manner?"

"I will tell you, my love," she replied; "there are many, not only of my acquaintances, but my friends, those whose opinions I really value, who believe I have been acting very wrongly all these years, in never having permitted you and Caroline to visit London. They think by this strict retirement I have quite unfitted you both for the station your rank demands you should fill. That by constantly living alone with us, and never mingling in society, you have imbibed notions that, to say the least, may be old-fashioned and romantic, and which will make you both feel uncomfortable when you are introduced in London. These fears never entered my mind; I wished you to receive ideas that were somewhat different to the generality of Fashion's dictates, and I did not doubt but that the uncomfortable feeling, against which the letters of my friends often warned

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me, would very quickly be removed. But since we have been here—I do not wish to grieve you more, my dear Emmeline—I must confess your conduct has been productive to me of the most painful self-reproach. I thought, indeed, my friends were right, and that for years I had been acting on an injudicious plan, and that instead of my measures tending to future happiness, they were only productive of pain and misery, which, had I done as other mothers of my station, might have been avoided.”

“Oh! do not, pray do not think so,” I exclaimed, for she had spoken so sorrowfully, I could not bear it. “I formed my own misery, dearest mother; you had nothing to do with it.”

“You think so now, my love,” she answered, with her usual fondness; “but if my friends see you gloomy and sad, and evidently discontented, longing for pleasures which are not offered to you in London, only dwelling on visions of the past, and notions tending to the indulgence of romance, what will they think? will not my judgment be called in question? and more, they know how very much I prefer a country to a London life, domestic pleasures, to those of society, and they may imagine, and with some probability, that to indulge my selfish wishes, I have disregarded the real interests of my children.”

“They cannot, they will not think so,” I passionately said. “They can never have known you who form such conclusions.” Would you not have agreed with me, dear Mary, and can you not fancy the wretchedness mamma’s words inflicted?

“My love,” she replied, with a smile, “they will not fancy they do not know me; they will rather imagine they must have been deceived in their opinion; that I am not what I may have appeared to them some few years ago. The character of a mother, my Emmeline, is frequently judged of by the conduct of her children; and such conclusions are generally correct, though, of course, as there are exceptions to every rule, there are to this, and many a mother may have been unjustly injured in the estimation of the world, by the thoughtless or criminal conduct of a wilful and disobedient child. I have been so completely a stranger to London society the last sixteen years, that my character and conduct depend more upon you and Caroline to be raised or lowered in the estimation of my friends and also of the world, than on any of the young people with whom you may mingle. On which, then, will my Emmeline decide,—to indulge in these gloomy fancies, and render herself ill both in health and temper, as well as exposing her mother to censure and suspicion; or will she, spite of the exertion and pain it may occasion, shake off this lethargy, recall all her natural animation and cheerfulness, and with her own bright smile restore gladness to the hearts of her parents?”

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I could not speak in answer to this appeal, dear Mary, but I clung weeping to mamma's neck. I never till that moment knew all my responsibility, how much depended on my conduct; but at that moment I inwardly vowed that never, never should my conduct injure that dear devoted mother, who endeavoured so fondly to soothe my grief, and check my bitter tears; who had done so much for me, who had devoted herself so completely to her children. Mentally I resolved that nothing should be wanting on my part to render her character as exalted in the eyes of the world as it was in mine. I could not bear to think how ungratefully I had acted, and I cried till I made my head and mamma's heart ache; but I could not long resist her fond caresses, her encouraging words, and before she left me I could even smile.

"And what am I to say," she said, with her usual playfulness, "of the sad complaints that I have received the last few days from Miss Harcourt, that she does not know what has come to you, from *Mons. Deville* and *Signer Rozzi*? Now what am I to say or do to prove that this *Mademoiselle Emmeline* does like Italian, and is not ill, as our polite professors fancy? must I lecture as I did when she was an idle little girl, and liked her play better than her studies? Suppose these gentlemen are asked, which in all probability they certainly are, what sort of pupils *Mrs. Hamilton's* daughters are; they ought to be something out of the way, for we hear she has instructed them principally herself. What answer will be given, what conclusions drawn, if you do not exert yourself and prove that you can learn as well, when you like, as your sister, and even quicker than your cousin?"

I felt so ashamed, dearest Mary, that I concealed my face on her shoulder, and would not even look up to promise amendment, for I felt I was not certain of myself; but when mamma spoke of my letter to you, and asked me if I still wished to send it, or if I would not write another, I made a desperate effort, and answered as well as I could—

"I will not write again to Mary, dear mamma, till I have conquered all these silly and sinful feelings, and can write as usual; and to be quite sure of myself, that I may not break my resolution, I promise you that for six months I will not give myself the pleasure of addressing her, and if even at the end of that time you do not think I have sufficiently recovered my senses, which certainly appear to have deserted me, you shall increase at your will my time of probation; I deserve some privation for my ungrateful conduct, and the not writing to Mary now is the greatest I can think of." I tried to appear very heroic as I made this speech, but with all my efforts I completely failed. Mamma looked at me a moment in surprise, but then, with more than usual fondness, she strained me to her heart, and I felt a tear fall on my cheek.

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“My own sweet child, my darling Emmeline!” she exclaimed, “I did not expect this offered sacrifice, but I will accept it, my own love, and let its pain be soothed to your affectionate heart by the knowledge that in making it, you have given me the purest, most delicious sense of pleasure you could bestow. We will not say six months,” she added, more playfully, “we will see what the middle or end of January brings. You will then still have nearly four months to redeem your character. I have not the slightest doubt that even before that period my Emmeline will be herself.” Oh, Mary, I felt so very happy as she thus spoke, that I thought I must find it very easy to conquer myself, but I was mistaken, painfully mistaken; I had encouraged despondency and gloom for so long a period, that it required every exertion, in the very least, to subdue it. I had chosen to waste my time, and be inattentive to all the means of improvement which were offered me, and to command my attention sufficiently to regain the good opinion of our sage professors was most disagreeably difficult; but I was no longer afraid, to encounter mamma’s sorrowful or reproving glance, as I had been before, and her fond encouragement and the marks of approval which both she and papa bestowed, when I could not but feel I had done little to deserve them, lightened the labour of my task, and by causing me to wish earnestly to deserve their kindness, increased my efforts; and at length, dearest Mary, these miserable feelings so completely departed from me, that I was surprised to perceive how very nearly I could be as happy in London as at dear Oakwood; quite as happy is impossible, because I feel more and more how very much I prefer a quiet domestic life in the country to London and society. You will perhaps smile as mamma does, and say I am not introduced yet, and then I may change my mind; but I do not think I shall. She prefers the country, so it will not be very strange if I should; but when I see how completely, and yet how cheerfully, she has given up her favourite residence and employments, for the interests and happiness of her children, I feel ashamed at the egregious selfishness which has been mine. Oh, Mary, when shall I ever be like mamma? when can I ever be worthy of half, nay, one quarter of that respectful admiration which is bestowed upon her, even by those whose principles and conduct are directly opposite?

In her conversations with me she had spoken more of the opinion of the world than she ever did at Oakwood, and one day venturing to notice it, as being contrary to that which she so carefully instilled, that to God and our conscience we should alone be answerable for our conduct, she answered, with a smile—

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"I have been long expecting this remark, my dear Emmeline, and I have endeavoured to be prepared with an answer. To our Father in Heaven and to our own conscience we must still look for our guide in life; that not in one thing must we transgress the love and duty we owe our Maker, or disregard the warning or reproaches of our hearts; but still, mingling in the world as it is undoubtedly our duty to do—for as I have often told you, we do not live for ourselves, but for others—we must have due regard in minor things to the opinions of those with whom we associate. When a woman has once set up for an Independent, when, scorning the opinion of the world, she walks forth conscious in her own integrity and virtue, though no stain may have sullied her conduct or name, though she may be innately amiable and good, yet every gentler female will shrink from such a character, and tremble lest they should become like her. Women are dependent beings; in Infinite Wisdom it was thus ordained, and why should we endeavour to be otherwise? When once we set up a standard for ourselves, we have thrown aside our surest safeguard, and exposed ourselves to censure and suspicion. When the ordinances of society do not interfere with the higher principle of our lives they should be obeyed, and in doing so we are following up the dictates of true religion, by doing our duty as members of a community, as children of one common father, which, if we stand selfishly apart, we cannot do. I speak more of the opinion of the world," mamma then continued, "to you than either to your sister or your cousin. Caroline I would rather check in her perhaps too great regard for admiration; and Ellen is at present too young, and in much too delicate health, to go out with me as much as you will, even before you are what is termed introduced: besides which, her natural reserve and timidity banish all fears on that account for her. But for you, Emmeline, I do sometimes feel fearful that, in the indulgence of uncontrolled feeling, you will forget you are not quite such an independent being as you were at Oakwood. Many of your ideas are quite contrary to those generally entertained by several with whom you may associate; and I sometimes dread that by their unchecked expression, or the avowed determination never to think as your companions do—that you hate such confined ideas, or some such thing, which," and she smiled, "if I know my Emmeline rightly, is not at all unlikely—you may be exposing yourself to suspicion and dislike. I feel quite sure you never will wilfully offend, or that you will really deserve such censure; all I wish is that you will be a little more guarded and controlled in your intercourse with strangers here, than you ever were in the happy halls of Oakwood."

I did not answer, my dear Mary; for I do not know why, but there was something in her words that caused my eyes to fill with tears. I think it was because it seemed such a painful task to maintain such a continued control over my words and feelings, and mamma as usual divined the cause of my sadness, even before I could define it myself.

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"Do not look so very sad, my sweet girl," she said so fondly, that like a simpleton I cried the more. "I do not wish to see you changed, however different you may be to others. I do not wish to chill one feeling in this affectionate little heart, nor check one burst of enthusiasm. Your character has been and is too great a source of unalloyed pleasure to your mother, my Emmeline; it would be misery indeed to see it in any way changed, though I do preach control so very much," she continued, more playfully, but with that same fond affection which, while it made me cry, appeared to soothe every painful emotion. "We shall not always be in society, Emmeline; come to me as of old, and tell me every thought and feeling, and all that has given you pain or pleasure. With me, dearest, there must be no control, no reserve; if there be the least appearance of either, you will inflict more pain on my heart than from your infancy you have ever done, for I shall think my own counsels have alienated from me the confidence of my child."

I never shall forget the impressive sadness with which she spoke these words, dearest Mary, and clinging to her, I declared and with truth, as long as I might speak and think and feel without control when with her, I would be all, all she wished in society—that I never could be unhappy,—and to be reserved with her, I felt sure I never, never could. She embraced me with the utmost tenderness, and banished all my remaining sadness by the earnest assurance that she believed me.

What a long letter have I written to you, my dearest friend; will you not say I have atoned for my long silence? If I have not atoned to you, I have at least gratified myself; for you know not how very often I longed, after such conversations as I have recounted, to sit down and write them all to you, as I had promised, when I could no longer tell in speech all my kind mother's instructions.

I do not make any apology for writing so much of her and myself, for I know to you it is unnecessary. I tried to write all she said, that you may benefit by it likewise, and in doing so I assure you I give you the sincerest proof of my affection; for to no one but my own Mary have I thus related the precious conversations I had alone with mamma. I know no one but you whom I deem worthy of them. How I wish in return you could solve a riddle for me. Why do I *fear* mamma so much, when I love her so very dearly? When I do or even think anything that my conscience tells me is wrong, or at least not right, I absolutely tremble when I meet her eye, though she may know nothing for which to condemn me. I have never heard her voice in anger, but its sorrowful tones are far more terrible. I think sometimes, if I had been in Ellen's place eighteen months ago, I should have been as ill from fear alone, as she was from a variety of emotions, poor girl. Yet why should I feel thus? Caroline does not even understand me when I speak of such an emotion.

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She says she is always very sorry when she has displeased mamma; but fear is to her unknown—we two certainly are complete opposites. I think Ellen's character resembles mine much more than my sister's does. But you will like to know how my time of probation is thus shortened. For I should have kept my resolution and waited the six months, pain as it was, but one day about a week ago, mamma chanced to enter our study at the very instant that the poor man who so politely believed Mademoiselle Emmeline was too ill to appreciate his lessons was praising me up to the skies for my progress; that same day Signor Rozzi had informed mamma, with all the enthusiasm of his nation, that he was delighted to teach a young lady who took such pleasure in the study of poetry, and so capable of appreciating the beauties of the Italian poets. "In truth, madam," he said, "she should be a poet herself, and the Temple of the Muses graced with her presence." There's for you, Mary! But jokes apart, I do love Italian; it is, it must be the natural language of poetry; the sentiments are so exquisitely lovely, the language, the words, as if framed to receive them—music dwells in every line. Petrarch, Tasso, Dante, all are open to me now, and I luxuriate even in the anticipation of the last,—but how I am digressing. That night mamma followed me to my room, as I retired to bed, and smiling, almost laughing, at the half terror of my countenance expressed, for I fancied she had come to reprove the wild spirits I had indulged in throughout the day, she said, "Is not this little head half turned with the flattery it has received to-day?"

"No," I instantly replied. "It is only the approbation of one or two that can put me in any danger of such a misfortune."

"Indeed," she answered, again smiling; "I fancied it was the fine speeches you had been hearing to-day that had excited such high spirits, but I am glad it is not; otherwise, I might have hesitated to express what I came here to do—my approbation of my Emmeline's conduct the last few months."

I felt my colour rising to my very temples, dear Mary, for I did not expect this, but I endeavoured to conceal all I felt by seizing her hand, and imploring her, in a serio-comic, semi-tragic tone, not to praise me, for she and papa were the two whose praises would have the effect on me she feared.

"But you must endeavour to keep your head steady now," she continued, "because papa sends a packet to Oakwood next week, and a long letter for Mary from my Emmeline must accompany it; her patience, I think, must be very nearly exhausted, and I know if you once begin to write, a frank will not contain all you will have to say, will it?" she added, with an arch but such a dear smile.

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All my high spirits seemed for the moment to desert me, and I could not answer her, except to cover her hand with kisses. I have told you what she said in the way of reproof and advice, my dear Mary, but I cannot coolly write all she said as encouragement and praise; it was much more than I deserved, and all, therefore, that I can do, is to continue my endeavours to feel one day rather more to merit it. I have risen every morning an hour earlier, that I might tell you all I wished without encroaching on my allotted hours of study; for I hope you will not imagine I have written all this in one or two, or even three sittings; and now do I not deserve a letter almost as long from you? If you do not thus reward me, dread my vengeance, and write soon, for I long to have a letter from you; of you I have heard often—but of and from, though they may be both brothers of the family of the prepositions, are very different in meaning. I have not written one word of Caroline or Ellen. Am I not incurably egotistical? The former declares she is sure you will have no time to read a letter from her, with such a volume as mine, and Ellen says she has no time by this opportunity. I told her she ought to get up as I did, she blushed, looked confused enough to awaken my attention, and then said she supposed she was too lazy; and now I really must say farewell. Mind you write all concerning yourself and your dear mother, to whom present my very loving respects, and as for yourself, dear Mary, let this long letter prove the sincere affection and perfect confidence of your giddy friend,

Emmeline.

P.S.—No young lady can write without a post-script. Mamma has absolutely had the patience to read through my letter, and except that she said so much of her was certainly needless, she approves of it almost as much as she disapproved of my other, which she has just compelled me to read. What a tissue of absurdity it contained,—worse, it is sinful. I have had the pleasure of burning it, and I hope and trust all my silly repinings are burnt with it. Once more, adieu.

E.H.

From Mrs. Hamilton to Miss Greville.

I cannot, my dear Mary, suffer Emmeline's long letter to be forwarded to you without a few lines from me, to remove all lingering fears which you may perhaps have had, that I do not approve of your correspondence. Believe me, my dear girl, that to see you the chosen friend of my giddy but warm-hearted Emmeline is still, as it has ever been from your childhood, a source of real pleasure both to Mr. Hamilton and myself. Female friendships are, I know, often regarded with contempt, not only by men, but frequently by the sterner principles of our own sex; they are deemed connections of folly; that the long letters which pass between young ladies set down by the world as intimate friends, are but relations of all the petty incidents they may hear or see. Such letters are also considered

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tending to weaken the mind and produce false sensibility, by the terms of affection they force into their service—the magnified expression of momentary and fleeting emotions. That such may sometimes be the tenor of some young people's correspondence, I do not pretend to deny, and when that is the case, and such letters are treasured up in secret and requested to be burnt, lest any eyes save those for whom they are intended should chance to encounter them, then, indeed, I too might disapprove of similar intimacies, and it was to prevent this I would not permit Emmeline to send the first letter to which she has alluded. Every feeling was magnified and distorted, till you must have fancied—had not the real cause been told—that some very serious evil had happened, or was impending over her. I did not in the least doubt but that you would have used all your influence to combat with and conquer this sinful repining; but still I thought your very replies might have called forth renewed ebullitions of sensibility, and thus in the frame of mind which she was then indulging, your hinted reproaches, however gentle, might have been turned and twisted into a decay of friendship or some such display of sensitiveness, which would certainly have removed your affection and injured herself. When, therefore, she so frankly acknowledged her error, and offered to sacrifice the pleasure I knew it was to write to you, I accepted it, spite of the pain which I saw she felt, and which to inflict on her, you may believe gave her, and now I certainly feel rewarded for all the self-denial we both practised, Emmeline is again the same happy girl she was at Oakwood, although I can perceive there is nothing, or at best but very little here, that can compensate for the rural pleasures she has left. I do not wonder at this, for in such feelings I trace those which, from my girlhood, were my own. I hope, therefore, my dear young friend, that nothing in future will check your intercourse with Emmeline, but that your correspondence may long continue a source of pleasure to both of you. I love to see the perfect confidence with which Emmeline has written, it proves she regards you as you deserve to be regarded, as indeed her friend, not her companion in frivolity and sentiment; and believe me, you may thus have it in your power to improve and strengthen her perhaps rather too yielding character. The manner in which, through the mercy of our compassionate God, you have been enabled, young as you are, to bear your trials, which are indeed severe, has inspired her with a respect for your character, which the trifling difference in your ages might otherwise have prevented, and therefore your letters will be received with more than ordinary interest, and your good example, my dear girl, may do much towards teaching her to bear those evils of life from which we cannot expect her to be exempt, with the same patient resignation that characterises you. Write to her therefore, as often as you feel inclined, and do not, I beg, suppress the thoughts her candid letter may have produced. I will not ask you to read her confession charitably, for I know you will, and I assure you she has completely redeemed her fault. The struggle was a very severe one to subdue the depression she had encouraged so long; but she has nobly conquered, and I do not fear such feelings of discontent ever again obtaining too great an ascendancy.

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Tell your dear mother, with my affectionate love, that she will be pleased to hear Ellen's health is improving, and has not as yet suffered in the least from the winter or the more confined air of London, which I almost dreaded might be baneful to one so delicate as she was when we left Oakwood. I think our little tour did her much good, though the idea of the exertion at first appeared painful. She is ever cheerful, though I sometimes wish she would be more lively, and cannot help fancying, notwithstanding her melancholy as a child was remarkable, that her sufferings, both bodily and mental, the last eighteen months have made her the very pensive character she is. I had hoped before that unfortunate affair she was becoming as animated and light-hearted as my Emmeline, but as that cannot be, I endeavoured to be thankful for the health and quiet, and, I trust, happiness she now enjoys. We receive, every opportunity, from Edward very satisfactory and pleasing letters, which, as you will believe, tend not a little to lessen the anxiety of both his sister and myself. His new captain is a far sterner character and even more rigid in discipline than was Sir Edward Manly; but our young sailor writes that this is rather a source of pleasure to him, for it will be the greater merit to win his regard, which he has resolved to use every endeavour to maintain.

I must not forget, in thus writing of my family, to mention that Herbert never writes home without inquiring after his favourite Mary, and if his sisters do not answer such queries very particularly, they are sure in the next letter to obtain as severe a reproach as can flow from his pen. Will you not return such little tokens of remembrance, my dear girl? Herbert has only lately changed the term by which in his boyhood he has so often spoken of you—his sister Mary; and surely friends in such early childhood may continue so in youth. The season has not, and will not yet commence here. Caroline is anticipating it with a delight which I could wish less violent. I certainly never observed the very striking contrast between my daughters as I do now, though I always knew they were very unlike. You, dear Mary, would, I think, even more than Emmeline, shrink from the life which for a few months in every year we must now lead, if we would do our duty in the station we are ordained to fill. I think one season will prove to Caroline that it is not in gaiety she will find true and perfect happiness, and if it do so, I shall join in society next year with a less trembling heart. And now, adieu, my dear young friend. If by Emmeline's long silence you have ever permitted yourself to entertain a suspicion that I did not approve of your correspondence, let this letter from me prove your error, and remember, if ever sorrows in your young yet chequered life should assail you, and you would conceal them from your revered parent, fearing to increase her griefs, write to me without hesitation, without fear, and I will answer you to the best of my ability; for sympathy, believe me, you will never appeal to me in vain, and if you require advice, I will give it you with all the affection I feel towards you. God bless you, my dear girl.

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Yours, most affectionately, E. *Hamilton*.

From Emmeline Hamilton to Mary Greville.

A month, actually a whole month has elapsed, dearest Mary, since I wrote to you last, and not a line from you. Granting it was nearly a week on the way, three weeks are surely long enough for you to have written an answer, when I entreated you to write so soon. What can be the cause of this silence? I will not upbraid you, because I tremble when I think what may perhaps have occasioned it. Mamma has become almost as anxious as myself, therefore, as soon as you can, pray write, if it be but one line to say you are well and at peace, I do not, will not ask more. I scarcely like to write on indifferent subjects in this letter, but yet as you have given me nothing to answer, I must do so to fill up my paper; for if what I dread be not the case, you will not thank me for an epistle containing but a dozen lines. London is becoming rather more agreeable, and the fogs have given place to fine weather. The Court arrived from Brighton yesterday, and they say the town will now rapidly fill. Caroline is all joy, because early next month Mr. Grahame's family leave Brighton. They have a fine house in Piccadilly not very far from us, and Caroline is anticipating great pleasure in the society of Annie. I wonder what my sister can find to like so much in Miss Grahame; to me this friendship has been and is quite incomprehensible. She does not possess one quality that would attract me; what a fortunate thing it is we do not all like the same sort of people. Congratulate me, my dear friend, I am overcoming in a degree my dislike to the company of strangers. Some of papa and mamma's select friends and their families have been calling on us the last month, and we have lately had rather more society in the evening; not anything like large parties, but nice little conversaziones, and really the lords and ladies who compose them are much more agreeable than my fancy pictured them. They are so intelligent, and know so much of the world, and the anecdotes they relate are so amusing, and some so full of good-natured wit, that in one evening I become more advanced in my favourite study, that of character, than I do in weeks spent in retirement. Caroline is very much admired, and I sometimes look at her with surprise; for she certainly looks much better, and makes herself more agreeable among strangers than she *always* does at home. Mamma would call that perhaps an unkind reflection, but I do not mean it for such; some people are more fascinating out than at home. I am contented to remain in the shade, and only speak when I am spoken to, like a good little girl; that is to say, I converse with those who are good-natured enough to converse with me, and many agreeable evenings have I passed in that way. There is her Grace the Duchess D——, a very delightful woman, with elegant manners, and full of true kindness. I like the way she speaks

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to her daughters, at least her two youngest—the rest are married—Lady Anne and Lady Lucy; they appear very nice young women, agreeable companions, as yet we have but little conversation in common, though they appear to get on remarkably well with Caroline. The Countess Elmore, a *nouvelle mariee*, but a delightful creature, so exquisitely lovely—such eyes, hair, teeth; and yet these rare charms appear entirely forgotten, or displayed only for the Earl her husband, who is worthy of it all. He has talked to me so often, that his wife also takes a great deal of notice of me, and when they are of our party I always pass an agreeable evening. The Earl is well acquainted with our beautiful Devonshire, dearest Mary; he admires country as I do, and he asked so much about it one night last week, that I quite forgot all my intentions about control, and actually talked and apostrophised the Dart as I would to one of my own brothers. I forgot everybody else in the room, till I caught mamma's glance fixed earnestly on me, and then, my dear friend, I did not feel over comfortable, however, I was soon at ease again, for I saw it was only *warning*, not *reproving*; and the next morning, when I sought her to tell her all my delight of the preceding evening, she shared in it all, and when I asked her, half fearfully, if her glance meant I was passing the boundary she had laid down, she said, "Not with the Earl of Elmore, my dear Emmeline; but had you been talking in the same animated strain to the Marquis of Alford, who, I believe, took you into supper, I should say you had."

"But I did not with him," I exclaimed.

"No, my love," she answered, laughing at the anxiety that was, I felt, imprinted on my face. "But why are you so terrified at the bare suggestion?"

"Because," I said, and I felt I blushed, "he is a single man; and I never can speak with the same freedom to unmarried as to married men."

"And why not?" she asked, and fixed her most penetrating glance on my face.

I became more and more confused, dear Mary, for I felt even to my own mother it would be difficult to express my feelings on that subject. I managed, however, with some difficulty, to say that I had often heard Annie say she hated assemblies where there were only married men, though there might be some fun in endeavouring to excite the jealousy of their wives; but it was nothing compared to the triumph of chaining young men to her side, and by animated conversation and smiles make each believe himself a special object of attraction, when, in reality, she cared nothing for either. "Rather than do that," I exclaimed, starting from the stool which I had occupied at mamma's feet, and with an energy I could not restrain, "I would bury myself for ever in a desert, and never look upon a face I loved; rather than play upon the feelings of my fellow-creatures, I would—I know not what I would not endure. Mother," I continued, "mother, if ever

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you see me for one instant forget myself, and by word or sign approach the borders of what is termed coquetry, promise me faithfully you will on the instant prevent farther intercourse, you will not hesitate one moment to tell me of it; even though in your eyes it may appear but earnest or animated conversation. Mother, promise me this," I repeated, for I felt carried so far beyond myself, that when I look back on that conversation, it is with astonishment at my own temerity. "Annie has laughed at me when I expressed my indignation; she says it is what every woman of fashion does, and that I am ridiculous if I hope to be otherwise. Mother, you will not laugh at me. Spare me, spare me from the remorse that will ensue, if such ever be my conduct."

"Fear not, my dear and noble child," she exclaimed (her voice I knew expressed emotion), and she pressed me fondly to her heart; "I promise all, all you wish. Retain these noble feelings, these virtuous fears, and I shall never have occasion to do what you desire. Oh, that your sister thought the same!" she added; and oh, Mary, I shall never forget the tone of anxiety and almost distress with which those last words were said.

"She does, she will, she must," I said, vehemently, for I would have given worlds to calm the anxiety I know she feels for Caroline, and I do wish that on some points my sister thought as I do, not from vanity, my dear Mary, believe me, but for her own happiness. I cannot describe each member of our circle, dear Mary, in this letter, but you shall have them by degrees. The Earl and Countess Elmore are my favourites. I was very sorry mamma did not permit me to join a very small party at their house last week; the Countess came herself to beg, but mamma's mandate had gone forth long ago, and therefore I submitted I hope with a good grace, but I doubt it. She wishes me only to join in society at home this year, but next year I may go out with her as often as I please. Lord Henry D'Este is one of the most amusing creatures I ever met with, he has always some droll anecdote to relate that calls forth universal merriment; but of single men, the Earl of St. Eval, eldest son of the Marquis of Malvern, is the most agreeable. He is not particularly handsome, but has an eloquent smile and persuading voice, very tall and noble in his carriage. He has talked to me much of Oxford, where for about six or seven months he was acquainted with my brothers, of whom he spoke in such high terms, dear Mary, and quite regretted he could not enjoy their society longer. He has since been on the Continent, and relates so delightfully all he has remarked or seen among foreigners, that it is evident he travelled really for pleasure and information, not for fashion. He appears much attracted with Caroline. I am sure he admires her very much, and I only wish she would be as pleased with him as I am, but she always provokes me by saying he has not sufficient *esprit*; nor is he quite handsome enough to please

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her; and yet she never refuses his attentions or shrinks from his conversation, as, if I disliked him (as when we are alone she appears to do), I know I should. Do not tremble for my peace, dear Mary, as you read these flowing descriptions. In society they are most agreeable, but as the partner of my life, I have not yet seen one to whom, were the question asked, I could with any hope of happiness give my hand. These scenes are well for a time, but they are not those in which I would wish to pass my life. My wishes are humbler, much humbler; but I do not yet understand them sufficiently even to define them to myself. It is much the same with the young ladies of rank with whom I now frequently associate; they are agreeable companions, but not one, no, not one can supply your place, dearest Mary. Not one can I love as I do you. We have no ideas in common; amiable and good as in all probability they are, still, as my intimate friends I could not regard them; and yet—strange contradiction you will say—I wish Caroline could find one amongst them to supply the place of Annie Grahame in her heart. Why am I so prejudiced against her, you will ask. Mary, I am prejudiced, and I cannot help it. Something tells me my sister will obtain no good from this intimacy, I never did like her, and of late this feeling has increased. Ellen is pleased, too, when her health permits her to join our agreeable little coteries. She appears overcoming her very great reserve, but does not become more lively. She looks always to me, as if she felt a stain yet lingers on her character, and though mamma and papa treat her even more kindly than they did before, if possible, still there are times when to me she appears inwardly unhappy. Strangers would only pronounce her more pensive than usual for her years; for her slight figure and very delicate features, as well as retiring manner, make her appear even younger than she is, but I sometimes fancy I read more. She is always calm and gentle as she used to be, and I never can discover when anything vexes her, except by her heightened colour, which is more easily visible now than when her health was better.

I am summoned away, dear Mary, to go with mamma to ride, and as this leaves to night, I must not write more now; but I intend teasing you with letters every week till you write to me, if you are not well, in the sincere wish to arouse you and draw your thoughts from what may be unpleasing subjects: and if you are idle, to spur you to your task. Adieu, my dearest friend.

Your ever affectionate EMMELINE.

From Mary Greville to Emmeline Hamilton.

Greville Manor, March 13.

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How can I thank you sufficiently, my dearest Emmeline, for the affectionate letters which I have received so regularly the last month. I am still so weak that much writing is forbidden me, and therefore to reply to them all as my affection dictates is impossible. But I know your kind heart, my Emmeline; I know it will be satisfied, when I say your letters have indeed cheered my couch of suffering; have indeed succeeded not only in changing *my* thoughts from the subject that perhaps too much engrosses them, but sometimes even my poor mother's. Your first long letter, dated January, you tell me you wrote to let me know you as you are, that all your faults may be laid bare to my inspection; and what is to be the consequence—that you are, as you said you would be, lowered in my estimation? no, dear and candid girl, you are not, and while you retain such ingenuousness of disposition, you never can be. Wrong you certainly were to encourage such despondency, when so very many blessings were around you; but when once you become sensible of an error, it is already with you corrected. Mamma has, I know, some weeks ago, written to Mrs. Hamilton, to tell her Greville Manor is to be sold. We shall never return to it again; the haunts I so dearly loved, the scenes in which I have spent so many happy hours, all will pass into the hands of strangers,—it will be no longer our own; we shall be no longer together, as for so many years we have been. In changing my residence thus, I feel as if every tie I loved was torn asunder.

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I thought I could have written calmly on this subject, my Emmeline, but I believed myself stronger, both in mind and body, than I am. I have been very ill, and therefore let that be my excuse. Plead for me with your mother, Emmeline; tell her she knows not how I struggle to conceal every pang from the watchful eyes of that mother who has hung over my couch, with an agony that has told me plainer than words I am indeed her only joy on earth. My spirit has been so tortured the three months of my stern father's residence at home, that I feel as if I would—oh! how gladly—flee away and be at rest: but for her sake, I pray for life, for strength; for her sake, I make no resistance to the advice of Mr. Maitland, that for a year or two we should live in Italy or Switzerland, though in leaving England I feel as if I left I know not what, but somewhat more than the mere love for my native land. Why, why is my health so weak? why does it ever suffer when my mind is unhappy? Oh, Emmeline, you know not the fierce struggle it is not to murmur; to feel that it is in mercy my Father in Heaven afflicts me thus. If I might but retain my health, my mother should never suspect my sufferings, I would, I know I would, hide them from every eye; but she reads them in my failing frame and pallid features, when I would by every means in my power prove to her that while she is spared to me, I cannot be wholly unhappy.

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It was not illness of body that prevented my replying to your first long letter; but papa and Alfred were both at home, and my nerves were so frequently shaken, that I knew it would be impossible to write and therefore did not attempt it, even at the risk of offending, or at least giving pain to you. I begged mamma to write to Mrs. Hamilton, and tell her all that had occurred, on the receipt of your second, dated February; for I thought while explaining our silence it would relieve herself, which I think it did. It is six weeks since then and I am only now allowed to write, and have been already obliged to pause more than once in my task; so forgive all incoherences, my dearest Emmeline. The Manor is to be sold in June: for my sake, mamma ventured to implore my father to dispose of another estate, which has lately become his, instead of this, but he would not listen to her; and I implored her not to harrow her feelings by vain supplications again. Alfred is to go to Cambridge, and this increased expense, as it is for him, papa seems to think nothing of, but to my poor mother it is only another subject of uneasiness, not so much for our sakes as for his own. Temptations of every kind will be around him; his own little income will never be sufficient to enable him to lead that life which his inclination will bid him seek. Misfortune on every side appears to darken the future; I cannot look forward. Pray for me, my dearest friend, that I may be enabled to trust so implicitly in the Most High that even now my faith should not for a moment waver. Oh! Emmeline, spite of all his harshness, his coldness, and evident dislike, my heart yearns to my father. Would he but permit me, I would love and respect him as fondly as ever child did a parent, and when, after beholding his cruelty to my mother, my heart has sometimes almost involuntarily reproached him and risen in rebellion against him, the remorse which instantly follows adds to that heavy burden which bows me to the earth. We leave England in May, if I am sufficiently strong. I do not think we shall visit London, but travel leisurely along the coast to Dover. I wish I could see you once more, for I know not if we shall ever meet again, dear Emmeline; but perhaps it is better not, it would only heighten the pain of separation. I should like much to have written to your kind good mother with this, but I fear my strength will not permit, yet perhaps, if she have one half-hour's leisure, she will write to me again; her letters indeed are my comfort and support. I thank your brother Herbert for his many kind and affectionate messages; tell him all you will of our plans, and tell him—tell him—his sister Mary will never forget the brother of her childhood—the kind, the sympathising companion of her youth. To Percy, too, remember me; and say all your own affection would dictate to Caroline and Ellen. I would have written to the latter, but my weakness will I know prove my best excuse. Before I quite conclude, let me say

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how pleased I am to think that, although you still regret Oakwood, you can find some pleasures in your present life. The society you describe must be agreeable. I could scarcely, however, refrain from smiling at your simplicity, my dear Emmeline, in imagining that all who visited at your father's house would be as delightful and estimable as those whom your second letter so eloquently described. Why are we so constantly commanded to be charitable in our intercourse one with another? Must it not be because our Great Master knew that we all had failings, some more than others? if all were as worthy and virtuous as some appear, there would be no need to practise such a virtue; but it is in a mixed society it is more frequently called into play. More, would we preserve our own virtue and piety, we must be charitable. We must look on the weaknesses of our fellow-creatures with mercy and kindness, or how can we demand it for ourselves? I am no advocate for seclusion in general, though my own feelings prefer a quiet life. I think a life of retirement is apt to render us selfish, and too positive in the wisdom and purity of our own notions, too prejudiced against the faults of our fellows. Society is a mirror, where we can see human character reflected in a variety of shades, and thereby, if our minds be so inclined, we may attain a better knowledge of ourselves. If, before we condemned others, we looked into our own hearts, we are likely to become more charitable and more humble at the same moment, and our own conduct necessarily becomes more guarded. But with your mother, my Emmeline, and your open heart—unsophisticated as it may be—you will never go far wrong. Mamma is looking anxiously at me, as if she feared I am exerting myself too much. I feel my cheeks are painfully flushed, and therefore I will obey her gentle hint. Farewell, my Emmeline; may you long be spared the sorrows that have lately wrung the heart of your attached and constant friend,

MARY GREVILLE.

From Mrs. Hamilton to Miss Greville.

London, March 20th.

Your letter to Emmeline, my dear young friend, I have read with feelings both of pain and pleasure, and willingly, most willingly, do I comply with your request, that I would write to you, however briefly. Your despondency is natural, and yet it is with delight I perceive through its gloom those feelings of faith and duty, which your sense of religion has made so peculiarly your own. I sympathise, believe me, from my heart, in those trials which your very delicate health renders you so little able to bear. I will not endeavour by words of consolation to alleviate their severity, for I know it would be in vain. In your earliest youth I endeavoured to impress upon your mind that we are not commanded to check every natural feeling. We are but told to pour before God our trouble, to lean on His mercy, to trust in His providence, to restrain our lips from murmuring, and if we do so, though our tears may fall, and our

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heart feel breaking, yet our prayers will be heard and accepted on high. It is not with you, my poor girl, the weak indulgence of sorrow that ever prostrates you on a couch of suffering, it is the struggle of resignation and concealment that is too fierce for the delicacy of your constitution; and do you not think that strife is marked by Him, who, as a father, pitieth His children? Painful as it is to you, my dear Mary, your sufferings may be in a degree a source of mercy to your mother. Agonizing as it is to the heart of a parent, to watch the fevered couch of a beloved child, yet had she not that anxiety, the conduct of your father and brother might present still deeper wretchedness. For your sake, she dismisses the harrowing thoughts that would otherwise be her own; for your sake, she rallies her own energies, which else might desert her; and when you are restored to her, when, in those intervals of peace which are sometimes your own, she sees you in health, and feels your constant devotion, believe me, there is a well of comfort, of blessed comfort in her fond heart, of which nothing can deprive her. For her sake, then, my dearest Mary, try to conquer this reluctance to leave England. I do not reproach your grief, for I know that it is natural. But endeavour to think that this residence for a few years on the Continent, may restore your mother to a degree of peace, which, in England, at present she cannot know; and will not this thought, my love, reconcile you to a short separation from the land of your birth, and the friends you so dearly love? We shall all think of and love our Mary, however widely parted. We will write very frequently, and every information I can obtain of your brother shall be faithfully recorded. Mr. Hamilton has ever felt for your mother as a brother would, and for her sake, her misguided son will be ever an object of his dearest care. Do not fear for him, and endeavour to soothe your mother's anxiety on that head also. Herbert has written to you, I enclose his letter; and he entreats most earnestly that you will not only permit him to continue to write, but answer him, during your residence abroad. He has been deeply grieved at the intelligence we have reported of you, and I hope and think, if your mother do not disapprove of your correspondence, that the humble yet fervent faith which breathes in the religion of my son may long prove a source of consolation as well as interest to you, who, from your childhood, could sympathise with all his exalted feelings. Poor Emmeline has shed many bitter tears over your letter; she cannot bear to think of your leaving England, but yet agrees with me in believing it will be a beneficial change for both yourself and Mrs. Greville, but her letter shall speak her own feelings. I will not write more now, but will very soon again. Do not exert yourself too much to answer either Emmeline or myself; we will not wait for regular replies. I have written to your mother also, therefore this brief epistle is entirely for yourself, as you wished it. Mr. Hamilton will meet you at Dover, which will afford me much satisfaction, as I shall know more than I could ever learn by a letter, and he will, I trust, be enabled to set your mother's heart at rest on some points which must be now subjects of anxiety. God bless you, my Mary, and restore you speedily to health and peace.

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Yours, with the warmest affection,

E. HAMILTON.

CHAPTER II.

An early April sun was shining brightly through one of the windows of an elegantly furnished boudoir of a distinguished-looking mansion, in the vicinity of Piccadilly. There was somewhat in the aspect of the room, in the variety of toys scattered on every side, in the selection of the newest novels which were arranged on the table, and an indescribable air which pervaded the whole, that might have aroused a suspicion, in any keen observer who could discover character by trifles, that the lady to whom that apartment belonged possessed not the very strongest or most sensible mind. A taste which frivolous trifles could alone gratify appeared evident; and the countenance of the lady, who was reclining listlessly on the couch, would have confirmed these surmises. She did not look above forty, if as much, but her features told a tale of lassitude and weariness, at variance with the prime of life, which was then her own. No intellect, no emotion was expressed on her countenance; it never varied, except, perhaps, to denote peevishness or sullenness when domestic affairs annoyed her, which appeared to be the case at present. A volume of the last new novel was in her hand, in which she appeared sufficiently interested as to feel still more annoyed at the interruption she was constantly receiving from a young lady, who was also an inmate of her room.

Striking, indeed, was the contrast exhibited in the features of the mother and daughter, for so nearly were they connected, and yet to some the inanimate expression of the former would have been far preferable to the handsome but scornful countenance of the latter. She could not have been more than eighteen, but the expression of the features and the tone of character were already decided to no ordinary degree. There was an air of fashion in her every movement; an easy assurance and independence of spirit which might have made her mother respected, but which in one so young were intolerable to all save those whom she had contrived to make her devoted admirers. Spite of the natural beauty of her face, haughtiness, pride, and some of the baser passions of human nature, were there visibly impressed; at least whenever she appeared in her natural character, when no concealed designs caused her to veil these less amiable emotions in eloquent smiles and a manner whose fascination was felt and unresisted, even by those who perhaps had been before prejudiced against her. Various were the characters she assumed in society—assumed to suit her own purpose, made up of art; even at home she sometimes found herself seeking for design, as if it were impossible to go straightforward, to act without some reason. We shall find, however, as we proceed, that she had one confidant at home, to whom, when exhausted by the fatigue of planning, she would confess herself, and who was generally the hearer and abettor of the young lady's schemes. This was a person who had lived for many years in the family as governess; although that office with the elder of her charges had ever been

but nominal, and with the younger it was neglected for the office of friend and confidant, which Miss Malison very much preferred.

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It was evident this morning that the efforts of the young lady had not succeeded quite so well as usual in veiling the discontent in which she inwardly indulged. She was amusing herself at that moment in opening every book on the table, glancing sulkily on their contents, and then throwing them down again with a violence that not only had the effect of making her mother start, but of disturbing the quiet repose of some of the fragile toys in their vicinity, to the manifest danger of their destruction.

"I wish you would oblige me, Annie, by endeavouring to amuse yourself in a quieter manner," observed her mother, in a very languid tone. "You have no pity on my poor nerves. You know when I have these nervous headaches, the least thing disturbs me."

"You may be certain, mamma, it is reading that makes them worse, not my noise. You had much better put away the book, and then you have some chance of being free from them."

"Will you read to me then instead? I assure you I should much prefer it."

"I read aloud! I could not do it to please the most agreeable person in the world; and as you are so very obliging to me in refusing so decidedly to go with me to-night, you cannot expect I should oblige you."

Lady Helen Grahame's placid countenance gave no evidence of inward disturbance at this undutiful speech; she was too much used to it, to feel the pain it might otherwise have produced, and too indifferent to be either indignant or displeased.

"You are very ungrateful, Annie," she replied, in that same languid tone, but with the very little expression in her voice, no emotion was visible. "I tell you I will send round to Lady Charlton or the Countess St. Aubyn; either of them, I know, will be very happy to chaperon you. Surely you can let me be quiet for one evening."

"Lady Charlton I cannot bear; she is the most detestable creature I know. I would rather be buried alive in the country, than join in London society under her care; with her long speeches of prudery and virtue, and the modest reserve of young ladies, and a hundred other such saint-like terms, when all the time she is doing all she can to catch husbands for her three great gawky daughters, who in mamma's presence are all simplicity and simpler—sweet girls just introduced; when I am very much mistaken if the youngest is not nearer thirty than twenty. And as for Lady St. Aubyn, you know very well, mamma, papa declared I should never go out with her again; it is just the same as if I were alone. She has not a word or thought for any one but herself: she thinks she may act with as much coquetry now as before she married. I do believe that woman only married that she might be more at liberty and go out by herself."

"Then, if you like neither of them, write a note to Mrs. Hamilton. Your father would be better pleased if you were to go under her care, than of any other."

“Mrs. Hamilton! I would not for worlds. Every pleasure I might otherwise enjoy would vanish before the stern majesty of her presence. I wonder how Caroline can bear the thraldom in which her mother holds her—it is complete slavery.”

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"I will not hear a word against Mrs. Hamilton," exclaimed Lady Helen, with more display of feeling than had yet been perceivable. "She is a truer friend both to your father and myself than any of those with whom we associate here."

"It is well you think so, my lady mother," replied Miss Grahame, in a peculiar tone. "It is fortunate you are not troubled with jealousy, and that this paragon of perfection, this Mrs. Hamilton, is your friend as well as papa's. If I heard my husband so constantly extolling another woman in my presence, I should not be quite so easy."

If a flush rose to Lady Helen's pale cheek at these words, it was so faint as scarcely to be perceivable, and she took no notice, except to say—

"If your great desire to go to this ball is to be with Caroline the first night of her *entree*, I should think Mrs. Hamilton was the best chaperon you could have."

"I tell you, mother, I will not go with her. She has not bewitched me as she has you and papa. If you would only be quiet for a few hours, I am sure your head would be sufficiently well for you to go with me; and you know I never do enjoy an evening so much as when you accompany me, dear mamma," she continued, softening the violence with which she had at first spoken into one of the most persuasive eloquence; and humbling her pride and controlling the contempt with which she ever looked on her weak but far more principled mother, she knelt on a low stool by her side, and caressingly kissed Lady Helen's hand.

"Dear mamma, you would oblige me, I am sure you would, if you knew how much your presence contributes to my enjoyment. A ball is quite a different thing when I feel I am under your wing, and you know papa prefers my going out with you to any one else."

Annie spoke truth, though her words appeared but flattery. The extreme indolence of Lady Helen's natural disposition, which was now heightened by the lassitude attendant on really failing health, rendered her merely a chaperon in name. Annie felt very much more at liberty when with her than with any other; she could act as she pleased, select her own companions, coquette, talk, dance, without ever thinking of her mother or being sought for by her, till the end of the evening. It was enough she was with Lady Helen, to silence all gossiping tongues and to satisfy her father, who, one of the most devoted members of the Lower House, scarcely ever visited such places of amusement, and therefore knew not the conduct of either his wife or daughter. He long since discovered his authority was as nothing to his children; he felt most painfully his sternness had alienated their affections, and he now rather shrunk from their society; therefore, even at home he was a solitary man, and yet Grahame was formed for all the best emotions, the warmest affections of our nature. He was ignorant that his wife now very frequently suffered from ill-health, for he had never seen her conduct different even when in youth and perfectly well. Had he known this, and also the fact that, though trembling at his sternness, she yet longed to receive some token of his affection—that she really loved

him, spite of the many faults and the extreme weakness of her character, he might have been happy.

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Deceived by her daughter's manner, Lady Helen began to waver in the positive refusal she had given to accompanying her, and Annie was not slow in discovering her advantage; she continued the persuasions she knew so well how to use, concealing the inward struggle it was to veil her discontent at this unwonted humiliation, and suppressing the violence that was ready to break forth, at length succeeded. Though really feeling too languid for the exertion, the wavering mother could not resist the unusually gentle manner of the persevering daughter, and Miss Grahame flew to her confidant to impart the joyful tidings.

Miss Malison was employed in endeavouring, by commands, exhortations, and threats, to compel her pupil to practise a difficult sonata, which her music-master had desired might be prepared by the time of his next visit. Now it happened that Lilla Grahame had not the slightest taste for music, and that Miss Malison did not possess the patient perseverance requisite to smooth the difficulty of the task, nor the gentleness necessary to render it more pleasing to her pupil; therefore, in these practising lessons discord ever prevailed over harmony, and the teacher was ever ready to seize the most trifling excuse to neglect her office, and leave Lilla to practise or not as she pleased.

"Malison, *chere* Malison," exclaimed Annie, in a tone of glee, as she entered, "do leave that stupid girl and come with me; I have some charming intelligence to communicate. And it really is no use boring yourself with Lilla; she will never play, try as hard as she can."

"According to you, I shall do nothing," burst angrily from her sister's lips, for her temper, naturally good, though somewhat hasty, had been completely ruined by careless and mistaken treatment. "If I had been properly taught, I should have done as others do: if Miss Malison had chosen to take the same pains with me as Miss Harcourt does with Emmeline and Ellen, I should have been a very different girl."

"Insolent, ungrateful girl! do you dare to say I have neglected my duty?" exclaimed the *gouvernante*, enraged beyond bounds at this display of insubordination in one whose spirit she had left no means untried to bend to her will, and forgetting herself in the passion of the moment, enforced her words by what is termed a sound box on the ear.

"Now go and tell mamma, pretty dear; or papa, if you like it better," Miss Grahame said, in a whining tone.

But Lilla answered her not. A crimson flush for the moment spread over her very temples at the infliction of this indignity, which very quickly gave way to a deadly, almost livid paleness, on which the marks of Miss Malison's ready fingers were the only spots of red. Without a word in reply, she hastily rose from the piano and left the room.

"Will she *blab*?" was the elegant question that was asked as the door closed.

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"Not she," replied Annie, laughing. "She dare not tell papa, and she knows it is of no use appealing to mamma, who implicitly believes all you tell her of Miss Lilla's excessive obstinacy, idleness, and passionate temper in which she so constantly indulges; your deep regrets that either of Lady Helen Grahame's daughters should be such a character have succeeded so admirably. I have had such a struggle to obtain mamma's promise to go with me to-night, that I really feel exhausted," and the young lady threw herself in a most graceful attitude of listlessness on a sofa that stood invitingly beside her.

"But have you succeeded?"

"Admirably! at length mamma thinks I am most amiable. My persuasions were so eloquent, that the most obdurate person could not have resisted them. I tried violence and sulkiness at first, thinking to frighten or worry her into compliance; but finding both fail, I was compelled to have recourse to humiliation and persuasion. If it had continued much longer, I should have choked by the way; it is quite a relief to breathe freely again. What do you think of her wishing me to go under the care of Mrs. Hamilton to-night? I really could hardly control my horror at the idea."

"Horrible, indeed! What would have become of all your plans, if you had?"

"My dear creature, I would not have gone with her for worlds; but, however, I think my plans are in too good training for one night spent under her eyes to injure them. Caroline is beginning, I think, to feel somewhat like a slave under this keen *surveillance* of her paragon mother, and to pine for the freedom of thought and act which I so unboundedly enjoy. She only wants a little of my good advice and better example, to become really a girl of spirit."

"But take care the spirit you are calling forth does not turn against you," observed Miss Malison.

"Not at all likely, *ma chere*. I am careful only to excite it to serve my own purposes. She likes me, I believe, and I can make her what I please. Let her confidence in her mother be once destroyed, you will see if she does not act as foolishly as I can desire. She has been buried in the country so long, she is a mere infant with regard to all that concerns a life of fashion; and, therefore, will be gladly led by one she considers so completely *au fait* at its mysteries as myself. I used to like her in the country, because she always listened so eagerly to all I said about London. I saw she envied me even when we were children, and therefore fancied myself a most important personage."

"And do you like her now?"

"You are laughing at me, *chere* Malison. You know I cannot bear a rival, and this girl's dazzling beauty will completely cast me in the shade."

“You don’t mean to say her beauty can be compared to yours?” interrupted Miss Malison.

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"Perhaps not in the sterling worth of the two," replied Annie, glancing complacently on a large mirror; "but she is new, Malison—quite new. Her mother only kept her so long away that she might shine with greater brilliancy when introduced. As for Caroline, I like her, as far as she assists my plans, and by her silly, or, if that would serve me better, criminal conduct, takes somewhat away from her mother's perfection, and by the pain Mrs. Hamilton will feel, gratify my overpowering detestation. Malison, you look delighted. Your assistance I am sure of, if I require it; for you dislike this paragon of her sex almost as much as I do."

"Indeed I do. I have never forgotten nor forgiven her presumption a year or two ago, in hinting so broadly I was mistaken in my treatment of Lilla, and that gentleness would have much better effect; gentleness indeed, with a girl that would tire the patience of a saint. She is always worse after having been with this Mrs. Hamilton, and I suppose it will be all over again now. I wish, with your charming plans, my dear Miss Grahame, you would find one to prevent all intercourse between the Hamiltons and your sister."

"At present, *ma chere*, such a thing is out of my power, but we will not despair; although the more you would say about Miss Lilla being undeserving of such indulgence, the more papa would answer, let her go and she will learn to be better there. I heard him give mamma peremptory orders the other day, when we prevented her going, never to refuse whenever Mrs. Hamilton invited her. Severity is a most admirable method, my good Malison; you will break her spirit if you persevere, notwithstanding all the amiable Mrs. Hamilton may do or say."

"I wish I may; but you have not told me all yet. How proceed your schemes with Lord Alphingham?"

"To perfection! I have given Caroline a distaste for every other kind of person. She has met him, you know, once or twice here, and that was sufficient to fascinate her. She thinks him the handsomest and most delightful man she ever knew. It is enough for Mr. Hamilton to see him a friend of papa's to be attracted towards him; in all probability he will be introduced at his house, and then my scheme will be still easier. It will not be difficult to talk Caroline into fancying herself desperately in love with him, and he with her—he is already attracted; and when I see the aspect of affairs favourable, I will just get some kind friend to whisper into Mrs. Hamilton's ear some of the pretty tales I have heard of this Viscount, and you will see what will follow. These *on dits* are, fortunately for my plans, only known among my coterie. With us, they only render Lord Alphingham more interesting; but with Mrs. Hamilton they would have the effect of banishing him for ever from her presence and from the notice of her daughter; the catastrophe, my dear creature, shall be the perfection of diplomacy, but of that hereafter. I owe Lord Alphingham a spite, which I will pay off one day, for his desertion of me the moment Caroline appeared. I may do all I wish with, one word. All my present intention is, by a gradual yet sure process, to undermine Caroline's confidence in her mother, and make me her confidant instead, and if I do that, the rest is easy."

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"You know you have never failed in any scheme, therefore you may feel secure in this," replied Miss Malison, with ready flattery; for she knew Miss Grahame's love of designing, and really felt gratified at any plan tending to injure Mrs. Hamilton, whom she detested with all the malevolence of a mean and grovelling mind, which despised the virtue that was too exalted for its comprehension.

Some little time longer this amiable pair conversed, but their further conversation it is needless to record. We have already seen that Emmeline Hamilton's prejudice against Annie Grahame was not unfounded, and that at present is enough. Before, however, we quit Lady Helen's mansion, we may say a few words on the character of Lilla, in whom, it may be recollected, Mrs. Hamilton had ever felt interest sufficient to indulge a hope that she might render her one day a greater comfort to her father than either of his other children. As a child, her temper was naturally good, though somewhat hasty and self-willed; high-spirited, but affectionate to a degree that would have made the task of training and instruction easy to any one who possessed sufficient gentleness to win her affection, and with patience, yet firmness, to guide her in the right way. Unfortunately, Miss Malison possessed neither; extremely passionate herself, where her interests did not interfere to control it, she was not at all the person to guide a passionate child. Severity was her weapon, and every means used to break the spirit, which she could plainly perceive would soon endeavour to throw off her control. Lilla revolted at this treatment, and many evil qualities were thus introduced in her disposition, which, when they fell under her eye, Mrs. Hamilton was convinced were completely the fruits of mistaken management. From being merely hasty, her passionate anger and hatred of her governess had now increased to such height, as to be really alarming not only to her weak-minded mother, but to Mrs. Hamilton, who, however, was certainly never aware of their extent; for before her Lilla was generally gentle and controlled. Something always occurred to call forth these bursts of passion in Lady Helen's presence, and consequently, the actual conduct of Lilla confirmed the statement of Miss Malison, as to her violence and other evil qualities. Mr. Grahame, too, was compelled to believe all that was told him, and his sternness towards his unhappy child frequently caused her to fly from his presence in dread; although her warm heart yearned towards him with such deep affection, which could he have guessed one-half of its extent, would have twined her fondly round his heart, and forced him to examine more strictly than he did the conduct of Miss Malison. Lilla's dislike to her more favoured sister was almost as violent as that she bore to her governess; and the conviction that all her mother's family looked on her as a passionate, evil-minded girl, of course, increased every bitter feeling. Often,

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very often, did Mrs. Hamilton long to implore Mr. Grahame to dismiss Miss Malison, and place Lilla under the care of some lady more fitted for the task; but she felt that such advice might be looked upon with some justice by Lady Helen's friends as most unwarrantable interference. Miss Malison had been most highly recommended to Lady Helen by her mother, the Duchess of —, and as, in the opinion of that branch of the family, Annie abundantly displayed the good effects of her management, it was very naturally supposed that Lilla's opposite character proceeded from an innate evil disposition, and not from any fault in her governess. She was now nearly fourteen and each year Mrs. Hamilton's hopes for the future worth of her character became fainter; yet still she determined to do all in her power to counteract Miss Malison's plans, and subdue Lilla's fearful passions, and those longings for revenge, not only on her governess but her sister, which, by many little things, she could perceive were lurking round her heart. Montrose Grahame had been, as we already know, from his earliest youth the intimate friend of Mr. Hamilton, and, notwithstanding the increasing cares of their respective families, this friendship had continued and, if possible, increased, and Mrs. Hamilton sharing the sentiments of her husband, the qualities of Grahame speedily caused him to become her friend likewise. She had ever seen with regret his sternness to his children, she saw also that he was pained, deeply pained, as their characters became more matured; and, spite of the difficulties of the task, her benevolent mind determined to leave no means untried to make one child at least his comfort. Lilla's affection for her was as violent as her other feelings, and on that she resolved at first to work. It was strange too, how devotedly attached this wild and headstrong girl became, to one, who of all others appeared least suited to her, and that one the mild and pensive Ellen. It appeared as if it were a relief to meet one so widely different to herself, and therefore she loved her. The high spirits and animation of Emmeline appeared less congenial to her affections than the gentle sweetness of Ellen. Caroline was Annie's friend, and that was enough for her; not even her being Mrs. Hamilton's daughter could make her an object of interest. On the day we have mentioned, Lilla had sat for above an hour in her room; indignation at the insult she had received swelling in every vein, and longing with sickening intensity for some means to free herself from such galling thralldom. She did not give vent to her injured feelings in tears, but her countenance so clearly expressed the emotions of her heart, that it actually startled a servant who entered with a message—a request from Mrs. Hamilton, that her young friend would spend that evening with her daughter and niece. Lilla started up with a wild exclamation of delight, and the anticipation of the evening hours enabled her to obey with haughty calmness

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the summons of Miss Malison. Before, however, she departed on her visit, a fresh ebullition had taken place between the sisters in the presence of their mother, to the great terror of Lady Helen, whose irritation at Lilla's violence increased, as she could perceive nothing in Annie's words or manner to call for it. Had she been less indolent, she might easily have discovered that her elder daughter never permitted a single opportunity to escape without eliciting Lilla's irritability. As it was, she coldly rejected the offered caresses the really affectionate girl would have lavished on her, as she wished her good night, and therefore it was with a heart bursting with many mingled emotions she sought the happy home of her beloved friends.

There gladly will we follow her, for the scenes of violence and evil passion we have slightly touched on are not subjects on which we love to linger.

CHAPTER III.

There was thought, deep thought, engraved on Mrs. Hamilton's expressive countenance, as she sat beside a small table, her head leaning on her hand, anxious, perhaps even painful, visions occupying her reflective mind. The evening was gradually darkening into twilight, but still she did not move, nor was it till a well-known tap sounded at the door, and her husband stood before her, that she looked up.

"Will you not let your husband share these anxious thoughts, my Emmeline?" he said, as he gazed earnestly on her face.

"My husband may perhaps think them silly and unfounded fancies," she replied, with a faint smile.

"He is so prone to do so," answered Mr. Hamilton, in an accent of playful reproach; "but if you will not tell me, I must guess them—you are thinking of our Caroline?"

"Arthur, I am," she said, with almost startling earnestness; "oh, you cannot tell how anxiously! I know not whether I am right to expose her to the temptations of the world; I know her disposition, I see the evils that may accrue from it, and yet, even as if I thought not of their existence, I expose her to them. Oh, my husband, can this be right? can I be doing a parent's duty?"

"We should not, my beloved, be fulfilling the duties of our station, did we not sometimes mingle in society: all our duty is not comprised in domestic life. It is when we retain our integrity unsullied, our restraining principles unchanged in the midst of temptations, that we show forth, even to the thoughtless, the spirit that actuates us, and by example may do good. Besides, remember, dearest, we are not about to enter into continued and



incessant dissipation, which occupies the existence of so many; we have drawn a line, and Caroline loves her parents too well to expect or wish to pass its boundary. Remember, too, the anxious fears which were yours when Percy was about to enter into scenes of even stronger temptation than those which will surround his sister; and have they had foundation? Has not the influence of his mother followed him there, and restrained him even at the moment of trial, and will not the influence of that mother do the same for Caroline?"

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"Percy is, indeed, all my heart could wish," replied Mrs. Hamilton, still somewhat sadly; "but his disposition is different to that of Caroline's. I know his confidence in me is such, and his affection so strong, that for my sake he would do more than those who but slightly know him would imagine. When a son really loves his mother, it is a different, perhaps a more fervid, feeling than that ever known by a daughter. He feels bound to protect, to cherish, and that very knowledge of power heightens his affections."

"You do not doubt your daughters' love, my Emmeline? must I accuse you of injustice too?"

"No, dearest Arthur, I do not doubt their love; for my Emmeline I do not tremble. Her confidence I shall never lose; her affections, however I may be called upon to exert my authority, will never waver, and completely opposite as are the feelings with which she and Percy regard me, their love may be equally intense. But forgive me, my dear husband, I may be unjust, and if I am may my child forgive me; I am not—oh, that I were—equally confident in my Caroline. She loves me, but that affection, I know, does not prevent her thinking me harsh and unkind, if my wishes interfere with hers. My authority is not the same with her as it is to her sister and cousin. She seeks another confidential friend besides her mother, for she dreads my opinions differing from hers. I have marked her thus in early childhood, and it still exists, though her temper is more controlled, her disposition, more improved. The last few years she has been thrown almost entirely with me, and not much above a twelvemonth since she shrunk from the idea of confiding in any one as she did in me."

"And while that confidence exists, my Emmeline, you surely have no right to fear."

"But it is waning, Arthur. The last month I know, I feel it is decreasing. She is no longer the same open-hearted girl with me as she was so lately at Oakwood. She is withdrawing her confidence from her mother, to bestow it on one whom I feel assured is unworthy of it."

"Nay, Emmeline, your anxiety must be blinding you; you are too anxious."

His wife answered him not in words, but she raised her expressive eyes to his face, and he saw they were filled with tears.

"Nay, nay, my beloved!" he exclaimed, as he folded her to his bosom, struck with sudden self-reproach. "Have my unkind words called forth these tears? forgive me, my best love; I think I love my children, but I know not half the depths of a mother's tenderness, my Emmeline, nor that clear-sightedness which calls for disquietude so much sooner in her gentle heart than in a father's. But can we in no way prevent the growth of that intimacy of which I know you disapprove?"

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"No, my dearest Arthur, it must now take its course. Pain as it is to me, I will not rudely check my child's affections, *that* will not bring them back to me. She may, one day, discover her error, and will then gladly return to that love, that tenderness, of which she now thinks but lightly. I must endeavour to wait till that day comes, with all the patience I can teach my heart to feel," she added, with a smile. "Perhaps I am demanding more than is my due. It is not often we find young girls willing to be contented with their mother only as a friend; they pine for novelty, for companions of their own age, whom they imagine can sympathise better in their feelings. A child is all in all to a mother, though a parent is but one link in the life of a child; yet my children have so long looked on me as a friend, that, perhaps, I feel this loss of confidence the more painfully."

"But you will regain it, my Emmeline; our Caroline is only dazzled now, she will soon discover the hollowness of Annie's professions of everlasting friendship."

Mrs. Hamilton shook her head.

"I doubt it, my dear husband. The flattering warmth with which Annie first met Caroline has disappointed me. I thought and hoped that here, surrounded by all her fashionable acquaintances, she would rather have neglected her former friends, and Caroline's pride taking umbrage, their intimacy would have been at once dissolved. Instead of this, Annie never fails to treat her with the most marked distinction, evidently appearing to prefer her much above her other friends; and, therefore, as in this instance Caroline has found my warnings and suspicions needless and unjust, she is not likely to permit my opinion of Annie to gain much ascendancy."

"But deceived as we have been in this instance, my dear Emmeline, may we not be so in other points of Annie's character? She is evidently devoted to fashion and fashionable pleasures, but still there may be some good qualities lurking round her heart, which her intimacy with Caroline may bring forward."

"I hope it may be so," replied Mrs. Hamilton, fervently, though somewhat doubtingly. "For her father's sake, as well as that of my child's, I wish her disposition may be different to that which I, perhaps uncharitably, believe it. You must give me a portion of your sanguine and trusting hopes, my dearest Arthur," she continued, fondly laying her hand in his.

Mr. Hamilton returned a playful answer, and endeavoured to turn the thoughts of his wife to other and more pleasurable subjects. Anxiety such as hers could not be entirely dispelled, but it was lessened, for she had imparted it to her husband, and his watchful care would combine with her own to guard their child.

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Very different were Caroline's feelings on this important night. Mrs. Hamilton's fears and Annie's hopes were both well founded. We have known the character of Caroline from a child; and though the last three or four years it had so improved, that at Oakwood, Mrs. Hamilton had ventured to banish fear, and indulge in every pleasing hope, yet there was a degree of pride still remaining, that revolted very frequently from the counsels even of her mother; that high and independent spirit sometimes in secret longed to throw off the very slight restraint in which she felt held at home. She could not bear to feel that she was in any way controlled; she longed for the exercise of power, and by the display of that beauty, those qualities, she knew she possessed, force herself to be acknowledged as a girl of far more consequence than she appeared to be when in the quiet halls of Oakwood. There nothing ever occurred to call these feelings forth, but they were only dormant, and in London they obtained much greater sway. She felt more controlled than ever by her mother. Secretly she pined to free herself from that which she magnified into thralldom, but which was but the watchful tenderness of a devoted parent; and when the representations, sympathy, and persuasions of Annie were listened to, no wonder these feelings increased. Cautiously Miss Grahame had worked: she continually spoke of the freedom she enjoyed; she introduced her friend to some young ladies who were continually speaking of the delights of independence both in act and word. Once introduced, they said they were emancipated from the labour of the schoolroom, they could employ themselves as they liked, go out when they pleased, and their mothers never interfered with their amusements, except to see that they were becomingly dressed, chaperon them to balls, and second all their efforts at fascination.

The restraint which, when compared with these, Caroline could not but feel was hers at home, of course became more and more intolerable. In confidence, she imparted to Annie her discontent. For the first time she confided in another, feelings she shrunk from imparting to her mother, and once such a confidential intimacy commenced, she neither could nor would draw back. Annie artfully appeared to soothe, while in reality she heightened the discontent and even indignation of her friend. Yes; Caroline by slow degrees became even indignant at the conduct of that mother whose every thought, whose most fervent prayer was for the happiness of her children; and she looked to this night as the beginning of a new era, when she allowed herself to hope, with the assistance of Annie, she would gradually escape from control, and act as other girls of spirit did.

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There was another subject on which, by the advice of Annie, Caroline carefully refrained from speaking at home, and that was Lord Alphingham, a handsome and elegant viscount, who it may be remembered had been mentioned in Annie's conversation with Miss Malison; and yet it would appear strange that such was Miss Grahame's counsel, when Mr. Hamilton frequently spoke of the viscount with every mark of approbation due to his public conduct; of his private little was known, and still less inquired. He was famous in the Upper House—an animated and eloquent speaker—seconding and aiding with powerful influence all Grahame's endeavours in the Lower House, and rendering himself to the latter a most able and influential friend. His brilliant qualities, both as a member of parliament and of polite society, rendered him universally courted; yet notwithstanding this, Mr. Hamilton had never invited him to his house.

“His public character, as far at least as it meets our eye, is unquestionably worthy of admiration,” he had said one day to his wife, “but I know nothing more; of his private character and conduct I am and must remain ignorant, and therefore I will not expose my children to the fascination of his society in the intimacy of home.”

Mrs. Hamilton had agreed with him, but it required not the “intimacy of home” to give Annie an opportunity of persuading Caroline towards secretly accepting his attentions, and making an impression in his favour on her heart; and the latter looked to her *entree* with the more pleasure, as she hoped, and with some justice, it would give her many more opportunities of meeting him than she now enjoyed. She saw before her, in imagination, a long train of captives whom she would enslave, still Lord Alphingham in all stood pre-eminent; and visions of varied nature, but all equally brilliant, floated before her eyes, as she prepared for the grand ball which, for the first time in her life, she was about to join.

The business of the toilette was completed, and we might forgive the proud smile of exultation which curled round her lip, as she gazed on the large pier glass which reflected her whole figure. The graceful folds of the rich white silk that formed her robe suited well with the tall and commanding form they encircled. The radiant clasp of diamonds securing the braid of pearls which twined the dark glossy hair, glittered with unusual brilliancy on that noble yet haughty brow, and heightened the dazzling beauty of her countenance. The dark eyes sparkling with animation, her cheek possessing the rose of buoyant youth and health, the Grecian nose, the lip, which even pride could not rob of its beauty, all combined to form a face lovely indeed. Fanny had gazed and admired her young lady with suppressed exclamations of delight, which were strangely at variance with the sigh that at that instant sounded on Caroline's ear; she turned hastily and beheld her mother, who was gazing on her

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with looks of such excessive tenderness, that a strange pang of self-reproach darted through her heart, although it was instantly banished by the fancy, that if it was with a sigh her mother regarded her on such a night, how could she look for sympathy in the pleasure then occupying her mind. At Oakwood every feeling, every anticipation would have been instantly imparted, but now she only longed to meet Annie, that to her all might be told without restraint. Painful, indeed, was this unwonted silence of a child to the fond heart of Mrs. Hamilton, but she refused to notice it. Much, very much, did she wish to say, but she saw by the countenance of her daughter it might be considered mistimed; yet to launch the beautiful girl she saw before her into the labyrinth of the world, without uttering one word of the thoughts which were thronging on her mind, she felt was impossible. They might not have the effect she wished, yet she would do her duty. Desiring Fanny to take her young lady's shawl down stairs, she gently detained Caroline as she was about to follow her.

“Listen to me but for a few minutes, my love,” she said, in that affectionate yet impressive tone, which seldom failed to arrest the attention of her children, “and forgive me, if my words fall harshly and coldly on your excited fancy. I know well the feelings that are yours, though you perhaps think I do not, by the involuntary sigh you heard, and I can sympathise with them, though lately you have refused to seek my sympathy. Bright as are your anticipations, reality for a time will be still brighter. Brilliant will be the scenes of enchantment in which you will mingle,—brilliant indeed, for you are beautiful, my Caroline—and admiration on all sides will be your own. Why should you look on me with surprise, my child? that beauty on which perhaps my heart has often dwelt too proudly, is not my gift nor of your creation. The Great Being who has given you those charms of face and form will mark how His gift is used; and oh, forget not for one moment His all-seeing eye is as much upon you in the crowded ball as in the retirement of your own room. You will be exposed to more temptations than have yet been yours; the most dangerous temptations, adulation, triumph, exciting pleasures of every kind, will be around you. The world in radiant beauty will loudly call upon you to follow it alone, to resign all things to become its votary; the trial of prosperity will indeed be yours. Caroline, my child, for my sake, if not for your own, resist them all. My happiness is in your hands. Seek your God in this ordeal, even more than you would in that of adversity; there the spirit naturally flies from earth, here it clings tenaciously to the world. Pray to Him to resist the temptations that will surround—implore him to teach you the best use of those charms He has bestowed on you. Forsake him not; Caroline, I conjure you, be not drawn away from Him. Do not let your thoughts be so wholly engrossed by pleasure

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as to prevent your bestowing on Him but one hour of your day. Let me clasp my child to my heart, when we return to Oakwood, unsullied, untouched by the stains of the world. Let me have the blessed comfort of seeing my Caroline return to the home of her childhood the same innocent happy being she was when she left. I have ever endeavoured to make you happy, to give you those pleasures you naturally desire, to form your character not only for the happiness of this world, but for that of the next; then if you are ever tempted to do wrong, if no higher consideration bids you pause, think on your mother, Caroline; remember my happiness or misery greatly depends on you, and, oh, if you have ever loved me, pause ere you proceed."

"Mother, do not doubt me; Caroline Hamilton will never sully the name she bears," replied Caroline, her eye flashing, and speaking proudly, to conceal the emotion her mother's words had involuntarily produced.

Mrs. Hamilton gazed on the haughty and satisfied security the features of her child expressed. A more softened feeling would at that moment better have pleased the yearning heart of the mother, but she checked the rising sigh of disappointment, and folding Caroline to her bosom, she imprinted a fond kiss on her noble brow, and murmuring, "God in heaven bless you, my child, and grant you sufficient strength," they descended the stairs together.

Brilliant indeed was the scene that met the dazzled eyes of Caroline, as she entered the elegant suite of rooms of the Duchess of Rothbury. The highest rank, the greatest talent, the loveliest of beauty's daughters, the manliest and noblest of her sons, were all assembled in that flood of light which every apartment might be termed. Yet could the varied countenances of these noble crowds have clearly marked the character within, what a strange and varied page in the book of human life might that ball have unfolded.

But various as are the characters that compose an assemblage such as this, the tone is generally given by the character and manner of the lady of the house, and her Grace the Duchess of Rothbury was admirably fitted for the position she filled. A daughter of fashion, bred up from her earliest years in scenes of luxury and pomp, she had yet escaped the selfishness, the artificial graces, which are there generally predominant. She had married early in life, a marriage *a la mode*, that is to say, not of love, but of interest on the part of her parents, and on her own, dazzled, perhaps, by the exalted rank of the man who had made her an offer of his hand. They were happy. The highly-principled mind of the Duchess revolted from that conduct which would, even in the *on dit* of a censorious world, have called the very faintest whisper on her name; and her husband, struck by the unwavering honour and integrity of her conduct, gradually deserted the haunts of ignoble pleasures which he had been wont to frequent,

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and paid her those marks of consideration and respect, both in public and private life, which she so greatly deserved. A large family had been the fruits of this union, all of whom, except her two youngest daughters and two of her sons, were married, and to the satisfaction of their parents. There was a degree of reserve, amounting to severity, in the character of the Duchess, which prevented that same affectionate confidence between her and her children as subsisted in Mr. Hamilton's family. Yet she had been a kind and careful mother, and her children ever proved, that surrounded as she constantly was by the fashionable and the gay, she had presided over the education of her daughters, and been more than usually particular in the choice of governesses. Violent as she might be considered in her prejudices for and against, yet there was that in her manner which alike prevented the petty feelings of dislike and envy, and equally debarred her from being regarded with any of that warm affection, for which no one imagined how frequently she had pined. She stood alone, respected, by many revered, and she was now content with this, though her youth had longed for somewhat more. Her chosen friend, spite of the difference of rank, had been Mr. Hamilton's mother, and she had watched with the jealousy of true friendship the object of Arthur Hamilton's love.

A brief yet penetrating survey of Emmeline Manvers' character she took, and was satisfied. The devotion of Mrs. Hamilton, for so many years, to her children she had ever admired, and frequently defended her with warmth when any one ventured before her to condemn her conduct. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton regarded her with reverence and affection, and were gratified at that kindness which insisted that the *entree* of Caroline should take place at her house.

The Earl and Countess Elmore were also pre-eminent among the guests—young, noble, exquisitely lovely, the latter at once riveted all eyes, yet by the graceful dignity of her manner, repelled all advances of familiarity. She might have been conscious of her charms, she could not fail to be, but she only valued them as having attracted towards her the man she loved. She only used them to endear him to his home; and it was when alone with the Earl, that the sweet playfulness of her character was displayed to its full extent, and scarcely could he then believe her the same being who in society charmed as much by her dignity and elegance, as by her surpassing beauty. The family of the Marquis of Malvern were also present; they had been long known to Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, who were glad to resume an intimacy which had been checked by their retirement, but which had ever been remembered with mutual pleasure. The Earl of St. Eval, eldest son of the Marquis, might have been thought by many, who only knew him casually, as undeserving of the high renown he enjoyed; and many young ladies would have wondered at Emmeline Hamilton's undisguised

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admiration. Handsome he certainly was not; yet intelligence and nobleness were stamped upon that broad straight, brow, and those dark eyes were capable at times of speaking the softest emotions of the human heart. But it was only when he permitted himself to speak with energy that his countenance was displayed to advantage, and then the bright rays of intellect and goodness which gilded every feature, aided by the eloquent tones of his full rich voice, would have made the most careless turn and look again, and ask why they admired; but such times were few. Reserved, almost painfully so, he was generally prone in such scenes as this to stand alone, for few indeed were those of either sex with whom the soul of Eugene St. Eval could hold commune; but this night there was more animation than usual glittering in his dark eyes. He was the first of the admiring crowd to join Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton's party, and petition for the hand of Caroline in the next quadrille. It was with a smile of proud satisfaction her father relinquished her to the young man, for she had consented, although the watchful eye of her mother observed her glance round the room, as if in search for some other, and a shade of disappointment pass over her brow, that said her search was fruitless; that feeling was but momentary, however. She joined the festive throng, and her young heart beat quicker as she met the many glances of undisguised admiration fixed constantly upon her. Seldom had Mr. Hamilton been so beset as he was that night by the number of young men who pressed forward to implore him for an introduction to his beautiful daughter; and Caroline's every anticipation of triumph was indeed fulfilled. Her mother was right. Reality was in this case far more dazzling than even imagination had been. There were many in that splendid scene equally, perhaps even more beautiful than Caroline Hamilton, but she possessed the charm of which almost all around her were deprived, that of novelty. She was, indeed, a novice amid scenes of fashion, and the genuine pleasure her countenance expressed, appeared a relief when compared to many around her. The name of Hamilton had never been entirely forgotten in London. Their singularity in living so long in unbroken retirement had been by many ridiculed, by others condemned, as an attempt to appear better than their neighbours; and many were the speculations as to whether the saintly Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton would really do such a wicked thing as introduce their daughters into society, or whether they would keep the poor girls in the country like nuns, to be moped to death. Great, therefore, was the astonishment of some, and equally great the pleasure to others, when Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton reappeared amongst their London friends; and that night the warm greetings of many old friends who thronged around them, eager to introduce to their notice the young members of their families, afforded a pleasing satisfaction to the heart of Mrs. Hamilton, whose gentle courtesy

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and winning smile they found had not in the least deserted her. The feelings of a mother swelled warmly within her as she gazed on her child; her fond heart throbbed with chastened pride, as she marked the unfeigned and respectful admiration Caroline received, and these emotions, combined with the pleasure she felt at beholding again well-remembered faces, and hearing the glad tones of eager greeting, caused this evening to be equally as pleasurable to her, though in a different way, as it was to Caroline.

The attentions of Eugene St. Eval to Miss Hamilton continued as unintermitting as they were respectful the whole of that night; and Caroline, if she did not encourage, certainly forbade them not. She listened to him with more attention; she appeared more animated with him than with any of her other partners, one perhaps, alone excepted, and yet she had taught her young heart to receive impressions to his prejudice, which Annie never permitted an opportunity to pass without carefully instilling. Why did she then permit his attentions? She knew not; while listening to his voice, there was a fascination about him she could not resist, but in her solitary hours she studiously banished his image to give place to one whom, by the representations of Annie, she persuaded herself that she loved alone.

Genuine, indeed, had been the enjoyment of Caroline Hamilton, from the first moment she had entered the ball-room; but if it could be heightened, it was when, about the middle of the evening, Lord Alphingham entered. A party of gay young men instantly surrounded him, but breaking from them all, he attached himself the greater part of the night to Mr. Hamilton. Only two quadrilles he danced with Caroline, but they were enough to aid the schemes of Annie. She was at hand to excite, to an almost painful degree, the mind of her friend, to speak in rapturous praise of Lord Alphingham, to chain him now and then to her side, and yet so contrive, that the whole of his conversation was with Caroline; and yet the conduct of Annie Grahame had been such that night as rather to excite the admiration than the censure of Mr. Hamilton. Playfully he combated the prejudice of his wife, who as sportively owned that Miss Grahame's conduct in society was different to that she had anticipated; but her penetrative mind felt not the more at ease when she thought on the friendship that subsisted between Annie and her child.

"Am I dreaming, or is it Mrs. Hamilton I again behold?" exclaimed an elderly gentleman, as she came forward, and hastily advancing, seized both her hands, and pressed them with unfeigned warmth and pleasure, which greeting Mrs. Hamilton as cordially returned. He was a very old friend of her father's, and had attained by promotion his present high rank of Admiral of the Blue, but had been the first captain under whose orders her lamented brother sailed. Very many, therefore, were the associations that filled her mind as she beheld him, and her mild eyes for a moment glistened in uncontrollable emotion.

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"How very many changes have taken place since we have come alongside, Mrs. Hamilton," the old veteran said, gazing on the blooming matron before him with almost paternal pleasure. "Poor Delmont! could his kind heart have borne up against the blow of poor Charles's fate, he surely would have been happy, if all the tales I hear of his daughter Emmeline be true."

"Come and judge for yourself, Sir George; my home must ever be open to my father's dearest friend," replied Mrs. Hamilton, endeavouring by speaking playfully to conceal the painful reminiscences called forth by his words. "I will not vouch for the truth of anything you may have heard about us in London. You must contrive to moor your ship into the harbour of Oakwood, and thus gratify us all."

"Ay, ay; take care that I do not cast anchor there so long, that you will find the best thing will be to cut the cables, send me adrift, and thus get rid of me," replied the old sailor, delighted at her addressing him in nautical phrase. "Your appearance here has belied half the stories I heard; so now that you have given me permission, I shall set sail to discover the truth of the rest."

"You heard, I suppose, that Mr. Hamilton never intended his children to visit London? They were too good, too—what may I term it?—too perfect, to mingle with their fellow-creatures; is not that it, Admiral?" demanded Mrs. Hamilton, with a smile.

"Ay, ay; something very like it,—but glad to see the wind is changed from that corner. Don't like solitude, particularly for young folks,—and how many are here?"

"Of my children?" The veteran nodded. "But one, my eldest girl. I do not consider her sister quite old enough to be introduced."

"And you left her in harbour, and only permitted one frigate to cruise. If she had any of her uncle Charles's spirit, she would have shown some little insubordination at that piece of discipline, Mrs. Hamilton," said the old man, joyously.

"Not if my authority is established somewhat like Sir George's, on the basis of affection," replied Mrs. Hamilton, again smiling.

"Ay, you have learnt that secret of government, have you? Now who would think this was the little quiet girl I had dandled on my knee, and told her tales of storm and war that made her shudder? And where are your sons?"

"Both at college."

"What, neither of them a chip of the old block, and neither of them for the sea? Don't like their taste. No spirit of salt-water within them."

“But neither of them deficient in spirit for a life on shore. But, however, to set your heart at ease, for the naval honour of our family, Sir George, I have a nephew, who, I think, some few years hence will prove a brave and gallant son of Neptune. The accounts we have of him are most pleasing. He has inherited all poor Charles’s spirit and daring, as well as that true courage, for which you have said my brother was so remarkable.”

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“Glad of it—glad of it; but what nephew? who is he? A nephew of Mr. Hamilton’s will not raise the glory of the Delmont family; and you had only one brother, if I remember rightly?”

“Have you quite forgotten the beautiful girl, who, when I last had the pleasure of meeting you in such a scene as this, was the object of universal attraction? You surely remember my father’s favourite Eleanor, Sir George?”

“Eleanor—Eleanor—let me think;” and the old sailor for a moment put himself in a musing attitude, and then starting, exclaimed, “to be sure I do; the loveliest girl I ever cast eyes upon;—and what has become of her? By the bye, there was some story about her, was there not? She chose a husband for herself, and ran off, and broke her poor father’s heart. Where is she now?”

“Let her faults be forgotten, my dear Sir George,” replied Mrs. Hamilton, with some emotion. “They were fully, painfully repented. Let them die with her.”

“Die! Is she, too, dead? What, that graceful sylph, that exquisite creature I see before me now, in all the pride of conscious loveliness!” and the veteran drew his rough hand across his eyes in unfeigned emotion, then hastily recovering himself, he said, “and this boy—this sailor is her son. I can hardly believe it possible. Why he surely cannot be old enough to go to sea.”

“You forget the number of years that have passed, Sir George. Edward is now eighteen, as old, if not older, than his mother was when you last saw her.”

“And when did poor Eleanor die?”

“Six years ago. She had been left a widow in India, and only reached her native land to breathe her last in my arms. You will be pleased, I think, with her daughter, though, on second thought, perhaps, she may not be quite lively enough for you; however, I must beg your notice for her, as her attachment to her brother is so excessive, that all relating to the sea is to her in the highest degree interesting.”

“And do your sister’s children live with you—had their father no relations?”

“None; and even if he had, I should have petitioned to bring them up and adopt them as my own. Poor children, when their mother died, their situation was indeed melancholy. Helpless orphans of ten and scarcely twelve, cast on a strange land, without one single friend to whom they could look for succour or protection. My heart bled for them, and never once have I regretted my decision.”

The old man looked at her glowing cheek in admiration, and pressing her hand, he said warmly, prefacing his words, as he always did, with the affirmative “ay, ay.”



“Your father’s daughter must be somewhat different to others of her rank. I must come and see you, positively I must. Wind and tide will be strongly against me, if you do not see me in a few days anchoring off your coast. No storms disturb your harbour, I fancy. But what has become of your husband—your daughter? let me see all I can belonging to you. Come, Mrs. Hamilton, crowd sail, and tow me at once to my wished for port.”

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Entering playfully into the veteran's humour, Mrs. Hamilton took his arm and returned to the ball-room, where she was speedily joined by her husband, who welcomed Sir George Wilmot with as much warmth and cordiality as his wife had done, and as soon as the quadrille was finished, a glance from her mother brought Caroline and her partner, Lord Alphingham, to her side.

The astonishment of Sir George, as Mrs. Hamilton introduced the blooming girl before him as her daughter, was so irresistibly comic, that no one present could prevent a smile; and that surprise was heightened when, in answer to his supposition that she must be the eldest of Mrs. Hamilton's family, Mrs. Hamilton replied that her two sons were both older, and Caroline was, indeed, the youngest but one.

"Then I tell you what, Mrs. Hamilton," the old veteran said, "Old Time has been playing tricks with me, and drawing me much nearer eternity than I at all imagined myself, or else he has stopped with me and gone on with you."

"Or rather, my good friend," replied Mr. Hamilton, "you can only trace the hand of Time upon yourself, having no children in whose increasing years you can behold him, and, therefore, he is very likely to slip the cable before you are aware; but with us such cannot be."

"Ay, ay, Hamilton, suppose it must be so—wish I had some children of my own, but shall come and watch Time's progress on these instead. Ah, Miss Hamilton, why am I such an old man? I see all the youngsters running off with the pretty girls, and I cannot venture to ask one to dance with me."

"May I venture to ask you then, Sir George? The name of Admiral Wilmot would be sufficient for any girl, I should think, to feel proud of her partner, even were he much older and much less gallant than you, Sir George," answered Caroline, with ready courtesy, for she had often heard her mother speak of him, and his manner pleased her.

"Well, that's a pretty fair challenge, Sir George; you must take up the glove thrown from so fair a hand," observed Lord Alphingham, with a smile that, to Caroline, and even to her mother, rendered his strikingly handsome features yet handsomer. "Shall I relinquish my partner?"

"No, no, Alphingham; you are better suited to her here. At home—at your *own* home, Miss Hamilton, one night, I shall remind you of your promise, and we will trip it together. Now I can only thank you for your courtesy; it has done my heart good, and reconciled me to my old age."

"I may chance to find a rival at home, Sir George. If you see my sister, you will not be content with me. She will use every effort to surpass me in your good graces; for when



I tell her I have seen the brave admiral whose exploits have often caused her cheek to flush with pride—patriot pride she calls it—she will be wild till she has seen you.”

“Will she—will she, indeed? Come and see her to-morrow; tell her so, with an old man’s love, and that I scolded your mother heartily for not bringing her to-night. Mind orders; let me see if you are sailor enough instinctively to obey an old captain’s orders.”

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"Trust me, Sir George," replied Caroline, laughingly, and a young man at that instant addressing her by name, she bowed gracefully to the veteran, and turned towards him who spoke.

"Miss Hamilton, I claim your promise for this quadrille," said Lord Henry D'Este.

"Good bye," said Sir George. "I shall claim you for my partner when I see you at home."

"St. Eval dancing again. Merciful powers! we certainly shall have the roof tumbling over our heads," exclaimed Lord Henry, as he and Caroline found themselves *vis a vis* to the earl of whom he spoke.

"Why, is it so very extraordinary that a young man should dance?" demanded Caroline.

"A philosopher as he is, decidedly. You do not know him, Miss Hamilton. He travelled all over Europe, I believe, really for the sake of improvement, instead of enjoying all the fun he might have had; he stored his brain with all sorts of knowledge, collecting material and stealing legends to write a book. I went with him part of the way, but became so tired of my companion, that I turned recreant and fled, to enjoy a more spirited excursion of my own. I tell him, whenever I want a lecture on all subjects, I shall come to him. I call him the Walking Cyclopaedia, and only fancy such a personage dancing a quadrille. What lady can have the courage to turn over the leaves of the Cyclopaedia in a quadrille? let me see. Oh, Lady Lucy Melville, our noble hostess's daughter. She pretends to be a bit of a blue, therefore they are not so ill-matched as I imagined; however, she is not very bad—not a deep blue, only just tinged with celestial azure. Sweet creature, how you will be edified before your lesson is over. Look, Miss Hamilton, on the other side of the Cyclopaedia. That good lady has been the last seven years dancing with all her might and main for a husband. There is another, striving, by an air of elegant hauteur, to prove she is something very great, when really she is nothing at all. There's a girl just introduced, as our noble poet says."

"Take care, take care, Lord Henry; you are treading on dangerous ground," exclaimed Caroline, unable to prevent laughing at the comic manner in which her companion criticised the dancers. "You forget that I too have only just been released, and that this is only my first glimpse of the world."

"You do me injustice, Miss Hamilton. I am too delightfully and refreshingly reminded of that truth to forget it for one instant. You may have only just made your *debut*, but you have not been schooled and scolded, and frightened into propriety as that unfortunate girl has. If she has smiled once too naturally, spoken one word too much, made one step wrong, or said sir, my lord, your lordship, once too often, she will have such a lecture to-morrow, she will never wish to go to a ball again."

“Poor girl!” said Caroline, in a tone of genuine pity, which caused a smile from her partner.

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"She is not worthy of your pity, Miss Hamilton; she is hardened to it all. What a set we are dancing with, men and women, all heartless alike; but I want to know what magic wand has touched St. Eval. I do believe it must be your eyes, Miss Hamilton. He talks to his partner, and looks at you; tries to do two things at once, listen to her, and hear your voice. You are the enchantress, depend upon it."

A glow of triumph burned on the heart of Caroline at these words. For though rather prejudiced against St. Eval by the arts of Annie, still, to make an impression on one whom she had heard was invulnerable to all, to make the calm, and some said, severely stoical, St. Eval bend beneath her power, was a triumph she determined to achieve. That spirit of coquetry so fatal to her aunt, the ill-fated Eleanor, was as innate in the bosom of Caroline; no opportunity had yet offered to give it play, still the seeds were there, and she could not resist the temptation now presented. Even in her childhood Mrs. Hamilton had marked this fatal propensity. Every effort had been put in force to check it, every gentle counsel given, but arrested in its growth though it was, erased entirely it could not be. The principles of virtue had been too carefully instilled, for coquetry to attain the same ascendancy and indulgence with Caroline as it had with her aunt, yet she felt she could no longer control the inclination which the present opportunity afforded her to use her power.

"Do you go to the Marchioness of Malvern's fete, next week?" demanded Lord Henry. Caroline answered in the affirmative.

"I am glad of it. The Walking Cyclopaedia may make himself as agreeable there as he has so marvellously done to-night. You will be in fairy land. He has brought flowers from every country, and reared them for his mother, till they have become the admiration of all for miles around. I told him he looked like a market gardener, collecting flowers from every place he went to. I dragged him away several times, and told him he would certainly be taken for a country booby, and scolded him for demeaning his rank with such ignoble pleasures, and what wise answer do you think he made me?"

"A very excellent one, I have no doubt."

"Or it would not come from such a learned personage, Miss Hamilton. Really it was so philosophic, I was obliged to learn it as a lesson to retain it. That he, superior as he deemed himself, and that wild flower which he tended with so much care, were alike the work of Infinite Wisdom, and as such, the study of the one could not demean the other. I stared at him, and for the space of a week dubbed him the Preaching Pilgrim; but I was soon tired of that, and resumed his former one, which comprises all. I wonder at what letter the walking volume will be opened at his mother's fete?"

"I should imagine B," said Caroline, smiling.

“B—B—what does B stand for? I have forgotten how to spell—let me see. Ah! I have it,—excellent, admirable! Miss Hamilton. Lecture on Botany from the Walking Cyclopaedia—bravo! We had better scrape up all our learning, to prove we are not perfect ignoramuses on the subject.”

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Caroline laughingly agreed; and the quadrille being finished, Lord Henry succeeded in persuading her to accompany him to the refreshment-room.

In the meanwhile, perfectly unconscious that he had been the subject of the animated conversation of his *vis a vis*, St. Eval was finding more and more to admire in Miss Hamilton. He conducted his partner to her seat as she desired, and then strolled towards Mr. Hamilton's party, in the hope that Caroline would soon rejoin her mother; but Annie had been in the refreshment-room, and she did not reappear for some little time. Mrs. Hamilton had at length been enabled to seek Lady Helen Grahame, with whom she remained conversing, for she felt, though the delay was unavoidable, she partly deserved the reproach with which Lady Helen greeted her, when she entered, for permitting the whole evening to pass without coming near her. Mrs. Hamilton perceived, with regret, that she was more fitted for the quiet of her own boudoir, than the glare and heat of crowded rooms. Gently she ventured to expostulate with her on her endeavours, and Lady Helen acknowledged she felt quite unequal to the exertion, but that the persuasions of her daughter had brought her there. She was too indolent to add, she had seen nothing of Annie the whole evening; nor did she wish to say anything that might increase the disapprobation with which she sometimes felt, though Annie heeded it not, Mrs. Hamilton regarded her child. It was admiration, almost veneration, which Lady Helen felt for Mrs. Hamilton, and no one could have imagined how very frequently the indolent but well-meaning woman had regretted what she deemed was her utter inability to act with the same firmness that characterised her friend. She was delighted at the notice Lilla ever received from her; but blinded by the artful manners of her elder girl, she often wished that Annie had been the favourite instead. There was somewhat in Mrs. Hamilton's manner that night that caused her to feel her own inferiority more than ever; but no self-reproach mingled with the feeling. She could not be like her, and then why should she expect or deplore what was impossible. Leaning on Mrs. Hamilton's arm, she resolved, however, to visit the ball-room, and they reached Mr. Hamilton at the instant Grahame joined them.

"You here, Grahame!" exclaimed his friend, as he approached. "I thought you had forsworn such things."

"I make an exception to-night," he answered. "I wished to see my fair friend Caroline where I have longed to see her."

"You are honoured, indeed, Mrs. Hamilton," Lady Helen could not refrain from saying. "He was not present at the *entree* even of his own daughter."

"And why was I not, Lady Helen? because I would not by my presence give the world reason to say I also approved of the very early age at which Miss Grahame was introduced. If I do not mistake, she is four months younger than Caroline, and yet my daughter is no longer a novice in such scenes as these."

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Lady Helen shrunk in terror from the stern glance of her husband, who little knew the pain he inflicted; and Mrs. Hamilton hastily, but cautiously drew her away to enter into conversation with the Marchioness of Malvern, who was near them, which little manoeuvre quickly removed the transient cloud; and though soon again compelled to seek the shelter of the quiet little room she had quitted, the friendly kindness of Mrs. Hamilton succeeded in making Lady Helen's evening end more agreeably than it had begun.

"Are you only just released, Grahame?" demanded Lord Alphingham, who still remained near Mr. Hamilton.

"You are less fortunate than I was, or perhaps you will think, in parliamentary concerns, more so; but as the ball was uppermost in my thoughts this evening, I was glad to find myself at liberty above an hour ago."

"Is there nothing, then, stirring in the Upper House?"

"Nothing; I saw many of the noble members fast asleep, and those who spoke said little to the purpose. When do you gentlemen of the Lower House send up your bill? it will be a charity to give us something to do."

"We shall be charitable then on Friday next, and I much doubt if you do not have some warm debating work. If we succeed, it will be a glorious triumph; the Whigs are violent against us, and they are by far the strongest party. I depend greatly on your eloquence, Alphingham."

"It is yours to the full extent of its power, my good friend; it carries some weight along with it, I believe, and I would gladly use it in a good cause."

"Did you speak to-night, Grahame?" Mr. Hamilton asked, evincing by his animated countenance an interest in politics, which, from his retired life, no one believed that he possessed. Grahame eagerly entered into the detail of that night's debate, and for a little time the three gentlemen were absorbed in politics alone. The approach of Caroline and her mother, however, caused Grahame suddenly to break off in his speech.

"A truce with debates, for the present," he gaily exclaimed. "Hamilton, I never saw Caroline's extraordinary likeness to you till this moment. What a noble-looking girl she is! Ah, Hamilton, I could pardon you if you were much prouder of your children than you are."

An involuntary sigh broke from his lips as he spoke, but checking it, he hastened to Caroline, and amused her with animated discourse, till Lord Alphingham and Eugene St. Eval at the same instant approached, the one to claim, the other to request, Caroline as

his partner in the last quadrille before supper. The shade of deep disappointment which passed over the young Earl's expressive countenance as Caroline eagerly accepted the Viscount's offered arm, and owned she had been engaged to him some time, at once confirmed to her flattered fancy the truth of Lord Henry's words, and occasioned a feeling near akin to pleasure in the equally observant mother.

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Mrs. Hamilton shrunk with horror at the idea of introducing her child into society merely for the purpose of decoying a husband; but she must have been void of natural feeling had not the thought very often crossed her mind, that the time was drawing nigh when her daughter's earthly destiny would, in all probability, be fixed for ever; and in the midst of the tremblings of maternal love the natural wish would mingle, that noble rank and manly virtue might be the endowments of him who would wed her Caroline, and amongst those noble youths with whom she had lately mingled, she had seen but one her fond heart deemed on all points worthy of her child, and that one was the young Earl Eugene St. Eval. That he was attracted, her penetrating eye could scarcely doubt, but farther she would not think; and so great was her sensitiveness on this head, that much as she admired the young man, she was much more reserved with him than she would have been had she suspected nothing of his newly dawning feelings.

St. Eval did not join in the quadrille, and after lingering by Mrs. Hamilton till she was invited to the supper-room, he aroused the increased merriment of his tormentor, Lord Henry, by offering her his arm, conducting her to supper, and devoting himself to her, he declared, as if she were the youngest and prettiest girl in the room.

"Playing the agreeable to mamma, to win the good graces of *la fille*. Admirable diplomacy; Lord St. Eval, I wish you joy of your new talent," maliciously remarked Lord Henry, as the Earl and his companion passed him. A glance from those dark eyes, severe enough to have sent terror to the soul of any less reckless than Lord Henry, was St. Eval's only reply, and he passed on; and seldom did Mrs. Hamilton find a companion more to her taste in a supper-room than the young Earl. The leaves of the Walking Cyclopaedia were indeed then opened, Henry D'Este would have said, for on very many subjects did St. Eval allow himself that evening to converse, which, except to his mother and sisters, were ever locked in the recesses of his own reflecting mind; but there was a kindness, almost maternal, which Mrs. Hamilton unconsciously used to every young person who sought her company, and that charm the young and gifted nobleman never could resist. He spoke of her sons in a manner that could not fail to attract a mother's heart. The six months he had spent with them at college had been sufficient for him to form an intimate friendship with Percy, whose endeavours to gain his esteem he had been unable to resist; while he regretted that the reserved disposition of Herbert, being so like his own, had prevented his knowing him so well as his brother. He spoke too of a distant relative of Mrs. Hamilton's, the present Lord Delmont, in whom, as the representative of her ancient family, she was much interested. St. Eval described with eloquence the lovely villa he occupied on the banks of Lago Guardia, near the frontiers of the Tyrol, the health of his only sister, some few years younger than himself, not permitting them to live in England; he had given up all the invitations to home and pleasure held out to him by his father-land, and retiring to Italy, devoted himself entirely to his mother and sister.

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“He is a brother and son after your own heart, Mrs. Hamilton,” concluded St. Eval, with animation, “and that is the highest compliment I can pay him.”

Mrs. Hamilton smiled, and as she gazed on the glowing features of the young man, she thought he who could so well appreciate such virtues could not be—nay, she knew he was not—deficient in them himself, and stronger than ever became her secret wish; but she hastily banished it, and gave her sole attention to the interesting subjects on which St. Eval continued to speak.

For some few hours after supper the ball continued, with even, perhaps, more spirit than it had commenced; but St. Eval did not ask Caroline to dance again. He fancied she preferred Alphingham’s attentions, and his sensitive mind shrunk from being again refused. Caroline knew not the heart of him over whom she had resolved to use her power, perhaps if she had, she would have hesitated in her determination. The least encouragement made his heart glow with an uncontrollable sensation of exquisite pleasure, while repulse bade it sink back with an equal if not a greater degree of pain. St. Eval was conscious of this weakness in his character; he was aware that he possessed a depth of feeling, which unless steadily controlled, would tend only to his misery; and it was for this he clothed himself in impenetrable reserve, and obtained from the world the character of being proud and disagreeable. He dreaded the first entrance of love within his bosom, for instinctively he felt that his very sensitiveness would render the passion more his misery than his joy. We are rather sceptics in the doctrine of love at first sight, but in this case it was fervid and enduring, as if it had risen on the solid basis of intimacy and esteem. From the first hour he had spent in the society of Caroline Hamilton, Eugene St. Eval loved. He tried to subdue and conquer his newly-awakened feelings, and would think he had succeeded, but the next hour he passed in her society brought the truth clearer than ever before his eyes; her image alone occupied his heart. He shrunk, in his overwrought sensitiveness, from paying her those attentions which would have marked his preference; he did not wish to excite the remarks of the world, nor did he feel that he possessed sufficient courage to bear the repulse, with which, if she did not regard him, and if she were the girl he fancied her, she would cheek his forwardness. But his heart beat high, and it was with some difficulty he controlled his emotion, when he perceived that Caroline refused to dance even with Lord Alphingham on several occasions, to continue conversing with himself. How his noble spirit would have chafed and bled, could he have known it was love of power and coquetry that dictated her manner, and not regard, as for the time he allowed himself to fancy.

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The evening closed, the noble guests departed, and daylight had resumed its reign over the earth by the time Mr. Hamilton's carriage stopped in Berkeley Square. Animatedly had Caroline conversed with her parents on the pleasures of the evening during their drive; but when she reached her own room, when Martyn had left her, and she was alone, she was not quite sure if a few faint whisperings of self-reproach did not in a degree alloy the retrospection of this her first glimpse of the gay world; but quickly—perhaps too quickly—they were banished. The attentions of Lord Alphingham—heightened in their charm by Miss Grahame's positive assurance to her friend that the Viscount was attracted, there was not the very slightest doubt of it—and the proposed pleasure of compelling the proud, reserved St. Eval to yield to her fascinations, alone occupied her fancy. To make him her captive would be triumph indeed. She wished, too, to show Annie she was not so completely under control as she fancied; that she, too, could act with the spirit of a girl of fashion; and to choose St. Eval, and succeed—charm him to her side—force him to pay her attentions which no other received, would, indeed, prove to her fashionable companions that she was not so entirely governed by her mother, so very simple and spiritless as they supposed. Her power should do that which all had attempted in vain. Her cheek glowed, her heart burned with the bright hope of expected triumph, and when she at length sunk to sleep, it was to dream of St. Eval at her feet.

Oh! were the counsels, the example, the appeal of her mother all forgotten? Was this a mother's recompense? Alas! alas!

CHAPTER IV.

Numerous were the cards and invitations now left at Mr. Hamilton's door; and the world, in its most tempting form, was indeed spread before Caroline, although, perhaps, compared with the constant routine of pleasure pursued by some young ladies who attend two or three assemblies each of the six nights out of the seven, her life could scarcely be called gay. Mr. Hamilton had drawn a line, and, difficult as it was to keep, he adhered to his resolution, notwithstanding the entreaties of his friends, and very often those of his daughter. A dinner-party and a ball he would sometimes permit Caroline to attend in one day, but the flying from house to house, to taste of every pleasure offered, he never would allow. Nor did he or any member of his family ever attend the Opera on Saturday night, however great might be the attractions. To Emmeline this was a great privation, as poetry and music had ever been her chief delights, and the loss of even one night's enjoyment was felt severely; but she acquiesced without a murmur, appreciating the truth of her father's remark, that it was impossible to pay attention to the Sabbath duties when the previous evening had been thus employed. She knew, too, how difficult it was to attend to her

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studies (due regard for which her parents required amidst every recreation) on the Wednesday, with every air she had so delighted in the previous night ringing in her ears. Those who were eager to condemn Mrs. Hamilton whenever they could, declared it was the greatest inconsistency to take Emmeline to the Opera, and permit her to appear so often in company at home, and yet in other matters be so strict; why could she not bring her out at once, instead of only tantalizing her? but Mrs. Hamilton could never do anything like anybody else. Her daughters were much to be pitied; and as for her niece, she must pass a miserable life, for she was scarcely ever seen. They had no doubt, with all Mrs. Hamilton's pretensions to goodness, that her poor niece was utterly neglected, and kept quite in the background; because she was so beautiful, Mrs. Hamilton was jealous of the notice she might obtain.

So thought, and so very often spoke, the ill-natured half of the world, who, in reality, jealous and displeased at being excluded from Mr. Hamilton's visiting list, did everything in their power to lessen the estimation in which the family was held. In this, however, they could not succeed, nor in causing pain to those whom they wished to wound. Such petty malice demanded not a second thought from minds so well-regulated as those of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton. Mrs. Hamilton, indeed, turned their ill-natured remarks to advantage, for instead of neglecting or wholly despising them, she considered them in her own heart, and in solitary reflection pondered deeply if she in any way deserved them. She knew that the lesson of self-knowledge is never entirely learnt; and she knew too, that an enemy may say that in ill-will or malice which may have some foundation, though our friends, aided by self-love, may have hidden the truth from us. Deeply did this noble woman think on her plan of conduct; severely she scrutinized its every motive, and she was at peace. Before entering upon it she had implored the Divine blessing, and she felt that, in the case of Emmeline and Ellen, her prayers for guidance had not been unheeded. Perhaps her conduct, with regard to the former, might have appeared inconsistent; but she felt no ill-will towards those who condemned, knowing the disposition of her child, and certainly those who thus spoke did not.

Although there was little more than fourteen months difference between the age of the sisters, Emmeline was so much a child in simplicity and feeling, that her mother felt assured it would neither be doing her good nor tending to her happiness to introduce her with her sister; as, from the little difference in their ages, some mothers might have been inclined to do. Yet she did not wish to keep her in such entire seclusion as some, even of her friends, advised, but permitted her the enjoyment of those innocent pleasures natural to her taste. Emmeline had never once murmured at this arrangement; however it interfered with her most earnest wishes, her confidence

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in her parents was such, that she ever submitted to their wishes with cheerfulness. Mrs. Hamilton knew and sympathised in her feelings at leaving Oakwood. She felt there were indeed few pleasures in London that could compensate to a disposition such as Emmeline's for those she had left. She had seen, with joy and thankfulness, the conquest of self which her child had so perseveringly achieved; and surely she was not wrong to reward her, by giving her every gratification in her power, and endeavouring to make her as happy as she was at Oakwood. Emmeline was no longer a child, and these pleasures interfered not with the attention her parents still wished her to bestow on the completion of her education. With all the innocence and quiet of a young child she enjoyed the select parties given by her mother with the same zest, but with the poetic feelings of dawning youth. She absolutely revelled in the Opera, and there her mother generally accompanied her once a week. An artist might have found a pleasing study in the contemplation of that young, bright face, as she sat entranced, every sense absorbed in the music which she heard, the varying expression of her countenance reflecting every emotion acted before her. At such moments the fond mother felt it to be impossible to deny the young enthusiast the rich treat these musical recreations afforded. A smile or look of sympathy was ever ready to meet the often uncontrolled expressions of delight which Emmeline could not suppress, for in thus listening to the compositions of our great masters, even those much older than Emmeline can seldom entirely command their emotions. Natural as were the manners of Caroline in public, they almost resembled art when compared with those of her sister. Mrs. Hamilton's lesson on self-control had not been forgotten. Emmeline generally contrived to behave with perfect propriety, except in moments of excitement such as these, where natural enthusiasm and almost childish glee would have their play, and her mother could not, would not check them.

With regard to Ellen, the thoughtless remarks of the world were indeed unfounded, as all who recollect the incidents detailed in former pages will readily believe. Her health still continued so delicate as frequently to occasion her aunt some anxiety. Through the winter, strange to say, she had not suffered, but the spring brought on, at intervals, those depressing feelings of languor which Mrs. Hamilton hoped had been entirely conquered. The least exertion or excitement caused her to suffer the following day, and therefore, except at very small parties, she did not appear even at home. No one could suspect from her quiet and controlled manner, and her apparently inanimate though beautiful features, that she was as enthusiastic in mind and in the delights of the Opera as her cousin Emmeline. By no one we do not mean her aunt, for Mrs. Hamilton could now trace every feeling of that young and sorrowing heart, and

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she saw with regret, that in her niece's present state of health, even that pleasure must be denied her, for the very exertion attendant on it was too much. Ellen never expressed regret, nor did she ever breathe even to her aunt how often, how very often, she longed once again to enjoy the fresh air of Oakwood, for London to her possessed not even the few attractions it did to Emmeline. She ever struggled to be cheerful, to smile when her aunt looked anxiously at her, and strove to assure her that she was happy, perfectly happy. Her never appearing as Emmeline did, and so very seldom even at home, certainly gave matter for observation to those who, seeking for it, refused to believe the true reason of her retirement. Miss Harcourt, though she steadfastly refused to go out with her friend—for Mrs. Hamilton never could allow that she filled any situation save that of a friend and relation of the family—yet sometimes accompanied Emmeline to the Opera, and always joined Mrs. Hamilton at home. Many, therefore, were the hours Ellen spent entirely alone, but she persevered unrepiningly in the course laid down for her by the first medical man in London, whom her aunt had consulted.

How she employed those lonely hours Mrs. Hamilton never would inquire. Perfect liberty to follow her own inclinations she should enjoy at least; but it was not without pain that Mrs. Hamilton so frequently left her niece. She knew that the greatest privation, far more than any of the pleasures her cousins enjoyed, was the loss of her society. The mornings and evenings were now so much occupied, that it often happened that the Sabbath and the evening previous were the only times Ellen could have intercourse of any duration with her. She regretted this deeply, for Ellen was no longer a child; she was at that age when life is in general keenly susceptible to the pleasures of society; and reserved as was her disposition, Mrs. Hamilton felt assured, the loss of that unchecked domestic intercourse she had so long enjoyed at Oakwood was pain, though never once was she heard to complain. These contrary duties frequently grieved the heart of her aunt. Often she accompanied Caroline when her inclination prompted her to remain at home; for she loved Ellen as her own child, and to tend and soothe her would sometimes have been the preferable duty; but she checked the wish, for suffering and solitary as was Ellen, Caroline, in the dangerous labyrinth of the world, required her care still more.

There are trials which the world regards not—trials on which there are many who look lightly—those productive of no interest, seldom of sympathy, but with pain to the sufferer; it is when health fails, not sufficiently to attract notice, but when the disordered state of the nerves renders the mind irritable, the body weak; when from that invisible weakness, little evils become great, the temper loses its equanimity, the spirits their elasticity, we scarcely know wherefore,

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and we reproach ourselves, and add to our uneasiness by thinking we are becoming pettish and ill-tempered, enervated and repining; we dare not confess such feelings, for our looks proclaim not failing health, and who would believe us? when the very struggle for cheerfulness fills the eye with tears, the heart with heaviness, and we feel provoked at our peevishness, and angry that we are so different now to what we have been; and we fancy, changed as we are, all we love can no longer regard us as formerly. Such are among the trials of woman, unknown, frequently unsuspected, by her nearest and dearest relations; and bitter indeed is it when such trials befall us in early youth, when liveliness and buoyancy are expected, and any departure therefrom is imagined to proceed from causes very opposite to the truth. Such at present were the trials of the orphan; but they were softened by the kindness and sympathy of her aunt, who possessed the happy art of soothing more effectually in a few words than others of a less kindly mould could ever have accomplished.

It is in the quick perception of character, in the adaptation of our words to those whom we address, that in domestic circles renders us beloved, and forms the fascination of society. Sympathy is the charm of human life, and when once that is made apparent, we are not slow in discovering or imagining others. Some people find the encouragement of sympathy disagreeable, for they say it makes them miserable for no purpose. What care they for the woes and joys of their acquaintances? Often a tax, and never a pleasure. Minds of such nature know not that there is a "joy in the midst of grief;" but Mrs. Hamilton did, and she encouraged every kindly feeling of her nature. Previous to her marriage, she had been perhaps too reserved and shrinking within herself, fancied there was no one of her own rank at least who could understand her, and therefore none with whom she could sympathise. But the greater confidence of maturer years, the example of her husband, the emotions of a wife and mother, had enlarged her heart, and caused her, by ready sympathy with others, to increase her own enjoyments, and render herself more pleasing than perhaps, if she had remained single, she ever would have been. It was this invisible charm that caused her to be admired and involuntarily loved, even by those who, considering her a saint at first, shrunk in dread from her society, and it was this that rendered the frequent trials of her niece less difficult to bear.

"Does my Ellen remember a little conversation we had on the eve of her last birthday?" demanded Mrs. Hamilton of her niece one evening, as she had finished dressing, to attend her daughter to the Opera, and Martyn, at her desire, had obeyed Caroline's impatient summons, and left to Ellen the task of fastening her lady's jewels.

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Whenever nothing occurred to prevent it, Ellen was generally with her aunt at dressing-time, and the little conversation that passed between them at such periods frequently rendered Ellen's solitary evening cheerful, when otherwise it might have been, from her state of health and apparently endless task, even gloomy. Mrs. Hamilton had observed a more than usual depression that evening in the manners of her niece, and, without noticing, she endeavoured to remove it. Ellen was bending down to clasp a bracelet as she spoke, and surprised at the question, looked up, without giving herself time to conceal an involuntary tear, though she endeavoured to remove any such impression, by smiling cheerfully as she replied in the affirmative.

"And will it cheer your solitary evenings, then, my dear Ellen?" she continued, drawing her niece to her, and kissing her transparent brow, "if I say that, in the self-denial, patience, and submission you are now practising, you are doing more, towards raising your character in my estimation, and banishing from remembrance the painful past, than you once fancied it would ever be in your power to do. I think I know its motive, and therefore I do not hesitate to bestow the meed of praise you so well deserve."

For a minute Ellen replied not, she only raised her aunt's hand to her lips and kissed it, as if to hide her emotion before she spoke, but her eyes were still swelling with tears as she looked up and replied—"Indeed, my dearest aunt, I do not deserve it. You do not know how irritable and ill-tempered I often feel."

"Because you are not very well, my love, and yet you do not feel sufficiently ill to complain. I sometimes fancy such a state of health as yours is more difficult to bear than a severe though short illness, then, you can, at least, claim soothing consolation and sympathy. Now my poor Ellen thinks she can demand neither," she added, smiling.

"I always receive both from you," replied Ellen, earnestly; "and not much submission is required when that is the case, and I am told my health forbids my sharing in Emmeline's pleasures."

"No, love, there would not be, if you felt so ill as to have no desire for them; but that is not the case, for I know you very often feel quite well enough to go out with me, and I am quite sure that my Ellen sometimes wishes she were not so completely prohibited such amusements."

"I thought I had succeeded better in concealing those wishes," replied Ellen, blushing deeply.

"So you have, my dear girl, no one but myself suspects them; and you could not expect to conceal them from me, Ellen, could you, when Emmeline says it is utterly impossible to hide her most secret thought from my mystic wand? Do not attempt more, my love; persevere in your present conduct, and I shall be quite satisfied. Have you an interesting book for to-night, or is there any other employment you prefer?"

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"You have banished all thoughts of gloom, my dear aunt, and perhaps, instead of reading, I shall work and think on what you have said," exclaimed Ellen, her cheek becoming more crimsoned than it was before, and exciting for the moment the attention of her aunt. She, however, soon permitted it to pass from her thoughts, for she knew the least emotion generally had that effect. Little did she imagine how those solitary hours were employed. Little did she think the cause of that deep blush, or guess the extent of comfort her words had bestowed on her niece, how they cheered the painful task the orphan believed it her duty to perform. Spite of many obstacles of failing health, she perseveringly continued, although as yet she approached not the end of her desires. No gleam of light yet appeared to say her toil was nearly over, her wish obtained.

The limits of our tale, as well as the many histories of individuals these memoirs of the Hamilton family must embrace, will not permit us to linger on the scenes of gaiety in which Caroline now mingled, and which afforded her, perhaps, too many opportunities for the prosecution of her schemes; Miss Grahame's task was no longer difficult. Her confidence once given to another, she could not recall to bestow it upon her mother, from whom, the more she mingled in society, the more she became estranged; and Annie became at once her confidant and adviser. Eager to prove she was not the simple-minded being she was believed, Caroline confided her designs, with regard to St. Eval, to Miss Grahame, who, as may be supposed, heightened and encouraged them. Had any one pointed out to Caroline she was acting with duplicity, departing from the line of truth to which, even in her childhood, in the midst of many other faults, she had beautifully and strictly adhered, she might have shrunk back in horror; but where was the harm of a little innocent flirtation? Annie would repeatedly urge, if she fancied a doubt of the propriety of such conduct was rising in her friend's mind, and she was ready with examples of girls of high birth and exemplary virtues who practised it with impunity: it gave a finish to the character of a woman, proved she would sometimes act for herself, not always be in leading-strings; it gave a taste of power, gratified her ambition; in short, flirtation was the very acme of enjoyment, and gave a decided *ton* before and after marriage.

St. Eval was not sanguine. But it was in vain he tried to resist the fascinations of the girl he loved, he could not for an instant doubt but that she encouraged him; he even felt grateful, and loved her more for those little arts and kindnesses with which she ever endeavoured to draw him from his reserve, and chain him to her side. Could that noble spirit imagine she only acted thus to afford herself amusement for the time, and prove her power to her companions? Could she, the child of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, act otherwise than honourably? We may pardon Lord St. Eval for believing it impossible, but bitterly was he deceived. Even her mother, her penetrating, confiding mother, was deceived, and no marvel then that such should be the case with a comparative stranger.

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Had Caroline's manner been more generally coquettish, Mrs. Hamilton's eyes might have been opened; but her behaviour in general was such as rather to diminish than increase those fears which, before her child had joined the world, had very frequently occupied her anxious heart. To strangers even, her encouragement of St. Eval might not have been observable, though it was clearly so to the watchful eyes of her parents, whose confidence in their daughter's integrity was such as entirely to exonerate her in their minds from any intention of coquetry. In this instance, perhaps, their regard for the young Earl himself, and their mutual but secret wishes might have heightened their belief, that not only was St. Eval attracted but that Caroline encouraged him, and feeling this they regretted that Lord Alphingham should continue his attentions, which Caroline never appeared to receive with any particular pleasure.

Anxious as had been Mrs. Hamilton's feelings with regard to the friendship subsisting between her daughter and Annie Grahame, she little imagined how painfully the influence of the latter had already tarnished the character of the former. Few are aware of the danger arising from those very intimate connections which young women are so fond of forming. Every mother should study, almost as carefully as those of her own, the character of her children's intimate friends. Mrs. Hamilton had done so, and as we know, never approved of Caroline's intimacy with Annie, but yet she could not check their intercourse while such intimate friendship existed between her husband and Montrose Grahame. She knew, too, that the latter felt pleasure in beholding Caroline the chosen friend of his daughter; and though she could never hope as Grahame did, that the influence of her child would improve the character of his, she had yet sufficient confidence in Caroline at one time to believe that she would still consider her mother her dearest and truest friend, and thus counteract the effects of Annie's ill-directed eloquence. In this hope she had already found herself disappointed; but still, though Caroline refused her sympathy, and bestowed it, as so many other girls did, on a companion of her own age, she relied perhaps too fondly on those principles she had so carefully instilled in early life, and believed that no stain would sully the career of her much-loved child. If Mrs. Hamilton's affection in this instance completely blinded her, if she acted too weakly in not at once breaking this closely woven chain of intimacy, her feelings, when she knew all, were more than sufficient chastisement. Could the noble, the honourable, the truth-loving mother for one instant imagine that Caroline, the child whose early years had caused her so much pain, had called forth so many tearful prayers—the child whose dawning youth had been so fair, that her heart had nearly lost its tremblings—that her Caroline should encourage one young man merely to indulge in love of power, and what was even worse,

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to thus conceal her regard for another? Yet it was even so. Caroline really believed that not only was she an object of passionate love to the Viscount, but that she returned the sentiment with equal if not heightened warmth, and, as the undeniable token of true love, she never mentioned his name except to her confidant. In the first of these conjectures she was undoubtedly right; as sincerely as a man of his character could, Lord Alphingham did love Miss Hamilton, and the fascination of his manner, his insinuating eloquence, and ever ready flattery, all combined, might well cause this novice in such matters to believe her heart was really touched; but that it truly was so not only may we be allowed to doubt, but it appeared that Annie did so also, by her laborious efforts to fan the newly ignited spark into a flame, and never once permit Caroline to look into herself; and she took so many opportunities of speaking of those silly, weak-spirited girls, that went with a tale of love directly to their mothers, and thus very frequently blighted their hopes and condemned them to broken hearts, by their duennas' caprices, that Caroline shrunk from the faintest wish to confide all to her mother, with a sensation amounting almost to fear and horror. Eminently handsome and accomplished as Lord Alphingham was, still there was somewhat in his features, or rather their expression, that did not please, and scarcely satisfied Mrs. Hamilton's penetration. Intimate as he was with Grahame, friendly as he had become with her husband, she could not overcome the feeling of repugance with which she more than once found herself unconsciously regarding him; and she felt pleased that Mr. Hamilton steadily adhered to his resolution in not inviting him to his house. To have described what she disliked in him would have been impossible, it was indefinable; but there was a casual glance of that dark eye, a curl of that handsome mouth, a momentary knitting of the brow, that whispered of a mind not inwardly at peace; that restless passions had found their dwelling-place around his heart. Mrs. Hamilton only saw him in society: it was uncharitable perhaps to judge him thus; but the feelings of a mother had rendered her thus acute, had endowed her with a penetration unusually perceptive, and she rejoiced that Caroline gave him only the meed of politeness, and that no sign of encouragement was displayed in her manner towards him.

That mother's fears were not unfounded. Lord Alphingham loved Caroline, but the love of a libertine is not true affection, and such a character for the last fourteen years of his life he had been; nine years of that time he had lived on the Continent, gay, and courted, in whatever country he resided, winning many a youthful heart to bid it break, or lure it on to ruin. It was only the last year he had returned to England, and as he had generally assumed different names in the various parts of the Continent he had visited, the adventures of his life

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were unknown in the land of his birth, save that they were sometimes whispered by a few in similar coteries, and then more as conjecture than reality. So long a time had elapsed, that the wild errors of his youth, which had been perhaps the original cause of his leaving England, were entirely forgotten, as if such things had never been, and the Viscount now found himself quite as much, if not more, an object of universal attraction in his native land than he had been on the Continent. He was now about thirty, and perfect indeed in his vocation. The freshness, *naïvete*, and perfect innocence of Caroline had captivated his fancy perhaps even more than it had ever been before, and her perfect ignorance of the ways of the fashionable world encouraged him to hope his conquest of her heart would be very easy. He had found an able confidant and advocate in Miss Grahame, who had contrived to place herself with her father's friend on the footing of most friendly intimacy, and partly by her advice and the suggestions of his own heart he determined to win the regard of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, before he openly paid attentions to their daughter. With the former he appeared very likely to succeed, for the talent he displayed in the House, his apparently earnest zeal for the welfare of his country, her church and state, his masterly eloquence, and the interest he felt for Grahame, were all qualities attractive in the eyes of Mr. Hamilton; and though he did not yet invite him to his house, he never met him without evincing pleasure. With Mrs. Hamilton, Alphingham did not find himself so much at ease, nor fancy he was so secure; courteous she was indeed, but in her intercourse with him she had unconsciously recalled much of what Grahame termed the forbidding reserve of years past. In vain he attempted with her to pass the barriers of universal politeness, and become intimate; his every advance was repelled coldly, yet not so devoid of courtesy as to make him suspect she had penetrated his secret character. Still he persevered in unwavering and marked politeness, although Annie's representations of Mrs. Hamilton's character had already caused him to determine in his own mind to make Caroline his wife, with or without her mother's approval; and he amused himself with believing that, as her mother was so strict and stern as to keep her children, particularly Caroline, in such subjection, it would be doing the poor girl a charity to release her from such thralldom, and introduce her, as his wife, into scenes far more congenial to her taste, where she would be free from such keen *surveillance*. In these thoughts he was ably seconded by Annie, who was constantly pitying Caroline's enslaved situation, and condemning Mrs. Hamilton's strict severity, declaring it was all affectation; she was not a degree better than any one else, who did not make half the fuss about it. Lord Alphingham's resolution was taken, that before the present season was over, Caroline should be engaged to him, *nolens volens* on the part of her parents, and he acted accordingly.

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As opposite as were the characters, so was the conduct of Caroline's two noble suitors. St. Eval, spite of the encouragement he received, yet shrunk from paying any marked attention either to Caroline or her parents. It was by degrees he became intimate in their family, but there, perhaps, the only person with whom he felt entirely at ease was Emmeline, who, rejoicing at Caroline's change of manner, began to hope her feelings were changing too, and indulged in hopes that one day Lord St. Eval might really be her brother. Emmeline knew her sister's opinion of coquetry was very different to hers; but this simple-minded girl could never have conceived that scheme of duplicity, which, by the aid and counsel of Annie, Caroline now practised. She scarcely ever saw Alphingham, and never hearing her sister name him, and being perfectly unconscious of his attentions when they met, she could not, even in her unusually acute imagination, believe him St. Eval's rival. More and more enamoured the young Earl became each time he felt himself an especial object of Caroline's notice; his heart throbbed and his hopes grew stronger, still he breathed not one word of love, he dared not. Diffident of his own attractive qualities, he feared to speak, till he thought he could be assured of her affections. In the intoxication of love, he felt her refusal would have more effect upon him than he could bear. He shrunk from the remarks of the world, and waited yet a little longer, ere with a trembling heart he should ask that all-important question. So matters stood in Mr. Hamilton's family during the greater part of the London season; but as it is not our task to enter into Caroline's gaieties, we here may be permitted to mention Mrs. Greville's departure with her delicate and suffering child from the land of their birth.

Mr. Greville had made no opposition to their intended plan. Seriously Mr. Maitland had told him that the life of his child depended on her residence for some time abroad, in a genial climate and extreme quiet; but in vain did Mrs. Greville endeavour to believe that affection for his daughter and herself occasioned this unwonted acquiescence; it was too clearly to be perceived that he was pleased at their separation from himself, for it gave him more liberty. She wrote to her son, imploring him in the most earnest and affectionate manner to return home for the Easter vacation, that she might see him for a few days before she left England—perhaps never to return. Ruined from earliest boyhood by weak indulgence, Alfred Greville felt sometimes a throb of natural feeling for his mother, though her counsels were of no avail. Touched by the mournful solemnity and deep affection breathing in every line, he complied with her request, and spent four or five days peacefully at home. He appeared shocked at the alteration he found in his sister, and was kinder than he had previously been in his manner towards her. He had lately become heir to a fortune and estate, left him by a very old

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and distant relative of his father, and it was from this he had determined, he told his father, to go to Cambridge and cut a dash there with the best of them. He was now eighteen, and believed himself no inconsiderable personage, in which belief he was warmly encouraged by his mistaken father. It was strange that, with such an income, he permitted the favourite residence of his mother and sister to be sold—but so it was. The generous feelings of his early childhood had been completely blunted, and to himself alone he intended to appropriate that fortune, when a portion would yet have removed many of Mrs. Greville's anxious fears for the future. Alfred intended, when he was of age, to be one of the first men of fashion; but he did not consider, that if he “cut a dash” at college, with the *ecclat* he wished, that before three years had passed, he would not be much richer than he had been when the fortune was first left him.

“Mother, you will drive me from you,” he one day exclaimed, in passion, as she endeavoured to detain him. “If you wish ever to see me, let me take my own way. Advice I will not brook, and reproach I will not bear; if you love me, be silent, for I will not be governed.”

“Alfred, I will speak!” replied his almost agonized parent, urged on by an irresistible impulse. “Child of my love, my prayers! Alfred, I will not see you go wrong, without one effort, one struggle to guide you in the right path. Alfred, I leave England—my heart is bursting; for Mary's sake alone I live, and if she be taken from me, Alfred, we shall never meet again. My son, oh, if you ever loved me, listen to me now, they may be the last words you will ever hear from your mother's lips. I implore, I beseech you to turn from your evil courses, Alfred!” and she suddenly sunk at his feet, the mother before the son. So devoted, so fervid was the love with which she regarded him, that had she been told, that to lure him to virtue her own life must be the forfeit, willingly at that moment would she have died. She continued with an eloquence of such beseeching tenderness, it would have seemed none could have heard it unmoved. “Alfred, your mother kneels to you, your own mother. Oh, hear her; do not condemn her to wretchedness. Let me not suffer more. You have sought temptation; oh, fly from it; seek the companionship of those who will lead you to honour, not to vice. Break from those connections you have weaved around you. Turn again to the God you have deserted. Oh, do not live as you have done; think on the responsibility each year increases. My child, my beloved, in mercy refuse not your mother's prayer! reject not my advice, Alfred! Alfred!” and she clung to him, while her voice became hoarse with intense anguish. “Oh, promise me to turn from your present life. Promise me to think on my words, to seek the footstool of mercy, and return again to Him who has not forsaken you. Promise me to live a better life; say you will be your mother's

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comfort, not her misery—her blessing, not her curse. My child, my child, be merciful!” Longer, more imploring still would she have pleaded, but voice failed, and it was only on those chiselled features the agony of the soul could have been discovered. Alfred gazed on her thus kneeling at his feet—his mother, she, who in his infancy had knelt beside him, to guide on high his childish prayers. The heart of the misguided boy was softened, tears filled his eyes. He would have spoken; he would have pledged himself to do all that she had asked, when suddenly the ridicule of his companions flashed before his fancy. Could he bear that? No; he could see his mother at his feet, but he could not meet the ridicule of the world. He raised her hastily, but in perfect silence; pressed her to his heart, kissed her cheek repeatedly, then placed her on a couch, and darted from her presence. He had said no word, he had given no sign; and for several hours that mother could not overcome internal wretchedness so far even as to join her Mary. He returned to Cambridge. They parted in affection; seldom had the reckless boy evinced so much emotion as he did when he bade farewell to his mother and sister. He folded Mary to his bosom, and implored her, in a voice almost inaudible, to take care of her own health for the sake of their mother; but when she entreated him to come and see them in their new abode as soon as he could, he answered not. Yet that emotion had left a balm on the torn heart of his mother. She fancied her son, wayward as he was, yet loved her; and though she dared not look forward to his reformation, still, to feel he loved her—oh, if fresh zeal were required in her prayers, that knowledge gave it.

The first week in May they left Greville Manor. Still weak and suffering, the struggle to conceal and subdue all she felt at leaving, as she thought for ever, the house of her infancy, of her girlhood, her youth, was almost too much for poor Mary; and her mother more than once believed she would not reach in life the land they were about to seek. The sea breezes, for they travelled whenever they could along the shore, in a degree nerved her; and by the time they reached Dover, ten days after they had left the Manor, she had rallied sufficiently to ease the sorrowing heart of her mother of a portion of its burden.

They arrived at Dover late in the evening, and early the following day, as Mary sat by the large window of the hotel, watching with some appearance of interest the bustling scene before her, a travelling carriage passed rapidly by and stopped at the entrance. She knew the livery, and her heart throbbed almost to suffocation, as it whispered that Mr. Hamilton would not come alone.

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"Mother, Mr. Hamilton has arrived," she succeeded at length in saying. "And Emmeline—is it, can it be?" But she had no more time to wonder, for ere she had recovered the agitation the sight of one other of Mr. Hamilton's family had occasioned, they were in the room, and Emmeline springing forward, had flung herself on Mary's neck; and utterly unable to control her feelings at the change she beheld in her friend, wept passionately on her shoulder. Powerfully agitated, Mary felt her strength was failing, and had it not been for Mr. Hamilton's support, she would have fallen to the ground. He supported her with a father's tenderness to the couch, and reproachfully demanded of Emmeline if she had entirely forgotten her promise of composure.

"Do not reprove her, my dear friend," said Mrs. Greville, as she drew the weeping girl affectionately to her. "My poor Mary is so quickly agitated now, that the pleasure of seeing three instead of one of our dear-valued friends has been sufficient of itself to produce this agitation. And you, too, Herbert," she continued, extending her hand to the young man, who hastily raised it to his lips, as if to conceal an emotion which had paled his cheek, almost as a kindred feeling had done with Mary's. "Have you deserted your favourite pursuits, and left Oxford at such a busy time, merely to see us before we leave? This is kind, indeed."

"I left Percy to work for me," answered Herbert, endeavouring to hide emotion under the veil of gaiety. "As to permit you to leave England without once more seeing you, and having one more smile from Mary, I would not, even had the whole honour of my college been at stake. You must not imagine me so entirely devoted to my books, dear Mrs. Greville, as to believe I possess neither time nor inclination for the gentler feelings of human nature."

"I know you too well, and have known you too long, to imagine that," replied Mrs. Greville, earnestly. "And is Mary so completely to engross your attention, Emmeline," she added, turning towards the couch where the friends sat, "that I am not to hear a word of your dear mother, Caroline, or Ellen? Indeed, I cannot allow that."

The remark quickly produced a general conversation, and Herbert for the first time addressed Mary. A strange, unconquerable emotion had chained his tongue as he beheld her; but now, with eager yet respectful tenderness, he inquired after her health, and how she had borne their long journey, and other questions, trifling in themselves, but uttered in a tone that thrilled the young heart of her he addressed.

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Herbert knew not how intimately the image of Mary Greville had mingled with his most secret thoughts, even in his moments of grave study and earnest application, until he heard she was about to leave England. Sorrow, disappointment, scarcely defined but bitterly painful, then occupied his mind, and the knowledge burst with dazzling clearness on his heart that he loved her; so deeply, so devotedly, that even were every other wish fulfilled, life, without her, would be a blank. He had deemed himself so lifted above all earthly feelings, that even were he to be deprived as Mr. Morton of every natural relation, he could in time reconcile himself to the will of his Maker, and in the discharge of ministerial duties be happy. He had fancied his heart was full of the love of God alone, blessed in that, however changed his earthly lot. Suddenly he was awakened from his illusion: now in the hour of separation he knew an earthly idol; he discovered that he was not so completely the servant of his Maker as he had hoped, and sometimes believed. But in the doubts and fears which shadowed his exalted mind, he sought the footstool of his God. His cry for assistance was not unheeded. Peace and comfort rested on his heart. A cloud was lifted from his eyes, and for the knowledge of his virtuous love he blessed his God; feeling thus supported he could guide and control himself according to the dictates of piety. He knew well the character of Mary; he felt assured that, if in after years he were permitted to make her his own, she would indeed become his helpmate in all things, more particularly in those which related to his God and to his holy duties among men. He thought on the sympathy that existed between them—he remembered the lighting up of that soft, dark eye, the flushing cheek, the smile of pleasure that ever welcomed him, and fondly his heart whispered that he need not doubt her love. Three years, or nearly four must elapse ere he could feel at liberty to marry; not till he beheld himself a minister of God. Yet interminable as to his imagination the intervening years appeared, still there was no trembling in his trusting heart. If his Father on high ordained them for each other, it mattered not how long the time that must elapse, and if for some wise purpose his wishes were delayed, he recognised the hand of God, and saw “that it was good.”

Yet Herbert could not resist the impulse to behold Mary once more ere she quitted England to explain to her his feelings; to understand each other. He knew the day his father intended going to Dover, and the evening previous, much to the astonishment of his family, made his appearance amongst them. All expressed pleasure at his intention but one, and that one understood not why; but when she heard the cause of his unexpected visit, a sudden and indefinable pang shot through her young heart, dimming at once the joy with which the sight of him had filled it. She knew not, guessed not why, when she laid her head on her pillow that night, she wept so bitterly. The source of those secret and silent tears she could not trace, she only knew their cause was one of sorrow, and yet she loved Mary.

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The pleading earnestness of Emmeline had, after some little difficulty, obtained the consent of her mother to her accompanying her father and brother, on condition, however, of her not agitating Mary by any unconstrained display of sorrow. It was only at their first meeting this condition had been forgotten. Mary looked so pale, so thin, so different even to when they parted, that the warm heart of Emmeline could not be restrained, for she knew, however resignation might be, nay, was felt, it was a bitter pang to that gentle girl to leave her native land, and the friends she so much loved; but recalling her promise, with a strong effort she checked her own sorrow, and endeavoured with playful fondness to raise the spirits of her friend.

The day passed cheerfully, the young people took a drive for some few miles in the vicinity of Dover, while Mr. Hamilton, acting the part of a brother to the favourite *protegee* of his much-loved mother, listened to her plans, counselled and improved them, and, indeed, on many points proved himself such a true friend, that when Mrs. Greville retired to rest that night, she felt more at ease in mind than for many months she had been.

The following day was employed in seeing the antiquities of Dover, its ancient castle among the first, and with Mr. Hamilton as a cicerone, it was a day of pleasure to all, though, perhaps, a degree of melancholy might have pervaded the party in the evening, for the recollection would come, that by noon on the morrow, Mrs. Greville and Mary would bid them farewell. In vain during that day had Herbert sought for an opportunity to speak with Mary on the subject nearest his heart, though they had been so happy together; when for a few minutes they found themselves alone, he had fancied there was more than usual reserve in Mary's manner, which checked the words upon his lip. Some hours he lay awake that night. Should he write his hopes and wishes? No: he would hear the answer from her own lips, and the next morning an opportunity appeared to present itself.

The vessel did not leave Dover till an hour before noon, and breakfast having been despatched by half-past nine, Mrs. Greville persuaded her daughter to take a gentle walk in the intervening time. Herbert instantly offered to escort her. Emmeline remained to assist Mrs. Greville in some travelling arrangements, and Mr. Hamilton employed himself in some of those numberless little offices which active men take upon themselves in the business of a departure. Mary shrunk with such evident reluctance from this arrangement, that for the first time Herbert doubted.

"You were not wont to shrink thus from accepting me as your companion," he said, fixing his large expressive eyes mournfully upon her, and speaking in a tone of such melancholy sweetness, that Mary hastily struggled to conceal the tear that started to her eye. "Are our happy days of childhood indeed thus forgotten?" he continued, gently. "Go with me, dear Mary; let us in fancy transport ourselves at least for one hour back to those happy years of early life which will not come again."

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The thoughts, the hopes, the joys of her childhood flashed with sudden power through the heart of Mary as he spoke, and she resisted them not.

“Forgive me, Herbert,” she said, hastily rising to prepare; “I have become a strange and wayward being the last few months; you must bear with me, for the sake of former days.”

Playfully he granted the desired forgiveness, and they departed on their walk. For some little time they walked in silence. Before they were aware of it, a gentle ascent conducted them to a spot, not only lovely in its own richness, but in the extensive view that stretched beneath them. The wide ocean lay slumbering at their feet; the brilliant rays of the sun, which it reflected as a mirror, appeared to lull it to rest, the very waves broke softly on the shore. To the left extended the snow-white cliffs, throwing in shadow part of the ocean, and bringing forward their own illumined walls in bold relief against the dark blue sea. Ships of every size, from the floating castle in the offing to the tiny pleasure boat, whose white sails shining in the sun caused her to be distinguished at some distance, skimming along the ocean as a bird of snowy plumage across the heavens, the merchant vessels, the packets entering and departing, even the blackened colliers, added interest to the scene; for at the distance Herbert and Mary stood, no confusion was heard to disturb the moving picture. On their right the beautiful country peculiar to Kent spread out before them in graceful undulations of hill and valley, hop-ground and meadow, wherein the sweet fragrance of the newly-mown grass was wafted at intervals to the spot where they stood. Wild flowers of various kinds were around them; the hawthorn appearing like a tree of snow in the centre of a dark green hedge; the modest primrose and the hidden violet yet lingered, as if loth to depart, though their brethren of the summer had already put forth their budding blossoms. A newly-severed trunk of an aged tree invited them to sit and rest, and the most tasteful art could not have placed a rustic seat in a more lovely scene.

Long and painfully did Mary gaze around her, as if she would engrave within her heart every scene of the land she was so soon to leave.

“Herbert,” she said, at length, “I never wished to gaze on futurity before, but now, oh, I would give much to know if indeed I shall ever gaze on these scenes again. Could I but think I might return to them, the pang of leaving would lose one half its bitterness. I know this is a weak and perhaps sinful feeling; but in vain I have lately striven to bow resignedly to my Maker’s will, even should His call meet me, as I sometimes fear it will, in a foreign land, apart from all, save one, whom I love on earth.”

“Do not, do not think so, dearest Mary. True, indeed, there is no parting without its fears, even for a week, a day, an hour. Death ever hovers near us, to descend when least expected. But oh, for my sake, Mary, dear Mary, talk not of dying in a foreign land. God’s will is best, His decree is love; I know, I feel it, and on this subject from our infancy we have felt alike; to you alone have I felt that I dared breathe the holy

aspirations sometimes my own. I am not wont to be sanguine, but somewhat whispers within me you will return—these scenes behold again.”

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Mary gazed on her young companion, he had spoken with unwonted animation, and his mild eye rested with trusting fondness upon her; she dared not meet it; her pale cheek suddenly became crimson, but with an effort she replied—

“Buoy me not up with vain hopes, Herbert; it is better, perhaps, that I should never look to my return, for hope might descend to vain wishes, and wishes to repinings, which must not be. I shall look on other scenes of loveliness, and though in them perhaps no fond association of earth may be mingled, yet there is one of which no change of country can deprive me, one association that from scenes as these can never never fly. The friends of my youth will be no longer near me, strangers alone will surround me; but even as the hand of my Heavenly Father is marked in every scene, however far apart, so is that hand, that love extended to me wherever I may dwell. Oh, that my heart may indeed be filled with the love of Him.”

There was a brief silence. The countenance of Herbert had been for a moment troubled, but after a few seconds resumed its serenity, heightened by the fervid feelings of his heart.

“Mary,” he said, taking her passive hand in his, “if I am too bold in speaking all I wish, forgive me. You know not how I have longed for one moment of unchecked confidence before you left England, it is now before me, and, oh, listen to me, dearest Mary, with that kindness you have ever shown. I need not remind you of our days of childhood and early youth; I need not recall the mutual sympathy which, in every feeling, hope, joy, or sorrow, has been our own. We have grown together, played together in infancy; read, thought, and often in secret prayed together in youth. To you I have ever imparted my heartfelt wishes, earnest prayers for my future life, to become a worthy servant of my God, and lead others in his path, and yet, frail mortal as I am, I feel, even if these wishes are fulfilled, there will yet, dearest Mary, remain a void within my heart. May I, may I, indeed, behold in the playmate of my infancy a friend in manhood, the partner of my life—my own Mary as my assistant in labours of love? I am agitating you, dearest girl, forgive me; only give me some little hope. Years must elapse ere that blessed moment can arrive, perhaps I have been wrong to urge it now, but I could not part from you without one word to explain my feelings, to implore your ever-granted sympathy.”

The hand of Mary trembled in his grasp. She had turned from his pleading glance, but when he ceased, she raised her head and struggled to speak. A smile, beautiful, holy in its beauty, appeared struggling with tears, and a faint flush had risen to her cheek, but voice she had none, and for one moment she concealed her face on his shoulder. She withdrew not her hand from his, and Herbert felt—oh, how gratefully—that his love was returned; he had not hoped in vain. For some minutes they could not speak, every feeling was in common; together

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they had grown, together loved, and now that the magic word had been spoken, what need was there for reserve? none; and reserve was banished. No darkening clouds were then perceived; at that moment Mary thought not of her father, and if she did, could she believe that his consent to an union with a son of Mr. Hamilton would be difficult to obtain. Marry they could not yet, and perhaps the unalloyed bliss of that hour might have originated in the fact that they thought only of the present—the blessed knowledge that they loved each other, were mutually beloved.

The happiness glowing on Mary's expressive countenance as she entered could not fail to attract the watchful eye of her mother, and almost unconsciously, and certainly indefinably, her own bosom reflected the pleasure of her child, and the pang of quitting England was partially eased of its bitterness. Yet still it was a sorrowful moment when the time of separation actually came. Their friends had gone on board with them, and remained till the signal for departure was given. Mary had preferred the cabin to the confusion on deck, and there her friends left her. In the sorrow of that moment Emmeline's promise of composure was again forgotten; she clung weeping to Mary's neck, till her father, with gentle persuasion, drew her away, and almost carried her on deck. Herbert yet lingered; they were alone in the cabin, the confusion attendant on a departure preventing all fear of intruders. He clasped Mary to his heart, in one long passionate embrace, then hastily placing the trembling girl in the arms of her mother, he murmured almost inaudibly—

"Mrs. Greville, dearest Mrs. Greville, guard, oh, guard her for me, she will be mine; she will return to bless me, when I may claim and can cherish her as my wife. Talk to her of me; let not the name of Herbert be prohibited between you. I must not stay, yet one word more, Mrs. Greville—say, oh, say you will not refuse me as your son, if three years hence Mary will still be mine. Say your blessing will hallow our union; and oh, I feel it will then indeed be blessed!"

Overpowered with sudden surprise and unexpected joy, Mrs. Greville gazed for a moment speechlessly on the noble youth before her, and vainly the mother struggled to speak at this confirmation of her long-cherished hopes and wishes.

"Mother," murmured Mary, alarmed at her silence, and burying her face in her bosom, "mother, will you not speak, will you not bid us hope?"

"God in Heaven bless you, my children!" she at length exclaimed, bursting into tears of heartfelt gratitude and joy. "It was joy, joy," she repeated, struggling for composure; "I expected not this blessing. Yes, Herbert, we will speak of you, think of you, doubt us not, my son, my dear son. A mother's protecting care and soothing love will guard your Mary. She is not only her mother's treasure now. Go, my beloved Herbert, you are summoned; farewell, and God bless you!"

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Herbert did not linger with his father and sister; a few minutes private interview with the former caused his most sanguine hopes to become yet stronger, then travelling post to London, where he only remained a few hours, returned with all haste to his college. In his rapid journey, however, he had changed his mind with regard to keeping what had passed between himself and Mary a secret from his mother, whom he yet loved with perhaps even more confiding fondness than in his boyhood. He saw her alone; imparted to her briefly but earnestly all that had passed, implored her to promise consent, and preserve his confidence even from his brothers and sisters; as so long a time must elapse ere they could indeed be united, that he dreaded their engagement being known.

“Even the good wishes of the dear members of home,” he said, “would sound, I fear, but harshly on my ear. I cannot define why I do not wish it known even to those I love; yet, dearest mother, indulge me. The events of one day are hidden from us; how dark then must be those of three years. No plighted promise has passed between us; it is but the confidence of mutual love; and that—oh, mother, I could not bear it torn from the recesses of my own breast to be a subject of conversation even to those dearest to me.”

His mother looked on the glowing countenance of her son; on him, who from, his birth had never by his conduct given her one single moment of care, and had she even disapproved of his secrecy, all he asked would have been granted him; but she approved of his resolution, and emotion glistened in her eye, as she said—

“My Herbert, if I had been privileged to select one among my young friends to be your wife, my choice would have fallen, without one moment’s hesitation, on Mary Greville. She, amid them all, I deem most worthy to be the partner of my son. May Heaven in mercy spare you to each other!”

Herbert returned to college, and resumed his studies with even greater earnestness than, before. His unrestrained confidence had been as balm to his mother’s heart, and soothed the bitter pain it was to behold, to feel assured, for it was no longer fancy, that the confidence of Caroline was indeed utterly denied her and bestowed upon another. Yet still Mrs. Hamilton fancied Caroline loved St. Eval; her eyes had not yet been opened to the enormity of her daughter’s conduct. Nor were they till, after a long struggle of fervid love with the tremblings natural to a fond but reserved and lowly heart, St. Eval summoned courage to offer hand, heart, and fortune to the girl he loved (he might well be pardoned for the belief that she loved him), and was rejected, coldly, decidedly.

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The young Earl had received the glad sanction of Mr. Hamilton to make his proposals to his daughter. There had never been, nor was there now, anything to damp his hopes. He was not, could not be deceived in the belief that Caroline accepted, nay, demanded, encouraged his attention. Invariably kind, almost fascinating in her manner, she had ever singled him out from the midst of many much gayer and more attractive young men. She had given him somewhat more to love each time they parted; and what could this mean, but that she cared for him more than for others? Again and again St. Eval pondered on the encouragement he could not doubt but that he received; again and again demanded of himself if he were not playing with her feelings thus to defer his proposals. Surely she loved him. The sanction of her parents had heightened his hopes, and love and confidence in the truth, the purity of his beloved one obtained so much ascendancy over his heart, that when the important words were said, he had almost ceased to fear. How bitter, how agonizing then must have been his disappointment when he was refused—when sudden haughtiness beamed on Caroline's noble brow, and coldness spread over every feature. And yet, could he doubt it? No; triumph was glittering in her sparkling eye; in vain he looked for sympathy in his disappointment, if love were denied him. He gazed on her, and the truth suddenly flashed on his mind; he marked the triumph with which she heard his offer; no softening emotion was in her countenance. In vain he tried to ascribe its expression to some other feeling; it was triumph, he could not be deceived; and with agony St. Eval discovered that the being he had almost worshipped was not the faultless creature he had believed her; she had played with his feelings; she had encouraged him, heightened his love, merely to afford herself amusement. The visions of hope, of fancy were rudely dispelled, and perhaps at that moment it was better for his peace that he suddenly felt she was beneath his love; she was not worthy to be his wife. He no longer esteemed; and if love itself were not utterly snapped asunder, the loss of esteem enabled him to act in that interview with pride approaching to her own. He reproached her not: no word did he utter that could prove how deeply he was wounded, and thus add to the triumph so plain to be perceived. That she had sunk in his estimation she might have seen, but other feelings prevented her discovering how deeply. Had she veiled her manner more, had she rejected him with kindness, St. Eval might still have loved, and imagined that friendship and esteem had actuated her conduct towards him. Yet those haughty features expelled this thought as soon as it arose. It was on the night of a gay assembly St. Eval had found an opportunity to speak with Caroline, and when both rejoined the gay crowd no emotion was discernible in the countenance of either. St. Eval was the same to all as usual. No one who might have heard his eloquent discussion

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on some state affairs with the Russian consul could have imagined how painfully acute were his sufferings; it was not only disappointed love—no, his was aggravated bitterness; he could no longer esteem the object of his love, he had found himself deceived, cruelly deceived, in one he had looked on almost as faultless; and where is the pang that can equal one like this? The heightened colour on Caroline's cheek, the increased brilliancy of her eye, attracted the admiration of all around her, the triumph of power had indeed been achieved. But when she laid her head on her pillow, when the silence and darkness of night brought the past to her mind more vividly, in vain she sought forgetfulness in sleep. Was it happiness, triumph, that bade her bury her face in her hands and weep, weep till almost every limb became convulsed by her overpowering emotion? Her thoughts were undefined, but so painful, that she was glad—how glad when morning came. She compared her present with her former self, and the contrast was misery; but even as her ill-fated aunt had done, she summoned pride to stifle every feeding of remorse.

Mr. Hamilton had given his sanction to the addresses of Lord St. Eval to his daughter; but he knew not when, the young man intended to place the seal upon his fate. Great then was his astonishment, the morning following the evening we have mentioned, when St. Eval called to bid him farewell, as he intended, he said, leaving London that afternoon for his father's seat, where he should remain perhaps a week, and then quit England for the Continent. He spoke calmly, but there was a paleness of the cheek, a dimness of the eye, that told a tale of inward wretchedness, which the regard of Mr. Hamilton could not fail instantly to discover. Deeply had he become interested in the young man, and the quick instinct combined with the fears of a father, told him that the conduct of Caroline had caused this change. He looked at the expressive countenance of the young Earl for a few minutes, then placing his hand on his shoulder, said kindly, but impressively—

“St. Eval, you are changed, as well as your plans. You are unhappy. What has happened? Have your too sensitive feelings caused you to fancy Caroline unkind?”

“Would to heaven it were only fancy!” replied St. Eval, with unwonted emotion, and almost convulsively clenching both hands as if for calmness, added more composedly, “I have been too presumptuous in my hopes; I fancied myself beloved by your beautiful daughter, but I have found myself painfully mistaken.”

Sternness gathered on the brow of the father as he heard, and he answered, with painful emphasis—

“St. Eval, deceive me not, I charge you. In what position do you now stand with Caroline?”



“Briefly, then, if I must speak, in the humble character of a rejected, scornfully rejected lover.” His feelings carried him beyond control. The triumph he had seen glittering so brightly in the eyes of Caroline had for the time turned every emotion into gall. He shrunk from the agony it was to find he was deceived in one whom he had believed so perfect.

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"Scorn! has a daughter of mine acted thus? Encourage, and then scorn. St. Eval, for pity's sake, tell me! you are jesting; it is not of Caroline you speak." So spoke the now agonized father, for every hope of his child's singleness of mind and purity of intention appeared at once blighted. He grasped St. Eval's hand, and looked on him with eyes from which, in the deep disappointment of his heart, all sternness had fled.

"I grieve to cause you pain, my dear friend," replied the young Earl, entering at once into the father's feelings, "but it is even so. Your daughter has only acted as many, nay, as the majority of her sex are fond of doing. It appears that you, too, have marked what might be termed the encouragement she gave me. My self-love is soothed, for I might otherwise have deemed my hopes were built on the unstable foundation of folly and presumption."

"And condemnation of my child is the fruit of your self-acquittal, St. Eval, is it not? You despise her now as much as you have loved her," and Mr. Hamilton paced the room with agitation.

"Would almost that I could!" exclaimed St. Eval; the young Earl then added, despondingly, "no, I deny not that your child has sunk in my estimation; I believed her exalted far above the majority of her sex; that she, apparently all softness and truth, was incapable of playing with the most sacred feelings of a fellow-creature. I looked on her as faultless; and though the veil has fallen from my eyes, it tells me that if in Caroline Hamilton I am deceived, it is useless to look for perfection upon earth. Yet I cannot tear her image from my heart. She has planted misery there which I cannot at present overcome; but if that triumph yields her pleasure, and tends to her happiness, be it so; my farther attention shall no longer annoy her."

Much disturbed, Mr. Hamilton continued to pace the room, then hastily approaching the young Earl, he said, hurriedly—

"Forget her, St. Eval, forget her; rest not till you have regained your peace. My disappointment, that of her mother—our long-cherished hopes, but it is useless to speak of them, to bring them forward, bitter as they are, in comparison with yours. Forget her, St. Eval; she is unworthy of you," and he wrung his hand again and again, as if in that pressure he could conquer and conceal his feelings. At that instant Emmeline bounded joyfully into the room, unconscious that any one was with her father, and only longing to tell him the delightful news that she had received a long, long letter from Mary, telling her of their safe arrival at Geneva, at which place Mrs. Greville intended to remain for a few weeks, before she proceeded more southward.

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“Look, dear papa, is not this worth receiving?” she exclaimed, holding up the well-filled letter, and looking the personification of innocent and radiant happiness, her fair luxuriant hair pushed in disorder from her open forehead and flushed cheek, her blue eyes sparkling with irresistible glee, which was greatly heightened by her glowing smiles. It was impossible to look on Emmeline without feeling every ruffled emotion suddenly calmed; she was so bright, so innocent, so fair a thing, that if peace and kindness had wished to take up their abode on earth, they could not have found a fairer form wherein to dwell. As St. Eval gazed upon the animated girl, he could not help contrasting her innocent and light-hearted pleasure with his own unmitigated sorrow.

“Your presence and your joy are mistimed, my dear Emmeline; your father appears engaged,” said Mrs. Hamilton, entering almost directly after her child, and perceiving by one glance at her husband’s face that something had chanced to disturb him. “Control these wild spirits for a time till he is able to listen to you.”

“Do not check her, my dear Emmeline, I am not particularly engaged. If St. Eval will forgive me, I would gladly hear some news of our dear Mary.”

“And pray let me hear it also. You know how interested I am in this dear friend of yours, Emmeline,” replied St. Eval, struggling with himself, and succeeding sufficiently to speak playfully; for he and Emmeline had contrived to become such great allies and intimate friends, that by some sympathy titles of ceremony were seldom used between them, and they were Eugene and Emmeline to each other, as if they were indeed brother and sister.

Laughingly and delightedly Emmeline imparted the contents of her letter, which afforded real pleasure both to Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, by the more cheerful, even happier style in which she had written.

“Now do you not think I ought to be proud of my friend, Master Eugene? is she not one worth having?” demanded Emmeline, sportively appealing to the young Earl, as she read to her father some of Mary’s affectionate expressions and wishes in the conclusion.

“So much so, that I am seized with an uncontrollable desire to know her, and if you will only give me a letter of introduction, I will set off for Geneva next week.”

Emmeline raised her laughing eyes to his face, with an expression of unfeigned amazement.

“A most probable circumstance,” she said, laughing; “no, Lord St. Eval, you will not impose thus on my credulity. Eugene St. Eval, the most courted, flattered, and distinguished, leave London before the season is over—impossible.”

“I thank you for the pretty compliments you are showering on me, my little fairy friend, but it is nevertheless true. I leave England for the Continent next week, and I may as well bend my wandering steps to Geneva as elsewhere.”

“But what can you possibly be going on the Continent again for? I am sure, by all the anecdotes you have told me, you must have seen all that is worth seeing, and so why should poor England again be deserted by one of the ablest of her sons?”

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“Emmeline!” exclaimed her mother, in an accent of warning and reproach, which brought a deep crimson flush to her cheek, and caused her eyes to glisten, for Mrs. Hamilton had marked that all was not serene on the countenance of the Earl, and her heart beat with anxious alarm; for she knew his intentions with regard to Caroline, and all she beheld and heard, startled, almost terrified her. Lord St. Eval certainly looked a little disturbed at Emmeline’s continued questions, and perceiving it, she hesitatingly but frankly said—

“I really beg your pardon, my lord, for my unjustifiable curiosity; mamma is always reproving me for it, and certainly I deserve her lecture now. But will you really find out Mary, and be the bearer of a small parcel for me?”

“With the greatest pleasure; for it will give me an object, which I had not before, and a most pleasing one, if I may hope your friend will not object to my intrusion.”

“A friend of mine will ever be warmly welcomed by Mary,” said Emmeline, with eagerness, but checking herself.

“Then may I hope you will continue to regard me as your friend, and still speak of me as Eugene, though perhaps a year or more may pass before you see me again?” demanded the young Earl, somewhat sadly, glancing towards Mrs. Hamilton, as if for her approval.

“As my brother Eugene—yes,” answered Emmeline, quickly, and perhaps archly. A shadow passed over his brow.

“As your *friend*” he repeated, laying an emphasis on the word, which to any one less innocent of the world than Emmeline, would at once have excited their suspicion, and which single word at once told Mrs. Hamilton that all her cherished hopes were blighted. She read confirmation in her husband’s countenance, and for a few minutes stood bewildered.

“I leave town in a few hours for my father’s seat,” added St. Eval, turning to Mrs. Hamilton. “I may amuse myself by taking Devonshire in my way, or rather going out of my way for that purpose. Have you any commands at Oakwood that I can perform?”

Mrs. Hamilton answered thankfully in the negative, but Emmeline exclaimed—

“I have a good mind to make you bearer of a letter and a *gage d’amour* to my good old nurse; she will be so delighted to hear of me, and her postman a nobleman. Poor nurse will have food for conversation and pleasurable reflection till we return.”

“Anything you like, only make me of use; and let me have it in an hour’s time, or perhaps I can give you two.”



“One will be all-sufficient; but what a wonderful desire to be useful has seized you all in a minute,” replied Emmeline, whose high spirits appeared on that day utterly uncontrollable, and she ran on unmindful of her mother’s glance. “But if I really do this, I must bid you farewell at once, or I shall have no time. Think of me, if anything extraordinary meets your eye, or occurs to you, and treasure it up for my information, as you know my taste for the marvellous. My letter to Mary shall be forwarded to you, for I really depend on your seeking her, and telling her all about us; and now, then, with every wish for your pleasant journey, I must wish you good-bye.”

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“Good-bye, dear, happy Emmeline,” he said, with earnestness. “May you be as light-hearted and joyous, and as kind, when we meet again as now; may I commission you with my warmest remembrances and kind adieus to your cousin, whom I am sorry I have not chanced to see this morning?”

“They shall be duly delivered,” answered Emmeline, and kissing her hand gaily in adieu, she tripped lightly out of the room, and St. Eval instantly turned towards Mrs. Hamilton.

“In this intention of leaving England for a few months, or perhaps a year,” he said, striving for calmness, but speaking in a tone of sadness, “you will at once perceive that my cherished hopes for the future are blighted. I will not linger on the subject, for I cannot yet bear disappointment such as this with composure. Were I of different mould, I might, spite of coldness and pride, continue my addresses; and were you as other parents are, Caroline—Miss Hamilton might still be mine; a fashionable marriage it would still be, but, thank God, such will not be; even to bestow your child on one you might value more than me, you would not trample on her affections, you would not consent that she should be an unwilling bride, and I—oh! I could not—could not wed with one who loved me not. My dream of happiness has ended—been painfully dispelled; the blow was unexpected, and has found me unprepared. I leave England, lest my ungoverned feelings should lead me wrong. Mrs. Hamilton,” he continued, more vehemently, “you understand my peculiar feelings, and can well guess the tortures I am now enduring. You know why I am reserved, because I dread the outbreak of emotion even in the most trifling circumstances. Oh, to have been your son—” he paused abruptly, and hurriedly paced the room. “Forgive me,” he said, more calmly. “Only say you approve of my resolution to seek change for a short time, till I obtain self-government, and can behold her without pain; say that I am doing right for myself. I cannot think.”

“You are right, quite right,” replied Mrs. Hamilton instantly, and her husband confirmed her words. “I do approve your resolution, though deeply, most deeply, I regret its cause, St. Eval. Your disappointment is most bitter, but you grieve not alone. To have given Caroline to you, to behold her your wife, would have fulfilled every fervent wish of which she is the object. Not you alone have been deceived; her conduct has been such as to mislead those who have known her from childhood. St. Eval, she is not worthy of you.”

Disappointed, not only at the blighting of every secret hope, not those alone in which St. Eval was concerned, but every fond thought she had indulged in the purity and integrity of her child, in which, though her confidence had been given to another, she had still implicitly trusted, the most bitter disappointment and natural displeasure filled that mother’s heart, and almost for the first time since their union Mr. Hamilton could read this unwonted emotion, in one usually so gentle, in her kindling eyes and agitated voice.

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“Child of my heart, my hopes, my care, as she is, I must yet speak it, forget her, Eugene; let not the thought of a deceiver, a coquette, debar you from the possession of that peace which should ever be the portion of one so truly honourable, so wholly estimable as yourself. You are disappointed, pained; but you know not—cannot guess the agony it is to find the integrity in which I so fondly trusted is as naught; that my child, my own child, whom I had hoped to lead through life without a stain, is capable of such conduct.”

Emotion choked her voice. She had been carried on by the violence of her feelings, and perhaps said more in that moment of excitement than she either wished or intended.

St. Eval gazed on the noble woman before him with unfeigned admiration. He saw the indignation, the displeasure which she felt; it heightened the dignity of her character in his estimation; but he now began to tremble for its effects upon her child.

“Do not, my dear Mrs. Hamilton,” he said, with some hesitation, “permit Miss Hamilton’s rejection of me to excite your displeasure towards her. If with me she could not be happy, she was right to refuse my hand. Let me not have the misery of feeling I have caused dissension in a family whose beautiful unity has ever bound me to it. Surely you would not urge the affections of your child.”

“Never,” replied Mrs. Hamilton, earnestly. “I understand your fears, but let them pass away. I shall urge nothing, but my duty I must do. Much as I admire the exalted sentiments you express, I must equally deplore the mistaken conduct of my child. She has wilfully sported with the most sacred of human feelings. Once more I say, she is not worthy to be yours.”

The indignation and strong emotion still lingering in her voice convinced St. Eval that he might urge no more. Respectfully he took his leave.

CHAPTER V.

Mrs. Hamilton sat silently revolving in her mind all Caroline’s late conduct, but vainly endeavouring to discover one single good reason to justify her rejection of St. Eval. In vain striving to believe all must have been mistaken, she had not given him encouragement. That her affections could have become secretly engaged was a thing so unlikely, that even when Mrs. Hamilton suggested it, both she and her husband banished the idea as impossible; for St. Eval alone had she evinced any marked preference.

“You must speak to her, Emmeline, I dare not; for I feel too angry and disappointed to argue calmly. She has deceived us; all your cares appear to have been of no avail; all



the watchful tenderness with which she had been treated thus returned! I could have forgiven it, I would not have said another word, if she had conducted herself towards him with propriety; but to give him encouragement, such as all who have seen them together must have remarked; to attract him by every winning art, to chain him to her side, and then reject him with scorn. What could have caused her conduct, but the wish to display her power, her triumph over one so superior? Well might he say she had sunk in his estimation. Why did we not question her, instead of thus fondly trusting in her integrity? Emmeline, we have trusted our child too confidently, and thus our reliance is rewarded."

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Seldom, if ever, had Mrs. Hamilton seen her husband so disturbed; for some little time she remained with him, and succeeded partly in soothing his natural displeasure. She then left him to compose her own troubled and disappointed feelings ere she desired the presence of her child. Meanwhile, as the happy Emmeline went to prepare her little packet for her dear old nurse, the thought suddenly arose that St. Eval had sent his remembrances and adieus to Ellen only, he had not mentioned Caroline; and unsophisticated as she was, this struck her as something very strange, and she was not long in connecting this circumstance with his sudden departure. Wild, sportive, and innocent as Emmeline was, she yet possessed a depth of reflection and clearness of perception, which those who only knew her casually might not have expected. She had marked with extreme pleasure that which she believed the mutual attachment of St. Eval and her sister; and with her ready fancy ever at work, had indulged very often in airy visions, in which she beheld Caroline Countess St. Eval, and mistress of that beautiful estate in Cornwall, which she had heard Mrs. Hamilton say had been presented by the Marquis of Malvern to his son on his twenty-first birthday. Emmeline had indulged these fancies, and noticed the conduct of Caroline and St. Eval till she really believed their union would take place. She had been so delighted at the receipt of Mary's letter, that she had no time to remember the young Earl's departure; but when she was alone, that truth suddenly flashed across her mind, and another strange incident, though at the time she had not remarked it, when she had said as her brother she would remember him, he had repeated, with startling emphasis, "as her *friend*." "What could it all mean?" she thought. "Caroline cannot have rejected him? No, that is quite impossible. My sister would surely not be such a practised coquette. I must seek her and have the mystery solved. Surely she will be sorry St. Eval leaves us so soon."

Emmeline hastened first to Ellen, begging her to pack up the little packet for Mrs. Langford, for she knew such an opportunity would be as acceptable to her cousin as to herself; for Ellen never forgot the humble kindness and prompt attention she had received from the widow during her long and tedious illness; and by little offerings, and what the good woman still more valued, by a few kind and playful lines, which ever accompanied them, she endeavoured to prove her sense of Widow Langford's conduct.

In five minutes more Emmeline was in her sister's room. Caroline was partly dressed as if for a morning drive, and her attendant leaving just as her sister entered. She looked pale and more fatigued than usual, from the gaiety of the preceding night. Happy she certainly did not look, and forgetting in that sight the indignation which the very supposition of coquetry in her sister had excited, Emmeline gently approached her, and kissing her cheek, said fondly—

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"What is the matter, dear Caroline? You look ill, wearied, and even melancholy. Did you dance more than usual last night?"

"No," replied Caroline; "I believe not. I do not think I am more tired than usual. But what do you come for, Emmeline? Some reason must bring you here, for you are generally hard at work at this time of the day."

"My wits have been so disturbed by Mary's letter, that I have been unable to settle to anything," replied her sister, laughing; "and to add to their disturbance, I have just heard something so strange, that I could not resist coming to tell you."

"Of what nature?"

"St. Eval leaves London to-day for Castle Malvern, and next week quits England. Now is not that extraordinary?"

Caroline became suddenly flushed with crimson, which quickly receding, left her even paler than before.

"She is innocent," thought Emmeline. "She loves him. St. Eval must have behaved ill to her; and yet he certainly looked more sinned against than sinning."

"To-day: does he leave to-day?" Caroline said, at length, speaking, it appeared, with effort, and turning to avoid her sister's glance.

"In little more than an hour's time; but I am sorry I told you, dear Caroline, if the news has pained you."

"Pained me," repeated her sister, with returning haughtiness; "what can you mean, Emmeline? Lord St. Eval is nothing to me."

"Nothing!" repeated the astonished girl. "Caroline, you are incomprehensible. Why did you treat him with such marked attention if you cared nothing for him?"

"For a very simple reason; because it gave me pleasure to prove that it was in my power to do that for which other girls have tried in vain—compel the proud lordly St. Eval to bow to a woman's will." Pride had returned again. She felt the pleasure of triumphant power, and her eyes sparkled and her cheek again flushed, but with a different emotion to that she had felt before.

"Do you mean, then, that you have never loved him, and merely sported with his feelings, for your own amusement? Caroline, I will not believe it. You could not have acted with such cruelty; you do love him, but you reject my confidence. I do not ask you to confide in me, though I did hope I should have been your chosen friend; but I beseech, I implore you, Caroline, only to say that you are jesting. You do love him."

“You are mistaken, Emmeline, never more so in your life. I have refused his offered hand; if you wish my confidence on this subject, I give it you. As he is a favourite of yours, I do not doubt your preserving his secret inviolate. I might have been Countess of St. Eval, but my end was accomplished, and I dismissed my devoted cavalier.”

“And can you, dare you jest on such a subject?” exclaimed Emmeline, indignantly. “Is it possible you can have wilfully acted thus? sported with the feelings of such a man as St. Eval, laughed at his pain, called forth his love to gratify your desire of power? Caroline, shame on you!”

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"I am not in the habit of being schooled as to right and wrong by a younger sister, nor will I put up with it now, Emmeline. I never interfere with your conduct, and therefore you will, if you please, do the same with me. I am not responsible to you for my actions, nor shall I ever be," replied Caroline, with cold yet angry pride.

"But I will speak, when I know you have acted contrary to those principles mamma has ever endeavoured to instill into us both," replied Emmeline, still indignantly; "and you are and have been ever welcome to remonstrate with me. I am not so weak as I once was, fearful to speak my sentiments even when I knew them to be right. You have acted shamefully, cruelly, Caroline, and I will tell you what I think, angry as it may make you."

A haughty and contemptuous answer rose to Caroline's lips, but she was prevented giving it utterance by the entrance of Martyn, her mother's maid, with her lady's commands that Miss Hamilton should attend her in the boudoir.

"How provoking!" she exclaimed. "I expect Annie to call for me every minute, and mamma will perhaps detain me half an hour;" and most unwillingly she obeyed the summons.

"Annie," repeated Emmeline, when her sister had left the room, "Annie—this is her work; if my sister had not been thus intimate with her she never would have acted in this manner." And so disturbed was the gentle girl at this confirmation of her fears, that it was some little time before she could recover sufficient serenity to rejoin Ellen in arranging the widow's packet.

Mrs. Langford had the charge of Oakwood during the absence of the family, and Mrs. Hamilton, recollecting some affairs concerning the village schools she wished the widow to attend to, was writing her directions as Caroline entered, much to the latter's increased annoyance, as her mother's business with her would thus be retarded, and every minute drew the time of Annie's appointment nearer. She could scarcely conceal her impatience, and did venture to beg her mother to tell her what she required.

"Your attention, Caroline, for a time," she replied, so coldly, that her daughter felt instantly something was wrong, though what she guessed not, for she knew not that St. Eval had obtained the sanction of her parents for his addresses; and she little imagined he could have anything to do with the displeasure she saw so clearly marked.

"You will wait, if you please, till I have finished writing, as this cannot be delayed. Lord St. Eval leaves town in a very short time, and I send this by him."

"Lord St. Eval," thought Caroline, suddenly becoming alarmed, "surely mamma and papa know nothing of his offer."

A few minutes passed in silence, which was broken by the sound of carriage-wheels stopping at the door, and Robert almost instantly after entered with Miss Grahame's love, saying she could not wait a minute, and hoped Miss Hamilton was ready.

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"Miss Grahame!" repeated Mrs. Hamilton, in an accent of surprise, before Caroline had time to make any answer; "Caroline, why have you not mentioned this engagement? You do not generally make appointments without at least consulting me, if you no longer think it necessary to request my permission. Where are you going with Annie?"

"To Oxford Street, I believe," she answered carelessly, to conceal her rising indignation at this interference of her mother.

"If you require anything there, you can go with me by and bye. Robert, give my compliments to Miss Grahame, and say from me, Miss Hamilton is particularly engaged with me at present, and therefore cannot keep her engagement to-day. Return here as soon as you have delivered my message."

"Mother!" burst from Caroline's lips, in an accent of uncontrollable anger, as soon as the servant had left the room; but with a strong effort she checked herself, and hastily walked to the window.

An expression of extreme pain passed across her mother's features as she looked towards her, but she took no notice till Robert had returned, and had been dismissed with her note to be given to Emmeline to transmit with hers.

"Caroline," she then said, with dignity, yet perhaps less coldly than before, "if you will give me your attention for a short time, you will learn the cause of my displeasure, which is perhaps at present incomprehensible, unless, indeed, your own conscience has already reproached you; but before I commence on any other subject, I must request that you will make no more appointments with Miss Grahame without my permission. This is not the first time you have done so; I have not noticed it previously, because I thought your own good sense would have told you that you were acting wrong, and contrary to those principles of candour I believed you to possess."

"You were always prejudiced against Annie," answered Caroline, with rising anger, for she had quite determined not to sit silent while her mother spoke, cost what it might.

"I am not speaking of Annie, Caroline, but to you. The change in your conduct since you have become thus intimate with her, might indeed justify my prejudice, but on that I am not now dwelling. I do not consider Miss Malison a fit chaperon for my daughter, and therefore I desire you will not again join her in her drives."

"Every other girl of my station has the privilege of at least choosing her own companions without animadversion," replied Caroline, indignantly, "and in the simple thing of making appointments without interference it is hard that I alone am to be an exception."

"If you look around the circle in which I visit intimately, Caroline, you will find that did you act according to your own wishes, you would stand more alone than were you to regard

mine. I have done wrong in ever allowing you to be as intimate with Miss Grahame as you are. You looked surprised and angry when I mentioned the change that had taken place in your conduct.”

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"I had sufficient reason for surprise," replied Caroline, impatiently, "I was not aware that my character was so weak, as to turn and change with every new acquaintance."

"Are you then the same girl you were at Oakwood?" demanded Mrs. Hamilton, gravely yet sadly.

A sudden pang of conscience smote the heart of the mistaken girl at these words, a sob rose choking in her throat, and she longed to have given vent to the tears which pride, anger, and remorse were summoning, but she would not, and answered according to those evil whisperings, which before she had only indulged in secret.

"If I am changed," she answered passionately, "it is because neither you nor papa are the same. At Oakwood I was free, I had full liberty to act, speak, think as I pleased, while here a chain is thrown around my simplest action; my very words are turned into weapons against me; my friendship disapproved of, and in that at least surely I may have liberty to choose for myself."

"You have," replied Mrs. Hamilton mildly. "I complain not, Caroline, of the pain you have inflicted upon me, in so completely withdrawing your confidence and friendship, to bestow them upon a young girl. I control not your affection, but it is my duty, and I will obey it, to warn you when I see your favourite companion likely to lead you wrong. Had your every thought and feeling been open to my inspection as at Oakwood, would you have trifled as you have with the most sacred feelings of a fellow-creature? would you have called forth love by every winning art, by marked preference to reject it, when acknowledged, with scorn, with triumph ill concealed? would you have sported thus with a heart whose affections would do honour to the favoured one on whom they were bestowed? would you have cast aside in this manner all that integrity and honour I hoped and believed were your own? Caroline, you have disappointed and deceived your parents; you have blighted their fondest hopes, and destroyed, sinfully destroyed, the peace of a noble, virtuous, excellent young man, who loved you with all the deep fervour of an enthusiastic soul. To have beheld him your husband would have fulfilled every wish, every hope entertained by your father and myself. I would have intrusted your happiness to his care without one doubt arising within me; and you have spurned his offer, rejected him without reason, without regret, without sympathy for his wounded and disappointed feelings, without giving him one hope that in time his affection might be returned. Caroline, why have you thus decidedly rejected him? what is there in the young man you see to bid you tremble for your future happiness?"

Caroline answered not; she had leaned her arms on the cushion of the couch, and buried her face upon them, while her mother spoke, and Mrs. Hamilton in vain waited for her reply.

“Caroline,” she continued, in a tone of such appealing affection, it seemed strange that it touched not the heart of her child, “Caroline, I will not intrude on your confidence, but one question I must ask, and I implore you to answer me truly—do you love another?”

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Still Caroline spoke not, moved not. Her mother continued, "If you do, why should you hide it from me, your own mother, Caroline? You believe my conduct changed towards you, but you have condemned me without proof. You have abandoned my sympathy—shrunk from my love. Try me now, my sweet child; if you love another, confess it, and we will do what we can to make that love happy; if it be returned, why should you conceal it? and if it be not, Caroline, my child, will you refuse even the poor comfort your mother can bestow?"

She spoke in vain; but could she have read her daughter's heart at that moment, maternal affection might not have been so deeply pained as it was by this strange silence. Regret, deep, though unavailing, had been Caroline's portion, from the moment she had reflected soberly on her rejection of St. Eval. She recalled his every word, his looks of respectful yet ardent admiration, and she wept at that infatuation which had bade her act as she had done; and then his look of controlled contempt stung her to the quick. He meant not, perhaps, that his glance should have so clearly denoted that she had sunk in his estimation, it did not at the moment, but it did when in solitude she recalled it, and she felt that she deserved it. In vain in those moments did she struggle to call up the vision of Lord Alphingham, his words of love, his looks of even more fervid passion, his image would not rise to banish that of St. Eval; and if Caroline had not still been blinded by the influence and arguments of Annie, had she given her own good sense one half-hour's uncontrolled dominion, she would have discovered, that if love had secretly and unsuspectingly entered her heart, it was not for Lord Alphingham. Had she really loved him, she could not have resisted the fond appeal of her mother; but to express in words all the confused and indefinable emotions then filling her heart was impossible. She continued for several minutes silent, and Mrs. Hamilton felt too deeply pained and disappointed to speak again. Her daughter had spoken to her that morning as she had seldom done even in her childhood. Then her mother could look forward to years of reason and maturity for the improvement of those errors; now others had arisen, and if her control were once so entirely thrown aside, could she ever regain sufficient influence to lead her right. Seldom had Caroline's conduct given her so much pain as in the disclosures and events of that morning.

"Is it absolutely necessary," Caroline at length said, summoning, as her aunt Eleanor had often done, pride to drown the whisperings of conscience, "that I must love another, because I rejected Lord St. Eval? In such an important step as marriage, I should imagine my own inclinations were the first to be consulted. It would be strange indeed, if, after all I have heard you say on the evil of forcing young women to marry, that you should compel your own child to accept the first offer she received."

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"You do me injustice, Caroline," replied her mother, controlling with an effort natural displeasure; "St. Eval would not accept an unwilling bride, nor after what has passed would your father and myself deem you worthy to become his wife."

"Then long may this paragon of excellence remain away," replied Caroline, with indignant haughtiness kindling in every feature. "I have no wish ever to associate again with one by whose side I am deemed so unworthy, even by my parents."

"Those who love you best, Caroline, are ever the first to behold and deplore your faults. Have you acted honourably? have you done worthily in exciting love merely to give pain, to amuse and gratify your own love of power?"

"I have done no more than other girls do with impunity, without even notice; and surely that which is so generally practised cannot demand such severe censure as you bestow on it."

"And therefore you would make custom an excuse for sin, Caroline. Would you have spoken thus a few months since? would you have questioned the justice of your mother's sentences? and yet you say you are not changed. Is it any excuse for a wrong action, because others do it? Had you been differently instructed it might be, but not when from your earliest years I have endeavoured to reason with, and to convince you of the sin of coquetry, to which from a child you have been inclined. You have acted more sinfully than many whose coquetry has been more general. You devoted yourself to one alone, encouraged, flattered, because you saw he was already attracted, instead of adhering to that distant behaviour which would have at once told him you could feel no more for him than as a friend. You would have prevented future suffering, by banishing from the first all secret hopes; but no, you wished to prove you could accomplish more than others, by captivating one so reserved and superior as St. Eval. Do not interrupt me by a denial, Caroline, for you dare not deliberately say such was not your motive. That noble integrity which I have so long believed your own, you have exiled from your heart. Your entire conduct towards St. Eval has been one continued falsehood, and are you then worthy to be united to one who is truth, honour, nobleness itself? Had you loved another, your rejection of this young man might have been excused, but not your behaviour towards him; for that not one good reason can be brought forward in excuse. I am speaking severely, Caroline, and perhaps my every word may alienate your confidence and affection still farther from me; but my duty shall be done, painful as it may be both to yourself and me. I cannot speak tamely on a subject in which the future character and welfare of my child are concerned. I can no longer trust in your integrity. Spite of your change in manner and in feeling towards me, I still confided in your unsullied honour; that I can no longer do, you have forfeited my confidence, Caroline, and not until I see a total change of conduct

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can you ever hope to regain it. That perhaps will not grieve you, as it would once have done; but unless you redeem your character," she continued "the serious displeasure of both your father and myself will be yours, and we shall, in all probability, find some means of withdrawing you from the society which has been so injurious to the purity of your character. Whatever others may do, it is your duty to act according to the principles of your parents, and not to those of others; and therefore, for the future, I desire you will abide by my criterion of right and wrong, and not by the misleading laws of custom. When you have conquered the irritation and anger which my words have occasioned, you may perhaps agree to the justice of what I have said, till then I do not expect it; but whether your reason approves of it or not, I desire your implicit obedience. If you have anything you desire to do, you may leave me, Caroline, I do not wish to detain you any longer."

In silence, too sullen to give any hope of a repentant feeling or judgment, convinced, Caroline had listened to her mother's words. They were indeed unusually severe; but her manner from the beginning of that interview could not have lessened the displeasure which she already felt. We have known Mrs. Hamilton from the commencement of her career, when as a girl not older than Caroline herself, she mingled with the world, and we cannot fail to have perceived her detestation of the fashionable sin of coquetry. The remembrance of Eleanor and all the evils she entailed upon herself by the indulgence of that sinful fault, were still vividly acute, and cost what it might, both to herself and, who was dearer still, her child, she would do her duty, and endeavour to turn her from the evil path. She saw that Caroline was in no mood for gentle words and tenderness to have any effect, and therefore, though at variance as it was to her nature, she spoke with some severity and her usual unwavering decision. She could read no promise of amendment or contrition in those haughty and sullen features, but she urged no more, for it might only exasperate and lead her farther from conviction.

For some few minutes Caroline remained in that same posture. Evil passions of varied nature suddenly appeared to gain ascendancy in that innately noble heart, and prevented all expressions that might have soothed her mother's solicitude. Hastily rising, without a word, she abruptly left the room, and retired to her own, where she gave vent to a brief but passionate flood of tears, but they cooled not the fever of her brain; her haughty spirit revolted from her mother's just severity.

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“To be scolded, threatened, desired to obey, like a child, an infant; what girl of my age would bear it tamely? Well might Annie say I was a slave, not permitted to act or even think according to my own discretion; well might she say no other mother behaved to her daughters as mine; to be kept in complete thralldom; to be threatened, if I do not behave better, to be removed from the scenes I so much love, buried again at home I suppose; is it a wonder I am changed? Is it strange that I should no longer feel for mamma as formerly? and even Emmeline must condemn me, call me to account for my actions, and my intimacy with Annie is made a subject of reproach; but if I do not see her as often as before, I can write, thank heaven, and at least her sympathy and affection will be mine.”

Such was the tenor of her secret thoughts, and she followed them up by writing to her friend a lengthened and heightened description of all that had occurred that morning, dwelling long and indignantly on what she termed the cruel and unjust severity of her mother, and imploring, as such confidential letters generally did, Annie's secrecy and sympathy. The epistle was despatched, and quickly answered, in a style which, as might be imagined, increased all Caroline's feelings of indignation towards her parents, and bade her rely still more confidingly on her false friend, who, she taught herself to believe, was almost the only person who really cared for her best interests.

Days passed, but neither Mr. nor Mrs. Hamilton changed in the coldness of their manner towards their child. Perhaps such conduct added fire to the already resentful girl; but surely they might be pardoned for acting as they did. Caroline's irritability increased, and Annie's secret letters were ever at hand to soothe while they excited. She ever endeavoured to turn her friend's attention from what she termed her severe trials to the devotion felt towards her by Lord Alphingham, declaring that each interview confirmed more and more her belief in his passionate admiration. The evil influence which Miss Grahame's letters had upon the mind of Caroline in her private hours, was apparent in her manner to Lord Alphingham, when they chanced to meet, but even more guarded than she had hitherto been, did Caroline become in her behaviour towards him when her parents were present. Their conduct had confirmed, to her heated and mistaken fancy, Annie's representation of their unjustifiable severity, and that, indignant at her rejection of St. Eval, they would unhesitatingly refuse their consent to her acceptance of the Viscount. Caroline thought not to ask herself how then is my intimacy with him to end? She only enjoyed the present as much as she could, while the coldness of her parents, amidst all her pride and boasted stoicism, still tortured her; and to the future Annie as yet completely prevented her looking. Miss Grahame's plans appeared indeed to thrive, and many were the confidential and

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triumphant conversations she held upon the subject with Miss Malison, who became more and more indignant at Mrs. Hamilton's intrusive conduct in taking so much notice of Lilla, notwithstanding the tales industriously circulated against her. Her own severity and malevolence, however, appeared about to become her foes; for about this time a slight change with regard to the happiness of her injured pupil took place, which threatened to banish her from Mr. Grahame's family.

One morning Mrs. Hamilton, accompanied by Ellen, called on Lady Helen rather earlier than usual, but found their friend not yet visible, an attack of indisposition confining her to her couch later than usual, but Lady Helen sending to entreat her friend not to leave her house without seeing her, Mrs. Hamilton determined on waiting. Annie had gone out with Miss Malison.

"No wonder our poor Lilla proceeds but slowly in her education," remarked Mrs. Hamilton, when the footman gave her this information. "If she be so much neglected, her father has no right to expect much progress. I wish from my heart that I could think of some plan that would tend not only to the happiness of this poor girl, but in the end to that of her father also. Were those faults now apparent in her character judiciously removed, I feel confident Mr. Grahame would have more comfort in her than in either of his other children."

"She is always very different when she is with us," observed Ellen. "I can never discover those evil passions of which so many accuse her; passionate she is, but that might be controlled."

"It never can be while Miss Malison remains with her, for her treatment is such that each year but increases the evil." A sound as of some one sobbing violently in the adjoining room interrupted their conversation. Fancying it came from the object of their conversation, Mrs. Hamilton opened the folding-doors, and discovered her young friend weeping violently, almost convulsively, on the sofa. Ever alive to sorrow, of whatever nature or at whatever age, Mrs. Hamilton, followed by Ellen, hastened towards her.

"What has happened, Lilla?" she said, soothingly. "What has chanced to call forth this violent grief? tell me, my love. You know you need not hesitate to trust me with your sorrows."

Unused, save from that one dear friend, to hear the voice of sympathy and kindness, Lilla flung her arms passionately round her neck, and clung to her for some few minutes till her choking sobs permitted her to speak.

“Aunt Augusta says I am so wicked, so very wicked, that mamma ought not to keep me at home, that I am not at all too old to go to school, and mamma says that I shall go—and—and”—

“But what occasioned your aunt to advise such an alternative?” demanded Mrs. Hamilton, gently.

“Oh, because—because I know I was very wicked, but I could not help it. Miss Malison had been tormenting me all the morning, and exciting my anger; and then Annie chose to do all she could to call it forth before mamma, and so I just told her what I thought of both her and her amiable confidant. I hate them both,” she continued, with a vehemence even the presence of Mrs. Hamilton could not restrain, “and I wish from my heart I could never see them more.”

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"If you gave vent to such sinful words before your mother," replied Mrs. Hamilton, gravely, "I do not wonder at your aunt's suggesting what she did. How often have I entreated you to leave the room when your sister commences her unkind endeavours to excite your anger, and thus give your mother a proof of your consideration for her present state of health, and evince to your sister, that if you cannot calmly listen to her words, you can at least avoid them."

"Mamma never takes any notice, however much I may endeavour to please her; if she would only caress me, and praise me sometimes, I know I should be a very different girl. Then I could bear all Annie's cruel words; but I will not, I will never put up with them, and permit either her or Miss Malison to govern me and chain down my spirit, as they try all they can to do. No one can ever know the constant ill-treatment which I receive from both; everything I do, every word I speak, is altered to suit their purpose, and mamma believes all they say. They shall feel my power one day when they least expect it. I will not be made so constantly miserable unrevenged."

"Lilla, dear Lilla," exclaimed Ellen, imploringly, "do not speak thus; you do not know what you say. You would not return evil for evil, and on your sister. Do not, pray do not let your anger, however just, obtain so much dominion."

"Annie never treats me as a sister, and I do not see why I should practise such forbearance towards her; but I will do all I can, indeed I will, if you will persuade papa not to send me from home. Oh, do not look at me so gravely and sadly, dearest, dearest Mrs. Hamilton," continued the impetuous and misguided but naturally right feeling child.

"I can bear any one's displeasure but yours; but when you look displeased with me I feel so very, very wretched. I know I deserve to lose all your kindness, for I never follow your advice; I deserve that you should hate me, as every one else does; but you do not know all I have to endure. Oh! do not let me go from home."

"I cannot persuade your father to let you remain at home, my dear girl," replied Mrs. Hamilton, drawing her young companion closer to her, and speaking with soothing tenderness, "because I agree with your aunt in thinking it would be really the best thing for you."

"Then I have lost every hope," exclaimed the impatient girl, clasping her hands despairingly. "Papa would never have consented, if you had advised him not, and you, you must think me as wicked as aunt Augusta does;" and the tears she had checked now burst violently forth anew.

"You mistake me, my love, quite mistake me; it is not because I believe you are not fitted to associate with your domestic circle. I believe if she were but properly encouraged, my little Lilla would add much to the comfort of both her parents; and I do

not at all despair of seeing that the case. But at present I must advise your leaving home for a few years, because I really do think it would add much to your happiness."

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"Happiness!" repeated Lilla, in an accent of extreme surprise. "School bring happiness?"

"Are you happy at home, my love? is not your life at present one continued scene of wretchedness? What is it that you so much dislike in the idea of school?"

"The control, the subordination, the irksome formula of lessons, prim governesses, satirical scholars." Neither Mrs. Hamilton nor Ellen could prevent a smile.

"If such things are all you dread, my dear, I have no fear of soon overcoming them," the former said, playfully. "I will do all I can to persuade your father not to send you to a large fashionable seminary, where such things may be the case; but I know a lady who lives at Hampstead, and under whose kind guidance I am sure you will be happy, much more so than you are now. If you would only think calmly on the subject, I am sure you would agree in all I urge."

"But no one treats me as a reasonable person at home. If mamma sends me to school, it will not be for my happiness, but because everybody thinks me so wicked, there is no managing me at home; and then in the holidays I shall hear nothing but the wonderful improvement school discipline has made, it will be no credit to my own efforts, and so there will be no pleasure in making any."

"Will there be no pleasure in making your father happy, Lilla? Will his approbation be nothing?"

"But he never praises me; I am too much afraid of him to go and caress him, as I often wish to do, and tell him if he will only call me his dear Lilla, I would be good and gentle, and learn all he desires. If he would but let me love him I should be much happier than I am."

Mrs. Hamilton thought so too; and deeply she regretted that mistaken sternness which had so completely alienated the affections of his child. Soothingly she answered—

"But your father dearly loves you, Lilla, though, perhaps your violent conduct has of late prevented his showing it. If you were, for his sake, to become gentle and amiable, and overcome your fears of his sternness, believe me, my dear Lilla, you would be rendering him and yourself much happier. You always tell me you believe everything I say. Suppose you trust in my assertion, and try the experiment; and if you want a second voice on my side, I appear to your friend Ellen for her vote as to the truth of what I say."

Mrs. Hamilton spoke playfully, and Ellen answered in the same spirit. Lilla's passionate tears had been checked by the kind treatment she received, and in a softened mood she answered—

“But I cannot become so while Miss Malison has anything to do with me. I cannot bear her treatment gently. Papa does not know all I have to endure with her.”

“And therefore do I so earnestly wish you would consent to my persuading your father to let you go to Hampstead,” answered Mrs. Hamilton, gently.

“But then papa will not think it is for his sake I endeavour to correct my faults; he will say it is the school, and not my own efforts; and if I go, I shall never, never see you, nor go to dear Moorlands, for I shall be away while papa and mamma are there; away from everybody I love. Oh, that would not make me happy!” and clinging to Mrs. Hamilton, the really affectionate girl again burst into tears.

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"What am I to urge in reply to these very weighty objections, my dear Lilla?" replied Mrs. Hamilton. "In the first place, your father shall know that every conquest you make is for his sake; he shall not think you were forced to submission. In the next, compulsion is not in my friend's system, and as I am very intimate with Mrs. Douglas, I shall very often come and see you when I am in town, your midsummer holidays will also occur during that time: and, lastly, if your papa and mamma will consent, you shall see Moorlands every year; for I shall ask Mr. Grahame to bring you with him in his annual Christmas visit to his estate, and petition that he will leave you behind him to spend the whole of your winter vacation with me and Ellen at Oakwood. Now, are all objections waived, or has my very determined opponent any more to bring forward?"

Lilla did not answer, but she raised her head from her kind friend's shoulder, and pushing back the disordered locks of her bright hair, looked up in her face as if no more sorrow could be her portion.

"Oh, I would remain at school a whole year together, if I might spend my vacation at Oakwood with you, and Ellen, and Emmeline, and all!" she exclaimed, with a glee as wild and childish as all her former emotion had been. Lady Helen at that instant entered, and after languidly greeting Mrs. Hamilton and Ellen, exclaimed—

"For heaven's sake, Lilla, go away! your appearance is enough to frighten any one. I should be absolutely ashamed of you, if any friend were to come in unexpectedly. Perhaps you may choose to obey me now that Mrs. Hamilton is present; she little knows what a trouble you are at home," she continued, languidly.

The flush of passion again mounted to Lilla's cheek, but Ellen, taking her arm, entreated to go with her, and they left the room together, while Lady Helen amused her friend by a long account of her domestic misfortunes, the insolence of her upper domestics, the heedlessness of her elder, and the fearful passions of her younger daughter, even the carelessness of her husband's manner towards her, notwithstanding her evidently declining health, all these and similar sorrows were poured into the sympathising ear of Mrs. Hamilton, and giving clearer and clearer evidence of Lady Helen's extreme and increasing weakness of mind and character.

Great, indeed, was the astonishment of this indolent mother when Mrs. Hamilton urged the necessity of sending Lilla to school. Without accusing Miss Malison of any want of judgment, she was yet enabled to work on Lady Augusta Denhain's words, and prove the good effects that a removal from home for a few years might produce on Lilla's character.

Lady Augusta's advice had been merely remembered during that lady's presence, but seconded as it now was by the earnest pleadings of Mrs. Hamilton, she determined on rousing herself sufficiently to put it in force, if her husband consented; but to obtain his approbation was a task too terrible for her nerves, and she entreated Mrs. Hamilton to

Speak with him on the subject. Willingly she consented, only requesting that Lady Helen would not mention her intentions either to Annie or Miss Malison till her husband had been consulted, and to this Lady Helen willingly consented, for in secret she dreaded Miss Malison's lamentations and reproaches, when this arrangement should be known.

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When Mr. Grahame, in compliance with Mrs. Hamilton's message, called on her the following morning, and heard the cause of his summons, his surprise almost equalled that of his wife. He knew her dislike to the plan of sending girls to school, however it might be in vogue; and almost in terror he asked if she proposed this scheme because the evil character of his child required some such desperate expedient. It was easy to prove to him such was very far from her meaning. She spoke more openly on the character of Lilla than she had yet done, for she thought their long years of intimacy demanded candour on her part; and each year, while it increased the evil of Lilla's present situation heightened her earnest desire to draw the father and child more closely together. She did not palliate her faults, but she proved that they were increased by the constant contradiction and irritation which she had to encounter. She repeated all that had passed between them the preceding day, unconsciously and cautiously condemning Grahame's excessive sternness, by relating, almost verbatim, Lilla's simply expressed wish that her father would let her love him.

She gained her point. The softened and agitated father felt self-condemned as she proceeded; and earnestly implored her to give him one more proof of her friendship, by recommending him some lady under whose care he could with safety place his erring, yet naturally noble-minded and warm-hearted child. A fashionable seminary, he was sure, would do her more harm than good, and he listened with eagerness to Mrs. Hamilton's description of Mrs. Douglas. The widow of a naval officer, who had for several years been in the habit of educating ten young ladies of the highest rank, and she mentioned one or two who had been her pupils, whose worth and mental endowments were well known to Grahame.

"Do not be guided entirely by me on a subject so important," she said, after recalling those families to his mind, whose daughters had been placed there; "make inquiries of all who know Mrs. Douglas, and see her yourself before you quite decide. That I have a very high opinion of her is certain; but I should be sorry if you were to place Lilla with her upon my advice alone, when, in all probability," she added, with a smile, "you will find all Lady Helen's family opposed to the arrangement."

"As they have never guided me right when they have interfered with my children, their approbation or disapproval will have little weight in my determination," answered Grahame. "You have awakened me to a sense of my duty, Mrs. Hamilton, for which I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude. With too much reliance upon the opinions of others I have regarded the many tales brought against my poor child, and now I see how greatly her faults have been occasioned by mistaken treatment. I thought once I could never have parted with a daughter for school, but now I see it will be a kindness to do so; and pain me as it will, now I know that I may in time win her affections, your advice shall be followed."

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"You must consent to part with her for one vacation also," replied Mrs. Hamilton, playfully. "I have promised, in answer to her weighty objection that she shall never see Moorlands again, to persuade you to let her spend Christmas at Oakwood. You must consent, or I shall teach Lilla a lesson of rebellion, and carry her off from Mrs. Douglas by force."

"Willingly, gratefully," exclaimed Mr. Grahame.

"And you will promise me to permit her to love you, to use her own simple affectionate words before she leaves you; you will not terrify her by the cold sternness you frequently manifest towards her, and prove that you take sufficient interest in her, to love her more for every conquest she makes."

"Faithfully, faithfully I promise, my kind friend."

"Then I am satisfied," replied Mrs. Hamilton, her countenance glowing with benevolent pleasure. "I shall, I trust, one day succeed in making my little Lilla happy, and thus add to the comfort of her parents. We are old friends, Mr. Grahame," she added, "and therefore I do not hesitate to express the pleasure you have given me by thus promising to think upon my advice. I began to fear that you would be displeased at my interference, deeming my advice impertinent and needless. I have endeavoured to impress upon Lilla the necessity of a temporary absence from home, and have in part succeeded; and having Lady Helen's sanction to speak with you, I could hesitate no longer."

"Nor do I hesitate one moment to act upon your disinterested advice, my dear friend. Your word is enough; but as you so earnestly wish it, I will this very hour seek those of my friends who are acquainted with Mrs. Douglas. I must leave Lilla to express her gratitude for her father and herself."

Mrs. Hamilton was soon placed at rest regarding the destination of her young friend. There was not a dissenting voice as to Mrs. Douglas's worth, one general opinion of satisfaction prevailed; but the most gratifying tribute Grahame felt, was the affection and esteem which her former pupils still fondly encouraged towards her. Thus prepossessed, her appearance and manners did much to strengthen his resolve, and Grahame now felt armed for all encounters with those who, presuming on their near relationship to his wife, would bring forward numberless objections to his plans; but he was agreeably mistaken. Lilla was looked upon by them all as such an evil-minded, ill-informed girl, that it signified little where she was placed, as she generally brought discredit on all who had anything to do with her. Miss Malison, however, excited their sympathy, and Annie declared it was a shameful and dishonourable thing to dismiss her without notice, after so many years of devoted service to their family. Poor Lady Helen had to encounter the storm of upbraiding from her daughter, and the tears and sobs of the governess, at the ill-treatment she received. In vain Lady Helen accepted her

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protestations that she had done her duty; that she was sure all that could be done for Miss Lilla had been done. Annie declared that, though her services were no longer required for her ungrateful sister, she could not do without Miss Malison, for her mother's health seldom permitted her to walk or drive out. She should absolutely die of *ennui* without some one to act in those cases as her chaperon. In this she was ably seconded by all her mother's family, whose *protegee* Miss Malison had long been, and, against his better judgment, Grahame at length consented that Miss Malison should remain in his family till she should get another situation as finishing governess. This, of course, Miss Grahame had determined should not be for some little time.

Mrs. Hamilton had been particularly cautious, in her interview with Mr. Grahame, not to speak any word for or against Miss Malison; perhaps had she said what she really thought, even this concession would not have been made.

Mr. Grahame's fixed and sudden determination to send Lilla to school was, of course, laid by Annie and her confidant to Mrs. Hamilton's charge, and increased not a little their prejudice against her, adding fresh incentive to their schemes for the destruction of her peace, which Caroline's self-willed conduct now rendered even more easy than it had previously been.

When all was arranged, when it was decidedly settled that Lilla should join Mrs. Douglas's establishment at the conclusion of the midsummer vacation, her father quietly entered the study where she was alone, to give her this information, and his really fond heart could not gaze on her without admiration. She was now nearly fifteen, though in looks, manners, and conversation, from being kept under such continual restraint, she always appeared at first sight very much younger. Childlike in every movement, even her impetuosity might have aided the deception; and Lady Helen herself had so often indolently answered questions concerning her daughter's age, she believed she was about twelve or thirteen, that at length she really believed it was so. It was Annie and Miss Malison's interest to preserve this illusion; for were she recognised as fifteen, many privileges might have been acceded to her, very much at variance with their interest. Annie had no desire for a rival to present herself, which, had her sister appeared in public, would undoubtedly have been the case; Lilla gave promise of beauty, which, though not perhaps really so perfect as Annie's, would certainly have attracted fully as much notice. She was drawing a tiny wreath of brilliant flowers on a small portfolio, which she was regarding with a complacency that added brilliancy to her animated features. At her father's well-known step she looked up in some little terror, and rose, as was her custom whenever she first saw him in the morning; her fear could not check the sparkling lustre of her eye, and Grahame, taking her hand, said kindly—

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"I have some news for my little girl, which I trust will prove as agreeable as I have every reason to hope they may. Mrs. Douglas will gladly consent to receive my Lilla as an inmate of her happy family."

The flush of animation, the sparkling lustre of her eye faded on the instant, and she turned away.

"Why, our kind friend, Mrs. Hamilton, bade me hope this would be pleasing intelligence; has she deceived me, love?" continued her father, drawing her with such unwonted tenderness to him, that, after a glance of bewilderment, she flung her arms round his neck, and for the first time in her life wept passionately on her father's shoulder.

"Can it be pleasure to hear I am to go from you and mamma?" she exclaimed, clinging to him with all the passionate warmth of her nature, and forgetting all her terror in that one moment of uncontrolled feeling. Her simple words confirmed at once all that Mrs. Hamilton had said in her favour, and the now gratified father seated her, as he would a little child, on his knee, and with affectionate caresses gradually soothed her to composure. Long did they converse together, and from that moment Lilla's happiness commenced. She could not at once lose her dread of her father's sternness, but the slightest hint from him was enough; and frequently, as Grahame felt her affectionate manner, would he wonder he had been blind to her character so long. The idea of school lost its repugnance. Her father's kindness enabled her to keep her determination, to prove, by the indulgence of the highest spirits, that going to school, instead of being a punishment, as her aunt Augusta intended it to be, was a privilege and a pleasure. That she was accused of want of feeling she little heeded, now that her father invited and encouraged her affection. Lady Helen wondered at her change of manner, but indolence and the prejudice constantly instilled by Annie and Miss Malison, prevented all indulgence of more kindly feelings. As things remained in this state for some weeks in Mr. Grahame's establishment, we will now return to Mr. Hamilton's family.

It was about this time, some three or four weeks before the end of the Oxford term, that letters arrived from Percy and Herbert, containing matters of interesting information, and others which caused some anxiety in the breast of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton. On the first subject both the brothers wrote, so deeply interested had they become in it. Among the servitors or free scholars of their college was a young man, whom they had frequently noticed the last year, but never recollected having seen before. He shrunk, as it appeared in sensitiveness from every eye, kept aloof from all companions, as if he felt himself above those who held the same rank in the University. Herbert's gentle and quickly sympathising heart had ever felt pained, when he first went to college, to see the broad distinction made between the servitors and other collegians. He felt it pain to see

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them, as, in their plain gowns and caps, they stood or sat apart from their brother students at their meals, but perceiving by degrees they were all happy in their rank, being, in general, sons of the poorer and less elevated classes of society, happy to obtain an excellent education free of expense, he had conquered these feelings, and imagined justly that they were, in all probability, indifferent to the distinction of rank. But one amongst them had recalled all these kindly sentiments, not only in the heart of Herbert but in that of Percy, who was in general too reckless to regard matters so minutely as his brother. The subject of their notice was a young man, perhaps some two or three years older than the heir of Oakwood, but with an expression of melancholy, which frequently amounted almost to anguish, ever stamped on his high and thoughtful brow, and his large, searching, dark grey eye. He was pale, but it appeared more from mental suffering than disease, and at times there was a proud even a haughty curl on his lip, that might have whispered he had seen better days. He was never observed to be familiar with his brother servitors, and shrunk with proud humility from the notice of his superiors. The servile offices exacted from those of his degree were performed with scrupulous exactness, but Herbert frequently beheld at such times a flush of suffering mount into his cheek, and when his task was done, he would fold his arms in his gown, and drop his head upon them, as if his spirit revolted in agony from its employment. The other servitors were fond of aping their superiors, by a studied affectation of similar dress and manner, but this young man was never once seen to alter his plain even coarse costume, and kept aloof from all appearance that would assimilate him with those above him; and yet he was their laughing-stock, the butt against which the pointed arrows of scorn, contumely, ridicule, and censure were ever hurled, with a malevolence that appeared strange to the benevolent hearts of the young Hamiltons, who vainly endeavoured to check the public torrent. "He was not always as he is now, and then, poor Welshman as he *is*, he always lorded it over us, and we will requite him now," was the only reply they obtained; but the first sentence touched a chord in Herbert's heart. Misfortune might have reduced him to the rank he now held, and perhaps he struggled vainly to teach his spirit submission; but how could he obtain his friendship, in what manner succeed in introducing himself. Herbert was naturally too reserved to make advances, however inclination prompted, and some months passed in inactivity, though the wish to know him, and by kindness remove his despondency, became more and more powerful to the brothers.

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A side attack one day on the young Welshman, made with unwonted and bitter sarcasm by an effeminate and luxurious scion of nobility, roused the indignation of Percy. Retorting haughtily on the defensive, a regular war of tongues took place. The masterly eloquence of Percy carried the day, and he hoped young Myrvin was free from all further attacks. He was mistaken: another party, headed by the defeated but enraged Lord, who had been roused to a state of fury by young Hamilton's appearance, surrounded the unhappy young man in the college court, and preventing all egress, heaped every sarcastic insult upon him, words that could not fail to sting his haughty spirit to the quick. Myrvin's eye flashed with sudden and unwonted lustre, and ere Herbert, who with his brother had hastily joined the throng, could prevent it, he had raised his arm and felled his insulting opponent to the ground. A wild uproar ensued, the civil officers appeared, and young Myrvin was committed, under the charge of wilfully, and without provocation, attacking the person of the right honourable Marquis of —.

The indignation of Percy and Herbert was now at its height; and without hesitation the former sought the principal of his college, and in a few brief but emphatic sentences placed the whole affair before him in its true light, condemning with much feeling the cowardly and cruel conduct of the true aggressors, and so convinced the worthy man of the injustice done towards the person of young Myrvin, that he was instantly released, with every honour that could soothe his troubled feelings, and a severe reprimand bestowed on the real authors of the affray.

Percy pursued his advantage; the noble heart of the young Welshman was touched by this generous interference in his behalf, and when the brothers followed him in his solitary walk the following day, he resisted them not. Gratefully he acknowledged the debt he owed them, confessed he would rather have received such a benefit from them than from any others in the college, and at length, unable to resist the frankly proffered friendship of Percy, the silent entreaty of Herbert, he grasped with convulsive pressure their offered hands, and promised faithfully he would avoid them no more. From that hour the weight of his reverses was less difficult to bear. In the society, the conversation of Herbert, he forgot his cares; innate nobleness was visible in Myrvin's every thought, act, and word, and he became dear indeed to the soul of Herbert Hamilton, even as a brother he loved him. Warm, equally warm perhaps, was the mutual regard of Myrvin and Percy, though the latter was not formed for such deep unchanging emotion evinced in the character of his brother. But it was not until some time after the commencement of their friendship that Herbert could elicit from his companion the history of his former life.

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It was simply this:—Arthur Myrvin was the only child of the rector of Llangwillan, a small village in Wales, about ten or twelve miles from Swansea. The living was not a rich one, but its emoluments enabled Mr. Myrvin to live in comparative affluence and comfort; beloved, revered by his parishioners, enabled to do good, to bestow happiness, to impart the knowledge of the Christian faith, he beheld his flock indeed walking in the paths of their Heavenly Shepherd. He had been enabled by the economy of years to save sufficient to place his son respectably and comfortably at college, and it was with no little pride he looked forward to the time when those savings would be used for their long-destined purpose. Arthur had grown beneath his eye; he had never left his father's roof, and Mr. Myrvin trusted had imbibed principles that would preserve him from the temptations of college life, and so strong was this hope, that he parted from his son without one throb of fear.

The sudden change in his life was, however, too tempting an ordeal for the young man. He associated with those above him both in rank and fortune, who leading him into their extravagant follies, quickly dissipated his allowance, which, though ample, permitted not extravagance. About this time the noble proprietor of the Llangwillan parish died, and its patronage fell to the disposal of a gay and dissipated young man, who succeeded to the large estates. Inordinately selfish, surrounded by ready flatterers, eager of gain, he was a complete tyrant in his domains.

The excessive beauty and fertility of Llangwillan, the industry and simple habits of the inhabitants, excited the desire of possessing it in the mind of one of these humble sycophants, and his point was very speedily gained. Justice and humanity were alike banished from the code of laws now in action, and, without preparation or excuse, Mr. Myrvin was desired to quit that parish which had been his so long. His incumbency expired with the death of the proprietor, and it had been already disposed of. The grief of the old man and his humble friends was long and deep; it was not openly displayed, the lessons of their beloved pastor had too well instructed them in the duty of resignation; but aged cheeks were wet with unwonted tears, and mingled with the sobs of childhood. Men, women, youth, and little children alike wept, when their pastor departed from the village. He who had been the shepherd of his flock so long, was now cast aside as a worthless thing, and the old man's heart was wellnigh broken. In a rude cot, forced on his acceptance by a wealthy parishioner, situated some eight or ten miles from the scene of his happiness, he took up his abode, and to him would the villagers still throng each Sabbath, as formerly to the humble church, and old Myrvin, in the midst of his own misfortunes, found time to pray for that misguided and evil-directed man who had succeeded him in his ministry, and brought down shame on his profession, and utterly destroyed the peace which Llangwillan had enjoyed so long.

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Resignation by degrees spread over Myrvin's mind, but the conduct of his son caused him fresh anxiety. The news of the change in his father's life awakened Arthur from his lethargy; he saw the folly, the imprudence of which he had been guilty; his father could no longer support him at college. In three years he had squandered away that which, with economy, would have served as maintenance for ten, and now he must leave the college, or do that from which at first his very soul revolted; but the image of his father, his injured father, rose before him. He could not inflict upon him a disappointment so severe as his departure from college would be. He would yet atone for his folly, and fulfil his father's long-cherished hopes, and without consulting him, in a moment of desperation, he sought the resident head of the University, and imparted his wishes. The preliminaries were quickly settled, and the next letter from Oxford which Mr. Myrvin received, contained the intelligence that his son had reconciled his mind to the change, and become a servitor.

A glow of thanksgiving suffused the old man's heart, but he knew all the inward and outward trials with which his son had to contend. Had he at the first joined the college in the rank which he now held, he might not have felt the change so keenly; but as it was, the pride and haughtiness which had characterised him before, were now, as we have seen, returned tenfold upon himself. He clothed himself outwardly in an invulnerable armour of self-control and cold reserve, but inwardly his blood was in one continued fever, until the friendship of Percy and Herbert soothed his troubled feelings. The name of Hamilton, Herbert continued to state, for it was he who wrote particularly of Arthur, the young man had declared he knew well; but where he had heard it, or how, appeared like a dream. He thought he had even seen Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton once, not very many years ago; but so many changes in his life had occurred since then, that the particulars of that meeting he could not remember. "Myrvin and Llangwillan appear equally familiar to me," wrote Herbert; "but even more than to Arthur they seem as the remembrances of an indistinct dream. It has sometimes occurred to me that they are combined with the recollection of my aunt, Mrs. Fortescue, and Arthur, to whom I mentioned her death, suddenly recalled a dying lady and her two children, in whom his father was very much interested. Fortescue he does not well remember, but the little girl's name was Ellen, a pale, dark-eyed and dark-haired, melancholy child, whom he used to call his wife, and my cousin certainly answers this description. If it be indeed the same, it is strange we should thus come together; and oh! my dearest father, the benefit our family received from this venerable and injured man, bids me long more intently that we could do something for him, and that Arthur should be restored to his former position. He is of full age, and quite capable

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of taking orders, and I have often thought, could he reside with Mr. Howard the year previous to his ordination, it would tend much more to his happiness and welfare than remaining here, even if he was released from that grade, the oppression of which now hangs so heavily upon him. Follies have been his, but they have been nobly repented; and something within me whispers that the knowledge he is my dearest and most intimate friend, that we mutually feel we are of service to each other, will plead his cause and my request to my kind and indulgent father, with even more force than the mere relation of facts, interesting as that alone would be."

He was right. The friend, the chosen and most intimate friend of their younger son would ever have been an object of interest to Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton. That he was the son of the same good man who had acted so benevolently towards Eleanor and her orphan children, who had soothed her dying bed, and reconciled the parting sinner to her Maker, added weight to the simple yet pathetic eloquence with which Herbert had related his story. The injury he had sustained excited their just indignation, and if the benevolence of their kind hearts had required fresh incentives, the unfeigned grief of Ellen, as the tale of the old man was related to her, would have given it.

"Oh, that I had it in my power to offer a sufficient sum to tempt the sordid and selfish being in whose possession Llangwillan now is," she was heard one day to exclaim, when she imagined herself alone, "that I might but restore it to Mr. Myrvin; that I might feel that good old man was passing his latter years in the spot and amongst all those he so much loved; that Arthur could break the chain that now so bitterly and painfully distresses him. Dear, dear Mr. Myrvin, oh, how little did I imagine, when my thoughts have wandered to you and Arthur, who was such a dear consoling friend in my childish sorrow, that misery such as this had been your portion; and I can do nothing, nothing to prove how often I have thought of and loved you both—and my dear mother's grave, in the midst of strangers," and she wept bitterly, little imagining her soliloquy had been overheard by her aunt and uncle, who were almost surprised at her vivid remembrance of those whom for the last seven years she had scarcely seen, and of whom she so seldom heard; but it heightened their desire to be of service to him who had once been so kind a friend to their family.

The contents of Percy's letter, to the rather alarming and mysterious nature of which we have already alluded, will be found in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

"Malison, dear Malison, congratulate me; the game is in my own hands!" exclaimed Miss Grahame one morning as she entered the private room of her confidant, about a

week after the receipt of the letters we have mentioned, with every feature expressing triumphant yet malignant glee.

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"That has been the case some weeks, has it not?" replied Miss Malison.

"Yes; but not so completely as at present. Caroline has just left me; she was afraid of imparting in writing the important intelligence she had to give me, important indeed, for it saves me a world of trouble: though did I allow myself to think on her present situation of suffering, I believe that I should repent her perfect and innocent confidence in me. Her defence of my character, whenever it is attacked, almost touches my heart; but her mother, her intrusive mother, that would-be paragon of her sex, rises before me and continually urges me on; she shall learn, to her cost, that her carefully-trained children are not better than others."

"She has learned it partly already, by your account," remarked Miss Malison, concealing under a calm exterior her detestation of Mrs. Hamilton.

"She has. That rejection of St. Eval assisted me most agreeably; I did not expect that Caroline's own spirit and self-will would have aided me so effectually. That disappointment with St. Eval has affected Mrs. Hamilton more deeply than she chooses to make visible. Her coldness and severity towards her child spring from her own angry and mortified feelings; however, she lays it to the score of Caroline's faulty conduct, and my friendly letters have happily convinced Caroline such is the case. In my most sanguine expectations of triumph, I never imagined I should succeed so well in severing the link between Mrs. Hamilton and her daughter. Confidence is utterly at an end between them, and that would be sufficient to gratify any one but myself; but my vengeance for the prejudice and dislike with which this perfect creature regards me must be more fully satisfied, at present it is only soothed. Now you know, *chere* Malison, you are dying with curiosity to hear what new assistance has started up; a little more patience and you shall know all. You are aware with what bitter and resentful feelings Caroline regards the treatment she receives from her parents, and also from Emmeline, child as she is."

"Perfectly; nor do I wonder at it. In this case the immaculate Mrs. Hamilton does not appear to practise what she preaches. It is rather wonderful, that one who says so much about gentle treatment doing more good than harshness, should now make her own child suffer beneath her severity."

"As I said before, Malison, her severity is but a disguise for mortification and annoyance. Lord St. Eval, the heir of the Malvern peerage, was too good a chance to be thrown away without vexation. Caroline was a silly fool to act as she did, I must say that for her, grateful as I ought to be for the assistance that foolish act has given me. As for rejecting him merely for love of Alphingham, it is a complete farce. She no more loves the Viscount than I do; perhaps not so much. I make her believe she does, and so I intend to do till my plan is fully accomplished; but love him as she would have done, as in all probability, at the present moment, she loves Lord St. Eval, she does not and never will. I shall make a fashionable pair, but not a love match, Malison, believe me."

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"That Mrs. Hamilton may have the exquisite pleasure of seeing her daughter like other people, however different she may choose to be herself; you will rather do her a kindness than an injury, my dear Miss Grahame."

"Fortunately for my purpose, she will not think so. I shall, through Caroline, inflict a deeper wound than I ever thought to have done. No other injury would have touched her; she prides herself on Christian forbearance and patience, and such like, which, simply translated, would be found to be nothing but haughtiness and pride, and utter insensibility to human feelings; but if Caroline goes wrong, elopes, perhaps, as her aunt did, disregards parental commands, and acts in the weighty affair of matrimony for herself, why that will be something like a triumph for my diplomatic schemes."

"You must work well on Caroline's mind to produce such a consummation," observed Miss Malison. "I doubt much whether she would ever act in a manner that she would believe so contrary to her duty. I would advise you never to give her time to reflect."

"I never mean to do so. If the silly girl had ever reflected at all, she would at once have known that she loved St. Eval and not Lord Alphingham; that her mother is her truest friend, and not Annie Grahame; but as she chooses to remain so stupidly blind and trusting, why I see no harm in playing my part, and as for her consenting, let her but hear the honourable Viscount's sweet persuasive eloquence and look on his handsome and pleading features, and consent will quickly be obtained."

"But why should he not demand her at once of her father? Mr. Hamilton is always friendly with him when they meet."

"You have just hit the mark, *ma chere*. That very truth was always a stumbling block in my machinations, for I almost feared, by Mr. Hamilton's manner towards him, that the interesting tales concerning his youth, which I had intended should be poured into his wife's ear, might be disregarded; such from the first had been my intention, but I have felt puzzled in a degree how to set about it."

"Nay, you do yourself injury, my dearest Miss Grahame," observed the ex-governess, officiously. "From your earliest years you were never puzzled at anything."

"My wits deserted me then for the moment," replied Annie, laughing, "and would perhaps have returned when my plot was ripe for execution; but I am happy to say I can dispense with their assistance, as I have received it most effectually from a member of Mr. Hamilton's own family."

"How!" exclaimed Miss Malison, much astonished.

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“Even so, *ma chere*; and now we come to the important intelligence Caroline brought me this morning. It appears, that last week Mr. Hamilton received a letter from Percy, which by her account must have contained some mysterious warning against this very Lord Alphingham, that his attentions to Caroline had been not only remarked, but reported to him, and conjuring his father, as he valued Caroline’s future peace, to dismiss him at once and peremptorily. Thus much Mr. Hamilton imparted to his daughter, a few days after the receipt of this letter, and after bestowing some little approbation on her conduct towards him, which you know before her parents is always particularly cold and guarded, he requested, or rather desired, that she would gradually withdraw herself entirely from his society, as he had received quite sufficient confirmation of that letter to render him anxious to break off all further communication and acquaintance with him. Caroline is such a simpleton, I wonder she could prevent her countenance from betraying her as he spoke; but I suppose she did, for Mr. Hamilton expressed himself satisfied by her assurance that his wishes should not be forgotten. Whether this letter contains other and more explicit matter she does not know, but her state of mind at present is miserable enough to touch any heart that is not quite so steeled as mine. I could almost smile at her fond belief that she really loves him, for I see my own work, no tender passion as she imagines; and to break off all intercourse with him appears comparative torture. I have already convinced her of her father’s injustice and cruelty in acting thus capriciously towards one so well known and so universally honoured, and merely from a mysterious and unsatisfactory letter from a boy who knows nothing about the matter. I hinted very broadly that it was only because her parents were provoked at her rejection of St. Eval; and as they still had a lingering hope he would return, they did not choose her to receive attentions from any one else. I saw her eyes flash and her cheek crimson with indignation against all who had thus injured her; and she declared with more vehemence than I expected, that neither father nor mother, nor Percy, should prevent her choosing a husband for herself. A violent burst of tears succeeded this speech; but I continued to soothe and console her, and she left me with a spirit vowed and determined to free herself from such galling tyranny. And what do you think had been her mood when she first came to me?”

Miss Malison, as expected, expressed ignorance.

“Why, the weak simpleton thought of confessing her whole tale of love to her mother, and imploring comfort and assistance.”

“Take care she does not do so still,” remarked Miss Malison.

“Not she. I have proved too clearly how ridiculous and miserable she would make herself by such a *denouement*. Her mother, I said, instead of pitying, would assuredly condemn her for all the past, and most probably convey her at once to Oakwood, and immure her there till Lord St. Eval came to release her. She was both terrified and indignant at the idea.”

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"No wonder she should be; but do you know if she or her father have seen Lord Alphingham since the arrival of this letter?"

"But once, last night; and it was the fancied anguish felt for his distress, which she was unable, as usual, to soothe, in consequence of the keen *surveillance* of her mother, that brought her here this morning to tell me all. Mr. Hamilton was still courteous, but more distant. I have convinced her, that as her parents no longer treat her with confidence, she has no right to treat them with any; and as every one knows the worthy character of the Viscount, she can be doing nothing wrong in proving to him that her feelings in his favour are unchanged. She has hinted to me to explain the situation in which she is placed, but *entre nous*, I mean to do no such thing, for I have a plan of my own to follow up. She is not aware how very intimate I am with the Viscount, and how much he confides in me; all my persuasions will tend to urge him to ask her of her father, and I am sure nothing can be more honourable than that course of action."

"Nothing, I am sure," echoed the conscientious confidant; "but how will that assist your former scheme?"

"Most admirably. Mr. Hamilton will, of course, decidedly refuse his consent, without even consulting his daughter; the anger of Lord Alphingham will be overpowering; rage against the father, and love for the daughter will urge him to any and every means to obtain her hand. Caroline's indignation against her father for acting in this way and treating her so much like a child, feelings which I shall take care to create and foster, will second his eloquence, and I feel quite certain that next season Caroline Hamilton mingles in the most fashionable circles as the Viscountess Alphingham; and to obtain such a triumphant end, in my opinion, no means are faulty."

"Most assuredly not. Not only the young lady herself, but her whole family ought to be eternally grateful, for without such manoeuvring I doubt much whether the perfect daughter or the self-satisfied mother would obtain an establishment in all things so desirable. Enraged as she will be at first at such unexpected conduct in the child she has so ill-treated, she will thank you in the end, Miss Grahame, depend upon it."

"If I thought so, Malison, on my honour, I should feel disinclined to proceed one step further in the business. Give her cause to thank me, feel that I have unwittingly been of service to her whom of her whole sex I hate the most, to one who from my earliest years I know regarded me with aversion and contempt; Malison, I would draw back on the instant did I think so. But no, it will not, it shall not be; the life of her child as Countess of Alphingham will not be such as to bring peace to Mrs. Hamilton's heart: to some mothers it might, but not to hers. She shall behold in this marriage the complete failure of her plans, the utter wreck of all her exclusive notions; she shall see that her pretended goodness and Christian example are not exemplified in Caroline at least. She shall feel my power—aye, bitterly. Thus will I triumph—in Caroline's disobedience will I be avenged for the contempt and dislike her mother has ever shown to me."

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She suddenly raised her slight figure to its full height, and looked on her companion with a countenance expressive of such malignant triumph, that all, save her companion in iniquity, must have shuddered as they beheld such youthful features so deformed. Some other conversation passed between her and her able confidant, but as little more was said on the subject most interesting to us, we will not follow them further. Annie's evil schemes are already too clearly displayed; her mind unable, as Miss Malison's, to comprehend the exalted nature of Mrs. Hamilton's character, looked upon it with detestation; the more so, as feeling she was ever *acting*—she believed it hypocrisy; that the worth for which even those who visited her not gave her credit, was not her real character, but an artful veil to conceal evil qualities. The quick penetration of Miss Grahame had even in childhood discovered that she was no favourite, and accustomed to be spoiled and flattered by all with whom she associated, her indignation and dislike towards the only one who would dare treat her differently, look on her as a mere child, rendered ridiculous by affectation, increased with her years. She soon discovered the influence she possessed over Caroline, and on that, knowing also her faults, she determined to work, and thus effectually destroy the peace of a mother devoted to her children, and prove to the world that the eccentric seclusion of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton for their children's benefit was productive of no more good, if as much as the plain and in her eyes only useful plan of fashionable education.

In her first scheme she had already succeeded more than she was perhaps conscious. The affair of St. Eval had clearly and painfully proved to Mr. Hamilton that the fears of his wife the night of Caroline's introduction—those anxious fears, were indeed well founded. She had sunk beneath temptation; integrity and honour, and every better feeling had been overcome by that inordinate love of power which her mother from the first had seen and dreaded. The father's heart was pained and disappointed, not only in this, but that his Caroline now was not the same as she had been at Oakwood. A change had come over her, and darkening her spirit, rendered her conduct at home gloomy, distrustful, and uneasy; the irritability of her childhood had returned, her very conversation appeared restrained, and since the departure of Lord St. Eval, her cheek had become pale, and her eye no longer sparkling; and only in the excitement of society her parents beheld her as formerly. Mr. Hamilton was deeply grieved, but he knew not, guessed not the extent of his wife's anguish. She saw every foreboding fear fulfilled; the confidence of her child was entirely withheld from her; the coldness with which she felt compelled to treat her disregard of her wishes had, she felt assured, completely alienated her affection. Caroline could no longer love her; every week, every day proved, by a hundred minute

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circumstances, her affection was fleeting, and her mother despairingly felt, never to return; and yet she had but done her duty, exercised her natural authority to lead her erring child in the better way. Her firm unshrinking discipline in childhood had only bound the cords of affection between herself and her offspring more firmly together; but now in the case of Caroline it appeared about to snap them asunder. Her fond heart yearned constantly towards her daughter, but she would not give way, for the sake of Emmeline and Ellen, whose efforts vied with each other to increase the comfort and happiness of her they so dearly loved. Their affection, their confidence would not change—no, however her authority might interfere with their wishes; and should she become repining and gloomy, because there was one source of sorrow amidst so many blessings? her pious heart struggled for submission, and obtained it. But Caroline guessed not the deep pang she had inflicted; she knew not the many tears shed in secret, the many inward prayers offered up for her, that however severe was her chastening, it might be blessed, and bring her back to the deserted fold, to the bosom of her mother. She knew not this, nor was Annie conscious how fearfully her plans had succeeded in inflicting pain.

The very cheerfulness of Mrs. Hamilton, striven for as it was, the unwavering kindness of her manner towards Emmeline and Ellen, increased the irritability of Caroline, and with it her indignation at her mother's coldness and severity towards herself. She felt she was indeed a slave, and longed to throw aside that galling bondage. What right had her mother to treat her thus? Why must her every action be controlled, her very friendship disapproved of? She felt she was the injured one, and therefore allowed herself no thought for her whom she in truth had injured. For the same reason she clung yet closer to Annie; in her alone, in her present state of mind, she found full sympathy, and yet even with her she was not happy; there was a strange indefinable sensation in her heart that even to her friend she could not express. There was a void within, a deep yearning void, which tortured her in her solitary moments, which even the society of Lord Alphingham could not wholly remove. In solitude she blindly taught herself to believe that void must be for him. How far she erred a future page must tell.

Her conduct in society meanwhile, since the departure of St. Eval, had been guarded and reserved, and her parents, fondly trusting their displeasure had been of service, relaxed after the first fortnight in their coldness and mistrustful manner towards her. Mrs. Hamilton had hoped the pale cheek and dim eye proceeded from remorse; and had not Caroline been so pointedly distant and reserved when in her society, she would have lavished on her all the tenderness of former years.

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When that mysterious letter from Percy came, although it caused his parents considerable anxiety, yet it never once occurred that any coldness on their part towards Lord Alphingham could occasion Caroline any pain. Percy wrote with a degree of eloquent earnestness that could not be resisted, and guarded as his information and caution was, Mr. Hamilton determined implicitly to abide by it. The young man wrote what Annie had informed Miss Malison; that he had heard from more than one quarter of Lord Alphingham's marked attentions to his sister, that he had even been congratulated on the brilliant alliance Caroline was about to make. He did not, he could not believe that such was the case, he said, for he should then have heard it from his parents, but he conjured his father, however casual the Viscount's attentions might be, to withdraw Caroline entirely from them.

"I know well," he wrote. "Father, as you value my sister's future peace, expose her not to his many fascinations. If he has endeavoured to win her heart, if he has paid her marked attentions, he is a villain! I dare not be more explicit, I am pledged to silence, and only to you, my dear father, and on such an emergency, am I privileged to write thus much. Desire Caroline to give him no more encouragement, however slight; but do not tell even this, it may not only alarm her, but be imparted perhaps to her friend, as young ladies are fond of doing. You have once said I never deceived you; father, trust me now, this is no jest; my sister's happiness is too dear to me. Break off all connection with Lord Alphingham. I give no credit to the rumours I have heard, for your letters this season bade me hope Lord St. Eval would have been my sister's choice. His departure from England has dispelled these visions; but yet Caroline's affections cannot have been given to Lord Alphingham without your or my mother's knowledge. Again I implore you, associate no more with him, he is not worthy of my father's friendship."

Mysterious as this was, yet both Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton knew Percy too well to imagine he would write thus without strong cause. The suspicions and almost unconscious prejudice entertained towards him by Mrs. Hamilton received confirmation by this letter, and she was pleased that her husband determined no longer to encourage his intimacy. Percy wrote, if he had paid Caroline marked attentions, or endeavoured to win her heart, he was a villain, and he had done so, and Mrs. Hamilton could not but feel sufficiently rejoiced at Caroline's apparent manner towards him. Deceived as she had been, yet that her once honourable child should so entirely forget the principles of her childhood, as to give him secret encouragement, while her conduct in society rather bespoke indifference and pride than pleasure, that Caroline could have been led to act thus was a thing so morally impossible to Mrs. Hamilton, that she had no hesitation whatever in complying with Percy's request, little imagining that in doing so she placed an inseparable bar to her regaining the confidence of her child, and widened more painfully the breach between them.

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Caroline's heart, on receiving her father's command to withdraw herself by degrees entirely from Lord Alphingham, was wrung with many bitter and contending feelings. At first she reproached herself for having thus completely concealed her feelings, and, had she followed the impulse of nature, she would at once have thrown herself on her mother's neck, and there confessed all, that she loved him; that she had long done so, and implore her not to check their intercourse without some more explicit reason: but Annie's evil influence had been too powerful. She dreaded her reproaches on this want of confidence in herself, or what was still worse, her satirical smile at her ridiculous weakness, and then she remembered her mother's displeasure at her former conduct, and dreaded a renewal of the same coldness, perhaps even increased control. She determined, therefore, to wait till she had seen Annie; and that interview rendered her more miserable, excited still more her indignation against her parents and brother, and strengthened the feelings of devoted affection with which she fancied she regarded Lord Alphingham. Annie's continued notes confirmed these feelings; under the specious intention of soothing Caroline's wounded pride, it was very easy for her to disguise her repeated insinuations of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton's injustice and caprice towards the Viscount, and tyranny towards herself. The veil she had thrown over Caroline's sober judgment became thicker and more blinding, and Caroline could sometimes scarcely restrain even before her parents the indignation which so continually filled her heart.

Mrs. Hamilton was ignorant of the communications that were so constantly passing between Annie and her daughter, or she might perhaps have put a stop to them. Caroline's own maid, Fanny, had been persuaded to become the means of receiving and sending their intelligence in secret. The conscience of the girl reproached her more than once, but the idea was so improbable that Miss Caroline could act improperly, that she continued faithful to her wishes, even against her better judgment.

Lord Alphingham's ready penetration was puzzled at the change of manner in both Mr. Hamilton and his daughter. The latter, he could easily perceive, was constrained to act thus, and his determination to release her from such thralldom became more strongly fixed within him. He became as cold and reserved to her father as Mr. Hamilton had been to him; but his silent yet despairing glances ever turned towards Caroline, were, he felt assured, quite enough to rivet his influence more closely around her. The following morning, as Annie had expected, the Viscount sought her to give vent to his fears about Caroline; his indignation against the unaccountable alteration in Mr. Hamilton's manner. What could have caused it? He had ever acted honourably and nobly, openly marked his preference, and he had talked himself into a passion, before his companion offered to give him any advice or speak any comfort.

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"They are either determined their daughter shall not marry whom she likes, in revenge for her not accepting whom they selected, or they are resolved, by this studied display of coldness, to bring you to a point, so I advise you to speak to this stern capricious father at once."

"And what good will that do?"

"A great deal, if you manoeuvre properly, on which quality you fortunately require no lessons from me. You will, at least, discover Mr. Hamilton's intentions. If he receive you, well and good, you should be flattered at his condescension; if the contrary, you will, at least, know on what ground you stand, and the situation in which my poor friend must be placed. She is worried to death with the continual caprices of mamma and papa. It would be a charity in any one to break the chains in which she is held. She came to me yesterday in the deepest distress, and all from caprice; for what else can it be that has changed Mr. Hamilton's manner?"

Lord Alphingham's fancy became more and more warmed as she spoke; vanity and self-love were alike gratified, and he answered eagerly—

"I may depend, then, on her affections; she will not, for fear of mamma, play me false."

"Not she; that is to say, if you do not betray her in your eagerness to ask her of her father. You have never yet asked the question, though you have discovered she loves you; but if, in demanding her of her father, you say you have gained her affections, the consequence will be, if Mr. Hamilton refuse her, she will be borne instantly to Oakwood, and there imprisoned, till the poor girl pines and droops like a chained bird without hope of freedom. Whereas, if you will only govern your impetuous temper, and trust to her affections and my friendship, your every wish may be gratified, with or without Mr. Hamilton's advice."

"And you will assist us;—adorable girl! how can we ever repay you?" he exclaimed, raising her hand passionately to his lips. The cheek of Annie suddenly blanched, but a cold, proud smile curled her lip. She answered him in his own spirit, and after a prolonged interview, the Viscount departed to act on her advice.

Ere that day closed, Lord Alphingham had sought, Mr. Hamilton, and with every demonstration of respectful yet passionate affection, solicited his consent to address his daughter. The warning of his son, the strong term he had used, were engraved on Mr. Hamilton's mind, and scarcely could he answer the Viscount with his accustomed calmness. Politely but decidedly he refused, adding, that he had hoped the constant reserve of Caroline's manner would at once have convinced him of her feelings, and spared him the pain of refusing for her the honourable alliance Lord Alphingham proposed. A haughty and somewhat triumphant smile played for a second on the

Viscount's lips, but Mr. Hamilton understood not its import; and his companion, with many expressions of wounded feeling and injured honour, departed, leaving Mr.

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Hamilton rather pleased than otherwise at this affair, as it gave him a plausible excuse for withdrawing entirely from his society. He imparted what had passed to his wife, and both agreed it was better for Caroline to say nothing of his proposals; and this determination, for once, was not thwarted by Annie, who thought it better for Lord Alphingham to plead his own cause at some future time when the idea of his having been refused without consulting her, the person principally concerned, would excite yet greater indignation toward her parents, and assist effectually the cause of her lover, who, leaving town for a week or two to prove to Mr. Hamilton his wounded feelings were no pretence, or for some other reason, left to Annie the charge of preparing Caroline's mind for the alternative he might propose.

A circumstance happened about this time, which appeared greatly to favour the schemes of Annie and Lord Alphingham, and expose Caroline more powerfully to temptation. The Duchess of Rothbury had invited a select number of friends to while away the remaining weeks of the London season at her elegant seat, which was situated in a lovely spot, about twenty miles from the metropolis. Amongst the number she, of course, included Mrs. Hamilton, and expressed herself very much disappointed when that lady tendered excuses. Mr. Hamilton could not leave town; he had put Mr. Myrvin's case into the hands of an able solicitor, and wished to remain on the spot himself to urge on the business, that it might be completed before he returned to Oakwood. It was not likely, he said, that the affair would occupy much time, the whole circumstance being directly illegal. It had only been the age and poverty, combined with the shrinking sensitiveness from public gaze, which had prevented Mr. Myrvin from coming forward at the very first against his persecutor. A specious tale had been brought forward to excuse the illegality, and impose on the bishop in whose diocese Llangwillan was situated, and Myrvin, though he could meet trials with resignation, was too broken-hearted to resist them. Thus much Mr. Hamilton had learned from Arthur, to whom he wrote himself, requesting him to give a minute account of the whole circumstance. His earnestness, seconded by the entreaties of both his sons, succeeded in banishing Arthur's proud reserve, and Mr. Hamilton was now engaged heart and soul in his benevolent scheme of exposing iniquity, and restoring the injured clergyman to his grieving flock. He could not, therefore, leave London, and Mrs. Hamilton who, for mere amusement, could not bear to part from her children, for only Caroline was to accompany her, steadily resisted the entreaties of her friend. For herself she was firm, but she hesitated when the Duchess, seconded by her daughters, requested most persuadingly, that if she would not come herself, she would, at least, permit Caroline to join them.

"You have known me so long, that I have the vanity to believe, that if I promise to guard your child as if she were my own, you will trust her with me," her grace urged, with a pertinacity that could not fail to be flattering. "She will be as safe under my care as were she under the observance of her mother."

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"That I do not doubt one moment," replied Mrs. Hamilton, earnestly; "if I hesitated, it was from no doubt of either your grace's care or kindness. If Caroline be willing to accept your invitation, and her father consent, she has my permission."

"Thank you, my good friend; I trusted in my eloquence to prevail," the Duchess said, smiling with an air of sincerity that gratified Mrs. Hamilton; and she quickly imparted to Caroline the accepted invitation, but in vain endeavoured to read on the face of her child whether she were pleased or otherwise. Circumstances which caused Mrs. Hamilton rather to rejoice at Caroline's absence from London for a time, were to the latter great preventives to the enjoyment to which, in such elegant society, she might otherwise have looked forward. Annie Grahame was, much to her own vexation, excluded from this select circle. The Duchess had penetrated her designing character, and regarded her with a prejudice, as violent as was her nature. She was only invited to those large assemblies which included all her acquaintances, not merely her friends. Amazed at this slight, Miss Grahame at once determined that there the catastrophe for which she had so long planned should take place, and her detestation of Mrs. Hamilton be gratified to the uttermost.

Would Lord Alphingham be there, was a question that crossed Caroline's mind repeatedly, and was as often demanded of her friend. Annie either would not or could not tell; and she would add, perhaps she ought to congratulate Caroline on her separation from him, as such a dread mandate had gone from her parent, and she surely would not wish to encourage his society; and then she would implore her forgiveness, and sympathise so well in her fancied distress, and describe that of Lord Alphingham in such heightened colours, that Caroline, unsophisticated as in some things she still was, felt truly miserable. The Viscount's sudden departure from town would have been unaccountable, had not Annie succeeded in persuading her that she was sure it was entirely owing to her (Caroline's) coldness and Mr. Hamilton's unaccountable conduct.

Mr. Hamilton did not at first approve of his daughter leaving home without her mother, even to visit the Duchess of Rothbury, but he yielded to the solicitations of his wife. They knew that Lord Alphingham was somewhat of a favourite with the Duke, but felt so assured that the heart of their child was entirely disengaged, at least to him, that on his account they did not hesitate. Caroline's conduct with regard to St. Eval had, they were convinced, proceeded from the pure love of coquetry; they could not believe she had rejected him because she fancied she loved another, they had had no cause to do so: and since Mrs. Hamilton had spoken so seriously on the subject, Caroline's behaviour in public had been such as to excite their approbation, and renew, in some measure, their confidence in her integrity. She was more reserved, and her manner to the Viscount,

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when they chanced to meet, had led them trustingly to believe their commands on this head would be implicitly obeyed. Perhaps Mrs. Hamilton's penetration had played her false; it was strange that a mother so long accustomed to divine the thoughts and feelings of her children, should have been thus blind to the emotions with which Caroline believed she regarded Lord Alphingham. But, surely, no farther proof than this was wanting to clearly demonstrate it was not true love she felt; had it been that real, pure, fervid passion, could one so unused to art have concealed the flushing cheek, the sparkling eye, the trembling voice, which would invariably have betrayed her? No; it was infatuation,—blind, maddening infatuation,—strengthened by indignation towards her parents; by the wish to prove she could throw off their control, and choose for herself, and love whom and where and how she liked, without their choice and sympathy; and it was thus she completely veiled her feelings. Can we condemn her mother for refusing to believe the child she had trained and watched, and prayed for so long, such an adept in deceit? Can we blame her want of penetration in this instance, and think it unnatural in her character, when we remember how completely the character of her child was changed? Surely not. It would have been stranger had she, without proof, believed Caroline the girl she had really become.

The reflection that she could still write to Annie and hear from her, consoled her for the temporary separation; and she joined the Duchess with some degree of pleasure, which had, however, been slightly alloyed by a conversation with her mother before she left home. Her spirit was in too excitable a state to hear advice calmly. Every word Mrs. Hamilton so gently said on her conduct being more guarded now than when under her eye, her mild entreaties that for her sake Caroline would behave with reserve, all fell on a poisoned ear. Sullenly she listened, and when her mother bade her farewell, it was with a heart grieving bitterly. While smarting under supposed injuries, how little did Caroline imagine the real agony she inflicted on her mother. If the gentle heart of Mrs. Hamilton had been wrung by the wayward conduct of her sister, how much more so must it have been wounded, when she saw so many of those evil qualities reflected in her child.

At Airlie, so the residence of the Duchess of Rothbury was called, Caroline found herself universally courted. She knew she was admired, and she was flattered; but there was a ceaseless gnawing at her heart, which not even gratified vanity could still. She knew not, would not know, it was remorse. She believed it was the conduct of her parents; the chain that was thrown round her actions, her disappointment with regard to Lord Alphingham; for he was not, as in secret she hoped, he would be, one of the invited guests. It was a task, a painful task, to write home, but she forced herself to speak of the scenes around, and sketch, with a masterly hand, some of the characters with whom she mingled; and her parents strove to be satisfied, though there was somewhat wanting in those letters which, when Caroline had been from home, they had never missed before.

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“So that man of learning, that marvellous prodigy, that walking cyclopaedia, Lord St. Eval, has absolutely deserted us, to bury himself in Italy or Switzerland. Miss Hamilton, can you explain so wonderful and puzzling an enigma?” mischievously demanded Lord Henry D’Este, one day, as he found himself alone near Caroline. His friend’s departure had indeed been to him a riddle, and believing at length that it must have originated in her caprice, he determined, whenever he had an opportunity, to revenge St. Eval by doing all in his power to torment her. A deep blush overspread Caroline’s cheeks as he spoke, for except that Mary Greville’s letters had mentioned him, he was never spoken of at home.

“It ought not to appear a very puzzling riddle to you,” she answered quickly. “He has gone, I should imagine, to collect fresh matters for reflection, that he may better deserve the title you have bestowed upon him.”

“Nay, nay, surely he has enough of such matters to form four and twenty good folio volumes,” answered Lord Henry, laughing. “The art of politeness he certainly has failed to retain, for you can have no idea what a *brusque* philosopher he is. I assure you, he terrified me the last time I saw him. What your honourable father had done to him I know not, but I met him just coming from Berkeley Square, and all the charms he had lately invited around him had suddenly departed, he was a different man, and that day, in a fit, I suppose, of spleen, he quits London, and the next time I hear of him he is in Geneva: that noble Lord is one of the strangest creatures I ever had the honour to know. However, perhaps he has visited the Continent to learn politeness, and I think he may chance to learn a lesson of love also. Not at all unlikely, by the praises he bestows in his letters on a certain Louisa Manvers.”

In vain Caroline struggled to prevent a start, or her cheek from suddenly paling. “Louisa Manvers,” she repeated, almost unconsciously.

“Yes, do you know her? by the bye, she must be some distant connection of yours, I fancy; her brother is Lord Delmont, he inherited the title from your maternal grandfather. St. Eval and Delmont were college chums, and, though they are parted, retain all the romantic enthusiasm of friendship. After spending some little time with your friends I believe, at Geneva, the lone pilgrim bent his steps to Lago Guardia, and there he has remained, wooing nature with his friend, and in all probability playing the *devoue* to Miss Manvers. We shall find Lord St. Eval bringing home a fair Italian bride, before we are aware of it; that is to say, if she will have the courage to pore through the deep and hidden treasures of this volume, till she comes to the magic word heart.”

He might have continued, for Caroline, buried in her own miserable thoughts, interrupted him not. Had she encountered the eyes of Lord Henry, as they were fixed full of mischief upon her, she might have made some effort to rouse herself, but as it was, she felt relieved and glad when their *tete-a-tete* was interrupted by the entrance of

a merry group, just returned in the highest spirits from exploring a thick and mazy wood in the vicinity of the extensive grounds.

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“Good news for you all,” exclaimed the Duke of Rothbury, entering directly after; “we are to have another guest to-day, to keep us all alive.”

“Who—who?” was reiterated by many voices, with somewhat of the noisy mirth of children.

“No less a person than Viscount Alphingham.” An exclamation of pleasure passed through the giddy crowd, but there was an expression in the countenance of the Duchess, who had also entered from a drive, which, to Caroline’s quickly awakened fancy, appeared contrary to the general emotion. “He is engaged as Sir Walter Courtenay’s guest, so I cannot claim him as mine,” the Duke continued; “but that does not much signify. Sir Walter is here every day, and Alphingham will of course accompany him. He is the best fellow I know.”

“And this is the man papa, for no reason whatever, save from Percy’s ill-natured opinion, has desired me to slight, to behave in a manner that, contrasted with former notice, must be madness itself; cruelty to him, after what has passed between us, and misery to me. Surely, in such a case as this I am not compelled to obey. When the general voice proclaims him other than they believe, am I to regard what is in itself a mystery? If Percy had good reasons for writing against him to papa, for I am sure he must have done so, why did he not explain them, instead of treating me thus like a child, and standing forward as his accuser, when the whole world extols him? Why are the dearest wishes of my heart to be destroyed merely by caprice? Percy ever tried, even in childhood, to bid me to look up to him, and acknowledge his power, and thus he would prove it; but he will find himself mistaken. When papa permits his judgment to be blinded by the insinuations of a mere boy, I no longer consider myself bound to obey him.”

Such was the tenor of Caroline’s thoughts when alone, in the short interval, ere she descended to dinner—there was no ray of happiness; her heart had that day received a wound, nor could she derive comfort even from the knowledge that Lord Alphingham was expected. She would not permit herself to think on Lord Henry’s conversation. What was it to her if St. Eval married Louisa Manvers? then studiously she thought only on the Viscount, and the situation with regard to him in which she was placed, till her head ached with the intensity of its reflections.

On entering the drawing-room she found, as she had anticipated, Lord Alphingham the centre of a brilliant coterie, and for the space of a minute her heart throbbed and her cheek flushed. He bowed respectfully as she appeared, but with distant courtesy; yet she fancied the flow of his eloquence was for a moment arrested, and his glance, subdued yet so mournfully beseeching, spoke volumes. Neither at dinner nor during the whole of that evening did he pay her more than ordinary attention; scarcely that. But those silent signals of intelligence had even greater power than words; for they nattered her self-love, by clearly

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proving, that courted, admired, as he could not but feel he was by all around him, his noble hostess perhaps excepted, yet all was as nothing, now that her favour had been so strangely and suddenly withdrawn. His tone, his manner, as he presented to her a note from Annie, of which he had been the bearer, strengthened this illusion; and Caroline, as she retired to rest, felt more and more convinced they were indeed mutually and devotedly attached, and that her obedience to her parents could not weigh against the duty she owed herself, the love he had evinced for her. Annie's note strengthened this determination.

"I give you joy, my dear Caroline," she wrote, "on the opportunity you will now enjoy of receiving Lord Alphingham's attentions, undisturbed by any of those wayward fancies which have lately so destroyed your peace. Do not, for heaven's sake, by squeamish notions of filial obedience and dutiful conduct—which I do assure you have been very long out of date—destroy your own happiness. When parents cease to care for the true welfare and felicity of their children, it becomes our positive duty to care for them ourselves. Mr. Hamilton has given you no reason for his command to withdraw yourself from the attentions of Lord Alphingham; and surely that is the clearest imaginable proof that he really has none to give, and that it is merely to gratify his own unjust displeasure at your rejection of St. Eval, as if in such matters you had not an undoubted right to decide for yourself. He cannot suppose that you will now be contented with that which completely crosses your own wishes, merely because he desires it. That was all very well in your childhood, but at present, when your own reason must be satisfied, he has no right to expect obedience. The whole conduct of your parents, you have owned to me yourself, has been lately such as to alienate your affection and confidence. They hold your will enchained, my poor friend; and if you have not the spirit to break it, now a fair opportunity occurs, forgive me, if I say I can no longer offer you consolation. Lord Alphingham loves you, and long ere this, had it not been for your mother's extraordinary conduct, would have proposed, and you might have been now a plighted bride, or still happier wife. I much doubt, by a few hints he dropped, if his late departure from town was not occasioned by Mr. Hamilton's positive refusal to sanction his addresses to you. If he has demanded your hand, and been rejected without your knowledge, your father and mother have treated you with much confidence and affection, have they not? Can they, dare they expect to receive yours, when such is the case? Is it not a clear proof your happiness is not to be consulted in any marriage you may form? It is ridiculous to imagine that your mother has penetrated, in some degree, your feelings for Alphingham, though perhaps not to their extent; and not approving of it, for no reason whatever, she desires you to shun his society. Your father

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refuses a most honourable offer, without even consulting the person principally concerned. Caroline, my dearest friend, do not permit your noble spirit to be thus bowed down. Whatever alternative Lord Alphingham may propose becomes lawful, when you are thus cruelly persecuted. Many secret marriages are happier, very much happier, than those for which the consent of parents have been obtained. They think only of ambition, interest; how can we expect them to enter into the warmth of youthful feelings? Do not be frightened at my words, but give them a calm, just deliberation. You have permitted your love for him to be discovered; it becomes your duty to prove it still more clearly."

Such were the principal contents of Annie's letter, more than sufficient to confirm Caroline's already half-adopted resolution, and convince her wavering judgment that obedience to her parents was now no longer a duty; their unjust harshness had alienated her from them, and she must stand forth and act alone. Conscience loudly called on her to desist; that she was deserting the plain path, and entering the labyrinth of deceit, but the words of Annie were before her. Again and again they were read, till every word became engraved within her, and the spirit they breathed thickened the film before her eyes, and deafened her ear to every loudly-whispered reproach. Yet in silence and solitude that still small voice, conscience, arose and left its pang, although on the instant banished.

A few days passed, and the conduct of the Viscount to Caroline continued the same as it had been the first night. Publicly distant, secretly and silently beseeching, with an eloquence few could have resisted. There was a grand *fete* and *dejeuner* at Airlie, which was pronounced by the connoisseurs in such things to be the most *recherche* of the season. But few, comparatively speaking, were the guests, though some had ventured to travel twenty miles for the purpose; yet all was elegant. The day was lovely, and with the bright sunshine and cloudless sky, added new charms to this fairy land; for so, by the tasteful arrangement of gorgeous tents, sparkling fountains, exotic shrubs, and flowers of every form and shade, the *coup d'oeil* might have been termed. Musicians were stationed in various parts of the grounds. The dance was enjoyed with spirit on the greensward, when the heat of the sun had subsided into the advancing twilight, and the picturesque groups, the chaste and elegant costumes scattered about, intermixed with the beauties of inanimate nature, added life and spirit to the picture.

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It was an exciting and yet a soothing scene. Some minds, untouched by care, would here have revelled in unchecked gladness. In others, it might have been productive of that soothing melancholy, which, from its very sweetness, we encourage till it becomes pain: such was the case with Caroline. Her spirits, buoyed up at first with the hope and expectation that here at least Lord Alphingham might resume his attentions unremarked, she had been excited to unwonted gaiety; but as the hours wore on, and he approached her not, that excitement faded into melancholy and doubt. Not even had the usual signals of intelligence passed between them, for he had been sedulously devoting himself to almost every beautiful girl in the gardens. Jealousy for a moment took possession of her mind, but that very quickly gave way to indignation against her father.

“If he has been treated as Annie tells me, if his proposals for me have been rejected,” she thought, “how can I expect or hope that he will continue his addresses? He knows not but that I have been consulted, and is my happiness to be overthrown, rudely cast aside, by the insinuations of a boy?” and covering her face with her hands, she burst into tears: the scene, the time, the faint sound of the distant music, encouraged these feelings, and heightened despondency. Day was darkening around her, aided by the sombre shade of the gigantic trees, which formed a grove where she sat, and the music borne along at intervals sounded unusually mournful. A heavy sigh near her aroused her from her painful trance, and starting, she beheld the object of her thoughts standing by her side. His speaking eyes were fixed on her with a glance not the most obtuse imagination could have misinterpreted, and the whole expression of his peculiarly handsome features betrayed the most eloquent and pleading sympathy.

“Oh, that it might be mine, the blessed privilege of endeavouring to soothe or to relieve this grief!” he passionately exclaimed, as with an air of the utmost respect he ventured to take her hand. “I had indulged in presumptuous hopes. I had ventured to read the flattering notice which I ever received from you as a confirmation of my wishes, and I indulged in fondly-cherished visions that ere this I should indeed have had a right, a holy right, to soothe your every grief and share in every joy. I thought wrong; your flattering notice must have been but the impulse of your kind heart, pitying what you could not fail to behold; and yet, oh, Miss Hamilton, that very demonstration of your gentle nature has increased my misery; it has bade me love, nay, adore you. I blame you not. I have been presumptuous—mad. I had no right to expect so much happiness. My proposals were refused. I was told your conduct must have made it evident that I was not pleasing to you. I fled from your presence, but I could not rest alone. Again, like a mad fool, I have plunged myself in the centre of fascination. I could not

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exist without the sound of your voice, though me it might never more address. I could not live without glancing on your expressive eyes, your eloquent smile, though on me neither more might beam. I am here, I feel my folly, but I cannot tear myself away. Caroline, adorable Caroline!" he continued, with well-practised passion, "only speak, command me; in what way can I relieve the grief in which I see you plunged? Give me at least the gratification of feeling I have been of service to you; that I have done somewhat for your happiness, though by you mine has fled for ever."

Rapidly yet eloquently had he spoken, and Caroline vainly struggled with herself to interrupt him. He believed she had rejected him, and in that moment she contrasted his present conduct with that of Lord St. Eval, under the same circumstances, and surely she could doubt no longer which loved her best. She had not seen the secret agony of the one—his proud and noble heart concealed it; but Alphingham—when such devoted love was offered her, would she condemn it to misery, and herself to everlasting reproach, if not to equal woe?

"You are mistaken, my lord," she said, proudly, after a severe struggle with herself. "Lay not to my charge the loss of your happiness. I was not aware till this instant that it depended—" She stopped abruptly, for the natural modesty of her disposition prevented more, indignant as she was at the confirmation of Annie's suspicions.

Lord Alphingham saw his advantage, and pursued it.

"How!" he exclaimed, in an accent of astonishment and ecstasy well combined. "Have you too been deceived, and my proposals rejected without having been laid before you? Can it be possible? Oh, speak again, my beloved Caroline! tell me I have not been too presuming—that I may hope that my long-cherished visions are not false. You will not, oh, you will not condemn me to misery—you will not reject my heart, and send me despairing from your feet. Caroline, my beloved, my beautiful! say that you will be merciful—say that you love me—that I love not alone; oh, say, promise me you will be mine, and come what will we shall be happy."

She heard, and her heart throbbed and her brain reeled; in the infatuation of that moment, all, all was forgotten, save the persuasions of Annie, his pleading eloquence, the wild impulse of her own blinded fancy; the fatal promise passed her lips—she was pledged to be his own. A few minutes she listened to his impassioned thanks, his words of devoted love, then suddenly starting back—

"My father!" she exclaimed, and burst into a passionate flood of tears.

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“Nay, weep not, my beloved, my own! let not a mere shadow, for such in this instance is duty, alloy the felicity that will be ours. His consent will in time be given; fear not, when he sees you happy, when he sees my only care, my every thought is for your welfare, that his forgiveness for involuntary disobedience will be granted, and his unjust and cruel prejudices against me will pass away, for he will find they were indeed but fancy; and if he continues obdurate, oh, how rejoiced I shall be to have withdrawn my Caroline from his stern guardianship. Already has he deceived you; and can he then expect implicit obedience to unjust and unfounded commands on your part? Cheer up, my best love, fear not; trust to my affection, and all will be well.”

But still she wept, even though Lord Alphingham continued this strain of consolation for some little time longer. Fearing at length to attract notice by her prolonged absence, she roused herself, and breaking from her triumphant lover, remained for a few minutes alone, endeavouring, but vainly, to recover that happiness which, when she had looked to an union with the Viscount, had promised to dawn around her. She saw it not; there was a dark, heavy, threatening cloud overhanging her mind, which no efforts could dispel. She felt, as she rejoined the glittering circle, the eye of the Duchess was fixed with startling earnestness upon her, and she shrunk from that severe look, as if indeed it could penetrate her soul and condemn the past. Why did not enjoyment return? Why was she not happy when in the centre of a scene like this? She knew not, and struggled to be gay and animated as usual; but she felt as if each effort failed, and drew upon her the attention of those near her, and rejoiced was she indeed when the festive hours had fled, and she was alone. She strove to compose her troubled thoughts to prayer, but no words came to her aid, and throwing herself on her bed, she wept for many weary hours. She could not have told why she thus wept; she only knew that she was wretched, that the light-heartedness once so peculiarly her own had fled, it seemed, for ever, and she shrunk almost in loathing from the hour when she should meet Lord Alphingham again; and when it came, even his presence cheered her not. He soothed, even gently reproached, but as he did so there was somewhat in his eye she had never seen before, and which struck terror. Subdued as it was it told of passions from which she had believed him exempt, and added additional pain to her distress. Noticing what she termed the indisposition of her young friend, the Duchess kindly advised her to remain quiet, nor join the gay party, till it had passed away; but as she spoke, Caroline observed the severe and scrutinizing glance of the Duchess again fixed upon her, and, contrary to her advice, appeared as usual at dinner.

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Days passed, and Lord Alphingham's plan was matured, and submitted to Caroline's sanction. A *fête*, similar to that given by the Duchess, only commencing at a later hour, to permit a superb display of fireworks on the grounds, was to be given by a neighbouring nobleman, to which all the members of the Duchess's party were invited. The villa was some few miles off, and they were to leave Airlie at half-past eight. That day Caroline was to feign indisposition, and remain undisturbed at home; at ten Lord Alphingham would dispatch a trusty servant, well disguised, with a note, apparently from Mrs. Hamilton, requesting her daughter's immediate return, as she had been taken suddenly and dangerously ill. This note was, of course, designed to impose upon any member of the party who might, by some mischance, remain at home, and be circulated among the servants to account for her sudden departure. The carriage, said to be Mr. Hamilton's, waited for her; Lord Alphingham was to meet it at some five miles off; but once within it, once safe from Airlie, the rest was easy.

Caroline heard, and an inward shuddering crept chilly through her frame. Faintly and briefly she agreed to all he so eloquently and persuasively pleaded, and instantly left him.

"Will she be weak enough now to waver?" thought Alphingham. "Perhaps, after all, she is not worthy of all this trouble, there is no spirit in her; yet she is so beautiful, it will suit me well to introduce such a lovely creature as my bride next season, and gratify my vengeance on Mr. Hamilton for his unceremonious refusal, and if I get tired of her, if then tears and pale cheeks continue, why, thank heaven, no chains with me are binding. That early folly of mine was not so useless as it seemed; I may act as I please, and if your daughter sickens or offends me, Mr. Hamilton, as you have done, you may well dread my vengeance, it will fall upon you both, and I unscathed will seek other lands and fairer beauties, as I have already done." His countenance had darkened during this speech, but at its close it became clear again, and, with a careless whistle of unconcern, he sauntered away.

And was it to this man that the cherished child of so much anxiety was about to sacrifice herself—with him and for him, she, who had once been the soul of truth and honour, had consented to leave the guardianship of her father, and break the sacred links of nature? Alas! though her very spirit now revolted, she had gone too far. How could she, how dared she draw back? and yet one effort she would make. She would implore him to permit her to confess all to her parents; she was convinced, did they know how much her happiness depended on her union with him, they would consent, and with their blessing hallow their marriage. Happiness—Caroline shuddered; the wild excitement of secret love had departed. She knew she was beloved, she had given her promise, yet she was not happy; and could she then expect to be when irrevocably his own? Her brain reeled beneath the bewildering chaos of her thoughts; but she followed up her resolution, and implored him as she had intended. Lord Alphingham heard with a dark and frowning brow.

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“And what becomes of your kind brother’s just accusations?” demanded the Viscount, with a very evident and contemptuous sneer.

“Defend yourself, and papa will be convinced they are unfounded,” was her reply. But she gazed on his countenance, and terrified at its expression, for the first time the thought flashed across her mind, could there indeed be any real cause for Percy’s warning; and more and more earnestly did she beseech him to say she might implore her father’s sanction. “Only let me confide in papa and mamma, let me try and convince them they are mistaken, and Percy too must be in error.”

The Viscount for some little time endeavoured mildly to confute her arguments, and convince her that in doing so, she was only forming her own misery; but still she pleaded, and ungoverned fury at length burst forth. He had been too long the victim of passions always to keep them in bounds, even when most required; and for a few minutes they spurned restraint, and Caroline beheld him as he was, and saw in dim perspective the blackened future. She would have broken from him, but he detained her, and with a rapid transition of mood humbled himself before her, and with impassioned fervour and deep contrition besought her forgiveness, her pity. It was his fervid love, his fear of losing her, that bade him thus forget himself, and he conjured her not to condemn him to everlasting misery; that he was wretched enough already at having caused her one moment’s pain. He spoke, and his softened voice, his imploring eyes, his protestations of unalterable love and gratitude, if she would but trust to his affections, and be his own as he proposed, had in a degree their effect. She was convinced it would only bring forth misery now to implore the sanction and blessing of her parents, and promised to resign all idea of so doing. But vainly she strove to forget that burst of ungoverned passion she had witnessed; it haunted her sleeping and waking thoughts, and his protestations of devoted love were dimmed beside it, they shared its blackened hue.

The appointed day came, and the Duchess, without question or remark, accepted Caroline’s excuse for not accompanying her and her friends to the expected *fete*. The heavy eyes and pale cheeks of the misguided girl were more than sufficient excuse; she even seconded Caroline in refusing the kind offer of Lady Annie and Lady Lucy Melville to remain with her. She said she preferred being quite alone, as she was no companion for any one, and it appeared as if not even that obstacle would arise to prevent her flight.

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The hours wore on; the noble guests could speak of nothing but the anticipated *fete* and its attendant pleasures, while they whiled away the intervening hours in the library, the music-room, the garden, wherever their taste dictated, for freedom was ever the password of Airslie; but Caroline joined them not. It was the second day that she had not seen the Viscount; for, fearing to attract notice, he had never made his visits unusually frequent, and well versed in intrigue, he had carried on his intercourse with Caroline in impenetrable secrecy. More than once in those lonely hours did she feel as if her brain reeled, and become confused, for she could not banish thought. She had that morning received letters from home, and in her present mood each line breathed affection, which her now awakened conscience told her was undeserved. Nature and reason had resumed their sway, as if to add their tortures to the anguish of those hours. The misery which had been her portion, since her acceptance of Lord Alphingham, had slowly but surely drawn the blinding film from her eyes. The light of reason had broke upon them with a lustre that would no more be darkened. At the same moment that she knew she did not love Lord Alphingham, her conduct to her parents, to St. Eval, appeared in their true colours. Yes! this was no fancy, she had been the victim of infatuation, of excitement; but clearer and clearer dawned the truth. She was sacrificing herself to one whom she did not love, whom she had never loved, with whom her life would be a dreary waste; and for this was she about to break the ties of nature, fly from her parents, perhaps draw down upon her head their curse, or, what she now felt would be worse, much worse, wring that mother's heart with anguish, whose conduct, now that reason had resumed her throne, she was convinced had been ever guided by the dictates of affection. She recalled with vivid clearness her every interview with Annie, and she saw with bitter self-reproach her own blindness and folly, in thus sacrificing her own judgment to false reasoning, in withdrawing her confidence and affection from the mother who had never once deceived her, to bestow them on one who had played upon her foolish weakness, heightened her scarcely-dawning fancy till it became infatuation, and finally recommended that plan of conduct from which Caroline's whole soul revolted. Why had she done this? Caroline felt, to bring down shame upon her head and suffering on her mother. Her parents' conduct changed towards her—oh! had not hers changed to them? had she not acted from the first of Annie's arrival in London as if under the influence of some spell? and now that it was rudely broken, recollections of the past mingled with and heightened her present sufferings. Her childhood, her early youth rushed like a torrent on her mind; faulty as they had been, they were innocent and pure compared with her present self. Then she had been ever actuated by truth, candour, respectful

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love, affectionate confidence towards her parents; now all had been cast aside. If her mother's words were true, and bitterly she felt they were, that her conduct to St. Eval had been one continued falsehood, what would her parents feel when her intercourse with Lord Alphingham was discovered. Lord Alphingham—she shuddered as his name rose to her lips. Her heart yearned with passionate intensity towards her mother, to hear her voice in blessing, to see her beaming smile, and feel her kiss of approbation, such as at Oakwood she had so often received: she longed in utter wretchedness for them. That night she was wilfully to cast them off for ever, flee as a criminal from all she loved; and if she could return home, confess all, would that confiding love ever be hers again? She shrunk in trembling terror from her father's sternness, her mother's look of woe, struggling with severity, the coldness, the displeasure she would excite—on all sides she beheld but misery; but to fly with Lord Alphingham, to bind herself for ever with one, whom every passing hour told her she did not, could not love—oh, all, all, even death itself, were preferable to that! The words of her brother sounded incessantly in her ears: "If you value my sister's future peace, let her be withdrawn from his society." How did she know that those words were wholly without foundation? the countenance of the Viscount as he had alluded to them confirmed them to her now awakened eye. Was she about to wed herself to crime? She remembered the perfect justness, the unwavering charity of her father, and in those softened moments she felt assured he would not have condemned him without good cause. Why, oh, why had she thus committed herself? where was she to turn for succour? where look for aid to guard her from the fate she had woven for herself? Where, in her childish faults, had her mother taught her to seek for assistance and forgiveness? Dare she address her Maker, the God whom, in those months of infatuated blindness, she had deserted; Him, whom her deception towards her parents had offended, for she had trampled on His holy laws, she had honoured them not?

The hour of seven chimed; three hours more, and her fate was irrevocably sealed—the God of her youth profaned; for could she ever address Him again when the wife of Alphingham? from whose lips no word of religion ever came, whose most simple action had lately evinced contempt for its forms and restrictions. The beloved guardians of her infant years, the tender friends of her youth insulted, lowered by her conduct in the estimation of the world, liable to reproach; their very devotion for so many years to their children condemned, ridiculed. An inseparable bar placed between her and the hand-in-hand companions of her youth; never again should she kneel with them around their parents, and with them share the fond impressive blessing. Oakwood and its attendant innocence and joys, had they passed away for ever? She thought on the anguish that had been her mother's, when in her childhood she had sinned, and what was she now about to inflict? She saw her bowed down in the depth of misery; she heard her agonized prayer for mercy on her child.



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“Saviour of my mother, for her sake, have mercy on her unworthy child! oh, save me from myself, restore me to my mother!” and sinking on her knees, the wretched girl buried her face in her hands, and minutes, which to her appeared like hours, rolled on in that wild burst of repentant and remorseful agony.

CHAPTER VII.

“Dearest mother, this is indeed like some of Oakwood’s happy hours,” exclaimed Emmeline, that same evening, as with childish glee she had placed herself at her mother’s feet, and raised her laughing eyes to her face, with an expression of fond confiding love.

She and Ellen were sitting alone with Mrs. Hamilton, Miss Harcourt being engaged at a friend’s, and Mr. Hamilton having been summoned after dinner to a private interview with his solicitor on the Myrvin affairs.

The lovely evening was slowly wearing on to twilight, and the sky, shadowed as it was by the towering mansions of Berkeley Square, yet bore all the rich hues which had attended the repose of a brilliant setting sun. The balcony of the drawing-room where they were sitting was filled with, flowers, and the window being thrown widely open, the gentle breeze of summer filled the room with their sweet fragrance. It was that hour of evening when even London is somewhat hushed. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton had been more at home since Caroline’s visit to Airlie, but yet not one evening had so vividly reminded Emmeline of her dear Oakwood as the present; it was thus in twilight she had often sought her mother, and given vent, by a thousand little innocent devices, to the warm emotions that filled her heart.

Ellen had been standing by the flowers, but on hearing her cousin’s exclamation, she too had established herself on the couch by her aunt, and added—

“You are right, dear Emmeline; it is indeed.”

There was an anxiety on Mrs. Hamilton’s heart, which she could not define; but was yet unable to resist the innocent happiness of her young companions, and twining her arm playfully round Ellen, she abandoned her other hand to Emmeline, and answered—

“I am very glad, my dear children, that such a simple thing as my company can afford you so much pleasure.”

“It is so very rare now to have you thus all alone, mamma, can it be otherwise than delight? I do not even want papa yet, we three make such a comfortable party.”

“You are exceedingly polite to my uncle, Emmeline. I have a good mind to tell him when he rejoins us,” said Ellen, laughing.



“Do so, my mischievous cousin, and I shall get a kiss for your pains. I know where mamma’s thoughts are, though she is trying to be as merry as we are; she wants another to make this Oakwood hour complete.”

“I ought not to wish for your sister, my love, she is happier where she is than she would be here, particularly to-night, for Lord D— gives a splendid *fete* at his beautiful villa, similar to that given by the Duchess ten days ago at which I should think Caroline must have been delighted, though she wrote but little of it.”

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"There is a tone in her letters, mamma, that tells me she will be as pleased as ourselves to be at Oakwood again, though, she may fancy *fetes*, assemblies, and a long list of *et ceteras*, are the most delightful things in existence; and do you know, mamma, I will not permit you to say you ought not to wish for her, because she is happier where she is than she would be here; it is high treason in my presence to say or even think so."

"I must plead guilty, then, my Emmeline, and place my case in Ellen's hands as counsel for the defendant, or throw myself on your mercy."

"In consideration of the peculiar happiness of this evening, I pronounce pardon," answered Emmeline, laughing, as she kissed her mother's hand.

"A letter we received this morning tells us of one who longs to behold us all again, spite of the many and varied pleasures of his exciting life, does it not, my dear aunt?"

"It does indeed, my love. Our Edward's letters have been, ever since he left us, sources of consolation and delight to me, though I do excite my Ellen's jealousy at the greater length of his letters to me than of those to her," she added, smiling.

"My brother knows if his letters to you impart pleasure and satisfaction, he cannot bestow greater happiness on me, however short mine may be," answered Ellen, earnestly; "and when he writes so fully to you and so fondly to me, I have every reason to be quite contented; his time is not so much at his own disposal as mine is."

"I wonder where he can find time to write such lengthy epistles to mamma," observed the smiling Emmeline. "I peeped over her shoulder this morning as she was reading, and was astounded to perceive it was written nearly as closely as mine would be. I wonder how he manages, sailors are said to be such bad correspondents."

"Have you forgotten what I used so repeatedly to say to you, when you were a lazy little girl, Emmeline, and were ever ready to escape disagreeable tasks, by saying you were quite sure you never could succeed—Where there's a will there's a way?"

"Indeed, I have not forgotten it, dear mamma; it often comes across me now, when I am ready to despair; and so I shall just read it to Master Ned when he returns, as a lecture for not writing to me."

"Nay, Emmeline, that would be demanding too much from our young sailor; there is moderation in everything, you know."

"Not in me, mamma," answered Emmeline, laughing. "You know I am always in extremes, up in the skies one minute, and down, down on the lowest earth the next. I sometimes wish I was like Ellen, always unruffled, always calm and collected. You will go through the world better than I shall, my quiet cousin."

“Shall I?” replied Ellen, faintly smiling. But Mrs. Hamilton could perceive that which the thoughtless Emmeline regarded not, a deep crimson staining apparently with pain the pale fair cheek of her niece, and she thought not with her daughter.

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“And how much longer does Ned intend being away from us?” demanded Emmeline, after a long pause.

“He cannot give us any idea yet,” answered her mother; “perhaps some time next year. They were to cruise off the shores of South America these autumnal months, and winter, Edward thinks, off Buenos Ayres. He is pleased at this, as he will see so very much more of the New World than he expected, when he left us.”

“What an entertaining companion he will be when he returns,” exclaimed Emmeline.

“Or rather ought to be, Emmeline,” remarked Ellen, quietly.

“Now, what an insinuation! Ellen, you are too bad to-night, and against your brother, of all persons in the world. It is just like the ill compliment you paid him on his gallantry in saving the Syren and all her crew—absolutely would not believe that your brother Edward and the young hero of my tale were one and the same person.”

“I can forgive her scepticism then,” said Mrs. Hamilton, affectionately. “The extraordinary efforts you described were indeed almost beyond credence, when known to have been those of a lad but just seventeen; but I hope my Ellen is no longer a sceptic as to the future fame and honour of her brother,” she added, kindly addressing her niece.

“Oh, I dare not indulge in one half the bright visions, the fond hopes that will intrude themselves upon my mind for him,” exclaimed Ellen, with involuntary energy.

“Why, Ellen, are you sometimes a victim to the freaks of imagination as well as myself?” asked her cousin, laughing.

“I have frequently compelled myself to seek active employment,” answered Ellen, “lest those hopes should be indeed but fading visions, and my disappointment more painfully bitter.”

“You do your brother injustice in even fancying disappointment,” said her aunt, playfully, “and I must act as defendant for the absent. I believe, say, and protest my firm belief, that the name of Edward Fortescue will stand one of the highest in naval fame, both as a commander and a man. The naval honour of my family will, I feel assured, have a worthy representative in my noble nephew, and I will not have one word breathed in doubt or mistrust on the subject.”

“If you think so, then I may hope indeed,” Ellen said with earnestness. “And the recollection of the past”—



“Must heighten anticipations for the future, my dear girl, or I must sentence them to perpetual banishment. Condemn them never to be recalled,” interrupted Mrs. Hamilton, still more playfully, and then added—

“Emmeline, have you no wish to know how the object of your kind sympathy, poor Lilla, parted from her father and me to day?”

“I quite forgot all about it, mamma; this Oakwood hour has made me so selfish. I thought of no one but ourselves,” replied Emmeline. “Gratify my curiosity now. Did Lady Helen evince any sorrow at the separation?”

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“Not so much as, for Lilla’s sake, I could have wished. She has been so unfortunately prejudiced against her both by Annie and Miss Malison, that although I am convinced she loves her child, she never will evince any proof of it; and Lilla’s unhappy temperament has, of course, increased this prejudice, which I fear will require years to remove, unless Annie be soon married, and Miss Malison removed from Lady Helen’s establishment. Then Lilla’s really excellent qualities will quickly be made evident.”

“Mr. Grahame is already convinced she is a very different girl to that she has been represented, is he not?” asked Ellen.

“He is; and I trust, from the awakened knowledge, happiness is dawning upon them both. I could not see unmoved his struggle to part with her to-day, brief as the separation will be—scarcely six short months.”

“I was quite sure Mr. Grahame loved his children, though Annie and Cecil did say so much about his sternness,” said Emmeline, somewhat triumphantly.

“Mr. Grahame’s feelings are naturally the very wannest, but disappointment in some of his dearest hopes has, in some cases, unfortunately caused him to veil them; I regret this, both for Cecil and Lilla’s sake, as I think, had he evinced greater interest and affection for them in their childish years, they might both have been different in character.”

“But it is not too late now?”

“I trust not for Lilla, but I greatly fear, from all I have heard, that Cecil’s character is already formed. Terrified at his father’s harshness, he has always shrunk from the idea of making him his friend, and has associated only with the young men of his mother’s family, who, some few years older than himself, and devoted to fashion, and gay amusements, are not the very best companions he could have selected, but whose near relationship seems to have prevented all interference on the part of Mr. Grahame. Cecil must now be sixteen, and I fear no alteration in his father’s conduct will efface the impressions already received.”

“But, changed as Mr. Grahame is towards Lilla, was it still necessary for her to go to Mrs. Douglas? Could not her reformation have been effected equally well at home?”

“No, my love; her father delighted at finding he had engaged her affections, and that some of the representations he had heard were false, would, in all probability, have gone to the contrary extreme, and indulged her as much, if not more, than he had previously neglected her. Lilla has very many faults, which require steady yet not harsh correction, and which from her earliest age demanded the greatest care; being neglected, they have strengthened with her years. The discipline she will now be under will at first be irksome, and perhaps Lilla may find all I have said in Mrs. Douglas’s

favour very contrary to reality; but I have such a good opinion of her docility, when reasoned with kindly, that I do not doubt all such impressions will be effaced when she visits us at Christmas."

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"Well, however kind Mrs. Douglas may be, I should not like to be in Lilla's place," observed Emmeline, and then added, with her usual animation, "Ah, mamma, how can we ever be sufficiently grateful to you for never sending us from you? I might have loved you very dearly, but I could not have looked upon you as my best and dearest friend, as I do now."

"It is sufficient recompense for all my care that you do look on me thus, my sweet child," exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton, with involuntary emotion, and she bent down to impress a kiss on Emmeline's forehead as she spoke, that she might conceal an unusual tear which had started to her eye, for the unrestrained confidence and unabated affection of her younger daughter, while it soothed, yet rendered the conduct of Caroline by its contrast more painful; and, almost unconsciously, she added—

"Oh, that this confidence and affection may never change, never be withdrawn."

"Change!" repeated Emmeline and Ellen at the same moment; but they checked themselves, for they knew where the thoughts of their much-loved relative had wandered, and they felt she had indeed sufficient cause for all her solicitude. Recovering herself almost instantly, Mrs. Hamilton resumed the conversation in a more cheerful tone, by demanding of Emmeline if her busy fancy had pictured how Oakwood was to look, on their return to it in a fortnight's time.

"She certainly must have done so," answered Ellen, laughing; "for she has had so many reveries over her drawing and work this week, that nothing less important could have occasioned them."

Emmeline shook her head archly, and answered gaily; and her dear old venerable home was the engrossing theme of conversation till the return of Mr. Hamilton, a short time afterwards.

"Congratulate me, all of you," he said, in a joyous tone; "my business is proceeding most favourably. Mr. Myrvin need know nothing about it till all is settled; the dishonourable conduct of his enemies brought to light, and himself reinstated in his little domain, once more the minister of Llangwillan. Thanks to the able conduct of Mr. Allan, all will soon be made clear. As soon as we are at Oakwood, Ellen, you shall write to Mr. Myrvin, and invite him to spend some little time with us; and when he leaves us, I trust it will be once more for Llangwillan and its own pretty vicarage."

"Dear, dear uncle!" exclaimed Ellen, starting up and clinging to his arm, "oh, how can I thank you for your interference in behalf of him who was the first friend I knew in England? the consoler of my mother—the"—

"The good man who first told us what a troublesome charge I should find in my niece," interrupted Mrs. Hamilton, playfully.

“I have indeed been a trouble to you,” replied Ellen, with a suppressed yet heavy sigh, and her uncle’s hand dropped from her grasp.

“Ellen!” said Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton at the same instant, in an accent of reproach.

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"Have I not?" she continued, with unusual impetuosity. "Did I not cause you misery, you, who from the first moment you knew me, loved me more than I deserved? Did I not make both of you ill in health and wretched in mind, and yet your kindness now is greater than before? There is not a wish—not a desire I express, but is granted on the instant; and I—oh, I have no power to—to"—

"You will, at least, have the power of making me seriously displeased if you speak in this way again, and thus turn my sportive words to gloom," said Mrs. Hamilton, gravely, but gently drawing the agitated girl with tenderness to her. "Come, come, Ellen, I will not have Emmeline's happy Oakwood hour thus alloyed. You may reward me yet for all, and one day, perhaps, make me your debtor. That may appear very impossible now," she added, smiling, as Ellen raised her large eyes incredulously to her face; "but more improbable things have come to pass."

"And where is Arthur to be while his father is with us?" demanded Emmeline, joyously, of her father. "Not as a servitor at college, I hope."

"No; I anticipate the pleasure of welcoming the friend of Herbert as my guest as well as his father, and then we shall deliberate on Arthur's future life. I should like much to place him under Mr. Howard for a year, and then establish him in a living of Lord Malvern's, in which I have little doubt I could succeed."

"Well, my fancy then will indeed be gratified. I shall see this proud persecuted youth, and judge for myself if he be deserving or not of my brother's friendship. Do you remember him, Ellen?"

"Perfectly well; he was so very kind to me. I well recollect his grief when I left the village, to live, he said, in such a very different style, that it was not likely we should ever meet again."

"But yet, you see, improbable as it appeared, you will meet again," said Mrs. Hamilton in a marked tone, as she smiled.

"So you call this an Oakwood hour, Emmy, do you?" demanded Mr. Hamilton, after Arthur and his father had been duly discussed. "Suppose we make the resemblance even more complete by ringing for lights, and you and Ellen giving me some music. I have had no opportunities of hearing your improvement, which, I suppose, under such able professors, has been something extraordinary."

"Marvellous, most marvellous!" exclaimed Emmeline, laughing, as she flew to obey him by ringing the bell. "I had begun to fancy I was practising for nothing, and that my father would never do his child the honour of listening to her again, but I remembered the enchanted halls of Oakwood, and I thought there at least I might chain him to my side, and so I continued my labours."

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"Let us fancy ourselves there," replied her father, smiling; and lights appearing, Emmeline and Ellen were speedily at the instruments, bestowing pleasure unalloyed by this domestic use of their talents to those dear ones who had so assiduously cultivated them. Their improvement, under the best professors in London, had been rapid; for, carefully prepared, no difficulties had to be overcome ere improvement commenced; and the approbation and evident pleasure of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton amply repaid those young and innocent beings for all the exertions they had made, particularly Emmeline, who, as we know, had determined, on her first arrival in London, to prove she would not learn, when all around her was so changed.

"Surely, surely, Caroline, surrounded by gaiety as she is, cannot be as happy as I am to-night," burst with wild glee from the lips of Emmeline, as at about half-past ten o'clock her father kissed her glowing cheek, and thanked her for the pleasing recreation she had given him. She had scarcely spoken, when a carriage was heard driving somewhat rapidly through the Square, then stopped, it appeared at their door, and a thundering and truly aristocratic rap resounded, startling not a little the inmates of that peaceful drawing-room.

"Who can it be at this hour?" demanded Emmeline, in an accent of bewilderment. "How very disagreeable. I did not wish any intrusion to-night. Mamma, dear mamma, you look terrified."

Mr. Hamilton had opened the drawing-room door, and was about to descend the stairs, for he too was startled at this unusual visit; but he turned at Emmeline's words, for his wife did not usually indulge in unfounded alarm or anticipated fears, but at that instant her wonted presence of mind appeared about to desert her; she was pale as marble, and had started up in an attitude of terror.

Voices were heard, and stops, well-known steps, ascending the stairs.

"It is the Duchess of Rothbury's voice and step—my child!" burst from her lips, in an accent that neither Emmeline nor Ellen ever could forget, and she sunk back almost fainting on her seat. Her children flew to her side in alarm, but ere a minute had passed away that wild anxiety was calmed, for Caroline herself entered with the Duchess, but her death-like cheek, blanched lip, and haggard eye told a tale of suffering which that mother could not mark unmoved. Vainly Mrs. Hamilton strove to rise and welcome the Duchess: she had no power to move from her chair.

"Caroline, my child!" were the only words her faltering tongue could utter; and that agonized voice thrilled through the heart of the now truly unhappy girl, and roused her from that trance of overwhelming emotion which bade her stand spell-bound at the threshold. She sprung forward, and sinking at her mother's feet, buried her face in her robe.

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"Mother, my injured mother, oh, do not, do not hate me!" she murmured, in a voice almost inarticulate. "I deserve to be cast from your love, to lose your confidence for ever. I have deceived you—I—" Sobs choked her utterance, and the grieving mother could only throw her arms around her child, and press her convulsively to her heart. Anxiety, nearly equal to that of his wife, had been an inmate of Mr. Hamilton's bosom as the Duchess's voice reached his ear; but as he glanced on Caroline, a frown gathered on his brow. He trembled involuntarily, for he felt assured it was imprudence, to give it the mildest term, in her conduct that called for this untimely visit, this strange return to her home. Already he had been deceived; and while every softened feeling struggled for mastery in the mother's bosom, the father stood ready to judge and to condemn, fiercely conquering every rising emotion that swelled within. There was even more lofty majesty in the carriage of her Grace, as she carefully closed the drawing-room door behind her, and slowly advanced towards Mrs. Hamilton; a cold, severe, unbending expression in every feature, that struck terror to the hearts of both Emmeline and Ellen, whose innocent festivity was indeed now rudely checked.

"Mrs. Hamilton," the Duchess said, and the grave and sad accents of her voice caused the anxious mother hastily to raise her head, and gaze inquiringly in her face, "to my especial care you committed your child. I promised to guard her as my own, and on that condition alone you entrusted her to me; I alone, therefore, restore her to you, thank God, unscathed. I make no apology for this strange and apparently needless intrusion at this late hour; deceived as I have been, my house was no longer a fitting home for your daughter, and not another night could I retain her, when my judgment told me her father's watchful guardianship alone could protect her from the designing arts of one, of whom but very little is known, and that little not such as would recommend him to my favour. You, too, have been deceived, cruelly deceived, by that weak, infatuated girl. Had you been aware that Lord Alphingham was her secretly favoured lover, that the coldness with which she ever treated him in public, the encouragement of another, were but to conceal from you and her father her attachment to him, you would not have consented to her joining a party of which he was a member. At my house he has received increased encouragement. I marked them with a jealous eye, for I could not believe his attentions sanctioned either by you or Mr. Hamilton; but even my vigilance was at fault, for she had consented to sever every tie which bound her to her too indulgent parents, and fly with him to Scotland. This night would have seen the accomplishment of their design. Had one of my children behaved thus, it would have been less a matter of bewilderment to me than such conduct in a daughter of yours. I have neglected to seek their confidence, their affection. You

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have never rested in your endeavours to obtain both, and therefore, that such should be your recompense is sad indeed. I sympathise with you, my dearest friend," she continued, in a tone of much more feeling than she ever allowed to be visible. "In the tale of shame I am repeating, I am inflicting misery upon you, I feel I am; and yet, in resigning my charge, I must do my duty, and set you on your guard, and let this one reflection be your comfort, that it was the recollection of your untiring care, your constant affection, which checked this infatuated girl in her career of error, and bade her pause ere it was too late. For her sufferings I have little pity; she is no longer the character I believed her. Neither integrity, honour, nor candour can be any longer inmates of her heart; the confession I have heard this night has betrayed a lengthened scheme of deception, to which, had I heard it of her, I should have given no credence. Forgive me, my dear Emmeline, and look not on me so beseechingly; painful as it is, in the sincerest friendship alone I place before your too partial eyes the real character of your child. I have now done my duty, and will therefore leave you. God bless you, and grant you strength to bear this bitter trial." She turned to the unhappy father, who, as she spoke, had, overcome with uncontrollable agitation, sunk on a chair and covered his face with his hands, but with a strong effort he roused himself as she pronounced his name, and rose.

"Mr. Hamilton, to your wife, your inestimable wife, you owe the preservation of your child this night from sin. Let her not, I beseech you, afflict herself too deeply for those sufferings under which she may behold Caroline for a time the victim. She deserves them all—all; but she merits not one half that affection which her fond and loving mother would lavish on her. I leave you now, but, trust me, feeling deeply for you both."

"Nay, rest with us to night, at least," exclaimed Mr. Hamilton, conquering himself sufficiently to think of his friend's situation, alone, in London, at such a late hour, and endeavouring to persuade her to remain with them; but decidedly, yet kindly, she refused.

"I sleep at St. James's, and shall be back at Airlie to-morrow morning before my guests are recovered from the effects of to-night," she urged. "Your hospitality is kindly meant, Hamilton, but I cannot accept it; both Caroline and her mother can dispense with my company now."

"Then let me accompany you home?"

"I will not hear of it, my good friend. Good night, once more; God bless you!"

Mr. Hamilton knew the character of his noble friend too well to urge more, and therefore contented himself by accompanying her down stairs.

To describe Mrs. Hamilton's feelings, as she listened to the words of the Duchess, would be indeed a vain attempt. We know all the anguish she had suffered when Caroline's conduct had first caused her uneasiness, and now the heightened agony of her fond heart may be easily imagined. Almost unconsciously she had withdrawn her arm; but Caroline clung more convulsively to her robe, and her first wild words sounded again and again in her mother's ears, soothing while they inflicted pain.

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"Can it be possible I have heard aright? Have I indeed been thus deceived?" she asked, struggling to speak calmly, when the Duchess and her husband had left the room; and she fixed her sad, searching glance upon Caroline, who for a moment raised her head.

"Mother, dearest mother, condemn me, despise me as you please; I deserve it all," she replied, in an accent of most piercing wretchedness. "Only say that I may in time regain your love, your confidence; that you will take me to your heart again. I have disregarded your affection; I have wilfully cast it from me. Yet—oh, if you knew all I have suffered. Mamma, mamma, oh, speak but one word more of kindness! I know I deserve it not, but my heart feels breaking. I have no other friend on earth but you; oh, call me but your child again, mother!"

Her voice utterly failed, a film suddenly obscured her sight, and a sense of suffocation rose in her throat; the misery of the last ten days, the wretchedness and excitement of that day had deprived her of more strength than she was at all aware of, and with one convulsive effort to clasp her mother's hand to her throbbing heart, she sunk exhausted at her feet. Emmeline would have flown for assistance, but a look from her mother bade her pause, and she remained with Ellen to seek those restoratives that were at hand. With a throbbing heart and trembling hand, Mrs. Hamilton raised her repentant child, and with the assistance of Emmeline placed her tenderly on the nearest couch, endeavouring, though for some few minutes in vain, to recall her scattered senses. Tears fell from that fond mother's eyes upon Caroline's deathlike features, and ere life returned she had been pressed again and again to her heart, and repeated kisses imprinted on her marble brow. It mattered not at that moment that she had been deceived, that Caroline had withdrawn alike her confidence and affection, that her conduct the last few months had been productive of bitter disappointment and extreme anguish, all, all was forgotten; the mother only knew her child was suffering—only felt she was restored to her arms; again and again she kissed her erring child, beseeching her with fond and gentle words to wake and know she was forgiven.

Slowly Caroline recovered consciousness, and unclosing her eyes, gazed wildly yet sadly on all by whom she was surrounded. All the father had struggled with Mr. Hamilton, as he stood by her side during the continuance of her swoon; but now sternness again darkened his brow, and he would have given vent to his wounded feelings in severe though just reproaches, but the beseeching glance, the agonized voice of his wife arrested him.

"Arthur, my husband, oh, for my sake, spare her now!" she passionately exclaimed, clasping his hand in hers, and looking up in his face with imploring earnestness. "Spare her, at least, till from her own lips we have heard all; she is in no state to bear anger now, however deserved. Arthur, dearest Arthur, oh, do not reproach her till we know what it is that has caused the wretchedness, the suffering we behold! For my sake, spare her now."

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"Mother," murmured the unhappy girl, with a powerful effort rising from the couch, and flinging herself on Mrs. Hamilton's neck, "do not plead for me; I do not deserve it. My conduct to you the last few months would alone demand the severest reproaches papa could inflict; and that, oh, that is but little to the crime I should have committed, had not the remembrance of all your devotion rushed to my mind, and arrested me, but a few brief hours ere it would have been too late, and I should have sacrificed myself to a man I discovered I did not love, merely to prove I was not a slave to your dictates, that I had a will of my own, and with or without your consent would abide by it. I have been infatuated, blind—led on by artful persuasion, false representations, and weakly I have yielded. Do not weep for me, Emmeline, I am not worthy of your tears. You would have guided me aright; you would have warned me, advised me, but I rejected your counsel, spurned your affection; with contempt, aversion from all, from each, do I deserve to be regarded. Ellen, you may triumph now; I did all I could to prove how I hated and despised you some months ago, and now, oh, how much more I have fallen. Oh, why, why did I ever leave Oakwood?—why was I so eager to visit London?" Exhaustion choked her voice, the vehemence with which she had spoken overpowered her, and her mother was compelled to lead her to a couch, and force her to sit down beside her. Mr. Hamilton spoke not; for a few minutes he paced the room with agitated steps, and then hastily quitted it.

"It is so very late, you had better retire, my dear girls," Mrs. Hamilton said, after a brief pause, addressing Emmeline and Ellen, who yet lingered sorrowfully near her. They understood her hint, and instantly obeyed, both affectionately but silently embracing Caroline ere they departed; and it was a relief to Mrs. Hamilton's anxious bosom to find herself alone with her painfully repentant child. For some time did that interview continue; and when Caroline retired to rest, it was with a spirit lighter than it had been for many weeks, spite of the dark clouds she still felt were around her. All her strange wayward feelings had been confessed. She laid no stress on those continued letters she had received from Annie, which had from the first alienated her from her mother. Remorse was too busy within to bid her attempt to defend herself by inculpating others; but though she carefully avoided reference to her misleading friend, Mrs. Hamilton could easily, very easily, perceive from whose arts all her own misery and Caroline's present suffering originated; and bitterly in secret she reproached herself for ever permitting that intimacy to continue, and obtain the influence it had. To Lord St. Eval and her conduct to him the unhappy girl also referred. Pride was completely at an end; every question Mrs. Hamilton asked was answered with all that candour and integrity which had once characterised her most trifling words;

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and while her undisguised confession on many points occasioned the most poignant sorrow, yet still, as the mother listened, and gazed on those expressive features, something whispered within her that her child would be a blessing still. She owned that from the moment she had rejected Lord St. Eval, regret had become so unceasing, that to escape it she had listened to and encouraged Lord Alphingham more than she had done before; his professions of devoted love had appeared as balm, and deadened the reproaches of conscience. Why she had so carefully concealed from her parents that which she imagined was love for the Viscount she could not explain, unless it was her weakness in following the example of others, who, she had been told, shrunk from confessing love-stories to their mothers; or, and that Mrs. Hamilton believed much nearer the real reason, she did not love him sufficiently to implore their consent to his addresses. She acknowledged, when their prohibition to her acquaintance with him was given, she had longed to confess the truth, and implore them at least to say why she might no longer enjoy his society; but that she had felt too indignant at what she deemed the slavery in which she was held, and discontent and irritation then took possession of her, instead of willing obedience. She described her feelings when he appeared at Airlie, the many struggles she then had with herself; and, finally, her wretchedness from the moment she had consented to be his wife; her entreaties that he would permit her to implore her father's consent; her agony the same evening; her fervent prayer for forgiveness and guidance; and, at length, her determination to elude him by setting off for home the instant the Duchess and her party had left the villa, which intention she had endeavoured to put in force by imploring the assistance and secrecy of her Grace's own maid to procure her a safe carriage and fleet horses, as she was compelled to return home that same night; she would leave a note, she said, explaining her reason for her departure to her Grace. She fancied Allison must have betrayed her, as, when she was every minute expecting to hear the carriage was ready, the Duchess entered her room, and, after a brief but stern interview, ordered her own carriage, and had herself accompanied her to town.

Mrs. Hamilton listened to this long sad tale without interrupting it by a word of reproach. Not once did she speak aught that might tend to increase the anguish under which it was so evident Caroline was suffering. Soothingly she spoke, and that fond yet saddened tone caused the poor girl's bursting heart to find relief in a violent flood of tears. She clung, even as in childhood, to her mother's neck, and as she wept, felt yet more bitterly the infatuated folly of her conduct in having for a moment forsaken the guidance of her true and kindest friend, for the apparently more pleasing, because flattering, confidence of one whom she now knew to be false and utterly deceiving.

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"But may he not still claim me?" she wildly exclaimed. "Will he not hold me up to the world as a faithless, capricious girl? I shall be the laughing-stock of all with whom we associate. Annie is not likely to keep my secret. Oh, why did I ever confide in her? Mother, I shall be despised, derided. I know I have brought it on myself, but oh, how can I bear it?"

"We leave London so very shortly, that I trust you will not be exposed to the derision you so much dread," replied Mrs. Hamilton, soothingly, "and by next season I hope all floating rumours that your conduct must occasion may have entirely passed away. You need not fear the scorn of the circle in which we principally mingle; and that of Annie's companions, if the dread of their laughter keep you from seeking, as you have done, their society, forgive me, my love, if I say I shall rejoice; for you will then no longer be exposed to example and precept contrary to those I have endeavoured to instil."

"But, Lord Alphingham, what will he say or do?" murmured Caroline, almost inaudibly.

"You must write to him, Caroline, dissolving your engagement; there is no other way."

"Write to him, mother, I—oh, no, no, I cannot."

"If you do not, you will still be exposed to constant annoyance; he may choose to believe that you were forced by compulsion to return to us. The circumstance of the Duchess herself accompanying you to town, he will consider as sufficient evidence. Acting on your promise, on your avowed preference, unless you write yourself, he will leave no means untried to succeed in his sinful schemes. Painful as is the task, or rather more disagreeable than painful if you do not love him, no one but yourself must write, and the sooner you do so the better."

"But if he really loves me? How can I—how dare I inflict more pain, more disappointment, than I have done already?"

"Loves you!" repeated Mrs. Hamilton, and displeasure mingled in her saddened tone; "Caroline, do not permit yourself to be thus egregiously deceived. He may fancy that he does, but it is no true honourable love; if it were, would he thus bear you by stealth from the friend to whom you were intrusted? If his conscience were indeed free from all stain, would he have refused your entreaties that you might confess your love to us, and beseech our blessing on your union? Would he have shrunk from defending his conduct according to your advice? Nay, more; if this accusation, which he has traced by some means to Percy, were indeed unfounded and unjust, do you think he would have refrained one moment from coming forward and asserting, not only by word but by proof, his unblemished innocence? His silence is to me the clearest proof of conduct that will not bear investigation; and I tremble to think what miseries, what wretchedness might have been your portion, had you indeed consented to his unworthy proposal." Her voice faltered, and she drew the still weeping girl closer to her, as if her maternal

love should protect her from every evil. Caroline answered not, and after a few minutes Mrs. Hamilton said, with tenderness—

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"You do not repent your decision, my own child? You do not regret that you have returned to those who love and cherish you so fondly? Speak to me, love."

Convulsively Caroline's hand pressed her mother's as if that pressure should say nothing more should part them; then suddenly sinking on her knees before her, she forced back the choking sobs, and said, clearly and distinctly—

"Mother, I dare no longer ask you to believe my simple word, as in former years you would have done, I have deceived you too long, too culpably for that; but now, on my knees, solemnly, sacredly I swear, I will never marry without papa's and your consent. I dare no longer trust myself; I have once been rendered blind by that sinful craving for freedom from all authority, for unchecked independence of thought and word and deed, and never, never more will I stand forth in my own weakness. My fate is in your hands, for never will I marry without your blessing; and may that vow be registered above as solemnly as it is now taken. Mother, you will not refuse to accept it," she added, laying her trembling hand on Mrs. Hamilton's, and gazing beseechingly in her face.

"I will not, my child!" and her mother struggled severely to conquer her emotion and speak calmly. "Tell me only it is in my affection you confide, that it is not under feelings of remorse alone you have made this solemn vow. Promise me you will no longer permit a doubt of my affection and interest in your happiness to enter your mind and poison your confidence in me, as it has done. From that doubt all the present misery has proceeded. You have imagined your parents harsh and cruel, while they have only thought of your welfare. Say only you will trust in our affection, my child, my own Caroline."

"Oh, that I had ever trusted in it. My blindness and folly concealed from me my misconduct, and bade me ascribe all my sufferings to you, on whom I have inflicted so much pain. Mother, oh, forgive me, plead for me to papa. I know he is seriously displeased, he has every right to be so; but he knows not all I have endured, the agony of the last week. I deserve his severest reproaches, but my heart feels as if it would break beneath his anger now," and she laid her aching head on her mother's lap, and wept.

"My forgiveness, my blessing, are both yours, my own. Do not weep thus," replied Mrs. Hamilton, imprinting a kiss on that burning forehead. "And your father too, when he has heard all, will not withhold his love."

"I will write to Lord Alphingham now, mother; it is useless to defer it, and my mind will not regain its peace till it is done," exclaimed Caroline, after a brief pause, which had followed her mother's words.

“Not now, my love, you are too agitated still,” replied her mother, gazing anxiously on her flushed cheek; “wait till sleep shall have calmed this inward fever, and restored you to composure. I do not think you can write it now.”

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"I cannot sleep till I have, mamma, indeed I cannot. I ought to have left it for him before I quitted Airlie, but I could then think of nothing but the ardent longing to see you, to hear your voice again; let me write now."

And believing her words were true, that in all probability she would not sleep while that letter was on her mind, Mrs. Hamilton made no further objection, and rose to place the inkstand and portfolio on a table near her. Caroline remained still kneeling, and by her attitude Mrs. Hamilton fancied was engaged in secret prayer; her tears were checked as she rose, and it was with firmness she walked to the table and drew a seat beside it. Anxiously for a few minutes did her mother watch her as she wrote. At first her hand appeared to tremble, but a successful effort conquered that emotion, and the increasing flush upon her cheek alone proclaimed the agitation of her mind. So deeply was she engrossed in her painful task, that she did not observe her mother had left the room, and remained absent for a few minutes, returning, however, before she had finished her letter. Without looking up, she placed the paper in Mrs. Hamilton's hands, and, leaning her arms on the table, buried her face in her hands.

Mrs. Hamilton folded the letter in perfect silence; but then taking the hand of her daughter from her eyes, she pressed it in hers, and said, in a voice of deep emotion—

"I am satisfied, my child. Let this letter be directed and sealed with your own hand, and the name of Lord Alphonham shall never again pass my lips. It is enough that duty and affection have triumphed over his intentions. I know not all the evil that might have been yours had he succeeded, but you are restored to me, and may God forgive him as freely as I do."

With a steady hand Caroline directed and placed her own seal to the letter; and then, exhausted by the agitation of that evening, she leaned her throbbing head against her mother.

"Caroline, my child!" exclaimed a deep and saddened voice beside her. She started, and looking up, beheld her father, who had been gazing at her an unobserved spectator for the last half hour.

"Forgive me, dearest father. Oh, let me not sleep to-night without your forgiveness. Mamma will not cast me from her heart; she has blessed me, and I have injured her even more than you. Papa, dear papa, oh, speak to me but one word of fondness!" she entreated, as her father drew her to his bosom, and as she ceased, mingled his blessing and forgiveness in that warm embrace.

It was late, so late, that the early morn was beginning to gild the horizon before Mrs. Hamilton had seen her agitated child placed in bed, and persuaded her to compose her spirits and invite sleep. Fondly her mother watched beside her till the grey dawn had

penetrated within the room; and then perceiving that calm, sleep had come at length, she retired to her own apartment. There sinking on her knees, her

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overcharged heart found blessed relief in pouring forth to Heaven its fervent thanksgiving for that great mercy vouchsafed her in the restoration of her child. The anguish of the past, the suffering of the present were alike forgotten, in the thought that Caroline's affection and confidence were again restored to her. The veil had at length been removed from her eyes. Annie's character was revealed before her and the sorrowful and repentant girl had once more sought for sympathy in the bosom of her mother. She now felt that mother was her truest friend, and a glow of sweet and soothing pleasure stole over Mrs. Hamilton's mind at this conviction. Caroline had said it was the recollection of her mother's care, devotion, and love that had stayed her, ere it was too late. She could not banish from her heart the duty therein so long and carefully implanted; the principles of religion, of virtue, shaken as they had been in that painful moment of indecision, had preserved her from misery. Often, very often, Mrs. Hamilton had felt disheartened, almost despairing in her task, during both the childhood and youth of Caroline, but now her recompense was apparent. Had she not persevered, had she been indolent or careless in the discharge of her duty, had she left the care of that child to strangers, who would never have thus studied or guided so difficult a disposition, there would have been naught to bid her pause. She would have done as others too often do, and fearful indeed would have been her chastisement. Now, what were all Mrs. Hamilton's self-conquering struggles, all the pain she had suffered, compared with the exquisite happiness of feeling that her care had preserved her child, and she knew not as yet from what depth of wretchedness? Fervent was the gratitude for that grace which had permitted her to guide her child aright; and as she recalled the heartfelt approbation of her conduct, which her beloved husband had gratefully expressed, happiness filled her heart, and many, very many might have envied that noble woman her feelings, as she laid her head on her pillow that night, when sleep only hushed the still lingering thanksgiving on her lips.

It may be well here briefly to relate all that had passed at Airlie, from the moment we left Caroline imploring pardon and guidance from Him, to whom she had never appealed in vain, to that when she so suddenly appeared in company with the Duchess in Berkeley Square. To accede to Lord Alphingham's wishes, she felt was no longer possible, but how to avoid him was a matter of still greater difficulty. To accompany the Duchess and thus elude him, she could not, for she felt neither her strength nor spirits could sustain her through the whole of that festive night. Each minute as it passed increased the fever of her brain, at length in despair she determined on the conduct with which we are already acquainted. As soon as the last carriage had rolled from the door she summoned Allison, the Duchess's own maid,

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and in accents that painfully betrayed the agitation within, implored her to procure her a carriage and fleet horses, as circumstances had occurred which obliged her instantly to return to town. She besought her neither to question her nor to speak of her sudden resolution to any one, as the note she would leave behind for her Grace would fully explain all. Allison remained for some few minutes gazing on the agitated girl, in motionless astonishment.

"Return to London at such a time of night, and alone," she rather allowed to drop from her lips than said, after a long pause.

"Oh, would to heaven some one would go with me! but I know none whom I can ask," Caroline replied, in a tone of anguish, and seizing Allison's hand, again and again implored her assistance. Briefly she promised to do all she could for her, and left her, not to do her bidding by seeking some conveyance, but to report the strange request and still more alarming manner of Caroline to her Grace; who, for some secret reason, which her daughters and friends in vain endeavoured to solve, had at the very last moment declared her intention of not accompanying them, and wishing them, with the utmost kindness, a pleasant evening, commissioned Lady Lucy and her eldest brother, who had lately joined them, to supply her place in their own party, and tender her excuses to the noble master of the *fete*. The simple truth was, that the penetration of the Duchess had observed and detected from the very first the manoeuvres of Lord Alphingham and Caroline.

The former, as may have already been discovered, was one of those against whom her prejudice was very strong. With her own free will, Lord Alphingham would never have visited at her house, although she was never heard to breathe one word to his disadvantage; especially invited he never was, and in heart she was much annoyed at her husband's marked preference and encouragement of his society. She had observed her friend Mrs. Hamilton's coldness towards him; and as much as she admired the conduct of the mother, so she sometimes found herself mistrusting the studied air and guarded reserve with which Caroline ever treated the Viscount. The sudden change in Mr. Hamilton's manner had also struck her, and therefore, when Alphingham joined her coterie, not once did she ever fail in the jealous watchfulness with which she regarded him and Caroline. Rendered suspicious by all that she had observed, Caroline's determination not to join the party that evening had increased her uneasiness to a degree that almost amounted to alarm, and that very instant her resolution was fixed to remain at Airlie. She desired Allison not to mention her intention of remaining to Miss Hamilton, but to inform her minutely of all that passed during the evening; and her astonishment was almost as great as her domestic's had been when Caroline's desire was related to her.

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It wanted but one half hour to the time appointed by the Viscount, and Caroline still sat in a state of anxiety and suspense, which tortured her almost to frenzy. Unable to bear it longer, her hand was on the bell once more to summon Allison, when the lock of the door turned, and starting forwards, the words, "Is all ready—have you succeeded?" were arrested on her lips by the appearance of the Duchess herself, who, closing the door, stood gazing on the terrified girl with a glance of severity and command few could have met unmoved. Scarcely conscious of what she did, Caroline started back, and, sinking on a stool at the farthest end of the room, covered her face with her hands.

"May I know with what intent Miss Hamilton is about to withdraw herself from my roof and my protection?" she demanded, in those brief yet searching tones she ever used when displeased. "What reason she can allege for this unceremonious departure from a house where she has ever been regarded as one of its most favoured inmates? Your mother trusted you to my care, and on your duty to her I demand an answer." She continued, after a brief pause, in which Caroline neither moved nor spoke, "Where would you go at this unseasonable hour?"

"Home to my mother," murmured the unhappy girl, in a voice almost inarticulate.

"Home!" repeated her Grace, in a bitterly satirical tone. "Strange, that you should thus suddenly desire to return. Were you not the child of those to whom equivocation is unknown, I might well doubt that tale;—home, and wherefore?"

"To save myself from the effects of my own sinful folly—my own infatuated madness," replied Caroline, summoning with a strong effort all the energy of her character, and with a vehemence that flushed her pallid cheek with crimson. "In this at least I am sincere, though in all else I deserve no longer to be regarded as the child of such noble-minded beings as are my parents. Spurn me from you as you will, this is no moment for equivocation and delay. I have deceived your Grace. I was about to bring down shame upon your house, to cause your indignant displeasure, my parents anguish, myself but endless remorseful misery. To save all this, I would return home to implore the forgiveness, the protection of my parents; they alone can guard me from myself. Oh, if you ever loved my mother," she continued, starting up with agony, as the hour of nine chimed on her ear, "send some one with me, and let me go home. Half an hour more," and her voice grew almost inarticulate with suppressed emotion, "and it may be too late. Mother, mother, if I could but see you once again!"

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"Before, as the wife or the victim of the Right Honourable Lord Alphingham, you fly from her for ever, and thus reward her cares, her love, her prayers, wretched and deceiving girl," sternly and slowly the Duchess said, as she rapidly yet with her usual majesty paced the room, and laid her hand heavily on Caroline's shoulder, as she sat bowed down with shame before her. "Deny it not; it was thus you would bring down shame on my home; thus create agony for your devoted parents; thus prove your gratitude, love, obedience, by wrenching every tie asunder. Oh, shame, shame! If this be the fruit of such tender cares, such careful training, oh, where shall we seek for honour and integrity—in what heart find virtue? And why not consummate your sin? why pause ere your noble and virtuous resolution was put in force? why hesitate in the accomplishment of your designs? Why not fly with your honourable lover, and thus wring the fond hearts of your parents at once to the utmost? Why retract now, when it will be only to delude again? Miserable and deluded girl, what new whim has caused this sudden change? Wherefore wait till it be too late to repent—to persuade us that you are an unwilling abettor and assistant in this man's schemes? Go, fly with him; it were better to reconcile your indulgent mother to an eternal separation, than that she should take you once more to her heart, and be again deceived. Go, your secret is safe. How dare you speak of inflicting misery on your parents? Must not hypocrisy lurk in every word, when wilfully, recklessly, you have already abused their confidence and insulted their love? much more you cannot do." She paused, as if in expectation of a reply, but none came. Caroline's breaking heart had lost that proud spirit which, a few days before, would have called a haughty answer from her lips. She writhed beneath those stern un pitying accents, which perhaps in such a moment of remorseful agony might have been spared, but she replied not; and, after a brief silence, the Duchess again spoke.

"Caroline, answer me. What has caused this sudden change in your intentions? What has chanced between you and Lord Alphingham to demand this sudden longing for home? What impulse bids you thus elude him?"

"The memory of my mother's love," and Caroline raised her head, and pushing back her disordered hair, gazed upon the face of the Duchess with an expression of suffering few could have looked upon unmoved. "You are right, I have deceived my too indulgent parents, I have abused their confidence, insulted their love; but I cannot, oh, I cannot still those principles within me which they have implanted. In my hours of maddening folly I remembered them not; I believed they had gone from me for ever, and I should be happy. They have returned to torture me, to tell me that as the wife of Lord Alphingham, without the blessing of my parents, I shall be wretched. I have brought down endless misery on myself—that

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matters not; but oh, I will not cause them further suffering. I will no longer wring the heart of my gentle mother, who has so often prayed for her erring child. Too late, perhaps, I have determined, but the wife of Lord Alphingham I will never be; but his character is still dear to me, and I entreat your Grace not to withdraw your favour from him. He alone is not to blame, I also am culpable, for I acknowledge the encouragement I have given him. My character for integrity is gone, but his is still unstained."

"Fear not for him, my favour he has never had; but my honour is too dear to me for such an affair as this to pass my lips. Let him continue the courted, the spoiled, the flattered child of fashion he has ever been. I regard him not. Let him run his course rejoicing, it matters not to me." She rang the bell as she spoke, and slowly and silently paced the room till Allison obeyed the summons. "Desire James to put four swift horses to the chariot. Important business calls me instantly to London; bid him use dispatch, every moment is precious."

Allison departed, and the Duchess continued pacing the apartment till she returned, announcing the carriage as ready. A very few minutes sufficed for their personal preparations, for the Duchess to give peremptory orders to her trusty Allison to keep her departure a profound secret, as she should return before her guests were stirring the next morning, and herself account for Miss Hamilton's sudden return home. Few words were sufficient for Allison, who was in all respects well fitted for the situation she held near a person of the Duchess of Rothbury's character; and the carriage rolled rapidly from Airlie.

Not another word passed between the travelling companions. In feverish agitation on the part of Caroline, in cold, unbending sternness on that of the Duchess, their journey passed. To the imagination of the former, the roll of the carriage-wheels was the sound of pursuing horses; in every turn of the road her fevered fancy beheld the figure of Lord Alphingham: at one time glaring on her in reproachful bitterness, at another, in mockery, derision, satire; and when she closed her eyes, those visions still tormented, nor did they depart till she felt her mother's arm around her, her gentle voice pronounce her name.

True to her determination, the Duchess left London as early as six the following day, and, as usual, was the first within the breakfast-room, and little could her friends imagine that since they had left her the preceding evening she had made a journey to London and back. Caroline's indisposition, which had been evident for several days, although she had not complained till the day before, easily accounted for her return home, although the exact time of her doing so was known to none save her Grace herself; and even if surprise had been created, it would speedily have passed away in

the whirl of amusements which surrounded them. But the courted, the admired, the fascinating

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Viscount no longer joined the festive group. His friend Sir Walter Courtenay accounted for and excused his absence, by stating that Lord Alphingham had received a disagreeable letter from an agent of his in Scotland, which demanded his instant presence; that he intended passing through London, thence proceed to the North, where, in all probability, he should await the hunting season, being engaged to join a large circle of noble friends.

It would be useless to linger on the impotent fury of Lord Alphingham when he discovered his well-conceived plans were utterly frustrated, and that his intended victim had eluded him, under the stern guardianship of the Duchess of Rothbury. In the first bitter moment of disappointment, he refused to accuse Caroline of any share in it, but believed their plans had been, by some unforeseen circumstance, discovered, and she had been forced to return home. If such were the case, he vowed to withdraw her from such galling slavery; he swore by some means to make her his own. But when her letter reached him, when he had perused its contents, and marked that not one word gave evidence of agitation of mind or unsteadiness of purpose, the current of his feelings changed. He cursed his own mad folly for thus seeking one, in whom from the first he might have seen there was no spirit, no quality suited to be his partner in a fashionable world; he vowed to think no more of a weak, capricious fool, so he now termed the girl he had fancied that he loved. As may readily be imagined, he felt his self love very deeply wounded by the complete frustration of his intentions, and being incapable of appreciating the better principles which had fortunately actuated the resolve of Caroline, a spirit of revenge entered his heart. He crushed the letter in his hand, and paced the room in fury, and would have torn it to atoms, when the thought struck him, that by enclosing the letter to the confidant and adviser of his plans regarding Caroline, he might save himself the mortification of relating his defeat, and revenge himself effectually by exposing her to ridicule and contempt.

He wrote therefore a few concise lines, regretting, in a slightly satirical style, that Miss Grahame should have been so deceived with regard to the views and feelings of her friend Miss Hamilton, and referring her to the enclosed letter for all further explanation.

Annie received this packet at the time she was in daily expectation of the triumph of her schemes, the gratification of her dislike for the being whose gentle admonitions she so much resented, which had been dictated by Mrs. Hamilton's wish to increase the happiness of her parents and herself. Lord Alphingham had regularly informed her of all his intentions, and though Caroline had for some time entirely ceased to write, yet she suspected nothing like defeat. Already she secretly indulged in triumph, already anticipated the moment when every malignant wish would

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be fulfilled, and she should see the proud, cold, disdainful Mrs. Hamilton bowed down beneath the conduct of her child, humbled to the dust by the reflections which would be cast upon her when the elopement of Caroline should be made public; at that very time the letter of Lord Alphingham arrived, and told her of defeat, complete, irremediable. Scorn, bitter scorn curled her lip, as she glanced over Caroline's epistle, thus dishonourably transmitted for her perusal. Severe disappointment was for the time her portion, and yet, amid all these violent emotions, attendant on one of her disposition, there was one of a very different nature mingling with them, one that, while she resolved if she could not mortify Mrs. Hamilton as she had intended, she would yet do so by insinuations against Caroline's character, whenever she had an opportunity; would bid her rejoice, strangely rejoice, that she was not the wife of Lord Alphingham, that he was still free. While she looked forward to that letter announcing the union of the Viscount and Caroline, as placing the final seal on her triumphant schemes, we may well doubt if even that enjoyment, the exultations in the sufferings of another, would have stilled the anguish of her own heart, and permitted her to triumph as she intended to have done, when the man she loved was the husband of another. It was even so, though rendered by prejudice almost insensible to anything but her hatred of Mrs. Hamilton.

Annie had not associated so intimately with Lord Alphingham without feeling the effect of his many fascinations; and, therefore, though both provoked and disappointed at this unlooked-for failure of her schemes, she was better enabled to overcome them. Resolving to leave her designs against the peace of Caroline and her mother henceforth to chance, all her energies were now put in action for the attainment of one grand object, to so work upon the disappointed Viscount as herself to take the place in his favour which Caroline had occupied. Her reply to his letter, which he had earnestly requested might enclose Caroline's, and be forwarded to him in London, was guarded, but artfully tending to inflame his indignation against Caroline; suppressing her own opinion on the subject, and exciting admiration of herself, and perhaps gratitude for her untiring sympathy in his welfare, which she ably contrived should breathe despondingly throughout. As that important affair, she added, was thus unhappily over, their correspondence she felt ought to cease, and she begged Lord Alphingham would write to her no more. She had braved remark when the happiness of two in whom she was so deeply interested was at stake; but as in that she had been disappointed, pain as it was for her to be the one to check a correspondence which could not fail to give her pleasure, being with one so enlightened, and in every way so superior as Lord Alphingham, she insisted that no more letters should pass between them. She gained her point; the Viscount wondered how he could ever be so blind as to prefer Caroline to her, and her words added weight to his resolution, to annoy the former by devoted attentions to Miss Grahame, and, if it suited his interests, make the latter his wife.

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The interviews Lord Alphingham contrived to have with Miss Grahame, before he retired to Scotland, which he did not do for a fortnight after his rejection, strengthened the intentions of both. The Viscount found new charms in the reserve and agitation which now marked Annie's behaviour, in the faint voice and well-concealed intelligence, that however she might sympathise in his vexation, for herself she could not regret his freedom. All this, though they were scarcely ever alone, formed a perfect understanding between them, and quickly banished the image of Caroline from the vain and fickle-minded Alphingham.

Wishing to keep up her pretended friendship for Caroline, that she might the more effectually wound her, and not believing the sentiments of the misguided girl were changed towards her also, Annie called at Berkeley Square a very few days after Caroline's return, and she had become acquainted with all that had passed. No one was visible in the drawing-room; the young men, she knew, had both arrived from college, but the house was destitute of that air of cheerfulness and glee which generally attended their return. Some little time she waited with impatient displeasure, which did not lessen when, on hearing the door open, she beheld, not Caroline but Mrs. Hamilton herself, her cheek pale, as if from some internal suffering, but with even more than her wonted dignity both in mien and step, and for a moment Annie struggled in vain to speak with the eagerness with which she intended to have inquired for Caroline; before the mild yet penetrating glance of Mrs. Hamilton even her self-possession appeared about to abandon her. She felt lowered, humbled in her presence, and it was this, perhaps, this very sense of inferiority, which had ever heightened dislike.

Mildly, yet coldly and briefly, Mrs. Hamilton answered Miss Grahame's torrent of questions and regrets which followed her information, that Caroline was not well enough to see any one but her own family, and that, as they left London some little time sooner than they had originally intended, she had begged her mother to tender her farewell. Annie expressed excessive sorrow, but no effort on either side was made to prolong this interview, and it was very quickly over. Annie returned home dissatisfied and angry, determining to make one attempt more; and if that failed, she thought she could as successfully wound by inuendoes and ridicule, should mere acquaintance take the place of intimate friendship.

Miss Grahame accordingly wrote in a truly heroic and highly-phrased style, regretting, sympathising, and encouraging; but the answer, though guardedly worded, told her too plainly all her influence was over.

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"I am not strong enough," wrote Caroline, "yet to argue with you, or defend my conduct, as I feel sure I should be compelled to do, did we meet now. I find, too late, that on many points we differ so completely, that the confidential intercourse, which has hitherto been ours, must henceforth be at an end. Forgive me, dear Annie, if it grieves you to read these words; believe me, it is painful to me to write them. But now that my feelings on so many important subjects have been changed—now that the blinding film has been mercifully removed from my eyes, and I see the whole extent of my sinful folly, I cannot hope to find the same friend in you. Too late, for my peace, I have discovered that our principles of duty are directly opposite. I blame you not for what I am, for the suffering I am still enduring, no, for that I alone have caused; but your persuasions, your representations heightened the evil, strengthened me in my sinful course. You saw my folly, and worked on it, by sowing the seeds of mistrust and dislike towards my parents. I was a passive tool in your hands, and you endeavoured to mould me according to your notions of happiness. I thank you for all the interest you have thus endeavoured to prove for me. You cannot regret withdrawing it, now I have in your eyes proved myself so undeserving. This is the last confidential letter I shall ever write, save to her who is indeed my best, my truest, most indulgent friend on earth; but before I entirely conclude, the love, the friendship I have felt for you compels me to implore you to pause in your career. Oh, Annie, do not follow up those principles you would have instilled in me; do not, oh, as you value future innocence and peace, do not let them be your guide in life; you will find them hollow, vain, and false. Pause but for one moment, and reflect. Can there be happiness without virtue, peace without integrity? Is there pleasure without truth? Was deception productive of felicity to me? Oh, no, no. That visit to London, that introduction in the gay world to which I looked forward with so much joy, the retrospection of which I hoped would have enlivened Oakwood, oh, what does it present? A dreary waste of life, varied only by remorse. Had my career been yours, you would perhaps have looked on it differently; but I cannot. Oh, Annie, once more, I beseech, let not such principles actuate your future conduct; they are wrong, they will lead to misery here, and what preparation are they for eternity?"

"Farewell, and may God bless you! We shall not, perhaps, meet again till next season, and then it cannot be as we have parted. An interest in your welfare I shall ever feel, but intimacy must be at an end between us.

"CAROLINE."

CHAPTER VIII.

There was a dark lowering frown obscuring the noble and usually open brow of the young heir of Oakwood, and undisguised anger visible in every feature and every movement, as he paced the library with disordered steps, about ten days after the events we have recorded, and three since his return from college. He had crossed his arms on his chest, which was swelling with the emotion he was with difficulty

repressing, and his tall, elegant figure appeared to increase in height beneath his indignant and, in this case, just displeasure.

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Caroline's depression had not decreased since her brother's arrival. She felt she had been unjust to Percy, and a degree of coldness which had appeared at first in his conduct towards her, occasioned, though she knew it not, by her rejection of his friend St. Eval, which he believed was occasioned by her love of Alphingham, whom he fancied she still continued to regard with an eye of favour; both these causes created reserve and distance between the brother and sister, in lieu of that cordiality which had hitherto subsisted between them.

Percy had not been aware of all that had passed between the Viscount and Caroline till that morning, when Emmeline, hoping to soften his manner towards her sister, related, with all her natural eloquence, the Viscount's conduct, and the triumph of duty which Caroline had achieved. That he had even asked her of his father, Percy knew not till then, and it was this intelligence bursting on him at once which called forth such violent anger. Emmeline had been summoned away before she had time to note the startling effects of her words; but Herbert did, and though he was unacquainted with the secret cause of his brother's dislike towards Lord Alphingham, he endeavoured by gentle eloquence to pacify and turn him from his purpose, at which he trembled.

"The villain, the cold-blooded, despicable villain!" muttered Percy at intervals, as he continued his hurried pace, without heeding, perhaps not hearing, Herbert's persuasive accents. "To act thus foully—to play thus on the unguarded feelings of a weak, at least, unsophisticated, unsuspecting girl—to gain her love, to destine her to ruin and shame, the heartless miscreant! Oh, that my promise prevented not my exposing him to the whole world; but there is another way—the villain shall find such conduct passes not unheeded!"

"You are right, Percy," interposed Herbert, gently determining not to understand him. "If his conduct be indeed such as to call forth, with justice, this irritation on your part, his punishment will come at last."

"It shall come, ay, and by this baud!" exclaimed Percy, striking his clenched hand violently on the table; "if his conduct be such. You speak coolly, Herbert, but you know not all, therefore I forgive you: it is the conduct of a villain, ay, and he shall know it too. Before three suns have set again, he shall feel my sister has an avenger!"

"His schemes against the peace, the honour of the innocent are registered on high; be calm, be satisfied, Percy. His last hour will be chastisement enough."

"By heaven, it shall be!" retorted Percy, passion increasing, it appeared, at every gentle word his brother spoke, and irritating him beyond control. "Herbert, you will drive me mad with this mistimed calmness; you know not half the injury she has received."

“Whatever might have been his schemes, they have all failed, Percy, and therefore should we not rather feel thankful for Caroline’s restoration to her home, to herself, than thus encourage fury against him from whose snares she has escaped?”

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“Yes; and though his base plan, thanks to my sister’s strength of mind, or, rather, my mother’s enduring counsel, has not succeeded, am I to sit calmly by and see her health, spirits, alike sinking beneath that love which the deceiving villain knew so well how to call forth? am I to see this, to gaze on the suffering he has caused, unmoved, and permit him to pass unscathed, as if his victim had neither father nor brother to protect and avenge her injured honour?”

“Her honour is not injured. She is as innocent and as pure as before Lord Alphingham addressed her. Percy, you are increasing this just displeasure by imaginary causes. I do not believe it to be love for him that occasions her present suffering; I think, from the conversations we have had, it is much more like remorse for the past, and bitter grief that the confidence of our parents must, spite of their excessive kindness, be for a time entirely withdrawn, not any lingering affection for Alphingham.”

“Whatever it be, he is the primary cause. Not injured! every word of love from his lips is pollution; his asking her of my father an atrocious insult; his endeavours to fly with her a deadly sin—an undying stain.”

Herbert shuddered involuntarily.

“What would you say, or mean?” he exclaimed.

“What have you heard or known concerning him, that calls for words like these?”

“Ask me not, as you love me; it is enough I know he is a villain,” and Percy continued his rapid walk. Herbert rose from his seat and approached him.

“Percy,” he said, “my dear brother, tell me what is it you would do? to what would this unwonted passion lead? Oh, let it not gain too great a dominion, Percy. Dear Percy, what would you do?”

“I would seek him, Herbert,” replied Percy, “where ever he is; by whom surrounded. I would taunt him as a deceiving, heartless villain, and if he demand satisfaction, by heaven, it would be joy for me to give it!”

“Has passion, then, indeed obtained so much ascendancy, it would be joy for you to meet him thus for blood?” demanded Herbert, fixing his large, melancholy eyes intently on Percy’s face, on which the cloud was becoming darker, and his step even more rapid. “Would you seek him for the purpose of exciting anger like your own? is it thus you would avenge my sister?”

“Thus, and only thus,” answered Percy, with ungoverned fury. “As others have done; man to man I would meet him, and villain as he is, I would have honourable vengeance for the insult, not only to my sister, but to us all. Why should I stay my hand?”

“Why? because on you more than on many others has the light of our blessed religion dawned,” answered Herbert, calmly; “because you know what others think not of, that the law of our Master forbiddeth blood; that whosoever sheds it, on whatever plea, his shall be demanded in return; because you know, in seeking vengeance by blood, His law is disobeyed, and His vengeance you would call upon yourself. Percy, you will not, you dare not act as this overwhelming passion dictates.”

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“Dare not,” repeated the young man, light flashing from his eye as if his spirit chafed at that word, even from his brother, “dare not; you mistake me, Herbert. I will not sit tamely down beneath an injury such as this. I will not see that villain triumph without one effort to prove to him that he is known, and make the whole world know him as he is.”

“And would a hostile meeting accomplish this? Would that proclaim his villainy, of whatever nature it may be, to the world? Would they not rather side with him, their present minion, and even bring forward your unjustifiable conduct as a fresh proof in his favour? How would they give credit to the terms they may hear you apply to him, when even in your family you speak not of the true cause of this strange agitation and indignant anger.”

Percy continued to pace the room for some minutes without answering.

“My honour has been insulted in the person of my sister,” he muttered, at length, as if speaking more to himself than to his brother; “and am I to bear that calmly? Were the truth made known, would not the whole world look on me with scorn as a spiritless coward, to whom the law of honour was as nothing; who would see his sister suffering from the arts of a miscreant, without one effort to revenge her?”

“The law of honour,” replied Herbert, bitterly; “it is the law of blood, of murder, of wilful, uncalled-for murder. Percy, my brother, banish these guilty thoughts. Do not be one of those misguided beings who, from that false deceiving plea, the law of honour, condemn whole families to misery, and themselves, without preparation, without prayer, nay, in the very act of disobeying a sacred commandment of their God, rush heedless into His presence, into awful eternity.”

He paused, but not vainly had he spoken. Percy gazed on his brother’s features with greater calmness, and more kindly, but still impetuously, said—

“Would you then have me stand calmly by and behold my sister a suffering victim to his arts, though actual sin, thank God, has been spared, and thus permit that villain Alphingham to continue his course triumphant?”

“Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay it,” answered Herbert, instantly, twining his arm within that of his brother, and looking up in his face with that beseeching glance of affection which was so peculiar to his features. “Dear brother, rest on those words and be contented. It is not for us to think of vengeance or to seek for retribution; justice is, indeed, ours to claim, but in this case, there is no point on which we can demand it. Let Alphingham, even granting you know him as he is, pursue his course in peace. Did you endeavour to inflict chastisement, is it not doubting the wisdom and justice of the Almighty? And suppose you fell instead of your adversary, in the meeting

you would seek—what, think you, would be the emotions of all those who so dearly love you,

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when they gazed on your bleeding corse, and remembered you had sought death in defiance of every principle they had so carefully instilled? Think of my mother's silent agony; has not Caroline's conduct occasioned sufficient pain, and would you increase it? you, whose most trifling action is dictated by love for her; you, in whom she has every reason to look for so much virtue, honour, and self-control; whom she so dearly, so devotedly loves? Remember what she would feel; and, if no other consideration have effect, surely that will bid you pause."

Percy still paced the room, but his head was averted from his brother as he spoke, and his step bespoke contending and painful emotions. He did not answer when Herbert ceased to speak, but his brother knew him well, and remained silent.

"You have conquered, Herbert," he exclaimed at length, firmly clasping his brother's hand in his and raising his head; anger still lingered on his cheek, but his eye was softer. "I could not bear my mother's wretchedness; I could not thus repay her love, her cherished care. I will not seek this base and heartless man. I tremble for my present resolution, if he chance to cross my path; but, for her sake, I will avoid him; for her sake, his villainy shall be still concealed."

"Endeavour to think of him more charitably, my dear Percy, or forget him entirely, which you will."

"Think of him charitably; him—a fashionable, fawning, seducing hypocrite!" burst from Percy, in a tone of renewed passion. "No! the gall he has created within me cannot yet be turned to sweetness; forget him—that at least is impossible, when Caroline's coldness and reserve remind me disagreeably of him every day. It is plain she looks on me as the destroyer of her happiness; thinks, perhaps, had it not been for my letter my father would have given his consent, and she might have peacefully become the wife of Alphingham. It is hard to bear unkindness from one whom I have endeavoured to preserve from ruin."

"Nay, do not be unjust, Percy; are you not cool and reserved yourself? How do we know why Caroline is somewhat more so than usual? Poor girl, we may find excuses for her, but I know no reason why you should treat her as you do."

"Her whole conduct demands it. How did she use that noble fellow St. Eval; encourage him, so that their union was confidently asserted, and then reject him for no cause whatever; or, if she had a cause, for love of a villain, who, it appears, in secret, possessed all the favour she pretended to lavish on St. Eval,—both false and deceiving."



“Percy, you are determined to be angry with everybody to-day. I flattered myself my influence had allayed your passion, and behold, it is only withdrawn from one object to be hurled upon another. Can you not find some good cause now to turn it from Caroline on me? Is it nothing that I should dare face the tempest of your wrath, and tell my impetuous and headstrong brother exactly what I thought—nothing, that I should have ventured to say there was a thing on earth you dared not do?”

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Percy turned sharply towards him, as if in that moment he could be angry even with him; but Herbert met his fierce glance with a smile so full of affectionate interest, that all Percy's displeasure and irritation seemed at once removed.

"Displeased with you!" exclaimed Percy, when involuntary admiration had taken the place of anger, and unconsciously the noble serenity of Herbert's temper appeared to soothe the more irritable nature of his own. "Ay, Herbert, when we two have exchanged characters, such may be, till then I am contented to love and reverence the virtue, the gentleness I cannot make my own."

"We are better thus, my brother," replied Herbert, feelingly; "were we the same, could I have been the happy being you have made me at college? Much, very much happiness do I owe to your high spirit, Percy. Without your support, my life, spite of the charms of study, would have been a painful void at college; and though I feel, you know not perhaps how often and how bitterly, that in many things I cannot hope to be your companion, yet to think my affection may sometimes check the violence that would lead you wrong, oh, that is all I can hope for or desire."

"Have you not my love, my confidence, my fondest, warmest esteem?" exclaimed Percy, impetuously, and twining his arm, as in fondness he often did, around his brother's neck. "Is there one among my gay companions I love as you, though I appear to seek their society more?"

Herbert was silent.

"You do not doubt me, Herbert?"

"Percy—no!" exclaimed the youth, with unwonted ardour. To speak more at that moment he could not, and ere words came at his command, the library door slowly opened, and Caroline languidly entered.

Herbert somewhat hurriedly left the room, to conceal the agitation the interview with Percy had occasioned him.

For some little time Caroline remained in the library, seeking, it appeared, a book, without a word passing between her and Percy. Both evidently wished to speak, but neither liked to begin; at length Caroline approached him.

"Percy," she began, and her voice trembled sufficiently to prevent more. Percy was softened.

"Well, dear Caroline, am I so very terrible you cannot speak to me? I have been angry and unjust, and you, perhaps, a little too reserved; so now let us forgive and forget, as we did when we were children, and be friends for the future."



He spoke with all his natural frankness, and extended his hand towards her. Caroline's spirits were so depressed, that the least word or token of kindness overcame her, and pressing her brother's hand in both hers, she turned away her head to conceal the quickly-starting tears, and Percy continued, trying to smile—

“Well, Caroline, will you not tell me what you were going to say? I cannot quite penetrate your thoughts.”

Again Caroline hesitated, but then with an effort she said, fixing her heavy eyes on her brother's face—

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"Percy, had you a real cause for writing to my father as you did some few weeks ago, or was it rumour alone which actuated your doing so? I implore you to answer me truly."

"I had all-sufficient cause," he answered, instantly. "It was from no rumour. Do you think that, without good reason, I would have endeavoured to traduce the character of any man?"

"And what was that cause? Why did you implore my father, as he valued my future peace, not to expose me to his fascinations?"

Caroline spoke slowly and deliberately, as if every word were weighed ere it was uttered, but with an expression on her features, as if life and peace depended on his answer.

Percy looked earnestly at her.

"Why should you ask this question, my dear sister?" he said. "If I answer it, what good will it do? Why should I solve a mystery, that, if you love this Alphingham, as this extreme depression bids me believe, must bring but increase of pain?"

"Percy," replied Caroline, raising her head, and standing with returning dignity before him, "Percy, do not let the idea of my love bid you hesitate. Increase of pain I do not think is possible; but yet, do not mistake me, that pain does not spring from disappointed affection. Percy, I do not love Lord Alphingham; I have been fascinated, and the remembrance of the past still clings to me with remorse and suffering; but I never loved him as, had I not been infatuated and blind, had I not rejected the counsels and confidence of my mother, I might have loved another. You know not how I have been led on, how I have permitted myself to be but a tool in the hands of those whose independence I admired, and aided them by my own reckless folly—the wish to prove, however differently I was educated, still I could act with equal spirit. Had it not been for that self-will, that perverse spirit, I might now have been a happy and a virtuous wife, loving and esteeming that superior being, whose affections I wilfully cast away; but that matters not now," she added, hurriedly. "My mother was right, I was unworthy to share his lot; but of this rest assured, I do not love, I never have loved, for I cannot esteem Lord Alphingham."

"But why then wish to know more concerning him?" Percy said, much relieved by his sister's words, and more pleased than he chose to appear by her allusion to St. Eval. "Is it not enough your connection with him is entirely broken off?"

"No, Percy; I have rejected him, dissolved our engagement, I scarcely know wherefore, except that I felt I could not be his without my father's consent; but there are times I feel as if I had treated him unjustly, that I have had no cause to think ill of him; my conduct had encouraged him. To me he has been devoted and respectful, and though I could

not, would not be his wife, yet these thoughts linger on my mind, and add most painfully to the chaos already there.”

Twice Percy slowly traversed the room, with a countenance on which anxious thought was deeply imprinted. He paused opposite to Caroline, took both her hands in his, and spoke in a voice which, though low, was so solemn that it thrilled to her inmost soul.

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“Caroline, I had hoped the fatal secret made known to me would never have passed my lips, but for the restoration of your peace it shall be divulged, nor will the injured one who first intrusted it to me, to preserve you from ruin, believe I have betrayed her trust. You have not suspected the whole extent of evil that would have been yours, had you indeed fled with that hypocritical villain. Caroline, Lord Alphingham is a married man—his wife still lives!”

Had a thunderbolt fallen at her feet, or the earth yawned beneath her, not more pale or transfixed would Caroline have stood than she did as those unexpected words fell clear and shrill as a trumpet-blast upon her tortured ear. Amid all her conjectures as to the meaning of Percy’s words, this idea had never crossed her mind; that Alphingham could thus have deliberately been seeking her ruin, under the guise of love and honour, was a stretch of villainy that entered not into her conception. Now that the truth was known, she stood as if suddenly turned to marble, her cheek, her very lips bearing the colour of death. Then came the thoughts of the past; had it not been for those recollections of her childhood, her mother’s love, devotion, what would she now have been? In vain she struggled to bear up against that rushing torrent of thought; every limb was seized with violent trembling, her brain reeled, and she would have sunk to the ground, had not Percy, alarmed at the effect of his words, led her tenderly to a seat, and kneeling by her side, threw his arms around her. Her head sunk on his shoulder, and she clung to him as if evil and guilt and wretchedness still hovered like fiends around her, and he would protect her from them all. Fire again flashed from the eyes of the young man as he thought on Alphingham, but for her sake he restrained himself, and endeavoured by a few soothing words to calm her.

“Tell me all—all you know, I can bear it,” she said at length, almost inaudibly, and looking up with features as deathlike as before. Percy complied with her request, and briefly related as follows:

He had become acquainted during his college life, he told her, with a widow and her daughter, who lived about four or five miles from Oxford. Some service he had rendered them, of sufficient importance as to make him an ever welcome and acceptable guest within the precincts of that cottage, which proclaimed a refined and elevated taste, although its inmates were not of the highest class. Both Percy fancied were widows, although he scarcely knew the foundation of that fancy, except the circumstance of their living together, and the husband of the younger lady never appearing; nor was his name ever mentioned in the confidential conversations he sometimes had with them, which the service he had had in his power to do demanded. Mrs. Amesfort, the daughter, still possessed great beauty, which a shade of pensive thought, sometimes amounting to deep melancholy, rendered even more lovely.

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Her age might have been six or seven and twenty, she could not have been more. At an earlier age, there was still evidence that she had been a sparkling, lively girl, and her mother would frequently relate to the young man the change that sorrow—and sorrow, she hinted, of a peculiarly painful nature—had made in one who, ten years previous, had been so full of life and glee. Decline, slow but sure, it seemed even to Percy's inexperienced eye, was marked on her pale features; and at those times when bodily suffering was greatest, her spirit would resume a portion of its former lightness, as if it rejoiced in the anticipated release. There was a deep thrilling melody in her voice, whether in speaking or, when strength allowed, in warbling forth the pathetic airs of her native land; for Agnes Amesfort was a child of Erin, once enthusiastic, warm, devoted, as were her countrywomen—possessing feelings that even beneath that pale, calm exterior would sometimes burst forth and tinge her cheek, and light up her soul-speaking eye with momentary but brilliant radiance, and whispered too clearly what she had once been, and what was now the wreck.

The gaiety, the frankness, and unassuming manner of Percy rendered him a most acceptable visitant at Isis Lodge, so the cottage was called; he was ever ready with some joyous tale, either of Oxford or of the metropolis, to bring a smile even to the lips of Mrs. Amesfort. It was not likely that he should so frequently visit the cottage without exciting the curiosity and risibility of his college companions; but he was enabled cheerfully and with temper to withstand it all, feeling secure in his own integrity, and confident that the situation in which he stood relative to the inmates of that cottage was mutually understood. Several inquiries Percy made concerning these interesting females; but no intelligence of their former lives could he obtain; they had only settled in the cottage a few months previous to the period of his first acquaintance with them; and whence they came, and who they were, no one knew nor cared to know. It was enough for the poor for many miles round, that the assistance of the strangers was extended towards them, with kind words and consolation in their troubles; and for the Oxonians, that though they received with extreme and even grateful politeness the visits made them, they were never returned.

One little member of this small family Percy had not mentioned, a little girl, who might have been about eight or nine years old, an interesting child, whom Percy had saved from a watery grave in the rapid Isis, which rolled at the base of the grounds; a child, in whom the affections of her widowed mother were centred with a force and intensity, that it appeared death itself could but divide; and she was, indeed, one to love—affectionate, and full of glee; yet the least sign of increased suffering on the part of her mother would check the wild exuberance of childish spirits, without diminishing in the least her cheerfulness,

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and she would throw her arms around her neck, and fondly ask, if she might by kisses while away the pain. Many a game of play did she have with her preserver, whose extreme kindness and excessive liveliness excited the affections of the child, and increased and preserved the gratitude his courageous conduct had occasioned in the bosom of that young devoted mother, whose every earthly joy was centred in her fatherless child.

It happened that in speaking one day of London society, and of the reigning belles and beaux of the season, that Percy casually mentioned the name of Lord Alphingham, whom he declared was by all accounts so overwhelmed with attentions and flatteries, since his return from a nine years' residence on the Continent, that there was every chance of his being thoroughly spoiled, if he were not so already, and losing every grain of sense, if he had any to lose. He was surprised, as he spoke, at the very visible agitation of the elder lady, whose colour went and came so rapidly, that involuntarily he turned towards her daughter, wondering if any such emotion were visible in her; and though she did not appear paler than usual, nor was any outward emotion visible, save that her arm was somewhat tightly bound round the tiny figure of the little Agnes, he almost started, as he met those large soft eyes fixed full upon him, as if they would penetrate his soul; and though her voice was calm, unhesitating, and firm, as she asked him if he were acquainted with Lord Alphingham, yet its tones sounded even more thrilling, more sadly than usual. He answered truly in the negative, adding, he was not ambitious of his acquaintance; as a man, he was not one to suit his fancy. Many questions did Mrs. Amesfort ask relative to this nobleman, and still unconsciously her arm held her child more closely to her side. The elder lady's looks were bent on them both, expressive, it seemed to Percy, of fondness for those two beloved objects, and struggling with indignation towards another. Percy returned to college that evening unusually thoughtful. What could Lord Alphingham have to do with the inhabitants of that simple cottage? Incoherent fancies occupied his mind, but from all which presented themselves as solutions to the mystery his pure mind revolted; and, compelled by an impulse he could not resist, he continued to speak of Alphingham every time he visited the cottage. Mrs. Amesfort, it appeared to him, rather encouraging than checking his conversation on that subject, by introducing it herself, and demanding if his name were still mentioned in Percy's letters from town. Mrs. Morley, her mother, ever looked anxiously at her, as if she could have wished the subject unnamed; but still Alphingham continued to be the theme so constantly discussed at Isis Lodge, that Percy felt no repugnance in mentioning those reports which allied his sister's name with that of the Viscount. Again were the eyes of Mrs. Amesfort fixed intently on his face, and she spoke

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but little more during that evening's visit. Percy left her, unable to account for the deep and serious thought imprinted on her features, nor the look with which she bade him seek her the following day at an appointed hour, as she earnestly wished to speak with him alone. The day passed heavily till he was again with her. She was alone; and steady determination more than ever marked on her clear and polished brow. She spoke, and Percy listened, absorbed; she alluded to his preservation of her child, and, in that moment of reawakened gratitude, all the enthusiasm of her country spoke in her eyes and voice; and then a moment she paused, and a bright and apparently painful flush mounted to those cheeks which Percy had ever seen so pale. She implored his forbearance with her; his pardon, at what might appear an unwarrantable interference on her part in the affairs of his family; but his many and eloquent descriptions of them, particularly of his mother, had caused an interest that compelled her to reveal a fatal secret which, she had hoped, would never have passed her lips. Was it a mere rumour, or were Lord Alphingham's attentions marked and decided towards his sister? Percy believed there was very good foundation for the rumours he had heard.

Did his parents approve of it? she again asked, and the flush of excitement faded. Percy was not quite sure; he rather thought by his mother's letters she did not, though Caroline was universally envied as an object of such profound attention from one so courted and admired. Did his sister love him?—the words appeared wrung with a violent effort from Mrs. Amesfort's lips.

He did not fancy she did as yet; but he doubted not the power of Lord Alphingham's many fascinations and exclusive devotion to herself, on one naturally rather susceptible to vanity as was Caroline.

"Oh, if you love your sister, save her ere it be too late, ere her affections are engaged," was Mrs. Amesfort's reply, with a burst of emotion, the more terrible, from its contrast with her general calm and unmoved demeanour. "Expose her not to those fascinations which I know no heart can resist. Let her not associate with him—with my husband; he is not free to love—I am his lawful wife; and the child you saved is his—his own—the offspring of lawfully-hallowed wedlock; though he has cast me off, though his eyes have never gazed upon my child, yet, yet we are his. No cruel words of separation has the law of England spoken. But do not, oh! if you have any regard for me," she continued, wildly seizing both Percy's hands, as she marked the dark blood of passion kindling on the young man's brow, "do not betray him; do not let him know that his wife—his injured wife—has risen to cry shame upon him, and banish him from those circles wherein he is formed to mingle. Promise me faithfully, solemnly, you will not betray my secret more than is necessary to preserve your sister from misery and ruin. I thought

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even for her I could not have spoken thus, but I gazed on my child, and remembered she too has a mother, whose happiness is centred in her as mine is in my Agnes, and I could hesitate no more. Promise me you will not abuse my confidence, Mr. Hamilton, promise me; let me not have the misery of reproaches from him to whom my fond heart still clings, as it did at first. Yes; though for nine long weary years I have never seen his face nor heard his voice, still he knows not, guesses not how his image dwells within, how faithfully, how fervidly he is still beloved. Promise me my existence shall not be suspected, that neither he nor any one shall know the secret of my existence. It is enough for me he lives, is happy. My child! could I but see her in the station her rank demands,—but, oh, I would not force her on her father.”

She would still have spoken, still have entreated, but this unwonted emotion had exhausted her feeble strength. Greatly moved by this extraordinary disclosure, and struck with that deep devotedness, that undying love, Percy solemnly pledged his word to preserve her secret.

“My course will soon be over, my sand run out,” she said, after energetically thanking him for his soothing and relieving words, and in a tone of such sad, resigned hopelessness, that, irritated as he felt towards Alphingham, his eye glistened and his lips quivered. “And wherefore should I dash down his present enjoyment by standing forward and proclaiming myself his wife? Why should I expose my secret sorrows, my breaking heart to the inspection of a cold and heartless world, and draw down on my dying moments his wrath, for the poor satisfaction of beholding myself recognised as Viscountess Alphingham? Would worldly honours supply the place of his affection? Oh, no, no! I am better as I am. The tears of maternal and filial love will hallow my grave; and he, too, when he knows for his sake, to save him a pang, I have suffered my heart to break in uncomplaining silence, oh, he too may shed one tear, bestow a thought on one who loved him to the last!”

“But your child!” exclaimed Percy, almost involuntarily.

“Will be happier here, under my mother’s care, unconscious of her birth, than mingling in a dangerous world, without a mother to cherish and protect her. Her father might neglect, despise her; she might be a bar to a second and a happier union, and oh, I could not die in peace did I expose her thus.”

Percy was silent, and when the interview had closed, he bade that devoted woman farewell, with a saddened and deeply thoughtful brow.

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Lord Alphingham had been a student in Dublin, in the environs of which city dwelt Mrs. Morley, a widow, and this her only child. At their cottage he became a constant and devoted guest, and as might have been expected, his impetuous and headstrong nature became desperately enamoured of the beautiful and innocent Agnes, then only seventeen. Spite of his youth, being barely twenty, neither mother nor daughter could withstand his eloquent solicitations, and a private but sacred marriage was performed. He quitted college, but still lingered in Ireland, till a peremptory letter from his father summoned him to England, to celebrate his coming of age. He left his bride, and the anguish of parting was certainly at that time mutual. Some few months Agnes hoped for and looked to his return. Alphingham, then Lord Amesfort, on his part, was restrained only by the fear of the inveteracy of his father's disposition from confessing his marriage, and sending for his wife. Another bride, of rank and wealth, was proposed to him, and then he confessed the truth. The fury of the old man knew no bounds, and he swore to disinherit his son, if he did not promise never to return to his ignoble wife, whom he vowed he never would acknowledge. Amesfort promised submission, fully intending to remain constant till his father's death, which failing health proclaimed was not far distant, and then seek his gentle wife, and introduce her in her proper sphere. He wrote to this effect, and the boding heart of Agnes sunk at once; in vain her mother strove to rouse her energies, by alluding to the strain of his letter, the passionate affection breathing in every line, the sacred nature of his promise. She felt her doom, and ere her child was six months old, her feelings, ominous of evil, were fully verified.

Lord Alphingham lingered some time, and his son found in the society in which the Viscount took good care he should continually mingle, attractions weighty enough to banish from his fickle heart all love, and nearly all recollection of his wife. He found matrimony would be very inconvenient in the gay circle of which he was a member. All the better feelings and qualities of his youth fled; beneath the influence of example and bad companionship his evil ones were called forth and fostered, and speedily he became the heartless libertine we have seen him. His letters to the unfortunate Agnes were less and less frequent, and at length ceased altogether, and the sum transmitted for her use every year was soon the only proof that he still lived. His residence in foreign lands, the various names he assumed, baffled all her efforts at receiving the most distant intelligence concerning him, and Agnes still lingered in hopeless resignation—"The heart will break, but brokenly live on;" and thus it was she lived, existing for her child alone. Nine years they had been parted, and Agnes had ever shrunk in evident pain from quitting her native land, and the cottage

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which had been the scene of her brief months of happiness; but when change of air was pleaded in behalf of her child, then suffering from lingering fever, when change of climate was strongly recommended by the physicians, in secret for herself equally with that of her little girl, she hesitated no longer, and a throb of mingled pain and pleasure swelled her too fond heart as her foot pressed the native land of her husband. Some friends of her mother, unacquainted with her sad story, resided near Oxford, and thither they bent their steps, and finally fixed their residence, where Mrs. Amesfort soon had the happiness of beholding her child restored to perfect health and radiant in beauty; perhaps the faint hope that Alphingham might one day unconsciously behold his daughter, reconciled her to this residence in England. She was in his own land; she might hear of him, of his happiness; and, deeply injured as she was, that knowledge, to her too warm, too devoted heart was all-sufficient.

Such were the particulars of the story which Percy concisely yet fully related in confidence to his sister. Caroline neither moved nor spoke during his recital; her features still retained their deadly paleness, and her brother almost involuntarily felt alarmed. A few words she said, as he ceased, in commentary on his tale, and her voice was calm. Nor did her step falter as she quitted the library, and returned to her own room, when, carefully closing the door, she sunk on the nearest seat, and covering her eyes with her hands, as if to shut out all outward objects, gave unchecked dominion to the incongruous thoughts occasioned by Percy's tale. She could not define or banish them; a sudden oppression appeared cast upon her brain, deadening its powers, and preventing all relief from tears. The ruin, the wretchedness from which she had been mercifully preserved stood foremost in her mind, all else appeared a strange and frightful dream. The wife and child of Alphingham flitted like mocking phantoms before her eyes, and the countenance of Alphingham himself glared at her, and his gibing laugh seemed to scream in her ears, and transform him into a malignant fiend revelling in the misery he had created. She strove to pray but vainly; no words of such soothing and consoling import rose to her lips. How long she remained in this state of wretchedness she knew not, but it was the mild accents of her mother's voice that roused her from her trance.

"Are you not well, Caroline? What is the matter, love?" Mrs. Hamilton asked, alarmed at the icy coldness of her daughter's hand, and kissing, as she spoke, her pallid cheek.

Caroline threw her arms round her, and a violent flood of tears relieved the misery from which she was suffering so painfully.

"Do not ask me to reveal the cause of this weakness, my dearest mother," she said, when voice returned. "I shall be better now, and never, never again shall recollections of the past, by afflicting me, cause you solicitude. Do not fancy this apparent grief has anything to do with regret at my late decision, or for still lingering affection; oh, no, no.

Do not look at me so anxiously, mother; I have had a long, long conversation with Percy, and that has caused the weakness you perceive; but it will soon pass away, and I shall be your own happy Caroline again."

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Tears were still stealing from those bloodshot eyes; but she looked up in Mrs. Hamilton's face with an expression of such confiding affection, that her mother's anxious fears were calmed. She would not inquire more, nor question Percy, when he sought her in her boudoir before dinner, to request that no notice might be taken, if his sister's manner were that evening less calm than usual. Mrs. Hamilton felt thankful that an understanding had taken place between her children, whose estrangement had been a source of severe pain, and she waited trustingly and calmly for time to do its work on the torn heart and agitated nerves of Caroline. To Emmeline's extreme delight, preparations for their departure from London and return to Oakwood were now proceeding in good earnest. Never did that fair and innocent face look more joyous and animated, and never had her laugh been more glad and ringing than when the carriage rolled away from Berkeley Square. Every circumstance of their journey increased her childlike glee, every town they passed through an object of interest, and even the pensive features of her cousin Ellen reflected her unchecked joyousness. They seldom travelled more than forty miles a day, and consequently it was not till the evening of the fourth they neared the village, whose inhabitants, clad in holiday attire, stood at the doors of their houses to receive them, with silent and respectful yet very evident tokens of joy. The evening was most lovely; the sun had lost the splendour of its beams, though clouds of every brilliant hue proclaimed the increased glory which attended its hour of rest, at times lost behind a richly glowing cloud, and then bursting forth again and dyeing all nature with a flood of gold. The river lay calmly sleeping before them, while on its glassy bosom the heavens cast their radiance, relieved by the shade of the mighty trees that stood to guard its banks; the rich foliage of the trees, the superb green of the fields, in some of which the ripening corn was beginning to stud with gold, the varied flowers gemming the fertile hedge, the holy calmness of this summer eve, all called forth the best feelings of the human heart. For a few minutes even Emmeline was silent, and then her clear silvery voice was heard chanting, as if by an irresistible impulse, the beautiful hymn of the Tyrolese, so peculiarly appropriate to the scene. On, on they went, the white walls of the church peeping through clustering ivy, the old and venerable rectory next came in sight; a few minutes more, and the heavy gates of Oakwood were thrown wide to receive them, and the carriages swept along the well-known entrance. Every tree and shrub, and even flower, were now looked on by Emmeline and Percy with increased and somewhat boisterous expressions of delight.

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"Try if you cannot be still a very short time longer, dear Emmeline," whispered the more restrained Ellen, whose eye had caught a glimpse of Caroline's countenance, and who perceived in an instant her feelings were not in unison with Emmeline's. She was right; Caroline could not feel as did her sister. She was not the same light-hearted, innocent being she had been when she quitted Oakwood; the appearance of the home of her childhood vividly recalled all that had occurred since she had mingled in the world, that world of which she had indulged so many brilliant visions; and while Emmeline's laugh conveyed gladness in that hour to all who heard it, Caroline leaned forward to conceal from her companions the tears that stole silently down her cheek.

A shout from Percy proclaimed the old hall in sight. A group of domestics stood on the steps, and the setting sun threw its brilliant hues on the mansion, as if with increased and unusual lustre that venerable spot should welcome the return of the Hamilton family within its sheltering walls.

CHAPTER IX.

"There wants but the guardian spirit of yon old Manor to render this scene as perfect as her society would bid the present hours roll on in unalloyed felicity to me," was Herbert Hamilton's observation some little time after their return to Oakwood, as he stood, arm in arm with his friend Arthur Myrvin, on the brow of a hill which overlooked, among other beautiful objects, Greville Manor, now inhabited by strangers.

Young Myrvin smiled archly, but ere their walk that evening was concluded, he too had become interested in the being so dear to his friend; for Herbert spoke in perfect confidence, secure of friendly sympathy. Oakwood was to him as dear, perhaps even dearer than to Emmeline, for his nature and tastes were not such as any amusement in London could gratify. His recreation from the grave studies necessary for the profession which he had chosen, was to wander forth with a congenial spirit, and marking Nature in all her varied robes, adore his Creator in His works as well as in His word. In London his ever active mind longed intensely to do good, and his benevolent exertions frequently exceeded his strength; it was his chief delight to seek the dwellings of the poor, to relieve distress, alleviate affliction. The prisoner in his cell, the bold and wilful transgressor of the laws of God, these would he teach, and by gentle admonitions bring nearer to the Throne of Grace. Yet notwithstanding the gratification which the pursuits of Herbert gave to his parents, they often felt considerable anxiety lest his health should suffer from his unceasing efforts, and they rejoiced on that account when their removal to Oakwood afforded their son a quieter and more healthful field of occupation. For miles around Oakwood the name of Herbert Hamilton was never spoken without a blessing. There he could do good; there he could speak of God, and behold the fruits of his pious labours; there was Mr. Howard ever ready to guide and to sympathise, and there was the field of Nature spread before him to fill his heart with increased and glowing adoration and reverential love.

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It was well for Herbert his parents were such as could understand and sympathise in these exalted feelings; had harshness, or even neglect, been extended over his childhood and his opening youth, happiness, such as had gilded his life, would never have been his.

As Emmeline had rejoiced, so also might have Herbert, as they neared the gates of his home, had there not been one recollection to dim his happiness. She who had shared in all his pleasures, who had shed a charm over that spot, a charm which he had never felt so keenly as when he looked for it, and found it not; the favourite playfellow of his infancy, the companion of his youth, his plighted bride, she was in far distant lands, and vainly on his first return home did Herbert struggle to remove the weight of loneliness resting on his heart; he never permitted it to be apparent, for to his family he was the same devoted son and affectionate brother he had ever been, but painfully he felt it. Mr. Myrvin and his son were now both inmates of Mr. Hamilton's family. The illegality of the proceedings against the former, in expelling him from his ministry of Llangwillan, had now been clearly proved, for the earnestness of Mr. Hamilton permitted no delay; and tears of pious gratitude chased down the cheeks of the injured man, as he recognised in the person of his benefactor the brother of the suffering woman whom he had sheltered, and whose bed of death he had deprived of its sting. The persuasions of Mr. Hamilton succeeded in conquering his objections to the plan, and he consented to make Oakwood his home for a short time, ere he once more settled in his long-loved rectory.

With Arthur, Ellen speedily resumed her place; the remembrance of that neglected little girl had never left Mr. Myrvin's mind, and when, radiant in animation and returning health and happiness, she hastily, almost impetuously, advanced to meet him, he pressed her to his bosom with the affection of a father; and even as a daughter Ellen devoted herself to him during his residence at Oakwood. He had been the first in England to treat her with kindness; he had soothed her childish sorrow, and cheered her painful duties; he had been the first since her father's death to evince interest for her, and though so many years had passed, that the little girl was fast verging into womanhood, yet such things were not forgotten, and Ellen endeavoured to prove the gratitude which time had not effaced.

Ellen was happy, her health almost entirely restored; but it was scarcely possible for any observant person to live with her for any time, without noticing the expression of pensive melancholy, of subdued spirit, unnatural in one still so very young, that, unless animated by any casual circumstances, ever rested on her features. Mr. Myrvin soon noticed this, and rather wondered such should still be, when surrounded by so much kindness and affection. Her gentleness and controlled temper, her respectful devotion to

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her aunt and uncle, were such as to awaken his warmest regard, and cause him to regret that shade of remaining sadness so foreign to her age. Traces of emotion were so visible on her cheeks one day, returning from a walk with Mr. Myrvin, that Mrs. Hamilton felt convinced the tale of the past had been told, and fearing her niece had done herself injustice, she scrupled no longer in alluding to it herself. Mr. Myrvin was deeply affected at the tale, and much relieved when the whole was known; for when he had praised her general conduct, and approved of so many feelings and sentiments she had acknowledged, and then tenderly demanded the cause of that depression he sometimes witnessed, Ellen had given vent to a violent burst of emotion, and spoken of a sin, a fearful sin, which long years of probation alone could wash away. Her strong, her terrible temptation, her extreme wretchedness and dreadful sufferings she had not mentioned, and, consequently, when known, an air of even more gentle and more affectionate interest pervaded Mr. Myrvin's manner towards her. Hearing her one day express an ardent desire once more to visit Llangwillan, to see again her mother's grave, he earnestly entreated Mrs. Hamilton's permission for her to visit him for a few weeks: her company would, he said, indeed shed joy over his home, and afford much pleasure to a widowed sister who resided with him. Mrs. Hamilton smilingly consented, and a flush of animated pleasure dyed Ellen's cheeks at the proposal. For about a quarter of an hour she was all delight and animation, when suddenly a thought entered her mind, banishing her unusual mirth, and filling her eyes with tears. Her voice faltered audibly, as she warmly thanked Mr. Myrvin and her aunt for their wish to increase her happiness, but she would rather not leave home that year. The change was so sudden, her manner so contradictory to her words, that Mrs. Hamilton, believing some fanciful reason existed, would have insisted on her compliance, and playfully accused her of unfounded caprice. There was, however, a degree of earnest entreaty in her manner, that Mr. Myrvin would not combat, and he expressed himself contented with her promise for the following year. Mrs. Hamilton was not, however, quite so easily satisfied. Ellen had been latterly so open with her, that anything like concealment in her conduct gave her some little uneasiness; but she could not withstand the imploring look of her niece, as she entreated her not to think her capricious and wilful; she was sure Mrs. Hamilton would approve of her reason, did she confess it.

"I am not quite so sure of that," was her aunt's smiling reply; "but, however, I will trust you, though I do not like mysteries," and the subject was dismissed.

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The manners and conversation of Arthur Myrvin were such as to prepossess both Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton very much in his favour, and strengthened the opinion they had already formed concerning him, on the word of their son. The respectful deference with which he ever treated Caroline and Emmeline often caused a laugh at his expense from Percy, but gratified Mrs. Hamilton; Percy declared he stood as much in awe of his sisters as if they were the highest ladies in the land. Arthur bore his raillery with unruffled temper, but he felt the distance that fortune placed between him and those fair girls, and he hoped, by reserve, to lessen the danger that might in their society attack his peace. Emmeline mistook this cautious reserve for coldness and distaste towards women, and, with the arts of a playful child, she frequently endeavoured to draw him from his abstraction, and render him a more agreeable companion.

There was still so very much of the child in Emmeline, though now rapidly approaching her eighteenth birthday, she was still so very young in manners and appearance, that the penetration of Mrs. Hamilton must not be too severely criticised, if it failed in discovering that intimately mingled with this childlike manner—the warm enthusiasm of a kind nature—was a fund of deep reflection, and feelings quite equal to her age. Mrs. Hamilton fancied the realities of life were still to her a dream. Had any one spoken to her of the marriage of Emmeline as soon taking place, she would have started at the idea, as a thing for some years impossible; and that her affections might become engaged—that the childlike, innocent, joyous Emmeline, whose gayest pleasures still consisted in chasing with wild glee the butterflies as they sported on the summer flowers, or tying garlands of the fairest buds to adorn her own or her sister's hair, or plucking the apples from the trees and throwing them to the village children as they sauntered at the orchard gate—whose graver joys consisted in revelling in every poet that her mother permitted her to read, or making her harp resound with wild, sweet melody—whose laugh was still so unchecked and gay—that such a being could think of love, of that fervid and engrossing passion, which can turn the playful girl into a thinking woman, Mrs. Hamilton may be pardoned if she deemed it as yet a thing that could not be; and she, too, smiled at the playful mischief with which Emmeline would sometimes claim the attention of young Myrvin, engage him in conversation, and then, with good-humoured wit and repartee, disagree in all he said, and compel him to defend his opinions with all the eloquence he possessed.

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With Ellen, young Myrvin was more at his ease; he recalled the days that were past, and never felt with her the barrier which his sensitive delicacy had placed between himself and her cousins. Arthur was proud, more so than he was aware of himself. He would have considered himself more humbled to love and sue for one raised by fortune or rank above him, than in uniting with one, who in both these essentials was his inferior. He was ambitious, but for honours and station obtained by his own endeavours not conferred by another. From his earliest youth he had grown up with so strong an impression that he was intended for the Church, that he considered it impossible any other profession could suit him better. When he mingled intimately at college with young men of higher rank and higher hopes, he discovered too late that a clergyman's life was not such as to render him most happy; but he could not draw back, he would not so disappoint his father. He felt and knew, to obtain the summit of his desires, to be placed in a public situation, where his ambition would have full scope, required a much larger fortune than his father possessed. He clothed himself in what he believed to be resignation and contentment, but which was in truth a morbid sensitiveness to his lot in life, which he imagined poverty would separate from every other. Association with Herbert Hamilton, to whom in frankness he confided these secret feelings, did much towards removing their bitterness; and the admiration which he felt for Herbert, whose unaffected piety and devotion to the Church he could not fail to appreciate, partially reconciled his ambitious spirit to his station. Yet the exalted ideas of Herbert were not entirely shared by Arthur, whose thoughts were centred in a more stirring field of usefulness than it would in all probability be his to fill. Herbert combated these objections with so much eloquence, he pointed with such ardent zeal to the crown eternal that would be his, when divine love had triumphed over all earthly ambition, and his duties were done for love of Him, who had ordained them, that when the time of his ordination came (which it did very shortly after the commencement of this chapter), he would not have drawn back, even had a more attractive profession been offered for his acceptance. The friendship and countenance of Mr. Hamilton did much to reconcile him to his lot. Mr. Howard's curate died suddenly, at the very time that Mr. Hamilton was writing to the Marquis of Malvern, in Arthur's favour, for a vacant living then at his disposal. Both now were offered to the young man's choice, and Percy, even Mr. Hamilton himself, were somewhat surprised that, without a moment's hesitation, he accepted that under Mr. Howard, in the gift of Mr. Hamilton, inferior as it was in point of worldly prospects to Lord Malvern's. His two parishes were situated about nine or ten miles from Oakwood, and seven or eight from Mr. Howard's rectory, and ere Mr. Myrvin returned to Llangwillan, he had the satisfaction of seeing his son settled comfortably in his curacy, performing his duties to the approval of his rector, and gaining by his manner the affection of his parishioners.

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Herbert alone knew to its full extent the conquest his friend had achieved over himself. His inclination led him to ambitious paths, where he might in time obtain the notice of and mingle in the highest ranks; but when the innate nobleness of his mind showed him where his duty lay, when conscience loudly whispered now was the time to redeem the errors of his college life, to prove his reverence for his father, to preserve the kindness of those friends, exalted alike by rank and virtue, with whom he still might mingle, with a strong effort he banished all ambitious wishes, and devoted himself heart and soul to his ministerial duties.

Herbert would speak of his friend at home, of his self-conquering struggles, till all would sympathise in the interest he so warmly displayed, particularly Emmeline, with whom, sportive as she was, Herbert from his childhood had had more thoughts and feelings in common than he ever had with Caroline; and now, whether he spoke of Mary Greville or Arthur Myrvin, in her he ever found a willing and attentive auditor. Whenever he had ridden over to Hawthorndell, which he frequently did, Emmeline would always in their next walk playfully draw from him every particular of the "Lone Hermit," as in true poetic style she termed Arthur. But there was no seriousness in her converse either of or to young Myrvin. There was always mischief lurking in her laughter-loving eye; always some wild joke betrayed in the arch smiles ever lingering round her mouth; but mischief as it was, apparently the mere wantonness of childhood, or very early youth, something in that glance or smile ever bade young Myrvin's heart beat quicker than before, and every pulse throb with what at first he deemed was pain. It was relief to him to seek the quiet, gentle Ellen, and speak to her even as he would to a sister, of all that had occurred to him since last they met, so secure was he of sympathy in his future prospects, his present cares and joys. But still that strange feeling lingered within his bosom in his solitary hours, and he dwelt on it much more than on the gentle accents of that fair girl whom in his boyhood he had termed his wife; and stranger still, if it were pain, that it should urge him on to seek it, that he could not rest till the glance of that eye, the tone of that voice, had once more been seen and heard, till fresh excitement had been given to thoughts and emotions which were unconsciously becoming the mainsprings of his life.

The undisturbed and happy calmness of Oakwood removed in a great measure Caroline's painful feelings; all thoughts of Lord Alphingham were gradually banished. The question how she could ever have been so blind as to imagine that he had gained her affections, that she loved him, returned more frequently than she could answer.

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But another vision stood forth to confront the darkened one of the Viscount, and the contrast heightened the lustre of the former. Why had she been so mad, so infatuated, as to reject with scorn and pride the hand and heart of one so noble, so fond, so superior as Eugene St. Eval? Now that the film had been removed from her eyes, that all the past appeared in its true colours, that self-will and love of independence had departed from her, the startling truth burst upon her mind, that she had loved, truly loved, the very man who of all others would have been the choice of both her parents—loved, and as his wife, might have been one of the happiest, the most envied of her sex, had not that indomitable spirit of coquetry urged her on, and lowered her to become a very tool in the hands of the artful and designing Annie Grahame.

Caroline loved; had she doubted the existence of that passion, every letter from Mary Greville would have confirmed it; for we will not say it was jealousy she felt, it was more self-condemnation and regret, heightened at times almost into wretchedness. That St. Eval should so soon forget her, that he should love again ere six months had passed, could not fail to be a subject of bitter mortification to one in whose bosom pride still rested. She would not have thus tormented herself with turning and twisting Mary's information into such ideas, had she not felt assured that he had penetrated her weakness, and despised her. Fickleness was no part of St. Eval's character, of that she was convinced; but it was natural he should cease to love, when he had ceased to esteem, and in the society and charms of Louisa Manvers endeavour to forget his disappointment.

Through Emmeline's introductory letter, Lord St. Eval had become sufficiently intimate with Mrs. Greville and Mary as to succeed in his persuasions for them to leave their present residence, and occupy a vacant villa on Lago Guardia, within a brief walk of Lord Delmont's, feeling sure that an intimacy between Mrs. Manvers's family and that of Mrs. Greville would be mutually pleasurable and beneficial; his friendly wishes succeeded. Mrs. Greville found an able and sympathising companion in the goodhearted, homely mother of the elegant and accomplished Lord Delmont, and Mary's sadness was at once soothed and cheered by the more animated Louisa, whose lot in life had never known those murky clouds of sorrow and anxiety which had so often dimmed the youth of Mary. The brother of Louisa had been all in all to her. She felt as if life could not have another charm, as if not another joy was wanting to render her lot perfect, until that other charm appeared, and her ardent fancy quickly knew to its full extent the delights of female companionship and sympathy. Their very dissimilitude of disposition rendered dearer the ties of youthful friendship, and Emmeline sometimes felt a pang of jealousy, as she read in the letters of her friend the constant praises of Louisa Manvers,

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not that any diminution of early affection breathed in them. Mary ever wrote so as to satisfy the most exacting disposition; but it required all Mrs. Hamilton's eloquence to persuade Emmeline she should rather rejoice than grieve that Mary had found some one to supply her place. But vainly Emmeline tried in playfulness to infect her brother Herbert with a portion of her jealousy, for she knew not the contents of those letters Mary ever wrote to Herbert, or she would not for one moment have imagined that either Lord Delmont or St. Eval would usurp her brother's place.

"Few things would give me greater pleasure," one of Mary's letters said, "than to see the union of Lord St. Eval and my fair friend. It appears to me strange that each, with affections disengaged, can remain blind to the fascination of the other. They are well suited in every respect, and I should fancy their union would certainly be a fair promise of happiness. I live in hope, though as yet, I must confess, hope has but very little to feed on."

St. Eval still lingered at Monte Rosa, and it was well for the inhabitants he did, for an event occurred which plunged that happy valley from joy and gaiety into wailing and affliction, and even for a brief interval infected the inhabitants of Oakwood with its gloom. Death came, and tore away as his victim the widow's son, the orphan's brother. The title of Delmont became extinct, for the last scion of that ancient race had gone to his last home. He had gone with St. Eval and some other young men on a fishing expedition, at some distance; a sudden squall had arisen, and dispersing with much damage the little flotilla, compelled the crews of each to seek their own safety. The sails of St. Eval's boat were not furled quickly enough to escape the danger; it upset, and though, after much buffeting and struggling with the angry waters, St. Eval succeeded in bearing his insensible friend to land, his constitution had received too great a shock, and he lingered but a few brief weeks ere he was released from suffering. He had been thrown with violence against a rock, producing a concussion of the brain, which, combined with the length of time he was under water, produced fever, and finally death.

On the agony of the bereaved mother and sister it would be useless to linger. St. Eval forgot his individual sorrows, and devoted himself, heart and soul, in relieving those helpless sufferers, in which painful task he was ably seconded by Mary and her mother, whose letters to their friends at Oakwood, in that season of affliction, spoke of him in a manner that, unconsciously to themselves, confirmed every miserable suspicion in Caroline's mind, and even excited some such feeling in her parents, whose disappointment was thus vividly recalled. That he should ever seek their child again they deemed impossible, as did Caroline herself; but still it was in vain they endeavoured to look with any degree of pleasure to his union with another.



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Mr. Hamilton's family mourned Lord Delmont's early fate with sincere regret, though they had known but little of him; but about this time the thoughts of Mrs. Hamilton were turned in another direction, by a circumstance which caused unaffected sorrow in her daughter and niece; nor were she and her husband exempt. Lucy Harcourt had been so many years a member of the family, she had been so associated from their infancy in the affections of her pupils, that to part from her was the bitterest pang of sorrow that Emmeline had yet known, and it was long before Mrs. Hamilton herself could be reconciled to the idea of separation; she had ever regarded and treated Miss Harcourt as a sister, and intended that even when her family were settled, she should never want another home. It was not only her own virtues that had endeared her to Mrs. Hamilton; the services she had rendered her children, her active and judicious share in the arduous task of education, demanded and received from both Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton the meed of gratitude and esteem, and never once, in the seventeen years of Miss Harcourt's residence amongst them, had they regretted the impulse which had offered her a sheltering home and sympathising friends.

Emmeline and Ellen were still her pupils, and Mrs. Hamilton intended them to remain so for two or three years longer, even after they were introduced, and it was on that account Miss Harcourt hesitated in complying with the earnest entreaty of him whose happy home in her early youth she had so nobly quitted, preferring to live by her own exertions than to share the home of the man she loved, when he was married to another.

It had been very, very long ere disappointed affection had permitted her to be cheerful. Her cousin, while rejoicing in the happy home she had found, while congratulating her with fraternal interest on the kind friends her mother's virtues had procured her, imagined not the agony she was striving to conquer, the devoted love for him which disturbed the peace around her, which otherwise she might have enjoyed to its full extent; but she did conquer at length. That complete separation from him did much towards restoring peace although perhaps love might still have lingered; for what absence, what distance can change a woman's heart? Yet it interfered no longer with happiness, and she answered Seymour's constant and affectionate letters in his own style, as a sister would have done.

Sixteen years had passed, and not once had the cousins met. Womanhood in its maturity was now Lucy's; every girlish feeling had fled, and she perhaps thought young affections had gone also, but her cheek flushed and every pulse throbbed, when she opened a long, long expected letter, and found her cousin was a widower in declining health, which precluded him from attending to his two motherless girls, imploring her, as her duties in Mrs. Hamilton's family were nearly over, to leave England and be the guardian spirit

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of his home, to comfort his affliction, to soothe his bodily suffering, and learn to know and love his children, ere they were fatherless as well as motherless, and deprived of every friend save the aunt Lucy they had been taught to love, although to them unknown. The spirit of deep melancholy breathing through this epistle called forth for a few minutes a burst of tears from her who for so many years had checked all selfish grief.

“If I can comfort him, teach his children to love me, and be their mother now they are orphans, oh, I shall not have lived in vain.” Such were the words that escaped her lips as she ceased to weep, and sat a few minutes in thought, then sought Mrs. Hamilton and imparted all to her. Mrs. Hamilton hesitated not a moment in her decision. Her own regret at parting with her friend interfered not an instant with the measure she believed would so greatly tend to the happiness of Miss Harcourt. Mr. Hamilton seconded her; but the sorrow at separation, which was very visible in the midst of their exertions for her welfare, both gratified and affected Lucy. Never had she imagined how dear she was to her pupils till the time of separation came; and when she quitted England, it was with a heart swelling with interest and affection for those she had left, and the fervent prayer that they might meet again.

Mr. Seymour had said, were it not for his declining health, which forbade the exertion of travelling, he would have come for her himself; but if she would only consent to his proposal, if she could resign such kind friends to devote herself to an irritable and ailing man, he would send one under whose escort she might safely travel. Miss Harcourt declined that offer, for Mr. Hamilton and Percy had both declared their intention of accompanying her as far as Paris, and thence to Geneva, where Mr. Seymour resided.

It was long ere Mr. Hamilton’s family became reconciled to this change; Oakwood appeared so strange without the kind, the gentle Miss Harcourt, whose steady yet mild firmness had so ably assisted Mrs. Hamilton in the rearing of her now blooming and virtuous family. It required some exertion, not only in Emmeline but in Ellen, to pursue their studies with any perseverance, now that the dear friend who had directed and encouraged them had departed. Ellen’s grateful affection had the last few years been returned with equal warmth; that prejudice which had at first characterised Miss Harcourt’s feelings towards her had entirely vanished during her sufferings, and a few days before her departure, Lucy with much feeling had admitted the uncalled for harshness with which she too had treated her in her months of misery, and playfully yet earnestly asked her forgiveness. They were alone, and Ellen’s only answer had been to throw herself on her friend’s neck and weep.

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Before Christmas came, however, these painful feelings had been conquered. Pleasing letters from Miss Harcourt arrived by almost every post for one or other of the inmates of Oakwood, and their contents breathing her own happiness, and the warmest, most affectionate interest in the dear ones she had left, satisfied even Emmeline, from whom a fortnight's visit from the Earl and Countess of Elmore had banished all remaining trace of sadness. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton had welcomed but very few resident visitors to Oakwood during the early years of their children, but now it was with pleasure they exercised the hospitality so naturally their own, and received in their own domains the visits of their most intimate friends of London; but these visits afford us no matter of entertainment, nor enter much into the purpose of this history. A large party was never collected within the walls of Oakwood; the intimate friends of Mr. Hamilton were but few, for it was only those who thought on the essentials of life as himself with whom he mingled in the familiar position of host. The Marquis of Malvern's family alone remained to spend Christmas with them, and added much to the enjoyment of that domestic circle. Their feelings and pursuits were in common, for the Marchioness of Malvern was a mother after Mrs. Hamilton's own stamp, and her children had benefited by similar principles; the same confidence existed between them. The Marchioness had contrived to win both the reverence and affection of her large family, though circumstances had prevented her devoting as much of her own time and care on their education as had Mrs. Hamilton. Her eldest daughter was married; her second, some few years older than Caroline, was then staying with her, and only one of the three who accompanied her to Oakwood was as yet introduced. Lady Florence was to make her *debut* the following season, with Emmeline Hamilton; and Lady Emily was still, when at home, under the superintendence of a governess and masters. Lord Louis, the Marchioness's youngest child, a fine lad of sixteen, with his tutor, by Mr. Hamilton's earnest desire, also joined their happy party, and by his light-hearted humour and fun, added not a little to the amusements of the evening. But it was Lady Gertrude, the eldest of the three sisters then at Oakwood, that Mrs. Hamilton earnestly hoped might take the place Annie Grahame had once occupied in Caroline's affections. Hers was a character much resembling her brother's St. Eval, to whom her features also bore a striking resemblance. She might, at a first introduction, have been pronounced proud, but, as is often the case, reserve was mistaken for pride. Yet in her domestic circle she was ever the gayest, and the first to contribute to general amusement. In childhood she had stood in a degree alone, for her elder sisters were four or five years older than herself, and Florence and Emily four and five years younger. She had learned from the first

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to seek no sympathy, and her strong feeling might perhaps by being constantly smothered, at length have perished within her, and left her the cold unloving character she appeared to the world, had it not been for the devoted affection of her brother Eugene, in whom she soon learned to confide every emotion as it rose, at that age when girls first become sensible that they are thinking and feeling beings. They quickly became sensible that in almost every point they were kindred souls, and the name of Eugene and Gertrude were ever heard together in their family. Their affection was at length a proverb among their brothers and sisters, and perhaps it was this great similarity of disposition and the regard felt for her noble brother, that first endeared Gertrude to Mrs. Hamilton, whose wishes with regard to her and Caroline promised fulfilment. Some chord of sympathy had been struck within them, and they were very soon attached companions, although at first Lady Gertrude had hesitated, for she could not forget the tale of scornfully-rejected love imparted to her by her brother. She had marked the conduct of Caroline from the beginning. She too had hoped that in her she might have welcomed a sister, although her observant eye had marked some defects in her character which the ardent St. Eval had not perceived. Coolness during the past season had subsisted between them, for Caroline had taken no trouble to conquer Lady Gertrude's reserve, and the latter was too proud to make advances. In vain Lord St. Eval had wished a better understanding should exist between them, while Caroline was under the influence of Miss Grahame, it was impossible for her to associate in sympathy with Lady Gertrude Lyle; yet now that they mingled in the intimacy of home, now the true character of Caroline was apparent, that Lady Gertrude had time and opportunity to remark her devotion to her parents, more particularly to her mother, her affectionate kindness to her brothers and Emmeline and Ellen, her very many sterling virtues, which had previously been concealed, but which were discovered by the tributes of grateful affection constantly offered to her by the inhabitants of the village, by the testimony of Mr. Howard, the self-conquests of temper and inclination for the sake of others, which the penetrating eye of Lady Gertrude discovered, and, above all, the spirit of piety and meekness which now characterised her actions, all bade the sister of St. Eval reproach herself for condemning without sufficient evidence. For her conduct to her brother there was indeed no excuse, and on that subject alone, with regard to Caroline, Lady Gertrude felt bewildered, and utterly unable to comprehend her. It was a subject on which neither chose to speak, for it was a point of delicacy to both. Had Lady Gertrude been excluded from her brother's confidence, she too might have spoken as carelessly and admiringly of him as his sisters constantly did; but she could not so address the girl who had rejected him, it would be pleading his cause, from which she revolted with a repugnance natural to her high-minded character.

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"If he still love her, as his letters would betray, let him come and plead his own cause; never will I say anything that can make Caroline believe I am in secret negotiating for him." Such was the thought that ever checked her, when about to speak of him in the common course of conversation, and baffled all Caroline's secret wishes that she would speak in his praise as her sisters and Lord Louis so constantly did.

But even as delicacy prevented all allusion to him from the lips of Lady Gertrude, so it actuated Caroline with perhaps even greater force. Would she betray herself, and confess that she repented her rejection of St. Eval? would she by word or deed betray that, would he return to her, she would be his own, and feel blessed in his affections? She shrunk almost in horror from doing so, and roused her every energy to conceal and subdue every emotion, till she could hear his name with composure. Yet more than once had Lady Gertrude, as she silently watched her countenance, fancied she perceived sufficient evidence to bid her wonder what could have induced Caroline's past conduct, to imagine that if St. Eval could forget that, he might be happy yet; and for his sake, conquering her scruples, once she spoke openly of him, when she and Caroline were visiting some poor cottagers alone. She spoke of his character, many points of which, though she admired, she regretted, as rendering him less susceptible of happiness than many who were less gifted. "Unless he find a wife to love him as he loves—one who will devote herself to him alone, regardless of rank or fortune, Eugene never can be happy; and if he pass through life, unblest by the dearest and nearest ties, he will be miserable." So much she did say, and added her earnest wishes for his welfare, in a tone that caused the tears to spring to the eyes of her companion, who permitted her to speak for some time without in any way replying.

"What a pity you are his sister," she replied, rallying all her energies to speak frankly and somewhat sportively; "a woman like yourself is alone worthy of Lord St. Eval."

"You are wrong," replied Lady Gertrude, sadly; "I am much too cold and reserved to form, as a wife, the happiness of such a character as my brother's. We have grown together from childhood, we have associated more intimately and affectionately with each other than with any other members of our family, and therefore Eugene knows and loves me. The wife of St. Eval should be of a disposition as ingenuous and open as his is reserved; her affection, her sympathy, must make his felicity. He is grave—too grave; she should be playful, but not childish. Even if she have some faults, with the love for which my brother pines, the ingenuousness unsullied by the most trifling artifice, her very faults would bind her more closely to him."

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Caroline was silent, and Lady Gertrude soon after changed the subject. Had she heard no reports of Caroline's preference of Lord Alphingham, of the affair which had somewhat hurried Mr. Hamilton's departure from London, that conversation would have confirmed her suspicions, that her brother was no subject of indifference to Caroline. She longed for her to be candid with her, to hear the whole truth from her own lips. The happiness of the young Earl was so dear to her, that she would have done much, very much to secure it; yet so far she could not force herself to go, particularly as he had given her no charge to do so. She little knew that Caroline would have given worlds, had they been at her disposal, to have confided all to her: her repentance, her folly, her earnest prayers for amendment, to become at length worthy of St. Eval. Caroline loved, truly loved, because she esteemed, Lady Gertrude; her friendship for her differed as much from that she believed she had felt for Annie Grahame, as her regard for St. Eval was unlike that which Lord Alphingham had originated. Once, the superiority of Lady Gertrude's character would have rendered her an object of almost dislike to Caroline, as possessing virtues she admired but would not imitate. Now those virtues were appreciated, her own inferiority was felt more painfully; and while associating with her, the recollections of the past returned more than ever, embittered by remorse. Sir George Wilmot and Lilla Grahame were also guests at Oakwood. The former declared he had seldom anchored in moorings so congenial to his taste. In Lilla the effects of happiness and judicious treatment were already distinctly visible. The young men spent the Christmas recess at home, and added much to the hilarity of their domestic circle; nor must we forget Arthur Myrvin, who spent as much of his time at Oakwood, as his duties permitted; the friendship of Herbert Hamilton doing much to remove the bitter feelings which often still possessed him. He would at first have shunned the invitation, but vainly he strove to do so; for there was one fair object there who held him with an iron chain, which excited while bound him. He could not break it asunder, though peace he felt was flying from his grasp.

CHAPTER X.

"Gertrude's letters this morning have brought her some extraordinarily agreeable tidings," exclaimed Lady Florence Lyle, gaily, as her sister entered the breakfast-room, rather later than usual.

"On my honour, her countenance is rather a clearer index than usual to-day," observed the Marquis, laughing. "Well, Gertrude, what is it?"

"News from Eugene," exclaimed Lady Emily and Lord Louis in a breath; "he is going to be married. Either Miss Manvers or Miss Greville have consented to take him for better or worse," added Lord Louis, laughing. "Gertrude, allow me to congratulate you on the gift of a new sister, who, as the wife of my right honourable brother the Earl of St. Eval, will be dearer to you than any other bearing the same relationship."

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"Reserve your congratulations, Louis, till they are needed," replied Lady Gertrude, fixing her eyes steadily on Caroline's face, which was rapidly changing from pale to crimson.

"I have no such exciting news to communicate," she added, very quietly. "Eugene is in England, and alone."

"In England!" repeated Percy, starting up; "I am delighted to hear it. I just know enough of him to wish most ardently to know more. Will he not join us? He surely will not winter at Castle Malvern alone, like a hermit, surrounded by snows; if he do, he is a bachelor confirmed: not a hope for his restoration to the congenial warmth of life."

"He has no such intention," replied Lady Gertrude, smiling; "our present happy circle has too many attractions to permit his resting quietly in solitude, and, with Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton's kind permission, will join us here by Christmas Eve."

"There are few whom we shall be so pleased to welcome as my noble young friend St. Eval," answered Mr. Hamilton, instantly; "few whose society I so much prize, both for myself and my sons."

"And the minstrel's harp shall sleep no more, but wake her boldest chords to welcome such a guest to Oakwood's aged walls," exclaimed Emmeline, gaily.

"Thus I give you leave to welcome him, but if he take my place with you in our evening walks, I shall wish him back again at Monte Rosa in a twinkling," observed Lord Louis, in the same gay tone, and looking archly at his fair companion; "when Eugene appears my reign is always over."

"Louis, I shall put you under the command of Sir George Wilmot," said his father, laughing, however, with the rest of the circle.

"Ay, ay, do; the sea is just the berth for such youngsters as these," remarked the old Admiral, clapping his hand kindly on the lad's shoulder.

While such *badinage* was passing, serious thoughts were occupying the minds of more than one individual of that circle. It would be difficult to define the feelings of Caroline as she heard that St. Eval was in England, and coming to Oakwood. Had he so soon conquered his affections, that he could associate with her on terms of friendly intimacy? She longed to confess to her mother her many conflicting feelings; she felt that her earnest prayers were her own, but shame prevented all disclosure. She could not admit she now loved that very man whom she had once treated with such contempt and scorn, rejected with proud indifference. Even her mother, her fond mother, would say her present feelings were a just punishment for the past; and that she could not bear. Inwardly she resolved that not a word should pass her lips; she would suffer unshrinkingly, and in silence.

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Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, and the Marquis and Marchioness of Malvern also became engrossed with the same subject; the latter had seen and highly approved of their son's attentions to Caroline, and appeared gratified by the manner in which she accepted them. Disappointment and indignation for a time succeeded the young Earl's departure for the Continent, but the friendship so long subsisting between the families prevented all unpleasant feeling, except, perhaps, a little towards Caroline herself. They gladly welcomed the intelligence that St. Eval was in England, and wished to join them at Oakwood, for they hailed it as a sign that his fancy had been but fleeting, and was now entirely conquered. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton thought the same, though to them it was far more a matter of disappointment than rejoicing; but hope mingled almost unconsciously with regret, and they too were pleased that he was about to become their guest.

Lady Gertrude's eyes were more than once during that morning fixed on Caroline, as the subject of St. Eval's travels and residence abroad were discussed, but she was silent; whatever were her secret reflections, they were confined within the recesses of her own heart.

Lord St. Eval came, and with him fresh enjoyment for Percy and Herbert; and even for young Myrvin, who found nothing in the society of the young nobleman to wound his pride by recalling to his mind his own inferior rank. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton fancied they had read his character before; but their previous intimacy had not discovered those many pleasing qualifications which domestic amusements and occupations betrayed. Much of his reserve was now banished; his manners were as easy and as free from pride or hauteur as his conversation, though chaste and intellectual, was from pedantry. To all the individuals of that happy circle he was the same; as kind and as gay to Emmeline and Ellen as to his own sisters; there might, perhaps, have been a degree of reserve in his demeanour towards Caroline, but that, except to those principally concerned, might not have been remarked, for his intercourse with her was even more general than with others. Emmeline and Ellen, or even Lilla, was often his selected companion for a walk, but such an invitation never extended to Caroline, and yet he could never be said either to neglect or shun her; and she shrinking from attracting his notice as much as she had once before courted it, an impassable yet invisible barrier seemed to exist between them. In St. Eval's manner, his mother and Lady Gertrude read that his feelings were not conquered; that he was struggling to subdue them, and putting their subjection to the proof; but Caroline and her parents imagined, and with bitter pain, that much as he had once esteemed and loved her, a feeling of indifference now possessed him.

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Herbert found pleasure in the society of the young Earl, for St. Eval had penetrated the secret of his and Mary's love; though with innate delicacy he refrained from noticing it farther than constantly to make Mary his theme during his walks with Herbert, and speaking of her continually to the family, warming the heart of Emmeline yet more in his favour, by his sincere admiration of her friend. He gave an excellent account of her health, which she had desired him to assure her friends the air of Italy had quite restored. He spoke in warm admiration of her enthusiasm, her love of nature, of all which called forth the more exalting feelings; of her unaffected goodness, which had rendered her a favourite, spite of her being a foreigner and a Protestant, throughout the whole hamlet of Monte Rosa, and as he thus spoke, the anxious eye of Mrs. Hamilton ever rested on her Herbert, who could read in that glance how true and fond was the sympathy, which not once since he had confided in her his happiness, had he regretted that he had sought.

The remaining period of the Marquis of Malvern's sojourn at Oakwood passed rapidly away without any event of sufficient importance to find a place in these pages. They left Oakwood at the latter end of January for St. Eval's beautiful estate in Cornwall, where they intended to remain a month ere they went to London, about the same time as Mr. Hamilton's family. That month was a quiet one at Oakwood; all their guests had departed, and, except occasional visits from Arthur Myrvin and St. Eval, their solitude was uninterrupted.

St. Eval's estate was situated a few miles inland from the banks of the Tamar, one of the most beautiful spots bordering that most beautiful river. He was wont leisurely to sail down the stream to Plymouth, and thence to Oakwood, declaring the distance was a mere trifle; but nevertheless it was sufficiently long for Mr. Hamilton sometimes to marvel at the taste of his noble friend, which led him often twice and regularly once a week to spend a few hours, never more, at Oakwood, when he knew they should so soon meet in London. St. Eval did not solve the mystery, but continued his visits, bringing cheerfulness and pleasure whenever he appeared, and bidding hope glow unconsciously in each parent's heart, though had they looked for its foundation, they would have found nothing in the young Earl's manner to justify its encouragement.

In March Mr. Hamilton's family once more sought their residence in Berkeley Square, about a week after the Marquis of Malvern's arrival; and this season, the feelings of the sisters, relative to the gaieties in which they were now both to mingle, were more equal. The bright hues with which Caroline had before regarded them had faded—too soon and too painfully, indeed.

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She had been deceived, and in that word, when applied to a young, aspiring, trusting mind, what anguish does it not comprise. True, she deserved her chastisement, not only that she had acted the part of a deceiver to one who trusted her far more than she had done Lord Alphingham, but wilfully she had blinded herself to her own feelings, that she might prove her independence; yet these facts lessened not the bitterness of feeling which was now often hers. But she did not relinquish society; the dread of encountering Lord Alphingham was not strong enough to overcome her secret wish that, by her conduct in society, she might prove to St. Eval that, although unworthy to be selected as his wife, she would yet endeavour to regain his esteem. She had resolved to think less of herself and more of others, and thus become more amiable in their sight, and not feel so many mortifications, as by her constant desire for universal homage, she had previously endured. She knew the task was difficult so to conquer herself, and doubting her own strength, was led to seek it where alone it could be found. To none did she confess these secret feelings and determination; calmly and steadily she looked forward, and so successfully had she schooled herself to submission, that no word or sign as yet betrayed to her parents the real state of her affections.

Emmeline's dislike to London had abated as much as had her sister's glowing anticipations. They were now only to be four months in the metropolis; the strict routine of masters, *etc.*, was at an end, and she was to accompany Mrs. Hamilton whenever she went out. She left Oakwood with regret, and the society and conversation of Arthur Myrvin were missed more often in London than she chose to confess, but enjoyment was ever found for Emmeline—life was still a romance to her. In the society of London, as in the cottages of Oakwood, she was beloved, and she was happy; but those of the opposite sex, much as they thronged around her, had no more thought of demanding such a being in marriage, than she had of what is termed making conquests. It was therefore with feelings of much less anxiety Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton mingled in society this season, for the conduct of both their daughters was such as to afford them satisfaction.

Some changes had taken place in many of the personages with whom we are acquainted, since the last time we beheld them. Short and evanescent is fashionable popularity. Lord Alphingham's reign might be, in a degree, considered over. Some rumours had been floating over the town at that time of the year when, in all probability, he thought himself most secure, that is, when London society is dispersed; rumours which had the effect of excluding him from most of those circles in which Mr. Hamilton's family mingled, and withdrawing from him in a great measure the friendship of Montrose Grahame, who, the soul of honour himself, shrunk from any connection with one whose reputation the faintest breath had

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stained. Yet still there were many who regarded these rumours as the mere whisperings of envy, and with them he was as much a favourite as ever. Amongst these was Annie Grahame, whose marked preference more than atoned to the Viscount for her father's coldness. In vain Grahame commanded that his daughter should change her manner towards him. She, who had prevailed on a daughter to disobey this very mandate from the lips of an indulgent parent, was not likely to regard that of the father whose sternness and often uncalled-for severity had completely alienated her affections, and Lord Alphingham had now another urgent reason to flatter Annie's vanity and make her his own.

A distant relation and godmother of Lady Helen Grahame had, most unexpectedly, left her at her death sole heiress to a handsome fortune, which was to descend undivided to her elder daughter, and thus to Annie's other attractions was now added that all-omnipotent charm, the knowledge that she was an heiress, not perhaps to any very large property, but quite sufficient to most agreeably enlarge the fortune of any gentleman who would venture to take her for better or worse. One would have supposed that now every wish of this aspiring young lady was gratified; but no. It mattered not, though crowds were at her feet, that when they met, which was very seldom, even Caroline was no longer her rival, all the affection she possessed was lavished without scruple on Lord Alphingham, and every thought was turned, every effort directed towards the accomplishment of that one design. So deeply engrossed was she in this resolution, that she had no time nor thought to annoy Caroline, as she had intended, except in exercising to its full extent her power over Lord Alphingham whenever she was present, in which the Viscount's own irritated feelings towards her ably assisted. Caroline felt the truth of her mother's words, that Lord Alphingham, indeed, had never honourably loved her; that Annie's conduct justified Mrs. Hamilton's prejudice, and as her heart shrunk in sadness from the retrospection of these, truths, it swelled in yet warmer affection, not only towards her fond and watchful mother, but towards the friends that mother's judicious choice selected and approved.

Cecil Grahame had been continually in the habit of drawing upon his mother's cash for the indulgence of his extravagant pleasures, and Lady Helen had thoughtlessly satisfied all his wishes, without being in the least aware of the evil propensities she was thus encouraging. It was not till Cecil was about to leave Eton for the University, that she was at all startled at the amount of his debts, and then her principal alarm arose more from the dread of her husband's anger towards her son, if he discovered the fact, than from any maternal anxiety for Cecil's unsteady principles. Her only wish was to pay off these numerous debts, without disclosing them to the husband she so weakly dreaded. How could she obtain so large a sum,

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even from her own banker, and thus apply it, without his knowledge and assistance? The very anticipation of so much trouble terrified her almost into a fit of illness; and rather than exert her energies or expose her son to his father's wrath, she would descend to deceit, and implore his assistance in obtaining the whole amount, on pretence that she required it for the payment of her own expenses and debts of honour. She imagined that she had sunk too low in her husband's esteem to sink much lower; and therefore, if her requiring money to discharge debts of honour exposed her yet more to his contempt, it was not of much consequence; besides if it were, she could not help it, a phrase with which Lady Helen ever contrived to silence the rebukes of conscience when they troubled her, which, however, was not often.

She acted accordingly; but as she met the glance of her husband, a glance in which sadness triumphed over severity, she was tempted to throw herself at his feet, and beseech him not to imagine her the dissipated woman her words betrayed, for Lady Helen loved her husband as much as such a nature could love; but, of all things, she hated a scene, and though every limb trembled with emotion, she permitted him to leave her, stung almost to madness by the disclosure her request implied. Did she play? was that fatal propensity added to her numerous other errors? and yet never had anything fallen under his eye to prove that she did. And what debts had she contracted to demand such a sum? Grahame felt she had deceived him; that the money had never been expended on herself; but he would not torture himself by demanding a true and full disclosure. The conduct of his children had ever grieved him, and fearing too justly the request of his wife related to them, madly and despairingly he closed his eyes and his lips, thus probably encouraging an evil which he might have prevented. He delivered the stated sum, and that same day made over to his wife's own unchecked disposal the whole of that fortune which, when first inherited, she had voluntarily placed in his hands as trustee for herself and for her daughter, to whom it would descend. Briefly he resigned the office she had entreated him to take, sternly observing, that Annie had better moderate her expectations, as, did Lady Helen frequently incur such heavy debts, not much was likely to descend to her daughter. It was a great deal too much trouble for Lady Helen to expostulate, and if any feeling predominated to conquer the pang occasioned by Grahame's determination, it was relief, that she might now assist Cecil, if he should require it, without applying to his father.

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Montrose Grahame was naturally not only an excellent but a judicious man; but to a great extent, his judgment had deserted him when he selected Lady Helen as his wife. Had he been united to a woman in whose judgment and firmness he could confide, he would have been quite as much respected and beloved in his family as were Mr. Hamilton and the Marquis of Malvern in theirs; but now neither respect nor affection was extended towards him, except, perhaps, by Lilla, and unconsciously by Lady Helen. Severity constantly indulged, was degenerating into moroseness; and feelings continually controlled, giving place to coldness and distrust. It was fortunate for Lilla's happiness and, as it afterwards proved, for her father's, that she was now under the kindly care of Mrs. Douglas, for constantly irritated with his elder girl, who, it must be owned, gave him abundant cause, that irritation and suspicion would undoubtedly have extended towards his younger, and at once have destroyed the gentleness and amiability which Mrs. Douglas was so carefully and tenderly fostering. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton saw this change, and regretted it; but their influence, powerful as it was, could be of no avail in counteracting the effect of domestic annoyances, paternal anxiety, and constantly aroused irritation. Of all the evils in life, domestic discord is one of the greatest, one under which the heart bleeds the most; want of sympathy always prevents or banishes affection. Had Grahame been a careless, selfish man, he might possibly have been happier; his very sensitiveness was his bane. The silly weaknesses of his wife might partially have lessened his love for her, but his children, with all their faults, were dear to their father; they knew not, guessed not, how much his happiness was centred in theirs; how his heart was rent with anguish every time that duty, as he imagined, called on him to be severe. Had he followed the dictates of his nature, he would rather have ruined his children by over-indulgence than severity; but the hope of counteracting the effect of their mother's weakness had guided his mistaken treatment. Could his inmost soul have been read by those who condemned his harshness, they would have sincerely pitied the keen and agonized sensitiveness with which he felt the alienation of their affections. Much as he saw to blame in Annie, had she ever given him one proof of filial love, all would have been forgiven, and the blessing of a parent been her own in all she did or wished. Had Cecil confessed those errors of which he was conscious that he was guilty to his father, he would have found a true and tender friend, who would have led his naturally good, though too yielding, character aright, and misery to both might have been spared, but such was not to be; and in the fates of Alfred Greville and Cecil Grahame we may chance to perceive that, whatever may be the difficulties surrounding her, however blighted may appear the produce of her anxious labours, yet reward will attend the firm, religious mother, however difficult may be the actual fulfilment of her duties; while that mother who, surrounded by luxury and prosperity, believes, by unqualified indulgence, she is firmly binding her offspring in the observance of love and duty, will reap but too bitter fruit.

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It was when in the presence of the Duchess of Rothbury Caroline felt most uncomfortable. The family were as cordial as ever, but there was somewhat in the cold, penetrating eye of her Grace, that bade her almost unconsciously shrink from meeting its glance. In the previous season the Duchess had ever singled Caroline out as an object of her especial regard, a circumstance so unusual in one of her character, that it rendered her present haughty coldness more difficult to bear. Caroline would have borne it in silence had it only extended towards herself, but it appeared as if both Emmeline and Ellen shared the contempt she perhaps had justly called forth on herself, as the Duchess, tenacious of her penetrative powers, feared to honour either of them with her favour, lest she should be again deceived. Caroline longed to undeceive her on this point, to give her a just estimate of both her sister and cousin's character, acknowledge how far superior in filial respect and affection, as well as in innate integrity and uprightness, they were to herself; but her mother entreated her to let time do its work, and wait till the Duchess herself discovered they were not what she either believed they were or might be, and she checked her wish.

We will here mention a circumstance which occurred in Mr. Hamilton's family soon after their arrival in town, which occasioned Mrs. Hamilton some uneasiness. Ellen's health was now perfectly re-established, and on Miss Harcourt's unexpected departure, Mrs. Hamilton had determined on introducing her niece with Emmeline in the present season. If Lucy had remained in her family, Ellen would not have made her *debut* till the following year, not that her age was any obstacle, for there were only eight months difference between her and Emmeline, but her retiring disposition and delicacy of constitution caused Mrs. Hamilton to think this plan the most advisable. When, however, there was no longer any excuse with regard to failing health, and no Miss Harcourt with whom her evenings at home might be more agreeably spent, Mrs. Hamilton, by the advice of her husband, changed her intention; and Emmeline even made a joke with Ellen on the admirable fun they should have together, rejoicing that such an important event in the lives of each should take place on the same day. It so happened that Ellen never appeared to enter into her cousin's everlasting merriment on this subject; still she said nothing for or against till the day all-important with the ordering their elegant dresses for the occasion. Timidly and hesitatingly she then ventured to entreat her aunt still to adhere to her first plan, and allow her to remain quietly at home, under the care of Ellis, till the following year. Mrs. Hamilton and her cousins looked at her with astonishment; but the former smilingly replied she could not indulge her niece in what appeared an unfounded fancy. The dress she should order, for she hoped Ellen would change her mind before the day arrived, as, unless a very good reason were given, she could not grant her request. Ellen appeared distressed; but the conversation changed, and the subject was not resumed till the day actually arrived, in the evening of which she was to accompany her aunt to a ball at the Marchioness of Malvern's, and two days after they were all engaged at a dinner-party at the Earl of Elmore's.

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Summoning all her courage, Ellen entered her aunt's boudoir in the morning, and again made her request with an earnestness that almost startled Mrs. Hamilton, particularly as it was accompanied by a depression of manner, which she now did not very often permit to obtain ascendancy. With affectionate persuasiveness she demanded the reason of this extraordinary resolution, and surprise gave way to some displeasure, when she found Ellen had really none to give. Her only entreaty was that she might not be desired to go out till the next year.

"But why, my dear Ellen? You must have some reason for this intended seclusion. Last year I fancied you wished much to accompany us, and I ever regretted your delicate health prevented it. What has made you change your mind so completely? Have you any distaste for the society in which I mingle?"

Falteringly, and almost inaudibly, Ellen answered, "None."

"Is it a religious motive? Do your principles revolt from the amusements which are now before you? Tell me candidly, Ellen. You know nothing displeases me so much as mystery? I can forgive everything else, for then I know our relative positions, and am satisfied you are not going far wrong; but when every reason is studiously concealed, I cannot guess the truth, and I must fancy it is, at least, a mistaken notion blinding your better judgment. I did not expect a second mystery from you, Ellen."

Mrs. Hamilton's expressive voice clearly denoted she was displeased, and her niece, after two or three ineffectual efforts to prevent it, finally burst into tears.

"I do not wish to be harsh with you, or accuse you unjustly," continued her aunt, softened at the unaffected grief she beheld, "but if your reason be a good one, why do you so carefully conceal it? You have been lately so very open with me, and appeared to regard me so truly as your friend, that your present conduct is to me not only a riddle, but a painful reflection. Is it because your conscience forbids? Perhaps in your solitary moments you have fancied that worldly amusements, even in the moderate way in which we regard them, unfits us for more serious considerations, and you fear perhaps to confess that such is your reason, because it will seem a reproach to me. If such really be your motive, do not fear to confess it, my dear girl; I should be the very last to urge you to do anything that is against your idea of what is right. To prove the fallacy of such reasoning, to show you that you may be truly religious without eccentricity, I certainly should endeavour to do, but I would not force you to go out with me till my arguments had convinced you. I fancy, by your blushing cheek, that I have really guessed the cause of your extraordinary resolution, and sorry as I shall be if I have, yet any reason, however mistaken, is better than a continued mystery."

"Indeed, indeed, I am not so good as you believe me," replied Ellen, with much emotion. "It is not the religious motive you imagine that urges me to act contrary to your

wishes. Did you know my reason, I am sure you would not blame me; but do not, pray do not command me to tell you. I must obey, if you do, and then”—

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“And then, if I approve of your reason, as you say I shall, what is it that you fear? Why, if your conscience does not reproach you, do you still hide it from me?”

Ellen was painfully silent. Mrs. Hamilton continued, in a tone of marked displeasure, “I fear I am to find myself again deceived in you, Ellen, though in what manner as yet I know not. I will not do such extreme violence to your inclinations as to command you to yield to my wishes. If you desire so much to remain at home, do so; but I cannot engage to make any excuse for you. Neither failing health nor being too young, can I now bring forward; I must answer all inquiries for you with the truth, that your own wishes, which I could not by persuasion overcome, alone keep you at home. My conscience will still be clear from the reproaches so plentifully showered on me by the world last season, that I feared to bring forward my orphan niece with my daughters, lest her charms should rival theirs.”

“Did the ill-natured and ignorant dare to say such a thing of you?” demanded Ellen, startled at this remark.

“They knew not the cause of your never appearing in public, and therefore, as appearances were against me, scrupled not to condemn.”

“And do you heed them? Do these remarks affect you?” exclaimed Ellen, earnestly.

“No, Ellen. I have done my duty; I will still do it, undisturbed by such idle calumnies, even should they now be believed by those whose opinions I value, who, from your seclusion, may imagine they have good reason. In my conduct towards you the last two years I have nothing to reproach myself.”

“The last two years. Oh, never, never, from the first moment I was under your care, never can your conduct to me have given you cause for self-reproach, dearest aunt. Oh, do not say that the gratification of my wishes will give rise to a suspicion so unjust, so unfounded,” entreated Ellen, seizing with impetuosity the hand of her aunt.

“In all probability it will; but do not speak in this strain now, Ellen, it accords not well with the mystery of your words,” and Mrs. Hamilton coldly withdrew her hand. There was a moment’s silence, for Ellen had turned away, pained to her heart’s core, and soon after she quitted the room to seek her own, where, throwing herself on a low seat by the side of her couch, she gave way to an unrestrained and violent flow of tears. Mrs. Hamilton little knew the internal struggle her niece was enduring, the cause of her seclusion; that the term of her self-condemned probation was not fulfilled, that the long, tedious task was not accomplished; that it was for this purpose she so earnestly desired that her time might not be occupied by amusement, till her task was done, the errors of her earlier years atoned. Mrs. Hamilton had seldom felt more thoroughly displeased and hurt with her niece than at the present moment. Gentle, and invulnerable as she ever seemed to irritation, open as the day

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herself, she had ever endeavoured to frame her children's characters in the like manner; ingenuousness always obtained forgiveness, whatever might have been the mistake or fault. Ellen had always been a subject of anxiety and watchfulness; but the last two years her reserve had so entirely given place to candour, that solicitude had much decreased, till recalled by the resolution we have recorded. Had Ellen alleged any reason whatever, all would have been well; Mrs. Hamilton would not have thought on the subject so seriously. A mystery in her conduct had once before been so productive of anguish, that Mrs. Hamilton could not think with her usual calmness and temper on the circumstance.

It was so long before Ellen regained her composure that traces of tears were visible even when she joined the family at dinner, and were remarked by her uncle, who jestingly demanded what could occasion signs of grief at such an important era in her life. Vainly Ellen hoped her aunt would spare her the pain of answering by even expressing her displeasure at her resolution, but she waited in vain, and she was compelled to own that the era of her life, to which her uncle so playfully referred, was postponed by her own earnest desire till the next season.

Mr. Hamilton put down his knife and fork in unfeigned astonishment. "Why, what is the meaning of this sudden change?" he exclaimed. "You were not wont to be capricious, Ellen. Will your aunt explain this marvellous mystery?"

"I am sorry I cannot," Mrs. Hamilton replied, in a tone that plainly betrayed to the quick ears of her husband that she was more than usually disturbed. "I am not in Ellen's confidence; her resolution is as extraordinary to me as to you, for she has given me no reason." Mr. Hamilton said no more, but he looked vexed, and Ellen did not feel more comfortable. He detained her as she was about to leave the room, and briefly demanded in what manner she intended to employ the many hours, which now that Miss Harcourt was away she would have to herself. A crimson flush mounted to Ellen's temples as she spoke, a flush that, combined with the hesitating tone in which she answered, "to read and work," might well justify the sternness of tone and manner with which her uncle replied.

"Ellen, had you never deceived us, I might trust you, spite of that flushed cheek and hesitating tone; as it is, your conduct the last two years urges me to do so, notwithstanding appearances, and all I say is, beware how you deceive me a second time."

Ellen's cheek lost its colour, and became for the space of a minute pale as death, so much so, that Mrs. Hamilton regretted her husband should have spoken so severely. Rallying her energies, Ellen replied, in a steady but very low voice—

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"My conduct, uncle, during my aunt's and your absence from home, has been and shall ever be open to the inspection of all your household. I am too well aware that I am undeserving of your confidence, but I appeal to Ellis, on whose fidelity I know you rely, to prove to you in this case you suspect me unjustly." The last word was audible, but that was all, and, deeply pained, Ellen retired to her own room, which she did not quit, even to see her favourite cousin decked for the ball. Emmeline sought her, however, and tried by kisses to recall the truant rose, the banished smile, but Mrs. Hamilton did not come to wish her good night, and Ellen's heart was heavy.

Some few days passed, and Mrs. Hamilton accepted three several invitations without again expressing her wishes, but though the subject was not resumed, equal perplexity existed in the minds of both aunt and niece. Ellen did not accuse Mrs. Hamilton of unkindness, but she could not fail to perceive that she no longer retained her confidence, and that knowledge painfully distressed the orphan's easily excited feelings. Another circumstance gave additional pain; her strange and apparently capricious behaviour had been casually mentioned to Herbert, and he, aware that his advice was always acceptable to Ellen, ventured to remonstrate with her, and playfully to reason her out of what he termed her extraordinary fancy for seclusion. Some indefinable sensation ever prevented Ellen from speaking or writing to Herbert as she would have done to any other member of the family, but she answered him, acknowledging she deserved his hinted reproach, but owning that she could not change her conduct, even in compliance with his request; nevertheless, it grieved her much to know that he, whose approbation she unconsciously but ardently wished to gain, should believe her the capricious, unaccountable being it was evident he did: still she persevered. These, and whatever more she might have to endure, were but petty trials, to which her secretly chastened mind might bend but should not weakly bow. She knew, if her aunt were conscious of her attention, much as perhaps she might approve of the motive, she would deem it a needless sacrifice, and probably prohibit its continuance; or, if she permitted and encouraged it, the merit of her action would no longer exist, nor could she indeed, while in the enjoyment of praise, have finished a task, commenced and carried on purely for the sake of duty, and as an atonement for the past, by the sacrifice of inclination, make peace with the gracious God she had offended. Petty trials were welcome then, for if she met them with a Christian temper, a Christian spirit, she might hope that, whatever she might endure, she was progressing in His paths, "whose ways are pleasantness, and whose paths are peace;" could she but remove the lingering displeasure and distrust of her aunt and uncle, she would be quite happy.

It so happened that Emmeline's next engagement was to the Opera, which was always Ellen's greatest conquest of inclination. She had amused herself by superintending her cousin's dressing, and a sigh so audibly escaped, that Emmeline instantly exclaimed—

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"Ellen, you know you would like to go with us. In the name of all that is incomprehensible, why do you stay at home?"

"Because, much as I own I should like to go with you, I like better to stay at home."

"You really are the spirit of contradiction, Ellen. What did you sigh for?"

"Not for the Opera, Emmeline."

"Then why?"

"Because I cannot bear to feel my aunt has lost all her confidence in me."

"You are marvellously silly, Ellen; mamma is just the same to you as usual, I have observed no difference."

"Dear Emmeline, coldness is not *seen*, it is *felt*, and as you have been so happy as never to have felt it, you cannot understand what I mean."

"Nor do I ever wish to feel it. But do not look so sorrowful, dear Ellen; mamma's coldness is an awful thing to encounter, I own."

"If you have never felt it, how can you judge?" said a playful voice beside them, for Emmeline had been too deeply engrossed in arranging and disarranging a wreath of roses in her hair, and Ellen too much engaged in her own thoughts, to notice the entrance of Mrs. Hamilton.

"Is it possible you are not yet ready, Emmeline? what have you been about?"

"Teasing Ellen, mamma; besides Fanny was engaged, and I could not please myself."

"Or rather you were disinclined for exertion. I have been watching you the last few moments, and you have played with that pretty wreath till it is nearly spoiled."

"I plead guilty, dear mamma, but let Fanny come, and I will be ready in a second," answered Emmeline, looking archly and caressingly in her mother's face. Mrs. Hamilton smiled, and turned as if to speak to her niece, but Ellen was gone. She was sitting in her own room a few minutes afterwards, endeavouring to collect her thoughts sufficiently to understand the book of the new opera which her cousin had lent her, when she was interrupted by a hand gently placed upon the leaves.

"So coldness is felt, not seen, is it, my dear Ellen? well, then, let that kiss banish it for ever," exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton, encircling the delicate form of her niece with her arm. "I have been more distant and unkind perhaps than was necessary, but your mysterious



resolution irritated me beyond forbearance, and I have been very unjust and very cruel, have I not? will you forgive me?"

Ellen looked up in her face, and, unable to control her feelings, threw her arms around her and burst into tears.

"Nay, dearest, do not let me leave you in tears. I am satisfied you have some good reason for your conduct, though my usual penetration is entirely at fault. Will you quite content me by looking steadily in my face, and assuring me that your conscience never reproaches your conduct. I shall not have one lingering doubt then."

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Ellen smiled through her tears, as she tried to obey, but her lip so quivered as she answered, that Mrs. Hamilton laughingly added, "That would never do in a court of justice, my silly little girl, no one would pronounce you innocent if thus tearfully affirmed; but as you generally compel me to regret severity, when I do venture to use it, I must be content to let you follow your own inclinations this year at least. Next season, I give you no such licences, *nolens volens*, as Percy would say, I must take you out with me, you shall not hide yourself in solitude; but I do not fancy your resolution will hold good, even the remainder of this season," she added, smilingly.

"Do not, pray do not try to turn me from it, my dear, kind aunt," said Ellen, earnestly; "I do not deserve this indulgence from you, for I know how much you dislike concealment, but indeed, indeed, you shall never regret your kindness. I do not, I will not abuse it, it is only because, because—" She hesitated.

"Do not excite my curiosity too painfully, Ellen, in return for my indulgence," said Mrs. Hamilton, sportively.

"No, dear aunt, I only wish to finish a task I have set myself, and my various avocations during the day prevent my having any time, unless I take it from such amusements," said Ellen, blushing as she spoke; "indeed, that is my real and only reason."

Mrs. Hamilton fixed an anxious glance upon her, but though she really felt satisfied at this avowal, the actual truth never entered her mind.

"You have quite satisfied me, my dear girl! I will not ask more, and you may stay at home as often as you please. Your uncle and I have both been very unjust and very severe upon our little Ellen, but you have quite disarmed us; so you shall neither feel nor fancy my coldness any more. There is Emmeline calling as loudly for me as if I were after my time. Good night, love. God bless you! do not sit up too late, and be as happy as you can."

"I am quite happy now," exclaimed Ellen, returning, with delighted eagerness, Mrs. Hamilton's fond embrace, and she was happy. For a moment she felt lonely, as the door closed on her aunt's retreating form, but as she roused herself to seek her work, that feeling fled. When the nature of her work was sufficiently simple to require but little thought, Ellen was accustomed to improve herself by committing to memory many parts of the Bible suited for prayer, confession, or praise, so that her thoughts might riot wander during those solitary hours in the paths of folly or of sin, but once centred on serious things, her mind might thence become strengthened and her judgment ripened.

These lonely hours did much towards the formation of the orphan's character. Accustomed thus to commune with her Creator, to gather strength in the solitude of her chamber, she was enabled, when her trial came, to meet it with a spirit most acceptable to Him who had ordained it.

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CHAPTER XI.

Lord Malvern's family and Mr. Hamilton's were still in town, though the younger members of each were longing for the fresh air of the country.

One afternoon, hot and dusty from rapid riding, the young Earl St. Eval hastily, and somewhat discomposedly, entered his sister Lady Gertrude's private room.

"Thank heaven, you are alone!" was his exclamation, as he entered; but throwing himself moodily on a couch, he did not seem inclined to say more.

"What is the matter, dear Eugene? Something has disturbed you," said Lady Gertrude, soothingly, and in a tone tending rather to allay his irritation than express her own desire to know what had happened.

"Something—yes, Gertrude, enough to bid me forswear England again, and bury myself in a desert, where a sigh from your sex could never reach me more."

"Not even mine, Eugene?" exclaimed his sister, laying down her work, and seating herself on a stool at his feet, while she looked up in his excited features with an expression of fondness on her placid countenance. "Would you indeed forbid my company, if I implored to share your solitude?"

"My sister, my own kind sister, would I, could I deprive myself of the blessing, the comfort your presence ever brings?" replied St. Eval, earnestly. "No, dearest Gertrude, I could not refuse you, whatever you might ask."

"Then tell me now what it is that has disturbed you thus. With what new fancy are you tormenting yourself?"

"Nay, this is no fancy, Gertrude. You are, you have been wrong from the first, and I am too painfully right Caroline does not and never will love me."

Lady Gertrude started.

"Have you been again rejected?" she demanded, a dark flush of indignant pride suffusing her cheek.

Lord St. Eval mournfully smiled.

"You are as summary in your conclusions as you say I am sometimes. No, Gertrude, I have not; I feel as if I could not undergo the torture I once experienced in saying those words which I hoped would seal my happiness."

“Nay, then, I must say them for you,” said Lady Gertrude, smiling. “I have watched Caroline narrowly, and I feel so confident she loves you, that I would, without the slightest doubt or fear, consign your happiness, precious as it is to me, to her disposal.”

“Forbear, Gertrude, for pity!” exclaimed Lord St. Eval, starting up and pacing the room. “You saw not what I saw last night, nor heard the cold, malicious words warning me against her; that even when she had accepted, she was false; or, if she were not false, that she still loved another. I saw it in her varying cheek, her confused manner; I heard it in her hurried accents, and this morning has confirmed all—all. Gertrude, I ever told you, my lot was not happiness; that as the fate of some men is all bright, so that of others is all gloom, and such is mine.”

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"Eugene, how often must I entreat you not to speak thus. Man's happiness or misery, in a great measure, depends upon himself. You have often said that when with me, you reason more calmly than when you think alone; only tell me coherently what has chanced, and all may not be so gloomy as you believe."

St. Eval suffered himself to be persuaded, and seating himself beside his sister, he complied with her request.

The fact was simply this. He had returned to England, at the entreaty of his sister, determined to discover if indeed there existed any hope of his at length obtaining Caroline's affections. Lady Gertrude's letter to him purposely portrayed the many amiable qualities existing in Caroline's character, and the general tenour of her words had led him to resolve that if he could indeed make so favourable an impression on her heart as to teach her to forget the past, he too would banish pride, and secure his happiness, and he hoped hers, by a second offer of his hand. Her conduct, guarded as it was, had unconsciously strengthened his hopes, and the last few weeks he had relaxed so much in his reserve, as to excite in the mind of Caroline the hope, almost the certainty, that he no longer despised her, and created for himself many truly delightful hours. It so happened that, on the evening to which he referred, Caroline had gone to a large party, under the protection of the Countess of Elmore, who at the entreaty of the lady of the house, had obtained the permission of Mrs. Hamilton to introduce her. The young Earl had devoted himself to her the greater part of the evening, to the satisfaction of both, when his pleasure was suddenly and painfully alloyed by her visible confusion at the unexpected entrance, and still more unexpected salutation, of Lord Alphingham. Caroline had so seldom met the Viscount during the season, that she was not yet enabled to conquer her agitation whenever she beheld him. She ever dreaded his addressing her; ever felt that somewhat lurked in his insinuating voice, that would in the end lead to evil; besides which, her abhorrence towards him whenever Percy's tale flashed across her mind, which it never failed to do when he appeared, always prevented her retaining her calmness undisturbed. Lord St. Eval had left England with the impression that Alphingham was his favoured rival, and his imagination instantly attributed Caroline's emotion at his entrance into a preference for the Viscount. His earnest manner suddenly became chilled, his eloquence checked. Intuitively Caroline penetrated his suspicions; the wish to prove they were mistaken and unjust increased her confusion, and instead of lessening, confirmed them. St. Eval said little more to her during the evening; but he watched her. He saw Lord Alphingham whisperingly address her. She appeared to become more painfully confused, and St. Eval could scarcely restrain himself from hurrying from her sight for ever; but he did restrain himself, only to be more tortured.

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The Viscount now believed the hour of his vengeance was at hand, when, without the slightest exertion, he might disturb not only St. Eval's peace, but that of Caroline.

If St. Eval had but heard the few words he said to her, jealousy would have been instantly banished, but for that he was not sufficiently near; he could only mark the earnest and insinuating manner which the Viscount knew so well how to assume, and notice her confusion, and the shade of melancholy expressed on her features, which was in fact occasioned by Lord St. Eval's sudden desertion, and her annoyance at the cause. His quick imagination attributed all to the effect of Lord Alphingham's tender words. The Viscount was well known, to him, and near the end of the evening approached and remained in conversation by his side, spite of the haughty reserve maintained by the young Earl, which said so plainly, "your presence is unwelcome," that it would speedily have dismissed any one less determined; but Lord Alphingham spoke admiringly and enthusiastically of Caroline. Lord St. Eval listened, as if fascinated by the very torture he endured. They were quite alone, and after a few such observations, the Viscount lowered his voice to a confidential tone, and said, triumphantly—

"Will you envy me, St. Eval, if I confess that I, more than any other man, am privileged to speak in Miss Hamilton's praise, having once had the honour of being her accepted lover, and had not cruel parents interfered, might now have claimed that lovely creature as my own? but still I do not despair, for the affections of a being so superior once given to me, as they have been, I am convinced they will never be another's. I am treating you as a friend, St. Eval, you will not betray me?"

"You may trust me, sir," replied the young Earl, coldly. "Your confidence has been given unasked, but you need not fear its betrayal."

"Thank you, my kind friend;" and the wily villain continued his deceiving tale, with an eloquence we will not trouble ourselves to repeat. It is enough to know its effect on St. Eval was to turn him from the room, his sensitive feelings wrought almost to madness by malignant bitterness. Lord Alphingham looked after him, and then turned his glance on Caroline, and an acute physiognomist might easily have read his inward thoughts—"My vengeance is complete."

Alphingham had more than once mentioned the name of the Duchess of Rothbury; but in such a manner, that though it sounded well enough in his tale, yet when afterwards recalled by the young Earl, he could not understand in what position she stood towards them. Lord Alphingham knew well her Grace's character; he wished St. Eval to seek her, for he felt assured what she would say would confirm his tale, and render the barrier between him and Caroline more impassable. His plan succeeded admirably: St. Eval galloped off to Airlie early the next morning. The Duchess welcomed him with the greatest cordiality, for he was

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a favourite; but the moment he spoke of Caroline her manner changed. She became as reserved as she had previously been warm; and when the young Earl frankly asked her if the refusal of her parents had been the only bar to her union with the Viscount, she referred him to Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton. That she was aware of something to Caroline's disadvantage appeared very evident, and that she was not the favourite she had been last year equally so. St. Eval left her more disturbed than ever, and it was on returning from his long yet hurried ride he had sought his sister in the mood we have described.

Lady Gertrude listened with earnest attention. The tale startled her, but she disliked the very sight of Lord Alphingham; she believed him to be a bad, designing man. She felt convinced Caroline did love her brother, much as appearances were against her; and both these feelings urged her to sift the whole matter carefully, and not permit the happiness of two individuals to be sacrificed to what might be but the idle invention or exaggerations of a bad man. Her ready mind instantly formed its plan, which calmly but earnestly she imparted to her brother, and implored his consent to act upon it. Startled and disturbed, St. Eval at first peremptorily refused; but his sisters's eloquence at length succeeded.

Early in the morning of the succeeding day Caroline Hamilton received the following brief note:

"Will you, my dear Caroline, receive me half an hour this afternoon? I have something important to say; I have vanity enough to believe as it concerns me it will interest you. We shall be more alone at your house than mine, or I might ask you to come to me.

"Yours affectionately,

"GERTRUDE LYLE."

Completely at a loss to understand the meaning of this little note, Caroline merely wrote a line to say she should be quite at Lady Gertrude's service at the appointed time; and so deeply was she engrossed in the sad tenour of her own thoughts, that all curiosity as to this important communication was dismissed.

Three o'clock came and so did Lady Gertrude, whose first exclamation was to notice Caroline's unusual paleness.

"Do not heed my looks, dear Gertrude, I am perfectly well; and now that you are before me, overwhelmed with curiosity as to your intelligence," said Caroline, whose heavy eyes belied her assurance that she was quite well.



“Dearest Caroline,” said Lady Gertrude, in a tone of feeling, “I am so interested in your welfare, that I cannot bear to see the change so evident in you; something has disturbed you. Show me you consider me your friend, and tell me what it is.”

“Not to you, oh, not to you; I cannot, I dare not!” burst involuntarily from the lips of the poor girl, in a tone of such deep distress, that Lady Gertrude felt pained. “Gertrude, do not ask me; I own I am unhappy, very, very unhappy, but I deserve to be so. Oh, I would give worlds that I might speak it, and to you; but I cannot—will not! But do not refuse me the confidence you offered,” she added, again endeavouring to smile, “I can sympathise in your happiness, though I refuse yours in my sadness.”

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"I am not quite sure whether I have sorrow or joy to impart," said Lady Gertrude, still feelingly; for she guessed why Caroline believed she dare not confide in her, and she hailed it as proof that she was right in her surmise, that her brother's honourable love would not be again rejected.

"Eugene seems bent on again quitting England, and I fear if he do, he will not return home again. On one little circumstance depends his final determination; my persuasions to the contrary have entirely failed."

The cheek of her companion blanched even paler than before, two or three large tears gathered in her eyes, then slowly fell, one by one, upon her tightly-clasped hands.

"And if you have failed, who will succeed?" she asked, with a strong effort.

"The chosen one, whose power over the heart of St. Eval is even greater than mine," said Lady Gertrude, steadily. "Ah, Caroline, when a man has learned to love, the affection of a sister is of little weight."

"He does love, then," thought Caroline, and her heart swelled even to bursting, and he goes to seek her. "And will not the being Lord St. Eval has honoured with his love second your efforts? if she be in England, can she wish him to quit it?" she said aloud, in answer to her friend.

"If she love him, she will not," said Lady Gertrude; "but St. Eval fears to ask the question that decides his fate. Strange and wayward as he is, he would rather create certain misery for himself, than undergo the torture of being *again refused*."

For a few minutes Caroline answered not; then, with a sudden effort, rallying her energies, she exclaimed, as if in jest—

"Why, then, does he not make you his messenger; the affection you bear for him would endow you with an eloquence, I doubt much whether his own would surpass."

She would have spoken more in the same strain, but the effort failed; and turning away from Lady Gertrude's penetrating glance, which she felt was fixed upon her, though she could not meet it, she burst into tears.

More than ever convinced of the truth of her suspicions, Lady Gertrude's noble mind found it impossible to continue this mode of discovery any longer. She saw that Caroline imagined not she was the being alluded to; that not even the phrase "again refused" had startled her into consciousness, and she felt it was unkind to distress her more.

"I knew it was false," she exclaimed, as the Viscount's tale flashed across her mind; then, checking herself, she took Caroline's cold and half-reluctant hand, and added, in a



voice of extreme feeling, "Caroline, dearest Caroline, forgive my having penetrated your secret; fear me not, dear girl, I honour too much the feeling which dictates your conduct. You have learned to love St. Eval; you have repented the wilful and capricious treatment he once received from you. Deny it not, nay, do not shrink from me, and think, because I appear so calm, I cannot feel for those who are dear to me, and even sympathise in their love. I do not, I will not condemn the past; I did once, I own, but since I have known you, I have forgiven the mistaken wilfulness of a misguided girl. You love him—confess that I am right, dearest."



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Caroline's face was concealed within her hand, and almost agonized was its expression as she looked up.

"Gertrude," she said, in a low, suffocated voice, "is it well, is it kind in you thus to speak, to lead me to avow a love for one who, your own words inform me, will soon be the husband of another?"

"I said not of another, my dear girl; forgive me this stratagem to penetrate your well-preserved secret. My brother's happiness is so dear to me, I could not trust it to one of whose affection I was not certain. I am not aware I said he would soon be the husband of another; since, if he be again refused, that he never will be. Simply, then, for I have been quite tormenting enough, Eugene has striven long with himself to conquer his love, to be happy as your friend; associating with you as he does with Emmeline, but he cannot. He still loves you, Caroline, as devotedly, as faithfully—perhaps more so than when he first offered you his hand; he dares not renew that offer himself, for he feels a second refusal from your lips would wound him too deeply. Your voice may chain him to England, an altered and a happier man, or send him from its shores a misanthrope and wretched: it is for you to decide, Caroline, dearest. Must I plead with that eloquence, which you said would surpass even his own, or will the pleadings of your own kind heart suffice?"

She paused, in evident emotion, for with a faint cry Caroline had thrown herself on her neck, and buried her cheek upon her shoulder. Every limb trembled with agitation; the ecstatic delight of that one moment—doubt was, indeed, at an end. He loved her, and in spite of her faults he would cherish her with tenderness; he had chosen her as his wife—chosen her, though she had rejected, injured him, in preference to the very many she felt so much more worthy than herself; but unalloyed happiness was hers only for a few fleeting minutes, he knew not the extent of her imprudence—how strangely and deeply she had been fascinated by the arts of Lord Alphingham. Could he love, respect her as the partner of his life, did he know that? and for a moment painfully did she long to conceal it from him, to prevent his ever knowing it; but no, her innate nobility and ingenuousness of character would not be thus trampled on. She wept, and Lady Gertrude was startled, for those bitter tears were not the signs of joy.

"Do not condemn my weakness, dearest Gertrude," she said at length, struggling for composure. "You do not know why I weep; you cannot guess the cause of tears at such a moment. Yes, you are right; I do love your brother with an affection equal to his own, but I thought it would never pass my lips; for wilfully, blindly I had rejected the affection of his good and noble heart; I had intentionally caused him pain, banished him from his country and his friends, and my punishment was just. I thought he would forget one so utterly unworthy, and the thought was

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agony. But, oh, Gertrude, I shall never regain his love: when he knows all, he will cease to trust me; his esteem I have lost for ever! Gertrude, bear with me; you cannot know the wretchedness it is to feel he knows not all my folly. The girl who could wilfully cast aside duty and obedience to a parent, listen to forbidden vows, weakly place her honour in the power of one against whom she had been warned—oh, Gertrude, Gertrude, when St. Eval learns this tale, he will spurn me from his heart! and yet I will not deceive him, he shall know all, and be free to act as he will—his proposals shall be no tie.”

The flush of firm yet painful resolution dyed her cheek as she spoke, and checked her tears. Alarmed as she was by the incoherence yet connection of her words when attached to Lord Alphingham’s hints, which still lingered on her mind, yet the high-minded Lady Gertrude felt as if Caroline’s honourable determination had struck a new chord of sympathy within her heart. Integrity itself was hers, and truth in others was ever to her their most attractive quality.

“St. Eval’s doubts and fears have been already painfully aroused,” she said, gently; “an open explanation from you is more likely to make him happy than produce the effect you so much, though so naturally, dread: fear not to impart it. In the relation you now stand to each other, the avowal of past errors will increase rather than lessen affection, by the integrity it will display; but leave it till years have passed, and if, instead of being known now, it is then discovered, then, indeed, might you fear, with some show of justice, the loss of his esteem. Such will not be now; but tell him yourself, dear Caroline, the truth or falsehood of the scandalous tale he heard a night or two ago.”

“What did he hear? if you know, for pity’s sake, do not conceal it from me, dearest Gertrude!” entreated Caroline, almost gasping for breath; and Lady Gertrude, without hesitation or abbreviation, related the whole tale her brother had imparted to her, dwelling on the suffering he endured, as he fancied Caroline’s conduct confirmed the words he heard.

“Then is it, indeed, time for me to speak, though my tale be one of shame,” she exclaimed, as Lady Gertrude paused, and indignation restored her usual energy. “Never were attentions so revolting to me as were those of Lord Alphingham that night. He knew he had no right to address me, and therefore did he ever refrain when mamma was present. Gertrude, solemnly, sacredly, I protest he has no hold on my affections—he dare not say he has—nor ever again venture to demand my hand; it has been irrevocably refused. Not only would my own will prevent my ever becoming his, but I have—” she paused a moment, for Percy’s fatal secret was on the point of escaping from her lips, but checking herself, she added, “I am not at liberty to say why, but an inseparable barrier is placed between us. Listen to me, Gertrude,

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you will condemn me, be it so; but I implore, I beseech you to believe me true.” Then, without further hesitation, Caroline briefly yet circumstantially related all those events in her life with which our readers are so well acquainted. She did not suppress one point, or endeavour in the least to excuse herself, and Lady Gertrude, as she listened to that unvarnished tale of youthful error, felt her heart glow more warmly towards her companion, and her eye glisten in sympathy for the pain she felt Caroline was inflicting on herself. Lady Gertrude could feel for others; twice had her carriage been announced, but she heeded not the summons; a third came just as Caroline had ceased to speak, and silently she rose to depart. She met the imploring look of her young friend, and folding her to her heart, she said, in a low and gentle voice—

“Ask not me, my dearest girl; St. Eval shall come and speak for himself.” She kissed her affectionately, and was gone.

Caroline seated herself on a low couch, and closing her eyes on every outward object, she gave herself up to thought. Might she indeed be happy—were the errors of her former years so forgiven, that she would indeed be blessed with the husband of her choice? Had St. Eval so conquered pride as again to seek her love—would the blessing of her parents now sanctify her marriage? it could not be, it was too much bliss—happiness of which she was utterly unworthy. Time rolled by unheeded in these meditations; she was quite unconscious that nearly half an hour had elapsed since Lady Gertrude had left her; scarcely did it appear five minutes, and yet it must have been more, for it was the voice of St. Eval himself that roused her, that addressed her as his own bride. St. Eval himself, who clasped her impetuously to his beating heart, imprinted one long, lingering kiss upon her cheek and murmured blessings on her head. He had waited for the return of his sister to the carriage, in a state of impatience little to be envied, flung himself in after her, and in a very brief space had heard and heard again every particular of her interview with Caroline. His doubts were satisfied, not a lingering fear remained.

“Gertrude told me, you said not to her the magic word that will seal my happiness, though she wrung from you that precious secret of your love,” said the young Lord, after many very fond words had been exchanged between them, and nearly an hour had passed away in that unrestrained confidence; “nor have I heard it pass your lips. You have told me that you love me, Caroline; will you not promise that but a very short time shall pass, ere you will indeed be mine; that you will not sentence me to a long probation ere that happy day is fixed?”

“It is not in my power to answer you, St. Eval,” and though her tone was sportive, her words startled him. “I cannot even promise to be yours; my fate is not in my own hands.”

“Caroline!” exclaimed the alarmed young man, “what can you mean?”

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“Simply, that I have vowed solemnly and sacredly never to marry without the consent and blessing of my parents. I have given you all I can, to them I refer you for the rest.”

“Then I am satisfied,” replied St. Eval, the flush of joyous excitement staining his cheek, and rendering his expressive countenance more than usually handsome, by the animation it produced.

Mrs. Hamilton, with Emmeline and Ellen, had returned from their ride rather later than usual, for they had gone to see a friend some few miles out of town, and finding it near the hour of dinner, they had dispersed to their dressing-rooms instead of entering the drawing-room as usual. On inquiring for Caroline, if she had been out with Lady Gertrude, or was still at home, she heard, to her extreme astonishment, that Miss Hamilton had not gone out, but that Lord St. Eval had been with her above an hour, nor had she left him to obey the summons of the dressing-bell, as usual. A throb of pleasure shot through the heart of Mrs. Hamilton, she scarcely knew wherefore, for it was no uncommon thing for Lord St. Eval to spend an hour at her house, but it was that he should thus have sought the society of Caroline alone.

“Had either of her sons been with him?” she asked, and the answer was in the negative.

Martyn silently concluded her task, for she saw deep thought was on her lady’s brow, which she was too respectful to disturb; an earnest thought it was, it might have been that silent prayer had mingled with it. Still was that wish uppermost in Mrs. Hamilton’s mind, that she might one day see her Caroline the happy wife of Lord St. Eval; but when she entered the drawing-room, words were not needed to explain the scene before her. Mr. Hamilton had drawn his daughter to him, and was pressing the young Earl’s hand in his with a grasp that spoke volumes.

“St. Eval, you have been too long the son of my affections, for one instant to doubt my consent,” Mrs. Hamilton heard her husband say, as she entered; “it is yours, freely, gladly. Speak not of fortune, I would give my child to you, had you but yourself to offer. But I am but a secondary personage in this business,” he added, playfully; “there is the enchantress who holds the fate of my Caroline more firmly than I do. Away with you, St. Eval, plead your cause to her.”

“Caroline, my own, does your happiness depend on my consent, or have you done this merely for my sake?” murmured Mrs. Hamilton, as her child clung in silence to her neck, and Lord St. Eval seized her hand and pressed it to his lips, as if eloquent silence should tell his tale, too, better than words. Mrs. Hamilton spoke in a voice so low, as to be heard only by Caroline.

“Speak to me, love; tell me that St. Eval will be the husband of your free, unbiased choice, and my fondest blessing shall be yours.” Caroline’s answer was inaudible to all, save to the ear of maternal affection, to her mother it was enough.

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“Take her, St. Eval; my consent, my earnest wish to behold you united has long been yours; may God in heaven bless you, my children, and make you happy in each other!”

Solemnly she spoke; her earnestness was affecting, it struck to their hearts; for a moment there was silence, which Mrs. Hamilton was the first to break.

“Does my Caroline intend appearing at dinner in this costume?” she asked, playfully, alluding to her daughter’s morning dress. Startled and blushing, Caroline, for the first time, perceived her mother was dressed for dinner, and her father, determining to banish all appearance of gravity, held up his watch, which pointed to some few minutes after the usual dinner-hour. Glad to escape for a few minutes to the solitude of her own room, Caroline hastily withdrew her hand from St. Eval’s detaining grasp, and smiling a brief farewell, brushed by Emmeline and Ellen, who were that instant entering, without speaking indeed, but with very evident marks of confusion, which Mr. Hamilton very quickly explained to the extreme satisfaction of all parties.

Caroline was not long before she returned. Happiness had caused her eyes to sparkle with a radiance her parents had not seen for many a long day; and they felt as they gazed on her, now indeed was she worthy to be the honoured wife of St. Eval, and their thoughts were raised in silent unison to heaven for the blessing thus vouchsafed to them. And scarcely could Mr. Hamilton restrain the emotion which swelled his bosom, as he thought, had it not been for the untiring care, the bright example of that mother, his child, instead of being a happy bride, might now have been—he shuddered as he thought, and the inward words were checked, he could not give them vent, they were hidden in the silent recesses of his own breast; and did not that same thought dwell in the mind of his wife, when she contrasted the present with the past? It did, but she looked not on herself as the cause of her child’s escape from wretchedness and sin. Her efforts she knew would have been as naught, without the blessing of Him whose aid she had ever sought; and if indeed the thought of her had arrested Caroline on the brink of ruin, it was His work, and Him alone she praised. She looked on the glowing countenance of her daughter; she marked the modest gentleness of her demeanour, the retiring dignity with which she checked the effusions of her own fond affection, and received the attentions of her devoted lover, and she felt sure those few moments of solitude had been passed in thanksgiving and prayer to Him who had pardoned the errors of the past, and granted such unlooked-for joy. And she guessed aright, for the mind of Caroline had not been entirely engrossed by the bright and glowing visions which anticipation in such a moment of our lives is apt to place before us. Her thoughts during the last year had been secretly under the guidance of the most rigid self-control, and thus permitted her to raise them from the happiness

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of earth to blessedness yet more exalted. Oh! who can say that religion is the heavy chain that fetters us to gloom and everlasting sadness; that in chastening the pleasures of earth, it offers no substantial good in return? True piety, open the heart by its sweet, refreshing influence, causes us to enjoy every earthly blessing with a zest the heart in which the love of God is not an inmate will seek in vain to know. It is piety that strengthens, purifies affection. Piety, that looks on happiness vouch us here, as harbingers of a state where felicity will be eternal. Piety that, in lifting up the grateful soul to God, heightens our joys, and renders that pure and lasting which would otherwise be evanescent and fleeting. Piety, whose soft and mildly-burning torch continues to enlighten life, long, long after the lustre of worldly pleasures has passed away. It was this blessed feeling, kindled in earliest infancy by the fostering hand of parental love, which now characterised and composed every emotion of Caroline's swelling bosom, which bade her feel that this indeed was happiness. With blushing modesty she received the eagerly-offered congratulations of her affectionate family; the delighted embrace which Percy in the enthusiasm of his joy found himself compelled to give her.

"Now, indeed, may I hope the past will never again cross my mind to torment me," he whispered to his sister, and wrung St. Eval's hand with a violence that forced that young man laughingly to cry for mercy. There had been a shade of unusual gloom shrouding the open countenance and usually frank demeanour of Percy since his return from Oxford, for which his parents and sisters could not account, but as he seemed to shrink from all observation on the subject, they did not ask the cause; but this unexpected happiness seemed to make him for a few following days as usual the gayest, merriest member of his amiable family.

Often in these days of happiness did Caroline think on the qualities which Lady Gertrude had once said should adorn the wife of her brother. Faults he could pardon, if they were redeemed by affection, and ingenuousness unsullied by the slightest artifice. Affection she well knew she possessed; but she also knew that, to be as unreserved as would form the happiness of her husband, she must effectually banish that pride, which she knew still lurked within. Often would she converse on these things when alone with her mother, and implore her advice as to the best method of securing not only the love but the esteem of St. Eval. "Gertrude was quite right in the estimate of her brother's character," Mrs. Hamilton would at such times observe, her fond heart fully repaid for past anxiety and disappointment by this confidence in her child; "and so too are you, dearest, in your idea that not the faintest sign of pride must mark your intercourse with him. Perhaps he is more reserved than proud; indeed, in his case, I cannot call it pride, but it is that kind of reserve

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which would jar most painfully did it come in contact with anything resembling pride. Had you grown up such as you were in childhood, your union with St. Eval, much as you might think you loved each other, would not have been productive of lasting happiness to either. Let him see dependence is not merely a profession which your every action would contradict; from independence spring so many evils, that I feel sure you will avoid it. It is, I regret to say, a prevailing error in those circles wherein your rank will entitle you to mingle; an error that must ever endanger conjugal happiness. When a woman marries, the world, except as the arbiter of propriety, ought to be forgotten; all her endeavours to please, to soothe, to cheer, must still be exerted even more than before marriage, but exerted only for her husband; not one little pleasing art, not one accomplishment should be given up, but used as affection dictates, to enhance her value in the eyes of him whose felicity it should be her principal aim to increase. You will be placed in an exalted station in the opinion of the world, my beloved child, a station of temptation, flattery, danger, more so than has over yet been yours; but I do not tremble now as I did, too forebodingly, when the world was first opened to your view. You have learned to mistrust your own strength, to seek it where alone it can be found, to examine your every action by the Word of God, and with these feelings you are safe. My Caroline will not fail in duty to her husband or herself."

"Nor to you, my mother, my devoted mother!" exclaimed Caroline, as she fondly kissed her. "It is to you, next to my God, I owe this blessing; and oh, if it be my lot to be a mother, may I be to my children, as far, at least, as one so much inferior in piety and virtue can be, what you have been to me. Oh, might I but resemble you, as my full heart has so lately longed, St. Eval might be happy!"

At the earnest entreaty of St. Eval and Caroline, both families consented that the ceremonial of their marriage should take place in the same venerable church where the first childish prayers of Caroline had ascended from a house of God, and the service be performed by the revered and pious rector of Oakwood, the clergyman who, from her earliest childhood, she had been taught to respect and love, as the humble representative of Him whose truths he so ably taught. Caroline had consented to name the second week of September as the period of her espousals. The few chosen friends of both families who were to be invited to the ceremony were to assemble in the hospitable halls of Oakwood, and earnestly did every member of Mr. Hamilton's family hope that the long-absent sailor, Edward Fortescue, who was soon expected home, might arrive in time to be present at the marriage of his cousin. How the young heart of his orphan sister fluttered with delight at the thought of beholding him again we will not attempt to describe, but it was shared with almost equal warmth by Mrs. Hamilton, whose desire was so great that her gallant nephew, the brave preserver of her husband, might be present at the approaching joyful event, that she laughingly told Ellen she certainly would postpone the ceremony till Edward arrived, whatever opposition she might have to encounter.

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The engagement of the Eight Honourable Earl St. Eval, the heir to the marquise of Malvern, embracing such rich possessions, with a plain gentleman's daughter was a matter of mingled wonder, scorn, admiration, and applause to the fashionable world; but these opinions and emotions were little regarded, save as a matter of continual jest to Percy, who amused himself by collecting all the reports he could, and repeating them at home, warning them against a marriage which caused such an universal sensation. It might be supposed this sensation would have been felt in various ways in the family of Montrose Grahame; but it happened that Annie was so engrossed with her own plans, her mind so occupied by one interesting subject, that she and Lord Alphingham had but little time to think of anything but each other. Annoyed they were indeed, for all their designs were foiled; St. Eval and Caroline were happy, spite of their efforts to the contrary. Lady Helen was really so delighted at the prospects of Caroline, who had ever been a favourite with her, that she actually exerted herself so much as to call in person to offer her best wishes, and promise that she would spend the whole winter at Moorlands, to be present at the ceremony. Lilla was overjoyed, for Mrs. Hamilton promised she should be among the guests at Oakwood. Mr. Grahame, whose friendship with Mr. Hamilton would have and did render him most interested in the event, was at Paris when their engagement was first published, but his warmly-written letters to his friend proclaimed his intention of very soon returning to England, but till then entreating the young couple to accept his sincerest prayers and best wishes for their happiness, and warmly congratulated Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton on the prospects of their child; but there was a sadness pervading his letters which gave them pain to note, for they knew too well the cause.

The letters of Mary Greville, too, added pleasure to the betrothed. Informed by Herbert of both past and present events, St. Eval's long affection for Caroline, which he playfully hoped would solve the mystery of his not gratifying her wishes, and falling in love with Miss Manvers, Mary wrote with equal sportiveness, that she was quite satisfied with his choice, and pleased that his residence at Lago Guardia had enabled her to become so well acquainted with one about to be so nearly connected with her Herbert.

About a week or fortnight before Mr. Hamilton's intended return to Oakwood, Percy one morning received a letter which appeared to produce excessive agitation. But as he evidently did not wish it remarked, no notice was taken, except by Herbert, to whom alone he had shown the letter, and who seemed equally interested, though not so much agitated by its contents. To the anxious inquiries of his parents, if individual embarrassment or distress occasioned Percy's uneasiness, Herbert answered readily in the negative; that the letter informed them of the death of an unfortunate individual in whose fate both he and Percy had been most deeply interested. Trusting in the well-known integrity of their sons, Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton inquired no farther, and dismissed the subject; but Percy did not rouse himself from his gloomy abstraction till startled by intelligence, which regard for his father's friend Grahame could not permit him to hear with calmness.

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Two mornings after the receipt of that letter, as the family, which the addition of St. Eval, were sitting together after breakfast, ere they separated to the various avocations of the day, Lord Henry D'Este bustled in with a countenance expressive of something extraordinary.

"Have you heard the news?" was his first eager exclamation.

"If we had, it would be no news," replied Emmeline, archly; "but we have heard nothing. Papa has something else to do than to seek out news for me, ditto the Right Honourable Lord St. Eval. Percy has been suddenly converted into the spirit of gloom, and to Herbert it is in vain to look for gossip, so, for pity's sake, satisfy my curiosity."

"Perhaps you will say I have been exciting it unnecessarily," he answered. "An elopement is too common a thing now to cause much astonishment."

"It depends on the parties," observed Mr. Hamilton. "Who are they?"

"Those, or rather one of them, I fear, for her father's sake, in whom you will be too deeply interested,—Lord Alphingham and Miss Grahame."

"Annie!" burst from Caroline's lips, in an accent of distress that struck all, and fell somewhat, painfully on Lord St. Eval's ear, when starting from the seat she had occupied near him, she sprung forward, and wildly continued, "when—when? Lord Henry, for pity's sake, tell me! is there no time? Can they not be overtaken? When did they go?"

Bewildered at the wild earnestness of her manner, at the muttered execration of Percy, Lord Henry was for a moment silent; but, on the repeated entreaty of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, he said that the particulars were not yet all known, except that she had been staying with her friend, that same lady of rank in whose family Miss Malison had been installed; that from her house the elopement had taken place, when, he did not exactly know, the report had only that morning gained credit. Lady Helen was not in the least aware of what had passed, nor would she, in all probability, till Annie's own letter announced it, as she turned a careless ear to all that her friends had hinted. He greatly feared, however, that it was useless to think of overtaking them; they had been seen and recognised, on the road between York and Berwick, by a friend of his, three days previous. He had at first regarded his friend's letter as a mere jest, but finding he had written the same to many others, and that the report was gaining ground, he felt sufficient interest in Mr. Grahame to discover the truth, that he might be informed of it, and take measures accordingly, and as Grahame was from home, he thought the best thing he could do was to tell the whole story to Mr. Hamilton.

"And is there indeed no hope? Can they not be overtaken?" again demanded Caroline, almost choked with an agitation for which even her parents could not account.

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Lord Henry did not think there was the slightest possibility, and unable to control her emotion, for she could not forget the long years she had regarded Annie as her friend, the favourite companion of her childhood, Caroline sunk, pale as death, on the nearest seat. Her mother and St. Eval approached her in some alarm, the former to demand the cause of this agitation, and implore her to be calm; the latter to connect, with a swelling heart and trembling frame, this deep emotion with the words of Lord Alphingham, which he vainly endeavoured to forget; but Percy alone had power to restore her to any degree of composure, taking her trembling hand in his, he whispered a few words, and their effect was instantaneous.

"Thank God, she will be at least his wife!" escaped Caroline's quivering lips, and then burst into tears.

"Mother, do not ask more now. St. Eval, do not doubt my sister, her agitation arose for Miss Grahame alone, not for the villain, the cold-hearted villain, Alphingham!" exclaimed Percy, in a low but impressive voice, as he alternately addressed his mother and the Earl, and then, as if fearing their further questions, he hastily turned away to join his father in demanding every possible information from Lord Henry; and perceiving that Caroline was becoming calm, and also that St. Eval looked somewhat disturbed, Mrs. Hamilton followed her son to the other end of the room. Still St. Eval spoke not, and Caroline, as she read the reproach, the doubt expressed upon his features, for a moment felt her natural pride swelling high within her, that he could for one minute permit a doubt of her truth to enter his mind; but her resolution, her mother's advice, the observation of Lady Gertrude, all rose to combat with returning pride, and they conquered.

"Eugene, dearest Eugene," she said, as she extended her hand towards him, "you have, indeed, every reason to look disturbed. In my deep anxiety for her whom I so long loved as my friend, I forgot that my agitation might indeed confirm the unworthy tale you heard. Forgive me, Eugene; I know that I have pained you, but, indeed, I meant it not. If Lord Alphingham did cross my mind, it was in detestation, in abhorrence, that he should thus have acted. I trembled for Annie, for her alone, for the fearful fate that, when Lord Henry first spoke, I believed must be her lot. Were I at liberty to disclose all, you would not wonder such should have been my feelings, Eugene," she added, in an accent of gentle reproach. "Must I indeed solemnly and sacredly assure you, that my agitation was occasioned by no lingering affection for Lord Alphingham? will nothing else satisfy you? Is it kind, is it generous thus to doubt me?"

Softened at once, ashamed of his own jealous tendency, the young Earl could only implore her forgiveness, assure her he had not the faintest doubt remaining; and suggesting, air would revive her sooner than anything, he drew her to the open window of the adjoining room, which looked out on the little garden, and there they remained in apparently earnest conversation, till Caroline, to her extreme astonishment, was summoned by her cousin to luncheon, and Lord St. Eval suddenly discovered he had

permitted the whole morning to slip away in idleness, when he imagined he had so very much to do.

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Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton were more grieved than surprised at the intelligence they had heard; but in what manner to act, what measures to take they knew not. Grahame was expected to arrive in England on the morrow or the next day at the farthest, and his agony they dreaded to witness; they feared lest reports should reach him ere he was in any way prepared, and Mr. Hamilton determined on travelling instantly to Dover, that he might be there ready to receive him, and console to the best of his ability this mistaken but truly affectionate father. Percy, rousing himself, entered with activity into all his father's plans; but Mrs. Hamilton fancied that he too had some plan to follow up, which his absence two or three days from home confirmed. Nor was it idle sympathy she felt; that same day she sought the residence of Lady Helen.

Scarcely ever did she enter that house without being struck by the melancholy pervading it. Wrapped in her own pleasures, her own desires and amusements, Annie never cast one thought on her mother, whose declining health it would have been her duty to tend and soothe; indeed she scarcely ever entered her room, and believing her parent's ailments were all fancy, made it a rule to take no notice of them. Cecil liked not gloom and quiet, and his fashionable cousins occupied almost all his time. He could not comprehend, much less return the deep affection his mother felt for him; and Lilla, whose naturally warm heart and right principles would have made her an affectionate attendant on her mother's couch, was seldom at home to perform her part. But already had Lady Helen felt the difference a year's residence with Mrs. Douglas had made in her younger girl; already her indolent nature felt the comfort of her presence, and bitterly regretted when her short vacations were at an end, for then she was indeed alone.

On being admitted, Mrs. Hamilton fancied somewhat eagerly, the first person she encountered at Lady Helen's was her young friend, clad, it seemed, for walking, with traces of anxiety and sorrow written on her countenance.

"The very person I was about to seek," she exclaimed, in a voice of intense relief, springing down the stairs to reach her friend. "Dearest Mrs. Hamilton, mamma—Annie—" The words choked her, and she burst into tears.

"Compose yourself, love, I know all; only tell me how your mother bears the shock," whispered Mrs. Hamilton, instantly penetrating at once the truth, that either the report had reached Lady Helen, or she had received the intelligence direct from her daughter; and anxious to escape the curious eyes of the domestics, who were in the hall, she hastily yet kindly drew the weeping Lilla to the nearest parlour, and, closing the door, succeeded in hearing all she desired. Lilla said, her mother, only an hour before, had received a letter from Annie, briefly announcing her marriage, and informing her they intended very shortly to embark for the Netherlands from Leith, thence to make a tour

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in Germany and Italy, which would prevent their returning to England for some time, when she hoped all present irritation at her conduct would have subsided; that her father's severity had tended to this step. Had he been kind, and like other fathers, she would have sacrificed her own desires, conscious that his reason for prohibiting her union with Alphingham was good, however it might be secret; but when from her childhood her every wish had been unreasonably thwarted, she was compelled to choose in such a case for herself. She should be sorry to live in enmity with her father, but even if she did, she never could regret the step she had taken. To her mother she wrote as if assured of her forgiveness, or rather her continued favour; forgiveness she did not seem to think it at all necessary to ask, saying, she was sure her kind and indulgent mother would not regret her union with Lord Alphingham, when she solemnly declared it had made her happier than she had ever been before. Such Lilla said were the contents of her letter; but the warm-hearted girl could not refer without indignation to the utter want of affection which breathed throughout. Her mother, Lilla continued to say, had been in a most alarming state from the time she received the letter, but she fancied occasioned more by the dread of what her father would say on his return, than from Annie's conduct.

When Mrs. Hamilton saw Lady Helen, she felt that Lilla was right. The unhappy mother reproached her own carelessness, indolence, and Annie's ingratitude, but it was evident the dread of her husband was uppermost in her mind—a dread which made her so extremely ill, from a succession of violent and uncontrolled hysterics, that Mrs. Hamilton did not leave her the whole of that day; nor would she permit the unhappy father to enter his wife's apartment on his return, till she had exacted from him a promise to forbear all reproaches towards his suffering wife, all allusions to the past.

With the stern brevity of the injured, Grahame addressed his disobedient child. His forgiveness and his blessing he sent, though he said she had asked for neither; that he bore no enmity to her, he wrote; his home and his heart were ever open to receive her, should she again require the protection of the one, the affection of the other. She had chosen for herself; linked her fate with one against whom many tongues had spoken, and he could only pray that her present happiness might never change. Lord Alphingham he did not name. Lady Helen's letter was a curious mixture of reproach and affection, complaint and congratulation; and Annie might have found it difficult to discover in what manner she was affected towards the Viscount, or with regard to the elopement itself. Perhaps of all the letters she received from home, Lilla's was the most irritating to her, for it was written in all the bitter indignation, the unchecked reproaches of a young and ardent spirit, in whose eyes the heartlessness of her letter was

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inexcusable, and she wrote as she thought. Annie, as might have been expected, deigned her no reply. A few languidly written letters her mother received from her during her tour; but the chief of her correspondence was reserved for Miss Malison and the lady who had so ably assisted their secret plans. The friendly influence of Mr. Hamilton succeeded, after a few days, in restoring his friend to comparative outward composure, although the wound within, he too sadly felt, was beyond his power to heal.

A few days passed in peace. Mrs. Hamilton and her family were anticipating with pleasure the quiet happiness of Oakwood, and the event then to take place. Scarcely a week intervened before their departure, when they were one afternoon startled by the appearance of Grahame, whose countenance bore the pallid hue of death, and every action denoted the most fearful agitation. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, Caroline and St. Eval, were alone present, and they gazed on him in unfeigned alarm.

"Hamilton, I start for Brussels to-night," was his salutation, as he entered.

"Brussels!" repeated Mr. Hamilton. "Grahame, you are beside yourself. What affairs can call you to Brussels so suddenly?"

"Affairs—business; aye, of such weight, I cannot rest till they are attended to. Hamilton, you are astonished; you think me mad; oh, would to God I were!" and striking his forehead with his clenched hand, he paced the room in agony.

Ere his friend could approach or address him, he suddenly paused before Caroline, who was watching him in alarm and commiseration, and grasping her arm, with a pressure that pained her, he said, in a voice which blanched her cheek with horror—

"Hamilton, look on this girl, and, as you love me, answer me. Could you be a Roman father, did you see her dishonoured,—the victim, the wilful victim of a base, a treacherous, miserable villain?—say, could you wash away the blackening stain with blood—with her blood—or his, or both? Speak to me—counsel me. My child, my child!" he groaned aloud.

"Grahame, you are ill; my dear friend, you know not what you say," exclaimed Mr. Hamilton, terrified both at his wildness and his words. "Come with me till this strange mood has passed; I entreat it as a favour—come."

"Passed—till this mood has passed! Hamilton, it will never pass till the grave has closed over Annie and myself. Oh, Hamilton, my friend, I had reconciled myself to this marriage; taught myself to believe that, as his wife, she might be happy; and—oh, God! can I say the words?—she is not his wife—he is already married." His trembling limbs refused support, and he sunk, overcome by his emotion, on a chair. Without a minute's

pause, a moment's hesitation, and ere her father could find words to reply, Caroline sprung forward, and kneeling beside the wretched father, she seized his hand—

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“Be calm, be comforted, dearest Mr. Grahame,” she exclaimed, in a voice that caused him to gaze at her with astonishment. “It is a mistaken tale you have heard; a cruel falsehood, to disturb your peace. Lord Alphingham was married, but Annie is now his lawful wedded wife; the partner of his youth, the devoted woman whom for eight years he deserted, is no more. She died the day preceding that which united Lord Alphingham to your child. I speak truth, Mr. Grahame; solemnly, sacredly, I affirm it. Percy will tell you more; I was pledged to secrecy. On her deathbed she demanded a solemn promise from all who knew her tale, never to divulge it, lest it should prove to the discredit of her cruel husband, whom her last accents blessed. I promised Percy it should be sacred, unless an emergency demanded it. Be comforted, Mr. Grahame, indeed, I speak the truth. Lord Alphingham was free, restrained by no tie, when he was united to your child.” Rapidly, hurriedly, she had spoken, for she trembled at the wild gaze Grahame had fixed upon her. Caroline’s voice rung clear and distinct upon his ear, and every word brought comfort, still he spoke not; but when she ceased, when slowly, more impressively her last words were spoken, he uttered a faint cry, and folding her slight form convulsively to his heart, sobbed like an infant on her shoulder. Thoughts unutterable thronged the minds of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton as they too listened with fascinated eagerness to Caroline’s words; thoughts, not only of the present but the past, rushed quickly to their minds. A year previous Lord Alphingham’s wife still lived; though he, villain as he was, had heeded not the sacred tie. Well could they enter into the blessed relief her words had brought to the distracted father. Mr. Hamilton permitted some minutes to elapse in silence, and then gently withdrawing Caroline from Grahame’s still convulsive hold, said a few words, in a voice which, though low, expressed that kindly sympathy which seldom fails to reach the inmost soul; and finally succeeded in passing his arm through that of his friend, and leading him to an adjoining room, where, after a time, Grahame conquered his agitation sufficiently to give a connected account of the means through which he had learned the information which had so distracted him. Caroline’s words and the influence of his friend restored him to comparative composure; but all was not at peace within until Percy had obeyed the summons of his father, and the information of his sister was confirmed in every point by him. He related the tale of Mrs. Amesfort, with which our readers are already well acquainted, with the addition of her death, of which the letter he received a few days previous had informed him. Many affecting interviews he had had with her, in which she spoke, of her husband, her mother, her child, so fondly, that the tears often started to the eyes of Percy, though her own were dry. In parting from him, she had again implored him not to divulge her secret, unless the interest of her child demanded it, or he saw urgent occasion.

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"Let not the breath of calumny sully the name of my child," she said, grasping his hand with a painful effort. "Let her not be looked on as a child of shame, when her birth is as pure and noble as any in the land. If her birth be questioned, let the whole world know she is the daughter of Lord Alphingham. In my mother's care is the certificate of my marriage, also of the christening of my Agnes. But if nothing be demanded, if her lot be happy, it is better both for father and daughter that they remain unknown to each other."

Percy had made the solemn promise she demanded, but the remembrance of her pale features, her drooping form, had haunted him on his return home, and caused that deep gloom his family had remarked. It was more than a week after Mrs. Amesfort's death, before her afflicted mother could write the tidings to the young man, who, on hearing of Annie's conduct, had instantly and actively set about obtaining the exact date of the unfortunate lady's death, and also that of the Viscount's hasty marriage in Scotland. The result was most satisfactory; rather more than a week had elapsed between the two events, and his marriage with Annie was, consequently, sacred and binding. Percy also said, Mrs. Morley had mentioned her intention of instantly returning to Ireland with the little Agnes, from whom she fervently prayed she might never be compelled to part.

Believed, and truly thankful, Grahame consulted with his friends on the best plan to pursue to silence the rumours which, having overheard in a public coffeehouse, would, he had no doubt, be immediately circulated over the town. Mrs. Morley said, she had written to inform Lord Alphingham of the death of his broken-hearted wife, enclosing one from the ill-fated Agnes herself. He was, therefore, perfectly aware of the validity of his second marriage, for Percy had inquired and found the letter had been forwarded; there was no need of communication with him on that point. Grahame's first care was to travel to Scotland, and obtain the registry of their marriage; his next, to proceed to Brussels, with Mr. Hamilton, and coolly and decisively inform Lord Alphingham that, unless the ceremony was publicly solemnized a second time, in his presence, and before proper witnesses, other proceedings would be entered upon against him. Astonished and somewhat alarmed as Lord and Lady Alphingham were at his unexpected appearance, the former had too many sins on his conscience to submit to a public *expose*, which he might justly fear was intended in this threat, and, with great apparent willingness, he consented. The ceremony was again performed; Grahame possessed himself of the certificate, and left Brussels, with the half-formed resolution that, while Lord Alphingham lived, he would never see his child again. The death of the Right Honourable Viscountess Alphingham, and the subsequent marriage in Scotland of the Eight Honourable Lord Viscount Alphingham with Miss Grahame,

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appeared in all the newspapers. The splendour of the second solemnization of their nuptials in Brussels was the next theme of wonder and gossip, and by the time that subject was exhausted, London had become deserted, and Lord and Lady Alphingham might probably have returned to the metropolis without question or remark; but such was not Lord Alphingham's intention. He feared that probably were his history publicly known he might be shunned for the deceit he had displayed; and he easily obtained Annie's glad consent to fix their residence for a few years in Paris. Irritated as in all probability he was, when he found himself again fettered, yet he so ably concealed this irritation, that his wife suspected it not, and for a time she was happy.

As Lord and Lady Alphingham are no longer concerned in our tale, having nothing more in common with those in whom, we trust, our readers are much more interested, we may here formally dismiss them in a few words. They lived, but if true happiness dwells only with the virtuous and good, with the upright and the noble, it gilded not their lot; but if those who are well acquainted with the morality of the higher classes of the French capital can pronounce that it dwells there, then, indeed, might they be said to possess it, for such was their lives. They returned not again to England, but lived in France and Italy, alternately. Alphingham, callous to every better and softer feeling, might have been happy, but not such was the fate of Annie. Bitterly, ere she died, did she regret her folly and disobedience; remorse was sometimes busy within, though no actual guilt dimmed her career: she drowned the voice of conscience in the vortex of frivolity and fashion. But the love she bore for Alphingham was the instrument of retribution, her husband neglected, despised, and frequently deserted her. Let no woman unite herself with sin, in the vain hope of transforming it to virtue. Such thoughts had not, indeed, been Annie's, when wilfully she sought her fate. She knew not the man she had chosen for her husband; she disregarded the warnings she had heard. Fatal delusion! she found, too late, the fate her will had woven was formed of knotty threads, the path that she had sought beset with thorns, from which she could not break. No children blessed her lot, and it was better thus—for they would have found but little happiness. The fate of Lord Alphingham's child, the little Agnes, was truly happy in her own innocence; she lived on for many years in ignorance of her real rank and the title of her father, under the careful guidance of that relative to whom her mother's last words had tenderly consigned her.

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Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton remained but little longer in town; Caroline's *trousseau* was quite completed, for but very few weeks now intervened ere her marriage. Lady Gertrude had devoted herself to the young Earl, and remained with him superintending the improvements and embellishments of his beautiful estate, Castle Terryn, in the vicinity of the Tamar, on the Cornwall side, which was being prepared with the greatest taste and splendour. Lady Gertrude was to remain with her brother till the week previous to the wedding, when she joined her family at Oakwood, where they had been staying since their departure from London, at the earnest persuasions of both Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton. Seldom had the banks of the placid Dart been so gay as they were on this occasion; the beautiful villas scattered around were all taken by the friends of the parties about to be so nearly connected. Rejoicings were not only confined to the higher class; the poor, for many miles round, hailed the expected marriage of Miss Hamilton as an occasion of peculiar and individual felicity. Blessings on her lot, prayers for her welfare, that Lord St. Eval might prove himself worthy of her, were murmured in many a rustic cot, and every one was employed in earnest thought as to the best, the most respectful mode of testifying their humble sympathy in the happiness of their benefactors. Such were the feelings with which high and low regarded the prosperity of the good.

END OF VOL. I.