

The chief characteristic of my Clara, must not, however, be passed over in silence, this was a sensibility but too deep for her happiness. Her nature, otherwise rather inclined to a spirited dignity, was instantly reduced to a state of the most yielding softness by a tale of woe, whether real or fictitious. The loss of her father at so early an age proved doubly unfortunate, as by this circumstance she was left entirely to the care of a young mother, whose health and mind both suffered much from the disappointment of all her early hopes of earthly bliss; and naturally doating fondly on this child, it is not surprising that she was unable to perform her duties with the strictness required. Instead of allowing the mind of her idol to range abroad, and, by healthful exercise through the vast fields presented by the study of human nature, acquire the requisite strength to struggle through the world, she confined it within the limits of a happy home, and an ill selected library. The real depravity of man, ay, and of women, for unfortunately it must be admitted, that all are not good, this I say, was carefully concealed from the pure being I am attempting to describe; and had she thought on the subject, it is probable her embodied ideas would have been, that the comparatively small circle of her mothers friends and acquaintances was a correct specimen of the whole world: perhaps it was; but not in the light in which the individuals composing it, shone before the good and amiable Mrs. Delville, whose conduct and principles inspired all who approached her, with too much tact, to allow them to expose their own or their neighbours faults to any extravagant degree in her presence.

Time, thus sped lightly on, gently fanning my heroine into lovely maturity, and she had reached the age of eighteen, that period when short lived beauty reaches its first stage of perfection; when the scarcely formed features of girlhood give place to the rich full growth of the young woman. Hitherto all had been bright and calm in her career; but the slight bark that was thus skimming lightly over the smooth surface of the sea, was about to experience storms that had nearly wrecked the delicate structure—but I must not anticipate.