# BURNEY FANNY

## CECILIA; OR, MEMOIRS OF AN HEIRESS. VOLUME 2

Fanny Burney

# Cecilia; Or, Memoirs of an Heiress. Volume 2

**Burney F.**

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# Содержание

# Fanny Burney
# Cecilia; Or, Memoirs of an Heiress – Volume 2

## BOOK IV. *Continued*

## CHAPTER x. – A MURMURING

Unable to relieve herself from this perplexity, Cecilia, to divert her chagrin, again visited Miss Belfield. She had then the pleasure to hear that her brother was much recovered, and had been able, the preceding day, to take an airing, which he had borne so well that Mr Rupil had charged him to use the same exercise every morning.

"And will he?" said Cecilia.

"No, madam, I am sadly afraid not," she answered, "for coach hire is very expensive, and we are willing, now, to save all we can in order to help fitting him out for going abroad."

Cecilia then earnestly entreated her to accept some assistance; but she assured her she did not dare without the consent of her mother, which, however, she undertook to obtain.

The next day, when Cecilia called to hear her success, Mrs Belfield, who hitherto had kept out of sight, made her appearance. She found her, alike in person, manners and conversation, a coarse and ordinary woman, not more unlike her son in talents and acquired accomplishments, than dissimilar to her daughter in softness and natural delicacy.

The moment Cecilia was seated, she began, without waiting for any ceremony, or requiring any solicitation, abruptly to talk of her affairs, and repiningly to relate her misfortunes.

"I find, madam," she said, "you have been so kind as to visit my daughter Henny a great many times, but as I have no time for company, I have always kept out of the way, having other things to do than sit still to talk. I have had a sad time of it here, ma'am, with my poor son's illness, having no conveniencies about me, and much ado to make him mind me; for he's all for having his own way, poor dear soul, and I'm sure I don't know who could contradict him, for it's what I never had the heart to do. But then, ma'am, what is to come of it? You see how bad things go! for though I have got a very good income, it won't do for every thing. And if it was as much again, I should want to save it all now. For here my poor son, you see, is reduced all in a minute, as one may say, from being one of the first gentlemen in the town, to a mere poor object, without a farthing in the world!"

"He is, however, I hope now much better in his health?" said Cecilia.

"Yes, madam, thank heaven, for if he was worse, those might tell of it that would, for I'm sure I should never live to hear of it. He has been the best son in the world, madam, and used [to] nothing but the best company, for I spared neither pains nor cost to bring him up genteely, and I believe there's not a nobleman in the land that looks more the gentleman. However, there's come no good of it, for though his acquaintances was all among the first quality, he never received the value of a penny from the best of them. So I have no great need to be proud. But I meant for the best, though I have often enough wished I had not meddled in the matter, but left him to be brought up in the shop, as his father was before him."

"His present plan, however," said Cecilia, "will I hope make you ample amends both for your sufferings and your tenderness."

"What, madam, when he's going to leave me, and settle in foreign parts? If you was a mother yourself, madam, you would not think that such good amends."

"Settle?" said Cecilia. "No, he only goes for a year or two."

"That's more than I can say, madam, or any body else; and nobody knows what may happen in that time. And how I shall keep myself up when he's beyond seas, I am sure I don't know, for he has always been the pride of my life, and every penny I saved for him, I thought to have been paid in pounds."

"You will still have your daughter, and she seems so amiable, that I am sure you can want no consolation she will not endeavour to give you."

"But what is a daughter, madam, to such a son as mine? a son that I thought to have seen living like a prince, and sending his own coach for me to dine with him! And now he's going to be taken away from me, and nobody knows if I shall live till he comes back. But I may thank myself, for if I had but been content to see him brought up in the shop—yet all the world would have cried shame upon it, for when he was quite a child in arms, the people used all to say he was born to be a gentleman, and would live to make many a fine lady's heart ache."

"If he can but make *your* heart easy," said Cecilia, smiling, "we will not grieve that the fine ladies should escape the prophecy."

"O, ma'am, I don't mean by that to say he has been over gay among the ladies, for it's a thing I never heard of him; and I dare say if any lady was to take a fancy to him, she'd find there was not a modester young man in the world. But you must needs think what a hardship it is to me to have him turn out so unlucky, after all I have done for him, when I thought to have seen him at the top of the tree, as one may say!"

"He will yet, I hope," said Cecilia, "make you rejoice in all your kindness to him; his health is already returning, and his affairs wear again a more prosperous aspect."

"But do you suppose, ma'am, that having him sent two or three hundred miles away from me; with some young master to take care of, is the way to make up to me what I have gone through for him? why I used to deny myself every thing in the world, in order to save money to buy him smart cloaths, and let him go to the Opera, and Ranelagh, and such sort of places, that he might keep himself in fortune's way! and now you see the end of it! here he is, in a little shabby room up two pairs of stairs, with not one of the great folks coming near him, to see if he's so much as dead or alive."

"I do not wonder," said Cecilia, "that you resent their shewing so little gratitude for the pleasure and entertainment they have formerly received from him but comfort yourself that it will at least secure you from any similar disappointment, as Mr Belfield will, in future, be guarded from forming such precarious expectations."

"But what good will that do me, ma'am, for all the money he has been throwing after them all this while? do you think I would have scraped it up for him, and gone without every thing in the world, to see it all end in this manner? why he might as well have been brought up the commonest journeyman, for any comfort I shall have of him at this rate. And suppose he should be drowned in going beyond seas? what am I to do then?"

"You must not," said Cecilia, "indulge such fears; I doubt not but your son will return well, and return all that you wish."

"Nobody knows that, ma'am; and the only way to be certain is for him not to go at all; and I'm surprised, ma'am, you can wish him to make such a journey to nobody knows where, with nothing but a young master that he must as good as teach his A. B. C. all the way they go!"

"Certainly," said Cecilia, amazed at this accusation, "I should not wish him to go abroad, if any thing more eligible could be, done by his remaining in England but as no prospect of that sort seems before him, you must endeavour to reconcile yourself to parting with him."

"Yes, but how am I to do that, when I don't know if ever I shall see him again? Who could have thought of his living so among the great folks, and then coming to want! I'm sure I thought they'd have provided for him like a son of their own, for he used to go about to all the public places just as they did themselves. Day after day I used to be counting for when he would come to tell me he'd got a place at court, or something of that sort, for I never could tell what it would be; and then the

next news I heard, was that he was shut up in this poor bit of place, with nobody troubling their heads about him! however, I'll never be persuaded but he might have done better, if he would but have spoke a good word for himself, or else have let me done it for him; instead of which, he never would so much as let me see any of his grand friends, though I would not have made the least scruple in the world to have asked them for any thing he had a mind to."

Cecilia again endeavoured to give her comfort; but finding her only satisfaction was to express her discontent, she arose to take leave. But, turning first to Miss Belfield, contrived to make a private enquiry whether she might repeat her offer of assistance. A downcast and dejected look answering in the affirmative, she put into her hand a ten pound bank note, and wishing them good morning, hurried out of the room.

Miss Belfield was running after her, but stopt by her mother, who called out, "What is it?—How much is it?—Let me look at it!"—And then, following Cecilia herself, she thanked her aloud all the way down stairs for her *genteelness*, assuring her she would not fail making it known to her son.

Cecilia at this declaration turned back, and exhorted her by no means to mention it; after which she got into her chair, and returned home; pitying Miss Belfield for the unjust partiality shewn to her brother, and excusing the proud shame he had manifested of his relations, from the vulgarity and selfishness of her who was at the head of them.

Almost a fortnight had now elapsed since her explanation with young Delvile, yet not once had he been in Portman-square, though in the fortnight which had preceded, scarce a day had passed which had not afforded him some pretence for calling there.

At length a note arrived from Mrs Delvile. It contained the most flattering reproaches for her long absence, and a pressing invitation that she would dine and spend the next day with her.

Cecilia, who had merely denied herself the pleasure of this visit from an apprehension of seeming too desirous of keeping up the connection, now, from the same sense of propriety, determined upon making it, wishing equally to avoid all appearance of consciousness, either by seeking or avoiding the intimacy of the family.

Not a little was her anxiety to know in what manner young Delvile would receive her, whether he would be grave or gay, agitated, as during their last conversation, or easy, as in the meetings which had preceded it.

She found Mrs Delvile, however, alone; and, extremely kind to her, yet much surprised, and half displeased, that she had so long been absent. Cecilia, though somewhat distressed what excuses to offer, was happy to find herself so highly in favour, and not very reluctant to promise more frequent visits in future.

They were then summoned to dinner; but still no young Delvile was visible; they were joined only by his father, and she found that no one else was expected.

Her astonishment now was greater than ever, and she could account by no possible conjecture for a conduct so extraordinary. Hitherto, whenever she had visited in St James's-square by appointment, the air with which he had received her, constantly announced that he had impatiently waited her arrival; he had given up other engagements to stay with her, he had openly expressed his hopes that she would never be long absent, and seemed to take a pleasure in her society to which every other was inferior. And now, how striking the difference! he forbore all visits at the house where she resided, he even flew from his own when he knew she was approaching it!

Nor was this the only vexation of which this day was productive; Mr Delvile, when the servants were withdrawn after dinner, expressed some concern that he had been called from her during their last conversation, and added that he would take the present opportunity to talk with her upon some matters of importance.

He then began the usual parading prelude, which, upon all occasions, he thought necessary, in order to enhance the value of his interposition, remind her of her inferiority, and impress her with a

deeper sense of the honour which his guardianship conferred upon her after which, he proceeded to make a formal enquiry whether she had positively dismissed Sir Robert Floyer?

She assured him she had.

"I understood my Lord Ernolf," said he, "that you had totally discouraged the addresses of his son?"

"Yes, Sir," answered Cecilia, "for I never mean to receive them."

"Have you, then, any other engagement?"

"No, Sir," cried she, colouring between shame and displeasure, "none at all."

"This is a very extraordinary circumstance!" replied he; "the son of an earl to be rejected by a young woman of no family, and yet no reason assigned for it!"

This contemptuous speech so cruelly shocked Cecilia, that though he continued to harangue her for a great part of the afternoon, she only answered him when compelled by some question, and was so evidently discomposed, that Mrs Delvile, who perceived her uneasiness with much concern, redoubled her civilities and caresses, and used every method in her power to oblige and enliven her.

Cecilia was not ungrateful for her care, and shewed her sense of it by added respect and attention; but her mind was disturbed, and she quitted the house as soon as she was able.

Mr Delvile's speech, from her previous knowledge of the extreme haughtiness of his character, would not have occasioned her the smallest emotion, had it merely related to him or to herself; but as it concerned Lord Ernolf, she regarded it as also concerning his son, and she found that, far from trying to promote the union Mr Monckton had told her he had planned, he did not seem even to think of it, but, on the contrary, proposed and seconded with all his interest another alliance.

This, added to the behaviour of young Delvile, made her suspect that some engagement was in agitation on his own part, and that while she thought him so sedulous only to avoid her, he was simply occupied in seeking another. This painful suggestion, which every thing seemed to confirm, again overset all her schemes, and destroyed all her visionary happiness. Yet how to reconcile it with what had passed at their last meeting she knew not; she had then every reason to believe that his heart was in her power, and that courage, or an opportunity more seasonable, was all he wanted to make known his devotion to her; why, then, shun if he loved her? why, if he loved her not, seem so perturbed at the explanation of her independence?

A very little time, however, she hoped would unravel this mystery; in two days, the entertainment which Mr Harrel had planned, to deceive the world by an appearance of affluence to which he had lost all title, was to take place; young Delvile, in common with every other person who had ever been seen at the house, had early received an invitation, which he had readily promised to accept some time before the conversation that seemed the period of their acquaintance had passed. Should he, after being so long engaged, fail to keep his appointment, she could no longer have any doubt of the justice of her conjecture; should he, on the contrary, again appear, from his behaviour and his looks she might perhaps be able to gather why he had so long been absent.

# BOOK V

## CHAPTER i. – A ROUT

The day at length arrived of which the evening and the entrance of company were, for the first time, as eagerly wished by Cecilia as by her dissipated host and hostess. No expence and no pains had been spared to render this long projected entertainment splendid and elegant; it was to begin with a concert, which was to be followed by a ball, and succeeded by a supper.

Cecilia, though unusually anxious about her own affairs, was not so engrossed by them as to behold with indifference a scene of such unjustifiable extravagance; it contributed to render her thoughtful and uneasy, and to deprive her of all mental power of participating in the gaiety of the assembly. Mr Arnott was yet more deeply affected by the mad folly of the scheme, and received from the whole evening no other satisfaction than that which a look of sympathetic concern from Cecilia occasionally afforded him.

Till nine o'clock no company appeared, except Sir Robert Floyer, who stayed from dinner time, and Mr Morrice, who having received an invitation for the evening, was so much delighted with the permission to again enter the house, that he made use of it between six and seven o'clock, and before the family had left the dining parlour. He apologized with the utmost humility to Cecilia for the unfortunate accident at the Pantheon; but as to her it had been productive of nothing but pleasure, by exciting in young Delvile the most flattering alarm for her safety, she found no great difficulty in according him her pardon.

Among those who came in the first crowd was Mr Monckton, who, had he been equally unconscious of sinister views, would in following his own inclination, have been as early in his attendance as Mr Morrice; but who, to obviate all suspicious remarks, conformed to the fashionable tardiness of the times.

Cecilia's chief apprehension for the evening was that Sir Robert Floyer would ask her to dance with him, which she could not refuse without sitting still during the ball, nor accept, after the reports she knew to be spread, without seeming to give a public sanction to them. To Mr Monckton therefore, innocently considering him as a married man and her old friend, she frankly told her distress, adding, by way of excuse for the hint, that the partners were to be changed every two dances.

Mr Monckton, though his principal study was carefully to avoid all public gallantry or assiduity towards Cecilia, had not the forbearance to resist this intimation, and therefore she had the pleasure of telling Sir Robert, when he asked the honour of her hand for the two first dances, that she was already engaged.

She then expected that he would immediately secure her for the two following; but, to her great joy, he was so much piqued by the evident pleasure with which she announced her engagement, that he proudly walked away without adding another word.

Much satisfied with this arrangement, and not without hopes that, if she was at liberty when he arrived, she might be applied to by young Delvile, she now endeavoured to procure herself a place in the music room.

This, with some difficulty, she effected; but though there was an excellent concert, in which several capital performers played and sung, she found it impossible to hear a note, as she chanced to be seated just by Miss Leeson, and two other young ladies, who were paying one another compliments upon their dress and their looks, settling to dance in the same cotillon, guessing who would begin the minuets, and wondering there were not more gentlemen. Yet, in the midst of this unmeaning conversation, of which she remarked that Miss Leeson bore the principal part, not one of them failed,

from time to time, to exclaim with great rapture *"What sweet music!—" "Oh! how charming!" "Did you ever hear any thing so delightful?—"*

"Ah," said Cecilia to Mr Gosport, who now approached her, "but for your explanatory observations, how much would the sudden loquacity of this supercilious lady, whom I had imagined all but dumb, have perplext me!"

"Those who are most silent to strangers," answered Mr Gosport, "commonly talk most fluently to their intimates, for they are deeply in arrears, and eager to pay off their debts. Miss Leeson now is in her proper set, and therefore appears in her natural character; and the poor girl's joy in being able to utter all the nothings she has painfully hoarded while separated from her coterie, gives to her now the wild transport of a bird just let loose from a cage. I rejoice to see the little creature at liberty, for what can be so melancholy as a forced appearance of thinking, where there are no materials for such an occupation?"

Soon after, Miss Larolles, who was laughing immoderately, contrived to crowd herself into their party, calling out to them, "O you have had the greatest loss in the world! if you had but been in the next room just now!—there's the drollest figure there you can conceive; enough to frighten one to look at him." And presently she added "O Lord, if you stoop a little this way, you may see him!"

Then followed a general tittering, accompanied with exclamations of "Lord, what a fright!" "It's enough to kill one with laughing to look at him!" "Did you ever see such a horrid creature in your life?" And soon after, one of them screamed out "O Lord, see!—he's grinning at Miss Beverley!"

Cecilia then turned her head towards the door, and there, to her own as well as her neighbours' amazement, she perceived Mr Briggs! who, in order to look about him at his ease, was standing upon a chair, from which, having singled her out, he was regarding her with a facetious smirk, which, when it caught her eye, was converted into a familiar nod.

She returned his salutation, but was not much charmed to observe, that presently descending from his exalted post, which had moved the wonder and risibility of all the company, he made a motion to approach her; for which purpose, regardless of either ladies or gentlemen in his way, he sturdily pushed forward, with the same unconcerned hardiness he would have forced himself through a crowd in the street; and taking not the smallest notice of their frowns, supplications that he would stand still, and exclamations of "Pray, Sir!"—"Lord, how troublesome!" and "Sir, I do assure you here's no room!" he fairly and adroitly elbowed them from him till he reached her seat; and then, with a waggish grin, he looked round, to show he had got the better, and to see whom he had discomposed.

When he had enjoyed this triumph, he turned to Cecilia, and chucking her under the chin, said "Well, my little duck, how goes it? got to you at last; squeezed my way; would not be nicked; warrant I'll mob with the best of them! Look here! all in a heat!—hot as the dog days."

And then, to the utter consternation of the company, he took off his wig to wipe his head! which occasioned such universal horror, that all who were near the door escaped into other, apartments, while those who were too much enclosed, for flight, with one accord turned away their heads.

Captain Aresby, being applied to by some of the ladies to remonstrate upon this unexampled behaviour, advanced to him, and said, "I am quite *abimé*, Sir, to incommode you, but the commands of the ladies are insuperable. Give me leave, Sir, to entreat that you would put on your wig."

"My wig?" cried he, "ay, ay, shall in a moment, only want to wipe my head first."

"I am quite *assommé*, Sir," returned the Captain, "to disturb you, but I must really hint you don't comprehend me; the ladies are extremely inconvenienced by these sort of sights, and we make it a principle they should never be *accablées* with them."

"Anan!" cried Mr Briggs, staring.

"I say, Sir," replied the Captain, "the ladies are quite *au desespoir* that you will not cover your head."

"What for?" cried he, "what's the matter with my head? ne'er a man here got a better! very good stuff in it; won't change it with ne'er a one of you!"

And then, half unconscious of the offence he had given, and half angry at the rebuke he had received, he leisurely compleated his design, and again put on his wig, settling it to his face with as much composure as if he had performed the operation in his own dressing-room.

The Captain, having gained his point, walked away, making, however, various grimaces of disgust, and whispering from side to side "he's the most petrifying fellow I ever was *obsedé* by!"

Mr Briggs then, with much derision, and sundry distortions of countenance, listened to an Italian song; after which, he bustled back to the outer apartment, in search of Cecilia, who, ashamed of seeming a party in the disturbance he had excited, had taken the opportunity of his dispute with the Captain, to run into the next room; where, however, he presently found her, while she was giving an account to Mr Gosport of her connection with him, to which Morrice, ever curious and eager to know what was going forward, was also listening.

"Ah, little chick!" cried he, "got to you again! soon out jostle those jemmy sparks! But where's the supper? see nothing of the supper! Time to go to bed,—suppose there is none; all a take in; nothing but a little piping."

"Supper, Sir?" cried Cecilia; "the Concert is not over yet. Was supper mentioned in your card of invitation?"

"Ay, to be sure, should not have come else. Don't visit often; always costs money. Wish I had not come now; wore a hole in my shoe; hardly a crack in it before."

"Why you did not walk, Sir?"

"Did, did; why not? Might as well have stayed away though; daubed my best coat, like to have spoilt it."

"So much the better for the taylors, Sir," said Morrice, pertly, "for then you must have another."

"Another! what for? ha'n't had this seven years; just as good as new."

"I hope," said Cecilia, "you had not another fall?"

"Worse, worse; like to have lost my bundle."

"What bundle, Sir?"

"Best coat and waistcoat; brought 'em in my handkerchief, purpose to save them. When will Master Harrel do as much?"

"But had you no apprehensions, Sir," said Mr Gosport drily, "that the handkerchief would be the sooner worn out for having a knot tied in it?"

"Took care of that, tied it slack. Met an unlucky boy; little dog gave it a pluck; knot slipt; coat and waistcoat popt out."

"But what became of the boy, Sir?" cried Morrice, "I hope he got off?"

"Could not run for laughing; caught him in a minute; gave him something to laugh for; drubbed him soundly."

"O poor fellow!" cried Morrice with a loud hallow, "I am really sorry for him. But pray, Sir, what became of your best coat and waistcoat while you gave him this drubbing? did you leave them in the dirt?"

"No, Mr Nincompoop," answered Briggs angrily, "I put them on a stall."

"That was a perilous expedient, Sir," said Mr Gosport, "and I should fear might be attended with ill consequences, for the owner of the stall would be apt to expect some little *douçeur*. How did you manage, Sir?"

"Bought a halfpenny worth of apples. Serve for supper to-morrow night."

"But how, Sir, did you get your cloaths dried, or cleaned?"

"Went to an alehouse; cost me half a pint."

"And pray, Sir," cried Morrice, "where, at last, did you make your toilette?"

"Sha'n't tell, sha'n't tell; ask no more questions. What signifies where a man slips on a coat and waist-coat?"

"Why, Sir, this will prove an expensive expedition to you," said Mr Gosport, very gravely; "Have you cast up what it may cost you?"

"More than it's worth, more than it's worth," answered he pettishly "ha'n't laid out so much in pleasure these five years."

"Ha! ha!" cried Morrice, hallowing aloud, "why it can't be more than sixpence in all!"

"Sixpence?" repeated he scornfully, "if you don't know the value of sixpence, you'll never be worth fivepence three farthings. How do think got rich, hay?—by wearing fine coats, and frizzling my pate? No, no; Master Harrel for that! ask him if he'll cast an account with me!—never knew a man worth a penny with such a coat as that on."

Morrice again laughed, and again Mr Briggs reproved him; and Cecilia, taking advantage of the squabble, stole back to the music-room. Here, in a few minutes, Mrs Panton, a lady who frequently visited at the house, approached Cecilia, followed by a gentleman, whom she had never before seen, but who was so evidently charmed with her, that he had looked at no other object since his entrance into the house. Mrs Panton, presenting him to her by the name of Mr Marriot, told her he had begged her intercession for the honour of her hand in the two first dances; and the moment she answered that she was already engaged, the same request was made for the two following. Cecilia had then no excuse, and was therefore obliged to accept him.

The hope she had entertained in the early part of the evening, was already almost wholly extinguished; Delvile appeared not! though her eye watched the entrance of every new visitor, and her vexation made her believe that he alone, of all the town, was absent.

When the Concert was over, the company joined promiscuously for chat and refreshments before the ball; and Mr Gosport advanced to Cecilia, to relate a ridiculous dispute which had just passed between Mr Briggs and Morrice.

"You, Mr Gosport," said Cecilia, "who seem to make the *minutiae* of absurd characters your study, can explain to me, perhaps, why Mr Briggs seems to have as much pleasure in proclaiming his meanness, as in boasting his wealth?"

"Because," answered Mr Gosport, "he knows them, in his own affairs, to be so nearly allied, that but for practising the one, he had never possessed the other; ignorant, therefore, of all discrimination, —except, indeed, of pounds, shillings and pence!—he supposes them necessarily inseparable, because with him they were united. What you, however, call meanness, he thinks wisdom, and recollects, therefore, not with shame but with triumph, the various little arts and subterfuges by which his coffers have been filled."

Here Lord Ernolf, concluding Cecilia still disengaged from seeing her only discourse with Mr Gosport and Mr Monckton, one of them was old enough to be her father, and the other was a *married man*, advanced, and presenting to her Lord Derford, his son, a youth not yet of age, solicited for him the honour of her hand as his partner.

Cecilia, having a double excuse, easily declined this proposal; Lord Ernolf, however, was too earnest to be repulsed, and told her he should again try his interest when her two present engagements were fulfilled. Hopeless, now, of young Delvile, she heard this intimation with indifference; and was accompanying Mr Monckton into the ballroom, when Miss Larolles, flying towards her with an air of infinite eagerness, caught her hand, and said in a whisper "pray let me wish you joy!"

"Certainly!" said Cecilia, "but pray let me ask you of what?"

"O Lord, now," answered she, "I am sure you know what I mean; but you must know I have a prodigious monstrous great favour to beg of you; now pray don't refuse me; I assure you if you do, I shall be so mortified you've no notion."

"Well, what is it?"

"Nothing but to let me be one of your bride maids. I assure you I shall take it as the greatest favour in the world."

"My bride maid!" cried Cecilia; "but do you not think the bridegroom himself will be rather offended to find a bridesmaid appointed, before he is even thought of?"

"O pray, now," cried she, "don't be ill-natured, for if you are, you've no idea how I shall be disappointed. Only conceive what happened to me three weeks ago! you must know I was invited to Miss Clinton's wedding, and so I made up a new dress on purpose, in a very particular sort of shape, quite of my own invention, and it had the sweetest effect you can conceive; well, and when the time came, do you know her mother happened to die! Never any thing was so excessive unlucky, for now she won't be married this half year, and my dress will be quite old and yellow; for it's all white, and the most beautiful thing you ever saw in your life."

"Upon my word you are very obliging!" cried Cecilia laughing; "and pray do you make interest regularly round with all your female acquaintance to be married upon this occasion, or am I the only one you think this distress will work upon?"

"Now how excessive teazing!" cried Miss Larolles, "when you know so well what I mean, and when all the town knows as well as myself."

Cecilia then seriously enquired whether she had really any meaning at all.

"Lord yes," answered she, "you know I mean about Sir Robert Floyer; for I'm told you've quite refused Lord Derford."

"And are you also told that I have accepted Sir Robert Floyer?"

"O dear yes!—the jewels are bought, and the equipages are built; it's quite a settled thing, I know very well."

Cecilia then very gravely began an attempt to undeceive her; but the dancing beginning also at the same time, she stayed not to hear her, hurrying, with a beating heart, to the place of action. Mr Monckton and his fair partner then followed, mutually exclaiming against Mr Harrel's impenetrable conduct; of which Cecilia, however, in a short time ceased wholly to think, for as soon as the first cotillon was over, she perceived young Delvile just walking into the room.

Surprise, pleasure and confusion assailed her all at once; she had entirely given up her expectation of seeing him, and an absence so determined had led her to conclude he had pursuits which ought to make her join in wishing it lengthened; but now he appeared, that conclusion, with the fears that gave rise to it, vanished; and she regretted nothing but the unfortunate succession of engagements which would prevent her dancing with him at all, and probably keep off all conversation with him till supper time.

She soon, however, perceived a change in his air and behaviour that extremely astonished her; he looked grave and thoughtful, saluted her at a distance, shewed no sign of any intention to approach her, regarded the dancing and dancers as a public spectacle in which he had no chance of personal interest, and seemed wholly altered, not merely with respect to her, but to himself, as his former eagerness for her society was not more abated than [his] former general gaiety.

She had no time, however, for comments, as she was presently called to the second cotillon; but the confused and unpleasant ideas which, without waiting for time or reflection, crowded upon her imagination on observing his behaviour, were not more depressing to herself, than obvious to her partner; Mr Monckton by the change in her countenance first perceived the entrance of young Delvile, and by her apparent emotion and uneasiness, readily penetrated into the state of her mind; he was confirmed that her affections were engaged; he saw, too, that she was doubtful with what return.

The grief with which he made the first discovery, was somewhat lessened by the hopes he conceived from, the second; yet the evening was to him as painful as to Cecilia, since he now knew that whatever prosperity' might ultimately attend his address and assiduity, her heart was not her own to bestow; and that even were he sure of young Delvile's indifference, and actually at liberty to make proposals for himself, the time of being first in her esteem was at an end, and the long-earned good opinion which he had hoped would have ripened into affection, might now be wholly undermined by the sudden impression of a lively stranger, without trouble to himself, and perhaps without pleasure!

Reflections such as these wholly embittered the delight he had promised himself from dancing with her, and took from him all power to combat the anxiety with which she was seized; when the second cotillon, therefore, was over, instead of following her to a seat, or taking the privilege of his present situation to converse with her, the jealousy rising in his breast robbed him of all satisfaction, and gave to him no other desire than to judge its justice by watching her motions at a distance.

Mean while Cecilia, inattentive whether he accompanied or quitted her proceeded to the first vacant seat. Young Delvile was standing near it, and, in a short time, but rather as if he could not avoid than as if he wished it, he came to enquire how she did.

The simplest question, in the then situation of her mind, was sufficient to confuse her, and though she answered, she hardly knew what he had asked. A minute's recollection, however, restored an apparent composure, and she talked to him of Mrs Delvile, with her usual partial regard for that lady, and with an earnest endeavour to seem unconscious of any alteration in his behaviour.

Yet, to him, even this trifling and general conversation was evidently painful, and he looked relieved by the approach of Sir Robert Floyer, who soon after joined them.

At this time a young lady who was sitting by Cecilia, called to a servant who was passing, for a glass of lemonade; Cecilia desired he would bring her one also; but Delvile, not sorry to break off the discourse, said he would himself be her cup-bearer, and for that purpose went away.

A moment after, the servant returned with some lemonade to Cecilia's neighbour, and Sir Robert, taking a glass from him, brought it to Cecilia at the very instant young Delvile came with another.

"I think I am before hand with you, Sir," said the insolent Baronet.

"No, Sir," answered young Delvile, "I think we were both in together; Miss Beverley, however, is steward of the race, and we must submit to her decision."

"Well, madam," cried Sir Robert, "here we stand, waiting your pleasure. Which is to be the happy man!"

"Each, I hope," answered Cecilia, with admirable presence of mind, "since I expect no less than that you will both do me the honour of drinking my health."

This little contrivance, which saved her alike from shewing favour or giving offence, could not but be applauded by both parties; and while they obeyed her orders, she took a third glass herself from the servant.

While this was passing, Mr Briggs, again perceiving her, stumpt hastily towards her, calling out "Ah ha! my duck! what's that? got something nice? Come here, my lad, taste it myself."

He then took a glass, but having only put it to his mouth, made a wry face, and returned it, saying "Bad! bad! poor punch indeed!—not a drop of rum in it!

"So much the better, Sir," cried Morrice, who diverted himself by following him, "for then you see the master of the house spares in something, and you said he spared in nothing."

"Don't spare in fools!" returned Mr Briggs, "keeps them in plenty."

"No, Sir, nor in any out of the way characters," answered Morrice.

"So much the worse," cried Briggs, "so much the worse! Eat him out of house and home; won't leave him a rag to his back nor a penny in his pocket. Never mind 'em, my little duck; mind none of your guardians but me; t'other two a'n't worth a rush."

Cecilia, somewhat ashamed of this speech, looked towards young Delvile, in whom it occasioned the first smile she had seen that evening.

"Been looking about for you!" continued Briggs, nodding sagaciously; "believe I've found one will do. Guess what I mean;—£100,0000—hay?—what say to that? any thing better at the west end of the town?"

"£100,000!" cried Morrice, "and pray, Sir, who may this be?"

"Not you, Mr jackanapes! sure of that. A'n't quite positive he'll have you, neither. Think he will, though."

"Pray; Sir, what age is he?" cried the never daunted Morrice.

"Why about—let's see—don't know, never heard,—what signifies?"

"But, Sir, he's an old man, I suppose, by being so rich?"

"Old? no, no such thing; about my own standing."

"What, Sir, and do you propose him for an husband to Miss Beverley?"

"Why not? know ever a one warmer? think Master Harrel will get her a better? or t'other old Don, in the grand square?"

"If you please, Sir," cried Cecilia hastily, "we will talk of this matter another time."

"No, pray," cried young Delvile, who could not forbear laughing, "let it be discussed now."

"Hate 'em," continued Mr Briggs, "hate 'em both! one spending more than he's worth, cheated and over-reached by fools, running into gaol to please a parcel of knaves; t'other counting nothing but uncles and grandfathers, dealing out fine names instead of cash, casting up more cousins than guineas—"

Again Cecilia endeavoured to silence him, but, only chucking her under the chin, he went on, "Ay, ay, my little duck, never mind 'em; one of 'em i'n't worth a penny, and t'other has nothing in his pockets but lists of the defunct. What good will come of that? would not give twopence a dozen for 'em! A poor set of grandees, with nothing but a tie-wig for their portions!"

Cecilia, unable to bear this harangue in the presence of young Delvile, who, however, laughed it off with a very good grace, arose with an intention to retreat, which being perceived by Sir Robert Floyer, who had attended to this dialogue with haughty contempt, he came forward, and said, "now then, madam, may I have the honour of your hand?"

"No, Sir," answered Cecilia, "I am engaged."

"Engaged again?" cried he, with the air of a man who thought himself much injured.

"Glad of it, glad of it!" said Mr Briggs; "served very right! have nothing to say to him, my chick!"

"Why not, Sir?" cried Sir Robert, with an imperious look.

"Sha'n't have her, sha'n't have her! can tell you that; won't consent; know you of old."

"And what do you know of me, pray Sir?"

"No good, no good; nothing to say to you; found fault with my nose! ha'n't forgot it."

At this moment Mr Marriot came to claim his partner, who, very willing to quit this scene of wrangling and vulgarity, immediately attended him. Miss Larolles, again flying up to her, said "O my dear, we are all expiring to know who that creature is! I never saw such a horrid fright in my life!"

Cecilia was beginning to satisfy her, but some more young ladies coming up to join in the request, she endeavoured to pass on; "O but," cried Miss Larolles, detaining her, "do pray stop, for I've something to tell you that's so monstrous you've no idea. Do you know Mr Meadows has not danced at all! and he's been standing with Mr Sawyer, and looking on all the time, and whispering and laughing so you've no notion. However, I assure you, I'm excessive glad he did not ask me, for all I have been sitting still all this time, for I had a great deal rather sit still, I assure you; only I'm sorry I put on this dress, for any thing would have done just to look on in that stupid manner."

Here Mr Meadows sauntered towards them; and all the young ladies began playing with their fans, and turning their heads another way, to disguise the expectations his approach awakened; and Miss Larolles, in a hasty whisper to Cecilia, cried, "Pray don't take any notice of what I said, for if he should happen to ask me, I can't well refuse him, you know, for if I do, he'll be so excessive affronted you can't think."

Mr Meadows then, mixing in the little group, began, with sundry grimaces, to exclaim "how intolerably hot it is! there's no such thing as breathing. How can anybody think of dancing! I am amazed Mr Harrel has not a ventilator in this room. Don't you think it would be a great improvement?"

This speech, though particularly addressed to no one, received immediately an assenting answer from all the young ladies.

Then, turning to Miss Larolles, “Don’t you dance?” he said.

“Me?” cried she, embarrassed, “yes, I believe so,—really I don’t know,—I a’n’t quite determined.”

“O, do dance!” cried he, stretching himself and yawning, “it always gives me spirits to see you.”

Then, turning suddenly to Cecilia, without any previous ceremony of renewing his acquaintance, either by speaking or bowing, he abruptly said “Do you love dancing, ma’am?”

“Yes, Sir, extremely well.”

“I’m very glad to hear it. You have one thing, then, to soften existence.”

“Do you dislike it yourself?”

“What dancing? Oh dreadful! how it was ever adopted in a civilized country I cannot find out; ‘tis certainly a Barbarian exercise, and of savage origin. Don’t you think so, Miss Larolles?”

“Lord no,” cried Miss Larolles, “I assure you I like it better than any thing; I know nothing so delightful, I declare I dare say I could not live without it; I should be so stupid you can’t conceive.”

“Why I remember,” said Mr Marriot, “when Mr Meadows was always dancing himself. Have you forgot, Sir, when you used to wish the night would last for ever, that you might dance without ceasing?”

Mr Meadows, who was now intently surveying a painting that was over the chimney-piece, seemed not to hear this question, but presently called out “I am amazed Mr Harrel can suffer such a picture as this to be in his house. I hate a portrait, ‘tis so wearisome looking at a thing that is doing nothing!”

“Do you like historical pictures, Sir, any better?”

“O no, I detest them! views of battles, murders, and death! Shocking! shocking!—I shrink from them with horror!”

“Perhaps you are fond of landscapes?”

“By no means! Green trees and fat cows! what do they tell one? I hate every thing that is insipid.”

“Your toleration, then,” said Cecilia, “will not be very extensive.”

“No,” said he, yawning, “one can tolerate nothing! one’s patience is wholly exhausted by the total tediousness of every thing one sees, and every body one talks with. Don’t you find it so, ma’am?”

“*Sometimes*!” said Cecilia, rather archly.

“You are right, ma’am, extremely right; one does not know what in the world to do with one’s self. At home, one is killed with meditation, abroad, one is overpowered by ceremony; no possibility of finding ease or comfort. You never go into public, I think, ma’am?”

“Why not to be much *marked*, I find!” said Cecilia, laughing.

“O, I beg your pardon! I believe I saw you one evening at Almack’s; I really beg your pardon, but I had quite forgot it.”

“Lord, Mr Meadows,” said Miss Larolles, “don’t you know you are meaning the Pantheon? only conceive how you forget things!”

“The Pantheon, was it? I never know one of those places from another. I heartily wish they were all abolished; I hate public places. ‘Tis terrible to be under the same roof with a set of people who would care nothing if they saw one expiring!”

“You are, at least, then, fond of the society of your friends?”

“O no! to be worn out by seeing always the same faces!—one is sick to death of friends; nothing makes one so melancholy.”

Cecilia now went to join the dancers, and Mr Meadows, turning to Miss Larolles, said, “Pray don’t let me keep you from dancing; I am afraid you’ll lose your place.”

“No,” cried she, bridling, “I sha’n’t dance at all.”

“How cruel!” cried he, yawning, “when you know how it exhilarates me to see you! Don’t you think this room is very close? I must go and try another atmosphere,—But I hope you will relent, and dance?”

And then, stretching his arms as if half asleep, he sauntered into the next room, where he flung himself upon a sofa till the ball was over.

The new partner of Cecilia, who was a wealthy, but very simple young man, used his utmost efforts to entertain and oblige her, and, flattered by the warmth of his own desire, he fancied that he succeeded; though, in a state of such suspence and anxiety, a man of brighter talents had failed.

At the end of the two dances, Lord Ernolf again attempted to engage her for his son, but she now excused herself from dancing any more, and sat quietly as a spectatress till the rest of the company gave over. Mr Marriot, however, would not quit her, and she was compelled to support with him a trifling conversation, which, though irksome to herself, to him, who had not *seen her in her happier hour*, was delightful.

She expected every instant to be again joined by young Delvile, but the expectation was disappointed; he came not; she concluded he was in another apartment; the company was summoned to supper, she then thought it impossible to miss him; but, after waiting and looking for him in vain, she found he had already left the house.

The rest of the evening she scarce knew what passed, for she attended to nothing; Mr Monckton might watch, and Mr Briggs might exhort her, Sir Robert might display his insolence, or Mr Marriot his gallantry,—all was equally indifferent, and equally unheeded; and before half the company left the house, she retired to her own room.

She spent the night in the utmost disturbance; the occurrences of the evening with respect to young Delvile she looked upon as decisive; if his absence had chagrined her, his presence had still more shocked her, since, while she was left to conjecture, though she had fears she had hopes, and though all she saw was gloomy, all she expected was pleasant; but they had now met, and those expectations proved fallacious. She knew not, indeed, how to account for the strangeness of his conduct; but in seeing it was strange, she was convinced it was unfavourable; he had evidently avoided her while it was in his power, and when, at last, he was obliged to meet her, he was formal, distant, and reserved.

The more she recollected and dwelt upon the difference of his behaviour in their preceding meeting, the more angry as well as amazed she became at the change, and though she still concluded the pursuit of some other object occasioned it, she could find no excuse for his fickleness if that pursuit was recent, nor for his caprice if it was anterior.

# CHAPTER ii. – A BROAD HINT

The next day Cecilia, to drive Delvile a little from her thoughts, which she now no longer wished him to occupy, again made a visit to Miss Belfield, whose society afforded her more consolation than any other she could procure.

She found her employed in packing up, and preparing to remove to another lodging, for her brother, she said, was so much better, that he did not think it right to continue in so disgraceful a situation.

She talked with her accustomed openness of her affairs, and the interest which Cecilia involuntarily took in them, contributed to lessen her vexation in thinking of her own. “The generous friend of my brother,” said she, “who, though but a new acquaintance to him, has courted him in all his sorrows, when every body else forsook him, has brought him at last into a better way of thinking. He says there is a gentleman whose son is soon going abroad, who he is almost sure will like my brother vastly, and in another week, he is to be introduced to him. And so, if my mother can but reconcile herself to parting with him, perhaps we may all do well again.”

“Your mother,” said Cecilia, “when he is gone, will better know the value of the blessing she has left in her daughter.”

“O no, madam, no; she is wrapt up in him, and cares nothing for all the world besides. It was always so, and we have all of us been used to it. But we have had a sad scene since you were so kind as to come last; for when she told him what you had done, he was almost out of his senses with anger that we had acquainted you with his distress, and he said it was publishing his misery, and undoing whatever his friend or himself could do, for it was making him ashamed to appear in the world, even when his affairs might be better. But I told him again and again that you had as much sweetness as goodness, and instead of hurting his reputation, would do him nothing but credit.”

“I am sorry,” said Cecilia, “Mrs Belfield mentioned the circumstance at all; it would have been better, for many reasons, that he should not have heard of it.”

“She hoped it would please him,” answered Miss Belfield, “however, he made us both promise we would take no such step in future, for he said we were not reduced to so much indigence, whatever he was; and that as to our accepting money from other people, that we might save up our own for him, it would be answering no purpose, for he should think himself a monster to make use of it.”

“And what said your mother?”

“Why she gave him a great many promises that she would never vex him about it again; and indeed, much as I know we are obliged to you, madam, and gratefully as I am sure I would lay down my life to serve you, I am very glad in this case that my brother has found it out. For though I so much wish him to do something for himself, and not to be so proud, and live in a manner he has no right to do, I think, for all that, that it is a great disgrace to my’ poor father’s honest memory, to have us turn beggars after his death, when he left us all so well provided for, if we had but known how to be satisfied.”

“There is a natural rectitude in your heart,” said Cecilia, “that the ablest casuists could not mend.”

She then enquired whither they were removing, and Miss Belfield told her to Portland Street, Oxford Road, where they were to have two apartments up two pair of stairs, and the use of a very good parlour, in which her brother might see his friends. “And this,” added she, “is a luxury for which nobody can blame him, because if he has not the appearance of a decent home, no gentleman will employ him.”

The Padington house, she said, was already let, and her mother was determined not to hire another, but still to live as penuriously as possible, in order, notwithstanding his remonstrances, to save all she could of her income for her son.

Here the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs Belfield, who very familiarly said she came to tell Cecilia they were *all in the wrong box* in letting her son know of the £10 bank note, "for," continued she, "he has a pride that would grace a duke, and he thinks nothing of his hardships, so long as nobody knows of them. So another time we must manage things better, and when we do him any good, not let him know a word of the matter. We'll settle it all among ourselves, and one day or other he'll be glad enough to thank us."

Cecilia, who saw Miss Belfield colour with shame at the freedom of this hint, now arose to depart; but Mrs Belfield begged her not to go so soon, and pressed her with such urgency to again sit down, that she was obliged to comply.

She then began a warm commendation of her son, lavishly praising all his good qualities, and exalting even his defects, concluding with saying "But, ma'am, for all he's such a complete gentleman, and for all he's made so much of, he was so diffident, I could not get him to call and thank you for the present you made him, though, when he went his last airing, I almost knelt to him to do it. But, with all his merit, he wants as much encouragement as a lady, for I can tell you it is not a little will do for him."

Cecilia, amazed at this extraordinary speech, looked from the mother to the daughter in order to discover its meaning, which, however, was soon rendered plainer by what followed.

"But pray now, ma'am, don't think him the more ungrateful for his shyness, for young ladies so high in the world as you are, must go pretty good lengths before a young man will get courage to speak to them. And though I have told my son over and over that the ladies never like a man the worse for being a little bold, he's so much down in the mouth that it has no effect upon him. But it all comes of his being brought up at the university, for that makes him think he knows better than I can tell him. And so, to be sure, he does. However, for all that, it is a hard thing upon a mother to find all she says goes just for nothing. But I hope you'll excuse him, ma'am, for it's nothing in the world but his over-modesty."

Cecilia now stared with a look of so much astonishment and displeasure, that Mrs Belfield, suspecting she had gone rather too far, added "I beg you won't take what I've said amiss, ma'am, for we mothers of families are more used to speak out than maiden ladies. And I should not have said so much, but only I was afraid you would misconstrue my son's backwardness, and so that he might be flung out of your favour at last, and all for nothing but having too much respect for you."

"O dear mother!" cried Miss Belfield, whose face was the colour of scarlet, "pray!"—

"What's the matter now?" cried Mrs Belfield; "you are as shy as your brother; and if we are all to be so, when are we to come to an understanding?"

"Not immediately, I believe indeed," said Cecilia, rising, "but that we may not plunge deeper in our mistakes, I will for the present take my leave."

"No, ma'am," cried Mrs Belfield, stopping her, "pray don't go yet, for I've got a great many things I want to talk to you about. In the first place, ma'am, pray what is your opinion of this scheme for sending my son abroad into foreign parts? I don't know what you may think of it, but as to me, it half drives me out of my senses to have him taken away from me at last in that unnatural manner. And I'm sure, ma'am, if you would only put in a word against it, I dare say he would give it up without a demur."

"Me?" cried Cecilia, disengaging herself from her hold, "No, madam, you must apply to those friends who better understand his affairs, and who would have a deeper interest in detaining him."

"Lack a day!" cried Mrs Belfield, with scarcely smothered vexation, "how hard it is to make these grand young ladies come to reason! As to my son's other friends, what good will it do for him to mind what they say? who can expect him to give up his journey, without knowing what amends he shall get for it?"

"You must settle this matter with him at your leisure," said Cecilia, "I cannot now stay another moment."

Mrs Belfield, again finding she had been too precipitate, tried to draw back, saying “Pray, ma’am, don’t let what I have mentioned go against my son in your good opinion, for he knows no more of it than the furthest person in the world, as my daughter can testify for as to shyness, he’s just as shy as a lady himself; so what good he ever got at the University, as to the matter of making his fortune, it’s what I never could discover. However, I dare say he knows best; though when all comes to all, if I was to speak my mind, I think he’s made but a poor hand of it.”

Cecilia, who only through compassion to the blushing Henrietta forbore repressing this forwardness more seriously, merely answered Mrs Belfield by wishing her good morning; but, while she was taking a kinder leave of her timid daughter, the mother added “As to the present, ma’am, you was so kind to make us, Henny can witness for me every penny of it shall go to my son.”

“I rather meant it,” said Cecilia, “for your daughter; but if it is of use to any body, my purpose is sufficiently answered.”

Mrs Belfield again pressed her to sit down, but she would not again listen to her, coldly saying “I am sorry you troubled Mr Belfield with any mention of what passed between his sister and me, but should you speak of it again, I beg you will explain to him that he had no concern in that little transaction, which belonged wholly to ourselves.”

She then hastened down stairs, followed, however, by Mrs Belfield, making awkward excuses for what she had said, intermixed with frequent hints that she knew all the time she was in the right.

This little incident, which convinced Cecilia Mrs Belfield was firmly persuaded she was in love with her son, gave her much uneasiness; she feared the son himself might entertain the same notion, and thought it most probable the daughter also had imbibed it, though but for the forward vulgarity of the sanguine mother, their opinions might long have remained concealed. Her benevolence towards them, notwithstanding its purity, must now therefore cease to be exerted; nor could she even visit Miss Belfield, since prudence, and a regard for her own character, seemed immediately to prohibit all commerce with the family.

“And thus difficult,” cried she, “is the blameless use of riches, though; all who want them, think nothing so easy as their disposal! This family I have so much wished to serve, I may at last only have injured, since the disappointment of their higher expectations, may render all smaller benefits contemptible. And thus this unfortunate misconstruction of my good offices, robs them of a useful assistant, and deprives me at the same time of an amiable companion.”

As soon as she returned home, she had a letter put into her hand which came from Mr Marriot, whose servant had twice called for an answer in the short time she had been absent.

This letter contained a most passionate avowal of the impression she had made on his heart the preceding evening, and an angry complaint that Mr Harrel had refused to hear his proposals. He entreated her permission to wait upon her for only five minutes, and concluded with the most fervent professions of respect and admiration.

The precipitancy of this declaration served merely to confirm the opinion she had already conceived of the weakness of his understanding; but the obstinacy of Mr Harrel irritated and distressed her, though weary of expostulating with so hopeless a subject, whom neither reason nor gratitude could turn from his own purposes, she was obliged to submit to his management, and was well content, in the present instance, to affirm his decree. She therefore wrote a concise answer to her new admirer, in the usual form of civil rejection.

# CHAPTER iii. – AN ACCOMMODATION

Cecilia was informed the next morning that a young woman begged to speak with her, and upon sending for her up stairs, she saw, to her great surprise, Miss Belfield.

She came in fear and trembling, sent, she said, by her mother, to entreat her pardon for what had passed the preceding day; “But I know, madam,” she added, “you cannot pardon it, and therefore all that I mean to do is to clear my brother from any share in what was said, for indeed he has too much sense to harbour any such presumption; and to thank you with a most grateful heart for all the goodness you have shewn us.”

And then, modestly courtsying, she would have returned home; but Cecilia, much touched by her gentleness, took her hand, and kindly reviving her by assurances of esteem, entreated that she would lengthen her stay.

“How good is this, madam,” said she, “after having so much reason to think so ill of me and of all of us I tried all in my power to undeceive my mother, or at least to keep her quiet; but she was so much persuaded she was right, that she never would listen to me, and always said, did I suppose it was for *me* you condescended to come so often?”

“Yes,” answered Cecilia, “most undoubtedly; had I not known you, however well I might have wished your brother, I should certainly not have visited at his house. But I am very happy to hear the mistake had spread no further.”

“No indeed, madam, I never once thought of it; and as to my brother, when my mother only hinted it to him, he was quite angry. But though I don’t mean to vindicate what has happened, you will not, I hope, be displeased if I say my mother is much more pardonable than she seems to be, for the same mistake she made with you, she would have been as apt to have made with a princess; it was not, therefore, from any want of respect, but merely from thinking my brother might marry as high as he pleased, and believing no lady would refuse him, if he would but have the courage to speak.”

Cecilia assured her she would think no more of the error, but told her that to avoid its renewal, she must decline calling upon her again till her brother was gone. She begged therefore to see her in Portman-square whenever she had leisure, repeatedly assuring her of her good opinion and regard, and of the pleasure with which she should seize every opportunity of shewing them.

Delighted by a reception so kind, Miss Belfield remained with her all the morning; and when at last she was obliged to leave her, she was but too happy in being solicited to repeat her visit.

She suffered one day only to elapse before she shewed her readiness to accept the friendship that was offered her; and Cecilia, much pleased by this eagerness, redoubled her efforts to oblige and to serve her.

From this time, hardly a day passed in which she did not call in Portman-square, where nothing in her reception was omitted that could contribute to her contentment. Cecilia was glad to employ her mind in any way that related not to Delvile, whom she now earnestly endeavoured to think of no more, denying herself even the pleasure of talking of him with Miss Belfield, by the name of *her brother’s noble friend*.

During this time she devised various methods, all too delicate to give even the shadow of offence, for making both useful and ornamental presents to her new favourite, with whom she grew daily more satisfied, and to whom she purposed hereafter offering a residence in her own house.

The trial of intimacy, so difficult to the ablest to stand, and from which even the most faultless are so rarely acquitted, Miss Belfield sustained with honour. Cecilia found her artless, ingenuous, and affectionate; her understanding was good, though no pains had been taken to improve it; her disposition though ardent was soft, and her mind seemed informed by intuitive integrity.

She communicated to Cecilia all the affairs of her family, disguising from her neither distress nor meanness, and seeking to palliate nothing but the grosser parts of the character of her mother.

She seemed equally ready to make known to her even the most chosen secrets of her own bosom, for that such she had was evident, from a frequent appearance of absence and uneasiness which she took but little trouble to conceal. Cecilia, however, trusted not herself, in the present critical situation of her own mind, with any enquiries that might lead to a subject she was conscious she ought not to dwell upon; a short time, she hoped, would totally remove her suspence; but as she had much less reason to expect good than evil, she made it her immediate study to prepare for the worst, and therefore carefully avoided all discourse that by nourishing her tenderness, might weaken her resolution.

While thus, in friendly conversation and virtuous forbearance, passed gravely, but not unhappily, the time of Cecilia, the rest of the house was very differently employed; feasting, revelling, amusements of all sorts were pursued with more eagerness than ever, and the alarm which so lately threatened their destruction, seemed now merely to heighten the avidity with which they were sought. Yet never was the disunion of happiness and diversion more striking and obvious; Mr Harrel, in spite of his natural levity, was seized from time to time with fits of horror that embittered his gayest moments, and cast a cloud upon all his enjoyments. Always an enemy to solitude, he now found it wholly insupportable, and ran into company of any sort, less from a hope of finding entertainment, than from a dread of spending half an hour by himself.

Cecilia, who saw that his rapacity for pleasure encreased with his uneasiness, once more ventured to speak with his lady upon the subject of reformation; counselling her to take advantage of his present apparent discontent, which showed at least some sensibility of his situation, in order to point out to him the necessity of an immediate inspection into his affairs, which, with a total change in his way of life, was her only chance for snatching him from the dismal despondency into which he was sinking.

Mrs Harrel declared herself unequal to following this advice, and said that her whole study was to find Mr Harrel amusement, for he was grown so ill-humoured and petulant she quite feared being alone with him.

The house therefore now was more crowded than ever, and nothing but dissipation was thought of. Among those who upon this plan were courted to it, the foremost was Mr Morrice, who, from a peculiar talent of uniting servility of conduct with gaiety of speech, made himself at once so agreeable and useful in the family, that in a short time they fancied it impossible to live without him. And Morrice, though his first view in obtaining admittance had been the cultivation of his acquaintance with Cecilia, was perfectly satisfied with the turn that matters had taken, since his utmost vanity had never led him to entertain any matrimonial hopes with her, and he thought his fortune as likely to profit from the civility of her friends as of herself. For Morrice, however flighty, and wild, had always at heart the study of his own interest; and though from a giddy forwardness of disposition he often gave offence, his meaning and his serious attention was not the less directed to the advancement of his own affairs; he formed no connection from which he hoped not some benefit, and he considered the acquaintance and friendship of his superiors in no other light than that of procuring him sooner or later recommendations to new clients.

Sir Robert Floyer also was more frequent than ever in his visits, and Mr Harrel, notwithstanding the remonstrances of Cecilia, contrived every possible opportunity of giving him access to her. Mrs Harrel herself, though hitherto neutral, now pleaded his cause with earnestness; and Mr Arnott, who had been her former refuge from this persecution, grew so serious and so tender in his devoirs, that unable any longer to doubt the sentiments she had inspired, she was compelled even with him to be guarded and distant.

She now with daily concern looked back to the sacrifice she had made to the worthless and ungrateful Mr Harrel, and was sometimes tempted to immediately chuse another guardian, and leave his house for ever; yet the delicacy of her disposition was averse to any step that might publicly expose him, and her early regard for his wife would not suffer her to put it in execution.

These circumstances contributed strongly to encrease her intimacy with Miss Belfield; she now never saw Mrs Delvile, whom alone she preferred to her, and from the troublesome assiduity of Sir Robert, scarce ever met Mr Monckton but in his presence; she found, therefore, no resource against teazing and vexation, but what was afforded her by the conversation of the amiable Henrietta.

# CHAPTER iv. – A DETECTION

A fortnight had now elapsed in which Cecilia had had no sort of communication with the Delviles, whom equally from pride and from prudence she forbore to seek for herself, when one morning, while she was sitting with Miss Belfield, her maid told her that young Mr Delvile was in the drawing-room, and begged the honour of seeing her for a few moments.

Cecilia, though she started and changed colour with surprize at this message, was unconscious she did either, from the yet greater surprise she received by the behaviour of Miss Belfield, who hastily arising, exclaimed "Good God, Mr Delvile!—do you know Mr Delvile, madam?—does Mr Delvile visit at this house?"

"Sometimes; not often," answered Cecilia; "but why?"

"I don't know,—nothing, madam,—I only asked by accident, I believe,—but it's very—it's extremely—I did not know"—and colouring violently, she again sat down.

An apprehension the most painful now took possession of Cecilia, and absorbed in thought, she continued for some minutes silent and immoveable.

From this state she was awakened by her maid, who asked if she chose to have her gloves.

Cecilia, taking them from her without speaking, left the room, and not daring to stop for enquiry or consideration, hastened down stairs; but when she entered the apartment where young Delvile was waiting for her, all utterance seemed denied her, and she courtsied without saying a word.

Struck with the look and uncommon manner of her entrance, he became in a moment as much disturbed as herself, pouring forth a thousand unnecessary and embarrassed apologies for his visit, and so totally forgetting even the reason why he made it, that he had taken his leave and was departing before he recollected it. He then turned back, forcing a laugh at his own absence of mind, and told her he had only called to acquaint her, that the commands with which she had honoured him were now obeyed, and, he hoped, to her satisfaction.

Cecilia, who knew not she had ever given him any, waited his further explanation; and he then informed her he had that very morning introduced Mr Belfield to the Earl of Vannelt, who had already heard him very advantageously spoken of by some gentlemen to whom he had been known at the University, and who was so much pleased with him upon this first interview, that he meant, after a few enquiries, which could not but turn out to his credit, to commit his eldest son to his trust in making the tour of Europe.

Cecilia thanked him for her share in the trouble he had taken in this transaction; and then asked if Mrs Delvile continued well.

"Yes," answered he, with a smile half reproachful, "as well as one who having ever hoped your favour, can easily be after finding that hope disappointed. But much as she has taught her son, there is one lesson she might perhaps learn from him;—to fly, not seek, those dangerous indulgences of which the deprivation is the loss of peace!"

He then bowed, and made his exit.

This unexpected reproof, and the yet more unexpected compliment that accompanied it, in both which *more seemed meant than met the ear*, encreased the perturbation into which Cecilia had already been thrown. It occurred to her that under the sanction of his mother's name, he had taken an opportunity of making an apology for his own conduct; yet why avoiding her society, if to that he alluded, should be *flying a dangerous indulgence*, she could not understand, since he had so little reason to fear any repulse in continuing to seek it.

Sorry, however, for the abrupt manner in which she had left Miss Belfield, she lost not a moment in hastening back to her; but when she came into the room, she found her employed in looking out of the window, her eye following some object with such earnestness of attention, that she perceived not her return.

Cecilia, who could not doubt the motive of her curiosity, had no great difficulty in forbearing to offer her any interruption. She drew her head back in a few minutes, and casting it upwards, with her hands clasped, softly whispered, “Heaven ever shield and bless him! and O may he never feel such pain as I do!”

She then again looked out, but soon drawing herself in, said, in the same soft accents, “Oh why art thou gone! sweetest and noblest of men! why might I not see thee longer, when, under heaven, there is no other blessing I wish for!”

A sigh which at these words escaped Cecilia made her start and turn towards the door; the deepest blushes overspread the cheeks of both as their eyes met each other, and while Miss Belfield trembled in every limb at the discovery she had made, Cecilia herself was hardly able to stand.

A painful and most embarrassed silence succeeded, which was only broken by Miss Belfield’s bursting into tears.

Cecilia, extremely moved, forgot for a moment her own interest in what was passing, and tenderly approaching, embraced her with the utmost kindness; but still she spoke not, fearing to make an enquiry, from dreading to hear any explanation.

Miss Belfield, soothed by her softness, clung about her, and hiding her face in her arms, sobbed out, “Ah madam! who ought to be unhappy if befriended by you! if I could help it, I would love nobody else in almost the whole world. But you must let me leave you now, and to-morrow I will tell you every thing.”

Cecilia, who had no wish for making any opposition, embraced her again, and suffered her quietly to depart.

Her own mind was now in a state of the utmost confusion. The rectitude of her heart and the soundness of her judgment had hitherto guarded her both from error and blame, and, except during her recent suspence, had preserved her tranquility inviolate; but her commerce with the world had been small and confined, and her actions had had little reference but to herself. The case was now altered; and she was suddenly in a conjuncture of all others the most delicate, that of accidentally discovering a rival in a favourite friend.

The fondness she had conceived for Miss Belfield, and the sincerity of her intentions as well as promises to serve her, made the detection of this secret peculiarly cruel; she had lately felt no pleasure but in her society, and looked forward to much future comfort from the continuance of her regard, and from their constantly living together; but now this was no longer even to be desired, since the utter annihilation of the wishes of both, by young Delvile’s being disposed of to a third person, could alone render eligible their dwelling under the same roof.

Her pity, however, for Miss Belfield was almost wholly unallayed by jealousy; she harboured not any suspicion that she was loved by young Delvile, whose aspiring spirit led her infinitely more to fear some higher rival, than to believe he bestowed even a thought upon the poor Henrietta; but still she wished with the utmost ardour to know the length of their acquaintance, how often they had met, when they had conversed, what notice he had taken of her, and how so dangerous a preference had invaded her heart.

But though this curiosity was both natural and powerful, her principal concern was the arrangement of her own conduct; the next day Miss Belfield was to tell her every thing by a voluntary promise; but she doubted if she had any right to accept such a confidence. Miss Belfield, she was sure, knew not she was interested in the tale, since she had not even imagined that Delvile was known to her. She might hope, therefore, not only for advice but assistance, and fancy that while she reposed her secret in the bosom of a friend, she secured herself her best offices and best wishes for ever.

Would she obtain them? no; the most romantic generosity would revolt from such a demand, for however precarious was her own chance with young Delvile, Miss Belfield she was sure could not have any; neither her birth nor education fitted her for his rank in life, and even were both

unexceptionable, the smallness of her fortune, as Mr Monckton had instructed her, would be an obstacle insurmountable.

Would it not be a kind of treachery to gather from her every thing, yet aid her in nothing? to take advantage of her unsuspicious openness in order to learn all that related to one whom she yet hoped would belong ultimately to herself, and gratify an interested curiosity at the expence of a candour not more simple than amiable? “No,” cried Cecilia, “arts that I could never forgive, I never will practice; this sweet, but unhappy girl shall tell me nothing; betrayed already by the tenderness of her own heart, she shall at least suffer no further from any duplicity in mine. If, indeed, Mr Delvile, as I suspect, is engaged elsewhere, I will make this gentle Henrietta the object of my future solicitude; the sympathy of our situations will not then divide but unite us, and I will take her to my bosom, hear all her sorrows, and calm her troubled spirit by participating in her sensibility. But if, on the contrary, this mystery ends more happily for myself, if Mr Delvile has now no other engagement, and hereafter clears his conduct to my satisfaction, I will not be accessory to loading her future recollection with the shame of a confidence she then cannot but repent, nor with an injury to her delicacy that may wound it for ever.”

She determined, therefore, carefully to avoid the subject for the present, since she could offer no advice for which she might not, hereafter, be suspected of selfish motives; but yet, from a real regard to the tender-hearted girl, to give all the tacit discouragement that was in her power, to a passion which she firmly believed would be productive of nothing but misery.

Once, from the frankness natural to her disposition, she thought not merely of receiving but returning her confidence; her better judgment, however, soon led her from so hazardous a plan, which could only have exposed them both to a romantic humiliation, by which, in the end, their mutual expectations might prove sources of mutual distrust.

When Miss Belfield, therefore, the next morning, her air unusually timid, and her whole face covered with blushes, made her visit, Cecilia, not seeming to notice her confusion, told her she was very sorry she was obliged to go out herself, and contrived, under various pretences, to keep her maid in the room. Miss Belfield, supposing this to be accidental, rejoiced in her imaginary reprieve, and soon recovered her usual chearfulness; and Cecilia, who really meant to call upon Mrs Delvile, borrowed Mrs Harrel’s carriage, and set down her artless young friend at her new lodgings in Portland-street, before she proceeded to St James’s-square, talking the whole time upon matters of utter indifference.

# CHAPTER v. – A SARCASM

The reproach which Cecilia had received from young Delvile in the name of his mother, determined her upon making this visit; for though, in her present uncertainty, she wished only to see that family when sought by themselves, she was yet desirous to avoid all appearance of singularity, lest any suspicions should be raised of her sentiments.

Mrs Delvile received her with a cold civility that chilled and afflicted her; she found her seriously offended by her long absence, and now for the first time perceived that haughtiness of character which hitherto she had thought only given to her by the calumny of envy; for though her displeasure was undisguised, she deigned not to make any reproaches, evidently shewing that her disappointment in the loss of her society, was embittered by a proud regret for the kindness she believed she had thrown away. But though she scrupulously forbore the smallest complaint, she failed not from time to time to cast out reflections upon fickleness and caprice the most satirical and pointed.

Cecilia, who could not possibly avow the motives of her behaviour, ventured not to offer any apology for her apparent negligence; but, hitherto accustomed to the most distinguished kindness, a change to so much bitterness shocked and overpowered her, and she sat almost wholly silent, and hardly able to look up.

Lady Honoria Pemberton, a daughter of the Duke of Derwent, now came into the room, and afforded her some relief by the sprightliness of her conversation. This young lady, who was a relation of the Delviles, and of a character the most airy and unthinking, ran on during her whole visit in a vein of fashionable scandal, with a levity that the censures of Mrs Delvile, though by no means spared, had no power to [controul]; and, after having completely ransacked the topics of the day, she turned suddenly to Cecilia, with whom during her residence in St James's-square she had made some acquaintance, and said, "So I hear, Miss Beverley, that after half the town has given you to Sir Robert Floyer, and the other half to my Lord Derford, you intend, without regarding one side or the other, to disappoint them both, and give yourself to Mr Marriot."

"Me? no, indeed," answered Cecilia, "your ladyship has been much misinformed."

"I hope so," said Mrs Delvile, "for Mr Marriot, by all I ever heard of him, seems to have but one recommendation, and that the last Miss Beverley ought to value, a good estate."

Cecilia, secretly delighted by a speech which she could not resist flattering herself had reference to her son, now a little revived, and endeavoured to bear some part in the conversation.

"Everybody one meets," cried Lady Honoria, "disposes of Miss Beverley to some new person; yet the common opinion is that Sir Robert Floyer will be the man. But upon my word, for my own part, I cannot conjecture how she will manage among them, for Mr Marriot declares he's determined he won't be refused, and Sir Robert vows that he'll never give her up. So we none of us know how it will end; but I am vastly glad she keeps them so long in suspence."

"If there is any suspence," said Cecilia, "I am at least sure it must be wilful. But why should your ladyship rejoice in it?"

"O, because it helps to torment them, and keeps something going forward. Besides, we are all looking in the news-papers every day, to see when they'll fight another duel for you."

"Another?" cried Cecilia; "indeed they have never yet fought any for me."

"O, I beg your pardon," answered her ladyship, "Sir Robert, you know, fought one for you in the beginning of the winter, with that Irish fortune-hunter who affronted you at the Opera."

"Irish fortune-hunter?" repeated Cecilia, "how strangely has that quarrel been misrepresented! In the first place, I never was affronted at the Opera at all, and in the second, if your Ladyship means Mr Belfield, I question if he ever was in Ireland in his life."

"Well," cried Lady Honoria, "he might come from Scotland, for aught I know, but somewhere he certainly came from; and they tell me he is wounded terribly, and Sir Robert has had all his things packed up this month, that in case he should die, he may go abroad in a moment."

"And pray where, Lady Honoria," cried Mrs Delvile, "do you contrive to pick up all this rattle?"

"O, I don't know; everybody tells me something, so I put it all together as well as I can. But I could acquaint you with a stranger piece of news than any you have heard yet."

"And what is that?"

"O, if I let you know it, you'll tell your son."

"No indeed," said Mrs Delvile laughing, "I shall probably forget it myself."

She then made some further difficulty, and Cecilia, uncertain if she was meant to be a party in the communication, strolled to a window; where, however, as Lady Honoria did not lower her voice, she heard her say "Why you must know I am told he keeps a mistress somewhere in Oxford-Road. They say she's mighty pretty; I should like vastly to see her."

The consternation of Cecilia at this intelligence would certainly have betrayed all she so much wished to conceal, had not her fortunate removal to the window guarded her from observation. She kept her post, fearing to look round, but was much pleased when Mrs Delvile, with great indignation answered "I am sorry, Lady Honoria, you can find any amusement in listening to such idle scandal, which those who tell will never respect you for hearing. In times less daring in slander, the character of Mortimer would have proved to him a shield from all injurious aspersions; yet who shall wonder he could not escape, and who shall contemn the inventors of calumny, if Lady Honoria Pemberton condescends to be entertained with it?"

"Dear Mrs Delvile," cried Lady Honoria, giddily, "you take me too seriously."

"And dear Lady Honoria," said Mrs Delvile, "I would it were possible to make you take yourself seriously; for could you once see with clearness and precision how much you lower your own dignity, while you stoop to depreciate that of others, the very subjects that now make your diversion, would then, far more properly, move your resentment."

"Ay but, dear madam," cried Lady Honoria, "if that were the case, I should be quite perfect, and then you and I should never quarrel, and I don't know what we should do for conversation."

And with these words, hastily shaking hands with her, she took leave.

"Such conversation," said Mrs Delvile when she was gone, "as results from the mixture of fruitless admonition with incorrigible levity, would be indeed *more honoured in the breach than the observance*. But levity is so much the fashionable characteristic of the present age, that a gay young girl who, like Lady Honoria Pemberton, rules the friends by whom she ought to be ruled, had little chance of escaping it."

"She seems so open, however, to reproof," said Cecilia, "that I should hope in a short time she may also be open to conviction."

"No," answered Mrs Delvile, "I have no hope of her at all. I once took much pains with her; but I soon found that the easiness with which she hears of her faults, is only another effect of the levity with which she commits them. But if the young are never tired of erring in conduct, neither are the older in erring in judgment; the fallibility of *mine* I have indeed very lately experienced."

Cecilia, who strongly felt the poignancy of this sarcasm, and whose constant and unaffected value of Mrs Delvile by no means deserved it, was again silenced, and again most cruelly depressed; nor could she secretly forbear repining that at the very moment she found herself threatened with a necessity of foregoing the society of her new favourite, Miss Belfield, the woman in the whole world whom she most wished to have for her friend, from an unhappy mistake was ready to relinquish her. Grieved to be thus fallen in her esteem, and shocked that she could offer no justification, after a short and thoughtful pause, she gravely arose to take leave.

Mrs Delvile then told her that if she had any business to transact with Mr Delvile, she advised her to acquaint him with it soon, as the whole family left town in a few days.

This was a new and severe blow to Cecilia, who sorrowfully repeated “In a few days, madam?”

“Yes,” answered Mrs Delvile, “I hope you intend to be much concerned?”

“Ah madam!” cried Cecilia, who could no longer preserve her quietness, “if you knew but half the respect I bear you, but half the sincerity with which I value and revere you, all protestations would be useless, for all accusations would be over!”

Mrs Delvile, at once surprised and softened by the warmth of this declaration, instantly took her hand, and said “They shall now, and for ever be over, if it pains you to hear them. I concluded that what I said would be a matter of indifference to you, or all my displeasure would immediately have been satisfied, when once I had intimated that your absence had excited it.”

“That I have excited it at all,” answered Cecilia, “gives me indeed the severest uneasiness; but believe me, madam, however unfortunately appearances maybe against me, I have always had the highest sense of the kindness with which you have honoured me, and never has there been the smallest abatement in the veneration, gratitude, and affection I have inviolably borne you.”

“You see, then,” said Mrs Delvile with a smile, “that where reproof takes any effect, it is not received; with that easiness you were just now admiring; on the contrary, where a concession is made without pain, it is also made without meaning, for it is not in human nature to project any amendment without a secret repugnance. That here, however, you should differ from Lady Honoria Pemberton, who can wonder, when you are superior to all comparison with her in every thing?”

“Will you then,” said Cecilia, “accept my apology, and forgive me?”

“I will do more,” said Mrs Delvile laughing, “I will forgive you *without* an apology; for the truth is I have heard none! But come,” continued she, perceiving Cecilia much abashed by this comment, “I will enquire no more about the matter; I am glad to receive my young friend again, and even half ashamed, deserving as she is, to say *how* glad!”

She then embraced her affectionately, and owned she had been more mortified by her fancied desertion than she had been willing to own even to herself, repeatedly assuring her that for many years she had not made any acquaintance she so much wished to cultivate, nor enjoyed any society from which she had derived so much pleasure.

Cecilia, whose eyes glistened with modest joy, while her heart beat quick with revived expectation, in listening to an effusion of praise so infinitely grateful to her, found little difficulty in returning her friendly professions, and, in a few minutes, was not merely reconciled, but more firmly united with her than ever.

Mrs Delvile insisted upon keeping her to dinner, and Cecilia, but too happy in her earnestness, readily agreed to send Mrs Harrel an excuse.

Neither of the Mr Delviles spent the day at home, and nothing, therefore, disturbed or interrupted those glowing and delightful sensations which spring from a cordial renewal of friendship and kindness. The report, indeed, of Lady Honoria Pemberton gave her some uneasiness, yet the flighty character of that lady, and Mrs Delvile’s reply to it, soon made her drive it from her mind.

She returned home early in the evening, as other company was expected, and she had not changed her dress since the morning; but she first made a promise to see Mrs Delvile some part of every day during the short time that she meant to remain in town.

# CHAPTER vi. – A SURMISE

The next morning opened with another scene; Mrs Harrel ran into Cecilia's room before breakfast, and acquainted her that Mr Harrel had not been at home all night.

The consternation with which she heard this account she instantly endeavoured to dissipate, in order to soften the apprehension with which it was communicated; Mrs Harrel, however, was extremely uneasy, and sent all the town over to make enquiries, but without receiving any intelligence.

Cecilia, unwilling to leave her in a state of such alarm, wrote an excuse to Mrs Delvile, that she might continue with her till some information was procured. A subject also of such immediate concern, was sufficient apology for avoiding any particular conversation with Miss Belfield, who called, as usual, about noon, and whose susceptible heart was much affected by the evident disturbance in which she found Cecilia.

The whole day passed, and no news arrived; but, greatly to her astonishment, Mrs Harrel in the evening prepared for going to an assembly! yet declaring at the same time it was extremely disagreeable to her, only she was afraid, if she stayed away, every body would suppose something was the matter.

Who then at last, thought Cecilia, are half so much the slaves of the world as the gay and the dissipated? Those who work for hire, have at least their hours of rest, those who labour for subsistence are at liberty when subsistence is procured; but those who toil to please the vain and the idle, undertake a task which can never be finished, however scrupulously all private peace, and all internal comfort, may be sacrificed in reality to the folly of saving appearances!

Losing, however, the motive for which she had given up her own engagement, she now sent for her chair, in order to spend an hour or two with Mrs Delvile. The servants, as they conducted her up stairs, said they would call their lady; and in entering the drawing-room she saw, reading and alone, young Delvile.

He seemed much surprised, but received her with the utmost respect, apologizing for the absence of his mother, whom he said had understood she was not to see her till the next day, and had left him to write letters now, that she might then be at liberty.

Cecilia in return made excuses for her seeming inconsistency; after which, for some time, all conversation dropt.

The silence was at length broken by young Delvile's saying "Mr Belfield's merit has not been thrown away upon Lord Vannelt; he has heard an excellent character of him from all his former acquaintance, and is now fitting up an apartment for him in his own house till his son begins his tour."

Cecilia said she was very happy in hearing such intelligence; and then again they were both silent.

"You have seen," said young Delvile, after this second pause, "Mr Belfield's sister?"

Cecilia, not without changing colour, answered "Yes, Sir."

"She is very amiable," he continued, "too amiable, indeed, for her situation, since her relations, her brother alone excepted, are all utterly unworthy of her."

He stopt; but Cecilia made no answer, and he presently added "Perhaps you do not think her amiable?—you may have seen more of her, and know something to her disadvantage?"

"O no!" cried Cecilia, with a forced alacrity, "but only I was thinking that—did you say you knew all her relations?"

"No," he answered, "but when I have been with Mr Belfield, some of them have called upon him."

Again they were both silent; and then Cecilia, ashamed of her apparent backwardness to give praise, compelled herself to say, "Miss Belfield is indeed a very sweet girl, and I wish—" she stopt, not well knowing herself what she meant to add.

"I have been greatly pleased," said he, after waiting some time to hear if she would finish her speech, "by being informed of your goodness to her, and I think she seems equally to require and to deserve it. I doubt not you will extend it to her when she is deprived of her brother, for then will be the time that by doing her most service, it will reflect on yourself most honour."

Cecilia, confounded by this recommendation, faintly answered "Certainly,—whatever is in my power,—I shall be very glad—"

And just then Mrs Delvile made her appearance, and during the mutual apologies that followed, her son left the room. Cecilia, glad of any pretence to leave it also, insisted upon giving no interruption to Mrs Delvile's letter writing, and having promised to spend all the next day with her, hurried back to her chair.

The reflections that followed her thither were by no means the most soothing; she began now to apprehend that the pity she had bestowed upon Miss Belfield, Miss Belfield in a short time might bestow upon her; at any other time, his recommendation would merely have served to confirm her opinion of his benevolence, but in her present state of anxiety and uncertainty, every thing gave birth to conjecture, and had power to alarm her. He had behaved to her of late with the strangest coldness and distance,—his praise of Henrietta had been ready and animated,—Henrietta she knew adored him, and she knew not with what reason,—but an involuntary suspicion arose in her mind, that the partiality she had herself once excited, was now transferred to that little dreaded, but not less dangerous rival.

Yet, if such was the case, what was to become either of the pride or the interest of his family? Would his relations ever pardon an alliance stimulated neither by rank nor riches? would Mr Delvile, who hardly ever spoke but to the high-born, without seeming to think his dignity somewhat injured, deign to receive for a daughter-in-law the child of a citizen and tradesman? would Mrs Delvile herself, little less elevated in her notions, though infinitely softer in her manners, ever condescend to acknowledge her? Cecilia's own birth and connections, superior as they were to those of Miss Belfield, were even openly disdained by Mr Delvile, and all her expectations of being received into his family were founded upon the largeness of her fortune, in favour of which the brevity of her genealogy might perhaps pass unnoticed. But what was the chance of Miss Belfield, who neither had ancestors to boast, nor wealth to allure?

This thought, however, awakened all the generosity of her soul; "If," cried she, "the advantages I possess are merely those of riches, how little should I be flattered by any appearance of preference! and how ill can I judge with what sincerity it may be offered! happier in that case is the lowly Henrietta, who to poverty may attribute neglect, but who can only be sought and caressed from motives of purest regard. She loves Mr Delvile, loves him with the most artless affection;—perhaps, too, he loves her in return,—why else his solicitude to know my opinion of her, and why so sudden his alarm when he thought it unfavourable? Perhaps he means to marry her, and to sacrifice to her innocence and her attractions all plans of ambition, and all views of aggrandizement;—thrice happy Henrietta, if such is thy prospect of felicity! to have inspired a passion so disinterested, may humble the most insolent of thy superiors, and teach even the wealthiest to envy thee!"

# CHAPTER vii. – A BOLD STROKE

When Cecilia returned home, she heard with much concern that no tidings of Mr Harrel had yet been obtained. His lady, who did not stay out late, was now very seriously frightened, and entreated Cecilia to sit up with her till some news could be procured; she sent also for her brother, and they all three, in trembling expectation of what was to ensue, passed the whole night in watching.

At six o'clock in the morning, Mr Arnott besought his sister and Cecilia to take some rest, promising to go out himself to every place where Mr Harrel was known to resort, and not to return without bringing some account of him.

Mrs Harrel, whose feelings were not very acute, finding the persuasions of her brother were seconded by her own fatigue, consented to follow his advice, and desired him to begin his search immediately.

A few moments after he was gone, while Mrs Harrel and Cecilia were upon the stairs, they were startled by a violent knocking at the door; Cecilia, prepared for some calamity, hurried her friend back to the drawing-room, and then flying out of it again to enquire who entered, saw to her equal surprize and relief, Mr Harrel himself.

She ran back with the welcome information, and he instantly followed her; Mrs Harrel eagerly told him of her fright, and Cecilia expressed her pleasure at his return; but the satisfaction of neither was of long duration.

He came into the room with a look of fierceness the most terrifying, his hat on, and his arms folded. He made no answer to what they said, but pushed back the door with his foot, and flung himself upon a sofa.

Cecilia would now have withdrawn, but Mrs Harrel caught her hand to prevent her. They continued some minutes in this situation, and then Mr Harrel, suddenly rising, called-out "Have you any thing to pack up?"

"Pack up?" repeated Mrs Harrel, "Lord bless me, for what?"

"I am going abroad," he answered; "I shall set off to-morrow."

"Abroad?" cried she, bursting into tears, "I am sure I hope not!"

"Hope nothing!" returned he, in a voice of rage; and then, with a dreadful oath, he ordered her to leave him and pack up.

Mrs Harrel, wholly unused to such treatment, was frightened into violent hysterics; of which, however, he took no notice, but swearing at her for *a fool who had been the cause of his ruin*, he left the room.

Cecilia, though she instantly rang the bell, and hastened to her assistance, was so much shocked by this unexpected brutality, that she scarcely knew how to act, or what to order. Mrs Harrel, however, soon recovered, and Cecilia accompanied her to her own apartment, where she stayed, and endeavoured to sooth her till Mr Arnott returned.

The terrible state in which Mr Harrel had at last come home was immediately communicated to him, and his sister entreated him to use all his influence that the scheme for going abroad might be deferred, at least, if not wholly given up.

Fearfully he went on the embassy, but speedily, and with a look wholly dismayed, he returned. Mr Harrel, he said, told him that he had contracted a larger debt of honour than he had any means to raise, and as he could not appear till it was paid, he was obliged to quit the kingdom without delay.

"Oh brother!" cried Mrs Harrel, "and can you suffer us to go?"

"Alas, my dear sister," answered he, "what can I do to prevent it? and who, if I too am ruined, will in future help you?"

Mrs Harrel then wept bitterly, nor could the gentle Mr Arnott, forbear, while he tried to comfort her, mixing his own tears with those of his beloved sister; but Cecilia, whose reason was stronger, and

whose justice was offended, felt other sensations; and leaving Mrs Harrel to the care of her brother, whose tenderness she infinitely compassionated, she retreated into her own room. Not, however, to rest; the dreadful situation of the family made her forget she wanted it, but to deliberate upon what course she ought herself to pursue.

She determined without any hesitation against accompanying them in their flight, as the irreparable injury she was convinced she had already done her fortune, was more than sufficient to satisfy the most romantic ideas of friendship and humanity; but her own place of abode must now immediately be changed, and her choice rested only between Mr Delvile and Mr Briggs.

Important as were the obstacles which opposed her residence at Mr Delvile's, all that belonged to inclination and to happiness encouraged it; while with respect to Mr Briggs, though the objections were lighter, there was not a single allurement. Yet whenever the suspicion recurred to her that Miss Belfield was beloved by young Delvile, she resolved at all events to avoid him; but when better hopes intervened, and represented that his enquiries were probably accidental, the wish of being finally acquainted with his sentiments, made nothing so desirable as an intercourse more frequent.

Such still was her irresolution, when she received a message from Mr Arnott to entreat the honour of seeing her. She immediately went down stairs, and found him in the utmost distress, "O Miss Beverley," he cried, "what can I do for my sister! what can I possibly devise to relieve her affliction!"

"Indeed I know not!" said Cecilia, "but the utter impracticability of preparing her for this blow, obviously as it has long been impending, makes it now fall so heavily I wish much to assist her,—but a debt so unjustifiably contracted—"

"O madam," interrupted he, "imagine not I sent to you with so treacherous a view as to involve you in our misery; far too unworthily has your generosity already been abused. I only wish to consult with you what I can do for my sister."

Cecilia, after some little consideration, proposed that Mrs Harrel should still be left in England, and under their joint care.

"Alas!" cried he, "I have already made that proposal, but Mr Harrel will not go without her, though his whole behaviour is so totally altered, that I fear to trust her with him."

"Who is there, then, that has more weight with him?" said Cecilia, "shall we send for Sir Robert Floyer to second our request?"

To this Mr Arnott assented, forgetting in his apprehension of losing his sister, the pain he should suffer from the interference of his rival.

The Baronet presently arrived, and Cecilia, not chusing to apply to him herself, left him with Mr Arnott, and waited for intelligence in the library.

In about an hour after, Mrs Harrel ran into the room, her tears dried up, and out of breath with joy, and called out "My dearest friend, my fate is now all in your hands, and I am sure you will not refuse to make me happy."

"What is it I can do for you?" cried Cecilia, dreading some impracticable proposal; "ask me not, I beseech you, what I cannot perform!"

"No, no," answered she, "What I ask requires nothing but good nature; Sir Robert Floyer has been begging Mr Harrel to leave me behind, and he has promised to comply, upon condition you will hasten your marriage, and take me into your own house."

"My marriage!" cried the astonished Cecilia.

Here they were joined by Mr Harrel himself, who repeated the same offer.

"You both amaze and shock me!" cried Cecilia, "what is it you mean, and why do you talk to me so wildly?"

"Miss Beverley," cried Mr Harrel, "it is high time now to give up this reserve, and trifle no longer with a gentleman so unexceptionable as Sir Robert Floyer. The whole town has long acknowledged him as your husband, and you are every where regarded as his bride, a little frankness, therefore,

in accepting him, will not only bind him to you for ever, but do credit to the generosity of your character."

At that moment Sir Robert himself burst into the room, and seizing one of her hands, while both of them were uplifted in mute amazement, he pressed it to his lips, poured forth a volley of such compliments as he had never before prevailed with himself to utter, and confidently entreated her to complete his long-attended happiness without the cruelty of further delay.

Cecilia, almost petrified by the excess of her surprise, at an attack so violent, so bold, and apparently so sanguine, was for some time scarce able to speak or to defend herself; but when Sir Robert, presuming on her silence, said she had made him the happiest of men, she indignantly drew back her hand, and with a look of displeasure that required little explanation, would have walked out of the room; when Mr Harrel, in a tone of bitterness and disappointment, called out "Is this lady-like tyranny then never to end?" And Sir Robert, impatiently following her, said "And is my suspense to endure for ever? After so many months' attendance—"

"This, indeed, is something too much," said Cecilia, turning back, "You have been kept, Sir, in no suspense; the whole tenor of my conduct has uniformly declared the same disapprobation I at present avow, and which my letter, at least, must have put beyond all doubt."

"Harrel," exclaimed Sir Robert, "did not you tell me—"

"Pho, Pho," cried Harrel, "what signifies calling upon me? I never saw in Miss Beverley any disapprobation beyond what it is customary for young ladies of a sentimental turn to shew; and every body knows that where a gentleman is allowed to pay his devoirs for any length of time, no lady intends to use him very severely."

"And can you, Mr Harrel," said Cecilia, "after such conversations as have passed between us, persevere in this wilful misapprehension? But it is vain to debate where all reasoning is disregarded, or to make any protestations where even rejection is received as a favour."

And then, with an air of disdain, she insisted upon passing them, and went to her own room.

Mrs Harrel, however, still followed, and clinging round her, still supplicated her pity and compliance.

"What infatuation is this!" cried Cecilia, "is it possible that you, too, can suppose I ever mean to accept Sir Robert?"

"To be sure I do," answered she, "for Mr Harrel has told me a thousand times, that however you played the prude, you would be his at last."

Cecilia, though doubly irritated against Mr Harrel, was now appeased with his lady, whose mistake, however ill-founded, offered an excuse for her behaviour; but she assured her in the strongest terms that her repugnance to the Baronet was unalterable, yet told her she might claim from her every good office that was not wholly unreasonable.

These were words of slender comfort to Mrs Harrel, who well knew that her wishes and reason had but little affinity, and she soon, therefore, left the room.

Cecilia then resolved to go instantly to Mrs Delvile, acquaint her with the necessity of her removal, and make her decision whither, according to the manner in which her intelligence should be received.

She sent, therefore, to order a chair, and was already in the hall, when she was stopt by the entrance of Mr Monckton, who, addressing her with a look of haste and earnestness, said, "I will not ask whither you are going so early, or upon what errand, for I must beg a moment's audience, be your business what it may."

Cecilia then accompanied him to the deserted breakfast room, which none but the servants had this morning entered, and there, grasping her hand, he said, "Miss Beverley, you must fly this house directly! it is the region of disorder and licentiousness, and unfit to contain you."

She assured him she was that moment preparing to quit it, but begged he would explain himself.

"I have taken care," he answered, "for some time past, to be well informed of all the proceedings of Mr Harrel; and the intelligence I procured this morning is of the most alarming nature. I find he spent the night before the last entirely at a gaming table, where, intoxicated by a run of good luck, he passed the whole of the next day in rioting with his profligate intimates, and last night, returning again to his favourite amusement, he not only lost all he had gained, but much more than he could pay. Doubt not, therefore, but you will be called upon to assist him; he still considers you as his resource in times of danger, and while he knows you are under his roof, he will always believe himself secure."

"Every thing indeed conspires," said Cecilia, more shocked than surprised at this account, "to make it necessary I should quit his house; yet I do not think he has at present any further expectations from me, as he came into the room this morning not merely without speaking to me, but behaved with a brutality to Mrs Harrel that he must be certain would give me disgust. It shewed me, indeed, a new part of his character, for ill as I have long thought of him, I did not suspect he could be guilty of such unmanly cruelty."

"The character of a gamester," said Mr Monckton, "depends solely upon his luck; his disposition varies with every throw of the dice, and he is airy, gay and good humoured, or sour, morose and savage, neither from nature nor from principle, but wholly by the caprice of chance."

Cecilia then related to him the scene in which she had just been engaged with Sir Robert Floyer.

"This," cried he, "is a *manoeuvre* I have been some time expecting; but Mr Harrel, though artful and selfish, is by no means deep. The plan he had formed would have succeeded with some women, and he therefore concluded it would with all. So many of your sex have been subdued by perseverance, and so many have been conquered by boldness, that he supposed when he united two such powerful besiegers in the person of a Baronet, he should vanquish all obstacles. By assuring you that the world thought the marriage already settled, he hoped to surprise you into believing there was no help for it, and by the suddenness and vehemence of the attack, to frighten and hurry you into compliance. His own wife, he knew, might have been managed thus with ease, and so, probably, might his sister, and his mother, and his cousin, for in love matters, or what are so called, women in general are, readily duped. He discerned not the superiority of your understanding to tricks so shallow and impertinent, nor the firmness of your mind in maintaining its own independence. No doubt but he was amply to have been rewarded for his assistance, and probably had you this morning been propitious, the Baronet in return was to have cleared him from his present difficulty."

"Even in my own mind," said Cecilia, "I can no longer defend him, for he could never have been so eager to promote the interest of Sir Robert, in the present terrible situation of his own affairs, had he not been stimulated by some secret motives. His schemes and his artifices, however, will now be utterly lost upon me, since your warning and advice, aided by my own suffering experience of the inutility of all I can do for him, will effectually guard me from all his future attempts."

"Rest no security upon yourself," said Mr Monckton, "since you have no knowledge of the many tricks and inventions by which you may yet be plundered. Perhaps he may beg permission to reside in your house in Suffolk, or desire an annuity for his wife, or chuse to receive your first rents when you come of age; and whatever he may fix upon, his dagger and his bowl will not fail to procure him. A heart so liberal as yours can only be guarded by flight. You were going, you said, when I came,—and whither?"

"To—to St James's-square," answered she, with a deep blush.

"Indeed!—is young Delvile, then, going abroad?"

"Abroad?—no,—I believe not."

"Nay, I only imagined it from your chusing to reside in his house."

"I do not chuse it," cried Cecilia, with quickness, "but is not any thing preferable to dwelling with Mr Briggs?"

"Certainly," said Mr Monckton coolly, "nor should I have supposed he had any chance with you, had I not hitherto observed that your convenience has always been sacrificed to your sense of propriety."

Cecilia, touched by praise so full of censure, and earnest to vindicate her delicacy, after an internal struggle, which Mr Monckton was too subtle to interrupt, protested she would go instantly to Mr Briggs, and see if it were possible to be settled in his house, before she made any attempt to fix herself elsewhere.

"And when?" said Mr Monckton.

"I don't know," answered she, with some hesitation, "perhaps this afternoon."

"Why not this morning?"

"I can go out no where this morning; I must stay with Mrs Harrel."

"You thought otherwise when I came, you were then content to leave her."

Cecilia's alacrity, however, for changing her abode, was now at an end, and she would fain have been left quietly to re-consider her plans; but Mr Monckton urged so strongly the danger of her lengthened stay in the house of so designing a man as Mr Harrel, that he prevailed with her to quit it without delay, and had himself the satisfaction of handing her to her chair.

# CHAPTER viii. – A MISER'S MANSION

Mr Briggs was at home, and Cecilia instantly and briefly informed him that it was inconvenient for her to live any longer at Mr Harrel's, and that if she could be accommodated at his house, she should be glad to reside with him during the rest of her minority.

"Shall, shall," cried he, extremely pleased, "take you with all my heart. Warrant Master Harrel's made a good penny of you. Not a bit the better for dressing so fine; many a rogue in a gold lace hat."

Cecilia begged to know what apartments he could spare for her.

"Take you up stairs," cried he, "shew you a place for a queen."

He then led her up stairs, and took her to a room entirely dark, and so close for want of air that she could hardly breathe in it. She retreated to the landing-place till he had opened the shutters, and then saw an apartment the most forlorn she had ever beheld, containing no other furniture than a ragged stuff bed, two worn-out rush-bottomed chairs, an old wooden box, and a bit of broken glass which was fastened to the wall by two bent nails.

"See here, my little chick," cried he, "everything ready! and a box for your gimcracks into the bargain."

"You don't mean this place for me, Sir!" cried Cecilia, staring.

"Do, do;" cried he, "a deal nicer by and by. Only wants a little furbishing; soon put to rights. Never sweep a room out of use; only wears out brooms for nothing."

"But, Sir, can I not have an apartment on the first floor?"

"No, no, something else to do with it; belongs to the club; secrets in all things! Make this do well enough. Come again next week; wear quite a new face. Nothing wanting but a table; pick you up one at a broker's."

"But I am obliged, Sir, to leave Mr Harrel's house directly."

"Well, well, make shift without a table at first; no great matter if you ha'n't one at all, nothing particular to do with it. Want another blanket, though. Know where to get one; a very good broker hard by. Understand how to deal with him! A close dog, but warm."

"I have also two servants, Sir," said Cecilia.

"Won't have 'em! Sha'n't come! Eat me out of house and home."

"Whatever they eat, Sir," answered she, "will be wholly at my expence, as will everything else that belongs to them."

"Better get rid of them; hate servants; all a pack of rogues; think of nothing but stuffing and guzzling."

Then opening another door, "See here," he cried, "my own room just by; snug as a church!"

Cecilia, following him into it, lost a great part of her surprise at the praise he had lavished upon that which he destined for herself, by perceiving that his own was yet more scantily furnished, having nothing in it but a miserable bed without any curtains, and a large chest, which, while it contained his clothes, sufficed both for table and chair.

"What are doing here?" cried he angrily, to a maid who was making the bed, "can't you take more care? beat 'out all the feathers, see! two on the ground; nothing but waste and extravagance! never mind how soon a man's ruined. Come to want, you slut, see that, come to want!"

"I can never want more than I do here," said the girl, "so that's one comfort."

Cecilia now began to repent she had made known the purport of her visit, for she found it would be utterly impossible to accommodate either her mind or her person to a residence such as was here to be obtained and she only wished Mr Monckton had been present, that he might himself be convinced of the impracticability of his scheme. Her whole business, therefore, now, was to retract her offer, and escape from the house.

"I see, Sir," said she, when he turned from his servant, "that I cannot be received here without inconvenience, and therefore I will make some new arrangement in my plan."

"No, no," cried he, "like to have you, 'tis but fair, all in our turn; won't be chorused; Master Harrel's had his share. Sorry could not get you that sweetheart! would not bite; soon find out another; never fret."

"But there are so many things with which I cannot possibly dispense," said Cecilia, "that I am certain my removing hither would occasion you far more trouble than you at present foresee."

"No, no; get all in order soon; go about myself; know how to bid; understand trap; always go shabby; no making a bargain in a good coat. Look sharp at the goods; say they won't do; come away; send somebody else for 'em. Never go twice myself; nothing got cheap if one seems to have a hankering."

"But I am sure it is not possible," said Cecilia, hurrying down stairs, "that my room, and one for each of my servants, should be ready in time."

"Yes, yes," cried he, following her, "ready in a trice. Make a little shift at first; double the blanket till we get another; lie with the maid a night or two; never stand for a trifle."

And, when she was seated in her chair, the whole time disclaiming her intention of returning, he only pinched her cheek with a facetious smirk, and said, "By, by, little duck; come again soon. Warrant I'll have the room ready. Sha'n't half know it again; make it as smart as a carrot."

And then she left the house; fully satisfied that no one could blame her refusing to inhabit it, and much less chagrined than she was willing to suppose herself, in finding she had now no resource but in the Delviles.

Yet, in her serious reflections, she could not but think herself strangely unfortunate that the guardian with whom alone it seemed proper for her to reside, should by parsimony, vulgarity, and meanness, render riches contemptible, prosperity unavailing, and economy odious; and that the choice of her uncle should thus unhappily have fallen upon the lowest and most wretched of misers, in a city abounding with opulence, hospitality, and splendour, and of which the principal inhabitants, long eminent for their wealth and their probity, were now almost universally rising in elegance and liberality.

# CHAPTER ix. – A DECLARATION

Cecilia's next progress, therefore, was to St James's-square, whither she went in the utmost anxiety, from her uncertainty of the reception with which her proposal would meet.

The servants informed her that Mr and Mrs Delvile were at breakfast, and that the Duke of Derwent and his two daughters were with them.

Before such witnesses to relate the reasons of her leaving the Harmless was impossible; and from such a party to send for Mrs Delvile, would, by her stately guardian, be deemed an indecorum unpardonable. She was obliged, therefore, to return to Portman-square, in order to open her cause in a letter to Mrs Delvile.

Mr Arnott, flying instantly to meet her, called out, "O madam, what alarm has your absence occasioned! My sister believed she should see you no more, Mr Harrel feared a premature discovery of his purposed retreat, and we have all been under the cruellest apprehensions lest you meant not to come back."

"I am sorry I spoke not with you before I went out," said Cecilia, accompanying him to the library, "but I thought you were all too much occupied to miss me. I have been, indeed, preparing for a removal, but I meant not to leave your sister without bidding her adieu, nor, indeed, to quit any part of the family with so little ceremony. Is Mr Harrel still firm to his last plan?"

"I fear so! I have tried what is possible to dissuade him, and my poor sister has wept without ceasing. Indeed, if she will take no consolation, I believe I shall do what she pleases, for I cannot bear the sight of her in such distress."

"You are too generous, and too good!" said Cecilia, "and I know not how, while flying from danger myself, to forbear counselling you to avoid it also."

"Ah madam!" cried he, "the greatest danger for *me* is what I have now no power to run from!"

Cecilia, though she could not but understand him, felt not the less his friend for knowing him the humblest of her admirers; and as she saw the threatening ruin to which his too great tenderness exposed him, she kindly said "Mr Arnott, I will speak, to you without reserve. It is not difficult to see that the destruction which awaits Mr Harrel, is ready also to ensnare his brother-in-law; but let not that blindness to the future which we have so often lamented for him, hereafter be lamented for yourself. Till his present connections are broken, and his way of living is changed, nothing can be done for him, and whatever you were to advance, would merely be sunk at the gaming table. Reserve, therefore, your liberality till it may indeed be of service to him, for believe me, at present, his mind is as much injured as his fortune."

"And is it possible, madam," said Mr Arnott, in an accent of surprize and delight, "that you can deign to be interested in what may become of me! and that my sharing or escaping the ruin of this house is not wholly indifferent to you?"

"Certainly not," answered Cecilia; "as the brother of my earliest friend, I can never be insensible to your welfare."

"Ah madam!" cried he, "as her brother!—Oh that there were any other tie!—"

"Think a little," said Cecilia, preparing to quit the room, "of what I have mentioned, and, for your sister's sake, be firm now, if you would be kind hereafter."

"I will be any and every thing," cried he, "that Miss Beverley will command."

Cecilia, fearful of any misinterpretation, then came back, and gravely said, "No, Sir, be ruled only by your own judgment; or, should my advice have any weight with you, remember it is given from the most disinterested motives, and with no other view than that of securing your power to be of service to your sister."

"For that sister's sake, then, have the goodness to hear my situation, and honour me with further directions."

"You will make me fear to speak," said Cecilia, "if you give so much consequence to my opinion. I have seen, however, nothing in your conduct I have ever wished changed, except too little attention to your own interest and affairs."

"Ah!" cried he, "with what rapture should I hear those words, could I but imagine—"

"Come, come," said Cecilia, smiling, "no digression! You called me back to talk of your sister; if you change your subject, perhaps you may lose your auditor."

"I would not, madam, for the world encroach upon your goodness; the favour I have found has indeed always exceeded my expectations, as it has always surpassed my desert; yet has it never blinded me to my own unworthiness. Do not, then, fear to indulge me with your conversation; I shall draw from it no inference but of pity, and though pity from Miss Beverley is the sweetest balm to my heart, it shall never seduce me to the encouragement of higher hopes."

Cecilia had long had reason to expect such a declaration, yet she heard it with unaffected concern, and looking at him with the utmost gentleness, said "Mr Arnott, your regard does me honour, and, were it somewhat more rational, would give me pleasure; take, then, from it what is more than I wish or merit, and, while you preserve the rest, be assured it will be faithfully returned."

"Your rejection is so mild," cried he, "that I, who had no hope of acceptance, find relief in having at last told my sufferings. Could I but continue to see you every day, and to be blest with your conversation, I think I should be happy, and I am sure I should be grateful."

"You are already," answered she, shaking her head, and moving towards the door, "infringing the conditions upon which our friendship is to be founded."

"Do not go, madam," he cried, "till I have done what you have just promised to permit, acquainted you with my situation, and been honoured with your advice. I must own to you, then, that £5000, which I had in the stocks, as well as a considerable sum in a banker's hands, I have parted with, as I now find for ever but I have no heart for refusal, nor would my sister at this moment be thus distressed, but that I have nothing more to give without I cut down my trees, or sell some farm, since all I was worth, except my landed property, is already gone. What, therefore, I can now do to save Mr Harrel from this desperate expedition I know not."

"I am sorry," said Cecilia, "to speak with severity of one so nearly connected with you, yet, suffer me to ask, why should he be saved from it at all? and what is there he can at present do better? Has not he long been threatened with every evil that is now arrived? have we not both warned him, and have not the clamours of his creditors assailed him? yet what has been the consequence? he has not submitted to the smallest change in his way of life, he has not denied himself a single indulgence, nor spared any expence, nor thought of any reformation. Luxury has followed luxury, and he has only grown fonder of extravagance, as extravagance has become more dangerous. Till the present storm, therefore, blows over, leave him to his fate, and when a calm succeeds, I will myself, for the sake of Priscilla, aid you to save what is possible of the wreck."

"All you say, madam, is as wise as it is good, and now I am acquainted with your opinion, I will wholly new model myself upon it, and grow as steady against all attacks as hitherto I have been yielding."

Cecilia was then retiring; but again detaining her, he said "You spoke, madam, of a removal, and indeed it is high time you should quit this scene; yet I hope you intend not to go till to-morrow, as Mr Harrel has declared your leaving him sooner will be his destruction."

"Heaven forbid," said Cecilia, "for I mean to be gone with all the speed in my power."

"Mr Harrel," answered he, "did not explain himself; but I believe he apprehends your deserting his house at this critical time, will raise a suspicion of his own design of going abroad, and make his creditors interfere to prevent him."

"To what a wretched state," cried Cecilia, "has he reduced himself! I will not, however, be the voluntary instrument of his disgrace; and if you think my stay is so material to his security, I will continue here till to-morrow morning."

Mr Arnott almost wept his thanks for this concession, and Cecilia, happy in making it to him instead of Mr Harrel, then went to her own room, and wrote the following letter to Mrs Delvile.

*To the Hon. Mrs Delvile, St James's-square.*

PORTMAN SQUARE, *June* 12.

DEAR MADAM,—I am willing to hope you have been rather surprised that I have not sooner availed myself of the permission with which you yesterday honoured me of spending this whole day with you, but, unfortunately for myself, I am prevented waiting upon you even for any part of it. Do not, however, think me now ungrateful if I stay away, nor to-morrow impertinent, if I venture to enquire whether that apartment which you had once the goodness to appropriate to my use, may then again be spared for me! The accidents which have prompted this strange request will, I trust, be sufficient apology for the liberty I take in making it, when I have the honour to see you, and acquaint you what they are.—I am, with the utmost respect, Dear Madam, your most obedient humble servant, CECILIA BEVERLEY.

She would not have been thus concise, had not the caution of Mr Arnott made her fear, in the present perilous situation of affairs, to trust the secret of Mr Harrel to paper.

The following answer was returned her from Mrs Delvile;—

*To Miss Beverley, Portman-square.*

The accidents you mention are not, I hope, of a very serious nature, since I shall find difficulty insurmountable in trying to lament them, if they are productive of a lengthened visit from my dear Miss Beverley to her Faithful humble servant, AUGUSTA DELVILE.

Cecilia, charmed with this note, could now no longer forbear looking forward to brighter prospects, flattering herself that once under the roof of Mrs Delvile, she must necessarily be happy, let the engagements or behaviour of her son be what they might.

# CHAPTER x. – A GAMESTER'S CONSCIENCE

From this soothing prospect, Cecilia was presently disturbed by Mrs Harrel's maid, who came to entreat she would hasten to her lady, whom she feared was going into fits.

Cecilia flew to her immediately, and found her in the most violent affliction. She used every kind effort in her power to quiet and console her, but it was not without the utmost difficulty she could sob out the cause of this fresh sorrow, which indeed was not trifling. Mr Harrel, she said, had told her he could not possibly raise money even for his travelling expences, without risking a discovery of his project, and being seized by his creditors; he had therefore charged her, *through her brother or her friend*, to procure for him £3000, as less would not suffice to maintain them while abroad, and he knew no method by which he could have any remittances without danger. And, when she hesitated in her compliance, he furiously accused her of having brought on all this distress by her negligence and want of management, and declared that if she did not get the money, she would only be served as she merited by starving in a foreign gaol, which he swore would be the fate of them both.

The horror and indignation with which Cecilia heard this account were unspeakable. She saw evidently that she was again to be played upon by terror and distress, and the cautions and opinions of Mr Monckton no longer appeared overstrained; *one year's income* was already demanded, the annuity and the country house might next be required; she rejoiced, however, that thus wisely forewarned, she was not liable to surprise, and she determined, be their entreaties or representations what they might, to be immovably steady in her purpose of leaving them the next morning.

Yet she could not but grieve at suffering the whole burthen of this clamorous imposition to fall upon the soft-hearted Mr Arnott, whose inability to resist solicitation made him so unequal to sustaining its weight; but when Mrs Harrel was again able to go on with her account, she heard, to her infinite surprise, that all application to her brother had proved fruitless. "He will not hear me," continued Mrs Harrel, "and he never was deaf to me before! so now I have lost my only and last resource, my brother himself gives me up, and there is no one else upon earth who will assist me!"

"With pleasure, with readiness, with joy," cried Cecilia, "should you find assistance from me, were it to you alone it were given; but to supply fuel for the very fire that is consuming you—no, no, my whole heart is hardened against gaming and gamesters, and neither now nor ever will I suffer any consideration to soften me in their favour."

Mrs Harrel only answered by tears and lamentations; and Cecilia, whose justice shut not out compassion, having now declared her purposed firmness, again attempted to sooth her, entreating her not to give way to such immoderate grief, since better prospects might arise from the very gloom now before her, and a short time spent in solitude and oeconomy, might enable her to return to her native land with recovered happiness.

"No, I shall never return!" cried she, weeping, "I shall die, I shall break my heart before I have been banished a month! Oh Miss Beverley, how happy are you! able to stay where you please,—rich,—rolling in wealth which you do not want,—of which had we but *one* year's income only, all this misery would be over, and we might stay in our dear, dear, country!"

Cecilia, struck by a hint that so nearly bordered upon reproach, and offended by seeing the impossibility of ever doing enough, while anything remained to be done, forbore not without difficulty enquiring what next was expected from her, and whether any part of her fortune might be guarded, without giving room for some censure! but the deep affliction of Mrs Harrel soon removed her resentment, and scarcely thinking her, while in a state of such wretchedness, answerable for what she said, after a little recollection, she mildly replied "As affluence is all comparative, you may at present think I have more than my share; but the time is only this moment past, when your own situation seemed as subject to the envy of others as mine may be now. My future destiny is yet undetermined, and the occasion I may have for my fortune is unknown to myself; but whether I possess it in peace

or in turbulence, whether it proves to me a blessing or an injury, so long as I can call it my own, I shall always remember with alacrity the claim upon that and upon me which early friendship has so justly given Mrs Harrel. Yet permit me, at the same time, to add, that I do not hold myself so entirely independent as you may probably suppose me. I have not, it is true, any Relations to call me to account, but respect for their memory supplies the place of their authority, and I cannot, in the distribution of the fortune which has devolved to me, forbear sometimes considering how they would have wished it should be spent, and always remembering that what was acquired by industry and labour, should never be dissipated in idleness and vanity. Forgive me for thus speaking to the point; you will not find me less friendly to yourself, for this frankness with respect to your situation."

Tears were again the only answer of Mrs Harrel; yet Cecilia, who pitied the weakness of her mind, stayed by her with the most patient kindness till the servants announced dinner. She then declared she would not go down stairs; but Cecilia so strongly represented the danger of awakening suspicion in the servants, that she at last prevailed with her to make her appearance.

Mr Harrel was already in the parlour, and enquiring for Mr Arnott, but was told by the servants he had sent word he had another engagement. Sir Robert Floyer also kept away, and, for the first time since her arrival in town, Cecilia dined with no other company than the master and mistress of the house.

Mrs Harrel could eat nothing; Cecilia, merely to avoid creating surprise in the servants, forbore following her example; but Mr Harrel ate much as usual, talked all dinner-time, was extremely civil to Cecilia, and discovered not by his manners the least alteration in his affairs.

When the servants were gone, he desired his wife to step for a moment with him into the library. They soon returned, and then Mr Harrel, after walking in a disordered manner about the room, rang the bell, and ordered his hat and cane, and as he took them, said "If this fails—" and, stopping short, without speaking to his wife, or even bowing to Cecilia, he hastily went out of the house.

Mrs Harrel told Cecilia that he had merely called her to know the event of her two petitions, and had heard her double failure in total silence. Whither he was now gone it was not easy to conjecture, nor what was the new resource which he still seemed to think worth trying; but the manner of his quitting the house, and the threat implied by *if this fails*, contributed not to lessen the grief of Mrs Harrel, and gave to Cecilia herself the utmost alarm.

They continued together till tea-time, the servants having been ordered to admit no company. Mr Harrel himself then returned, and returned, to the amazement of Cecilia, accompanied by Mr Marriot.

He presented that young man to both the ladies as a gentleman whose acquaintance and friendship he was very desirous to cultivate. Mrs Harrel, too much absorbed in her own affairs to care about any other, saw his entrance with a momentary surprise, and then thought of it no more; but it was not so with Cecilia, whose better understanding led her to deeper reflection.

Even the visits of Mr Marriot but a few weeks since Mr Harrel had prohibited, yet he now introduced him into his house with particular distinction; he came back too himself in admirable spirits, enlivened in his countenance, and restored to his good humour. A change so extraordinary both in conduct and disposition convinced her that some change no less extra-ordinary of circumstance must previously have happened; what that might be it was not possible for her to divine, but the lessons she had received from Mr Monckton led her to suspicions of the darkest kind.

Every part of his behaviour served still further to confirm them; he was civil even to excess to Mr Marriot; he gave orders aloud not to be at home to Sir Robert Floyer; he made his court to Cecilia with unusual assiduity, and he took every method in his power to procure opportunity to her admirer of addressing and approaching her.

The young man, who seemed *enamoured even to madness*, could scarce refrain not merely from prostration to the object of his passion, but to Mr Harrel himself for permitting him to see her. Cecilia, who not without some concern perceived a fondness so fruitless, and who knew not by what arts or

with what views Mr Harrel might think proper to encourage it, determined to take all the means that were in her own power towards giving it immediate control. She behaved, therefore, with the utmost reserve, and the moment tea was over, though earnestly entreated to remain with them, she retired to her own room, without making any other apology than coldly saying she could not stay.

In about an hour Mrs Harrel ran up stairs to her.

"Oh Miss Beverley," she cried, "a little respite is now granted me! Mr Harrel says he shall stay another day; he says, too, one single thousand pound would now make him a new man."

Cecilia returned no answer; she conjectured some new deceit was in agitation to raise money, and she feared Mr Marriot was the next dupe to be played upon. Mrs Harrel, therefore, with a look of the utmost disappointment, left her, saying she would send for her brother, and once more try if he had yet any remaining regard for her.

Cecilia rested quiet till eleven o'clock, when she was summoned to supper; she found Mr Marriot still the only guest, and that Mr Arnott made not his appearance.

She now resolved to publish her resolution of going the next morning to St James's-square. As soon, therefore, as the servants withdrew, she enquired of Mr Harrel if he had any commands with Mr or Mrs Delvile, as she should see them the next morning, and purposed to spend some time with them.

Mr Harrel, with a look of much alarm, asked if she meant the whole day.

Many days, she answered, and probably some months.

Mrs Harrel exclaimed her surprise aloud, and Mr Harrel looked aghast; while his new young friend cast upon him a glance of reproach and resentment, which fully convinced Cecilia he imagined he had procured himself a title to an easiness of intercourse and frequency of meeting which this intelligence destroyed. Cecilia, thinking after all that had passed, no other ceremony on her part was necessary but that of simply speaking her intention, then arose and returned to her own room.

She acquainted her maid that she was going to make a visit to Mrs Delvile, and gave her directions about packing up her clothes, and sending for a man in the morning to take care of her books.

This employment was soon interrupted by the entrance of Mrs Harrel, who desiring to speak with her alone, when the maid was gone, said "O Miss Beverley, can you indeed be so barbarous as to leave me?"

"I entreat you, Mrs Harrel," answered Cecilia, "to save both yourself and me any further discussions. I have delayed this removal very long, and I can now delay it no longer."

Mrs Harrel then flung herself upon a chair in the bitterest sorrow, declaring she was utterly undone; that Mr Harrel had declared he could not stay even an hour in England if she was not in his house; that he had already had a violent quarrel with Mr Marriot upon the subject; and that her brother, though she had sent him the most earnest entreaties, would not come near her.

Cecilia, tired of vain attempts to offer comfort, now urged the warmest expostulations against her opposition, strongly representing the real necessity of her going abroad, and the unpardonable weakness of wishing to continue such a life as she now led, adding debt to debt, and hoarding distress upon distress.

Mrs Harrel then, though rather from compulsion than conviction, declared she would agree to go, if she had not a dread of ill usage; but Mr Harrel, she said, had behaved to her with the utmost brutality, calling her the cause of his ruin, and threatening that if she procured not this thousand pound before the ensuing evening, she should be treated as she deserved for her extravagance and folly.

"Does he think, then," said Cecilia with the utmost indignation, "that I am to be frightened through your fears into what compliances he pleases?"

"O no," cried Mrs Harrel, "no; his expectations are all from my brother. He surely thought that when I supplicated and pleaded to him, he would do what I wished, for so he always did formerly, and so once again I am sure he would do now, could I but make him come to me, and tell him how

I am used, and tell him that if Mr Harrel takes me abroad in this humour, I verily think in his rage he will half murder me."

Cecilia, who well knew she was herself the real cause of Mr Arnott's resistance, now felt her resolution waver, internally reproaching herself with the sufferings of his sister; alarmed, however, for her own constancy, she earnestly besought Mrs Harrel to go and compose herself for the night, and promised to deliberate what could be done for her before morning.

Mrs Harrel complied; but scarce was her own rest more broken than that of Cecilia, who, though extremely fatigued with a whole night's watching, was so perturbed in her mind she could not close her eyes. Mrs Harrel was her earliest, and had once been her dearest friend; she had deprived her by her own advice of her customary refuge in her brother; to refuse, therefore, assistance to her seemed cruelty, though to deny it to Mr Harrel was justice; she endeavoured, therefore, to make a compromise between her judgment and compassion, by resolving that though she would grant nothing further to Mr Harrel while he remained in London, she would contribute from time to time both to his necessities and comfort, when once he was established elsewhere upon some plan of prudence and economy.

# CHAPTER xi. – A PERSECUTION

The next morning by five o'clock Mrs Harrel came into Cecilia's room to know the result of her deliberation; and Cecilia, with that graceful readiness which accompanied all her kind offices, instantly assured her the thousand pound should be her own, if she would consent to seek some quiet retreat, and receive it in small sums, of fifty or one hundred pounds at a time, which should be carefully transmitted, and which, by being delivered to herself, might secure better treatment from Mr Harrel, and be a motive to revive his care and affection.

She flew, much delighted, with this proposal to her husband; but presently, and with a dejected look, returning, said Mr Harrel protested he could not possibly set out without first receiving the money. "I shall go myself, therefore," said she, "to my brother after breakfast, for he will not, I see, unkind as he is grown, come to me; and if I do not succeed with him, I believe I shall never come back!"

To this Cecilia, offended and disappointed, answered "I am sorry for Mr Arnott, but for myself I have done!"

Mrs Harrel then left her, and she arose to make immediate preparations for her removal to St James's-square, whither, with all the speed in her power, she sent her books, her trunks, and all that belonged to her.

When she was summoned down stairs, she found, for the first time, Mr Harrel breakfasting at the same table with his wife; they seemed mutually out of humour and comfortless, nothing hardly was spoken, and little was swallowed; Mr Harrel, however, was civil, but his wife was totally silent, and Cecilia the whole time was planning how to take her leave.

When the tea things were removed, Mr Harrel said, "You have not, I hope, Miss Beverley, quite determined upon this strange scheme?"

"Indeed I have, Sir," she answered, "and already I have sent my clothes."

At this information he seemed thunderstruck; but, after somewhat recovering, said with much bitterness, "Well, madam, at least may I request you will stay here till the evening?"

"No, Sir," answered she coolly, "I am going instantly."

"And will you not," said he, with yet greater asperity, "amuse yourself first with seeing bailiffs take possession of my house, and your friend Priscilla follow me to jail?"

"Good God, Mr Harrel!" exclaimed Cecilia, with uplifted hands, "is this a question, is this behaviour I have merited!"

"O no!" cried he with quickness, "should I once think that way—" then rising and striking his forehead, he walked about the room.

Mrs Harrel arose too, and weeping violently went away.

"Will you at least," said Cecilia, when she was gone, "till your affairs are settled, leave Priscilla with me? When I go into my own house, she shall accompany me, and mean time Mr Arnott's I am sure will gladly be open to her."

"No, no," answered he, "she deserves no such indulgence; she has not any reason to complain, she has been as negligent, as profuse, as expensive as myself; she has practised neither oeconomy nor self-denial, she has neither thought of me nor my affairs, nor is she now afflicted at any thing but the loss of that affluence she has done her best towards diminishing.

"All recrimination," said Cecilia, "were vain, or what might not Mrs Harrel urge in return! but let us not enlarge upon so ungrateful a subject, the wisest and the happiest scheme now were mutually and kindly to console each other."

"Consolation and kindness," cried he, with abruptness, "are out of the question. I have ordered a post chaise to be here at night, and if till then you will stay, I will promise to release you without

further petition if not, eternal destruction be my portion if I *live* to see the scene which your removal will occasion!”

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.