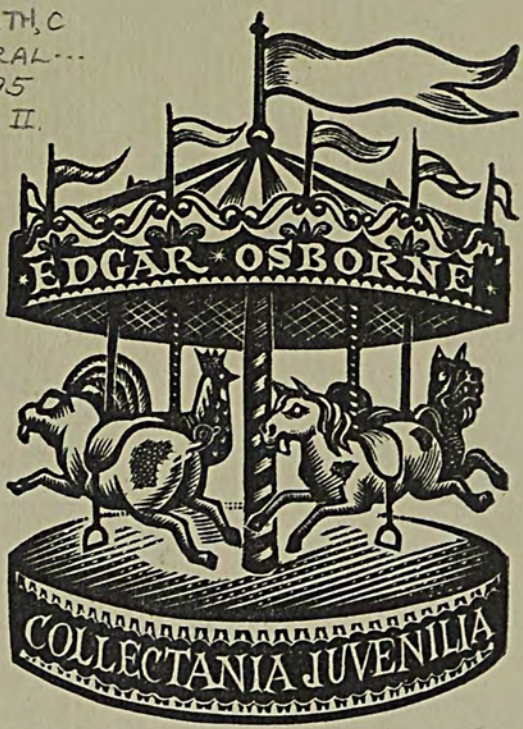

J. Beague

RURAL WALKS:

IN

DIALOGUES.

INTENDED

FOR THE USE OF YOUNG PERSONS.

By CHARLOTTE SMITH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
Printed for T. CADELL Jun. and W. DAVIES,
(Succeſſors to Mr. CADELL,) in the STRAND.
1795.

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SECOND VOLUME.

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RURAL WALKS.

DIALOGUE VII.

THE STRAWBERRY-GIRLS.

[Scene—The Breakfaſt-room.]

Mrs. Woodfield.

I EXPECT to-day what is quite a treat for me, and will, perhaps, be accompanied with ſomething not leſs welcome to you.

Elizabeth. I gueſs what it is,—new books from London.

Mrs. Woodfield. You have gueſſed rightly.

Elizabeth. And there are ſome for us?

Mrs. Woodfield. Yes; and ſome colours for your couſin and you.

Caroline. I am very much obliged to you. May I aſk what the books are?

Mrs. Woodfield. What would you wiſh them to be?

Caroline. Oh! I ſhall be contented with your choice! But you know that I love poetry.

Mrs. Woodfield. And do not hate novels.

Caroline. I have heard you ſay, my dear aunt, that you did not yourſelf do much otherwiſe, when you were of my age.

Mrs. Woodfield. And preciſely for that reaſon it is that I would not have you read many of them. When I was a girl, I had nobody to direct my reading; and, being a good deal at a ſolitary houſe in the country, I fell upon all ſorts of books that lay about, and many that nothing but the rage for reading,

with

with which I was devoured, would have tempted a young perſon to look into. By this means I acquired, at a very early age, a great deal of deſultory knowledge; and I was contented without reading novels, for there were none in the houſe I inhabited; and at that time, every little country town had not a circulating library, as they have now. I found, however, exquiſite delight in the little narratives which are ſcattered here and there in the Spectator, Guardian, Tatler, World, Rambler, Adventurer, &c. and I read them with ſuch avidity and intereſt, that I believe I could now repeat every one of them with tolerable correctneſs. Soon after I was eleven years old, I was removed to London, to an houſe where there were no books, and where my whole time was taken up by the attendance of maſters from morning till night. But I found out by accident a circulating

library; and, ſubſcribing out of my own pocket-money, unknown to the relation with whom I lived, I paſſed the hours deſtined to repoſe, in running through all the traſh it contained. My head was full of Sir Charleſes, Sir Edwards, Lord Belmonts, and Colonel Somervilles; while Lady Elizas and Lady Aramintas, with many nymphs of inferior rank, but with names equally *beautiful*, occupied my dreams. My relation ſoon perceived that I was thinking of ſomething very different from my muſic and my arithmetic (for my drawing I never neglected); and a poor ſquirrel and ſome birds I kept were formally accuſed by my maſters, as being the cauſe of my neglect, by occupying great part of my time. I was threatened with the perpetual baniſhment of my unfortunate favourites, if any more complaints were made; and I redoubled my diligence that my menagerie might not ſuffer,

nor

nor my ſecret ſtudies be detected. It happened, however, that before I could derive any benefit from this partial reformation, I was caught in my clandeſtine reading, by my aunt, who, having ſent me to practiſe a difficult leſſon on the harpſichord, remarked, for the firſt time, (though the circumſtance had often occurred before,) that ſhe did not hear it. She therefore fancied I was gone to play with my ſquirrel, inſtead of conquering the piece of muſic; and deſcending ſoftly into the room, the door of which was open, and which was juſt oppoſite to the place where I ſat, ſhe found me with my elbows on my knees, and in my lap were three greaſy-looking books, on one of which I was ſo intent, that I did not ſee her till ſhe was immediately cloſe to me. I was ſharply queſtioned as to the means by which I came by theſe books, and the ſervant, who had been employed

to procure them for me, was ſeverely reproved. My future communication with the circulating library was prohibited, and my father was told of my miſdemeanor. Inſtead, however, of being angry, he only told me, that the more I read the better he ſhould be pleaſed; but he wiſhed I would not waſte my time in reading indiſcriminately all ſorts of books, but that I would let him ſee what I was going to read. He blamed me, however, for doing any thing clandeſtinely; and forbade my having any books in future, which were not approved either by him or one of my friends. In conſequence of this, I read, among much other more profitable reading, a great number of novels; and though I certainly did not derive much advantage from them, I think the only harm they did me, was giving me falſe views of life. Almoſt all of them repreſent beings that do not exiſt; and a girl who fancies ſhe is to meet

meet with a Sir Charles Grandiſon, and affects the perfections of a Miſs Byron, would be ridiculous or unhappy. Another fault of theſe books is the conſequence given in them to trifles. The heroines are deſcribed as being elegantly dreſſed, and the heroes wear coats of pale purple cut velvet, on a gold ground. Point ruffles and diamond buckles, and ſuch acquiſitions, are deſcribed among the felicities of the cataſtrophe, when the lovers are married, and all is bliſsful around them.

Caroline. I think nothing in the world ſo tireſome and dull as Sir Charles Grandiſon. There is ſo much bowing upon the ladies hands, ſo much about the cedar parlour, and uncle Selby, and dear grandmamma, that I never could get through it all. Beſides, I know Sir Charles Grandiſon wore a wig.

Mrs. Woodfield. Well, if he did?

Elizabeth. Oh! what a fright he muſt have been! Only think of a hero in a wig!

Mrs. Woodfield (ſmiling). A wig gives you now the moſt ridiculous idea in the world; does it not?

Caroline. One thinks of an old apothecary, or an old clergyman.

Mrs. Woodfield. The wigs, however, worn by the fine men when Richardſon wrote, did not reſemble ſuch as now cover the heads of thoſe venerable characters. Don't you recollect what fine flowing flaxen wigs adorn the heads of very young men, and even very little boys, in the great gallery at M— Hall? Nothing gives one a more ridiculous idea of the fluctuation of faſhions, or the falſe taſte of adopting in painting ſuch unnatural modes. Thus, the heroes of novels written fifty years ago, appear to us abſurd caricatures. However, I do not know

know that there is any evidence of Sir Charles Grandiſon's wearing a wig.

Caroline. Oh! indeed, aunt, he certainly did; for Sir Hargrave Vollexſen wore one, and I dare ſay they both dreſſed equally faſhionable. Beſides, Lovelace complains, in one of his letters, that his wig was wet through while he waited for Clariſſa's letters.

Mrs. Woodfield. Well, Caroline, we will not diſpute on ſo important a point. I find you are minutely well read in theſe books, and you therefore muſt know, that, with all thoſe faults of tediouſneſs and repetition, they contain characters very ſtrongly diſcriminated, and leſſons of the pureſt morality. A great critic has ſaid, that the madneſs of Clementina is the fineſt piece of painting in our language, after the King Lear of Shakeſpeare; and though the impoſſible perfection of Sir Charles, who ſeems ſo equal to every trial, that we

forget to be interested about him, is to many readers disgusting, yet it is not surely wrong to paint man as he *ought* to be, since there is a chance of inducing him to become, by the study of such a character, better than he is. However, we must defer any farther discussion of this matter till another time, for here comes Samuel with the parcels from London.

[CAROLINE and ELIZABETH go out, and return with books and materials for drawing.]

Caroline. Oh, my dear aunt! how much I am obliged to you! What a delightful set of crayons, and such a nice painting box, with pallet and all so complete!

Mrs. Woodfield. I am glad you are pleased, my dear Caroline. It is an ample return to me, when I see that you are interested; but, however, you shall make me another repayment.

Caroline.

Caroline. To be ſure I will, moſt readily.

Mrs. Woodfield. You ſhall ſuperintend the leſſons of my little Henrietta in drawing flowers. Here is the book I have purchaſed for her; and when ſhe has practiſed a little in this, ſhe ſhall try to draw flowers from nature, beginning with the moſt ſimple.

Caroline. My dear aunt, you could teach her much better yourſelf.

Mrs. Woodfield. I might teach her as well, perhaps, if I had time to give her; but that, unfortunately, I have not. The neceſſity I am under of writing continually on buſineſs, occupies moſt of thoſe hours which ought to be dedicated to the education of my children. In you, however, Caroline, I have an excellent ſubſtitute in this amuſing and elegant art; and while you inſtruct Henrietta, you will find an acquiſition of knowledge to yourſelf: And beſides

that, you will derive a clearer idea of the principles you teach, you will acquire an habit of attention and of patience, uſeful to yourſelf.

Caroline. It is very true that I find myſelf improved in muſic ſince Elizabeth has been my ſcholar.

Mrs. Woodfield. I am afraid thoſe ſtudies will be ſuſpended a day or two, for theſe books will engage us too much to ſuffer us to give our uſual attention to thorough-baſs. Elizabeth ſeems quite abſorbed in what ſhe is reading already.

Elizabeth. It is a narrative ſo intereſting that I happened to open upon!

Mrs. Woodfield. We will, however, leave it for the preſent, or the ſun will be too high before we can reach the woods, where we will take ſome book of poetry to read, and return through the fir-grove on the other ſide the common, to avoid the heat. Take your baſkets

with

with you; perhaps we may find ſome ſtrawberries.

[They go out.]

Henrietta. Oh! here are ſtrawberries; already I have found ſeveral bunches! And there, a little lower, mamma, among that copſe-wood which has lately been cut, I ſee the ſame poor children gathering them who brought thoſe that you bought at the door yeſterday. Mamma! I think if I gather them it will be robbing thoſe poor children, who get a little money by ſelling them.

Mrs. Woodfield. It is an exquiſite pleaſure to me to ſee you ſo conſiderate, my Henrietta; but you ſhall amuſe yourſelf with picking them, if it *does* amuſe you; then add your *recolte* * to theirs, and I will become the purchaſer.

Elizabeth. Theſe are the ſame children we ſaw the other day; and I fancy

* Recolte, gathering, collection.

that

that poor old woman, who is ſitting on one of thoſe faggots, is the grandmother they told us they lived with. One of the little girls is the moſt intereſting creature!

[Mrs. WOODFIELD goes up to the old woman, converſes with her, and makes her a ſmall preſent—ELIZABETH and HENRIETTA gaze at her with a mixture of pity and terror expreſſed in their faces.]

Elizabeth. Dear mamma! what a melancholy ſight is a perſon ſo very old!

Mrs. Woodfield. So very old and ſo very poor;—the ſpectacle is indeed humiliating and painful. Yet this poor old woman, whoſe figure has almoſt loſt the traces of humanity, was the daughter of a rich farmer, and was, as I have heard other women of the neighbourhood relate, a great beauty in her time, and a celebrated horſewoman. When the mind is carried back to thoſe days, it is difficult

difficult to imagine how ſuch a change can have taken place.

Caroline (ſhuddering). I wonder that any perſon ſhould think old age deſirable.

Mrs. Woodfield. Yet we are ſo conſtructed, that evils, which at a diſtance appear ſo inſupportable that death is preferable, approach gradually, and we ſeem not to feel them. If a girl, in the bloom of youth, were ſuddenly to become withered and decrepid, like that very ancient woman, ſhe would probably die in deſpair. But of the moſt celebrated beauties that ever have been ſung in the different ages of the world, ſome have lived to great ages, and

" To that complexion muſt have come at
" laſt,"

notwithſtanding all the ſtruggles of expiring vanity; and they have uſually, I believe, been as much reſigned to their lot, as women who, ſetting out without any

any remarkable perfections, had leſs to regret of loſſes in the way. It is fortunate, perhaps, that ſelf-love at firſt prevents our being ſenſible of the lamentable change that time makes in the perſon. Thoſe who either have, or fancy they have been poſſeſſed of uncommon advantages, take great pains to hide the decay of thoſe advantages, even when their glaſs compels them to avow the mortifying truth, and will no longer be contradicted by the flattery of their maid. But theſe efforts generally render more conſpicuous the defects they attempt to hide. What is half ſo abſurd, or excites ſo much juſt ridicule, as to ſee a fat woman of five and forty or fifty, with a broad face and a double chin, dreſſed in ſome flimſy gauze dreſs, which might well become the light figure of her youngeſt daughter; with ſtays ſo tight, that ſhe can hardly breathe; flowers in her hair, and a pound of rouge

on

on her cheeks? Yet how often do such figures present themselves in public, and make themselves objects of laughter and contempt, instead of being entitled to our respect and regard! These poor gentlewomen do not consider, that they might be very agreeable women, though they cannot be beauties any longer; and that by pretending to what they are not, they lose all the esteem which they might engage as what they are, and by submitting, like reasonable beings, to the inevitable effects of time.

Elizabeth. But it is not for such people as those, I am sorry; I think one sees old ladies as happy as young ones; and I am sure Caroline and I do not enjoy a ball, more than Mrs. Flint and Mrs. Wadford do a game at whist. How eager they always are to begin, and how cross if any body disturbs them! I am sure they are quite as happy as girls, especially when they win, and talk

talk the game over afterwards. Mamma, do you know I ſhould like, when one of thoſe old ladies is in the midſt of her triumph at winning a rubber, and pocketting her half crowns with ſo much delight, to go up to her, and aſk her to give ſome of her winnings to ſuch a poor old woman as we have juſt ſeen.

Mrs. Woodfield. Elizabeth, the idea is admirable. Tell me now, ſuppoſe the forms of ſociety would allow you to addreſs yourſelf to Mrs. Wadford, for example, a perſon of a very awful preſence, and of no very gentle voice and demeanor, how would you ſet about it?

Elizabeth. I don't think I ſhould be in the leaſt afraid; but I would go up to her and ſay, " Mrs. Wadford, I am glad to ſee you have won a good deal to-night, and I am come to beg ſome of it for a poor old diſtreſſed woman, who is incapable of procuring any of the com-

forts

forts of life, though her great age makes them so necessary to her. She lives in a miserable cottage, which does not keep out the weather;—she has only a few rags instead of cloaths, and no nourishing food;—she has nobody to help her, for all her children are dead; and, what is yet more distressing, she has three of her grandchildren, whom the parish have sent to her to take care of, when she had more occasion to have some person hired to take care of her;—so, my dear Madam, I am sure you will give her something for a little present relief."

Mrs. Woodfield. Well! your pleading would be very good: Now tell me what you think would be Mrs. Wadford's answer.

Elizabeth. And you will not be angry, mamma, and say I am satirical?

Mrs. Woodfield. No; I give you leave to represent what you think would be her answer.

Elizabeth.

Elizabeth. Then I think ſhe would look very red and very croſs, and ſay, "Miſs! I'm really ſurprized at your aſking *me!* Fine times indeed, when little chits are ſo forward, and are taught to dictate about charity! Upon my word, Miſs Woodfield, I ſhall take an opportunity of telling your mamma." Then ſhe would have finiſhed reckoning her money, have tied up her purſe carefully, and have put it into her pocket, and perhaps be ſhuffling on her cloak.

Mrs. Woodfield. And would you, Elizabeth, be repulſed ſo eaſily?

Elizabeth. I think I ſhould addreſs her again, and repeat my petition, and perhaps bid her think, that ſhe herſelf is old, and has the gout and the rheumatiſm, which ſhe finds bad enough to bear, even with all manner of comforts about her; how hard then, I would ſay, muſt be the ſufferings of a poor deſolate creature, older and more infirm

than

than you are, Ma'am, and who has not the neceſſaries of life?

Mrs. Woodfield. Oh! Elizabeth, you would ſpoil all by repeating that unfortunate word *old.*

Elizabeth. But would it not ſerve her right, mamma?

Mrs. Woodfield. Perhaps it might; but no perſon has a right to intrude upon another with diſagreeable truths. Mrs. Wadford would tell you, that you were a pert girl, and ought to be ſent to ſchool and well whipped; that if people were poor, there was a proviſion made for them by the pariſh; and if girls were encouraged in ſuch impertinence, it would ſoon be impoſſible for any mortal to have *parties,* unleſs ſuch diſagreeable children were excluded. Caroline, do you think Elizabeth's method would ſucceed?

Caroline. Oh! I am ſure it would not.

Mrs.

Mrs. Woodfield. Could you not deviſe a better?

Caroline. I would addreſs to her ſome pathetic piece of poetry; ſuch as,

" Pity the ſorrows of a poor old man;"

or that which I read the other day in the Scottiſh poet, repreſenting the calamities of old age and poverty.

Mrs. Woodfield. I do not exactly recollect what you mean; repeat to me ſome of the verſes that ſtruck you the moſt *.

" The ſun that overhangs yon Moors,
" Out-ſpreading far and wide,
" Where hundreds labour to ſupport
" A haughty lordling's pride;
" I've ſeen yon weary winter ſun
" Twice forty times return,
" And every time has added proofs
" That man was made to mourn.

* Second verſe of " Man was made to " mourn," a Dirge, from Burn's Poems.

" Look

" Look not alone on youthful prime,
" Or manhood's active might,
" Man then is useful to his kind,
" *Supported* is his right;
" But see him on the verge of life,
" With cares and sorrows worn,
" Then age and want—Oh! ill match'd
" pair!
" Shew man was made to mourn.

" Many and sharp the num'rous ills
" Inwoven with our frame,
" More pointed still we make ourselves,
" Regret, remorse, and shame:
" And man, whose heaven-erected face
" The smiles of love adorn,
" Man's inhumanity to man
" Makes countless thousands mourn."

Mrs. Woodfield. Alas! my dear girl, neither these, nor the most affecting verses that ever were written, would move an heart like that of Mrs. Wadford. We have heard, among the fables of antiquity, that the power of harmony, by which poetry and eloquence have been understood, has effected

fected miracles, and moved even the ſavages of the wild; but an inhuman heart, hardened by ſelfiſh policy, is not to be moved; and I would ſooner undertake to mollify the untameable beaſts of the deſart. I believe the human heart is no longer reſponſive to the ſounds of the ſweeteſt meaſures, and that Orpheus himſelf might unite poeſy with muſic in vain; three parts in four of the world "*hear not the voice of the* "*charmer, charm ſhe ever ſo ſweetly.*" On Mrs. Wadford, I am ſure, the pathos of poeſy or of eloquence would be exerted in vain; ſhe would be ſtill as "*the deaf adder;*" for there is only one perſon ſhe loves in the world, and that one is herſelf. Collected thus to a point, her affections are very ſtrong; and it muſt be acknowledged, that if they are not diffuſed they are ardent.

Elizabeth. I always diſliked that woman, ever ſince ſhe beat my little dog,

who followed us into her odious house one day, because she supposed he would dirt her carpet.

Mrs. Woodfield. Her character is the same throughout. I am afraid that your project of affecting her feelings in prose, or that of Caroline to address her in verse, would be equally fruitless; and we must have recourse to some more certain method, if we would do any good to the ancient grandmother of our little Strawberry Girls.

Elizabeth. Mamma, I think that all poets are disposed to be melancholy. What can be more mournful than those verses Caroline repeated; or than a great number of other poems that are the most celebrated, particularly those of Gray?

Mrs. Woodfield. It is a very just remark; but the melancholy views given of human life by the poets, are easily accounted for. The same keenness of

perception that makes them poets, awakens in them the warmeſt reliſh for the enjoyments of life, of courſe the moſt poignant feelings of its diſappointments. Tremblingly alive, the common lot of humanity too often appears inſupportable. A man of buſineſs, who is occupied in the acquiſition of money, or in providing the neceſſaries of exiſtence, loſes his miſtreſs or his wife; but he knows that miſtreſſes and wives are mortal: he gives the uſual time to ſorrow, and then returns to the common vocations of his life. But a poet nouriſhes or aſſuages his grief by telling it in harmonious numbers. It is from hence that we fancy poets have a greater ſhare of calamity than other people; whereas, in fact, it is only that they poſſeſs ſuperior powers of deſcription. Certain, however, it is, that in reading the lives of the poets, it appears as if they were an aſſemblage of

of the moſt unhappy men that could be collected; and ſome, particularly Savage and Otway, are related to have ſuffered the moſt terrible extremes of poverty, even to famine. A later inſtance is that ſingular and unfortunate being, Chatterton.

Caroline. I once looked into his poems; but the language was ſuch as made it impoſſible for me to read them with any pleaſure.

Mrs. Woodfield. Nothing, however, is more eaſy. I have not got a good edition of Chatterton, but I have ſent to order one down; I think you will learn, with a very little attention, to read his imitation of old Engliſh, with at leaſt as much facility as you read the Scottiſh of Burns, though, perhaps, the ſubjects will be leſs agreeable to you.

Elizabeth. But Burns I cannot read, which I have often regretted, ſince you

have told me, mamma, that ſome of his poems are ſo pretty.

Mrs. Woodfield. I will read to you one of the moſt intereſting, in Engliſh, ſave only a few words which muſt remain in the original dialect, on account of the rhyme: Indeed, except *about a dozen* words, it is already Engliſh.

To a MOUNTAIN DAISY, *on turning one down with the plough.*

" Small, modeſt, crimſon-tipped flower,
" Thou'ſt met me in an evil hour;
" For I muſt cruſh, among the ſtoure,
" Thy ſlender ſtem;
" To ſpare thee now, is paſt my power,
" Thou beauteous gem!

" Alas! 'tis not thy neighbour ſweet,
" The bonny lark, companion meek,
" Bending thee 'mong the dewy wheat
" With ſpeckled breaſt,
" When upward ſpringing, blythe to greet
" The purpling Eaſt.

" Cold blew the bitter-biting North
" Upon thy early humble birth,

" Yet

" Yet cheerfully thou ventureſt forth
" Amid the ſtorm,
" Scarce rear'd above the parent earth
" Thy tender form.

" The flaunting flowers our gardens yield,
" High ſheltering woods and walls muſt ſhield;
" But thou, beneath the random bield
" Of clod or ſtone,
" Adorn'ſt the rugged ſtubble field,
" Unſeen—alone.

" There, in thy ſcanty mantle clad,
" Thy ſnowy boſom ſun-ward ſpread,
" Thou lift'ſt thy unaſſuming head
" In humble guiſe,
" But now the ſhare uptears thy bed,
" And low thou lies!

" * Such is the fate of ſimple bard,
" On life's rough ocean luckleſs ſtarr'd,
" Unſkilful he, to note the card
" Of prudent lore,
" The billows rage, and gales blow hard,
" And whelm him o'er!

" Such fate to ſuffering worth is given,
" Who long with *wants and woes* has ſtriven,

* One verſe is omitted.

" By human *pride* or *cunning* driven
" To miſery's brink,
" Till wrench'd of every ſtay but Heaven,
" He, ruin'd, ſink!

" Even thou who mourn'ſt the Daiſy's fate,
" That fate is thine—no diſtant date,
" Stern Ruin's plough-ſhare drives elate
" Full on thy bloom,
" Till cruſh'd beneath the furrow's weight
" Shall be thy doom.

DIALOGUE VIII.

FANNY BENNISON.

IT was on a ſultry evening in the month of Auguſt, when the heat having kept her children within the whole day, Mrs. Woodfield accompanied them for a walk to a farm-houſe, with the inhabitants of which ſhe had ſome buſineſs. They paſſed through fields on their way, in ſome of which the wheat was cutting, in others it was already cut, and the leaſers were gathering up the ſcattered ears. Elizabeth looked around for the lovely form of Lavinia, as Thomſon has repreſented her; but no ſuch figure was to be found among the groups of children and old perſons diſperſed about the field. When ſhe ſaw a farmer drive in his

herd of hogs, before these unhappy people had gathered the scanty refuse that was left them; when she saw their disappointment, of which they did not dare to complain, but dejectedly and sorrowfully left the field, she was not only filled with indignation, but felt disposed to try the experiment Caroline had talked of, with the card-playing old lady; and to have said,

"Be not too narrow, husbandman; but fling
"From the full sheaf, with charitable stealth,
"The liberal handful. Think, oh! grateful
"think!
"How good the God of harvest is to you,
"Who pours abundance o'er your flowing
"fields!
"While these unhappy partners of your kind
"Wide hover round you, like the fowls of
"heaven,
"And ask their humble dole. The various
"turns
"Of fortune ponder; think your sons may
"want
"What now, with hard reluctance, faint, ye
"give."

Such

Such were the reflections Elizabeth communicated to her couſin, as, paſſing into another field where the reapers were yet at work, they ſaw the farmer himſelf, an immenſe fat man, without his coat, in a red waiſtcoat, emulating his face, urging his men to exertion, by promiſing them (as he was afraid of a change of weather, and was to finiſh that night) a larger ſhare than uſual of that favourite liquor on which he ſeemed to have fattened. They none of them, however, appeared to ſerve him with pleaſure, even thus bribed; but executed their taſk, though with alacrity, yet without that delight with which labourers work at the harveſt-home of a good and conſiderate maſter.

The farmer hardly noticed the ladies as they paſſed. On their arrival at the houſe, which was a large old faſhioned building, with a court, and cut hollies between the door and the farm-yard,

they were received with as much ſtate by the miſtreſs of the manſion, as if ſhe had been the lady of the manor, inſtead of the tenant of the manor-farm. She was ſeated in a great chair in her ample kitchen, with two tall maids, without their gowns, and with blue linſey aprons, waiting on her, while ſhe dealt out the beer for the labourers who were in the field. There was an air of conſequence about her which amazed Caroline, who had imagined a farmer's wife to be a ſimple and civil being. But Mrs. Gooſetray, the dame of this manſion, ſeemed to ſuppoſe herſelf as much better than her viſitors, as ſhe was much richer. Mrs. Woodfield and her family being ſeated, and the little buſineſs of paying for ſome corn and poultry ſhe had bought being finiſhed, Mrs. Woodfield ſaid, "I wiſhed to have ſeen Mr. Gooſetray, as he is overſeer and church-warden, to have aſked him to allow ſome farther

relief

relief to poor old Sarah Hobloun." [It was the grandmother to the little Strawberry Girls of whom ſhe ſpoke.]

Mrs. Gooſetray. Relief! more relief for ſhe?—Lord, Ma'am! I wonder you ſhould believe the cant of that artful old jade—ſhe wants for nothing.

Mrs. Woodfield. I don't ſee how that can well be, Mrs. Gooſetray; for the pariſh allow her no more than three and ſixpence a-week.

Mrs. Gooſetray. Aye, well! and enough too. I wonder, for my part, what folks would have!—Humph! I'd be glad to know whether we be to keep the paupers to live better than ourſels.

Mrs. Woodfield. No, not to live *better*, good Madam, nor ſo well, but certainly to live.

Mrs. Gooſetray. Why ſo they do, don't they? There's that old woman have been a more trouble to my maſter then arrow a poor body in our pariſh;

for becauſe ſhe have once lived better forſooth, and ad a farm on her own, why ſhe expects to live ſtill as though ſhe was *well to do*. But, as I ſays to my maſter, what is that to we? be we to notice that? and han't we enough to do with paupers, and ſich like, that we be *forced* to do?

Mrs. Woodfield ſeeing it in vain to contend with ignorance and avarice ſo invincible, ſilently determined to ſpeak in favour of the unfortunate poor creature (whom ſhe could not herſelf help to the extent of her wiſhes) to a magiſtrate in the neighbourhood, and was riſing to go, when a young man about eighteen, pale, and to all appearance far gone in a conſumption, opened a door near her, and, without lifting his eyes from ſome papers he held in his hand, advanced ſlowly to the table by which Mrs. Gooſetray ſat, and, putting them down, was retiring, when looking

up he ſaw ſome ladies who were ſtrangers, and, a faint bluſh overſpreading his languid countenance, he retired precipitately the way he came.

Mrs. Woodfield (ſtruck with the dejection and diſeaſe that he ſeemed to ſuffer under). Is that your ſon, Mrs. Gooſetray?

Mrs. Gooſetray. My ſon, indeed! No, a thank you, Ma'am. I have but one ſon, he as has Fulwood farm, and not quite ſuch a poor-looking ſcaramouch neither as that.

Mrs. Woodfield. I beg your pardon; I had forgot. But this young man ſeems unwell; he is ſome relation of yours, I ſuppoſe.

Mrs. Gooſetray. Relations!—yes, one has always enough of they, as I ſays ſometimes to my huſband. But for my ſhare, if they be no more no profitable than Billy Benniſon and his ſiſter, I had full as lief be without um.

Mrs.

Mrs. Woodfield. He has a ſiſter then?

Mrs. Gooſetray. Yes, indeed; juſt ſuch a poor mopus for a woman, as this is for a man; but their father was my huſband's brother-in-law; he was a parſon, and comed down here ſome years agon to be curate, and ſo he and one of my maſter's ſiſters made a match on't. He got ſomething of a living, or ſome ſuch thing, in London, and did pretty well, till about two years or ſo agone, and then a died not worth a hundred pounds, and left my maſter's ſiſter with them there two children. The boy had been brought up a ſcollard to be ſure, and the girl to do nothing; ſo what was to be done? Maſter gived a matter of twenty pounds (unknown to me) to put Miſs prentice to a mantua-maker, for her mother died broken hearted, half-a-year or ſo ater the parſon, and the boy went out to write for the lawyers; but they've both been made ſo much of,

that

that now it ſeems they can't bear work nor confinement, nor I don't know what, not I, ſo as her miſtreſs was afeard Fanny would die with her, and Bill he was of no uſe in lawyer Tearſkin's office, bin as he had got a diſorder, I forget what they calls it, upon his cheſt, by writing ſo much. My maſter, though he's none ſo near a-kin to um neither, agreed (for, as I tells un, a have more money nor wit) to give um the run here of our houſe for country air, and I have made um uſeful; for it is a rule with me to have no more cats than catch mice, as the proverb ſays.

Mrs. Woodfield. And what employments have you found for theſe young people?

Mrs. Gooſetray. Why, firſt and foremoſt, I ſet Madam Fan to make up a brown *pattyſway* ſilk that I've had by me this nine years, and then to mend a pair of ſtays, and new-body and ſleeve my

my ſtriped cotton, and my yellow and white Mancheſter, and to turn my blue riding habit, which is as good as new, only a little moth-eaten from lying by; and then, as I had no more clothes to buſy her upon, I got my quilting frame out, and ſhe have quilted me as beautiful a *laylock* ſtuff petticoat as you'd wiſh to lay your eyes upon; and ſince ſhe've finiſh'd that, I've ſet her at a quilt made of pieces as I've been begging and ſaving theſe five years; ſhe've almoſt done it, and I aſſure you that it will be a good job; and I warrant I could not buy ſuch a quilt for twenty ſhillings.

Mrs. Woodfield. Indeed ſhe ſeems not to have been idle; but the young man—how have you found employment for him?

Mrs. Goſetray. Oh! why as to that, we wer'n't at no loſs; for, you know, maſter have had long accounts as ſteward to young Squire Melfort, who is juſt coming

coming of age. Maſter was employed by lawyer Trickman, who was a ſort of guardian, and now theſe things were to be ſettled, there was a power of papers, d'ye ſee, to put to rights, for maſter is no great ſcribe; and ſo as there is like to be a law-ſuit, it ſeems, atween lawyer Trickman and the young Squire, maſter, you ſee, cannot be too careful, and Billy Benniſon is getting all them there matters to right for un.

Mrs. Woodfield. It is very lucky indeed that you have found ſuch employment for both theſe diſtreſſed young people; but, perhaps, if their health admit of it, you may not be averſe to their procuring ſome little employment elſewhere. If the young woman will come to me, I will endeavour to find ſome eaſy work in mantua-making for her, and perhaps I may alſo have ſome writing, ſuch as copying of letters and

papers

papers on buſineſs, to give to her brother to copy for me.

Mrs. Gooſetray. Oh, Lord! to be ſure; if they can find work while they ſtays with us, why ſo much the better.

Mrs. Woodfield. Can I ſpeak to the young perſon, the ſiſter of the gentleman I ſaw?

Mrs. Gooſetray. Gentleman, indeed! God bleſs us all!—Now, Madam, I muſt juſt mention one thing, and that is, that if ſo be as you can find ſome little matter of *emplyment* for this here boy and girl, that you would not go for to ſay, nor to put in their heads, that they, being born a ſort of gentlefolks, are bad off to work for their living, and *ſich*.

Mrs. Woodfield. No, no, Mrs. Gooſetray; I ſhall ſay nothing to make them diſcontented with their ſituation,—of that be aſſured.

The

The purpoſe of Mrs. Woodfield was to procure an opportunity of ſpeaking to theſe unfortunate young people, of whoſe ſituation her converſation with the farmer's wife had given her the moſt deplorable idea. Mrs. Gooſetray now went to the foot of the ſtairs, and, in a loud voice, called, "Fan, Fan! here girl, you be wanted: Come down, I ſay, directly." In a few moments, a very young woman appeared, whoſe countenance bore a ſtrong reſemblance to that of the youth; ſhe did not ſeem ſo unhealthy, but the deepeſt dejection was viſible on her countenance. Trembling and pale, ſhe approached her unfeeling relation, at whom ſhe ſeemed to be in the greateſt awe and terror, and who thus ſpoke to her.

Mrs. Gooſetray. Come hither, girl; why what?—ane your feet tied together? I wonder what you're afear'd on. Here's Madam Woodfield thinks ſhe can

can find ſum-mot for thee to do—doſt hear?

Fanny Benniſon (caſting a look of mingled apprehenſion and acknowledgment at Mrs. Woodfield). I am very much obliged to the lady.

Mrs. Woodfield (much intereſted by the modeſt and innocent appearance of the young woman). Perhaps, Miſs Benniſon, you might make it convenient to go home with me this evening. I will have a bed made up for you for the time you remain with me, as I underſtand you are not in perfect health, and it may perhaps fatigue you too much to go to my houſe and return hither every day.

Fanny Benniſon. You are very conſiderate, Madam—but—I am ſure I ſhall be too happy to obtain your encouragement—but only—

Mrs. Gooſetray (angrily). But—and only—and but—Pray, *Miſs*, what does all them airs mean?

Fanny

Fanny Bennison. It is on account of my brother, Ma'am, that I hesitated. My poor brother *(she burst into tears)* is so very ill, that just now, in this busy time, to be sure, you cannot spare people to do for him, and if I am not by he neglects himself; and, as I think he has not long to live, I cannot bear to leave him alone to his melancholy thoughts.

Mrs. Woodfield. I hope he is not so bad as your fears represent him to be. But if it give you pain, you shall not quit him; I will send the work hither, and if you will walk with me a little way this evening, I will inform you what I wish to have done.

Mrs. Goosetray. Aye, aye, there, go you along; I shall have the kitchen full of the harvesters in a min-nut, and you'll be better out of the way.

There needed little preparation, and Fanny Bennison, encouraged by the easy gentle-

gentleneſs of Mrs. Woodfield, and the compaſſionate looks and civil attention of the young people, regained ſome degree of compoſure, as by the light of the harveſt moon, which was now riſen, they took their way by the ſide of the river towards home.

Mrs. Woodfield then drew from the young woman a confeſſion of her ſorrows. "Ah! Madam," ſaid ſhe, "our ſituation is indeed hard, but I will not murmur, for certainly it might have been worſe. While my poor father lived, perhaps we were too delicately brought up for our ſlender expectations. He was ſo fond of us both, poor dear man! and ſo proud of my brother's advancement, while he was able to keep him at Oxford, that he did not love to remember, that if he died we had nothing. His life appeared to be a good one. His friends made him a great many promiſes of preferment, and upon the

ſtrength

ſtrength of thoſe expectations, though he continued to live with the greateſt œconomy, yet it made him eaſy about the future, and prevented his placing my poor dear brother in ſome other way of life: for after my father died, William had no longer any friends, either to ſupport him at Oxford, or to procure him any fellowſhip, or ſome other proviſion, which my father had hopes of getting for him by their means. It is true, that, notwithſtanding the expence of William's being there, and the education my father beſtowed upon me, my dear parents had ſaved a little money; but the long illneſs of my poor father, who, though only about forty years old, was ſtruck with the palſy many months before we loſt him, and the languiſhing illneſs my dear, dear mother fell into immediately after his death, and which ended in our being deprived of her too, naturally exhauſted

their

their little ſavings—and—*(ſobs here broke her voice)* and when this laſt dear parent was taken from us, we had hardly enough—to bury her by the ſide of my father!"

Mrs. Woodfield. Compoſe yourſelf, my dear Miſs Benniſon; let us try to look forward.

Fanny Benniſon. Do not imagine, Madam, that the change we have experienced affects me for my own ſake. I know the tenderneſs of my parents induced them to bring me up in a higher ſtile than I had any pretenſions to; but my brother's ſituation breaks my heart;—to ſee all the proſpects his underſtanding and his education opened to him blaſted, and to think that he has not *one* friend to countenance him, not one to ſave him from the ſad drudgery of being a copying clerk, by which he does not earn enough to enable him to exiſt!

Mrs.

Mrs. Woodfield. Come, come, I muſt not have you give way to deſpondence, my young friend; perhaps ſomething may be done for your brother. I aſſure you, I am deeply intereſted for you both, but my power individually is nothing; however, I have connexions whom I can, I think, engage in favour of a young man ſo unhappily circumſtanced: But I am much afraid, that while he continues to work as Mrs. Gooſetray repreſents, the country air will not produce ſo favourable a change in his health as might otherwiſe be expected.

Fanny Benniſon (deeply ſighing). I need not ſay to you, Madam, how ill his preſent ſituation muſt agree with a mind like his; under the idea of an obligation beſtowed by Mr. and Mrs. Gooſetray, of which to be ſure we hear a great deal, we both in reality work harder than we did at our reſpective employments in London.

But ſtill I wiſh my poor dear William to remain a little longer, and eſpecially during this dreadfully-hot weather; for merely to breathe the air of the country, and to have the advantage of freſh milk, muſt be beneficial. In London, at the office of the lawyer who employs him, I have never ſeen him lately, without believing that every time I took leave of him would be the laſt that I ſhould ever ſee him. My hope now is, Madam, if you will be ſo very good as to employ and recommend me, that I may be able, by dint of continual labour, to pay for our board, and to releaſe him from the conſtant toil he now undergoes, which indeed, the doctors ſay, was the cauſe of his illneſs at firſt, by obliging him to ſit ſo much, and to lean with his breaſt againſt a deſk.

Mrs. Woodfield. Well, you ſhall not go any farther to-night, leſt you ſhould be late home. Return, and make your-

ſelf

ſelf as eaſy as you can, and endeavour to relieve the ſpirits of your brother. I will contrive to ſend for you both to-morrow, and perhaps, by talking with him, I may be better enabled to judge what ſituation will beſt ſuit him.

The poor girl, with an heart ſo overflowing with gratitude that ſhe was unable to expreſs its emotion, now took leave; and Mrs. Woodfield, greatly affected by what ſhe had heard, walked penſively along the path, gazing at the water, on which the moon-beams fell with undulating luſtre. "And this," ſaid ſhe to herſelf, "this is the end of all the ſolicitude which the father of theſe poor young people gave to their education! So ſink in friendleſs obſcurity, all the hopes that they had been taught to cheriſh of future competence! Alas! how many people are there who periſh unlamented and unknown, for whom the fond heart of

parental tenderneſs has throbbed with the moſt flattering expectations!" Tears filled her eyes, as ſhe caſt them on the three girls, who were walking ſlowly before her, as if infected with a portion of her melancholy. She was conſcious of the impropriety of too frequently preſenting to young minds gloomy and diſcouraging proſpects of human life; and ſhe endeavoured to ſhake off the weight that hung upon her ſpirits, and to give the converſation a more cheerful turn. But efforts to force gaiety, ſeldom or never ſucceed. The queſtions of her niece and her daughters, who all appeared greatly intereſted in the fate of Fanny Benniſon, ſerved rather to increaſe than diſſipate the heavineſs of her ſpirits. Still, however, as the beſt way to counteract the effect, not only of the little mournful ſtory ſhe had liſtened to, but of the general penſiveneſs of the ſcene, added to the lan-

guor

guor that follows an hot autumnal day, Mrs. Woodfield told them what ſhe propoſed doing towards the alleviation of thoſe ſorrows for which they all expreſſed ſo much concern. And having at length ſatisfied their earneſt enquiries, ſhe deſired, in order to change the converſation, or at leaſt to give it a turn leſs really painful, that each ſhould repeat ſome little piece of poetry that might lately have ſtruck them enough to engage them to learn it.

After a moment's pauſe, Caroline choſe, as moſt accordant to the ſcene, and to her ſtate of mind, the following Sonnet, from thoſe beautiful little pieces of poetry lately publiſhed by Mr. Bowles:

"While ſlowly wanders thy ſequeſter'd
"ſtream,
"Wenſbeck, the moſſy-ſcatter'd rocks among,
"In fancy's ear ſtill making plaintive ſong,
"To the dark woods above, that, waving,
"ſeem

" To bend o'er ſome enchanted ſpot; re-
" mov'd
" From life's vain coil, I liſten to the wind,
" And think I hear meek ſorrow's plaint, re-
" clin'd
" O'er the forſaken tomb of one ſhe lov'd.
" Fair ſcenes! ye lend a pleaſure long un-
" known
" To him who paſſes weary on his way,
" The farewel tear, which now he turns to pay,
" Shall thank you; and whene'er of plea-
" ſures flown,
" His heart ſome long-loſt image would renew,
" Delightful haunts! he will remember you!"

Elizabeth, avowing her inferiority both in choice and manner to her couſin, yet ventured to repeat, ſince her mother would not excuſe her, the following addreſs to the Moon:

" Queen of the ſilver bow! by thy pale beam
" Alone and penſive I delight to ſtray,
" And watch thy ſhadow trembling in the
" ſtream,
" Or mark the fleecy clouds that croſs thy
" way.

" And,

" And, while I gaze, thy mild and penſive
" light
" Sheds a ſoft calm upon my troubled
" breaſt;
" And oft I think, fair planet of the night!
" That in thy orb the wretched may have
" reſt.
" The ſufferers of the earth perhaps may go,
" Releas'd by death, to thy benignant
" ſphere,
" And the ſad children of deſpair and woe
" Forget in thee their cup of ſorrow here.
" Ah! that I ſoon may reach thy world ſerene,
" Poor wearied pilgrim in this toiling ſcene!"

DIALOGUE IX.

THE FISHERMEN.

IT was about a month after the laſt converſation before Mrs. Woodfield had completely ſucceeded in placing the two young people, Fanny Benniſon and her brother, in ſituations much more fortunate than ſhe had even hoped to meet with. The young man, whoſe health was eſtabliſhed by the advice of an excellent phyſician whom Mrs. Woodfield had engaged to attend him, was received as ſecretary, by a gentleman who was going to Italy on a voyage of pleaſure and inſtruction, and who wanted an intelligent perſon to accompany and write for him. Fanny was taken by a lady advanced in years

to

to read to her, and attend on her; and Mrs. Woodfield had very ſoon the pleaſure of hearing that both the brother and ſiſter acquitted themſelves ſo much to the ſatisfaction of the two friends to whom ſhe had recommended them, that they ſeemed to have found protectors for the reſt of their lives.

The ſucceſs of her benevolent exertions in favour of the unfortunate, was a balm to the heart of Mrs. Woodfield, and conſoled her for many vexations which ſometimes weighed on her ſpirits. She had lately heard from her brother, Colonel Cecil, who had been wounded in the knee, and there were apprehenſions entertained that he would be lame for life. She had not however told Caroline the whole of her apprehenſions; for ſo much was her character changed by the pains Mrs. Woodfield had taken to teach her to reflect, and by being detached from thoſe ſcenes of thoughtleſs diſſipation

that had rendered her heart inſenſible by diſtracting her underſtanding, that her temper was now more likely to be injured by extreme ſenſibility than to want it.

Anxiety for a brother ſhe loved, with other domeſtic uneaſineſs, had at length ſo far affected Mrs. Woodfield's health, that it became abſolutely neceſſary for her to follow the advice of a medical friend, and to go for a few weeks to the ſea.

This ſhe more readily complied with, as within five or ſix miles of her houſe was one of thoſe retired bathing-places where invalids find it convenient to reſort, to avoid the expence and noiſe of thoſe that are frequented as much for pleaſure as health.

Thither, therefore, Mrs. Woodfield and her three girls repaired, about the middle of September. The days were ſhortening, and the yellow hues of

autumn already touched the woods they left. In their garden, the moſt beautiful flowers were faded; hardly a few white ſpangles remained on Henrietta's favourite jeſſamine, which grew againſt the parlour window. The roſes, and even the carnations, which had rendered their ſhrubbery and borders ſo gay, were now ſucceeded by the unintereſting Michaelmas daiſy, the broad ſtaring China after, the tawdry ſun-flower, or the holyoak; flowers which, like ſome characters in human life, are ſhewy but worthleſs, and that hardly compenſate, by their glaring colours, for the pain they give us in reminding us that they are the laſt in the annual proceſſion of flowers.

The ſea proſpects had all the charms of novelty. The rocks, that bounded the ſhore, were high, and afforded an extenſive horizon. Beneath them was a broad belt of ſhingles—ſtones that

nature ſeems to have collected as the beſt defence againſt the incroaching ocean, which continually beats upon them, poliſhing their rugged ſurfaces, and throwing them up in ſteep ridges. The bed of the waves was a hard and level ſand, which, when they ebbed, afforded a dry and delightful walk of ſome miles. It was here that, early on the morning after their arrival, the little party took their walk.

Mrs. Woodfield. Henrietta is as much enraptured with a walk by the ſea ſide, as if it were the firſt ſhe had ever taken.

Caroline. And I am as much captivated with it as if it were entirely new to *me*.

Mrs. Woodfield. It has often been ſaid, that a ſea view is monotonous, and offers nothing but a repetition of the ſame objects, at high or low water; ſmooth in a calm, or roughened by winds. But I think it has much more

variety.

variety. What can be more beautiful than thoſe ſhades of purple, blue, and green, mingling inſenſibly with each other, like the ſoft ſhadows of the rainbow, while ſuddenly breaking beyond them is a dark maſs of ſhadow, the reflection of clouds above, and then, as far as the horizon, the moſt dazzling brightneſs. There is hardly an hour that does not preſent ſome new and beautiful appearance; and, ſo little am I wearied with continually looking on the ſea, that it is to me the object of all others the moſt amuſing.

Elizabeth. But I think, mamma, I ſhould like to ſee large ſhips, and different kinds of veſſels.

Mrs. Woodfield. I, on the contrary, am content to ſee them paſs at a diſtance. Wherever large veſſels approach the ſhore, there muſt be a deep harbour, formed by ſome river that empties itſelf into the ſea; of courſe the ſhore

is

is muddy, and at low water not only ugly but offenſive. Beſides, I ſhould be ſorry to have this pure air polluted by the ſmell of all thoſe things uſed about ſhipping; and to exchange the chirping of the ſea-ſnipes, or even the harſher cry of the ſea-gulls and cormorants, or the tinkling ſheep-bell we now hear from the downs, for the ſcreams of the horrible women that frequent ſea-ports, the buſtle of ſailors, the noiſe of drawing up anchors, quarrelling, ſwearing, crying, and a thouſand unpleaſant ſounds that are always heard in a port.

Caroline. A fleet is certainly a moſt beautiful ſight.

Mrs. Woodfield. Certainly; the *moſt* beautiful that the ingenuity of man has formed. Yet the ſpectacle of a fleet of forty ſhips of war, which I once ſaw, however magnificent as a ſight, conveyed to my mind only painful ideas.

I figured

I figured to myſelf how many of thoſe brave thoughtleſs beings, who were now rending the air with ſhouts of triumph, proud of the ſplendor of that ſhew of which every one conſidered himſelf as a part, and elate with the grandeur of his country, whoſe ſtrength lies in its navy, would, within a few days, perhaps, become mangled carcaſes for the prey of the monſters of the deep, and dye, with their blood, the waves over which they were now ſo gaily bounding; inflicting, at the ſame time, equal evils on an equal or more conſiderable number of human beings, whom they never ſaw before, and with whom they have no manner of quarrel.

Caroline. But, my dear aunt, if every body reaſoned in this manner, there would be no wars.

Mrs. Woodfield. And if there were not?

Caroline. Why then there would be no occaſion for either armies or navies.

Mrs.

Mrs. Woodfield. And what would there be in that to lament?

Caroline. Dear aunt, I don't know. But other nations would fall upon us and deſtroy us, if we had neither.

Mrs. Woodfield. Not if all nations would be equally reaſonable, and learn that there is nothing to be obtained by our cutting each other's throats. Good God! when I reflect on the calamities and the expences of war, and the little advantage that has ever been gained by it, I own I am aſtoniſhed at the madneſs of mankind.

Elizabeth. But, mamma, there have always been wars.

Mrs. Woodfield. And one bluſhes, as a human being and as a Chriſtian, to trace thoſe wars to their ſources.

Henrietta. But, mamma, is it not true that the Engliſh have always been glorious about fighting? Oh! how I like to hear of Edward the Black Prince,

Prince, and his making the King of France ride by him upon a black poney, and to see his picture in your great History of England, patting the head of a fierce lion.

Mrs. Woodfield. Really, Henrietta, your ideas of glory are worthy a little amazon, but they are not quite correct. The Black Prince, who, from the character that is given of him, was undoubtedly one of the best of our Princes, was so far from making his illustrious prisoner ride by him upon a black poney, that he himself took the poney, (if there was a poney in question,) and gave to the captured King a beautiful horse, richly caparisoned. The evening after the battle he waited on the King of France at table, and generously endeavoured to console him under his misfortunes; thus attaching to his character, as a man, praise infinitely superior to that of a mere conqueror.

But,

But, however, Henrietta, whatever paſſion for the glory of your country you have caught from ſtudying your little hiſtories of England, and from looking at the imaginary reſemblance of our Kings in my great Rapin, I aſſure you, that the laurels of Britannia by no means compenſate for her ſcars.

Elizabeth. Mamma, at a great diſtance I obſerve one, two, three, four, five, ſix, ſeven large ſhips! are they ſhips of war?

Mrs. Woodfield. I am no judge of them, even if I ſaw them nearer; at this diſtance it is impoſſible to diſtinguiſh what they are. Indeed I can but juſt diſcern them with my glaſs: Do they go up or down the Channel?

Caroline. How do you mean, aunt, up or down?

Mrs. Woodfield. Do they go to the Eaſt or the Weſt?

Caroline.

Caroline. Let me consider which is the East. Oh! I know; they go to the East.

Mrs. Woodfield. They are then going up the Channel, and are probably merchant ships, under convoy, going to the port of London.

Caroline. Perhaps from the West Indies; for now I see eleven or twelve others, still farther off. Ah! how glad must the passengers be that they are so near England! I remember I was, when I only came from France.

Elizabeth. Because you were sick at sea, but not because you were glad to leave France.

Caroline. But still it is pleasant to return to one's own country; and I am sure I should think so, were I coming from the West Indies.

Henrietta. Do you know, mamma, I saw a very great bird dart down to the water

water and seize a fish, which he seemed to swallow in a moment?

Mrs. Woodfield. It was a cormorant. Those sea-gulls are fishing too; every now and then you see them dip into a rising wave. To what numerous tribes of birds the sea gives food! If you look along the sands you will see another sort of bird, watching, as the tide retires, for shrimps, young crabs, and other minute fishes, or rather sea-insects, which the waves leave.

Henrietta. And where do they find trees to build their nests upon?

Mrs. Woodfield. Do all birds then build on trees?

Henrietta. Yes, I believe so.

Mrs. Woodfield. You have already forgotten then, that larks build on the ground, swallows under the eaves of houses, and sand-martins, as well as some other birds, in the holes of rocks

or

or neglected buildings. Sea birds build in the chasms of the cliffs; so do the daws which we hear cawing above our heads; but these chuse only the highest chalky rocks, where they hope, but in vain, to be secure from the cruel and useless robberies of man.

Henrietta. Why surely, mamma, it is not possible for any body to take them from thence.

Mrs. Woodfield. One would believe so; but I have often shuddered to see a party of boys engaged in the perilous exploit of robbing these nests. They fasten a stick horizontally to a rope, which two or three of them secure to the top of the rock by means of a strong stake or an iron crow; one of them gets astride on the stick, and is let down the side of the cliff, to which he clings with his hands and knees; the breaking or giving way of the rope, or one false step, would precipitate him many fathoms

thoms on a maſs of flints, where he muſt be daſhed into a thouſand pieces. Yet this hazard theſe unthinking creatures incur for a prize ſo worthleſs, that when they have got the miſerable neſtlings, they ſell them to the firſt paſſenger they meet for an halfpenny, or, in default of finding a purchaſer, wring their necks off—but *too* ſtriking a reſemblance has *ſuch* folly to many of the purſuits that engage creatures wiſer than theſe poor fiſhermen's boys!—But remark the porpuſſes; I ſee three of them playing near the boats: I believe we ſhall have a ſtorm this evening; there is every prognoſtic of it on the ſea, beſides the appearance of thoſe fiſh, which always denote it. We had better not go farther, as theſe ſqualls from the ſea, at this time of the year, are ſudden and violent. Elizabeth, can you recollect no deſcription of the ſea which you have read lately?

Elizabeth.

Elizabeth. I believe I can; it is in Cowper.

Mrs. Woodfield. Repeat it.

" Ocean exhibits, fathomleſs and broad,
" Much of power and majeſty of God;
" He ſwathes about the ſwelling of the deep,
" That ſhines and reſts, as infants ſmile and
" ſleep.
" Vaſt as it is, it anſwers, as it flows,
" The breathings of the lighteſt air that
" blows;
" Curling and whit'ning over all the waſte,
" The riſing waves obey th' increaſing blaſt,
" Abrupt and horrid as the tempeſt roars,
" Thunders and flaſh upon the ſtedfaſt ſhores,
" Till he that rides the whirlwind checks the
" rein,
" Then all the world of waters ſleeps again."

Before they could reach their lodgings the wind roſe, and dark clouds gathered over the ſea, while the tops of the waves began to curl and whiten, as they rolled toward the ſhore; and, as the clouds were ſwiftly driven along, the

the ſea in ſome places aſſumed a deep green hue, and in others a dull purple; the ſea birds forſook their fiſhing, and flew, ſhrieking, towards their rocky aſylums.

This continued without much increaſe, however, till the ſun ſunk, fiery and half obſcured by brown and purple ſpots and wandering clouds, beneath the horizon, tinging the air with that red and lurid appearance which always foretells violent winds. It was not yet, however, ſo ſtrong, but that Mrs. Woodfield and her children determined on taking their ſhort evening's walk. Early in the morning, the fiſhermen of the village, which poſſeſſed only ten or twelve boats, had gone out in purſuit of herrings and whitings. Before noon, their little veſſels, the white ſails appearing like feathers on the broad blue ſea, had been almoſt inviſible, from the diſtance they had gained; and ſoon afterwards

terwards they were out of ſight. The wind was againſt their returning, and as the ſtorm came on, their mothers and wives were aſſembled on the high grounds, in hopes of diſtinguiſhing their returning ſails.

Mrs. Woodfield, who, from the converſation of the old men on ſhore, and the anxiety they expreſſed, began to feel very apprehenſive for the mariners of the village, defied the increaſing wind, which now blew almoſt an hurricane, to go to an height above, from whence, with a ſmall teleſcope ſhe had, ſhe was in hopes of diſcovering their diſtant boats; but darkneſs and tempeſt ſcowled over the ſea, and it appeared as if the two elements of fire and water were mingling together in dreary confuſion. The women now ſurrounded her, ſome expreſſing their apprehenſions in terms of exaggerated terror, and others endeavouring to appear more

courageous, and relating how on ſuch and ſuch a night they were ſure the ſtorm was worſe, and yet no harm came of it.

Being too little verſed in this matter to be able to afford comfort to the anxious group, Mrs. Woodfield and her family retired to their ſmall lodging, but were ſoon alarmed by the increaſing violence of the tempeſt.

Tremendous thunder now ſeemed to rival the fury of the winds; and floods of fire mingled with the rain, that drove in torrents ſo violent, that it ſeemed as if the ſea itſelf were ruſhing on the land. Could the danger of the poor men who were out, and the agonies of the women who belonged to them, have been a moment diſmiſſed from her mind, there would have been ſomething of ſublime horror in this war of elements. But her ſolicitude for theſe unhappy people ſuffered her not to feel

any

any other ſenſations than terror and pity. The women now endeavoured to hang out lights, that might guide the boats to the landing-place; but ſuch power had the wind, that it was impoſſible, by any contrivance, to prevent their lights going out. In looking towards the ſea, it ſometimes ſeemed itſelf on fire; for the lightning ran along it, and the tops of the white foaming waves appeared to be tinged with flame. Shuddering, and huddling round their mother, the three girls ſat ſilent and pale; and when the hour of repoſe came, intreated that they might ſtill be allowed to remain where they were.

Mrs. Woodfield. And why, my dears? Are you not equally ſafe in your beds? Are you not equally under the protection of Providence there as here?

Elizabeth. Yes, mamma, certainly; but it is ſo much better to be all together, and then let what will happen.

Mrs. Woodfield. And to us what ſhould happen?

Caroline. Accidents, you know, ſometimes happen by lightning.

Mrs. Woodfield. I allow it; but ſhould ſuch a circumſtance occur when we are all together, you know, there would be more chance of our all ſuffering.

Henrietta (clinging round her mother's neck, and weeping). Oh, mamma! let me then ſtay with you and my ſiſter and my couſin; for I had a thouſand times rather be killed with you and them, than be ſafe, if any of you were to be hurt.

Mrs. Woodfield. My dear little girl, do not let us torment ourſelves with theſe (I hope) needleſs fears. We are in no danger, I truſt; but what muſt be the condition of thoſe poor men, who, in purſuing the occupation on which their ſubſiſtence depends, are overtaken by this terrible ſtorm? What the ſad

ſituation

ſituation of thoſe that belong to them; of families, whoſe fathers are ſtruggling with the raging element; of wives trembling for their huſbands; of mothers, dreading leſt every wave that they hear thundering againſt the groaning cliffs, may have overwhelmed their ſons, the comforts and ſupports of their declining days!

Henrietta. Oh, my dear mamma! pray do not let us talk of it any more; I cannot bear to think of it, indeed I cannot.

Voices were now heard, clamorouſly declaring that ſome of the boats were approaching, and that the wind was abated. The rain had now ceaſed; but its continuance would hardly have prevented the whole party from going out to witneſs the ſcene that now preſented itſelf on the beach. The various expreſſions in the countenances of the women, the old men, and the children

from ten to thirteen years old, that were collected along the shore; their hopes and fears, as the boats appeared, or were for a moment lost behind the swelling waves, some flattering themselves they distinguished those who were dear to them, others still despairing; would have made the finest study for a painter, who desired to study the passions. At length the men came on shore, though not without great risk, all but two boats crews, and those to whom they were related heard, in answer to their eager inquiries, that they were landed at a little creek about a mile lower down. It was with all the delight of benevolent hearts, that the spectators of this scene saw the content and satisfaction which the whole village now expressed. The dripping and fatigued fishermen returned each to his home, accompanied by their families, some

ſome among whom were weeping for joy.

The little houſehold of Mrs. Woodfield aſſembled round their fire for a moment before they retired to reſt, and moralized on the ſpectacle they had ſeen.

Caroline. How little the poor women thought of *themſelves*, while they were ſo anxious! though I ſaw ſome of them with little children in their arms, hardly able to ſtand againſt the violence of the wind, and trembling ſo, that they were obliged to hold by the rails on the beach!

Mrs. Woodfield. Why *we*, who were much leſs intereſted, my dear Caroline, were inſenſible of the inconvenience of the wind, and even of ſome rain that fell, while we were in anxious expectation of the arrival of the boats. How admirably Shakeſpeare has deſcribed the careleſſneſs of perſonal inconvenience,

which is occaſioned by violent grief and anxiety!

—— "When the mind's free,
"The body's delicate; the tempeſt in my
"mind
"Does from my ſenſes take all feeling elſe,
"But what beats there!"

Elizabeth. I thought of Lear, mamma, when the ſtorm was moſt violent, and remembered thoſe lines:

—— "Things that love night,
"Love not ſuch nights as theſe: the wrath-
"ful ſkies
"Gallow the very wanderers of the dark,
"And make them keep their caves; ſince I
"was man,
"Such ſheets of fire, ſuch burſts of horrid
"thunder,
"Such groans of roaring wind and rain,
"I never
"Remember to have heard!"

Mrs. Woodfield. A tempeſt at ſea, though one of the moſt awful and ſublime ſpectacles the world can ſhew, has,

has, I think, been leſs frequently deſcribed in poetry than any other phenomenon of Nature. But, indeed, the unfortunate ſufferers, in ſuch a caſe, are not likely to be in a condition to analiſe their ſenſations, or to remark appearances around them. There is, however, the Shipwreck, by Falconer, which has ſome fine paſſages.

How very correct, in all he deſcribes, is that charming poet, Thomſon! If you recollect what we have remarked to-day, you may obſerve how cloſely he has traced the progreſs of the ſtorm:

—— "The cormorant on high
"Wheels from the deep, and ſcreams along
"the land;
"Loud ſhrieks the ſoaring hern, and, with
"wild wing,
"The circling ſea-fowl cleave the flaky
"clouds;
"Ocean, unequal preſs'd with broken tide
"And blind commotion, heaves; while from
"the ſhore,
"Eat into caverns by the reſtleſs wave,

" And foreſt-ruſtling mountain, comes a voice
" That, ſolemn-ſounding, bids the world pre-
" pare;
" Then iſſues forth the ſtorm, with ſudden
" burſt,
" And hurls the whole precipitated air
" Down in a torrent. On the paſſive main
" Deſcends the etherial force, and, with
" ſtrong guſt,
" Turns from its bottom the diſcolour'd deep,
" Through the black night that ſits immenſe
" around.
" Laſh'd into foam, the fierce-conflicting brine
" Seems o'er a thouſand raging waves to
" burn;
" Meantime the mountain-billows, to the
" clouds
" In dreadful tumult ſwell'd, ſurge above
" ſurge,
" Burſt into chaos with tremendous roar,
" And anchor'd navies from their ſtations
" drive,
" Wild as the winds, acroſs the howling waſte
" Of mighty waters."

DIALOGUE X.

THE VISIT.

IT was the middle of October before Mrs. Woodfield returned with her family to her own houſe. Her health was amended, and her ſpirits much cheered, by letters ſhe had received from Colonel Cecil, which informed her that, though he was not worſe, he had found it neceſſary to accept the permiſſion that had been given him to return home, in order to complete his cure; and that as ſoon as he could undertake the journey he ſhould be in London, remain there only as long as was neceſſary to conſult one of his friends, a ſurgeon of great eminence, and then haſten to embrace his beloved

ſiſter and his Caroline, whom he had never ſeen ſince the death of her mother. Preparations were now joyfully making for his reception; but a fine October admitted of frequent morning walks among the now fading woods and ruſſet fields. Their paths through the copſes were often interrupted by great branches, or whole trees of hazel, that had been torn down for the nuts. It was on remarking this, and ſome other appearances, that the following dialogue paſſed:

Henrietta. I ſuppoſe, mamma, it was in autumn that their wicked uncle turned out thoſe two poor little children to periſh in the woods, as I read in that old ballad.

Mrs. Woodfield. And why do you ſuppoſe ſo?

Henrietta. Becauſe, you know, they are ſaid to have fed upon blackberries, which are ripe at that time of year; and I ſup-

I ſuppoſe they gathered nuts too in the hedges.

Mrs. Woodfield. I know not that: But have you any other reaſons for believing that it was autumn?

Henrietta. Yes, the robins, that ſing now all day long, ſeem as if they did juſt ſo when they covered the poor little girl and boy with moſs.

Mrs. Woodfield. There certainly is ſomething particularly mournful in the autumnal ſong of the robin. Some poet, I believe Miſs Seward, whoſe deſcriptive poetry is very charming, calls the robin,

"The laſt lone ſongſter of the fading year."

And your idea, my little girl, is probably very juſt, as to the ſeaſon when the orphan children are ſuppoſed to have been left in the woods, by the half-repentance of the ruffians who had been ordered to murder them; when

"The babes, quite famiſh'd, laid them down
"to die."

Elizabeth.

Elizabeth. Was it not true then, that this happened; becauſe you ſay *ſuppoſed?*

Mrs. Woodfield. It probably did happen, or ſomething like it, on which the ſtory was founded.

Caroline. How is it poſſible that there ever could have been a perſon ſo wicked!

Mrs. Woodfield. Alas! dear Caroline, it is almoſt cruel to give to young minds the fatal information of *how* wicked mankind have been, and are capable of being, ſince this is one of thoſe inſtances where, as

—— "Ignorance is bliſs,
"'Tis folly to be wiſe;"

at leaſt, it is humiliating to be wiſe, and takes off that enchanting ingenuouſneſs, that native bloom of the mind which makes young people ſo amiable and intereſting, and which, when once loſt, is never recovered.

At

At this moment a gun that went off very near them, and which was followed by two more reports, made the whole party haſten out of the coppice with ſome precipitation; for though the girls had been taught not to affect fears on the ſight or report of fire-arms, (which is a common and diſguſting folly,) yet when they heard the ſhot rattle in the branches immediately over their heads, Mrs. Woodfield thought it was time to retreat. They preſently reached a barley erſh, and were proceeding tranquilly on their walk acroſs the field, when they were overtaken by a gentleman of the neighbourhood, with whom Mrs. Woodfield had ſome ſlight acquaintance, and preſented with a leaſh of (three) pheaſants, which were ſhot when they heard the report of the three guns. Mr. Northcote would have ſent his ſervant to the houſe of Mrs. Woodfield, but ſhe, in accepting them, inſiſted on leave to decline

decline giving him that trouble, and bidding each of the girls take one, ſhe thanked him, and they proceeded homeward.

Elizabeth. Oh, what beautiful creatures theſe are!

Henrietta. I am ſure it is a thouſand pities to deſtroy ſuch lovely birds. Ah! poor thing, ſee how this bleeds! Mamma, I am ſurpriſed any body has the heart to kill them.

Mrs. Woodfield. A ſportſman has no more idea of ſparing an animal on account of its beauty, than an epicure has of not eating it becauſe of its having been ſplendidly clad before it was roaſted. We are told, that the epicures of Rome reckoned among their greateſt dainties thoſe ſinging birds which we keep on account of the ſweetneſs of their muſic; and that, in one of the enormouſly-expenſive ſuppers given by Lucullus, a

dish was entirely composed of the brains of nightingales.

Caroline. What a dish! Those men, aunt, must have been more hateful than those we now call epicures.

Mrs. Woodfield. Nearly the same, I believe. Gluttony is an odious vice, and always raises contempt and indignation. In the old, it is hateful and disgusting; but in the young, it always excites, in me at least, some degree of abhorrence.

Caroline (musing). There are lines in some poem describing a pheasant, but I cannot recollect them, or where they are.

Mrs. Woodfield. They are in Pope's Windsor Forest:

" See! from the brake the whirring pheasant
" springs,
" And mounts exulting on triumphant wings;
" Short is his joy; he feels the fiery wound,
" Flutters in blood, and, panting, beats the
" ground.

" Ah!

" Ah! what avail his gloſſy varying dyes,
" His purple creſt, and ſcarlet circled eyes,
" The vivid green his ſhining plumes unfold,
" His painted wings, and breaſt that flames
" with gold?"

Caroline. How well the bird is deſcribed! But, aunt, I have ſeen, in Lady Mary M—'s menagerie, pheaſants very different from theſe.

Mrs. Woodfield. You have ſeen the painted or gold pheaſant, and the pencil pheaſant; both ſorts come from the Eaſt-Indies.

Caroline. Theſe, I think, are not leſs beautiful.

Mrs. Woodfield. No: the dazzling colours of the gold pheaſant, which in the ſun are almoſt too bright to look upon, and the delicate pencilling of the white and black pheaſant, are certainly neither of them more elegant than the burniſhed gold and black, the green neck and ſcarlet eye of the male birds

in

in our own country. There is a variety in our woods with a circle of white feathers round the neck, or an horſeſhoe-ſhaped ſpot of white partly round it.

Henrietta. Oh! how I ſhould like to have a place all netted over, as there is at Mr. D—'s, to keep pheaſants in, and to collect all ſorts of them. Mamma, are there more ſorts than thoſe three?

Mrs. Woodfield. I have ſeen the repreſentation of another, which is called the peacock-pheaſant, and which is painted as having the form of a pheaſant, with plumage nearly reſembling that of the peacock.

Elizabeth. If I had a menagerie, I would keep not only pheaſants, but partridges and quails.

Mrs. Woodfield. Oh! you would have an immenſe collection, I have no doubt.

A hare, which ſeem'd hardly able to drag itſelf along, at this moment came limping

limping out of the hedge they were near, and, only a few yards before them, ſtopped, and, turning her long ears to the wind, liſtened; then crawling a few paces, liſtened again, by rearing herſelf on her hind legs. Alas!

"Hot-ſtreaming, up behind her comes again
"Th' inhuman rout."

Five or ſix beagles were now heard bellowing in an adjoining hedge-row. They preſently daſhed through, and the unfortunate object of their purſuit, though ſhe exerted all her little remaining ſtrength, had not ſtaggered an hundred paces before ſhe was overtaken. Henrietta ſhrieked with terror, when ſhe heard the cries of the helpleſs animal, as the dogs ſeized it. In half a ſecond it would have been torn into a thouſand pieces, but a young farmer of the neighbouring village, with loud execrations, and in terms underſtood by the hounds, forced his horſe through the hedge immediately

mediately afterwards, and, ſnatching their prey away from the clamorous pack, paunched it, and threw its entrails among them.

The ſurly ruſtic, and two or three companions he had with him, then began to try the hedge-row around the ſame field for another hare; and Mrs. Woodfield, with her family, afraid of their ſucceeding, and not having the leaſt inclination to be *in* at another death, haſtened, by the ſhorteſt path, to regain their home.

They there found ſome unexpected viſitors. The family of an old acquaintance of their deceaſed father, conſiſting of his widow, three daughters, and a ſon, were on their way from a public bathing-place not many miles off, and intending to ſleep at the next poſt town, in order to have an opportunity of ſeeing the magnificent houſe of a nobleman near it the next morning,

morning, they had found it convenient to take a paſſing dinner with their former friends.

Mrs. Woodfield, though ſo unexpected an addition was likely to make her family dinner fall very ſhort, did not put herſelf in that fuſs which many notable ladies think neceſſary on theſe occaſions; but calmly making ſuch alteration in her little bill of fare as was poſſible at that hour, ſhe returned to entertain her gueſts.

Mrs. Hammerton, the mother of the family, was one of thoſe good women who are always in a buſtle, either about her own affairs or other people's. Fond of what ſhe called ſociety, that is, people who would play at cards or talk with her, or both, ſhe paſſed her life in public places; lived one ſummer at Tunbridge, the next at Margate, a third at Southampton, and a fourth at Weymouth; then croſſed to Bath for a

month or ſix weeks; and always made it a rule to return to London againſt Parliament met; though what connexion there was between her playing at whiſt in Argyle-ſtreet, and the meeting of Parliament, (with no one member of whom ſhe was connected,) no mortal could ever conjecture. But it ſeems her dear Mr. Hammerton, who had been a Banker, was one ſeſſion in the Houſe, and ſo, as ſhe told her friends, ſhe had been *uſed* while he was alive to be guided by the meeting of Parliament, and ſomehow it was become quite habitual. She was a lady who poſſeſſed indeed many of the qualities of a great orator; for ſhe had a loud, ſhrill, and powerful voice, a never-ceaſing tongue, and a courageous confidence in her own powers of entertainment, which never ſuffered her to doubt but that her auditors were as well pleaſed to hear as ſhe was to ſpeak.

The

The first compliments between her, her family, and that of her old friend, were no sooner over, than she thus began:

Mrs. Hammerton. And so, my dear creature, here you are settled in this rustic box! I declare I'm vastly glad to see you look so well *though*; and the two girls are vastly grown. I think Elizabeth will be handsome. Everilda, *(addressing herself to one of her own daughters,)* do you not see a resemblance between Miss Woodfield and somebody you know?

Miss Everilda. A resemblance! Let me see: No; I declare I don't recollect any body that . . .

Mrs. Hammerton. She is like her friend Lady Anne; very like her. Well, if she is as amiable, my good Madam, you will have reason to bless your stars; for Lady Anne is absolutely a per-

a perfect character. Her ſiſter, Lady Charlotte, too, is amazingly amiable. A charming family!—But did you hear what happened about a month ago to their brother, Lord Canterdown?

Mrs. Woodfield. I hear very little of lordly adventures here.

Mrs. Hammerton. Oh! but it made ſuch a noiſe! Heavens! the papers were full of it; and, indeed, my dear friend Lady Scoulborough ſaid to me, in the greateſt diſtreſs of mind, *What* I ſhall *do*, my *dear* Mrs. Hammerton, I *know* not; but I *believe* this affair of Canterdown's will abſolutely give me my bilious complaint. Oh! Lady Scoulborough, ſaid I—

[Enter a ſervant, who announces dinner—They paſs into another room, and ſeat themſelves at table.]

Mrs. Hammerton. Lady Scoulborough, ſaid I, (for ſhe is the beſt mother and moſt amiable woman in the world,) I am

ſhock'd to death—(I'll take ſome ſoup, if you pleaſe) ſhock'd to death, that your Ladyſhip ſhould be ſo affected; and, for my own part, I declare I am vaſtly ſurprized that you ſhould think my Lord Canterdown to blame. To blame! cried ſhe, all amazement that I ſhould ſo have miſunderſtood her; not at all, ſaid her Ladyſhip; no, no, that is not my meaning; but—(you ſeem to have excellent mutton here, I ſuppoſe it is down-fed) but what hurts me, my dear Mrs. Hammerton, is, that the fellow he has had this quarrel with is ſuch a low creature, that in ſhort it is vaſtly diſgraceful for a man of faſhion to have his name in the ſame paragraph. But, however, that leads me to tell you—I dare ſay you have not heard *that* neither, about the two Miſs Hattons; you remember them in London?

Poor Mrs. Woodfield dreading an hiſtory of the two Miſs Hattons, as loud, as long,

long, and as little to the purpoſe as that of Lord Canterdown, endeavoured in vain to change or evade the converſation, which, relating to people ſhe never ſaw, or deſired to ſee, was very irkſome to her. Her gueſt, however, continued to talk, and ſhe compelled herſelf to liſten with all the patience ſhe could muſter, comforted by the reflection, that if her puniſhment was ſevere it would be ſhort.

Breath, rather than matter, ſeemed now and then to fail her loquacious gueſt, and then, or when the neceſſary intervals occaſioned by eating occurred, her three daughters, willing to avail themſelves of an opportunity of being relieved from involuntary ſilence, all began to talk together; a circumſtance which, while it amazed Caroline and Henrietta, was rather a conſolation to Mrs. Woodfield, and ſhe ſmiled, as it brought to her recollection an anſwer of

Dr. Johnſon's, who, when one of his acquaintance teazed him, by the fooliſh trick parents have, of making their children repeat to ſtrangers what they have learned by heart, cried, "Let the pretty dears repeat it both together, Sir, more noiſe will be made, and it will be the ſooner over." At length dinner and coffee were happily ended; the moon came to her aſſiſtance; and her gueſts, the talkative mamma, the chattering miſſes, and their brother, who did not talk at all, but affected the fine contemplative and contemptuous airs which many modern coxcombs aſſume, departed, to the extreme ſatisfaction of the family they left, who now aſſembled round their fire.

Caroline. Oh! thank my ſtars, thoſe good people are gone! I never ſaw ſo diſagreeable a ſet.

Mrs. Woodfield. And yet it was among ſuch ſort of people, dear Caroline, that

you lived, when you paſſed your time in London, and among ſcenes which, I dare ſay, you often think of with regret.

Caroline. No, indeed, aunt; whatever I *may* have done, I never now think of London and public places and routs, but to recollect how much I am obliged to you for teaching me to find content without them.

Elizabeth. Oh! my coz, if you ever did regret ſuch people as this Mrs. Hammerton, and theſe Miſſes, and this Maſter, what a ſad taſte you muſt have had!

Mrs. Woodfield. Yet my children are to conſider, that *their* not liking this family, is no proof that they are not very agreeable.

Elizabeth. Agreeable, mamma! it is ſurely impoſſible you can think ſo!

Mrs. Woodfield. I may not think ſo, and yet an hundred or a thouſand other people may, and certainly do; for did

not the good lady give us a list of many very honourable persons with whom she lives in the greatest degree of intimacy, and who, I therefore suppose, find charms in her conversation, which you little rustics cannot discover. Instead, however, of entering into a too minute criticism on the failings, real or imaginary, of the persons we have seen, let us learn to avoid what strikes us as being so unpleasant in them, and let us never fall into that very common error of talking to people on subjects that cannot either interest or amuse them. When Mrs. Hammerton tells me a long story of Lady This and Lord That, she knows that I am not acquainted with them, and that it is impossible I can care about their insignificant adventures; but she hopes to impress me with high ideas of her consequence, from her thus being always "in the very best company." Poor ambition! as if there was

any

any other real diſtinction but that which is acquired by goodneſs of heart or ſuperiority of underſtanding. This poor woman was a merchant's daughter in the city; and I have heard Mr. Woodfield ſay, for I was not then acquainted with her, that, in the younger part of her life, ſhe would have thought it an honour to have received a curteſy from the lady of a new-made knight at Haberdaſhers' Hall, for ſhe was even then partial, like Mrs. Heidelberg, to *quality*. By means of ſome perſons of rank, to whom her huſband, who was a banker, granted certain pecuniary accommodations, ſhe has been introduced to two or three titled people; and among thoſe of that deſcription there are many who, even more than their inferiors, find life ſo tedious, that they are glad of any company, and therefore do not refuſe ſuch as Mrs. Hammerton, certain that if they cannot laugh *with* her, they can

laugh *at* her, which anſwers their purpoſe as well: Perhaps, when ſhe is in the ſociety of thoſe for whom ſhe has ſo profound a veneration, ſhe may bridle her rapid eloquence, and permit others to talk a little too.

Elizabeth. I cannot imagine how that is poſſible; for I obſerved, that whenever any thing for a moment interrupted their mamma, the young ladies all began talking together as loud as poſſible.

Caroline. They put me in mind of a neſt of hungry young birds, all opening their mouths at once.

Mrs. Woodfield. Perhaps there is nothing in which people err ſo egregiouſly as in the manner of carrying on converſation. In thoſe who value themſelves on ſuperior talents and information, there is often an eagerneſs to be attended to, that defeats their purpoſe of being either inſtructive or agreeable. To bear an equal part in converſation,

without

without hurting the ſelf-love of others; to allow that *reciprocity* of diſcourſe that gives every one an opportunity of being heard, and which is the great charm of ſociety, is the effect of the ſomething we have agreed to call good breeding: And to be really well-bred, requires good ſenſe, which enables us to enter into the characters and ſentiments of others. Thus, there are people *naturally* well-bred; and there are others who, though they have always lived among people of high rank, are ſo rude and ill-manner'd, that it is a penance to be in their company.

Caroline. I own, aunt, I have ſometimes been in company with people who are called "remarkably clever," and I have thought it owing to my own ignorance that I could not find out the brilliancy of which I had heard ſo much.

Mrs. Woodfield. That is another error, my dear Caroline, to believe that peo-

ple who have eminent talents are always to be witty; what can be ſaid witty in common converſation? I often have remarked one of thoſe unfortunate people, who has the reputation of a wit, labouring to produce ſome pleaſant ſally, becauſe he knew it was expected of him, but failing, has been diſcouraged for the whole evening; to add to which, ſome good-natured friend has obſerved, that "Mr. E. was not in ſpirits."

Elizabeth. Mamma, I'll tell you who tries me more than any body,—Mrs. Cardimore.

Mrs. Woodfield. And yet ſhe is the beſt kind of woman in the world.

Elizabeth. But ſhe has ſomehow ſuch a teazing way; is always finding fault, and telling people how they might do better. Then ſhe has ſo many whims about her own children. Jemmy looks pale, and Mary has a trick of ſtanding upon one leg, and ſhe is afraid little

Emily

Emily will have bleak eyes; really it tires one to death.

Mrs. Woodfield. Mrs. Cardimore was an heireſs, and was always brought up to think that every thing relating to her was of the utmoſt importance. The mind, ſtrongly impreſſed with this idea, has never loſt it, even in a long commerce with the world: She teazes her huſband, poor man! more than ſhe does her friends; and, in the midſt of affluence and proſperity of every kind, has found the art of making him and herſelf miſerable. It is in vain that ſome friends, who loved them both, have endeavoured to cure her of this foible, which degenerates into a vice, by repreſenting to her how happy ſhe is, compared with this or the other perſon. She does not think ſo; ſhe ſees nothing extraordinary in *their* being unhappy, impoveriſhed, or liable to any other evil; but that *ſhe* herſelf ſhould have

the ſmalleſt pebble in her path, ſeems the moſt ſtrange thing in the world. Yet with all this, Mrs. Cardimore is really a well-meaning woman; is a good wife and a good mother; though no perſon who has paſſed a whole day in her company ever deſires to paſs a ſecond.

Caroline. Yet I dare ſay, aunt, that the ſelf-love, that appears ſo diſagreeable in this lady, is not more than every body has, but that people who have been leſs indulged contrive to conceal it better.

Mrs. Woodfield. Not always. You remember, I think, Mrs. Indworth?

Caroline. Perfectly well.

Mrs. Woodfield. She is another inſtance of the ſame irkſome temper, appearing in a ſomewhat different form. Without beauty and underſtanding, and born rather below the middle ranks of life, ſhe has a prodigious deſire to be a perſon

perſon of conſequence wherever ſhe appears; and ſhe contrives to effect it, by always being diſcontented. As ſhe has no children, *her* miſeries are all about herſelf; and ſhe happens to have an huſband who loves her, and who either does not or will not ſee how troubleſome ſhe makes herſelf. It is always too cold or too hot; the air is oppreſſive; her nerves are abſolutely ſhaken to pieces by the roads; the wind gives her an inſupportable head-ache; the duſt blinds her; ſitting up late deſtroys her health; going to bed early makes her low-ſpirited; London never agrees with her; the country is too bleak for ſuch a frame as hers.—The poor man, her huſband, who is unaccountably attached to her, is always buſied in trying to make her eaſy, but he feels horribly *uneaſy* himſelf, though he does not know that all his former friends are pitying him. One of them, a very pleaſant lively young man,

man, obſerved to me, the firſt time I ever ſaw Mr. and Mrs. Indworth after their marriage, "That his poor friend, Frank Indworth, was a wretch for life, for he had married a *piper*."

Elizabeth. He muſt be a very good-natured man; for ſome croſs brutiſh men would not endure ſuch a woman.

Mrs. Woodfield. I have often obſerved, that theſe teazing tempered women, who are inſupportable to their acquaintance, have the undeſerved good fortune to meet with patient and obliging huſbands. However, my dear girls, it is an experiment that I hope none of you will ever try; and now we will diſmiſs the converſation to which the Hammerton family gave riſe, and, to ſooth our minds after ſome unpleaſant hours, we will have recourſe, as uſual, to the poets. Elizabeth, read to me the invocation to Evening, which

I bade

I bade you mark yeſterday in the taſh.

Elizabeth.

" Come, Evening, once again; ſeaſon of peace,
" Return, ſweet Evening, and continue long!
" Methinks I ſee thee in the ſtreaky Weſt,
" With matron-ſtep, ſlow moving, while the
" Night
" Treads on thy ſweeping train; one hand
" employ'd
" In letting fall the curtain of repoſe
" On bird and beaſt, the other charg'd for
" man,
" With ſweet oblivion of the cares of day,
" Not ſumptuouſly adorn'd, or needing aid,
" Like homely-featured Night, with cluſ-
" t'ring gems;
" A ſtar or two, juſt twinkling on thy brow,
" Suffices thee; ſave that the moon is thine
" Not leſs than hers; not worn indeed ſo high
" With oſtentatious pageantry, but, ſet
" With modeſt grandeur in thy purple zone,
" Reſplendent leſs, but of an ample round.
" Come then! and thou ſhalt find thy votary
" calm,
" Or make me ſo!"

Caroline.

Caroline. If I could remember it, which, however, I cannot do perfectly, I would repeat another addreſs to Evening, which I know you admire, aunt; Collins's blank Ode.

Mrs. Woodfield. Cannot you recollect it? try.

Caroline. Not more than the two or three laſt verſes, I fear.

" While Spring ſhall pour his ſhowers, as oft
" he wont,
" And bathe thy breathing treſſes, meekeſt
" Eve;
" While Summer loves to ſport
" Beneath thy lingering light;
" While ſallow Autumn fills thy lap with
" leaves,
" And Winter, yelling through the troublous
" air,
" Affrights thy ſhrinking train,
" And rudely rends thy robes;
" So long, regardful of thy quiet rule,
" Shall fancy, friendſhip, ſcience, ſmiling peace,
" Thy gentle influence own,
" And love thy favourite name."

DIALOGUE XI.

THE ALARM.

THE dark and gloomy month of November was now arrived; but to outward appearances the family of Mrs. Woodfield gave leſs attention than uſual, for they expected, by every poſt, to hear that Colonel Cecil, who was arrived in London and ſlowly recovering, would fix the day for ſetting out for their abode; and only his earneſt deſire, and the neceſſity of conſtant attendance on her family, prevented his ſiſter from attending him in town.

Every morning, however, when the weather did not forbid their excurſions, his daughter and her two couſins went early to the place where the letters were uſually

uſually left, about a mile and a half from the houſe, eager to procure ſome new intelligence of his intended arrival, though Caroline could not think of the approaching interview, which could not fail of being extremely affecting to them both. When her father bade her adieu, her mother was ſuffering under a lingering illneſs, which ſoon after terminated in her death. The recollection of that ſcene, as well as of all the dangers her father had ſince encountered, muſt make their meeting now very affecting to both.

The country, which once appeared ſo melancholy a reſidence, had now loſt its horrors. Gratitude towards her aunt, affection for her couſins, and a taſte for the domeſtic amuſements and reſources the country afforded, had taken place of that ſullen apathy, which, on her coming to reſide in the family,

had

had given her aunt ſo much uneaſineſs.

The good ſenſe and taſte that nature had given her, had now room to diſplay itſelf; and even the dull and grey ſkies, the almoſt diſmantled woods, and cheerleſs aſpect, which every object wore around her, failed not to awaken in her mind poetical recollections.

On their way to the cottage by the high road ſide, which ſerved as a ſort of poſt-houſe to the neighbouring villages, was a rocky eminence: From the top it afforded a view of the ſea; at its foot ran the narrow-winding path; and its abrupt and rugged ſides preſented, in ſome places, bare ſcars of rock, where the ſand-martin or the bat had found ſhelter; in others it was ſhaded with broom, female fern, and feſtoons of ivy. It was here that, during the heats of ſummer, the little party had often ſtopped on their walk, to enjoy the cool

cool ſhade of the rocks, and the refreſhing echoes of the ſtream that, iſſuing from a cavern near the top, fell in ſmall but clear and brilliant guſhes of water, till it wound away near the path over a deep-worn channel, and found its way to the river which croſſed a neighbouring heath.

No flowers now adorned its ſtony acclivity. An old oak, whoſe tawny leaves had yet reſiſted the ſharp winds of autumn, ſeemed to mourn over the withered foliage beneath. The three girls ſtopped a moment, at the deſire of Caroline; who, reſting upon a fragment of rock, recollected that ſhe had ſomewhere read a deſcription of ſcenery extremely reſembling the landſcape before her. A little conſideration brought the paſſage to her mind; but ſhe felt grateful, that the laſt lines had no alluſion to her circumſtance, who might, from the loſs of a

father,

father, have found them but too applicable:

" 'Twas here, even here, where now I ſit
" reclin'd,
" And Winter's ſighs ſound hollow in the
" wind;
" Loud and more loud the blaſt of Evening
" raves,
" And ſtrips the oaks of their laſt lingering
" leaves,
" The eddying foliage in the tempeſt flies,
" And fills, with duſkier gloom, the thickening
" ing ſkies;
" Red ſinks the Sun behind the howling hill,
" And ruſhes, with hoarſe ſtream, the mountain
" tain rill;
" And now, with ruffling billow cold and pale,
" Runs, ſwoln and daſhing, down the lonely
" vale;
" While to theſe tearful eyes, grief's faded
" form
" Sits on the cloud, and ſighs amid the
" ſtorm *."

Hardly had Caroline finiſhed repeating theſe lines, which, except the hour

* From Louiſa; a Poetical Novel, by Miſs Seward.

of

of the day, gave to her imagination the reflection of the ſcene before her, when ſuddenly, from an excavation in the rock which had concealed them, came forward a group of gypſies, two men, three women, and ſeveral little ragged children, who all ſpeaking together in language peculiar to themſelves, began to beg; while the three girls, extremely terrified, walked on as quick as they could, ſearching, however, for what halfpence or ſmall money they had about them, which they threw towards the importunate group; one woman, however, ſtill continuing to follow them, and inſiſting on being allowed to tell their fortunes, while, on looking back, they ſaw the two men ſtill gazing after them; their terror, and of courſe their ſpeed, increaſed, and they at length gained an open road, and ſaw two men at plough in a field immediately near it. Their troubleſome follower

lower then left them; but Caroline, though she had more courage than either of her cousins, was so much alarmed at an encounter, which in all their solitary walks had never happened before, that she engaged a farmer's servant whom she met, and whom they happened to know, to attend them for the rest of their walk, and she determined to go home another way.

Their walk was fruitless, for they found no letter from Colonel Cecil. On their return home, they of course mentioned the apprehensions they had felt on their way; but occupied in other business just at that moment, and seeing them all safe around her, Mrs. Woodfield deferred listening to their little history till evening.

It soon came—and, assembled round their work-table, some other occurrences that had happened to a friend of Mrs. Woodfield's engaged them. The

lowering

lowering day had been followed by a ſtormy and wet evening. The wind and rain beat heavy againſt the windows; when Henrietta ſaid, "Mamma, I wonder where thoſe people we ſaw to-day take ſhelter in ſuch a night as this."

Mrs. Woodfield. In barns and out-houſes. They are a people of whom the farmers are ſaid often to be afraid; and that they find it leſs hazardous to give them leave to aſſemble of a night in their out-buildings, than, by refuſing, incur their reſentment.

Elizabeth. But I don't underſtand why they are called gypſies.

Mrs. Woodfield. Becauſe they are ſuppoſed to come originally from Egypt, though in France they are called Bohemians. There was an elaborate hiſtory of them publiſhed not long ſince, which, however, I never happen to have met with, ſo that I do not know the

the reſult of thoſe inquiries, which I conclude the hiſtorian made, as to the cauſe of this ſingular race of people being ſpread over Europe, where they are ſaid to have long had, and indeed ſtill to have, a government and laws of their own. I recollect having ſeen, when I was a young woman, more numerous parties of them than I ever obſerve now, and that they had more ſwarthy complexions. I ſhould rather think, that the people we denominate in this country travellers, unhappy houſeleſs wanderers, who, ſome from neceſſity, and others, perhaps, from choice, lead the ſame kind of vagabond life, have ſo intermingled with the original race, that their diſtinct character is nearly loſt. Among theſe wretched people were thoſe who uſed to be called Mad Toms, and affected inſanity to enforce or excite charity. Edgar, you know, in Lear,

ſays, he will aſſume the ſemblance of one of thoſe who,

—— "From low farms,
"Poor-pelting villages, ſheep-cots, and mills
"Enforce their charity."

And I remember being extremely terrified, when I was a girl, with female beggars, who came dreſſed with flowers and ſtraws, and called themſelves Couſin Betties: I imagine theſe people are all connected.

Caroline. There are a great many ſtories in novels, of gypſies ſtealing away children; Do you think, aunt, it ever happens?

Mrs. Woodfield. I cannot ſay that it never has happened; but, I ſhould think, much leſs frequently than noveliſts have found it convenient to ſuppoſe. The gypſies ſeem to have made a great impreſſion on the mind of Fielding, who tells a ſtory about a party of them,

in his Foundling, which would not be endured in a modern novel, as it is fooliſh, and contributes nothing to the progreſs of the ſtory.

Caroline. Joſeph Andrews, too, is exchanged by the gypſies.

Mrs. Woodfield. Yes, but with inconſiſtencies in the relation, that a writer of the preſent day would not dare to venture upon; and which, greatly as I admire much of Fielding's writing, has always, in my mind, ſpoiled the ſtory. However, I believe now, that no children are ſtolen or exchanged by thoſe people; and that, notwithſtanding your panic to-day, for which, however, I do not blame you, they do little other harm than pilfer from the farms, kill hares in their ſeats, or ſometimes venture on a ſheep, or a pig, that they find ſtraggling in the fields, remote from any habitation.

Cowper, in the firſt book of "the Taſk," gives an admirably-correct deſcription of them; and having done ſo, very juſtly exclaims,

"Strange! that a creature rational, and caſt
"In human mold, ſhould brutalize, by choice,
"His nature; and, though capable of arts,
"By which the world might profit, and him-
"ſelf,
"Self-baniſh'd from ſociety, prefer
"Such ſqualid ſloth to honourable toil!
"Yet even theſe, though, feigning ſickneſs oft,
"They ſwathe the forehead, drag the limp-
"ing limb,
"And vex their fleſh with artificial ſores,
"Can change their whine into a cheerful note,
"When ſafe occaſion offers; and with dance,
"And muſic of the bladder and the bag,
"Beguile their woes, and make the woods
"reſound.
"Such health, and gaiety of heart, enjoy
"The houſeleſs rovers of the ſylvan world;
"And breathing wholeſome air, and wan-
"dering much,
"Need other phyſic none, to heal th' effects
"Of loathſome diet, penury, and cold."

Hardly

Hardly were theſe lines finiſhed, when, at the iron gate which ſeparated the court before the houſe from the common on which it was ſituated, a grumbling voice was heard, hoarſely and rudely demanding admittance. Terror and affright were immediately viſible on the faces of the three girls, nor was that of Mrs. Woodfield entirely exempt from the ſame ſymptoms. She deſired them to liſten. The man at the gate was heard, amid the howlings of the wind and driving of the rain, to growl out his diſpleaſure at being kept ſo long in the ſtorm, and to thump at the gate with a great ſtick.

[Mrs. Woodfield rang the bell; and a female ſervant entering, ſhe bade her ſend Samuel, a lad of about eighteen, to ſee who it was.]

Mary. Lord, Ma'am, Samuel isn't within; he've been gone down to the village above an hour agon, and is not returned yet!

Mrs. Woodfield. You muſt go to the door then, and ſee what the man wants, who ſo loudly inſiſts upon being let in.

Mary. Who? I, Ma'am, go to the gate! No, that I would not, not if you would give me the whole world: But, Ma'am, I'll go up ſtairs and open one of the windows, and aſk him, if you pleaſe, what he wants; for, I am ſure, t'would not be ſafe nohow to ſpeak to him from below, unleſs one know'd who it was; for it was but laſt week that five men in ſailors' jackets came a begging to Comb Farm, and frightened Dame Jedwyn out of her very wits, and if it had not a been . . .

Mrs. Woodfield. Well, well; but what is all this to the purpoſe? However, ſince your fears are ſo violent, and we have no man in the houſe, go up, and, from the window, inquire what the man wants.

Mary

Mary (returning out of breath). Lord, Ma'am! 'tis a man come on horſeback, ſays how he have got a letter which he muſt deliver into your hands.

Mrs. Woodfield (viſibly agitated). A letter! Good Heavens! from whom can it be, that it is thus ſent expreſs! for you ſay, Mary, he has an horſe with him.

Caroline. Oh! it is from my father, I am ſure it is! He is worſe; he is prevented coming!

Mrs. Woodfield. I hope not. Alas! it may be ſome letter that relates to my abſent boys. But what weakneſs this is! while we are heſitating we might be ſatisfied. Give me the umbrella; I will go out myſelf.

Caroline and Elizabeth (ſpeaking together, Henrietta clinging to her mother). Oh! pray, dear aunt, dear mamma, do not go; or ſuffer us to go with you.

Mrs. Woodfield. No, my loves! I certainly ſhall not do that. I am perſuaded there is no danger; but if there were, it would not be leſſened by your ſharing it. I ſhall only ſpeak to the man through the gate.

[She goes thither and receives a letter, which ſhe returns eagerly to read.]

Caroline. Oh, how my heart beats! if it ſhould be bad news from my father!

Mrs. Woodfield (recovering herſelf). Well, dear girls, I can now happily put you out of ſuſpence. It *is* a letter, Caroline, from your father, but fortunately it brings us the moſt agreeable news. He has already left London: He remains two days at E—, with his old friend, General T. and will be here to a late dinner on Thurſday.

Caroline. Thank Heaven, then! we ſhall certainly ſee him at laſt.

Mrs.

Mrs. Woodfield. And with him another viſitor, who will alſo be very welcome.

Caroline. Surely not one of my brothers!

Mrs. Woodfield. No, my dear Caroline; ſo much good fortune does not come together. But would you not be glad to ſee one of Elizabeth and Henrietta's brothers? your couſin, Harry, who has been ſo long in Scotland?

Caroline. Certainly I ſhould.

Mrs. Woodfield. Well, then, we ſhall have the pleaſure of ſeeing him with my brother. He came from Glaſgow, and, going immediately to his uncle, found him on the point of leaving London, and began his journey with him: And now, ſince our hearts are at eaſe, let us ſit down, and call ourſelves to account for the panic we have been all thrown into.

Caroline. From which, my dear aunt, you were not more exempt than we were.

Mrs. Woodfield. I own I was not; but my apprehenſions were infinitely greater, after I knew it was a man with a letter, than while I ſuppoſed it to be only a drunken fellow, who, without having any bad deſign, might have been troubleſome, as we had nobody in the houſe to oblige him to go away.

Henrietta. I was ſure, almoſt, that it was one of thoſe frightful gypſy men we met to-day.

Elizabeth. And I was perſuaded that it was the ſailors, that Mary ſays have frightened a great number of people about the country lately.

Mrs. Woodfield. Really you had both lucky imaginations. I ſhall be angry with the ſervants, if they tell you theſe ſtories of threatened robberies, and I know not what: But it is aſtoniſhing what

what a paſſion the *people* in every country have for the horrible and the wonderful. I have known a mad dog, a gang of imaginary houſebreakers, or two or three ſtout vagabonds in ſailors jackets, keep an whole neighbourhood in alarm for ſix weeks;—ſome had heard them, ſome had ſeen them at a diſtance, but I never met with perſons who pretended to have ſuffered from theſe terrific objects. As to mad dogs, that have from time to time alarmed the country, I could never find any other real cauſe for the panic they have occaſioned, than ſome miſerable ſtarved dog, who, become ſavage through hunger or pain, has fled from his inhoſpitable home, or has been driven from it by blows or torments, and, taking ſhelter in ſome out-houſe, or under the ſtraw in a farm-yard, is diſcovered, and hunted from his concealment by the brutal clowns, who drive him away

with blows and ſhouts, and then wonder the miſerable animal appears wild and diſtracted, and ſnaps at every one who approaches.

As to the marvellous ſtories of robberies and houſebreaking, which ſometimes run through a country, I never, on inquiry, could diſcover above one of them to be founded on fact. At this diſtance from London, ſuch things very rarely happen; and, alas! my dear children, it is an improvident weakneſs to exhauſt our ſpirits in contending with imaginary or poſſible evils, when it is but too probable that the happieſt and moſt proſperous life will give to every one ſufficient exerciſe for their fortitude.

Even this little alarm was a ſpecimen of the neceſſity of reflection, if we would eſcape from the miſeries of unreal afflictions, which, though they cannot laſt long, are too acute to be borne even a moment without injury. Without

out reflecting, Caroline was seized with immediate apprehension for her father; I thought too of him, but I thought still more of my absent boys; so naturally do the mother's feelings supersede every other feeling.

Caroline. And do you not think, aunt, that children love their parents as well as parents their children?

Mrs. Woodfield. Certainly not. The most tenderly affectionate child does not feel, for the fondest parent, the same degree of affection as that parent has felt for her. This is so ordered by nature, who seems to have made the love of a mother for her children the strongest of all sensations.

Caroline. And yet, aunt, I think there are addresses of affection from sons to their mothers, in one or two Poets that I could name, which do the highest honour to the filial tenderness of the authors: I do not recollect any

any in which the parent addreſſes the child.

Mrs. Woodfield. I believe, however, that I can repeat two little pieces of this ſort; one of which you have already ſeen, though you have, perhaps, forgotten it: It is addreſſed by a mother to her children, whoſe future fate, from a long ſeries of calamitous circumſtances in their family, ſeemed to be doubtful, and too probably unfortunate.

SONNET.

" Sighing, I ſee yon little troop at play,
" By ſorrow yet unhurt, untouch'd by care,
" While free and ſportive they enjoy to-day,
" Content, and careleſs of to-morrow's fare.
" Ah! happy age! when youth's unclouded
" ray
" Lights their green path, and prompts
" their ſimple mirth,
" E'er yet they feel the thorns that, lurking,
" lay
" To wound the wretched pilgrims of the
" earth.

" Bidding

" Bidding them curſe the hour that gave
" them birth,
" And threw them on a world ſo full of
" pain,
" Where proſperous folly treads on patient
" worth,
" And, to deaf pride, misfortune pleads
" in vain.
" Oh! for their future fate how many fears
" Oppreſs my heart, and fill mine eyes
" with tears!"

The other piece of poetry was written by a woman of high rank and admirable talents, who, without the ſame cauſes for apprehenſion, contemplated her two ſons, eagerly engaged in their infantine ſports, with thoſe mingled emotions of delight and anxiety, that a mother only can feel, and, as I have heard, wrote the lines in queſtion with little or no premeditation:

" Sweet age of bleſt deluſion! Blooming boys,
" Ah! revel long in childhood's thoughtleſs
" joys,

" With

" With light and pliant ſpirits, that can
" ſtoop
" To follow, ſportively, the rolling hoop;
" To watch the ſleeping top with gay delight,
" Or mark, with raptur'd gaze, the ſailing
" kite;
" Or, eagerly purſuing pleaſure's call,
" Can find it center'd in the bounding ball!
" Alas! the day *will* come, when ſports like
" theſe
" Muſt loſe their magic, and their power to
" pleaſe,
" Too ſwiftly fled, the roſy hours of youth,
" Shall yield their fairy-charms to mournful
" truth;
" Even now, a mother's fond prophetic
" fear,
" Sees the dark train of human ills appear;
" Views various fortune for each lovely child,
" Storms for the bold, and anguiſh for the
" mild;
" Beholds already, thoſe expreſſive eyes
" Beam a ſad certainty of future ſighs;
" And dreads each ſuffering thoſe dear breaſts
" may know,
" In their long paſſage through a world of
" woe;

" Per-

" Perchance predeſtin'd, every pang to
" prove,
" That treacherous friends inflict, or faithleſs
" love;
" For, ah! how few have found exiſtence
" ſweet
" Where grief is ſure, but happineſs deceit!"

DIALOGUE XII.

THE FAMILY ASSEMBLED.

THE re-union of the members of a family long ſeparated and tenderly attached to each other, is one of the moſt pleaſing and affecting ſpectacles that ſociety preſents. Colonel Cecil, in ſeeing the favourable change that had taken place in the mind and manners of his daughter, found his heart overflow with tender gratitude towards his ſiſter; and the regret he had been once ſo acutely conſcious of, for the loſs of a wife whom he had loved but too much for his happineſs, and indulged too much for her own, was every hour leſs ſenſibly felt. For however his blind affection for her, and the ſtrong in-

fluence

fluence she had obtained over his mind, had prevented him from seeing her errors while she lived, he now internally acknowledged those failings, which he could not yet have borne that any other person should even hint at; till these keen sensations subsiding by degrees, he thought of the death of his wife as of an event that had at once pained and relieved him.

But the fondness he had once had for her, seemed now transferred to his daughter, towards whom he felt every day his tenderness increase. Her amiable manners, her attentive duty, added to the natural graces of her form, made him believe her the most perfect of human beings. His health rendered it necessary for him to sell out of the army; but on this he could not determine, being strongly attached to a profession in which he had passed the greatest part of his life; but when he reflected

flected on the dangerous ſituation in which his beloved daughter would be left, ſhould he die, either in the field, or from the fatigues incident to the ſoldier's life, which he was now ſo little able to encounter, he determined to ſacrifice his own inclinations to the welfare of the child who had ſo many claims on his heart; and, to the inexpreſſible ſatisfaction of his family, he now quitted the army, and, at his ſiſter's earneſt ſolicitation, agreed to remain with her till he could find ſome ſmall houſe in the ſame neighbourhood, or fit up a cottage within a mile or two, for himſelf and his Caroline. Enlivened by his preſence, that of her ſecond ſon, and her two little boys from ſchool, the ſmall habitation of Mrs. Woodfield had never appeared ſo gay. Their morning walks were not interrupted, though the Colonel could not accompany them, being ſtill very lame, and having been deſired

to

to take no other exercise yet, than what could be procured by a servant's drawing him about in a garden chair. The weather was sometimes too severe for him to venture into the air in that conveyance; and when it happened so, Caroline, or one of her cousins, remained at home to read to him and attend him.

Sometimes the long evenings were beguiled by works of imagination, such as Mrs. Woodfield judged not improper for her daughters, young as they were, to listen to. The admirable novels of Evelina and Cecilia, but particularly the latter, afforded them at once entertainment and instruction, without giving them those false views of life, which is one of the most serious objections against this species of writing. Essays, and the periodical papers, supplied the want of many performances equally interesting and unexceptionable. The Spectator, Guardian, and Tatler, the Rambler, Idler,

Idler, World, Adventurer, Connoiſſeur, Mirror, and Obſerver, offered them an inceſſant variety of entertainment and inſtruction. Voyages and travels alſo were introduced; and in no one inſtance did they find it neceſſary to have recourſe to cards, to enable them to paſs, without languor, the longeſt evening of December. Among other amuſements, each endeavoured to recollect ſome view of the ſcene, in every part of the world, when winter reigns in his ſevereſt form, and even with more rugged features than he wore at the preſent moment in England. The Colonel recollected ſome of thoſe lines of Phillips's, which have been ſo much celebrated, deſcribing winter in Sweden:

" When every ſhrub, and every blade of graſs,
" And every pointed thorn, ſeem'd wrought
" in glaſs;
" In pearls and rubies rich the hawthorns ſhew,
" While, through the ice, the crimſon-berries
" glow;

" The

" The thick-ſprung reeds, the watry marſhes
" yield,
" Seem poliſh'd lances in an hoſtile field;
" The ſpreading oak, the beech, and tow'ring
" pine,
" Glaz'd over, in the freezing æther ſhine;
" The frighted birds the rattling branches ſhun,
" That wave and glitter in the diſtant ſun:
" When, if a ſudden guſt of wind ariſe,
" The brittle foreſt into atoms flies,
" The crackling wood beneath the tempeſt
" bends,
" And in a ſpangled ſhower the proſpect ends;
" Or if a ſouthern gale the region warm,
" And by degrees unbind the wintry charm,
" The traveller a miry country ſees,
" And journeys ſad, beneath the dropping
" trees."

Mrs. Woodfield. Oh! brother, your quotation is excellent! but I ſhall, as uſual, bring forward the modern Poet, whoſe deſcriptions never fail to give me new pleaſure. How beautiful are his froſt-pieces!

" The verdure of the plain lies buried deep
" Beneath the dazzling deluge; and the bents,
" Or

" Or coarſer graſs, up-ſpearing o'er the reſt,
" Of late unſightly or unſeen, now ſhine
" Conſpicuous, and in bright apparel clad,
" And fledged with ivy feathers not ſuperb."

His picture of the effects of froſt on a water-fall, is alſo inimitable.

Henry Woodfield. But, my dear Madam, I, who have not yet learned to reliſh blank verſe, at leaſt not as you do, have another living Poet to quote. What can be finer than theſe few lines of Dr. Darwin's, that ſet before us ſome of the moſt ſtriking features of a polar winter!

" * Where leads the northern ſtar his lucid
" train,
" High o'er the ſnow-clad earth and icy main,
" With milky light the white horizon ſtreams,
" And to the moon each ſparkling mountain
" gleams;
" Slow o'er the printed ſnows, with ſilent
" walk,
" Huge ſhaggy forms acroſs the twilight ſtalk,

* Dr. Darwin.

" And

" And ever and anon, with hideous ſound,
" Burſt the thick ribs of ice, and thunder
" round."

Mrs. Woodfield. The winter ſcenes of Thomſon are not, in my opinion, inferior to any of theſe. But, inſtead of any repetition of what we all know ſo well, I will relate what happened, not many years ſince, to two ladies with whom I was acquainted in the North, who were loſt in the ſnow, on their way from Scotland.

In one of the provinces neareſt, though not actually in the Highlands, dwelt a Scottiſh gentleman, who, though of as ancient a family as any in his country, poſſeſſed no other fortune than a ſmall paternal farm; on which, however, he contrived, with the aſſiſtance of a wife, whom he had married early in life, to bring up a family of three ſons and a daughter, not only decently, but comfortably. The boys, as ſoon as they

were old enough, were ſent out into the world. One entered into the army, another went to the Eaſt Indies, and the third, after having been ſome few years in the compting-houſe of a Merchant in London, was taken into the buſineſs; and, by his aſſiduity and quickneſs, ſoon became ſo much maſter of it, that his former maſter, now his partner, already very rich, retired from its fatigues to an houſe at a ſmall diſtance from London, leaving the whole concern to Mr. Charles Widdrington. The very flouriſhing ſituation of this third ſon was, very naturally, a great acquiſition of happineſs, as well as proſperity, to his father, his mother, and his ſiſter, to whom he frequently made preſents, which enabled them to live in much greater affluence than they had done before. At length, Charles Widdrington made ſome connexion with a perſon intruſted with the affairs

affairs of government; and by means of this friend, made ſuch advantage of the fluctuation of the funds, that in a few months he doubled his fortune; and ſuch golden viſions aroſe to his imagination, that he quitted the buſineſs on which he had ſo proſperouſly begun the world, and gave himſelf up entirely to the more alluring career of ſpeculation in the ſtocks, by which he had no doubt of realizing, in a very ſhort time, an immenſe fortune.

For ſome time, his ſucceſs was more than equal to his moſt ſanguine expectations. He went down to viſit his father in all the ſplendour of a man of large fortune; directed ſome additions to be made to the family-manſion; ordered new furniture; dreſſed his mother and ſiſter in a ſtyle they had never before dreamed of; and fixed on the ſpring of the following year (for his viſit was made in autumn) as the time when

he intreated them all to come to London for ſome months, that Eupheme (which was the name of his ſiſter) might receive that poliſh which a great capital alone is ſuppoſed to give. She was not more than eighteen; and being very pretty, he perſuaded himſelf, that if ſhe was introduced to the world as the ſiſter of a man of fortune, her own could not fail of being eſtabliſhed by an affluent marriage.

Eupheme, who till then had never any ambition higher than to remain in Scotland, and to be, at ſome future period, miſtreſs of ſuch an humble habitation as her paternal houſe, was not much dazzled with theſe ſchemes of future greatneſs: but on her father, they had a very different effect; in the long conferences he had with his ſon, he ſeemed to have caught all his enthuſiaſm in purſuit of fortune. They entered into ſome engagements together, which the elder

Mr.

Mr. Widdrington assured his wife, would turn out greatly to the advantage of the whole family; and early in November, their son left them, elate with the visions of accumulating fortune, which now offered to him for the ensuing winter.

Soothed with these golden dreams, six or eight weeks passed away, when the family of the elder Widdrington was suddenly aroused from their indulgence by two men from London, who demanded to speak to him. He was shut up with them for some time, and then, in visible agitation, he came to his wife, and told her, that some circumstances had occurred in the affairs of his son Charles, which had made his presence absolutely necessary in London, whither he must go with the persons who were then in the house, and who were about to set out immediately. Though Mrs. Widdrington was entirely

unacquainted with ſuch matters, ſhe ſaw, by the confuſion and diſtreſs that appeared in the countenance of her huſband, that all was not well. She of courſe expreſſed her uneaſineſs in very ſtrong terms, which Mr. Widdrington endeavoured to appeaſe, by telling her, that the affair, on which his preſence was neceſſary in London, would be ſettled with very little trouble, and that it was not likely either to diminiſh or impede the future proſperity of their ſon.

Mrs. Widdrington, relying on the aſſurances of a man who had never deceived her, endeavoured to conquer the uneaſineſs ſhe felt: It was yet eaſier to re-aſſure their daughter, and both ſaw, with apparent calmneſs, the maſter of the manſion depart from an abode which he had not quitted for any time for a great number of years.

When he was gone, however, the apprehenſions of his wife became more uneaſy

uneasy to her, yet she knew not what she feared. This painful anxiety was a little subdued by a letter she received from her husband, written on the road, which repeated those assurances he had given her before his departure, and seemed to breathe a tranquillity of mind which she thought it was impossible Mr. Widdrington could assume, if her fears had any foundation. He promised to write to her the moment he arrived in London, and every week till his return, which he said there was no doubt of his doing within a month.

Thus re-assured, the mother and daughter returned to their usual simple occupations; but time wore away: twice as much had already elapsed as was necessary for Mr. Widdrington to have arrived in London, and to have written from thence, but no letter came. His wife, however this circumstance might renew her alarm, endeavoured yet to calm her mind, by believing

that the hurry of the buſineſs which had carried him to London might engage every moment of his time; but a week, ten days longer paſſed, and no letter came. Unwilling to communicate to her daughter the anguiſh ſhe felt herſelf, ſhe concealed her terrors till they could no longer be a ſecret to any body, for the houſe was now viſited by thoſe ſort of men who are in Scotland what ſheriff's officers are here, who informed her that, at ſuch a time, a ſeizure would be made of all the effects in the houſe, and cattle on the farm, &c. in conſequence of debts Mr. Widdrington had contracted in being engaged for his ſon.

Heavy as this ſtroke was, it was ſome hours after rendered almoſt inſupportable by a letter from Mr. Widdrington himſelf, in which, after a ſhort and confuſed preamble to prepare her for the cruel intelligence he was about to communicate, he informed her, that, in conſequence

ſequence of the treachery of a man, who to ſave himſelf had ſacrificed his ſon Charles, for whom he had ſome months before engaged himſelf to the amount of all he was worth in the world, they were both entirely undone; that his ſon had abſconded, and that he was himſelf in the King's Bench priſon, whither he intreated her to come, with Eupheme, as ſoon as poſſible, as it was only by the exertions of ſo faithful a friend that he had any hope of being releaſed.

The wretched wife, ſeeing how much occaſion there was for fortitude, endeavoured to collect enough to carry her through the trying circumſtances ſhe was thus involved in. She had no male relation to whom ſhe could apply for aſſiſtance, for ſhe was the laſt of her family: On herſelf alone, therefore, ſhe muſt depend; and endeavouring to give to her terrified daughter ſome portion of that courage ſhe wanted herſelf, they turned

whatever they could into money, and hiring a chaiſe at the neareſt town where ſuch a conveyance was to be had, they ſet out for Edinburgh, where, on arriving, they meant to have proceeded to London by the public conveyances; but finding that very expenſive, they were perſuaded, by the only acquaintance they had there, who did not fly from them in their adverſity, to hire a chaiſe, which he engaged to find at a cheap rate, that ſhould carry them as far as York, where he ſaid he would give them a letter of introduction to a friend, who would, at his requeſt, find for them the beſt and cheapeſt conveyance to London. Of this offer Mrs. Widdrington gladly accepted, for at her time of life, (as ſhe was upwards of fifty,) in no very ſtrong health, and depreſſed by the greatneſs and ſuddenneſs of the calamity that had fallen on her family, ſhe was glad to find any expedient

dient by which ſhe might eſcape from the fatigue and hurry of ſtage coaches.

This matter being arranged, they began again their melancholy journey, and the firſt two days (for they could proceed but ſlowly) paſſed without any accident. On the morning of the third, a fall of ſnow threatened to impede their progreſs; but impatient to get on, Mrs. Widdrington preſſed the driver to haſten as much as poſſible. The man, who probably was already tired of the engagement he had made, either was, or pretended to be taken very ill, and, in deſpite of their remonſtrances, ſtopped at a ſmall alehouſe by the way-ſide, where he lingered two hours under pretence of recruiting his ſtrength, and then told them that, as he found it impoſſible for him to go any farther, he had hired a lad who would drive them to a town about four miles off, where, if he could not rejoin them in the morning, the landlord

of the alehouſe they were at, had a brother, who would undertake to conduct them ſafely to York.

The prayers and remonſtrances of Mrs. Widdrington were equally vain. Above an hour paſſed in arguing with him to no purpoſe. Night was coming on, the ſnow continued ſlowly to fall, and the dread of being compelled to paſs the night in ſo wretched a place as they were then in, at length determined Mrs. Widdrington to ſubmit. They departed then, between five and ſix in the evening, for the town in queſtion, which lay out of the high road; but the maſter of the alehouſe aſſured her, the man who was to drive knew the way perfectly well, that the road was good, and that it was the only place where they would be ſure of meeting with a perſon that would carry them ſafely to the end of their journey.

Before

Before they had croſſed the wide heath on which the alehouſe was ſituated, the ſtorm of ſnow increaſed: It was nearly dark, and the horſes, from the balls of ſnow that gathered on their feet, and from the ſlipperineſs of the road, ſeemed to be ſo fatigued that they were likely to fall at every ſtep.

The man who drove was a ſturdy clown, who ſeemed never to have driven a chaiſe before. He was not the leſs obſtinate for being very ignorant, and he plunged on through thick and thin, regardleſs of the intreaties of Mrs. Widdrington, or the danger he was frequently in of overturning the chaiſe.

In this manner they blundered through a large wood, where the ſnow had not yet concealed the track that led, as the man ſaid, to the town in queſtion. It brought them out on the edge of one of thoſe extenſive wolds or moors ſo frequent in the north of England. It was

almoſt

almoſt dark; yet the man, perſiſting in his aſſurance that he perfectly knew the road, though all was now covered with ſnow, the chaiſe was ſuddenly overturned by the falling of one of the horſes, and the driver thrown to ſome diſtance.

He ſoon, however, recovered himſelf, and, not without many execrations, approached to deliver the mother and daughter from their perilous ſituation in the chaiſe. They were neither of them hurt, but greatly terrified, alike at what they had ſuffered and what they feared; for it was now evident that one of the wheels was broke, and that in the carriage it was quite impoſſible for them to proceed. Mrs. Widdrington, her trembling daughter now hanging on her arm, collected all her reſolution to conſider what was to be done; and at length determined that the poſtillion ſhould put their baggage on the horſes, and lead the way,

way, while they attempted to find the road back to the houſe they had left, for the dreary expanſe before them afforded no ſign of habitations; not a light glimmered acroſs the deſolate plain, and the man owned that the town to which they had been directed was at leaſt five miles off on its oppoſite ſide.

Nothing can be imagined much more deplorable than the ſituation of theſe two poor women, who never had before been expoſed to the leaſt hardſhip or difficulty. To remain where they were, was to periſh in the ſnow before morning, yet it was far from clear that they ſhould be able to reach any ſhelter. The man, however, who did not ſeem much leſs alarmed than they were, walked on, leading the horſes; and the mother and daughter, holding by each other, followed as well as they could.

Sud-

Suddenly the road which the man had taken turned into a kind of lane; by the reflection of the ſnow, they diſcovered that it was bounded on one ſide by the wood they had been in, and on the other by an high old wall. They were then near an houſe; a circumſtance that Mrs. Widdrington ſpoke of with the greateſt joy; but their guide was ſo far from appearing to ſhare their joy, that he exclaimed, in great conſternation, that he had miſſed his way, and that it was better to go back. Mrs. Widdrington, regardleſs of his apparent reluctance, now eagerly aſked which was the way to the entrance of the houſe. The man ſullenly anſwered, that it was no matter, for that they ſhould get no good there, and 'twas better not to attempt to enter.

Any ſhelter, however, appeared ſo deſirable to Mrs. Widdrington, that ſhe diſregarded this ſpeech; but Eupheme eagerly aſked the man, "Why they had

had better not try to gain admittance?"

"Why!" replied he, "why, becauſe 'tis haunted."—"And is it not inhabited then?"—"Oh! aye, there's inhabitants ſure enough, ſuch as they be."—"If there are," ſaid Mrs. Widdrington, "nothing ſhall prevent my aſking a ſhelter for the night." She then again repeated the queſtion of which was the way to the front, or to any entrance of the houſe. The man with reluctance ſhewed her, and they, in a few moments, came to the corner of an high wall, and turning perceived an high and heavy old-faſhioned iron gate, through which they ſaw a court, and the front of a large old-faſhioned ſtone houſe with thoſe kind of ſcolloped points that look like the corners of a minced pye. The window-frames, they could perceive, were of heavy ſtone-work, and no light appeared at any of them; but

as

as it was not late, Mrs. Widdrington desired the man to endeavour to find a bell, or otherwise to make their distress known to the persons within. This, therefore, though still very unwillingly, he attempted; but for some time in vain. A dog, however, was more alert than the rest of the household, and starting with a violent bark from a kennel in the court, he came with such fury to the iron gate, that Eupheme, retreating in terror, besought her mother to go back, and rather encounter the fatigue of returning to the alehouse on the heath, than attempt to enter that frightful house.

The raging of the dog had more effect on the people of the house, than the noise of those who had alarmed him. A faint light gleamed from one of the casements above. A form, which could not be distinguished through the gloom, appeared for a moment at it, and then glided

glided away. All the ſtories he had ever heard about the ſupernatural inhabitants of this houſe, now recurred to the poſtillion, who, with his teeth chattering in his head, rather from fear than cold, again implored Mrs. Widdrington not to think of entering it.

The light now again appeared in the chamber. A figure, which did not appear to be the ſame, ſlowly opened the caſement, and in a ſharp and tremulous voice, demanded who was there, and what was their buſineſs.

The inceſſant barking, or rather roaring of the dog, hardly permitted Mrs. Widdrington to anſwer, (in an accent that admitted no doubt at leaſt of her country,) that ſhe was a perſon from Scotland, who, with her daughter, was travelling towards London, but that having miſſed their way in the ſnow, their chaiſe was overturned and broken, and they were likely to periſh during

ſo

ſo ſevere a night, if the inhabitants of the houſe were not charitable enough to receive them.

The old man or woman who had ſpoken to them, now retired, and, without giving any anſwer, ſhut the window. The heart of Mrs. Widdrington ſunk within her. She looked round, to ſee if any cottages ſurrounded this inhoſpitable manſion, where ſhe might find an aſylum, which it ſeemed to deny her, but none appeared. Its front looked through a curve in the woods over the extenſive moor they had attempted to paſs, and on the ſides of it were high walls and ruinous offices. A dark and heavy ſtorm of ſnow now came on, and the objects which were before but faintly ſeen, were no longer diſcernible. Mrs. Widdrington gave herſelf and her daughter up for loſt: The dog, however, was a ſufficient intimation to the perſons within,

within, that their petitioners ſtill remained at the gate.

Almoſt a quarter of an hour longer paſſed before any one again appeared. At length the ſame dim and doubtful figure whom they had before heard ſpeak, ſlowly opened the ſame caſement, and bade them go to another gate a few yards farther in the wall, where he ſaid he would come and ſpeak to them. They crept to the place he pointed out, for by this time they were nearly periſhed with cold. Here they again waited ſome time, till, from a ſide door of the old Gothic edifice, the figure, holding a lantern in one hand, and in the other a ruſty broad ſword, ſlowly approached. He was dreſſed in a long black or very dark gown; ſomething equally dark was bound over his hollow brows; his face was long, pale, and ſhrivelled, and two ſmall eyes glared from their deep ſockets, under a broad ruſty

ruſty hat: He held up his lantern when he came cloſe to this gate, which was alſo of iron, and examined the three perſons who appeared at it, but ſpoke not a word in anſwer to the earneſt intreaties that Mrs. Widdrington made to be let in. After having made this ſilent inquiry for ſome minutes, he told her, in a voice that made her ſhudder, that though it was what he had ſworn never to do, yet, as he believed her diſtreſs might be real, he would, for once, break through his reſolution, and let ſtrangers enter his houſe; but that as for the man with them, he could give him no other permiſſion than to go into the ſtable. The man who, half-frozen as he was, felt no inclination to enter an houſe where he was firmly perſuaded evil ſpirits kept their court, declared he ſhould be quite as well content with the ſtable. He was admitted, therefore, into the yard, and the old man pointed

to

to a door on its oppoſite ſide, where he ſaid there was a ſhelter for himſelf and horſes; a ſhelter was all he ſeemed diſpoſed to grant to either of them.

While the poſtillion, then, trembling, and looking back at every ſtep, led the weary animals acroſs the dreary yard, Mrs. Widdrington and her daughter, petrified with terror and cold, followed the old man, who, with a ſlow and feeble ſtep, walked before them. At the door of the houſe ſtood another figure, who, except his having a more ſqualid appearance, reſembled their diſmal-looking conductor. This ſecond ſtrange figure let them paſs, but ſpoke not; and as they entered an high bricked hall, roofed with ſome kind of black wood, he barred the door behind them, and then ſtalked after them.

The man with the lantern, which reflected a dim and lurid light on the melancholy manſion, moved ſlowly out of

the hall, and entered a long paſſage. Overcome with terror, Eupheme now claſped her mother's arm, and faintly articulated, "Good God! whither are we going?"—"Have patience, have courage, my child," anſwered her mother, ſtill endeavouring to lead her on; but ſhe hung back involuntarily, and the man with the lantern diſappeared. A dreary pauſe enſued, and the figure behind cried, in a hollow voice, "Won't you go on?"

They proceeded, hardly knowing how, to the end of this paſſage, and then ſaw a door opening into a very large room, where, at the farther end of it, ſtood the old man, ſtill holding in his hand the lantern, which made the darkneſs and deſolation of the apartment appear viſible. He waved his hand that they might approach. They ſlowly advanced towards him; when they were quite cloſe to him, he cried, in a ſharp tone,

"It

"It is five and thirty years ſince a woman has been within the walls of this houſe. I wiſh I may not now repent my fooliſh compaſſion. I can afford you nothing but leave to remain in this room. There has been a fire in it today. My own ſecurity obliges me to lock you in. Here is a piece of candle in the lantern. With the dawn of the morning you muſt depart." He then croſſed the room, ſeemed either to lock or unlock a door on one ſide of it, and ſtalked away through that at which they had entered, where the other diſmal figure had ſtood centinel during this ſhort conference. Struck with the horrors of being thus left in a ſituation which, except that they were leſs liable to be frozen to death, appeared to Eupheme worſe than that they had eſcaped from, ſhe threw herſelf into her mother's arms, and burſt into tears.

The neceſſity of exertion had hitherto kept up the ſtrength of Mrs. Widdrington, but now ſhe ſeemed to loſe not only her courage, but her ſenſes. The terror of her daughter redoubled, when ſhe perceived that her mother did not anſwer her, but ſeemed inſenſible to her tears and careſſes. It was now her turn to exert herſelf. She ſeized the lantern, in which the candle was expiring, and examined the room, in hopes of ſhe knew not what, but from a confuſed idea of obtaining ſome aſſiſtance for her mother. A door on one ſide was not locked, though the old man had appeared to lock it. Eupheme opened it; a violent guſt of wind ruſhed into the room, but all was darkneſs beyond: She ventured in, however, a ſtep or two; and, by the dull and wavering light ſhe held, thought ſhe ſaw three or four tall figures, in black, ſtand againſt the oppoſite wall of the high and ſpacious chamber;

chamber; ſhe even fancied they moved; and terrified, ſhe retreated haſtily, and ſhut the door, which ſhe endeavoured in vain to lock. On approaching her mother, ſhe ſaw her eyes turned with a melancholy look towards the immenſe chimney; and ſhe underſtood, from the ſigns Mrs. Widdrington made, that ſhe ſhould endeavour to revive the few embers that might yet be alive, under the handful of aſhes that remained in the chimney. This then ſhe endeavoured to do, and fortunately found two ſmall pieces of unburnt wood, with which, though green, ſhe at length contrived to make a blaze. She then aſſiſted her mother to approach cloſe to it; rubbed her hands to reſtore their warmth, chaffed her feet, and covered her with her cloak and apron over her own. In a few moments her recollection returned, and ſhe ſpoke; but her eyes were glazed, and her vital powers ſeemed ſtill in a great

degree ſuſpended. Eupheme dreaded the extinction of their light, and the failure of their fire. She raiſed the candle as well as ſhe could, and again traverſed the room, though ſtill looking fearfully towards the unlocked door, expecting every moment one of the ſpectres would appear at it, which ſhe fancied ſhe had ſeen in the room beyond it.

Her ſearch now was to find ſomething to feed their fire, on which her mother's exiſtence ſeemed to depend; and ſuch was the diſmantled ſtate of the room, that this was not difficult. The boards of the window-ſeats were rotten, and in broken ſplinters; Eupheme, without ſcruple, took a piece of them, and reſerved others to keep up their fire, which afforded them ſuch a ſupply, that ſhe ſaw the laſt ſinking gleam of the candle with leſs diſmay; and with great difficulty, dragging to the fire a long and broken ſort of ſettee, ſhe perſuaded her

her mother to lie down upon it, while she knelt before her, still chafing her hands, and endeavouring to re-animate the spark of life which fear and extreme cold had so nearly extinguished.

Fatigue, aided by the torpor which is always felt on being long exposed to severe cold, now conquered both faintness from want of food, and apprehension either for her child or herself, and Mrs. Widdrington fell into a dozing kind of stupor, which Eupheme flattered herself was sleep.

Anxiety, however, and fear lest the fire should go out, together with dread of the terrific shapes that she still thought were in the next room, deterred the trembling girl from attempting to take any repose. The wind howled round the desolate mansion, and every now and then the door, towards which her looks were so fearfully directed, scrooped on

its hinges, and ſhe fancied ſhe ſaw the lock turn.

So paſſed the apparently-longeſt night that ſhe had ever known. Day at length appeared, faintly glimmering through the crevices of the window-ſhutters; and with its firſt dawn Eupheme would gladly have left this inhoſpitable abode, but that her mother remained in a ſtate that rendered it hopeleſs to propoſe it to her. She ſeemed wholly exhauſted; hunger, fatigue, and cold had on her the effect of long illneſs, and ſhe endeavoured in vain to move, when Eupheme made her recollect the neceſſity of their immediate departure.

Nothing was now to be done, on the part of Eupheme, but to endeavour to find ſome refreſhment for her mother, which might give her ſtrength to proceed. She propoſed this, and receiving her aſſent, ſhe ventured once more to enter the room where ſhe had ſeen, the night

night before, ſhapes, which her terrified imagination had magnified into ſpectres, from whence ſhe thought ſhe might find a paſſage to the part of the houſe inhabited by the two old men, who, however, appeared to her to be wraiths and kelpies *, rather than living beings. On her opening the door, ſhe now perceived that the objects of her affright were nothing more than large bundles of vegetables, tied up for the ſeed to dry, and ſome of them wrapped round with pieces of rug and mat: The whole room was covered with things of the ſame nature, and it ſeemed to have been many years ſince it had been inhabited by any other animals than the vermin which theſe things attracted. Eupheme found no door in this great room, but one which opened into a ſort of garden or court, and which had once been

* Evil ſpirits ſo called in Scotland.

glazed, but was now compoſed of old boards nailed in place of ſaſhes. She would have opened one of the windows, in hopes of being able to get out of it, but juſt as ſhe was attempting to lift the ſaſh, a young man appeared in boots, a thick great coat, and a flapped hat, who, with a dejected air, picked his way through the deep ſnow. The noiſe ſhe made at the window ſtartled him; he looked up, and had he ſeen all the *ghaiſts* which Eupheme had figured to herſelf the night before, he could not have teſtified more ſurpriſe. The ſight of him was much leſs ſo to Eupheme, who, ſuppoſing he belonged to the houſe, renewed her efforts to open the window in order to ſpeak to him. He ſaw her deſign, and ſtepping forward, forced up the old ſhattered ſaſh, which ſeemed within-ſide to be confined by cobwebs and dirt.

Then,

Then, in a voice and manner expreſſive of the greateſt ſurpriſe, he inquired, though very reſpectfully, by what ſtrange accident he ſaw her there. Eupheme related briefly what had befallen them; and he, again expreſſing his wonder, and in ſtill ſtronger terms his concern, told her very haſtily that the old gentleman who, with one ancient domeſtic, inhabited the houſe, was a man of very large fortune, who, in conſequence of ſome diſappointment near forty years before, had taken a diſlike to the world, and particularly to women, not one having ever been ſuffered to enter his houſe ſince; that he had fallen inſenſibly into the vice of old age, extreme avarice, and, though he was ſuppoſed to have very great ſums of money concealed in the houſe, he denied himſelf the common neceſſaries of life. The young man went on to ſay that he was the nephew of this ſingular perſon, the only ſon of his only ſiſter,

whom

whom he had only within the two or three laſt years conſented to ſee; but that he never eat or drank in the houſe, and only made an occaſional viſit from a neighbouring town, where he lived with his mother, always expecting to find that his uncle was either murdered for the ſums of money that were ſuppoſed to be hid in the houſe, or had periſhed through his extreme fear of being at the leaſt expence; and that the unuſual rigor of the preceding night had occaſioned him to pay an early viſit of inquiry, becauſe he thought that the old man might very probably have ſuffered himſelf to die of cold rather than allow himſelf a fire.

Such an account gave but little hope to the unfortunate Eupheme, that ſhe ſhould be able to procure, for her mother, the refreſhment that was become ſo requiſite. She related, to the young man, the deplorable ſituation her parent

was

was in, and her own fears. He declared, with great appearance of confuſion, his inability to help her ſo immediately as he wiſhed; but ſaid, that to offer the old gentleman, whoſe name was Morſewall, to pay for any thing they might have, would be the only way to engage him to accommodate them; that in the mean time he would haſten to ſee what could be done for them, without appearing, however, to know any thing of what had paſſed, for the leaſt offence given to his uncle would, he ſaid, not only prevent his being of the leaſt uſe to them, but, perhaps, ſhut him out for ever.

My ſtory would run into too great length, were I to relate the particulars of the following ſcenes. For three days, Mrs. Widdrington remained in a ſtate which rendered her removal impoſſible; but, contrary to all expectation, Mr. Morſewall ſuffered her to have a bed in his

his houſe, ſuch as it was, and even a little fire. His nephew procured them, by means of a labourer he employed, ſome wine and other neceſſaries, which the houſe did not afford: He got their chaiſe refitted; and as ſoon as the unhappy Mrs. Widdrington was able to move, ſaw her carefully conveyed to the town where his mother lived, and where, in ſome days more, ſhe ſo far recovered by the kindneſs of theſe ſtrangers, and the tender aſſiduity of her daughter, that ſhe was enabled once more to renew her mournful journey.

I will not enter into a detail of the ſufferings of the mother and daughter when they reached London, where neither of them had ever been before, and now came to viſit, in priſon, the huſband and the father, who had ſo little merited this cruel deſtiny: Suffice it to tell you, that, from the chicanery of thoſe infamous men who thrive and fatten on the miſeries

miſeries of others, Mr. Widdrington would probably have died in confinement, if the nephew of old Morſewall had not ſuddenly appeared there. Introducing himſelf as the old acquaintance of Mrs. Widdrington, who warmly acknowledged the obligations ſhe owed to him, he deſired to ſpeak with her huſband in private, when he told him, that his uncle was lately dead, having literally ſtarved himſelf to death; that he immediately came into the undiſputed poſſeſſion of wealth, much greater than his moſt ſanguine ideas had taught him to ſuppoſe; and that the filial affection, beauty, and innocence of Miſs Widdrington had made ſuch an impreſſion upon him, when ſhe had been reduced to the neceſſity of taking a temporary aſylum at Mr. Morſewall's, that he had no ſooner paid the laſt duties to his uncle and ſecured the ſums in ſpecie, as well as the ſecurities he had left him, than he haſtened

tened to lay the whole at her feet; and he truſted, not only that ſhe would not reject him, but that ſhe would ſuffer him to make the beſt uſe of his fortune, by releaſing her father.

A very few days now ſerved, with the aſſiſtance of a lawyer employed by Mr. Weſtcombe, (for ſo the young lover was called,) to ſettle all the affairs of Mr. Widdrington, in a much better way than he expected. The marriage-ceremony between Mr. Weſtcombe and Eupheme was no ſooner over, than they ſet out for Scotland, where, in a few months afterwards, Charles Widdrington returned, cured of his ambition, and anxious only to make amends to his father for all he had ſuffered on his account, by aſſiſting him in his farm, which ſoon flouriſhed more than before his misfortunes. Mr. and Mrs. Weſtcombe fitted up an houſe in the pleaſanteſt part of Yorkſhire, to which he had ſucceeded, among many other

other eſtates: and the night that threatened to be the laſt of hers and of her mother's life, is now thought of with gratitude to that Providence which thus brought good out of evil, and from apparent misfortune produced long and unuſual felicity.

Remarks on this little narrative cloſed the evening.

THE END.

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