

AGUILAR GRACE

THE MOTHER'S
RECOMPENSE,
VOLUME 1

Grace Aguilar

The Mother's Recompense, Volume 1

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Grace Aguilar

The Mother's Recompense, Volume 1 / A Sequel to Home Influence

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.

CHAPTER I

From Emmeline Hamilton to Mary Greville.

London, January, 18—

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 *entrée* 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 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 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.

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 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 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?"

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.

"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—

"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.

"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. 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.

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 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.

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.

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 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 mariée*, 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 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 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.

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. 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 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 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.

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.

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 simper—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 thralldom in which her mother holds her—it is complete slavery."

"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 *entrée*, 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.

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, *chère* 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.

"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 chère*. 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, *chère* 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.

"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 chère*, 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."

"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, 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 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?"

"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?"

"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.

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.

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 *entrée* 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 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 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 *à 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, 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 *entrée* 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 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 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.

"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."

"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."

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."

"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 à 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 *début*, 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.

"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 fête, 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 fête?"

"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."

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 à 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 *entrée* 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."

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. 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.

"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.

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.

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