

## CHAPTER XI

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

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

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

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

one, displayed itself in his infant years; and the strong indignation, which he felt and expressed at a criminal, or a mean action, sometimes drew upon him the displeasure of his tutor; who reprobated it under the general term of violence of temper; and who, when haranguing on the virtues of mildness and moderation, seemed to forget the gentleness and compassion, which always appeared in his pupil towards objects of misfortune.

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

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

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

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

encouraging her to imitate the conduct that had won it, rather made her shrink into the reserve, that would protect her from such absurdity.

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

The entrance of supper somewhat interrupted the complacent discourse of Madame Cheron and the painful considerations, which it had forced upon Emily. When the repast, which was rendered ostentatious by the attendance of a great number of servants, and by a profusion of plate, was over, Madame Cheron retired to her chamber, and a female servant came to shew Emily to hers. Having passed up a large stair-case, and through several galleries, they came to a flight of back stairs, which led into a short passage in a remote part of the chateau, and there the servant opened the door of a small chamber, which she said was Ma'amselle Emily's, who, once more alone, indulged the tears she had long tried to restrain.

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

## CHAPTER XII

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

Madame Cheron's house stood at a little distance from the city of Tholouse, and was surrounded by extensive gardens, in which Emily, who had risen early, amused herself with wandering before breakfast. From a terrace, that extended along the highest part of them, was a wide view over Languedoc. On the distant horizon to the south, she discovered the wild summits of the Pyrenees, and her fancy immediately painted the green pastures of Gascony at their feet. Her heart pointed to her peaceful home—to the neighbourhood where Valancourt was—where St. Aubert had been; and her imagination, piercing the veil of distance, brought that home to her eyes in all its interesting and romantic beauty. She experienced an inexpressible pleasure in believing, that she beheld the country around it, though no feature could be distinguished, except the retiring chain of the Pyrenees; and, inattentive to the scene immediately before her, and to the flight of time, she continued to lean on the window of a pavilion, that terminated the terrace, with her eyes fixed on Gascony, and her mind occupied with the interesting ideas which the view of it

awakened, till a servant came to tell her breakfast was ready. Her thoughts thus recalled to the surrounding objects, the straight walks, square parterres, and artificial fountains of the garden, could not fail, as she passed through it, to appear the worse, opposed to the negligent graces, and natural beauties of the grounds of La Vallée, upon which her recollection had been so intensely employed.

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

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

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

Emily, less surprised by her aunt’s moderation and mysterious silence, than by the accusation she had received, deeply considered the latter, and scarcely doubted, that it was Valancourt whom she had seen at night in the gardens of La Vallée, and that he had been observed there by Madame Cheron; who now passing from one painful topic only to revive another almost equally so, spoke of the situation of her niece’s property, in the hands of M. Motteville. While she thus talked with ostentatious pity of Emily’s misfortunes, she failed not to inculcate the duties of humility and gratitude, or to render Emily fully sensible of every cruel mortification, who soon perceived, that she was to be considered as a dependant, not only by her aunt, but by her aunt’s servants.

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

When the company arrived, Emily entered the saloon with an air of timidity, which all her efforts could not overcome, and which was increased by the consciousness of Madame Cheron’s severe observation. Her mourning dress, the mild dejection of her beautiful countenance, and the

retiring diffidence of her manner, rendered her a very interesting object to many of the company; among whom she distinguished Signor Montoni, and his friend Cavigni, the late visitors at M. Quesnel's, who now seemed to converse with Madame Cheron with the familiarity of old acquaintance, and she to attend to them with particular pleasure.

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

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

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

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

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

One evening, having excused herself from accompanying her aunt abroad, she thus withdrew to the pavilion, with books and her lute. It was the mild and beautiful evening of a sultry day, and the windows, which fronted the west, opened upon all the glory of a setting sun. Its rays

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'My brother was a good kind of a man,' replied Madame Cheron, 'but he did not know the world. I am sure I have always felt a proper respect for myself, yet—' she stopped, but she might

have added, that the world had not always shewn respect to her, and this without impeaching its judgment.

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

the conclusion of the conference. She knew not how to account for Valancourt's visit to her aunt, before he had received the permission he solicited, since she was ignorant of a circumstance, which would have rendered the request useless, even if Madame Cheron had been inclined to grant it. Valancourt, in the agitation of his spirits, had forgotten to date his letter, so that it was impossible for Madame Cheron to return an answer; and, when he recollected this circumstance, he was, perhaps, not so sorry for the omission as glad of the excuse it allowed him for waiting on her before she could send a refusal.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The entertainments of this evening consisted of a ball and supper; it was a fancy ball, and the company danced in groups in the gardens, which were very extensive. The high and luxuriant trees, under which the groups assembled, were illuminated with a profusion of lamps, disposed with taste and fancy. The gay and various dresses of the company, some of whom were seated on the turf, conversing at their ease, observing the cotillons, taking refreshments, and sometimes touching sportively a guitar; the gallant manners of the gentlemen, the exquisitely capricious air of the ladies; the light fantastic steps of their dances; the musicians, with the lute, the hautboy, and the tabor, seated at the foot of an elm, and the sylvan scenery of woods around were circumstances, that unitedly formed a characteristic and striking picture of French festivity. Emily surveyed the gaiety of the scene with a melancholy kind of pleasure, and her emotion may be imagined when, as she stood with her aunt, looking at one of the groups, she perceived Valancourt; saw him dancing with a young and beautiful lady, saw him conversing with her with a mixture of attention and familiarity, such as she had seldom observed in his manner. She turned hastily from the scene, and attempted to draw away Madame Cheron, who was conversing with Signor Cavigni, and neither perceived Valancourt, or was willing to be interrupted. A faintness suddenly came over Emily, and, unable to support herself, she sat down on a turf bank beneath the trees, where several other persons were seated. One of these, observing the extreme paleness of her countenance, enquired if she was ill, and begged she would allow him to fetch her a glass of water, for which politeness she thanked him, but did not accept it. Her apprehension lest Valancourt should observe her emotion made her anxious to overcome it, and she succeeded so far as to re-compose her countenance. Madame Cheron was still conversing with Cavigni; and the Count Bauvillers, who had addressed Emily, made some observations upon the scene, to which she answered almost unconsciously, for her mind was still occupied with the idea of Valancourt, to whom it was with extreme uneasiness that she remained so near. Some remarks, however, which the Count made upon the dance obliged her to turn her eyes towards it, and, at

that moment, Valancourt's met hers. Her colour faded again, she felt, that she was relapsing into faintness, and instantly averted her looks, but not before she had observed the altered countenance of Valancourt, on perceiving her. She would have left the spot immediately, had she not been conscious, that this conduct would have shewn him more obviously the interest he held in her heart; and, having tried to attend to the Count's conversation, and to join in it, she, at length, recovered her spirits. But, when he made some observation on Valancourt's partner, the fear of shewing that she was interested in the remark, would have betrayed it to him, had not the Count, while he spoke, looked towards the person of whom he was speaking. 'The lady,' said he, 'dancing with that young Chevalier, who appears to be accomplished in every thing, but in dancing, is ranked among the beauties of Tholouse. She is handsome, and her fortune will be very large. I hope she will make a better choice in a partner for life than she has done in a partner for the dance, for I observe he has just put the set into great confusion; he does nothing but commit blunders. I am surprised, that, with his air and figure, he has not taken more care to accomplish himself in dancing.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The supper was served in different pavilions in the gardens, as well as in one large saloon of the chateau, and with more of taste, than either of splendour, or even of plenty. Madame Cheron

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

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

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

'I cannot doubt the truth of it,' replied the lady gravely, disgusted by the abrupt contradiction she had received, concerning her opinion of Valancourt's merit. 'You will, perhaps, doubt it,' said Madame Cheron, 'when I assure you, that it was only this morning that I rejected his suit.' This was said without any intention of imposing the meaning it conveyed, but simply from a habit of considering herself to be the most important person in every affair that concerned her niece, and because literally she had rejected Valancourt. 'Your reasons are indeed such as cannot be doubted,' replied the lady, with an ironical smile. 'Any more than the discernment of the Chevalier Valancourt,' added Cavigni, who stood by the chair of Madame Cheron, and had heard her arrogate to herself, as he thought, a distinction which had been paid to her niece. 'His discernment MAY be justly questioned, Signor,' said Madame Cheron, who was not flattered by what she understood to be an encomium on Emily.

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

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

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

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

'Unquestionably it would,' said Cavigni.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘Degrading indeed, my poor friend!’ said Madame Clairval. ‘You may rely upon it I will contradict the report wherever I go;’ as she said which, she turned her attention upon another part of the company; and Cavigni, who had hitherto appeared a grave spectator of the scene, now fearing he should be unable to smother the laugh, that convulsed him, walked abruptly away.

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

Emily, who, during the greater part of this conversation, had been so absorbed in thought as to be spared the pain of hearing it, was now extremely surprised by her aunt’s praise of Valancourt, with whose relationship to Madame Clairval she was unacquainted; but she was not sorry when Madame Cheron, who, though she now tried to appear unconcerned, was really much embarrassed, prepared to withdraw immediately after supper. Montoni then came to hand

Madame Cheron to her carriage, and Cavigni, with an arch solemnity of countenance, followed with Emily, who, as she wished them good night, and drew up the glass, saw Valancourt among the crowd at the gates. Before the carriage drove off, he disappeared. Madame Cheron forbore to mention him to Emily, and, as soon as they reached the chateau, they separated for the night.

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

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

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

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

Emily's countenance, during this coarse speech, varied every instant, and, towards its conclusion, her distress had so much increased, that she was on the point of leaving the room. Valancourt, meanwhile, scarcely less embarrassed, did not dare to look at her, for whom he was thus distressed; but, when Madame Cheron was silent, he said, 'Flattering, madam, as your approbation is to me—highly as I am honoured by it—I have yet so much to fear, that I scarcely dare to hope.' 'Pray, sir, explain yourself,' said Madame Cheron; an unexpected requisition,

which embarrassed Valancourt again, and almost overcame him with confusion, at circumstances, on which, had he been only a spectator of the scene, he would have smiled.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thus passed the winter months, not only in peace, but in happiness, to Valancourt and Emily; the station of his regiment being so near Thoulouse, as to allow this frequent intercourse. The pavilion on the terrace was the favourite scene of their interviews, and there Emily, with

Madame Cheron, would work, while Valancourt read aloud works of genius and taste, listened to her enthusiasm, expressed his own, and caught new opportunities of observing, that their minds were formed to constitute the happiness of each other, the same taste, the same noble and benevolent sentiments animating each.

### CHAPTER XIII

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

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

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

Emily observed with concern the ascendancy, which Montoni had acquired over Madame Cheron, as well as the increasing frequency of his visits; and her own opinion of this Italian was confirmed by that of Valancourt, who had always expressed a dislike of him. As she was, one morning, sitting at work in the pavilion, enjoying the pleasant freshness of spring, whose colours were now spread upon the landscape, and listening to Valancourt, who was reading, but who often laid aside the book to converse, she received a summons to attend Madame Cheron immediately, and had scarcely entered the dressing-room, when she observed with surprise the

dejection of her aunt's countenance, and the contrasted gaiety of her dress. 'So, niece!'—said Madame, and she stopped under some degree of embarrassment.—'I sent for you—I—I wished to see you; I have news to tell you. From this hour you must consider the Signor Montoni as your uncle—we were married this morning.'

Astonished—not so much at the marriage, as at the secrecy with which it had been concluded, and the agitation with which it was announced, Emily, at length, attributed the privacy to the wish of Montoni, rather than of her aunt. His wife, however, intended, that the contrary should be believed, and therefore added, 'you see I wished to avoid a bustle; but now the ceremony is over I shall do so no longer; and I wish to announce to my servants that they must receive the Signor Montoni for their master.' Emily made a feeble attempt to congratulate her on these apparently imprudent nuptials. 'I shall now celebrate my marriage with some splendour,' continued Madame Montoni, 'and to save time I shall avail myself of the preparation that has been made for yours, which will, of course, be delayed a little while. Such of your wedding clothes as are ready I shall expect you will appear in, to do honour to this festival. I also wish you to inform Monsieur Valancourt, that I have changed my name, and he will acquaint Madame Clairval. In a few days I shall give a grand entertainment, at which I shall request their presence.'

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

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

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

This was the first and the last entertainment, given in celebration of their nuptials. Montoni, though the severity of his temper and the gloominess of his pride prevented him from enjoying such festivities, was extremely willing to promote them. It was seldom, that he could meet in any company a man of more address, and still seldomer one of more understanding, than himself; the balance of advantage in such parties, or in the connections, which might arise from them, must,

therefore, be on his side; and, knowing, as he did, the selfish purposes, for which they are generally frequented, he had no objection to measure his talents of dissimulation with those of any other competitor for distinction and plunder. But his wife, who, when her own interest was immediately concerned, had sometimes more discernment than vanity, acquired a consciousness of her inferiority to other women, in personal attractions, which, uniting with the jealousy natural to the discovery, counteracted his readiness for mingling with all the parties Tholouse could afford. Till she had, as she supposed, the affections of an husband to lose, she had no motive for discovering the unwelcome truth, and it had never obtruded itself upon her; but, now that it influenced her policy, she opposed her husband's inclination for company, with the more eagerness, because she believed him to be really as well received in the female society of the place, as, during his addresses to her, he had affected to be.

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

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

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

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

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

Emily was, at this time, too much affected to employ either remonstrance, or entreaty on this topic; and when, at length, she attempted the latter, her emotion overcame her speech, and she retired to her apartment, to think, if in the present state of her mind to think was possible, upon this sudden and overwhelming subject. It was very long, before her spirits were sufficiently

composed to permit the reflection, which, when it came, was dark and even terrible. She saw, that Montoni sought to aggrandise himself in his disposal of her, and it occurred, that his friend Cavigni was the person, for whom he was interested. The prospect of going to Italy was still rendered darker, when she considered the tumultuous situation of that country, then torn by civil commotion, where every petty state was at war with its neighbour, and even every castle liable to the attack of an invader. She considered the person, to whose immediate guidance she would be committed, and the vast distance, that was to separate her from Valancourt, and, at the recollection of him, every other image vanished from her mind, and every thought was again obscured by grief.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Emily no longer opposed him, as he led her into an adjoining parlour; the manner, in which he had named Montoni, had so much alarmed her for his own safety, that she was now only anxious to prevent the consequences of his just resentment. He listened to her entreaties, with attention, but replied to them only with looks of despondency and tenderness, concealing, as much as possible, the sentiments he felt towards Montoni, that he might soothe the apprehensions, which

distressed her. But she saw the veil he had spread over his resentment, and, his assumed tranquillity only alarming her more, she urged, at length, the impolicy of forcing an interview with Montoni, and of taking any measure, which might render their separation irremediable. Valancourt yielded to these remonstrances, and her affecting entreaties drew from him a promise, that, however Montoni might persist in his design of disuniting them, he would not seek to redress his wrongs by violence. 'For my sake,' said Emily, 'let the consideration of what I should suffer deter you from such a mode of revenge!' 'For your sake, Emily,' replied Valancourt, his eyes filling with tears of tenderness and grief, while he gazed upon her. 'Yes—yes—I shall subdue myself. But, though I have given you my solemn promise to do this, do not expect, that I can tamely submit to the authority of Montoni; if I could, I should be unworthy of you. Yet, O Emily! how long may he condemn me to live without you,—how long may it be before you return to France!'

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

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

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

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

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

To Montoni he looked with equal despondency, since it was nearly evident, that this plan of separation originated with him, and it was not probable, that he would relinquish his own views to entreaties, or remonstrances, which he must have foreseen and have been prepared to resist.

Yet, remembering his promise to Emily, and more solicitous, concerning his love, than jealous of his consequence, Valancourt was careful to do nothing that might unnecessarily irritate Montoni, he wrote to him, therefore, not to demand an interview, but to solicit one, and, having done this, he endeavoured to wait with calmness his reply.

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

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

In consideration of the policy, suggested by Emily, and of his promise to her, Valancourt restrained the impulse, that urged him to the house of Montoni, to demand what had been denied to his entreaties. He only repeated his solicitations to see him; seconding them with all the arguments his situation could suggest. Thus several days passed, in remonstrance, on one side, and inflexible denial, on the other; for, whether it was fear, or shame, or the hatred, which results from both, that made Montoni shun the man he had injured, he was peremptory in his refusal, and was neither softened to pity by the agony, which Valancourt's letters pourtrayed, or awakened to a repentance of his own injustice by the strong remonstrances he employed. At length, Valancourt's letters were returned unopened, and then, in the first moments of passionate despair, he forgot every promise to Emily, except the solemn one, which bound him to avoid violence, and hastened to Montoni's chateau, determined to see him by whatever other means might be necessary. Montoni was denied, and Valancourt, when he afterwards enquired for Madame, and Ma'amselle St. Aubert, was absolutely refused admittance by the servants. Not choosing to submit himself to a contest with these, he, at length, departed, and, returning home in a state of mind approaching to frenzy, wrote to Emily of what had passed, expressed without restraint all the agony of his heart, and entreated, that, since he must not otherwise hope to see her immediately, she would allow him an interview unknown to Montoni. Soon after he had dispatched this, his passions becoming more temperate, he was sensible of the error he had committed in having given Emily a new subject of distress in the strong mention of his own suffering, and would have given half the world, had it been his, to recover the letter. Emily, however, was spared the pain she must have received from it by the suspicious policy of Madame Montoni, who had ordered, that all letters, addressed to her niece, should be delivered to herself, and who, after having perused this and indulged the expressions of resentment, which Valancourt's mention of Montoni provoked, had consigned it to the flames.

Montoni, meanwhile, every day more impatient to leave France, gave repeated orders for dispatch to the servants employed in preparations for the journey, and to the persons, with whom he was transacting some particular business. He preserved a steady silence to the letters in which Valancourt, despairing of greater good, and having subdued the passion, that had transgressed against his policy, solicited only the indulgence of being allowed to bid Emily farewell. But,

when the latter [Valancourt] learned, that she was really to set out in a very few days, and that it was designed he should see her no more, forgetting every consideration of prudence, he dared, in a second letter to Emily, to propose a clandestine marriage. This also was transmitted to Madame Montoni, and the last day of Emily's stay at Tholouse arrived, without affording Valancourt even a line to sooth his sufferings, or a hope, that he should be allowed a parting interview.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This reflection overcame Valancourt with tenderness, but, relapsing into despondency, he again felt only for himself, and lamented again this cruel separation, in a voice and words so impassioned, that Emily could no longer struggle to repress her own grief, or to sooth his. Valancourt, between these emotions of love and pity, lost the power, and almost the wish, of repressing his agitation; and, in the intervals of convulsive sobs, he, at one moment, kissed away her tears, then told her cruelly, that possibly she might never again weep for him, and then tried

to speak more calmly, but only exclaimed, 'O Emily—my heart will break!—I cannot—cannot leave you! Now—I gaze upon that countenance, now I hold you in my arms! a little while, and all this will appear a dream. I shall look, and cannot see you; shall try to recollect your features—and the impression will be fled from my imagination;—to hear the tones of your voice, and even memory will be silent!—I cannot, cannot leave you! why should we confide the happiness of our whole lives to the will of people, who have no right to interrupt, and, except in giving you to me, have no power to promote it? O Emily! venture to trust your own heart, venture to be mine for ever!' His voice trembled, and he was silent; Emily continued to weep, and was silent also, when Valancourt proceeded to propose an immediate marriage, and that at an early hour on the following morning, she should quit Madame Montoni's house, and be conducted by him to the church of the Augustines, where a friar should await to unite them.

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

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

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

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

'Stay!' said Valancourt, 'I conjure you stay, for I have much to tell you. The agitation of my mind has hitherto suffered me to speak only on the subject that occupied it;—I have forborne to

mention a doubt of much importance, partly, lest it should appear as if I told it with an ungenerous view of alarming you into a compliance with my late proposal.'

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

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

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

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

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

Valancourt walked upon the terrace with hurried steps, while Emily remained leaning on the balustrade in deep thought. The information she had just received excited, perhaps, more alarm than it could justify, and raised once more the conflict of contrasted interests. She had never liked Montoni. The fire and keenness of his eye, its proud exultation, its bold fierceness, its sullen watchfulness, as occasion, and even slight occasion, had called forth the latent soul, she had often observed with emotion; while from the usual expression of his countenance she had always shrunk. From such observations she was the more inclined to believe, that it was this Montoni, of whom the Italian had uttered his suspicious hints. The thought of being solely in his power, in a foreign land, was terrifying to her, but it was not by terror alone that she was urged to

an immediate marriage with Valancourt. The tenderest love had already pleaded his cause, but had been unable to overcome her opinion, as to her duty, her disinterested considerations for Valancourt, and the delicacy, which made her revolt from a clandestine union. It was not to be expected, that a vague terror would be more powerful, than the united influence of love and grief. But it recalled all their energy, and rendered a second conquest necessary. With Valancourt, whose imagination was now awake to the suggestion of every passion; whose apprehensions for Emily had acquired strength by the mere mention of them, and became every instant more powerful, as his mind brooded over them—with Valancourt no second conquest was attainable. He thought he saw in the clearest light, and love assisted the fear, that this journey to Italy would involve Emily in misery; he determined, therefore, to persevere in opposing it, and in conjuring her to bestow upon him the title of her lawful protector.

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

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

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

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

‘Think of you!—love you!’ exclaimed Valancourt.

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

‘For your sake!’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He supported her slowly towards the chateau, weeping and speaking to her; but she answered only in sighs, till, having reached the gate, that terminated the avenue, she seemed to have recovered her consciousness, and, looking round, perceived how near they were to the chateau. ‘We must part here,’ said she, stopping, ‘Why prolong these moments? Teach me the fortitude I have forgot.’

Valancourt struggled to assume a composed air. ‘Farewell, my love!’ said he, in a voice of solemn tenderness—‘trust me we shall meet again—meet for each other—meet to part no more!’ His voice faltered, but, recovering it, he proceeded in a firmer tone. ‘You know not what I shall suffer, till I hear from you; I shall omit no opportunity of conveying to you my letters, yet I tremble to think how few may occur. And trust me, love, for your dear sake, I will try to bear this absence with fortitude. O how little I have shewn to-night!’

‘Farewell!’ said Emily faintly. ‘When you are gone, I shall think of many things I would have said to you.’ ‘And I of many—many!’ said Valancourt; ‘I never left you yet, that I did not immediately remember some question, or some entreaty, or some circumstance, concerning my love, that I earnestly wished to mention, and feel wretched because I could not. O Emily! this countenance, on which I now gaze—will, in a moment, be gone from my eyes, and not all the efforts of fancy will be able to recall it with exactness. O! what an infinite difference between this moment and the next! NOW, I am in your presence, can behold you! THEN, all will be a dreary blank— and I shall be a wanderer, exiled from my only home!’

Valancourt again pressed her to his heart, and held her there in silence, weeping. Tears once again calmed her oppressed mind. They again bade each other farewell, lingered a moment, and then parted. Valancourt seemed to force himself from the spot; he passed hastily up the avenue, and Emily, as she moved slowly towards the chateau, heard his distant steps. she listened to the sounds, as they sunk fainter and fainter, till the melancholy stillness of night alone remained; and then hurried to her chamber, to seek repose, which, alas! was fled from her wretchedness.