

and misery of the world proceed. However it may be corrected and subdued by education, it is necessary that a knowledge of its existence, and a watchfulness for it, be constantly exhibited—since every day may occur circumstances calculated to call it forth. This fault is the festering sore, which extends itself until all that was healthy becomes a livid mass of corruption,—and the heart that might have continued pure and happy becomes defiled and miserable for ever !

Although the family connections of Tracey, in the county of Essex, were extensive, he had but few relatives of any near degree of consanguinity. Of these the only paternal one was an uncle—his guardian. His mother's family had been more celebrated for the beauty of its female members than for rank and wealth. While, therefore, his only maternal aunt had married an earl, her brother, in choosing a wife, had been content with respectability and a competency equal to his own. The issue of the first marriage was a daughter—Lady Florence Elthorpe,—that of the second was also a daughter, who, like Tracey, had been left an orphan at a very early age. Lady Florence Elthorpe he had never met until a few months before the period of which we are writing. During a visit to London, his affluence and other qualifications had made him a not unwelcome guest of the Earl and Countess. Thrown constantly, then, into the immediate society of his brilliant and fascinating cousin, her wit, her beauty, her “thousand nameless charms,” had not been displayed day by day without effect. When he first beheld her, it was in the gay, and to him novel, scene of a ball room. Her enchanting beauty and sparkling conversation had called a crowd of admirers around her,—and when Tracey joined the train, he was, with all the wayward coquetry of a sovereign belle, immediately exalted to the situation vacated by the last discarded favourite. In this situation, while every thing around him was calculated to produce an intoxicating effect on his mind, the aroused passion for all that is brilliant and exciting burned fiercely within him. And, as day after day the delirium increased,—as day after day he listened to the silvery tones of her voice, and beheld the admiration with which others regarded every exhibition of her intellectual powers,—as the display of every charm seemed to excite some deeper feeling in his bosom, this craving, thus intense, grew more intense and even insatiable. When, at length, it was necessary for him to return to Essex, to tear himself from the magic circle into which he had been drawn, it was to carry with him an un-

fading remembrance of its fascinations. That a burning love for Lady Florence had taken possession of his heart, he readily acknowledged to himself ; but the circumstances and scenes under which his passion had sprung up, had rendered it far more ardent than it would otherwise have been. Had it been after repeated visits to the metropolis, and after having seen much of its gaiety and dissipation, that he had met with his brilliant cousin, it is scarcely possible that affection would have been engendered in his mind at all. It wanted but an insight into the follies of the world to have improved his judgment and to have corrected his taste,—and it is, perhaps, safer to pass through the ordeal than to remain in a happy state of ignorance. Then, had he experienced a love for Lady Florence, it would have been the result of a study of her higher and nobler qualities, and in that case it would have been deep and lasting. Or, had it sprung up when the feverish delights of society had not quite pulled upon him, but when at least their novelty had worn off, it would, no doubt, have been light and evanescent. But an exotic, as it was, born amid the luxuriance, enchantment, and freshness, which the first gaze throws upon the charms of the world, but which they do not in reality possess, it was calculated to survive until deeper experience brought deeper reflection : and then, with the enchantment and the freshness amid which it had been reared,—with these, too, it was calculated to decay.

It had been determined, that on the occasion of Tracey's coming of age, a ball should be given at the Hall to celebrate the event. With the consent of his guardian, therefore, he seized with eagerness the opportunity to entreat a visit from the Earl and Countess, who, with Lady Florence, were staying with a noble friend in a neighbouring county. The answer was in the affirmative, and accordingly, on the day that his guardian surrendered into his hands the trust he had so long held, his noble relatives arrived. With the stately Earl and his Countess, the simple current of our story has nought to do ; if they differed in ought from the majority of those in the same station, it was but in the shades of their prejudices or the peculiarity of their tastes,—and neither in the quality of their minds nor the character of their pursuits. They had the same contracted and petty ambition that note the thousands who, though holding the high places of this world, have only to do with its most unimportant matters,—and, however interesting, therefore, they might have been to the portrayer of *manners*, they do not come within the province of him whose aim it is