

descended from the younger branch of a noble family of the same name, and bearing the same arms. But, unhappily, some links were wanting in this chain of honourable parentage. The claim to nobility could not be traced to the entire satisfaction of the baron; who, though he would have dispensed with any moral qualities in favour of rank, considered obscure birth as a radical stain, which could not be wiped off by all the virtues under heaven. He looked upon marriage as merely a convention of interest, and children as a property, of which it was reasonable for parents to make the most in their power.

“The father of Madame Monique C—— was a farmer, and died three months before the birth of this child; who, with seven other children, was educated with the utmost care by their mother, a woman of sense and virtue, beloved by all to whom she was known. It seemed as if this respectable woman had, after the death of her husband, only supported life for the sake of her infant family, from whom she was snatched by death, the moment her maternal cares became no longer necessary; her youngest daughter, Monique, having, at this period, just attained her twentieth year. Upon the death of her mother, Monique went to live with an aunt, with whom she remained only a very short time, being invited by Madame du F——, to whom she was well known, to come and live with her as an humble companion, to read to her when she was disposed to listen, and to enliven the sullen grandeur of the chateau, by her animating vivacity.

“This young person had cultivated her excellent understanding by reading, and her heart stood in no need of cultivation. Monsieur du F—— found in the charms of her conversation, and in the sympathy of her friendship, the most soothing consolation under the rigour of parental tyranny. Living several years beneath the same roof, he had constant opportunities of observing her disposition and character; and the pas-

sion with which she at length inspired him, was founded on the lasting basis of esteem.

“If it was ever pardonable to deviate from that law, in the code of interest and etiquette, which forbids the heart to listen to its best emotions; which, stifling every generous sentiment of pure disinterested attachment, sacrifices love at the shrine of avarice or ambition; the virtues of Monique were such as might excuse this deviation. Yes, the character, the conduct of this amiable person, have nobly justified her lover's choice. How long might he have vainly sought, in the highest classes of society, a mind so elevated above the common mass!—a mind that, endowed with the most exquisite sensibility, has had sufficient firmness to sustain, with a calm and equal spirit, every transition of fortune; the most severe trials of adversity, and perhaps what is still more difficult to bear, the trial of high prosperity.

“Monsieur du F—— had been taught, by his early misfortunes, that domestic happiness was the first good of life. He had already found, by experience, the insufficiency of rank and fortune to confer enjoyment; and he determined to seek it in the bosom of conjugal felicity. He determined to pass his life with her whose society now seemed essential not only to his happiness, but to his very existence.

“At the solemn hour of midnight the young couple went to a church where they were met by a priest, whom Monsieur du F—— had made the confidant of his attachment, and by whom the marriage ceremony was performed.

“Some time after, when the situation of his wife obliged Monsieur du F—— to acknowledge their marriage to his mother, she assured her son that she would willingly consent to receive his wife as her daughter, but for the dread of his father's resentment. Madame du F——, with tears of regret, parted with Monique, whom she placed under the protec-