

ploy the vacant hours of peasants. To these attractive qualifications there was added another, which was a sprightly air and address, that captivated the hearts of all the damsels around. There was scarcely one among them who did not acknowledge his superiority, and strive, by every winning art to supersede the rest in his affections. Orlando, however, was proof against their allurements; and though he appeared to encourage the hopes of each of them by a free and easy gallantry, he avoided a particular attachment. His time was not yet come.

Lucinda had often viewed the achievements of Orlando with pleasure. She always, though she scarcely knew why, interested herself in his favour, and secretly rejoiced when he was victorious. His gallant manner likewise charmed her; and, notwithstanding she had been taught by her parents to expect a wealthier husband, she now and then deigned to smile at the sallies of his wit, and his attempts to please her.

Orlando, who was an adept in every art that led to the conquest of a female heart, beheld with pleasure these sparks of a kindling passion, and was not without hopes that time would fan it into a brighter flame. But other incidents were needful to produce this effect.

Lucinda's beauty was too resplendent to be confined to the devoirs of her present admirers. The fame of it, even in its budding state, found its way to the great house of the village, and attracted more than the notice of its proprietor, Sir Thomas Hazle, who viewed with pleasure her ripening charms, and marked them for his own.

Sir Thomas was one of those country gentlemen, that devote the greatest part of their time to rural sports, and by way of relaxation from this grand business of their lives, amuse themselves in undermining the chastity of the wives and daughters of their tenants. Having always been a professed debauchee, the restraints of virtue and decency were neither known or acknowledged by him; he therefore was constantly on the watch to take advantage of innocence and simplicity; though sometimes, indeed, he fell a prey to cunning and deception.

Sir Thomas had marked the beauties of Lucinda as they budded forth, and determined to make them subservient to his pleasures, when they arrived at maturity; he consequently sought every occasion to ensnare her virtue. He was about the age of fifty, and had been some years a widower, an event, which is said to have been precipitated by his irregularities. He

had two daughters, somewhat older than Lucinda, accomplished young ladies, but rather haughty in their carriage.

In order to have the readier access to his devoted prey, Sir Thomas's first care was to make a proposal to farmer Fallow of taking Lucinda to wait on his daughters, in the quality of attendant or humble companion. And as this could not but be considered by her parents both as an honor and a comfortable establishment, it was readily accepted by them. Lucinda, accordingly, entered upon her employment, for which she was not unqualified.

Her situation, however, did not prove so agreeable as she had expected; for though the Miss Hazles were accomplished young ladies, yet, as in respect of personal charms, they fell far short of their attendant, on whom, instead of themselves, every eye was rivetted when they happened to be together, they could not suppress the envious sensations which upon these occasions arose in their mind. Their behaviour therefore to her, after she became settled in the family, was accompanied with so much haughtiness as rendered her state far from agreeable. The behaviour of Sir Thomas, at the same time, was no less irksome to her. Having thus got her under his roof, he omitted no opportunity of putting in practice all the arts and wiles that a man skilled in deception and intrigue was capable of.

Though Lucinda, from her residence in an obscure village, had acquired but little knowledge of the world, she was soon able to perceive the purposes of the baronet, (who indeed, pluming himself on his superior situation, took but little pains to conceal them,) and determined to exert all her prudence and foresight to circumvent them.

Sir Thomas being wearied out with a resistance, to which he had not been accustomed formed the resolution of taking by force, whenever it should be in his power, what he could not obtain by intreaty; an accident soon furnished him with as favourable an opportunity for the accomplishment of his wishes as he could himself have contrived.

One fine summer's evening, while the young ladies were on a distant visit, Lucinda incautiously roved to a pavilion situated at the bottom of a long serpentine walk, that bounded the pleasure grounds which surround Hazle Hall. Here, as she sat with a book in her hand, her whole attention engaged on an interesting story, she perceived the person, whose presence she had most reason to dread, approaching. Alarmed at her situation, she instantly arose, and would have made toward the house,