

I pressed her hand, and withdrew.

I found Sir Alexander seated at his study table, surrounded with papers. If there was one thing my good old friend hated more than another, it was writing letters. He flung the pen pettishly from him, as I approached the table.

"Zounds! Geoffrey, I cannot defile paper with writing to that scoundrel. I will see him myself. It will be some satisfaction to witness his chagrin—and who knows, but in the heat of anger, he may say something that will afford a clue to unravel his treachery towards yourself. At all events, I am determined to make the experiment."

My curiosity was deeply excited to know the result, and I strengthened the Baronet's resolution to that effect.

"I do not ask you to accompany me, Geoffrey; I have business for you during my absence. You must lose no time in visiting —, in Devonshire, the parish in which your mother's father resided, and where she was born. I will supply you with means for your journey. You must take lodgings in the neighbourhood; say for the good of your health, and diligently prosecute enquiries respecting her. She may have relatives still living in the place, who could give you some information respecting the nature of her elopement, and whether any reports existed at the time, of her being married to your father. If so, find out the church in which the ceremony was performed, and the persons who witnessed the marriage. Take the best riding horse in the stable, and if your funds fail you, draw without reserve on me. Should Robert Moncton drop any hints upon the subject, which can in any way further the object of your search, I will immediately write you word. Now order the carriage to be ready at eight tomorrow morning, and we will start together—each on our different adventure—and God defend the right."

I had long wished to prosecute this enquiry—yet now the moment had arrived, I felt loth to leave the Hall. The society and presence of Margaret, had become necessary to my happiness—yet I fancied myself still desperately in love with Catharine Lee, and never suspected the fact, that my passion for the one was ideal, and for the other real and tangible. How we suffer youth and imagination to deceive us, in affairs of the heart. We love a name, and invest the person who bears it, with a thousand perfections, which have no existence in reality. The object of our idolatry is not a child of nature, but a creation of fancy. First love marriages are proverbially unhappy, from this very circumstance, that the virtues of the parties are so extravagantly over-rated during the period of courtship, that disappointment is sure to ensue. Boys and girls, of fifteen and sixteen, are beings without reflection—their knowledge of character is too imperfect to admit of a judicious choice. They love the first person who

charms their fancy, from the very necessity of the case. Time divests their idol of all its borrowed charms, and they feel too deeply that they have made an unhappy choice. Though love may laugh at the cold maxims of reason and prudence, yet it requires the full exercise of both qualities to secure for any length of time domestic happiness.

I can reason calmly now on this exciting subject, but I reasoned not calmly then—I was a creature of passion, and passionate impulses. The woman I loved had no faults in my eyes—to have suspected her liable to fall into the errors common to her sex, would have been an act of treason against the deity I worshipped.

I retired to my chamber, and finished my letter to Harrison. The day wore slowly away—the evening was bright and beautiful. Margaret had been busy in making preparations for her father's journey—she looked languid and pale—I proposed a walk in the park, she consented with a smile, and we were soon wandering beneath the shade of embowering trees.

"Your father leaves the Park early tomorrow, my little cousin—you will feel very lonely during his absence."

"His society is very dear to me, Geoffrey; but you must exert all your powers of pleasing, to supply his place."

"I should only be too happy—but I leave Moncton tomorrow, for an indefinite period."

Margaret turned very pale, and raised her bright enquiring eyes to my face. That look of tender anxiety caused a strange flutter in my heart.

"May I flatter myself, dear Margaret, with the idea, that Geoffrey, though but a poor relation, will not be regarded by you with indifference?"

Margaret made no reply, and I continued:

"Think of me with kindness during my absence; should we never meet again, I shall ever regard you and your excellent father with gratitude and veneration."

"These are but cold sentiments from one, so deservedly dear to us both," said Margaret; "we love you, Geoffrey, and would fain hope that the feeling is reciprocal."

Though this was said in perfect simplicity, it revealed the true sentiments of Margaret's heart. I felt that she loved me; but at that moment, out of mere contradiction, considered myself bound, by a romantic tie of honour, to Catharine Lee.

"You love me, Margaret," I said, clasping her hand in mine; "God knows how happy this blessed discovery would have made me, had not my affections been pre-engaged."

A deep blush mantled the pale cheek of the sweet girl—her hand trembled violently as she gently withdrew it from mine.

"Geoffrey, we are not accountable for our affections; I am sorry that I suffered my foolish heart