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THE FIRST DEBT.

A TALE OF EVERY DAY.

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Continued from our last Number.

CHAPTER XIX.

TRUE to his appointment, Captain Ogilvie called in the afternoon, to accompany the ladies to the ruins; and, to the unspeakable joy of Alice, his sister Lucy had consented to make one of the party; and proposed taking tea at the Abbey farm, with Mrs. Hazlewood, a very respectable woman, and her father's tenant. Sophia was rather annoyed at this unexpected interruption to the agreeable *tête-à-tête*, she had anticipated with her military admirer. That gentleman was, however, too well skilled in the art of manœuvring, to be baffled by his sister. He contrived that Mr. Fleming should take charge of Alice and Lucy, while he and the fair Sophia loitered far behind, under the pretence of selecting a pretty group of flowers for her screen.

"I shall only accompany you as far as the cottage on the commons," said Lucy. "I never heard of the Featherstone's return to B— until this morning. I am quite impatient to welcome such old and valued friends, particularly as I understand that their circumstances are not improved by their Jamaica visit. Poor or rich, Jane Featherstone will always be very dear to me. I tried to persuade Amelia to call with me, but she pleaded prior engagements. The world has sadly spoiled my cousin's heart. It grieves me, Alice, to see her eagerly acquiring all its follies. My brother, too, is led away by the same infatuation. But I did hope better things from Amelia once."

"Miss Ogilvie is a great heiress, very accomplished and very beautiful," said Alice; "and she is placed in a situation which exposes her to great temptation; she is therefore more to be pitied than blamed. But I rejoice that our dear Jane still ranks Lucy Ogilvie among her friends."

"And who is Jane Featherstone?" said Fleming, who felt much interested in the chit-chat between the two amiable girls.

"A lovely young woman," said Lucy, "who resides with her widowed mother, in the cottage we are approaching."

"Will you favor me with an introduction?" returned Arthur.

"With pleasure," said Lucy. "But mind, you must not fall in love with her, as her affections have long been engaged."

"The caution is needless," said Fleming; "I assure you, Miss Lucy, I do not mean to change my condition."

"How," said Lucy, "are you contented to remain that unblessed person an old bachelor? I should have thought that the beauty and vivacity of my friend Sophy, or the good sense of little Alice here, would have driven such monkish notions out of your head. But I understand you now, Mr. Fleming," she continued with an arch glance from him to Alice; "you are an engaged lover, and your words bear a double meaning."

Fleming shook his head and looked very grave, and Alice sad; and Lucy, to hide her own dejection of spirit, ran on without appearing to notice the gloom which had spread through their little party. Alice often looked back, in the vain hope of discovering the Captain and Sophia, but they were no longer in sight. They found Mrs. Featherstone and Jane at work in the porch; and a plainly dressed, but distinguished looking young man, reading aloud to them. The book fell from his hand, he rose up in great haste. "Dear Alice!" "Dear Stephen!" were exclamations that burst spontaneously from the lips of the parties thus abruptly named.

"You in England, Stephen," continued Alice, "and I not know a word about it? Is this a proof of your friendship?"

"It is no evidence to the contrary, I hope," said Stephen; "I have only been here a few hours, and was waiting for Jane to conclude her task, that we might visit our dear friends together. You have put an end to mine." he continued, picking up the book from the centre of a bed of *mignonette*. "Cowper has found just such a bed as, living, he would have enjoyed. But how is dear Mrs. Fleming, your good mother, and my old flirt Sophy?"