

Sir Henry Cathcart was decidedly a young man of superior mind, if not of very surpassing abilities, and, moreover, united to a person of eminent elegance, a peculiar faculty of pleasing. The growth of love is not to be estimated by any standard with which we are acquainted; and we would fain add that our hero was deservng of the confidence and admiration which he seldom failed to excite; that morally as well as mentally he was a person to be respected.

But alas! the elements of virtue are not to be attained, (or if to be attained, at least it is an exception to a general rule,) amongst those with whom he was in the habit of mingling—men not undistinguished in the ranks of fashion, and even intellect, but for the most part votaries of dissipation, vice, and irreligion.

Cathcart continued to speak, and Matilda hung enraptured upon the words that fell from his lips, full as they were of fancy, of refinement, and of elegant, if not poetical, sentiment; and in the course of a single hour experienced in her romantic views more pleasure than she ever had before. Sir Henry had travelled much, although so young; he had beheld the gorgeous remains of Rome's once imperial grandeur: had climbed the snow-capped Alps, and roamed in the fair valley below; ocean, and river, hill, cataract, and lake, were all subjects on which he could expatiate with all the charms of a lively feeling; and its effect was not lost upon a mind like Matilda's. We do not say that she immediately became enamoured of the handsome and clever young baronet; but he knew enough of her sense to feel that his company was not indifferent to her; and, as he rose to leave, he pressed her to remember their "first meeting," and to grant him on a future occasion the honour of a second.

"Well," inquired De l' Orme, "what do you think of her?" as Matilda with her aunt left the room.

"She is a beautiful girl!" replied his companion, "quite a heroine in her language, rather too romantic; but that will wear off!"

The Frenchman smiled, and to his companion's inquiry, answered with something of a sneer in his tone, "I was thinking how strange things come about. Nobody would have thought when we entered this house there was the remotest chance of your getting a wife so soon. Though Lady Matilda Cathcart would sound pretty enough, and how much nearer the relationship would be between you and the noble-looking baroness."

"You are jesting, Vivian," said Sir Henry,

"I fear that cannot be, for I have lost heavily, as you know, of late, and much as I respect, nay love, Matilda Saville, I could not afford to take her portionless; besides I don't think I shall ever marry at all.

"The Devil! What is your reason for setting up a la Benedict?"

"Wives are generally bores;" was the laconic reply, "at least so they say at the club." The finish of the sentence bespoke how much he was guided by the mistaken laws of fashion.

Three months after the above conversation, the London season being over, Lady Featherfield and her niece left town for a distant part of the country. It was reported that ill health led her to choose such a retired spot, though there were others in which her creditors' claims bore a prominent position. By a singular coincidence, a few days afterwards, Sir Henry Cathcart, who had a hunting-seat in that very part of the country, for the first time in his life, took a fancy to visit it, and with surprise learned who were his neighbours. The baroness was delighted—"Her old London acquaintance to be so near them; it was extraordinary; it was charming."

Cathcart now had numerous opportunities of meeting with Matilda alone. The romantic feeling which he had noticed in London, was here ten-fold increased; and often would he find her by the side of some pleasant stream, attended by a favourite dog, and lost in the pages of some fashionable author, unconscious of his appearance till he had reached her side. It was upon such occasions as these that he wound himself around her young heart, until, at length, she loitered but for his coming, and the views that once pleased her were dull and spiritless without him.

Lady Featherfield had heard of these repeated meetings, and only prolonged the moment of her interference, that she might, as she afterwards stated, the more surely secure her niece as his bride; nor was she awakened to a sense of her improper supineness, till she learned her niece had eloped with the young baronet. The particulars of their criminality, the arguments by which Sir Henry prevailed upon Matilda to forego virtue's name, we must pass over; suffice it she had fallen; and as her lover lifted her from the carriage-door, the morning after the elopement, he exclaimed, "Now am I blessed in the memory of our first meeting."

It was on a gorgeous summer's evening, several years after the above events, just as