

CHAPTER VIII

Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damn'd,  
Bring with thee airs from heaven, or blasts from hell,  
Be thy intents wicked, or charitable,

I will speak to thee.

HAMLET

Count de Villefort, at length, received a letter from the advocate at Avignon, encouraging Emily to assert her claim to the estates of the late Madame Montoni; and, about the same time, a messenger arrived from Monsieur Quesnel with intelligence, that made an appeal to the law on this subject unnecessary, since it appeared, that the only person, who could have opposed her claim, was now no more. A friend of Monsieur Quesnel, who resided at Venice, had sent him an account of the death of Montoni who had been brought to trial with Orsino, as his supposed accomplice in the murder of the Venetian nobleman. Orsino was found guilty, condemned and executed upon the wheel, but, nothing being discovered to criminate Montoni, and his colleagues, on this charge, they were all released, except Montoni, who, being considered by the senate as a very dangerous person, was, for other reasons, ordered again into confinement, where, it was said, he had died in a doubtful and mysterious manner, and not without suspicion of having been poisoned. The authority, from which M. Quesnel had received this information, would not allow him to doubt its truth, and he told Emily, that she had now only to lay claim to the estates of her late aunt, to secure them, and added, that he would himself assist in the necessary forms of this business. The term, for which La Vallée had been let being now also nearly expired, he acquainted her with the circumstance, and advised her to take the road thither, through Toulouse, where he promised to meet her, and where it would be proper for her to take possession of the estates of the late Madame Montoni; adding, that he would spare her any difficulties, that might occur on that occasion from the want of knowledge on the subject, and that he believed it would be necessary for her to be at Toulouse, in about three weeks from the present time.

An increase of fortune seemed to have awakened this sudden kindness in M. Quesnel towards his niece, and it appeared, that he entertained more respect for the rich heiress, than he had ever felt compassion for the poor and unfriended orphan.

The pleasure, with which she received this intelligence, was clouded when she considered, that he, for whose sake she had once regretted the want of fortune, was no longer worthy of sharing it with her; but, remembering the friendly admonition of the Count, she checked this melancholy reflection, and endeavoured to feel only gratitude for the unexpected good, that now attended her; while it formed no inconsiderable part of her satisfaction to know, that La Vallée, her native home, which was endeared to her by it's having been the residence of her parents, would soon be restored to her possession.

There she meant to fix her future residence, for, though it could not be compared with the château at Toulouse, either for extent, or magnificence, its pleasant scenes and the tender remembrances, that haunted them, had claims upon her heart, which she was not inclined to sacrifice to ostentation. She wrote immediately to thank M. Quesnel for the active interest he took in her concerns, and to say, that she would meet him at Thoulouse at the appointed time.

When Count de Villefort, with Blanche, came to the convent to give Emily the advice of the advocate, he was informed of the contents of M. Quesnel's letter, and gave her his sincere congratulations, on the occasion; but she observed, that, when the first expression of satisfaction had faded from his countenance, an unusual gravity succeeded, and she scarcely hesitated to enquire its cause.

"It has no new occasion" replied the Count; "I am harassed and perplexed by the confusion, into which my family is thrown by their foolish superstition. Idle reports are floating round me, which I can neither admit to be true, nor prove to be false; and I am, also, very anxious about the poor fellow, Ludovico, concerning whom I have not been able to obtain information. Every part of the château and every part of the neighbourhood, too, has, I believe, been searched, and I know not what further can be done, since I have already offered large rewards for the discovery of him. The keys of the north apartment I have not suffered to be out of my possession, since he disappeared, and I mean to watch in those chambers, myself, this very night."

Emily, seriously alarmed for the Count, united her entreaties with those of the Lady Blanche, to dissuade him from his purpose.

"What should I fear?" said he. "I have no faith in supernatural combats, and for human opposition I shall be prepared; nay, I will even promise not to watch alone."

"But who, dear sir, will have courage enough to watch with you?" said Emily.

"My son" replied the Count. "If I am not carried off in the night" added he, smiling, "you shall hear the result of my adventure, tomorrow."

The Count and Lady Blanche, shortly afterwards, took leave of Emily, and returned to the château, where he informed Henri of his intention, who, not without some secret reluctance, consented to be the partner of his watch; and, when the design was mentioned after supper, the Countess was terrified, and the Baron, and M. Du Pont joined with her in entreating, that he would not tempt his fate, as Ludovico had done. "We know not" added the Baron "the nature, or the power of an evil spirit; and that such a spirit haunts those chambers can now, I think, scarcely be doubted. Beware, my lord, how you provoke its vengeance, since it has already given us one terrible example of its malice. I allow it may be probable, that the spirits of the dead are permitted to return to the earth only on occasions of high import; but the present import may be your destruction."

The Count could not forbear smiling; “Do you think then, Baron” said he “that my destruction is of sufficient importance to draw back to earth the soul of the departed? Alas! my good friend, there is no occasion for such means to accomplish the destruction of any individual. Wherever the mystery rests, I trust I shall, this night, be able to detect it. You know I am not superstitious.”

“I know that you are incredulous” interrupted the Baron.

“Well, call it what you will, I mean to say, that, though you know I am free from superstition — if anything supernatural has appeared, I doubt not it will appear to me, and if any strange event hangs over my house, or if any extraordinary transaction has formerly been connected with it, I shall probably be made acquainted with it. At all events I will invite discovery; and, that I may be equal to a mortal attack, which in good truth, my friend, is what I most expect, I shall take care to be well armed.”

The Count took leave of his family, for the night, with an assumed gaiety, which but ill concealed the anxiety, that depressed his spirits, and retired to the north apartments, accompanied by his son and followed by the Baron, M. Du Pont and some of the domestics, who all bade him good night at the outer door. In these chambers everything appeared as when he had last been here; even in the bedroom no alteration was visible, where he lighted his own fire, for none of the domestics could be prevailed upon to venture thither. After carefully examining the chamber and the oriel, the Count and Henri drew their chairs upon the hearth, set a bottle of wine and a lamp before them, laid their swords upon the table, and, stirring the wood into a blaze, began to converse on indifferent topics. But Henri was often silent and abstracted, and sometimes threw a glance of mingled awe and curiosity round the gloomy apartment; while the Count gradually ceased to converse, and sat either lost in thought, or reading a volume of Tacitus, which he had brought to beguile the tediousness of the night.

## CHAPTER IX

Give thy thoughts no tongue.

SHAKESPEARE

The Baron St. Foix, whom anxiety for his friend had kept awake, rose early to enquire the event of the night, when, as he passed the Count's closet, hearing steps within, he knocked at the door, and it was opened by his friend himself. Rejoicing to see him in safety, and curious to learn the occurrences of the night, he had not immediately leisure to observe the unusual gravity, that overspread the features of the Count, whose reserved answers first occasioned him to notice it. The Count, then smiling, endeavoured to treat the subject of his curiosity with levity, but the Baron was serious, and pursued his enquiries so closely, that the Count, at length, resuming his gravity, said "Well, my friend, press the subject no further, I entreat you; and let me request also, that you will hereafter be silent upon anything you may think extraordinary in my future conduct. I do not scruple to tell you, that I am unhappy, and that the watch of the last night has not assisted me to discover Ludovico; upon every occurrence of the night you must excuse my reserve."

"But where is Henri?" said the Baron, with surprise and disappointment at this denial.

"He is well in his own apartment" replied the Count. "You will not question him on this topic, my friend, since you know my wish."

"Certainly not" said the Baron, somewhat chagrined "since it would be displeasing to you; but methinks, my friend, you might rely on my discretion, and drop this unusual reserve. However, you must allow me to suspect, that you have seen reason to become a convert to my system, and are no longer the incredulous knight you lately appeared to be."

"Let us talk no more upon this subject" said the Count; "you may be assured, that no ordinary circumstance has imposed this silence upon me towards a friend, whom I have called so for near thirty years; and my present reserve cannot make you question either my esteem, or the sincerity of my friendship."

"I will not doubt either" said the Baron "though you must allow me to express my surprise, at this silence."

"To me I will allow it" replied the Count "but I earnestly entreat that you will forbear to notice it to my family, as well as everything remarkable you may observe in my conduct towards them."

The Baron readily promised this, and, after conversing for some time on general topics, they descended to the breakfast-room, where the Count met his family with a cheerful countenance, and evaded their enquiries by employing light ridicule, and assuming an air of uncommon gaiety, while he assured them,

that they need not apprehend any evil from the north chambers, since Henri and himself had been permitted to return from them in safety.

Henri, however, was less successful in disguising his feelings. From his countenance an expression of terror was not entirely faded; he was often silent and thoughtful, and when he attempted to laugh at the eager enquiries of Mademoiselle Bearn, it was evidently only an attempt.

In the evening, the Count called, as he had promised, at the convent, and Emily was surprised to perceive a mixture of playful ridicule and of reserve in his mention of the north apartment. Of what had occurred there, however, he said nothing, and, when she ventured to remind him of his promise to tell her the result of his enquiries, and to ask if he had received any proof, that those chambers were haunted, his look became solemn, for a moment, then, seeming to recollect himself, he smiled, and said "My dear Emily, do not suffer my lady abbess to infect your good understanding with these fancies; she will teach you to expect a ghost in every dark room. But believe me" added he, with a profound sigh, "the apparition of the dead comes not on light, or sportive errands, to terrify, or to surprise the timid." He paused, and fell into a momentary thoughtfulness, and then added "We will say no more on this subject."

Soon after, he took leave, and, when Emily joined some of the nuns, she was surprised to find them acquainted with a circumstance, which she had carefully avoided to mention, and expressing their admiration of his intrepidity in having dared to pass a night in the apartment, whence Ludovico had disappeared; for she had not considered with what rapidity a tale of wonder circulates. The nuns had acquired their information from peasants, who brought fruit to the monastery, and whose whole attention had been fixed, since the disappearance of Ludovico, on what was passing in the castle.

Emily listened in silence to the various opinions of the nuns, concerning the conduct of the Count, most of whom condemned it as rash and presumptuous, affirming, that it was provoking the vengeance of an evil spirit, thus to intrude upon its haunts.

Sister Frances contended, that the Count had acted with the bravery of a virtuous mind. He knew himself guiltless of aught, that should provoke a good spirit, and did not fear the spells of an evil one, since he could claim the protection of a higher Power, of Him, who can command the wicked, and will protect the innocent.

"The guilty cannot claim that protection!" said sister Agnes "let the Count look to his conduct, that he do not forfeit his claim! Yet who is he, that shall dare to call himself innocent! — All earthly innocence is but comparative. Yet still how wide asunder are the extremes of guilt, and to what a horrible depth may we fall! Oh! —"

The nun, as she concluded, uttered a shuddering sigh, that startled Emily, who, looking up, perceived the eyes of Agnes fixed on hers, after which the sister

rose, took her hand, gazed earnestly upon her countenance, for some moments, in silence, and then said,

“You are young — you are innocent! I mean you are yet innocent of any great crime! — But you have passions in your heart — scorpions; they sleep now — beware how you awaken them! — they will sting you, even unto death!”

Emily, affected by these words and by the solemnity, with which they were delivered, could not suppress her tears.

“Ah! is it so?” exclaimed Agnes, her countenance softening from its sternness — “so young, and so unfortunate! We are sisters, then indeed. Yet, there is no bond of kindness among the guilty” she added, while her eyes resumed their wild expression “no gentleness — no peace, no hope! I knew them all once — my eyes could weep — but now they burn, for now, my soul is fixed, and fearless! — I lament no more!”

“Rather let us repent, and pray” said another nun. “We are taught to hope, that prayer and penitence will work our salvation. There is hope for all who repent!”

“Who repent and turn to the true faith” observed sister Frances.

“For all but me!” replied Agnes solemnly, who paused, and then abruptly added “My head burns, I believe I am not well. O! Could I strike from my memory all former scenes — the figures, that rise up, like furies, to torment me! — I see them, when I sleep, and, when I am awake, they are still before my eyes! I see them now — now!”

She stood in a fixed attitude of horror, her straining eyes moving slowly round the room, as if they followed something. One of the nuns gently took her hand, to lead her from the parlour. Agnes became calm, drew her other hand across her eyes, looked again, and, sighing deeply, said, “They are gone — they are gone! I am feverish, I know not what I say. I am thus, sometimes, but it will go off again, I shall soon be better. Was not that the vesper bell?”

“No” replied Frances “the evening service is passed. Let Margaret lead you to your cell.”

“You are right” replied sister Agnes “I shall be better there. Good night, my sisters, remember me in your orisons.”

When they had withdrawn, Frances, observing Emily’s emotion, said “Do not be alarmed, our sister is often thus deranged, though I have not lately seen her so frantic; her usual mood is melancholy. This fit has been coming on, for several days; seclusion and the customary treatment will restore her.”

“But how rationally she conversed, at first!” observed Emily “her ideas followed each other in perfect order.”

“Yes” replied the nun “this is nothing new; nay, I have sometimes known her argue not only with method, but with acuteness, and then, in a moment, start off into madness.”

“Her conscience seems afflicted” said Emily “did you ever hear what circumstance reduced her to this deplorable condition?”

“I have” replied the nun, who said no more till Emily repeated the question, when she added in a low voice, and looking significantly towards the other boarders, “I cannot tell you now, but, if you think it worth your while, come to my cell, tonight, when our sisterhood are at rest, and you shall hear more; but remember we rise to midnight prayers, and come either before, or after midnight.”

Emily promised to remember, and, the abbess soon after appearing, they spoke no more of the unhappy nun.

The Count meanwhile, on his return home, had found M. Du Pont in one of those fits of despondency, which his attachment to Emily frequently occasioned him, an attachment, that had subsisted too long to be easily subdued, and which had already outlived the opposition of his friends. M. Du Pont had first seen Emily in Gascony, during the lifetime of his parent, who, on discovering his son’s partiality for Mademoiselle St. Aubert, his inferior in point of fortune, forbade him to declare it to her family, or to think of her more. During the life of his father, he had observed the first command, but had found it impracticable to obey the second, and had, sometimes, soothed his passion by visiting her favourite haunts, among which was the fishing house, where, once or twice, he addressed her in verse, concealing his name, in obedience to the promise he had given his father. There too he played the pathetic air, to which she had listened with such surprise and admiration; and there he found the miniature, that had since cherished a passion fatal to his repose. During his expedition into Italy, his father died; but he received his liberty at a moment, when he was the least enabled to profit by it, since the object, that rendered it most valuable, was no longer within the reach of his vows. By what accident he discovered Emily, and assisted to release her from a terrible imprisonment, has already appeared, and also the unavailing hope, with which he then encouraged his love, and the fruitless efforts, that he had since made to overcome it.

The Count still endeavoured, with friendly zeal, to sooth him with a belief, that patience, perseverance and prudence would finally obtain for him happiness and Emily: “Time” said he “will wear away the melancholy impression, which disappointment has left on her mind, and she will be sensible of your merit. Your services have already awakened her gratitude, and your sufferings her pity; and trust me, my friend, in a heart so sensible as hers, gratitude and pity lead to love. When her imagination is rescued from its present delusion, she will readily accept the homage of a mind like yours.”

Du Pont sighed, while he listened to these words; and, endeavouring to hope what his friend believed, he willingly yielded to an invitation to prolong his visit at the château, which we now leave for the monastery of St. Claire.

When the nuns had retired to rest, Emily stole to her appointment with sister Frances, whom she found in her cell, engaged in prayer, before a little table, where appeared the image she was addressing, and, above, the dim lamp that gave light to the place. Turning her eyes, as the door opened, she beckoned to Emily to come in, who, having done so, seated herself in silence beside the nun's little mattress of straw, till her orisons should conclude. The latter soon rose from her knees, and, taking down the lamp and placing it on the table, Emily perceived there a human skull and bones, lying beside an hour-glass; but the nun, without observing her emotion, sat down on the mattress by her, saying "Your curiosity, sister, has made you punctual, but you have nothing remarkable to hear in the history of poor Agnes, of whom I avoided to speak in the presence of my lay sisters, only because I would not publish her crime to them."

"I shall consider your confidence in me as a favour" said Emily "and will not misuse it."

"Sister Agnes" resumed the nun "is of a noble family, as the dignity of her air must already have informed you, but I will not dishonour their name so much as to reveal it. Love was the occasion of her crime and of her madness. She was beloved by a gentleman of inferior fortune, and her father, as I have heard, bestowing her on a nobleman, whom she disliked, an ill governed passion proved her destruction. — Every obligation of virtue and of duty was forgotten, and she prophaned her marriage vows; but her guilt was soon detected, and she would have fallen a sacrifice to the vengeance of her husband, had not her father contrived to convey her from his power. By what means he did this, I never could learn; but he secreted her in this convent, where he afterwards prevailed with her to take the veil, while a report was circulated in the world, that she was dead, and the father, to save his daughter, assisted the rumour, and employed such means as induced her husband to believe she had become a victim to his jealousy. You look surprised" added the nun, observing Emily's countenance; "I allow the story is uncommon, but not, I believe, without a parallel."

"Pray proceed" said Emily "I am interested."

"The story is already told" resumed the nun "I have only to mention, that the long struggle, which Agnes suffered, between love, remorse and a sense of the duties she had taken upon herself in becoming of our order, at length unsettled her reason. At first, she was frantic and melancholy by quick alternatives; then, she sunk into a deep and settled melancholy, which still, however, has, at times, been interrupted by fits of wildness, and, of late, these have again been frequent."

Emily was affected by the history of the sister, some parts of whose story brought to her remembrance that of the Marchioness de Villeroi, who had also been compelled by her father to forsake the object of her affections, for a nobleman of his choice; but, from what Dorothée had related, there appeared no reason to suppose, that she had escaped the vengeance of a jealous husband, or to doubt for a moment the innocence of her conduct. But Emily, while she sighed over the misery of the nun, could not forbear shedding a few tears to the misfortunes of the Marchioness; and, when she returned to the mention of sister Agnes, she asked Frances if she remembered her in her youth, and whether she was then beautiful.

“I was not here at the time, when she took the vows” replied Frances “which is so long ago, that few of the present sisterhood, I believe, were witnesses of the ceremony; nay, ever our lady mother did not then preside over the convent: but I can remember, when sister Agnes was a very beautiful woman. She retains that air of high rank, which always distinguished her, but her beauty, you must perceive, is fled; I can scarcely discover even a vestige of the loveliness, that once animated her features.”

“It is strange” said Emily “but there are moments, when her countenance has appeared familiar to my memory! You will think me fanciful, and I think myself so, for I certainly never saw sister Agnes, before I came to this convent, and I must, therefore, have seen some person, whom she strongly resembles, though of this I have no recollection.”

“You have been interested by the deep melancholy of her countenance” said Frances “and its impression has probably deluded your imagination; for I might as reasonably think I perceive a likeness between you and Agnes, as you, that you have seen her anywhere but in this convent, since this has been her place of refuge, for nearly as many years as make your age.”

“Indeed!” said Emily.

“Yes” rejoined Frances “and why does that circumstance excite your surprise?”

Emily did not appear to notice this question, but remained thoughtful, for a few moments, and then said “It was about that same period that the Marchioness de Villeroi expired.”

“That is an odd remark” said Frances.

Emily, recalled from her reverie, smiled, and gave the conversation another turn, but it soon came back to the subject of the unhappy nun, and Emily remained in the cell of sister Frances, till the midnight bell aroused her; when, apologising for having interrupted the sister’s repose, till this late hour, they quitted the cell together. Emily returned to her chamber, and the nun, bearing a glimmering taper, went to her devotion in the chapel.

Several days followed, during which Emily saw neither the Count, nor any of his family; and, when, at length, he appeared, she remarked, with concern, that his air was unusually disturbed.

“My spirits are harassed” said he, in answer to her anxious enquiries, “and I mean to change my residence, for a little while, an experiment, which, I hope, will restore my mind to its usual tranquillity. My daughter and myself will accompany the Baron St. Foix to his château. It lies in a valley of the Pyrenees, that opens towards Gascony, and I have been thinking, Emily, that, when you set out for La Vallée, we may go part of the way together; it would be a satisfaction to me to guard you towards your home.”

She thanked the Count for his friendly consideration, and lamented, that the necessity for her going first to Toulouse would render this plan impracticable. “But, when you are at the Baron’s residence” she added “you will be only a short journey from La Vallée, and I think, sir, you will not leave the country without visiting me; it is unnecessary to say with what pleasure I should receive you and the Lady Blanche.”

“I do not doubt it” replied the Count “and I will not deny myself and Blanche the pleasure of visiting you, if your affairs should allow you to be at La Vallée, about the time when we can meet you there.”

When Emily said that she should hope to see the Countess also, she was not sorry to learn that this lady was going, accompanied by Mademoiselle Bearn, to pay a visit, for a few weeks, to a family in lower Languedoc.

The Count, after some further conversation on his intended journey and on the arrangement of Emily’s, took leave; and many days did not succeed this visit, before a second letter from M. Quesnel informed her, that he was then at Toulouse, that La Vallée was at liberty, and that he wished her to set off for the former place, where he awaited her arrival, with all possible dispatch, since his own affairs pressed him to return to Gascony. Emily did not hesitate to obey him, and, having taken an affecting leave of the Count’s family, in which M. Du Pont was still included, and of her friends at the convent, she set out for Toulouse, attended by the unhappy Annette, and guarded by a steady servant of the Count.

CHAPTER X

Lull'd in the countless chambers of the brain,  
Our thoughts are link'd by many a hidden chain:  
Awake but one, and lo! what myriads rise!  
Each stamps its image as the other flies!

PLEASURES OF MEMORY

Emily pursued her journey, without any accident, along the plains of Languedoc towards the north west; and, on this her return to Toulouse, which she had last left with Madame Montoni, she thought much on the melancholy fate of her aunt, who, but for her own imprudence, might now have been living in happiness there! Montoni, too, often rose to her fancy, such as she had seen him in his days of triumph, bold, spirited and commanding; such also as she had since beheld him in his days of vengeance; and now, only a few short months had passed — and he had no longer the power, or the will to afflict; — he had become a clod of earth, and his life was vanished like a shadow! Emily could have wept at his fate, had she not remembered his crimes; for that of her unfortunate aunt she did weep, and all sense of her errors was overcome by the recollection of her misfortunes.

Other thoughts and other emotions succeeded, as Emily drew near the well-known scenes of her early love, and considered, that Valancourt was lost to her and to himself, for ever. At length, she came to the brow of the hill, whence, on her departure for Italy, she had given a farewell look to this beloved landscape, amongst whose woods and fields she had so often walked with Valancourt, and where he was then to inhabit, when she would be far, far away! She saw, once more, that chain of the Pyrenees, which overlooked La Vallée, rising, like faint clouds, on the horizon. “There, too, is Gascony, extended at their feet!” said she “O my father — my mother! And there, too, is the Garonne!” she added, drying the tears, that obscured her sight, — “and Toulouse, and my aunt’s mansion — and the groves in her garden! — O my friends! are ye all lost to me — must I never, never see ye more!” Tears rushed again to her eyes, and she continued to weep, till an abrupt turn in the road had nearly occasioned the carriage to overset, when, looking up, she perceived another part of the well known scene around Toulouse, and all the reflections and anticipations, which she had suffered, at the moment, when she bade it last adieu, came with recollected force to her heart. She remembered how anxiously she had looked forward to the futurity, which was to decide her happiness concerning Valancourt, and what depressing fears had assailed her; the very words she had uttered, as she withdrew her last look from the prospect, came to her memory. “Could I but be certain” she had then said “that I should ever return, and that Valancourt would still live for me — I should go in peace!”

Now, that futurity, so anxiously anticipated, was arrived, she was returned — but what a dreary blank appeared! — Valancourt no longer lived for her! She had no longer even the melancholy satisfaction of contemplating his image in her heart, for he was no longer the same Valancourt she had cherished there

— the solace of many a mournful hour, the animating friend, that had enabled her to bear up against the oppression of Montoni — the distant hope, that had beamed over her gloomy prospect! On perceiving this beloved idea to be an illusion of her own creation, Valancourt seemed to be annihilated, and her soul sickened at the blank, that remained. His marriage with a rival, even his death, she thought she could have endured with more fortitude, than this discovery; for then, amidst all her grief, she could have looked in secret upon the image of goodness, which her fancy had drawn of him, and comfort would have mingled with her suffering!

Drying her tears, she looked, once more, upon the landscape, which had excited them, and perceived, that she was passing the very bank, where she had taken leave of Valancourt, on the morning of her departure from Toulouse, and she now saw him, through her returning tears, such as he had appeared, when she looked from the carriage to give him a last adieu — saw him leaning mournfully against the high trees, and remembered the fixed look of mingled tenderness and anguish, with which he had then regarded her. This recollection was too much for her heart, and she sunk back in the carriage, nor once looked up, till it stopped at the gates of what was now her own mansion.

These being opened, and by the servant, to whose care the château had been entrusted, the carriage drove into the court, where, alighting, she hastily passed through the great hall, now silent and solitary, to a large oak parlour, the common sitting room of the late Madame Montoni, where, instead of being received by M. Quesnel, she found a letter from him, informing her that business of consequence had obliged him to leave Toulouse two days before. Emily was, upon the whole, not sorry to be spared his presence, since his abrupt departure appeared to indicate the same indifference, with which he had formerly regarded her. This letter informed her, also, of the progress he had made in the settlement of her affairs, and concluded with directions, concerning the forms of some business, which remained for her to transact. But M. Quesnel's unkindness did not long occupy her thoughts, which returned the remembrance of the persons she had been accustomed to see in this mansion, and chiefly of the ill guided and unfortunate Madame Montoni. In the room, where she now sat, she had breakfasted with her on the morning of their departure for Italy; and the view of it brought most forcibly to her recollection all she had herself suffered, at that time, and the many gay expectations, which her aunt had formed, respecting the journey before her. While Emily's mind was thus engaged, her eyes wandered unconsciously to a large window, that looked upon the garden, and here new memorials of the past spoke to her heart, for she saw extended before her the very avenue, in which she had parted with Valancourt, on the eve of her journey; and all the anxiety, the tender interest he had shown, concerning her future happiness, his earnest remonstrances against her committing herself to the power of Montoni, and the truth of his affection, came afresh to her memory. At this moment, it appeared almost impossible, that Valancourt could have become unworthy of her regard, and she doubted all that she had lately heard to his disadvantage, and even his own words, which had confirmed Count De Villefort's report of him. Overcome by the recollections, which the view of this avenue occasioned, she turned abruptly

from the window, and sunk into a chair beside it, where she sat, given up to grief, till the entrance of Annette, with coffee, aroused her.

“Dear madam, how melancholy this place looks now” said Annette, “to what it used to do! It is dismal coming home, when there is nobody to welcome one!”

This was not the moment, in which Emily could bear the remark; her tears fell again, and, as soon as she had taken the coffee, she retired to her apartment, where she endeavoured to repose her fatigued spirits. But busy memory would still supply her with the visions of former times: she saw Valancourt interesting and benevolent, as he had been wont to appear in the days of their early love, and, amidst the scenes, where she had believed that they should sometimes pass their years together! — But, at length, sleep closed these afflicting scenes from her view.

On the following morning, serious occupation recovered her from such melancholy reflections; for, being desirous of quitting Toulouse, and of hastening on to La Vallée, she made some enquiries into the condition of the estate, and immediately dispatched a part of the necessary business concerning it, according to the directions of Mons. Quesnel. It required a strong effort to abstract her thoughts from other interests sufficiently to attend to this, but she was rewarded for her exertions by again experiencing, that employment is the surest antidote to sorrow.

This day was devoted entirely to business; and, among other concerns, she employed means to learn the situation of all her poor tenants, that she might relieve their wants, or confirm their comforts.

In the evening, her spirits were so much strengthened, that she thought she could bear to visit the gardens, where she had so often walked with Valancourt; and, knowing, that, if she delayed to do so, their scenes would only affect her the more, whenever they should be viewed, she took advantage of the present state of her mind, and entered them.

Passing hastily the gate leading from the court into the gardens, she hurried up the great avenue, scarcely permitting her memory to dwell for a moment on the circumstance of her having here parted with Valancourt, and soon quitted this for other walks less interesting to her heart. These brought her, at length, to the flight of steps, that led from the lower garden to the terrace, on seeing which, she became agitated, and hesitated whether to ascend, but, her resolution returning, she proceeded.

“Ah!” said Emily, as she ascended, “these are the same high trees, that used to wave over the terrace, and these the same flowery thickets — the laburnum, the wild rose, and the cerinthe — which were wont to grow beneath them! Ah! And there, too, on that bank, are the very plants, which Valancourt so carefully reared! — O, when last I saw them!” — she checked the thought, but could not restrain her tears, and, after walking slowly on for a few moments, her agitation, upon the view of this well known scene, increased so much, that she was obliged

to stop, and lean upon the wall of the terrace. It was a mild, and beautiful evening. The sun was setting over the extensive landscape, to which his beams, sloping from beneath a dark cloud, that overhung the west, gave rich and partial colouring, and touched the tufted summits of the groves, that rose from the garden below, with a yellow gleam. Emily and Valancourt had often admired together this scene, at the same hour; and it was exactly on this spot, that, on the night preceding her departure for Italy, she had listened to his remonstrances against the journey, and to the pleadings of passionate affection. Some observations, which she made on the landscape, brought this to her remembrance, and with it all the minute particulars of that conversation; — the alarming doubts he had expressed concerning Montoni, doubts, which had since been fatally confirmed; the reasons and entreaties he had employed to prevail with her to consent to an immediate marriage; the tenderness of his love, the paroxysms of this grief, and the conviction that he had repeatedly expressed, that they should never meet again in happiness! All these circumstances rose afresh to her mind, and awakened the various emotions she had then suffered. Her tenderness for Valancourt became as powerful as in the moments, when she thought, that she was parting with him and happiness together, and when the strength of her mind had enabled her to triumph over present suffering, rather than to deserve the reproach of her conscience by engaging in a clandestine marriage. — “Alas!” said Emily, as these recollections came to her mind, “and what have I gained by the fortitude I then practised? — am I happy now? — He said, we should meet no more in happiness; but, O! He little thought his own misconduct would separate us, and lead to the very evil he then dreaded!”

Her reflections increased her anguish, while she was compelled to acknowledge, that the fortitude she had formerly exerted, if it had not conducted her to happiness, had saved her from irretrievable misfortune — from Valancourt himself! But in these moments she could not congratulate herself on the prudence, that had saved her; she could only lament, with bitterest anguish, the circumstances, which had conspired to betray Valancourt into a course of life so different from that, which the virtues, the tastes, and the pursuits of his early years had promised; but she still loved him too well to believe, that his heart was even now depraved, though his conduct had been criminal. An observation, which had fallen from M. St. Aubert more than once, now occurred to her. “This young man” said he, speaking of Valancourt, “has never been at Paris;” a remark, that had surprised her at the time it was uttered, but which she now understood, and she exclaimed sorrowfully, “O Valancourt! if such a friend as my father had been with you at Paris — your noble, ingenuous nature would not have fallen!”

The sun was now set, and, recalling her thoughts from their melancholy subject, she continued her walk; for the pensive shade of twilight was pleasing to her, and the nightingales from the surrounding groves began to answer each other in the long drawn, plaintive note, which always touched her heart; while all the fragrance of the flowery thickets, that bounded the terrace, was awakened by the cool evening air, which floated so lightly among their leaves, that they scarcely trembled as it passed.

Emily came, at length, to the steps of the pavilion, that terminated the terrace, and where her last interview with Valancourt, before her departure from Toulouse, had so unexpectedly taken place. The door was now shut, and she trembled, while she hesitated whether to open it; but her wish to see again a place, which had been the chief scene of her former happiness, at length overcoming her reluctance to encounter the painful regret it would renew, she entered. The room was obscured by a melancholy shade; but through the open lattices, darkened by the hanging foliage of the vines, appeared the dusky landscape, the Garonne reflecting the evening light, and the west still glowing. A chair was placed near one of the balconies, as if some person had been sitting there, but the other furniture of the pavilion remained exactly as usual, and Emily thought it looked as if it had not once been moved since she set out for Italy. The silent and deserted air of the place added solemnity to her emotions, for she heard only the low whisper of the breeze, as it shook the leaves of the vines, and the very faint murmur of the Garonne.

She seated herself in a chair, near the lattice, and yielded to the sadness of her heart, while she recollected the circumstances of her parting interview with Valancourt, on this spot. It was here too, that she had passed some of the happiest hours of her life with him, when her aunt favoured the connection, for here she had often sat and worked, while he conversed, or read; and she now well remembered with what discriminating judgment, with what tempered energy, he used to repeat some of the sublimest passages of their favourite authors; how often he would pause to admire with her their excellence, and with what tender delight he would listen to her remarks, and correct her taste.

“And is it possible” said Emily, as these recollections returned — “is it possible, that a mind, so susceptible of whatever is grand and beautiful, could stoop to low pursuits, and be subdued by frivolous temptations?”

She remembered how often she had seen the sudden tear start in his eye, and had heard his voice tremble with emotion, while he related any great or benevolent action, or repeated a sentiment of the same character. “And such a mind” said she “such a heart, were to be sacrificed to the habits of a great city!”

These recollections becoming too painful to be endured, she abruptly left the pavilion, and, anxious to escape from the memorials of her departed happiness, returned towards the château. As she passed along the terrace, she perceived a person, walking, with a slow step, and a dejected air, under the trees, at some distance. The twilight, which was now deep, would not allow her to distinguish who it was, and she imagined it to be one of the servants, till, the sound of her steps seeming to reach him, he turned half round, and she thought she saw Valancourt!

Whoever it was, he instantly struck among the thickets on the left, and disappeared, while Emily, her eyes fixed on the place, whence he had vanished, and her frame trembling so excessively, that she could scarcely support herself, remained, for some moments, unable to quit the spot, and scarcely conscious

of existence. With her recollection, her strength returned, and she hurried toward the house, where she did not venture to enquire who had been in the gardens, lest she should betray her emotion; and she sat down alone, endeavouring to recollect the figure, air and features of the person she had just seen. Her view of him, however, had been so transient, and the gloom had rendered it so imperfect, that she could remember nothing with exactness; yet the general appearance of his figure, and his abrupt departure, made her still believe, that this person was Valancourt. Sometimes, indeed, she thought, that her fancy, which had been occupied by the idea of him, had suggested his image to her uncertain sight: but this conjecture was fleeting. If it was himself whom she had seen, she wondered much, that he should be at Toulouse, and more, how he had gained admittance into the garden; but as often as her impatience prompted her to enquire whether any stranger had been admitted, she was restrained by an unwillingness to betray her doubts; and the evening was passed in anxious conjecture, and in efforts to dismiss the subject from her thoughts. But, these endeavours were ineffectual, and a thousand inconsistent emotions assailed her, whenever she fancied that Valancourt might be near her; now, she dreaded it to be true, and now she feared it to be false; and, while she constantly tried to persuade herself, that she wished the person, whom she had seen, might not be Valancourt, her heart as constantly contradicted her reason.

The following day was occupied by the visits of several neighbouring families, formerly intimate with Madame Montoni, who came to condole with Emily on her death, to congratulate her upon the acquisition of these estates, and to enquire about Montoni, and concerning the strange reports they had heard of her own situation; all which was done with the utmost decorum, and the visitors departed with as much composure as they had arrived.

Emily was wearied by these formalities, and disgusted by the subservient manners of many persons, who had thought her scarcely worthy of common attention, while she was believed to be a dependant on Madame Montoni.

“Surely” said she “there is some magic in wealth, which can thus make persons pay their court to it, when it does not even benefit themselves. How strange it is, that a fool or a knave, with riches, should be treated with more respect by the world, than a good man, or a wise man in poverty!”

It was evening, before she was left alone, and she then wished to have refreshed her spirits in the free air of her garden; but she feared to go thither, lest she should meet again the person, whom she had seen on the preceding night, and he should prove to be Valancourt. The suspense and anxiety she suffered, on this subject, she found all her efforts unable to control, and her secret wish to see Valancourt once more, though unseen by him, powerfully prompted her to go, but prudence and a delicate pride restrained her, and she determined to avoid the possibility of throwing herself in his way, by forbearing to visit the gardens, for several days.

When, after near a week, she again ventured thither, she made Annette her companion, and confined her walk to the lower grounds, but often started as

the leaves rustled in the breeze, imagining, that some person was among the thickets; and, at the turn of every alley, she looked forward with apprehensive expectation. She pursued her walk thoughtfully and silently, for her agitation would not suffer her to converse with Annette, to whom, however, thought and silence were so intolerable, that she did not scruple at length to talk to her mistress.

“Dear madam” said she “why do you start so? One would think you knew what has happened.”

“What has happened?” said Emily, in a faltering voice, and trying to command her emotion.

“The night before last, you know, madam —”

“I know nothing, Annette” replied her lady in a more hurried voice.

“The night before last, madam, there was a robber in the garden.”

“A robber!” said Emily, in an eager, yet doubting tone.

“I suppose he was a robber, madam. What else could he be?”

“Where did you see him, Annette?” rejoined Emily, looking round her, and turning back towards the château.

“It was not I that saw him, madam, it was Jean the gardener. It was twelve o’clock at night, and, as he was coming across the court to go the back way into the house, what should he see — but somebody walking in the avenue, that fronts the garden gate! So, with that, Jean guessed how it was, and he went into the house for his gun.”

“His gun!” exclaimed Emily.

“Yes, madam, his gun; and then he came out into the court to watch him. Presently, he sees him come slowly down the avenue, and lean over the garden gate, and look up at the house for a long time; and I warrant he examined it well, and settled what window he should break in at.”

“But the gun” said Emily — “the gun!”

“Yes, madam, all in good time. Presently, Jean says, the robber opened the gate, and was coming into the court, and then he thought proper to ask him his business: so he called out again, and bade him say who he was, and what he wanted. But the man would do neither; but turned upon his heel, and passed into the garden again. Jean knew then well enough how it was, and so he fired after him.”

“Fired!” exclaimed Emily.

“Yes, madam, fired off his gun; but, Holy Virgin! what makes you look so pale, madam? The man was not killed — I dare say; but if he was, his comrades carried him off: for, when Jean went in the morning, to look for the body, it was gone, and nothing to be seen but a track of blood on the ground. Jean followed it, that he might find out where the man got into the garden, but it was lost in the grass, and —”

Annette was interrupted: for Emily’s spirits died away, and she would have fallen to the ground, if the girl had not caught her, and supported her to a bench, close to them.

When, after a long absence, her senses returned, Emily desired to be led to her apartment; and, though she trembled with anxiety to enquire further on the subject of her alarm, she found herself too ill at present, to dare the intelligence which it was possible she might receive of Valancourt. Having dismissed Annette, that she might weep and think at liberty, she endeavoured to recollect the exact air of the person, whom she had seen on the terrace, and still her fancy gave her the figure of Valancourt. She had, indeed, scarcely a doubt, that it was he whom she had seen, and at whom the gardener had fired: for the manner of the latter person, as described by Annette, was not that of a robber; nor did it appear probable, that a robber would have come alone, to break into a house so spacious as this.

When Emily thought herself sufficiently recovered, to listen to what Jean might have to relate, she sent for him; but he could inform her of no circumstance, that might lead to a knowledge of the person, who had been shot, or of the consequence of the wound; and, after severely reprimanding him, for having fired with bullets, and ordering diligent enquiry to be made in the neighbourhood for the discovery of the wounded person, she dismissed him, and herself remained in the same state of terrible suspense. All the tenderness she had ever felt for Valancourt, was recalled by the sense of his danger; and the more she considered the subject, the more her conviction strengthened, that it was he, who had visited the gardens, for the purpose of soothing the misery of disappointed affection, amidst the scenes of his former happiness.

“Dear madam” said Annette, when she returned “I never saw you so affected before! I dare say the man is not killed.”

Emily shuddered, and lamented bitterly the rashness of the gardener in having fired.

“I knew you would be angry enough about that, madam, or I should have told you before; and he knew so too; for, says he ‘Annette, say nothing about this to my lady. She lies on the other side of the house, so did not hear the gun, perhaps; but she would be angry with me, if she knew, seeing there is blood. But then,’ says he ‘how is one to keep the garden clear, if one is afraid to fire at a robber, when one sees him?’”

“No more of this” said Emily, “pray leave me.”

Annette obeyed, and Emily returned to the agonizing considerations, that had assailed her before, but which she, at length, endeavoured to sooth by a new remark. If the stranger was Valancourt, it was certain he had come alone, and it appeared, therefore, that he had been able to quit the gardens, without assistance; a circumstance which did not seem probable, had his wound been dangerous. With this consideration, she endeavoured to support herself, during the enquiries, that were making by her servants in the neighbourhood; but day after day came, and still losed in uncertainty, concerning this affair: and Emily, suffering in silence, at length, drooped, and sunk under the pressure of her anxiety. She was attacked by a slow fever, and when she yielded to the persuasion of Annette to send for medical advice, the physicians prescribed little beside air, gentle exercise and amusement: but how was this last to be obtained? She, however, endeavoured to abstract her thoughts from the subject of her anxiety, by employing them in promoting that happiness in others, which she had lost herself; and, when the evening was fine, she usually took an airing, including in her ride the cottages of some of her tenants, on whose condition she made such observations, as often enabled her, unasked, to fulfil their wishes.

Her indisposition and the business she engaged in, relative to this estate, had already protracted her stay at Toulouse, beyond the period she had formerly fixed for her departure to La Vallée; and now she was unwilling to leave the only place, where it seemed possible, that certainty could be obtained on the subject of her distress. But the time was come, when her presence was necessary at La Vallée, a letter from the Lady Blanche now informing her, that the Count and herself, being then at the château of the Baron St. Foix, purposed to visit her at La Vallée, on their way home, as soon as they should be informed of her arrival there. Blanche added, that they made this visit, with the hope of inducing her to return with them to Château-le-Blanc.

Emily, having replied to the letter of her friend, and said that she should be at La Vallée in a few days, made hasty preparations for the journey; and, in thus leaving Toulouse, endeavoured to support herself with a belief, that, if any fatal accident had happened to Valancourt, she must in this interval have heard of it.

On the evening before her departure, she went to take leave of the terrace and the pavilion. The day had been sultry, but a light shower, that fell just before sunset, had cooled the air, and given that soft verdure to the woods and pastures, which is so refreshing to the eye; while the rain drops, still trembling on the shrubs, glittered in the last yellow gleam, that lighted up the scene, and the air was filled with fragrance, exhaled by the late shower, from herbs and flowers and from the earth itself. But the lovely prospect, which Emily beheld from the terrace, was no longer viewed by her with delight; she sighed deeply as her eye wandered over it, and her spirits were in a state of such dejection, that she could not think of her approaching return to La Vallée, without tears, and seemed to mourn again the death of her father, as if it had been an event

of yesterday. Having reached the pavilion, she seated herself at the open lattice, and, while her eyes settled on the distant mountains, that overlooked Gascony, still gleaming on the horizon, though the sun had now left the plains below, "Alas!" said she "I return to your long lost scenes, but shall meet no more the parents, that were wont to render them delightful! — No more shall see the smile of welcome, or hear the well known voice of fondness: — all will now be cold and silent in what was once my happy home."

Tears stole down her cheek, as the remembrance of what that home had been, returned to her; but, after indulging her sorrow for some time, she checked it, accusing herself of ingratitude in forgetting the friends, that she possessed, while she lamented those that were departed; and she, at length, left the pavilion and the terrace, without having observed a shadow of Valancourt or of any other person.

CHAPTER XI

Ah happy hills! ah pleasing shade!  
Ah fields belov'd in vain!  
Where once my careless childhood stray'd,  
A stranger yet to pain!  
I feel the gales, that from ye blow,  
A momentary bliss bestow,  
As waving fresh their gladsome wing,  
My weary soul they seem to sooth.

GRAY

On the following morning, Emily left Thoulouse at an early hour, and reached La Vallée about sunset. With the melancholy she experienced on the review of a place which had been the residence of her parents, and the scene of her earliest delight, was mingled, after the first shock had subsided, a tender and undescribable pleasure. For time had so far blunted the acuteness of her grief, that she now courted every scene, that awakened the memory of her friends; in every room, where she had been accustomed to see them, they almost seemed to live again; and she felt that La Vallée was still her happiest home. One of the first apartments she visited, was that, which had been her father's library, and here she seated herself in his armchair, and, while she contemplated, with tempered resignation, the picture of past times, which her memory gave, the tears she shed could scarcely be called those of grief.

Soon after her arrival, she was surprised by a visit from the venerable M. Barreaux, who came impatiently to welcome the daughter of his late respected neighbour, to her long deserted home. Emily was comforted by the presence of an old friend, and they passed an interesting hour in conversing of former times, and in relating some of the circumstances, that had occurred to each, since they parted.

The evening was so far advanced, when M. Barreaux left Emily, that she could not visit the garden that night; but, on the following morning, she traced its long regretted scenes with fond impatience; and, as she walked beneath the groves, which her father had planted, and where she had so often sauntered in affectionate conversation with him, his countenance, his smile, even the accents of his voice, returned with exactness to her fancy, and her heart melted to the tender recollections.

This, too, was his favourite season of the year, at which they had often together admired the rich and variegated tints of these woods and the magical effect of autumnal lights upon the mountains; and now, the view of these circumstances made memory eloquent. As she wandered pensively on, she fancied the following address

## TO AUTUMN

Sweet Autumn! how thy melancholy grace  
 Steals on my heart, as through these shades I wind!  
 Sooth'd by thy breathing sigh, I fondly trace  
 Each lonely image of the pensive mind!  
 Lov'd scenes, lov'd friends—long lost! around me rise,  
 And wake the melting thought, the tender tear!  
 That tear, that thought, which more than mirth I prize—  
 Sweet as the gradual tint, that paints thy year!  
 Thy farewell smile, with fond regret, I view,  
 Thy beaming lights, soft gliding o'er the woods;  
 Thy distant landscape, touch'd with yellow hue  
 While falls the lengthen'd gleam; thy winding floods,  
 Now veil'd in shade, save where the skiff's white sails  
 Swell to the breeze, and catch thy streaming ray.  
 But now, e'en now!—the partial vision fails,  
 And the wave smiles, as sweeps the cloud away!  
 Emblem of life!—Thus checquer'd is its plan,  
 Thus joy succeeds to grief—thus smiles the varied man!

One of Emily's earliest enquiries, after her arrival at La Vallée, was concerning Theresa, her father's old servant, whom it may be remembered that M. Quesnel had turned from the house when it was let, without any provision. Understanding that she lived in a cottage at no great distance, Emily walked thither, and, on approaching, was pleased to see, that her habitation was pleasantly situated on a green slope, sheltered by a tuft of oaks, and had an appearance of comfort and extreme neatness. She found the old woman within, picking vine stalks, who, on perceiving her young mistress, was nearly overcome with joy.

"Ah! my dear young lady!" said she "I thought I should never see you again in this world, when I heard you were gone to that outlandish country. I have been hardly used, since you went; I little thought they would have turned me out of my old master's family in my old age!"

Emily lamented the circumstance, and then assured her, that she would make her latter days comfortable, and expressed satisfaction, on seeing her in so pleasant a habitation.

Theresa thanked her with tears, adding "Yes, mademoiselle, it is a very comfortable home, thanks to the kind friend, who took me out of my distress, when you were too far off to help me, and placed me here! I little thought! — but no more of that —"

"And who was this kind friend?" said Emily: "whoever it was, I shall consider him as mine also."

“Ah, mademoiselle! That friend forbade me to blazon the good deed — I must not say, who it was. But how you are altered since I saw you last! You look so pale now, and so thin, too; but then, there is my old master’s smile! Yes, that will never leave you, any more than the goodness, that used to make him smile. Alas-a-day! The poor lost a friend indeed, when he died!”

Emily was affected by this mention of her father, which Theresa observing, changed the subject. “I heard, mademoiselle” said she “that Madame Cheron married a foreign gentleman, after all, and took you abroad; how does she do?”

Emily now mentioned her death. “Alas!” said Theresa “If she had not been my master’s sister, I should never have loved her; she was always so cross. But how does that dear young gentleman do, M. Valancourt? He was a handsome youth, and a good one; is he well, mademoiselle?”

Emily was much agitated.

“A blessing on him!” continued Theresa. “Ah, my dear young lady, you need not look so shy; I know all about it. Do you think I do not know, that he loves you? Why, when you were away, mademoiselle, he used to come to the château and walk about it, so disconsolate! He would go into every room in the lower part of the house, and, sometimes, he would sit himself down in a chair, with his arms across, and his eyes on the floor, and there he would sit, and think, and think, for the hour together. He used to be very fond of the south parlour, because I told him it used to be yours; and there he would stay, looking at the pictures, which I said you drew, and playing upon your lute, that hung up by the window, and reading in your books, till sunset, and then he must go back to his brother’s château. And then —”

“It is enough, Theresa” said Emily. — “How long have you lived in this cottage — and how can I serve you? Will you remain here, or return and live with me?”

“Nay, mademoiselle” said Theresa “do not be so shy to your poor old servant. I am sure it is no disgrace to like such a good young gentleman.”

A deep sigh escaped from Emily.

“Ah! how he did love to talk of you! I loved him for that. Nay, for that matter, he liked to hear me talk, for he did not say much himself. But I soon found out what he came to the château about. Then, he would go into the garden, and down to the terrace, and sit under that great tree there, for the day together, with one of your books in his hand; but he did not read much, I fancy; for one day I happened to go that way, and I heard somebody talking. Who can be here? says I: I am sure I let nobody into the garden, but the Chevalier. So I walked softly, to see who it could be; and behold! it was the Chevalier himself, talking to himself about you. And he repeated your name, and sighed so! And said he had lost you for ever, for that you would never return for him. I thought he was out in his reckoning there, but I said nothing, and stole away.”

“No more of this trifling” said Emily, awakening from her reverie: “it displeases me.”

“But, when M. Quesnel let the château, I thought it would have broke the Chevalier’s heart.”

“Theresa” said Emily seriously “you must name the Chevalier no more!”

“Not name him, mademoiselle!” cried Theresa: “what times are come up now? Why, I love the Chevalier next to my old master and you, mademoiselle.”

“Perhaps your love was not well bestowed, then” replied Emily, trying to conceal her tears; “but, however that might be, we shall meet no more.”

“Meet no more! — Not well bestowed!” exclaimed Theresa. “What do I hear? No, mademoiselle, my love was well bestowed, for it was the Chevalier Valancourt, who gave me this cottage, and has supported me in my old age, ever since M. Quesnel turned me from my master’s house.”

“The Chevalier Valancourt!” said Emily, trembling extremely.

“Yes, mademoiselle, he himself, though he made me promise not to tell; but how could one help, when one heard him ill spoken of? Ah! Dear young lady, you may well weep, if you have behaved unkindly to him, for a more tender heart than his never young gentleman had. He found me out in my distress, when you were too far off to help me; and M. Quesnel refused to do so, and bade me go to service again — Alas! I was too old for that! — The Chevalier found me, and bought me this cottage, and gave me money to furnish it, and bade me seek out another poor woman to live with me; and he ordered his brother’s steward to pay me, every quarter, that which has supported me in comfort. Think then, mademoiselle, whether I have not reason to speak well of the Chevalier. And there are others, who could have afforded it better than he: and I am afraid he has hurt himself by his generosity, for quarter day is gone by long since, and no money for me! But do not weep so, mademoiselle: you are not sorry surely to hear of the poor Chevalier’s goodness?”

“Sorry!” said Emily, and wept the more. “But how long is it since you have seen him?”

“Not this many a day, mademoiselle.”

“When did you hear of him?” enquired Emily, with increased emotion.

“Alas! Never since he went away so suddenly into Languedoc; and he was but just come from Paris then, or I should have seen him, I am sure. Quarter day is gone by long since, and, as I said, no money for me; and I begin to fear some harm has happened to him: and if I was not so far from Estuvière and so lame, I should have gone to enquire before this time; and I have nobody to send so far.”

Emily's anxiety, as to the fate of Valancourt, was now scarcely endurable, and, since propriety would not suffer her to send to the château of his brother, she requested that Theresa would immediately hire some person to go to his steward from herself, and, when he asked for the quarterage due to her, to make enquiries concerning Valancourt. But she first made Theresa promise never to mention her name in this affair, or ever with that of the Chevalier Valancourt; and her former faithfulness to M. St. Aubert induced Emily to confide in her assurances. Theresa now joyfully undertook to procure a person for this errand, and then Emily, after giving her a sum of money to supply her with present comforts, returned, with spirits heavily oppressed, to her home, lamenting, more than ever, that a heart, possessed of so much benevolence as Valancourt's, should have been contaminated by the vices of the world, but affected by the delicate affection, which his kindness to her old servant expressed for herself.