

CHAPTER XXX

Happier prospects begin to appear. Let us be inflexible, and fortune will at last change in our favour.

When I had thus finished and my audience was retired, the gaoler, who was one of the most humane of his profession, hoped I would not be displeased, as what he did was but his duty, observing that he must be obliged to remove my son into a stronger cell, but that he should be permitted to revisit me every morning. I thanked him for his clemency, and grasping my boy's hand, bade him farewell, and be mindful of the great duty that was before him.

I again, therefore laid me down, and one of my little ones sat by my bedside reading, when Mr. Jenkinson entering, informed me that there was news of my daughter; for that she was seen by a person about two hours before in a strange gentleman's company, and that they had stopped at a neighbouring village for refreshment, and seemed as if returning to town. He had scarce delivered this news, when the gaoler came with looks of haste and pleasure, to inform me, that my daughter was found. Moses came running in a moment after, crying out that his sister Sophy was below and coming up with our old friend Mr. Burchell.

Just as he delivered this news my dearest girl entered, and with looks almost wild with pleasure, ran to kiss me in a transport of affection. Her mother's tears and silence also showed her pleasure. — "Here, pappa" cried the charming girl, "here is the brave man to whom I owe my delivery; to this gentleman's intrepidity I am indebted for my happiness and safety —" A kiss from Mr. Burchell, whose pleasure seemed even greater than hers, interrupted what she was going to add.

"Ah, Mr. Burchell" cried I "this is but a wretched habitation you now find us in; and we are now very different from what you last saw us. You were ever our friend: we have long discovered our errors with regard to you, and repented of our ingratitude. After the vile usage you then received at my hands I am almost ashamed to behold your face; yet I hope you'll forgive me, as I was deceived by a base ungenerous wretch, who, under the mask of friendship, has undone me."

"It is impossible" replied Mr. Burchell "that I should forgive you, as you never deserved my resentment. I partly saw your delusion then, and as it was out of my power to restrain, I could only pity it!"

"It was ever my conjecture" cried I "that your mind was noble; but now I find it so. But tell me, my dear child, how hast thou been relieved, or who the ruffians were who carried thee away?"

"Indeed, Sir" replied she "as to the villain who carried me off, I am yet ignorant. For as my mamma and I were walking out, he came behind us, and almost before I could call for help, forced me into the post chaise, and in an

instant the horses drove away. I met several on the road, to whom I cried out for assistance; but they disregarded my entreaties. In the meantime the ruffian himself used every art to hinder me from crying out: he flattered and threatened by turns, and swore that if I continued but silent, he intended no harm. In the meantime I had broken the canvas that he had drawn up, and whom should I perceive at some distance but your old friend Mr. Burchell, walking along with his usual swiftness, with the great stick for which we used so much to ridicule him. As soon as we came within hearing, I called out to him by name, and entreated his help. I repeated my exclamations several times, upon which, with a very loud voice, he bid the postillion stop; but the boy took no notice, but drove on with still greater speed. I now thought he could never overtake us, when in less than a minute I saw Mr. Burchell come running up by the side of the horses, and with one blow knock the postillion to the ground. The horses when he was fallen soon stopped of themselves, and the ruffian stepping out, with oaths and menaces drew his sword, and ordered him at his peril to retire; but Mr. Burchell running up, shivered his sword to pieces, and then pursued him for near a quarter of a mile; but he made his escape. I was at this time come out myself, willing to assist my deliverer; but he soon returned to me in triumph. The postillion, who was recovered, was going to make his escape too; but Mr. Burchell ordered him at his peril to mount again, and drive back to town. Finding it impossible to resist, he reluctantly complied, though the wound he had received seemed, to me at least, to be dangerous. He continued to complain of the pain as we drove along, so that he at last excited Mr. Burchell's compassion, who, at my request, exchanged him for another at an inn where we called on our return."

"Welcome then" cried I "my child, and thou her gallant deliverer, a thousand welcomes. Though our cheer is but wretched, yet our hearts are ready to receive you. And now, Mr. Burchell, as you have delivered my girl, if you think her a recompence she is yours, if you can stoop to an alliance with a family so poor as mine, take her, obtain her consent, as I know you have her heart, and you have mine. And let me tell you, Sir, that I give you no small treasure, she has been celebrated for beauty it is true, but that is not my meaning, I give you up a treasure in her mind."

"But I suppose, Sir" cried Mr. Burchell "that you are apprised of my circumstances, and of my incapacity to support her as she deserves?"

"If your present objection" replied I "be meant as an evasion of my offer, I desist: but I know no man so worthy to deserve her as you; and if I could give her thousands, and thousands sought her from me, yet my honest brave Burchell should be my dearest choice."

To all this his silence alone seemed to give a mortifying refusal, and without the least reply to my offer, he demanded if we could not be furnished with refreshments from the next inn, to which being answered in the affirmative, he ordered them to send in the best dinner that could be provided upon such short notice. He bespoke also a dozen of their best wine; and some cordials for me. Adding, with a smile, that he would stretch a little for once, and tho' in a prison,

asserted he was never better disposed to be merry. The waiter soon made his appearance with preparations for dinner, a table was lent us by the gaoler, who seemed remarkably assiduous, the wine was disposed in order, and two very well dressed dishes were brought in.

My daughter had not yet heard of her poor brother's melancholy situation, and we all seemed unwilling to damp her cheerfulness by the relation. But it was in vain that I attempted to appear cheerful, the circumstances of my unfortunate son broke through all efforts to dissemble; so that I was at last obliged to damp our mirth by relating his misfortunes, and wishing that he might be permitted to share with us in this little interval of satisfaction. After my guests were recovered, from the consternation my account had produced, I requested also that Mr. Jenkinson, a fellow prisoner, might be admitted, and the gaoler granted my request with an air of unusual submission. The clanking of my son's irons was no sooner heard along the passage, than his sister ran impatiently to meet him; while Mr. Burchell, in the meantime, asked me if my son's name were George, to which replying in the affirmative, he still continued silent. As soon as my boy entered the room, I could perceive he regarded Mr. Burchell with a look of astonishment and reverence. "Come on" cried I "my son, though we are fallen very low, yet providence has been pleased to grant us some small relaxation from pain. Thy sister is restored to us, and there is her deliverer: to that brave man it is that I am indebted for yet having a daughter, give him, my boy, the hand of friendship, he deserves our warmest gratitude."

My son seemed all this while regardless of what I said, and still continued fixed at respectful distance. — "My dear brother" cried his sister "why don't you thank my good deliverer; the brave should ever love each other."

He still continued his silence and astonishment, till our guest at last perceived himself to be known, and assuming all his native dignity, desired my son to come forward. Never before had I seen any thing so truly majestic as the air he assumed upon this occasion. The greatest object in the universe, says a certain philosopher, is a good man struggling with adversity; yet there is still a greater, which is the good man that comes to relieve it. After he had regarded my son for some time with a superior air "I again find" said he "unthinking boy, that the same crime —" But here he was interrupted by one of the gaoler's servants, who came to inform us that a person of distinction, who had driven into town with a chariot and several attendants, sent his respects to the gentleman that was with us, and begged to know when he should think proper to be waited upon. — "Bid the fellow wait" cried our guest "till I shall have leisure to receive him;" and then turning to my son, "I again find, Sir" proceeded he "that you are guilty of the same offence for which you once had my reproof, and for which the law is now preparing its justest punishments. You imagine, perhaps, that a contempt for your own life, gives you a right to take that of another: but where, Sir, is the difference between a duelist who hazards a life of no value, and the murderer who acts with greater security? Is it any diminution of the gamester's fraud when he alleges that he has staked a counter?"

“Alas, Sir” cried I “whoever you are, pity the poor misguided creature; for what he has done was in obedience to a deluded mother, who in the bitterness of her resentment required him upon her blessing to avenge her quarrel. Here, Sir, is the letter, which will serve to convince you of her imprudence and diminish his guilt.”

He took the letter, and hastily read it over. “This” says he “though not a perfect excuse, is such a palliation of his fault, as induces me to forgive him. And now, Sir” continued he, kindly taking my son by the hand, “I see you are surprised at finding me here; but I have often visited prisons upon occasions less interesting. I am now come to see justice done a worthy man, for whom I have the most sincere esteem. I have long been a disguised spectator of thy father’s benevolence. I have at his little dwelling enjoyed respect uncontaminated by flattery, and have received that happiness that courts could not give, from the amusing simplicity around his fireside. My nephew has been apprised of my intentions of coming here, and I find is arrived; it would be wronging him and you to condemn him without examination: if there be injury, there shall be redress; and this I may say without boasting, that none have ever taxed the injustice of Sir William Thornhill.”

We now found the personage whom we had so long entertained as an harmless amusing companion was no other than the celebrated Sir William Thornhill, to whose virtues and singularities scarce any were strangers. The poor Mr. Burchell was in reality a man of large fortune and great interest, to whom senates listened with applause, and whom party heard with conviction; who was the friend of his country, but loyal to his king. My poor wife recollecting her former familiarity, seemed to shrink with apprehension; but Sophia, who a few moments before thought him her own, now perceiving the immense distance to which he was removed by fortune, was unable to conceal her tears.

“Ah, Sir” cried my wife, with a piteous aspect “how is it possible that I can ever have your forgiveness; the slights you received from me the last time I had the honour of seeing you at our house, and the jokes which I audaciously threw out, these jokes, Sir, I fear can never be forgiven.”

“My dear good lady” returned he with a smile “if you had your joke, I had my answer: I’ll leave it to all the company if mine were not as good as yours. To say the truth, I know nobody whom I am disposed to be angry with at present but the fellow who so frightened my little girl here. I had not even time to examine the rascal’s person so as to describe him in an advertisement. Can you tell me, Sophia, my dear, whether you should know him again?”

“Indeed, Sir” replied she “I can’t be positive; yet now I recollect he had a large mark over one of his eyebrows.”

“I ask pardon, madam” interrupted Jenkinson, who was by, “but be so good as to inform me if the fellow wore his own red hair?”

“Yes, I think so” cried Sophia.

“And did your honour” continued he, turning to Sir William, “observe the length of his legs?”

“I can’t be sure of their length” cried the Baronet “but I am convinced of their swiftness; for he outran me, which is what I thought few men in the kingdom could have done.”

“Please your honour” cried Jenkinson “I know the man: it is certainly the same; the best runner in England; he has beaten Pinwire of Newcastle, Timothy Baxter is his name, I know him perfectly, and the very place of his retreat this moment. If your honour will bid Mr Gaoler let two of his men go with me, I’ll engage to produce him to you in an hour at farthest.”

Upon this the gaoler was called, who instantly appearing, Sir William demanded if he knew him. ‘Yes, please your honour” replied the gaoler “I know Sir William Thornhill well, and everybody that knows any thing of him, will desire to know more of him.”

“Well then” said the Baronet “my request is, that you will permit this man and two of your servants to go upon a message by my authority, and as I am in the commission of the peace, I undertake to secure you.”

“Your promise is sufficient” replied the other “and you may at a minute’s warning send them over England whenever your honour thinks fit.”

In pursuance of the gaoler’s compliance, Jenkinson was dispatched in search of Timothy Baxter, while we were amused with the assiduity of our youngest boy Bill, who had just come in and climbed up to Sir William’s neck in order to kiss him. His mother was immediately going to chastise his familiarity, but the worthy man prevented her; and taking the child, all ragged as he was, upon his knee, “What, Bill, you chubby rogue” cried he “do you remember your old friend Burchell; and Dick too, my honest veteran, are you here, you shall find I have not forgot you.” So saying, he gave each a large piece of gingerbread, which the poor fellows eat very heartily, as they had got that morning but a very scanty breakfast.

We now sat down to dinner, which was almost cold; but previously, my arm still continuing painful, Sir William wrote a prescription, for he had made the study of physic his amusement, and was more than moderately skilled in the profession: this being sent to an apothecary who lived in the place, my arm was dressed, and I found almost instantaneous relief. We were waited upon at dinner by the gaoler himself, who was willing to do our guest all the honour in his power. But before we had well dined, another message was brought from his nephew, desiring permission to appear, in order to vindicate his innocence and honour, with which request the Baronet complied, and desired Mr. Thornhill to be introduced.

CHAPTER XXXI

Former benevolence now repaid with unexpected interest.

Mr. Thornhill made his entrance with a smile, which he seldom wanted, and was going to embrace his uncle, which the other repulsed with an air of disdain. "No fawning, Sir, at present" cried the Baronet, with a look of severity, "the only way to my heart is by the road of honour; but here I only see complicated instances of falsehood, cowardice, and oppression. How is it, Sir, that this poor man, for whom I know you professed a friendship, is used thus hardly? His daughter vilely seduced, as a recompence for his hospitality, and he himself thrown into a prison perhaps but for resenting the insult? His son too, whom you feared to face as a man —"

"Is it possible, Sir" interrupted his nephew "that my uncle could object that as a crime which his repeated instructions alone have persuaded me to avoid.'

"Your rebuke" cried Sir William "is just; you have acted in this instance prudently and well, though not quite as your father would have done: my brother indeed was the soul of honour; but thou — yes you have acted in this instance perfectly right, and it has my warmest approbation."

"And I hope" said his nephew "that the rest of my conduct will not be found to deserve censure. I appeared, Sir, with this gentleman's daughter at some places of public amusement; thus what was levity, scandal called by a harsher name, and it was reported that I had debauched her. I waited on her father in person, willing to clear the thing to his satisfaction, and he received me only with insult and abuse. As for the rest, with regard to his being here, my attorney and steward can best inform you, as I commit the management of business entirely to them. If he has contracted debts and is unwilling or even unable to pay them, it is their business to proceed in this manner, and I see no hardship or injustice in pursuing the most legal means of redress.'

"If this" cried Sir William "be as you have stated it, there is nothing unpardonable in your offence, and though your conduct might have been more generous in not suffering this gentleman to be oppressed by subordinate tyranny, yet it has been at least equitable."

"He cannot contradict a single particular" replied the Squire "I defy him to do so, and several of my servants are ready to attest what I say. Thus, Sir," continued he, finding that I was silent, for in fact I could not contradict him, "thus, Sir, my own innocence is vindicated; but though at your entreaty I am ready to forgive this gentleman every other offence, yet his attempts to lessen me in your esteem, excite a resentment that I cannot govern. And this too at a time when his son was actually preparing to take away my life; this, I say, was

such guilt, that I am determined to let the law take its course. I have here the challenge that was sent me and two witnesses to prove it; one of my servants has been wounded dangerously, and even though my uncle himself should dissuade me, which I know he will not, yet I will see public justice done, and he shall suffer for it.”

“Thou monster” cried my wife “hast thou not had vengeance enough already, but must my poor boy feel thy cruelty. I hope that good Sir William will protect us, for my son is as innocent as a child; I am sure he is, and never did harm to man.”

“Madam” replied the good man “your wishes for his safety are not greater than mine; but I am sorry to find his guilt too plain; and if my nephew persists —” But the appearance of Jenkinson and the gaoler’s two servants now called off our attention, who entered, haling in a tall man, very genteelly dressed, and answering the description already given of the ruffian who had carried off my daughter

“Here” cried Jenkinson, pulling him in, “here we have him, and if ever there was a candidate for Tyburn, this is one.”

The moment Mr. Thornhill perceived the prisoner, and Jenkinson, who had him in custody, he seemed to shrink back with terror. His face became pale with conscious guilt, and he would have withdrawn; but Jenkinson, who perceived his design, stopped him — “What, Squire” cried he “are you ashamed of your two old acquaintances, Jenkinson and Baxter: but this is the way that all great men forget their friends, though I am resolved we will not forget you. Our prisoner, please your honour” continued he, turning to Sir William, “has already confessed all. This is the gentleman reported to be so dangerously wounded: He declares that it was Mr. Thornhill who first put him upon this affair, that he gave him the clothes he now wears to appear like a gentleman, and furnished him with the post chaise. The plan was laid between them that he should carry off the young lady to a place of safety, and that there he should threaten and terrify her; but Mr. Thornhill was to come in in the meantime, as if by accident, to her rescue, and that they should fight awhile and then he was to run off, by which Mr. Thornhill would have the better opportunity of gaining her affections himself under the character of her defender.”

Sir William remembered the coat to have been frequently worn by his nephew, and all the rest the prisoner himself confirmed by a more circumstantial account; concluding, that Mr. Thornhill had often declared to him that he was in love with both sisters at the same time.

“Heavens” cried Sir William “what a viper have I been fostering in my bosom! And so fond of public justice too as he seemed to be. But he shall have it; secure him, Mr. Gaoler — yet hold, I fear there is not legal evidence to detain him.”

Upon this, Mr. Thornhill, with the utmost humility, entreated that two such abandoned wretches might not be admitted as evidences against him, but that

his servants should be examined. — “Your servants” replied Sir William, “wretch, call them yours no longer: but come let us hear what those fellows have to say, let his butler be called.”

When the butler was introduced, he soon perceived by his former master’s looks that all his power was now over. “Tell me” cried Sir William sternly “have you ever seen your master and that fellow dressed up in his clothes in company together?”

“Yes, please your honour” cried the butler “a thousand times: he was the man that always brought him his ladies.”

“How” interrupted young Mr. Thornhill “this to my face!”

“Yes” replied the butler “or to any man’s face. To tell you a truth, Master Thornhill, I never either loved you or liked you, and I don’t care if I tell you now a piece of my mind.”

“Now then” cried Jenkinson “tell his honour whether you know any thing of me.”

“I can’t say” replied the butler “that I know much good of you. The night that gentleman’s daughter was deluded to our house, you were one of them.”

“So then” cried Sir William “I find you have brought a very fine witness to prove your innocence: thou stain to humanity! To associate with such wretches!” (But continuing his examination) “You tell me, Mr. Butler, that this was the person who brought him this old gentleman’s daughter.”

“No, please your honour” replied the butler “he did not bring her, for the Squire himself undertook that business; but he brought the priest that pretended to marry them.”

“It is but too true” cried Jenkinson “I cannot deny it, that was the employment assigned me, and I confess it to my confusion.”

“Good heavens!” exclaimed the Baronet “how every new discovery of his villainy alarms me. All his guilt is now too plain, and I find his present prosecution was dictated by tyranny, cowardice and revenge; at my request, Mr. Gaoler, set this young officer, now your prisoner, free, and trust to me for the consequences. I’ll make it my business to set the affair in a proper light to my friend the magistrate who has committed him. But where is the unfortunate young lady herself: let her appear to confront this wretch, I long to know by what arts he has seduced her. Entreat her to come in. Where is she?”

“Ah, Sir” said I “that question stings me to the heart: I was once indeed happy in a daughter, but her miseries —” Another interruption here prevented me; for who should make her appearance but Miss Arabella Wilmot, who was next day to have been married to Mr. Thornhill. Nothing could equal her surprise at

seeing Sir William and his nephew here before her; for her arrival was quite accidental. It happened that she and the old gentleman her father were passing through the town, on their way to her aunt's, who had insisted that her nuptials with Mr Thornhill should be consummated at her house; but stopping for refreshment, they put up at an inn at the other end of the town. It was there from the window that the young lady happened to observe one of my little boys playing in the street, and instantly sending a footman to bring the child to her, she learnt from him some account of our misfortunes; but was still kept ignorant of young Mr. Thornhill's being the cause. Though her father made several remonstrances on the impropriety of going to a prison to visit us, yet they were ineffectual; she desired the child to conduct her, which he did, and it was thus she surprised us at a juncture so unexpected.

Nor can I go on, without a reflection on those accidental meetings, which, though they happen everyday, seldom excite our surprise but upon some extraordinary occasion. To what a fortuitous concurrence do we not owe every pleasure and convenience of our lives. How many seeming accidents must unite before we can be clothed or fed. The peasant must be disposed to labour, the shower must fall, the wind fill the merchant's sail, or numbers must want the usual supply.

We all continued silent for some moments, while my charming pupil, which was the name I generally gave this young lady, united in her looks compassion and astonishment, which gave new finishings to her beauty. "Indeed, my dear Mr. Thornhill" cried she to the Squire, who she supposed was come here to succour and not to oppress us "I take it a little unkindly that you should come here without me, or never inform me of the situation of a family so dear to us both: you know I should take as much pleasure in contributing to the relief of my reverend old master here, whom I shall ever esteem, as you can. But I find that, like your uncle, you take a pleasure in doing good in secret."

"He find pleasure in doing good!" cried Sir William, interrupting her. "No, my dear, his pleasures are as base as he is. You see in him, madam, as complete a villain as ever disgraced humanity. A wretch, who after having deluded this poor man's daughter, after plotting against the innocence of her sister, has thrown the father into prison, and the eldest son into fetters, because he had courage to face his betrayer. And give me leave, madam, now to congratulate you upon an escape from the embraces of such a monster."

"O goodness" cried the lovely girl "how have I been deceived! Mr Thornhill informed me for certain that this gentleman's eldest son, Captain Primrose, was gone off to America with his new married lady."

"My sweetest miss" cried my wife "he has told you nothing but falsehoods. My son George never left the kingdom, nor was married. Tho' you have forsaken him, he has always loved you too well to think of anybody else; and I have heard him say he would die a bachelor for your sake." She then proceeded to expatiate upon the sincerity of her son's passion, she set his duel with Mr. Thornhill in a proper light, from thence she made a rapid digression to the Squire's

debaucheries, his pretended marriages, and ended with a most insulting picture of his cowardice.

“Good heavens!” cried Miss Wilmot “how very near have I been to the brink of ruin! But how great is my pleasure to have escaped it! Ten thousand falsehoods has this gentleman told me! He had at last art enough to persuade me that my promise to the only man I esteemed was no longer binding, since he had been unfaithful. By his falsehoods I was taught to detest one equally brave and generous!”

But by this time my son was freed from the encumbrances of justice as the person supposed to be wounded was detected to be an impostor. Mr. Jenkinson also, who had acted as his valet de chambre, had dressed up his hair, and furnished him with whatever was necessary to make a genteel appearance. He now therefore entered, handsomely dressed in his regimentals, and, without vanity, (for I am above it) he appeared as handsome a fellow as ever wore a military dress. As he entered, he made Miss Wilmot a modest and distant bow, for he was not as yet acquainted with the change which the eloquence of his mother had wrought in his favour. But no decorums could restrain the impatience of his blushing mistress to be forgiven. Her tears, her looks, all contributed to discover the real sensations of her heart for having forgotten her former promise and having suffered herself to be deluded by an impostor. My son appeared amazed at her condescension, and could scarce believe it real. — “Sure, madam” cried he “this is but delusion! I can never have merited this! To be, blessed thus is to be too happy.”

“No, Sir” replied she “I have been deceived, basely deceived, else nothing could have ever made me unjust to my promise. You know my friendship, you have long known it; but forget what I have done, and as you once had my warmest vows of constancy, you shall now have them repeated; and be assured that if your Arabella cannot be yours, she shall never be another’s.”

“And no other’s you shall be” cried Sir William “if I have any influence with your father.”

This hint was sufficient for my son Moses, who immediately flew to the inn where the old gentleman was, to inform him of every circumstance that had happened. But in the mean time the Squire perceiving that he was on every side undone, now finding that no hopes were left from flattery or dissimulation, concluded that his wisest way would be to turn and face his pursuers. Thus laying aside all shame, he appeared the open hardy villain. “I find then” cried he “that I am to expect no justice here; but I am resolved it shall be done me. You shall know, Sir” turning to Sir William “I am no longer a poor dependent upon your favours. I scorn them. Nothing can keep Miss Wilmot’s fortune from me, which, I thank her father’s assiduity, is pretty large. The articles, and a bond for her fortune, are signed, and safe in my possession. It was her fortune, not her person, that induced me to wish for this match, and possessed of the one, let who will take the other.”

This was an alarming blow, Sir William was sensible of the justice of his claims, for he had been instrumental in drawing up the marriage articles himself. Miss Wilmot therefore perceiving that her fortune was irretrievably lost, turning to my son, she asked if the loss of fortune could lessen her value to him. "Though fortune" said she "is out of my power, at least I have my hand to give."

"And that, madam" cried her real lover "was indeed all that you ever had to give; at least all that I ever thought worth the acceptance. And now I protest, my Arabella, by all that's happy, your want of fortune this moment increases my pleasure, as it serves to convince my sweet girl of my sincerity."

Mr. Wilmot now entering, he seemed not a little pleased at the danger his daughter had just escaped, and readily consented to a dissolution of the match. But finding that her fortune, which was secured to Mr. Thornhill by bond, would not be given up, nothing could exceed his disappointment. He now saw that his money must all go to enrich one who had no fortune of his own. He could bear his being a rascal; but to want an equivalent to his daughter's fortune was wormwood. He sat therefore for some minutes employed in the most mortifying speculations, till Sir William attempted to lessen his anxiety. — "I must confess, Sir" cried he "that your present disappointment does not entirely displease me. Your immoderate passion for wealth is now justly punished. But tho' the young lady cannot be rich, she has still a competence sufficient to give content. Here you see an honest young soldier, who is willing to take her without fortune; they have long loved each other, and for the friendship I bear his father, my interest shall not be wanting in his promotion. Leave then that ambition which disappoints you, and for once admit that happiness which courts your acceptance."

"Sir William" replied the old gentleman "be assured I never yet forced her inclinations, nor will I now. If she still continues to love this young gentleman, let her have him with all my heart. There is still, thank heaven, some fortune left, and your promise will make it something more. Only let my old friend here (meaning me) give me a promise of settling six thousand pounds upon my girl, if ever he should come to his fortune, and I am ready this night to be the first to join them together."

As it now remained with me to make the young couple happy, I readily gave a promise of making the settlement he required, which, to one who had such little expectations as I, was no great favour. We had now therefore the satisfaction of seeing them fly into each other's arms in a transport. "After all my misfortunes" cried my son George "to be thus rewarded! Sure this is more than I could ever have presumed to hope for. To be possessed of all that's good, and after such an interval of pain! My warmest wishes could never rise so high!"

"Yes, my George" returned his lovely bride "now let the wretch take my fortune; since you are happy without it so am I. O what an exchange have I made from the basest of men to the dearest best! — Let him enjoy our fortune, I now can be happy even in indigence."

“And I promise you” cried the Squire, with a malicious grin, “that I shall be very happy with what you despise.”

“Hold, hold, Sir” cried Jenkinson “there are two words to that bargain. As for that lady’s fortune, Sir, you shall never touch a single stiver of it. Pray your honour” continued he to Sir William “can the Squire have this lady’s fortune if he be married to another?”

“How can you make such a simple demand” replied the Baronet, “undoubtedly he cannot.”

“I am sorry for that” cried Jenkinson; “or as this gentleman and I have been old fellow spotters, I have a friendship for him. But I must declare, well as I love him, that his contract is not worth a tobacco stopper, for he is married already.”

“You lie, like a rascal” returned the Squire, who seemed roused by this insult, “I never was legally married to any woman.”

“Indeed, begging your honour’s pardon” replied the other “you were; and I hope you will show a proper return of friendship to your own honest Jenkinson, who brings you a wife, and if the company restrains their curiosity a few minutes, they shall see her.” — So saying he went off with his usual celerity, and left us all unable to form any probable conjecture as to his design.

“Aye let him go” cried the Squire “whatever else I may have done I defy him there. I am too old now to be frightened with squibs.”

“I am surprised” said the Baronet “what the fellow can intend by this. Some low piece of humour I suppose!”

“Perhaps, Sir” replied I “he may have a more serious meaning. For when we reflect on the various schemes this gentleman has laid to seduce innocence, perhaps some one more artful than the rest has been found able to deceive him. When we consider what numbers he has ruined, how many parents now feel with anguish the infamy and the contamination which he has brought into their families, it would not surprise me if some one of them — Amazement! Do I see my lost daughter! Do I hold her! It is, it is my life, my happiness. I thought thee lost, my Olivia, yet still I hold thee — and still thou shalt live to bless me.” The warmest transports of the fondest lover were not greater than mine when I saw him introduce my child, and held my daughter in my arms, whose silence only spoke her raptures. “And art thou returned to me, my darling” cried I “to be my comfort in age!”

“That she is” cried Jenkinson “and make much of her, for she is your own honourable child, and as honest a woman as any in the whole room, let the other be who she will. And as for you Squire, as sure as you stand there this young lady is your lawful wedded wife. And to convince you that I speak nothing but truth, here is the licence by which you were married together.” — So saying,

he put the licence into the Baronet's hands, who read it, and found it perfect in every respect. "And now, gentlemen" continued he, I find you are surprised at all this; but a few words will explain the difficulty. That there Squire of renown, for whom I have a great friendship, but that's between ourselves, as often employed me in doing odd little things for him. Among the rest, he commissioned me to procure him a false licence and a false priest, in order to deceive this young lady. But as I was very much his friend, what did I do but went and got a true licence and a true priest, and married them both as fast as the cloth could make them. Perhaps you'll think it was generosity that made me do all this. But no. To my shame I confess it, my only design was to keep the licence and let the Squire know that I could prove it upon him whenever I thought proper, and so make him come down whenever I wanted money." A burst of pleasure now seemed to fill the whole apartment; our joy reached even to the common room, where the prisoners themselves sympathized,

— And shook their chains
In transport and rude harmony.

Happiness was expanded upon every face, and even Olivia's cheek seemed flushed with pleasure. To be thus restored to reputation, to friends and fortune at once, was a rapture sufficient to stop the progress of decay and restore former health and vivacity. But perhaps among all there was not one who felt sincerer pleasure than I. Still holding the dear-loved child in my arms, I asked my heart if these transports were not delusion. "How could you" cried I, turning to Mr. Jenkinson, "how could you add to my miseries by the story of her death! But it matters not, my pleasure at finding her again, is more than a recompence for the pain."

"As to your question" replied Jenkinson "that is easily answered. I thought the only probable means of freeing you from prison, was by submitting to the Squire, and consenting to his marriage with the other young lady. But these you had vowed never to grant while your daughter was living, there was therefore no other method to bring things to bear but by persuading you that she was dead. I prevailed on your wife to join in the deceit, and we have not had a fit opportunity of undeceiving you till now."

In the whole assembly now there only appeared two faces that did not glow with transport. Mr. Thornhill's assurance had entirely forsaken him: he now saw the gulf of infamy and want before him, and trembled to take the plunge. He therefore fell on his knees before his uncle, and in a voice of piercing misery implored compassion. Sir William was going to spurn him away, but at my request he raised him, and after pausing a few moments, "Thy vices, crimes, and ingratitude" cried he, "deserve no tenderness; yet thou shalt not be entirely forsaken, a bare competence shall be supplied, to support the wants of life, but not its follies. This young lady, thy wife, shall be put in possession of a third part of that fortune which once was thine, and from her tenderness alone thou art to expect any extraordinary supplies for the future." He was going to express his gratitude for such kindness in a set speech; but the Baronet prevented him

by bidding him not aggravate his meanness, which was already but too apparent. He ordered him at the same time to be gone, and from all his former domestics to choose one such as he should think proper, which was all that should be granted to attend him.

As soon as he left us, Sir William very politely stepped up to his new niece with a smile, and wished her joy. His example was followed by Miss Wilmot and her father; my wife too kissed her daughter with much affection, as, to use her own expression, she was now made an honest woman of. Sophia and Moses followed in turn, and even our benefactor Jenkinson desired to be admitted to that honour. Our satisfaction seemed scarce capable of increase. Sir William, whose greatest pleasure was in doing good, now looked round with a countenance open as the sun, and saw nothing but joy in the looks of all except that of my daughter Sophia, who, for some reasons we could not comprehend, did not seem perfectly satisfied. "I think now" cried he, with a smile "that all the company, except one or two, seem perfectly happy. There only remains an act of justice for me to do. You are sensible, Sir" continued he, turning to me, "of the obligations we both owe Mr. Jenkinson. And it is but just we should both reward him for it. Miss Sophia will, I am sure, make him very happy, and he shall have from me five hundred pounds as her fortune, and upon this I am sure they can live very comfortably together. Come, Miss Sophia, what say you to this match of my making? Will you have him?"

My poor girl seemed almost sinking into her mother's arms at the hideous proposal. — "Have him, Sir!" cried she faintly. "No, Sir, never."

"What" cried he again "not have Mr. Jenkinson, your benefactor, a handsome young fellow, with five hundred pounds and good expectations!"

"I beg, Sir" returned she, scarce able to speak, "that you'll desist, and not make me so very wretched."

"Was ever such obstinacy known" cried he again "to refuse a man whom the family has such infinite obligations to, who has preserved your sister, and who has five hundred pounds! What not have him!"

"No, Sir, never" replied she, angrily, "I'd sooner die first."

"If that be the case then" cried he "if you will not have him — I think I must have you myself." And so saying, he caught her to his breast with ardour. "My loveliest, my most sensible of girls" cried he "how could you ever think your own Burchell could deceive you, or that Sir William Thornhill could ever cease to admire a mistress that loved him for himself alone? I have for some years sought for a woman, who a stranger to my fortune could think that I had merit as a man. After having tried in vain, even amongst the pert and the ugly, how great at last must be my rapture to have made a conquest over such sense and such heavenly beauty." Then, turning to Jenkinson, "As I cannot, Sir, part with this young lady myself, for she has taken a fancy to the cut of my face, all the recompence I can make is to give you her fortune, and you may call upon my

steward tomorrow for five hundred pounds." Thus we had all our compliments to repeat, and Lady Thornhill underwent the same round of ceremony that her sister had done before. In the meantime Sir William's gentleman appeared to tell us that the equipages were ready to carry us to the inn, where everything was prepared for our reception. My wife and I led the van, and left those gloomy mansions of sorrow. The generous Baronet ordered forty pounds to be distributed among the prisoners, and Mr. Wilmot, induced by his example, gave half that sum. We were received below by the shouts of the villagers, and I saw and shook by the hand two or three of my honest parishioners, who were among the number. They attended us to our inn, where a sumptuous entertainment was provided, and coarser provisions distributed in great quantities among the populace.

After supper, as my spirits were exhausted by the alternation of pleasure and pain which they had sustained during the day, I asked permission to withdraw, and leaving the company in the midst of their mirth, as soon as I found myself alone, I poured out my heart in gratitude to the giver of joy as well as of sorrow, and then slept undisturbed till morning.

CHAPTER XXXII

The Conclusion.

The next morning as soon as I awaked I found my eldest son sitting by my bedside, who came to increase my joy with another turn of fortune in my favour. First having released me from the settlement that I had made the day before in his favour, he let me know that my merchant who had failed in town was arrested at Antwerp, and there had given up effects to a much greater amount than what was due to his creditors. My boy's generosity pleased me almost as much as this unlooked for good fortune. But I had some doubts whether I ought in justice to accept his offer. While I was pondering upon this, Sir William entered the room, to whom I communicated my doubts. His opinion was, that as my son was already possessed of a very affluent fortune by his marriage, I might accept his offer without any hesitation. His business, however, was to inform me that as he had the night before sent for the licences, and expected them every hour, he hoped that I would not refuse my assistance in making all the company happy that morning. A footman entered while we were speaking, to tell us that the messenger was returned, and as I was by this time ready, I went down, where I found the whole company as merry as affluence and innocence could make them. However, as they were now preparing for a very solemn ceremony, their laughter entirely displeased me. I told them of the grave, becoming and sublime deportment they should assume upon this Mystical occasion, and read them two homilies and a thesis of my own composing, in order to prepare them. Yet they still seemed perfectly refractory and ungovernable. Even as we were going along to church, to which I led the way, all gravity had quite forsaken them, and I was often tempted to turn back in indignation. In church a new dilemma arose, which promised no easy solution. This was, which couple should be married first; my son's bride warmly insisted, that Lady Thornhill, (that was to be) should take the lead; but this the other refused with equal ardour, protesting she would not be guilty of such rudeness for the world. The argument was supported for some time between both with equal obstinacy and good breeding. But as I stood all this time with my book ready, I was at last quite tired of the contest, and shutting it, "I perceive" cried I "that none of you have a mind to be married, and I think we had as good go back again; for I suppose there will be no business done here today." — This at once reduced them to reason. The Baronet and his Lady were first married, and then my son and his lovely partner.

I had previously that morning given orders that a coach should be sent for my honest neighbour Flamborough and his family, by which means, upon our return to the inn, we had the pleasure of finding the two Miss Flamboroughs alighted before us. Mr. Jenkinson gave his hand to the eldest, and my son Moses led up the other; (and I have since found that he has taken a real liking to the girl, and my consent and bounty he shall have whenever he thinks proper to demand them.) We were no sooner returned to the inn, but numbers of my parishioners, hearing of my success, came to congratulate me, but among the

rest were those who rose to rescue me, and whom I formerly rebuked with such sharpness. I told the story to Sir William, my son-in-law, who went out and reprove them with great severity; but finding them quite disheartened by his harsh reproof, he gave them half a guinea a piece to drink his health and raise their dejected spirits.

Soon after this we were called to a very genteel entertainment, which was dressed by Mr. Thornhill's cook. And it may not be improper to observe with respect to that gentleman, that he now resides in quality of companion at a relation's house, being very well liked and seldom sitting at the side table, except when there is no room at the other; for they make no stranger of him. His time is pretty much taken up in keeping his relation, who is a little melancholy, in spirits, and in learning to blow the French horn. My eldest daughter, however, still remembers him with regret; and she has even told me, though I make a great secret of it, that when he reforms she may be brought to relent. But to return, for I am not apt to digress thus, when we were to sit down to dinner our ceremonies were going to be renewed. The question was whether my eldest daughter, as being a matron, should not sit above the two young brides, but the debate was cut short by my son George, who proposed, that the company should sit indiscriminately, every gentleman by his lady. This was received with great approbation by all, excepting my wife, who I could perceive was not perfectly satisfied, as she expected to have had the pleasure of sitting at the head of the table and carving all the meat for all the company. But notwithstanding this, it is impossible to describe our good humour. I can't say whether we had more wit amongst us now than usual; but I am certain we had more laughing, which answered the end as well. One jest I particularly remember, old Mr. Wilmot drinking to Moses, whose head was turned another way, my son replied "Madam, I thank you." Upon which the old gentleman, winking upon the rest of the company, observed that he was thinking of his mistress. At which jest I thought the two miss Flamboroughs would have died with laughing. As soon as dinner was over, according to my old custom, I requested that the table might be taken away, to have the pleasure of seeing all my family assembled once more by a chearful fireside. My two little ones sat upon each knee, the rest of the company by their partners. I had nothing now on this side of the grave to wish for, all my cares were over, my pleasure was unspeakable. It now only remained that my gratitude in good fortune should exceed my former submission in adversity.