CHAPTER VIII

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

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

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

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

Retired to her lonely cabin, her melancholy thoughts still hovered round the body of her deceased parent; and, when she sunk into a kind of slumber, the images of her waking mind still haunted her fancy. She thought she saw her father approaching her with a benign countenance; then, smiling mournfully and pointing upwards, his lips moved, but, instead of words, she heard sweet

music borne on the distant air, and presently saw his features glow with the mild rapture of a superior being. The strain seemed to swell louder, and she awoke. The vision was gone, but music yet came to her ear in strains such as angels might breathe. She doubted, listened, raised herself in the bed, and again listened. It was music, and not an illusion of her imagination. After a solemn steady harmony, it paused; then rose again, in mournful sweetness, and then died, in a cadence, that seemed to bear away the listening soul to heaven. She instantly remembered the music of the preceding night, with the strange circumstances, related by La Voisin, and the affecting conversation it had led to, concerning the state of departed spirits. All that St. Aubert had said, on that subject, now pressed upon her heart, and overwhelmed it. What a change in a few hours! He, who then could only conjecture, was now made acquainted with truth; was himself become one of the departed! As she listened, she was chilled with superstitious awe, her tears stopped; and she rose, and went to the window. All without was obscured in shade; but Emily, turning her eyes from the massy darkness of the woods, whose waving outline appeared on the horizon, saw, on the left, that effulgent planet, which the old man had pointed out, setting over the woods. She remembered what he had said concerning it, and, the music now coming at intervals on the air, she unclosed the casement to listen to the strains, that soon gradually sunk to a greater distance, and tried to discover whence they came. The obscurity prevented her from distinguishing any object on the green platform below; and the sounds became fainter and fainter, till they softened into silence. She listened, but they returned no more. Soon after, she observed the planet trembling between the fringed tops of the woods, and, in the next moment, sink behind them. Chilled with a melancholy awe, she retired once more to her bed, and, at length, forgot for a while her sorrows in sleep.

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

About an hour before sunset, La Voisin showed her the way through the woods to the convent, which stood in a small bay of the Mediterranean, crowned by a woody amphitheatre; and Emily, had she been less unhappy, would have admired the extensive sea view, that appeared from the green slope, in front of the edifice, and the rich shores, hung with woods and pastures, that extended on either hand. But her thoughts were now occupied by one sad idea, and the features of nature were to her colourless and without form. The bell for vespers struck, as she passed the ancient gate of the convent, and seemed the funereal note for St. Aubert. Little incidents affect a mind, enervated by sorrow; Emily struggled against the sickening faintness, that came over her, and was led into the presence of the abbess, who received her with an air of maternal tenderness; an air of such gentle solicitude and consideration, as touched her with an instantaneous gratitude; her eyes were filled with tears, and the words she would have spoken faltered on her lips. The abbess led her to a seat, and sat down beside her, still holding her hand and regarding her in silence, as Emily

dried her tears and attempted to speak. “Be composed, my daughter,” said the abbess in a soothing voice, “do not speak yet; I know all you would say. Your spirits must be soothed. We are going to prayers — will you attend our evening service? It is comfortable, my child, to look up in our afflictions to a father, who sees and pities us, and who chastens in his mercy.”

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

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

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

Twilight came on, before the abbess’s kindness would suffer Emily to depart, when she left the convent, with a heart much lighter than she had entered it, and was reconducted by La Voisin through the woods, the pensive gloom of which was in unison with the temper of her mind; and she pursued the little wild path, in musing silence, till her guide suddenly stopped, looked round, and then struck out of the path into the high grass, saying he had mistaken the road. He now walked on quickly, and Emily, proceeding with difficulty over the obscured and uneven ground, was left at some distance, till her voice arrested him, who seemed unwilling to stop, and still hurried on. “If you are in doubt about the way,” said Emily, “had we not better enquire it at the château yonder, between the trees?”

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

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

“No, ma’amselle — no banditti.”

"What are you afraid of then, my good friend? you are not superstitious?"

"No, not superstitious; but, to tell you the truth, lady, nobody likes to go near that château, after dusk."

"By whom is it inhabited," said Emily, "that it is so formidable?"

"Why, ma'amselle, it is scarcely inhabited, for our lord the Marquis, and the lord of all these find woods, too, is dead. He had not once been in it, for these many years, and his people, who have the care of it, live in a cottage close by." Emily now understood this to be the château, which La Voisin had formerly pointed out, as having belonged to the Marquis Villeroi, on the mention of which her father had appeared so much affected.

"Ah! it is a desolate place now," continued La Voisin, "and such a grand, fine place, as I remember it!"

Emily enquired what had occasioned this lamentable change; but the old man was silent, and Emily, whose interest was awakened by the fear he had expressed, and above all by a recollection of her father's agitation, repeated the question, and added, "If you are neither afraid of the inhabitants, my good friend, nor are superstitious, how happens it, that you dread to pass near that château in the dark?"

"Perhaps, then, I am a little superstitious, ma'amselle; and, if you knew what I do, you might be so too. Strange things have happened there. Monsieur, your good father, appeared to have known the late Marchioness."

"Pray inform me what did happen?" said Emily, with much emotion.

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

"You doubtless believe this music to have some connection with the château," said Emily suddenly, "and are, therefore, superstitious."

"It may be so, ma'amselle, but there are other circumstances, belonging to that château, which I remember, and sadly too." A heavy sigh followed: but Emily's delicacy restrained the curiosity these words revived, and she enquired no further.

On reaching the cottage, all the violence of her grief returned; it seemed as if she had escaped its heavy pressure only while she was removed from the object

of it. She passed immediately to the chamber, where the remains of her father were laid, and yielded to all the anguish of hopeless grief. La Voisin, at length, persuaded her to leave the room, and she returned to her own, where, exhausted by the sufferings of the day, she soon fell into deep sleep, and awoke considerably refreshed.

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

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

The abbess led her from the church into her own parlour, and there administered all the consolations, that religion and gentle sympathy can give. Emily struggled against the pressure of grief; but the abbess, observing her attentively, ordered a bed to be prepared, and recommended her to retire to

repose. She also kindly claimed her promise to remain a few days at the convent; and Emily, who had no wish to return to the cottage, the scene of all her sufferings, had leisure, now that no immediate care pressed upon her attention, to feel the indisposition, which disabled her from immediately travelling.

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

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

During her stay at the convent, the peace and sanctity that reigned within, the tranquil beauty of the scenery without, and the delicate attentions of the abbess and the nuns, were circumstances so soothing to her mind, that they almost tempted her to leave a world, where she had lost her dearest friends, and devote herself to the cloister, in a spot, rendered sacred to her by containing the tomb of St. Aubert. The pensive enthusiasm, too, so natural to her temper, had spread a beautiful illusion over the sanctified retirement of a nun, that almost hid from her view the selfishness of its security. But the touches, which a melancholy fancy, slightly tinctured with superstition, gave to the monastic scene, began to fade, as her spirits revived, and brought once more to her heart an image, which had only transiently been banished thence. By this she was silently awakened to hope and comfort and sweet affections; visions of happiness gleamed faintly at a distance, and, though she knew them to be illusions, she could not resolve to shut them out for ever. It was the remembrance of Valancourt, of his taste, his genius, and of the countenance which glowed with both, that, perhaps, alone determined her to return to the world. The grandeur and sublimity of the scenes, amidst which they had first met, had fascinated her fancy, and had imperceptibly contributed to render

Valancourt more interesting by seeming to communicate to him somewhat of their own character. The esteem, too, which St. Aubert had repeatedly expressed for him, sanctioned this kindness; but, though his countenance and manner had continually expressed his admiration of her, he had not otherwise declared it; and even the hope of seeing him again was so distant, that she was scarcely conscious of it, still less that it influenced her conduct on this occasion.

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

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

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

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

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

Towards the close of this day, Emily came within view of the plains in the neighbourhood of La Vallée, and the well-known objects of former times began to press upon her notice, and with them recollections, that awakened all her

tenderness and grief. Often, while she looked through her tears upon the wild grandeur of the Pyrenees, now varied with the rich lights and shadows of evening, she remembered, that, when last she saw them, her father partook with her of the pleasure they inspired. Suddenly some scene, which he had particularly pointed out to her, would present itself, and the sick languor of despair would steal upon her heart. “There!” she would exclaim, “there are the very cliffs, there the wood of pines, which he looked at with such delight, as we passed this road together for the last time. There, too, under the crag of that mountain, is the cottage, peeping from among the cedars, which he bade me remember, and copy with my pencil. O my father, shall I never see you more!”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SONNET

Now the bat circles on the breeze of eve,
That creeps, in shudd'ring fits, along the wave,
And trembles 'mid the woods, and through the cave
Whose lonely sighs the wanderer deceive;

For oft, when melancholy charms his mind,
He thinks the Spirit of the rock he hears,
Nor listens, but with sweetly-thrilling fears,
To the low, mystic murmurs of the wind!

Now the bat circles, and the twilight-dew
Falls silent round, and, o'er the mountain-cliff,
The gleaming wave, and far-discover'd skiff,
Spreads the grey veil of soft, harmonious hue.

So falls o'er Grief the dew of pity's tear
Dimming her lonely visions of despair.

Emily, wandering on, came to St. Aubert's favourite plane tree, where so often, at this hour, they had sat beneath the shade together, and with her dear mother so often had conversed on the subject of a future state. How often, too, had her father expressed the comfort he derived from believing, that they should meet in another world! Emily, overcome by these recollections, left the plane tree, and, as she leaned pensively on the wall of the terrace, she observed a group of peasants dancing gaily on the banks of the Garonne, which spread in broad expanse below, and reflected the evening light. What a contrast they formed to the desolate, unhappy Emily! They were gay and *debonnaire*, as they were wont to be when she, too, was gay — when St. Aubert used to listen to

their merry music, with a countenance beaming pleasure and benevolence. Emily, having looked for a moment on this sprightly band, turned away, unable to bear the remembrances it excited; but where, alas! could she turn, and not meet new objects to give acuteness to grief?

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

“Pray, Theresa, cease,” said Emily, wishing to interrupt this ill judged, but well meaning harangue; Theresa’s loquacity, however, was not to be silenced so easily. “And when you used to grieve so,” she added, “he often told you how wrong it was — for that my mistress was happy. And, if she was happy, I am sure he is so too; for the prayers of the poor, they say, reach heaven.” During this speech, Emily had walked silently into the château, and Theresa lighted her across the hall into the common sitting parlour, where she had laid the cloth, with one solitary knife and fork, for supper. Emily was in the room before she perceived that it was not her own apartment, but she checked the emotion which inclined her to leave it, and seated herself quietly by the little supper table. Her father’s hat hung upon the opposite wall; while she gazed at it, a faintness came over her. Theresa looked at her, and then at the object, on which her eyes were settled, and went to remove it; but Emily waved her hand — “No,” said she, “let it remain. I am going to my chamber.”

“Nay, ma’amselle, supper is ready.”

“I cannot take it,” replied Emily, “I will go to my room, and try to sleep. Tomorrow I shall be better.”

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

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

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

CHAPTER IX

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

MASON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the dusk the features of the person who spoke, she felt a remembrance too strong to be distrusted.

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

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

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

Emily could still answer only by tears, till she rose, and begged they might leave the melancholy spot, when Valancourt, though he saw her feebleness, could not offer to detain her, but took her arm within his, and led her from the fishing-house. They walked silently through the woods, Valancourt anxious to know, yet fearing to ask any particulars concerning St. Aubert; and Emily too much distressed to converse. After some time, however, she acquired fortitude enough to speak of her father, and to give a brief account of the manner of his death; during which recital Valancourt’s countenance betrayed strong emotion, and, when he heard that St. Aubert had died on the road, and that Emily had been left among strangers, he pressed her hand between his, and involuntarily exclaimed, “Why was I not there!” but in the next moment recollected himself, for he immediately returned to the mention of her father; till, perceiving that her spirits were exhausted, he gradually changed the subject, and spoke of himself. Emily thus learned that, after they had parted, he had wandered, for some time, along the shores of the Mediterranean, and had then returned through Languedoc into Gascony, which was his native province, and where he usually resided.

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

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

CHAPTER X

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

MACBETH

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

The solitary life, which Emily had led of late, and the melancholy subjects, on which she had suffered her thoughts to dwell, had rendered her at times sensible to the 'thick-coming fancies' of a mind greatly enervated. It was lamentable, that her excellent understanding should have yielded, even for a moment, to the reveries of superstition, or rather to those starts of imagination, which deceive the senses into what can be called nothing less than momentary madness. Instances of this temporary failure of mind had more than once occurred since her return home; particularly when, wandering through this lonely mansion in the evening twilight, she had been alarmed by appearances, which would have been unseen in her more cheerful days. To this infirm state of her nerves may be attributed what she imagined, when, her eyes glancing a second time on the armchair, which stood in an obscure part of the closet, the countenance of her dead father appeared there. Emily stood fixed for a moment to the floor, after which she left the closet. Her spirits, however, soon returned; she reproached herself with the weakness of thus suffering interruption in an act of serious importance, and again opened the door. By the directions which St. Aubert had given her, she readily found the board he had described in an opposite corner of the closet, near the window; she distinguished also the line he had mentioned, and, pressing it as he had bade her, it slid down, and disclosed the bundle of papers, together with some scattered ones, and the purse of louis. With a trembling hand she removed them, replaced the board, paused a moment, and was rising from the floor, when, on looking up, there appeared to her alarmed fancy the same countenance in the chair. The illusion, another instance of the unhappy effect which solitude and grief had gradually produced upon her mind, subdued her spirits; she rushed forward into the chamber, and sunk almost senseless into a chair. Returning reason soon overcame the dreadful, but pitiable attack of imagination, and she turned to the papers, though still with so little recollection, that her eyes involuntarily settled on the writing of some loose sheets, which lay open; and she was unconscious, that she was transgressing her father's strict injunction, till a sentence of dreadful import awakened her attention and her memory together. She hastily

put the papers from her; but the words, which had roused equally her curiosity and terror, she could not dismiss from her thoughts. So powerfully had they affected her, that she even could not resolve to destroy the papers immediately; and the more she dwelt on the circumstance, the more it inflamed her imagination. Urged by the most forcible, and apparently the most necessary, curiosity to enquire farther, concerning the terrible and mysterious subject, to which she had seen an allusion, she began to lament her promise to destroy the papers. For a moment, she even doubted, whether it could justly be obeyed, in contradiction to such reasons as there appeared to be for further information. But the delusion was momentary.

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

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

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

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

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

upwards with an expression of peculiar meekness, while the soft cloud of the brow spoke of the fine sensibility of the temper.

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

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

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

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

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

Emily and Valancourt talked of the scenes they had passed among the Pyrenean Alps; as he spoke of which there was often a tremulous tenderness in his voice, and sometimes he expatiated on them with all the fire of genius, sometimes would appear scarcely conscious of the topic, though he continued

to speak. This subject recalled forcibly to Emily the idea of her father, whose image appeared in every landscape, which Valancourt particularised, whose remarks dwelt upon her memory, and whose enthusiasm still glowed in her heart. Her silence, at length, reminded Valancourt how nearly his conversation approached to the occasion of her grief, and he changed the subject, though for one scarcely less affecting to Emily. When he admired the grandeur of the plane tree, that spread its wide branches over the terrace, and under whose shade they now sat, she remembered how often she had sat thus with St. Aubert, and heard him express the same admiration.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Then, forgetting his resolution, he again spoke of himself. “You know not,” said he, “the many anxious hours I have passed near you lately, when you believed me, if indeed you honoured me with a thought, far away. I have wandered, near the château, in the still hours of the night, when no eye could observe me. It was delightful to know I was so near you, and there was something particularly soothing in the thought, that I watched round your habitation, while you slept. These grounds are not entirely new to me. Once I ventured within the fence, and spent one of the happiest, and yet most melancholy hours of my life in walking under what I believed to be your window.”

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

Having thus continued to converse, without perceiving the flight of time, Valancourt, at length, seemed to recollect himself. “I must go,” said he mournfully, “but it is with the hope of seeing you again, of being permitted to pay my respects to your family; let me hear this hope confirmed by your voice.”

“My family will be happy to see any friend of my dear father,” said Emily. Valancourt kissed her hand, and still lingered, unable to depart, while Emily sat silently, with her eyes bent on the ground; and Valancourt, as he gazed on her, considered that it would soon be impossible for him to recall, even to his memory, the exact resemblance of the beautiful countenance he then beheld; at this moment a hasty footstep approached from behind the plane-tree, and, turning her eyes, Emily saw Madame Cheron. She felt a blush steal upon her

cheek, and her frame trembled with the emotion of her mind; but she instantly rose to meet her visitor.

"So, niece!" said Madame Cheron, casting a look of surprise and enquiry on Valancourt, "so niece, how do you do? But I need not ask, your looks tell me you have already recovered your loss."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Nor has he done so, I hope, madam," said Emily calmly, "nor did his pecuniary misfortunes arise from that noble generosity, which always distinguished him. The affairs of M. de Motteville may, I trust, yet be settled

without deeply injuring his creditors, and in the meantime I should be very happy to remain at La Vallée."

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

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

"I see that I have undertaken a very troublesome task," said Madame Cheron, colouring highly.

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

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

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

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

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

"And who is this young adventurer, pray?" said Madame Cheron, "and what are his pretensions?"

"These he must himself explain, madam," replied Emily. "Of his family my father was not ignorant, and I believe it is unexceptionable." She then proceeded to mention what she knew concerning it.

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

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

"I am sorry to perceive, niece," said she, in allusion to somewhat that Emily had said, concerning physiognomy, "that you have a great many of your father's prejudices, and among them those sudden predilections for people from their looks. I can perceive, that you imagine yourself to be violently in love with this young adventurer, after an acquaintance of only a few days. There was something, too, so charmingly romantic in the manner of your meeting!"

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

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

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

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

Having dismissed Theresa to bed, Emily wandered through every lonely apartment of the château, lingering long in what had been her father's bedroom, indulging melancholy, yet not unpleasing, emotions, and, having often returned within the door to take another look at it, she withdrew to her own chamber. From her window she gazed upon the garden below, shown faintly by the moon, rising over the tops of the palm-trees, and, at length, the calm beauty of the night increased a desire of indulging the mournful sweetness of bidding farewell to the beloved shades of her childhood, till she was tempted to descend. Throwing over her the light veil, in which she usually walked, she silently passed into the garden, and, hastening towards the distant groves, was glad to breathe once more the air of liberty, and to sigh unobserved. The deep repose of the scene, the rich scents, that floated on the breeze, the grandeur of the wide horizon and of the clear blue arch, soothed and gradually elevated her mind to that sublime complacency, which renders the vexations of this world so insignificant and mean in our eyes, that we wonder they have had power for a moment to disturb us. Emily forgot Madame Cheron and all the circumstances of her conduct, while her thoughts ascended to the contemplation of those unnumbered worlds, that lie scattered in the depths of æther, thousands of them hid from human eyes, and almost beyond the flight of human fancy. As her imagination soared through the regions of space, and aspired to that Great First Cause, which pervades and governs all being, the

idea of her father scarcely ever left her; but it was a pleasing idea, since she resigned him to God in the full confidence of a pure and holy faith. She pursued her way through the groves to the terrace, often pausing as memory awakened the pang of affection, and as reason anticipated the exile, into which she was going.

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

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

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

almond trees she had just left. She immediately withdrew from the casement, and, though much agitated, sought in sleep the refreshment of a short oblivion.