Cecilia Volume 1

Frances Burney

Title: Cecilia Volume 1

Author: Frances Burney

Release Date: August, 2004 [EBook #6346]
[Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule]
[This file was first posted on November 29, 2002]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

Produced by Delphine Lettau, Charles Franks
and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team.

CECILIA

OR

Memoirs of an Heiress

by

FRANCES BURNEY

PREFACE

"Fanny's Cecilia came out last summer, and is as much liked and read, I believe, as any book ever was," wrote Charlotte Burney in Jan. 1783. "She had 250 pounds for it from Payne and Cadell. Most people say she ought to have had a thousand. It is now going into the third edition, though Payne owns that they printed two thousand at the first edition, and Lowndes told me five hundred was the common number for a novel." [Footnote: _The Early Diary of Frances Burney, with a selection from her correspondence, and from the journals of her sisters Susan and Charlotte Burney._ Edited by Annie Raine Ellis. 1889. Vol. II. p. 307.]

The manuscript of _Cecilia_ was submitted to Dr Burney and Mr Crisp during its composition, and their suggestions were in some cases adopted, as we learn from the _Diary_. Dr Johnson was not consulted, but a desire at once to imitate and to please him evidently controlled the work.

Under these circumstances it is naturally less fresh and spontaneous than _Evelina_, but it is more mature. The touch is surer and the plot more elaborate. We cannot to-day fully appreciate the "conflict scene between mother and son," for which, Miss Burney tells us, the book was written; but the pictures of eighteenth century affectations are all alive, and the story is thoroughly absorbing, except, perhaps, in the last book.

Miss Burney often took the name of her characters from her acquaintances, and it seems probable that some of the "types" in _Cecilia_ are also drawn from real life. The title of Miss Austen's _Pride and Prejudice_ was borrowed from _Cecilia_, and some points of resemblance may be traced between the two novels.

The present edition is reprinted from:--

CECILIA, or, Memoirs of an Heiress. By the author of Evelina. In five volumes. London: Printed for T. Payne and Son, at the Newsgate, and T. Cadell in the Strand. MDCCLXXXII. R. B. J.

THE RIGHT HON. EDMUND BURKE TO MISS F. BURNEY. (AFTER READING CECILIA.)

Madam,--I should feel exceedingly to blame if I could refuse to myself the natural satisfaction, and to you the just but poor return, of my best thanks for the very great instruction and entertainment I have received from the new present you have bestowed on the public. There are few--I believe I may say fairly there are none at all--that will not find themselves better informed

concerning human nature, and their stock of observation enriched, by reading your "Cecilia." They certainly will, let their experience in life and manners be what it may. The arrogance of age must submit to be taught by youth. You have crowded into a few small volumes an incredible variety of characters; most of them well planned, well supported, and well contrasted with each other. If there be any fault in this respect, it is one in which you are in no great danger of being imitated. Justly as your characters are drawn, perhaps they are too numerous. But I beg pardon; I fear it is quite in vain to preach economy to those who are come young to excessive and sudden opulence.

I might trespass on your delicacy if I should fill my letter to you with what I fill my conversation to others. I should be troublesome to you alone if I should tell you all I feel and think on the natural vein of humour, the tender pathetic, the comprehensive and noble moral, and the sagacious observation, that appear quite throughout that extraordinary performance.

In an age distinguished by producing extraordinary women, I hardly dare to tell you where my opinion would place you amongst them. I respect your modesty, that will not endure the commendations which your merit forces from everybody.

I have the honour to be, with great gratitude, respect, and esteem, madam, your most obedient and most humble servant,

EDM. BURKE

WHITEHALL, _July 19, 1782_.

My best compliments and congratulations to Dr Burney on the great honour acquired to his family.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The indulgence shewn by the Public to Evelina, which, unpatronized, unaided, and unowned, past through Four Editions in one Year, has encouraged its Author to risk this SECOND attempt. The animation of success is too universally acknowledged, to make the writer of the following sheets dread much censure of temerity; though the precariousness of any power to give pleasure, suppresses all vanity of confidence, and sends CECILIA into the world with scarce more hope, though far more encouragement, than attended her highly-honoured predecessor, Evelina.

July, 1782

CHAPTER i

A JOURNEY.

"Peace to the spirits of my honoured parents, respected be their remains, and immortalized their virtues! may time, while it moulders their frail relicks to dust, commit to tradition the record of their

goodness; and Oh, may their orphan-descendant be influenced through life by the remembrance of their purity, and be solaced in death, that by her it was unsullied!"

Such was the secret prayer with which the only survivor of the Beverley family quitted the abode of her youth, and residence of her forefathers; while tears of recollecting sorrow filled her eyes, and obstructed the last view of her native town which had excited them.

Cecilia, this fair traveller, had lately entered into the one-and-twentieth year of her age. Her ancestors had been rich farmers in the county of Suffolk, though her father, in whom a spirit of elegance had supplanted the rapacity of wealth, had spent his time as a private country gentleman, satisfied, without increasing his store, to live upon what he inherited from the labours of his predecessors. She had lost him in her early youth, and her mother had not long survived him. They had bequeathed to her 10,000 pounds, and consigned her to the care of the Dean of ------, her uncle. With this gentleman, in whom, by various contingencies, the accumulated possessions of a rising and prosperous family were centred, she had passed the last four years of her life; and a few weeks only had yet elapsed since his death, which, by depriving her of her last relation, made her heiress to an estate of 3000 pounds per annum; with no other restriction than that of annexing her name, if she married, to the disposal of her hand and her riches.

But though thus largely indebted to fortune, to nature she had yet greater obligations: her form was elegant, her heart was liberal; her countenance announced the intelligence of her mind, her complexion varied with every emotion of her soul, and her eyes, the heralds of her speech, now beamed with understanding and now glistened with sensibility.

For the short period of her minority, the management of her fortune and the care of her person, had by the Dean been entrusted to three guardians, among whom her own choice was to settle her residence: but her mind, saddened by the loss of all her natural friends, coveted to regain its serenity in the quietness of the country, and in the bosom of an aged and maternal counsellor, whom she loved as her mother, and to whom she had been known from her childhood.

The Deanery, indeed, she was obliged to relinquish, a long repining expectant being eager, by entering it, to bequeath to another the anxiety and suspense he had suffered himself; though probably without much impatience to shorten their duration in favour of the next successor; but the house of Mrs Charlton, her benevolent friend, was open for her reception, and the alleviating tenderness of her conversation took from her all wish of changing it.

Here she had dwelt since the interment of her uncle; and here, from the affectionate gratitude of her disposition, she had perhaps been content to dwell till her own, had not her guardians interfered to remove her.

Reluctantly she complied; she quitted her early companions, the friend she most revered, and the spot which contained the relicks of all she had yet lived to lament; and, accompanied by one of her guardians, and attended by two servants, she began her journey from Bury to London.

Mr Harrel, this gentleman, though in the prime of his life, though gay, fashionable and splendid, had been appointed by her uncle to be one of her trustees; a choice which had for object the peculiar gratification of his niece, whose most favourite young friend Mr Harrel had married, and in whose house he therefore knew she would most wish to live.

Whatever good-nature could dictate or politeness suggest to dispel her melancholy, Mr Harrel failed not to urge; and Cecilia, in whose disposition sweetness was tempered with dignity, and gentleness with fortitude, suffered not his kind offices to seem ineffectual; she kissed her hand at the last glimpse a friendly hill afforded of her native town, and made an effort to forget the regret with which she lost sight of it. She revived her spirits by plans of future happiness, dwelt upon the delight with which she should meet her young friend, and, by accepting his consolation, amply rewarded his trouble.

Her serenity, however, had yet another, though milder trial to undergo, since another friend was yet to be met, and another farewell was yet to be taken.

At the distance of seven miles from Bury resided Mr Monckton, the richest and most powerful man in that neighbourhood, at whose house Cecilia and her guardian were invited to breakfast in their journey.

Mr Monckton, who was the younger son of a noble family, was a man of parts, information and sagacity; to great native strength of mind he added a penetrating knowledge of the world, and to faculties the most skilful of investigating the character of every other, a dissimulation the most profound in concealing his own. In the bloom of his youth, impatient for wealth and ambitious of power, he had tied himself to a rich dowager of quality, whose age, though sixty-seven, was but among the smaller species of her evil properties, her disposition being far more repulsive than her wrinkles. An inequality of years so considerable, had led him to expect that the fortune he had thus acquired, would speedily be released from the burthen with which it was at present incumbered; but his expectations proved as vain as they were mercenary, and his lady was not more the dupe of his protestations than he was himself of his own purposes. Ten years he had been married to her, yet her health was good, and her faculties were unimpaired; eagerly he had watched for her dissolution, yet his eagerness had injured no health but his own! So short-sighted is selfish cunning, that in aiming no further than at the gratification of the present moment, it obscures the evils of the future, while it impedes the perception of integrity and honour.

His ardour, however, to attain the blessed period of returning liberty, deprived him neither of spirit nor inclination for intermediate enjoyment; he knew the world too well to incur its censure by ill-treating the woman to whom he was indebted for the rank he held in it; he saw her, indeed, but seldom, yet he had the decency, alike in avoiding as in meeting her, to shew no abatement of civility and good breeding: but, having thus sacrificed to ambition all possibility of happiness in domestic life, he turned his thoughts to those other methods of procuring it, which he had so dearly purchased the power of essaying.

The resources of pleasure to the possessors of wealth are only to be cut off by the satiety of which they are productive: a satiety which the vigorous mind of Mr Monckton had not yet suffered him to experience; his time, therefore, was either devoted to the expensive amusements of the metropolis, or spent in the country among the gayest of its diversions.

The little knowledge of fashionable manners and of the characters of the times of which Cecilia was yet mistress, she had gathered at the house of this gentleman, with whom the Dean her uncle had been intimately connected: for as he preserved to the world the same appearance of decency he supported to his wife, he was everywhere well received, and being but partially known, was extremely respected: the world, with its wonted facility, repaying his circumspect attention to its laws, by silencing the voice of censure, guarding his character from impeachment, and his name from reproach.

Cecilia had been known to him half her life; she had been caressed in his house as a beautiful child, and her presence was now solicited there as an amiable acquaintance. Her visits, indeed, had by no means been frequent, as the ill-humour of Lady Margaret Monckton had rendered them painful to her; yet the opportunities they had afforded her of mixing with people of fashion, had served to prepare her for the new scenes in which she was soon to be a performer.

Mr Monckton, in return, had always been a welcome guest at the Deanery; his conversation was to Cecilia a never-failing source of information, as his knowledge of life and manners enabled him to start those subjects of which she was most ignorant; and her mind, copious for the admission and intelligent for the arrangement of knowledge, received all new ideas with avidity.

Pleasure given in society, like money lent in usury, returns with interest to those who dispense it: and the discourse of Mr Monckton conferred not a greater favour upon Cecilia than her attention to it repaid. And thus, the speaker and the hearer being mutually gratified, they had always met with complacency, and commonly parted with regret.

This reciprocation of pleasure had, however, produced different effects upon their minds; the ideas of Cecilia were enlarged, while the reflections of Mr Monckton were embittered. He here saw an object who to all the advantages of that wealth he had so highly prized, added youth, beauty, and intelligence; though much her senior, he was by no means of an age to render his addressing her an impropriety, and the entertainment she received from his conversation, persuaded him that her good opinion might with ease be improved into a regard the most partial. He regretted the venal rapacity with which he had sacrificed himself to a woman he abhorred, and his wishes for her final decay became daily more fervent. He knew that the acquaintance of Cecilia was confined to a circle of which he was himself the principal ornament, that she had rejected all the proposals of marriage which had hitherto been made to her, and, as he had sedulously watched her from her earliest years, he had reason to believe that her heart had escaped any dangerous impression. This being her situation, he had long looked

upon her as his future property; as such he had indulged his admiration, and as such he had already appropriated her estate, though he had not more vigilantly inspected into her sentiments, than he had guarded his own from a similar scrutiny.

The death of the Dean her uncle had, indeed, much alarmed him; he grieved at her leaving Suffolk, where he considered himself the first man, alike in parts and in consequence, and he dreaded her residing in London, where he foresaw that numerous rivals, equal to himself in talents and in riches, would speedily surround her; rivals, too, youthful and sanguine, not shackled by present ties, but at liberty to solicit her immediate acceptance. Beauty and independence, rarely found together, would attract a crowd of suitors at once brilliant and assiduous; and the house of Mr Harrel was eminent for its elegance and gaiety; but yet, undaunted by danger, and confiding in his own powers, he determined to pursue the project he had formed, not fearing by address and perseverance to ensure its success.

CHAPTER ii

AN ARGUMENT.

Mr Monckton had, at this time, a party of company assembled at his house for the purpose of spending the Christmas holidays. He waited with anxiety the arrival of Cecilia, and flew to hand her from the chaise before Mr Harrel could alight. He observed the melancholy of her countenance, and was much pleased to find that her London journey had so little power to charm her. He conducted her to the breakfast parlour, where Lady Margaret and his friends expected her.

Lady Margaret received her with a coldness that bordered upon incivility; irascible by nature and jealous by situation, the appearance of beauty alarmed, and of chearfulness disgusted her. She regarded with watchful suspicion whoever was addressed by her husband, and having marked his frequent attendance at the Deanery, she had singled out Cecilia for the object of her peculiar antipathy; while Cecilia, perceiving her aversion though ignorant of its cause, took care to avoid all intercourse with her but what ceremony exacted, and pitied in secret the unfortunate lot of her friend.

The company now present consisted of one lady and several gentlemen.

Miss Bennet, the lady, was in every sense of the phrase, the humble companion of Lady Margaret; she was low-born, meanly educated, and narrow-minded; a stranger alike to innate merit or acquired accomplishments, yet skilful in the art of flattery, and an adept in every species of low cunning. With no other view in life than the attainment of affluence without labour, she was not more the slave of the mistress of the house, than the tool of its master; receiving indignity without murmur, and submitting to contempt as a thing of course.

Among the gentlemen, the most conspicuous, by means of his dress,

was Mr Aresby, a captain in the militia; a young man who having frequently heard the words red-coat and gallantry put together, imagined the conjunction not merely customary, but honourable, and therefore, without even pretending to think of the service of his country, he considered a cockade as a badge of politeness, and wore it but to mark his devotion to the ladies, whom he held himself equipped to conquer, and bound to adore.

The next who by forwardness the most officious took care to be noticed, was Mr Morrice, a young lawyer, who, though rising in his profession, owed his success neither to distinguished abilities, nor to skill-supplying industry, but to the art of uniting suppleness to others with confidence in himself. To a reverence of rank, talents, and fortune the most profound, he joined an assurance in his own merit, which no superiority could depress; and with a presumption which encouraged him to aim at all things, he blended a good-humour that no mortification could lessen. And while by the pliability of his disposition he avoided making enemies, by his readiness to oblige, he learned the surest way of making friends by becoming useful to them.

There were also some neighbouring squires; and there was one old gentleman, who, without seeming to notice any of the company, sat frowning in a corner.

But the principal figure in the circle was Mr Belfield, a tall, thin young man, whose face was all animation, and whose eyes sparkled with intelligence. He had been intended by his father for trade, but his spirit, soaring above the occupation for which he was designed, from repining led him to resist, and from resisting, to rebel. He eloped from his friends, and contrived to enter the army. But, fond of the polite arts, and eager for the acquirement of knowledge, he found not this way of life much better adapted to his inclination than that from which he had escaped; he soon grew weary of it, was reconciled to his father, and entered at the Temple. But here, too volatile for serious study, and too gay for laborious application, he made little progress: and the same quickness of parts and vigour of imagination which united with prudence, or accompanied by judgment, might have raised him to the head of his profession, being unhappily associated with fickleness and caprice, served only to impede his improvement, and obstruct his preferment. And now, with little business, and that little neglected, a small fortune, and that fortune daily becoming less, the admiration of the world, but that admiration ending simply in civility, he lived an unsettled and unprofitable life, generally caressed, and universally sought, yet careless of his interest and thoughtless of the future; devoting his time to company, his income to dissipation, and his heart to the Muses.

"I bring you," said Mr Monckton, as he attended Cecilia into the room, "a subject of sorrow in a young lady who never gave disturbance to her friends but in quitting them."

"If sorrow," cried Mr Belfield, darting upon her his piercing eyes, "wears in your part of the world a form such as this, who would wish to change it for a view of joy?"

"She's divinely handsome, indeed!" cried the Captain, affecting an involuntary exclamation.

Meantime, Cecilia, who was placed next to the lady of the house, quietly began her breakfast; Mr Morrice, the young lawyer, with the most easy freedom, seating himself at her side, while Mr Monckton was elsewhere arranging the rest of his guests, in order to secure that place for himself.

Mr Morrice, without ceremony, attacked his fair neighbour; he talked of her journey, and the prospects of gaiety which it opened to her view; but by these finding her unmoved, he changed his theme, and expatiated upon the delights of the spot she was quitting. Studious to recommend himself to her notice, and indifferent by what means, one moment he flippantly extolled the entertainments of the town; and the next, rapturously described the charms of the country. A word, a look sufficed to mark her approbation or dissent, which he no sooner discovered, than he slided into her opinion, with as much facility and satisfaction as if it had originally been his own.

Mr Monckton, suppressing his chagrin, waited some time in expectation that when this young man saw he was standing, he would yield to him his chair: but the remark was not made, and the resignation was not thought of. The Captain, too, regarding the lady as his natural property for the morning, perceived with indignation by whom he was supplanted; while the company in general, saw with much surprize, the place they had severally foreborne to occupy from respect to their host, thus familiarly seized upon by the man who, in the whole room, had the least claim, either from age or rank, to consult nothing but his own inclination.

Mr Monckton, however, when he found that delicacy and good manners had no weight with his guest, thought it most expedient to allow them none with himself; and therefore, disguising his displeasure under an appearance of facetiousness, he called out, "Come, Morrice, you that love Christmas sports, what say you to the game of move-all?"

"I like it of all things!" answered Morrice, and starting from his chair, he skipped to another.

"So should I too," cried Mr Monckton, instantly taking his place, "were I to remove from any seat but this."

Morrice, though he felt himself outwitted, was the first to laugh, and seemed as happy in the change as Mr Monckton himself.

Mr Monckton now, addressing himself to Cecilia, said, "We are going to lose you, and you seem concerned at leaving us; yet, in a very few months you will forget Bury, forget its inhabitants, and forget its environs."

"If you think so," answered Cecilia, "must I not thence infer that Bury, its inhabitants, and its environs, will in a very few months forget me?"

"Ay, ay, and so much the better!" said Lady Margaret, muttering between her teeth, "so much the better!" "I am sorry you think so, madam," cried Cecilia, colouring at her ill-breeding.

"You will find," said Mr Monckton, affecting the same ignorance of

her meaning that Cecilia really felt, "as you mix with the world, you will find that Lady Margaret has but expressed what by almost every body is thought: to neglect old friends, and to court new acquaintance, though perhaps not yet avowedly delivered as a precept from parents to children, is nevertheless so universally recommended by example, that those who act differently, incur general censure for affecting singularity."

"It is happy then, for me," answered Cecilia, "that neither my actions nor myself will be sufficiently known to attract public observation."

"You intend, then, madam," said Mr Belfield, "in defiance of these maxims of the world, to be guided by the light of your own understanding."

"And such," returned Mr Monckton, "at first setting out in life, is the intention of every one. The closet reasoner is always refined in his sentiments, and always confident in his virtue; but when he mixes with the world, when he thinks less and acts more, he soon finds the necessity of accommodating himself to such customs as are already received, and of pursuing quietly the track that is already marked out."

"But not," exclaimed Mr Belfield, "if he has the least grain of spirit! the beaten track will be the last that a man of parts will deign to tread,

> For common rules were ne'er designed
> Directors of a noble mind."

"A pernicious maxim! a most pernicious maxim!" cried the old gentleman, who sat frowning in a corner of the room.

"Deviations from common rules," said Mr Monckton, without taking any notice of this interruption, "when they proceed from genius, are not merely pardonable, but admirable; and you, Belfield, have a peculiar right to plead their merits; but so little genius as there is in the world, you must surely grant that pleas of this sort are very rarely to be urged."

"And why rarely," cried Belfield, "but because your general rules, your appropriated customs, your settled forms, are but so many absurd arrangements to impede not merely the progress of genius, but the use of understanding? If man dared act for himself, if neither worldly views, contracted prejudices, eternal precepts, nor compulsive examples, swayed his better reason and impelled his conduct, how noble indeed would he be! _how infinite in faculties! in apprehension how like a God!_" [Footnote: Hamlet.]

"All this," answered Mr Monckton, "is but the doctrine of a lively imagination, that looks upon impossibilities simply as difficulties, and upon difficulties as mere invitations to victory. But experience teaches another lesson; experience shows that the opposition of an individual to a community is always dangerous in the operation, and seldom successful in the event;--never, indeed, without a concurrence strange as desirable, of fortunate circumstances with great abilities."

"And why is this," returned Belfield, "but because the attempt is so seldom made? The pitiful prevalence of general conformity extirpates genius, and murders originality; the man is brought up, not as if he were 'the noblest work of God,' but as a mere ductile machine of human formation: he is early taught that he must neither consult his understanding, nor pursue his inclinations, lest, unhappily for his commerce with the world, his understanding should be averse to fools, and provoke him to despise them; and his inclinations to the tyranny of perpetual restraint, and give him courage to abjure it."

"I am ready enough to allow," answered Mr Monckton, "that an eccentric genius, such, for example, as yours, may murmur at the tediousness of complying with the customs of the world, and wish, unconfined, and at large, to range through life without any settled plan or prudential restriction; but would you, therefore, grant the same licence to every one? would you wish to see the world peopled with defiers of order, and contemners of established forms? and not merely excuse the irregularities resulting from uncommon parts, but encourage those, also, to lead, who without blundering cannot even follow?"

"I would have _all_ men," replied Belfield, "whether philosophers or ideots, act for themselves. Every one would then appear what he is; enterprize would be encouraged, and imitation abolished; genius would feel its superiority, and folly its insignificance; and then, and then only, should we cease to be surfeited with that eternal sameness of manner and appearance which at present runs through all ranks of men."

"Petrifying dull work this, _mon ami!_" said the Captain, in a whisper to Morrice, "_de grace_, start some new game."

"With all my heart," answered he; and then, suddenly jumping up, exclaimed, "A hare! a hare!"

"Where?--where?--which way?" and all the gentlemen arose, and ran to different windows, except the master of the house, the object of whose pursuit was already near him.

Morrice, with much pretended earnestness, flew from window to window, to trace footsteps upon the turf which he knew had not printed it: yet, never inattentive to his own interest, when he perceived in the midst of the combustion he had raised, that Lady Margaret was incensed at the noise it produced, he artfully gave over his search, and seating himself in a chair next to her, eagerly offered to assist her with cakes, chocolate, or whatever the table afforded.

He had, however, effectually broken up the conversation; and breakfast being over, Mr Harrel ordered his chaise, and Cecilia arose to take leave.

And now not without some difficulty could Mr Monckton disguise the uneasy fears which her departure occasioned him. Taking her hand, "I suppose," he said, "you will not permit an old friend to visit you in town, lest the sight of him should prove a disagreeable memorial of the time you will soon regret having wasted in the country?"

"Why will you say this, Mr Monckton?" cried Cecilia; "I am sure you

cannot think it."

"These profound studiers of mankind, madam," said Belfield, "are mighty sorry champions for constancy or friendship. They wage war with all expectations but of depravity, and grant no quarter even to the purest designs, where they think there will be any temptation to deviate from them."

"Temptation," said Mr Monckton, "is very easy of resistance in theory; but if you reflect upon the great change of situation Miss Beverley will experience, upon the new scenes she will see, the new acquaintance she must make, and the new connections she may form, you will not wonder at the anxiety of a friend for her welfare."

"But I presume," cried Belfield, with a laugh, "Miss Beverley does not mean to convey her person to town, and leave her understanding locked up, with other natural curiosities, in the country? Why, therefore, may not the same discernment regulate her adoption of new acquaintance, and choice of new connections, that guided her selection of old ones? Do you suppose that because she is to take leave of you, she is to take leave of herself?"

"Where fortune smiles upon youth and beauty," answered Mr Monckton, "do you think it nothing that their fair possessor should make a sudden transition of situation from the quietness of a retired life in the country, to the gaiety of a splendid town residence?"

"Where fortune _frowns_ upon youth and beauty," returned Belfield, "they may not irrationally excite commiseration; but where nature and chance unite their forces to bless the same object, what room there may be for alarm or lamentation I confess I cannot divine."

"What!" cried Mr Monckton, with some emotion, "are there not sharpers, fortune-hunters, sycophants, wretches of all sorts and denominations, who watch the approach of the rich and unwary, feed upon their inexperience, and prey upon their property?"

"Come, come," cried Mr Harrel, "it is time I should hasten my fair ward away, if this is your method of describing the place she is going to live in."

"Is it possible," cried the Captain, advancing to Cecilia, "that this lady has never yet tried the town?" and then, lowering his voice, and smiling languishingly in her face, he added, "Can anything so divinely handsome have been immured in the country? Ah! _quelle honte!_ do you make it a principle to be so cruel?"

Cecilia, thinking such a compliment merited not any other notice than a slight bow, turned to Lady Margaret, and said, "Should your ladyship be in town this winter, may I expect the honour of hearing where I may wait upon you?"

"I don't know whether I shall go or not," answered the old lady, with her usual ungraciousness.

Cecilia would now have hastened away, but Mr Monckton, stopping her, again expressed his fears of the consequences of her journey; "Be

upon your guard," he cried, "with all new acquaintance; judge nobody from appearances; form no friendship rashly; take time to look about you, and remember you can make no alteration in your way of life, without greater probability of faring worse, than chance of faring better. Keep therefore as you are, and the more you see of others, the more you will rejoice that you neither resemble nor are connected with them."

"This from you, Mr Monckton!" cried Belfield, "what is become of your conformity system? I thought all the world was to be alike, or only so much the worse for any variation?"

"I spoke," said Mr Monckton, "of the world in general, not of this lady in particular; and who that knows, who that sees her, would not wish it were possible she might continue in every respect exactly and unalterably what she is at present?"

"I find," said Cecilia, "you are determined that flattery at least, should I meet with it, shall owe no pernicious effects to its novelty."

"Well, Miss Beverley," cried Mr Harrel, "will you now venture to accompany me to town? Or has Mr Monckton frightened you from proceeding any farther?"

"If," replied Cecilia, "I felt no more sorrow in quitting my friends, than I feel terror in venturing to London, with how light a heart should I make the journey!"

"Brava!" cried Belfield, "I am happy to find the discourse of Mr Monckton has not intimidated you, nor prevailed upon you to deplore your condition in having the accumulated misery of being young, fair and affluent."

"Alas! poor thing!" exclaimed the old gentleman who sat in the corner, fixing his eyes upon Cecilia with an expression of mingled grief and pity.

Cecilia started, but no one else paid him any attention.

The usual ceremonies of leave-taking now followed, and the Captain, with most obsequious reverence, advanced to conduct Cecilia to the carriage; but in the midst of the dumb eloquence of his bows and smiles, Mr Morrice, affecting not to perceive his design, skipped gaily between them, and, without any previous formality, seized the hand of Cecilia himself; failing not, however, to temper the freedom of his action by a look of respect the most profound.

The Captain shrugged and retired. But Mr Monckton, enraged at his assurance, and determined it should nothing avail him, exclaimed, "Why how now, Morrice, do you take away the privilege of my house?"

"True, true;" answered Morrice, "you members of parliament have an undoubted right to be tenacious of your privileges." Then, bowing with a look of veneration to Cecilia, he resigned her hand with an air of as much happiness as he had taken it.

Mr Monckton, in leading her to the chaise, again begged permission to wait upon her in town: Mr Harrel took the hint, and entreated him

to consider his house as his own; and Cecilia, gratefully thanking him for his solicitude in her welfare, added, "And I hope, sir, you will honour me with your counsel and admonitions with respect to my future conduct, whenever you have the goodness to let me see you."

This was precisely his wish. He begged, in return, that she would treat him with confidence, and then suffered the chaise to drive off.

CHAPTER iii

AN ARRIVAL.

As soon as they lost sight of the house, Cecilia expressed her surprise at the behaviour of the old gentleman who sat in the corner, whose general silence, seclusion from the company, and absence of mind, had strongly excited her curiosity.

Mr Harrel could give her very little satisfaction: he told her that he had twice or thrice met him in public places, where everybody remarked the singularity of his manners and appearance, but that he had never discoursed with anyone to whom he seemed known; and that he was as much surprised as herself in seeing so strange a character at the house of Mr Monckton.

The conversation then turned upon the family they had just quitted, and Cecilia warmly declared the good opinion she had of Mr Monckton, the obligations she owed to him for the interest which, from her childhood, he had always taken in her affairs; and her hopes of reaping much instruction from the friendship of a man who had so extensive a knowledge of the world.

Mr Harrel professed himself well satisfied that she should have such a counsellor; for though but little acquainted with him, he knew he was a man of fortune and fashion, and well esteemed in the world. They mutually compassionated his unhappy situation in domestic life, and Cecilia innocently expressed her concern at the dislike Lady Margaret seemed to have taken to her; a dislike which Mr Harrel naturally enough imputed to her youth and beauty, yet without suspecting any cause more cogent than a general jealousy of attractions of which she had herself so long outlived the possession.

As their journey drew near to its conclusion, all the uneasy and disagreeable sensations which in the bosom of Cecilia had accompanied its commencement, gave way to the expectation of quick approaching happiness in again meeting her favourite young friend.

Mrs Harrel had in childhood been her playmate, and in youth her school-fellow; a similarity of disposition with respect to sweetness of temper, had early rendered them dear to each other, though the resemblance extended no farther, Mrs Harrel having no pretensions to the wit or understanding of her friend; but she was amiable and obliging, and therefore sufficiently deserving affection, though neither blazing with attractions which laid claim to admiration, nor

endowed with those superior qualities which mingle respect in the love they inspire.

From the time of her marriage, which was near three years, she had entirely quitted Suffolk, and had had no intercourse with Cecilia but by letter. She was now just returned from Violet Bank, the name given by Mr Harrel to a villa about twelve miles from London, where with a large party of company she had spent the Christmas holidays.

Their meeting was tender and affectionate; the sensibility of Cecilia's heart flowed from her eyes, and the gladness of Mrs Harrel's dimpled her cheeks.

As soon as their mutual salutations, expressions of kindness, and general inquiries had been made, Mrs Harrel begged to lead her to the drawing-room, "where," she added, "you will see some of my friends, who are impatient to be presented to you."

"I could have wished," said Cecilia, "after so long an absence, to have passed this first evening alone with you."

"They are all people who particularly desired to see you," she answered, "and I had them by way of entertaining you, as I was afraid you would be out of spirits at leaving Bury."

Cecilia, finding the kindness of her intentions, forbore any further expostulation, and quietly followed her to the drawing-room. But as the door was opened, she was struck with amazement upon finding that the apartment, which was spacious, lighted with brilliancy, and decorated with magnificence, was more than half filled with company, every one of which was dressed with gaiety and profusion.

Cecilia, who from the word friends, expected to have seen a small and private party, selected for the purpose of social converse, started involuntarily at the sight before her, and had hardly courage to proceed.

Mrs Harrel, however, took her hand and introduced her to the whole company, who were all severally named to her; a ceremonial which though not merely agreeable but even necessary to those who live in the gay world, in order to obviate distressing mistakes, or unfortunate implications in discourse, would by Cecilia have been willingly dispensed with, since to her their names were as new as their persons, and since knowing nothing of their histories, parties or connections, she could to nothing allude: it therefore served but to heighten her colour and increase her embarrassment.

A native dignity of mind, however, which had early taught her to distinguish modesty from bashfulness, enabled her in a short time to conquer her surprise, and recover her composure. She entreated Mrs Harrel to apologise for her appearance, and being seated between two young ladies, endeavoured to seem reconciled to it herself.

Nor was this very difficult; for while her dress, which she had not changed since her journey, joined to the novelty of her face, attracted general observation, the report of her fortune, which had preceded her entrance, secured to her general respect. She soon found, too, that a company was not necessarily formidable because full dressed, that familiarity could be united with magnificence,

and that though to her, every one seemed attired to walk in a procession, or to grace a drawing-room, no formality was assumed, and no solemnity was affected: every one was without restraint, even rank obtained but little distinction; ease was the general plan, and entertainment the general pursuit.

Cecilia, though new to London, which city the ill-health of her uncle had hitherto prevented her seeing, was yet no stranger to company; she had passed her time in retirement, but not in obscurity, since for some years past she had presided at the table of the Dean, who was visited by the first people of the county in which he lived: and notwithstanding his parties, which were frequent though small, and elegant though private, had not prepared her for the splendour or the diversity of a London assembly, they yet, by initiating her in the practical rules of good breeding, had taught her to subdue the timid fears of total inexperience, and to repress the bashful feelings of shamefaced awkwardness; fears and feelings which rather call for compassion than admiration, and which, except in extreme youth, serve but to degrade the modesty they indicate.

She regarded, therefore, the two young ladies between whom she was seated, rather with a wish of addressing, than a shyness of being attacked by them; but the elder, Miss Larolles, was earnestly engaged in discourse with a gentleman, and the younger, Miss Leeson, totally discouraged her, by the invariable silence and gravity with which from time to time she met her eyes.

Uninterrupted, therefore, except by occasional speeches from Mr and Mrs Harrel, she spent the first part of the evening merely in surveying the company.

Nor was the company dilatory in returning her notice, since from the time of her entrance into the room, she had been the object of general regard.

The ladies took an exact inventory of her dress, and internally settled how differently they would have been attired if blessed with equal affluence.

The men disputed among themselves whether or not she was painted; and one of them asserting boldly that she rouged well, a debate ensued, which ended in a bet, and the decision was mutually agreed to depend upon the colour of her cheeks by the beginning of April, when, if unfaded by bad hours and continual dissipation, they wore the same bright bloom with which they were now glowing, her champion acknowledged that his wager would be lost.

In about half an hour the gentleman with whom Miss Larolles had been talking, left the room, and then that young lady, turning suddenly to Cecilia, exclaimed, "How odd Mr Meadows is! Do you know, he says he shan't be well enough to go to Lady Nyland's assembly! How ridiculous! as if that could hurt him."

Cecilia, surprised at an attack so little ceremonious, lent her a civil, but silent attention.

"You shall be there, shan't you?" she added.

"No, ma'am, I have not the honour of being at all known to her

ladyship."

"Oh, there's nothing in that," returned she, "for Mrs Harrel can acquaint her you are here, and then, you know, she'll send you a ticket, and then you can go."

"A ticket?" repeated Cecilia, "does Lady Nyland only admit her company with tickets?"

"Oh, lord!" cried Miss Larolles, laughing immoderately, "don't you know what I mean? Why, a ticket is only a visiting card, with a name upon it; but we all call them tickets now."

Cecilia thanked her for the information, and then Miss Larolles enquired how many miles she had travelled since morning?

"Seventy-three," answered Cecilia, "which I hope will plead my apology for being so little dressed."

"Oh, you're vastly well," returned the other, "and for my part, I never think about dress. But only conceive what happened to me last year! Do you know I came to town the twentieth of March! was not that horrid provoking?"

"Perhaps so," said Cecilia, "but I am sure I cannot tell why."

"Not tell why?" repeated Miss Larolles, "why, don't you know it was the very night of the grand private masquerade at Lord Darien's? I would not have missed it for the whole universe. I never travelled in such an agony in my life: we did not get to town till monstrous late, and then do you know I had neither a ticket nor a habit! Only conceive what a distress! well, I sent to every creature I knew for a ticket, but they all said there was not one to be had; so I was just like a mad creature--but about ten or eleven o'clock, a young lady of my particular acquaintance, by the greatest good luck in the world happened to be taken suddenly ill; so she sent me her ticket, --was not that delightful?"

"For _her_, extremely!" said Cecilia, laughing.

"Well," she continued, "then I was almost out of my wits with joy; and I went about, and got one of the sweetest dresses you ever saw. If you'll call upon me some morning, I'll shew it you."

Cecilia, not prepared for an invitation so abrupt, bowed without speaking, and Miss Larolles, too happy in talking herself to be offended at the silence of another, continued her narration.

"Well, but now comes the vilest part of the business; do you know, when everything else was ready, I could not get my hair-dresser! I sent all over the town,--he was nowhere to be found; I thought I should have died with vexation; I assure you I cried so that if I had not gone in a mask, I should have been ashamed to be seen. And so, after all this monstrous fatigue, I was forced to have my hair dressed by my own maid, quite in a common way; was not it cruelly mortifying?"

"Why yes," answered Cecilia, "I should think it was almost sufficient to make you regret the illness of the young lady who sent

you her ticket."

They were now interrupted by Mrs Harrel, who advanced to them followed by a young man of a serious aspect and modest demeanour, and said, "I am happy to see you both so well engaged; but my brother has been reproaching me with presenting everybody to Miss Beverley but himself."

"I cannot hope," said Mr Arnott, "that I have any place in the recollection of Miss Beverley, but long as I have been absent from Suffolk, and unfortunate as I was in not seeing her during my last visit there, I am yet sure, even at this distance of time, grown and formed as she is, I should instantly have known her."

"Amazing!" cried an elderly gentleman, in a tone of irony, who was standing near them, "for the face is a very common one!"

"I remember well," said Cecilia, "that when you left Suffolk I thought I had lost my best friend."

"Is that possible?" cried Mr Arnott, with a look of much delight.

"Yes, indeed, and not without reason, for in all disputes you were my advocate; in all plays, my companion; and in all difficulties, my assistant."

"Madam," cried the same gentleman, "if you liked him because he was your advocate, companion, and assistant, pray like me too, for I am ready to become all three at once."

"You are very good," said Cecilia, laughing, "but at present I find no want of any defender."

"That's pity," he returned, "for Mr Arnott seems to me very willing to act the same parts over again with you."

"But for that purpose he must return to the days of his childhood."

"Ah, would to heaven it were possible!" cried Mr Arnott, "for they were the happiest of my life."

"After such a confession," said his companion, "surely you will let him attempt to renew them? 'tis but taking a walk backwards; and though it is very early in life for Mr Arnott to sigh for that retrograde motion, which, in the regular course of things, we shall all in our turns desire, yet with such a motive as recovering Miss Beverley for a playfellow, who can wonder that he anticipates in youth the hopeless wishes of age?"

Here Miss Larolles, who was one of that numerous tribe of young ladies to whom all conversation is irksome in which they are not themselves engaged, quitted her place, of which Mr Gosport, Cecilia's new acquaintance, immediately took possession.

"Is it utterly impossible," continued this gentleman, "that I should assist in procuring Mr Arnott such a renovation? Is there no subaltern part I can perform to facilitate the project? for I will either _hide_ or _seek_ with any boy in the parish; and for a _Q in the corner_, there is none more celebrated."

"I have no doubt, sir," answered Cecilia, "of your accomplishments; and I should be not a little entertained with the surprize of the company if you could persuade yourself to display them." "And what," cried he, "could the company do half so well as to rise also, and join in the sport? it would but interrupt some tale of scandal, or some description of a _toupee_. Active wit, however despicable when compared with intellectual, is yet surely better than the insignificant click-clack of modish conversation," casting his eyes towards Miss Larolles, "or even the pensive dullness of affected silence," changing their direction towards Miss Leeson.

Cecilia, though surprised at an attack upon the society her friend had selected, by one who was admitted to make a part of it, felt its justice too strongly to be offended at its severity.

"I have often wished," he continued, "that when large parties are collected, as here, without any possible reason why they might not as well be separated, something could be proposed in which each person might innocently take a share: for surely after the first half-hour, they can find little new to observe in the dress of their neighbours, or to display in their own; and with whatever seeming gaiety they may contrive to fill up the middle and end of the evening, by wire-drawing the comments afforded by the beginning, they are yet so miserably fatigued, that if they have not four or five places to run to every night, they suffer nearly as much from weariness of their friends in company, as they would do from weariness of themselves in solitude."

Here, by the general breaking up of the party, the conversation was interrupted, and Mr Gosport was obliged to make his exit; not much to the regret of Cecilia, who was impatient to be alone with Mrs Harrel.

The rest of the evening, therefore, was spent much more to her satisfaction; it was devoted to friendship, to mutual enquiries, to kind congratulations, and endearing recollections; and though it was late when she retired, she retired with reluctance.

CHAPTER iv

A SKETCH OF HIGH LIFE.

Eager to renew a conversation which had afforded her so much pleasure, Cecilia, neither sensible of fatigue from her change of hours nor her journey, arose with the light, and as soon as she was dressed, hastened to the breakfast apartment.

She had not, however, been more impatient to enter than she soon became to quit it; for though not much surprized to find herself there before her friend, her ardour for waiting her arrival was somewhat chilled, upon finding the fire but just lighted, the room cold, and the servants still employed in putting it in order.

At 10 o'clock she made another attempt: the room was then better

prepared for her reception, but still it was empty. Again she was retiring, when the appearance of Mr Arnott stopped her.

He expressed his surprize at her early rising, in a manner that marked the pleasure it gave to him; and then, returning to the conversation of the preceding evening, he expatiated with warmth and feeling upon the happiness of his boyish days, remembered every circumstance belonging to the plays in which they had formerly been companions, and dwelt upon every incident with a minuteness of delight that shewed his unwillingness ever to have done with the subject.

This discourse detained her till they were joined by Mrs Harrel, and then another, more gay and more general succeeded to it.

During their breakfast, Miss Larolles was announced as a visitor to Cecilia, to whom she immediately advanced with the intimacy of an old acquaintance, taking her hand, and assuring her she could no longer defer the honour of waiting upon her.

Cecilia, much amazed at this warmth of civility from one to whom she was almost a stranger, received her compliment rather coldly; but Miss Larolles, without consulting her looks, or attending to her manner, proceeded to express the earnest desire she had long had to be known to her; to hope they should meet very often; to declare nothing could make her so happy; and to beg leave to recommend to her notice her own milliner.

"I assure you," she continued, "she has all Paris in her disposal; the sweetest caps! the most beautiful trimmings! and her ribbons are quite divine! It is the most dangerous thing you can conceive to go near her; I never trust myself in her room but I am sure to be ruined. If you please, I'll take you to her this morning."

"If her acquaintance is so ruinous," said Cecilia, "I think I had better avoid it."

"Oh, impossible! there's no such thing as living without her. To be sure she's shockingly dear, that I must own; but then who can wonder? She makes such sweet things, 'tis impossible to pay her too much for them."

Mrs Harrel now joining in the recommendation, the party was agreed upon, and accompanied by Mr Arnott, the ladies proceeded to the house of the milliner.

Here the raptures of Miss Larolles were again excited: she viewed the finery displayed with delight inexpressible, enquired who were the intended possessors, heard their names with envy, and sighed with all the bitterness of mortification that she was unable to order home almost everything she looked at.

Having finished their business here, they proceeded to various other dress manufacturers, in whose praises Miss Larolles was almost equally eloquent, and to appropriate whose goods she was almost equally earnest: and then, after attending this loquacious young lady to her father's house, Mrs Harrel and Cecilia returned to their own.

Cecilia rejoiced at the separation, and congratulated herself that the rest of the day might be spent alone with her friend.

"Why, no," said Mrs Harrel, "not absolutely alone, for I expect some company at night."

"Company again to-night?"

"Nay, don't be frightened, for it will be a very small party; not more than fifteen or twenty in all."

"Is that so small a party?" said Cecilia, smiling; "and how short a time since would you, as well as I, have reckoned it a large one!"

"Oh, you mean when I lived in the country," returned Mrs Harrel; "but what in the world could I know of parties or company then?"

"Not much, indeed," said Cecilia, "as my present ignorance shews."

They then parted to dress for dinner.

The company of this evening were again all strangers to Cecilia, except Miss Leeson, who was seated next to her, and whose frigid looks again compelled her to observe the same silence she so resolutely practised herself. Yet not the less was her internal surprise that a lady who seemed determined neither to give nor receive any entertainment, should repeatedly chuse to show herself in a company with no part of which she associated.

Mr Arnott, who contrived to occupy the seat on her other side, suffered not the silence with which her fair neighbour had infected her to spread any further: he talked, indeed, upon no new subject; and upon the old one, of their former sports and amusements, he had already exhausted all that was worth being mentioned; but not yet had he exhausted the pleasure he received from the theme; it seemed always fresh and always enchanting to him; it employed his thoughts, regaled his imagination, and enlivened his discourse. Cecilia in vain tried to change it for another; he quitted it only by compulsion, and returned to it with redoubled eagerness.

When the company was retired, and Mr Arnott only remained with the ladies, Cecilia, with no little surprise, inquired for Mr Harrel, observing that she had not seen him the whole day.

"O!" cried his lady, "don't think of wondering at that, for it happens continually. He dines at home, indeed, in general, but otherwise I should see nothing of him at all."

"Indeed? why, how does he fill up his time?"

"That I am sure I cannot tell, for he never consults me about it; but I suppose much in the same way that other people do."

"Ah, Priscilla!" cried Cecilia, with some earnestness, "how little did I ever expect to see you so much a fine lady!"

"A fine lady?" repeated Mrs Harrel; "why, what is it I do? Don't I live exactly like every body else that mixes at all with the world?"

"You, Miss Beverley," said Mr Arnott in a low voice, "will I hope give to the world an example, not take one from it."

Soon after, they separated for the night.

The next morning, Cecilia took care to fill up her time more advantageously, than in wandering about the house in search of a companion she now expected not to find: she got together her books, arranged them to her fancy, and secured to herself for the future occupation of her leisure hours, the exhaustless fund of entertainment which reading, that richest, highest, and noblest source of intellectual enjoyment, perpetually affords.

While they were yet at breakfast, they were again visited by Miss Larolles. "I am come," cried she, eagerly, "to run away with you both to my Lord Belgrade's sale. All the world will be there; and we shall go in with tickets, and you have no notion how it will be crowded."

"What is to be sold there?" said Cecilia.

"Oh, every thing you can conceive; house, stables, china, laces, horses, caps, everything in the world."

"And do you intend to buy any thing?"

"Lord, no; but one likes to see the people's things."

Cecilia then begged they would excuse her attendance.

"O, by no means!" cried Miss Larolles; "you must go, I assure you; there'll be such a monstrous crowd as you never saw in your life. I dare say we shall be half squeezed to death."

"That," said Cecilia, "is an inducement which you must not expect will have much weight with a poor rustic just out of the country: it must require all the polish of a long residence in the metropolis to make it attractive."

"O but do go, for I assure you it will be the best sale we shall have this season. I can't imagine, Mrs Harrel, what poor Lady Belgrade will do with herself; I hear the creditors have seized every thing; I really believe creditors are the cruelest set of people in the world! they have taken those beautiful buckles out of her shoes! Poor soul! I declare it will make my heart ache to see them put up. It's quite shocking, upon my word. I wonder who'll buy them. I assure you they were the prettiest fancied I ever saw. But come, if we don't go directly, there will be no getting in."

Cecilia again desired to be excused accompanying them, adding that she wished to spend the day at home.

"At home, my dear?" cried Mrs Harrel; "why we have been engaged to Mrs Mears this month, and she begged me to prevail with you to be of the party. I expect she'll call, or send you a ticket, every moment"

"How unlucky for me," said Cecilia, "that you should happen to have so many engagements just at this time! I hope, at least, there will not be any for to-morrow."

"O yes; to-morrow we go to Mrs Elton's."

"Again to-morrow? and how long is this to last?"

"O, heaven knows; I'll shew you my catalogue."

She then produced a book which contained a list of engagements for more than three weeks. "And as these," she said, "are struck off, new ones are made; and so it is we go on till after the birth-day."

When this list had been examined and commented upon by Miss Larolles, and viewed and wondered at by Cecilia, it was restored to its place, the two ladies went together to the auction, permitting Cecilia, at her repeated request, to return to her own apartment.

She returned, however, neither satisfied with the behaviour of her friend, nor pleased with her own situation: the sobriety of her education, as it had early instilled into her mind the pure dictates of religion, and strict principles of honour, had also taught her to regard continual dissipation as an introduction to vice, and unbounded extravagance as the harbinger of injustice. Long accustomed to see Mrs Harrel in the same retirement in which she had hitherto lived herself, when books were their first amusement, and the society of each other was their chief happiness, the change she now perceived in her mind and manners equally concerned and surprised her. She found her insensible to friendship, indifferent to her husband, and negligent of all social felicity. Dress, company, parties of pleasure, and public places, seemed not merely to occupy all her time; but to gratify all her wishes. Cecilia, in whose heart glowed the warmest affections and most generous virtue, was cruelly depressed and mortified by this disappointment; yet she had the good sense to determine against upbraiding her, well aware that if reproach has any power over indifference, it is only that of changing it into aversion.

Mrs Harrel, in truth, was innocent of heart, though dissipated in life; married very young, she had made an immediate transition from living in a private family and a country town, to becoming mistress of one of the most elegant houses in Portman-square, at the head of a splendid fortune, and wife to a man whose own pursuits soon showed her the little value he himself set upon domestic happiness. Immersed in the fashionable round of company and diversions, her understanding, naturally weak, was easily dazzled by the brilliancy of her situation; greedily, therefore, sucking in air impregnated with luxury and extravagance, she had soon no pleasure but to vie with some rival in elegance, and no ambition but to exceed some superior in expence.

The Dean of----in naming Mr Harrel for one of the guardians of his niece, had no other view than that of indulging her wishes by allowing her to reside in the house of her friend: he had little personal knowledge of him, but was satisfied with the nomination, because acquainted with his family, fortune, and connections, all which persuaded him to believe without further enquiry, that it was more peculiarly proper for his niece than any other he could make.

In his choice of the other two trustees he had been more prudent; the first of these, the honourable Mr Delvile, was a man of high

birth and character; the second, Mr Briggs, had spent his whole life in business, in which he had already amassed an immense fortune, and had still no greater pleasure than that of encreasing it. From the high honour, therefore, of Mr Delvile, he expected the most scrupulous watchfulness that his niece should in nothing be injured, and from the experience of Mr Briggs in money matters, and his diligence in transacting business, he hoped for the most vigilant observance that her fortune, while under his care, should be turned to the best account. And thus, as far as he was able, he had equally consulted her pleasure, her security, and her pecuniary advantage.

Mrs Harrel returned home only in time to dress for the rest of the day.

When Cecilia was summoned to dinner, she found, besides her host and hostess and Mr Arnott, a gentleman she had not before seen, but who as soon as she entered the parlour, Mr Harrel presented to her, saying at the same time he was one of the most intimate of his friends.

This gentleman, Sir Robert Floyer, was about thirty years of age; his face was neither remarkable for its beauty nor its ugliness, but sufficiently distinguished by its expression of invincible assurance; his person, too, though neither striking for its grace nor its deformity, attracted notice from the insolence of his deportment. His manners, haughty and supercilious, marked the high opinion he cherished of his own importance; and his air and address, at once bold and negligent, announced his happy perfection in the character at which he aimed, that of an accomplished man of the town.

The moment Cecilia appeared, she became the object of his attention, though neither with the look of admiration due to her beauty, nor yet with that of curiosity excited by her novelty, but with the scrutinizing observation of a man on the point of making a bargain, who views with fault-seeking eyes the property he means to cheapen.

Cecilia, wholly unused to an examination so little ceremonious, shrunk abashed from his regards: but his conversation was not less displeasing to her than his looks; his principal subjects, which were horse-racing, losses at play, and disputes at gaming-tables, could afford her but little amusement, because she could not understand them; and the episodes with which they were occasionally interspersed, consisting chiefly of comparative strictures upon celebrated beauties, hints of impending bankruptcies, and witticisms upon recent divorces, were yet more disagreeable to her, because more intelligible. Wearied, therefore, with uninteresting anecdotes, and offended with injudicious subjects of pleasantry, she waited with impatience for the moment of retiring; but Mrs Harrel, less eager, because better entertained, was in no haste to remove, and therefore she was compelled to remain quiet, till they were both obliged to arise, in order to fulfil their engagement with Mrs Mears.

As they went together to the house of that lady, in Mrs Harrel's vis-a-vis, Cecilia, not doubting but their opinions concerning the Baronet would accord, instantly and openly declared her disapprobation of every thing he had uttered; but Mrs Harrel, far from confirming her expectations, only said, "I am sorry you don't

like him, for he is almost always with us?"

"Do you like him, then, yourself?"

"Extremely; he is very entertaining and clever, and knows the world."

"How judiciously do you praise him!" cried Cecilia; "and how long might you deliberate before you could add another word to his panegyric!"

Mrs Harrel, satisfied to commend, without even attempting to vindicate him, was soon content to change the subject; and Cecilia, though much concerned that the husband of her friend had made so disgraceful an election of a favourite, yet hoped that the lenity of Mrs Harrel resulted from her desire to excuse his choice, not from her own approbation.

CHAPTER v

AN ASSEMBLY.

Mrs Mears, whose character was of that common sort which renders delineation superfluous, received them with the customary forms of good breeding.

Mrs Harrel soon engaged herself at a card-table; and Cecilia, who declined playing, was seated next to Miss Leeson, who arose to return the courtesy she made in advancing to her, but that past, did not again even look at her.

Cecilia, though fond of conversation and formed for society, was too diffident to attempt speaking where so little encouraged; they both, therefore, continued silent, till Sir Robert Floyer, Mr Harrel, and Mr Arnott entered the room together, and all at the same time advanced to Cecilia.

"What," cried Mr Harrel, "don't you chuse to play, Miss Beverley?"

"I flatter myself," cried Mr Arnott, "that Miss Beverley never plays at all, for then, in one thing, I shall have the honour to resemble her."

"Very seldom, indeed," answered Cecilia, "and consequently very ill."

"O, you must take a few lessons," said Mr Harrel, "Sir Robert Floyer, I am sure, will be proud to instruct you."

Sir Robert, who had placed himself opposite to her, and was staring full in her face, made a slight inclination of his head, and said, "Certainly."

"I should be a very unpromising pupil," returned Cecilia, "for I fear I should not only want diligence to improve, but desire."

"Oh, you will learn better things," said Mr Harrel; "we have had you yet but three days amongst us,--in three months we shall see the difference."

"I hope not," cried Mr Arnott, "I earnestly hope there will be none!"

Mr Harrel now joined another party; and Mr Arnott seeing no seat vacant near that of Cecilia, moved round to the back of her chair, where he patiently stood for the rest of the evening. But Sir Robert still kept his post, and still, without troubling himself to speak, kept his eyes fixed upon the same object.

Cecilia, offended by his boldness, looked a thousand ways to avoid him; but her embarrassment, by giving greater play to her features, served only to keep awake an attention which might otherwise have wearied. She was almost tempted to move her chair round and face Mr Arnott, but though she wished to shew her disapprobation of the Baronet, she had not yet been reconciled by fashion to turning her back upon the company at large, for the indulgence of conversing with some particular person: a fashion which to unaccustomed observers seems rude and repulsive, but which, when once adopted, carries with it imperceptibly its own recommendation, in the ease, convenience and freedom it promotes.

Thus disagreeably stationed, she found but little assistance from the neighbourhood of Mr Arnott, since even his own desire of conversing with her, was swallowed up by an anxious and involuntary impulse to watch the looks and motions of Sir Robert.

At length, quite tired of sitting as if merely an object to be gazed at, she determined to attempt entering into conversation with Miss Leeson.

The difficulty, however, was not inconsiderable how to make the attack; she was unacquainted with her friends and connections, uninformed of her way of thinking, or her way of life, ignorant even of the sound of her voice, and chilled by the coldness of her aspect: yet, having no other alternative, she was more willing to encounter the forbidding looks of this lady, than to continue silently abashed under the scrutinizing eyes of Sir Robert.

After much deliberation with what subject to begin, she remembered that Miss Larolles had been present the first time they had met, and thought it probable they might be acquainted with each other; and therefore, bending forward, she ventured to enquire if she had lately seen that young lady?

Miss Leeson, in a voice alike inexpressive of satisfaction or displeasure, quietly answered, "No, ma'am."

Cecilia, discouraged by this conciseness, was a few minutes silent; but the perseverance of Sir Robert in staring at her, exciting her own in trying to avoid his eyes, she exerted herself so far as to add, "Does Mrs Mears expect Miss Larolles here this evening?"

Miss Leeson, without raising her head, gravely replied, "I don't know, ma'am."

All was now to be done over again, and a new subject to be started, for she could suggest nothing further to ask concerning Miss Larolles.

Cecilia had seen, little of life, but that little she had well marked, and her observation had taught her, that among fashionable people, public places seemed a never-failing source of conversation and entertainment: upon this topic, therefore, she hoped for better success; and as to those who have spent more time in the country than in London, no place of amusement is so interesting as a theatre, she opened the subject she had so happily suggested, by an enquiry whether any new play had lately come out?

Miss Leeson, with the same dryness, only answered, "Indeed, I can't tell."

Another pause now followed, and the spirits of Cecilia were considerably dampt; but happening accidentally to recollect the name of Almack, she presently revived, and, congratulating herself that she should now be able to speak of a place too fashionable for disdain, she asked her, in a manner somewhat more assured, if she was a subscriber to his assemblies?

"Yes, ma'am."

"Do you go to them constantly?"

"No, ma'am."

Again they were both silent. And now, tired of finding the ill-success of each particular enquiry, she thought a more general one might obtain an answer less laconic, and therefore begged she would inform her what was the most fashionable place of diversion for the present season?

This question, however, cost Miss Leeson no more trouble than any which had preceded it, for she only replied, "Indeed I don't know."

Cecilia now began to sicken of her attempt, and for some minutes to give it up as hopeless; but afterwards when she reflected how frivolous were the questions she had asked, she felt more inclined to pardon the answers she had received, and in a short time to fancy she had mistaken contempt for stupidity, and to grow less angry with Miss Leeson than ashamed of herself.

This supposition excited her to make yet another trial of her talents for conversation, and therefore, summoning all the courage in her power, she modestly apologised for the liberty she was taking, and then begged her permission to enquire whether there was anything new in the literary way that she thought worth recommending?

Miss Leeson now turned her eyes towards her, with a look that implied a doubt whether she had heard right; and when the attentive attitude of Cecilia confirmed her question, surprise for a few instants took place of insensibility, and with rather more spirit than she had yet shown, she answered, "Indeed, I know nothing of the matter."

Cecilia was now utterly disconcerted; and half angry with herself, and wholly provoked with her sullen neighbour, she resolved to let nothing in future provoke her to a similar trial with so unpromising a subject.

She had not, however, much longer to endure the examination of Sir Robert, who being pretty well satisfied with staring, turned upon his heel, and was striding out of the room, when he was stopt by Mr Gosport, who for some time had been watching him.

Mr Gosport was a man of good parts, and keen satire: minute in his observations, and ironical in his expressions.

"So you don't play, Sir Robert?" he cried.

"What, here? No, I am going to Brookes's."

"But how do you like Harrel's ward? You have taken a pretty good survey of her."

"Why, faith, I don't know; but not much, I think; she's a devilish fine woman, too; but she has no spirit, no life."

"Did you try her? Have you talked to her?"

"Not I, truly!"

"Nay, then how do you mean to judge of her?"

"O, faith, that's all over, now; one never thinks of talking to the women by way of trying them."

"What other method, then, have you adopted?"

"None."

"None? Why, then, how do you go on?"

"Why, they talk to us. The women take all that trouble upon themselves now."

"And pray how long may you have commenced _fade macaroni?_ For this is a part of your character with which I was not acquainted."

"Oh, hang it, 'tis not from _ton_; no, it's merely from laziness. Who the d---l will fatigue himself with dancing attendance upon the women, when keeping them at a distance makes them dance attendance upon us?"

Then stalking from him to Mr Harrel, he took him by the arm, and they left the room together.

Mr Gosport now advanced to Cecilia, and addressing her so as not to be heard by Miss Leeson, said, "I have been wishing to approach you, some time, but the fear that you are already overpowered by the loquacity of your fair neighbour makes me cautious of attempting to engage you."

"You mean," said Cecilia, "to laugh at _my_ loquacity, and indeed its ill success has rendered it sufficiently ridiculous."

"Are you, then, yet to learn," cried he, "that there are certain young ladies who make it a rule never to speak but to their own cronies? Of this class is Miss Leeson, and till you get into her particular coterie, you must never expect to hear from her a word of two syllables. The TON misses, as they are called, who now infest the town, are in two divisions, the SUPERCILIOUS, and the VOLUBLE. The SUPERCILIOUS, like Miss Leeson, are silent, scornful, languid, and affected, and disdain all converse but with those of their own set: the VOLUBLE, like Miss Larolles, are flirting, communicative, restless, and familiar, and attack without the smallest ceremony, every one they think worthy their notice. But this they have in common, that at home they think of nothing but dress, abroad, of nothing but admiration, and that every where they hold in supreme contempt all but themselves."

"Probably, then," said Cecilia, "I have passed tonight, for one of the VOLUBLES; however, all the advantage has been with the SUPERCILIOUS, for I have suffered a total repulse."

"Are you sure, however, you have not talked too well for her?"

"O, a child of five years old ought to have been whipt for not talking better!"

"But it is not capacity alone you are to consult when you talk with misses of the TON; were their understandings only to be considered, they would indeed be wonderfully easy of access! in order, therefore, to render their commerce somewhat difficult, they will only be pleased by an observance of their humours: which are ever most various and most exuberant where the intellects are weakest and least cultivated. I have, however, a receipt which I have found infallible for engaging the attention of young ladies of whatsoever character or denomination."

"O, then," cried Cecilia, "pray favour me with it, for I have here an admirable opportunity to try its efficacy."

"I will give it you," he answered, "with full directions. When you meet with a young lady who seems resolutely determined not to speak, or who, if compelled by a direct question to make some answer, drily gives a brief affirmative, or coldly a laconic negative---"

"A case in point," interrupted Cecilia.

"Well, thus circumstanced," he continued, "the remedy I have to propose consists of three topics of discourse."

"Pray what are they?"

"Dress, public places, and love."

Cecilia, half surprised and half diverted, waited a fuller explanation without giving any interruption.

"These three topics," he continued, "are to answer three purposes, since there are no less than three causes from which the silence of

young ladies may proceed: sorrow, affectation, and stupidity."

"Do you, then," cried Cecilia, "give nothing at all to modesty?"

"I give much to it," he answered, "as an excuse, nay almost as an equivalent for wit; but for that sullen silence which resists all encouragement, modesty is a mere pretence, not a cause."

"You must, however, be somewhat more explicit, if you mean that I should benefit from your instructions."

"Well, then," he answered, "I will briefly enumerate the three causes, with directions for the three methods of cure. To begin with sorrow. The taciturnity which really results from that is attended with an incurable absence of mind, and a total unconsciousness of the observation which it excites; upon this occasion, public places may sometimes be tried in vain, and even dress may fail; but love--"

"Are you sure, then," said Cecilia, with a laugh, "that sorrow has but that one source?"

"By no means," answered he, "for perhaps papa may have been angry, or mama may have been cross; a milliner may have sent a wrong pompoon, or a chaperon to an assembly may have been taken ill--"

"Bitter subjects of affliction, indeed! And are these all you allow us?"

"Nay, I speak but of young ladies of fashion, and what of greater importance can befall them? If, therefore, the grief of the fair patient proceeds from papa, mama, or the chaperon, then the mention of public places, those endless incentives of displeasure between the old and the young, will draw forth her complaints, and her complaints will bring their own cure, for those who lament find speedy consolation: if the milliner has occasioned the calamity, the discussion of dress will have the same effect; should both these medicines fail, love, as I said before, will be found infallible, for you will then have investigated every subject of uneasiness which a youthful female in high life can experience."

"They are greatly obliged to you," cried Cecilia, bowing, "for granting them motives of sorrow so honourable, and I thank you in the name of the whole sex."

"You, madam," said he, returning her bow, "are I hope an exception in the happiest way, that of having no sorrow at all. I come, now, to the silence of affectation, which is presently discernible by the roving of the eye round the room to see if it is heeded, by the sedulous care to avoid an accidental smile, and by the variety of disconsolate attitudes exhibited to the beholders. This species of silence has almost without exception its origin in that babyish vanity which is always gratified by exciting attention, without ever perceiving that it provokes contempt. In these cases, as nature is wholly out of the question, and the mind is guarded against its own feelings, dress and public places are almost certain of failing, but here again love is sure to vanquish; as soon as it is named, attention becomes involuntary, and in a short time a struggling simper discomposes the arrangement of the features, and then the business is presently over, for the young lady is either supporting

some system, or opposing some proposition, before she is well aware that she has been cheated out of her sad silence at all."

"So much," said Cecilia, "for sorrow and for affectation. Proceed next to stupidity; for that, in all probability, I shall most frequently encounter." "That always must be heavy work," returned he, "yet the road is plain, though it is all up hill. Love, here, may be talked of without exciting any emotion, or provoking any reply, and dress may be dilated upon without producing any other effect than that of attracting a vacant stare; but public places are indubitably certain of success. Dull and heavy characters, incapable of animating from wit or from reason, because unable to keep pace with them, and void of all internal sources of entertainment, require the stimulation of shew, glare, noise, and bustle, to interest or awaken them. Talk to them of such subjects, and they adore you; no matter whether you paint to them joy or horror, let there but be action, and they are content; a battle has charms for them equal to a coronation, and a funeral amuses them as much as a wedding."

"I am much obliged to you," said Cecilia, smiling, "for these instructions; yet I must confess I know not how upon the present occasion to make use of them: public places I have already tried, but tried in vain; dress I dare not mention, as I have not yet learned its technical terms--"

"Well, but," interrupted he, "be not desperate; you have yet the third topic unessayed."

"O, that," returned she, laughing, "I leave to you."

"Pardon me," cried he; "love is a source of loquacity only with yourselves: when it is started by men, young ladies dwindle into mere listeners. _Simpering_ listeners, I confess; but it is only with one another that you will discuss its merits."

At this time they were interrupted by the approach of Miss Larolles, who, tripping towards Cecilia, exclaimed, "Lord, how glad I am to see you! So you would not go to the auction! Well, you had a prodigious loss, I assure you. All the wardrobe was sold, and all Lady Belgrade's trinkets. I never saw such a collection of sweet things in my life. I was ready to cry that I could not bid for half a hundred of them. I declare I was kept in an agony the whole morning. I would not but have been there for the world. Poor Lady Belgrade! you really can't conceive how I was shocked for her. All her beautiful things sold for almost nothing. I assure you, if you had seen how they went, you would have lost all patience. It's a thousand pities you were not there."

"On the contrary," said Cecilia, "I think I had a very fortunate escape, for the loss of patience without the acquisition of the trinkets, would have been rather mortifying."

"Yes," said Mr Gosport; "but when you have lived some time longer in this commercial city, you will find the exchange of patience for mortification the most common and constant traffic amongst its inhabitants."

"Pray, have you been here long?" cried Miss Larolles, "for I have

been to twenty places, wondering I did not meet with you before. But whereabouts is Mrs Mears? O, I see her now; I'm sure there's no mistaking her; I could know her by that old red gown half a mile off. Did you ever see such a frightful thing in your life? And it's never off her back. I believe she sleeps in it. I am sure I have seen her in nothing else all winter. It quite tires one's eye. She's a monstrous shocking dresser. But do you know I have met with the most provoking thing in the world this evening? I declare it has made me quite sick. I was never in such a passion in my life. You can conceive nothing like it."

"Like what?" cried Cecilia, laughing; "your passion, or your provocation?"

"Why, I'll tell you what it was, and then you shall judge if it was not quite past endurance. You must know I commissioned a particular friend of mine, Miss Moffat, to buy me a trimming when she went to Paris; well, she sent it me over about a month ago by Mr Meadows, and it's the sweetest thing you ever saw in your life; but I would not make it up, because there was not a creature in town, so I thought to bring it out quite new in about a week's time, for you know any thing does till after Christmas. Well, to-night at Lady Jane Dranet's, who should I meet but Miss Moffat! She had been in town some days, but so monstrously engaged I could never find her at home. Well, I was quite delighted to see her, for you must know she's a prodigious favourite with me, so I ran up to her in a great hurry to shake hands, and what do you think was the first thing that struck my eyes? Why, just such a trimming as my own, upon a nasty, odious gown, and half dirty! Can you conceive anything so distressing? I could have cried with pleasure."

"Why so?" said Cecilia. "If her trimming is dirty, yours will look the more delicate."

"O Lord! but it's making it seem quite an old thing! Half the town will get something like it. And I quite ruined myself to buy it. I declare, I don't think anything was ever half so mortifying. It distressed me so, I could hardly speak to her. If she had stayed a month or two longer, I should not have minded it, but it was the cruellest thing in the world to come over just now. I wish the Custom-house officers had kept all her cloaths till summer."

"The wish is tender, indeed," said Cecilia, "for a _particular friend_."

Mrs Mears now rising from the card-table, Miss Larolles tript away to pay her compliments to her.

"Here, at least," cried Cecilia, "no receipt seems requisite for the cure of silence! I would have Miss Larolles be the constant companion of Miss Leeson: they could not but agree admirably, since that SUPERCILIOUS young lady seems determined never to speak, and the VOLUBLE Miss Larolles never to be silent. Were each to borrow something of the other, how greatly would both be the better!"

"The composition would still be a sorry one," answered Mr Gosport, "for I believe they are equally weak, and equally ignorant; the only difference is, that one, though silly, is quick, the other, though deliberate, is stupid. Upon a short acquaintance, that heaviness

which leaves to others the whole weight of discourse, and whole search of entertainment, is the most fatiguing, but, upon a longer intimacy, even that is less irksome and less offensive, than the flippancy which hears nothing but itself."

Mrs Harrel arose now to depart, and Cecilia, not more tired of the beginning of the evening than entertained with its conclusion, was handed to the carriage by Mr Arnott.

CHAPTER vi

A BREAKFAST.

The next morning, during breakfast, a servant acquainted Cecilia that a young gentleman was in the hall, who begged to speak with her. She desired he might be admitted; and Mrs Harrel, laughing, asked if she ought not to quit the room; while Mr Arnott, with even more than his usual gravity, directed his eye towards the door to watch who should enter.

Neither of them, however, received any satisfaction when it was opened, for the gentleman who made his appearance was unknown to both: but great was the amazement of Cecilia, though little her emotion, when she saw Mr Morrice!

He came forward with an air of the most profound respect for the company in general, and obsequiously advancing to Cecilia, made an earnest enquiry into her health after her journey, and hoped she had heard good news from her friends in the country.

Mrs Harrel, naturally concluding both from his visit and behaviour, that he was an acquaintance of some intimacy, very civilly offered him a seat and some breakfast, which, very frankly, he accepted. But Mr Arnott, who already felt the anxiety of a rising passion which was too full of veneration to be sanguine, looked at him with uneasiness, and waited his departure with impatience.

Cecilia began to imagine he had been commissioned to call upon her with some message from Mr Monckton: for she knew not how to suppose that merely and accidentally having spent an hour or two in the same room with her, would authorize a visiting acquaintance. Mr Morrice, however, had a faculty the most happy of reconciling his pretensions to his inclination; and therefore she soon found that the pretence she had suggested appeared to him unnecessary. To lead, however, to the subject from which she expected his excuse, she enquired how long he had left Suffolk?

"But yesterday noon, ma'am," he answered, "or I should certainly have taken the liberty to wait upon you before."

Cecilia, who had only been perplexing herself to devise some reason why he came at all, now looked at him with a grave surprize, which would totally have abashed a man whose courage had been less, or whose expectations had been greater; but Mr Morrice, though he had hazarded every danger upon the slightest chance of hope, knew too

well the weakness of his claims to be confident of success, and had been too familiar with rebuffs to be much hurt by receiving them. He might possibly have something to gain, but he knew he had nothing to lose.

"I had the pleasure," he continued, "to leave all our friends well, except poor Lady Margaret, and she has had an attack of the asthma; yet she would not have a physician, though Mr Monckton would fain have persuaded her: however, I believe the old lady knows better things." And he looked archly at Cecilia: but perceiving that the insinuation gave her nothing but disgust, he changed his tone, and added, "It is amazing how well they live together; nobody would imagine the disparity in their years. Poor old lady! Mr Monckton will really have a great loss of her when she dies."

"A loss of her!" repeated Mrs Harrel, "I am sure she is an exceeding ill-natured old woman. When I lived at Bury, I was always frightened out of my wits at the sight of her."

"Why indeed, ma'am," said Morrice, "I must own her appearance is rather against her: I had myself a great aversion to her at first sight. But the house is chearful,--very chearful; I like to spend a few days there now and then of all things. Miss Bennet, too, is agreeable enough, and----"

"Miss Bennet agreeable!" cried Mrs Harrel, "I think she's the most odious creature I ever knew in my life; a nasty, spiteful old maid!"

"Why indeed, ma'am, as you say," answered Morrice, "she is not very young; and as to her temper, I confess I know very little about it; and Mr Monckton is likely enough to try it, for he is pretty severe."

"Mr Monckton," cried Cecilia, extremely provoked at hearing him censured by a man she thought highly honoured in being permitted to approach him, "whenever _I_ have been his guest, has merited from me nothing but praise and gratitude."

"O," cried Morrice, eagerly, "there is not a more worthy man in the world! he has so much wit, so much politeness! I don't know a more charming man anywhere than my friend Mr Monckton." Cecilia now perceiving that the opinions of her new acquaintance were as pliant as his bows, determined to pay him no further attention, and hoped by sitting silent to force from him the business of his visit, if any he had, or if, as she now suspected, he had none, to weary him into a retreat.

But this plan, though it would have succeeded with herself, failed with Mr Morrice, who to a stock of good humour that made him always ready to oblige others, added an equal portion of insensibility that hardened him against all indignity. Finding, therefore, that Cecilia, to whom his visit was intended, seemed already satisfied with its length, he prudently forbore to torment her; but perceiving that the lady of the house was more accessible, he quickly made a transfer of his attention, and addressed his discourse to her with as much pleasure as if his only view had been to see her, and as much ease as if he had known her all his life.

With Mrs Harrel this conduct was not injudicious; she was pleased

with his assiduity, amused with his vivacity, and sufficiently satisfied with his understanding. They conversed, therefore, upon pretty equal terms, and neither of them were yet tired, when they were interrupted by Mr Harrel, who came into the room, to ask if they had seen or heard any thing of Sir Robert Floyer?

"No," answered Mrs Harrel, "nothing at all."

"I wish he was hanged," returned he, "for he has kept me waiting this hour. He made me promise not to ride out till he called and now he'll stay till the morning is over."

"Pray where does he live, sir?" cried Morrice, starting from his seat.

"In Cavendish Square, sir," answered Mr Harrel, looking at him with much surprise.

Not a word more said Morrice, but scampered out of the room.

"Pray who is this Genius?" cried Mr Harrel, "and what has he run away for?"

"Upon my word I know nothing at all of him," said Mrs Harrel; "he is a visitor of Miss Beverley's."

"And I, too," said Cecilia, "might almost equally disclaim all knowledge of him; for though I once saw, I never was introduced to him."

She then began a relation of her meeting him at Mr Monckton's house, and had hardly concluded it, before again, and quite out of breath, he made his appearance.

"Sir Robert Floyer, sir," said he to Mr Harrel, "will be here in two minutes."

"I hope, sir," said Mr Harrel, "you have not given yourself the trouble of going to him?"

"No, sir, it has given me nothing but pleasure; a run these cold mornings is the thing I like best."

"Sir, you are extremely good," said Mr Harrel, "but I had not the least intention of your taking such a walk upon my account."

He then begged him to be seated, to rest himself, and to take some refreshment; which civilities he received without scruple.

"But, Miss Beverley," said Mr Harrel, turning suddenly to Cecilia, "you don't tell me what you think of my friend?"

"What friend, sir?"

"Why, Sir Robert Floyer; I observed he never quitted you a moment while he stayed at Mrs Mears."

"His stay, however, was too short," said Cecilia, "to allow me to form a fair opinion of him."

"But perhaps," cried Morrice," it was long enough to allow you to form a _foul_ one."

Cecilia could not forbear laughing to hear the truth thus accidentally blundered out; but Mr Harrel, looking very little pleased, said, "Surely you can find no fault with him? he is one of the most fashionable men I know."

"My finding fault with him then," said Cecilia, "will only farther prove what I believe is already pretty evident, that I am yet a novice in the art of admiration."

Mr Arnott, animating at this speech, glided behind her chair, and said, "I knew you could not like him! I knew it from the turn of your mind;--I knew it even from your countenance!"

Soon after, Sir Robert Floyer arrived.

"You are a pretty fellow, a'n't you," cried Mr Harrel, "to keep me waiting so long."

"I could not come a moment sooner; I hardly expected to get here at all, for my horse has been so confounded resty I could not tell how to get him along."

"Do you come on horseback through the streets, Sir Robert?" asked Mrs Harrel.

"Sometimes; when I am lazy. But what the d---l is the matter with him I don't know; he has started at everything. I suspect there has been some foul play with him."

"Is he at the door, sir?" cried Morrice.

"Yes," answered Sir Robert.

"Then I'll tell you what's the matter with him in a minute;" and away again ran Morrice.

"What time did you get off last night, Harrel?" said Sir Robert.

"Not very early; but you were too much engaged to miss me. By the way," lowering his voice, "what do you think I lost?"

"I can't tell indeed, but I know what I gained: I have not had such a run of luck this winter."

They then went up to a window to carry on their enquiries more privately.

At the words _what do you think I lost_, Cecilia, half starting, cast her eyes uneasily upon Mrs Harrel, but perceived not the least change in her countenance. Mr Arnott, however, seemed as little pleased as herself, and from a similar sensation looked anxiously at his sister.

Morrice now returning, called out, "He's had a fall, I assure you!"

"Curse him!" cried Sir Robert, "what shall I do now? he cost me the d---l and all of money, and I have not had him a twelvemonth. Can you lend me a horse for this morning, Harrel?"

"No, I have not one that will do for you. You must send to Astley."

"Who can I send? John must take care of this."

"I'll go, sir," cried Morrice, "if you'll give me the commission."

"By no means, sir," said Sir Robert, "I can't think of giving you such an office."

"It is the thing in the world I like best," answered he; "I understand horses, and had rather go to Astley's than any where."

The matter was now settled in a few minutes, and having received his directions, and an invitation to dinner, Morrice danced off, with a heart yet lighter than his heels.

"Why, Miss Beverley," said Mr Harrel, "this friend of yours is the most obliging gentleman I ever met with; there was no avoiding asking him to dinner."

"Remember, however," said Cecilia, who was involuntarily diverted at the successful officiousness of her new acquaintance, "that if you receive him henceforth as your guest, he obtains admission through his own merits, and not through my interest."

At dinner, Morrice, who failed not to accept the invitation of Mr Harrel, was the gayest, and indeed the happiest man in the company: the effort he had made to fasten himself upon Cecilia as an acquaintance, had not, it is true, from herself met with much encouragement; but he knew the chances were against him when he made the trial, and therefore the prospect of gaining admission into such a house as Mr Harrel's, was not only sufficient to make amends for what scarcely amounted to a disappointment, but a subject of serious comfort from the credit of the connection, and of internal exultation at his own management and address.

In the evening, the ladies, as usual, went to a private assembly, and, as usual, were attended to it by Mr Arnott. The other gentlemen had engagements elsewhere.

CHAPTER vii

A PROJECT.

Several days passed on nearly in the same manner; the mornings were all spent in gossipping, shopping and dressing, and the evenings were regularly appropriated to public places, or large parties of company.

Meanwhile Mr Arnott lived almost entirely in Portman Square; he slept, indeed, at his own lodgings, but he boarded wholly with Mr

Harrel, whose house he never for a moment quitted till night, except to attend Cecilia and his sister in their visitings and rambles.

Mr Arnott was a young man of unexceptionable character, and of a disposition mild, serious and benignant: his principles and blameless conduct obtained the universal esteem of the world, but his manners, which were rather too precise, joined to an uncommon gravity of countenance and demeanour, made his society rather permitted as a duty, than sought as a pleasure.

The charms of Cecilia had forcibly, suddenly and deeply penetrated his heart; he only lived in her presence, away from her he hardly existed: the emotions she excited were rather those of adoration than of love, for he gazed upon her beauty till he thought her more than human, and hung upon her accents till all speech seemed impertinent to him but her own. Yet so small were his expectations of success, that not even to his sister did he hint at the situation of his heart: happy in an easy access to her, he contented himself with seeing, hearing and watching her, beyond which bounds he formed not any plan, and scarce indulged any hope.

Sir Robert Floyer, too, was a frequent visitor in Portman Square, where he dined almost daily. Cecilia was chagrined at seeing so much of him, and provoked to find herself almost constantly the object of his unrestrained examination; she was, however, far more seriously concerned for Mrs Harrel, when she discovered that this favourite friend of her husband was an unprincipled spendthrift, and an extravagant gamester, for as he was the inseparable companion of Mr Harrel, she dreaded the consequence both of his influence and his example.

She saw, too, with an amazement that daily increased, the fatigue, yet fascination of a life of pleasure: Mr Harrel seemed to consider his own house merely as an hotel, where at any hour of the night he might disturb the family to claim admittance, where letters and messages might be left for him, where he dined when no other dinner was offered him, and where, when he made an appointment, he was to be met with. His lady, too, though more at home, was not therefore more solitary; her acquaintance were numerous, expensive and idle, and every moment not actually spent in company, was scrupulously devoted to making arrangements for that purpose.

In a short time Cecilia, who every day had hoped that the next would afford her greater satisfaction, but who every day found the present no better than the former, began to grow weary of eternally running the same round, and to sicken at the irksome repetition of unremitting yet uninteresting dissipation. She saw nobody she wished to see, as she had met with nobody for whom she could care; for though sometimes those with whom she mixed appeared to be amiable, she knew that their manners, like their persons, were in their best array, and therefore she had too much understanding to judge decisively of their characters. But what chiefly damped her hopes of forming a friendship with any of the new acquaintance to whom she was introduced, was the observation she herself made how ill the coldness of their hearts accorded with the warmth of their professions; upon every first meeting, the civilities which were shewn her, flattered her into believing she had excited a partiality that a very little time would ripen into affection; the next meeting commonly confirmed the expectation; but the third, and every future

one, regularly destroyed it. She found that time added nothing to their fondness, nor intimacy to their sincerity; that the interest in her welfare which appeared to be taken at first sight, seldom, with whatever reason, increased, and often without any, abated; that the distinction she at first met with, was no effusion of kindness, but of curiosity, which is scarcely sooner gratified than satiated; and that those who lived always the life into which she had only lately been initiated, were as much harassed with it as herself, though less spirited to relinquish, and more helpless to better it, and that they coveted nothing but what was new, because they had experienced the insufficiency of whatever was familiar.

She began now to regret the loss she sustained in quitting the neighbourhood, and being deprived of the conversation of Mr Monckton, and yet more earnestly to miss the affection and sigh for the society of Mrs Charlton, the lady with whom she had long and happily resided at Bury; for she was very soon compelled to give up all expectation of renewing the felicity of her earlier years, by being restored to the friendship of Mrs Harrel, in whom she had mistaken the kindness of childish intimacy for the sincerity of chosen affection; and though she saw her credulous error with mortification and displeasure, she regretted it with tenderness and sorrow. "What, at last," cried she, "is human felicity, who has tasted, and where is it to be found? If I, who, to others, seem marked out for even a partial possession of it,--distinguished by fortune, caressed by the world, brought into the circle of high life, and surrounded with splendour, seek without finding it, yet losing, scarce know how I miss it!"

Ashamed upon reflection to believe she was considered as an object of envy by others, while repining and discontented herself, she determined no longer to be the only one insensible to the blessings within her reach, but by projecting and adopting some plan of conduct better suited to her taste and feelings than the frivolous insipidity of her present life, to make at once a more spirited and more worthy use of the affluence, freedom, and power which she possessed.

A scheme of happiness at once rational and refined soon presented itself to her imagination. She purposed, for the basis of her plan, to become mistress of her own time, and with this view, to drop all idle and uninteresting acquaintance, who, while they contribute neither to use nor pleasure, make so large a part of the community, that they may properly be called the underminers of existence; she could then shew some taste and discernment in her choice of friends, and she resolved to select such only as by their piety could elevate her mind, by their knowledge improve her understanding, or by their accomplishments and manners delight her affections. This regulation, if strictly adhered to, would soon relieve her from the fatigue of receiving many visitors, and therefore she might have all the leisure she could desire for the pursuit of her favourite studies, music and reading.

Having thus, from her own estimation of human perfection, culled whatever was noblest for her society, and from her own ideas of sedentary enjoyments arranged the occupations of her hours of solitude, she felt fully satisfied with the portion of happiness which her scheme promised to herself, and began next to consider what was due from her to the world.

And not without trembling did she then look forward to the claims which the splendid income she was soon to possess would call upon her to discharge. A strong sense of DUTY, a fervent desire to ACT RIGHT, were the ruling characteristics of her mind: her affluence she therefore considered as a debt contracted with the poor, and her independence as a tie upon her liberality to pay it with interest.

Many and various, then, soothing to her spirit and grateful to her sensibility, were the scenes which her fancy delineated; now she supported an orphan, now softened the sorrows of a widow, now snatched from iniquity the feeble trembler at poverty, and now rescued from shame the proud struggler with disgrace. The prospect at once exalted her hopes, and enraptured her imagination; she regarded herself as an agent of Charity, and already in idea anticipated the rewards of a good and faithful delegate; so animating are the designs of disinterested benevolence! so pure is the bliss of intellectual philanthropy!

Not immediately, however, could this plan be put in execution; the society she meant to form could not be selected in the house of another, where, though to some she might shew a preference, there were none she could reject: nor had she yet the power to indulge, according to the munificence of her wishes, the extensive generosity she projected: these purposes demanded a house of her own, and the unlimited disposal of her fortune, neither of which she could claim till she became of age. That period, however, was only eight months distant, and she pleased herself with the intention of meliorating her plan in the meantime, and preparing to put it in practice.

But though, in common with all the race of still-expecting man, she looked for that happiness in the time to come which the present failed to afford, she had yet the spirit and good sense to determine upon making every effort in her power to render her immediate way of life more useful and contented.

Her first wish, therefore, now, was to quit the house of Mr Harrel, where she neither met with entertainment nor instruction, but was perpetually mortified by seeing the total indifference of the friend in whose society she had hoped for nothing but affection.

The will of her uncle, though it obliged her while under age to live with one of her guardians, left her at liberty to chuse and to change amongst them according to her wishes or convenience: she determined, therefore, to make a visit herself to each of them, to observe their manners and way of life, and then, to the best of her judgment, decide with which she could be most contented: resolving, however, not to hint at her intention till it was ripe for execution, and then honestly to confess the reasons of her retreat.

She had acquainted them both of her journey to town the morning after her arrival. She was almost an entire stranger to each of them, as she had not seen Mr Briggs since she was nine years old, nor Mr Delvile within the time she could remember.

The very morning that she had settled her proceedings for the arrangement of this new plan, she intended to request the use of Mrs Harrel's carriage, and to make, without delay, the visits preparatory to her removal; but when she entered the parlour upon a

summons to breakfast, her eagerness to quit the house gave way, for the present, to the pleasure she felt at the sight of Mr Monckton, who was just arrived from Suffolk.

She expressed her satisfaction in the most lively terms, and scrupled not to tell him she had not once been so much pleased since her journey to town, except at her first meeting with Mrs Harrel.

Mr Monckton, whose delight was infinitely superior to her own, and whose joy in seeing her was redoubled by the affectionate frankness of her reception, stifled the emotions to which her sight gave rise, and denying himself the solace of expressing his feelings, seemed much less charmed than herself at the meeting, and suffered no word nor look to escape him beyond what could be authorised by friendly civility.

He then renewed with Mrs Harrel an acquaintance which had been formed before her marriage, but which [he] had dropt when her distance from Cecilia, upon whose account alone he had thought it worth cultivation, made it no longer of use to him. She afterwards introduced her brother to him; and a conversation very interesting to both the ladies took place, concerning several families with which they had been formerly connected, as well as the neighbourhood at large in which they had lately dwelt.

Very little was the share taken by Mr Arnott in these accounts and enquiries; the unaffected joy with which Cecilia had received Mr Monckton, had struck him with a sensation of envy as involuntary as it was painful; he did not, indeed, suspect that gentleman's secret views; no reason for suspicion was obvious, and his penetration sunk not deeper than appearances; he knew, too, that he was married, and therefore no jealousy occurred to him; but still she had smiled upon him!--and he felt that to purchase for himself a smile of so much sweetness, he would have sacrificed almost all else that was valuable to him upon earth.

With an attention infinitely more accurate, Mr Monckton had returned his observations. The uneasiness of his mind was apparent, and the anxious watchfulness of his eyes plainly manifested whence it arose. From a situation, indeed, which permitted an intercourse the most constant and unrestrained with such an object as Cecilia, nothing less could be expected, and therefore he considered his admiration as inevitable; all that remained to be discovered, was the reception it had met from his fair enslaver. Nor was he here long in doubt; he soon saw that she was not merely free from all passion herself, but had so little watched Mr Arnott as to be unconscious she had inspired any.

Yet was his own serenity, though apparently unmoved, little less disturbed in secret than that of his rival; he did not think him a formidable candidate, but he dreaded the effects of intimacy, fearing she might first grow accustomed to his attentions, and then become pleased with them. He apprehended, also, the influence of his sister and of Mr Harrel in his favour; and though he had no difficulty to persuade himself that any offer he might now make would be rejected without hesitation, he knew too well the insidious properties of perseverance, to see him, without inquietude, situated so advantageously.

The morning was far advanced before he took leave, yet he found no opportunity of discoursing with Cecilia, though he impatiently desired to examine into the state of her mind, and to discover whether her London journey had added any fresh difficulties to the success of his long-concerted scheme. But as Mrs Harrel invited him to dinner, he hoped the afternoon would be more propitious to his wishes.

Cecilia, too, was eager to communicate to him her favourite project, and to receive his advice with respect to its execution. She had long been used to his counsel, and she was now more than ever solicitous to obtain it, because she considered him as the only person in London who was interested in her welfare.

He saw, however, no promise of better success when he made his appearance at dinner time, for not only Mr Arnott was already arrived, but Sir Robert Floyer, and he found Cecilia so much the object of their mutual attention, that he had still less chance than in the morning of speaking to her unheard.

Yet was he not idle; the sight of Sir Robert gave abundant employment to his penetration, which was immediately at work, to discover the motive of his visit: but this, with all his sagacity, was not easily decided; for though the constant direction of his eyes towards Cecilia, proved, at least, that he was not insensible of her beauty, his carelessness whether or not she was hurt by his examination, the little pains he took to converse with her, and the invariable assurance and negligence of his manners, seemed strongly to demonstrate an indifference to the sentiments he inspired, totally incompatible with the solicitude of affection.

In Cecilia he had nothing to observe but what his knowledge of her character prepared him to expect, a shame no less indignant than modest at the freedom with which she saw herself surveyed.

Very little, therefore, was the satisfaction which this visit procured him, for soon after dinner the ladies retired; and as they had an early engagement for the evening, the gentlemen received no summons to their tea-table. But he contrived, before they quitted the room, to make an appointment for attending them the next morning to a rehearsal of a new serious Opera.

He stayed not after their departure longer than decency required, for too much in earnest was his present pursuit, to fit him for such conversation as the house in Cecilia's absence could afford him.

CHAPTER viii

AN OPERA REHEARSAL.

The next day, between eleven and twelve o'clock, Mr Monckton was again in Portman Square; he found, as he expected, both the ladies, and he found, as he feared, Mr Arnott prepared to be of their party. He had, however, but little time to repine at this intrusion, before he was disturbed by another, for, in a few minutes, they were joined

by Sir Robert Floyer, who also declared his intention of accompanying them to the Haymarket.

Mr Monckton, to disguise his chagrin, pretended he was in great haste to set off, lest they should be too late for the overture: they were, therefore, quitting the breakfast room, when they were stopt by the appearance of Mr Morrice.

The surprise which the sight of him gave to Mr Monckton was extreme; he knew that he was unacquainted with Mr Harrel, for he remembered they were strangers to each other when they lately met at his house; he concluded, therefore, that Cecilia was the object of his visit, but he could frame no conjecture under what pretence.

The easy terms upon which he seemed with all the family by no means diminished his amazement; for when Mrs Harrel expressed some concern that she was obliged to go out, he gaily begged her not to mind him, assuring her he could not have stayed two minutes, and promising, unasked, to call again the next day: and when she added, "We would not hurry away so, only we are going to a rehearsal of an Opera," he exclaimed with quickness, "A rehearsal!--are you really? I have a great mind to go too!"

Then, perceiving Mr Monckton, he bowed to him with great respect, and enquired, with no little solemnity, how he had left Lady Margaret, hoped she was perfectly recovered from her late indisposition, and asked sundry questions with regard to her plan for the winter.

This discourse was ill constructed for rendering his presence desirable to Mr Monckton; he answered him very drily, and again pressed their departure.

"O," cried Morrice, "there's no occasion for such haste; the rehearsal does not begin till one."

"You are mistaken, sir," said Mr Monckton; "it is to begin at twelve o'clock."

"O ay, very true," returned Morrice; "I had forgot the dances, and I suppose they are to be rehearsed first. Pray, Miss Beverley, did you ever see any dances rehearsed?"

"No, sir."

"You will be excessively entertained, then, I assure you. It's the most comical thing in the world to see those signores and signoras cutting capers in a morning. And the _figuranti_ will divert you beyond measure; you never saw such a shabby set in your life: but the most amusing thing is to look in their faces, for all the time they are jumping and skipping about the stage as if they could not stand still for joy, they look as sedate and as dismal as if they were so many undertaker's men."

"Not a word against dancing!" cried Sir Robert, "it's the only thing carries one to the Opera; and I am sure it's the only thing one minds at it."

The two ladies were then handed to Mrs Harrel's _vis-a-vis_;

and the gentlemen, joined without further ceremony by Mr Morrice, followed them to the Haymarket.

The rehearsal was not begun, and Mrs Harrel and Cecilia secured themselves a box upon the stage, from which the gentlemen of their party took care not to be very distant.

They were soon perceived by Mr Gosport, who instantly entered into conversation with Cecilia. Miss Larolles, who with some other ladies came soon after into the next box, looked out to courtsie and nod, with her usual readiness, at Mrs Harrel, but took not any notice of Cecilia, though she made the first advances.

"What's the matter now?" cried Mr Gosport; "have you affronted your little prattling friend?"

"Not with my own knowledge," answered Cecilia; "perhaps she does not recollect me."

Just then Miss Larolles, tapping at the door, came in from the next box to speak to Mrs Harrel; with whom she stood chatting and laughing some minutes, without seeming to perceive that Cecilia was of her party.

"Why, what have you done to the poor girl?" whispered Mr Gosport; "did you talk more than herself when you saw her last?"

"Would that have been possible?" cried Cecilia; "however, I still fancy she does not know me."

She then stood up, which making Miss Larolles involuntarily turn towards her, she again courtsied; a civility which that young lady scarce deigned to return, before, bridling with an air of resentment, she hastily looked another way, and then, nodding good-humouredly at Mrs Harrel, hurried back to her party.

Cecilia, much amazed, said to Mr Gosport, "See now how great was our presumption in supposing this young lady's loquacity always at our devotion!"

"Ah, madam!" cried he, laughing, "there is no permanency, no consistency in the world! no, not even in the tongue of a VOLUBLE! and if that fails, upon what may we depend?"

"But seriously," said Cecilia, "I am sorry I have offended her, and the more because I so little know how, that I can offer her no apology."

"Will you appoint me your envoy? Shall I demand the cause of these hostilities?"

She thanked him, and he followed Miss Larolles; who was now addressing herself with great earnestness to Mr Meadows, the gentleman with whom she was conversing when Cecilia first saw her in Portman Square. He stopt a moment to let her finish her speech, which, with no little spirit, she did in these words, "I never knew anything like it in my life; but I shan't put up with such airs, I assure her!"

Mr Meadows made not any other return to her harangue, but stretching himself with a languid smile, and yawning: Mr Gosport, therefore, seizing the moment of cessation, said, "Miss Larolles, I hear a strange report about you."

"Do you?" returned she, with quickness, "pray what is it? something monstrous impertinent, I dare say,---however, I assure you it i'n't true."

"Your assurance," cried he, "carries conviction indisputable, for the report was that you had left off talking."

"O, was that all?" cried she, disappointed, "I thought it had been something about Mr Sawyer, for I declare I have been plagued so about him, I am quite sick of his name."

"And for my part, I never heard it! so fear nothing from me upon his account."

"Lord, Mr Gosport, how can you say so? I am sure you must know about the Festino that night, for it was all over the town in a moment."

"What festino?"

"Well, only conceive, how provoking!--why, I know nothing else was talked of for a month!"

"You are most formidably stout this morning! it is not two minutes since I saw you fling the gauntlet at Miss Beverley, and yet you are already prepared for another antagonist."

"O as to Miss Beverley, I must really beg you not to mention her; she has behaved so impertinently, that I don't intend ever to speak to her again."

"Why, what has she done?"

"O she's been so rude you've no notion. I'll tell you how it was. You must know I met her at Mrs Barrel's the day she came to town, and the very next morning I waited on her myself, for I would not send a ticket, because I really wished to be civil to her; well, the day after, she never came near me, though I called upon her again; however, I did not take any notice of that; but when the third day came, and I found she had not even sent me a ticket, I thought it monstrous ill bred indeed; and now there has passed more than a week, and yet she has never called: so I suppose she don't like me; so I shall drop her acquaintance."

Mr Gosport, satisfied now with the subject of her complaint, returned to Cecilia, and informed her of the heavy charge which was brought against her.

"I am glad, at least, to know my crime," said she, "for otherwise I should certainly have sinned on in ignorance, as I must confess I never thought of returning her visits: but even if I had, I should not have supposed I had yet lost much time."

"I beg your pardon there," said Mrs Harrel; "a first visit ought to be returned always by the third day."

"Then have I an unanswerable excuse," said Cecilia, "for I remember that on the third day I saw her at your house."

"O that's nothing at all to the purpose; you should have waited upon her, or sent her a ticket, just the same as if you had not seen her."

The overture was now begun, and Cecilia declined any further conversation. This was the first Opera she had ever heard, yet she was not wholly a stranger to Italian compositions, having assiduously studied music from a natural love of the art, attended all the best concerts her neighbourhood afforded, and regularly received from London the works of the best masters. But the little skill she had thus gained, served rather to increase than to lessen the surprize with which she heard the present performance,--a surprize of which the discovery of her own ignorance made not the least part. Unconscious from the little she had acquired how much was to be learnt, she was astonished to find the inadequate power of written music to convey any idea of vocal abilities: with just knowledge enough, therefore, to understand something of the difficulties, and feel much of the merit, she gave to the whole Opera an avidity of attention almost painful from its own eagerness.

But both the surprize and the pleasure which she received from the performance in general, were faint, cold, and languid, compared to the strength of those emotions when excited by Signore Pacchierotti in particular; and though not half the excellencies of that superior singer were necessary either to amaze or charm her unaccustomed ears, though the refinement of his taste and masterly originality of his genius, to be praised as they deserved, called for the judgment and knowledge of professors, yet a natural love of music in some measure supplied the place of cultivation, and what she could neither explain nor understand, she could feel and enjoy.

The opera was Artaserse; and the pleasure she received from the music was much augmented by her previous acquaintance with that interesting drama; yet, as to all noviciates in science, whatever is least complicated is most pleasing, she found herself by nothing so deeply impressed, as by the plaintive and beautiful simplicity with which Pacchierotti uttered the affecting repetition of _sono innocente_! his voice, always either sweet or impassioned, delivered those words in a tone of softness, pathos, and sensibility, that struck her with a sensation not more new than delightful.

But though she was, perhaps, the only person thus astonished, she was by no means the only one enraptured; for notwithstanding she was too earnestly engaged to remark the company in general, she could not avoid taking notice of an old gentleman who stood by one of the side scenes, against which he leant his head in a manner that concealed his face, with an evident design to be wholly absorbed in listening: and during the songs of Pacchierotti he sighed so deeply that Cecilia, struck by his uncommon sensibility to the power of music, involuntarily watched him, whenever her mind was sufficiently at liberty to attend to any emotions but its own.

As soon as the rehearsal was over, the gentlemen of Mrs Harrel's party crowded before her box; and Cecilia then perceived that the

person whose musical enthusiasm had excited her curiosity, was the same old gentleman whose extraordinary behaviour had so much surprized her at the house of Mr Monckton. Her desire to obtain some information concerning him again reviving, she was beginning to make fresh enquiries, when she was interrupted by the approach of Captain Aresby.

That gentleman, advancing to her with a smile of the extremest self-complacency, after hoping, in a low voice, he had the honour of seeing her well, exclaimed, "How wretchedly empty is the town! petrifying to a degree! I believe you do not find yourself at present _obsede_ by too much company?"

"_At present_, I believe the contrary!" cried Mr Gosport.

"Really!" said the Captain, unsuspicious of his sneer, "I protest I have hardly seen a soul. Have you tried the Pantheon yet, ma'am?"

"No, sir."

"Nor I; I don't know whether people go there this year. It is not a favourite _spectacle_ with me; that sitting to hear the music is a horrid bore. Have you done the Festino the honour to look in there yet?"

"No, sir."

"Permit me, then, to have the honour to beg you will try it."

"O, ay, true," cried Mrs Harrel; "I have really used you very ill about that; I should have got you in for a subscriber: but Lord, I have done nothing for you yet, and you never put me in mind. There's the ancient music, and Abel's concert;--as to the opera, we may have a box between us;--but there's the ladies' concert we must try for; and there's--O Lord, fifty other places we must think of!"

"Oh times of folly and dissipation!" exclaimed a voice at some distance; "Oh mignons of idleness and luxury! What next will ye invent for the perdition of your time! How yet further will ye proceed in the annihilation of virtue!"

Everybody stared; but Mrs Harrel coolly said, "Dear, it's only the man-hater!"

"The man-hater?" repeated Cecilia, who found that the speech was made by the object of her former curiosity; "is that the name by which he is known?"

"He is known by fifty names," said Mr Monckton; "his friends call him the _moralist_; the young ladies, the _crazy-man_; the macaronies, the _bore_; in short, he is called by any and every name but his own."

"He is a most petrifying wretch, I assure you," said the Captain; "I am _obsede_ by him _partout_; if I had known he had been so near, I should certainly have said nothing."

"That you have done so well," cried Mr Gosport, "that if you had known it the whole time, you could have done it no better."

The Captain, who had not heard this speech, which was rather made at him than to him, continued his address to Cecilia; "Give me leave to have the honour of hoping you intend to honour our select masquerade at the Pantheon with your presence. We shall have but five hundred tickets, and the subscription will only be three guineas and a half."

"Oh objects of penury and want!" again exclaimed the incognito; "Oh vassals of famine and distress! Come and listen to this wantonness of wealth! Come, naked and breadless as ye are, and learn how that money is consumed which to you might bring raiment and food!"

"That strange wretch," said the Captain, "ought really to be confined; I have had the honour to be _degoute_ by him so often, that I think him quite obnoxious. I make it quite a principle to seal up my lips the moment I perceive him."

"Where is it, then," said Cecilia, "that you have so often met him?"

"O," answered the Captain, "_partout_; there is no greater bore about town. But the time I found him most petrifying was once when I happened to have the honour of dancing with a very young lady, who was but just come from a boarding-school, and whose friends had done me the honour to fix upon me upon the principle of first bringing her out: and while I was doing _mon possible_ for killing the time, he came up, and in his particular manner, told her I had no meaning in any thing I said! I must own I never felt more tempted to be _enrage_ with a person in years, in my life."

Mr Arnott now brought the ladies word that their carriage was ready, and they quitted their box: but as Cecilia had never before seen the interior parts of a theatre, Mr Monckton, hoping while they loitered to have an opportunity of talking with her, asked Morrice why he did not _shew the lions?_ Morrice, always happy in being employed, declared it was _just the thing he liked best_, and begged permission to do the honours to Mrs Harrel, who, ever eager in the search of amusement, willingly accepted his offer.

They all, therefore, marched upon the stage, their own party now being the only one that remained.

"We shall make a triumphal entry here," cried Sir Robert Floyer; "the very tread of the stage half tempts me to turn actor."

"You are a rare man," said Mr Gosport, "if, at your time of life, that is a turn not already taken."

"My time of life!" repeated he; "what do you mean by that? do you take me for an old man?"

"No, sir, but I take you to be past childhood, and consequently to have served your apprenticeship to the actors you have mixed with on the great stage of the world, and, for some years at least, to have set up for yourself."

"Come," cried Morrice, "let's have a little spouting; 'twill make us warm."

"Yes," said Sir Robert, "if we spout to an animating object. If Miss Beverley will be Juliet, I am Romeo at her service."

At this moment the incognito, quitting the corner in which he had planted himself, came suddenly forward, and standing before the whole group, cast upon Cecilia a look of much compassion, and called out, "Poor simple victim! hast thou already so many pursuers? yet seest not that thou art marked for sacrifice! yet knowest not that thou art destined for prey!"

Cecilia, extremely struck by this extraordinary address, stopt short and looked much disturbed: which, when he perceived, he added, "Let the danger, not the warning affect you! discard the sycophants that surround you, seek the virtuous, relieve the poor, and save yourself from the impending destruction of unfeeling prosperity!"

Having uttered these words with vehemence and authority, he sternly passed them, and disappeared.

Cecilia, too much astonished for speech, stood for some time immoveable, revolving in her mind various conjectures upon the meaning of an exhortation so strange and so urgent.

Nor was the rest of the company much less discomposed: Sir Robert, Mr Monckton, and Mr Arnott, each conscious of their own particular plans, were each apprehensive that the warning pointed at himself: Mr Gosport was offended at being included in the general appellation of sycophants; Mrs Harrel was provoked at being interrupted in her ramble; and Captain Aresby, sickening at the very sight of him, retreated the moment he came forth.

"For heaven's sake," cried Cecilia, when somewhat recovered from her consternation, "who can this be, and what can he mean? You, Mr Monckton, must surely know something of him; it was at your house I first saw him."

"Indeed," answered Mr Monckton, "I knew almost nothing of him then, and I am but little better informed now. Belfield picked him up somewhere, and desired to bring him to my house: he called him by the name of Albany: I found him a most extraordinary character, and Belfield, who is a worshipper of originality, was very fond of him."

"He's a devilish crabbed old fellow," cried Sir Robert, "and if he goes on much longer at this confounded rate, he stands a very fair chance of getting his ears cropped."

"He is a man of the most singular conduct I have ever met with," said Mr Gosport; "he seems to hold mankind in abhorrence, yet he is never a moment alone, and at the same time that he intrudes himself into all parties, he associates with none: he is commonly a stern and silent observer of all that passes, or when he speaks, it is but to utter some sentence of rigid morality, or some bitterness of indignant reproof."

The carriage was now again announced, and Mr Monckton taking Cecilia's hand, while Mr Morrice secured to himself the honour of Mrs Harrel's, Sir Robert and Mr Gosport made their bows and departed. But though they had now quitted the stage, and arrived at the head of a small stair case by which they were to descend out of

the theatre, Mr Monckton, finding all his tormentors retired, except Mr Arnott, whom he hoped to elude, could not resist making one more attempt for a few moments' conversation with Cecilia; and therefore, again applying to Morrice, he called out, "I don't think you have shewn the ladies any of the contrivances behind the scenes?"

"True," cried Morrice, "no more I have; suppose we go back?"

"I shall like it vastly," said Mrs Harrel; and back they returned.

Mr Monckton now soon found an opportunity to say to Cecilia, "Miss Beverley, what I foresaw has exactly come to pass; you are surrounded by selfish designers, by interested, double-minded people, who have nothing at heart but your fortune, and whose mercenary views, if you are not guarded against them---"

Here a loud scream from Mrs Harrel interrupted his speech; Cecilia, much alarmed, turned from him to enquire the cause, and Mr Monckton was obliged to follow her example: but his mortification was almost intolerable when he saw that lady in a violent fit of laughter, and found her scream was only occasioned by seeing Mr Morrice, in his diligence to do the honours, pull upon his own head one of the side scenes!

There was now no possibility of proposing any further delay; but Mr Monckton, in attending the ladies to their carriage, was obliged to have recourse to his utmost discretion and forbearance, in order to check his desire of reprimanding Morrice for his blundering officiousness.

Dressing, dining with company at home, and then going out with company abroad, filled up, as usual, the rest of the day.

CHAPTER ix

A SUPPLICATION.

The next morning Cecilia, at the repeated remonstrances of Mrs Harrel, consented to call upon Miss Larolles. She felt the impracticability of beginning at present the alteration in her way of life she had projected, and therefore thought it most expedient to assume no singularity till her independency should enable her to support it with consistency; yet greater than ever was her internal eagerness to better satisfy her inclination and her conscience in the disposition of her time, and the distribution of her wealth, since she had heard the emphatic charge of her unknown Mentor.

Mrs Harrel declined accompanying her in this visit, because she had appointed a surveyor to bring a plan for the inspection of Mr Harrel and herself, of a small temporary building, to be erected at Violet-Bank, for the purpose of performing plays in private the ensuing Easter.

When the street door was opened for her to get into the carriage, she was struck with the appearance of an elderly woman who was

standing at some distance, and seemed shivering with cold, and who, as she descended the steps, joined her hands in an act of supplication, and advanced nearer to the carriage.

Cecilia stopt to look at her: her dress, though parsimonious, was too neat for a beggar, and she considered a moment what she could offer her. The poor woman continued to move forward, but with a slowness of pace that indicated extreme weakness; and, as she approached and raised her head, she exhibited a countenance so wretched, and a complexion so sickly, that Cecilia was impressed with horror at the sight.

With her hands still joined, and a voice that seemed fearful of its own sound, "Oh madam," she cried, "that you would but hear me!"

"Hear you!" repeated Cecilia, hastily feeling for her purse; "most certainly, and tell me how I shall assist you."

"Heaven bless you for speaking so kindly, madam!" cried the woman, with a voice more assured; "I was sadly afraid you would be angry, but I saw the carriage at the door, and I thought I would try; for I could be no worse; and distress, madam, makes very bold."

"Angry!" said Cecilia, taking a crown from her purse; "no, indeed!-- who could see such wretchedness, and feel any thing but pity?"

"Oh madam," returned the poor woman, "I could almost cry to hear you talk so, though I never thought to cry again, since I left it off for my poor Billy!"

"Have you, then, lost a son?"

"Yes, madam; but he was a great deal too good to live, so I have quite left off grieving for him now."

"Come in, good woman," said Cecilia, "it is too cold to stand here, and you seem half-starved already: come in, and let me have some talk with you."

She then gave orders that the carriage should be driven round the square till she was ready, and making the woman follow her into a parlour, desired to know what she should do for her; changing, while she spoke, from a movement of encreasing compassion, the crown which she held in her hand for double that sum.

"You can do everything, madam," she answered, "if you will but plead for us to his honour: he little thinks of our distress, because he has been afflicted with none himself, and I would not be so troublesome to him, but indeed, indeed, madam, we are quite pinched for want!"

Cecilia, struck with the words, _he little thinks of our distress, because he has been afflicted with none himself_, felt again ashamed of the smallness of her intended donation, and taking from her purse another half guinea, said, "Will this assist you? Will a guinea be sufficient to you for the present?"

"I humbly thank you, madam," said the woman, curtsying low, "shall I give you a receipt?"

"A receipt?" cried Cecilia, with emotion, "for what? Alas, our accounts are by no means balanced! but I shall do more for you if I find you as deserving an object as you seem to be."

"You are very good, madam; but I only meant a receipt in part of payment."

"Payment for what? I don't understand you."

"Did his honour never tell you, madam, of our account?"

"What account?"

"Our bill, madam, for work done to the new Temple at Violet-Bank: it was the last great work my poor husband was able to do, for it was there he met with his misfortune."

"What bill? What misfortune?" cried Cecilia; "what had your husband to do at Violet-Bank?"

"He was the carpenter, madam. I thought you might have seen poor Hill the carpenter there."

"No, I never was there myself. Perhaps you mistake me for Mrs Harrel."

"Why, sure, madam, a'n't you his honour's lady?"

"No. But tell me, what is this bill?"

"'Tis a bill, madam, for very hard work, for work, madam, which I am sure will cost my husband his life; and though I have been after his honour night and day to get it, and sent him letters and petitions with an account of our misfortunes, I have never received so much as a shilling! and now the servants won't even let me wait in the hall to speak to him. Oh, madam! you who seem so good, plead to his honour in our behalf! tell him my poor husband cannot live! tell him my children are starving! and tell him my poor Billy, that used to help to keep us, is dead, and that all the work I can do by myself is not enough to maintain us!"

"Good heaven!" cried Cecilia, extremely moved, "is it then your own money for which you sue thus humbly?"

"Yes, madam, for my own just and honest money, as his honour knows, and will tell you himself."

"Impossible!" cried Cecilia, "he cannot know it; but I will take care he shall soon be informed of it. How much is the bill?"

"Two-and-twenty pounds, madam."

"What, no more?"

"Ah, madam, you gentlefolks little think how much that is to poor people! A hard working family, like mine, madam, with the help of 20 pounds will go on for a long while quite in paradise."

"Poor worthy woman!" cried Cecilia, whose eyes were filled with tears of compassion, "if 20 pounds will place you in paradise, and that 20 pounds only your just right, it is hard, indeed, that you should be kept without it; especially when your debtors are too affluent to miss it. Stay here a few moments, and I will bring you the money immediately."

Away she flew, and returned to the breakfast room, but found there only Mr Arnott, who told her that Mr Harrel was in the library, with his sister and some gentlemen. Cecilia briefly related her business, and begged he would inform Mr Harrel she wished to speak to him directly. Mr Arnott shook his head, but obeyed.

They returned together, and immediately.

"Miss Beverley," cried Mr Harrel, gaily, "I am glad you are not gone, for we want much to consult with you. Will you come up stairs?"

"Presently," answered she; "but first I must speak to you about a poor woman with whom I have accidentally been talking, who has begged me to intercede with you to pay a little debt that she thinks you have forgotten, but that probably you have never heard mentioned."

"A debt?" cried he, with an immediate change of countenance, "to whom?"

"Her name, I think, is Hill; she is wife to the carpenter you employed about a new temple at Violet-Bank."

"O, what--what, that woman?--Well, well, I'll see she shall be paid. Come, let us go to the library."

"What, with my commission so ill executed? I promised to petition for her to have the money directly."

"Pho, pho, there's no such hurry; I don't know what I have done with her bill."

"I'll run and get another."

"O upon no account! She may send another in two or three days. She deserves to wait a twelvemonth for her impertinence in troubling you at all about it."

"That was entirely accidental: but indeed you must give me leave to perform my promise and plead for her. It must be almost the same to you whether you pay such a trifle as 20 pounds now or a month hence, and to this poor woman the difference seems little short of life or death, for she tells me her husband is dying, and her children are half-famished; and though she looks an object of the cruellest want and distress herself, she appears to be their only support."

"O," cried Mr Harrel, laughing, "what a dismal tale has she been telling you! no doubt she saw you were fresh from the country! But if you give credit to all the farragos of these trumpery impostors, you will never have a moment to yourself, nor a guinea in your purse."

"This woman,"' answered Cecilia, "cannot be an impostor, she carries marks but too evident and too dreadful in her countenance of the sufferings which she relates."

"O," returned he, "when you know the town better you will soon see through tricks of this sort; a sick husband and five small children are complaints so stale now, that they serve no other purpose in the world but to make a joke."

"Those, however, who can laugh at them must have notions of merriment very different to mine. And this poor woman, whose cause I have ventured to undertake, had she no family at all, must still and indisputably be an object of pity herself, for she is so weak she can hardly crawl, and so pallid that she seems already half dead."

"All imposition, depend upon it! The moment she is out of your sight her complaints will vanish."

"Nay, sir," cried Cecilia, a little impatiently, "there is no reason to suspect such deceit, since she does not come hither as a beggar, however well the state of beggary may accord with her poverty: she only solicits the payment of a bill, and if in that there is any fraud, nothing can be so easy as detection."

Mr Harrel bit his lips at this speech, and for some instants looked much disturbed; but soon recovering himself, he negligently said, "Pray, how did she get at you?"

"I met her at the street door. But tell me, is not her bill a just one?"

"I cannot say; I have never had time to look at it."

"But you know who the woman is, and that her husband worked for you, and therefore that in all probability it is right,--do you not?"

"Yes, yes, I know who the woman is well enough; she has taken care of that, for she has pestered me every day these nine months."

Cecilia was struck dumb by this speech: hitherto she had supposed that the dissipation of his life kept him ignorant of his own injustice; but when she found he was so well informed of it, yet, with such total indifference, could suffer a poor woman to claim a just debt every day for nine months together, she was shocked and astonished beyond measure. They were both some time silent, and then Mr Harrel, yawning and stretching out his arms, indolently asked, "Pray, why does not the man come himself?"

"Did I not tell you," answered Cecilia, staring at so absent a question, "that he was very ill, and unable even to work?"

"Well, when he is better," added he, moving towards the door, "he may call, and I will talk to him."

Cecilia, all amazement at this unfeeling behaviour, turned involuntarily to Mr Arnott, with a countenance that appealed for his assistance; but Mr Arnott hung his head, ashamed to meet her eyes, and abruptly left the room.

Meantime Mr Harrel, half-turning back, though without looking Cecilia in the face, carelessly said, "Well, won't you come?"

"No, sir," answered she, coldly.

He then returned to the library, leaving her equally displeased, surprised, and disconcerted at the conversation which had just passed between them. "Good heaven," cried she to herself, "what strange, what cruel insensibility! to suffer a wretched family to starve, from an obstinate determination to assert that they can live! to distress the poor by retaining the recompense for which alone they labour, and which at last they must have, merely from indolence, forgetfulness, or insolence! Oh how little did my uncle know, how little did I imagine to what a guardian I was entrusted!" She now felt ashamed even to return to the poor woman, though she resolved to do all in her power to soften her disappointment and relieve her distress.

But before she had quitted the room one of the servants came to tell her that his master begged the honor of her company up stairs. "Perhaps he relents!" thought she; and pleased with the hope, readily obeyed the summons.

She found him, his lady, Sir Robert Floyer, and two other gentlemen, all earnestly engaged in an argument over a large table, which was covered with plans and elevations of small buildings.

Mr Harrel immediately addressed her with an air of vivacity, and said, "You are very good for coming; we can settle nothing without your advice: pray look at these different plans for our theatre, and tell us which is the best."

Cecilia advanced not a step: the sight of plans for new edifices when the workmen were yet unpaid for old ones; the cruel wantonness of raising fresh fabrics of expensive luxury, while those so lately built had brought their neglected labourers to ruin, excited an indignation she scarce thought right to repress: while the easy sprightliness of the director of these revels, to whom but the moment before she had represented the oppression of which they made him guilty, filled her with aversion and disgust: and, recollecting the charge given her by the stranger at the Opera rehearsal, she resolved to speed her departure to another house, internally repeating, "Yes, I _will_ save myself from _the impending destruction of unfeeling prosperity_!"

Mrs Harrel, surprised at her silence and extreme gravity, enquired if she was not well, and why she had put off her visit to Miss Larolles? And Sir Robert Floyer, turning suddenly to look at her, said, "Do you begin to feel the London air already?"

Cecilia endeavoured to recover her serenity, and answer these questions in her usual manner; but she persisted in declining to give any opinion at all about the plans, and, after slightly looking at them, left the room.

Mr Harrel, who knew better how to account for her behaviour than he thought proper to declare, saw with concern that she was more seriously displeased than he had believed an occurrence which he had

regarded as wholly unimportant could have made her: and, therefore, desirous that she should be appeased, he followed her out of the library, and said, "Miss Beverley, will to-morrow be soon enough for your _protegee_?"

"O yes, no doubt!" answered she, most agreeably surprised by the question.

"Well, then, will you take the trouble to bid her come to me in the morning?"

Delighted at this unexpected commission, she thanked him with smiles for the office; and as she hastened down stairs to chear the poor expectant with the welcome intelligence, she framed a thousand excuses for the part he had hitherto acted, and without any difficulty, persuaded herself he began to see the faults of his conduct, and to meditate a reformation.

She was received by the poor creature she so warmly wished to serve with a countenance already so much enlivened, that she fancied Mr Harrel had himself anticipated her intended information: this, however, she found was not the case, for as soon as she heard his message, she shook her head, and said, "Ah, madam, his honour always says to-morrow! but I can better bear to be disappointed now, so I'll grumble no more; for indeed, madam, I have been blessed enough to-day to comfort me for every thing in the world, if I could but keep from thinking of poor Billy! I could bear all the rest, madam, but whenever my other troubles go off, that comes back to me so much the harder!"

"There, indeed, I can afford you no relief," said Cecilia, "but you must try to think less of him, and more of your husband and children who are now alive. To-morrow you will receive your money, and that, I hope, will raise your spirits. And pray let your husband have a physician, to tell you how to nurse and manage him; I will give you one fee for him now, and if he should want further advice, don't fear to let me know."

Cecilia had again taken out her purse, but Mrs Hill, clasping her hands, called out, "Oh madam no! I don't come here to fleece such goodness! but blessed be the hour that brought me here to-day, and if my poor Billy was alive, he should help me to thank you!"

She then told her that she was now quite rich, for while she was gone, a gentleman had come into the room, who had given her five guineas.

Cecilia, by her description, soon found this gentleman was Mr Arnott, and a charity so sympathetic with her own, failed not to raise him greatly in her favour. But as her benevolence was a stranger to that parade which is only liberal from emulation, when she found more money not immediately wanted, she put up her purse, and charging Mrs Hill to enquire for her the next morning when she came to be paid, bid her hasten back to her sick husband.

And then, again ordering the carriage to the door, she set off upon her visit to Miss Larolles, with a heart happy in the good already done, and happier still in the hope of doing more.

Miss Larolles was out, and she returned home; for she was too sanguine in her expectations from Mr Harrel, to have any desire of seeking her other guardians. The rest of the day she was more than usually civil to him, with a view to mark her approbation of his good intentions: while Mr Arnott, gratified by meeting the smiles he so much valued, thought his five guineas amply repaid, independently of the real pleasure which he took in doing good.

CHAPTER x

A PROVOCATION.

The next morning, when breakfast was over, Cecilia waited with much impatience to hear some tidings of the poor carpenter's wife; but though Mr Harrel, who had always that meal in his own room, came into his lady's at his usual hour, to see what was going forward, he did not mention her name. She therefore went into the hall herself, to enquire among the servants if Mrs Hill was yet come?

Yes, they answered, and had seen their master, and was gone.

She then returned to the breakfast room, where her eagerness to procure some information detained her, though the entrance of Sir Robert Floyer made her wish to retire. But she was wholly at a loss whether to impute to general forgetfulness, or to the failure of performing his promise, the silence of Mr Harrel upon the subject of her petition.

In a few minutes they were visited by Mr Morrice, who said he called to acquaint the ladies that the next morning there was to be a rehearsal of a very grand new dance at the Opera-House, where, though admission was difficult, if it was agreeable to them to go, he would undertake to introduce them.

Mrs Harrel happened to be engaged, and therefore declined the offer. He then turned to Cecilia, and said, "Well, ma'am, when did you see our friend Monckton?"

"Not since the rehearsal, sir."

"He is a mighty agreeable fellow," he continued, "and his house in the country is charming. One is as easy at it as at home. Were you ever there, Sir Robert?"

"Not I, truly," replied Sir Robert; "what should I go for?--to see an old woman with never a tooth in her head sitting at the top of the table! Faith, I'd go an hundred miles a day for a month never to see such a sight again."

"O but you don't know how well she does the honours," said Morrice; "and for my part, except just at meal times, I always contrive to keep out of her way."

"I wonder when she intends to die," said Mr Harrel.

"She's been a long time about it," cried Sir Robert; "but those tough old cats last for ever. We all thought she was going when Monckton married her; however, if he had not managed like a driveler, he might have broke her heart nine years ago."

"I am sure I wish he had," cried Mrs Harrel, "for she's an odious creature, and used always to make me afraid of her."

"But an old woman," answered Sir Robert, "is a person who has no sense of decency; if once she takes to living, the devil himself can't get rid of her."

"I dare say," cried Morrice, "she'll pop off before long in one of those fits of the asthma. I assure you sometimes you may hear her wheeze a mile off."

"She'll go never the sooner for that," said Sir Robert, "for I have got an old aunt of my own, who has been puffing and blowing as if she was at her last gasp ever since I can remember; and for all that, only yesterday, when I asked her doctor when she'd give up the ghost, he told me she might live these dozen years."

Cecilia was by no means sorry to have this brutal conversation interrupted by the entrance of a servant with a letter for her. She was immediately retiring to read it; but upon the petition of Mr Monckton, who just then came into the room, she only went to a window. The letter was as follows:

To Miss, at his Honour Squire Harrel's--These:

Honoured Madam,--This with my humble duty. His Honour has given me nothing. But I would not be troublesome, having wherewithal to wait, so conclude, Honoured Madam, your dutiful servant to command, till death, M. HILL.

The vexation with which Cecilia read this letter was visible to the whole company; and while Mr Arnott looked at her with a wish of enquiry he did not dare express, and Mr Monckton, under an appearance of inattention, concealed the most anxious curiosity, Mr Morrice alone had courage to interrogate her; and, pertly advancing, said, "He is a happy man who writ that letter, ma'am, for I am sure you have not read it with indifference."

"Were I the writer," said Mr Arnott, tenderly, "I am sure I should reckon myself far otherwise, for Miss Beverley seems to have read it with uneasiness."

"However, I have read it," answered she, "I assure you it is not from _any man_."

"O pray, Miss Beverley," cried Sir Robert, coming forward, "are you any better to-day?"

"No, sir, for I have not been ill."

"A little vapoured, I thought, yesterday; perhaps you want exercise."

"I wish the ladies would put themselves under my care," cried

Morrice, "and take a turn round the park."

"I don't doubt you, Sir," said Mr Monckton, contemptuously, "and, but for the check of modesty, probably there is not a man here who would not wish the same."

"I could propose a much better scheme than that," said Sir Robert; "what if you all walk to Harley Street, and give me your notions of a house I am about there? what say you, Mrs Harrel?"

"O, I shall like it vastly."

"Done," cried Mr Harrel; "'tis an excellent motion."

"Come then," said Sir Robert, "let's be off. Miss Beverley, I hope you have a good warm cloak?"

"I must beg you to excuse my attending you, sir."

Mr Monckton, who had heard this proposal with the utmost dread of its success, revived at the calm steadiness with which it was declined. Mr and Mrs Harrel both teized Cecilia to consent; but the haughty Baronet, evidently more offended than hurt by her refusal, pressed the matter no further, either with her or the rest of the party, and the scheme was dropt entirely.

Mr Monckton failed not to remark this circumstance, which confirmed his suspicions, that though the proposal seemed made by chance, its design was nothing else than to obtain Cecilia's opinion concerning his house. But while this somewhat alarmed him, the unabated insolence of his carriage, and the confident defiance of his pride, still more surprized him; and notwithstanding all he observed of Cecilia, seemed to promise nothing but dislike; he could draw no other inference from his behaviour, than that if he admired, he also concluded himself sure of her.

This was not a pleasant conjecture, however little weight he allowed to it; and he resolved, by outstaying all the company, to have a few minutes' private discourse with her upon the subject.

In about half an hour, Sir Robert and Mr Harrel went out together: Mr Monckton still persevered in keeping his ground, and tried, though already weary, to keep up a general conversation; but what moved at once his wonder and his indignation was the assurance of Morrice, who seemed not only bent upon staying as long as himself, but determined, by rattling away, to make his own entertainment.

At length a servant came in to tell Mrs Harrel that a stranger, who was waiting in the house-keeper's room, begged to speak with her upon very particular business.

"O, I know," cried she, "'tis that odious John Groot: do pray, brother, try to get rid of him for me, for he comes to teize me about his bill, and I never know what to say to him."

Mr Arnott went immediately, and Mr Monckton could scarce refrain from going too, that he might entreat John Groot by no means to be satisfied without seeing Mrs Harrel herself: John Groot, however, wanted not his entreaties, as the servant soon returned to summons

his lady to the conference.

But though Mr Monckton now seemed near the completion of his purpose, Morrice still remained; his vexation at this circumstance soon grew intolerable; to see himself upon the point of receiving the recompense of his perseverance, by the fortunate removal of all the obstacles in its way, and then to have it held from him by a young fellow he so much despised, and who had no entrance into the house but through his own boldness, and no inducement to stay in it but from his own impertinence, mortified him so insufferably, that it was with difficulty he even forbore from affronting him. Nor would he have scrupled a moment desiring him to leave the room, had he not prudently determined to guard with the utmost sedulity against raising any suspicions of his passion for Cecilia.

He arose, however, and was moving towards her, with the intention to occupy a part of a sofa on which she was seated, when Morrice, who was standing at the back of it, with a sudden spring which made the whole room shake, jumpt over, and sunk plump into the vacant place himself, calling out at the same time, "Come, come, what have you married men to do with young ladies? I shall seize this post for myself."

The rage of Mr Monckton at this feat, and still more at the words _married men_, almost exceeded endurance; he stopt short, and looking at him with a fierceness that overpowered his discretion, was bursting out with, "Sir, you are an---_impudent fellow_," but checking himself when he got half way, concluded with, "a very facetious gentleman!"

Morrice, who wished nothing so little as disobliging Mr Monckton, and whose behaviour was merely the result of levity and a want of early education, no sooner perceived his displeasure, than, rising with yet more agility than he had seated himself, he resumed the obsequiousness of which an uncommon flow of spirits had robbed him, and guessing no other subject for his anger than the disturbance he had made, he bowed almost to the ground, first to him, and afterwards to Cecilia, most respectfully begging pardon of them both for his frolic, and protesting he had no notion he should have made such a noise!

Mrs Harrel and Mr Arnott, now hastening back, enquired what had been the matter? Morrice, ashamed of his exploit, and frightened by the looks of Mr Monckton, made an apology with the utmost humility, and hurried away: and Mr Monckton, hopeless of any better fortune, soon did the same, gnawn with a cruel discontent which he did not dare avow, and longing. to revenge himself upon Morrice, even by personal chastisement.

CHAPTER xi

A NARRATION.

The moment Cecilia was at liberty, she sent her own servant to examine into the real situation of the carpenter and his family, and

to desire his wife would call upon her as soon as she was at leisure. The account which he brought back encreased her concern for the injuries of these poor people, and determined her not to rest satisfied till she saw them redressed. He informed her that they lived in a small lodging up two pair of stairs; that there were five children, all girls, the three eldest of whom were hard at work with their mother in matting chair-bottoms, and the fourth, though a mere child, was nursing the youngest; while the poor carpenter himself was confined to his bed, in consequence of a fall from a ladder while working at Violet-Bank, by which he was covered with wounds and contusions, and an object of misery and pain.

As soon as Mrs Hill came, Cecilia sent for her into her own room, where she received her with the most compassionate tenderness, and desired to know when Mr Harrel talked of paying her?

"To-morrow, madam," she answered, shaking her head, "that is always his honour's speech: but I shall bear it while I can. However, though I dare not tell his honour, something bad will come of it, if I am not paid soon."

"Do you mean, then, to apply to the law?"

"I must not tell you, madam; but to be sure we have thought of it many a sad time and often; but still, while we could rub on, we thought it best not to make enemies: but, indeed, madam, his honour was so hardhearted this morning, that if I was not afraid you would be angry, I could not tell how to bear it; for when I told him I had no help now, for I had lost my Billy, he had the heart to say, 'So much the better, there's one the less of you.'"

"But what," cried Cecilia, extremely shocked by this unfeeling speech, "is the reason he gives for disappointing you so often?"

"He says, madam, that none of the other workmen are paid yet; and that, to be sure, is very true; but then they can all better afford to wait than we can, for we were the poorest of all, madam, and have been misfortunate from the beginning: and his honour would never have employed us, only he had run up such a bill with Mr Wright, that he would not undertake any thing more till he was paid. We were told from the first we should not get our money; but we were willing to hope for the best, for we had nothing to do, and were hard run, and had never had the offer of so good a job before; and we had a great family to keep, and many losses, and so much illness!--Oh madam! if you did but know what the poor go through!"

This speech opened to Cecilia a new view of life; that a young man could appear so gay and happy, yet be guilty of such injustice and inhumanity, that he could take pride in works which not even money had made his own, and live with undiminished splendor, when his credit itself began to fail, seemed to her incongruities so irrational, that hitherto she had supposed them impossible.

She then enquired if her husband had yet had any physician?

"Yes, madam, I humbly thank your goodness," she answered; "but I am not the poorer for that, for the gentleman was so kind he would take nothing."

"And does he give you any hopes? what does he say?"

"He says he must die, madam, but I knew that before."

"Poor woman! and what will you do then?"

"The same, madam, as I did when I lost my Billy, work on the harder!"

"Good heaven, _how severe a lot_! but tell me, why is it you seem to love your Billy so much better than the rest of your children?"

"Because, madam, he was the only boy that ever I had; he was seventeen years old, madam, and as tall and as pretty a lad! and so good, that he never cost me a wet eye till I lost him. He worked with his father, and all the folks used to say he was the better workman of the two."

"And what was the occasion of his death?"

"A consumption, madam, that wasted him quite to nothing: and he was ill a long time, and cost us a deal of money, for we spared neither for wine nor any thing that we thought would but comfort him; and we loved him so we never grudged it. But he died, madam! and if it had not been for very hard work, the loss of him would quite have broke my heart."

"Try, however, to think less of him," said Cecilia; "and depend upon my speaking again for you to Mr Harrel. You shall certainly have your money; take care, therefore, of your own health, and go home and give comfort to your sick husband."

"Oh, madam," cried the poor woman, tears streaming down her cheeks, "you don't know how touching it is to hear gentlefolks talk so kindly! And I have been used to nothing but roughness from his honour! But what I most fear, madam, is that when my husband is gone, he will be harder to deal with than ever; for a widow, madam, is always hard to be righted; and I don't expect to hold out long myself, for sickness and sorrow wear fast: and then, when we are both gone, who is to help our poor children?"

"_I_ will!" cried the generous Cecilia; "I am able, and I am willing; you shall not find all the rich hardhearted, and I will try to make you some amends for the unkindness you have suffered."

The poor woman, overcome by a promise so unexpected, burst into a passionate fit of tears, and sobbed out her thanks with a violence of emotion that frightened Cecilia almost as much as it melted her. She endeavoured, by re-iterated assurances of assistance, to appease her, and solemnly pledged her own honour that she should certainly be paid the following Saturday, which was only three days distant.

Mrs Hill, when a little calmer, dried her eyes, and humbly begging her to forgive a transport which she could not restrain, most gratefully thanked her for the engagement into which she had entered, protesting that she would not be _troublesome to her goodness_ as long as she could help it; "And I believe," she continued, "that if his honour will but pay me time enough for the

burial, I can make shift with what I have till then. But when my poor Billy died, we were sadly off indeed, for we could not bear but bury him prettily, because it was the last we could do for him: but we could hardly scrape up enough for it, and yet we all went without our dinners to help forward, except the little one of all. But that did not much matter, for we had no great heart for eating.".

"I cannot bear this!" cried Cecilia; "you must tell me no more of your Billy; but go home, and chear your spirits, and do every thing in your power to save your husband."

"I will, madam," answered the woman, "and his dying prayers shall bless you! and all my children shall bless you, and every night they shall pray for you. And oh!"--again bursting into tears, "that Billy was but alive to pray for you too!"

Cecilia kindly endeavoured to soothe her, but the poor creature, no longer able to suppress the violence of her awakened sorrows, cried out, "I must go, madam, and pray for you at home, for now I have once begun crying again, I don't know how to have done!" and hurried away.

Cecilia determined to make once more an effort with Mr Harrel for the payment of the bill, and if that, in two days, did not succeed, to take up money for the discharge of it herself, and rest all her security for reimbursement upon the shame with which such a proceeding must overwhelm him. Offended, however, by the repulse she had already received from him, and disgusted by all she had heard of his unfeeling negligence, she knew not how to address him, and resolved upon applying again to Mr Arnott, who was already acquainted with the affair, for advice and assistance.

Mr Arnott, though extremely gratified that she consulted him, betrayed by his looks a hopelessness of success, that damped all her expectations. He promised, however, to speak to Mr Harrel upon the subject, but the promise was evidently given to oblige the fair mediatrix, without any hope of advantage to the cause.

The next morning Mrs Hill again came, and again without payment was dismissed.

Mr Arnott then, at the request of Cecilia, followed Mr Harrel into his room, to enquire into the reason of this breach of promise; they continued some time together, and when he returned to Cecilia, he told her, that his brother had assured him he would give orders to Davison, his gentleman, to let her have the money the next day.

The pleasure with which she would have heard this intelligence was much checked by the grave and cold manner in which it was communicated: she waited, therefore, with more impatience than confidence for the result of this fresh assurance.

The next morning, however, was the same as the last; Mrs Hill came, saw Davison, and was sent away.

Cecilia, to whom she related her grievances, then flew to Mr Arnott, and entreated him to enquire at least of Davison why the woman had again been disappointed.

Mr Arnott obeyed her, and brought for answer, that Davison had received no orders from his master.

"I entreat you then," cried she, with mingled eagerness and vexation, "to go, for the last time, to Mr Harrel. I am sorry to impose upon you an office so disagreeable, but I am sure you compassionate these poor people, and will serve them now with your interest, as you have already done with your purse. I only wish to know if there has been any mistake, or if these delays are merely to sicken me of petitioning."

Mr Arnott, with a repugnance to the request which he could as ill conceal as his admiration of the zealous requester, again forced himself to follow Mr Harrel. His stay was not long, and Cecilia at his return perceived that he was hurt and disconcerted. As soon as they were alone together, she begged to know what had passed? "Nothing," answered he, "that will give you any pleasure. When I entreated my brother to come to the point, he said it was his intention to pay all his workmen together, for that if he paid any one singly, all the rest would be dissatisfied."

"And why," said Cecilia, "should he not pay them at once? There can be no more comparison in the value of the money to him and to them, than, to speak with truth, there is in his and in their right to it."

"But, madam, the bills for the new house itself are none of them settled, and he says that the moment he is known to discharge an account for the Temple, he shall not have any rest for the clamours it will raise among the workmen who were employed about the house."

"How infinitely strange!" exclaimed Cecilia; "will he not, then, pay anybody?"

"Next quarter, he says, he shall pay them all, but, at present, he has a particular call for his money."

Cecilia would not trust herself to make any comments upon such an avowal, but thanking Mr Arnott for the trouble which he had taken, she determined, without any further application, to desire Mr Harrel to advance her 20 pounds the next morning, and satisfy the carpenter herself, be the risk what it might.

The following day, therefore, which was the Saturday when payment was promised, she begged an audience of Mr Harrel; which he immediately granted; but, before she could make her demand, he said to her, with an air of the utmost gaiety and good-humour, "Well, Miss Beverley, how fares it with your _protegee_? I hope, at length, she is contented. But I must beg you would charge her to keep her own counsel, as otherwise she will draw me into a scrape I shall not thank her for."

"Have you, then, paid her?" cried Cecilia, with much amazement.

"Yes; I promised you I would, you know."

This intelligence equally delighted and astonished her; she repeatedly thanked him for his attention to her petition, and, eager to communicate her success to Mr Arnott, she hastened to find him.

"Now," cried she, "I shall torment you no more with painful commissions; the Hills, at last, are paid!"

"From you, madam," answered he gravely, "no commissions could be painful."

"Well, but," said Cecilia, somewhat disappointed, "you don't seem glad of this?"

"Yes," answered he, with a forced smile, "I am very glad to see you so."

"But how was it brought about? did Mr Harrel relent? or did you attack him again?"

The hesitation of his answer convinced her there was some mystery in the transaction; she began to apprehend she had been deceived, and hastily quitting the room, sent for Mrs Hill: but the moment the poor woman appeared, she was satisfied of the contrary, for, almost frantic with joy and gratitude, she immediately flung herself upon her knees, to thank her benefactress for having _seen her righted_.

Cecilia then gave her some general advice, promised to continue her friend, and offered her assistance in getting her husband into an hospital; but she told her he had already been in one many months, where he had been pronounced incurable, and therefore was desirous to spend his last days in his own lodgings.

"Well," said Cecilia, "make them as easy to him as you, can, and come to me next week, and I will try to put you in a better way of living."

She then, still greatly perplexed about Mr Arnott, sought him again, and, after various questions and conjectures, at length brought him to confess he had himself lent his brother the sum with which the Hills had been paid.

Struck with his generosity, she poured forth thanks and praises so grateful to his ears, that she soon gave him a recompense which he would have thought cheaply purchased by half his fortune.

BOOK II

CHAPTER i

A MAN OF WEALTH

The meanness with which Mr Harrel had assumed the credit, as well as accepted the assistance of Mr Arnott, increased the disgust he had already excited in Cecilia, and hastened her resolution of quitting his house; and therefore, without waiting any longer for the advice of Mr Monckton, she resolved to go instantly to her other guardians, and see what better prospects their habitations might offer.

For this purpose she borrowed one of the carriages, and gave orders to be driven into the city to the house of Mr Briggs.

She told her name, and was shewn, by a little shabby footboy, into a parlour.

Here she waited, with tolerable patience, for half an hour, but then, imagining the boy had forgotten to tell his master she was in the house, she thought it expedient to make some enquiry.

No bell, however, could she find, and therefore she went into the passage in search of the footboy; but, as she was proceeding to the head of the kitchen stairs, she was startled by hearing a man's voice from the upper part of the house exclaiming, in a furious passion, "Dare say you've filched it for a dish-clout!"

She called out, however, "Are any of Mr Briggs's servants below?"

"Anan!" answered the boy, who came to the foot of the stairs, with a knife in one hand and an old shoe, upon the sole of which he was sharpening it, in the other, "Does any one call?"

"Yes," said Cecilia, "I do; for I could not find the bell."

"O, we have no bell in the parlour," returned the boy, "master always knocks with his stick."

"I am afraid Mr Briggs is too busy to see me, and if so, I will come another time."

"No, ma'am," said the boy, "master's only looking over his things from the wash."

"Will you tell him, then, that I am waiting?"

"I has, ma'am; but master misses his shaving-rag, and he says he won't come to the Mogul till he's found it." And then he went on with sharpening his knife.

This little circumstance was at least sufficient to satisfy Cecilia that if she fixed her abode with Mr Briggs, she should not have much uneasiness to fear from the sight of extravagance and profusion.

She returned to the parlour, and after waiting another half-hour, Mr Briggs made his appearance.

Mr Briggs was a short, thick, sturdy man, with very small keen black eyes, a square face, a dark complexion, and a snub nose. His constant dress, both in winter and summer, was a snuff-colour suit of clothes, blue and white speckled worsted stockings, a plain shirt, and a bob wig. He was seldom without a stick in his hand, which he usually held to his forehead when not speaking.

This bob wig, however, to the no small amazement of Cecilia, he now brought into the room upon the forefinger of his left hand, while, with his right, he was smoothing the curls; and his head, in defiance of the coldness of the weather, was bald and uncovered.

"Well," cried he, as he entered, "did you think I should not come?"

"I was very willing, sir, to wait your leisure."

"Ay, ay, knew you had not much to do. Been looking for my shaving-rag. Going out of town; never use such a thing at home, paper does as well. Warrant Master Harrel never heard of such a thing; ever see him comb his own wig? Warrant he don't know how! never trust mine out of my hands, the boy would tear off half the hair; all one to master Harrel, I suppose. Well, which is the warmer man, that's all? Will he cast an account with me?"

Cecilia, at a loss what to say to this singular exordium, began an apology for not waiting upon him sooner.

"Ay, ay," cried he, "always gadding, no getting sight of you. Live a fine life! A pretty guardian, Master Harrel! and where's t'other? where's old Don Puffabout?"

"If you mean Mr Delvile, sir, I have not yet seen him."

"Thought so. No matter, as well not. Only tell you he's a German Duke, or a Spanish Don Ferdinand. Well, you've me! poorly off else. A couple of ignoramuses! don't know when to buy nor when to sell. No doing business with either of them. We met once or twice; all to no purpose; only heard Don Vampus count his old Grandees; how will that get interest for money? Then comes Master Harrel--twenty bows to a word,--looks at a watch,--about as big as a sixpence,--poor raw ninny!--a couple of rare guardians! Well, you've me, I say; mind that!"

Cecilia was wholly unable to devise any answer to these effusions of contempt and anger; and therefore his harangue lasted without interruption, till he had exhausted all his subjects of complaint, and emptied his mind of ill-will; and then, settling his wig, he drew a chair near her, and twinkling his little black eyes in her face, his rage subsided into the most perfect good humour; and, after peering at her some time with a look of much approbation, he said, with an arch nod, "Well, my duck, got ever a sweetheart yet?"

Cecilia laughed, and said "No."

"Ah, little rogue, don't believe you! all a fib! better speak out: come, fit I should know; a'n't you my own ward? to be sure, almost of age, but not quite, so what's that to me?"

She then, more seriously, assured him she had no intelligence of that sort to communicate.

"Well, when you have, tell, that's all. Warrant sparks enough hankering. I'll give you some advice Take care of sharpers; don't trust shoe-buckles, nothing but Bristol stones! tricks in all things. A fine gentleman sharp as another man. Never give your heart to a gold-topped cane, nothing but brass gilt over. Cheats everywhere: fleece you in a year; won't leave you a groat. But one way to be safe,--bring 'em all to me."

Cecilia thanked him for his caution, and promised not to forget his advice.

"That's the way," he continued, "bring 'em to me. Won't be bamboozled. Know their tricks. Shew 'em the odds on't. Ask for the rent-roll,--see how they look! stare like stuck pigs! got no such thing."

"Certainly, sir, that will be an excellent method of trial."

"Ay, ay, know the way! soon find if they are above par. Be sure don't mind gold waistcoats; nothing but tinsel, all shew and no substance; better leave the matter to me; take care of you myself; know where to find one will do."

She again thanked him; and, being fully satisfied with this specimen of his conversation, and unambitious of any further counsel from him, she arose to depart.

"Well," repeated he, nodding at her, with a look of much kindness, "leave it to me, I say; I'll get you a careful husband, so take no thought about the matter."

Cecilia, half-laughing, begged he would not give himself much trouble, and assured him she was not in any haste.

"All the better," said he, "good girl; no fear for you: look out myself; warrant I'll find one. Not very easy, neither! hard times! men scarce; wars and tumults! stocks low! women chargeable!--but don't fear; do our best; get you off soon."

She then returned to her carriage: full of reflection upon the scene in which she had just been engaged, and upon the strangeness of hastening from one house to avoid a vice the very want of which seemed to render another insupportable! but she now found that though luxury was more baneful in its consequences, it was less disgustful in its progress than avarice; yet, insuperably averse to both, and almost equally desirous to fly from the unjust extravagance of Mr Harrel, as from the comfortless and unnecessary parsimony of Mr Briggs, she proceeded instantly to St James's Square, convinced that her third guardian, unless exactly resembling one of the others, must inevitably be preferable to both.

CHAPTER ii

A MAN OF FAMILY.

The house of Mr Delvile was grand and spacious, fitted up not with modern taste, but with the magnificence of former times; the servants were all veterans, gorgeous in their liveries, and profoundly respectful in their manners; every thing had an air of state, but of a state so gloomy, that while it inspired awe, it repressed pleasure.

Cecilia sent in her name and was admitted without difficulty, and was then ushered with great pomp through sundry apartments, and rows of servants, before she came into the presence of Mr Delvile.

He received her with an air of haughty affability which, to a spirit open and liberal as that of Cecilia, could not fail being extremely offensive; but too much occupied with the care of his own importance to penetrate into the feelings of another, he attributed the uneasiness which his reception occasioned to the overawing predominance of superior rank and consequence.

He ordered a servant to bring her a chair, while he only half rose from his own upon her entering into the room; then, waving his hand and bowing, with a motion that desired her to be seated, he said, "I am very happy, Miss Beverley, that you have found me alone; you would rarely have had the same good fortune. At this time of day I am generally in a crowd. People of large connections have not much leisure in London, especially if they see a little after their own affairs, and if their estates, like mine, are dispersed in various parts of the kingdom. However, I am glad it happened so. And I am glad, too, that you have done me the favour of calling without waiting till I sent, which I really would have done as soon as I heard of your arrival, but that the multiplicity of my engagements allowed me no respite."

A display of importance so ostentatious made Cecilia already half repent her visit, satisfied that the hope in which she had planned it would be fruitless.

Mr Delvile, still imputing to embarrassment, an inquietude of countenance that proceeded merely from disappointment, imagined her veneration was every moment increasing; and therefore, pitying a timidity which both gratified and softened him, and equally pleased with himself for inspiring, and with her for feeling it, he abated more and more of his greatness, till he became, at length, so infinitely condescending, with intention to give her courage, that he totally depressed her with mortification and chagrin.

After some general inquiries concerning her way of life, he told her that he hoped she was contented with her situation at the Harrels, adding, "If you have any thing to complain of, remember to whom you may appeal." He then asked if she had seen Mr Briggs?

"Yes, sir, I am this moment come from his house."

"I am sorry for it; his house cannot be a proper one for the reception of a young lady. When the Dean made application that I would be one of your guardians, I instantly sent him a refusal, as is my custom upon all such occasions, which indeed occur to me with a frequency extremely importunate: but the Dean was a man for whom I had really a regard, and, therefore, when I found my refusal had affected him, I suffered myself to be prevailed upon to indulge him, contrary not only to my general rule, but to my inclination."

Here he stopt, as if to receive some compliment, but Cecilia, very little disposed to pay him any, went no farther than an inclination of the head.

"I knew not, however," he continued, "at the time I was induced to give my consent, with whom I was to be associated; nor could I have imagined the Dean so little conversant with the distinctions of the world, as to disgrace me with inferior coadjutors: but the moment I

learnt the state of the affair, I insisted upon withdrawing both my name and countenance."

Here again he paused; not in expectation of an answer from Cecilia, but merely to give her time to marvel in what manner he had at last been melted.

"The Dean," he resumed, "was then very ill; my displeasure, I believe, hurt him. I was sorry for it; he was a worthy man, and had not meant to offend me; in the end, I accepted his apology, and was even persuaded to accept the office. You have a right, therefore, to consider yourself as _personally_ my ward, and though I do not think proper to mix much with your other guardians, I shall always be ready to serve and advise you, and much pleased to see you."

"You do me honour, sir," said Cecilia, extremely wearied of such graciousness, and rising to be gone.

"Pray sit still," said he, with a smile; "I have not many engagements for this morning. You must give me some account how you pass your time. Are you much out? The Harrels, I am told, live at a great expense. What is their establishment?"

"I don't exactly know, sir."

"They are decent sort of people, I believe; are they not?"

"I hope so, sir!"

"And they have a tolerable acquaintance, I believe: I am told so; for I know nothing of them."

"They have, at least, a very numerous one, sir."

"Well, my dear," said he, taking her hand, "now you have once ventured to come, don't be apprehensive of repeating your visits. I must introduce you to Mrs Delvile; I am sure she will be happy to shew you any kindness. Come, therefore, when you please, and without scruple. I would call upon you myself, but am fearful of being embarrassed by the people with whom you live."

He then rang his bell, and with the same ceremonies which had attended her admittance, she was conducted back to her carriage.

And here died away all hope of putting into execution, during her minority, the plan of which the formation had given her so much pleasure. She found that her present situation, however wide of her wishes, was by no means the most disagreeable in which she could be placed; she was tired, indeed, of dissipation, and shocked at the sight of unfeeling extravagance; but notwithstanding the houses of each of her other guardians were exempt from these particular vices, she saw not any prospect of happiness with either of them; vulgarity seemed leagued with avarice to drive her from the mansion of Mr Briggs, and haughtiness with ostentation to exclude her from that of Mr Delvile.

She came back, therefore, to Portman Square, disappointed in her hopes, and sick both of those whom she quitted and of those to whom she was returning; but in going to her own apartment Mrs Harrel,

eagerly stopping her, begged she would come into the drawing-room, where she promised her a most agreeable surprise.

Cecilia, for an instant, imagined that some old acquaintance was just arrived out of the country; but, upon her entrance, she saw only Mr Harrel and some workmen, and found that the agreeable surprise was to proceed from the sight of an elegant Awning, prepared for one of the inner apartments, to be fixed over a long desert-table, which was to be ornamented with various devices of cut glass.

"Did you ever see any thing so beautiful in your life?" cried Mrs Harrel; "and when the table is covered with the coloured ices and those sort of things, it will be as beautiful again. We shall have it ready for Tuesday se'nnight.

"I understood you were engaged to go to the Masquerade ?"

"So we shall; only we intend to see masks at home first."

"I have some thoughts," said Mr Harrel, leading the way to another small room, "of running up a flight of steps and a little light gallery here, and so making a little Orchestra. What would such a thing come to, Mr Tomkins?"

"O, a trifle, sir," answered Mr Tomkins, "a mere nothing."

"Well, then, give orders for it, and let it be done directly. I don't care how slight it is, but pray let it be very elegant. Won't it be a great addition, Miss Beverley?"

"Indeed, sir, I don't think it seems to be very necessary," said Cecilia, who wished much to take that moment for reminding him of the debt he had contracted with Mr Arnott.

"Lord, Miss Beverley is so grave!" cried Mrs Harrel; "nothing of this sort gives her any pleasure."

"She has indeed," answered Cecilia, trying to smile, "not much taste for the pleasure of being always surrounded by workmen."

And, as soon as she was able, she retired to her room, feeling, both on the part of Mr Arnott and the Hills, a resentment at the injustice of Mr Harrel, which fixed her in the resolution of breaking through that facility of compliance, which had hitherto confined her disapprobation to her own breast, and venturing, henceforward, to mark the opinion she entertained of his conduct by consulting nothing but reason and principle in her own.

Her first effort towards this change was made immediately, in begging to be excused from accompanying Mrs Harrel to a large card assembly that evening.

Mrs Harrel, extremely surprised, asked a thousand times the reason of her refusal, imagining it to proceed from some very extraordinary cause; nor was she, without the utmost difficulty, persuaded at last that she merely meant to pass one evening by herself.

But the next day, when the refusal was repeated, she was still more

incredulous; it seemed to her impossible that any one who had the power to be encircled with company, could by choice spend a second afternoon alone: and she was so urgent in her request to be entrusted with the secret, that Cecilia found no way left to appease her, but by frankly confessing she was weary of eternal visiting, and sick of living always in a crowd.

"Suppose, then," cried she, "I send for Miss Larolles to come and sit with you?"

Cecilia, not without laughing, declined this proposal, assuring her that no such assistant was necessary for her entertainment: yet it was not till after a long contention that she was able to convince her there would be no cruelty in leaving her by herself.

The following day, however, her trouble diminished; for Mrs Harrel, ceasing to be surprised, thought little more of the matter, and forbore any earnestness of solicitation: and, from that time, she suffered her to follow her own humour with very little opposition. Cecilia was much concerned to find her so unmoved; and not less disappointed at the indifference of Mr Harrel, who, being seldom of the same parties with his lady, and seeing her too rarely either to communicate or hear any domestic occurrences, far from being struck, as she had hoped, with the new way in which she passed her time, was scarce sensible of the change, and interfered not upon the subject.

Sir Robert Floyer, who continued to see her when he dined in Portman Square, often enquired what she did with herself in an evening; but never obtaining any satisfactory answer, he concluded her engagements were with people to whom he was a stranger.

Poor Mr Arnott felt the cruellest disappointment in being deprived of the happiness of attending her in her evening's expeditions, when, whether he conversed with her or not, he was sure of the indulgence of seeing and hearing her.

But the greatest sufferer from this new regulation was Mr Monckton, who, unable any longer to endure the mortifications of which his morning visits to Portman Square had been productive, determined not to trust his temper with such provocations in future, but rather to take his chance of meeting with her elsewhere: for which purpose, he assiduously frequented all public places, and sought acquaintance with every family and every person he believed to be known to the Harrels: but his patience was unrewarded, and his diligence unsuccessful; he met with her no where, and, while he continued his search, fancied every evil power was at work to lead him whither he was sure never to find her.

Meanwhile Cecilia passed her time greatly to her own satisfaction. Her first care was to assist and comfort the Hills. She went herself to their lodgings, ordered and paid for whatever the physician prescribed to the sick man, gave clothes to the children, and money and various necessaries to the wife. She found that the poor carpenter was not likely to languish much longer, and therefore, for the present, only thought of alleviating his sufferings, by procuring him such indulgences as were authorised by his physician, and enabling his family to abate so much of their labour as was requisite for obtaining time to nurse and attend him: but she meant, as soon as the last duties should be paid him, to assist his

survivors in attempting to follow some better and more profitable business.

Her next solicitude was to furnish herself with a well-chosen collection of books: and this employment, which to a lover of literature, young and ardent in its pursuit, is perhaps the mind's first luxury, proved a source of entertainment so fertile and delightful that it left her nothing to wish.

She confined not her acquisitions to the limits of her present power, but, as she was laying in a stock for future as well as immediate advantage, she was restrained by no expence from gratifying her taste and her inclination. She had now entered the last year of her minority, and therefore had not any doubt that her guardians would permit her to take up whatever sum she should require for such a purpose.

And thus, in the exercise of charity, the search of knowledge, and the enjoyment of quiet, serenely in innocent philosophy passed the hours of Cecilia.

CHAPTER iii

A MASQUERADE.

The first check this tranquillity received was upon the day of the masquerade, the preparations for which have been already mentioned. The whole house was then in commotion from various arrangements and improvements which were planned for almost every apartment that was to be opened for the reception of masks. Cecilia herself, however little pleased with the attendant circumstance of wantonly accumulating unnecessary debts, was not the least animated of the party: she was a stranger to every diversion of this sort, and from the novelty of the scene, hoped for uncommon satisfaction.

At noon Mrs Harrel sent for her to consult upon a new scheme which occurred to Mr Harrel, of fixing in fantastic forms some coloured lamps in the drawing-room.

While they were all discoursing this matter over, one of the servants, who had two or three times whispered some message to Mr Harrel, and then retired, said, in a voice not too low to be heard by Cecilia, "Indeed, Sir, I can't get him away."

"He's an insolent scoundrel," answered Mr Harrel; "however, if I must speak to him, I must;" and went out of the room.

Mrs Harrel still continued to exercise her fancy upon this new project, calling both upon Mr Arnott and Cecilia to admire her taste and contrivance; till they were all interrupted by the loudness of a voice from below stairs, which frequently repeated, "Sir, I can wait no longer! I have been put off till I can be put off no more!"

Startled by this, Mrs Harrel ceased her employment, and they all stood still and silent. They then heard Mr Harrel with much softness

answer, "Good Mr Rawlins, have a little patience; I shall receive a large sum of money to-morrow, or next day, and you may then depend upon being paid."

"Sir," cried the man, "you have so often told me the same, that it goes just for nothing: I have had a right to it a long time, and I have a bill to make up that can't be waited for any longer."

"Certainly, Mr Rawlins," replied Mr Harrel, with still increasing gentleness, "and certainly you shall have it: nobody means to dispute your right; I only beg you to wait a day, or two days at furthest, and you may then depend upon being paid. And you shall not be the worse for obliging me; I will never employ any body else, and I shall have occasion for you very soon, as I intend to make some alterations at Violet-Bank that will be very considerable."

"Sir," said the man, still louder, "it is of no use your employing me, if I can never get my money. All my workmen must be paid whether I am or no; and so, if I must needs speak to a lawyer, why there's no help for it."

"Did you ever hear any thing so impertinent?" exclaimed Mrs Harrel; "I am sure Mr Harrel will be very much to blame, if ever he lets that man do any thing more for him."

Just then Mr Harrel appeared, and, with an air of affected unconcern, said, "Here's the most insolent rascal of a mason below stairs I ever met with in my life; he has come upon me, quite unexpectedly, with a bill of 400 pounds, and won't leave the house without the money. Brother Arnott, I wish you would do me the favour to speak to the fellow, for I could not bear to stay with him any longer."

"Do you wish me to give him a draft for the money upon my own banker?"

"That would be vastly obliging," answered Mr Harrel, "and I will give you my note for it directly. And so we shall get rid of this fellow at once: and he shall do nothing more for me as long as he lives. I will run up a new building at Violet-Bank next summer, if only to shew him what a job he has lost."

"Pay the man at once, there's a good brother," cried Mrs Harrel, "and let's hear no more of him."

The two gentlemen then retired to another room, and Mrs Harrel, after praising the extreme good-nature of her brother, of whom she was very fond, and declaring that the mason's impertinence had quite frightened her, again returned to her plan of new decorations.

Cecilia, amazed at this indifference to the state of her husband's affairs, began to think it was her own duty to talk with her upon the subject: and therefore, after a silence so marked that Mrs Harrel enquired into its reason, she said, "Will you pardon me, my dear friend, if I own I am rather surprized to see you continue these preparations?"

"Lord, why?"

"Because any fresh unnecessary expences just now, till Mr Harrel actually receives the money he talks of--"

"Why, my dear, the expence of such a thing as this is nothing; in Mr Harrel's affairs I assure you it will not be at all felt. Besides, he expects money so soon, that it is just the same as if he had it already."

Cecilia, unwilling to be too officious, began then to express her admiration of the goodness and generosity of Mr Arnott; taking frequent occasion, in the course of her praise, to insinuate that those only can be properly liberal, who are just and economical.

She had prepared no masquerade habit for this evening, as Mrs Harrel, by whose direction she was guided, informed her it was not necessary for ladies to be masked at home, and said she should receive her company herself in a dress which she might wear upon any other occasion. Mr Harrel, also, and Mr Arnott made not any alteration in their appearance.

At about eight o'clock the business of the evening began; and before nine, there were so many masks that Cecilia wished she had herself made one of the number, as she was far more conspicuous in being almost the only female in a common dress, than any masquerade habit could have made her. The novelty of the scene, however, joined to the general air of gaiety diffused throughout the company, shortly lessened her embarrassment; and, after being somewhat familiarized to the abruptness with which the masks approached her, and the freedom with which they looked at or addressed her, the first confusion of her situation subsided, and in her curiosity to watch others, she ceased to observe how much she was watched herself.

Her expectations of entertainment were not only fulfilled but surpassed; the variety of dresses, the medley of characters, the quick succession of figures, and the ludicrous mixture of groups, kept her attention unwearied: while the conceited efforts at wit, the total thoughtlessness of consistency, and the ridiculous incongruity of the language with the appearance, were incitements to surprise and diversion without end. Even the local cant of, _Do you know me? Who are you?_ and _I know you_; with the sly pointing of the finger, the arch nod of the head, and the pert squeak of the voice, though wearisome to those who frequent such assemblies, were, to her unhackneyed observation, additional subjects of amusement.

Soon after nine o'clock, every room was occupied, and the common crowd of regular masqueraders were dispersed through the various apartments. Dominos of no character, and fancy dresses of no meaning, made, as is usual at such meetings, the general herd of the company: for the rest, the men were Spaniards, chimney-sweepers, Turks, watchmen, conjurers, and old women; and the ladies, shepherdesses, orange girls, Circassians, gipseys, haymakers, and sultanas.

Cecilia had, as yet, escaped any address beyond the customary enquiry of _Do you know me?_ and a few passing compliments; but when the rooms filled, and the general crowd gave general courage, she was attacked in a manner more pointed and singular.

The very first mask who approached her seemed to have nothing less in view than preventing the approach of every other: yet had he little reason to hope favour for himself, as the person he represented, of all others least alluring to the view, was the devil! He was black from head to foot, save that two red horns seemed to issue from his forehead; his face was so completely covered that the sight only of his eyes was visible, his feet were cloven, and in his right hand he held a wand the colour of fire.

Waving this wand as he advanced towards Cecilia, he cleared a semi-circular space before her chair, thrice with the most profound reverence bowed to her, thrice. turned himself around with sundry grimaces, and then fiercely planted himself at her side.

Cecilia was amused by his mummery, but felt no great delight in his guardianship, and, after a short time, arose, with intention to walk to another place; but the black gentleman, adroitly moving round her, held out his wand to obstruct her passage, and therefore, preferring captivity to resistance, she was again obliged to seat herself.

An Hotspur, who just then made his appearance, was now strutting boldly towards her; but the devil, rushing furiously forwards, placed himself immediately between them. Hotspur, putting his arms a-kimbo with an air of defiance, gave a loud stamp with his right foot, and then--marched into another room!

The victorious devil ostentatiously waved his wand, and returned to his station.

Mr Arnott, who had never moved two yards from Cecilia, knowing her too well to suppose she received any pleasure from being thus distinguished, modestly advanced to offer his assistance in releasing her from confinement; but the devil, again describing a circle with his wand, gave him three such smart raps on the head that his hair was disordered, and his face covered with powder. A general laugh succeeded, and Mr Arnott, too diffident to brave raillery, or withstand shame, retired in confusion.

The black gentleman seemed now to have all authority in his own hands, and his wand was brandished with more ferocity than ever, no one again venturing to invade the domain he thought fit to appropriate for his own.

At length, however, a Don Quixote appeared, and every mask in the room was eager to point out to him the imprisonment of Cecilia.

This Don Quixote was accoutered with tolerable exactness according to the description of the admirable Cervantes; his armour was rusty, his helmet was a barber's basin, his shield, a pewter dish, and his lance, an old sword fastened to a slim cane. His figure, tall and thin, was well adapted to the character he represented, and his mask, which depictured a lean and haggard face, worn with care, yet fiery with crazy passions, exhibited, with propriety the most striking, the knight of the doleful countenance.

The complaints against the devil with which immediately and from all quarters he was assailed, he heard with the most solemn taciturnity: after which, making a motion for general silence, he stalked

majestically towards Cecilia, but stopping short of the limits prescribed by her guard, he kissed his spear in token of allegiance, and then, slowly dropping upon one knee, began the following address:

"Most incomparable Princess!--Thus humbly prostrate at the feet of your divine and ineffable beauty, graciously permit the most pitiful of your servitors, Don Quixote De la Mancha, from your high and tender grace, to salute the fair boards which sustain your corporeal machine."

Then, bending down his head, he kissed the floor; after which, raising himself upon his feet, he proceeded in his speech.

"Report, O most fair and unmatchable virgin! daringly affirmeth that a certain discourteous person, who calleth himself the devil, even now, and in thwart of your fair inclinations, keepeth and detaineth your irradiant frame in hostile thraldom. Suffer then, magnanimous and undescribable lady! that I, the most groveling of your unworthy vassals, do sift the fair truth out of this foul sieve, and obsequiously bending to your divine attractions, conjure your highness veritably to inform me, if that honourable chair which haply supports your terrestrial perfections, containeth the inimitable burthen with the free and legal consent of your celestial spirit?"

Here he ceased: and Cecilia, who laughed at this characteristic address, though she had not courage to answer it, again made an effort to quit her place, but again by the wand of her black persecutor was prevented.

This little incident was answer sufficient for the valorous knight, who indignantly exclaimed,

"Sublime Lady!--I beseech but of your exquisite mercy to refrain mouldering the clay composition of my unworthy body to impalpable dust, by the refulgence of those bright stars vulgarly called eyes, till I have lawfully wreaked my vengeance upon this unobliging caitiff, for his most disloyal obstruction of your highness's adorable pleasure."

Then, bowing low, he turned from her, and thus addressed his intended antagonist:

"Uncourtly Miscreant,--The black garment which envellopeth thy most unpleasant person, seemeth even of the most ravishing whiteness, in compare of the black bile which floateth within thy sable interior. Behold, then, my gauntlet! yet ere I deign to be the instrument of thy extirpation, O thou most mean and ignoble enemy! that the honour of Don Quixote De la Mancha may not be sullied by thy extinction, I do here confer upon thee the honour of knighthood, dubbing thee, by my own sword, Don Devil, knight of the horrible physiognomy."

He then attempted to strike his shoulder with his spear, but the black gentleman, adroitly eluding the blow, defended himself with his wand: a mock fight ensued, conducted on both sides with admirable dexterity; but Cecilia, less eager to view it than to become again a free agent, made her escape into another apartment; while the rest of the ladies, though they almost all screamed,

jumped upon chairs and sofas to peep at the combat.

In conclusion, the wand of the knight of the horrible physiognomy was broken against the shield of the knight of the doleful countenance; upon which Don Quixote called out _victoria_! the whole room echoed the sound; the unfortunate new knight retired abruptly into another apartment, and the conquering Don, seizing the fragments of the weapon of his vanquished enemy went out in search of the lady for whose releasement he had fought: and the moment he found her, prostrating both himself and the trophies at her feet, he again pressed the floor with his lips, and then, slowly arising, repeated his reverences with added formality, and, without waiting her acknowledgments, gravely retired.

The moment he departed a Minerva, not stately nor austere, not marching in warlike majesty, but gay and airy,

"Tripping on light fantastic toe,"

ran up to Cecilia, and squeaked out, "Do you know me?"

"Not," answered she, instantly recollecting Miss Larolles, "by your _appearance_, I own! but by your _voice_, I think I can guess you."

"I was monstrous sorry," returned the goddess, without understanding this distinction, "that I was not at home when you called upon me. Pray, how do you like my dress? I assure you I think it's the prettiest here. But do you know there's the most shocking thing in the world happened in the next room! I really believe there's a common chimney-sweeper got in! I assure you it's enough to frighten one to death, for every time he moves the soot smells so you can't think; quite real soot, I assure you! only conceive how nasty! I declare I wish with all my heart it would suffocate him!"

Here she was interrupted by the re-appearance of _Don Devil_; who, looking around him, and perceiving that his antagonist was gone, again advanced to Cecilia: not, however, with the authority of his first approach, for with his wand he had lost much of his power; but to recompense himself for this disgrace, he had recourse to another method equally effectual for keeping his prey to himself, for he began a growling, so dismal and disagreeable, that while many of the ladies, and, among the first, the _Goddess of Wisdom and Courage_, ran away to avoid him, the men all stood aloof to watch what next was to follow.

Cecilia now became seriously uneasy; for she was made an object of general attention, yet could neither speak nor be spoken to. She could suggest no motive for behaviour so whimsical, though she imagined the only person who could have the assurance to practise it was Sir Robert Floyer.

After some time spent thus disagreeably, a white domino, who for a few minutes had been a very attentive spectator, suddenly came forward, and exclaiming, "_I'll cross him though he blast me!_" rushed upon the fiend, and grasping one of his horns, called out to a Harlequin who stood near him, "Harlequin! do you fear to fight the devil?"

"Not I truly!" answered Harlequin, whose voice immediately betrayed

young Morrice, and who, issuing from the crowd, whirled himself round before the black gentleman with yet more agility than he had himself done before Cecilia, giving him, from time to time, many smart blows on his shoulders, head, and back, with his wooden sword.

The rage of _Don Devil_ at this attack seemed somewhat beyond what a masquerade character rendered necessary; he foamed at the mouth with resentment, and defended himself with so much vehemence, that he soon drove poor Harlequin into another room: but, when he would have returned to his prey, the genius of pantomime, curbed, but not subdued, at the instigation of the white domino, returned to the charge, and by a perpetual rotation of attack and retreat, kept him in constant employment, pursuing him from room to room, and teazing him without cessation or mercy.

Mean time Cecilia, delighted at being released, hurried into a corner, where she hoped to breathe and look on in quiet; and the white domino having exhorted Harlequin to torment the tormentor, and keep him at bay, followed her with congratulations upon her recovered freedom.

"It is you," answered she, "I ought to thank for it, which indeed I do most heartily. I was so tired of confinement, that my mind seemed almost as little at liberty as my person."

"Your persecutor, I presume," said the domino, "is known to you."

"I hope so," answered she, "because there is one man I suspect, and I should be sorry to find there was another equally disagreeable."

"O, depend upon it," cried he, "there are many who would be happy to confine you in the same manner; neither have you much cause for complaint; you have, doubtless, been the aggressor, and played this game yourself without mercy, for I read in your face the captivity of thousands: have you, then, any right to be offended at the spirit of retaliation which one, out of such numbers has courage to exert in return?"

"I protest," cried Cecilia, "I took you for my defender! whence is it you are become my accuser?"

"From seeing the danger to which my incautious knight-errantry has exposed me; I begin, indeed, to take you for a very mischievous sort of person, and I fear the poor devil from whom I rescued you will be amply revenged for his disgrace, by finding that the first use you make of your freedom is to doom your deliverer to bondage."

Here they were disturbed by the extreme loquacity of two opposite parties: and listening attentively, they heard from one side, "My angel! fairest of creatures! goddess of my heart!" uttered in accents of rapture; while from the other, the vociferation was so violent they could distinctly hear nothing.

The white domino satisfied his curiosity by going to both parties; and then, returning to Cecilia, said, "Can you conjecture who was making those soft speeches? a Shylock! his knife all the while in his hand, and his design, doubtless, to _cut as near the heart as possible!_ while the loud cackling from the other side is owing to the riotous merriment of a noisy Mentor! when next I hear a

disturbance, I shall expect to see some simpering Pythagoras stunned by his talkative disciples."

"To own the truth," said Cecilia, "the almost universal neglect of the characters assumed by these masquers has been the chief source of my entertainment this evening: for at a place of this sort, the next best thing to a character well supported is a character ridiculously burlesqued."

"You cannot, then, have wanted amusement," returned the domino, "for among all the persons assembled in these apartments, I have seen only three who have seemed conscious that any change but that of dress was necessary to disguise them."

"And pray who are those?"

"A Don Quixote, a schoolmaster, and your friend the devil."

"O, call him not my friend," exclaimed Cecilia, "for indeed in or out of that garb he is particularly my aversion."

"_My_ friend, then, I will call him," said the domino, "for so, were he ten devils, I must think him, since I owe to him the honour of conversing with you. And, after all, to give him his due, to which, you know, he is even proverbially entitled, he has shewn such abilities in the performance of his part, so much skill in the display of malice, and so much perseverance in the art of tormenting, that I cannot but respect his ingenuity and capacity. And, indeed, if instead of an evil genius, he had represented a guardian angel, he could not have shewn a more refined taste in his choice of an object to hover about."

Just then they were approached by a young haymaker, to whom the white domino called out, "You look as gay and as brisk as if fresh from the hay-field after only half a day's work. Pray, how is it you pretty lasses find employment for the winter"

"How?" cried she, pertly, "why, the same as for the summer!" And pleased with her own readiness at repartee, without feeling the ignorance it betrayed, she tript lightly on.

Immediately after the schoolmaster mentioned by the white domino advanced to Cecilia. His dress was merely a long wrapping gown of green stuff, a pair of red slippers, and a woollen night-cap of the same colour; while, as the symbol of his profession, he held a rod in his hand.

"Ah, fair lady," he cried, "how soothing were it to the austerity of my life, how softening to the rigidity of my manners, might I-- without a _breaking out of bounds_, which I ought to be the first to discourage, and a "confusion to all order" for which the school-boy should himself chastise his master--be permitted to cast at your feet this emblem of my authority! and to forget, in the softness of your conversation, all the roughness of discipline!"

"No, no," cried Cecilia, "I will not be answerable for such corruption of taste!"

"This repulse," answered he, "is just what I feared; for alas! under

what pretence could a poor miserable country pedagogue presume to approach you? Should I examine you in the dead languages, would not your living accents charm from me all power of reproof? Could I look at you, and hear a false concord? Should I doom you to water-gruel as a dunce, would not my subsequent remorse make me want it myself as a madman? Were your fair hand spread out to me for correction, should I help applying my lips to it, instead of my rat-tan? If I ordered you to be _called up_, should I ever remember to have you sent back? And if I commanded you to stand in a corner, how should I forbear following you thither myself?"

Cecilia, who had no difficulty in knowing this pretended schoolmaster for Mr Gosport, was readily beginning to propose conditions for according him her favour, when their ears were assailed by a forced phthisical cough, which they found proceeded from an apparent old woman, who was a young man in disguise, and whose hobbling gait, grunting voice, and most grievous asthmatic complaints, seemed greatly enjoyed and applauded by the company.

"How true is it, yet how inconsistent," cried the white domino, "that while we all desire to live long, we have all a horror of being old! The figure now passing is not meant to ridicule any particular person, nor to stigmatize any particular absurdity; its sole view is to expose to contempt and derision the general and natural infirmities of age! and the design is not more disgusting than impolitic; for why, while so carefully we guard from all approaches of death, should we close the only avenues to happiness in long life, respect and tenderness?"

Cecilia, delighted both by the understanding and humanity of her new acquaintance, and pleased at being joined by Mr Gosport, was beginning to be perfectly satisfied with her situation, when, creeping softly towards her, she again perceived the black gentleman.

"Ah!" cried she, with some vexation, "here comes my old tormentor! screen me from him if possible, or he will again make me his prisoner."

"Fear not," cried the white domino, "he is an evil spirit, and we will surely lay him. If one spell fails, we must try another."

Cecilia then perceiving Mr Arnott, begged he would also assist in barricading her from the fiend who so obstinately pursued her.

Mr Arnott most gratefully acceded to the proposal; and the white domino, who acted as commanding officer, assigned to each his station: he desired Cecilia would keep quietly to her seat, appointed the schoolmaster to be her guard on the left, took possession himself of the opposite post, and ordered Mr Arnott to stand centinel in front.

This arrangement being settled, the guards of the right and left wings instantly secured their places; but while Mr Arnott was considering whether it were better to face the besieged or the enemy, the arch-foe rushed suddenly before him, and laid himself down at the feet of Cecilia!

Mr Arnott, extremely disconcerted, began a serious expostulation

upon the ill-breeding of this behaviour; but the devil, resting all excuse upon supporting his character, only answered by growling.

The white domino seemed to hesitate for a moment in what manner to conduct himself, and with a quickness that marked his chagrin, said to Cecilia, "You told me you knew him,--has he any right to follow you?"

"If he thinks he has," answered she, a little alarmed by his question, "this is no time to dispute it."

And then, to avoid any hazard of altercation, she discreetly forbore making further complaints, preferring any persecution to seriously remonstrating with a man of so much insolence as the Baronet.

The schoolmaster, laughing at the whole transaction, only said, "And pray, madam, after playing the devil with all mankind, what right have you to complain that one man plays the devil with you?"

"We shall, at least, fortify you," said the white domino, "from any other assailant: no three-headed Cerberus could protect you more effectually: but you will not, therefore, fancy yourself in the lower regions, for, if I mistake not, the torment of _three guardians_ is nothing new to you."

"And how," said Cecilia, surprised, "should you know of my three guardians? I hope I am not quite encompassed with evil spirits!"

"No," answered he; "you will find me as inoffensive as the hue of the domino I wear;----and would I could add as insensible!"

"This black gentleman," said the schoolmaster, "who, and very innocently, I was going to call your _black-guard_, has as noble and fiend-like a disposition as I remember to have seen; for without even attempting to take any diversion himself, he seems gratified to his heart's content in excluding from it the lady he serves."

"He does me an honour I could well dispense with," said Cecilia; "but I hope he has some secret satisfaction in his situation which pays him for its apparent inconvenience."

Here the black gentleman half-raised himself, and attempted to take her hand. She started, and with much displeasure drew it back. He then growled, and again sank prostrate.

"This is a fiend," said the schoolmaster, "who to himself sayeth, _Budge not!_ let his conscience never so often say _budge!_ Well, fair lady, your fortifications, however, may now be deemed impregnable, since I, with a flourish of my rod, can keep off the young by recollection of the past, and since the fiend, with a jut of his foot, may keep off the old from dread of the future!"

Here a Turk, richly habited and resplendent with jewels, stalked towards Cecilia, and, having regarded her some time, called out, "I have been looking hard about me the whole evening, and, faith, I have seen nothing handsome before!"

The moment he opened his mouth, his voice, to her utter

astonishment, betrayed Sir Robert Floyer! "Mercy on me," cried she aloud, and pointing to the fiend, "who, then, can this possibly be?"

"Do you not know?" cried the white domino.

"I thought I had known with certainty," answered she, "but I now find I was mistaken."

"He is a happy man," said the schoolmaster, sarcastically looking at the Turk, "who has removed your suspicions only by appearing in another character!"

"Why, what the deuce, then," exclaimed the Turk, "have you taken that black dog there for _me_?"

Before this question could be answered, an offensive smell of soot, making everybody look around the room, the chimney-sweeper already mentioned by Miss Larolles was perceived to enter it. Every way he moved a passage was cleared for him, as the company, with general disgust, retreated wherever he advanced.

He was short, and seemed somewhat incommoded by his dress; he held his soot-bag over one arm, and his shovel under the other. As soon as he espied Cecilia, whose situation was such as to prevent her eluding him, he hooted aloud, and came stumping up to her; "Ah ha," he cried, "found at last;" then, throwing down his shovel, he opened the mouth of his bag, and pointing waggishly to her head, said, "Come, shall I pop you?--a good place for naughty girls; in, I say, poke in!--cram you up the chimney."

And then he put forth his sooty hands to reach her cap.

Cecilia, though she instantly knew the dialect of her guardian Mr Briggs, was not therefore the more willing to be so handled, and started back to save herself from his touch; the white domino also came forward, and spread out his arms as a defence to her, while the devil, who was still before her, again began to growl.

"Ah ha!" cried the chimney-sweeper, laughing, "so did not know me? Poor duck! won't hurt you; don't be frightened; nothing but old guardian; all a joke!" And then, patting her cheek with his dirty hand, and nodding at her with much kindness, "Pretty dove," he added, "be of good heart! shan't be meddled with; come to see after you. Heard of your tricks; thought I'd catch you!--come o' purpose. --Poor duck! did not know me! ha! ha!--good joke enough!"

"What do you mean, you dirty dog," cried the Turk, "by touching that lady?"

"Won't tell!" answered he; "not your business. Got a good right. Who cares for pearls? Nothing but French beads." Pointing with a sneer to his turban. Then, again addressing Cecilia, "Fine doings!" he continued, "Here's a place! never saw the like before! turn a man's noddle!--All goings out; no comings in; wax candles in every room; servants thick as mushrooms! And where's the cash? Who's to pay the piper? Come to more than a guinea; warrant Master Harrel thinks that nothing!"

"A guinea?" contemptuously repeated the Turk, "and what do you

suppose a guinea will do?"

"What? Why, keep a whole family handsome a week;--never spend so much myself; no, nor half neither."

"Why then, how the devil do you live? Do you beg?"

"Beg? Who should I beg of? You?--Got anything to give? Are warm?"

"Take the trouble to speak more respectfully, sir!" said the Turk, haughtily; "I see you are some low fellow, and I shall not put up with your impudence."

"Shall, shall! I say!" answered the chimneysweeper, sturdily; "Hark'ee, my duck," chucking Cecilia under the chin, "don't be cajoled, nick that spark! never mind gold trappings; none of his own; all a take-in; hired for eighteenpence; not worth a groat. Never set your heart on a fine outside, nothing within. Bristol stones won't buy stock: only wants to chouse you."

"What do you mean by that, you little old scrub!" cried the imperious Turk; "would you provoke me to soil my fingers by pulling that beastly snub nose?" For Mr Briggs had saved himself any actual mask, by merely blacking his face with soot.

"Beastly snub nose!" sputtered out the chimneysweeper in much wrath, "good nose enough; don't want a better; good as another man's. Where's the harm on't?"

"How could this blackguard get in?" cried the Turk, "I believe he's a mere common chimneysweeper out of the streets, for he's all over dirt and filth. I never saw such a dress at a masquerade before in my life."

"All the better," returned the other; "would not change. What do think it cost?"

"Cost? Why, not a crown."

"A crown? ha! ha!--a pot o' beer! Little Tom borrowed it; had it of our own sweep. Said 'twas for himself. I bid him a pint; rascal would not take less."

"Did your late uncle," said the white domino in a low voice to Cecilia, "chuse for two of your guardians Mr Harrel and Mr Briggs, to give you an early lesson upon the opposite errors of profusion and meanness?"

"My uncle?" cried Cecilia, starting, "were you acquainted with my uncle?"

"No," said he, "for my happiness I knew him not."

"You would have owed no loss of happiness to an acquaintance with him," said Cecilia, very seriously, "for he was one who dispensed to his friends nothing but good."

"Perhaps so," said the domino; "but I fear I should have found the good he dispensed through his niece not quite unmixed with evil!"

"What's here?" cried the chimney-sweeper, stumbling over the fiend, "what's this black thing? Don't like it; looks like the devil. You shan't stay with it; carry you away; take care of you myself."

He then offered Cecilia his hand; but the black gentleman, raising himself upon his knees before her, paid her, in dumb shew, the humblest devoirs, yet prevented her from removing.

"Ah ha!" cried the chimney-sweeper, significantly nodding his head, "smell a rat! a sweetheart in disguise. No bamboozling! it won't do; a'n't so soon put upon. If you've got any thing to say, tell _me_, that's the way. Where's the cash? Got ever a _rental_? Are warm? That's the point; are warm?"

The fiend, without returning any answer, continued his homage to Cecilia; at which the enraged chimney-sweeper exclaimed, "Come, come with me! won't be imposed upon; an old fox,--understand trap!"

He then again held out his hand, but Cecilia, pointing to the fiend, answered, "How can I come, sir?"

"Shew you the way," cried he, "shovel him off." And taking his shovel, he very roughly set about removing him.

The fiend then began a yell so horrid, that it disturbed the whole company; but the chimney-sweeper, only saying, "Aye, aye, blacky, growl away, blacky,--makes no odds," sturdily continued his work, and, as the fiend had no chance of resisting so coarse an antagonist without a serious struggle, he was presently compelled to change his ground.

"Warm work!" cried the victorious chimney-sweeper, taking off his wig, and wiping his head with the sleeves of his dress, "pure warm work this!"

Cecilia, once again freed from her persecutor, instantly quitted her place, almost equally desirous to escape the haughty Turk, who was peculiarly her aversion, and the facetious chimney-sweeper, whose vicinity, either on account of his dress or his conversation, was by no means desirable. She was not, however, displeased that the white domino and the schoolmaster still continued to attend her.

"Pray, look," said the white domino, as they entered another apartment, "at that figure of Hope; is there any in the room half so expressive of despondency?"

"The reason, however," answered the schoolmaster, "is obvious; that light and beautiful silver anchor upon which she reclines presents an occasion irresistible for an attitude of elegant dejection; and the assumed character is always given up where an opportunity offers to display any beauty, or manifest any perfection in the dear proper person!"

"But why," said Cecilia, "should she assume the character of _Hope_? Could she not have been equally dejected and equally elegant as Niobe, or some tragedy queen?"

"But she does not assume the character," answered the schoolmaster,

"she does not even think of it: the dress is her object, and that alone fills up all her ideas. Enquire of almost any body in the room concerning the persons they seem to represent, and you will find their ignorance more gross than you can imagine; they have not once thought upon the subject; accident, or convenience, or caprice has alone directed their choice."

A tall and elegant youth now approached them, whose laurels and harp announced Apollo. The white domino immediately enquired of him if the noise and turbulence of the company had any chance of being stilled into silence and rapture by the divine music of the inspired god?

"No," answered he, pointing to the room in which was erected the new gallery, and whence, as he spoke, issued the sound of a _hautboy_, "there is a flute playing there already."

"O for a Midas," cried the white domino, "to return to this leather-eared god the disgrace he received from him!"

They now proceeded to the apartment which had been lately fitted up for refreshments, and which was so full of company that they entered it with difficulty. And here they were again joined by Minerva, who, taking Cecilia's hand, said, "Lord, how glad I am you've got away from that frightful black mask! I can't conceive who he is; nobody can find out; it's monstrous odd, but he has not spoke a word all night, and he makes such a shocking noise when people touch him, that I assure you it's enough to put one in a fright."

"And pray," cried the schoolmaster, disguising his voice, "how camest thou to take the helmet of Minerva for a fool's cap?"

"Lord, I have not," cried she, innocently, "why, the whole dress is Minerva's; don't you see?"

"My dear child," answered he, "thou couldst as well with that little figure pass for a Goliath, as with that little wit for a Pallas."

Their attention was now drawn from the goddess of wisdom to a mad Edgar, who so vehemently ran about the room calling out "Poor Tom's a cold!" that, in a short time, he was obliged to take off his mask, from an effect, not very delicate, of the heat!

Soon after, a gentleman desiring some lemonade whose toga spoke the consular dignity, though his broken English betrayed a native of France, the schoolmaster followed him, and, with reverence the most profound, began to address him in Latin; but, turning quick towards him, he gaily said, "_Monsieur, j'ai l'honneur de representer Ciceron, le grand Ciceron, pere de sa patrie! mais quoique j'ai cet honneur-la, je ne suit pas pedant!--mon dieu, Monsieur, je ne parle que le Francois dans la bonne compagnie_!" And, politely bowing, he went on.

Just then Cecilia, while looking about the room for Mrs Harrel, found herself suddenly pinched by the cheek, and hastily turning round, perceived again her friend the chimney-sweeper, who, laughing, cried, "Only me! don't be frightened. Have something to tell you;--had no luck!--got never a husband yet! can't find one! looked all over, too; sharp as a needle. Not one to be had! all

catched up!"

"I am glad to hear it, sir," said Cecilia, somewhat vexed by observing the white domino attentively listening; "and I hope, therefore, you will give yourself no farther trouble."

"Pretty duck!" cried he, chucking her under the chin; "never mind, don't be cast down; get one at last. Leave it to me. Nothing under a plum; won't take up with less. Good-by, ducky, good-by! must go home now,--begin to be nodding."

And then, repeating his kind caresses, he walked away.

"Do you think, then," said the white domino, "more highly of Mr Briggs for discernment and taste than of any body?"

"I hope not!" answered she, "for low indeed should I then think of the rest of the world!"

"The commission with which he is charged," returned the domino, "has then misled me; I imagined discernment and taste might be necessary ingredients for making such a choice as your approbation would sanctify: but perhaps his skill in guarding against any fraud or deduction in the stipulation he mentioned, may be all that is requisite for the execution of his trust."

"I understand very well," said Cecilia, a little hurt, "the severity of your meaning; and if Mr Briggs had any commission but of his own suggestion, it would fill me with shame and confusion; but as that is not the case, those at least are sensations which it cannot give me."

"My meaning," cried the domino, with some earnestness, "should I express it seriously, would but prove to you the respect and admiration with which you have inspired me, and if indeed, as Mr Briggs hinted, such a prize is to be purchased by riches, I know not, from what I have seen of its merit, any sum I should think adequate to its value."

"You are determined, I see," said Cecilia, smiling, "to make most liberal amends for your asperity."

A loud clack of tongues now interrupted their discourse; and the domino, at the desire of Cecilia, for whom he had procured a seat, went forward to enquire what was the matter. But scarce had he given up his place a moment, before, to her great mortification, it was occupied by the fiend.

Again, but with the same determined silence he had hitherto preserved, he made signs of obedience and homage, and her perplexity to conjecture who he could be, or what were his motives for this persecution, became the more urgent as they seemed the less likely to be satisfied. But the fiend, who was no other than Mr Monckton, had every instant less and less encouragement to make himself known: his plan had in nothing succeeded, and his provocation at its failure had caused him the bitterest disappointment; he had intended, in the character of a tormentor, not only to pursue and hover around her himself, but he had also hoped, in the same character, to have kept at a distance all other admirers: but the

violence with which he had over-acted his part, by raising her disgust and the indignation of the company, rendered his views wholly abortive while the consciousness of an extravagance for which, if discovered, he could assign no reason not liable to excite suspicions of his secret motives, reduced him to guarding a painful and most irksome silence the whole evening. And Cecilia, to whose unsuspicious mind the idea of Mr Monckton had never occurred, added continually to the cruelty of his situation, by an undisguised abhorrence of his assiduity, as well as by a manifest preference to the attendance of the white domino. All, therefore, that his disappointed scheme now left in his power, was to watch her motions, listen to her discourse, and inflict occasionally upon others some part of the chagrin with which he was tormented himself.

While they were in this situation, Harlequin, in consequence of being ridiculed by the Turk for want of agility, offered to jump over the new desert table, and desired to have a little space cleared to give room for his motions. It was in vain the people who distributed the refreshments, and who were placed at the other side of the table, expostulated upon the danger of the experiment; Morrice had a rage of enterprise untameable, and, therefore, first taking a run, he attempted the leap.

The consequence was such as might naturally be expected; he could not accomplish his purpose, but, finding himself falling, imprudently caught hold of the lately erected Awning, and pulled it entirely upon his own head, and with it the new contrived lights, which, in various forms, were fixed to it, and which all came down together.

The mischief and confusion occasioned by this exploit were very alarming, and almost dangerous; those who were near the table suffered most by the crush, but splinters of the glass flew yet further; and as the room, which was small, had been only lighted up by lamps hanging from the Awning, it was now in total darkness, except close to the door, which was still illuminated from the adjoining apartments.

The clamour of Harlequin, who was covered with glass, papier-machee, lamps and oil, the screams of the ladies, the universal buz of tongues, and the struggle between the frighted crowd which was enclosed to get out, and the curious crowd from the other apartments to get in, occasioned a disturbance and tumult equally noisy and confused. But the most serious sufferer was the unfortunate fiend, who, being nearer the table than Cecilia, was so pressed upon by the numbers which poured from it, that he found a separation unavoidable, and was unable, from the darkness and the throng, to discover whether she was still in the same place, or had made her escape into another.

She had, however, encountered the white domino, and, under his protection, was safely conveyed to a further part of the room. Her intention and desire were to quit it immediately, but at the remonstrance of her conductor, she consented to remain some time longer. "The conflict at the door," said he, "will quite overpower you. Stay here but a few minutes, and both parties will have struggled themselves tired, and you may then go without difficulty. Meantime, can you not, by this faint light, suppose me one of your guardians, Mr Briggs, for example, or, if he is too old for me, Mr

Harrel, and entrust yourself to my care?"

"You seem wonderfully well acquainted with my guardians," said Cecilia; "I cannot imagine how you have had your intelligence."

"Nor can I," answered the domino, "imagine how Mr Briggs became so particularly your favourite as to be entrusted with powers to dispose of you."

"You are mistaken indeed; he is entrusted with no powers but such as his own fancy has suggested."

"But how has Mr Delvile offended you, that with him only you seem to have no commerce or communication?"

"Mr Delvile!" repeated Cecilia, still more surprised, "are you also acquainted with Mr Delvile?"

"He is certainly a man of fashion," continued the domino, "and he is also a man of honour; surely, then, he would be more pleasant for confidence and consultation than one whose only notion of happiness is money, whose only idea of excellence is avarice, and whose only conception of sense is distrust!" Here a violent outcry again interrupted their conversation; but not till Cecilia had satisfied her doubts concerning the white domino, by conjecturing he was Mr Belfield, who might easily, at the house of Mr Monckton, have gathered the little circumstances of her situation to which he alluded, and whose size and figure exactly resembled those of her new acquaintance.

The author of the former disturbance was now the occasion of the present: the fiend, having vainly traversed the room in search of Cecilia, stumbled accidentally upon Harlequin, before he was freed from the relicks of his own mischief; and unable to resist the temptation of opportunity and the impulse of revenge, he gave vent to the wrath so often excited by the blunders, forwardness, and tricks of Morrice, and inflicted upon him, with his own wooden sword, which he seized for that purpose, a chastisement the most serious and severe.

Poor Harlequin, unable to imagine any reason for this violent attack, and already cut with the glass, and bruised with the fall, spared not his lungs in making known his disapprobation of such treatment: but the fiend, regardless either of his complaints or his resistance, forbore not to belabour him till compelled by the entrance of people with lights. And then, after artfully playing sundry antics under pretence of still supporting his character, with a motion too sudden for prevention, and too rapid for pursuit, he escaped out of the room, and hurrying down stairs, threw himself into an hackney chair, which conveyed him to a place where he privately changed his dress before he returned home, bitterly repenting the experiment he had made, and conscious too late that, had he appeared in a character he might have avowed, he could, without impropriety, have attended Cecilia the whole evening. But such is deservedly the frequent fate of cunning, which, while it plots surprise and detection of others, commonly overshoots its mark, and ends in its own disgrace.

The introduction of the lights now making manifest the confusion

which the frolic of Harlequin had occasioned, he was seized with such a dread of the resentment of Mr Harrel, that, forgetting blows, bruises, and wounds, not one of which were so frightful to him as reproof, he made the last exhibition of his agility by an abrupt and hasty retreat.

He had, however, no reason for apprehension, since, in every thing that regarded expence, Mr Harrel had no feeling, and his lady had no thought.

The rooms now began to empty very fast, but among the few masks yet remaining, Cecilia again perceived Don Quixote; and while, in conjunction with the white domino, she was allowing him the praise of having supported his character with more uniform propriety than any other person in the assembly, she observed him taking off his mask for the convenience of drinking some lemonade, and, looking in his face, found he was no other than Mr Belfield! Much astonished, and more than ever perplexed, she again turned to the white domino, who, seeing in her countenance a surprise of which he knew not the reason, said, half-laughing, "You think, perhaps, I shall never be gone? And indeed I am almost of the same opinion; but what can I do? Instead of growing weary by the length of my stay, my reluctance to shorten it increases with its duration; and all the methods I take, whether by speaking to you or looking at you, with a view to be satiated, only double my eagerness for looking and listening again! I must go, however; and if I am happy, I may perhaps meet with you again,--though, if I am wise, I shall never seek you more!"

And then, with the last stragglers that reluctantly disappeared, he made his exit, leaving Cecilia greatly pleased with his conversation and his manners, but extremely perplexed to account for his knowledge of her affairs and situation.

The schoolmaster had already been gone some time.

She was now earnestly pressed by the Harrels and Sir Robert, who still remained, to send to a warehouse for a dress, and accompany them to the Pantheon; but though she was not without some inclination to comply, in the hope of further prolonging the entertainment of an evening from which she had received much pleasure, she disliked the attendance of the Baronet, and felt averse to grant any request that he could make, and therefore she begged they would excuse her; and having waited to see their dresses, which were very superb, she retired to her own apartment.

A great variety of conjecture upon all that had passed, now, and till the moment that she sunk to rest, occupied her mind; the extraordinary persecution of the fiend excited at once her curiosity and amazement, while the knowledge of her affairs shown by the white domino surprised her not less, and interested her more.

CHAPTER iv

AN AFFRAY.

The next morning, during breakfast, Cecilia was informed that a

gentleman desired to speak with her. She begged permission of Mrs Harrel to have him asked upstairs, and was not a little surprized when he proved to be the same old gentleman whose singular exclamations had so much struck her at Mr Monckton's, and at the rehearsal of Artaserse.

Abruptly and with a stern aspect advancing to her, "You are rich," he cried; "are you therefore worthless?"

"I hope not," answered she, in some consternation; while Mrs Harrel, believing his intention was to rob them, ran precipitately to the bell, which she rang without ceasing till two or three servants hastened into the room; by which time, being less alarmed, she only made signs to them to stay, and stood quietly herself to wait what would follow.

The old man, without attending to her, continued his dialogue with Cecilia.

"Know you then," he said, "a blameless use of riches? such a use as not only in the broad glare of day shall shine resplendent, but in the darkness of midnight, and stillness of repose, shall give you reflections unembittered, and slumbers unbroken? tell me, know you this use?"

"Not so well, perhaps," answered she, "as I ought; but I am very willing to learn better."

"Begin, then, while yet youth and inexperience, new to the callousness of power and affluence, leave something good to work upon: yesterday you saw the extravagance of luxury and folly; to-day look deeper, and see, and learn to pity, the misery of disease and penury."

He then put into her hand a paper which contained a most affecting account of the misery to which a poor and wretched family had been reduced, by sickness and various other misfortunes.

Cecilia, "open as day to melting charity," having hastily perused it, took out her purse, and offering to him three guineas, said, "You must direct me, sir, what to give if this is insufficient."

"Hast thou so much heart?" cried he, with emotion, "and has fortune, though it has cursed thee with the temptation of prosperity, not yet rooted from thy mind its native benevolence? I return in part thy liberal contribution; this," taking one guinea, "doubles my expectations; I will not, by making thy charity distress thee, accelerate the fatal hour of hardness and degeneracy."

He was then going; but Cecilia, following him, said "No, take it all! Who should assist the poor if I will not? Rich, without connections; powerful, without wants; upon whom have they any claim if not upon me?"

"True," cried he, receiving the rest, "and wise as true. Give, therefore, whilst yet thou hast the heart to give, and make, in thy days of innocence and kindness, some interest with Heaven and the poor!"

And then he disappeared.

"Why, my dear, cried Mrs Harrel, "what could induce you to give the man so much money? Don't you see he is crazy? I dare say he would have been just as well contented with sixpence."

"I know not what he is," said Cecilia, "but his manners are not more singular than his sentiments are affecting; and if he is actuated by charity to raise subscriptions for the indigent, he can surely apply to no one who ought so readily to contribute as myself."

Mr Harrel then came in, and his lady most eagerly told him the transaction.

"Scandalous!" he exclaimed; "why, this is no better than being a housebreaker! Pray give orders never to admit him again. Three guineas! I never heard so impudent a thing in my life! Indeed, Miss Beverley, you must be more discreet in future, you will else be ruined before you know where you are."

"Thus it is," said Cecilia, half smiling, "that we can all lecture one another! to-day you recommend economy to me; yesterday I with difficulty forbore recommending it to you."

"Nay," answered he, "that was quite another matter; expence incurred in the common way of a man's living is quite another thing to an extortion of this sort."

"It is another thing indeed," said she, "but I know not that it is therefore a better."

Mr Harrel made no answer: and Cecilia, privately moralizing upon the different estimates of expence and economy made by the dissipated and the charitable, soon retired to her own apartment, determined firmly to adhere to her lately adopted plan, and hoping, by the assistance of her new and very singular monitor, to extend her practice of doing good, by enlarging her knowledge of distress.

Objects are, however, never wanting for the exercise of benevolence; report soon published her liberality, and those who wished to believe it, failed not to enquire into its truth. She was soon at the head of a little band of pensioners, and, never satisfied with the generosity of her donations, found in a very short time that the common allowance of her guardians was scarce adequate to the calls of her munificence.

And thus, in acts of goodness and charity, passed undisturbed another week of the life of Cecilia: but when the fervour of self-approbation lost its novelty, the pleasure with which her new plan was begun first subsided into tranquillity, and then sunk into languor. To a heart formed for friendship and affection the charms of solitude are very short-lived; and though she had sickened of the turbulence of perpetual company, she now wearied of passing all her time by herself, and sighed for the comfort of society and the relief of communication. But she saw with astonishment the difficulty with which this was to be obtained: the endless succession of diversions, the continual rotation of assemblies, the numerousness of splendid engagements, of which, while every one complained, every one was proud to boast, so effectually impeded

private meetings and friendly intercourse, that, whichever way she turned herself, all commerce seemed impracticable, but such as either led to dissipation, or accidentally flowed from it.

Yet, finding the error into which her ardour of reformation had hurried her, and that a rigid seclusion from company was productive of a lassitude as little favourable to active virtue as dissipation itself, she resolved to soften her plan, and by mingling amusement with benevolence, to try, at least, to approach that golden mean, which, like the philosopher's stone, always eludes our grasp, yet always invites our wishes.

For this purpose she desired to attend Mrs Harrel to the next Opera that should be represented.

The following Saturday, therefore, she accompanied that lady and Mrs Mears to the Haymarket, escorted by Mr Arnott.

They were very late; the Opera was begun, and even in the lobby the crowd was so great that their passage was obstructed. Here they were presently accosted by Miss Larolles, who, running up to Cecilia and taking her hand, said, "Lord, you can't conceive how glad I am to see you! why, my dear creature, where have you hid yourself these twenty ages? You are quite in luck in coming to-night, I assure you; it's the best Opera we have had this season: there's such a monstrous crowd there's no stirring. We shan't get in this half hour. The coffee-room is quite full; only come and see; is it not delightful?"

This intimation was sufficient for Mrs Harrel, whose love of the Opera was merely a love of company, fashion, and shew; and therefore to the coffee-room she readily led the way.

And here Cecilia found rather the appearance of a brilliant assembly of ladies and gentlemen, collected merely to see and to entertain one another, than of distinct and casual parties, mixing solely from necessity, and waiting only for room to enter a theatre.

The first person that addressed them was Captain Aresby, who, with his usual delicate languishment, smiled upon Cecilia, and softly whispering, "How divinely you look to-night!" proceeded to pay his compliments to some other ladies.

"Do, pray, now," cried Miss Larolles, "observe Mr Meadows! only just see where he has fixed himself! in the very best place in the room, and keeping the fire from every body! I do assure you that's always his way, and it's monstrous provoking, for if one's ever so cold, he lollops so, that one's quite starved. But you must know there's another thing he does that is quite as bad, for if he gets a seat, he never offers to move, if he sees one sinking with fatigue. And besides, if one is waiting for one's carriage two hours together, he makes it a rule never to stir a step to see for it. Only think how monstrous!"

"These are heavy complaints, indeed," said Cecilia, looking at him attentively; "I should have expected from his appearance a very different account of his gallantry, for he seems dressed with more studied elegance than anybody here."

"O yes," cried Miss Larolles, "he is the sweetest dresser in the world; he has the most delightful taste you can conceive, nobody has half so good a fancy. I assure you it's a great thing to be spoke to by him: we are all of us quite angry when he won't take any notice of us."

"Is your anger," said Cecilia, laughing, "in honour of himself or of his coat?"

"Why, Lord, don't you know all this time that he is an _ennuye_?

"I know, at least," answered Cecilia, "that he would soon make one of me."

"O, but one is never affronted with an _ennuye_, if he is ever so provoking, because one always knows what it means."

"Is he agreeable?"

"Why, to tell you the truth,--but pray now, don't mention it,--I think him most excessive disagreeable! He yawns in one's face every time one looks at him. I assure you sometimes I expect to see him fall fast asleep while I am talking to him, for he is so immensely absent he don't hear one half that one says; only conceive how horrid!"

"But why, then, do you encourage him? why do you take any notice of him?"

"O, every body does, I assure you, else I would not for the world; but he is so courted you have no idea. However, of all things let me advise you never to dance with him; I did once myself, and I declare I was quite distressed to death the whole time, for he was taken with such a fit of absence he knew nothing he was about, sometimes skipping and jumping with all the violence in the world, just as if he only danced for exercise, and sometimes standing quite still, or lolling against the wainscoat and gaping, and taking no more notice of me than if he had never seen me in his life!"

The Captain now, again advancing to Cecilia, said, "So you would not do us the honour to try the masquerade at the Pantheon? however, I hear you had a very brilliant spectacle at Mr Harrel's. I was quite _au desespoir_ that I could not get there. I did _mon possible_, but it was quite beyond me."

"We should have been very happy," said Mrs Harrel, "to have seen you; I assure you we had some excellent masks."

"So I have heard _partout_, and I am reduced to despair that I could not have the honour of sliding in. But I was _accable_ with affairs all day. Nothing could be so mortifying."

Cecilia now, growing very impatient to hear the Opera, begged to know if they might not make a trial to get into the pit?

"I fear," said the Captain, smiling as they passed him, without offering any assistance, "you will find it extreme petrifying; for my part, I confess I am not upon the principle of crowding."

The ladies, however, accompanied by Mr Arnott, made the attempt, and soon found, according to the custom of report, that the difficulty, for the pleasure of talking of it, had been considerably exaggerated. They were separated, indeed, but their accommodation was tolerably good.

Cecilia was much vexed to find the first act of the Opera almost over; but she was soon still more dissatisfied when she discovered that she had no chance of hearing the little which remained: the place she had happened to find vacant was next to a party of young ladies, who were so earnestly engaged in their own discourse, that they listened not to a note of the Opera, and so infinitely diverted with their own witticisms, that their tittering and loquacity allowed no one in their vicinity to hear better than themselves. Cecilia tried in vain to confine her attention to the singers; she was distant from the stage, and to them she was near, and her fruitless attempts all ended in chagrin and impatience.

At length she resolved to make an effort for entertainment in another way, and since the expectations which brought her to the Opera were destroyed, to try by listening to her fair neighbours, whether those who occasioned her disappointment could make her any amends.

For this purpose she turned to them wholly; yet was at first in no little perplexity to understand what was going forward, since so universal was the eagerness for talking, and so insurmountable the antipathy to listening, that every one seemed to have her wishes bounded by a continual utterance of words, without waiting for any answer, or scarce even desiring to be heard.

But when, somewhat more used to their dialect and manner, she began better to comprehend their discourse, wretchedly indeed did it supply to her the loss of the Opera. She heard nothing but descriptions of trimmings, and complaints of hair-dressers, hints of conquest that teemed with vanity, and histories of engagements which were inflated with exultation.

At the end of the act, by the crowding forward of the gentlemen to see the dance, Mrs Harrel had an opportunity of making room for her by herself, and she had then some reason to expect hearing the rest of the Opera in peace, for the company before her, consisting entirely of young men, seemed, even during the dance, fearful of speaking, lest their attention should be drawn for a moment from the stage.

But to her infinite surprize, no sooner was the second act begun, than their attention ended! they turned from the performers to each other, and entered into a whispering but gay conversation, which, though not loud enough to disturb the audience in general, kept in the ears of their neighbours a buzzing which interrupted all pleasure from the representation. Of this effect of their gaiety it seemed uncertain whether they were conscious, but very evident that they were totally careless.

The desperate resource which she had tried during the first act, of seeking entertainment from the very conversation which prevented her enjoying it, was not now even in her power: for these gentlemen,

though as negligent as the young ladies had been whom they disturbed, were much more cautious whom they instructed: their language was ambiguous, and their terms, to Cecilia, were unintelligible: their subjects, indeed, required some discretion, being nothing less than a ludicrous calculation of the age and duration of jointured widows, and of the chances and expectations of unmarried young ladies.

But what more even than their talking provoked her, was finding that the moment the act was over, when she cared not if their vociferation had been incessant, one of them called out, "Come, be quiet, the dance is begun;" and then they were again all silent attention!

In the third act, however, she was more fortunate; the gentlemen again changed their places, and they were succeeded by others who came to the Opera not to hear themselves but the performers: and as soon as she was permitted to listen, the voice of Pacchierotti took from her all desire to hear any thing but itself.

During the last dance she was discovered by Sir Robert Floyer, who, sauntering down fop's alley, stationed himself by her side, and whenever the _figurante_ relieved the principal dancers, turned his eyes from the stage to her face, as better worth his notice, and equally destined for his amusement.

Mr Monckton, too, who for some time had seen and watched her, now approached; he had observed with much satisfaction that her whole mind had been intent upon the performance, yet still the familiarity of Sir Robert Floyer's admiration disturbed and perplexed him; he determined, therefore, to make an effort to satisfy his doubts by examining into his intentions: and, taking him apart, before the dance was quite over, "Well," he said, "who is so handsome here as Harrel's ward?"

"Yes," answered he, calmly, "she is handsome, but I don't like her expression."

"No? why, what is the fault of it?"

"Proud, cursed proud. It is not the sort of woman I like. If one says a civil thing to her, she only wishes one at the devil for one's pains."

"O, you have tried her, then, have you? why, you are not, in general, much given to say civil things."

"Yes, you know, I said something of that sort to her once about Juliet, at the rehearsal. Was not you by?"

"What, then, was that all? and did you imagine one compliment would do your business with her?"

"O, hang it, who ever dreams of complimenting the women now? that's all at an end."

"You won't find she thinks so, though; for, as you well say, her pride is insufferable, and I, who have long known her, can assure you it does not diminish upon intimacy."

"Perhaps not,--but there's very pretty picking in 3000 pounds per annum! one would not think much of a little encumbrance upon such an estate."

"Are you quite sure the estate is so considerable? Report is mightily given to magnify."

"O, I have pretty good intelligence: though, after all, I don't know but I may be off; she'll take a confounded deal of time and trouble."

Monckton, too much a man of interest and of the world to cherish that delicacy which covets universal admiration for the object of its fondness, then artfully enlarged upon the obstacles he already apprehended, and insinuated such others as he believed would be most likely to intimidate him. But his subtlety was lost upon the impenetrable Baronet, who possessed that hard insensibility which obstinately pursues its own course, deaf to what is said, and indifferent to what is thought.

Meanwhile the ladies were now making way to the coffee-room, though very slowly on account of the crowd; and just as they got near the lobby, Cecilia perceived Mr Belfield, who, immediately making himself known to her, was offering his service to hand her out of the pit, when Sir Robert Floyer, not seeing or not heeding him, pressed forward, and said, "Will you let me have the honour, Miss Beverley, of taking care of you?"

Cecilia, to whom he grew daily more disagreeable, coldly declined his assistance, while she readily accepted that which had first been offered her by Mr Belfield.

The haughty Baronet, extremely nettled, forced his way on, and rudely stalking up to Mr Belfield, motioned with his hand for room to pass him, and said, "Make way, sir!"

"Make way for _me_, Sir!" cried Belfield, opposing him with one hand, while with the other he held Cecilia.

"You, Sir? and who are you, Sir?" demanded the Baronet, disdainfully.

"Of that, Sir, I shall give you an account whenever you please," answered Belfield, with equal scorn.

"What the devil do you mean, Sir?"

"Nothing very difficult to be understood," replied Belfield, and attempted to draw on Cecilia, who, much alarmed, was shrinking back.

Sir Robert then, swelling with rage, reproachfully turned to her, and said, "Will you suffer such an impertinent fellow as that, Miss Beverley, to have the honour of taking your hand?"

Belfield, with great indignation, demanded what he meant by the term impertinent fellow; and Sir Robert yet more insolently repeated it: Cecilia, extremely shocked, earnestly besought them both to be quiet; but Belfield, at the repetition of this insult, hastily let

go her hand and put his own upon his sword, whilst Sir Robert, taking advantage of his situation in being a step higher than his antagonist, fiercely pushed him back, and descended into the lobby.

Belfield, enraged beyond endurance, instantly drew his sword, and Sir Robert was preparing to follow his example, when Cecilia, in an agony of fright, called out, "Good Heaven! will nobody interfere?" And then a young man, forcing his way through the crowd, exclaimed, "For shame, for shame, gentlemen! is this a place for such violence?"

Belfield, endeavouring to recover himself, put up his sword, and, though in a voice half choaked with passion, said, "I thank you, Sir! I was off my guard. I beg pardon of the whole company."

Then, walking up to Sir Robert, he put into his hand a card with his name and direction, saying, "With you, Sir, I shall be happy to settle what apologies are necessary at your first leisure;" and hurried away.

Sir Robert, exclaiming aloud that he should soon teach him to whom he had been so impertinent, was immediately going to follow him, when the affrighted Cecilia again called out aloud, "Oh, stop him!-- good God! will nobody stop him!"

The rapidity with which this angry scene had passed had filled her with amazement, and the evident resentment of the Baronet upon her refusing his assistance, gave her an immediate consciousness that she was herself the real cause of the quarrel; while the manner in which he was preparing to follow Mr Belfield convinced her of the desperate scene which was likely to succeed; fear, therefore, overcoming every other feeling, forced from her this exclamation before she knew what she said.

The moment she had spoken, the young man who had already interposed again rushed forward, and seizing Sir Robert by the arm, warmly remonstrated against the violence of his proceedings, and being presently seconded by other gentlemen, almost compelled him to give up his design.

Then, hastening to Cecilia, "Be not alarmed, madam," he cried, "all is over, and every body is safe."

Cecilia, finding herself thus addressed by a gentleman she had never before seen, felt extremely ashamed of having rendered her interest in the debate so apparent; she courtsied to him in some confusion, and taking hold of Mrs Harrel's arm, hurried her back into the pit, in order to quit a crowd, of which she now found herself the principal object.

Curiosity, however, was universally excited, and her retreat served but to inflame it: some of the ladies, and most of the gentlemen, upon various pretences, returned into the pit merely to look at her, and in a few minutes the report was current that the young lady who had been the occasion of the quarrel, was dying with love for Sir Robert Floyer.

Mr Monckton, who had kept by her side during the whole affair, felt thunderstruck by the emotion she had shewn; Mr Arnott too, who had

never quitted her, wished himself exposed to the same danger as Sir Robert, so that he might be honoured with the same concern: but they were both too much the dupes of their own apprehensions and jealousy, to perceive that what they instantly imputed to fondness, proceeded simply from general humanity, accidentally united with the consciousness of being accessary to the quarrel.

The young stranger who had officiated as mediator between the disputants, in a few moments followed her with a glass of water, which he had brought from the coffee-room, begging her to drink it and compose herself.

Cecilia, though she declined his civility with more vexation than gratitude, perceived, as she raised her eyes to thank him, that her new friend was a young man very strikingly elegant in his address and appearance.

Miss Larolles next, who, with her party, came back into the pit, ran up to Cecilia, crying, "O my dear creature, what a monstrous shocking thing! You've no Idea how I am frightened; do you know I happened to be quite at the further end of the coffee-room when it began, and I could not get out to see what was the matter for ten ages; only conceive what a situation!"

"Would your fright, then, have been less," said Cecilia, "had you been nearer the danger?"

"O Lord no, for when I came within sight I was fifty times worse! I gave such a monstrous scream, that it quite made Mr Meadows start. I dare say he'll tell me of it these hundred years: but really when I saw them draw their swords I thought I should have died; I was so amazingly surprized you've no notion."

Here she was interrupted by the re-appearance of the active stranger, who again advancing to Cecilia, said, "I am in doubt whether the efforts I make to revive will please or irritate you, but though you rejected the last cordial I ventured to present you, perhaps you will look with a more favourable eye towards that of which I am now the herald."

Cecilia then, casting her eyes around, saw that he was followed by Sir Robert Floyer. Full of displeasure both at this introduction and at his presence, she turned hastily to Mr Arnott, and entreated him to enquire if the carriage was not yet ready.

Sir Robert, looking at her with all the exultation of new-raised vanity, said, with more softness than he had ever before addressed her, "Have you been frightened?"

"Every body, I believe was frightened," answered Cecilia, with an air of dignity intended to check his rising expectations.

"There was no sort of cause," answered he; "the fellow did not know whom he spoke [to], that was all."

"Lord, Sir Robert," cried Miss Larolles, "how could you be so shocking as to draw your sword? you can't conceive how horrid it looked."

"Why I did not draw my sword," cried he, "I only had my hand on the hilt."

"Lord, did not you, indeed! well, every body said you did, and I'm sure I thought I saw five-and-twenty swords all at once. I thought one of you would be killed every moment. It was horrid disagreeable, I assure you."

Sir Robert was now called away by some gentlemen; and Mr Monckton, earnest to be better informed of Cecilia's real sentiments, said, with affected concern, "At present this matter is merely ridiculous; I am sorry to think in how short a time it may become more important."

"Surely," cried Cecilia with quickness, "some of their friends will interfere! surely upon so trifling a subject they will not be so mad, so inexcusable, as to proceed to more serious resentment!"

"Whichever of them," said the stranger, "is most honoured by this anxiety, will be mad indeed to risk a life so valued!"

"Cannot you, Mr Monckton," continued Cecilia, too much alarmed to regard this insinuation, "speak with Mr Belfield? You are acquainted with him, I know; is it impossible you can follow him?"

"I will with pleasure do whatever you wish; but still if Sir Robert--"

"O, as to Sir Robert, Mr Harrel, I am very sure, will undertake him; I will try to see him to-night myself, and entreat him to exert all his influence."

"Ah, madam," cried the stranger, archly, and lowering his voice, "those _French beads_ and _Bristol stones_ have not, I find, shone in vain!"

At these words Cecilia recognised her white domino acquaintance at the masquerade; she had before recollected his voice, but was too much perturbed to consider where or when she had heard it.

"If Mr Briggs," continued he, "does not speedily come forth with his plum friend, before the glittering of swords and spears is joined to that of jewels, the glare will be so resplendent, that he will fear to come within the influence of its rays. Though, perhaps, he may only think the stronger the light, the better he shall see to count his guineas: for as

'---in ten thousand pounds
Ten thousand charms are centred,'

in an hundred thousand, the charms may have such magic power, that he may defy the united efforts of tinsel and knight-errantry to deliver you from the golden spell."

Here the Captain, advancing to Cecilia, said, "I have been looking for you in vain _partout_, but the crowd has been so _accablant_ I was almost reduced to despair. Give me leave to hope you are now recovered from the _horreur_ of this little _fracas_?"

Mr Arnott then brought intelligence that the carriage was ready. Cecilia, glad to be gone, instantly hastened to it; and, as she was conducted by Mr Monckton, most earnestly entreated him to take an active part, in endeavouring to prevent the fatal consequences with which the quarrel seemed likely to terminate.

CHAPTER v

A FASHIONABLE FRIEND.

As soon as they returned home, Cecilia begged Mrs Harrel not to lose a moment before she tried to acquaint Mr Harrel with the state of the affair. But that lady was too helpless to know in what manner to set about it; she could not tell where he was, she could not conjecture where he might be.

Cecilia then rang for his own man, and upon enquiry, heard that he was, in all probability, at Brookes's in St James's-Street.

She then begged Mrs Harrel would write to him.

Mrs Harrel knew not what to say.

Cecilia therefore, equally quick in forming and executing her designs, wrote to him herself, and entreated that without losing an instant he would find out his friend Sir Robert Floyer, and endeavour to effect an accommodation between him and Mr Belfield, with whom he had had a dispute at the Opera-house.

The man soon returned with an answer that Mr Harrel would not fail to obey her commands.

She determined to sit up till he came home in order to learn the event of the negociation. She considered herself as the efficient cause of the quarrel, yet scarce knew how or in what to blame herself; the behaviour of Sir Robert had always been offensive to her; she disliked his manners, and detested his boldness; and she had already shewn her intention to accept the assistance of Mr Belfield before he had followed her with an offer of his own. She was uncertain, indeed, whether he had remarked what had passed, but she had reason to think that, so circumstanced, to have changed her purpose, would have been construed into an encouragement that might have authorised his future presumption of her favour. All she could find to regret with regard to herself, was wanting the presence of mind to have refused the civilities of both.

Mrs Harrel, though really sorry at the state of the affair, regarded herself as so entirely unconcerned in it, that, easily wearied when out of company, she soon grew sleepy, and retired to her own room.

The anxious Cecilia, hoping every instant the return of Mr Harrel, sat up by herself: but it was not till near four o'clock in the morning that he made his appearance.

"Well, sir," cried she, the moment she saw him, "I fear by your coming home so late you have had much trouble, but I hope it has been successful?"

Great, however, was her mortification when he answered that he had not even seen the Baronet, having been engaged himself in so particular a manner, that he could not possibly break from his party till past three o'clock, at which time he drove to the house of Sir Robert, but heard that he was not yet come home.

Cecilia, though much disgusted by such a specimen of insensibility towards a man whom he pretended to call his friend, would not leave him till he had promised to arise as soon as it was light, and make an effort to recover the time lost.

She was now no longer surprised either at the debts of Mr Harrel, or at his _particular occasions_ for money. She was convinced he spent half the night in gaming, and the consequences, however dreadful, were but natural. That Sir Robert Floyer also did the same was a matter of much less importance to her, but that the life of any man should through her means be endangered, disturbed her inexpressibly.

She went, however, to bed, but arose again at six o'clock, and dressed herself by candle light. In an hour's time she sent to enquire if Mr Harrel was stirring, and hearing he was asleep, gave orders to have him called. Yet he did not rise till eight o'clock, nor could all her messages or expostulations drive him out of the house till nine.

He was scarcely gone before Mr Monckton arrived, who now for the first time had the satisfaction of finding her alone.

"You are very good for coming so early," cried she; "have you seen Mr Belfield? Have you had any conversation with him?"

Alarmed at her eagerness, and still more at seeing by her looks the sleepless night she had passed, he made at first no reply; and when, with increasing impatience, she repeated her question, he only said, "Has Belfield ever visited you since he had the honour of meeting you at my house?"

"No, never."

"Have you seen him often in public?"

"No, I have never seen him at all but the evening Mrs Harrel received masks, and last night at the Opera."

"Is it, then, for the safety of Sir Robert you are so extremely anxious?"

"It is for the safety of both; the cause of their quarrel was so trifling, that I cannot bear to think its consequence should be serious."

"But do you not wish better to one of them than to the other?"

"As a matter of justice I do, but not from any partiality: Sir

Robert was undoubtedly the aggressor, and Mr Belfield, though at first too fiery, was certainly ill-used."

The candour of this speech recovered Mr Monckton from his apprehensions; and, carefully observing her looks while he spoke, he gave her the following account.

That he had hastened to Belfield's lodgings the moment he left the Opera-house, and, after repeated denials, absolutely forced himself into his room, where he was quite alone, and in much agitation: he conversed with him for more than an hour upon the subject of the quarrel, but found he so warmly resented the personal insult given him by Sir Robert, that no remonstrance had any effect in making him alter his resolution of demanding satisfaction.

"And could you bring him to consent to no compromise before you left him?" cried Cecilia.

"No; for before I got to him--the challenge had been sent."

"The challenge! good heaven!--and do you know the event?"

"I called again this morning at his lodgings, but he was not returned home."

"And was it impossible to follow him? Were there no means to discover whither he was gone?"

"None; to elude all pursuit, he went out before any body in the house was stirring, and took his servant with him."

"Have you, then, been to Sir Robert?"

"I have been to Cavendish-Square, but there, it seems, he has not appeared all night; I traced him, through his servants, from the Opera to a gaminghouse, where I found he had amused himself till this morning."

The uneasiness of Cecilia now encreased every moment; and Mr Monckton, seeing he had no other chance of satisfying her, offered his service to go again in search of both the gentlemen, and endeavour to bring her better information. She accepted the proposal with gratitude, and he departed.

Soon after she was joined by Mr Arnott, who, though seized with all the horrors of jealousy at sight of her apprehensions, was so desirous to relieve them, that without even making any merit of obliging her, he almost instantly set out upon the same errand that employed Mr Monckton, and determined not to mention his design till he found whether it would enable him to bring her good tidings.

He was scarce gone when she was told that Mr Delvile begged to have the honour of speaking to her. Surprised at this condescension, she desired he might immediately be admitted; but much was her surprise augmented, when, instead of seeing her ostentatious guardian, she again beheld her masquerade friend, the white domino.

He entreated her pardon for an intrusion neither authorised by acquaintance nor by business, though somewhat, he hoped, palliated,

by his near connection with one who was privileged to take an interest in her affairs: and then, hastening to the motives which had occasioned his visit, "when I had the honour," he said, "of seeing you last night at the Opera-house, the dispute which had just happened between two gentlemen, seemed to give you an uneasiness which could not but be painful to all who observed it, and as among that number I was not the least moved, you will forgive, I hope, my eagerness to be the first to bring you intelligence that nothing fatal has happened, or is likely to happen."

"You do me, sir," said Cecilia, "much honour; and indeed you relieve me from a suspense extremely disagreeable. The accommodation, I suppose, was brought about this morning?"

"I find," answered he, smiling, "you now expect too much; but hope is never so elastic as when it springs from the ruins of terror."

"What then is the matter? Are they at last, not safe?"

"Yes, perfectly safe; but I cannot tell you they have never been in danger."

"Well, if it is now over I am contented: but you will very much oblige me, sir, if you will inform me what has passed."

"You oblige me, madam, by the honour of your commands. I saw but too much reason to apprehend that measures the most violent would follow the affray of last night; yet as I found that the quarrel had been accidental, and the offence unpremeditated, I thought it not absolutely impossible that an expeditious mediation might effect a compromise: at least it was worth trying; for though wrath slowly kindled or long nourished is sullen and intractable, the sudden anger that has not had time to impress the mind with a deep sense of injury, will, when gently managed, be sometimes appeased with the same quickness it is excited: I hoped, therefore, that some trifling concession from Sir Robert, as the aggressor,--"

"Ah sir!" cried Cecilia, "that, I fear, was not to be obtained!"

"Not by me, I must own," he answered; "but I was not willing to think of the difficulty, and therefore ventured to make the proposal: nor did I leave the Opera-house till I had used every possible argument to persuade Sir Robert an apology would neither stain his courage nor his reputation. But his spirit brooked not the humiliation."

"Spirit!" cried Cecilia, "how mild a word! What, then, could poor Mr Belfield resolve upon?"

"That, I believe, took him very little time to decide. I discovered, by means of a gentleman at the Opera who was acquainted with him, where he lived, and I waited upon him with an intention to offer my services towards settling the affair by arbitration: for since you call him poor Mr Belfield, I think you will permit me, without offence to his antagonist, to own that his gallantry, though too impetuous for commendation, engaged me in his interest."

"I hope you don't think," cried Cecilia, "that an offence to his antagonist must necessarily be an offence to me?"

"Whatever I may have thought," answered he, looking at her with evident surprise, "I certainly did not wish that a sympathy offensive and defensive had been concluded between you. I could not, however, gain access to Mr Belfield last night, but the affair dwelt upon my mind, and this morning I called at his lodging as soon as it was light."

"How good you have been!" cried Cecilia; "your kind offices have not, I hope, all proved ineffectual!"

"So valorous a Don Quixote," returned he, laughing, "certainly merited a faithful Esquire! He was, however, gone out, and nobody knew whither. About half an hour ago I called upon him again; he was then just returned home."

"Well, Sir?"

"I saw him; the affair was over; and in a short time he will be able, if you will allow him so much honour, to thank you for these enquiries."

"He is then wounded?"

"He is a little hurt, but Sir Robert is perfectly safe. Belfield fired first, and missed; the Baronet was not so successless."

"I am grieved to hear it, indeed! And where is the wound?"

"The ball entered his right side, and the moment he felt it, he fired his second pistol in the air. This I heard from his servant. He was brought home carefully and slowly; no surgeon had been upon the spot, but one was called to him immediately. I stayed to enquire his opinion after the wound had been dressed: he told me he had extracted the ball, and assured me Mr Belfield was not in any danger. Your alarm, madam, last night, which had always been present to me, then encouraged me to take the liberty of waiting upon you; for I concluded you could yet have had no certain intelligence, and thought it best to let the plain and simple fact out-run the probable exaggeration of rumour."

Cecilia thanked him for his attention, and Mrs Harrel then making her appearance, he arose and said, "Had my father known the honour I have had this morning of waiting upon Miss Beverley, I am sure I should have been charged with his compliments, and such a commission would somewhat have lessened the presumption of this visit; but I feared lest while I should be making interest for my credentials, the pretence of my embassy might be lost, and other couriers, less scrupulous, might obtain previous audiences, and anticipate my dispatches."

He then took his leave.

"This white domino, at last then," said Cecilia, "is the son of Mr Delvile! and thence the knowledge of my situation which gave me so much surprise:--a son how infinitely unlike his father!"

"Yes," said Mrs Harrel, "and as unlike his mother too, for I assure you she is more proud and haughty even than the old gentleman. I

hate the very sight of her, for she keeps every body in such awe that there's nothing but restraint in her presence. But the son is a very pretty young man, and much admired; though I have only seen him in public, for none of the family visit here."

Mr Monckton, who now soon returned, was not a little surprised to find that all the intelligence he meant to communicate was already known: and not the more pleased to hear that the white domino, to whom before he owed no good-will, had thus officiously preceded him.

Mr Arnott, who also came just after him, had been so little satisfied with the result of his enquiries, that from the fear of encreasing Cecilia's uneasiness, he determined not to make known whither he had been; but he soon found his forbearance was of no avail, as she was already acquainted with the duel and its consequences. Yet his unremitting desire to oblige her urged him twice in the course of the same day to again call at Mr Belfield's lodgings, in order to bring her thence fresh and unsolicited intelligence.

Before breakfast was quite over, Miss Larolles, out of breath with eagerness, came to tell the news of the duel, in her way to church, as it was Sunday morning! and soon after Mrs Mears, who also was followed by other ladies, brought the same account, which by all was addressed to Cecilia, with expressions of concern that convinced her, to her infinite vexation, she was generally regarded as the person chiefly interested in the accident.

Mr Harrel did not return till late, but then seemed in very high spirits: "Miss Beverley," he cried, "I bring you news that will repay all your fright; Sir Robert is not only safe, but is come off conqueror."

"I am very sorry, Sir," answered Cecilia, extremely provoked to be thus congratulated, "that any body conquered, or any body was vanquished."

"There is no need for sorrow," cried Mr Harrel, "or for any thing but joy, for he has not killed his man; the victory, therefore, will neither cost him a flight nor a trial. To-day he means to wait upon you, and lay his laurels at your feet."

"He means, then, to take very fruitless trouble," said Cecilia, "for I have not any ambition to be so honoured."

"Ah, Miss Beverley," returned he, laughing, "this won't do now! it might have passed a little while ago, but it won't do now, I promise you!"

Cecilia, though much displeased by this accusation, found that disclaiming it only excited further raillery, and therefore prevailed upon herself to give him a quiet hearing, and scarce any reply.

At dinner, when Sir Robert arrived, the dislike she had originally taken to him, encreased already into disgust by his behaviour the preceding evening, was now fixed into the strongest aversion by the horror she conceived of his fierceness, and the indignation she felt excited by his arrogance. He seemed, from the success of this duel,

to think himself raised to the highest pinnacle of human glory; triumph sat exulting on his brow; he looked down on whoever he deigned to look at all, and shewed that he thought his notice an honour, however imperious the manner in which it was accorded.

Upon Cecilia, however, he cast an eye of more complacency; he now believed her subdued, and his vanity revelled in the belief: her anxiety had so thoroughly satisfied him of her love, that she had hardly the power left to undeceive him; her silence he only attributed to admiration, her coldness to fear, and her reserve to shame.

Sickened by insolence so undisguised and unauthorised, and incensed at the triumph of his successful brutality, Cecilia with pain kept her seat, and with vexation reflected upon the necessity she was under of passing so large a portion of her time in company to which she was so extremely averse.

After dinner, when Mrs Harrel was talking of her party for the evening, of which Cecilia declined making one, Sir Robert, with a sort of proud humility, that half feared rejection, and half proclaimed an indifference to meeting it, said, "I don't much care for going further myself, if Miss Beverley will give me the honour of taking my tea with her."

Cecilia, regarding him with much surprise, answered that she had letters to write into the country, which would confine her to her own room for the rest of the evening. The Baronet, looking at his watch, instantly cried, "Faith, that is very fortunate, for I have just recollected an engagement at the other end of the town which had slipt my memory."

Soon after they were all gone, Cecilia received a note from Mrs Delvile, begging the favour of her company the next morning to breakfast. She readily accepted the invitation, though she was by no means prepared, by the character she had heard of her, to expect much pleasure from an acquaintance with that lady.

CHAPTER vi

A FAMILY PARTY.

Cecilia the next morning, between nine and ten o'clock, went to St James'-Square; she found nobody immediately ready to receive her, but in a short time was waited upon by Mr Delvile.

After the usual salutations, "Miss Beverley," he said, "I have given express orders to my people, that I may not be interrupted while I have the pleasure of passing some minutes in conversation with you before you are presented to Mrs Delvile."

And then, with an air of solemnity, he led her to a seat, and having himself taken possession of another, continued his speech.

"I have received information, from authority which I cannot doubt,

that the indiscretion of certain of your admirers last Saturday at the Opera-house occasioned a disturbance which to a young woman of delicacy I should imagine must be very alarming: now as I consider myself concerned in your fame and welfare from regarding you as my ward, I think it is incumbent upon me to make enquiries into such of your affairs as become public; for I should feel in some measure disgraced myself, should it appear to the world, while you are under my guardianship, that there was any want of propriety in the direction of your conduct."

Cecilia, not much flattered by this address, gravely answered that she fancied the affair had been misrepresented to him.

"I am not much addicted," he replied, "to give ear to any thing lightly; you must therefore permit me to enquire into the merits of the cause, and then to draw my own inferences. And let me, at the same time, assure you there is no other young lady who has any right to expect such an attention from me. I must begin by begging you to inform me upon what grounds the two gentlemen in question, for such, by courtesy, I presume they are called, thought themselves entitled publicly to dispute your favour?"

"My favour, Sir!" cried Cecilia, much amazed.

"My dear," said he, with a complacency meant to give her courage, "I know the question is difficult for a young lady to answer; but be not abashed, I should be sorry to distress you, and mean to the utmost of my power to save your blushes. Do not, therefore, fear me; consider me as your guardian, and assure yourself I am perfectly well disposed to consider you as my ward. Acquaint me, then, freely, what are the pretensions of these gentlemen?"

"To me, Sir, they have, I believe, no pretensions at all."

"I see you are shy," returned he, with encreasing gentleness, "I see you cannot be easy with me; and when I consider how little you are accustomed to me, I do not wonder. But pray take courage; I think it necessary to inform myself of your affairs, and therefore I beg you will speak to me with freedom."

Cecilia, more and more mortified by this humiliating condescension, again assured him he had been misinformed, and was again, though discredited, praised for her modesty, when, to her great relief, they were interrupted by the entrance of her friend the _white domino_.

"Mortimer," said Mr Delvile, "I understand you have already had the pleasure of seeing this young lady?"

"Yes, Sir," he answered, "I have more than once had that happiness, but I have never had the honour of being introduced to her."

"Miss Beverley, then," said the father, "I must present to you Mr Mortimer Delvile, my son; and, Mortimer, in Miss Beverley I desire you will remember that you respect a ward of your father's."

"I will not, Sir," answered he, "forget an injunction my own inclinations had already out-run."

Mortimer Delvile was tall and finely formed, his features, though not handsome, were full of expression, and a noble openness of manners and address spoke the elegance of his education, and the liberality of his mind.

When this introduction was over, a more general conversation took place, till Mr Delvile, suddenly rising, said to Cecilia, "You will pardon me, Miss Beverley, if I leave you for a few minutes; one of my tenants sets out to-morrow morning for my estate in the North, and he has been two hours waiting to speak with me. But if my son is not particularly engaged, I am sure he will be so good as to do the honours of the house till his mother is ready to receive you."

And then, graciously waving his hand, he quitted the room.

"My father," cried young Delvile, "has left me an office which, could I execute it as perfectly as I shall willingly, would be performed without a fault."

"I am very sorry," said Cecilia, "that I have so much mistaken your hour of breakfast; but let me not

Livros Grátis

(http://www.livrosgratis.com.br)

Milhares de Livros para Download:

Baixar livros de Literatura
Baixar livros de Literatura de Cordel
Baixar livros de Literatura Infantil
Baixar livros de Matemática
Baixar livros de Medicina
Baixar livros de Medicina Veterinária
Baixar livros de Meio Ambiente
Baixar livros de Meteorologia
Baixar Monografias e TCC
Baixar livros Multidisciplinar
Baixar livros de Música
Baixar livros de Psicologia
Baixar livros de Química
Baixar livros de Saúde Coletiva
Baixar livros de Serviço Social
Baixar livros de Sociologia
Baixar livros de Teologia
Baixar livros de Trabalho
Baixar livros de Turismo