

"Ah, and the rest follows, as a matter of course," he said, half-questioning, half asserting, and looking at her with a sort of amused interest and admiring curiosity. "I suppose you cannot conceive the possibility of having a home, and *not* being very fond of it?"

"I know it is possible. I know it is the case often," she returned, coldly, again. "People are either very much to be pitied or blamed who are in such a position, I think."

"Do *you* pity or blame them most?"

"I cannot possibly do either, till I know the circumstances," she said, with a judicial gravity at which he found it impossible to restrain a smile.

She detected it. Mr. Farquhar's smiles were peculiarly obnoxious to her, it would seem: at this one she turned away with a degree of dignity that ought to have been absolutely awful to any but a very hardened and misguided young man.

But the guests began to arrive, and Miss Maturin and the three gentlemen went into the ball-room. The melancholy-looking persons who attended in the capacity of musicians struck up a lively strain, in direct and grotesque contrast to their lugubrious faces and air of resigned depression. The room began to glow with colour; brilliant dresses and laughing faces reflected back the light; the flower-fragrant air grew warm, and the buzz and hum of many voices sounded with a vague sense of festivity, Caroline thought.

Caroline forgot Mr. Farquhar; everything that was displeasing to her faded away at once. She had all her acquaintances to greet; they were all acquaintances; she had formed few intimacies, no friendships. This arose partly from circumstances, but far more from her disposition, which, while it led her to feel kindly to all, allowed her to entertain love for very few. And we know that the friendship of a young girl of any depth of nature scouts the idea of degree; it must be superlative, or it is nothing. Caroline did not see in Bessy Windleton, pretty little sylph as she was, or in either of the two accomplished, handsome daughters of Sir John and Lady Bracebridge that ideal perfection which she could fairly and fully adore, or that community of feeling in which she could repose, *ergo* she was to them Miss Maturin, and no more. If the enthusiasm of youth gives us something, it also loses us a great deal. Older people are apt to talk with regret of the generosity, the confiding faith of early years. Is it not somewhat hollow, this generosity that is so thoughtless? is it not spurious and not to be relied on, this faith which only holds its existence by virtue of its blindness? After all, is not a kind of passionate eclecticism one of the most salient characteristics of a young