АННА РАДКЛИФ

THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO

Ann Ward Radcliffe

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Radcliffe A.

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Содержание

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VOLUME 1

CHAPTER I

home is the resort
Of love, of joy, of peace and plenty, where,
Supporting and supported, polish'd friends
And dear relations mingle into bliss.*

**Thomson*

On the pleasant banks of the Garonne, in the province of Gascony, stood, in the year 1584, the chateau of Monsieur St. Aubert. From its windows were seen the pastoral landscapes of Guienne and Gascony stretching along the river, gay with luxuriant woods and vine, and plantations of olives. To the south, the view was bounded by the majestic Pyrenees, whose summits, veiled in clouds, or exhibiting awful forms, seen, and lost again, as the partial vapours rolled along, were sometimes barren, and gleamed through the blue tinge of air, and sometimes frowned with forests of gloomy pine, that swept downward to their base. These tremendous precipices were contrasted by the soft green of the pastures and woods that hung upon their skirts; among whose flocks, and herds, and simple cottages, the eye, after having scaled the cliffs above, delighted to repose. To the north, and to the east, the plains of Guienne and Languedoc were lost in the mist of distance; on the west, Gascony was bounded by the waters of Biscay.

M. St. Aubert loved to wander, with his wife and daughter, on the margin of the Garonne, and to listen to the music that floated on its waves. He had known life in other forms than those of pastoral simplicity, having mingled in the gay and in the busy scenes of the world; but the flattering portrait of mankind, which his heart had delineated in early youth, his experience had too sorrowfully corrected. Yet, amidst the changing visions of life, his principles remained unshaken, his benevolence unchilled; and he retired from the multitude 'more in PITY than in anger,' to scenes of simple nature, to the pure delights of literature, and to the exercise of domestic virtues.

He was a descendant from the younger branch of an illustrious family, and it was designed, that the deficiency of his patrimonial wealth should be supplied either by a splendid alliance in marriage, or by success in the intrigues of public affairs. But St. Aubert had too nice a sense of honour to fulfil the latter hope, and too small a portion of ambition to sacrifice what he called happiness, to the attainment of wealth. After the death of his father he married a very amiable woman, his equal in birth, and not his superior in fortune. The late Monsieur St. Aubert's liberality, or extravagance, had so much involved his affairs, that his son found it necessary to dispose of a part of the family domain, and, some years after his marriage, he sold it to Monsieur Quesnel, the brother of his wife, and retired to a small estate in Gascony, where conjugal felicity, and parental duties, divided his attention with the treasures of knowledge and the illuminations of genius.

To this spot he had been attached from his infancy. He had often made excursions to it when a boy, and the impressions of delight given to his mind by the homely kindness of the grey-headed peasant, to whom it was intrusted, and whose fruit and cream never failed, had not been obliterated by succeeding circumstances. The green pastures along which he had so often bounded in the exultation

of health, and youthful freedom—the woods, under whose refreshing shade he had first indulged that pensive melancholy, which afterwards made a strong feature of his character—the wild walks of the mountains, the river, on whose waves he had floated, and the distant plains, which seemed boundless as his early hopes—were never after remembered by St. Aubert but with enthusiasm and regret. At length he disengaged himself from the world, and retired hither, to realize the wishes of many years.

The building, as it then stood, was merely a summer cottage, rendered interesting to a stranger by its neat simplicity, or the beauty of the surrounding scene; and considerable additions were necessary to make it a comfortable family residence. St. Aubert felt a kind of affection for every part of the fabric, which he remembered in his youth, and would not suffer a stone of it to be removed, so that the new building, adapted to the style of the old one, formed with it only a simple and elegant residence. The taste of Madame St. Aubert was conspicuous in its internal finishing, where the same chaste simplicity was observable in the furniture, and in the few ornaments of the apartments, that characterized the manners of its inhabitants.

The library occupied the west side of the chateau, and was enriched by a collection of the best books in the ancient and modern languages. This room opened upon a grove, which stood on the brow of a gentle declivity, that fell towards the river, and the tall trees gave it a melancholy and pleasing shade; while from the windows the eye caught, beneath the spreading branches, the gay and luxuriant landscape stretching to the west, and overlooked on the left by the bold precipices of the Pyrenees. Adjoining the library was a green-house, stored with scarce and beautiful plants; for one of the amusements of St. Aubert was the study of botany, and among the neighbouring mountains, which afforded a luxurious feast to the mind of the naturalist, he often passed the day in the pursuit of his favourite science. He was sometimes accompanied in these little excursions by Madame St. Aubert, and frequently by his daughter; when, with a small osier basket to receive plants, and another filled with cold refreshments, such as the cabin of the shepherd did not afford, they wandered away among the most romantic and magnificent scenes, nor suffered the charms of Nature's lowly children to abstract them from the observance of her stupendous works. When weary of sauntering among cliffs that seemed scarcely accessible but to the steps of the enthusiast, and where no track appeared on the vegetation, but what the foot of the izard had left; they would seek one of those green recesses, which so beautifully adorn the bosom of these mountains, where, under the shade of the lofty larch, or cedar, they enjoyed their simple repast, made sweeter by the waters of the cool stream, that crept along the turf, and by the breath of wild flowers and aromatic plants, that fringed the rocks, and inlaid the grass.

Adjoining the eastern side of the green-house, looking towards the plains of Languedoc, was a room, which Emily called hers, and which contained her books, her drawings, her musical instruments, with some favourite birds and plants. Here she usually exercised herself in elegant arts, cultivated only because they were congenial to her taste, and in which native genius, assisted by the instructions of Monsieur and Madame St. Aubert, made her an early proficient. The windows of this room were particularly pleasant; they descended to the floor, and, opening upon the little lawn that surrounded the house, the eye was led between groves of almond, palm-trees, flowering-ash, and myrtle, to the distant landscape, where the Garonne wandered.

The peasants of this gay climate were often seen on an evening, when the day's labour was done, dancing in groups on the margin of the river. Their sprightly melodies, debonnaire steps, the fanciful figure of their dances, with the tasteful and capricious manner in which the girls adjusted their simple dress, gave a character to the scene entirely French.

The front of the chateau, which, having a southern aspect, opened upon the grandeur of the mountains, was occupied on the ground floor by a rustic hall, and two excellent sitting rooms. The first floor, for the cottage had no second story, was laid out in bed-chambers, except one apartment that opened to a balcony, and which was generally used for a breakfast-room.

In the surrounding ground, St. Aubert had made very tasteful improvements; yet, such was his attachment to objects he had remembered from his boyish days, that he had in some instances sacrificed taste to sentiment. There were two old larches that shaded the building, and interrupted the prospect; St. Aubert had sometimes declared that he believed he should have been weak enough to have wept at their fall. In addition to these larches he planted a little grove of beech, pine, and mountain-ash. On a lofty terrace, formed by the swelling bank of the river, rose a plantation of orange, lemon, and palm-trees, whose fruit, in the coolness of evening, breathed delicious fragrance. With these were mingled a few trees of other species. Here, under the ample shade of a plane-tree, that spread its majestic canopy towards the river, St. Aubert loved to sit in the fine evenings of summer, with his wife and children, watching, beneath its foliage, the setting sun, the mild splendour of its light fading from the distant landscape, till the shadows of twilight melted its various features into one tint of sober grey. Here, too, he loved to read, and to converse with Madame St. Aubert; or to play with his children, resigning himself to the influence of those sweet affections, which are ever attendant on simplicity and nature. He has often said, while tears of pleasure trembled in his eyes, that these were moments infinitely more delightful than any passed amid the brilliant and tumultuous scenes that are courted by the world. His heart was occupied; it had, what can be so rarely said, no wish for a happiness beyond what it experienced. The consciousness of acting right diffused a serenity over his manners, which nothing else could impart to a man of moral perceptions like his, and which refined his sense of every surrounding blessing.

The deepest shade of twilight did not send him from his favourite plane-tree. He loved the soothing hour, when the last tints of light die away; when the stars, one by one, tremble through aether, and are reflected on the dark mirror of the waters; that hour, which, of all others, inspires the mind with pensive tenderness, and often elevates it to sublime contemplation. When the moon shed her soft rays among the foliage, he still lingered, and his pastoral supper of cream and fruits was often spread beneath it. Then, on the stillness of night, came the song of the nightingale, breathing sweetness, and awakening melancholy.

The first interruptions to the happiness he had known since his retirement, were occasioned by the death of his two sons. He lost them at that age when infantine simplicity is so fascinating; and though, in consideration of Madame St. Aubert's distress, he restrained the expression of his own, and endeavoured to bear it, as he meant, with philosophy, he had, in truth, no philosophy that could render him calm to such losses. One daughter was now his only surviving child; and, while he watched the unfolding of her infant character, with anxious fondness, he endeavoured, with unremitting effort, to counteract those traits in her disposition, which might hereafter lead her from happiness. She had discovered in her early years uncommon delicacy of mind, warm affections, and ready benevolence; but with these was observable a degree of susceptibility too exquisite to admit of lasting peace. As she advanced in youth, this sensibility gave a pensive tone to her spirits, and a softness to her manner, which added grace to beauty, and rendered her a very interesting object to persons of a congenial disposition. But St. Aubert had too much good sense to prefer a charm to a virtue; and had penetration enough to see, that this charm was too dangerous to its possessor to be allowed the character of a blessing. He endeavoured, therefore, to strengthen her mind; to enure her to habits of self-command; to teach her to reject the first impulse of her feelings, and to look, with cool examination, upon the disappointments he sometimes threw in her way. While he instructed her to resist first impressions, and to acquire that steady dignity of mind, that can alone counterbalance the passions, and bear us, as far as is compatible with our nature, above the reach of circumstances, he taught himself a lesson of fortitude; for he was often obliged to witness, with seeming indifference, the tears and struggles which his caution occasioned her.

In person, Emily resembled her mother; having the same elegant symmetry of form, the same delicacy of features, and the same blue eyes, full of tender sweetness. But, lovely as was her person,

it was the varied expression of her countenance, as conversation awakened the nicer emotions of her mind, that threw such a captivating grace around her:

Those tend'rer tints, that shun the careless eye,
And, in the world's contagious circle, die.

St. Aubert cultivated her understanding with the most scrupulous care. He gave her a general view of the sciences, and an exact acquaintance with every part of elegant literature. He taught her Latin and English, chiefly that she might understand the sublimity of their best poets. She discovered in her early years a taste for works of genius; and it was St. Aubert's principle, as well as his inclination, to promote every innocent means of happiness. 'A well-informed mind,' he would say, 'is the best security against the contagion of folly and of vice. The vacant mind is ever on the watch for relief, and ready to plunge into error, to escape from the languor of idleness. Store it with ideas, teach it the pleasure of thinking; and the temptations of the world without, will be counteracted by the gratifications derived from the world within. Thought, and cultivation, are necessary equally to the happiness of a country and a city life; in the first they prevent the uneasy sensations of indolence, and afford a sublime pleasure in the taste they create for the beautiful, and the grand; in the latter, they make dissipation less an object of necessity, and consequently of interest.'

It was one of Emily's earliest pleasures to ramble among the scenes of nature; nor was it in the soft and glowing landscape that she most delighted; she loved more the wild wood-walks, that skirted the mountain; and still more the mountain's stupendous recesses, where the silence and grandeur of solitude impressed a sacred awe upon her heart, and lifted her thoughts to the GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH. In scenes like these she would often linger along, wrapt in a melancholy charm, till the last gleam of day faded from the west; till the lonely sound of a sheep-bell, or the distant bark of a watch-dog, were all that broke on the stillness of the evening. Then, the gloom of the woods; the trembling of their leaves, at intervals, in the breeze; the bat, flitting on the twilight; the cottage-lights, now seen, and now lost—were circumstances that awakened her mind into effort, and led to enthusiasm and poetry.

Her favourite walk was to a little fishing-house, belonging to St. Aubert, in a woody glen, on the margin of a rivulet that descended from the Pyrenees, and, after foaming among their rocks, wound its silent way beneath the shades it reflected. Above the woods, that screened this glen, rose the lofty summits of the Pyrenees, which often burst boldly on the eye through the glades below. Sometimes the shattered face of a rock only was seen, crowned with wild shrubs; or a shepherd's cabin seated on a cliff, overshadowed by dark cypress, or waving ash. Emerging from the deep recesses of the woods, the glade opened to the distant landscape, where the rich pastures and vine-covered slopes of Gascony gradually declined to the plains; and there, on the winding shores of the Garonne, groves, and hamlets, and villas—their outlines softened by distance, melted from the eye into one rich harmonious tint.

This, too, was the favourite retreat of St. Aubert, to which he frequently withdrew from the fervour of noon, with his wife, his daughter, and his books; or came at the sweet evening hour to welcome the silent dusk, or to listen for the music of the nightingale. Sometimes, too, he brought music of his own, and awakened every fairy echo with the tender accents of his oboe; and often have the tones of Emily's voice drawn sweetness from the waves, over which they trembled.

It was in one of these excursions to this spot, that she observed the following lines written with a pencil on a part of the wainscot:

SONNET

Go, pencil! faithful to thy master's sighs!

Go—tell the Goddess of the fairy scene,
When next her light steps wind these wood-walks green,
Whence all his tears, his tender sorrows, rise;
Ah! paint her form, her soul-illumin'd eyes,
The sweet expression of her pensive face,
The light'ning smile, the animated grace—
The portrait well the lover's voice supplies;
Speaks all his heart must feel, his tongue would say:
Yet ah! not all his heart must sadly feel!
How oft the flow'ret's silken leaves conceal
The drug that steals the vital spark away!
And who that gazes on that angel-smile,
Would fear its charm, or think it could beguile!

These lines were not inscribed to any person; Emily therefore could not apply them to herself, though she was undoubtedly the nymph of these shades. Having glanced round the little circle of her acquaintance without being detained by a suspicion as to whom they could be addressed, she was compelled to rest in uncertainty; an uncertainty which would have been more painful to an idle mind than it was to hers. She had no leisure to suffer this circumstance, trifling at first, to swell into importance by frequent remembrance. The little vanity it had excited (for the incertitude which forbade her to presume upon having inspired the sonnet, forbade her also to disbelieve it) passed away, and the incident was dismissed from her thoughts amid her books, her studies, and the exercise of social charities.

Soon after this period, her anxiety was awakened by the indisposition of her father, who was attacked with a fever; which, though not thought to be of a dangerous kind, gave a severe shock to his constitution. Madame St. Aubert and Emily attended him with unremitting care; but his recovery was very slow, and, as he advanced towards health, Madame seemed to decline.

The first scene he visited, after he was well enough to take the air, was his favourite fishing-house. A basket of provisions was sent thither, with books, and Emily's lute; for fishing-tackle he had no use, for he never could find amusement in torturing or destroying.

After employing himself, for about an hour, in botanizing, dinner was served. It was a repast, to which gratitude, for being again permitted to visit this spot, gave sweetness; and family happiness once more smiled beneath these shades. Monsieur St. Aubert conversed with unusual cheerfulness; every object delighted his senses. The refreshing pleasure from the first view of nature, after the pain of illness, and the confinement of a sick-chamber, is above the conceptions, as well as the descriptions, of those in health. The green woods and pastures; the flowery turf; the blue concave of the heavens; the balmy air; the murmur of the limpid stream; and even the hum of every little insect of the shade, seem to revivify the soul, and make mere existence bliss.

Madame St. Aubert, reanimated by the cheerfulness and recovery of her husband, was no longer sensible of the indisposition which had lately oppressed her; and, as she sauntered along the wood-walks of this romantic glen, and conversed with him, and with her daughter, she often looked at them alternately with a degree of tenderness, that filled her eyes with tears. St. Aubert observed this more than once, and gently reproved her for the emotion; but she could only smile, clasp his hand, and that of Emily, and weep the more. He felt the tender enthusiasm stealing upon himself in a degree that became almost painful; his features assumed a serious air, and he could not forbear secretly sighing —'Perhaps I shall some time look back to these moments, as to the summit of my happiness, with hopeless regret. But let me not misuse them by useless anticipation; let me hope I shall not live to mourn the loss of those who are dearer to me than life.'

To relieve, or perhaps to indulge, the pensive temper of his mind, he bade Emily fetch the lute she knew how to touch with such sweet pathos. As she drew near the fishing-house, she was surprised to hear the tones of the instrument, which were awakened by the hand of taste, and uttered a plaintive air, whose exquisite melody engaged all her attention. She listened in profound silence, afraid to move from the spot, lest the sound of her steps should occasion her to lose a note of the music, or should disturb the musician. Every thing without the building was still, and no person appeared. She continued to listen, till timidity succeeded to surprise and delight; a timidity, increased by a remembrance of the pencilled lines she had formerly seen, and she hesitated whether to proceed, or to return.

While she paused, the music ceased; and, after a momentary hesitation, she re-collected courage to advance to the fishing-house, which she entered with faltering steps, and found unoccupied! Her lute lay on the table; every thing seemed undisturbed, and she began to believe it was another instrument she had heard, till she remembered, that, when she followed M. and Madame St. Aubert from this spot, her lute was left on a window seat. She felt alarmed, yet knew not wherefore; the melancholy gloom of evening, and the profound stillness of the place, interrupted only by the light trembling of leaves, heightened her fanciful apprehensions, and she was desirous of quitting the building, but perceived herself grow faint, and sat down. As she tried to recover herself, the pencilled lines on the wainscot met her eye; she started, as if she had seen a stranger; but, endeavouring to conquer the tremor of her spirits, rose, and went to the window. To the lines before noticed she now perceived that others were added, in which her name appeared.

Though no longer suffered to doubt that they were addressed to herself, she was as ignorant, as before, by whom they could be written. While she mused, she thought she heard the sound of a step without the building, and again alarmed, she caught up her lute, and hurried away. Monsieur and Madame St. Aubert she found in a little path that wound along the sides of the glen.

Having reached a green summit, shadowed by palm-trees, and overlooking the vallies and plains of Gascony, they seated themselves on the turf; and while their eyes wandered over the glorious scene, and they inhaled the sweet breath of flowers and herbs that enriched the grass, Emily played and sung several of their favourite airs, with the delicacy of expression in which she so much excelled.

Music and conversation detained them in this enchanting spot, till the sun's last light slept upon the plains; till the white sails that glided beneath the mountains, where the Garonne wandered, became dim, and the gloom of evening stole over the landscape. It was a melancholy but not unpleasing gloom. St. Aubert and his family rose, and left the place with regret; alas! Madame St. Aubert knew not that she left it for ever.

When they reached the fishing-house she missed her bracelet, and recollected that she had taken it from her arm after dinner, and had left it on the table when she went to walk. After a long search, in which Emily was very active, she was compelled to resign herself to the loss of it. What made this bracelet valuable to her was a miniature of her daughter to which it was attached, esteemed a striking resemblance, and which had been painted only a few months before. When Emily was convinced that the bracelet was really gone, she blushed, and became thoughtful. That some stranger had been in the fishing-house, during her absence, her lute, and the additional lines of a pencil, had already informed her: from the purport of these lines it was not unreasonable to believe, that the poet, the musician, and the thief were the same person. But though the music she had heard, the written lines she had seen, and the disappearance of the picture, formed a combination of circumstances very remarkable, she was irresistibly restrained from mentioning them; secretly determining, however, never again to visit the fishing-house without Monsieur or Madame St. Aubert.

They returned pensively to the chateau, Emily musing on the incident which had just occurred; St. Aubert reflecting, with placid gratitude, on the blessings he possessed; and Madame St. Aubert somewhat disturbed, and perplexed, by the loss of her daughter's picture. As they drew near the house, they observed an unusual bustle about it; the sound of voices was distinctly heard, servants and horses

were seen passing between the trees, and, at length, the wheels of a carriage rolled along. Having come within view of the front of the chateau, a landau, with smoking horses, appeared on the little lawn before it. St. Aubert perceived the liveries of his brother-in-law, and in the parlour he found Monsieur and Madame Quesnel already entered. They had left Paris some days before, and were on the way to their estate, only ten leagues distant from La Vallee, and which Monsieur Quesnel had purchased several years before of St. Aubert. This gentleman was the only brother of Madame St. Aubert; but the ties of relationship having never been strengthened by congeniality of character, the intercourse between them had not been frequent. M. Quesnel had lived altogether in the world; his aim had been consequence; splendour was the object of his taste; and his address and knowledge of character had carried him forward to the attainment of almost all that he had courted. By a man of such a disposition, it is not surprising that the virtues of St. Aubert should be overlooked; or that his pure taste, simplicity, and moderated wishes, were considered as marks of a weak intellect, and of confined views. The marriage of his sister with St. Aubert had been mortifying to his ambition, for he had designed that the matrimonial connection she formed should assist him to attain the consequence which he so much desired; and some offers were made her by persons whose rank and fortune flattered his warmest hope. But his sister, who was then addressed also by St. Aubert, perceived, or thought she perceived, that happiness and splendour were not the same, and she did not hesitate to forego the last for the attainment of the former. Whether Monsieur Quesnel thought them the same, or not, he would readily have sacrificed his sister's peace to the gratification of his own ambition; and, on her marriage with St. Aubert, expressed in private his contempt of her spiritless conduct, and of the connection which it permitted. Madame St. Aubert, though she concealed this insult from her husband, felt, perhaps, for the first time, resentment lighted in her heart; and, though a regard for her own dignity, united with considerations of prudence, restrained her expression of this resentment, there was ever after a mild reserve in her manner towards M. Quesnel, which he both understood and felt.

In his own marriage he did not follow his sister's example. His lady was an Italian, and an heiress by birth; and, by nature and education, was a vain and frivolous woman.

They now determined to pass the night with St. Aubert; and as the chateau was not large enough to accommodate their servants, the latter were dismissed to the neighbouring village. When the first compliments were over, and the arrangements for the night made M. Quesnel began the display of his intelligence and his connections; while St. Aubert, who had been long enough in retirement to find these topics recommended by their novelty, listened, with a degree of patience and attention, which his guest mistook for the humility of wonder. The latter, indeed, described the few festivities which the turbulence of that period permitted to the court of Henry the Third, with a minuteness, that somewhat recompensed for his ostentation; but, when he came to speak of the character of the Duke de Joyeuse, of a secret treaty, which he knew to be negotiating with the Porte, and of the light in which Henry of Navarre was received, M. St. Aubert recollected enough of his former experience to be assured, that his guest could be only of an inferior class of politicians; and that, from the importance of the subjects upon which he committed himself, he could not be of the rank to which he pretended to belong. The opinions delivered by M. Quesnel, were such as St. Aubert forebore to reply to, for he knew that his guest had neither humanity to feel, nor discernment to perceive, what is just.

Madame Quesnel, meanwhile, was expressing to Madame St. Aubert her astonishment, that she could bear to pass her life in this remote corner of the world, as she called it, and describing, from a wish, probably, of exciting envy, the splendour of the balls, banquets, and processions which had just been given by the court, in honour of the nuptials of the Duke de Joyeuse with Margaretta of Lorrain, the sister of the Queen. She described with equal minuteness the magnificence she had seen, and that from which she had been excluded; while Emily's vivid fancy, as she listened with the ardent curiosity of youth, heightened the scenes she heard of; and Madame St. Aubert, looking on her family, felt, as a tear stole to her eye, that though splendour may grace happiness, virtue only can bestow it.

'It is now twelve years, St. Aubert,' said M. Quesnel, 'since I purchased your family estate.'—'Somewhere thereabout,' replied St. Aubert, suppressing a sigh. 'It is near five years since I have been there,' resumed Quesnel; 'for Paris and its neighbourhood is the only place in the world to live in, and I am so immersed in politics, and have so many affairs of moment on my hands, that I find it difficult to steal away even for a month or two.' St. Aubert remaining silent, M. Quesnel proceeded: 'I have sometimes wondered how you, who have lived in the capital, and have been accustomed to company, can exist elsewhere;—especially in so remote a country as this, where you can neither hear nor see any thing, and can in short be scarcely conscious of life.'

'I live for my family and myself,' said St. Aubert; 'I am now contented to know only happiness; —formerly I knew life.'

'I mean to expend thirty or forty thousand livres on improvements,' said M. Quesnel, without seeming to notice the words of St. Aubert; 'for I design, next summer, to bring here my friends, the Duke de Durefort and the Marquis Ramont, to pass a month or two with me.' To St. Aubert's enquiry, as to these intended improvements, he replied, that he should take down the whole east wing of the chateau, and raise upon the site a set of stables. 'Then I shall build,' said he, 'a SALLE A MANGER, a SALON, a SALLE AU COMMUNE, and a number of rooms for servants; for at present there is not accommodation for a third part of my own people.'

'It accommodated our father's household,' said St. Aubert, grieved that the old mansion was to be thus improved, 'and that was not a small one.'

'Our notions are somewhat enlarged since those days,' said M. Quesnel;—'what was then thought a decent style of living would not now be endured.' Even the calm St. Aubert blushed at these words, but his anger soon yielded to contempt. 'The ground about the chateau is encumbered with trees; I mean to cut some of them down.'

'Cut down the trees too!' said St. Aubert.

'Certainly. Why should I not? they interrupt my prospects. There is a chesnut which spreads its branches before the whole south side of the chateau, and which is so ancient that they tell me the hollow of its trunk will hold a dozen men. Your enthusiasm will scarcely contend that there can be either use, or beauty, in such a sapless old tree as this.'

'Good God!' exclaimed St. Aubert, 'you surely will not destroy that noble chesnut, which has flourished for centuries, the glory of the estate! It was in its maturity when the present mansion was built. How often, in my youth, have I climbed among its broad branches, and sat embowered amidst a world of leaves, while the heavy shower has pattered above, and not a rain drop reached me! How often I have sat with a book in my hand, sometimes reading, and sometimes looking out between the branches upon the wide landscape, and the setting sun, till twilight came, and brought the birds home to their little nests among the leaves! How often—but pardon me,' added St. Aubert, recollecting that he was speaking to a man who could neither comprehend, nor allow his feelings, 'I am talking of times and feelings as old-fashioned as the taste that would spare that venerable tree.'

'It will certainly come down,' said M. Quesnel; 'I believe I shall plant some Lombardy poplars among the clumps of chesnut, that I shall leave of the avenue; Madame Quesnel is partial to the poplar, and tells me how much it adorns a villa of her uncle, not far from Venice.'

'On the banks of the Brenta, indeed,' continued St. Aubert, 'where its spiry form is intermingled with the pine, and the cypress, and where it plays over light and elegant porticos and colonnades, it, unquestionably, adorns the scene; but among the giants of the forest, and near a heavy gothic mansion —'

'Well, my good sir,' said M. Quesnel, 'I will not dispute with you. You must return to Paris before our ideas can at all agree. But A-PROPOS of Venice, I have some thoughts of going thither, next summer; events may call me to take possession of that same villa, too, which they tell me is the most charming that can be imagined. In that case I shall leave the improvements I mention to another year, and I may, perhaps, be tempted to stay some time in Italy.'

Emily was somewhat surprised to hear him talk of being tempted to remain abroad, after he had mentioned his presence to be so necessary at Paris, that it was with difficulty he could steal away for a month or two; but St. Aubert understood the self-importance of the man too well to wonder at this trait; and the possibility, that these projected improvements might be deferred, gave him a hope, that they might never take place.

Before they separated for the night, M. Quesnel desired to speak with St. Aubert alone, and they retired to another room, where they remained a considerable time. The subject of this conversation was not known; but, whatever it might be, St. Aubert, when he returned to the supper-room, seemed much disturbed, and a shade of sorrow sometimes fell upon his features that alarmed Madame St. Aubert. When they were alone she was tempted to enquire the occasion of it, but the delicacy of mind, which had ever appeared in his conduct, restrained her: she considered that, if St. Aubert wished her to be acquainted with the subject of his concern, he would not wait on her enquiries.

On the following day, before M. Quesnel departed, he had a second conference with St. Aubert.

The guests, after dining at the chateau, set out in the cool of the day for Epourville, whither they gave him and Madame St. Aubert a pressing invitation, prompted rather by the vanity of displaying their splendour, than by a wish to make their friends happy.

Emily returned, with delight, to the liberty which their presence had restrained, to her books, her walks, and the rational conversation of M. and Madame St. Aubert, who seemed to rejoice, no less, that they were delivered from the shackles, which arrogance and frivolity had imposed.

Madame St. Aubert excused herself from sharing their usual evening walk, complaining that she was not quite well, and St. Aubert and Emily went out together.

They chose a walk towards the mountains, intending to visit some old pensioners of St. Aubert, which, from his very moderate income, he contrived to support, though it is probable M. Quesnel, with his very large one, could not have afforded this.

After distributing to his pensioners their weekly stipends, listening patiently to the complaints of some, redressing the grievances of others, and softening the discontents of all, by the look of sympathy, and the smile of benevolence, St. Aubert returned home through the woods,

whereAt fall of eve the fairy-people throng,In various games and revelry to passThe summer night, as village stories tell.* *Thomson

'The evening gloom of woods was always delightful to me,' said St. Aubert, whose mind now experienced the sweet calm, which results from the consciousness of having done a beneficent action, and which disposes it to receive pleasure from every surrounding object. 'I remember that in my youth this gloom used to call forth to my fancy a thousand fairy visions, and romantic images; and, I own, I am not yet wholly insensible of that high enthusiasm, which wakes the poet's dream: I can linger, with solemn steps, under the deep shades, send forward a transforming eye into the distant obscurity, and listen with thrilling delight to the mystic murmuring of the woods.'

'O my dear father,' said Emily, while a sudden tear started to her eye, 'how exactly you describe what I have felt so often, and which I thought nobody had ever felt but myself! But hark! here comes the sweeping sound over the wood-tops;—now it dies away;—how solemn the stillness that succeeds! Now the breeze swells again. It is like the voice of some supernatural being—the voice of the spirit of the woods, that watches over them by night. Ah! what light is yonder? But it is gone. And now it gleams again, near the root of that large chestnut: look, sir!'

'Are you such an admirer of nature,' said St. Aubert, 'and so little acquainted with her appearances as not to know that for the glow-worm? But come,' added he gaily, 'step a little further, and we shall see fairies, perhaps; they are often companions. The glow-worm lends his light, and they in return charm him with music, and the dance. Do you see nothing tripping yonder?'

Emily laughed. 'Well, my dear sir,' said she, 'since you allow of this alliance, I may venture to own I have anticipated you; and almost dare venture to repeat some verses I made one evening in these very woods.'

'Nay,' replied St. Aubert, 'dismiss the ALMOST, and venture quite; let us hear what vagaries fancy has been playing in your mind. If she has given you one of her spells, you need not envy those of the fairies.'

'If it is strong enough to enchant your judgment, sir,' said Emily, 'while I disclose her images, I need NOT envy them. The lines go in a sort of tripping measure, which I thought might suit the subject well enough, but I fear they are too irregular.'

THE GLOW-WORM

How pleasant is the green-wood's deep-matted shade
On a mid-summer's eve, when the fresh rain is o'er;
When the yellow beams slope, and sparkle thro' the glade,
And swiftly in the thin air the light swallows soar!

But sweeter, sweeter still, when the sun sinks to rest,
And twilight comes on, with the fairies so gay
Tripping through the forest-walk, where flow'rs, unprest,
Bow not their tall heads beneath their frolic play

To music's softest sounds they dance away the hour,
Till moon-light steals down among the trembling leaves,
And checquers all the ground, and guides them to the bow'r,
The long haunted bow'r, where the nightingale grieves.

Then no more they dance, till her sad song is done,
But, silent as the night, to her mourning attend;
And often as her dying notes their pity have won,
They vow all her sacred haunts from mortals to defend

When, down among the mountains, sinks the ev'ning star,
And the changing moon forsakes this shadowy sphere,
How cheerless would they be, tho' they fairies are,
If I, with my pale light, came not near

Yet cheerless tho' they'd be, they're ungrateful to my love!
For, often when the traveller's benighted on his way,
And I glimmer in his path, and would guide him thro' the grove,
They bind me in their magic spells to lead him far astray;

And in the mire to leave him, till the stars are all burnt out,
While, in strange-looking shapes, they frisk about the ground,
And, afar in the woods, they raise a dismal shout,
Till I shrink into my cell again for terror of the sound!

But, see where all the tiny elves come dancing in a ring,
With the merry, merry pipe, and the tabor, and the horn,
And the timbrel so clear, and the lute with dulcet string;
Then round about the oak they go till peeping of the morn.

Down yonder glade two lovers steal, to shun the fairy-queen,
Who frowns upon their plighted vows, and jealous is of me,
That yester-eve I lighted them, along the dewy green,
To seek the purple flow'r, whose juice from all her spells can free.

And now, to punish me, she keeps afar her jocund band,
With the merry, merry pipe, and the tabor, and the lute;
If I creep near yonder oak she will wave her fairy wand,
And to me the dance will cease, and the music all be mute.

O! had I but that purple flow'r whose leaves her charms can foil,
And knew like fays to draw the juice, and throw it on the wind,
I'd be her slave no longer, nor the traveller beguile,
And help all faithful lovers, nor fear the fairy kind!

But soon the VAPOUR OF THE WOODS will wander afar,
And the fickle moon will fade, and the stars disappear,
Then, cheerless will they be, tho' they fairies are,
If I, with my pale light, come not near!

Whatever St. Aubert might think of the stanzas, he would not deny his daughter the pleasure of believing that he approved them; and, having given his commendation, he sunk into a reverie, and they walked on in silence.

A faint erroneous rayGlanc'd from th' imperfect surfaces of things,
Flung half an image on the straining eye;
While waving woods, and villages, and streams,
And rocks, and mountain-tops, that long retain
The ascending gleam, are all one swimming scene,
Uncertain if beheld.*

**Thomson.*

St. Aubert continued silent till he reached the chateau, where his wife had retired to her chamber. The languor and dejection, that had lately oppressed her, and which the exertion called forth by the arrival of her guests had suspended, now returned with increased effect. On the following day, symptoms of fever appeared, and St. Aubert, having sent for medical advice, learned, that her disorder was a fever of the same nature as that, from which he had lately recovered. She had, indeed, taken the infection, during her attendance upon him, and, her constitution being too weak to throw out the disease immediately, it had lurked in her veins, and occasioned the heavy languor of which she had complained. St. Aubert, whose anxiety for his wife overcame every other consideration, detained the physician in his house. He remembered the feelings and the reflections that had called a momentary gloom upon his mind, on the day when he had last visited the fishing-house, in company with Madame St. Aubert, and he now admitted a presentiment, that this illness would be a fatal one. But he effectually concealed this from her, and from his daughter, whom he endeavoured to re-animate with hopes that her constant assiduities would not be unavailing. The physician, when asked by St. Aubert for his opinion of the disorder, replied, that the event of it depended upon circumstances which he could not ascertain. Madame St. Aubert seemed to have formed a more decided one; but her

eyes only gave hints of this. She frequently fixed them upon her anxious friends with an expression of pity, and of tenderness, as if she anticipated the sorrow that awaited them, and that seemed to say, it was for their sakes only, for their sufferings, that she regretted life. On the seventh day, the disorder was at its crisis. The physician assumed a graver manner, which she observed, and took occasion, when her family had once quitted the chamber, to tell him, that she perceived her death was approaching. 'Do not attempt to deceive me,' said she, 'I feel that I cannot long survive. I am prepared for the event, I have long, I hope, been preparing for it. Since I have not long to live, do not suffer a mistaken compassion to induce you to flatter my family with false hopes. If you do, their affliction will only be the heavier when it arrives: I will endeavour to teach them resignation by my example.'

The physician was affected; he promised to obey her, and told St. Aubert, somewhat abruptly, that there was nothing to expect. The latter was not philosopher enough to restrain his feelings when he received this information; but a consideration of the increased affliction which the observance of his grief would occasion his wife, enabled him, after some time, to command himself in her presence. Emily was at first overwhelmed with the intelligence; then, deluded by the strength of her wishes, a hope sprung up in her mind that her mother would yet recover, and to this she pertinaciously adhered almost to the last hour.

The progress of this disorder was marked, on the side of Madame St. Aubert, by patient suffering, and subjected wishes. The composure, with which she awaited her death, could be derived only from the retrospect of a life governed, as far as human frailty permits, by a consciousness of being always in the presence of the Deity, and by the hope of a higher world. But her piety could not entirely subdue the grief of parting from those whom she so dearly loved. During these her last hours, she conversed much with St. Aubert and Emily, on the prospect of futurity, and on other religious topics. The resignation she expressed, with the firm hope of meeting in a future world the friends she left in this, and the effort which sometimes appeared to conceal her sorrow at this temporary separation, frequently affected St. Aubert so much as to oblige him to leave the room. Having indulged his tears awhile, he would dry them and return to the chamber with a countenance composed by an endeavour which did but increase his grief.

Never had Emily felt the importance of the lessons, which had taught her to restrain her sensibility, so much as in these moments, and never had she practised them with a triumph so complete. But when the last was over, she sunk at once under the pressure of her sorrow, and then perceived that it was hope, as well as fortitude, which had hitherto supported her. St. Aubert was for a time too devoid of comfort himself to bestow any on his daughter.

CHAPTER II

I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul.

SHAKESPEARE

Madame St. Aubert was interred in the neighbouring village church; her husband and daughter attended her to the grave, followed by a long train of the peasantry, who were sincere mourners of this excellent woman.

On his return from the funeral, St. Aubert shut himself in his chamber. When he came forth, it was with a serene countenance, though pale in sorrow. He gave orders that his family should attend him. Emily only was absent; who, overcome with the scene she had just witnessed, had retired to her closet to weep alone. St. Aubert followed her thither: he took her hand in silence, while she continued to weep; and it was some moments before he could so far command his voice as to speak. It trembled while he said, 'My Emily, I am going to prayers with my family; you will join us. We must ask support from above. Where else ought we to seek it—where else can we find it?'

Emily checked her tears, and followed her father to the parlour, where, the servants being assembled, St. Aubert read, in a low and solemn voice, the evening service, and added a prayer for the soul of the departed. During this, his voice often faltered, his tears fell upon the book, and at length he paused. But the sublime emotions of pure devotion gradually elevated his views above this world, and finally brought comfort to his heart.

When the service was ended, and the servants were withdrawn, he tenderly kissed Emily, and said, 'I have endeavoured to teach you, from your earliest youth, the duty of self-command; I have pointed out to you the great importance of it through life, not only as it preserves us in the various and dangerous temptations that call us from rectitude and virtue, but as it limits the indulgences which are termed virtuous, yet which, extended beyond a certain boundary, are vicious, for their consequence is evil. All excess is vicious; even that sorrow, which is amiable in its origin, becomes a selfish and unjust passion, if indulged at the expence of our duties—by our duties I mean what we owe to ourselves, as well as to others. The indulgence of excessive grief enervates the mind, and almost incapacitates it for again partaking of those various innocent enjoyments which a benevolent God designed to be the sun-shine of our lives. My dear Emily, recollect and practise the precepts I have so often given you, and which your own experience has so often shewn you to be wise.

'Your sorrow is useless. Do not receive this as merely a commonplace remark, but let reason THEREFORE restrain sorrow. I would not annihilate your feelings, my child, I would only teach you to command them; for whatever may be the evils resulting from a too susceptible heart, nothing can be hoped from an insensible one; that, on the other hand, is all vice—vice, of which the deformity is not softened, or the effect consoled for, by any semblance or possibility of good. You know my sufferings, and are, therefore, convinced that mine are not the light words which, on these occasions, are so often repeated to destroy even the sources of honest emotion, or which merely display the selfish ostentation of a false philosophy. I will shew my Emily, that I can practise what I advise. I have said thus much, because I cannot bear to see you wasting in useless sorrow, for want of that resistance which is due from mind; and I have not said it till now, because there is a period when all reasoning must yield to nature; that is past: and another, when excessive indulgence, having sunk into habit, weighs down the elasticity of the spirits so as to render conquest nearly impossible; this is to come. You, my Emily, will shew that you are willing to avoid it.'

Emily smiled through her tears upon her father: 'Dear sir,' said she, and her voice trembled; she would have added, 'I will shew myself worthy of being your daughter;' but a mingled emotion

of gratitude, affection, and grief overcame her. St. Aubert suffered her to weep without interruption, and then began to talk on common topics.

The first person who came to condole with St. Aubert was a M. Barreaux, an austere and seemingly unfeeling man. A taste for botany had introduced them to each other, for they had frequently met in their wanderings among the mountains. M. Barreaux had retired from the world, and almost from society, to live in a pleasant chateau, on the skirts of the woods, near La Vallee. He also had been disappointed in his opinion of mankind; but he did not, like St. Aubert, pity and mourn for them; he felt more indignation at their vices, than compassion for their weaknesses.

St. Aubert was somewhat surprised to see him; for, though he had often pressed him to come to the chateau, he had never till now accepted the invitation; and now he came without ceremony or reserve, entering the parlour as an old friend. The claims of misfortune appeared to have softened down all the ruggedness and prejudices of his heart. St. Aubert unhappy, seemed to be the sole idea that occupied his mind. It was in manners, more than in words, that he appeared to sympathize with his friends: he spoke little on the subject of their grief; but the minute attention he gave them, and the modulated voice, and softened look that accompanied it, came from his heart, and spoke to theirs.

At this melancholy period St. Aubert was likewise visited by Madame Cheron, his only surviving sister, who had been some years a widow, and now resided on her own estate near Tholouse. The intercourse between them had not been very frequent. In her condolements, words were not wanting; she understood not the magic of the look that speaks at once to the soul, or the voice that sinks like balm to the heart: but she assured St. Aubert that she sincerely sympathized with him, praised the virtues of his late wife, and then offered what she considered to be consolation. Emily wept unceasingly while she spoke; St. Aubert was tranquil, listened to what she said in silence, and then turned the discourse upon another subject.

At parting she pressed him and her niece to make her an early visit. 'Change of place will amuse you,' said she, 'and it is wrong to give way to grief.' St. Aubert acknowledged the truth of these words of course; but, at the same time, felt more reluctant than ever to quit the spot which his past happiness had consecrated. The presence of his wife had sanctified every surrounding scene, and, each day, as it gradually softened the acuteness of his suffering, assisted the tender enchantment that bound him to home.

But there were calls which must be complied with, and of this kind was the visit he paid to his brother-in-law M. Quesnel. An affair of an interesting nature made it necessary that he should delay this visit no longer, and, wishing to rouse Emily from her dejection, he took her with him to Epourville.

As the carriage entered upon the forest that adjoined his paternal domain, his eyes once more caught, between the chesnut avenue, the turreted corners of the chateau. He sighed to think of what had passed since he was last there, and that it was now the property of a man who neither revered nor valued it. At length he entered the avenue, whose lofty trees had so often delighted him when a boy, and whose melancholy shade was now so congenial with the tone of his spirits. Every feature of the edifice, distinguished by an air of heavy grandeur, appeared successively between the branches of the trees—the broad turret, the arched gate-way that led into the courts, the drawbridge, and the dry fosse which surrounded the whole.

The sound of carriage wheels brought a troop of servants to the great gate, where St. Aubert alighted, and from which he led Emily into the gothic hall, now no longer hung with the arms and ancient banners of the family. These were displaced, and the oak wainscotting, and beams that crossed the roof, were painted white. The large table, too, that used to stretch along the upper end of the hall, where the master of the mansion loved to display his hospitality, and whence the peal of laughter, and the song of conviviality, had so often resounded, was now removed; even the benches that had surrounded the hall were no longer there. The heavy walls were hung with frivolous ornaments, and every thing that appeared denoted the false taste and corrupted sentiments of the present owner.

St. Aubert followed a gay Parisian servant to a parlour, where sat Mons. and Madame Quesnel, who received him with a stately politeness, and, after a few formal words of condolement, seemed to have forgotten that they ever had a sister.

Emily felt tears swell into her eyes, and then resentment checked them. St. Aubert, calm and deliberate, preserved his dignity without assuming importance, and Quesnel was depressed by his presence without exactly knowing wherefore.

After some general conversation, St. Aubert requested to speak with him alone; and Emily, being left with Madame Quesnel, soon learned that a large party was invited to dine at the chateau, and was compelled to hear that nothing which was past and irremediable ought to prevent the festivity of the present hour.

St. Aubert, when he was told that company were expected, felt a mixed emotion of disgust and indignation against the insensibility of Quesnel, which prompted him to return home immediately. But he was informed, that Madame Cheron had been asked to meet him; and, when he looked at Emily, and considered that a time might come when the enmity of her uncle would be prejudicial to her, he determined not to incur it himself, by conduct which would be resented as indecorous, by the very persons who now showed so little sense of decorum.

Among the visitors assembled at dinner were two Italian gentlemen, of whom one was named Montoni, a distant relation of Madame Quesnel, a man about forty, of an uncommonly handsome person, with features manly and expressive, but whose countenance exhibited, upon the whole, more of the haughtiness of command, and the quickness of discernment, than of any other character.

Signor Cavigni, his friend, appeared to be about thirty—inferior in dignity, but equal to him in penetration of countenance, and superior in insinuation of manner.

Emily was shocked by the salutation with which Madame Cheron met her father—'Dear brother,' said she, 'I am concerned to see you look so very ill; do, pray, have advice!' St. Aubert answered, with a melancholy smile, that he felt himself much as usual; but Emily's fears made her now fancy that her father looked worse than he really did.

Emily would have been amused by the new characters she saw, and the varied conversation that passed during dinner, which was served in a style of splendour she had seldom seen before, had her spirits been less oppressed. Of the guests, Signor Montoni was lately come from Italy, and he spoke of the commotions which at that period agitated the country; talked of party differences with warmth, and then lamented the probable consequences of the tumults. His friend spoke with equal ardour, of the politics of his country; praised the government and prosperity of Venice, and boasted of its decided superiority over all the other Italian states. He then turned to the ladies, and talked with the same eloquence, of Parisian fashions, the French opera, and French manners; and on the latter subject he did not fail to mingle what is so particularly agreeable to French taste. The flattery was not detected by those to whom it was addressed, though its effect, in producing submissive attention, did not escape his observation. When he could disengage himself from the assiduities of the other ladies, he sometimes addressed Emily: but she knew nothing of Parisian fashions, or Parisian operas; and her modesty, simplicity, and correct manners formed a decided contrast to those of her female companions.

After dinner, St. Aubert stole from the room to view once more the old chesnut which Quesnel talked of cutting down. As he stood under its shade, and looked up among its branches, still luxuriant, and saw here and there the blue sky trembling between them; the pursuits and events of his early days crowded fast to his mind, with the figures and characters of friends—long since gone from the earth; and he now felt himself to be almost an insulated being, with nobody but his Emily for his heart to turn to.

He stood lost amid the scenes of years which fancy called up, till the succession closed with the picture of his dying wife, and he started away, to forget it, if possible, at the social board.

St. Aubert ordered his carriage at an early hour, and Emily observed, that he was more than usually silent and dejected on the way home; but she considered this to be the effect of his visit to a place which spoke so eloquently of former times, nor suspected that he had a cause of grief which he concealed from her.

On entering the chateau she felt more depressed than ever, for she more than ever missed the presence of that dear parent, who, whenever she had been from home, used to welcome her return with smiles and fondness; now, all was silent and forsaken.

But what reason and effort may fail to do, time effects. Week after week passed away, and each, as it passed, stole something from the harshness of her affliction, till it was mellowed to that tenderness which the feeling heart cherishes as sacred. St. Aubert, on the contrary, visibly declined in health; though Emily, who had been so constantly with him, was almost the last person who observed it. His constitution had never recovered from the late attack of the fever, and the succeeding shock it received from Madame St. Aubert's death had produced its present infirmity. His physician now ordered him to travel; for it was perceptible that sorrow had seized upon his nerves, weakened as they had been by the preceding illness; and variety of scene, it was probable, would, by amusing his mind, restore them to their proper tone.

For some days Emily was occupied in preparations to attend him; and he, by endeavours to diminish his expences at home during the journey—a purpose which determined him at length to dismiss his domestics. Emily seldom opposed her father's wishes by questions or remonstrances, or she would now have asked why he did not take a servant, and have represented that his infirm health made one almost necessary. But when, on the eve of their departure, she found that he had dismissed Jacques, Francis, and Mary, and detained only Theresa the old housekeeper, she was extremely surprised, and ventured to ask his reason for having done so. 'To save expences, my dear,' he replied —'we are going on an expensive excursion.'

The physician had prescribed the air of Languedoc and Provence; and St. Aubert determined, therefore, to travel leisurely along the shores of the Mediterranean, towards Provence.

They retired early to their chamber on the night before their departure; but Emily had a few books and other things to collect, and the clock had struck twelve before she had finished, or had remembered that some of her drawing instruments, which she meant to take with her, were in the parlour below. As she went to fetch these, she passed her father's room, and, perceiving the door half open, concluded that he was in his study—for, since the death of Madame St. Aubert, it had been frequently his custom to rise from his restless bed, and go thither to compose his mind. When she was below stairs she looked into this room, but without finding him; and as she returned to her chamber, she tapped at his door, and receiving no answer, stepped softly in, to be certain whether he was there.

The room was dark, but a light glimmered through some panes of glass that were placed in the upper part of a closet-door. Emily believed her father to be in the closet, and, surprised that he was up at so late an hour, apprehended he was unwell, and was going to enquire; but, considering that her sudden appearance at this hour might alarm him, she removed her light to the stair-case, and then stepped softly to the closet. On looking through the panes of glass, she saw him seated at a small table, with papers before him, some of which he was reading with deep attention and interest, during which he often wept and sobbed aloud. Emily, who had come to the door to learn whether her father was ill, was now detained there by a mixture of curiosity and tenderness. She could not witness his sorrow, without being anxious to know the subject of; and she therefore continued to observe him in silence, concluding that those papers were letters of her late mother. Presently he knelt down, and with a look so solemn as she had seldom seen him assume, and which was mingled with a certain wild expression, that partook more of horror than of any other character, he prayed silently for a considerable time.

When he rose, a ghastly paleness was on his countenance. Emily was hastily retiring; but she saw him turn again to the papers, and she stopped. He took from among them a small case, and from

thence a miniature picture. The rays of light fell strongly upon it, and she perceived it to be that of a lady, but not of her mother.

St. Aubert gazed earnestly and tenderly upon his portrait, put it to his lips, and then to his heart, and sighed with a convulsive force. Emily could scarcely believe what she saw to be real. She never knew till now that he had a picture of any other lady than her mother, much less that he had one which he evidently valued so highly; but having looked repeatedly, to be certain that it was not the resemblance of Madame St. Aubert, she became entirely convinced that it was designed for that of some other person.

At length St. Aubert returned the picture to its case; and Emily, recollecting that she was intruding upon his private sorrows, softly withdrew from the chamber.

CHAPTER III

O how canst thou renounce the boundless store
Of charms which nature to her vot'ry yields!
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields;
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
And all that echoes to the song of even;
All that the mountain's shelt'ring bosom shields,
And all the dread magnificence of heaven;
O how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven!.....
These charms shall work thy soul's eternal health,
And love, and gentleness, and joy, impart.

THE MINSTREL

St. Aubert, instead of taking the more direct road, that ran along the feet of the Pyrenees to Languedoc, chose one that, winding over the heights, afforded more extensive views and greater variety of romantic scenery. He turned a little out of his way to take leave of M. Barreaux, whom he found botanizing in the wood near his chateau, and who, when he was told the purpose of St. Aubert's visit, expressed a degree of concern, such as his friend had thought it was scarcely possible for him to feel on any similar occasion. They parted with mutual regret.

'If any thing could have tempted me from my retirement,' said M. Barreaux, 'it would have been the pleasure of accompanying you on this little tour. I do not often offer compliments; you may, therefore, believe me, when I say, that I shall look for your return with impatience.'

The travellers proceeded on their journey. As they ascended the heights, St. Aubert often looked back upon the chateau, in the plain below; tender images crowded to his mind; his melancholy imagination suggested that he should return no more; and though he checked this wandering thought, still he continued to look, till the haziness of distance blended his home with the general landscape, and St. Aubert seemed to

Drag at each remove a lengthening chain.

He and Emily continued sunk in musing silence for some leagues, from which melancholy reverie Emily first awoke, and her young fancy, struck with the grandeur of the objects around, gradually yielded to delightful impressions. The road now descended into glens, confined by stupendous walls of rock, grey and barren, except where shrubs fringed their summits, or patches of meagre vegetation tinted their recesses, in which the wild goat was frequently browsing. And now, the way led to the lofty cliffs, from whence the landscape was seen extending in all its magnificence.

Emily could not restrain her transport as she looked over the pine forests of the mountains upon the vast plains, that, enriched with woods, towns, blushing vines, and plantations of almonds, palms, and olives, stretched along, till their various colours melted in distance into one harmonious hue, that seemed to unite earth with heaven. Through the whole of this glorious scene the majestic Garonne wandered; descending from its source among the Pyrenees, and winding its blue waves towards the Bay of Biscay.

The ruggedness of the unfrequented road often obliged the wanderers to alight from their little carriage, but they thought themselves amply repaid for this inconvenience by the grandeur of the scenes; and, while the muleteer led his animals slowly over the broken ground, the travellers had

leisure to linger amid these solitudes, and to indulge the sublime reflections, which soften, while they elevate, the heart, and fill it with the certainty of a present God! Still the enjoyment of St. Aubert was touched with that pensive melancholy, which gives to every object a mellower tint, and breathes a sacred charm over all around.

They had provided against part of the evil to be encountered from a want of convenient inns, by carrying a stock of provisions in the carriage, so that they might take refreshment on any pleasant spot, in the open air, and pass the nights wherever they should happen to meet with a comfortable cottage. For the mind, also, they had provided, by a work on botany, written by M. Barreaux, and by several of the Latin and Italian poets; while Emily's pencil enabled her to preserve some of those combinations of forms, which charmed her at every step.

The loneliness of the road, where, only now and then, a peasant was seen driving his mule, or some mountaineer-children at play among the rocks, heightened the effect of the scenery. St. Aubert was so much struck with it, that he determined, if he could hear of a road, to penetrate further among the mountains, and, bending his way rather more to the south, to emerge into Rousillon, and coast the Mediterranean along part of that country to Languedoc.

Soon after mid-day, they reached the summit of one of those cliffs, which, bright with the verdure of palm-trees, adorn, like gems, the tremendous walls of the rocks, and which overlooked the greater part of Gascony, and part of Languedoc. Here was shade, and the fresh water of a spring, that, gliding among the turf, under the trees, thence precipitated itself from rock to rock, till its dashing murmurs were lost in the abyss, though its white foam was long seen amid the darkness of the pines below.

This was a spot well suited for rest, and the travellers alighted to dine, while the mules were unharnessed to browse on the savoury herbs that enriched this summit.

It was some time before St. Aubert or Emily could withdraw their attention from the surrounding objects, so as to partake of their little repast. Seated in the shade of the palms, St. Aubert pointed out to her observation the course of the rivers, the situation of great towns, and the boundaries of provinces, which science, rather than the eye, enabled him to describe. Notwithstanding this occupation, when he had talked awhile he suddenly became silent, thoughtful, and tears often swelled to his eyes, which Emily observed, and the sympathy of her own heart told her their cause. The scene before them bore some resemblance, though it was on a much grander scale, to a favourite one of the late Madame St. Aubert, within view of the fishing-house. They both observed this, and thought how delighted she would have been with the present landscape, while they knew that her eyes must never, never more open upon this world. St. Aubert remembered the last time of his visiting that spot in company with her, and also the mournfully presaging thoughts which had then arisen in his mind, and were now, even thus soon, realized! The recollections subdued him, and he abruptly rose from his seat, and walked away to where no eye could observe his grief.

When he returned, his countenance had recovered its usual serenity; he took Emily's hand, pressed it affectionately, without speaking, and soon after called to the muleteer, who sat at a little distance, concerning a road among the mountains towards Rousillon. Michael said, there were several that way, but he did not know how far they extended, or even whether they were passable; and St. Aubert, who did not intend to travel after sun-set, asked what village they could reach about that time. The muleteer calculated that they could easily reach Mateau, which was in their present road; but that, if they took a road that sloped more to the south, towards Rousillon, there was a hamlet, which he thought they could gain before the evening shut in.

St. Aubert, after some hesitation, determined to take the latter course, and Michael, having finished his meal, and harnessed his mules, again set forward, but soon stopped; and St. Aubert saw him doing homage to a cross, that stood on a rock impending over their way. Having concluded his devotions, he smacked his whip in the air, and, in spite of the rough road, and the pain of his poor mules, which he had been lately lamenting, rattled, in a full gallop, along the edge of a precipice,

which it made the eye dizzy to look down. Emily was terrified almost to fainting; and St. Aubert, apprehending still greater danger from suddenly stopping the driver, was compelled to sit quietly, and trust his fate to the strength and discretion of the mules, who seemed to possess a greater portion of the latter quality than their master; for they carried the travellers safely into the valley, and there stopped upon the brink of the rivulet that watered it.

Leaving the splendour of extensive prospects, they now entered this narrow valley screened by

> Rocks on rocks piled, as if by magic spell,
> Here scorch'd by lightnings, there with ivy green.

The scene of barrenness was here and there interrupted by the spreading branches of the larch and cedar, which threw their gloom over the cliff, or athwart the torrent that rolled in the vale. No living creature appeared, except the izard, scrambling among the rocks, and often hanging upon points so dangerous, that fancy shrunk from the view of them. This was such a scene as SALVATOR would have chosen, had he then existed, for his canvas; St. Aubert, impressed by the romantic character of the place, almost expected to see banditti start from behind some projecting rock, and he kept his hand upon the arms with which he always travelled.

As they advanced, the valley opened; its savage features gradually softened, and, towards evening, they were among heathy mountains, stretched in far perspective, along which the solitary sheep-bell was heard, and the voice of the shepherd calling his wandering flocks to the nightly fold. His cabin, partly shadowed by the cork-tree and the ilex, which St. Aubert observed to flourish in higher regions of the air than any other trees, except the fir, was all the human habitation that yet appeared. Along the bottom of this valley the most vivid verdure was spread; and, in the little hollow recesses of the mountains, under the shade of the oak and chestnut, herds of cattle were grazing. Groups of them, too, were often seen reposing on the banks of the rivulet, or laving their sides in the cool stream, and sipping its wave.

The sun was now setting upon the valley; its last light gleamed upon the water, and heightened the rich yellow and purple tints of the heath and broom, that overspread the mountains. St. Aubert enquired of Michael the distance to the hamlet he had mentioned, but the man could not with certainty tell; and Emily began to fear that he had mistaken the road. Here was no human being to assist, or direct them; they had left the shepherd and his cabin far behind, and the scene became so obscured in twilight, that the eye could not follow the distant perspective of the valley in search of a cottage, or a hamlet. A glow of the horizon still marked the west, and this was of some little use to the travellers. Michael seemed endeavouring to keep up his courage by singing; his music, however, was not of a kind to disperse melancholy; he sung, in a sort of chant, one of the most dismal ditties his present auditors had ever heard, and St. Aubert at length discovered it to be a vesper-hymn to his favourite saint.

They travelled on, sunk in that thoughtful melancholy, with which twilight and solitude impress the mind. Michael had now ended his ditty, and nothing was heard but the drowsy murmur of the breeze among the woods, and its light flutter, as it blew freshly into the carriage. They were at length roused by the sound of fire-arms. St. Aubert called to the muleteer to stop, and they listened. The noise was not repeated; but presently they heard a rustling among the brakes. St. Aubert drew forth a pistol, and ordered Michael to proceed as fast as possible; who had not long obeyed, before a horn sounded, that made the mountains ring. He looked again from the window, and then saw a young man spring from the bushes into the road, followed by a couple of dogs. The stranger was in a hunter's dress. His gun was slung across his shoulders, the hunter's horn hung from his belt, and in his hand was a small pike, which, as he held it, added to the manly grace of his figure, and assisted the agility of his steps.

After a moment's hesitation, St. Aubert again stopped the carriage, and waited till he came up, that they might enquire concerning the hamlet they were in search of. The stranger informed him, that it was only half a league distant, that he was going thither himself, and would readily shew the way. St. Aubert thanked him for the offer, and, pleased with his chevalier-like air and open countenance, asked him to take a seat in the carriage; which the stranger, with an acknowledgment, declined, adding that he would keep pace with the mules. 'But I fear you will be wretchedly accommodated,' said he: 'the inhabitants of these mountains are a simple people, who are not only without the luxuries of life, but almost destitute of what in other places are held to be its necessaries.'

'I perceive you are not one of its inhabitants, sir,' said St. Aubert.

'No, sir, I am only a wanderer here.'

The carriage drove on, and the increasing dusk made the travellers very thankful that they had a guide; the frequent glens, too, that now opened among the mountains, would likewise have added to their perplexity. Emily, as she looked up one of these, saw something at a great distance like a bright cloud in the air. 'What light is yonder, sir?' said she.

St. Aubert looked, and perceived that it was the snowy summit of a mountain, so much higher than any around it, that it still reflected the sun's rays, while those below lay in deep shade.

At length, the village lights were seen to twinkle through the dusk, and, soon after, some cottages were discovered in the valley, or rather were seen by reflection in the stream, on whose margin they stood, and which still gleamed with the evening light.

The stranger now came up, and St. Aubert, on further enquiry, found not only that there was no inn in the place, but not any sort of house of public reception. The stranger, however, offered to walk on, and enquire for a cottage to accommodate them; for which further civility St. Aubert returned his thanks, and said, that, as the village was so near, he would alight, and walk with him. Emily followed slowly in the carriage.

On the way, St. Aubert asked his companion what success he had had in the chase. 'Not much, sir,' he replied, 'nor do I aim at it. I am pleased with the country, and mean to saunter away a few weeks among its scenes. My dogs I take with me more for companionship than for game. This dress, too, gives me an ostensible business, and procures me that respect from the people, which would, perhaps, be refused to a lonely stranger, who had no visible motive for coming among them.'

'I admire your taste,' said St. Aubert, 'and, if I was a younger man, should like to pass a few weeks in your way exceedingly. I, too, am a wanderer, but neither my plan nor pursuits are exactly like yours—I go in search of health, as much as of amusement.' St. Aubert sighed, and paused; and then, seeming to recollect himself, he resumed: 'If I can hear of a tolerable road, that shall afford decent accommodation, it is my intention to pass into Rousillon, and along the sea-shore to Languedoc. You, sir, seem to be acquainted with the country, and can, perhaps, give me information on the subject.'

The stranger said, that what information he could give was entirely at his service; and then mentioned a road rather more to the east, which led to a town, whence it would be easy to proceed into Rousillon.

They now arrived at the village, and commenced their search for a cottage, that would afford a night's lodging. In several, which they entered, ignorance, poverty, and mirth seemed equally to prevail; and the owners eyed St. Aubert with a mixture of curiosity and timidity. Nothing like a bed could be found, and he had ceased to enquire for one, when Emily joined him, who observed the languor of her father's countenance, and lamented, that he had taken a road so ill provided with the comforts necessary for an invalid. Other cottages, which they examined, seemed somewhat less savage than the former, consisting of two rooms, if such they could be called; the first of these occupied by mules and pigs, the second by the family, which generally consisted of six or eight children, with their parents, who slept on beds of skins and dried beech leaves, spread upon a mud floor. Here, light was admitted, and smoke discharged, through an aperture in the roof; and here the scent of spirits (for the travelling smugglers, who haunted the Pyrenees, had made this rude people familiar with

the use of liquors) was generally perceptible enough. Emily turned from such scenes, and looked at her father with anxious tenderness, which the young stranger seemed to observe; for, drawing St. Aubert aside, he made him an offer of his own bed. 'It is a decent one,' said he, 'when compared with what we have just seen, yet such as in other circumstances I should be ashamed to offer you.' St. Aubert acknowledged how much he felt himself obliged by this kindness, but refused to accept it, till the young stranger would take no denial. 'Do not give me the pain of knowing, sir,' said he, 'that an invalid, like you, lies on hard skins, while I sleep in a bed. Besides, sir, your refusal wounds my pride; I must believe you think my offer unworthy your acceptance. Let me shew you the way. I have no doubt my landlady can accommodate this young lady also.'

St. Aubert at length consented, that, if this could be done, he would accept his kindness, though he felt rather surprised, that the stranger had proved himself so deficient in gallantry, as to administer to the repose of an infirm man, rather than to that of a very lovely young woman, for he had not once offered the room for Emily. But she thought not of herself, and the animated smile she gave him, told how much she felt herself obliged for the preference of her father.

On their way, the stranger, whose name was Valancourt, stepped on first to speak to his hostess, and she came out to welcome St. Aubert into a cottage, much superior to any he had seen. This good woman seemed very willing to accommodate the strangers, who were soon compelled to accept the only two beds in the place. Eggs and milk were the only food the cottage afforded; but against scarcity of provisions St. Aubert had provided, and he requested Valancourt to stay, and partake with him of less homely fare; an invitation, which was readily accepted, and they passed an hour in intelligent conversation. St. Aubert was much pleased with the manly frankness, simplicity, and keen susceptibility to the grandeur of nature, which his new acquaintance discovered; and, indeed, he had often been heard to say, that, without a certain simplicity of heart, this taste could not exist in any strong degree.

The conversation was interrupted by a violent uproar without, in which the voice of the muleteer was heard above every other sound. Valancourt started from his seat, and went to enquire the occasion; but the dispute continued so long afterwards, that St. Aubert went himself, and found Michael quarrelling with the hostess, because she had refused to let his mules lie in a little room where he and three of her sons were to pass the night. The place was wretched enough, but there was no other for these people to sleep in; and, with somewhat more of delicacy than was usual among the inhabitants of this wild tract of country, she persisted in refusing to let the animals have the same BED-CHAMBER with her children. This was a tender point with the muleteer; his honour was wounded when his mules were treated with disrespect, and he would have received a blow, perhaps, with more meekness. He declared that his beasts were as honest beasts, and as good beasts, as any in the whole province; and that they had a right to be well treated wherever they went. 'They are as harmless as lambs,' said he, 'if people don't affront them. I never knew them behave themselves amiss above once or twice in my life, and then they had good reason for doing so. Once, indeed, they kicked at a boy's leg that lay asleep in the stable, and broke it; but I told them they were out there, and by St. Anthony! I believe they understood me, for they never did so again.'

He concluded this eloquent harangue with protesting, that they should share with him, go where he would.

The dispute was at length settled by Valancourt, who drew the hostess aside, and desired she would let the muleteer and his beasts have the place in question to themselves, while her sons should have the bed of skins designed for him, for that he would wrap himself in his cloak, and sleep on the bench by the cottage door. But this she thought it her duty to oppose, and she felt it to be her inclination to disappoint the muleteer. Valancourt, however, was positive, and the tedious affair was at length settled.

It was late when St. Aubert and Emily retired to their rooms, and Valancourt to his station at the door, which, at this mild season, he preferred to a close cabin and a bed of skins. St. Aubert was

somewhat surprised to find in his room volumes of Homer, Horace, and Petrarch; but the name of Valancourt, written in them, told him to whom they belonged.

CHAPTER IV

In truth he was a strange and wayward wight,
Fond of each gentle, and each dreadful scene,
In darkness, and in storm he found delight;
Nor less than when on ocean-wave serene
The southern sun diffus'd his dazzling sheen.
Even sad vicissitude amus'd his soul;
And if a sigh would sometimes intervene,
And down his cheek a tear of pity roll,
A sigh, a tear, so sweet, he wish'd not to controul.

THE MINSTREL

St. Aubert awoke at an early hour, refreshed by sleep, and desirous to set forward. He invited the stranger to breakfast with him; and, talking again of the road, Valancourt said, that, some months past, he had travelled as far as Beaujeu, which was a town of some consequence on the way to Rousillon. He recommended it to St. Aubert to take that route, and the latter determined to do so.

'The road from this hamlet,' said Valancourt, 'and that to Beaujeu, part at the distance of about a league and a half from hence; if you will give me leave, I will direct your muleteer so far. I must wander somewhere, and your company would make this a pleasanter ramble than any other I could take.'

St. Aubert thankfully accepted his offer, and they set out together, the young stranger on foot, for he refused the invitation of St. Aubert to take a seat in his little carriage.

The road wound along the feet of the mountains through a pastoral valley, bright with verdure, and varied with groves of dwarf oak, beech and sycamore, under whose branches herds of cattle reposed. The mountain-ash too, and the weeping birch, often threw their pendant foliage over the steeps above, where the scanty soil scarcely concealed their roots, and where their light branches waved to every breeze that fluttered from the mountains.

The travellers were frequently met at this early hour, for the sun had not yet risen upon the valley, by shepherds driving immense flocks from their folds to feed upon the hills. St. Aubert had set out thus early, not only that he might enjoy the first appearance of sunrise, but that he might inhale the first pure breath of morning, which above all things is refreshing to the spirits of the invalid. In these regions it was particularly so, where an abundance of wild flowers and aromatic herbs breathed forth their essence on the air.

The dawn, which softened the scenery with its peculiar grey tint, now dispersed, and Emily watched the progress of the day, first trembling on the tops of the highest cliffs, then touching them with splendid light, while their sides and the vale below were still wrapt in dewy mist. Meanwhile, the sullen grey of the eastern clouds began to blush, then to redden, and then to glow with a thousand colours, till the golden light darted over all the air, touched the lower points of the mountain's brow, and glanced in long sloping beams upon the valley and its stream. All nature seemed to have awakened from death into life; the spirit of St. Aubert was renovated. His heart was full; he wept, and his thoughts ascended to the Great Creator.

Emily wished to trip along the turf, so green and bright with dew, and to taste the full delight of that liberty, which the izard seemed to enjoy as he bounded along the brow of the cliffs; while Valancourt often stopped to speak with the travellers, and with social feeling to point out to them the peculiar objects of his admiration. St. Aubert was pleased with him: 'Here is the real ingenuousness and ardour of youth,' said he to himself; 'this young man has never been at Paris.'

He was sorry when they came to the spot where the roads parted, and his heart took a more affectionate leave of him than is usual after so short an acquaintance. Valancourt talked long by the side of the carriage; seemed more than once to be going, but still lingered, and appeared to search anxiously for topics of conversation to account for his delay. At length he took leave. As he went, St. Aubert observed him look with an earnest and pensive eye at Emily, who bowed to him with a countenance full of timid sweetness, while the carriage drove on. St. Aubert, for whatever reason, soon after looked from the window, and saw Valancourt standing upon the bank of the road, resting on his pike with folded arms, and following the carriage with his eyes. He waved his hand, and Valancourt, seeming to awake from his reverie, returned the salute, and started away.

The aspect of the country now began to change, and the travellers soon found themselves among mountains covered from their base nearly to their summits with forests of gloomy pine, except where a rock of granite shot up from the vale, and lost its snowy top in the clouds. The rivulet, which had hitherto accompanied them, now expanded into a river; and, flowing deeply and silently along, reflected, as in a mirror, the blackness of the impending shades. Sometimes a cliff was seen lifting its bold head above the woods and the vapours, that floated mid-way down the mountains; and sometimes a face of perpendicular marble rose from the water's edge, over which the larch threw his gigantic arms, here scathed with lightning, and there floating in luxuriant foliage.

They continued to travel over a rough and unfrequented road, seeing now and then at a distance the solitary shepherd, with his dog, stalking along the valley, and hearing only the dashing of torrents, which the woods concealed from the eye, the long sullen murmur of the breeze, as it swept over the pines, or the notes of the eagle and the vulture, which were seen towering round the beetling cliff.

Often, as the carriage moved slowly over uneven ground, St. Aubert alighted, and amused himself with examining the curious plants that grew on the banks of the road, and with which these regions abound; while Emily, wrapt in high enthusiasm, wandered away under the shades, listening in deep silence to the lonely murmur of the woods.

Neither village nor hamlet was seen for many leagues; the goat-herd's or the hunter's cabin, perched among the cliffs of the rocks, were the only human habitations that appeared.

The travellers again took their dinner in the open air, on a pleasant spot in the valley, under the spreading shade of cedars; and then set forward towards Beaujeu.

The road now began to descend, and, leaving the pine forests behind, wound among rocky precipices. The evening twilight again fell over the scene, and the travellers were ignorant how far they might yet be from Beaujeu. St. Aubert, however, conjectured that the distance could not be very great, and comforted himself with the prospect of travelling on a more frequented road after reaching that town, where he designed to pass the night. Mingled woods, and rocks, and heathy mountains were now seen obscurely through the dusk; but soon even these imperfect images faded in darkness. Michael proceeded with caution, for he could scarcely distinguish the road; his mules, however, seemed to have more sagacity, and their steps were sure.

On turning the angle of a mountain, a light appeared at a distance, that illumined the rocks, and the horizon to a great extent. It was evidently a large fire, but whether accidental, or otherwise, there were no means of knowing. St. Aubert thought it was probably kindled by some of the numerous banditti, that infested the Pyrenees, and he became watchful and anxious to know whether the road passed near this fire. He had arms with him, which, on an emergency, might afford some protection, though certainly a very unequal one, against a band of robbers, so desperate too as those usually were who haunted these wild regions. While many reflections rose upon his mind, he heard a voice shouting from the road behind, and ordering the muleteer to stop. St. Aubert bade him proceed as fast as possible; but either Michael, or his mules were obstinate, for they did not quit the old pace. Horses' feet were now heard; a man rode up to the carriage, still ordering the driver to stop; and St. Aubert, who could no longer doubt his purpose, was with difficulty able to prepare a pistol for his defence, when his hand was upon the door of the chaise. The man staggered on his horse, the report

of the pistol was followed by a groan, and St. Aubert's horror may be imagined, when in the next instant he thought he heard the faint voice of Valancourt. He now himself bade the muleteer stop; and, pronouncing the name of Valancourt, was answered in a voice, that no longer suffered him to doubt. St. Aubert, who instantly alighted and went to his assistance, found him still sitting on his horse, but bleeding profusely, and appearing to be in great pain, though he endeavoured to soften the terror of St. Aubert by assurances that he was not materially hurt, the wound being only in his arm. St. Aubert, with the muleteer, assisted him to dismount, and he sat down on the bank of the road, where St. Aubert tried to bind up his arm, but his hands trembled so excessively that he could not accomplish it; and, Michael being now gone in pursuit of the horse, which, on being disengaged from his rider, had galloped off, he called Emily to his assistance. Receiving no answer, he went to the carriage, and found her sunk on the seat in a fainting fit. Between the distress of this circumstance and that of leaving Valancourt bleeding, he scarcely knew what he did; he endeavoured, however, to raise her, and called to Michael to fetch water from the rivulet that flowed by the road, but Michael was gone beyond the reach of his voice. Valancourt, who heard these calls, and also the repeated name of Emily, instantly understood the subject of his distress; and, almost forgetting his own condition, he hastened to her relief. She was reviving when he reached the carriage; and then, understanding that anxiety for him had occasioned her indisposition, he assured her, in a voice that trembled, but not from anguish, that his wound was of no consequence. While he said this St. Aubert turned round, and perceiving that he was still bleeding, the subject of his alarm changed again, and he hastily formed some handkerchiefs into a bandage. This stopped the effusion of the blood; but St. Aubert, dreading the consequence of the wound, enquired repeatedly how far they were from Beaujeu; when, learning that it was at two leagues' distance, his distress increased, since he knew not how Valancourt, in his present state, would bear the motion of the carriage, and perceived that he was already faint from loss of blood. When he mentioned the subject of his anxiety, Valancourt entreated that he would not suffer himself to be thus alarmed on his account, for that he had no doubt he should be able to support himself very well; and then he talked of the accident as a slight one. The muleteer being now returned with Valancourt's horse, assisted him into the chaise; and, as Emily was now revived, they moved slowly on towards Beaujeu.

St. Aubert, when he had recovered from the terror occasioned him by this accident, expressed surprise on seeing Valancourt, who explained his unexpected appearance by saying, 'You, sir, renewed my taste for society; when you had left the hamlet, it did indeed appear a solitude. I determined, therefore, since my object was merely amusement, to change the scene; and I took this road, because I knew it led through a more romantic tract of mountains than the spot I have left. Besides,' added he, hesitating for an instant, 'I will own, and why should I not? that I had some hope of overtaking you.'

'And I have made you a very unexpected return for the compliment,' said St. Aubert, who lamented again the rashness which had produced the accident, and explained the cause of his late alarm. But Valancourt seemed anxious only to remove from the minds of his companions every unpleasant feeling relative to himself; and, for that purpose, still struggled against a sense of pain, and tried to converse with gaiety. Emily meanwhile was silent, except when Valancourt particularly addressed her, and there was at those times a tremulous tone in his voice that spoke much.

They were now so near the fire, which had long flamed at a distance on the blackness of night, that it gleamed upon the road, and they could distinguish figures moving about the blaze. The way winding still nearer, they perceived in the valley one of those numerous bands of gipsies, which at that period particularly haunted the wilds of the Pyrenees, and lived partly by plundering the traveller. Emily looked with some degree of terror on the savage countenances of these people, shewn by the fire, which heightened the romantic effects of the scenery, as it threw a red dusky gleam upon the rocks and on the foliage of the trees, leaving heavy masses of shade and regions of obscurity, which the eye feared to penetrate.

They were preparing their supper; a large pot stood by the fire, over which several figures were busy. The blaze discovered a rude kind of tent, round which many children and dogs were playing, and the whole formed a picture highly grotesque. The travellers saw plainly their danger. Valancourt was silent, but laid his hand on one of St. Aubert's pistols; St. Aubert drew forth another, and Michael was ordered to proceed as fast as possible. They passed the place, however, without being attacked; the rovers being probably unprepared for the opportunity, and too busy about their supper to feel much interest, at the moment, in any thing besides.

After a league and a half more, passed in darkness, the travellers arrived at Beaujeu, and drove up to the only inn the place afforded; which, though superior to any they had seen since they entered the mountains, was bad enough.

The surgeon of the town was immediately sent for, if a surgeon he could be called, who prescribed for horses as well as for men, and shaved faces at least as dexterously as he set bones. After examining Valancourt's arm, and perceiving that the bullet had passed through the flesh without touching the bone, he dressed it, and left him with a solemn prescription of quiet, which his patient was not inclined to obey. The delight of ease had now succeeded to pain; for ease may be allowed to assume a positive quality when contrasted with anguish; and, his spirits thus re-animated, he wished to partake of the conversation of St. Aubert and Emily, who, released from so many apprehensions, were uncommonly cheerful. Late as it was, however, St. Aubert was obliged to go out with the landlord to buy meat for supper; and Emily, who, during this interval, had been absent as long as she could, upon excuses of looking to their accommodation, which she found rather better than she expected, was compelled to return, and converse with Valancourt alone. They talked of the character of the scenes they had passed, of the natural history of the country, of poetry, and of St. Aubert; a subject on which Emily always spoke and listened to with peculiar pleasure.

The travellers passed an agreeable evening; but St. Aubert was fatigued with his journey; and, as Valancourt seemed again sensible of pain, they separated soon after supper.

In the morning St. Aubert found that Valancourt had passed a restless night; that he was feverish, and his wound very painful. The surgeon, when he dressed it, advised him to remain quietly at Beaujeu; advice which was too reasonable to be rejected. St. Aubert, however, had no favourable opinion of this practitioner, and was anxious to commit Valancourt into more skilful hands; but learning, upon enquiry, that there was no town within several leagues which seemed more likely to afford better advice, he altered the plan of his journey, and determined to await the recovery of Valancourt, who, with somewhat more ceremony than sincerity, made many objections to this delay.

By order of his surgeon, Valancourt did not go out of the house that day; but St. Aubert and Emily surveyed with delight the environs of the town, situated at the feet of the Pyrenean Alps, that rose, some in abrupt precipices, and others swelling with woods of cedar, fir, and cypress, which stretched nearly to their highest summits. The cheerful green of the beech and mountain-ash was sometimes seen, like a gleam of light, amidst the dark verdure of the forest; and sometimes a torrent poured its sparkling flood, high among the woods.

Valancourt's indisposition detained the travellers at Beaujeu several days, during which interval St. Aubert had observed his disposition and his talents with the philosophic inquiry so natural to him. He saw a frank and generous nature, full of ardour, highly susceptible of whatever is grand and beautiful, but impetuous, wild, and somewhat romantic. Valancourt had known little of the world. His perceptions were clear, and his feelings just; his indignation of an unworthy, or his admiration of a generous action, were expressed in terms of equal vehemence. St. Aubert sometimes smiled at his warmth, but seldom checked it, and often repeated to himself, 'This young man has never been at Paris.' A sigh sometimes followed this silent ejaculation. He determined not to leave Valancourt till he should be perfectly recovered; and, as he was now well enough to travel, though not able to manage his horse, St. Aubert invited him to accompany him for a few days in the carriage. This he the more readily did, since he had discovered that Valancourt was of a family of the same name in

Gascony, with whose respectability he was well acquainted. The latter accepted the offer with great pleasure, and they again set forward among these romantic wilds about Rousillon.

They travelled leisurely; stopping wherever a scene uncommonly grand appeared; frequently alighting to walk to an eminence, whither the mules could not go, from which the prospect opened in greater magnificence; and often sauntering over hillocks covered with lavender, wild thyme, juniper, and tamarisc; and under the shades of woods, between those boles they caught the long mountain-vista, sublime beyond any thing that Emily had ever imagined.

St. Aubert sometimes amused himself with botanizing, while Valancourt and Emily strolled on; he pointing out to her notice the objects that particularly charmed him, and reciting beautiful passages from such of the Latin and Italian poets as he had heard her admire. In the pauses of conversation, when he thought himself not observed, he frequently fixed his eyes pensively on her countenance, which expressed with so much animation the taste and energy of her mind; and when he spoke again, there was a peculiar tenderness in the tone of his voice, that defeated any attempt to conceal his sentiments. By degrees these silent pauses became more frequent; till Emily, only, betrayed an anxiety to interrupt them; and she; who had been hitherto reserved, would now talk again, and again, of the woods and the vallies and the mountains, to avoid the danger of sympathy and silence.

From Beaujeu the road had constantly ascended, conducting the travellers into the higher regions of the air, where immense glaciers exhibited their frozen horrors, and eternal snow whitened the summits of the mountains. They often paused to contemplate these stupendous scenes, and, seated on some wild cliff, where only the ilex or the larch could flourish, looked over dark forests of fir, and precipices where human foot had never wandered, into the glen—so deep, that the thunder of the torrent, which was seen to foam along the bottom, was scarcely heard to murmur. Over these crags rose others of stupendous height, and fantastic shape; some shooting into cones; others impending far over their base, in huge masses of granite, along whose broken ridges was often lodged a weight of snow, that, trembling even to the vibration of a sound, threatened to bear destruction in its course to the vale. Around, on every side, far as the eye could penetrate, were seen only forms of grandeur—the long perspective of mountain-tops, tinged with ethereal blue, or white with snow; vallies of ice, and forests of gloomy fir. The serenity and clearness of the air in these high regions were particularly delightful to the travellers; it seemed to inspire them with a finer spirit, and diffused an indescribable complacency over their minds. They had no words to express the sublime emotions they felt. A solemn expression characterized the feelings of St. Aubert; tears often came to his eyes, and he frequently walked away from his companions. Valancourt now and then spoke, to point to Emily's notice some feature of the scene. The thinness of the atmosphere, through which every object came so distinctly to the eye, surprised and deluded her; who could scarcely believe that objects, which appeared so near, were, in reality, so distant. The deep silence of these solitudes was broken only at intervals by the scream of the vultures, seen cowering round some cliff below, or by the cry of the eagle sailing high in the air; except when the travellers listened to the hollow thunder that sometimes muttered at their feet. While, above, the deep blue of the heavens was unobscured by the lightest cloud, half way down the mountains, long billows of vapour were frequently seen rolling, now wholly excluding the country below, and now opening, and partially revealing its features. Emily delighted to observe the grandeur of these clouds as they changed in shape and tints, and to watch their various effect on the lower world, whose features, partly veiled, were continually assuming new forms of sublimity.

After traversing these regions for many leagues, they began to descend towards Rousillon, and features of beauty then mingled with the scene. Yet the travellers did not look back without some regret to the sublime objects they had quitted; though the eye, fatigued with the extension of its powers, was glad to repose on the verdure of woods and pastures, that now hung on the margin of the river below; to view again the humble cottage shaded by cedars, the playful group of mountaineer-children, and the flowery nooks that appeared among the hills.

As they descended, they saw at a distance, on the right, one of the grand passes of the Pyrenees into Spain, gleaming with its battlements and towers to the splendour of the setting rays, yellow tops of woods colouring the steeps below, while far above aspired the snowy points of the mountains, still reflecting a rosy hue.

St. Aubert began to look out for the little town he had been directed to by the people of Beaujeu, and where he meant to pass the night; but no habitation yet appeared. Of its distance Valancourt could not assist him to judge, for he had never been so far along this chain of Alps before. There was, however, a road to guide them; and there could be little doubt that it was the right one; for, since they had left Beaujeu, there had been no variety of tracks to perplex or mislead.

The sun now gave his last light, and St. Aubert bade the muleteer proceed with all possible dispatch. He found, indeed, the lassitude of illness return upon him, after a day of uncommon fatigue, both of body and mind, and he longed for repose. His anxiety was not soothed by observing a numerous train, consisting of men, horses, and loaded mules, winding down the steeps of an opposite mountain, appearing and disappearing at intervals among the woods, so that its numbers could not be judged of. Something bright, like arms, glanced in the setting ray, and the military dress was distinguishable upon the men who were in the van, and on others scattered among the troop that followed. As these wound into the vale, the rear of the party emerged from the woods, and exhibited a band of soldiers. St. Aubert's apprehensions now subsided; he had no doubt that the train before him consisted of smugglers, who, in conveying prohibited goods over the Pyrenees, had been encountered, and conquered by a party of troops.

The travellers had lingered so long among the sublimer scenes of these mountains, that they found themselves entirely mistaken in their calculation that they could reach Montigny at sun-set; but, as they wound along the valley, the saw, on a rude Alpine bridge, that united two lofty crags of the glen, a group of mountaineer-children, amusing themselves with dropping pebbles into a torrent below, and watching the stones plunge into the water, that threw up its white spray high in the air as it received them, and returned a sullen sound, which the echoes of the mountains prolonged. Under the bridge was seen a perspective of the valley, with its cataract descending among the rocks, and a cottage on a cliff, overshadowed with pines. It appeared, that they could not be far from some small town. St. Aubert bade the muleteer stop, and then called to the children to enquire if he was near Montigny; but the distance, and the roaring of the waters, would not suffer his voice to be heard; and the crags, adjoining the bridge, were of such tremendous height and steepness, that to have climbed either would have been scarcely practicable to a person unacquainted with the ascent. St. Aubert, therefore, did not waste more moments in delay. They continued to travel long after twilight had obscured the road, which was so broken, that, now thinking it safer to walk than to ride, they all alighted. The moon was rising, but her light was yet too feeble to assist them. While they stepped carefully on, they heard the vesper-bell of a convent. The twilight would not permit them to distinguish anything like a building, but the sounds seemed to come from some woods, that overhung an acclivity to the right. Valancourt proposed to go in search of this convent. 'If they will not accommodate us with a night's lodging,' said he, 'they may certainly inform us how far we are from Montigny, and direct us towards it.' He was bounding forward, without waiting St. Aubert's reply, when the latter stopped him. 'I am very weary,' said St. Aubert, 'and wish for nothing so much as for immediate rest. We will all go to the convent; your good looks would defeat our purpose; but when they see mine and Emily's exhausted countenances, they will scarcely deny us repose.'

As he said this, he took Emily's arm within his, and, telling Michael to wait awhile in the road with the carriage, they began to ascend towards the woods, guided by the bell of the convent. His steps were feeble, and Valancourt offered him his arm, which he accepted. The moon now threw a faint light over their path, and, soon after, enabled them to distinguish some towers rising above the tops of the woods. Still following the note of the bell, they entered the shade of those woods, lighted only by the moonbeams, that glided down between the leaves, and threw a tremulous uncertain gleam

upon the steep track they were winding. The gloom and the silence that prevailed, except when the bell returned upon the air, together with the wildness of the surrounding scene, struck Emily with a degree of fear, which, however, the voice and conversation of Valancourt somewhat repressed. When they had been some time ascending, St. Aubert complained of weariness, and they stopped to rest upon a little green summit, where the trees opened, and admitted the moon-light. He sat down upon the turf, between Emily and Valancourt. The bell had now ceased, and the deep repose of the scene was undisturbed by any sound, for the low dull murmur of some distant torrents might be said to sooth, rather than to interrupt, the silence.

Before them, extended the valley they had quitted; its rocks, and woods to the left, just silvered by the rays, formed a contrast to the deep shadow, that involved the opposite cliffs, whose fringed summits only were tipped with light; while the distant perspective of the valley was lost in the yellow mist of moon-light. The travellers sat for some time wrapt in the complacency which such scenes inspire.

'These scenes,' said Valancourt, at length, 'soften the heart, like the notes of sweet music, and inspire that delicious melancholy which no person, who had felt it once, would resign for the gayest pleasures. They waken our best and purest feelings, disposing us to benevolence, pity, and friendship. Those whom I love—I always seem to love more in such an hour as this.' His voice trembled, and he paused.

St. Aubert was silent; Emily perceived a warm tear fall upon the hand he held; she knew the object of his thoughts; hers too had, for some time, been occupied by the remembrance of her mother. He seemed by an effort to rouse himself. 'Yes,' said he, with an half-suppressed sigh, 'the memory of those we love—of times for ever past! in such an hour as this steals upon the mind, like a strain of distant music in the stillness of night;—all tender and harmonious as this landscape, sleeping in the mellow moon-light.' After the pause of a moment, St. Aubert added, 'I have always fancied, that I thought with more clearness, and precision, at such an hour than at any other, and that heart must be insensible in a great degree, that does not soften to its influence. But many such there are.'

Valancourt sighed.

'Are there, indeed, many such?' said Emily.

'A few years hence, my Emily,' replied St. Aubert, 'and you may smile at the recollection of that question—if you do not weep to it. But come, I am somewhat refreshed, let us proceed.'

Having emerged from the woods, they saw, upon a turfy hillock above, the convent of which they were in search. A high wall, that surrounded it, led them to an ancient gate, at which they knocked; and the poor monk, who opened it, conducted them into a small adjoining room, where he desired they would wait while he informed the superior of their request. In this interval, several friars came in separately to look at them; and at length the first monk returned, and they followed him to a room, where the superior was sitting in an arm-chair, with a large folio volume, printed in black letter, open on a desk before him. He received them with courtesy, though he did not rise from his seat; and, having asked them a few questions, granted their request. After a short conversation, formal and solemn on the part of the superior, they withdrew to the apartment where they were to sup, and Valancourt, whom one of the inferior friars civilly desired to accompany, went to seek Michael and his mules. They had not descended half way down the cliffs, before they heard the voice of the muleteer echoing far and wide. Sometimes he called on St. Aubert, and sometimes on Valancourt; who having, at length, convinced him that he had nothing to fear either for himself, or his master; and having disposed of him, for the night, in a cottage on the skirts of the woods, returned to sup with his friends, on such sober fare as the monks thought it prudent to set before them. While St. Aubert was too much indisposed to share it, Emily, in her anxiety for her father, forgot herself; and Valancourt, silent and thoughtful, yet never inattentive to them, appeared particularly solicitous to accommodate and relieve St. Aubert, who often observed, while his daughter was pressing him to eat, or adjusting

the pillow she had placed in the back of his arm-chair, that Valancourt fixed on her a look of pensive tenderness, which he was not displeased to understand.

They separated at an early hour, and retired to their respective apartments. Emily was shown to hers by a nun of the convent, whom she was glad to dismiss, for her heart was melancholy, and her attention so much abstracted, that conversation with a stranger was painful. She thought her father daily declining, and attributed his present fatigue more to the feeble state of his frame, than to the difficulty of the journey. A train of gloomy ideas haunted her mind, till she fell asleep.

In about two hours after, she was awakened by the chiming of a bell, and then heard quick steps pass along the gallery, into which her chamber opened. She was so little accustomed to the manners of a convent, as to be alarmed by this circumstance; her fears, ever alive for her father, suggested that he was very ill, and she rose in haste to go to him. Having paused, however, to let the persons in the gallery pass before she opened her door, her thoughts, in the mean time, recovered from the confusion of sleep, and she understood that the bell was the call of the monks to prayers. It had now ceased, and, all being again still, she forbore to go to St. Aubert's room. Her mind was not disposed for immediate sleep, and the moon-light, that shone into her chamber, invited her to open the casement, and look out upon the country.

It was a still and beautiful night, the sky was unobscured by any cloud, and scarce a leaf of the woods beneath trembled in the air. As she listened, the mid-night hymn of the monks rose softly from a chapel, that stood on one of the lower cliffs, an holy strain, that seemed to ascend through the silence of night to heaven, and her thoughts ascended with it. From the consideration of His works, her mind arose to the adoration of the Deity, in His goodness and power; wherever she turned her view, whether on the sleeping earth, or to the vast regions of space, glowing with worlds beyond the reach of human thought, the sublimity of God, and the majesty of His presence appeared. Her eyes were filled with tears of awful love and admiration; and she felt that pure devotion, superior to all the distinctions of human system, which lifts the soul above this world, and seems to expand it into a nobler nature; such devotion as can, perhaps, only be experienced, when the mind, rescued, for a moment, from the humbleness of earthly considerations, aspires to contemplate His power in the sublimity of His works, and His goodness in the infinity of His blessings.

Is it not now the hour,
The holy hour, when to the cloudless height
Of yon starred concave climbs the full-orbed moon,
And to this nether world in solemn stillness,
Gives sign, that, to the list'ning ear of Heaven
Religion's voice should plead? The very babe
Knows this, and, chance awak'd, his little hands
Lifts to the gods, and on his innocent couch
Calls down a blessing.*

**Caractacus*

The midnight chant of the monks soon after dropped into silence; but Emily remained at the casement, watching the setting moon, and the valley sinking into deep shade, and willing to prolong her present state of mind. At length she retired to her mattress, and sunk into tranquil slumber.

CHAPTER V

While in the rosy vale
Love breath'd his infant sighs, from anguish free.

Thomson

St. Aubert, sufficiently restored by a night's repose to pursue his journey, set out in the morning, with his family and Valancourt, for Rousillon, which he hoped to reach before night-fall. The scenes, through which they now passed, were as wild and romantic, as any they had yet observed, with this difference, that beauty, every now and then, softened the landscape into smiles. Little woody recesses appeared among the mountains, covered with bright verdure and flowers; or a pastoral valley opened its grassy bosom in the shade of the cliffs, with flocks and herds loitering along the banks of a rivulet, that refreshed it with perpetual green. St. Aubert could not repent the having taken this fatiguing road, though he was this day, also, frequently obliged to alight, to walk along the rugged precipice, and to climb the steep and flinty mountain. The wonderful sublimity and variety of the prospects repaid him for all this, and the enthusiasm, with which they were viewed by his young companions, heightened his own, and awakened a remembrance of all the delightful emotions of his early days, when the sublime charms of nature were first unveiled to him. He found great pleasure in conversing with Valancourt, and in listening to his ingenuous remarks. The fire and simplicity of his manners seemed to render him a characteristic figure in the scenes around them; and St. Aubert discovered in his sentiments the justness and the dignity of an elevated mind, unbiased by intercourse with the world. He perceived, that his opinions were formed, rather than imbibed; were more the result of thought, than of learning. Of the world he seemed to know nothing; for he believed well of all mankind, and this opinion gave him the reflected image of his own heart.

St. Aubert, as he sometimes lingered to examine the wild plants in his path, often looked forward with pleasure to Emily and Valancourt, as they strolled on together; he, with a countenance of animated delight, pointing to her attention some grand feature of the scene; and she, listening and observing with a look of tender seriousness, that spoke the elevation of her mind. They appeared like two lovers who had never strayed beyond these their native mountains; whose situation had secluded them from the frivolities of common life, whose ideas were simple and grand, like the landscapes among which they moved, and who knew no other happiness, than in the union of pure and affectionate hearts. St. Aubert smiled, and sighed at the romantic picture of felicity his fancy drew; and sighed again to think, that nature and simplicity were so little known to the world, as that their pleasures were thought romantic.

'The world,' said he, pursuing this train of thought, 'ridicules a passion which it seldom feels; its scenes, and its interests, distract the mind, deprave the taste, corrupt the heart, and love cannot exist in a heart that has lost the meek dignity of innocence. Virtue and taste are nearly the same, for virtue is little more than active taste, and the most delicate affections of each combine in real love. How then are we to look for love in great cities, where selfishness, dissipation, and insincerity supply the place of tenderness, simplicity and truth?'

It was near noon, when the travellers, having arrived at a piece of steep and dangerous road, alighted to walk. The road wound up an ascent, that was clothed with wood, and, instead of following the carriage, they entered the refreshing shade. A dewy coolness was diffused upon the air, which, with the bright verdure of turf, that grew under the trees, the mingled fragrance of flowers and of balm, thyme, and lavender, that enriched it, and the grandeur of the pines, beech, and chestnuts, that overshadowed them, rendered this a most delicious retreat. Sometimes, the thick foliage excluded all view of the country; at others, it admitted some partial catches of the distant scenery, which gave

hints to the imagination to picture landscapes more interesting, more impressive, than any that had been presented to the eye. The wanderers often lingered to indulge in these reveries of fancy.

The pauses of silence, such as had formerly interrupted the conversations of Valancourt and Emily, were more frequent today than ever. Valancourt often dropped suddenly from the most animating vivacity into fits of deep musing, and there was, sometimes, an unaffected melancholy in his smile, which Emily could not avoid understanding, for her heart was interested in the sentiment it spoke.

St. Aubert was refreshed by the shades, and they continued to saunter under them, following, as nearly as they could guess, the direction of the road, till they perceived that they had totally lost it. They had continued near the brow of the precipice, allured by the scenery it exhibited, while the road wound far away over the cliff above. Valancourt called loudly to Michael, but heard no voice, except his own, echoing among the rocks, and his various efforts to regain the road were equally unsuccessful. While they were thus circumstanced, they perceived a shepherd's cabin, between the boles of the trees at some distance, and Valancourt bounded on first to ask assistance. When he reached it, he saw only two little children, at play, on the turf before the door. He looked into the hut, but no person was there, and the eldest of the boys told him that their father was with his flocks, and their mother was gone down into the vale, but would be back presently. As he stood, considering what was further to be done, on a sudden he heard Michael's voice roaring forth most manfully among the cliffs above, till he made their echoes ring. Valancourt immediately answered the call, and endeavoured to make his way through the thicket that clothed the steeps, following the direction of the sound. After much struggle over brambles and precipices, he reached Michael, and at length prevailed with him to be silent, and to listen to him. The road was at a considerable distance from the spot where St. Aubert and Emily were; the carriage could not easily return to the entrance of the wood, and, since it would be very fatiguing for St. Aubert to climb the long and steep road to the place where it now stood, Valancourt was anxious to find a more easy ascent, by the way he had himself passed.

Meanwhile St. Aubert and Emily approached the cottage, and rested themselves on a rustic bench, fastened between two pines, which overshadowed it, till Valancourt, whose steps they had observed, should return.

The eldest of the children desisted from his play, and stood still to observe the strangers, while the younger continued his little gambols, and teased his brother to join in them. St. Aubert looked with pleasure upon this picture of infantine simplicity, till it brought to his remembrance his own boys, whom he had lost about the age of these, and their lamented mother; and he sunk into a thoughtfulness, which Emily observing, she immediately began to sing one of those simple and lively airs he was so fond of, and which she knew how to give with the most captivating sweetness. St. Aubert smiled on her through his tears, took her hand and pressed it affectionately, and then tried to dissipate the melancholy reflections that lingered in his mind.

While she sung, Valancourt approached, who was unwilling to interrupt her, and paused at a little distance to listen. When she had concluded, he joined the party, and told them, that he had found Michael, as well as a way, by which he thought they could ascend the cliff to the carriage. He pointed to the woody steeps above, which St. Aubert surveyed with an anxious eye. He was already wearied by his walk, and this ascent was formidable to him. He thought, however, it would be less toilsome than the long and broken road, and he determined to attempt it; but Emily, ever watchful of his ease, proposing that he should rest, and dine before they proceeded further, Valancourt went to the carriage for the refreshments deposited there.

On his return, he proposed removing a little higher up the mountain, to where the woods opened upon a grand and extensive prospect; and thither they were preparing to go, when they saw a young woman join the children, and caress and weep over them.

The travellers, interested by her distress, stopped to observe her. She took the youngest of the children in her arms, and, perceiving the strangers, hastily dried her tears, and proceeded to

the cottage. St. Aubert, on enquiring the occasion of her sorrow, learned that her husband, who was a shepherd, and lived here in the summer months to watch over the flocks he led to feed upon these mountains, had lost, on the preceding night, his little all. A gang of gipsies, who had for some time infested the neighbourhood, had driven away several of his master's sheep. 'Jacques,' added the shepherd's wife, 'had saved a little money, and had bought a few sheep with it, and now they must go to his master for those that are stolen; and what is worse than all, his master, when he comes to know how it is, will trust him no longer with the care of his flocks, for he is a hard man! and then what is to become of our children!'

The innocent countenance of the woman, and the simplicity of her manner in relating her grievance, inclined St. Aubert to believe her story; and Valancourt, convinced that it was true, asked eagerly what was the value of the stolen sheep; on hearing which he turned away with a look of disappointment. St. Aubert put some money into her hand, Emily too gave something from her little purse, and they walked towards the cliff; but Valancourt lingered behind, and spoke to the shepherd's wife, who was now weeping with gratitude and surprise. He enquired how much money was yet wanting to replace the stolen sheep, and found, that it was a sum very little short of all he had about him. He was perplexed and distressed. 'This sum then,' said he to himself, 'would make this poor family completely happy—it is in my power to give it—to make them completely happy! But what is to become of me?—how shall I contrive to reach home with the little money that will remain?' For a moment he stood, unwilling to forego the luxury of raising a family from ruin to happiness, yet considering the difficulties of pursuing his journey with so small a sum as would be left.

While he was in this state of perplexity, the shepherd himself appeared: his children ran to meet him; he took one of them in his arms, and, with the other clinging to his coat, came forward with a loitering step. His forlorn and melancholy look determined Valancourt at once; he threw down all the money he had, except a very few louis, and bounded away after St. Aubert and Emily, who were proceeding slowly up the steep. Valancourt had seldom felt his heart so light as at this moment; his gay spirits danced with pleasure; every object around him appeared more interesting, or beautiful, than before. St. Aubert observed the uncommon vivacity of his countenance: 'What has pleased you so much?' said he. 'O what a lovely day,' replied Valancourt, 'how brightly the sun shines, how pure is this air, what enchanting scenery!' 'It is indeed enchanting,' said St. Aubert, whom early experience had taught to understand the nature of Valancourt's present feelings. 'What pity that the wealthy, who can command such sunshine, should ever pass their days in gloom—in the cold shade of selfishness! For you, my young friend, may the sun always shine as brightly as at this moment; may your own conduct always give you the sunshine of benevolence and reason united!'

Valancourt, highly flattered by this compliment, could make no reply but by a smile of gratitude.

They continued to wind under the woods, between the grassy knolls of the mountain, and, as they reached the shady summit, which he had pointed out, the whole party burst into an exclamation. Behind the spot where they stood, the rock rose perpendicularly in a massy wall to a considerable height, and then branched out into overhanging crags. Their grey tints were well contrasted by the bright hues of the plants and wild flowers, that grew in their fractured sides, and were deepened by the gloom of the pines and cedars, that waved above. The steeps below, over which the eye passed abruptly to the valley, were fringed with thickets of alpine shrubs; and, lower still, appeared the tufted tops of the chesnut woods, that clothed their base, among which peeped forth the shepherd's cottage, just left by the travellers, with its blueish smoke curling high in the air. On every side appeared the majestic summits of the Pyrenees, some exhibiting tremendous crags of marble, whose appearance was changing every instant, as the varying lights fell upon their surface; others, still higher, displaying only snowy points, while their lower steeps were covered almost invariably with forests of pine, larch, and oak, that stretched down to the vale. This was one of the narrow vallies, that open from the Pyrenees into the country of Rousillon, and whose green pastures, and cultivated beauty, form a decided and wonderful contrast to the romantic grandeur that environs it. Through a vista of the

mountains appeared the lowlands of Rousillon, tinted with the blue haze of distance, as they united with the waters of the Mediterranean; where, on a promontory, which marked the boundary of the shore, stood a lonely beacon, over which were seen circling flights of sea-fowl. Beyond, appeared, now and then, a stealing sail, white with the sun-beam, and whose progress was perceivable by its approach to the light-house. Sometimes, too, was seen a sail so distant, that it served only to mark the line of separation between the sky and the waves.

On the other side of the valley, immediately opposite to the spot where the travellers rested, a rocky pass opened toward Gascony. Here no sign of cultivation appeared. The rocks of granite, that screened the glen, rose abruptly from their base, and stretched their barren points to the clouds, unvaried with woods, and uncheered even by a hunter's cabin. Sometimes, indeed, a gigantic larch threw its long shade over the precipice, and here and there a cliff reared on its brow a monumental cross, to tell the traveller the fate of him who had ventured thither before. This spot seemed the very haunt of banditti; and Emily, as she looked down upon it, almost expected to see them stealing out from some hollow cave to look for their prey. Soon after an object not less terrific struck her,—a gibbet standing on a point of rock near the entrance of the pass, and immediately over one of the crosses she had before observed. These were hieroglyphics that told a plain and dreadful story. She forbore to point it out to St. Aubert, but it threw a gloom over her spirits, and made her anxious to hasten forward, that they might with certainty reach Rousillon before night-fall. It was necessary, however, that St. Aubert should take some refreshment, and, seating themselves on the short dry turf, they opened the basket of provisions, while

> by breezy murmurs cool'd,
> Broad o'er THEIR heads the verdant cedars wave,
> And high palmetos lift their graceful shade.
> ——THEY draw
> Ethereal soul, there drink reviving gales
> Profusely breathing from the piney groves,
> And vales of fragrance; there at a distance hear
> The roaring floods, and cataracts.*
>
> **Thomson*

St. Aubert was revived by rest, and by the serene air of this summit; and Valancourt was so charmed with all around, and with the conversation of his companions, that he seemed to have forgotten he had any further to go. Having concluded their simple repast, they gave a long farewell look to the scene, and again began to ascend. St. Aubert rejoiced when he reached the carriage, which Emily entered with him; but Valancourt, willing to take a more extensive view of the enchanting country, into which they were about to descend, than he could do from a carriage, loosened his dogs, and once more bounded with them along the banks of the road. He often quitted it for points that promised a wider prospect, and the slow pace, at which the mules travelled, allowed him to overtake them with ease. Whenever a scene of uncommon magnificence appeared, he hastened to inform St. Aubert, who, though he was too much tired to walk himself, sometimes made the chaise wait, while Emily went to the neighbouring cliff.

It was evening when they descended the lower alps, that bind Rousillon, and form a majestic barrier round that charming country, leaving it open only on the east to the Mediterranean. The gay tints of cultivation once more beautified the landscape; for the lowlands were coloured with the richest hues, which a luxuriant climate, and an industrious people can awaken into life. Groves of orange and lemon perfumed the air, their ripe fruit glowing among the foliage; while, sloping to the plains, extensive vineyards spread their treasures. Beyond these, woods and pastures, and mingled towns and hamlets stretched towards the sea, on whose bright surface gleamed many a distant sail; while, over

the whole scene, was diffused the purple glow of evening. This landscape with the surrounding alps did, indeed, present a perfect picture of the lovely and the sublime, of 'beauty sleeping in the lap of horror.'

The travellers, having reached the plains, proceeded, between hedges of flowering myrtle and pomegranate, to the town of Arles, where they proposed to rest for the night. They met with simple, but neat accommodation, and would have passed a happy evening, after the toils and the delights of this day, had not the approaching separation thrown a gloom over their spirit. It was St. Aubert's plan to proceed, on the morrow, to the borders of the Mediterranean, and travel along its shores into Languedoc; and Valancourt, since he was now nearly recovered, and had no longer a pretence for continuing with his new friends, resolved to leave them here. St. Aubert, who was much pleased with him, invited him to go further, but did not repeat the invitation, and Valancourt had resolution enough to forego the temptation of accepting it, that he might prove himself not unworthy of the favour. On the following morning, therefore, they were to part, St. Aubert to pursue his way to Languedoc, and Valancourt to explore new scenes among the mountains, on his return home. During this evening he was often silent and thoughtful; St. Aubert's manner towards him was affectionate, though grave, and Emily was serious, though she made frequent efforts to appear cheerful. After one of the most melancholy evenings they had yet passed together, they separated for the night.

CHAPTER VI

I care not, Fortune! what you me deny;
You cannot rob me of free nature's grace;
You cannot shut the windows of the sky,
Through which Aurora shews her brightening face;
You cannot bar my constant feet to trace
The woods and lawns, by living stream, at eve:
Let health my nerves and finer fibres brace,
And I their toys to the great children leave:
Of fancy, reason, virtue, nought can me bereave.

THOMSON

In the morning, Valancourt breakfasted with St. Aubert and Emily, neither of whom seemed much refreshed by sleep. The languor of illness still hung over St. Aubert, and to Emily's fears his disorder appeared to be increasing fast upon him. She watched his looks with anxious affection, and their expression was always faithfully reflected in her own.

At the commencement of their acquaintance, Valancourt had made known his name and family. St. Aubert was not a stranger to either, for the family estates, which were now in the possession of an elder brother of Valancourt, were little more than twenty miles distant from La Vallee, and he had sometimes met the elder Valancourt on visits in the neighbourhood. This knowledge had made him more willingly receive his present companion; for, though his countenance and manners would have won him the acquaintance of St. Aubert, who was very apt to trust to the intelligence of his own eyes, with respect to countenances, he would not have accepted these, as sufficient introductions to that of his daughter.

The breakfast was almost as silent as the supper of the preceding night; but their musing was at length interrupted by the sound of the carriage wheels, which were to bear away St. Aubert and Emily. Valancourt started from his chair, and went to the window; it was indeed the carriage, and he returned to his seat without speaking. The moment was now come when they must part. St. Aubert told Valancourt, that he hoped he would never pass La Vallee without favouring him with a visit; and Valancourt, eagerly thanking him, assured him that he never would; as he said which he looked timidly at Emily, who tried to smile away the seriousness of her spirits. They passed a few minutes in interesting conversation, and St. Aubert then led the way to the carriage, Emily and Valancourt following in silence. The latter lingered at the door several minutes after they were seated, and none of the party seemed to have courage enough to say—Farewell. At length, St. Aubert pronounced the melancholy word, which Emily passed to Valancourt, who returned it, with a dejected smile, and the carriage drove on.

The travellers remained, for some time, in a state of tranquil pensiveness, which is not unpleasing. St. Aubert interrupted it by observing, 'This is a very promising young man; it is many years since I have been so much pleased with any person, on so short an acquaintance. He brings back to my memory the days of my youth, when every scene was new and delightful!' St. Aubert sighed, and sunk again into a reverie; and, as Emily looked back upon the road they had passed, Valancourt was seen, at the door of the little inn, following them with his eyes. Her perceived her, and waved his hand; and she returned the adieu, till the winding road shut her from his sight.

'I remember when I was about his age,' resumed St. Aubert, 'and I thought, and felt exactly as he does. The world was opening upon me then, now—it is closing.'

'My dear sir, do not think so gloomily,' said Emily in a trembling voice, 'I hope you have many, many years to live—for your own sake—for MY sake.'

'Ah, my Emily!' replied St. Aubert, 'for thy sake! Well—I hope it is so.' He wiped away a tear, that was stealing down his cheek, threw a smile upon his countenance, and said in a cheering voice, 'there is something in the ardour and ingenuousness of youth, which is particularly pleasing to the contemplation of an old man, if his feelings have not been entirely corroded by the world. It is cheering and reviving, like the view of spring to a sick person; his mind catches somewhat of the spirit of the season, and his eyes are lighted up with a transient sunshine. Valancourt is this spring to me.'

Emily, who pressed her father's hand affectionately, had never before listened with so much pleasure to the praises he bestowed; no, not even when he had bestowed them on herself.

They travelled on, among vineyards, woods, and pastures, delighted with the romantic beauty of the landscape, which was bounded, on one side, by the grandeur of the Pyrenees, and, on the other, by the ocean; and, soon after noon, they reached the town of Colioure, situated on the Mediterranean. Here they dined, and rested till towards the cool of day, when they pursued their way along the shores—those enchanting shores!—which extend to Languedoc. Emily gazed with enthusiasm on the vastness of the sea, its surface varying, as the lights and shadows fell, and on its woody banks, mellowed with autumnal tints.

St. Aubert was impatient to reach Perpignan, where he expected letters from M. Quesnel; and it was the expectation of these letters, that had induced him to leave Colioure, for his feeble frame had required immediate rest. After travelling a few miles, he fell asleep; and Emily, who had put two or three books into the carriage, on leaving La Vallee, had now the leisure for looking into them. She sought for one, in which Valancourt had been reading the day before, and hoped for the pleasure of re-tracing a page, over which the eyes of a beloved friend had lately passed, of dwelling on the passages, which he had admired, and of permitting them to speak to her in the language of his own mind, and to bring himself to her presence. On searching for the book, she could find it no where, but in its stead perceived a volume of Petrarch's poems, that had belonged to Valancourt, whose name was written in it, and from which he had frequently read passages to her, with all the pathetic expression, that characterized the feelings of the author. She hesitated in believing, what would have been sufficiently apparent to almost any other person, that he had purposely left this book, instead of the one she had lost, and that love had prompted the exchange; but, having opened it with impatient pleasure, and observed the lines of his pencil drawn along the various passages he had read aloud, and under others more descriptive of delicate tenderness than he had dared to trust his voice with, the conviction came, at length, to her mind. For some moments she was conscious only of being beloved; then, a recollection of all the variations of tone and countenance, with which he had recited these sonnets, and of the soul, which spoke in their expression, pressed to her memory, and she wept over the memorial of his affection.

They arrived at Perpignan soon after sunset, where St. Aubert found, as he had expected, letters from M. Quesnel, the contents of which so evidently and grievously affected him, that Emily was alarmed, and pressed him, as far as her delicacy would permit, to disclose the occasion of his concern; but he answered her only by tears, and immediately began to talk on other topics. Emily, though she forbore to press the one most interesting to her, was greatly affected by her father's manner, and passed a night of sleepless solicitude.

In the morning they pursued their journey along the coast towards Leucate, another town on the Mediterranean, situated on the borders of Languedoc and Rousillon. On the way, Emily renewed the subject of the preceding night, and appeared so deeply affected by St. Aubert's silence and dejection, that he relaxed from his reserve. 'I was unwilling, my dear Emily,' said he, 'to throw a cloud over the pleasure you receive from these scenes, and meant, therefore, to conceal, for the present, some circumstances, with which, however, you must at length have been made acquainted. But your anxiety has defeated my purpose; you suffer as much from this, perhaps, as you will do from a knowledge of

the facts I have to relate. M. Quesnel's visit proved an unhappy one to me; he came to tell me part of the news he has now confirmed. You may have heard me mention a M. Motteville, of Paris, but you did not know that the chief of my personal property was invested in his hands. I had great confidence in him, and I am yet willing to believe, that he is not wholly unworthy of my esteem. A variety of circumstances have concurred to ruin him, and—I am ruined with him.'

St. Aubert paused to conceal his emotion.

'The letters I have just received from M. Quesnel,' resumed he, struggling to speak with firmness, 'enclosed others from Motteville, which confirmed all I dreaded.'

'Must we then quit La Vallee?' said Emily, after a long pause of silence. 'That is yet uncertain,' replied St. Aubert, 'it will depend upon the compromise Motteville is able to make with his creditors. My income, you know, was never large, and now it will be reduced to little indeed! It is for you, Emily, for you, my child, that I am most afflicted.' His last words faltered; Emily smiled tenderly upon him through her tears, and then, endeavouring to overcome her emotion, 'My dear father,' said she, 'do not grieve for me, or for yourself; we may yet be happy;—if La Vallee remains for us, we must be happy. We will retain only one servant, and you shall scarcely perceive the change in your income. Be comforted, my dear sir; we shall not feel the want of those luxuries, which others value so highly, since we never had a taste for them; and poverty cannot deprive us of many consolations. It cannot rob us of the affection we have for each other, or degrade us in our own opinion, or in that of any person, whose opinion we ought to value.'

St. Aubert concealed his face with his handkerchief, and was unable to speak; but Emily continued to urge to her father the truths, which himself had impressed upon her mind.

'Besides, my dear sir, poverty cannot deprive us of intellectual delights. It cannot deprive you of the comfort of affording me examples of fortitude and benevolence; nor me of the delight of consoling a beloved parent. It cannot deaden our taste for the grand, and the beautiful, or deny us the means of indulging it; for the scenes of nature—those sublime spectacles, so infinitely superior to all artificial luxuries! are open for the enjoyment of the poor, as well as of the rich. Of what, then, have we to complain, so long as we are not in want of necessaries? Pleasures, such as wealth cannot buy, will still be ours. We retain, then, the sublime luxuries of nature, and lose only the frivolous ones of art.'

St. Aubert could not reply: he caught Emily to his bosom, their tears flowed together, but—they were not tears of sorrow. After this language of the heart, all other would have been feeble, and they remained silent for some time. Then, St. Aubert conversed as before; for, if his mind had not recovered its natural tranquillity, it at least assumed the appearance of it.

They reached the romantic town of Leucate early in the day, but St. Aubert was weary, and they determined to pass the night there. In the evening, he exerted himself so far as to walk with his daughter to view the environs that overlook the lake of Leucate, the Mediterranean, part of Rousillon, with the Pyrenees, and a wide extent of the luxuriant province of Languedoc, now blushing with the ripened vintage, which the peasants were beginning to gather. St. Aubert and Emily saw the busy groups, caught the joyous song, that was wafted on the breeze, and anticipated, with apparent pleasure, their next day's journey over this gay region. He designed, however, still to wind along the sea-shore. To return home immediately was partly his wish, but from this he was withheld by a desire to lengthen the pleasure, which the journey gave his daughter, and to try the effect of the sea air on his own disorder.

On the following day, therefore, they recommenced their journey through Languedoc, winding the shores of the Mediterranean; the Pyrenees still forming the magnificent back-ground of their prospects, while on their right was the ocean, and, on their left, wide extended plains melting into the blue horizon. St. Aubert was pleased, and conversed much with Emily, yet his cheerfulness was sometimes artificial, and sometimes a shade of melancholy would steal upon his countenance, and betray him. This was soon chased away by Emily's smile; who smiled, however, with an aching heart, for she saw that his misfortunes preyed upon his mind, and upon his enfeebled frame.

It was evening when they reached a small village of Upper Languedoc, where they meant to pass the night, but the place could not afford them beds; for here, too, it was the time of the vintage, and they were obliged to proceed to the next post. The languor of illness and of fatigue, which returned upon St. Aubert, required immediate repose, and the evening was now far advanced; but from necessity there was no appeal, and he ordered Michael to proceed.

The rich plains of Languedoc, which exhibited all the glories of the vintage, with the gaieties of a French festival, no longer awakened St. Aubert to pleasure, whose condition formed a mournful contrast to the hilarity and youthful beauty which surrounded him. As his languid eyes moved over the scene, he considered, that they would soon, perhaps, be closed for ever on this world. 'Those distant and sublime mountains,' said he secretly, as he gazed on a chain of the Pyrenees that stretched towards the west, 'these luxuriant plains, this blue vault, the cheerful light of day, will be shut from my eyes! The song of the peasant, the cheering voice of man—will no longer sound for me!'

The intelligent eyes of Emily seemed to read what passed in the mind of her father, and she fixed them on his face, with an expression of such tender pity, as recalled his thoughts from every desultory object of regret, and he remembered only, that he must leave his daughter without protection. This reflection changed regret to agony; he sighed deeply, and remained silent, while she seemed to understand that sigh, for she pressed his hand affectionately, and then turned to the window to conceal her tears. The sun now threw a last yellow gleam on the waves of the Mediterranean, and the gloom of twilight spread fast over the scene, till only a melancholy ray appeared on the western horizon, marking the point where the sun had set amid the vapours of an autumnal evening. A cool breeze now came from the shore, and Emily let down the glass; but the air, which was refreshing to health, was as chilling to sickness, and St. Aubert desired, that the window might be drawn up. Increasing illness made him now more anxious than ever to finish the day's journey, and he stopped the muleteer to enquire how far they had yet to go to the next post. He replied, 'Nine miles.' 'I feel I am unable to proceed much further,' said St. Aubert; 'enquire, as you go, if there is any house on the road that would accommodate us for the night.' He sunk back in the carriage, and Michael, cracking his whip in the air, set off, and continued on the full gallop, till St. Aubert, almost fainting, called to him to stop. Emily looked anxiously from the window, and saw a peasant walking at some little distance on the road, for whom they waited, till he came up, when he was asked, if there was any house in the neighbourhood that accommodated travellers. He replied, that he knew of none. 'There is a chateau, indeed, among those woods on the right,' added he, 'but I believe it receives nobody, and I cannot show you the way, for I am almost a stranger here.' St. Aubert was going to ask him some further question concerning the chateau, but the man abruptly passed on. After some consideration, he ordered Michael to proceed slowly to the woods. Every moment now deepened the twilight, and increased the difficulty of finding the road. Another peasant soon after passed. 'Which is the way to the chateau in the woods?' cried Michael.

'The chateau in the woods!' exclaimed the peasant—'Do you mean that with the turret, yonder?'

'I don't know as for the turret, as you call it,' said Michael, 'I mean that white piece of a building, that we see at a distance there, among the trees.'

'Yes, that is the turret; why, who are you, that you are going thither?' said the man with surprise.

St. Aubert, on hearing this odd question, and observing the peculiar tone in which it was delivered, looked out from the carriage. 'We are travellers,' said he, 'who are in search of a house of accommodation for the night; is there any hereabout?'

'None, Monsieur, unless you have a mind to try your luck yonder,' replied the peasant, pointing to the woods, 'but I would not advise you to go there.'

'To whom does the chateau belong?'

'I scarcely know myself, Monsieur.'

'It is uninhabited, then?' 'No, not uninhabited; the steward and housekeeper are there, I believe.'

On hearing this, St. Aubert determined to proceed to the chateau, and risque the refusal of being accommodated for the night; he therefore desired the countryman would shew Michael the way, and bade him expect reward for his trouble. The man was for a moment silent, and then said, that he was going on other business, but that the road could not be missed, if they went up an avenue to the right, to which he pointed. St. Aubert was going to speak, but the peasant wished him good night, and walked on.

The carriage now moved towards the avenue, which was guarded by a gate, and Michael having dismounted to open it, they entered between rows of ancient oak and chesnut, whose intermingled branches formed a lofty arch above. There was something so gloomy and desolate in the appearance of this avenue, and its lonely silence, that Emily almost shuddered as she passed along; and, recollecting the manner in which the peasant had mentioned the chateau, she gave a mysterious meaning to his words, such as she had not suspected when he uttered them. These apprehensions, however, she tried to check, considering that they were probably the effect of a melancholy imagination, which her father's situation, and a consideration of her own circumstances, had made sensible to every impression.

They passed slowly on, for they were now almost in darkness, which, together with the unevenness of the ground, and the frequent roots of old trees, that shot up above the soil, made it necessary to proceed with caution. On a sudden Michael stopped the carriage; and, as St. Aubert looked from the window to enquire the cause, he perceived a figure at some distance moving up the avenue. The dusk would not permit him to distinguish what it was, but he bade Michael go on.

'This seems a wild place,' said Michael; 'there is no house hereabout, don't your honour think we had better turn back?'

'Go a little farther, and if we see no house then, we will return to the road,' replied St. Aubert.

Michael proceeded with reluctance, and the extreme slowness of his pace made St. Aubert look again from the window to hasten him, when again he saw the same figure. He was somewhat startled: probably the gloominess of the spot made him more liable to alarm than usual; however this might be, he now stopped Michael, and bade him call to the person in the avenue.

'Please your honour, he may be a robber,' said Michael. 'It does not please me,' replied St. Aubert, who could not forbear smiling at the simplicity of his phrase, 'and we will, therefore, return to the road, for I see no probability of meeting here with what we seek.'

Michael turned about immediately, and was retracing his way with alacrity, when a voice was heard from among the trees on the left. It was not the voice of command, or distress, but a deep hollow tone, which seemed to be scarcely human. The man whipped his mules till they went as fast as possible, regardless of the darkness, the broken ground, and the necks of the whole party, nor once stopped till he reached the gate, which opened from the avenue into the high-road, where he went into a more moderate pace.

'I am very ill,' said St. Aubert, taking his daughter's hand. 'You are worse, then, sir!' said Emily, extremely alarmed by his manner, 'you are worse, and here is no assistance. Good God! what is to be done!' He leaned his head on her shoulder, while she endeavoured to support him with her arm, and Michael was again ordered to stop. When the rattling of the wheels had ceased, music was heard on their air; it was to Emily the voice of Hope. 'Oh! we are near some human habitation!' said she, 'help may soon be had.'

She listened anxiously; the sounds were distant, and seemed to come from a remote part of the woods that bordered the road; and, as she looked towards the spot whence they issued, she perceived in the faint moon-light something like a chateau. It was difficult, however, to reach this; St. Aubert was now too ill to bear the motion of the carriage; Michael could not quit his mules; and Emily, who still supported her father, feared to leave him, and also feared to venture alone to such a distance, she knew not whither, or to whom. Something, however, it was necessary to determine upon immediately; St. Aubert, therefore, told Michael to proceed slowly; but they had not gone far, when he fainted,

and the carriage was again stopped. He lay quite senseless.—'My dear, dear father!' cried Emily in great agony, who began to fear that he was dying, 'speak, if it is only one word to let me hear the sound of your voice!' But no voice spoke in reply. In the agony of terror she bade Michael bring water from the rivulet, that flowed along the road; and, having received some in the man's hat, with trembling hands she sprinkled it over her father's face, which, as the moon's rays now fell upon it, seemed to bear the impression of death. Every emotion of selfish fear now gave way to a stronger influence, and, committing St. Aubert to the care of Michael, who refused to go far from his mules, she stepped from the carriage in search of the chateau she had seen at a distance. It was a still moon-light night, and the music, which yet sounded on the air, directed her steps from the high road, up a shadowy lane, that led to the woods. Her mind was for some time so entirely occupied by anxiety and terror for her father, that she felt none for herself, till the deepening gloom of the overhanging foliage, which now wholly excluded the moon-light, and the wildness of the place, recalled her to a sense of her adventurous situation. The music had ceased, and she had no guide but chance. For a moment she paused in terrified perplexity, till a sense of her father's condition again overcoming every consideration for herself, she proceeded. The lane terminated in the woods, but she looked round in vain for a house, or a human being, and as vainly listened for a sound to guide her. She hurried on, however, not knowing whither, avoiding the recesses of the woods, and endeavouring to keep along their margin, till a rude kind of avenue, which opened upon a moon-light spot, arrested her attention. The wildness of this avenue brought to her recollection the one leading to the turreted chateau, and she was inclined to believe, that this was a part of the same domain, and probably led to the same point. While she hesitated, whether to follow it or not, a sound of many voices in loud merriment burst upon her ear. It seemed not the laugh of cheerfulness, but of riot, and she stood appalled. While she paused, she heard a distant voice, calling from the way she had come, and not doubting but it was that of Michael, her first impulse was to hasten back; but a second thought changed her purpose; she believed that nothing less than the last extremity could have prevailed with Michael to quit his mules, and fearing that her father was now dying, she rushed forward, with a feeble hope of obtaining assistance from the people in the woods. Her heart beat with fearful expectation, as she drew near the spot whence the voices issued, and she often startled when her steps disturbed the fallen leaves. The sounds led her towards the moon-light glade she had before noticed; at a little distance from which she stopped, and saw, between the boles of the trees, a small circular level of green turf, surrounded by the woods, on which appeared a group of figures. On drawing nearer, she distinguished these, by their dress, to be peasants, and perceived several cottages scattered round the edge of the woods, which waved loftily over this spot. While she gazed, and endeavoured to overcome the apprehensions that withheld her steps, several peasant girls came out of a cottage; music instantly struck up, and the dance began. It was the joyous music of the vintage! the same she had before heard upon the air. Her heart, occupied with terror for her father, could not feel the contrast, which this gay scene offered to her own distress; she stepped hastily forward towards a group of elder peasants, who were seated at the door of a cottage, and, having explained her situation, entreated their assistance. Several of them rose with alacrity, and, offering any service in their power, followed Emily, who seemed to move on the wind, as fast as they could towards the road.

When she reached the carriage she found St. Aubert restored to animation. On the recovery of his senses, having heard from Michael whither his daughter was gone, anxiety for her overcame every regard for himself, and he had sent him in search of her. He was, however, still languid, and, perceiving himself unable to travel much farther, he renewed his enquiries for an inn, and concerning the chateau in the woods. 'The chateau cannot accommodate you, sir,' said a venerable peasant who had followed Emily from the woods, 'it is scarcely inhabited; but, if you will do me the honour to visit my cottage, you shall be welcome to the best bed it affords.'

St. Aubert was himself a Frenchman; he therefore was not surprised at French courtesy; but, ill as he was, he felt the value of the offer enhanced by the manner which accompanied it. He had too

much delicacy to apologize, or to appear to hesitate about availing himself of the peasant's hospitality, but immediately accepted it with the same frankness with which it was offered.

The carriage again moved slowly on; Michael following the peasants up the lane, which Emily had just quitted, till they came to the moon-light glade. St. Aubert's spirits were so far restored by the courtesy of his host, and the near prospect of repose, that he looked with a sweet complacency upon the moon-light scene, surrounded by the shadowy woods, through which, here and there, an opening admitted the streaming splendour, discovering a cottage, or a sparkling rivulet. He listened, with no painful emotion, to the merry notes of the guitar and tamborine; and, though tears came to his eyes, when he saw the debonnaire dance of the peasants, they were not merely tears of mournful regret. With Emily it was otherwise; immediate terror for her father had now subsided into a gentle melancholy, which every note of joy, by awakening comparison, served to heighten.

The dance ceased on the approach of the carriage, which was a phenomenon in these sequestered woods, and the peasantry flocked round it with eager curiosity. On learning that it brought a sick stranger, several girls ran across the turf, and returned with wine and baskets of grapes, which they presented to the travellers, each with kind contention pressing for a preference. At length, the carriage stopped at a neat cottage, and his venerable conductor, having assisted St. Aubert to alight, led him and Emily to a small inner room, illuminated only by moon-beams, which the open casement admitted. St. Aubert, rejoicing in rest, seated himself in an arm-chair, and his senses were refreshed by the cool and balmy air, that lightly waved the embowering honeysuckles, and wafted their sweet breath into the apartment. His host, who was called La Voisin, quitted the room, but soon returned with fruits, cream, and all the pastoral luxury his cottage afforded; having set down which, with a smile of unfeigned welcome, he retired behind the chair of his guest. St. Aubert insisted on his taking a seat at the table, and, when the fruit had allayed the fever of his palate, and he found himself somewhat revived, he began to converse with his host, who communicated several particulars concerning himself and his family, which were interesting, because they were spoken from the heart, and delineated a picture of the sweet courtesies of family kindness. Emily sat by her father, holding his hand, and, while she listened to the old man, her heart swelled with the affectionate sympathy he described, and her tears fell to the mournful consideration, that death would probably soon deprive her of the dearest blessing she then possessed. The soft moon-light of an autumnal evening, and the distant music, which now sounded a plaintive strain, aided the melancholy of her mind. The old man continued to talk of his family, and St. Aubert remained silent. 'I have only one daughter living,' said La Voisin, 'but she is happily married, and is every thing to me. When I lost my wife,' he added with a sigh, 'I came to live with Agnes, and her family; she has several children, who are all dancing on the green yonder, as merry as grasshoppers—and long may they be so! I hope to die among them, monsieur. I am old now, and cannot expect to live long, but there is some comfort in dying surrounded by one's children.'

'My good friend,' said St. Aubert, while his voice trembled, 'I hope you will long live surrounded by them.'

'Ah, sir! at my age I must not expect that!' replied the old man, and he paused: 'I can scarcely wish it,' he resumed, 'for I trust that whenever I die I shall go to heaven, where my poor wife is gone before me. I can sometimes almost fancy I see her of a still moon-light night, walking among these shades she loved so well. Do you believe, monsieur, that we shall be permitted to revisit the earth, after we have quitted the body?'

Emily could no longer stifle the anguish of her heart; her tears fell fast upon her father's hand, which she yet held. He made an effort to speak, and at length said in a low voice, 'I hope we shall be permitted to look down on those we have left on the earth, but I can only hope it. Futurity is much veiled from our eyes, and faith and hope are our only guides concerning it. We are not enjoined to believe, that disembodied spirits watch over the friends they have loved, but we may innocently hope it. It is a hope which I will never resign,' continued he, while he wiped the tears from his daughter's eyes, 'it will sweeten the bitter moments of death!' Tears fell slowly on his cheeks; La Voisin wept

too, and there was a pause of silence. Then, La Voisin, renewing the subject, said, 'But you believe, sir, that we shall meet in another world the relations we have loved in this; I must believe this.' 'Then do believe it,' replied St. Aubert, 'severe, indeed, would be the pangs of separation, if we believed it to be eternal. Look up, my dear Emily, we shall meet again!' He lifted his eyes towards heaven, and a gleam of moon-light, which fell upon his countenance, discovered peace and resignation, stealing on the lines of sorrow.

La Voisin felt that he had pursued the subject too far, and he dropped it, saying, 'We are in darkness, I forgot to bring a light.'

'No,' said St. Aubert, 'this is a light I love. Sit down, my good friend. Emily, my love, I find myself better than I have been all day; this air refreshes me. I can enjoy this tranquil hour, and that music, which floats so sweetly at a distance. Let me see you smile. Who touches that guitar so tastefully? are there two instruments, or is it an echo I hear?'

'It is an echo, monsieur, I fancy. That guitar is often heard at night, when all is still, but nobody knows who touches it, and it is sometimes accompanied by a voice so sweet, and so sad, one would almost think the woods were haunted.' 'They certainly are haunted,' said St. Aubert with a smile, 'but I believe it is by mortals.' 'I have sometimes heard it at midnight, when I could not sleep,' rejoined La Voisin, not seeming to notice this remark, 'almost under my window, and I never heard any music like it. It has often made me think of my poor wife till I cried. I have sometimes got up to the window to look if I could see anybody, but as soon as I opened the casement all was hushed, and nobody to be seen; and I have listened, and listened till I have been so timorous, that even the trembling of the leaves in the breeze has made me start. They say it often comes to warn people of their death, but I have heard it these many years, and outlived the warning.'

Emily, though she smiled at the mention of this ridiculous superstition, could not, in the present tone of her spirits, wholly resist its contagion.

'Well, but, my good friend,' said St. Aubert, 'has nobody had courage to follow the sounds? If they had, they would probably have discovered who is the musician.' 'Yes, sir, they have followed them some way into the woods, but the music has still retreated, and seemed as distant as ever, and the people have at last been afraid of being led into harm, and would go no further. It is very seldom that I have heard these sounds so early in the evening. They usually come about midnight, when that bright planet, which is rising above the turret yonder, sets below the woods on the left.'

'What turret?' asked St. Aubert with quickness, 'I see none.'

'Your pardon, monsieur, you do see one indeed, for the moon shines full upon it;—up the avenue yonder, a long way off; the chateau it belongs to is hid among the trees.'

'Yes, my dear sir,' said Emily, pointing, 'don't you see something glitter above the dark woods? It is a fane, I fancy, which the rays fall upon.'

'O yes, I see what you mean; and who does the chateau belong to?'

'The Marquis de Villeroi was its owner,' replied La Voisin, emphatically.

'Ah!' said St. Aubert, with a deep sigh, 'are we then so near Le-Blanc!' He appeared much agitated.

'It used to be the Marquis's favourite residence,' resumed La Voisin, 'but he took a dislike to the place, and has not been there for many years. We have heard lately that he is dead, and that it is fallen into other hands.' St. Aubert, who had sat in deep musing, was roused by the last words. 'Dead!' he exclaimed, 'Good God! when did he die?'

'He is reported to have died about five weeks since,' replied La Voisin. 'Did you know the Marquis, sir?'

'This is very extraordinary!' said St. Aubert without attending to the question. 'Why is it so, my dear sir?' said Emily, in a voice of timid curiosity. He made no reply, but sunk again into a reverie; and in a few moments, when he seemed to have recovered himself, asked who had succeeded to the

estates. 'I have forgot his title, monsieur,' said La Voisin; 'but my lord resides at Paris chiefly; I hear no talk of his coming hither.'

'The chateau is shut up then, still?'

'Why, little better, sir; the old housekeeper, and her husband the steward, have the care of it, but they live generally in a cottage hard by.'

'The chateau is spacious, I suppose,' said Emily, 'and must be desolate for the residence of only two persons.'

'Desolate enough, mademoiselle,' replied La Voisin, 'I would not pass one night in the chateau, for the value of the whole domain.'

'What is that?' said St. Aubert, roused again from thoughtfulness. As his host repeated his last sentence, a groan escaped from St. Aubert, and then, as if anxious to prevent it from being noticed, he hastily asked La Voisin how long he had lived in this neighbourhood. 'Almost from my childhood, sir,' replied his host.

'You remember the late marchioness, then?' said St. Aubert in an altered voice.

'Ah, monsieur!—that I do well. There are many besides me who remember her.'

'Yes—' said St. Aubert, 'and I am one of those.'

'Alas, sir! you remember, then, a most beautiful and excellent lady. She deserved a better fate.'

Tears stood in St. Aubert's eyes; 'Enough,' said he, in a voice almost stifled by the violence of his emotions,—'it is enough, my friend.'

Emily, though extremely surprised by her father's manner, forbore to express her feelings by any question. La Voisin began to apologize, but St. Aubert interrupted him; 'Apology is quite unnecessary,' said he, 'let us change the topic. You was speaking of the music we just now heard.'

'I was, monsieur—but hark!—it comes again; listen to that voice!' They were all silent;

> At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound
> Rose, like a stream of rich distilled perfumes,
> And stole upon the air, that even Silence
> Was took ere she was 'ware, and wished she might
> Deny her nature, and be never more
> Still, to be so displaced.*
>
> **Milton.*

In a few moments the voice died into air, and the instrument, which had been heard before, sounded in low symphony. St. Aubert now observed, that it produced a tone much more full and melodious than that of a guitar, and still more melancholy and soft than the lute. They continued to listen, but the sounds returned no more. 'This is strange!' said St. Aubert, at length interrupting the silence. 'Very strange!' said Emily. 'It is so,' rejoined La Voisin, and they were again silent.

After a long pause, 'It is now about eighteen years since I first heard that music,' said La Voisin; 'I remember it was on a fine summer's night, much like this, but later, that I was walking in the woods, and alone. I remember, too, that my spirits were very low, for one of my boys was ill, and we feared we should lose him. I had been watching at his bed-side all the evening while his mother slept; for she had sat up with him the night before. I had been watching, and went out for a little fresh air, the day had been very sultry. As I walked under the shades and mused, I heard music at a distance, and thought it was Claude playing upon his flute, as he often did of a fine evening, at the cottage door. But, when I came to a place where the trees opened, (I shall never forget it!) and stood looking up at the north-lights, which shot up the heaven to a great height, I heard all of a sudden such sounds! —they came so as I cannot describe. It was like the music of angels, and I looked up again almost expecting to see them in the sky. When I came home, I told what I had heard, but they laughed at me, and said it must be some of the shepherds playing on their pipes, and I could not persuade them to

the contrary. A few nights after, however, my wife herself heard the same sounds, and was as much surprised as I was, and Father Denis frightened her sadly by saying, that it was music come to warn her of her child's death, and that music often came to houses where there was a dying person.'

Emily, on hearing this, shrunk with a superstitious dread entirely new to her, and could scarcely conceal her agitation from St. Aubert.

'But the boy lived, monsieur, in spite of Father Denis.'

'Father Denis!' said St. Aubert, who had listened to 'narrative old age' with patient attention, 'are we near a convent, then?'

'Yes, sir; the convent of St. Clair stands at no great distance, on the sea shore yonder.'

'Ah!' said St. Aubert, as if struck with some sudden remembrance, 'the convent of St. Clair!' Emily observed the clouds of grief, mingled with a faint expression of horror, gathering on his brow; his countenance became fixed, and, touched as it now was by the silver whiteness of the moon-light, he resembled one of those marble statues of a monument, which seem to bend, in hopeless sorrow, over the ashes of the dead, shewn

by the blunted light
That the dim moon through painted casements lends.*

* *The Emigrants.*

'But, my dear sir,' said Emily, anxious to dissipate his thoughts, 'you forget that repose is necessary to you. If our kind host will give me leave, I will prepare your bed, for I know how you like it to be made.' St. Aubert, recollecting himself, and smiling affectionately, desired she would not add to her fatigue by that attention; and La Voisin, whose consideration for his guest had been suspended by the interests which his own narrative had recalled, now started from his seat, and, apologizing for not having called Agnes from the green, hurried out of the room.

In a few moments he returned with his daughter, a young woman of pleasing countenance, and Emily learned from her, what she had not before suspected, that, for their accommodation, it was necessary part of La Voisin's family should leave their beds; she lamented this circumstance, but Agnes, by her reply, fully proved that she inherited, at least, a share of her father's courteous hospitality. It was settled, that some of her children and Michael should sleep in the neighbouring cottage.

'If I am better, to-morrow, my dear,' said St. Aubert when Emily returned to him, 'I mean to set out at an early hour, that we may rest, during the heat of the day, and will travel towards home. In the present state of my health and spirits I cannot look on a longer journey with pleasure, and I am also very anxious to reach La Vallee.' Emily, though she also desired to return, was grieved at her father's sudden wish to do so, which she thought indicated a greater degree of indisposition than he would acknowledge. St. Aubert now retired to rest, and Emily to her little chamber, but not to immediate repose. Her thoughts returned to the late conversation, concerning the state of departed spirits; a subject, at this time, particularly affecting to her, when she had every reason to believe that her dear father would ere long be numbered with them. She leaned pensively on the little open casement, and in deep thought fixed her eyes on the heaven, whose blue unclouded concave was studded thick with stars, the worlds, perhaps, of spirits, unsphered of mortal mould. As her eyes wandered along the boundless aether, her thoughts rose, as before, towards the sublimity of the Deity, and to the contemplation of futurity. No busy note of this world interrupted the course of her mind; the merry dance had ceased, and every cottager had retired to his home. The still air seemed scarcely to breathe upon the woods, and, now and then, the distant sound of a solitary sheep-bell, or of a closing casement, was all that broke on silence. At length, even this hint of human being was heard no more. Elevated and enwrapt, while her eyes were often wet with tears of sublime devotion and solemn awe, she continued at the casement, till the gloom of mid-night hung over the earth, and the planet, which

La Voisin had pointed out, sunk below the woods. She then recollected what he had said concerning this planet, and the mysterious music; and, as she lingered at the window, half hoping and half fearing that it would return, her mind was led to the remembrance of the extreme emotion her father had shewn on mention of the Marquis La Villeroi's death, and of the fate of the Marchioness, and she felt strongly interested concerning the remote cause of this emotion. Her surprise and curiosity were indeed the greater, because she did not recollect ever to have heard him mention the name of Villeroi.

No music, however, stole on the silence of the night, and Emily, perceiving the lateness of the hour, returned to a scene of fatigue, remembered that she was to rise early in the morning, and withdrew from the window to repose.

CHAPTER VII

Let those deplore their doom,
Whose hope still grovels in this dark sojourn.
But lofty souls can look beyond the tomb,
Can smile at fate, and wonder how they mourn.
Shall Spring to these sad scenes no more return?
Is yonder wave the sun's eternal bed?—
Soon shall the orient with new lustre burn,
And Spring shall soon her vital influence shed,
Again attune the grove, again adorn the mead!

BEATTIE

Emily, called, as she had requested, at an early hour, awoke, little refreshed by sleep, for uneasy dreams had pursued her, and marred the kindest blessing of the unhappy. But, when she opened her casement, looked out upon the woods, bright with the morning sun, and inspired the pure air, her mind was soothed. The scene was filled with that cheering freshness, which seems to breathe the very spirit of health, and she heard only sweet and PICTURESQUE sounds, if such an expression may be allowed—the matin-bell of a distant convent, the faint murmur of the sea-waves, the song of birds, and the far-off low of cattle, which she saw coming slowly on between the trunks of trees. Struck with the circumstances of imagery around her, she indulged the pensive tranquillity which they inspired; and while she leaned on her window, waiting till St. Aubert should descend to breakfast, her ideas arranged themselves in the following lines:

THE FIRST HOUR OF MORNING

How sweet to wind the forest's tangled shade,
When early twilight, from the eastern bound,
Dawns on the sleeping landscape in the glade,
And fades as morning spreads her blush around!

When ev'ry infant flower, that wept in night,
Lifts its chill head soft glowing with a tear,
Expands its tender blossom to the light,
And gives its incense to the genial air.

How fresh the breeze that wafts the rich perfume,
And swells the melody of waking birds;
The hum of bees, beneath the verdant gloom,
And woodman's song, and low of distant herds!

Then, doubtful gleams the mountain's hoary head,
Seen through the parting foliage from afar;
And, farther still, the ocean's misty bed,
With flitting sails, that partial sun-beams share.

But, vain the sylvan shade—the breath of May,
The voice of music floating on the gale,
And forms, that beam through morning's dewy veil,
If health no longer bid the heart be gay!
O balmy hour! 'tis thine her wealth to give,
Here spread her blush, and bid the parent live!

Emily now heard persons moving below in the cottage, and presently the voice of Michael, who was talking to his mules, as he led them forth from a hut adjoining. As she left her room, St. Aubert, who was now risen, met her at the door, apparently as little restored by sleep as herself. She led him down stairs to the little parlour, in which they had supped on the preceding night, where they found a neat breakfast set out, while the host and his daughter waited to bid them good-morrow.

'I envy you this cottage, my good friends,' said St. Aubert, as he met them, 'it is so pleasant, so quiet, and so neat; and this air, that one breathes—if any thing could restore lost health, it would surely be this air.'

La Voisin bowed gratefully, and replied, with the gallantry of a Frenchman, 'Our cottage may be envied, sir, since you and Mademoiselle have honoured it with your presence.' St. Aubert gave him a friendly smile for his compliment, and sat down to a table, spread with cream, fruit, new cheese, butter, and coffee. Emily, who had observed her father with attention and thought he looked very ill, endeavoured to persuade him to defer travelling till the afternoon; but he seemed very anxious to be at home, and his anxiety he expressed repeatedly, and with an earnestness that was unusual with him. He now said, he found himself as well as he had been of late, and that he could bear travelling better in the cool hour of the morning, than at any other time. But, while he was talking with his venerable host, and thanking him for his kind attentions, Emily observed his countenance change, and, before she could reach him, he fell back in his chair. In a few moments he recovered from the sudden faintness that had come over him, but felt so ill, that he perceived himself unable to set out, and, having remained a little while, struggling against the pressure of indisposition, he begged he might be helped up stairs to bed. This request renewed all the terror which Emily had suffered on the preceding evening; but, though scarcely able to support herself, under the sudden shock it gave her, she tried to conceal her apprehensions from St. Aubert, and gave her trembling arm to assist him to the door of his chamber.

When he was once more in bed, he desired that Emily, who was then weeping in her own room, might be called; and, as she came, he waved his hand for every other person to quit the apartment. When they were alone, he held out his hand to her, and fixed his eyes upon her countenance, with an expression so full of tenderness and grief, that all her fortitude forsook her, and she burst into an agony of tears. St. Aubert seemed struggling to acquire firmness, but was still unable to speak; he could only press her hand, and check the tears that stood trembling in his eyes. At length he commanded his voice, 'My dear child,' said he, trying to smile through his anguish, 'my dear Emily!'—and paused again. He raised his eyes to heaven, as if in prayer, and then, in a firmer tone, and with a look, in which the tenderness of the father was dignified by the pious solemnity of the saint, he said, 'My dear child, I would soften the painful truth I have to tell you, but I find myself quite unequal to the art. Alas! I would, at this moment, conceal it from you, but that it would be most cruel to deceive you. It cannot be long before we must part; let us talk of it, that our thoughts and our prayers may prepare us to bear it.' His voice faltered, while Emily, still weeping, pressed his hand close to her heart, which swelled with a convulsive sigh, but she could not look up.

'Let me not waste these moments,' said St. Aubert, recovering himself, 'I have much to say. There is a circumstance of solemn consequence, which I have to mention, and a solemn promise to obtain from you; when this is done I shall be easier. You have observed, my dear, how anxious I am to reach home, but know not all my reasons for this. Listen to what I am going to say.—Yet stay—before

I say more give me this promise, a promise made to your dying father!'—St. Aubert was interrupted; Emily, struck by his last words, as if for the first time, with a conviction of his immediate danger, raised her head; her tears stopped, and, gazing at him for a moment with an expression of unutterable anguish, a slight convulsion seized her, and she sunk senseless in her chair. St. Aubert's cries brought La Voisin and his daughter to the room, and they administered every means in their power to restore her, but, for a considerable time, without effect. When she recovered, St. Aubert was so exhausted by the scene he had witnessed, that it was many minutes before he had strength to speak; he was, however, somewhat revived by a cordial, which Emily gave him; and, being again alone with her, he exerted himself to tranquilize her spirits, and to offer her all the comfort of which her situation admitted. She threw herself into his arms, wept on his neck, and grief made her so insensible to all he said, that he ceased to offer the alleviations, which he himself could not, at this moment, feel, and mingled his silent tears with hers. Recalled, at length, to a sense of duty, she tried to spare her father from a farther view of her suffering; and, quitting his embrace, dried her tears, and said something, which she meant for consolation. 'My dear Emily,' replied St. Aubert, 'my dear child, we must look up with humble confidence to that Being, who has protected and comforted us in every danger, and in every affliction we have known; to whose eye every moment of our lives has been exposed; he will not, he does not, forsake us now; I feel his consolations in my heart. I shall leave you, my child, still in his care; and, though I depart from this world, I shall be still in his presence. Nay, weep not again, my Emily. In death there is nothing new, or surprising, since we all know, that we are born to die; and nothing terrible to those, who can confide in an all-powerful God. Had my life been spared now, after a very few years, in the course of nature, I must have resigned it; old age, with all its train of infirmity, its privations and its sorrows, would have been mine; and then, at last, death would have come, and called forth the tears you now shed. Rather, my child, rejoice, that I am saved from such suffering, and that I am permitted to die with a mind unimpaired, and sensible of the comforts of faith and resignation.' St. Aubert paused, fatigued with speaking. Emily again endeavoured to assume an air of composure; and, in replying to what he had said, tried to sooth him with a belief, that he had not spoken in vain.

When he had reposed a while, he resumed the conversation. 'Let me return,' said he, 'to a subject, which is very near my heart. I said I had a solemn promise to receive from you; let me receive it now, before I explain the chief circumstance which it concerns; there are others, of which your peace requires that you should rest in ignorance. Promise, then, that you will perform exactly what I shall enjoin.'

Emily, awed by the earnest solemnity of his manner, dried her tears, that had begun again to flow, in spite of her efforts to suppress them; and, looking eloquently at St. Aubert, bound herself to do whatever he should require by a vow, at which she shuddered, yet knew not why.

He proceeded: 'I know you too well, my Emily, to believe, that you would break any promise, much less one thus solemnly given; your assurance gives me peace, and the observance of it is of the utmost importance to your tranquillity. Hear, then, what I am going to tell you. The closet, which adjoins my chamber at La Vallee, has a sliding board in the floor. You will know it by a remarkable knot in the wood, and by its being the next board, except one, to the wainscot, which fronts the door. At the distance of about a yard from that end, nearer the window, you will perceive a line across it, as if the plank had been joined;—the way to open it is this:—Press your foot upon the line; the end of the board will then sink, and you may slide it with ease beneath the other. Below, you will see a hollow place.' St. Aubert paused for breath, and Emily sat fixed in deep attention. 'Do you understand these directions, my dear?' said he. Emily, though scarcely able to speak, assured him that she did.

'When you return home, then,' he added with a deep sigh—

At the mention of her return home, all the melancholy circumstances, that must attend this return, rushed upon her fancy; she burst into convulsive grief, and St. Aubert himself, affected beyond the resistance of the fortitude which he had, at first, summoned, wept with her. After some moments,

he composed himself. 'My dear child,' said he, 'be comforted. When I am gone, you will not be forsaken—I leave you only in the more immediate care of that Providence, which has never yet forsaken me. Do not afflict me with this excess of grief; rather teach me by your example to bear my own.' He stopped again, and Emily, the more she endeavoured to restrain her emotion, found it the less possible to do so.

St. Aubert, who now spoke with pain, resumed the subject. 'That closet, my dear,—when you return home, go to it; and, beneath the board I have described, you will find a packet of written papers. Attend to me now, for the promise you have given particularly relates to what I shall direct. These papers you must burn—and, solemnly I command you, WITHOUT EXAMINING THEM.'

Emily's surprise, for a moment, overcame her grief, and she ventured to ask, why this must be? St. Aubert replied, that, if it had been right for him to explain his reasons, her late promise would have been unnecessarily exacted. 'It is sufficient for you, my love, to have a deep sense of the importance of observing me in this instance.' St. Aubert proceeded. 'Under that board you will also find about two hundred louis d'ors, wrapped in a silk purse; indeed, it was to secure whatever money might be in the chateau, that this secret place was contrived, at a time when the province was over-run by troops of men, who took advantage of the tumults, and became plunderers.

'But I have yet another promise to receive from you, which is—that you will never, whatever may be your future circumstances, SELL the chateau.' St. Aubert even enjoined her, whenever she might marry, to make it an article in the contract, that the chateau should always be hers. He then gave her a more minute account of his present circumstances than he had yet done, adding, 'The two hundred louis, with what money you will now find in my purse, is all the ready money I have to leave you. I have told you how I am circumstanced with M. Motteville, at Paris. Ah, my child! I leave you poor—but not destitute,' he added, after a long pause. Emily could make no reply to any thing he now said, but knelt at the bed-side, with her face upon the quilt, weeping over the hand she held there.

After this conversation, the mind of St. Aubert appeared to be much more at ease; but, exhausted by the effort of speaking, he sunk into a kind of doze, and Emily continued to watch and weep beside him, till a gentle tap at the chamber-door roused her. It was La Voisin, come to say, that a confessor from the neighbouring convent was below, ready to attend St. Aubert. Emily would not suffer her father to be disturbed, but desired, that the priest might not leave the cottage. When St. Aubert awoke from this doze, his senses were confused, and it was some moments before he recovered them sufficiently to know, that it was Emily who sat beside him. He then moved his lips, and stretched forth his hand to her; as she received which, she sunk back in her chair, overcome by the impression of death on his countenance. In a few minutes he recovered his voice, and Emily then asked, if he wished to see the confessor; he replied, that he did; and, when the holy father appeared, she withdrew. They remained alone together above half an hour; when Emily was called in, she found St. Aubert more agitated than when she had left him, and she gazed, with a slight degree of resentment, at the friar, as the cause of this; who, however, looked mildly and mournfully at her, and turned away. St. Aubert, in a tremulous voice, said, he wished her to join in prayer with him, and asked if La Voisin would do so too. The old man and his daughter came; they both wept, and knelt with Emily round the bed, while the holy father read in a solemn voice the service for the dying. St. Aubert lay with a serene countenance, and seemed to join fervently in the devotion, while tears often stole from beneath his closed eyelids, and Emily's sobs more than once interrupted the service.

When it was concluded, and extreme unction had been administered, the friar withdrew. St. Aubert then made a sign for La Voisin to come nearer. He gave him his hand, and was, for a moment, silent. At length, he said, in a trembling voice, 'My good friend, our acquaintance has been short, but long enough to give you an opportunity of shewing me much kind attention. I cannot doubt, that you will extend this kindness to my daughter, when I am gone; she will have need of it. I entrust her to your care during the few days she will remain here. I need say no more—you know the feelings of a father, for you have children; mine would be, indeed, severe if I had less confidence in you.' He paused.

La Voisin assured him, and his tears bore testimony to his sincerity, that he would do all he could to soften her affliction, and that, if St. Aubert wished it, he would even attend her into Gascony; an offer so pleasing to St. Aubert, that he had scarcely words to acknowledge his sense of the old man's kindness, or to tell him, that he accepted it. The scene, that followed between St. Aubert and Emily, affected La Voisin so much, that he quitted the chamber, and she was again left alone with her father, whose spirits seemed fainting fast, but neither his senses, or his voice, yet failed him; and, at intervals, he employed much of these last awful moments in advising his daughter, as to her future conduct. Perhaps, he never had thought more justly, or expressed himself more clearly, than he did now.

'Above all, my dear Emily,' said he, 'do not indulge in the pride of fine feeling, the romantic error of amiable minds. Those, who really possess sensibility, ought early to be taught, that it is a dangerous quality, which is continually extracting the excess of misery, or delight, from every surrounding circumstance. And, since, in our passage through this world, painful circumstances occur more frequently than pleasing ones, and since our sense of evil is, I fear, more acute than our sense of good, we become the victims of our feelings, unless we can in some degree command them. I know you will say, (for you are young, my Emily) I know you will say, that you are contented sometimes to suffer, rather than to give up your refined sense of happiness, at others; but, when your mind has been long harassed by vicissitude, you will be content to rest, and you will then recover from your delusion. You will perceive, that the phantom of happiness is exchanged for the substance; for happiness arises in a state of peace, not of tumult. It is of a temperate and uniform nature, and can no more exist in a heart, that is continually alive to minute circumstances, than in one that is dead to feeling. You see, my dear, that, though I would guard you against the dangers of sensibility, I am not an advocate for apathy. At your age I should have said THAT is a vice more hateful than all the errors of sensibility, and I say so still. I call it a VICE, because it leads to positive evil; in this, however, it does no more than an ill-governed sensibility, which, by such a rule, might also be called a vice; but the evil of the former is of more general consequence. I have exhausted myself,' said St. Aubert, feebly, 'and have wearied you, my Emily; but, on a subject so important to your future comfort, I am anxious to be perfectly understood.'

Emily assured him, that his advice was most precious to her, and that she would never forget it, or cease from endeavouring to profit by it. St. Aubert smiled affectionately and sorrowfully upon her. 'I repeat it,' said he, 'I would not teach you to become insensible, if I could; I would only warn you of the evils of susceptibility, and point out how you may avoid them. Beware, my love, I conjure you, of that self-delusion, which has been fatal to the peace of so many persons; beware of priding yourself on the gracefulness of sensibility; if you yield to this vanity, your happiness is lost for ever. Always remember how much more valuable is the strength of fortitude, than the grace of sensibility. Do not, however, confound fortitude with apathy; apathy cannot know the virtue. Remember, too, that one act of beneficence, one act of real usefulness, is worth all the abstract sentiment in the world. Sentiment is a disgrace, instead of an ornament, unless it lead us to good actions. The miser, who thinks himself respectable, merely because he possesses wealth, and thus mistakes the means of doing good, for the actual accomplishment of it, is not more blameable than the man of sentiment, without active virtue. You may have observed persons, who delight so much in this sort of sensibility to sentiment, which excludes that to the calls of any practical virtue, that they turn from the distressed, and, because their sufferings are painful to be contemplated, do not endeavour to relieve them. How despicable is that humanity, which can be contented to pity, where it might assuage!'

St. Aubert, some time after, spoke of Madame Cheron, his sister. 'Let me inform you of a circumstance, that nearly affects your welfare,' he added. 'We have, you know, had little intercourse for some years, but, as she is now your only female relation, I have thought it proper to consign you to her care, as you will see in my will, till you are of age, and to recommend you to her protection afterwards. She is not exactly the person, to whom I would have committed my Emily, but I had no alternative, and I believe her to be upon the whole—a good kind of woman. I need not recommend

it to your prudence, my love, to endeavour to conciliate her kindness; you will do this for his sake, who has often wished to do so for yours.'

Emily assured him, that, whatever he requested she would religiously perform to the utmost of her ability. 'Alas!' added she, in a voice interrupted by sighs, 'that will soon be all which remains for me; it will be almost my only consolation to fulfil your wishes.'

St. Aubert looked up silently in her face, as if would have spoken, but his spirit sunk a while, and his eyes became heavy and dull. She felt that look at her heart. 'My dear father!' she exclaimed; and then, checking herself, pressed his hand closer, and hid her face with her handkerchief. Her tears were concealed, but St. Aubert heard her convulsive sobs. His spirits returned. 'O my child!' said he, faintly, 'let my consolations be yours. I die in peace; for I know, that I am about to return to the bosom of my Father, who will still be your Father, when I am gone. Always trust in him, my love, and he will support you in these moments, as he supports me.'

Emily could only listen, and weep; but the extreme composure of his manner, and the faith and hope he expressed, somewhat soothed her anguish. Yet, whenever she looked upon his emaciated countenance, and saw the lines of death beginning to prevail over it—saw his sunk eyes, still bent on her, and their heavy lids pressing to a close, there was a pang in her heart, such as defied expression, though it required filial virtue, like hers, to forbear the attempt.

He desired once more to bless her; 'Where are you, my dear?' said he, as he stretched forth his hands. Emily had turned to the window, that he might not perceive her anguish; she now understood, that his sight had failed him. When he had given her his blessing, and it seemed to be the last effort of expiring life, he sunk back on his pillow. She kissed his forehead; the damps of death had settled there, and, forgetting her fortitude for a moment, her tears mingled with them. St. Aubert lifted up his eyes; the spirit of a father returned to them, but it quickly vanished, and he spoke no more.

St. Aubert lingered till about three o'clock in the afternoon, and, thus gradually sinking into death, he expired without a struggle, or a sigh.

Emily was led from the chamber by La Voisin and his daughter, who did what they could to comfort her. The old man sat and wept with her. Agnes was more erroneously officious.

CHAPTER VIII

O'er him, whose doom thy virtues grieve,
Aerial forms shall sit at eve,and bend the pensive head.

COLLINS

The monk, who had before appeared, returned in the evening to offer consolation to Emily, and brought a kind message from the lady abbess, inviting her to the convent. Emily, though she did not accept the offer, returned an answer expressive of her gratitude. The holy conversation of the friar, whose mild benevolence of manners bore some resemblance to those of St. Aubert, soothed the violence of her grief, and lifted her heart to the Being, who, extending through all place and all eternity, looks on the events of this little world as on the shadows of a moment, and beholds equally, and in the same instant, the soul that has passed the gates of death, and that, which still lingers in the body. 'In the sight of God,' said Emily, 'my dear father now exists, as truly as he yesterday existed to me; it is to me only that he is dead; to God and to himself he yet lives!'

The good monk left her more tranquil than she had been since St. Aubert died; and, before she retired to her little cabin for the night, she trusted herself so far as to visit the corpse. Silent, and without weeping, she stood by its side. The features, placid and serene, told the nature of the last sensations, that had lingered in the now deserted frame. For a moment she turned away, in horror of the stillness in which death had fixed that countenance, never till now seen otherwise than animated; then gazed on it with a mixture of doubt and awful astonishment. Her reason could scarcely overcome an involuntary and unaccountable expectation of seeing that beloved countenance still susceptible. She continued to gaze wildly; took up the cold hand; spoke; still gazed, and then burst into a transport of grief. La Voisin, hearing her sobs, came into the room to lead her away, but she heard nothing, and only begged that he would leave her.

Again alone, she indulged her tears, and, when the gloom of evening obscured the chamber, and almost veiled from her eyes the object of her distress, she still hung over the body; till her spirits, at length, were exhausted, and she became tranquil. La Voisin again knocked at the door, and entreated that she would come to the common apartment. Before she went, she kissed the lips of St. Aubert, as she was wont to do when she bade him good night. Again she kissed them; her heart felt as if it would break, a few tears of agony started to her eyes, she looked up to heaven, then at St. Aubert, and left the room.

Retired to her lonely cabin, her melancholy thoughts still hovered round the body of her deceased parent; and, when she sunk into a kind of slumber, the images of her waking mind still haunted her fancy. She thought she saw her father approaching her with a benign countenance; then, smiling mournfully and pointing upwards, his lips moved, but, instead of words, she heard sweet music borne on the distant air, and presently saw his features glow with the mild rapture of a superior being. The strain seemed to swell louder, and she awoke. The vision was gone, but music yet came to her ear in strains such as angels might breathe. She doubted, listened, raised herself in the bed, and again listened. It was music, and not an illusion of her imagination. After a solemn steady harmony, it paused; then rose again, in mournful sweetness, and then died, in a cadence, that seemed to bear away the listening soul to heaven. She instantly remembered the music of the preceding night, with the strange circumstances, related by La Voisin, and the affecting conversation it had led to, concerning the state of departed spirits. All that St. Aubert had said, on that subject, now pressed upon her heart, and overwhelmed it. What a change in a few hours! He, who then could only conjecture, was now made acquainted with truth; was himself become one of the departed! As she listened, she was chilled with superstitious awe, her tears stopped; and she rose, and went to the window. All without was

obscured in shade; but Emily, turning her eyes from the massy darkness of the woods, whose waving outline appeared on the horizon, saw, on the left, that effulgent planet, which the old man had pointed out, setting over the woods. She remembered what he had said concerning it, and, the music now coming at intervals on the air, she unclosed the casement to listen to the strains, that soon gradually sunk to a greater distance, and tried to discover whence they came. The obscurity prevented her from distinguishing any object on the green platform below; and the sounds became fainter and fainter, till they softened into silence. She listened, but they returned no more. Soon after, she observed the planet trembling between the fringed tops of the woods, and, in the next moment, sink behind them. Chilled with a melancholy awe, she retired once more to her bed, and, at length, forgot for a while her sorrows in sleep.

On the following morning, she was visited by a sister of the convent, who came, with kind offices and a second invitation from the lady abbess; and Emily, though she could not forsake the cottage, while the remains of her father were in it, consented, however painful such a visit must be, in the present state of her spirits, to pay her respects to the abbess, in the evening.

About an hour before sun-set, La Voisin shewed her the way through the woods to the convent, which stood in a small bay of the Mediterranean, crowned by a woody amphitheatre; and Emily, had she been less unhappy, would have admired the extensive sea view, that appeared from the green slope, in front of the edifice, and the rich shores, hung with woods and pastures, that extended on either hand. But her thoughts were now occupied by one sad idea, and the features of nature were to her colourless and without form. The bell for vespers struck, as she passed the ancient gate of the convent, and seemed the funereal note for St. Aubert. Little incidents affect a mind, enervated by sorrow; Emily struggled against the sickening faintness, that came over her, and was led into the presence of the abbess, who received her with an air of maternal tenderness; an air of such gentle solicitude and consideration, as touched her with an instantaneous gratitude; her eyes were filled with tears, and the words she would have spoken faltered on her lips. The abbess led her to a seat, and sat down beside her, still holding her hand and regarding her in silence, as Emily dried her tears and attempted to speak. 'Be composed, my daughter,' said the abbess in a soothing voice, 'do not speak yet; I know all you would say. Your spirits must be soothed. We are going to prayers;—will you attend our evening service? It is comfortable, my child, to look up in our afflictions to a father, who sees and pities us, and who chastens in his mercy.'

Emily's tears flowed again, but a thousand sweet emotions mingled with them. The abbess suffered her to weep without interruption, and watched over her with a look of benignity, that might have characterized the countenance of a guardian angel. Emily, when she became tranquil, was encouraged to speak without reserve, and to mention the motive, that made her unwilling to quit the cottage, which the abbess did not oppose even by a hint; but praised the filial piety of her conduct, and added a hope, that she would pass a few days at the convent, before she returned to La Vallee. 'You must allow yourself a little time to recover from your first shock, my daughter, before you encounter a second; I will not affect to conceal from you how much I know your heart must suffer, on returning to the scene of your former happiness. Here, you will have all, that quiet and sympathy and religion can give, to restore your spirits. But come,' added she, observing the tears swell in Emily's eyes, 'we will go to the chapel.'

Emily followed to the parlour, where the nuns were assembled, to whom the abbess committed her, saying, 'This is a daughter, for whom I have much esteem; be sisters to her.'

They passed on in a train to the chapel, where the solemn devotion, with which the service was performed, elevated her mind, and brought to it the comforts of faith and resignation.

Twilight came on, before the abbess's kindness would suffer Emily to depart, when she left the convent, with a heart much lighter than she had entered it, and was reconducted by La Voisin through the woods, the pensive gloom of which was in unison with the temper of her mind; and she pursued the little wild path, in musing silence, till her guide suddenly stopped, looked round, and then struck

out of the path into the high grass, saying he had mistaken the road. He now walked on quickly, and Emily, proceeding with difficulty over the obscured and uneven ground, was left at some distance, till her voice arrested him, who seemed unwilling to stop, and still hurried on. 'If you are in doubt about the way,' said Emily, 'had we not better enquire it at the chateau yonder, between the trees?'

'No,' replied La Voisin, 'there is no occasion. When we reach that brook, ma'amselle, (you see the light upon the water there, beyond the woods) when we reach that brook, we shall be at home presently. I don't know how I happened to mistake the path; I seldom come this way after sun-set.'

'It is solitary enough,' said Emily, 'but you have no banditti here.'

'No, ma'amselle—no banditti.'

'What are you afraid of then, my good friend? you are not superstitious?' 'No, not superstitious; but, to tell you the truth, lady, nobody likes to go near that chateau, after dusk.' 'By whom is it inhabited,' said Emily, 'that it is so formidable?' 'Why, ma'amselle, it is scarcely inhabited, for our lord the Marquis, and the lord of all these find woods, too, is dead. He had not once been in it, for these many years, and his people, who have the care of it, live in a cottage close by.' Emily now understood this to be the chateau, which La Voisin had formerly pointed out, as having belonged to the Marquis Villeroi, on the mention of which her father had appeared so much affected.

'Ah! it is a desolate place now,' continued La Voisin, 'and such a grand, fine place, as I remember it!' Emily enquired what had occasioned this lamentable change; but the old man was silent, and Emily, whose interest was awakened by the fear he had expressed, and above all by a recollection of her father's agitation, repeated the question, and added, 'If you are neither afraid of the inhabitants, my good friend, nor are superstitious, how happens it, that you dread to pass near that chateau in the dark?'

'Perhaps, then, I am a little superstitious, ma'amselle; and, if you knew what I do, you might be so too. Strange things have happened there. Monsieur, your good father, appeared to have known the late Marchioness.' 'Pray inform me what did happen?' said Emily, with much emotion.

'Alas! ma'amselle,' answered La Voisin, 'enquire no further; it is not for me to lay open the domestic secrets of my lord.'—Emily, surprised by the old man's words, and his manner of delivering them, forbore to repeat her question; a nearer interest, the remembrance of St. Aubert, occupied her thoughts, and she was led to recollect the music she heard on the preceding night, which she mentioned to La Voisin. 'You was not alone, ma'amselle, in this,' he replied, 'I heard it too; but I have so often heard it, at the same hour, that I was scarcely surprised.'

'You doubtless believe this music to have some connection with the chateau,' said Emily suddenly, 'and are, therefore, superstitious.' 'It may be so, ma'amselle, but there are other circumstances, belonging to that chateau, which I remember, and sadly too.' A heavy sigh followed: but Emily's delicacy restrained the curiosity these words revived, and she enquired no further.

On reaching the cottage, all the violence of her grief returned; it seemed as if she had escaped its heavy pressure only while she was removed from the object of it. She passed immediately to the chamber, where the remains of her father were laid, and yielded to all the anguish of hopeless grief. La Voisin, at length, persuaded her to leave the room, and she returned to her own, where, exhausted by the sufferings of the day, she soon fell into deep sleep, and awoke considerably refreshed.

When the dreadful hour arrived, in which the remains of St. Aubert were to be taken from her for ever, she went alone to the chamber to look upon his countenance yet once again, and La Voisin, who had waited patiently below stairs, till her despair should subside, with the respect due to grief, forbore to interrupt the indulgence of it, till surprise, at the length of her stay, and then apprehension overcame his delicacy, and he went to lead her from the chamber. Having tapped gently at the door, without receiving an answer, he listened attentively, but all was still; no sigh, no sob of anguish was heard. Yet more alarmed by this silence, he opened the door, and found Emily lying senseless across the foot of the bed, near which stood the coffin. His calls procured assistance, and she was carried to her room, where proper applications, at length, restored her.

During her state of insensibility, La Voisin had given directions for the coffin to be closed, and he succeeded in persuading Emily to forbear revisiting the chamber. She, indeed, felt herself unequal to this, and also perceived the necessity of sparing her spirits, and recollecting fortitude sufficient to bear her through the approaching scene. St. Aubert had given a particular injunction, that his remains should be interred in the church of the convent of St. Clair, and, in mentioning the north chancel, near the ancient tomb of the Villerois, had pointed out the exact spot, where he wished to be laid. The superior had granted this place for the interment, and thither, therefore, the sad procession now moved, which was met, at the gates, by the venerable priest, followed by a train of friars. Every person, who heard the solemn chant of the anthem, and the peal of the organ, that struck up, when the body entered the church, and saw also the feeble steps, and the assumed tranquillity of Emily, gave her involuntary tears. She shed none, but walked, her face partly shaded by a thin black veil, between two persons, who supported her, preceded by the abbess, and followed by nuns, whose plaintive voices mellowed the swelling harmony of the dirge. When the procession came to the grave the music ceased. Emily drew the veil entirely over her face, and, in a momentary pause, between the anthem and the rest of the service, her sobs were distinctly audible. The holy father began the service, and Emily again commanded her feelings, till the coffin was let down, and she heard the earth rattle on its lid. Then, as she shuddered, a groan burst from her heart, and she leaned for support on the person who stood next to her. In a few moments she recovered; and, when she heard those affecting and sublime words: 'His body is buried in peace, and his soul returns to Him that gave it,' her anguish softened into tears.

The abbess led her from the church into her own parlour, and there administered all the consolations, that religion and gentle sympathy can give. Emily struggled against the pressure of grief; but the abbess, observing her attentively, ordered a bed to be prepared, and recommended her to retire to repose. She also kindly claimed her promise to remain a few days at the convent; and Emily, who had no wish to return to the cottage, the scene of all her sufferings, had leisure, now that no immediate care pressed upon her attention, to feel the indisposition, which disabled her from immediately travelling.

Meanwhile, the maternal kindness of the abbess, and the gentle attentions of the nuns did all, that was possible, towards soothing her spirits and restoring her health. But the latter was too deeply wounded, through the medium of her mind, to be quickly revived. She lingered for some weeks at the convent, under the influence of a slow fever, wishing to return home, yet unable to go thither; often even reluctant to leave the spot where her father's relics were deposited, and sometimes soothing herself with the consideration, that, if she died here, her remains would repose beside those of St. Aubert. In the meanwhile, she sent letters to Madame Cheron and to the old housekeeper, informing them of the sad event, that had taken place, and of her own situation. From her aunt she received an answer, abounding more in common-place condolement, than in traits of real sorrow, which assured her, that a servant should be sent to conduct her to La Vallee, for that her own time was so much occupied by company, that she had no leisure to undertake so long a journey. However Emily might prefer La Vallee to Tholouse, she could not be insensible to the indecorous and unkind conduct of her aunt, in suffering her to return thither, where she had no longer a relation to console and protect her; a conduct, which was the more culpable, since St. Aubert had appointed Madame Cheron the guardian of his orphan daughter.

Madame Cheron's servant made the attendance of the good La Voisin unnecessary; and Emily, who felt sensibly her obligations to him, for all his kind attention to her late father, as well as to herself, was glad to spare him a long, and what, at his time of life, must have been a troublesome journey.

During her stay at the convent, the peace and sanctity that reigned within, the tranquil beauty of the scenery without, and the delicate attentions of the abbess and the nuns, were circumstances so soothing to her mind, that they almost tempted her to leave a world, where she had lost her dearest friends, and devote herself to the cloister, in a spot, rendered sacred to her by containing the tomb

of St. Aubert. The pensive enthusiasm, too, so natural to her temper, had spread a beautiful illusion over the sanctified retirement of a nun, that almost hid from her view the selfishness of its security. But the touches, which a melancholy fancy, slightly tinctured with superstition, gave to the monastic scene, began to fade, as her spirits revived, and brought once more to her heart an image, which had only transiently been banished thence. By this she was silently awakened to hope and comfort and sweet affections; visions of happiness gleamed faintly at a distance, and, though she knew them to be illusions, she could not resolve to shut them out for ever. It was the remembrance of Valancourt, of his taste, his genius, and of the countenance which glowed with both, that, perhaps, alone determined her to return to the world. The grandeur and sublimity of the scenes, amidst which they had first met, had fascinated her fancy, and had imperceptibly contributed to render Valancourt more interesting by seeming to communicate to him somewhat of their own character. The esteem, too, which St. Aubert had repeatedly expressed for him, sanctioned this kindness; but, though his countenance and manner had continually expressed his admiration of her, he had not otherwise declared it; and even the hope of seeing him again was so distant, that she was scarcely conscious of it, still less that it influenced her conduct on this occasion.

It was several days after the arrival of Madame Cheron's servant before Emily was sufficiently recovered to undertake the journey to La Vallee. On the evening preceding her departure, she went to the cottage to take leave of La Voisin and his family, and to make them a return for their kindness. The old man she found sitting on a bench at his door, between his daughter, and his son-in-law, who was just returned from his daily labour, and who was playing upon a pipe, that, in tone, resembled an oboe. A flask of wine stood beside the old man, and, before him, a small table with fruit and bread, round which stood several of his grandsons, fine rosy children, who were taking their supper, as their mother distributed it. On the edge of the little green, that spread before the cottage, were cattle and a few sheep reposing under the trees. The landscape was touched with the mellow light of the evening sun, whose long slanting beams played through a vista of the woods, and lighted up the distant turrets of the chateau. She paused a moment, before she emerged from the shade, to gaze upon the happy group before her—on the complacency and ease of healthy age, depictured on the countenance of La Voisin; the maternal tenderness of Agnes, as she looked upon her children, and the innocency of infantine pleasures, reflected in their smiles. Emily looked again at the venerable old man, and at the cottage; the memory of her father rose with full force upon her mind, and she hastily stepped forward, afraid to trust herself with a longer pause. She took an affectionate and affecting leave of La Voisin and his family; he seemed to love her as his daughter, and shed tears; Emily shed many. She avoided going into the cottage, since she knew it would revive emotions, such as she could not now endure.

One painful scene yet awaited her, for she determined to visit again her father's grave; and that she might not be interrupted, or observed in the indulgence of her melancholy tenderness, she deferred her visit, till every inhabitant of the convent, except the nun who promised to bring her the key of the church, should be retired to rest. Emily remained in her chamber, till she heard the convent bell strike twelve, when the nun came, as she had appointed, with the key of a private door, that opened into the church, and they descended together the narrow winding stair-case, that led thither. The nun offered to accompany Emily to the grave, adding, 'It is melancholy to go alone at this hour;' but the former, thanking her for the consideration, could not consent to have any witness of her sorrow; and the sister, having unlocked the door, gave her the lamp. 'You will remember, sister,' said she, 'that in the east aisle, which you must pass, is a newly opened grave; hold the light to the ground, that you may not stumble over the loose earth.' Emily, thanking her again, took the lamp, and, stepping into the church, sister Mariette departed. But Emily paused a moment at the door; a sudden fear came over her, and she returned to the foot of the stair-case, where, as she heard the steps of the nun ascending, and, while she held up the lamp, saw her black veil waving over the spiral balusters, she was tempted to call her back. While she hesitated, the veil disappeared, and, in the next moment, ashamed of her fears, she returned to the church. The cold air of the aisles chilled her, and their deep silence and

extent, feebly shone upon by the moon-light, that streamed through a distant gothic window, would at any other time have awed her into superstition; now, grief occupied all her attention. She scarcely heard the whispering echoes of her own steps, or thought of the open grave, till she found herself almost on its brink. A friar of the convent had been buried there on the preceding evening, and, as she had sat alone in her chamber at twilight, she heard, at distance, the monks chanting the requiem for his soul. This brought freshly to her memory the circumstances of her father's death; and, as the voices, mingling with a low querulous peal of the organ, swelled faintly, gloomy and affecting visions had arisen upon her mind. Now she remembered them, and, turning aside to avoid the broken ground, these recollections made her pass on with quicker steps to the grave of St. Aubert, when in the moon-light, that fell athwart a remote part of the aisle, she thought she saw a shadow gliding between the pillars. She stopped to listen, and, not hearing any footstep, believed that her fancy had deceived her, and, no longer apprehensive of being observed, proceeded. St. Aubert was buried beneath a plain marble, bearing little more than his name and the date of his birth and death, near the foot of the stately monument of the Villerois. Emily remained at his grave, till a chime, that called the monks to early prayers, warned her to retire; then, she wept over it a last farewel, and forced herself from the spot. After this hour of melancholy indulgence, she was refreshed by a deeper sleep, than she had experienced for a long time, and, on awakening, her mind was more tranquil and resigned, than it had been since St. Aubert's death.

But, when the moment of her departure from the convent arrived, all her grief returned; the memory of the dead, and the kindness of the living attached her to the place; and for the sacred spot, where her father's remains were interred, she seemed to feel all those tender affections which we conceive for home. The abbess repeated many kind assurances of regard at their parting, and pressed her to return, if ever she should find her condition elsewhere unpleasant; many of the nuns also expressed unaffected regret at her departure, and Emily left the convent with many tears, and followed by sincere wishes for her happiness.

She had travelled several leagues, before the scenes of the country, through which she passed, had power to rouse her for a moment from the deep melancholy, into which she was sunk, and, when they did, it was only to remind her, that, on her last view of them, St. Aubert was at her side, and to call up to her remembrance the remarks he had delivered on similar scenery. Thus, without any particular occurrence, passed the day in languor and dejection. She slept that night in a town on the skirts of Languedoc, and, on the following morning, entered Gascony.

Towards the close of this day, Emily came within view of the plains in the neighbourhood of La Vallee, and the well-known objects of former times began to press upon her notice, and with them recollections, that awakened all her tenderness and grief. Often, while she looked through her tears upon the wild grandeur of the Pyrenees, now varied with the rich lights and shadows of evening, she remembered, that, when last she saw them, her father partook with her of the pleasure they inspired. Suddenly some scene, which he had particularly pointed out to her, would present itself, and the sick languor of despair would steal upon her heart. 'There!' she would exclaim, 'there are the very cliffs, there the wood of pines, which he looked at with such delight, as we passed this road together for the last time. There, too, under the crag of that mountain, is the cottage, peeping from among the cedars, which he bade me remember, and copy with my pencil. O my father, shall I never see you more!'

As she drew near the chateau, these melancholy memorials of past times multiplied. At length, the chateau itself appeared, amid the glowing beauty of St. Aubert's favourite landscape. This was an object, which called for fortitude, not for tears; Emily dried hers, and prepared to meet with calmness the trying moment of her return to that home, where there was no longer a parent to welcome her. 'Yes,' said she, 'let me not forget the lessons he has taught me! How often he has pointed out the necessity of resisting even virtuous sorrow; how often we have admired together the greatness of a mind, that can at once suffer and reason! O my father! if you are permitted to look down upon

your child, it will please you to see, that she remembers, and endeavours to practise, the precepts you have given her.'

A turn on the road now allowed a nearer view of the chateau, the chimneys, tipped with light, rising from behind St. Aubert's favourite oaks, whose foliage partly concealed the lower part of the building. Emily could not suppress a heavy sigh. 'This, too, was his favourite hour,' said she, as she gazed upon the long evening shadows, stretched athwart the landscape. 'How deep the repose, how lovely the scene! lovely and tranquil as in former days!'

Again she resisted the pressure of sorrow, till her ear caught the gay melody of the dance, which she had so often listened to, as she walked with St. Aubert, on the margin of the Garonne, when all her fortitude forsook her, and she continued to weep, till the carriage stopped at the little gate, that opened upon what was now her own territory. She raised her eyes on the sudden stopping of the carriage, and saw her father's old housekeeper coming to open the gate. Manchon also came running, and barking before her; and when his young mistress alighted, fawned, and played round her, gasping with joy.

'Dear ma'amselle!' said Theresa, and paused, and looked as if she would have offered something of condolement to Emily, whose tears now prevented reply. The dog still fawned and ran round her, and then flew towards the carriage, with a short quick bark. 'Ah, ma'amselle!—my poor master!' said Theresa, whose feelings were more awakened than her delicacy, 'Manchon's gone to look for him.' Emily sobbed aloud; and, on looking towards the carriage, which still stood with the door open, saw the animal spring into it, and instantly leap out, and then with his nose on the ground run round the horses.

'Don't cry so, ma'amselle,' said Theresa, 'it breaks my heart to see you.' The dog now came running to Emily, then returned to the carriage, and then back again to her, whining and discontented. 'Poor rogue!' said Theresa, 'thou hast lost thy master, thou mayst well cry! But come, my dear young lady, be comforted. What shall I get to refresh you?' Emily gave her hand to the old servant, and tried to restrain her grief, while she made some kind enquiries concerning her health. But she still lingered in the walk which led to the chateau, for within was no person to meet her with the kiss of affection; her own heart no longer palpitated with impatient joy to meet again the well-known smile, and she dreaded to see objects, which would recall the full remembrance of her former happiness. She moved slowly towards the door, paused, went on, and paused again. How silent, how forsaken, how forlorn did the chateau appear! Trembling to enter it, yet blaming herself for delaying what she could not avoid, she, at length, passed into the hall; crossed it with a hurried step, as if afraid to look round, and opened the door of that room, which she was wont to call her own. The gloom of evening gave solemnity to its silent and deserted air. The chairs, the tables, every article of furniture, so familiar to her in happier times, spoke eloquently to her heart. She seated herself, without immediately observing it, in a window, which opened upon the garden, and where St. Aubert had often sat with her, watching the sun retire from the rich and extensive prospect, that appeared beyond the groves.

Having indulged her tears for some time, she became more composed; and, when Theresa, after seeing the baggage deposited in her lady's room, again appeared, she had so far recovered her spirits, as to be able to converse with her.

'I have made up the green bed for you, ma'amselle,' said Theresa, as she set the coffee upon the table. 'I thought you would like it better than your own now; but I little thought this day month, that you would come back alone. A-well-a-day! the news almost broke my heart, when it did come. Who would have believed, that my poor master, when he went from home, would never return again!' Emily hid her face with her handkerchief, and waved her hand.

'Do taste the coffee,' said Theresa. 'My dear young lady, be comforted—we must all die. My dear master is a saint above.' Emily took the handkerchief from her face, and raised her eyes full of tears towards heaven; soon after she dried them, and, in a calm, but tremulous voice, began to enquire concerning some of her late father's pensioners.

'Alas-a-day!' said Theresa, as she poured out the coffee, and handed it to her mistress, 'all that could come, have been here every day to enquire after you and my master.' She then proceeded to tell, that some were dead whom they had left well; and others, who were ill, had recovered. 'And see, ma'amselle,' added Theresa, 'there is old Mary coming up the garden now; she has looked every day these three years as if she would die, yet she is alive still. She has seen the chaise at the door, and knows you are come home.'

The sight of this poor old woman would have been too much for Emily, and she begged Theresa would go and tell her, that she was too ill to see any person that night. 'To-morrow I shall be better, perhaps; but give her this token of my remembrance.'

Emily sat for some time, given up to sorrow. Not an object, on which her eye glanced, but awakened some remembrance, that led immediately to the subject of her grief. Her favourite plants, which St. Aubert had taught her to nurse; the little drawings, that adorned the room, which his taste had instructed her to execute; the books, that he had selected for her use, and which they had read together; her musical instruments, whose sounds he loved so well, and which he sometimes awakened himself—every object gave new force to sorrow. At length, she roused herself from this melancholy indulgence, and, summoning all her resolution, stepped forward to go into those forlorn rooms, which, though she dreaded to enter, she knew would yet more powerfully affect her, if she delayed to visit them.

Having passed through the green-house, her courage for a moment forsook her, when she opened the door of the library; and, perhaps, the shade, which evening and the foliage of the trees near the windows threw across the room, heightened the solemnity of her feelings on entering that apartment, where every thing spoke of her father. There was an arm chair, in which he used to sit; she shrunk when she observed it, for she had so often seen him seated there, and the idea of him rose so distinctly to her mind, that she almost fancied she saw him before her. But she checked the illusions of a distempered imagination, though she could not subdue a certain degree of awe, which now mingled with her emotions. She walked slowly to the chair, and seated herself in it; there was a reading-desk before it, on which lay a book open, as it had been left by her father. It was some moments before she recovered courage enough to examine it; and, when she looked at the open page, she immediately recollected, that St. Aubert, on the evening before his departure from the chateau, had read to her some passages from this his favourite author. The circumstance now affected her extremely; she looked at the page, wept, and looked again. To her the book appeared sacred and invaluable, and she would not have moved it, or closed the page, which he had left open, for the treasures of the Indies. Still she sat before the desk, and could not resolve to quit it, though the increasing gloom, and the profound silence of the apartment, revived a degree of painful awe. Her thoughts dwelt on the probable state of departed spirits, and she remembered the affecting conversation, which had passed between St. Aubert and La Voisin, on the night preceding his death.

As she mused she saw the door slowly open, and a rustling sound in a remote part of the room startled her. Through the dusk she thought she perceived something move. The subject she had been considering, and the present tone of her spirits, which made her imagination respond to every impression of her senses, gave her a sudden terror of something supernatural. She sat for a moment motionless, and then, her dissipated reason returning, 'What should I fear?' said she. 'If the spirits of those we love ever return to us, it is in kindness.'

The silence, which again reigned, made her ashamed of her late fears, and she believed, that her imagination had deluded her, or that she had heard one of those unaccountable noises, which sometimes occur in old houses. The same sound, however, returned; and, distinguishing something moving towards her, and in the next instant press beside her into the chair, she shrieked; but her fleeting senses were instantly recalled, on perceiving that it was Manchon who sat by her, and who now licked her hands affectionately.

Perceiving her spirits unequal to the task she had assigned herself of visiting the deserted rooms of the chateau this night, when she left the library, she walked into the garden, and down to the terrace, that overhung the river. The sun was now set; but, under the dark branches of the almond trees, was seen the saffron glow of the west, spreading beyond the twilight of middle air. The bat flitted silently by; and, now and then, the mourning note of the nightingale was heard. The circumstances of the hour brought to her recollection some lines, which she had once heard St. Aubert recite on this very spot, and she had now a melancholy pleasure in repeating them.

SONNET

Now the bat circles on the breeze of eve,
That creeps, in shudd'ring fits, along the wave,
And trembles 'mid the woods, and through the cave
Whose lonely sighs the wanderer deceive;
For oft, when melancholy charms his mind,
He thinks the Spirit of the rock he hears,
Nor listens, but with sweetly-thrilling fears,
To the low, mystic murmurs of the wind!
Now the bat circles, and the twilight-dew
Falls silent round, and, o'er the mountain-cliff,
The gleaming wave, and far-discover'd skiff,
Spreads the gray veil of soft, harmonious hue.
So falls o'er Grief the dew of pity's tear
Dimming her lonely visions of despair.

Emily, wandering on, came to St. Aubert's favourite plane-tree, where so often, at this hour, they had sat beneath the shade together, and with her dear mother so often had conversed on the subject of a future state. How often, too, had her father expressed the comfort he derived from believing, that they should meet in another world! Emily, overcome by these recollections, left the plane-tree, and, as she leaned pensively on the wall of the terrace, she observed a group of peasants dancing gaily on the banks of the Garonne, which spread in broad expanse below, and reflected the evening light. What a contrast they formed to the desolate, unhappy Emily! They were gay and debonnaire, as they were wont to be when she, too, was gay—when St. Aubert used to listen to their merry music, with a countenance beaming pleasure and benevolence. Emily, having looked for a moment on this sprightly band, turned away, unable to bear the remembrances it excited; but where, alas! could she turn, and not meet new objects to give acuteness to grief?

As she walked slowly towards the house, she was met by Theresa. 'Dear ma'amselle,' said she, 'I have been seeking you up and down this half hour, and was afraid some accident had happened to you. How can you like to wander about so in this night air! Do come into the house. Think what my poor master would have said, if he could see you. I am sure, when my dear lady died, no gentleman could take it more to heart than he did, yet you know he seldom shed a tear.'

'Pray, Theresa, cease,' said Emily, wishing to interrupt this ill-judged, but well-meaning harangue; Theresa's loquacity, however, was not to be silenced so easily. 'And when you used to grieve so,' she added, 'he often told you how wrong it was—for that my mistress was happy. And, if she was happy, I am sure he is so too; for the prayers of the poor, they say, reach heaven.' During this speech, Emily had walked silently into the chateau, and Theresa lighted her across the hall into the common sitting parlour, where she had laid the cloth, with one solitary knife and fork, for supper. Emily was in the room before she perceived that it was not her own apartment, but she checked the emotion

which inclined her to leave it, and seated herself quietly by the little supper table. Her father's hat hung upon the opposite wall; while she gazed at it, a faintness came over her. Theresa looked at her, and then at the object, on which her eyes were settled, and went to remove it; but Emily waved her hand—'No,' said she, 'let it remain. I am going to my chamber.' 'Nay, ma'amselle, supper is ready.' 'I cannot take it,' replied Emily, 'I will go to my room, and try to sleep. Tomorrow I shall be better.'

'This is poor doings!' said Theresa. 'Dear lady! do take some food! I have dressed a pheasant, and a fine one it is. Old Monsieur Barreaux sent it this morning, for I saw him yesterday, and told him you were coming. And I know nobody that seemed more concerned, when he heard the sad news, then he.'

'Did he?' said Emily, in a tender voice, while she felt her poor heart warmed for a moment by a ray of sympathy.

At length, her spirits were entirely overcome, and she retired to her room.

CHAPTER IX

Can Music's voice, can Beauty's eye,
Can Painting's glowing hand supply
A charm so suited to my mind,
As blows this hollow gust of wind?
As drops this little weeping rill,
Soft tinkling down the moss-grown hill;
While, through the west, where sinks the crimson day,
Meek Twilight slowly sails, and waves her banners gray?

MASON

Emily, some time after her return to La Vallee, received letters from her aunt, Madame Cheron, in which, after some common-place condolement and advice, she invited her to Tholouse, and added, that, as her late brother had entrusted Emily's EDUCATION to her, she should consider herself bound to overlook her conduct. Emily, at this time, wished only to remain at La Vallee, in the scenes of her early happiness, now rendered infinitely dear to her, as the late residence of those, whom she had lost for ever, where she could weep unobserved, retrace their steps, and remember each minute particular of their manners. But she was equally anxious to avoid the displeasure of Madame Cheron.

Though her affection would not suffer her to question, even a moment, the propriety of St. Aubert's conduct in appointing Madame Cheron for her guardian, she was sensible, that this step had made her happiness depend, in a great degree, on the humour of her aunt. In her reply, she begged permission to remain, at present, at La Vallee, mentioning the extreme dejection of her spirits, and the necessity she felt for quiet and retirement to restore them. These she knew were not to be found at Madame Cheron's, whose inclinations led her into a life of dissipation, which her ample fortune encouraged; and, having given her answer, she felt somewhat more at ease.

In the first days of her affliction, she was visited by Monsieur Barreaux, a sincere mourner for St. Aubert. 'I may well lament my friend,' said he, 'for I shall never meet with his resemblance. If I could have found such a man in what is called society, I should not have left it.'

M. Barreaux's admiration of her father endeared him extremely to Emily, whose heart found almost its first relief in conversing of her parents, with a man, whom she so much revered, and who, though with such an ungracious appearance, possessed to much goodness of heart and delicacy of mind.

Several weeks passed away in quiet retirement, and Emily's affliction began to soften into melancholy. She could bear to read the books she had before read with her father; to sit in his chair in the library—to watch the flowers his hand had planted—to awaken the tones of that instrument his fingers had pressed, and sometimes even to play his favourite air.

When her mind had recovered from the first shock of affliction, perceiving the danger of yielding to indolence, and that activity alone could restore its tone, she scrupulously endeavoured to pass all her hours in employment. And it was now that she understood the full value of the education she had received from St. Aubert, for in cultivating her understanding he had secured her an asylum from indolence, without recourse to dissipation, and rich and varied amusement and information, independent of the society, from which her situation secluded her. Nor were the good effects of this education confined to selfish advantages, since, St. Aubert having nourished every amiable qualify of her heart, it now expanded in benevolence to all around her, and taught her, when she could not remove the misfortunes of others, at least to soften them by sympathy and tenderness;—a benevolence that taught her to feel for all, that could suffer.

Madame Cheron returned no answer to Emily's letter, who began to hope, that she should be permitted to remain some time longer in her retirement, and her mind had now so far recovered its strength, that she ventured to view the scenes, which most powerfully recalled the images of past times. Among these was the fishing-house; and, to indulge still more the affectionate melancholy of the visit, she took thither her lute, that she might again hear there the tones, to which St. Aubert and her mother had so often delighted to listen. She went alone, and at that still hour of the evening which is so soothing to fancy and to grief. The last time she had been here she was in company with Monsieur and Madame St. Aubert, a few days preceding that, on which the latter was seized with a fatal illness. Now, when Emily again entered the woods, that surrounded the building, they awakened so forcibly the memory of former times, that her resolution yielded for a moment to excess of grief. She stopped, leaned for support against a tree, and wept for some minutes, before she had recovered herself sufficiently to proceed. The little path, that led to the building, was overgrown with grass and the flowers which St. Aubert had scattered carelessly along the border were almost choked with weeds —the tall thistle—the fox-glove, and the nettle. She often paused to look on the desolate spot, now so silent and forsaken, and when, with a trembling hand, she opened the door of the fishing-house, 'Ah!' said she, 'every thing—every thing remains as when I left it last—left it with those who never must return!' She went to a window, that overhung the rivulet, and, leaning over it, with her eyes fixed on the current, was soon lost in melancholy reverie. The lute she had brought lay forgotten beside her; the mournful sighing of the breeze, as it waved the high pines above, and its softer whispers among the osiers, that bowed upon the banks below, was a kind of music more in unison with her feelings. It did not vibrate on the chords of unhappy memory, but was soothing to the heart as the voice of Pity. She continued to muse, unconscious of the gloom of evening, and that the sun's last light trembled on the heights above, and would probably have remained so much longer, if a sudden footstep, without the building, had not alarmed her attention, and first made her recollect that she was unprotected. In the next moment, a door opened, and a stranger appeared, who stopped on perceiving Emily, and then began to apologize for his intrusion. But Emily, at the sound of his voice, lost her fear in a stronger emotion: its tones were familiar to her ear, and, though she could not readily distinguish through the dusk the features of the person who spoke, she felt a remembrance too strong to be distrusted.

He repeated his apology, and Emily then said something in reply, when the stranger eagerly advancing, exclaimed, 'Good God! can it be—surely I am not mistaken—ma'amselle St. Aubert?—is it not?'

'It is indeed,' said Emily, who was confirmed in her first conjecture, for she now distinguished the countenance of Valancourt, lighted up with still more than its usual animation. A thousand painful recollections crowded to her mind, and the effort, which she made to support herself, only served to increase her agitation. Valancourt, meanwhile, having enquired anxiously after her health, and expressed his hopes, that M. St. Aubert had found benefit from travelling, learned from the flood of tears, which she could no longer repress, the fatal truth. He led her to a seat, and sat down by her, while Emily continued to weep, and Valancourt to hold the hand, which she was unconscious he had taken, till it was wet with the tears, which grief for St. Aubert and sympathy for herself had called forth.

'I feel,' said he at length, 'I feel how insufficient all attempt at consolation must be on this subject. I can only mourn with you, for I cannot doubt the source of your tears. Would to God I were mistaken!'

Emily could still answer only by tears, till she rose, and begged they might leave the melancholy spot, when Valancourt, though he saw her feebleness, could not offer to detain her, but took her arm within his, and led her from the fishing-house. They walked silently through the woods, Valancourt anxious to know, yet fearing to ask any particulars concerning St. Aubert; and Emily too much distressed to converse. After some time, however, she acquired fortitude enough to speak of her father, and to give a brief account of the manner of his death; during which recital Valancourt's countenance betrayed strong emotion, and, when he heard that St. Aubert had died on the road,

and that Emily had been left among strangers, he pressed her hand between his, and involuntarily exclaimed, 'Why was I not there!' but in the next moment recollected himself, for he immediately returned to the mention of her father; till, perceiving that her spirits were exhausted, he gradually changed the subject, and spoke of himself. Emily thus learned that, after they had parted, he had wandered, for some time, along the shores of the Mediterranean, and had then returned through Languedoc into Gascony, which was his native province, and where he usually resided.

When he had concluded his little narrative, he sunk into a silence, which Emily was not disposed to interrupt, and it continued, till they reached the gate of the chateau, when he stopped, as if he had known this to be the limit of his walk. Here, saying, that it was his intention to return to Estuviere on the following day, he asked her if she would permit him to take leave of her in the morning; and Emily, perceiving that she could not reject an ordinary civility, without expressing by her refusal an expectation of something more, was compelled to answer, that she should be at home.

She passed a melancholy evening, during which the retrospect of all that had happened, since she had seen Valancourt, would rise to her imagination; and the scene of her father's death appeared in tints as fresh, as if it had passed on the preceding day. She remembered particularly the earnest and solemn manner, in which he had required her to destroy the manuscript papers, and, awakening from the lethargy, in which sorrow had held her, she was shocked to think she had not yet obeyed him, and determined, that another day should not reproach her with the neglect.

CHAPTER X

Can such things be,
And overcome us like a summer's cloud,
Without our special wonder?

MACBETH

On the next morning, Emily ordered a fire to be lighted in the stove of the chamber, where St. Aubert used to sleep; and, as soon as she had breakfasted, went thither to burn the papers. Having fastened the door to prevent interruption, she opened the closet where they were concealed, as she entered which, she felt an emotion of unusual awe, and stood for some moments surveying it, trembling, and almost afraid to remove the board. There was a great chair in one corner of the closet, and, opposite to it, stood the table, at which she had seen her father sit, on the evening that preceded his departure, looking over, with so much emotion, what she believed to be these very papers.

The solitary life, which Emily had led of late, and the melancholy subjects, on which she had suffered her thoughts to dwell, had rendered her at times sensible to the 'thick-coming fancies' of a mind greatly enervated. It was lamentable, that her excellent understanding should have yielded, even for a moment, to the reveries of superstition, or rather to those starts of imagination, which deceive the senses into what can be called nothing less than momentary madness. Instances of this temporary failure of mind had more than once occurred since her return home; particularly when, wandering through this lonely mansion in the evening twilight, she had been alarmed by appearances, which would have been unseen in her more cheerful days. To this infirm state of her nerves may be attributed what she imagined, when, her eyes glancing a second time on the arm-chair, which stood in an obscure part of the closet, the countenance of her dead father appeared there. Emily stood fixed for a moment to the floor, after which she left the closet. Her spirits, however, soon returned; she reproached herself with the weakness of thus suffering interruption in an act of serious importance, and again opened the door. By the directions which St. Aubert had given her, she readily found the board he had described in an opposite corner of the closet, near the window; she distinguished also the line he had mentioned, and, pressing it as he had bade her, it slid down, and disclosed the bundle of papers, together with some scattered ones, and the purse of louis. With a trembling hand she removed them, replaced the board, paused a moment, and was rising from the floor, when, on looking up, there appeared to her alarmed fancy the same countenance in the chair. The illusion, another instance of the unhappy effect which solitude and grief had gradually produced upon her mind, subdued her spirits; she rushed forward into the chamber, and sunk almost senseless into a chair. Returning reason soon overcame the dreadful, but pitiable attack of imagination, and she turned to the papers, though still with so little recollection, that her eyes involuntarily settled on the writing of some loose sheets, which lay open; and she was unconscious, that she was transgressing her father's strict injunction, till a sentence of dreadful import awakened her attention and her memory together. She hastily put the papers from her; but the words, which had roused equally her curiosity and terror, she could not dismiss from her thoughts. So powerfully had they affected her, that she even could not resolve to destroy the papers immediately; and the more she dwelt on the circumstance, the more it inflamed her imagination. Urged by the most forcible, and apparently the most necessary, curiosity to enquire farther, concerning the terrible and mysterious subject, to which she had seen an allusion, she began to lament her promise to destroy the papers. For a moment, she even doubted, whether it could justly be obeyed, in contradiction to such reasons as there appeared to be for further information. But the delusion was momentary.

'I have given a solemn promise,' said she, 'to observe a solemn injunction, and it is not my business to argue, but to obey. Let me hasten to remove the temptation, that would destroy my innocence, and embitter my life with the consciousness of irremediable guilt, while I have strength to reject it.'

Thus re-animated with a sense of her duty, she completed the triumph of her integrity over temptation, more forcible than any she had ever known, and consigned the papers to the flames. Her eyes watched them as they slowly consumed, she shuddered at the recollection of the sentence she had just seen, and at the certainty, that the only opportunity of explaining it was then passing away for ever.

It was long after this, that she recollected the purse; and as she was depositing it, unopened, in a cabinet, perceiving that it contained something of a size larger than coin, she examined it. 'His hand deposited them here,' said she, as she kissed some pieces of the coin, and wetted them with her tears, 'his hand—which is now dust!' At the bottom of the purse was a small packet, having taken out which, and unfolded paper after paper, she found to be an ivory case, containing the miniature of a —lady! She started—'The same,' said she, 'my father wept over!' On examining the countenance she could recollect no person that it resembled. It was of uncommon beauty, and was characterized by an expression of sweetness, shaded with sorrow, and tempered by resignation.

St. Aubert had given no directions concerning this picture, nor had even named it; she, therefore, thought herself justified in preserving it. More than once remembering his manner, when he had spoken of the Marchioness of Villeroi, she felt inclined to believe that this was her resemblance; yet there appeared no reason why he should have preserved a picture of that lady, or, having preserved it, why he should lament over it in a manner so striking and affecting as she had witnessed on the night preceding his departure.

Emily still gazed on the countenance, examining its features, but she knew not where to detect the charm that captivated her attention, and inspired sentiments of such love and pity. Dark brown hair played carelessly along the open forehead; the nose was rather inclined to aquiline; the lips spoke in a smile, but it was a melancholy one; the eyes were blue, and were directed upwards with an expression of peculiar meekness, while the soft cloud of the brow spoke of the fine sensibility of the temper.

Emily was roused from the musing mood into which the picture had thrown her, by the closing of the garden gate; and, on turning her eyes to the window, she saw Valancourt coming towards the chateau. Her spirits agitated by the subjects that had lately occupied her mind, she felt unprepared to see him, and remained a few moments in the chamber to recover herself.

When she met him in the parlour, she was struck with the change that appeared in his air and countenance since they had parted in Rousillon, which twilight and the distress she suffered on the preceding evening had prevented her from observing. But dejection and languor disappeared, for a moment, in the smile that now enlightened his countenance, on perceiving her. 'You see,' said he, 'I have availed myself of the permission with which you honoured me—of bidding YOU farewell, whom I had the happiness of meeting only yesterday.'

Emily smiled faintly, and, anxious to say something, asked if he had been long in Gascony. 'A few days only,' replied Valancourt, while a blush passed over his cheek. 'I engaged in a long ramble after I had the misfortune of parting with the friends who had made my wanderings among the Pyrenees so delightful.'

A tear came to Emily's eye, as Valancourt said this, which he observed; and, anxious to draw off her attention from the remembrance that had occasioned it, as well as shocked at his own thoughtlessness, he began to speak on other subjects, expressing his admiration of the chateau, and its prospects. Emily, who felt somewhat embarrassed how to support a conversation, was glad of such an opportunity to continue it on indifferent topics. They walked down to the terrace, where Valancourt was charmed with the river scenery, and the views over the opposite shores of Guienne.

As he leaned on the wall of the terrace, watching the rapid current of the Garonne, 'I was a few weeks ago,' said he, 'at the source of this noble river; I had not then the happiness of knowing you, or I should have regretted your absence—it was a scene so exactly suited to your taste. It rises in a part of the Pyrenees, still wilder and more sublime, I think, than any we passed in the way to Rousillon.' He then described its fall among the precipices of the mountains, where its waters, augmented by the streams that descend from the snowy summits around, rush into the Vallee d'Aran, between whose romantic heights it foams along, pursuing its way to the north west till it emerges upon the plains of Languedoc. Then, washing the walls of Tholouse, and turning again to the north west, it assumes a milder character, as it fertilizes the pastures of Gascony and Guienne, in its progress to the Bay of Biscay.

Emily and Valancourt talked of the scenes they had passed among the Pyrenean Alps; as he spoke of which there was often a tremulous tenderness in his voice, and sometimes he expatiated on them with all the fire of genius, sometimes would appear scarcely conscious of the topic, though he continued to speak. This subject recalled forcibly to Emily the idea of her father, whose image appeared in every landscape, which Valancourt particularized, whose remarks dwelt upon her memory, and whose enthusiasm still glowed in her heart. Her silence, at length, reminded Valancourt how nearly his conversation approached to the occasion of her grief, and he changed the subject, though for one scarcely less affecting to Emily. When he admired the grandeur of the plane-tree, that spread its wide branches over the terrace, and under whose shade they now sat, she remembered how often she had sat thus with St. Aubert, and heard him express the same admiration.

'This was a favourite tree with my dear father,' said she; 'he used to love to sit under its foliage with his family about him, in the fine evenings of summer.'

Valancourt understood her feelings, and was silent; had she raised her eyes from the ground she would have seen tears in his. He rose, and leaned on the wall of the terrace, from which, in a few moments, he returned to his seat, then rose again, and appeared to be greatly agitated; while Emily found her spirits so much depressed, that several of her attempts to renew the conversation were ineffectual. Valancourt again sat down, but was still silent, and trembled. At length he said, with a hesitating voice, 'This lovely scene!—I am going to leave—to leave you—perhaps for ever! These moments may never return; I cannot resolve to neglect, though I scarcely dare to avail myself of them. Let me, however, without offending the delicacy of your sorrow, venture to declare the admiration I must always feel of your goodness—O! that at some future period I might be permitted to call it love!'

Emily's emotion would not suffer her to reply; and Valancourt, who now ventured to look up, observing her countenance change, expected to see her faint, and made an involuntary effort to support her, which recalled Emily to a sense of her situation, and to an exertion of her spirits. Valancourt did not appear to notice her indisposition, but, when he spoke again, his voice told the tenderest love. 'I will not presume,' he added, 'to intrude this subject longer upon your attention at this time, but I may, perhaps, be permitted to mention, that these parting moments would lose much of their bitterness if I might be allowed to hope the declaration I have made would not exclude me from your presence in future.'

Emily made another effort to overcome the confusion of her thoughts, and to speak. She feared to trust the preference her heart acknowledged towards Valancourt, and to give him any encouragement for hope, on so short an acquaintance. For though in this narrow period she had observed much that was admirable in his taste and disposition, and though these observations had been sanctioned by the opinion of her father, they were not sufficient testimonies of his general worth to determine her upon a subject so infinitely important to her future happiness as that, which now solicited her attention. Yet, though the thought of dismissing Valancourt was so very painful to her, that she could scarcely endure to pause upon it, the consciousness of this made her fear the partiality of her judgment, and hesitate still more to encourage that suit, for which her own heart too tenderly pleaded. The family of Valancourt, if not his circumstances, had been known to her father,

and known to be unexceptionable. Of his circumstances, Valancourt himself hinted as far as delicacy would permit, when he said he had at present little else to offer but an heart, that adored her. He had solicited only for a distant hope, and she could not resolve to forbid, though she scarcely dared to permit it; at length, she acquired courage to say, that she must think herself honoured by the good opinion of any person, whom her father had esteemed.

'And was I, then, thought worthy of his esteem?' said Valancourt, in a voice trembling with anxiety; then checking himself, he added, 'But pardon the question; I scarcely know what I say. If I might dare to hope, that you think me not unworthy such honour, and might be permitted sometimes to enquire after your health, I should now leave you with comparative tranquillity.'

Emily, after a moment's silence, said, 'I will be ingenuous with you, for I know you will understand, and allow for my situation; you will consider it as a proof of my—my esteem that I am so. Though I live here in what was my father's house, I live here alone. I have, alas! no longer a parent—a parent, whose presence might sanction your visits. It is unnecessary for me to point out the impropriety of my receiving them.'

'Nor will I affect to be insensible of this,' replied Valancourt, adding mournfully—'but what is to console me for my candour? I distress you, and would now leave the subject, if I might carry with me a hope of being some time permitted to renew it, of being allowed to make myself known to your family.'

Emily was again confused, and again hesitated what to reply; she felt most acutely the difficulty —the forlornness of her situation, which did not allow her a single relative, or friend, to whom she could turn for even a look, that might support and guide her in the present embarrassing circumstances. Madame Cheron, who was her only relative, and ought to have been this friend, was either occupied by her own amusements, or so resentful of the reluctance her niece had shewn to quit La Vallee, that she seemed totally to have abandoned her.

'Ah! I see,' said Valancourt, after a long pause, during which Emily had begun, and left unfinished two or three sentences, 'I see that I have nothing to hope; my fears were too just, you think me unworthy of your esteem. That fatal journey! which I considered as the happiest period of my life—those delightful days were to embitter all my future ones. How often I have looked back to them with hope and fear—yet never till this moment could I prevail with myself to regret their enchanting influence.'

His voice faltered, and he abruptly quitted his seat and walked on the terrace. There was an expression of despair on his countenance, that affected Emily. The pleadings of her heart overcame, in some degree, her extreme timidity, and, when he resumed his seat, she said, in an accent that betrayed her tenderness, 'You do both yourself and me injustice when you say I think you unworthy of my esteem; I will acknowledge that you have long possessed it, and—and—'

Valancourt waited impatiently for the conclusion of the sentence, but the words died on her lips. Her eyes, however, reflected all the emotions of her heart. Valancourt passed, in an instant, from the impatience of despair, to that of joy and tenderness. 'O Emily!' he exclaimed, 'my own Emily—teach me to sustain this moment! Let me seal it as the most sacred of my life!'

He pressed her hand to his lips, it was cold and trembling; and, raising her eyes, he saw the paleness of her countenance. Tears came to her relief, and Valancourt watched in anxious silence over her. In a few moments, she recovered herself, and smiling faintly through her tears, said, 'Can you excuse this weakness? My spirits have not yet, I believe, recovered from the shock they lately received.'

'I cannot excuse myself,' said Valancourt, 'but I will forbear to renew the subject, which may have contributed to agitate them, now that I can leave you with the sweet certainty of possessing your esteem.'

Then, forgetting his resolution, he again spoke of himself. 'You know not,' said he, 'the many anxious hours I have passed near you lately, when you believed me, if indeed you honoured me with

a thought, far away. I have wandered, near the chateau, in the still hours of the night, when no eye could observe me. It was delightful to know I was so near you, and there was something particularly soothing in the thought, that I watched round your habitation, while you slept. These grounds are not entirely new to me. Once I ventured within the fence, and spent one of the happiest, and yet most melancholy hours of my life in walking under what I believed to be your window.'

Emily enquired how long Valancourt had been in the neighbourhood. 'Several days,' he replied. 'It was my design to avail myself of the permission M. St. Aubert had given me. I scarcely know how to account for it; but, though I anxiously wished to do this, my resolution always failed, when the moment approached, and I constantly deferred my visit. I lodged in a village at some distance, and wandered with my dogs, among the scenes of this charming country, wishing continually to meet you, yet not daring to visit you.'

Having thus continued to converse, without perceiving the flight of time, Valancourt, at length, seemed to recollect himself. 'I must go,' said he mournfully, 'but it is with the hope of seeing you again, of being permitted to pay my respects to your family; let me hear this hope confirmed by your voice.' 'My family will be happy to see any friend of my dear father,' said Emily. Valancourt kissed her hand, and still lingered, unable to depart, while Emily sat silently, with her eyes bent on the ground; and Valancourt, as he gazed on her, considered that it would soon be impossible for him to recall, even to his memory, the exact resemblance of the beautiful countenance he then beheld; at this moment an hasty footstep approached from behind the plane-tree, and, turning her eyes, Emily saw Madame Cheron. She felt a blush steal upon her cheek, and her frame trembled with the emotion of her mind; but she instantly rose to meet her visitor. 'So, niece!' said Madame Cheron, casting a look of surprise and enquiry on Valancourt, 'so niece, how do you do? But I need not ask, your looks tell me you have already recovered your loss.'

'My looks do me injustice then, Madame, my loss I know can never be recovered.'

'Well—well! I will not argue with you; I see you have exactly your father's disposition; and let me tell you it would have been much happier for him, poor man! if it had been a different one.'

A look of dignified displeasure, with which Emily regarded Madame Cheron, while she spoke, would have touched almost any other heart; she made no other reply, but introduced Valancourt, who could scarcely stifle the resentment he felt, and whose bow Madame Cheron returned with a slight curtsy, and a look of supercilious examination. After a few moments he took leave of Emily, in a manner, that hastily expressed his pain both at his own departure, and at leaving her to the society of Madame Cheron.

'Who is that young man?' said her aunt, in an accent which equally implied inquisitiveness and censure. 'Some idle admirer of yours I suppose; but I believed niece you had a greater sense of propriety, than to have received the visits of any young man in your present unfriended situation. Let me tell you the world will observe those things, and it will talk, aye and very freely too.'

Emily, extremely shocked at this coarse speech, attempted to interrupt it; but Madame Cheron would proceed, with all the self-importance of a person, to whom power is new.

'It is very necessary you should be under the eye of some person more able to guide you than yourself. I, indeed, have not much leisure for such a task; however, since your poor father made it his last request, that I should overlook your conduct—I must even take you under my care. But this let me tell you niece, that, unless you will determine to be very conformable to my direction, I shall not trouble myself longer about you.'

Emily made no attempt to interrupt Madame Cheron a second time, grief and the pride of conscious innocence kept her silent, till her aunt said, 'I am now come to take you with me to Tholouse; I am sorry to find, that your poor father died, after all, in such indifferent circumstances; however, I shall take you home with me. Ah! poor man, he was always more generous than provident, or he would not have left his daughter dependent on his relations.'

'Nor has he done so, I hope, madam,' said Emily calmly, 'nor did his pecuniary misfortunes arise from that noble generosity, which always distinguished him. The affairs of M. de Motteville may, I trust, yet be settled without deeply injuring his creditors, and in the meantime I should be very happy to remain at La Vallee.'

'No doubt you would,' replied Madame Cheron, with a smile of irony, 'and I shall no doubt consent to this, since I see how necessary tranquillity and retirement are to restore your spirits. I did not think you capable of so much duplicity, niece; when you pleaded this excuse for remaining here, I foolishly believed it to be a just one, nor expected to have found with you so agreeable a companion as this M. La Val—, I forget his name.'

Emily could no longer endure these cruel indignities. 'It was a just one, madam,' said she; 'and now, indeed, I feel more than ever the value of the retirement I then solicited; and, if the purport of your visit is only to add insult to the sorrows of your brother's child, she could well have spared it.'

'I see that I have undertaken a very troublesome task,' said Madame Cheron, colouring highly. 'I am sure, madam,' said Emily mildly, and endeavouring to restrain her tears, 'I am sure my father did not mean it should be such. I have the happiness to reflect, that my conduct under his eye was such as he often delighted to approve. It would be very painful to me to disobey the sister of such a parent, and, if you believe the task will really be so troublesome, I must lament, that it is yours.'

'Well! niece, fine speaking signifies little. I am willing, in consideration of my poor brother, to overlook the impropriety of your late conduct, and to try what your future will be.'

Emily interrupted her, to beg she would explain what was the impropriety she alluded to.

'What impropriety! why that of receiving the visits of a lover unknown to your family,' replied Madame Cheron, not considering the impropriety of which she had herself been guilty, in exposing her niece to the possibility of conduct so erroneous.

A faint blush passed over Emily's countenance; pride and anxiety struggled in her breast; and, till she recollected, that appearances did, in some degree, justify her aunt's suspicions, she could not resolve to humble herself so far as to enter into the defence of a conduct, which had been so innocent and undesigning on her part. She mentioned the manner of Valancourt's introduction to her father; the circumstances of his receiving the pistol-shot, and of their afterwards travelling together; with the accidental way, in which she had met him, on the preceding evening. She owned he had declared a partiality for her, and that he had asked permission to address her family.

'And who is this young adventurer, pray?' said Madame Cheron, 'and what are his pretensions?' 'These he must himself explain, madam,' replied Emily. 'Of his family my father was not ignorant, and I believe it is unexceptionable.' She then proceeded to mention what she knew concerning it.

'Oh, then, this it seems is a younger brother,' exclaimed her aunt, 'and of course a beggar. A very fine tale indeed! And so my brother took a fancy to this young man after only a few days acquaintance!—but that was so like him! In his youth he was always taking these likes and dislikes, when no other person saw any reason for them at all; nay, indeed, I have often thought the people he disapproved were much more agreeable than those he admired;—but there is no accounting for tastes. He was always so much influenced by people's countenances; now I, for my part, have no notion of this, it is all ridiculous enthusiasm. What has a man's face to do with his character? Can a man of good character help having a disagreeable face?'—which last sentence Madame Cheron delivered with the decisive air of a person who congratulates herself on having made a grand discovery, and believes the question to be unanswerably settled.

Emily, desirous of concluding the conversation, enquired if her aunt would accept some refreshment, and Madame Cheron accompanied her to the chateau, but without desisting from a topic, which she discussed with so much complacency to herself, and severity to her niece.

'I am sorry to perceive, niece,' said she, in allusion to somewhat that Emily had said, concerning physiognomy, 'that you have a great many of your father's prejudices, and among them those sudden predilections for people from their looks. I can perceive, that you imagine yourself to be violently in

love with this young adventurer, after an acquaintance of only a few days. There was something, too, so charmingly romantic in the manner of your meeting!'

Emily checked the tears, that trembled in her eyes, while she said, 'When my conduct shall deserve this severity, madam, you will do well to exercise it; till then justice, if not tenderness, should surely restrain it. I have never willingly offended you; now I have lost my parents, you are the only person to whom I can look for kindness. Let me not lament more than ever the loss of such parents.' The last words were almost stifled by her emotions, and she burst into tears. Remembering the delicacy and the tenderness of St. Aubert, the happy, happy days she had passed in these scenes, and contrasting them with the coarse and unfeeling behaviour of Madame Cheron, and from the future hours of mortification she must submit to in her presence—a degree of grief seized her, that almost reached despair. Madame Cheron, more offended by the reproof which Emily's words conveyed, than touched by the sorrow they expressed, said nothing, that might soften her grief; but, notwithstanding an apparent reluctance to receive her niece, she desired her company. The love of sway was her ruling passion, and she knew it would be highly gratified by taking into her house a young orphan, who had no appeal from her decisions, and on whom she could exercise without controul the capricious humour of the moment.

On entering the chateau, Madame Cheron expressed a desire, that she would put up what she thought necessary to take to Tholouse, as she meant to set off immediately. Emily now tried to persuade her to defer the journey, at least till the next day, and, at length, with much difficulty, prevailed.

The day passed in the exercise of petty tyranny on the part of Madame Cheron, and in mournful regret and melancholy anticipation on that of Emily, who, when her aunt retired to her apartment for the night, went to take leave of every other room in this her dear native home, which she was now quitting for she knew not how long, and for a world, to which she was wholly a stranger. She could not conquer a presentiment, which frequently occurred to her, this night—that she should never more return to La Vallee. Having passed a considerable time in what had been her father's study, having selected some of his favourite authors, to put up with her clothes, and shed many tears, as she wiped the dust from their covers, she seated herself in his chair before the reading desk, and sat lost in melancholy reflection, till Theresa opened the door to examine, as was her custom before she went to bed, if was all safe. She started, on observing her young lady, who bade her come in, and then gave her some directions for keeping the chateau in readiness for her reception at all times.

'Alas-a-day! that you should leave it!' said Theresa, 'I think you would be happier here than where you are going, if one may judge.' Emily made no reply to this remark; the sorrow Theresa proceeded to express at her departure affected her, but she found some comfort in the simple affection of this poor old servant, to whom she gave such directions as might best conduce to her comfort during her own absence.

Having dismissed Theresa to bed, Emily wandered through every lonely apartment of the chateau, lingering long in what had been her father's bed-room, indulging melancholy, yet not unpleasing, emotions, and, having often returned within the door to take another look at it, she withdrew to her own chamber. From her window she gazed upon the garden below, shewn faintly by the moon, rising over the tops of the palm-trees, and, at length, the calm beauty of the night increased a desire of indulging the mournful sweetness of bidding farewel to the beloved shades of her childhood, till she was tempted to descend. Throwing over her the light veil, in which she usually walked, she silently passed into the garden, and, hastening towards the distant groves, was glad to breathe once more the air of liberty, and to sigh unobserved. The deep repose of the scene, the rich scents, that floated on the breeze, the grandeur of the wide horizon and of the clear blue arch, soothed and gradually elevated her mind to that sublime complacency, which renders the vexations of this world so insignificant and mean in our eyes, that we wonder they have had power for a moment to disturb us. Emily forgot Madame Cheron and all the circumstances of her conduct, while her

thoughts ascended to the contemplation of those unnumbered worlds, that lie scattered in the depths of aether, thousands of them hid from human eyes, and almost beyond the flight of human fancy. As her imagination soared through the regions of space, and aspired to that Great First Cause, which pervades and governs all being, the idea of her father scarcely ever left her; but it was a pleasing idea, since she resigned him to God in the full confidence of a pure and holy faith. She pursued her way through the groves to the terrace, often pausing as memory awakened the pang of affection, and as reason anticipated the exile, into which she was going.

And now the moon was high over the woods, touching their summits with yellow light, and darting between the foliage long level beams; while on the rapid Garonne below the trembling radiance was faintly obscured by the lightest vapour. Emily long watched the playing lustre, listened to the soothing murmur of the current, and the yet lighter sounds of the air, as it stirred, at intervals, the lofty palm-trees. 'How delightful is the sweet breath of these groves,' said she. 'This lovely scene!—how often shall I remember and regret it, when I am far away. Alas! what events may occur before I see it again! O, peaceful, happy shades!—scenes of my infant delights, of parental tenderness now lost for ever!—why must I leave ye!—In your retreats I should still find safety and repose. Sweet hours of my childhood—I am now to leave even your last memorials! No objects, that would revive your impressions, will remain for me!'

Then drying her tears and looking up, her thoughts rose again to the sublime subject she had contemplated; the same divine complacency stole over her heart, and, hushing its throbs, inspired hope and confidence and resignation to the will of the Deity, whose works filled her mind with adoration.

Emily gazed long on the plane-tree, and then seated herself, for the last time, on the bench under its shade, where she had so often sat with her parents, and where, only a few hours before, she had conversed with Valancourt, at the remembrance of whom, thus revived, a mingled sensation of esteem, tenderness and anxiety rose in her breast. With this remembrance occurred a recollection of his late confession—that he had often wandered near her habitation in the night, having even passed the boundary of the garden, and it immediately occurred to her, that he might be at this moment in the grounds. The fear of meeting him, particularly after the declaration he had made, and of incurring a censure, which her aunt might so reasonably bestow, if it was known, that she was met by her lover, at this hour, made her instantly leave her beloved plane-tree, and walk towards the chateau. She cast an anxious eye around, and often stopped for a moment to examine the shadowy scene before she ventured to proceed, but she passed on without perceiving any person, till, having reached a clump of almond trees, not far from the house, she rested to take a retrospect of the garden, and to sigh forth another adieu. As her eyes wandered over the landscape she thought she perceived a person emerge from the groves, and pass slowly along a moon-light alley that led between them; but the distance, and the imperfect light would not suffer her to judge with any degree of certainty whether this was fancy or reality. She continued to gaze for some time on the spot, till on the dead stillness of the air she heard a sudden sound, and in the next instant fancied she distinguished footsteps near her. Wasting not another moment in conjecture, she hurried to the chateau, and, having reached it, retired to her chamber, where, as she closed her window she looked upon the garden, and then again thought she distinguished a figure, gliding between the almond trees she had just left. She immediately withdrew from the casement, and, though much agitated, sought in sleep the refreshment of a short oblivion.

CHAPTER XI

I leave that flowery path for eye
Of childhood, where I sported many a day,
Warbling and sauntering carelessly along;
Where every face was innocent and gay,
Each vale romantic, tuneful every tongue,
Sweet, wild, and artless all.

THE MINSTREL

At an early hour, the carriage, which was to take Emily and Madame Cheron to Tholouse, appeared at the door of the chateau, and Madame was already in the breakfast-room, when her niece entered it. The repast was silent and melancholy on the part of Emily; and Madame Cheron, whose vanity was piqued on observing her dejection, reproved her in a manner that did not contribute to remove it. It was with much reluctance, that Emily's request to take with her the dog, which had been a favourite of her father, was granted. Her aunt, impatient to be gone, ordered the carriage to draw up; and, while she passed to the hall door, Emily gave another look into the library, and another farewell glance over the garden, and then followed. Old Theresa stood at the door to take leave of her young lady. 'God for ever keep you, ma'amselle!' said she, while Emily gave her hand in silence, and could answer only with a pressure of her hand, and a forced smile.

At the gate, which led out of the grounds, several of her father's pensioners were assembled to bid her farewell, to whom she would have spoken, if her aunt would have suffered the driver to stop; and, having distributed to them almost all the money she had about her, she sunk back in the carriage, yielding to the melancholy of her heart. Soon after, she caught, between the steep banks of the road, another view of the chateau, peeping from among the high trees, and surrounded by green slopes and tufted groves, the Garonne winding its way beneath their shades, sometimes lost among the vineyards, and then rising in greater majesty in the distant pastures. The towering precipices of the Pyrenees, that rose to the south, gave Emily a thousand interesting recollections of her late journey; and these objects of her former enthusiastic admiration, now excited only sorrow and regret. Having gazed on the chateau and its lovely scenery, till the banks again closed upon them, her mind became too much occupied by mournful reflections, to permit her to attend to the conversation, which Madame Cheron had begun on some trivial topic, so that they soon travelled in profound silence.

Valancourt, mean while, was returned to Estuviere, his heart occupied with the image of Emily; sometimes indulging in reveries of future happiness, but more frequently shrinking with dread of the opposition he might encounter from her family. He was the younger son of an ancient family of Gascony; and, having lost his parents at an early period of his life, the care of his education and of his small portion had devolved to his brother, the Count de Duvarney, his senior by nearly twenty years. Valancourt had been educated in all the accomplishments of his age, and had an ardour of spirit, and a certain grandeur of mind, that gave him particular excellence in the exercises then thought heroic. His little fortune had been diminished by the necessary expences of his education; but M. La Valancourt, the elder, seemed to think that his genius and accomplishments would amply supply the deficiency of his inheritance. They offered flattering hopes of promotion in the military profession, in those times almost the only one in which a gentleman could engage without incurring a stain on his name; and La Valancourt was of course enrolled in the army. The general genius of his mind was but little understood by his brother. That ardour for whatever is great and good in the moral world, as well as in the natural one, displayed itself in his infant years; and the strong indignation, which he felt and expressed at a criminal, or a mean action, sometimes drew upon him the displeasure of his

tutor; who reprobated it under the general term of violence of temper; and who, when haranguing on the virtues of mildness and moderation, seemed to forget the gentleness and compassion, which always appeared in his pupil towards objects of misfortune.

He had now obtained leave of absence from his regiment when he made the excursion into the Pyrenees, which was the means of introducing him to St. Aubert; and, as this permission was nearly expired, he was the more anxious to declare himself to Emily's family, from whom he reasonably apprehended opposition, since his fortune, though, with a moderate addition from hers, it would be sufficient to support them, would not satisfy the views, either of vanity, or ambition. Valancourt was not without the latter, but he saw golden visions of promotion in the army; and believed, that with Emily he could, in the mean time, be delighted to live within the limits of his humble income. His thoughts were now occupied in considering the means of making himself known to her family, to whom, however, he had yet no address, for he was entirely ignorant of Emily's precipitate departure from La Vallee, of whom he hoped to obtain it.

Meanwhile, the travellers pursued their journey; Emily making frequent efforts to appear cheerful, and too often relapsing into silence and dejection. Madame Cheron, attributing her melancholy solely to the circumstance of her being removed to a distance from her lover, and believing, that the sorrow, which her niece still expressed for the loss of St. Aubert, proceeded partly from an affectation of sensibility, endeavoured to make it appear ridiculous to her, that such deep regret should continue to be felt so long after the period usually allowed for grief.

At length, these unpleasant lectures were interrupted by the arrival of the travellers at Tholouse; and Emily, who had not been there for many years, and had only a very faint recollection of it, was surprised at the ostentatious style exhibited in her aunt's house and furniture; the more so, perhaps, because it was so totally different from the modest elegance, to which she had been accustomed. She followed Madame Cheron through a large hall, where several servants in rich liveries appeared, to a kind of saloon, fitted up with more shew than taste; and her aunt, complaining of fatigue, ordered supper immediately. 'I am glad to find myself in my own house again,' said she, throwing herself on a large settee, 'and to have my own people about me. I detest travelling; though, indeed, I ought to like it, for what I see abroad always makes me delighted to return to my own chateau. What makes you so silent, child?—What is it that disturbs you now?'

Emily suppressed a starting tear, and tried to smile away the expression of an oppressed heart; she was thinking of HER home, and felt too sensibly the arrogance and ostentatious vanity of Madame Cheron's conversation. 'Can this be my father's sister!' said she to herself; and then the conviction that she was so, warming her heart with something like kindness towards her, she felt anxious to soften the harsh impression her mind had received of her aunt's character, and to shew a willingness to oblige her. The effort did not entirely fail; she listened with apparent cheerfulness, while Madame Cheron expatiated on the splendour of her house, told of the numerous parties she entertained, and what she should expect of Emily, whose diffidence assumed the air of a reserve, which her aunt, believing it to be that of pride and ignorance united, now took occasion to reprehend. She knew nothing of the conduct of a mind, that fears to trust its own powers; which, possessing a nice judgment, and inclining to believe, that every other person perceives still more critically, fears to commit itself to censure, and seeks shelter in the obscurity of silence. Emily had frequently blushed at the fearless manners, which she had seen admired, and the brilliant nothings, which she had heard applauded; yet this applause, so far from encouraging her to imitate the conduct that had won it, rather made her shrink into the reserve, that would protect her from such absurdity.

Madame Cheron looked on her niece's diffidence with a feeling very near to contempt, and endeavoured to overcome it by reproof, rather than to encourage it by gentleness.

The entrance of supper somewhat interrupted the complacent discourse of Madame Cheron and the painful considerations, which it had forced upon Emily. When the repast, which was rendered ostentatious by the attendance of a great number of servants, and by a profusion of plate, was over,

Madame Cheron retired to her chamber, and a female servant came to shew Emily to hers. Having passed up a large stair-case, and through several galleries, they came to a flight of back stairs, which led into a short passage in a remote part of the chateau, and there the servant opened the door of a small chamber, which she said was Ma'amselle Emily's, who, once more alone, indulged the tears she had long tried to restrain.

Those, who know, from experience, how much the heart becomes attached even to inanimate objects, to which it has been long accustomed, how unwillingly it resigns them; how with the sensations of an old friend it meets them, after temporary absence, will understand the forlornness of Emily's feelings, of Emily shut out from the only home she had known from her infancy, and thrown upon a scene, and among persons, disagreeable for more qualities than their novelty. Her father's favourite dog, now in the chamber, thus seemed to acquire the character and importance of a friend; and, as the animal fawned over her when she wept, and licked her hands, 'Ah, poor Manchon!' said she, 'I have nobody now to love me—but you!' and she wept the more. After some time, her thoughts returning to her father's injunctions, she remembered how often he had blamed her for indulging useless sorrow; how often he had pointed out to her the necessity of fortitude and patience, assuring her, that the faculties of the mind strengthen by exertion, till they finally unnerve affliction, and triumph over it. These recollections dried her tears, gradually soothed her spirits, and inspired her with the sweet emulation of practising precepts, which her father had so frequently inculcated.

CHAPTER XII

Some pow'r impart the spear and shield,
At which the wizard passions fly,
By which the giant follies die.

COLLINS

Madame Cheron's house stood at a little distance from the city of Tholouse, and was surrounded by extensive gardens, in which Emily, who had risen early, amused herself with wandering before breakfast. From a terrace, that extended along the highest part of them, was a wide view over Languedoc. On the distant horizon to the south, she discovered the wild summits of the Pyrenees, and her fancy immediately painted the green pastures of Gascony at their feet. Her heart pointed to her peaceful home—to the neighbourhood where Valancourt was—where St. Aubert had been; and her imagination, piercing the veil of distance, brought that home to her eyes in all its interesting and romantic beauty. She experienced an inexpressible pleasure in believing, that she beheld the country around it, though no feature could be distinguished, except the retiring chain of the Pyrenees; and, inattentive to the scene immediately before her, and to the flight of time, she continued to lean on the window of a pavilion, that terminated the terrace, with her eyes fixed on Gascony, and her mind occupied with the interesting ideas which the view of it awakened, till a servant came to tell her breakfast was ready. Her thoughts thus recalled to the surrounding objects, the straight walks, square parterres, and artificial fountains of the garden, could not fail, as she passed through it, to appear the worse, opposed to the negligent graces, and natural beauties of the grounds of La Vallee, upon which her recollection had been so intensely employed.

'Whither have you been rambling so early?' said Madame Cheron, as her niece entered the breakfast-room. 'I don't approve of these solitary walks;' and Emily was surprised, when, having informed her aunt, that she had been no further than the gardens, she understood these to be included in the reproof. 'I desire you will not walk there again at so early an hour unattended,' said Madame Cheron; 'my gardens are very extensive; and a young woman, who can make assignations by moonlight, at La Vallee, is not to be trusted to her own inclinations elsewhere.'

Emily, extremely surprised and shocked, had scarcely power to beg an explanation of these words, and, when she did, her aunt absolutely refused to give it, though, by her severe looks, and half sentences, she appeared anxious to impress Emily with a belief, that she was well informed of some degrading circumstances of her conduct. Conscious innocence could not prevent a blush from stealing over Emily's cheek; she trembled, and looked confusedly under the bold eye of Madame Cheron, who blushed also; but hers was the blush of triumph, such as sometimes stains the countenance of a person, congratulating himself on the penetration which had taught him to suspect another, and who loses both pity for the supposed criminal, and indignation of his guilt, in the gratification of his own vanity.

Emily, not doubting that her aunt's mistake arose from the having observed her ramble in the garden on the night preceding her departure from La Vallee, now mentioned the motive of it, at which Madame Cheron smiled contemptuously, refusing either to accept this explanation, or to give her reasons for refusing it; and, soon after, she concluded the subject by saying, 'I never trust people's assertions, I always judge of them by their actions; but I am willing to try what will be your behaviour in future.'

Emily, less surprised by her aunt's moderation and mysterious silence, than by the accusation she had received, deeply considered the latter, and scarcely doubted, that it was Valancourt whom she had seen at night in the gardens of La Vallee, and that he had been observed there by Madame Cheron; who now passing from one painful topic only to revive another almost equally so, spoke of the situation

of her niece's property, in the hands of M. Motteville. While she thus talked with ostentatious pity of Emily's misfortunes, she failed not to inculcate the duties of humility and gratitude, or to render Emily fully sensible of every cruel mortification, who soon perceived, that she was to be considered as a dependant, not only by her aunt, but by her aunt's servants.

She was now informed, that a large party were expected to dinner, on which account Madame Cheron repeated the lesson of the preceding night, concerning her conduct in company, and Emily wished, that she might have courage enough to practise it. Her aunt then proceeded to examine the simplicity of her dress, adding, that she expected to see her attired with gaiety and taste; after which she condescended to shew Emily the splendour of her chateau, and to point out the particular beauty, or elegance, which she thought distinguished each of her numerous suites of apartments. She then withdrew to her toilet, the throne of her homage, and Emily to her chamber, to unpack her books, and to try to charm her mind by reading, till the hour of dressing.

When the company arrived, Emily entered the saloon with an air of timidity, which all her efforts could not overcome, and which was increased by the consciousness of Madame Cheron's severe observation. Her mourning dress, the mild dejection of her beautiful countenance, and the retiring diffidence of her manner, rendered her a very interesting object to many of the company; among whom she distinguished Signor Montoni, and his friend Cavigni, the late visitors at M. Quesnel's, who now seemed to converse with Madame Cheron with the familiarity of old acquaintance, and she to attend to them with particular pleasure.

This Signor Montoni had an air of conscious superiority, animated by spirit, and strengthened by talents, to which every person seemed involuntarily to yield. The quickness of his perceptions was strikingly expressed on his countenance, yet that countenance could submit implicitly to occasion; and, more than once in this day, the triumph of art over nature might have been discerned in it. His visage was long, and rather narrow, yet he was called handsome; and it was, perhaps, the spirit and vigour of his soul, sparkling through his features, that triumphed for him. Emily felt admiration, but not the admiration that leads to esteem; for it was mixed with a degree of fear she knew not exactly wherefore.

Cavigni was gay and insinuating as formerly; and, though he paid almost incessant attention to Madame Cheron, he found some opportunities of conversing with Emily, to whom he directed, at first, the sallies of his wit, but now and then assumed an air of tenderness, which she observed, and shrunk from. Though she replied but little, the gentleness and sweetness of her manners encouraged him to talk, and she felt relieved when a young lady of the party, who spoke incessantly, obtruded herself on his notice. This lady, who possessed all the sprightliness of a Frenchwoman, with all her coquetry, affected to understand every subject, or rather there was no affectation in the case; for, never looking beyond the limits of her own ignorance, she believed she had nothing to learn. She attracted notice from all; amused some, disgusted others for a moment, and was then forgotten.

This day passed without any material occurrence; and Emily, though amused by the characters she had seen, was glad when she could retire to the recollections, which had acquired with her the character of duties.

A fortnight passed in a round of dissipation and company, and Emily, who attended Madame Cheron in all her visits, was sometimes entertained, but oftener wearied. She was struck by the apparent talents and knowledge displayed in the various conversations she listened to, and it was long before she discovered, that the talents were for the most part those of imposture, and the knowledge nothing more than was necessary to assist them. But what deceived her most, was the air of constant gaiety and good spirits, displayed by every visitor, and which she supposed to arise from content as constant, and from benevolence as ready. At length, from the over-acting of some, less accomplished than the others, she could perceive, that, though contentment and benevolence are the only sure sources of cheerfulness, the immoderate and feverish animation, usually exhibited in large parties, results partly from an insensibility to the cares, which benevolence must sometimes derive from the

sufferings of others, and partly from a desire to display the appearance of that prosperity, which they know will command submission and attention to themselves.

Emily's pleasantest hours were passed in the pavilion of the terrace, to which she retired, when she could steal from observation, with a book to overcome, or a lute to indulge, her melancholy. There, as she sat with her eyes fixed on the far-distant Pyrenees, and her thoughts on Valancourt and the beloved scenes of Gascony, she would play the sweet and melancholy songs of her native province —the popular songs she had listened to from her childhood.

One evening, having excused herself from accompanying her aunt abroad, she thus withdrew to the pavilion, with books and her lute. It was the mild and beautiful evening of a sultry day, and the windows, which fronted the west, opened upon all the glory of a setting sun. Its rays illuminated, with strong splendour, the cliffs of the Pyrenees, and touched their snowy tops with a roseate hue, that remained, long after the sun had sunk below the horizon, and the shades of twilight had stolen over the landscape. Emily touched her lute with that fine melancholy expression, which came from her heart. The pensive hour and the scene, the evening light on the Garonne, that flowed at no great distance, and whose waves, as they passed towards La Vallee, she often viewed with a sigh,—these united circumstances disposed her mind to tenderness, and her thoughts were with Valancourt, of whom she had heard nothing since her arrival at Tholouse, and now that she was removed from him, and in uncertainty, she perceived all the interest he held in her heart. Before she saw Valancourt she had never met a mind and taste so accordant with her own, and, though Madame Cheron told her much of the arts of dissimulation, and that the elegance and propriety of thought, which she so much admired in her lover, were assumed for the purpose of pleasing her, she could scarcely doubt their truth. This possibility, however, faint as it was, was sufficient to harass her mind with anxiety, and she found, that few conditions are more painful than that of uncertainty, as to the merit of a beloved object; an uncertainty, which she would not have suffered, had her confidence in her own opinions been greater.

She was awakened from her musing by the sound of horses' feet along a road, that wound under the windows of the pavilion, and a gentleman passed on horseback, whose resemblance to Valancourt, in air and figure, for the twilight did not permit a view of his features, immediately struck her. She retired hastily from the lattice, fearing to be seen, yet wishing to observe further, while the stranger passed on without looking up, and, when she returned to the lattice, she saw him faintly through the twilight, winding under the high trees, that led to Tholouse. This little incident so much disturbed her spirits, that the temple and its scenery were no longer interesting to her, and, after walking awhile on the terrace, she returned to the chateau.

Madame Cheron, whether she had seen a rival admired, had lost at play, or had witnessed an entertainment more splendid than her own, was returned from her visit with a temper more than usually discomposed; and Emily was glad, when the hour arrived, in which she could retire to the solitude of her own apartment.

On the following morning, she was summoned to Madame Cheron, whose countenance was inflamed with resentment, and, as Emily advanced, she held out a letter to her.

'Do you know this hand?' said she, in a severe tone, and with a look that was intended to search her heart, while Emily examined the letter attentively, and assured her, that she did not.

'Do not provoke me,' said her aunt; 'you do know it, confess the truth immediately. I insist upon your confessing the truth instantly.'

Emily was silent, and turned to leave the room, but Madame called her back. 'O you are guilty, then,' said she, 'you do know the hand.' 'If you was before in doubt of this, madam,' replied Emily calmly, 'why did you accuse me of having told a falsehood.' Madame Cheron did not blush; but her niece did, a moment after, when she heard the name of Valancourt. It was not, however, with the consciousness of deserving reproof, for, if she ever had seen his hand-writing, the present characters did not bring it to her recollection.

'It is useless to deny it,' said Madame Cheron, 'I see in your countenance, that you are no stranger to this letter; and, I dare say, you have received many such from this impertinent young man, without my knowledge, in my own house.'

Emily, shocked at the indelicacy of this accusation, still more than by the vulgarity of the former, instantly forgot the pride, that had imposed silence, and endeavoured to vindicate herself from the aspersion, but Madame Cheron was not to be convinced.

'I cannot suppose,' she resumed, 'that this young man would have taken the liberty of writing to me, if you had not encouraged him to do so, and I must now'—'You will allow me to remind you, madam,' said Emily timidly, 'of some particulars of a conversation we had at La Vallee. I then told you truly, that I had only not forbade Monsieur Valancourt from addressing my family.'

'I will not be interrupted,' said Madame Cheron, interrupting her niece, 'I was going to say—I—I-have forgot what I was going to say. But how happened it that you did not forbid him?' Emily was silent. 'How happened it that you encouraged him to trouble me with this letter?—A young man that nobody knows;—an utter stranger in the place,—a young adventurer, no doubt, who is looking out for a good fortune. However, on that point he has mistaken his aim.'

'His family was known to my father,' said Emily modestly, and without appearing to be sensible of the last sentence.

'O! that is no recommendation at all,' replied her aunt, with her usual readiness upon this topic; 'he took such strange fancies to people! He was always judging persons by their countenances, and was continually deceived.' 'Yet it was but now, madam, that you judged me guilty by my countenance,' said Emily, with a design of reproving Madame Cheron, to which she was induced by this disrespectful mention of her father.

'I called you here,' resumed her aunt, colouring, 'to tell you, that I will not be disturbed in my own house by any letters, or visits from young men, who may take a fancy to flatter you. This M. de Valantine—I think you call him, has the impertinence to beg I will permit him to pay his respects to me! I shall send him a proper answer. And for you, Emily, I repeat it once for all—if you are not contented to conform to my directions, and to my way of live, I shall give up the task of overlooking your conduct—I shall no longer trouble myself with your education, but shall send you to board in a convent.'

'Dear madam,' said Emily, bursting into tears, and overcome by the rude suspicions her aunt had expressed, 'how have I deserved these reproofs?' She could say no more; and so very fearful was she of acting with any degree of impropriety in the affair itself, that, at the present moment, Madame Cheron might perhaps have prevailed with her to bind herself by a promise to renounce Valancourt for ever. Her mind, weakened by her terrors, would no longer suffer her to view him as she had formerly done; she feared the error of her own judgment, not that of Madame Cheron, and feared also, that, in her former conversation with him, at La Vallee, she had not conducted herself with sufficient reserve. She knew, that she did not deserve the coarse suspicions, which her aunt had thrown out, but a thousand scruples rose to torment her, such as would never have disturbed the peace of Madame Cheron. Thus rendered anxious to avoid every opportunity of erring, and willing to submit to any restrictions, that her aunt should think proper, she expressed an obedience, to which Madame Cheron did not give much confidence, and which she seemed to consider as the consequence of either fear, or artifice.

'Well, then,' said she, 'promise me that you will neither see this young man, nor write to him without my consent.' 'Dear madam,' replied Emily, 'can you suppose I would do either, unknown to you!' 'I don't know what to suppose; there is no knowing how young women will act. It is difficult to place any confidence in them, for they have seldom sense enough to wish for the respect of the world.'

'Alas, madam!' said Emily, 'I am anxious for my own respect; my father taught me the value of that; he said if I deserved my own esteem, that the world would follow of course.'

'My brother was a good kind of a man,' replied Madame Cheron, 'but he did not know the world. I am sure I have always felt a proper respect for myself, yet—' she stopped, but she might have added, that the world had not always shewn respect to her, and this without impeaching its judgment.

'Well!' resumed Madame Cheron, 'you have not give me the promise, though, that I demand.' Emily readily gave it, and, being then suffered to withdraw, she walked in the garden; tried to compose her spirits, and, at length, arrived at her favourite pavilion at the end of the terrace, where, seating herself at one of the embowered windows, that opened upon a balcony, the stillness and seclusion of the scene allowed her to recollect her thoughts, and to arrange them so as to form a clearer judgment of her former conduct. She endeavoured to review with exactness all the particulars of her conversation with Valancourt at La Vallee, had the satisfaction to observe nothing, that could alarm her delicate pride, and thus to be confirmed in the self-esteem, which was so necessary to her peace. Her mind then became tranquil, and she saw Valancourt amiable and intelligent, as he had formerly appeared, and Madame Cheron neither the one, or the other. The remembrance of her lover, however, brought with it many very painful emotions, for it by no means reconciled her to the thought of resigning him; and, Madame Cheron having already shewn how highly she disapproved of the attachment, she foresaw much suffering from the opposition of interests; yet with all this was mingled a degree of delight, which, in spite of reason, partook of hope. She determined, however, that no consideration should induce her to permit a clandestine correspondence, and to observe in her conversation with Valancourt, should they ever meet again, the same nicety of reserve, which had hitherto marked her conduct. As she repeated the words—'should we ever meet again!' she shrunk as if this was a circumstance, which had never before occurred to her, and tears came to her eyes, which she hastily dried, for she heard footsteps approaching, and then the door of the pavilion open, and, on turning, she saw—Valancourt. An emotion of mingled pleasure, surprise and apprehension pressed so suddenly upon her heart as almost to overcome her spirits; the colour left her cheeks, then returned brighter than before, and she was for a moment unable to speak, or to rise from her chair. His countenance was the mirror, in which she saw her own emotions reflected, and it roused her to self-command. The joy, which had animated his features, when he entered the pavilion, was suddenly repressed, as, approaching, he perceived her agitation, and, in a tremulous voice, enquired after her health. Recovered from her first surprise, she answered him with a tempered smile; but a variety of opposite emotions still assailed her heart, and struggled to subdue the mild dignity of her manner. It was difficult to tell which predominated—the joy of seeing Valancourt, or the terror of her aunt's displeasure, when she should hear of this meeting. After some short and embarrassed conversation, she led him into the gardens, and enquired if he had seen Madame Cheron. 'No,' said he, 'I have not yet seen her, for they told me she was engaged, and as soon as I learned that you were in the gardens, I came hither.' He paused a moment, in great agitation, and then added, 'May I venture to tell you the purport of my visit, without incurring your displeasure, and to hope, that you will not accuse me of precipitation in now availing myself of the permission you once gave me of addressing your family?' Emily, who knew not what to reply, was spared from further perplexity, and was sensible only of fear, when on raising her eyes, she saw Madame Cheron turn into the avenue. As the consciousness of innocence returned, this fear was so far dissipated as to permit her to appear tranquil, and, instead of avoiding her aunt, she advanced with Valancourt to meet her. The look of haughty and impatient displeasure, with which Madame Cheron regarded them, made Emily shrink, who understood from a single glance, that this meeting was believed to have been more than accidental: having mentioned Valancourt's name, she became again too much agitated to remain with them, and returned into the chateau; where she awaited long, in a state of trembling anxiety, the conclusion of the conference. She knew not how to account for Valancourt's visit to her aunt, before he had received the permission he solicited, since she was ignorant of a circumstance, which would have rendered the request useless, even if Madame Cheron had been inclined to grant it. Valancourt, in the agitation of his spirits, had forgotten to date his letter, so that it was impossible for Madame Cheron to return an answer; and,

when he recollected this circumstance, he was, perhaps, not so sorry for the omission as glad of the excuse it allowed him for waiting on her before she could send a refusal.

Madame Cheron had a long conversation with Valancourt, and, when she returned to the chateau, her countenance expressed ill-humour, but not the degree of severity, which Emily had apprehended. 'I have dismissed this young man, at last,' said she, 'and I hope my house will never again be disturbed with similar visits. He assures me, that your interview was not preconcerted.'

'Dear madam!' said Emily in extreme emotion, 'you surely did not ask him the question!' 'Most certainly I did; you could not suppose I should be so imprudent as to neglect it.'

'Good God!' exclaimed Emily, 'what an opinion must he form of me, since you, Madam, could express a suspicion of such ill conduct!'

'It is of very little consequence what opinion he may form of you,' replied her aunt, 'for I have put an end to the affair; but I believe he will not form a worse opinion of me for my prudent conduct. I let him see, that I was not to be trifled with, and that I had more delicacy, than to permit any clandestine correspondence to be carried on in my house.'

Emily had frequently heard Madame Cheron use the word delicacy, but she was now more than usually perplexed to understand how she meant to apply it in this instance, in which her whole conduct appeared to merit the very reverse of the term.

'It was very inconsiderate of my brother,' resumed Madame Cheron, 'to leave the trouble of overlooking your conduct to me; I wish you was well settled in life. But if I find, that I am to be further troubled with such visitors as this M. Valancourt, I shall place you in a convent at once;—so remember the alternative. This young man has the impertinence to own to me,—he owns it! that his fortune is very small, and that he is chiefly dependent on an elder brother and on the profession he has chosen! He should have concealed these circumstances, at least, if he expected to succeed with me. Had he the presumption to suppose I would marry my niece to a person such as he describes himself!'

Emily dried her tears when she heard of the candid confession of Valancourt; and, though the circumstances it discovered were afflicting to her hopes, his artless conduct gave her a degree of pleasure, that overcame every other emotion. But she was compelled, even thus early in life, to observe, that good sense and noble integrity are not always sufficient to cope with folly and narrow cunning; and her heart was pure enough to allow her, even at this trying moment, to look with more pride on the defeat of the former, than with mortification on the conquests of the latter.

Madame Cheron pursued her triumph. 'He has also thought proper to tell me, that he will receive his dismission from no person but yourself; this favour, however, I have absolutely refused him. He shall learn, that it is quite sufficient, that I disapprove him. And I take this opportunity of repeating,—that if you concert any means of interview unknown to me, you shall leave my house immediately.'

'How little do you know me, madam, that you should think such an injunction necessary!' said Emily, trying to suppress her emotion, 'how little of the dear parents, who educated me!'

Madame Cheron now went to dress for an engagement, which she had made for the evening; and Emily, who would gladly have been excused from attending her aunt, did not ask to remain at home lest her request should be attributed to an improper motive. When she retired to her own room, the little fortitude, which had supported her in the presence of her relation, forsook her; she remembered only that Valancourt, whose character appeared more amiable from every circumstance, that unfolded it, was banished from her presence, perhaps, for ever, and she passed the time in weeping, which, according to her aunt's direction, she ought to have employed in dressing. This important duty was, however, quickly dispatched; though, when she joined Madame Cheron at table, her eyes betrayed, that she had been in tears, and drew upon her a severe reproof.

Her efforts to appear cheerful did not entirely fail when she joined the company at the house of Madame Clairval, an elderly widow lady, who had lately come to reside at Tholouse, on an estate of her late husband. She had lived many years at Paris in a splendid style; had naturally a gay temper,

and, since her residence at Tholouse, had given some of the most magnificent entertainments, that had been seen in that neighbourhood.

These excited not only the envy, but the trifling ambition of Madame Cheron, who, since she could not rival the splendour of her festivities, was desirous of being ranked in the number of her most intimate friends. For this purpose she paid her the most obsequious attention, and made a point of being disengaged, whenever she received an invitation from Madame Clairval, of whom she talked, wherever she went, and derived much self-consequence from impressing a belief on her general acquaintance, that they were on the most familiar footing.

The entertainments of this evening consisted of a ball and supper; it was a fancy ball, and the company danced in groups in the gardens, which were very extensive. The high and luxuriant trees, under which the groups assembled, were illuminated with a profusion of lamps, disposed with taste and fancy. The gay and various dresses of the company, some of whom were seated on the turf, conversing at their ease, observing the cotillons, taking refreshments, and sometimes touching sportively a guitar; the gallant manners of the gentlemen, the exquisitely capricious air of the ladies; the light fantastic steps of their dances; the musicians, with the lute, the hautboy, and the tabor, seated at the foot of an elm, and the sylvan scenery of woods around were circumstances, that unitedly formed a characteristic and striking picture of French festivity. Emily surveyed the gaiety of the scene with a melancholy kind of pleasure, and her emotion may be imagined when, as she stood with her aunt, looking at one of the groups, she perceived Valancourt; saw him dancing with a young and beautiful lady, saw him conversing with her with a mixture of attention and familiarity, such as she had seldom observed in his manner. She turned hastily from the scene, and attempted to draw away Madame Cheron, who was conversing with Signor Cavigni, and neither perceived Valancourt, or was willing to be interrupted. A faintness suddenly came over Emily, and, unable to support herself, she sat down on a turf bank beneath the trees, where several other persons were seated. One of these, observing the extreme paleness of her countenance, enquired if she was ill, and begged she would allow him to fetch her a glass of water, for which politeness she thanked him, but did not accept it. Her apprehension lest Valancourt should observe her emotion made her anxious to overcome it, and she succeeded so far as to re-compose her countenance. Madame Cheron was still conversing with Cavigni; and the Count Bauvillers, who had addressed Emily, made some observations upon the scene, to which she answered almost unconsciously, for her mind was still occupied with the idea of Valancourt, to whom it was with extreme uneasiness that she remained so near. Some remarks, however, which the Count made upon the dance obliged her to turn her eyes towards it, and, at that moment, Valancourt's met hers. Her colour faded again, she felt, that she was relapsing into faintness, and instantly averted her looks, but not before she had observed the altered countenance of Valancourt, on perceiving her. She would have left the spot immediately, had she not been conscious, that this conduct would have shewn him more obviously the interest he held in her heart; and, having tried to attend to the Count's conversation, and to join in it, she, at length, recovered her spirits. But, when he made some observation on Valancourt's partner, the fear of shewing that she was interested in the remark, would have betrayed it to him, had not the Count, while he spoke, looked towards the person of whom he was speaking. 'The lady,' said he, 'dancing with that young Chevalier, who appears to be accomplished in every thing, but in dancing, is ranked among the beauties of Tholouse. She is handsome, and her fortune will be very large. I hope she will make a better choice in a partner for life than she has done in a partner for the dance, for I observe he has just put the set into great confusion; he does nothing but commit blunders. I am surprised, that, with his air and figure, he has not taken more care to accomplish himself in dancing.'

Emily, whose heart trembled at every word, that was now uttered, endeavoured to turn the conversation from Valancourt, by enquiring the name of the lady, with whom he danced; but, before the Count could reply, the dance concluded, and Emily, perceiving that Valancourt was coming towards her, rose and joined Madame Cheron.

'Here is the Chevalier Valancourt, madam,' said she in a whisper, 'pray let us go.' Her aunt immediately moved on, but not before Valancourt had reached them, who bowed lowly to Madame Cheron, and with an earnest and dejected look to Emily, with whom, notwithstanding all her effort, an air of more than common reserve prevailed. The presence of Madame Cheron prevented Valancourt from remaining, and he passed on with a countenance, whose melancholy reproached her for having increased it. Emily was called from the musing fit, into which she had fallen, by the Count Bauvillers, who was known to her aunt.

'I have your pardon to beg, ma'amselle,' said he, 'for a rudeness, which you will readily believe was quite unintentional. I did not know, that the Chevalier was your acquaintance, when I so freely criticised his dancing.' Emily blushed and smiled, and Madame Cheron spared her the difficulty of replying. 'If you mean the person, who has just passed us,' said she, 'I can assure you he is no acquaintance of either mine, or ma'amselle St. Aubert's: I know nothing of him.'

'O! that is the Chevalier Valancourt,' said Cavigni carelessly, and looking back. 'You know him then?' said Madame Cheron. 'I am not acquainted with him,' replied Cavigni. 'You don't know, then, the reason I have to call him impertinent;—he has had the presumption to admire my niece!'

'If every man deserves the title of impertinent, who admires ma'amselle St. Aubert,' replied Cavigni, 'I fear there are a great many impertinents, and I am willing to acknowledge myself one of the number.'

'O Signor!' said Madame Cheron, with an affected smile, 'I perceive you have learnt the art of complimenting, since you came into France. But it is cruel to compliment children, since they mistake flattery for truth.'

Cavigni turned away his face for a moment, and then said with a studied air, 'Whom then are we to compliment, madam? for it would be absurd to compliment a woman of refined understanding; SHE is above all praise.' As he finished the sentence he gave Emily a sly look, and the smile, that had lurked in his eye, stole forth. She perfectly understood it, and blushed for Madame Cheron, who replied, 'You are perfectly right, signor, no woman of understanding can endure compliment.'

'I have heard Signor Montoni say,' rejoined Cavigni, 'that he never knew but one woman who deserved it.'

'Well!' exclaimed Madame Cheron, with a short laugh, and a smile of unutterable complacency, 'and who could she be?'

'O!' replied Cavigni, 'it is impossible to mistake her, for certainly there is not more than one woman in the world, who has both the merit to deserve compliment and the wit to refuse it. Most women reverse the case entirely.' He looked again at Emily, who blushed deeper than before for her aunt, and turned from him with displeasure.

'Well, signor!' said Madame Cheron, 'I protest you are a Frenchman; I never heard a foreigner say any thing half so gallant as that!'

'True, madam,' said the Count, who had been some time silent, and with a low bow, 'but the gallantry of the compliment had been utterly lost, but for the ingenuity that discovered the application.'

Madame Cheron did not perceive the meaning of this too satirical sentence, and she, therefore, escaped the pain, which Emily felt on her account. 'O! here comes Signor Montoni himself,' said her aunt, 'I protest I will tell him all the fine things you have been saying to me.' The Signor, however, passed at this moment into another walk. 'Pray, who is it, that has so much engaged your friend this evening?' asked Madame Cheron, with an air of chagrin, 'I have not seen him once.'

'He had a very particular engagement with the Marquis La Riviere,' replied Cavigni, 'which has detained him, I perceive, till this moment, or he would have done himself the honour of paying his respects to you, madam, sooner, as he commissioned me to say. But, I know not how it is—your conversation is so fascinating—that it can charm even memory, I think, or I should certainly have delivered my friend's apology before.'

'The apology, sir, would have been more satisfactory from himself,' said Madame Cheron, whose vanity was more mortified by Montoni's neglect, than flattered by Cavigni's compliment. Her manner, at this moment, and Cavigni's late conversation, now awakened a suspicion in Emily's mind, which, notwithstanding that some recollections served to confirm it, appeared preposterous. She thought she perceived, that Montoni was paying serious addresses to her aunt, and that she not only accepted them, but was jealously watchful of any appearance of neglect on his part.—That Madame Cheron at her years should elect a second husband was ridiculous, though her vanity made it not impossible; but that Montoni, with his discernment, his figure, and pretensions, should make a choice of Madame Cheron—appeared most wonderful. Her thoughts, however, did not dwell long on the subject; nearer interests pressed upon them; Valancourt, rejected of her aunt, and Valancourt dancing with a gay and beautiful partner, alternately tormented her mind. As she passed along the gardens she looked timidly forward, half fearing and half hoping that he might appear in the crowd; and the disappointment she felt on not seeing him, told her, that she had hoped more than she had feared.

Montoni soon after joined the party. He muttered over some short speech about regret for having been so long detained elsewhere, when he knew he should have the pleasure of seeing Madame Cheron here; and she, receiving the apology with the air of a pettish girl, addressed herself entirely to Cavigni, who looked archly at Montoni, as if he would have said, 'I will not triumph over you too much; I will have the goodness to bear my honours meekly; but look sharp, Signor, or I shall certainly run away with your prize.'

The supper was served in different pavilions in the gardens, as well as in one large saloon of the chateau, and with more of taste, than either of splendour, or even of plenty. Madame Cheron and her party supped with Madame Clairval in the saloon, and Emily, with difficulty, disguised her emotion, when she saw Valancourt placed at the same table with herself. There, Madame Cheron having surveyed him with high displeasure, said to some person who sat next to her, 'Pray, who IS that young man?' 'It is the Chevalier Valancourt,' was the answer. 'Yes, I am not ignorant of his name, but who is this Chevalier Valancourt that thus intrudes himself at this table?' The attention of the person, who whom she spoke, was called off before she received a second reply. The table, at which they sat, was very long, and, Valancourt being seated, with his partner, near the bottom, and Emily near the top, the distance between them may account for his not immediately perceiving her. She avoided looking to that end of the table, but whenever her eyes happened to glance towards it, she observed him conversing with his beautiful companion, and the observation did not contribute to restore her peace, any more than the accounts she heard of the fortune and accomplishments of this same lady.

Madame Cheron, to whom these remarks were sometimes addressed, because they supported topics for trivial conversation, seemed indefatigable in her attempts to depreciate Valancourt, towards whom she felt all the petty resentment of a narrow pride. 'I admire the lady,' said she, 'but I must condemn her choice of a partner.' 'Oh, the Chevalier Valancourt is one of the most accomplished young men we have,' replied the lady, to whom this remark was addressed: 'it is whispered, that Mademoiselle D'Emery, and her large fortune, are to be his.'

'Impossible!' exclaimed Madame Cheron, reddening with vexation, 'it is impossible that she can be so destitute of taste; he has so little the air of a person of condition, that, if I did not see him at the table of Madame Clairval, I should never have suspected him to be one. I have besides particular reasons for believing the report to be erroneous.'

'I cannot doubt the truth of it,' replied the lady gravely, disgusted by the abrupt contradiction she had received, concerning her opinion of Valancourt's merit. 'You will, perhaps, doubt it,' said Madame Cheron, 'when I assure you, that it was only this morning that I rejected his suit.' This was said without any intention of imposing the meaning it conveyed, but simply from a habit of considering herself to be the most important person in every affair that concerned her niece, and because literally she had rejected Valancourt. 'Your reasons are indeed such as cannot be doubted,' replied the lady, with an ironical smile. 'Any more than the discernment of the Chevalier Valancourt,' added Cavigni,

who stood by the chair of Madame Cheron, and had heard her arrogate to herself, as he thought, a distinction which had been paid to her niece. 'His discernment MAY be justly questioned, Signor,' said Madame Cheron, who was not flattered by what she understood to be an encomium on Emily.

'Alas!' exclaimed Cavigni, surveying Madame Cheron with affected ecstasy, 'how vain is that assertion, while that face—that shape—that air—combine to refute it! Unhappy Valancourt! his discernment has been his destruction.'

Emily looked surprised and embarrassed; the lady, who had lately spoke, astonished, and Madame Cheron, who, though she did not perfectly understand this speech, was very ready to believe herself complimented by it, said smilingly, 'O Signor! you are very gallant; but those, who hear you vindicate the Chevalier's discernment, will suppose that I am the object of it.'

'They cannot doubt it,' replied Cavigni, bowing low.

'And would not that be very mortifying, Signor?'

'Unquestionably it would,' said Cavigni.

'I cannot endure the thought,' said Madame Cheron.

'It is not to be endured,' replied Cavigni.

'What can be done to prevent so humiliating a mistake?' rejoined Madame Cheron.

'Alas! I cannot assist you,' replied Cavigni, with a deliberating air. 'Your only chance of refuting the calumny, and of making people understand what you wish them to believe, is to persist in your first assertion; for, when they are told of the Chevalier's want of discernment, it is possible they may suppose he never presumed to distress you with his admiration.—But then again—that diffidence, which renders you so insensible to your own perfections—they will consider this, and Valancourt's taste will not be doubted, though you arraign it. In short, they will, in spite of your endeavours, continue to believe, what might very naturally have occurred to them without any hint of mine—that the Chevalier has taste enough to admire a beautiful woman.'

'All this is very distressing!' said Madame Cheron, with a profound sigh.

'May I be allowed to ask what is so distressing?' said Madame Clairval, who was struck with the rueful countenance and doleful accent, with which this was delivered.

'It is a delicate subject,' replied Madame Cheron, 'a very mortifying one to me.' 'I am concerned to hear it,' said Madame Clairval, 'I hope nothing has occurred, this evening, particularly to distress you?' 'Alas, yes! within this half hour; and I know not where the report may end;—my pride was never so shocked before, but I assure you the report is totally void of foundation.' 'Good God!' exclaimed Madame Clairval,' what can be done? Can you point out any way, by which I can assist, or console you?'

'The only way, by which you can do either,' replied Madame Cheron, 'is to contradict the report wherever you go.'

'Well! but pray inform me what I am to contradict.'

'It is so very humiliating, that I know not how to mention it,' continued Madame Cheron, 'but you shall judge. Do you observe that young man seated near the bottom of the table, who is conversing with Mademoiselle D'Emery?' 'Yes, I perceive whom you mean.' 'You observe how little he has the air of a person of condition; I was saying just now, that I should not have thought him a gentleman, if I had not seen him at this table.' 'Well! but the report,' said Madame Clairval, 'let me understand the subject of your distress.' 'Ah! the subject of my distress,' replied Madame Cheron; 'this person, whom nobody knows—(I beg pardon, madam, I did not consider what I said)—this impertinent young man, having had the presumption to address my niece, has, I fear, given rise to a report, that he had declared himself my admirer. Now only consider how very mortifying such a report must be! You, I know, will feel for my situation. A woman of my condition!—think how degrading even the rumour of such an alliance must be.'

'Degrading indeed, my poor friend!' said Madame Clairval. 'You may rely upon it I will contradict the report wherever I go;' as she said which, she turned her attention upon another part of

the company; and Cavigni, who had hitherto appeared a grave spectator of the scene, now fearing he should be unable to smother the laugh, that convulsed him, walked abruptly away.

'I perceive you do not know,' said the lady who sat near Madame Cheron, 'that the gentleman you have been speaking of is Madame Clairval's nephew!' 'Impossible!' exclaimed Madame Cheron, who now began to perceive, that she had been totally mistaken in her judgment of Valancourt, and to praise him aloud with as much servility, as she had before censured him with frivolous malignity.

Emily, who, during the greater part of this conversation, had been so absorbed in thought as to be spared the pain of hearing it, was now extremely surprised by her aunt's praise of Valancourt, with whose relationship to Madame Clairval she was unacquainted; but she was not sorry when Madame Cheron, who, though she now tried to appear unconcerned, was really much embarrassed, prepared to withdraw immediately after supper. Montoni then came to hand Madame Cheron to her carriage, and Cavigni, with an arch solemnity of countenance, followed with Emily, who, as she wished them good night, and drew up the glass, saw Valancourt among the crowd at the gates. Before the carriage drove off, he disappeared. Madame Cheron forbore to mention him to Emily, and, as soon as they reached the chateau, they separated for the night.

On the following morning, as Emily sat at breakfast with her aunt, a letter was brought to her, of which she knew the handwriting upon the cover; and, as she received it with a trembling hand, Madame Cheron hastily enquired from whom it came. Emily, with her leave, broke the seal, and, observing the signature of Valancourt, gave it unread to her aunt, who received it with impatience; and, as she looked it over, Emily endeavoured to read on her countenance its contents. Having returned the letter to her niece, whose eyes asked if she might examine it, 'Yes, read it, child,' said Madame Cheron, in a manner less severe than she had expected, and Emily had, perhaps, never before so willingly obeyed her aunt. In this letter Valancourt said little of the interview of the preceding day, but concluded with declaring, that he would accept his dismission from Emily only, and with entreating, that she would allow him to wait upon her, on the approaching evening. When she read this, she was astonished at the moderation of Madame Cheron, and looked at her with timid expectation, as she said sorrowfully—'What am I to say, madam?'

'Why—we must see the young man, I believe,' replied her aunt, 'and hear what he has further to say for himself. You may tell him he may come.' Emily dared scarcely credit what she heard. 'Yet, stay,' added Madame Cheron, 'I will tell him so myself.' She called for pen and ink; Emily still not daring to trust the emotions she felt, and almost sinking beneath them. Her surprise would have been less had she overheard, on the preceding evening, what Madame Cheron had not forgotten—that Valancourt was the nephew of Madame Clairval.

What were the particulars of her aunt's note Emily did not learn, but the result was a visit from Valancourt in the evening, whom Madame Cheron received alone, and they had a long conversation before Emily was called down. When she entered the room, her aunt was conversing with complacency, and she saw the eyes of Valancourt, as he impatiently rose, animated with hope.

'We have been talking over this affair,' said Madame Cheron, 'the chevalier has been telling me, that the late Monsieur Clairval was the brother of the Countess de Duvarney, his mother. I only wish he had mentioned his relationship to Madame Clairval before; I certainly should have considered that circumstance as a sufficient introduction to my house.' Valancourt bowed, and was going to address Emily, but her aunt prevented him. 'I have, therefore, consented that you shall receive his visits; and, though I will not bind myself by any promise, or say, that I shall consider him as my nephew, yet I shall permit the intercourse, and shall look forward to any further connection as an event, which may possibly take place in a course of years, provided the chevalier rises in his profession, or any circumstance occurs, which may make it prudent for him to take a wife. But Mons. Valancourt will observe, and you too, Emily, that, till that happens, I positively forbid any thoughts of marrying.'

Emily's countenance, during this coarse speech, varied every instant, and, towards its conclusion, her distress had so much increased, that she was on the point of leaving the room.

Valancourt, meanwhile, scarcely less embarrassed, did not dare to look at her, for whom he was thus distressed; but, when Madame Cheron was silent, he said, 'Flattering, madam, as your approbation is to me—highly as I am honoured by it—I have yet so much to fear, that I scarcely dare to hope.' 'Pray, sir, explain yourself,' said Madame Cheron; an unexpected requisition, which embarrassed Valancourt again, and almost overcame him with confusion, at circumstances, on which, had he been only a spectator of the scene, he would have smiled.

'Till I receive Mademoiselle St. Aubert's permission to accept your indulgence,' said he, falteringly—'till she allows me to hope—'

'O! is that all?' interrupted Madame Cheron. 'Well, I will take upon me to answer for her. But at the same time, sir, give me leave to observe to you, that I am her guardian, and that I expect, in every instance, that my will is hers.'

As she said this, she rose and quitted the room, leaving Emily and Valancourt in a state of mutual embarrassment; and, when Valancourt's hopes enabled him to overcome his fears, and to address her with the zeal and sincerity so natural to him, it was a considerable time before she was sufficiently recovered to hear with distinctness his solicitations and inquiries.

The conduct of Madame Cheron in this affair had been entirely governed by selfish vanity. Valancourt, in his first interview, had with great candour laid open to her the true state of his present circumstances, and his future expectancies, and she, with more prudence than humanity, had absolutely and abruptly rejected his suit. She wished her niece to marry ambitiously, not because she desired to see her in possession of the happiness, which rank and wealth are usually believed to bestow, but because she desired to partake the importance, which such an alliance would give. When, therefore, she discovered that Valancourt was the nephew of a person of so much consequence as Madame Clairval, she became anxious for the connection, since the prospect it afforded of future fortune and distinction for Emily, promised the exaltation she coveted for herself. Her calculations concerning fortune in this alliance were guided rather by her wishes, than by any hint of Valancourt, or strong appearance of probability; and, when she rested her expectation on the wealth of Madame Clairval, she seemed totally to have forgotten, that the latter had a daughter. Valancourt, however, had not forgotten this circumstance, and the consideration of it had made him so modest in his expectations from Madame Clairval, that he had not even named the relationship in his first conversation with Madame Cheron. But, whatever might be the future fortune of Emily, the present distinction, which the connection would afford for herself, was certain, since the splendour of Madame Clairval's establishment was such as to excite the general envy and partial imitation of the neighbourhood. Thus had she consented to involve her niece in an engagement, to which she saw only a distant and uncertain conclusion, with as little consideration of her happiness, as when she had so precipitately forbade it: for though she herself possessed the means of rendering this union not only certain, but prudent, yet to do so was no part of her present intention.

From this period Valancourt made frequent visits to Madame Cheron, and Emily passed in his society the happiest hours she had known since the death of her father. They were both too much engaged by the present moments to give serious consideration to the future. They loved and were beloved, and saw not, that the very attachment, which formed the delight of their present days, might possibly occasion the sufferings of years. Meanwhile, Madame Cheron's intercourse with Madame Clairval became more frequent than before, and her vanity was already gratified by the opportunity of proclaiming, wherever she went, the attachment that subsisted between their nephew and niece.

Montoni was now also become a daily guest at the chateau, and Emily was compelled to observe, that he really was a suitor, and a favoured suitor, to her aunt.

Thus passed the winter months, not only in peace, but in happiness, to Valancourt and Emily; the station of his regiment being so near Tholouse, as to allow this frequent intercourse. The pavilion on the terrace was the favourite scene of their interviews, and there Emily, with Madame Cheron, would work, while Valancourt read aloud works of genius and taste, listened to her enthusiasm,

expressed his own, and caught new opportunities of observing, that their minds were formed to constitute the happiness of each other, the same taste, the same noble and benevolent sentiments animating each.

CHAPTER XIII

As when a shepherd of the Hebrid-Isles,
Placed far amid the melancholy main,
(Whether it be lone fancy him beguiles,
Or that aerial beings sometimes deign
To stand embodied to our senses plain)
Sees on the naked hill, or valley low,
The whilst in ocean Phoebus dips his wain,
A vast assembly moving to and fro,
Then all at once in air dissolves the wondrous show.

CASTLE OF INDOLENCE

Madame Cheron's avarice at length yielded to her vanity. Some very splendid entertainments, which Madame Clairval had given, and the general adulation, which was paid her, made the former more anxious than before to secure an alliance, that would so much exalt her in her own opinion and in that of the world. She proposed terms for the immediate marriage of her niece, and offered to give Emily a dower, provided Madame Clairval observed equal terms, on the part of her nephew. Madame Clairval listened to the proposal, and, considering that Emily was the apparent heiress of her aunt's wealth, accepted it. Meanwhile, Emily knew nothing of the transaction, till Madame Cheron informed her, that she must make preparation for the nuptials, which would be celebrated without further delay; then, astonished and wholly unable to account for this sudden conclusion, which Valancourt had not solicited (for he was ignorant of what had passed between the elder ladies, and had not dared to hope such good fortune), she decisively objected to it. Madame Cheron, however, quite as jealous of contradiction now, as she had been formerly, contended for a speedy marriage with as much vehemence as she had formerly opposed whatever had the most remote possibility of leading to it; and Emily's scruples disappeared, when she again saw Valancourt, who was now informed of the happiness, designed for him, and came to claim a promise of it from herself.

While preparations were making for these nuptials, Montoni became the acknowledged lover of Madame Cheron; and, though Madame Clairval was much displeased, when she heard of the approaching connection, and was willing to prevent that of Valancourt with Emily, her conscience told her, that she had no right thus to trifle with their peace, and Madame Clairval, though a woman of fashion, was far less advanced than her friend in the art of deriving satisfaction from distinction and admiration, rather than from conscience.

Emily observed with concern the ascendancy, which Montoni had acquired over Madame Cheron, as well as the increasing frequency of his visits; and her own opinion of this Italian was confirmed by that of Valancourt, who had always expressed a dislike of him. As she was, one morning, sitting at work in the pavilion, enjoying the pleasant freshness of spring, whose colours were now spread upon the landscape, and listening to Valancourt, who was reading, but who often laid aside the book to converse, she received a summons to attend Madame Cheron immediately, and had scarcely entered the dressing-room, when she observed with surprise the dejection of her aunt's countenance, and the contrasted gaiety of her dress. 'So, niece!'—said Madame, and she stopped under some degree of embarrassment.—'I sent for you—I—I wished to see you; I have news to tell you. From this hour you must consider the Signor Montoni as your uncle—we were married this morning.'

Astonished—not so much at the marriage, as at the secrecy with which it had been concluded, and the agitation with which it was announced, Emily, at length, attributed the privacy to the wish of Montoni, rather than of her aunt. His wife, however, intended, that the contrary should be believed,

and therefore added, 'you see I wished to avoid a bustle; but now the ceremony is over I shall do so no longer; and I wish to announce to my servants that they must receive the Signor Montoni for their master.' Emily made a feeble attempt to congratulate her on these apparently imprudent nuptials. 'I shall now celebrate my marriage with some splendour,' continued Madame Montoni, 'and to save time I shall avail myself of the preparation that has been made for yours, which will, of course, be delayed a little while. Such of your wedding clothes as are ready I shall expect you will appear in, to do honour to this festival. I also wish you to inform Monsieur Valancourt, that I have changed my name, and he will acquaint Madame Clairval. In a few days I shall give a grand entertainment, at which I shall request their presence.'

Emily was so lost in surprise and various thought, that she made Madame Montoni scarcely any reply, but, at her desire, she returned to inform Valancourt of what had passed. Surprise was not his predominant emotion on hearing of these hasty nuptials; and, when he learned, that they were to be the means of delaying his own, and that the very ornaments of the chateau, which had been prepared to grace the nuptial day of his Emily, were to be degraded to the celebration of Madame Montoni's, grief and indignation agitated him alternately. He could conceal neither from the observation of Emily, whose efforts to abstract him from these serious emotions, and to laugh at the apprehensive considerations, that assailed him, were ineffectual; and, when, at length, he took leave, there was an earnest tenderness in his manner, that extremely affected her; she even shed tears, when he disappeared at the end of the terrace, yet knew not exactly why she should do so.

Montoni now took possession of the chateau, and the command of its inhabitants, with the ease of a man, who had long considered it to be his own. His friend Cavigni, who had been extremely serviceable, in having paid Madame Cheron the attention and flattery, which she required, but from which Montoni too often revolted, had apartments assigned to him, and received from the domestics an equal degree of obedience with the master of the mansion.

Within a few days, Madame Montoni, as she had promised, gave a magnificent entertainment to a very numerous company, among whom was Valancourt; but at which Madame Clairval excused herself from attending. There was a concert, ball and supper. Valancourt was, of course, Emily's partner, and though, when he gave a look to the decorations of the apartments, he could not but remember, that they were designed for other festivities, than those they now contributed to celebrate, he endeavoured to check his concern by considering, that a little while only would elapse before they would be given to their original destination. During this evening, Madame Montoni danced, laughed and talked incessantly; while Montoni, silent, reserved and somewhat haughty, seemed weary of the parade, and of the frivolous company it had drawn together.

This was the first and the last entertainment, given in celebration of their nuptials. Montoni, though the severity of his temper and the gloominess of his pride prevented him from enjoying such festivities, was extremely willing to promote them. It was seldom, that he could meet in any company a man of more address, and still seldomer one of more understanding, than himself; the balance of advantage in such parties, or in the connections, which might arise from them, must, therefore, be on his side; and, knowing, as he did, the selfish purposes, for which they are generally frequented, he had no objection to measure his talents of dissimulation with those of any other competitor for distinction and plunder. But his wife, who, when her own interest was immediately concerned, had sometimes more discernment than vanity, acquired a consciousness of her inferiority to other women, in personal attractions, which, uniting with the jealousy natural to the discovery, counteracted his readiness for mingling with all the parties Tholouse could afford. Till she had, as she supposed, the affections of an husband to lose, she had no motive for discovering the unwelcome truth, and it had never obtruded itself upon her; but, now that it influenced her policy, she opposed her husband's inclination for company, with the more eagerness, because she believed him to be really as well received in the female society of the place, as, during his addresses to her, he had affected to be.

A few weeks only had elapsed, since the marriage, when Madame Montoni informed Emily, that the Signor intended to return to Italy, as soon as the necessary preparation could be made for so long a journey. 'We shall go to Venice,' said she, 'where the Signor has a fine mansion, and from thence to his estate in Tuscany. Why do you look so grave, child?—You, who are so fond of a romantic country and fine views, will doubtless be delighted with this journey.'

'Am I then to be of the party, madam?' said Emily, with extreme surprise and emotion. 'Most certainly,' replied her aunt, 'how could you imagine we should leave you behind? But I see you are thinking of the Chevalier; he is not yet, I believe, informed of the journey, but he very soon will be so. Signor Montoni is gone to acquaint Madame Clairval of our journey, and to say, that the proposed connection between the families must from this time be thought of no more.'

The unfeeling manner, in which Madame Montoni thus informed her niece, that she must be separated, perhaps for ever, from the man, with whom she was on the point of being united for life, added to the dismay, which she must otherwise have suffered at such intelligence. When she could speak, she asked the cause of the sudden change in Madame's sentiments towards Valancourt, but the only reply she could obtain was, that the Signor had forbade the connection, considering it to be greatly inferior to what Emily might reasonably expect.

'I now leave the affair entirely to the Signor,' added Madame Montoni, 'but I must say, that M. Valancourt never was a favourite with me, and I was overpersuaded, or I should not have given my consent to the connection. I was weak enough—I am so foolish sometimes!—to suffer other people's uneasiness to affect me, and so my better judgment yielded to your affliction. But the Signor has very properly pointed out the folly of this, and he shall not have to reprove me a second time. I am determined, that you shall submit to those, who know how to guide you better than yourself—I am determined, that you shall be conformable.'

Emily would have been astonished at the assertions of this eloquent speech, had not her mind been so overwhelmed by the sudden shock it had received, that she scarcely heard a word of what was latterly addressed to her. Whatever were the weaknesses of Madame Montoni, she might have avoided to accuse herself with those of compassion and tenderness to the feelings of others, and especially to those of Emily. It was the same ambition, that lately prevailed upon her to solicit an alliance with Madame Clairval's family, which induced her to withdraw from it, now that her marriage with Montoni had exalted her self-consequence, and, with it, her views for her niece.

Emily was, at this time, too much affected to employ either remonstrance, or entreaty on this topic; and when, at length, she attempted the latter, her emotion overcame her speech, and she retired to her apartment, to think, if in the present state of her mind to think was possible, upon this sudden and overwhelming subject. It was very long, before her spirits were sufficiently composed to permit the reflection, which, when it came, was dark and even terrible. She saw, that Montoni sought to aggrandise himself in his disposal of her, and it occurred, that his friend Cavigni was the person, for whom he was interested. The prospect of going to Italy was still rendered darker, when she considered the tumultuous situation of that country, then torn by civil commotion, where every petty state was at war with its neighbour, and even every castle liable to the attack of an invader. She considered the person, to whose immediate guidance she would be committed, and the vast distance, that was to separate her from Valancourt, and, at the recollection of him, every other image vanished from her mind, and every thought was again obscured by grief.

In this perturbed state she passed some hours, and, when she was summoned to dinner, she entreated permission to remain in her own apartment; but Madame Montoni was alone, and the request was refused. Emily and her aunt said little during the repast; the one occupied by her griefs, the other engrossed by the disappointment, which the unexpected absence of Montoni occasioned; for not only was her vanity piqued by the neglect, but her jealousy alarmed by what she considered as a mysterious engagement. When the cloth was drawn and they were alone, Emily renewed the mention of Valancourt; but her aunt, neither softened to pity, or awakened to remorse, became enraged, that

her will should be opposed, and the authority of Montoni questioned, though this was done by Emily with her usual gentleness, who, after a long, and torturing conversation, retired in tears.

As she crossed the hall, a person entered it by the great door, whom, as her eyes hastily glanced that way, she imagined to be Montoni, and she was passing on with quicker steps, when she heard the well-known voice of Valancourt.

'Emily, O! my Emily!' cried he in a tone faltering with impatience, while she turned, and, as he advanced, was alarmed at the expression of his countenance and the eager desperation of his air. 'In tears, Emily! I would speak with you,' said he, 'I have much to say; conduct me to where we may converse. But you tremble—you are ill! Let me lead you to a seat.'

He observed the open door of an apartment, and hastily took her hand to lead her thither; but she attempted to withdraw it, and said, with a languid smile, 'I am better already; if you wish to see my aunt she is in the dining-parlour.' 'I must speak with YOU, my Emily,' replied Valancourt, 'Good God! is it already come to this? Are you indeed so willing to resign me?' But this is an improper place—I am overheard. Let me entreat your attention, if only for a few minutes.'—'When you have seen my aunt,' said Emily. 'I was wretched enough when I came hither,' exclaimed Valancourt, 'do not increase my misery by this coldness—this cruel refusal.'

The despondency, with which he spoke this, affected her almost to tears, but she persisted in refusing to hear him, till he had conversed with Madame Montoni. 'Where is her husband, where, then, is Montoni?' said Valancourt, in an altered tone: 'it is he, to whom I must speak.'

Emily, terrified for the consequence of the indignation, that flashed in his eyes, tremblingly assured him, that Montoni was not at home, and entreated he would endeavour to moderate his resentment. At the tremulous accents of her voice, his eyes softened instantly from wildness into tenderness. 'You are ill, Emily,' said he, 'they will destroy us both! Forgive me, that I dared to doubt your affection.'

Emily no longer opposed him, as he led her into an adjoining parlour; the manner, in which he had named Montoni, had so much alarmed her for his own safety, that she was now only anxious to prevent the consequences of his just resentment. He listened to her entreaties, with attention, but replied to them only with looks of despondency and tenderness, concealing, as much as possible, the sentiments he felt towards Montoni, that he might soothe the apprehensions, which distressed her. But she saw the veil he had spread over his resentment, and, his assumed tranquillity only alarming her more, she urged, at length, the impolicy of forcing an interview with Montoni, and of taking any measure, which might render their separation irremediable. Valancourt yielded to these remonstrances, and her affecting entreaties drew from him a promise, that, however Montoni might persist in his design of disuniting them, he would not seek to redress his wrongs by violence. 'For my sake,' said Emily, 'let the consideration of what I should suffer deter you from such a mode of revenge!' 'For your sake, Emily,' replied Valancourt, his eyes filling with tears of tenderness and grief, while he gazed upon her. 'Yes—yes—I shall subdue myself. But, though I have given you my solemn promise to do this, do not expect, that I can tamely submit to the authority of Montoni; if I could, I should be unworthy of you. Yet, O Emily! how long may he condemn me to live without you,—how long may it be before you return to France!'

Emily endeavoured to sooth him with assurances of her unalterable affection, and by representing, that, in little more than a year, she should be her own mistress, as far as related to her aunt, from whose guardianship her age would then release her; assurances, which gave little consolation to Valancourt, who considered, that she would then be in Italy and in the power of those, whose dominion over her would not cease with their rights; but he affected to be consoled by them. Emily, comforted by the promise she had obtained, and by his apparent composure, was about to leave him, when her aunt entered the room. She threw a glance of sharp reproof upon her niece, who immediately withdrew, and of haughty displeasure upon Valancourt.

'This is not the conduct I should have expected from you, sir;' said she, 'I did not expect to see you in my house, after you had been informed, that your visits were no longer agreeable, much less, that you would seek a clandestine interview with my niece, and that she would grant one.'

Valancourt, perceiving it necessary to vindicate Emily from such a design, explained, that the purpose of his own visit had been to request an interview with Montoni, and he then entered upon the subject of it, with the tempered spirit which the sex, rather than the respectability, of Madame Montoni, demanded.

His expostulations were answered with severe rebuke; she lamented again, that her prudence had ever yielded to what she termed compassion, and added, that she was so sensible of the folly of her former consent, that, to prevent the possibility of a repetition, she had committed the affair entirely to the conduct of Signor Montoni.

The feeling eloquence of Valancourt, however, at length, made her sensible in some measure of her unworthy conduct, and she became susceptible to shame, but not remorse: she hated Valancourt, who awakened her to this painful sensation, and, in proportion as she grew dissatisfied with herself, her abhorrence of him increased. This was also the more inveterate, because his tempered words and manner were such as, without accusing her, compelled her to accuse herself, and neither left her a hope, that the odious portrait was the caricature of his prejudice, or afforded her an excuse for expressing the violent resentment, with which she contemplated it. At length, her anger rose to such an height, that Valancourt was compelled to leave the house abruptly, lest he should forfeit his own esteem by an intemperate reply. He was then convinced, that from Madame Montoni he had nothing to hope, for what of either pity, or justice could be expected from a person, who could feel the pain of guilt, without the humility of repentance?

To Montoni he looked with equal despondency, since it was nearly evident, that this plan of separation originated with him, and it was not probable, that he would relinquish his own views to entreaties, or remonstrances, which he must have foreseen and have been prepared to resist. Yet, remembering his promise to Emily, and more solicitous, concerning his love, than jealous of his consequence, Valancourt was careful to do nothing that might unnecessarily irritate Montoni, he wrote to him, therefore, not to demand an interview, but to solicit one, and, having done this, he endeavoured to wait with calmness his reply.

Madame Clairval was passive in the affair. When she gave her approbation to Valancourt's marriage, it was in the belief, that Emily would be the heiress of Madame Montoni's fortune; and, though, upon the nuptials of the latter, when she perceived the fallacy of this expectation, her conscience had withheld her from adopting any measure to prevent the union, her benevolence was not sufficiently active to impel her towards any step, that might now promote it. She was, on the contrary, secretly pleased, that Valancourt was released from an engagement, which she considered to be as inferior, in point of fortune, to his merit, as his alliance was thought by Montoni to be humiliating to the beauty of Emily; and, though her pride was wounded by this rejection of a member of her family, she disdained to shew resentment otherwise, than by silence.

Montoni, in his reply to Valancourt, said, that as an interview could neither remove the objections of the one, or overcome the wishes of the other, it would serve only to produce useless altercation between them. He, therefore, thought proper to refuse it.

In consideration of the policy, suggested by Emily, and of his promise to her, Valancourt restrained the impulse, that urged him to the house of Montoni, to demand what had been denied to his entreaties. He only repeated his solicitations to see him; seconding them with all the arguments his situation could suggest. Thus several days passed, in remonstrance, on one side, and inflexible denial, on the other; for, whether it was fear, or shame, or the hatred, which results from both, that made Montoni shun the man he had injured, he was peremptory in his refusal, and was neither softened to pity by the agony, which Valancourt's letters pourtrayed, or awakened to a repentance of his own injustice by the strong remonstrances he employed. At length, Valancourt's letters were

returned unopened, and then, in the first moments of passionate despair, he forgot every promise to Emily, except the solemn one, which bound him to avoid violence, and hastened to Montoni's chateau, determined to see him by whatever other means might be necessary. Montoni was denied, and Valancourt, when he afterwards enquired for Madame, and Ma'amselle St. Aubert, was absolutely refused admittance by the servants. Not choosing to submit himself to a contest with these, he, at length, departed, and, returning home in a state of mind approaching to frenzy, wrote to Emily of what had passed, expressed without restraint all the agony of his heart, and entreated, that, since he must not otherwise hope to see her immediately, she would allow him an interview unknown to Montoni. Soon after he had dispatched this, his passions becoming more temperate, he was sensible of the error he had committed in having given Emily a new subject of distress in the strong mention of his own suffering, and would have given half the world, had it been his, to recover the letter. Emily, however, was spared the pain she must have received from it by the suspicious policy of Madame Montoni, who had ordered, that all letters, addressed to her niece, should be delivered to herself, and who, after having perused this and indulged the expressions of resentment, which Valancourt's mention of Montoni provoked, had consigned it to the flames.

Montoni, meanwhile, every day more impatient to leave France, gave repeated orders for dispatch to the servants employed in preparations for the journey, and to the persons, with whom he was transacting some particular business. He preserved a steady silence to the letters in which Valancourt, despairing of greater good, and having subdued the passion, that had transgressed against his policy, solicited only the indulgence of being allowed to bid Emily farewell. But, when the latter [Valancourt] learned, that she was really to set out in a very few days, and that it was designed he should see her no more, forgetting every consideration of prudence, he dared, in a second letter to Emily, to propose a clandestine marriage. This also was transmitted to Madame Montoni, and the last day of Emily's stay at Tholouse arrived, without affording Valancourt even a line to sooth his sufferings, or a hope, that he should be allowed a parting interview.

During this period of torturing suspense to Valancourt, Emily was sunk into that kind of stupor, with which sudden and irremediable misfortune sometimes overwhelms the mind. Loving him with the tenderest affection, and having long been accustomed to consider him as the friend and companion of all her future days, she had no ideas of happiness, that were not connected with him. What, then, must have been her suffering, when thus suddenly they were to be separated, perhaps, for ever, certainly to be thrown into distant parts of the world, where they could scarcely hear of each other's existence; and all this in obedience to the will of a stranger, for such as Montoni, and of a person, who had but lately been anxious to hasten their nuptials! It was in vain, that she endeavoured to subdue her grief, and resign herself to an event, which she could not avoid. The silence of Valancourt afflicted more than it surprised her, since she attributed it to its just occasion; but, when the day, preceding that, on which she was to quit Tholouse, arrived, and she had heard no mention of his being permitted to take leave of her, grief overcame every consideration, that had made her reluctant to speak of him, and she enquired of Madame Montoni, whether this consolation had been refused. Her aunt informed her that it had, adding, that, after the provocation she had herself received from Valancourt, in their last interview, and the persecution, which the Signor had suffered from his letters, no entreaties should avail to procure it.

'If the Chevalier expected this favour from us,' said she, 'he should have conducted himself in a very different manner; he should have waited patiently, till he knew whether we were disposed to grant it, and not have come and reproved me, because I did not think proper to bestow my niece upon him,—and then have persisted in troubling the Signor, because he did not think proper to enter into any dispute about so childish an affair. His behaviour throughout has been extremely presumptuous and impertinent, and I desire, that I may never hear his name repeated, and that you will get the better of those foolish sorrows and whims, and look like other people, and not appear with that dismal countenance, as if you were ready to cry. For, though you say nothing, you cannot conceal your grief

from my penetration. I can see you are ready to cry at this moment, though I am reproving you for it; aye, even now, in spite of my commands.'

Emily, having turned away to hide her tears, quitted the room to indulge them, and the day was passed in an intensity of anguish, such as she had, perhaps, never known before. When she withdrew to her chamber for the night, she remained in the chair where she had placed herself, on entering the room, absorbed in her grief, till long after every member of the family, except herself, was retired to rest. She could not divest herself of a belief, that she had parted with Valancourt to meet no more; a belief, which did not arise merely from foreseen circumstances, for, though the length of the journey she was about to commence, the uncertainty as to the period of her return, together with the prohibitions she had received, seemed to justify it, she yielded also to an impression, which she mistook for a pre-sentiment, that she was going from Valancourt for ever. How dreadful to her imagination, too, was the distance that would separate them—the Alps, those tremendous barriers! would rise, and whole countries extend between the regions where each must exist! To live in adjoining provinces, to live even in the same country, though without seeing him, was comparative happiness to the conviction of this dreadful length of distance.

Her mind was, at length, so much agitated by the consideration of her state, and the belief, that she had seen Valancourt for the last time, that she suddenly became very faint, and, looking round the chamber for something, that might revive her, she observed the casements, and had just strength to throw one open, near which she seated herself. The air recalled her spirits, and the still moon-light, that fell upon the elms of a long avenue, fronting the window, somewhat soothed them, and determined her to try whether exercise and the open air would not relieve the intense pain that bound her temples. In the chateau all was still; and, passing down the great stair-case into the hall, from whence a passage led immediately to the garden, she softly and unheard, as she thought, unlocked the door, and entered the avenue. Emily passed on with steps now hurried, and now faltering, as, deceived by the shadows among the trees, she fancied she saw some person move in the distant perspective, and feared, that it was a spy of Madame Montoni. Her desire, however, to re-visit the pavilion, where she had passed so many happy hours with Valancourt, and had admired with him the extensive prospect over Languedoc and her native Gascony, overcame her apprehension of being observed, and she moved on towards the terrace, which, running along the upper garden, commanded the whole of the lower one, and communicated with it by a flight of marble steps, that terminated the avenue.

Having reached these steps, she paused a moment to look round, for her distance from the chateau now increased the fear, which the stillness and obscurity of the hour had awakened. But, perceiving nothing that could justify it, she ascended to the terrace, where the moon-light shewed the long broad walk, with the pavilion at its extremity, while the rays silvered the foliage of the high trees and shrubs, that bordered it on the right, and the tufted summits of those, that rose to a level with the balustrade on the left, from the garden below. Her distance from the chateau again alarming her, she paused to listen; the night was so calm, that no sound could have escaped her, but she heard only the plaintive sweetness of the nightingale, with the light shiver of the leaves, and she pursued her way towards the pavilion, having reached which, its obscurity did not prevent the emotion, that a fuller view of its well-known scene would have excited. The lattices were thrown back, and shewed beyond their embowered arch the moon-light landscape, shadowy and soft; its groves, and plains extending gradually and indistinctly to the eye, its distant mountains catching a stronger gleam, and the nearer river reflecting the moon, and trembling to her rays.

Emily, as she approached the lattice, was sensible of the features of this scene only as they served to bring Valancourt more immediately to her fancy. 'Ah!' said she, with a heavy sigh, as she threw herself into a chair by the window, 'how often have we sat together in this spot—often have looked upon that landscape! Never, never more shall we view it together—never—never more, perhaps, shall we look upon each other!'

Her tears were suddenly stopped by terror—a voice spoke near her in the pavilion; she shrieked —it spoke again, and she distinguished the well-known tones of Valancourt. It was indeed Valancourt who supported her in his arms! For some moments their emotion would not suffer either to speak. 'Emily,' said Valancourt at length, as he pressed her hand in his. 'Emily!' and he was again silent, but the accent, in which he had pronounced her name, expressed all his tenderness and sorrow.

'O my Emily!' he resumed, after a long pause, 'I do then see you once again, and hear again the sound of that voice! I have haunted this place—these gardens, for many—many nights, with a faint, very faint hope of seeing you. This was the only chance that remained to me, and thank heaven! it has at length succeeded—I am not condemned to absolute despair!'

Emily said something, she scarcely knew what, expressive of her unalterable affection, and endeavoured to calm the agitation of his mind; but Valancourt could for some time only utter incoherent expressions of his emotions; and, when he was somewhat more composed, he said, 'I came hither, soon after sun-set, and have been watching in the gardens, and in this pavilion ever since; for, though I had now given up all hope of seeing you, I could not resolve to tear myself from a place so near to you, and should probably have lingered about the chateau till morning dawned. O how heavily the moments have passed, yet with what various emotion have they been marked, as I sometimes thought I heard footsteps, and fancied you were approaching, and then again—perceived only a dead and dreary silence! But, when you opened the door of the pavilion, and the darkness prevented my distinguishing with certainty, whether it was my love—my heart beat so strongly with hopes and fears, that I could not speak. The instant I heard the plaintive accents of your voice, my doubts vanished, but not my fears, till you spoke of me; then, losing the apprehension of alarming you in the excess of my emotion, I could no longer be silent. O Emily! these are moments, in which joy and grief struggle so powerfully for pre-eminence, that the heart can scarcely support the contest!'

Emily's heart acknowledged the truth of this assertion, but the joy she felt on thus meeting Valancourt, at the very moment when she was lamenting, that they must probably meet no more, soon melted into grief, as reflection stole over her thoughts, and imagination prompted visions of the future. She struggled to recover the calm dignity of mind, which was necessary to support her through this last interview, and which Valancourt found it utterly impossible to attain, for the transports of his joy changed abruptly into those of suffering, and he expressed in the most impassioned language his horror of this separation, and his despair of their ever meeting again. Emily wept silently as she listened to him, and then, trying to command her own distress, and to sooth his, she suggested every circumstance that could lead to hope. But the energy of his fears led him instantly to detect the friendly fallacies, which she endeavoured to impose on herself and him, and also to conjure up illusions too powerful for his reason.

'You are going from me,' said he, 'to a distant country, O how distant!—to new society, new friends, new admirers, with people too, who will try to make you forget me, and to promote new connections! How can I know this, and not know, that you will never return for me—never can be mine.' His voice was stifled by sighs.

'You believe, then,' said Emily, 'that the pangs I suffer proceed from a trivial and temporary interest; you believe—'

'Suffer!' interrupted Valancourt, 'suffer for me! O Emily—how sweet—how bitter are those words; what comfort, what anguish do they give! I ought not to doubt the steadiness of your affection, yet such is the inconsistency of real love, that it is always awake to suspicion, however unreasonable; always requiring new assurances from the object of its interest, and thus it is, that I always feel revived, as by a new conviction, when your words tell me I am dear to you; and, wanting these, I relapse into doubt, and too often into despondency.' Then seeming to recollect himself, he exclaimed, 'But what a wretch am I, thus to torture you, and in these moments, too! I, who ought to support and comfort you!'

This reflection overcame Valancourt with tenderness, but, relapsing into despondency, he again felt only for himself, and lamented again this cruel separation, in a voice and words so impassioned,

that Emily could no longer struggle to repress her own grief, or to sooth his. Valancourt, between these emotions of love and pity, lost the power, and almost the wish, of repressing his agitation; and, in the intervals of convulsive sobs, he, at one moment, kissed away her tears, then told her cruelly, that possibly she might never again weep for him, and then tried to speak more calmly, but only exclaimed, 'O Emily—my heart will break!—I cannot—cannot leave you! Now—I gaze upon that countenance, now I hold you in my arms! a little while, and all this will appear a dream. I shall look, and cannot see you; shall try to recollect your features—and the impression will be fled from my imagination; —to hear the tones of your voice, and even memory will be silent!—I cannot, cannot leave you! why should we confide the happiness of our whole lives to the will of people, who have no right to interrupt, and, except in giving you to me, have no power to promote it? O Emily! venture to trust your own heart, venture to be mine for ever!' His voice trembled, and he was silent; Emily continued to weep, and was silent also, when Valancourt proceeded to propose an immediate marriage, and that at an early hour on the following morning, she should quit Madame Montoni's house, and be conducted by him to the church of the Augustines, where a friar should await to unite them.

The silence, with which she listened to a proposal, dictated by love and despair, and enforced at a moment, when it seemed scarcely possible for her to oppose it;—when her heart was softened by the sorrows of a separation, that might be eternal, and her reason obscured by the illusions of love and terror, encouraged him to hope, that it would not be rejected. 'Speak, my Emily!' said Valancourt eagerly, 'let me hear your voice, let me hear you confirm my fate.' she spoke not; her cheek was cold, and her senses seemed to fail her, but she did not faint. To Valancourt's terrified imagination she appeared to be dying; he called upon her name, rose to go to the chateau for assistance, and then, recollecting her situation, feared to go, or to leave her for a moment.

After a few minutes, she drew a deep sigh, and began to revive. The conflict she had suffered, between love and the duty she at present owed to her father's sister; her repugnance to a clandestine marriage, her fear of emerging on the world with embarrassments, such as might ultimately involve the object of her affection in misery and repentance;—all this various interest was too powerful for a mind, already enervated by sorrow, and her reason had suffered a transient suspension. But duty, and good sense, however hard the conflict, at length, triumphed over affection and mournful presentiment; above all, she dreaded to involve Valancourt in obscurity and vain regret, which she saw, or thought she saw, must be the too certain consequence of a marriage in their present circumstances; and she acted, perhaps, with somewhat more than female fortitude, when she resolved to endure a present, rather than provoke a distant misfortune.

With a candour, that proved how truly she esteemed and loved him, and which endeared her to him, if possible, more than ever, she told Valancourt all her reasons for rejecting his proposals. Those, which influenced her concerning his future welfare, he instantly refuted, or rather contradicted; but they awakened tender considerations for her, which the frenzy of passion and despair had concealed before, and love, which had but lately prompted him to propose a clandestine and immediate marriage, now induced him to renounce it. The triumph was almost too much for his heart; for Emily's sake, he endeavoured to stifle his grief, but the swelling anguish would not be restrained. 'O Emily!' said he, 'I must leave you—I MUST leave you, and I know it is for ever!'

Convulsive sobs again interrupted his words, and they wept together in silence, till Emily, recollecting the danger of being discovered, and the impropriety of prolonging an interview, which might subject her to censure, summoned all her fortitude to utter a last farewell.

'Stay!' said Valancourt, 'I conjure you stay, for I have much to tell you. The agitation of my mind has hitherto suffered me to speak only on the subject that occupied it;—I have forborne to mention a doubt of much importance, partly, lest it should appear as if I told it with an ungenerous view of alarming you into a compliance with my late proposal.'

Emily, much agitated, did not leave Valancourt, but she led him from the pavilion, and, as they walked upon the terrace, he proceeded as follows:

'This Montoni: I have heard some strange hints concerning him. Are you certain he is of Madame Quesnel's family, and that his fortune is what it appears to be?'

'I have no reason to doubt either,' replied Emily, in a voice of alarm. 'Of the first, indeed, I cannot doubt, but I have no certain means of judging of the latter, and I entreat you will tell me all you have heard.'

'That I certainly will, but it is very imperfect, and unsatisfactory information. I gathered it by accident from an Italian, who was speaking to another person of this Montoni. They were talking of his marriage; the Italian said, that if he was the person he meant, he was not likely to make Madame Cheron happy. He proceeded to speak of him in general terms of dislike, and then gave some particular hints, concerning his character, that excited my curiosity, and I ventured to ask him a few questions. He was reserved in his replies, but, after hesitating for some time, he owned, that he had understood abroad, that Montoni was a man of desperate fortune and character. He said something of a castle of Montoni's, situated among the Apennines, and of some strange circumstances, that might be mentioned, as to his former mode of life. I pressed him to inform me further, but I believe the strong interest I felt was visible in my manner, and alarmed him; for no entreaties could prevail with him to give any explanation of the circumstances he had alluded to, or to mention any thing further concerning Montoni. I observed to him, that, if Montoni was possessed of a castle in the Apennines, it appeared from such a circumstance, that he was of some family, and also seemed to contradict the report, that he was a man of entirely broken fortunes. He shook his head, and looked as if he could have said a great deal, but made no reply.

'A hope of learning something more satisfactory, or more positive, detained me in his company a considerable time, and I renewed the subject repeatedly, but the Italian wrapped himself up in reserve, said—that what he had mentioned he had caught only from a floating report, and that reports frequently arose from personal malice, and were very little to be depended upon. I forbore to press the subject farther, since it was obvious that he was alarmed for the consequence of what he had already said, and I was compelled to remain in uncertainty on a point where suspense is almost intolerable. Think, Emily, what I must suffer to see you depart for a foreign country, committed to the power of a man of such doubtful character as is this Montoni! But I will not alarm you unnecessarily;—it is possible, as the Italian said, at first, that this is not the Montoni he alluded to. Yet, Emily, consider well before you resolve to commit yourself to him. O! I must not trust myself to speak—or I shall renounce all the motives, which so lately influenced me to resign the hope of your becoming mine immediately.'

Valancourt walked upon the terrace with hurried steps, while Emily remained leaning on the balustrade in deep thought. The information she had just received excited, perhaps, more alarm than it could justify, and raised once more the conflict of contrasted interests. She had never liked Montoni. The fire and keenness of his eye, its proud exultation, its bold fierceness, its sullen watchfulness, as occasion, and even slight occasion, had called forth the latent soul, she had often observed with emotion; while from the usual expression of his countenance she had always shrunk. From such observations she was the more inclined to believe, that it was this Montoni, of whom the Italian had uttered his suspicious hints. The thought of being solely in his power, in a foreign land, was terrifying to her, but it was not by terror alone that she was urged to an immediate marriage with Valancourt. The tenderest love had already pleaded his cause, but had been unable to overcome her opinion, as to her duty, her disinterested considerations for Valancourt, and the delicacy, which made her revolt from a clandestine union. It was not to be expected, that a vague terror would be more powerful, than the united influence of love and grief. But it recalled all their energy, and rendered a second conquest necessary.

With Valancourt, whose imagination was now awake to the suggestion of every passion; whose apprehensions for Emily had acquired strength by the mere mention of them, and became every instant more powerful, as his mind brooded over them—with Valancourt no second conquest was

attainable. He thought he saw in the clearest light, and love assisted the fear, that this journey to Italy would involve Emily in misery; he determined, therefore, to persevere in opposing it, and in conjuring her to bestow upon him the title of her lawful protector.

'Emily!' said he, with solemn earnestness, 'this is no time for scrupulous distinctions, for weighing the dubious and comparatively trifling circumstances, that may affect our future comfort. I now see, much more clearly than before, the train of serious dangers you are going to encounter with a man of Montoni's character. Those dark hints of the Italian spoke much, but not more than the idea I have of Montoni's disposition, as exhibited even in his countenance. I think I see at this moment all that could have been hinted, written there. He is the Italian, whom I fear, and I conjure you for your own sake, as well as for mine, to prevent the evils I shudder to foresee. O Emily! let my tenderness, my arms withhold you from them—give me the right to defend you!'

Emily only sighed, while Valancourt proceeded to remonstrate and to entreat with all the energy that love and apprehension could inspire. But, as his imagination magnified to her the possible evils she was going to meet, the mists of her own fancy began to dissipate, and allowed her to distinguish the exaggerated images, which imposed on his reason. She considered, that there was no proof of Montoni being the person, whom the stranger had meant; that, even if he was so, the Italian had noticed his character and broken fortunes merely from report; and that, though the countenance of Montoni seemed to give probability to a part of the rumour, it was not by such circumstances that an implicit belief of it could be justified. These considerations would probably not have arisen so distinctly to her mind, at this time, had not the terrors of Valancourt presented to her such obvious exaggerations of her danger, as incited her to distrust the fallacies of passion. But, while she endeavoured in the gentlest manner to convince him of his error, she plunged him into a new one. His voice and countenance changed to an expression of dark despair. 'Emily!' said he, 'this, this moment is the bitterest that is yet come to me. You do not—cannot love me!—It would be impossible for you to reason thus coolly, thus deliberately, if you did. I, *I* am torn with anguish at the prospect of our separation, and of the evils that may await you in consequence of it; I would encounter any hazards to prevent it—to save you. No! Emily, no!—you cannot love me.'

'We have now little time to waste in exclamation, or assertion,' said Emily, endeavouring to conceal her emotion: 'if you are yet to learn how dear you are, and ever must be, to my heart, no assurances of mine can give you conviction.'

The last words faltered on her lips, and her tears flowed fast. These words and tears brought, once more, and with instantaneous force, conviction of her love to Valancourt. He could only exclaim, 'Emily! Emily!' and weep over the hand he pressed to his lips; but she, after some moments, again roused herself from the indulgence of sorrow, and said, 'I must leave you; it is late, and my absence from the chateau may be discovered. Think of me—love me—when I am far away; the belief of this will be my comfort!'

'Think of you!—love you!' exclaimed Valancourt.

'Try to moderate these transports,' said Emily, 'for my sake, try.'

'For your sake!'

'Yes, for my sake,' replied Emily, in a tremulous voice, 'I cannot leave you thus!'

'Then do not leave me!' said Valancourt, with quickness. 'Why should we part, or part for longer than till to-morrow?'

'I am, indeed I am, unequal to these moments,' replied Emily, 'you tear my heart, but I never can consent to this hasty, imprudent proposal!'

'If we could command our time, my Emily, it should not be thus hasty; we must submit to circumstances.'

'We must indeed! I have already told you all my heart—my spirits are gone. You allowed the force of my objections, till your tenderness called up vague terrors, which have given us both unnecessary anguish. Spare me! do not oblige me to repeat the reasons I have already urged.'

'Spare you!' cried Valancourt, 'I am a wretch—a very wretch, that have felt only for myself!—I! who ought to have shewn the fortitude of a man, who ought to have supported you, I! have increased your sufferings by the conduct of a child! Forgive me, Emily! think of the distraction of my mind now that I am about to part with all that is dear to me—and forgive me! When you are gone, I shall recollect with bitter remorse what I have made you suffer, and shall wish in vain that I could see you, if only for a moment, that I might sooth your grief.'

Tears again interrupted his voice, and Emily wept with him. 'I will shew myself more worthy of your love,' said Valancourt, at length; 'I will not prolong these moments. My Emily—my own Emily! never forget me! God knows when we shall meet again! I resign you to his care.—O God!—O God! —protect and bless her!'

He pressed her hand to his heart. Emily sunk almost lifeless on his bosom, and neither wept, nor spoke. Valancourt, now commanding his own distress, tried to comfort and re-assure her, but she appeared totally unaffected by what he said, and a sigh, which she uttered, now and then, was all that proved she had not fainted.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.