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Содержание

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A DESCRIPTION OF MILLENIUM HALL

Dear Sir,

Though, when I left London, I promised to write to you as soon as I had reached my northern retreat, yet, I believe, you little expected instead of a letter to receive a volume; but I should not stand excused to myself, were I to fail communicating to you the pleasure I received in my road hither, from the sight of a society whose acquaintance I owe to one of those fortunate, though in appearance trifling, accidents, from which sometimes arise the most pleasing circumstances of our lives; for as such I must ever esteem the acquaintance of that amiable family, who have fixed their abode at a place which I shall nominate Millenium Hall, as the best adapted to the lives of the inhabitants, and to avoid giving the real name, fearing to offend that modesty which has induced them to conceal their virtues in retirement.

In giving you a very circumstantial account of this society, I confess I have a view beyond the pleasure which a mind like yours must receive from the contemplation of so much virtue. Your constant endeavours have been to inculcate the best principles into youthful minds, the only probable means of mending mankind; for the foundation of most of our virtues, or our vices, are laid in that season of life when we are most susceptible of impression, and when on our minds, as on a sheet of white paper, any characters may be engraven; these laudable endeavours, by which we may reasonably expect the rising generation will be greatly improved, render particularly due to you, any examples which may teach those virtues that are not easily learnt by precept and shew the facility of what, in

mere speculation, might appear surrounded with a discouraging impracticability: you are the best judge, whether, by being made public, they may be conducive to your great end of benefiting the world. I therefore submit the future fate of the following sheets entirely to you, and shall not think any prefatory apology for the publication at all requisite; for though a man who supposes his own life and actions deserve universal notice, or can be of general use, may be liable to the imputation of vanity, yet, as I have no other share than that of a spectator, and auditor, in what I purpose to relate, I presume no apology can be required; for my vanity must rather be mortified than flattered in the description of such virtues as will continually accuse me of my own deficiencies, and lead me to make a humiliating comparison between these excellent ladies and myself.

You may remember, Sir, that when I took leave of you with a design of retiring to my native county, there to enjoy the plenty and leisure for which a few years labour had furnished me with the necessary requisites, I was advised by an eminent physician to make a very extensive tour through the western part of this kingdom, in order, by frequent change of air, and continued exercise, to cure the ill effects of my long abode in the hot and unwholesome climate of Jamaica, where, while I increased my fortune, I gradually impaired my constitution; and though one who, like me, has dedicated all his application to mercantile gain, will not allow that he has given up the substance for the shadow, yet perhaps it would be difficult to deny that I thus sacrificed the

greater good in pursuit of the less.

The eagerness with which I longed to fix in my wished-for retirement, made me imagine that when I had once reached it, even the pursuit of health would be an insufficient inducement to determine me to leave my retreat. I therefore chose to make the advised tour before I went into the north. As the pleasure arising from a variety of beautiful objects is but half enjoyed when we have no one to share it with us, I accepted the offer Mr Lamont (the son of my old friend) made of accompanying me in my journey. As this young gentleman has not the good fortune to be known to you, it may not be amiss, as will appear in the sequel, to let you into his character.

Mr Lamont is a young man of about twenty-five years of age, of an agreeable person, and lively understanding; both perhaps have concurred to render him a coxcomb. The vivacity of his parts soon gained him such a degree of encouragement as excited his vanity, and raised in him a high opinion of himself. A very generous father enabled him to partake of every fashionable amusement, and the natural bent of his mind soon led him into all the dissipation which the gay world affords. Useful and improving studies were laid aside for such desultory reading as he found most proper to furnish him with topics for conversation in the idle societies he frequented. Thus that vivacity, which, properly qualified, might have become true wit, degenerated into pertness and impertinence. A consciousness of an understanding, which he never exerted, rendered him conceited; those talents

which nature kindly bestowed upon him, by being perverted, gave rise to his greatest faults. His reasoning faculty, by a partial and superficial use, led him to infidelity, and the desire of being thought superiorly distinguishing established him an infidel. Fashion, not reason, has been the guide of all his thoughts and actions. But with these faults he is good-natured, and not unentertaining, especially in a tête-à-tête, where he does not desire to shine, and therefore his vanity lies dormant and suffers the best qualifications of his mind to break forth. This induced me to accept him as a fellow traveller.

We proceeded on our journey as far as Cornwall, without meeting with any other than the usual incidents of the road, till one afternoon, when our chaise broke down. The worst circumstance attending this accident was our being several miles from a town, and so ignorant of the country, that we knew not whether there was any village within a moderate distance. We sent the postilion on my man's horse to the next town to fetch a smith, and leaving my servant to guard the chaise, Mr Lamont and I walked towards an avenue of oaks, which we observed at a small distance. The thick shade they afforded us, the fragrance wafted from the woodbines with which they were encircled, was so delightful, and the beauty of the grounds so very attracting, that we strolled on, desirous of approaching the house to which this avenue led. It is a mile and a half in length, but the eye is so charmed with the remarkable verdure and neatness of the fields, with the beauty of the flowers which are planted all around them

and seem to mix with the quickset hedges, that time steals away insensibly.

When we had walked about half a mile in a scene truly pastoral, we began to think ourselves in the days of Theocritus, so sweetly did the sound of a flute come wafted through the air. Never did pastoral swain make sweeter melody on his oaten reed. Our ears now afforded us fresh attraction, and with quicker steps we proceeded, till we came within sight of the musician that had charmed us. Our pleasure was not a little heightened, to see, as the scene promised, in reality a shepherd, watching a large flock of sheep. We continued motionless, listening to his music, till a lamb straying from its fold demanded his care, and he laid aside his instrument, to guide home the little wanderer.

Curiosity now prompted us to walk on; the nearer we came to the house, the greater we found the profusion of flowers which ornamented every field. Some had no other defence than hedges of rose trees and sweetbriars, so artfully planted, that they made a very thick hedge, while at the lower part, pinks, jonquils, hyacinths, and various other flowers, seemed to grow under their protection. Primroses, violets, lilies of the valley, and polyanthuses enriched such shady spots, as, for want of sun, were not well calculated for the production of other flowers. The mixture of perfumes which exhaled from this profusion composed the highest fragrance, and sometimes the different scents regaled the senses alternately, and filled us with reflections on the infinite variety of nature.

When we were within about a quarter of a mile of the house, the scene became still more animated. On one side was the greatest variety of cattle, the most beautiful of their kinds, grazing in fields whose verdure equalled that of the finest turf, nor were they destitute of their ornaments, only the woodbines and jessamine, and such flowers as might have tempted the inhabitants of these pastures to crop them, were defended with roses and sweetbriars, whose thorns preserved them from all attacks.

Though Lamont had hitherto been little accustomed to admire nature, yet was he much captivated with this scene, and with his usual levity cried out, 'If Nebuchadnezzar had such pastures as these to range in, his seven years expulsion from human society might not be the least agreeable part of his life.' My attention was too much engaged to criticize the light turn of Lamont's mind, nor did his thoughts continue long on the same subject, for our observation was soon called off by a company of hay-makers in the fields on the other side of the avenue. The cleanliness and neatness of the young women thus employed, rendered them a more pleasing subject for Lamont's contemplation than any thing we had yet seen; in them we beheld rural simplicity, without any of those marks of poverty and boorish rusticity, which would have spoilt the pastoral air of the scene around us; but not even the happy amiable innocence, which their figures and countenances expressed, gave me so much satisfaction as the sight of the number of children, who were all exerting the utmost

of their strength, with an air of delighted emulation between themselves, to contribute their share to the general undertaking. Their eyes sparkled with that spirit which health and activity can only give, and their rosy cheeks shewed the benefits of youthful labour.

Curiosity is one of those insatiable passions that grow by gratification; it still prompted us to proceed, not unsatisfied with what we had seen, but desirous to see still more of this earthly paradise. We approached the house, wherein, as it was the only human habitation in view, we imagined must reside the Primum Mobile of all we had yet beheld. We were admiring the magnificence of the ancient structure, and inclined to believe it the abode of the genius which presided over this fairy land, when we were surprised by a storm, which had been some time gathering over our heads, though our thoughts had been too agreeably engaged to pay much attention to it. We took shelter under the thick shade of a large oak, but the violence of the thunder and lightning made our situation rather uncomfortable. All those whom we had a little before seen so busy left their work on hearing the first clap of thunder and ran with the utmost speed to Millenium Hall, so I shall call the noble mansion of which I am speaking, as to an assured asylum against every evil.

Some of these persons, I imagine, perceived us; for immediately after they entered, came out a woman who, by her air and manner of address, we guessed to be the housekeeper, and desired us to walk into the house till the storm was over.

We made some difficulties about taking that liberty, but she still persisting in her invitation, had my curiosity to see the inhabitants of this hospitable mansion been less, I could not have refused to comply, as by prolonging these ceremonious altercations I was detaining her in the storm; we therefore agreed to follow her.

If we had been inclined before to fancy ourselves on enchanted ground, when after being led through a large hall, we were introduced to the ladies, who knew nothing of what had passed, I could scarcely forbear believing myself in the Attic school. The room where they sat was about forty-five feet long, of a proportionable breadth, with three windows on one side, which looked into a garden, and a large bow at the upper end. Over against the windows were three large bookcases, upon the top of the middle one stood an orrery, and a globe on each of the others. In the bow sat two ladies reading, with pen, ink and paper on a table before them at which was a young girl translating out of French. At the lower end of the room was a lady painting, with exquisite art indeed, a beautiful Madonna; near her another, drawing a landscape out of her own imagination; a third, carving a picture-frame in wood, in the finest manner, a fourth, engraving; and a young girl reading aloud to them; the distance from the ladies in the bow window being such, that they could receive no disturbance from her. At the next window were placed a group of girls, from the age of ten years old to fourteen. Of these, one was drawing figures, another a landscape, a third a perspective view, a fourth engraving, a fifth carving, a sixth

turning in wood, a seventh writing, an eighth cutting out linen, another making a gown, and by them an empty chair and a tent, with embroidery, finely fancied, before it, which we afterwards found had been left by a young girl who was gone to practise on the harpsichord.

As soon as we entered they all rose up, and the housekeeper introduced us by saying she saw us standing under a tree to avoid the storm and so had desired us to walk in. The ladies received us with the greatest politeness, and expressed concern that when their house was so near, we should have recourse to so insufficient a shelter. Our surprise at the sight of so uncommon a society occasioned our making but an awkward return to their obliging reception; nor when we observed how many arts we had interrupted, could we avoid being ashamed that we had then intruded upon them.

But before I proceed farther, I shall endeavour to give you some idea of the persons of the ladies, whose minds I shall afterwards best describe by their actions. The two who sat in the bow window were called Mrs Maynard and Miss Selvyn. Mrs Maynard is between forty and fifty years of age, a little woman, well made, with a lively and genteel air, her hair black, and her eyes of the same colour, bright and piercing, her features good, and complexion agreeable, though brown. Her countenance expresses all the vivacity of youth, tempered with a serenity which becomes her age.

Miss Selvyn can scarcely be called tall, though she approaches

that standard. Her features are too irregular to be handsome, but there is a sensibility and delicacy in her countenance which render her extremely engaging; and her person is elegant.

Miss Mancel, whom we had disturbed from her painting, is tall and finely formed, has great elegance of figure, and is graceful in every motion. Her hair is of a fine brown, her eyes blue, with all that sensible sweetness which is peculiar to that colour. In short, she excels in every beauty but the bloom, which is so soon faded, and so impossible to be imitated by the utmost efforts of art, nor has she suffered any farther by years than the loss of that radiance which renders beauty rather more resplendent than more pleasing.

Miss Trentham, who was carving by her, was the tallest of the company, and in dignity of air particularly excels, but her features and complexion have been so injured by the smallpox, that one can but just guess they were once uncommonly fine; a sweetness of countenance, and a very sensible look, indeed, still remain, and have baffled all the most cruel ravages of that distemper.

Lady Mary Jones, whom we found engraving, seems to have been rather pleasing than beautiful. She is thin and pale, but a pair of the finest black eyes I ever saw, animate, to a great degree, a countenance which sickness has done its utmost to render languid, but has, perhaps, only made more delicate and amiable. Her person is exquisitely genteel, and her voice, in common speech, enchantingly melodious.

Mrs Morgan, the lady who was drawing, appears to be

upwards of fifty, tall, rather plump, and extremely majestic, an air of dignity distinguishes her person, and every virtue is engraven in indelible characters on her countenance. There is a benignity in every look, which renders the decline of life, if possible, more amiable than the bloom of youth. One would almost think nature had formed her for a common parent, such universal and tender benevolence beams from every glance she casts around her.

The dress of the ladies was thus far uniform, the same neatness, the same simplicity and cleanliness appeared in each, and they were all in lutestring night-gowns, though of different colours, nor was there any thing unfashionable in their appearance, except that they were free from any trumpery ornaments. The girls were all clothed in camblet coats, but not uniform in colour, their linen extremely white and clean though coarse. Some of them were pretty, and none had any defect in person, to take off from that general pleasingness which attends youth and innocence.

They had been taught such a habit of attention that they seemed not at all disturbed by our conversation, which was of that general kind, as might naturally be expected on such an occasion, though supported by the ladies with more sensible vivacity and politeness than is usual where part of the company are such total strangers to the rest; till by chance one of the ladies called Mrs Maynard by her name.

From the moment I saw her, I thought her face not unknown to

me, but could not recollect where or when I had been acquainted with her, but her name brought to my recollection, that she was not only an old acquaintance, but a near relation. I observed that she had looked on me with particular attention, and I begged her to give me leave to ask her of what family of Maynards she was. Her answer confirmed my supposition, and as she told me that she believed she had some remembrance of my face, I soon made her recollect our affinity and former intimacy, though my twenty years abode in Jamaica, the alteration the climate had wrought in me, and time had made in us both, had almost effaced us from each other's memory.

There is great pleasure in renewing the acquaintance of our youth; a thousand pleasing ideas accompany it; many mirthful scenes and juvenile amusements return to the remembrance, and make us, as it were, live over again what is generally the most pleasing part of life. Mrs Maynard seemed no less sensible of the satisfaction arising from this train of thoughts than myself, and the rest of the company were so indulgently good-natured, as in appearance, to share them with us. The tea table by no means interrupted our conversation, and I believe I should have forgot that our journey was not at an end, if a servant had not brought in word, that my man, who had observed our motions, was come to inform us that our chaise could not be repaired that night.

The ladies immediately declared that though their equipage was in order, they would not suffer it to put an end to a pleasure they owed to the accident which had happened to ours, and

insisted we should give them our company till the smith had made all necessary reparations, adding, that I could not be obstinately bent on depriving Mrs Maynard so soon of the satisfaction she received from having recovered so long lost a relation. I was little inclined to reject this invitation: pleasure was the chief design of my journey, and I saw not how I could receive more than by remaining in a family so extraordinary, and so perfectly agreeable. When both parties are well agreed, the necessary ceremonies previous to a compliance are soon over, and it was settled that we should not think of departing before the next day at soonest.

The continuance of the rain rendered it impossible to stir out of the house; my cousin, who seemed to think variety necessary to amuse, asked if we loved music, which being answered in the affirmative, she begged the other ladies to entertain us with one of their family concerts, and we joining in the petition, proper orders were given, and we adjourned into another room, which was well furnished with musical instruments. Over the door was a beautiful Saint Cecilia, painted in crayons by Miss Mancel, and a fine piece of carved work over the chimney, done by Miss Trentham, which was a very artificial representation of every sort of musical instrument.

While we were admiring these performances, the company took their respective places. Miss Mancel seated herself at the harpsichord, Lady Mary Jones played on the arch lute, Mrs Morgan on the organ, Miss Selvyn and Miss Trentham each on

the six-stringed bass; the shepherd who had charmed us in the field was there with his German flute, a venerable looking man, who is their steward, played on the violincello, a lame youth on the French horn, another, who seemed very near blind, on the bassoon, and two on the fiddle. My cousin had no share in the performance except singing agreeably, wherein she was joined by some of the ladies, and where the music could bear it, by ten of the young girls, with two or three others whom we had not seen, and whose voices and manner were equally pleasing. They performed several of the finest pieces of the Messiah and Judas Maccabeus, with exquisite taste, and the most exact time. There was a sufficient number of performers to give the choruses all their pomp and fullness, and the songs were sung in a manner so touching and pathetic, as could be equalled by none whose hearts were not as much affected by the words as their senses were by the music. The sight of so many little innocents joining in the most sublime harmony made me almost think myself already amongst the heavenly choir, and it was a great mortification to me to be brought back to this sensual world by so gross an attraction as a call to supper, which put an end to our concert, and carried us to another room, where we found a repast more elegant than expensive.

The evening certainly is the most social part of the day, without any of those excesses which so often turn it into senseless revelry. The conversation after supper was particularly animated, and left us still more charmed with the society into which chance

had introduced us; the sprightliness of their wit, the justness of their reflections, the dignity which accompanied their vivacity, plainly evinced with how much greater strength the mind can exert itself in a regular and rational way of life, than in a course of dissipation. At this house every change came too soon, time seemed to wear a double portion of wings, eleven o'clock struck, and the ladies ordered a servant to shew us our rooms, themselves retiring to theirs.

It was impossible for Lamont and I to part till we had spent an hour in talking over this amiable family, with whom he could not help being much delighted, though he observed they were very deficient in the bon ton, there was too much solidity in all they said, they would trifle with trifles indeed, but had not the art of treating more weighty subjects with the same lightness, which gave them an air of rusticity; and he did not doubt, but on a more intimate acquaintance we should find their manners much rusticated, and their heads filled with antiquated notions, by having lived so long out of the great world.

I rose the next morning very early, desirous to make the day, which I purposed for the last of my abode in this mansion, as long as I could. I went directly into the garden, which, by what I saw from the house, was extremely pretty. As I passed by the windows of the saloon, I perceived the ladies and their little pupils were earlier risers than myself, for they were all at their various employments. I first went into the gayest flower garden I ever beheld. The rainbow exhibits not half the variety of tints,

and they are so artfully mingled, and ranged to make such a harmony of colours, as taught me how much the most beautiful objects may be improved by a judicious disposition of them. Beyond these beds of flowers rises a shrubbery, where every thing sweet and pleasing is collected. As these ladies have no taste but what is directed by good sense, nothing found a place here from being only uncommon, for they think few things are very rare but because they are little desirable; and indeed it is plain they are free from that littleness of mind, which makes people value a thing the more for its being possessed by no one but themselves. Behind the shrubbery is a little wood, which affords a gloom, rendered more agreeable by its contrast with the dazzling beauty of that part of the garden that leads to it. In the high pale which encloses this wood I observed a little door, curiosity induced me to pass through it; I found it opened on a row of the neatest cottages I ever saw, which the wood had concealed from my view. They were new and uniform, and therefore I imagined all dedicated to the same purpose. Seeing a very old woman spinning at one of the doors, I accosted her, by admiring the neatness of her habitation.

'Ay, indeed,' said she, 'it is a most comfortable place, God bless the good ladies! I and my neighbours are as happy as princesses, we have every thing we want and wish, and who can say more?' 'Very few so much,' answered I, 'but pray what share have the ladies in procuring the happiness you seem so sensible of?' 'Why Sir,' continued the old woman, 'it is all owing to them.

I was almost starved when they put me into this house, and no shame of mine, for so were my neighbours too; perhaps we were not so painstaking as we might have been; but that was not our fault, you know, as we had not things to work with, nor any body to set us to work, poor folks cannot know every thing as these good ladies do; we were half dead for want of victuals, and then people have not courage to set about any thing. Nay, all the parish were so when they came into it, young and old, there was not much to choose, few of us had rags to cover us, or a morsel of bread to eat except the two Squires; they indeed grew rich, because they had our work, and paid us not enough to keep life and soul together, they live about a mile off, so perhaps they did not know how poor we were, I must say that for them; the ladies tell me I ought not to speak against them, for every one has faults, only we see other people's, and are blind to our own; and certainly it is true enough, for they are very wise ladies as well as good, and must know such things.'

As my new acquaintance seemed as loquacious as her age promised, I hoped for full satisfaction, and asked her how she and her neighbours employed themselves.

'Not all alike,' replied the good woman, 'I will tell you all about it There are twelve of us that live here. We have every one a house of two rooms, as you may see, beside other conveniences, and each a little garden, but though we are separate, we agree as well, perhaps better, than if we lived together, and all help one another. Now, there is neighbour Susan, and neighbour Rachel;

Susan is lame, so she spins clothes for Rachel; and Rachel cleans Susan's house, and does such things for her as she cannot do for herself. The ladies settled all these matters at first, and told us, that as they, to please God, assisted us, we must in order to please him serve others; and that to make us happy they would put us in a way, poor as we are, to do good to many. Thus neighbour Jane who, poor woman, is almost stone deaf, they thought would have a melancholy life if she was to be always spinning and knitting, seeing other people around her talking, and not be able to hear a word they said, so the ladies busy her in making broths and caudles and such things, for all the sick poor in this and the next parish, and two of us are fixed upon to carry what, they have made to those that want them; to visit them often, and spend more or less time with them every day according as they have, or have not relations to take care of them; for though the ladies always hire nurses for those who are very ill, yet they will not trust quite to them, but make us overlook them, so that in a sickly time we shall be all day going from one to another.'

'But,' said I, 'there are I perceive many children amongst you, how happens that? Your ages shew they are not your own.'

'Oh! as for that,' replied my intelligencer, 'I will tell you how that is. You must know these good ladies, heaven preserve them! take every child after the fifth of every poor person, as soon as it can walk, till when they pay the mother for nursing it; these children they send to us to keep out of harm, and as soon as they can hold a knitting-needle to teach them to knit, and to spin, as

much as they can be taught before they are four or five years old, when they are removed into one of the schools. They are pretty company for us, and make us mothers again, as it were, in our old age; then the children's relations are all so fond of us for our care of them, that it makes us a power of friends, which you know is very pleasant, though we want nothing from them but their good wills.'

Here I interrupted her by observing, that it must take up a great deal of time, and stop their work, consequently lessen their profits.

'There is nothing in that,' continued the good woman, 'the ladies' steward sends us in all we want in the way of meat, drink and firing; and our spinning we carry to the ladies; they employ a poor old weaver, who before they came broke for want of work, to weave it for us, and when there is not enough they put more to it, so we are sure to have our clothing; if we are not idle that is all they desire, except that we should be cleanly too. There never passes a day that one or other of the ladies does not come and look all over our houses, which they tell us, and certainly with truth, for it is a great deal of trouble to them, is all for our good, for that we cannot be healthy if we are not clean and neat. Then every Saint's day, and every Sunday after church, we all go down to the hall, and the ladies read prayers, and a sermon to us, and their own family; nor do they ever come here without giving us some good advice. We used to quarrel, to be sure, sometimes when we first came to these houses, but the ladies condescended

to make it up amongst us, and shewed us so kindly how much it was our duty to agree together, and to forgive everybody their faults, or else we could not hope to be forgiven by God, against whom we so often sinned, that now we love one another like sisters, or indeed better, for I often see such quarrel. Beside, they have taught us that we are generally in fault ourselves; and we find now that we take care not to be perverse, our neighbours are seldom in the wrong, and when they are, we bear with it in hopes they will bear with us when we are as much to blame, which we may be sure enough will happen, let us try ever so much to the contrary. Then the ladies seem so pleased when we do any kindness to one another, as to be sure is a great encouragement; and if any of us are sick they are so careful and so good, that it would be a shame if we did not do all we can for one another, who have been always neighbours and acquaintance, when such great ladies, who never knew us, as I may say, but to make us happy, and have no reason to take care of us but that we are poor, are so kind and condescending to us.'

I was so pleased with the good effect which the charity of her benefactors had on the mind, as well as the situation, of this old woman, whose neighbours by her own account were equally benefited by the blessings they received, that I should have stayed longer with her, if a bell had not rung at Millenium Hall, which she informed me was a summons to breakfast. I obeyed its call, and after thanking her for her conversation, returned with a heart warmed and enlarged, to the amiable society. My mind was so

filled with exalted reflections on their virtues that I was less attentive to the charms of inanimate nature than when I first passed through the gardens.

After breakfast the ladies proposed a walk, and as they had seen the course I took when I first went out, they led us a contrary way, lest, they said, I should be tired with the repetition of the same scene. I told them with, great truth, that what I had beheld could never weary, for virtue is a subject we must ever contemplate with fresh delight, and as such examples could not fail of improving every witness of them, the pleasure of reflection would increase, as one daily grew more capable of enjoying it, by cultivating kindred sensations. By some more explicit hints they found out to what I alluded, and thereby knew where I had been, but turning the conversation to present objects, they conducted us to a very fine wood which is laid out with so much taste that Lamont observed the artist's hand was never more distinguishable, and perceived in various spots the direction of the person at present most famous for that sort of improvement.

The ladies smiled, and one of them answered that he did their wood great honour, in thinking art had lent her assistance to nature, but that there was little in that place for which they were not solely obliged to the latter. Miss Trentham interrupted her who was speaking and told us that as she had no share in the improvements which had been made, she might with the better grace assure Mr Lamont that Lady Mary Jones, Miss

Mancel, and Mrs Morgan were the only persons who had laid out that wood, and the commonest labourers in the country had executed their orders. Lamont was much surprised at this piece of information, and though he would have thought it still more exquisitely beautiful had it been the design of the person he imagined, yet truth is so powerful, that he could not suppress his admiration and surprise. Every cut in it is terminated by some noble object. In several places are seats formed with such rustic simplicity, as have more real grandeur in them, than can be found in the most expensive buildings. On an eminence, 'bosomed high in tufted trees', is a temple dedicated to solitude. The structure is an exquisite piece of architecture, the prospect from it noble and extensive, and the windows so placed, that one sees no house but at so considerable a distance, as not to take off from the solitary air, which is perfectly agreeable to a temple declaredly dedicated to solitude. The most beautiful object in the view is a very large river, in reality an arm of the sea, little more than a quarter of a mile distant from the building; about three miles beyond it lies the sea, on which the sun then shone, and made it dazzlingly bright. In the temple is a picture of Contemplation, another of Silence, two of various birds and animals, and a couple of moonlight pieces, the workmanship of the ladies.

Close by the temple runs a gentle murmuring rivulet, which flows in meanders through the rest of the wood, sometimes concealed from view, and then appearing at the next turning of the walk. The wood is well peopled with pheasants, wild turkeys,

squirrels and hares, who live so unmolested, that they seem to have forgot all fear, and rather to welcome than flee from those who come amongst them. Man never appears there as a merciless destroyer, but the preserver, instead of the tyrant, of the inferior part of the creation. While they continue in that wood, none but natural evil can approach them, and from that they are defended as much as possible. We there 'walked joint tenant of the shade' with the animal race; and a perfect equality in nature's bounty seems enjoyed by the whole creation. One could scarcely forbear thinking those happy times were come, when 'The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a young child shall lead them. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.'

At the verge of this wood, which extends to the river I have mentioned, without perceiving we were entering a building, so well is the outside of it concealed by trees, we found ourselves in a most beautiful grotto, made of fossils, spars, coral, and such shells as are at once both fine and rustic; all of the glaring, tawdry kind are excluded, and by the gloom and simplicity preserved, one would imagine it the habitation of some devout anchoret. Ivy and moss in some places cover, while they seem to unite, the several materials of the variegated walls. The rivulet which runs through the wood falls down one side of the grotto with great rapidity, broken into various streams by the spar and coral,

and passing through, forms a fine cascade just at the foot of the grotto, whence it flows into the river. Great care is taken to prevent the place from growing damp, so that we sat some time in it with safety, admiring the smooth surface of the river, to which it lies very open.

As the ladies had some daily business on their hands which they never neglect, we were obliged to leave this lovely scene, where I think I could have passed my life with pleasure, and to return towards the house, though by a different way from that we came, traversing the other side of the wood. In one spot where we went near the verge, I observed a pale, which, upon examination, I found was continued for some acres, though it was remarkable only in one place. It is painted green, and on the inside a hedge of yews, laurel, and other thick evergreens rises to about seven or eight feet high. I could not forbear asking what was thus so carefully enclosed. The ladies smiled on each other, but evaded answering my question, which only increased my curiosity. Lamont, not less curious, and more importunate, observed that the inclosure bore some resemblance to one of Lord Lamore's, where he kept lions, tigers, leopards, and such foreign animals, and he would be hanged, if the ladies had not made some such collection, intreating that he might be admitted to see them; for nothing gave him greater entertainment than to behold those beautiful wild beasts, brought out of their native woods, where they had reigned as kings, and here tamed and subjected by the superior art of man. It was a triumph of human

reason, which could not fail to afford great pleasure.

'Not to us, I assure you, Sir,' replied Miss Mancel, 'when reason appears only in the exertion of cruelty and tyrannical oppression, it is surely not a gift to be boasted of. When a man forces the furious steed to endure the bit, or breaks oxen to the yoke, the great benefits he receive from, and communicates to the animals, excuse the forcible methods by which it is accomplished. But to see a man, from a vain desire to have in his possession the native of another climate and another country, reduce a fine and noble creature to misery, and confine him within narrow inclosures whose happiness consisted in unbounded liberty, shocks my nature. There is I confess something so amiable in gentleness, that I could be pleased with seeing a tiger caress its keeper, if the cruel means by which the fiercest of beasts is taught all the servility of a fawning spaniel, did not recur every instant to my mind; and it is not much less abhorrent to my nature, to see a venerable lion jumping over a stick, than it would be to behold a hoary philosopher forced by some cruel tyrant to spend his days in whipping a top, or playing with a rattle. Every thing to me loses its charm when it is put out of the station wherein nature, or to speak more properly, the all-wise Creator has placed it. I imagine man has a right to use the animal race for his own preservation, perhaps for his convenience, but certainly not to treat them with wanton cruelty, and as it is not in his power to give them any thing so valuable as their liberty, it is, in my opinion, criminal to enslave them in

order to procure ourselves a vain amusement, if we have so little feeling as to find any while others suffer.'

'I believe madam,' replied Lamont, 'it is most advisable for me not to attempt to defend what I have said; should I have reason on my side, while you have humanity on yours, I should make but a bad figure in the argument. What advantage could I expect from applying to the understanding, while your amiable disposition would captivate even reason itself? But still I am puzzled; what we behold is certainly an inclosure, how can that be without a confinement to those that are within it?'

'After having spoken so much against tyranny,' said Miss Mancel, smiling, 'I do not know whether I should be excusable if I left you to be tyrannized by curiosity, which I believe can inflict very severe pains, at least, if I may be allowed to judge by the means people often take to satisfy it. I will therefore gratify you with the knowledge of what is within this inclosure, which makes so extraordinary an impression upon you. It is, then, an asylum for those poor creatures who are rendered miserable from some natural deficiency or redundancy. Here they find refuge from the tyranny of those wretches, who seem to think that being two or three feet taller gives them a right to make them a property, and expose their unhappy forms to the contemptuous curiosity of the unthinking multitude. Procrustes has been branded through all ages with the name of tyrant; and principally, as it appears, from fitting the body of every stranger to a bed which he kept as the necessary standard, cutting off the legs of those whose

height exceeded the length of it and stretching on the rack such as fell short of that measure, till they attained the requisite proportion. But is not almost every man a Procrustes? We have not the power of shewing our cruelty exactly in the same method, but actuated by the like spirit, we abridge of their liberty, and torment by scorn, all who either fall short, or exceed the usual standard, if they happen to have the additional misfortune of poverty. Perhaps we are in no part more susceptible than in our vanity, how much then must those poor wretches suffer, whose deformity would lead them to wish to be secluded from human view, in being exposed to the public, whose observations are no better than expressions of scorn, and who are surprised to find that any thing less than themselves can speak, or appear like intelligent beings. But this is only part of what they have to endure. As if their deficiency in height deprived them of the natural right to air and sunshine, they are kept confined in small rooms, and because they fill less space than common, are stuffed into chairs so little, that they are squeezed as close as a pair of gloves in a walnut-shell.

'This miserable treatment of persons, to whom compassion should secure more than common indulgence, determined us to purchase these worst sort of slaves, and in this place we have five who owed their wretchedness to being only three foot high, one grey-headed toothless old man of sixteen years of age, a woman of about seven foot in height, and a man who would be still taller, if the extreme weakness of his body, and the wretched life he for

some time led, in the hands of one of these monster-mongers, did not make him bend almost double, and oblige him to walk on crutches; with which infirmities he is well pleased, as they reduce him nearer the common standard.'

We were very desirous of seeing this enfranchised company; but Mrs. Morgan told us it was what they seldom granted, for fear of inflicting some of the pains from which they had endeavoured to rescue those poor creatures, but she would step in, and ask if they had no objection to our admission, and if that appeared really the case she would gratify us.

This tenderness to persons who were under such high obligations, charmed me. She soon returned with the permission we wished, but intreated us to pay all our attention to the house and garden, and to take no more than a civil notice of its inhabitants. We promised obedience, and followed her. Her advice was almost unnecessary, for the place could not have failed of attracting our particular observation. It was a quadrangle of about six acres, and the inward part was divided by nets into eight parts, four of which alternatively were filled with poultry of all sorts, which were fed here for the use of the hall, and kept with the most exact cleanliness. The other four parts were filled with shrubs and flowers, which were cultivated with great delight by these once unfortunate, but now happy beings. A little stream ran across the quadrangle, which served for drink to the poultry, and facilitated the watering of the flowers. I have already said, that at the inward edge of the pale was a row of evergreens; at their

feet were beds of flowers, and a little gravel walk went round the whole. At each corner was an arbour made with woodbines and jessamine, in one or two of which there was always an agreeable shade.

At one side of the quadrangle was a very neat habitation, into which a dwarf invited us to enter, to rest ourselves after our walk; they were all passing backwards and forwards, and thus gave us a full view of them, which would have been a shocking sight, but for the reflections we could not avoid making on their happy condition, and the very extraordinary humanity of the ladies to whom they owed it; so that instead of feeling the pain one might naturally receive from seeing the human form so disgraced, we were filled with admiration of the human mind, when so nobly exalted by virtue, as it is in the patronesses of these poor creatures, who wore an air of cheerfulness, which shewed they thought the churlishness wherewith they had been treated by nature sufficiently compensated. The tender inquiries the ladies made after their healths, and the kind notice they took of each of them, could not be exceeded by any thing but the affection, I might almost say adoration, with which these people beheld their benefactresses.

This scene had made too deep an impression on our minds not to be the subject of our discourse all the way home, and in the course of conversation, I learnt that when these people were first rescued out of their misery, their healths were much impaired, and their tempers more so; to restore the first, all medicinal care

was taken, and air and exercise assisted greatly in their recovery; but to cure the malady of the mind, and conquer that internal source of unhappiness, was a work of longer time. Even these poor wretches had their vanity, and would contend for superior merit, of which the argument was the money their keepers had gained in exhibiting them. To put an end to this contention, the ladies made them understand that what they thought a subject for boasting, was only a proof of their being so much farther from the usual standard of the human form, and therefore a more extraordinary spectacle. But it was long before one of them could be persuaded to lay aside her pretensions to superiority, which she claimed on account of an extraordinary honour she had received from a great princess, who had made her a present of a sedan chair.

At length, however, much reasoning and persuasion, a conviction of principles, of which they had before no knowledge, the happiness of their situation, and the improvement of their healths, concurred to sweeten their tempers and they now live in great harmony. They are entirely mistresses of their house, have two maids to wait on them, over whom they have sole command, and a person to do such little things in their garden as they cannot themselves perform; but the cultivation of it is one of their great pleasures; and by their extraordinary care, they have the satisfaction of presenting the finest flowers of the spring to their benefactresses, before they are blown in any other place.

When they first came, the ladies told us that the horror they

had conceived of being exhibited as public spectacles had fixed in them such a fear of being seen by any stranger, that the sound of a voice with which they were not acquainted at the outside of the paling, or the trampling of feet, would set them all a running behind the bushes to hide themselves, like so many timorous partridges in a mew, hurrying behind sheaves of corn for shelter; they even found a convenience in their size, which, though it rendered them unwilling to be seen, enabled them so easily to find places for concealment.

By degrees the ladies brought them to consent to see their head servants, and some of the best people in the parish; desiring that to render it more agreeable to their visitors, they would entertain them with fruit and wine; advising them to assist their neighbours in plain work; thus to endear themselves to them, and procure more frequent visits, which as they chose to confine themselves within so narrow a compass, and enjoyed but precarious health, their benefactresses thought a necessary amusement. These recommendations, and the incidents wherewith their former lives had furnished them to amuse their company, and which they now could relate with pleasure, from the happy sense that all mortifications were past, rendered their conversation much courted among that rank of people.

It occurred to me that their dislike to being seen by numbers must prevent their attendance on public worship, but my cousin informed me that was thus avoided. There was in the church an old gallery, which from disuse was grown out of repair; this the

ladies caused to be mended, and the front of it so heightened, that these little folks when in it could not be seen; the tall ones contrived by stooping when they were there not to appear of any extraordinary height. To this they were conveyed in the ladies' coach and set down close to covered stairs, which led up to the gallery.

This subject employed our conversation till we approached the hall; the ladies then, after insisting that we should not think of going from thence that day, all left us expect Mrs Maynard. It may seem strange that I was not sorry for their departure; but, in truth, I was so filled with astonishment at characters so new, and so curious to know by what steps women thus qualified both by nature and fortune to have the world almost at command, were brought thus to seclude themselves from it, and make as it were a new one for themselves constituted on such very different principles from that I had hitherto lived in, that I longed to be alone with my cousin, in hopes I might from her receive some account of this wonder. I soon made my curiosity known, and beseeched her to gratify it.

'I see no good reason,' said she, 'why I should not comply with your request, as my friends are above wishing to conceal any part of their lives, though themselves are never the subject of their own conversation. If they have had any follies they do not desire to hide them; they have not pride enough to be hurt with candid criticisms, and have too much innocence to fear any very severe censure. But as we did not all reach this paradise at the

same time, I shall begin with the first inhabitants of, and indeed the founders of this society, Miss Mancel and Mrs Morgan, who from their childhood have been so connected that I could not, if I would, disunite them in my relation; and it would be almost a sin to endeavour to separate them even in idea.'

We sat down in an arbour, whose shade invited us to seek there a defence against the sun, which was then in its meridian, and shone with uncommon heat. The woodbines, the roses, the jessamines, the pinks and above all, the minionette with which it was surrounded, made the air one general perfume; every breeze came loaded with fragrance, stealing and giving odour. A rivulet ran bubbling by the side of the arbour, whose gentle murmurs soothed the mind into composure, and seemed to hush us to attention, when Mrs Maynard thus began to shew her readiness to comply with my request.

THE HISTORY OF Miss MANCEL AND Mrs MORGAN

You may perhaps think I am presuming on your patience when I lead you into a nursery, or a boarding school; but the life of Louisa Mancel was so early chequered with that various fate which gives this world the motley appearance of joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure, that it is not in my power to pass over the events of her infancy. I shall, however, spare you all that is possible, and recommend her to your notice only when she attracted the observation of Mr Hintman. This gentleman hearing that a person who rented some land of him was come to London, and lodged at one of those public houses which by the landlord is called an inn, at the outskirts of London, on the Surrey side; and having some occasion to speak to him, he went thither. The people of the house called the man Mr Hintman enquired for, who immediately came downstairs, wiping tears from his eyes; the continuance of which he could hardly restrain. Mr Hintman asking the reason of those appearances of sorrow, the good-natured old man told him, his visit had called him from a scene which had shocked him excessively. 'The first day I came here' said he, 'I was induced by the frequent groans which issued from the next chamber, to enquire who lodged there; I learnt, it was a gentlewoman, who arrived the day before, and was

immediately taken so ill that they apprehended her life in danger; and, about two hours ago, the maid of the house ran into my room, begging me to come to her assistance, for the gentlewoman was in such strong fits, she was not able to hold her. I obeyed the summons, and found the poor woman in fits indeed; but what appeared to me the last agonies of a life which, near exhausted, lavishes away its small remains in strong convulsions.

'By her bedside stood the most beautiful child I ever beheld, in appearance about ten years of age, crying as if its little heart would break; not with the rage of an infant, but with the settled grief of a person mature both in years and affliction. I asked her if the poor dying woman was her mother; she told me, no—she was only her aunt; but to her the same as a mother; and she did not know any one else that would take care of her.

'After a time the poor woman's convulsions left her; she just recovered sense enough to embrace the lovely girl, and cried out, Oh! my dear child, what will become of you! a friendless, helpless infant; and seeing me at her bedside, she lifted up her hands in a suppliant posture; and with eyes that petitioned in stronger terms than words could express, Oh! Sir, said she, though you are a stranger to me, yet I see you are not so to humanity; take pity on this forlorn child; her amiable disposition will repay you in this world, and the great Father of us all will reward you in the next, for your compassion on a wretched friendless girl! But why do I call her friendless? Her innocence has the best of friends in heaven; the Almighty is a parent she is

not left to seek for; he is never absent;—Oh! blessed Lord! cried she, with a degree of ecstasy and confidence which most sensibly affected us all, to thy care I resign her; thy tender mercies are over all thy works, and thou, who carest for the smallest part of thy creation, will not deny her thy protection. Oh! Lord defend her innocence! Let her obtain a place in thy kingdom after death; and for all the rest I submit to thy providence; nor presumptuously pretend to dictate to supreme wisdom. Thou art a gracious father and the afflictions thou sendest are.... Here her voice failed her; but by her gestures we could perceive the continued praying, and, having before taken the child in her arms the little angel continued there for fear of disturbing her. By looks sometimes turned towards the poor infant, and sometimes with her hand on her own heart, and then her eyes lifted up as it were to heaven, we saw she mixed prayers for the little mourner, with intercessions for herself, till sense and motion seemed to fail her; she then fell into a convulsion, and expired.

'The little girl perceived she was dead; and became almost as senseless as the lump of clay which had so lately been her only friend. We had but just taken her from the body, sir, when you came; and this was the occasion of the emotions you observed in me.'

'The cause was indeed sufficient,' replied Mr Hintman, 'but I am glad your sorrow proceeded from nothing more immediately concerning yourself. Misery will strike its arrows into a humane heart; but the wounds it makes are not so lasting, as those which

are impressed by passions that are more relative to ourselves.' 'Oh! sir,' said the old man, 'you cannot form an adequate idea of the effect this scene must have on every spectator, except you had seen the child! surely nature never formed so lovely a little creature!' He continued his praises of Louisa, till at length he excited Mr Hintman's curiosity; who expressing a desire of seeing this miracle, he was carried up into the good man's room, to which they had removed her. She, who had cried most bitterly before the fatal stroke arrived, was now so oppressed, as not to be able to shed a tear. They had put her on the bed, where she lay sighing with a heart ready to break; her eyes fixed on one point, she neither saw nor heard.

Though her countenance expressed unutterable woe, yet she looked so extremely beautiful, that Mr Hintman, highly as his expectation had been raised, was struck with surprise. He allowed he never saw any thing so lovely; and the charms of which her melancholy might deprive her, were more than compensated in his imagination by so strong a proof of extreme sensibility, at an age when few children perceive half the dreadful consequences of such a misfortune.

He advised that she should be blooded, to prevent any ill effects from so severe a shock; for as she felt it as strongly as one of a more mature age, the same precautions should be used. In this he was obeyed; and it gave her such relief that she burst into a flood of tears; a change which appeared so salutary, that Mr Hintman would not immediately interrupt her. But his curiosity

did not suffer him long to forbear asking her name, and many other particulars; several of which she could not answer; all the account she was able to give of herself was, that her name was Mancel, that the person for whom she grieved was her aunt; but had had the sole care of her from her earliest remembrance. This aunt, she said, had often told her she had a father and mother living; but when she enquired why she never saw or heard from them she could get no satisfactory answer, but was put off with being told they were not in England; and that she should know when she grew older.

This person had bred her up with the utmost tenderness, and employed the most assiduous care in her education; which was the principal object of her attention. They had lived in a neat cottage in the most retired part of Surrey from Miss Mancel's earliest remembrance, till her aunt, after having been some time in a bad state of health, fell into a galloping consumption. As soon as she apprehended the danger with which her life was threatened, she prepared every thing for her removal to London; but as she did not expect ever to return, this took more time than the quickness of her decay could well allow. The hasty approach of her dissolution affected her extremely on the account of her little niece, and she often expressed her concern in terms intelligible to her who was the occasion of it, who gathered from the expressions which fell from her aunt, that the motive for the journey was to find out some of Miss Mancel's relations, to whom she might deliver her before death had put a period to her

own life; and where she might safely remain till the return of her parents into England.

In this resolution she discharged the only servant she kept, delivered up her house to her landlord, and after having settled all her pecuniary affairs, she set out on her journey with her little charge; but grew so ill on the road that she desired to be set down at the first inn; and her illness increased so fast she had no thought of removing; nor was she able to make any very exact enquiries after the persons of whom she came in search.

This account was interrupted with many tears, which served to render it more affecting, and Mr Hintman, as much touched as the good old man who was the occasion of his having heard it, agreed with him that it would be proper to examine into the effects of which the deceased was then possessed; and to see if they could find any paper which would in a degree clear up the mysterious part of this affair.

This was accordingly performed; but as to the latter intention without any success; for after all the examination they could make, they remained as much in the dark as ever.

They found in her trunk rather more money than was requisite to bury her in a manner becoming her rank; to defray the expenses of her sickness; and to reward those that had attended her.

The old man expressed a willingness to take the child. He said it was a legacy left him by one who had conceived some confidence in his humanity, and he could not in conscience

disappoint an opinion which did him honour; though, having children of his own, he did not pretend to breed her up in the genteel manner to which she seemed by birth entitled.

Mr Hintman replied, that he should have great reason to reproach himself if with the ample fortune he enjoyed, and having no children or family to partake of it, he should suffer another to take that charge, to whom it could not be so convenient; he therefore would immediately receive her as his child; and see her educated in all accomplishments proper for a young person of fashion and fortune; as he should be able to supply all deficiency, if necessary, in the latter particular.

The old man was very glad to have the child better established than with him; though he had for some hours looked with so much pleasure on her as his adopted daughter, that no consideration, but the prospect of her greater advantage, could have reconciled him to parting with her.

In pursuance of the resolution Mr Hintman had taken, he carried Miss Mancel to a French boarding school which he had heard commended; very prudently judging that his house was not a proper place for education, having there no one fit to take care of a young person.

Louisa was so oppressed by the forlornness of her situation that she felt none of that reluctance to going amongst strangers, so usual with children of her age. All the world was equally unknown to her, therefore she was indifferent where she was carried, only she rather wished not to have been taken from

the good old man whose venerable aspect, and compassionate behaviour, had in some degree attached her to him; but she felt the generosity of Mr Hintman's declared intentions; and, young as she was, had too much delicacy to appear ungrateful by shewing an unwillingness to accompany him. Mademoiselle d'Avaux, the mistress of the school, was pleased with the appearance of her young scholar, whose tears had ceased for some time; and her face bore no disfiguring signs of sorrow; the dejection which overspread it giving charms equal to those of which it robbed it.

Mr Hintman desired Mademoiselle d'Avaux to take the trouble of providing Miss Mancel with all things requisite, and to put her in proper mourning; those minute feminine details being things of which he was too ignorant to acquit himself well; and gave strict charge that her mind should be cultivated with the greatest care, and no accomplishment omitted which she was capable of acquiring.

What contributed much towards gratifying this wish of Mr Hintman's was Mademoiselle d'Avaux's house being so full, that there was no room for Louisa, but a share of the apartment which Miss Melvyn had hitherto enjoyed alone, and of which she could not willingly have admitted any one to partake but the lovely child who was presented to her for this purpose. Her beautiful form prejudiced everyone in her favour; but the distress and sorrow which were impressed on her countenance, at an age generally too volatile and thoughtless to be deeply affected, could not fail

of exciting a tender sensibility in the heart of a person of Miss Melvyn's disposition.

This young lady was of a very peculiar turn of mind. She had been the darling daughter of Sir Charles and Lady Melvyn, whose attachment to her had appeared equal; but, in the former, it was rather the result of habit and compliance with Lady Melvyn's behaviour than a deep-rooted affection, of which his heart was not very susceptible; while Lady Melvyn's arose from that entire fondness which maternal love and the most distinguishing reason could excite in the warmest and tenderest of hearts.

Sir Charles was an easy-tempered, weak man who gave no proof of good sense but the secret deference he had to his wife's judgement, whose very superior understanding was on nothing so assiduously employed as in giving consequence to the man with whom she was united, by the desire of her parents, contrary to her inclination. Their authority had been necessary to reduce her to compliance, not from any particular dislike to Sir Charles, who had deservedly the reputation of sobriety and great good nature and whose person was remarkably fine; but Lady Melvyn perceived the weakness of his understanding and, ignorant of the strength of her own, was unwilling to enter into life without a guide whose judgement was equal to the desire he might naturally be supposed to have to direct her right, through all the various paths in which she might be obliged to walk; an assistance she had always expected from a husband; and thought even a necessary

part of that character. She was besides sensible of the difficulty of performing a promise so solemnly made, as that of honour and obedience to one who, though she knew not half her own excellence, she must be sensible was her inferior.

These reasons had deterred Lady Melvyn from marrying Sir Charles, but when she could no longer avoid it without violating her duty to her parents, she resolved to supply the apparent deficiencies in her husband's understanding by a most respectful deference to his opinions, thus conferring distinction on him whom she wished everyone to esteem and honour; for as there was no affectation in this part of her conduct, any more than in the rest of her behaviour, all were convinced that the man who was respected by a woman of an understanding so superior to most of her own sex, and the greatest part of the other, must have great merit, though they could not perceive wherein it consisted.

In company Lady Melvyn always endeavoured to turn the conversation on such subjects as she know were best suited to Sir Charles's capacity, more desirous that he should appear to advantage than to display her own talents. She contrived to make all her actions appear the result of his choice, and whatever he did by her instigation seemed even to himself to have been his own thought. As their way of life was in every circumstance consonant to reason, religion, and every virtue which could render them useful and respectable to others, Sir Charles acquired a character in the neighbourhood which Lady Melvyn thought a sufficient reward for the endeavours she used to secure it to him; and, for

that purpose, fixed her abode entirely in the country, where his conduct might give him the respect which would not be so easily obtained in a gayer scene, where talents are in higher estimation than virtue.

Sir Charles and Lady Melvyn had no other child than the daughter I have mentioned, whose education was her mother's great care; and she had the pleasure of seeing in her an uncommon capacity, with every virtue the fondest parent could wish; and which indeed she had by inheritance; but her mother's humility made them appear to her as a peculiar gift of providence to her daughter.

Lady Melvyn soon began to instil all the principles of true religion into her daughter's infant mind; and, by her judicious instructions, gave her knowledge far superior to her years; which was indeed the most delightful task of this fond parent; for her daughter's uncommon docility and quick parts, continually stimulated by her tenderness for the best of mothers, made her improve even beyond Lady Melvyn's expectation.

In this happy situation Miss Melvyn continued till near the end of her fourteenth year, when she had the misfortune to lose this excellent parent, nor was she the only sufferer by Lady Melvyn's death; every poor person within her knowledge lost a benefactress; all who knew her, an excellent example; and, some, the best of friends; but her extraordinary merit was but imperfectly known till after her decease; for she had made Sir Charles appear so much the principal person, and director of all

their affairs; that till the change in his conduct proved how great her influence had been, she had only shared the approbation, which, afterwards, became all her own.

Human nature cannot feel a deeper affliction than now overwhelmed Miss Melvyn; wherein Sir Charles bore as great a share, as the easiness of his nature was capable of; but his heart was not susceptible, either of strong or lasting impressions. He walked in the path Lady Melvyn had traced out for him; and suffered his daughter to imitate her mother in benevolent duties; and she had profited too much by the excellent pattern, whereby she had endeavoured to regulate her actions, not to acquit herself far beyond what could have been expected at her years.

Miss Melvyn was not long indulged in the only consolation her grief could receive—that of being permitted to aim at an imitation of her mother—for Sir Charles had not been a widower quite a year when he married a young lady in the neighbourhood who had designed him this honour from the hour of Lady Melvyn's death; and to procure better opportunity for affecting her purpose had pretended a most affectionate compassion for Miss Melvyn's deep affliction; she visited her continually; and appeared so tenderly attached to her that Miss Melvyn, who had neither experience nor any guile in her own heart to inspire her with suspicions of an attempt to deceive her, made that return of affection which she thought gratitude required; nor was she at all disturbed when she found she was soon to look on this lady in another light than that in which she had hitherto seen her; it

was easy for her to respect one whom she before loved; and she had been taught so true a veneration for her father, that she felt no averseness to obey whomsoever he thought proper to give a title to her duty.

Miss Melvyn had but very little time to congratulate herself on having acquired for a mother a friend in whose conversation she hoped to enjoy great satisfaction and to feel the tenderness of an intimate changed into the fondness of a parent. She behaved to her with the same perfect respect, and all the humility of obedience, as if nature had placed her in that parental relation; fearing, if she gave way to the familiarity which had subsisted between them when they were on an equality, it might appear like a failure in the reverence due to her new situation.

But this behaviour, amiable as it was, could not make the new Lady Melvyn change the plan she had formed for her future conduct. She had not been married above a month before she began to intimate to Sir Charles that Miss Melvyn's education had been very imperfect; that a young lady of her rank ought to be highly accomplished; but that after she had been so long indulged by her parents, if a step-mother were to pretend to direct her it might not only exasperate Miss Melvyn but prejudice the world against herself; as people are too apt to determine against persons in that relation, without examining the merits of the cause; and though, she said, she was little concerned about the opinion of the world in comparison with her tender regard for any one that belonged to him; yet she was much influenced by

the other reasons she had alleged for not appearing to dictate to Miss Melvyn, being very desirous of keeping on affectionate terms with her; and she was already much mortified at perceiving that young lady had imbibed too many of the vulgar prejudices against a step-mother; though, for her part, she had endeavoured to behave with submission to her daughter, instead of pretending to assume any authority. The consequence and conclusion of all these insinuations was, that 'it would be advisable to send Miss Melvyn to a boarding school.'

Sir Charles was soon prevailed with to comply with his lady's request; and his daughter was acquainted with the determination which Lady Melvyn assured her, 'was very contrary to her inclination, who should find a great loss of so agreeable a friend, but that Sir Charles had declared his intention in so peremptory a manner that she dared not contend.'

Miss Melvyn had before observed that marriage had made a great alteration in Lady Melvyn's behaviour; but this was a stroke she did not expect and a very mortifying one to her who had long laid aside all childish amusements; had been taught to employ herself as rationally as if she had arrived at a maturer age, and been indulged in the exercise of a most benevolent disposition, having given such good proofs of the propriety with which she employed both her time and money, that she had been dispensed from all restraints; and now to commence a new infancy, and be confined to the society of children, was a very afflicting change; but it came from a hand she too much respected to make any

resistance, though she easily perceived that it was entirely at her mother's instigation; and knew her father too well to believe he could be peremptory on any occasion.

A very short time intervened between the declaration and execution of this design, and Miss Melvyn was introduced to Mademoiselle d'Avaux by her kind step-mother, who with some tears and many assurances of regret left her there. Miss Melvyn had been at this school three months when Louisa Mancel was brought thither, and though a separation from a father she sincerely loved, and the fear of the arts Lady Melvyn might use to alienate his affections from her, after having thus removed her from his presence, greatly affected her spirits and she found no companions fit to amuse her rational mind, yet she endeavoured to support her mortifications with all the cheerfulness she could assume; and received some satisfaction from the conversation of Mademoiselle d'Avaux, a woman of tolerable understanding, and who was much pleased with Miss Melvyn's behaviour.

Miss Mancel's dejected air prejudiced Miss Melvyn much in her favour, the usual consequence of a similitude of mind or manners; and when by a further knowledge of her, she perceived her uncommon share of understanding; her desire to learn; the strength of her application; the quickness of her apprehension; and her great sweetness of temper, she grew extremely fond of her; and as Miss Mancel's melancholy rendered her little inclined to play with those of her own age, she was almost always with Miss Melvyn, who found great pleasure in endeavouring

to instruct her; and grew to feel for her the tenderness of a mother, while Miss Mancel began to receive consolation from experiencing an affection quite maternal.

At the beginning of the winter, Lady Melvyn, who had less ambition to imitate the real merit of her predecessor than to exhibit her own imaginary perfections, brought Sir Charles to London, there to fix their residence for the ensuing half year. This made little alteration in Miss Melvyn's way of life. Sir Charles and his lady would sometimes call upon her, the latter not choosing to trust Sir Charles alone with his daughter, lest she should represent to him how unworthily she was treated; but as he was not devoid of affection for her, he would sometimes visit her privately, concealing it from his lady, who endeavoured to prevent this, by telling him, that schoolmistresses were apt to take amiss a parent's visiting his children too often, construing it as a distrust of their care; and therefore if he offended in that way, Mademoiselle d'Avaux's disgust might affect her behaviour to Miss Melvyn, and render her residence there very disagreeable, which Lady Melvyn's great tenderness made her ardently wish to avoid, as she was desirous every thing should be agreeable to her dear daughter. Sir Charles could not be entirely restrained by these kind admonitions from indulging himself with the sight of Miss Melvyn.

His lady had little reason to be afraid of these interviews, for her step-daughter had too strong a sense of filial obedience, and too delicate a regard for her father's happiness, to suffer

the least intimation of a fault in his wife to escape her lips, as a good opinion of her was so necessary to his ease; but as she soon found out these visits were made by stealth, they gave her great pleasure as a plain proof of his affection. Lady Melvyn thought her daughter's coming abroad would be as hurtful as her being visited at home, and therefore very seldom sent for her to her house; and when she did, took care to have her carried home before the hour that she expected company, on pretence of preserving the regularity of hours, which she knew would be agreeable to Mademoiselle d'Avaux.

The true reason of this great caution was an unwillingness to be seen with one whose person all her vanity could not prevent her from being sensible was more attractive than her own. Miss Melvyn was very pretty, had an engaging sweetness in her countenance, and all the bloom which belongs to youth, though it does not always accompany it. Her person was elegant, and perfectly genteel.

Lady Melvyn was void of delicacy; she had a regular set of features but they wanted to be softened into effeminacy before they could have any just pretence to beauty. Her eyes were black and not void of vivacity, but they neither expressed penetration nor gentleness. Her person was well proportioned, but she was formed on too large a scale, and destitute of grace. She was not ill bred, but had none of that softness of manners which gives rise to all the sweet civilities of life. In short, Lady Melvyn was one who by herself and many others would be esteemed a fine

woman, and by many more ranked only under the denomination of a shewey woman; like Mr Bayes's hero, she was unamiable, but she was great; she excited the admiration of some, but pleased none.

As soon as she appeared in the world as Lady Melvyn, she began to exercise what she thought only lively coquetry; but her entire want of grace and delicacy often made that appear like boldness, which she designed for vivacity. As her ambition to charm was as great as if she had been better qualified for success, it is not strange that she did not choose to give opportunities of comparison between herself and a daughter who, though not so striking at first sight, was filled with attractions.

The contempt which her ladyship thought she must in justice to her own understanding shew for her husband's, and the supercilious coldness with which she treated Miss Melvyn, made that young lady very glad that she was so seldom sent for to her father's house. But she wished to learn such accomplishments as whilst she lived in the country were out of her power, and therefore intimated to Lady Melvyn her desire of being taught music and drawing, with the better hope of success, as the necessity of completing her education had been made the excuse for sending her to a boarding school; but this request was denied her on frivolous pretences, the real cause, when she perceived the very extravagant turn of her step-mother, she soon understood was to avoid expense.

She had flattered herself she might obtain permission to have

her books sent to her; but upon enquiry found that Lady Melvyn had removed them to her dressing room, and intermixed them with china, in so ornamental a manner, so truly expressive of the turn of her mind, where a pretended love of reading was blended with a real fondness for trifles, that she had no chance for this indulgence.

While Miss Melvyn was suffering all these mortifications from a parent, Miss Mancel was receiving every proof of the most tender affection from one bound to her by no paternal ties. Mr Hintman, as soon as the season of the year brought him to town, visited his little charge, and was charmed with the vivacity which was now restored to her. He called upon her frequently, and seldom without some present, or a proposal of some pleasure. He would continually entreat her to make him some request, that he might have the pleasure of gratifying her. He frequently gave Mademoiselle d'Avaux tickets for the play and the opera, that the young Louisa might have somebody to accompany her; but as Miss Melvyn did not think it proper at her age to go often with only her schoolmistress, or, according to the language of schools, her governess, Miss Mancel frequently declined being of the party, rather than leave her amiable friend and instructor.

There was no one who shewed any particular civility to Miss Mancel, but received some return from Mr Hintman. Miss Melvyn was very deservedly the chief object of his gratitude; but as she declined accepting the presents he offered her, he chose a

way more agreeable to himself, as it would make his little Louisa the rewarder of the favours she received. He therefore was lavish of his money to her, and intreated her to lay it out in such manner as would be most agreeable to herself and Miss Melvyn; at the same time asking her by what means she could most gratify that young lady.

Miss Mancel said she knew nothing that would be so acceptable to Miss Melvyn as books. To this Mr Hintman replied that since that was the case, he could very easily accommodate them, for he had by him a very pretty library left him by his sister about a year before, which he had never unpacked, having most of the same books in his own study.

This accordingly he sent to Miss Mancel, with proper bookcases to contain them, which they immediately put up in their apartments. This was the most agreeable acquisition imaginable; for Miss Hintman having been a very sensible young lady, the collection was extremely valuable.

Mr Hintman's great indulgence could not fail of receiving from Miss Mancel the wished-for return of affection and gratitude; whenever he came she flew to him with delight, caressed him with all the fondness so enchanting at that age, and parted from him with the extremest reluctance. Her great obligations to him were the frequent subjects of her discourse with Miss Melvyn, who had the highest admiration of his generosity.

His allowance to Miss Mancel was sufficient to have defrayed

all her expenses, but those were to be the care of Mademoiselle d'Avaux, for the money he gave Louisa was for no other purpose than her gratifications; necessity, or even usefulness, was out of the question; every thing of that kind being provided for her. Nor was he more sparing in what concerned her education, she learnt dancing, music, and drawing; besides other things generally taught at schools; but her greatest improvement was from reading with Miss Melvyn, who instructed her in geography, and in such parts of philosophy of which her age was capable: but above all, she was most attentive to inculcate into her mind the principles of true religion.

Thus her understanding opened in a surprising degree, and while the beauty and graces of her person, and her great progress in genteel accomplishments, charmed every eye, the nice discernment, and uncommon strength of reason which appeared in her conversation, astonished every judicious observer; but her most admirable qualities were her humility and modesty; which, notwithstanding her great internal and external excellencies, rendered her diffident, mild, bashful, and tractable; her heart seemed as free from defects as her understanding was from the follies which in a degree are incident to almost every other person.

Miss Melvyn and her little companion received a considerable increase of happiness from the present of books Mr Hintman had made them; the latter had no wish but that Miss Melvyn might receive equal indulgence from parents that she enjoyed from one

who bore no relation to her. The first desire that occurred to her on Mr Hintman's profuse presents of money was to treat her friend with masters for music and drawing, and such other things as she knew she had an inclination to learn; but as she was not unacquainted with her delicacy on that subject, as soon as Mr Hintman left her, she ran to Miss Melvyn with some of the impatience in her countenance, though she endeavoured to conceal it, with which her heart was filled, and tried every tender caress, every fond and humble petition, to obtain a promise from that young lady, that she would grant her a request she had to make. She hung round her neck, and endeavoured to prevail by a thousand engaging infantine arts; and when she found they would not succeed, she knelt down before her, and with all the grace and importunity of the most amiable suppliant, tried to win her to compliance. Nothing would avail, for Miss Melvyn was convinced by her earnestness that her design was to confer some favour; she knew the generosity of her youthful mind too well to believe she so ardently aimed at any thing that was for her own private gratification.

Thus Louisa found herself reduced to explain the use she intended to have made of the promise she wanted to obtain; and having acquainted Miss Melvyn with Mr Hintman's generous allowance, and of the payment she had received of the first quarter, she in explicit terms told her, 'Mr Hintman has indeed given me money, but it depends on you to make that money yield me pleasure, by suffering me to apply it to such uses as will

procure me the inexpressible joy of contributing in some degree to the pleasure of one who renders my life so very happy.'

Miss Melvyn was so pleased with the generosity of her little pupil that she gave her as many caresses as the other had lavished on her in order to obtain the promise she so much wished for; but she could not be induced to grant her request. Miss Melvyn was void of that pride which often conceals itself under the name of spirit and greatness of soul; and makes people averse to receiving an obligation because they feel themselves too proud to be grateful, and think that to be obliged implies an inferiority which their pride cannot support. Had Louisa been of the same age with herself, she would have felt a kind of property in all she possessed; friendship, the tenure by which she held it; for where hearts are strictly united, she had no notion of any distinction in things of less importance, the adventitious goods of fortune. The boundaries and barriers raised by those two watchful and suspicious enemies, Meum and Tuum, were in her opinion broke down by true friendship; and all property laid in one undistinguished common; but to accept Miss Mancel's money, especially in so great a proportion, appeared to her like taking advantage of her youth; and as she did not think her old enough to be a sufficient judge of the value of it, she did not look upon her as capable of being a party in so perfect a friendship, as was requisite to constitute that unity of property.

Poor Louisa by this disappointment of the first wish of her heart found what older people often experience, that her riches

instead of pleasure procured her only mortification. She could scarcely refrain from tears at a refusal which she thought must arise from want of affection, and told Miss Melvyn she saw that she loved her but imperfectly; for, added she, 'Could we change places, with how much pleasure should I have accepted it from you! And the satisfaction that learning these things now gives me would be turned into delight by reflecting on the gratification you would receive in having been the means of procuring them for me. I should not envy you the joy of giving, because I as receiver should not have the less share of that satisfaction, since by reflecting on yours I must partake of it, and so increase my own.'

Miss Melvyn could not forbear blushing at finding a superior degree of delicacy, and a generosity much more exalted, in one so young, than she had felt in herself. She plainly saw that the greatest proof of a noble mind is to feel a joy in gratitude; for those who know all the pleasures of conferring an obligation will be sensible that by accepting it they give the highest delight the human mind can feel, when employed on human objects; and therefore while they receive a benefit, they will taste not only the comforts arising from it to themselves, but share the gratification of a benefactor, from reflecting on the joy they give to those who have conferred it: thus the receiver of a favour from a truly generous person, 'by owing owes not, and is at once indebted and discharged.'

As Miss Melvyn felt her little friend's reproach, and saw that

she had done her injustice in thinking her youth rendered her incapable of that perfection of friendship, which might justify the accepting of her offer; she acknowledged her error, and assured her she would comply if she had no other means of obtaining the instruction she proposed to purchase for her; but that was not the case, for she found she could very well learn from seeing the masters teach her, and practising in their absence.

Mr Hintman expressed a desire that Miss Mancel should learn Italian, if she had no objection to it; for he never dictated to her, but offered any advice he had to give, or any inclination which he chose to intimate, with the humility of a dependant, rather than the authority of a benefactor; and indeed it was sufficient; for the slightest hint that any thing would be agreeable to him, met with the most impatient desire in Miss Mancel to perform it: actuated by sincere affection, and the strongest gratitude, nothing made her so happy as an opportunity to shew him the readiness of her obedience.

But as they were at a loss for a master to teach her that language, Miss Melvyn told them she knew an Italian gentleman, who had been at Sir Charles's house near two months before she had the misfortune of losing the best of mothers. Lady Melvyn had begun to teach her daughter Italian, but desirous that she should speak it with great propriety, she invited this gentleman to her house who was reduced to great distress of circumstances, and whose person, as well as his many virtues, she had known from her childhood. He had been a friend of her father's and

she was glad of this excuse for making him a handsome present, which otherwise it was not easy to induce him to accept.

Mr Hintman was not long before he procured this Italian master for Miss Mancel; nor did she delay making use of his instructions; but I shall not describe her progress in the acquisition of this, any more than her other accomplishments, in all of which she excelled to a surprising degree; nor did Miss Melvyn fall very short of her, though she was at such disadvantage in her method of learning many of them, not having the assistance of a master. Their time was so entirely engrossed by these employments, that they had little leisure, and still less desire, to keep company with the rest of the school; but they saved themselves from the dislike which might naturally have arisen in the minds of the other scholars, from being thus neglected, by little presents which Miss Mancel frequently made them.

These two young ladies were very early risers, and the time which was not taken up by Miss Mancel's masters, and that wherein it was requisite to practise what they taught her, they employed in reading, wherein Mr d'Avora, their Italian master, often accompanied them.

Mr d'Avora was a man of excellent understanding, and had an incomparable heart. Misfortunes had softened common humanity into a most tender disposition; and had given him a thorough knowledge of mankind without lessening his benevolence for individuals; though such as learn it by adversity,

the surest school for that science, seldom see them in an amiable light.

Mr d'Avora was not less acquainted with particular nations than with mankind in general; he had travelled through all the countries in Europe, some parts of Asia and Africa, and having traversed them with discernment and the curiosity of wisdom, not of impertinence, he received such improvement of understanding, as few travellers can boast.

He had an affection for Miss Melvyn, both for her own merits and the obligations he had to her family, and a very short acquaintance with Miss Mancel made him extremely fond of her. He took great pleasure in assisting them in the improvement they so industriously laboured for, and as he was a man of universal knowledge, he was capable of being very useful to them in that respect. For this purpose he often read with them, and by explaining many books on abstruse subjects, rendered several authors intelligible to them, who, without his assistance, would have been too obscure for persons of their age. He had very few scholars, therefore had much leisure, and with great satisfaction dedicated part of it to our young ladies, as he saw he thereby gave them a very sincere pleasure; and he was much gratified with thinking that by his care and instruction of Miss Melvyn, he made some return for the friendship he had received from her family; and that could her mother be sensible of his attendance on her much-loved and now neglected daughter, it would be highly agreeable to her.

In the manner I have mentioned, these two young ladies passed their time, till Miss Mancel reached her fifteenth year, with little alteration, except the increase of her charms, and her great improvement in every accomplishment. Her appearance began to grow womanly, she was indeed

'In the bloom of beauty's pride'.

Dazzlingly handsome at first view; but such numerous and various charms appeared on a more intimate acquaintance that people forgot how much they had been struck by the first sight of her, lost in wonder at her increasing attractions, to the force of which she was the only person that was insensible. Humble piety rendered her indifferent to circumstances which she looked upon rather as snares than blessings, and like a person on the brink of a precipice could not enjoy the beauty of the prospect, overawed by the dangers of her situation.

She had indeed too much of human nature in her not to feel sometimes a little flush of vanity on seeing herself admired; but she immediately corrected the foible, by reflecting that whatever advantages of mind or form had fallen to her share, they were given her by one who expected she should not suffer her thoughts or attention to be withdrawn thereby from him, who was the perfection of all excellence, while she at best could but flatter herself with being less imperfect than many of her fellow creatures.

She considered flattery and admiration as the rocks on which young people, who are at all superior to the multitude, are apt

to be wrecked; deprived of quiet happiness in this world, and exalted felicity in the next; and as she was really convinced that she had only a few obvious external advantages over others, she opposed to the praises lavished on her reflections of her imperfections, which, though not apparent to any one but herself, she verily believed were uncommonly great, as she beheld them with very scrutinizing and rigid eyes, while she looked on those of others with the greatest lenity. But of all the means she used to preserve her humility, she was the most assiduous in praying to him who made her heart, to preserve it humble.

Though the degree of piety I mention may sound in the ears of many too grave for so young a person, yet it by no means rendered her so; she had great vivacity; a lively imagination; an uncommon share of wit; and a very happy manner of expressing herself. She had all the amiable gaiety of youth, without the least tendency to imprudence; and when she talked most, and, in appearance, let fancy assume the reins, said nothing to repent of. Her heart was all purity, universal benevolence and good-nature; and as out of its abundance her mouth spake, she was in little danger of offending with her tongue.

It is not strange that Mr Hintman's fondness should increase with Miss Mancel's excellencies, but the caresses which suited her earlier years were now become improper, and Mr Hintman, by appearing insensible of the necessary change of behaviour, reduced her to great difficulties; she could not reconcile herself to receiving them; and yet to inform him of the impropriety

implied a forward consciousness which she was not able to assume.

She communicated the vexation of her mind to Miss Melvyn, who was still more alarmed as her superior age and experience rendered her more apprehensive; but she knew not what to advise.

In this dilemma Miss Melvyn had recourse to their good friend, whose knowledge of mankind, his integrity and prudence, rendered him the safest guide. Accordingly one day when Louisa was called from them to Mr Hintman, who came to make her a visit, Miss Melvyn informed Mr d'Avora of the reason why her friend obeyed the summons with less joy than he had observed in her on the like occasion the year before.

Mr d'Avora was much disturbed at this information; but not choosing to increase the uneasiness the young ladies seemed to be under till he had more certain foundation for his opinion, he only intimated, that customs were hard to break, but he should hope, that when Mr Hintman reflected on the impropriety of behaving to a young woman as if she was still a child, he would alter it, and if he was not immediately sensible of the difference a small addition of age makes, yet her behaviour would lead him to recollect it.

Although Mr d'Avora seemed to pay little regard to what Miss Melvyn said, yet it made great impression on him, and as soon as he left her, he took all proper measures to enquire into the character, and usual conduct of Mr Hintman.

This scrutiny did not turn out at all to his satisfaction, every account he received was the same; he had not the pleasure of finding what is usually asserted, that 'all men have two characters'; for Mr Hintman had but one, and that the most alarming that could be for Miss Mancel. Every person told him that Mr Hintman had a very great fortune, which he spent entirely in the gratification of his favourite vice, the love of women; on whom his profuseness was boundless. That as he was easily captivated, so he was soon tired; and seldom kept a woman long after he had obtained the free possession of her; but generally was more bountiful than is customary with men of his debauched principles at parting with them.

This, Mr d'Avora was assured, was Mr Hintman's only vice; that he was good-natured, and generous on all occasions. From this account he saw too great reason to fear, that all the care which had been taken to improve Miss Mancel arose only from a sort of epicurism in his predominant vice, but yet this was too doubtful a circumstance to be the ground-work of any plan of action. A man of acknowledged generosity and good-nature, however vicious, might do a noble action without having any criminal design. In this uncertainty of mind he knew not what to advise her, and was unwilling to excite such fears in the breasts of these two young friends, as might be groundless; but yet would entirely destroy their peace, therefore, he only told Miss Melvyn in general terms, that Mr Hintman's character was such, as rendered it very necessary that Louisa should be much on her

guard; but that whether more than prudent caution, and decent reserve were requisite, her own observation must discover, for no one else could determine that point, since he had the reputation of being generous as well as debauched; therefore his actions towards her might be, and he hoped were, the result of his greatest virtue, rather than of his predominant vice.

Miss Melvyn made a faithful report of what Mr d'Avora had said to her, which filled both herself and her friend with inexpressible uneasiness.

Louisa was in great difficulty how to act, between gratitude and affection on the one side, and necessary caution and reserve on the other. She was almost as much afraid of appearing ungrateful, as of being imprudent. She found little assistance from the advice of her friends, who declared them selves incapable of directing her, therefore she was obliged to lay aside all dependence on her own care, and to trust in that of heaven, convinced that her innocence would be guarded by that power who knew the integrity and purity of her heart; and that while she preserved it unblemished, even in thought and inclination, her prayers for his protection would not be unavailing.

The remainder of the winter passed like the former part, only that the increase of her apprehensions so far lessened her easy vivacity, that Mr Hintman observed the alteration, and complained of the constraint and awe which damped her conversation.

As the school broke up at Easter, he intreated her to

accompany him that short time into the country, from which she would gladly have excused herself, both on account of her fears, and of her unwillingness to leave Miss Melvyn, of whose conversation she was now more particularly tenacious, as Lady Melvyn had determined to suffer her to return home in a short time, not knowing how to excuse her remaining longer at school, as she was entered into her one and twentieth year. Miss Melvyn would have been glad that her ladyship had not shewn this token of regard to popular opinion; for since she had enjoyed Miss Mancel's company, and been in possession of so good a collection of books, she was grown perfectly contented with her situation.

Louisa, to make Mr Hintman desist from the request he urged with so much importunity, tried every means that did not appear like a total disinclination to accompany him, for any thing that bore the air of ingratitude could not be supported by her, whose heart was so void of it, and who thought she could never feel enough for her benefactor, if his designs were not so criminal as she feared, but scarcely could suffer herself to suspect.

Mr Hintman was too ardent in his purposes to give up his favourite scheme, and Louisa beheld with inexpressible concern the day approach, when she must either accompany him into the country, or disoblige him for ever, and make herself appear extremely ungrateful in the eyes of a man whom she loved and honoured like a father. Her addresses to heaven for protection now became more vehement and continual, and the greatest part

of her time was spent on her knees in praying to that power in whom she trusted. Miss Melvyn and Mr d'Avora were scarcely less anxious, or under fewer apprehensions than herself, but could see no resource except in the protection of the Almighty, to whom we seldom apply with entire faith and resignation while we have any hopes in human assistance.

Two days before that fixed on for the purposed journey, when Louisa's anxiety was risen to the utmost height, the schoolmistress entered the room, with a countenance so melancholy, as was more suitable to the situation of mind in which the two young friends were then in, than to any reason they apprehended she could have for an air of so much sorrow. She soon began a discourse, which they immediately apprehended was preparatory to the opening of some fatal event, and which, as is usual in such cases, was, if possible, more alarming than any misfortune it could precede. The ladies expressed their fears, and begged to be acquainted with what had befallen them. After considerable efforts to deliver her of the secret with which she was pregnant, they learnt that a gentleman was in the parlour, who came to inform Miss Mancel that Mr Hintman died the day before in a fit of an apoplexy.

All Louisa's fears and suspicions vanished at once, and grief alone took possession of her heart. The shock so entirely overcame her, that she was not able to see the fatal messenger of such melancholy tidings as the death of her benefactor, and second father. Miss Melvyn was obliged to undertake this office,

and learnt from the gentleman that Mr Hintman died without a will, and therefore left the poor Louisa as destitute, except being enriched by various accomplishments, as he found her, and at a much more dangerous time, when her beauty would scarcely suffer compassion to arise unaccompanied with softer sentiments. This gentleman proceeded to inform Miss Melvyn, that his father and another person of equal relation to Mr Hintman were heirs at law. He expressed great concern for Miss Mancel, and wished he had his father's power of repairing Mr Hintman's neglect, but that his influence extended no farther than to obtain a commission to pay the expenses of another year at that school, that the young lady might have time to recollect herself after so fatal a change, and determine at leisure on her future course of life.

Miss Melvyn was so sensibly touched at the prospect of the approaching distress with which her friend was threatened, that she burst into tears and uttered some exclamations concerning 'the inconsistency of that affection, which could suffer a man to rest a moment without securing a provision in case of death, to a young woman he seemed to love with the greatest excess of tenderness'. 'Believe me, madam,' said the young gentleman, 'Mr Hintman was capable of no love that was not entirely sensual, and consequently selfish; all who knew him lamented the fate of a young woman, who by every account is so superiorly lovely. Among his friends he made no secret of his designs in all he had done for her, and boasted frequently of the extraordinary charms

which were ripening for his possession. It was but two days ago, that he was exulting in the presence of some of them, that the time was now approaching, when he should be rewarded for long expectation, and boundless expense; for he should then, he said, be sure of her person, and had long secured her heart. He knew he had strong prejudices and strange scruples to combat; but was prepared, and should not find them difficult to conquer; at worst, his steward in a parson's habit would lull them all to sleep.'

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.