

regard. He was desperately enamoured with her personal charms ; and though he rejected indignantly the idea of making her his wife, he entertained hopes of obtaining her affections on less honourable terms—so confident was he in his own strength, and Sophia's weakness.

"Has Captain Ogilvie called during our absence, mamma ?" were the first words Sophia uttered, when she returned from her walk.

"He has been, and is gone," replied Mrs. Fleming, "and, in all probability, will never enter these doors again."

"What do you mean, grand-mamma ?" said Sophia, sinking into a chair, and turning very pale. "He surely has not left B——?"

Mrs. Fleming related the conversation that had passed between them. Sophia's countenance underwent many changes, and several times she smiled disdainfully to herself—but to the surprise of all present, she made no comment on the Captain's conduct, but snatching up her hat and veil from the table, cast a hurried glance upon the mirror, as she left the room, and sought the solitude of her own apartment. When alone, she gave way to a passion of tears, and bitterly reproached her aged relative for her interference. "But I am sure he loves me!" she cried. "He has told me so a thousand times—and as to his being engaged, it is an invention of Mrs. Fleming's, in order to mortify me more deeply. I do not believe that he could mention me with such coldness—such indifference. She has exaggerated the matter, and put words into his mouth which he never said. Yes—yes. I see through it all. Alice has contrived this scheme that I may not laugh at her disappointment, with regard to that methodical, and most disagreeable piece of formality, my saintly cousin Arthur."

The tears still hung on her beautiful eyelashes, when she was aroused from her indignant reverie, by the entrance of the servant, who, with a cautious and hurried glance, slipped a note into Sophia's hand and disappeared. It was from the Captain, and contained a few hurried words, in which he briefly informed his fair young friend of his unceremonious dismissal from the house. "If it was not at her own request, he said, he earnestly entreated her to allow him the pleasure of sometimes sharing her evening walks." Sophia's heart again fluttered with joy ; her vanity blinded her eyes to the impropriety of granting such a request ; and she found a thousand excuses in her own mind for conduct which, on his part, she should have considered as perfectly inexcusable. But Sophia fancied herself into heroine of romance, and the Captain a persecuted and injured lover, who dared not offend his proud family by openly declaring his attachment for her. It would be an endless task to enumerate all the extravagant and visionary speculations with which fancy cheated a mind, unfortified by religion, to

combat against its deluding sophistries. A person totally ignorant of the faults and weaknesses of their own character, is not able to form a very accurate estimate of the mental qualifications of another. Sophia had been insensible to the real worth of Arthur Fleming, yet she suffered the common-place chit-chat of a trifler like Philip Ogilvie to make a deep impression on her heart. His rank and fortune at first attracted her attention ; and while he remained an object of personal indifference, she was a shrewd calculator on the advantages which would accrue from these envied possessions. A more powerful spell was now operating upon her mind, which, aided by ambition and her love of display, made her insensible to the dangers which surrounded her. Whilst selfishly seeking to gratify her pride she hardened her conscience and yielded to the criminal self-indulgence, which urged her to sacrifice, without a sigh, the peace and happiness of her family.

To please her gay lover she thought it absolutely requisite to dress in the height of the fashion, and she ordered several expensive dresses of Mrs. Lawrence, on the same terms as she procured the last. When she entered the room a few days after the Captain's dismissal, dressed in an elegant lilac silk gown and pelisse, Alice asked her, in great agitation, how she had obtained them. Sophia answered with a smile, and in the frankest manner imaginable—

"Is it not a handsome addition to my wardrobe ? I was sure you and mamma would admire my taste. Uncle sent me the money, in his last letter in return for my pretty hand-screens. I said nothing about it at the time, because I wished to surprise you."

There was nothing improbable in this statement. Alice knew the generous turn of her uncle's mind ; and never for a moment suspected that her sister was capable of uttering such a falsehood. Yet there were times when a vague misgiving would flash over her mind, particularly when she saw how many little ornamental articles of dress Sophia protested she had procured with this donation from her uncle. You would have imagined that these ten sovereigns were as inexhaustible as the widow Zarephath's barrel of meal and cruise of oil, for Sophia's purse never appeared empty. Alice was rather surprised that her sister never offered to repay her the five pounds she had lent her to settle Mrs. Lawrence's account ; but forbore to mention it, from motives of delicacy.

There was a family of the name of Newton, who had lately settled in the vicinity of B——. The mother was the widow of a naval officer, with two grown up daughters, and three sons—the eldest of whom was studying the law in a solicitor's office in B——. A few ceremonious calls had passed between the Linhopes and the Newtons ; but Mrs. Newton was such a mischief-making gossip, and her daugh-