The Watsons

An Unfinished Novel

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The first winter assembly in the Town of D.— in Surry was to be held on Tuesday Octr. ye 13th, & it was generally expected to be a very good one; a long list of Country Families was confidently run over as sure of attending, & sanguine hopes were entertained that the Osbornes themselves would be there.—The Edwardes' invitation to the Watsons followed of course. The Edward's were people of fortune who lived in the Town & kept their Coach; the Watsons inhabited a village about 3 miles distant, were poor & had no close carriage; & ever since there had been Balls in the place, the former were accustomed to invite the Latter to dress dine & sleep at their House, on every monthly return throughout the winter.—On the present occasion, as only two of M^{r}. W.'s children were at home, & one was always necessary as companion to himself, for he was sickly & had lost his wife one only could profit by the kindness of their friends; Miss Emma Watson who was very recently returned to her family from the care of an Aunt who had brought her up was to make her first public appearance in the neighbourhood—& her eldest Sister, whose delight in a Ball was not lessened by a ten years Enjoyment, had some merit in chearfully undertaking to drive her & all her finery in the old Chair to D. on the important morn^{g}.

As they splashed along the dirty Lane Miss Watson thus instructed & cautioned her inexperienc'd sister.

"I dare say it will be a very good Ball, & among so many officers, you will hardly want partners. You will find M^{rs}. Edwards' maid very willing to help you, and I would

advise you to ask Mary Edwards's opinion if you are at all at a loss for she has a very good Taste.—If Mr. E. does not lose his money at Cards, you will stay as late as you can wish for; if he does, he will hurry you home perhaps—but you are sure of some comfortable Soup.—I hope you will be in good looks—. I should not be surprised if you were to be thought one of the prettiest girls in the room, there is a great deal in Novelty. Perhaps Tom Musgrave may take notice of you—but I would advise you by all means not to give him any encouragement. He generally pays attention to every new girl, but he is a great flirt & never means anything serious."

"I think I have heard you speak of him before, said Emma. Who is he?"

"A young Man of very good fortune, quite independant, & remarkably agreable, an universal favourite wherever he goes. Most of the girls hereabouts are in love with him, or have been. I beleive I am the only one among them that have escaped with a whole heart, and yet I was the first he paid attention to, when he came into this Country, six years ago; and very great attention indeed did he pay me. Some people say that he has never seemed to like any girl so well since, tho' he is always behaving in a particular way to one or another."

"And how came *your* heart to be the only cold one?—" said Emma smiling.

"There was a reason for that—replied Miss W. changing colour.—I have not been very well used Emma among them, I hope you will have better luck."

"Dear Sister, I beg your pardon, if I have unthinkingly given you pain."

“When first we knew Tom Musgrave, continued Miss W. without seeming to hear her, I was very much attached to a young Man of the name of Purvis—a particular friend of Robert’s, who used to be with us a great deal. Every body thought it would have been a Match.”

A sigh accompanied these words, which Emma respected in silence—but her Sister after a short pause, went on—.

“You will naturally ask why it did not take place, & why he is married to another Woman, while I am still single.—But you must ask him—not me—you must ask Penelope.—Yes Emma, Penelope was at the bottom of it all.—She thinks everything fair for a Husband; I trusted her, she set him against me, with a veiw of gaining him herself, & it ended in his discontinuing his visits & soon after marrying somebody else.—Penelope makes light of her conduct, but *I* think such Treachery very bad. It has been the ruin of my happiness. I shall never love any Man as I loved Purvis. I do not think Tom Musgrave should be named with him in the same day.—”

“You quite shock me by what you say of Penelope—said Emma. Could a sister do such a thing?—Rivalry, Treachery between Sisters!—I shall be afraid of being acquainted with her—but I hope it was not so. Appearances were against her”

“You do not know Penelope.—There is nothing she w^{d}. not do to get married—she would as good as tell you so herself.—Do not trust her with any secrets of your own, take warning by me, do not trust her; she has her good qualities, but she has no Faith, no Honour, no Scruples, if she can promote her own advantage.—I wish with all my

heart she was well married. I declare I had rather have her well-married than myself."

"Than Yourself!—Yes I can suppose so. A heart, wounded like yours can have little inclination for Matrimony."

"Not much indeed—but you know we must marry.—I could do very well single for my own part—A little Company, & a pleasant Ball now & then, would be enough for me, if one could be young for ever, but my Father cannot provide for us, & it is very bad to grow old & be poor & laughed at.—I have lost Purvis, it is true but very few people marry their first Loves. I should not refuse a man because he was not Purvis—. Not that I can ever quite forgive Penelope.—"

Emma shook her head in acquiescence.

"Penelope however has had her Troubles—continued Miss W.—she was sadly disappointed in Tom Musgrave, who afterwards transferred his attentions from me to her, & whom she was very fond of;—but he never means anything serious, & when he had trifled with her long enough, he began to slight her for Margaret, & poor Penelope was very wretched—. And since then, she has been trying to make some match at Chichester; she wont tell us with whom, but I beleive it is a rich old D^{r}. Harding, Uncle to the friend she goes to see;—& she has taken a vast deal of trouble about him & given up a great deal of Time to no purpose as yet.—. When she went away the other day, she said it should be the last time.—I suppose you did not know what her particular Business was at Chichester—nor guess at the object that could take her away, from Stanton just as you were coming home after so many years absence."

“No indeed, I had not the smallest suspicion of it. I considered her engagement to M^rs^. Shaw just at that time as very unfortunate for me. I had hoped to find all my Sisters at home; to be able to make an immediate friend of each.”

“I suspect the D^r^. to have had an attack of the Asthma. & that she was hurried away on that account—The Shaws are quite on her side.—At least I believe so—but she tells me nothing. She professes to keep her own counsel; she says, & truly enough, that “Too many cooks spoil the Broth.”

“I am sorry for her anxieties, said Emma,—but I do not like her plans or her opinions. I shall be afraid of her.—She must have too masculine & bold a temper.—To be so bent on Marriage—to pursue a Man merely for the sake of Situation—is a sort of thing that shocks me; I cannot understand it. Poverty is a great Evil, but to a woman of Education & feeling it ought not, it cannot be the greatest.—I would rather be Teacher at a school (and I can think of nothing worse) than marry a Man I did not like.—”

“I would rather do any thing than be Teacher at a school—said her Sister. *I* have been at school, Emma, & know what a Life they lead; *you* never have.—I should not like marrying a disagreable Man any more than yourself,—but I do not think there *are* many very disagreable Men;—I think I could like any good humoured Man with a comfortable Income.—I suppose my Aunt brought you up to be rather refined.”

“Indeed I do not know.—My Conduct must tell you how I have been brought up. I am no judge of it my self. I cannot compare my Aunt’s method with any other persons, because I know no other.”

“But I can see in a great many things that you are very refined. I have observed it ever since you came home, & I am afraid it will not be for your happiness. Penelope will laugh at you very much.”

“*That* will not be for my happiness I am sure.—If my opinions are wrong, I must correct them—if they are above my Situation, I must endeavour to conceal them.—But I doubt whether Ridicule,—Has Penelope much wit?—”

“Yes—she has great spirits, & never cares what she says.”

“Margaret is more gentle I imagine?”

“Yes—especially in company; she is all gentleness & mildness when anybody is by.—But she is a little fretful & perverse among ourselves.—Poor Creature!—she is possessed with the notion of Tom Musgrave’s being more seriously in love with her, than he ever was with any body else, & is always expecting him to come to the point. This is the second time within this twelvemonth that she has gone to spend a month with Robert & Jane on purpose to egg him on, by her absence—but I am sure she is mistaken, & that he will no more follow her to Croydon now than he did last March.—He will never marry unless he can marry somebody very great; Miss Osborne perhaps, or something in that stile.—”

“Your account of this Tom Musgrave, Elizabeth, gives me very little inclination for his acquaintance.”

“You are afraid of him, I do not wonder at you.”

“No indeed—I dislike & despise him.”

“Dislike & Despise Tom Musgrave! No, *that* you never can. I defy you not to be delighted with him if he takes

notice of you.—I hope he will dance with you—& I dare say he will, unless the Osbornes come with a large party, & then he will not speak to any body else.—”

“He seems to have most engaging manners!—said Emma.—Well, we shall see how irresistable M^{r}. Tom Musgrave & I find each other.—I suppose I shall know him as soon as I enter the Ball-room;—he *must* carry some of his Charms in his face.”

“You will not find him in the Ball room I can tell you, You will go early that M^{rs}. Edwards may get a good place by the fire, & he never comes till late; & If the Osbornes are coming, he will wait in the Passage, & come in with them.—I should like to look in upon you Emma. If it was but a good day with my Father, I w^{d}. wrap my self up, & James should drive me over, as soon as I had made Tea for him, & I should be with you by the time the Dancing began.”

“What! would you come late at night in this Chair?”

“To be sure I would.—There, I said you were very refined;—& *that*’s an instance of it.—”

Emma for a moment made no answer—at last she said—

“I wish Elizabeth, you had not made a point of my going to this Ball, I wish you were going instead of me. Your pleasure would be greater than mine. I am a stranger here, & know nobody but the Edwardses;—my Enjoyment therefore must be very doubtful. Yours among all your acquaintance w^{d}. be certain.—It is not too late to change. very little apology c^{d}. be requisite to the Edwardes, who must be more glad of your company than of mine, & I sh^{d}. most readily return to my Father; & should not be at all

afraid to drive this quiet old Creature home. Your Cloathes I would undertake to find means of sending to you."

"My dearest Emma cried Eliz: warmly—do you think I would do such a thing?—Not for the Universe—but I shall never forget your goodnature in proposing it. You must have a sweet temper indeed!—I never met with any thing like it!—And w^{d}. you really give up the Ball, that I might be able to go to it!—Beleive me Emma, I am not so selfish as that comes to. No, tho' I am nine years older than you are, I would not be the means of keeping you from being seen.—You are very pretty, & it would be very hard that you should not have as fair a chance as we have all had, to make your fortune.—No Emma, whoever stays at home this winter, it sha'nt be you. I am sure I sh^{d}. never have forgiven the person who kept me from a Ball at 19."

Emma expressed her Gratitude, & for a few minutes they jogged on in silence.—Elizabeth first spoke.

"You will take notice who Mary Edwards dances with."

"I will remember her partners if I can—but you know they will be all strangers to me."

"Only observe whether she dances with Capt. Hunter, more than once; I have my fears in that quarter. Not that her Father or Mother like officers, but if she does you know, it is all over with poor Sam.—And I have promised to write him word who she dances with."

"Is Sam attached to Miss Edwardes?"

"Did not you know *that*?—"

"How should I know it?—How should I know in Shropshire, what is passing of that nature in Surry?—It is not likely that circumstances of such delicacy should make

any part of the scanty communication which passed between you & me for the last 14 years;"

"I wonder I never mentioned it when I wrote. Since you have been at home, I have been so busy with my poor Father & our great wash that I have had no leisure to tell you anything—but indeed I concluded you knew it all.—He has been very much in love with her these two years, & it is a great disappointment to him that he cannot always get away to our Balls—but M^{r}. Curtis won't often spare him, & just now it is a sickly time at Guilford.—"

"Do you suppose Miss Edwardes inclined to like him?"

"I am afraid not: You know she is an only Child, & will have at least ten thousand pounds."

"But still she may like our Brother."

"Oh! no—. The Edwardes look much higher. Her Father & Mother w^{d}. never consent to it. Sam is only a Surgeon you know.—Sometimes I think she does like him. But Mary Edwardes is rather prim & reserved; I do not always know what she w^{d}. be at."

"Unless Sam feels on sure grounds with the Lady herself, It seems a pity to me that he should be encouraged to think of her at all."

"A young Man must think of somebody. said Eliz:—& why should not he be as lucky as Robert, who has got a good wife & six thousand pounds?"

"We must not all expect to be individually lucky replied Emma. The Luck of one member of a Family is Luck to all.—"

"Mine is all to come I am sure—said Eliz: giving another sigh to the remembrance of Purvis.—I have been

unlucky enough, & I cannot say much for you, as my Aunt married again so foolishly.—Well—you will have a good Ball I dare say. The next turning will bring us to the Turnpike. You may see the Church Tower over the hedge, & the White Hart is close by it.—I shall long to know what you think of Tom Musgrave."

Such were the last audible sounds of Miss Watson's voice, before they passed thro' the Turnpike gate & entered on the pitching of the Town—the jumbling & noise of which made farther Conversation most thoroughly undesirable.—The old Mare trotted heavily on, wanting no direction of the reins to take the right Turning, & making only one Blunder, in proposing to stop at the Milleners, before she drew up towards M^{r}. Edward's door.—M^{r}. E. lived in the best house in the Street, & the best in the place, if M^{r}. Tomlinson the Banker might be indulged in calling his newly erected House at the end of the Town with a shrubbery & sweep in the Country.

M^{r}. E.s House was higher than most of its neighbours with four windows on each side the door, the windows guarded by posts & chain the door approached by a flight of stone steps.

"Here we are—said Eliz:—as the Carriage ceased moving—safely arrived;—& by the Market Clock, we have been only five & thirty minutes coming.—which *I* think is doing pretty well, tho' it would be nothing for Penelope.—Is not it a nice Town?—The Edwards' have a noble house you see, & They live quite in stile. The door will be opened by a Man in Livery with a powder'd head, I can tell you."

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Emma had seen the Edwardses only one morn^{g}. at Stanton, they were therefore all but Strangers to her, & tho' her spirits were by no means insensible to the expected joys of the Evening, she felt a little uncomfortable in the thought of all that was to precede them. Her conversation with Eliz. too giving her some very unpleasant feelings, with respect to her own family; had made her more open to disagreable impressions, from any other cause, & encreased her sense of the awkwardness of rushing into Intimacy on so slight an acquaintance.

There was nothing in the manners of M^{rs}. or Miss Edwardes to give immediate change to these Ideas; the Mother tho' a very friendly woman, had a reserved air, & a great deal of formal Civility—& the daughter, a genteel looking girl of 22, with her hair in papers, seemed very naturally to have caught something of the Stile of the Mother who had brought her up.—Emma was soon left to know what they could be, by Eliz.'s being obliged to hurry away—& some very, very languid remarks on the probable Brilliancy of the Ball, were all that broke at intervals a silence of half an hour before they were joined by the Master of the house.—M^{r}. Edwards had a much easier, & more communicative air than the Ladies of the Family; he was fresh from the Street, and he came ready to tell whatever might interest.—After a cordial reception of Emma, he turned to his daughter with

"Well Mary, I bring you good news.—The Osbornes will certainly be at the Ball tonight.—Horses for two

Carriages are ordered from the White Hart, to be at Osborne Castle by 9.—"

"I am glad of it—observed Mrs. E., because their coming gives a credit to our Assemblies. The Osbornes being known to have been at the first Ball, will dispose a great many people to attend the second.—It is more than they deserve for in fact they add nothing to the pleasure of the Evening, they come so late, & go so early;—but Great People have always their charm."

Mr. Edwards proceeded to relate every other little article of news which his morning's lounge had supplied him with, & they chatted with greater briskness, till Mrs. E.'s moment for dressing arrived, & the young Ladies were carefully recommended to lose no time.—Emma was shewn to a very comfortable apartment, & as soon as Mrs. E.'s civilities could leave her to herself, the happy occupation, the first Bliss of a Ball began.—The girls, dressing in some measure together, grew unavoidably better acquainted; Emma found in Miss E. the shew of good sense, a modest unpretending mind, & a great wish of obliging—& when they returned to the parlour where Mrs. E. was sitting respectably attired in one of the two Sattin gowns which went thro' the winter, & a new Cap from the Milliners, they entered it with much easier feelings & more natural smiles than they had taken away.

Their dress was now to be examined; Mrs. Edwards acknowledged herself too old-fashioned to approve of every modern extravagance however sanctioned—& tho' complacently veiwing her daughter's good looks, wd. give but a qualified admiration; & Mr. E. not less satisfied with Mary, paid some Compliments of good humoured Gallantry to Emma at her expence.—The discussion led to

more intimate remarks, & Miss Edwardes gently asked Emma if she were not often reckoned very like her youngest brother.—Emma thought she could perceive a faint blush accompany the question, & there seemed something still more suspicious in the manner in which M^r^. E. took up the subject.

"You are paying Miss Emma no great compliment I think Mary, said he hastily—. M^r^. Sam. Watson is a very good sort of young man, & I dare say a very clever Surgeon, but his complexion has been rather too much exposed to all weathers, to make a likeness to him very flattering."

Mary apologised in some confusion. "She had not thought a strong Likeness at all incompatible with very different degrees of Beauty.—There might be resemblance in Countenance; & the complexion, & even the features be very unlike."

"I know nothing of my Brother's Beauty, said Emma, for I have not seen him since he was 7 years old—but my father reckons us alike."

"M^r^. Watson!—cried M^r^. Edwardes, Well, you astonish me.—There is not the least likeness in the world; y^r^. brother's eyes are grey, yours are brown, He has a long face, & a wide mouth.—My dear, do *you* perceive the least resemblance?"

"Not the least.—Miss Emma Watson puts me very much in mind of her eldest Sister, & sometimes I see a look of Miss Penelope—& once or twice there has been a glance of M^r^. Robert—but I cannot perceive any likeness to M^r^. Samuel."

“I see the likeness between her & Miss Watson, replied M^r^. E.—, very strongly—but I am not sensible of the others. I do not much think she is like any of the Family *but* Miss Watson; but I am very sure there is no resemblance between her & Sam.”

This matter was settled, & they went to Dinner.

“Your Father, Miss Emma, is one of my oldest friends—said M^r^. Edwardes, as he helped her to wine, when they were drawn round the fire to enjoy their Desert,—We must drink to his better health.—It is a great concern to me I assure you that he should be such an Invalid.—I know nobody who likes a game of cards in a social way, better than he does;—& very few people that play a fairer rubber.—It is a thousand pities that he should be so deprived of the pleasure. For now We have a quiet little Whist club that meets three times a week at the White Hart, & if he c^d^. but have his health, how much he w^d^. enjoy it.”

“I dare say he would Sir—& I wish with all my heart he were equal to it.”

“Your Club w^d^. be better fitted for an Invalid, said M^rs^. E. if you did not keep it up so late.”

This was an old greivance.

“So late, my dear, what are you talking of; cried the Husband with sturdy pleasantry—. We are always at home before midnight. They would laugh at Osborne Castle to hear you call *that* late; they are but just rising from dinner at midnight.”

“That is nothing to the purpose.—retorted the Lady calmly. The Osbornes are to be no rule for us. You had better meet every night, & break up two hours sooner.”

So far, the subject was very often carried;—but M^{r}. & M^{rs}. Edwards were so wise as never to pass that point; & M^{r}. Edwards now turned to something else.—He had lived long enough in the Idleness of a Town to become a little of a Gossip, & having some curiosity to know more of the Circumstances of his young Guest, than had yet reached him, he began with,

"I think Miss Emma, I remember your Aunt very well about 30 years ago; I am pretty sure I danced with her in the old rooms at Bath, the year before I married—. She was a very fine woman then—but like other people I suppose she is grown somewhat older since that time.—I hope she is likely to be happy in her second choice."

"I hope so, I beleive so, Sir—said Emma in some agitation."

"M^{r}. Turner had not been dead a great while I think?"

"About 2 years Sir."

"I forget what her name is now?"

"O'brien."

"Irish! Ah! I remember—& she is gone to settle in Ireland.—I do not wonder that you should not wish to go with her into *that* Country Miss Emma—. but it must be a great deprivation to her, poor Lady!—After bringing you up like a Child of her own."

"I was not so ungrateful Sir, said Emma warmly, as to wish to be any where but with her.—It did not suit them, it did not suit Capt. O'brien that I sh^{d}. be of the party.—"

"Captain!—repeated M^{rs}. E, the Gentleman is in the army then?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"Aye—there is nothing like your officers for captivating the Ladies, Young or Old.—There is no resisting a Cockade my dear."

"I hope there is."—said Mrs. E. gravely, with a quick glance at her daughter;—and Emma had just recovered from her own perturbation in time to see a blush on Miss E.'s cheek, & in remembering what Elizabeth had said of Capt. Hunter, to wonder & waver between his influence & her brother's.

"Elderly Ladies should be careful how they make a second choice." observed Mr. Edwardes.

"Carefulness—Discretion—should not be confined to Elderly Ladies, or to a second choice added his wife. It is quite as necessary to young Ladies in their first."

"Rather more so, my dear—replied he—because young Ladies are likely to feel the effects of it longer. When an old Lady plays the fool, it is not in the course of nature that she should suffer from it many years."

Emma drew her hand across her eyes—& Mrs. Edwards on perceiving it, changed the subject to one of less anxiety to all.

With nothing to do but to expect the hour of setting off, the afternoon was long to the two young Ladies; & tho' Miss Edwards was rather discomposed at the very early hour which her mother always fixed for going, that early hour itself was watched for with some eagerness.

The entrance of the Tea things at 7 o'clock was some releif—& luckily Mr. & Mrs. Edwards always drank a dish extraordinary, & ate an additional muffin when they were

going to sit up late, which lengthened the ceremony almost to the wished for moment.

At a little before 8, the Tomlinsons carriage was heard to go by, which was the constant signal for Mrs. Edwards to order hers to the door; & in a very few minutes, the party were transported from the quiet warmth of a snug parlour, to the bustle, noise & draughts of air of the broad Entrance-passage of an Inn. Mrs. Edwards carefully guarding her own dress, while she attended with yet greater Solicitude to the proper security of her young Charges' Shoulders & Throats, led the way up the wide staircase, while no sound of a Ball but the first, Scrape of one violin, blessed the ears of her followers, & Miss Edwards on hazarding the anxious inquiry of whether there were many people come yet, was told, by the Waiter as she knew she should, that "Mr. Tomlinson's family were in the room."

In passing along a short gallery to the Assembly-room, brilliant in lights before them, They were accosted by a young Man in a morning dress & Boots, who was standing in the doorway of a Bedchamber, apparently on purpose to see them go by.

"Ah! Mrs. E—how do you do?—How do you do Miss E.?—he cried, with an easy air;—You are determined to be in good time I see, as usual.—The Candles are but this moment lit—"

"I like to get a good seat by the fire you know, Mr. Musgrave." replied Mrs. E.

"I am this moment going to dress, said he—I am waiting for my stupid fellow.—We shall have a famous Ball, The Osbornes are certainly coming; you may depend upon *that* for I was with Ld. Osborne this morng.—"

The party passed on—M^rs. E's sattin gown swept along the clean floor of the Ball-room, to the fire place at the upper end, where one party only were formally seated, while three or four Officers were lounging together, passing in & out from the adjoining card-room.—A very stiff meeting between these near neighbours ensued—& as soon as they were all duely placed again, Emma in the low whisper which became the solemn scene, said to Miss Edwardes,

"The gentleman we passed in the passage, was M^r. Musgrave, then.—He is reckoned remarkably agreable I understand.—"

Miss E. answered hesitatingly—"Yes—he is very much liked by many people.—But *we* are not very intimate.—"

"He is rich, is not he?—"

"He has about 8 or 900£ a year I beleive.—He came into possession of it, when he was very young, & my Father & Mother think it has given him rather an unsettled turn.—He is no favourite with them."

The cold & empty appearance of the Room & the demure air of the small cluster of Females at one end of it, began soon to give way; the inspiriting sound of other Carriages was heard, & continual accessions of portly Chaperons, & strings of smartly-dressed girls were received, with now & then a fresh, gentleman straggler who if not enough in Love, to station himself near any fair Creature seemed glad to escape into the Card-room.

Among the increasing numbers of Military Men, one now made his way to Miss Edwards, with an air of Empressément, which decidedly said to her Companion "I am Capt. Hunter."—& Emma, who could not but watch her at such a moment, saw her looking rather distressed,

but by no means displeased, & heard an engagement formed for the two first dances, which made her think her Brother Sam's a hopeless case.

Emma in the mean while was not unobserved, or unadmired herself.—A new face & a very pretty one, could not be slighted—her name was whispered from one party to another, & no sooner had the signal been given, by the Orchestra's striking up a favourite air, which seemed to call the young Men to their duty, & people the centre of the room, than she found herself engaged to dance with a Brother officer, introduced by Capt. Hunter.

Emma Watson was not more than of the middle height—well made & plump, with an air of healthy vigour.—Her skin was very brown, but clear, smooth and glowing—; which with a lively Eye, a sweet smile, & an open Countenance, gave beauty to attract, & expression to make that beauty improve on acquaintance.—Having no reason to be dissatisfied with her partner, the Even^{g}. began very pleasantly to her; & her feelings perfectly coincided with the re-iterated observation of others, that it was an excellent Ball.

The two first dances were not quite over, when the returning sound of Carriages after a long interruption, called general notice, & "the Osbornes are coming, the Osbornes are coming"—was repeated round the room.—After some minutes of extraordinary bustle without, & watchful curiosity within, the important Party, preceded by the attentive Master of the Inn to open a door which was never shut, made their appearance. They consisted of Ly. Osborne, her son L^{d}. Osborne, her daughter Miss Osborne; Miss Carr, her daughter's friend, M^{r}. Howard formerly Tutor to L^{d}. Osborne, now Clergyman of the Parish in which the Castle stood, M^{rs}. Blake, a widow-

sister who lived with him, her son a fine boy of 10 years old, & M^r^. Tom Musgrave; who probably imprisoned within his own room, had been listening in bitter impatience to the sound of the Music, for the last half hour. In their progress up the room, they paused almost immediately behind Emma, to receive the Compt^s^. of some acquaintance, & she heard Ly. Osborne observe that they had made a point of coming early for the gratification of M^rs^. Blake's little boy, who was uncommonly fond of dancing.

Emma looked at them all as they passed—but cheifly & with most interest on Tom Musgrave, who was certainly a genteel, good looking young man.—Of the females, Ly. Osborne had by much the finest person;—tho' nearly 50, she was very handsome, & had all the Dignity of Rank.—L^d^. Osborne was a very fine young man; but there was an air of, Coldness, of Carelessness, even of Awkwardness about him, which seemed to speak him out of his Element in a Ball room. He came in fact only because it was judged expedient for him to please the Borough—he was not fond of Women's company, & he never danced.—M^r^. Howard was an agreable-looking Man, a little more than Thirty.

At the conclusion of the two Dances, Emma found herself, she knew not how, seated amongst the Osborne Set; & she was immediately struck with the fine Countenance & animated gestures of the little boy, as he was standing before his Mother, wondering when they should begin.

"You will not be surprised at Charles's impatience, said M^rs^.. Blake, a lively pleasant-looking little Woman of 5 or 6 & 30, to a Lady who was standing near her, when you know what a partner he is to have. Miss Osborne has been

so very kind as to promise to dance the two 1st dances with him."

"Oh! yes—we have been engaged this week. cried the boy. & we are to dance down every couple."

On the other side of Emma, Miss Osborne, Miss Carr, & a party of young Men were standing engaged in very lively consultation—& soon afterwards she saw the smartest officer of the Sett, walking off to the orchestra to order the dance, while Miss Osborne passing before her, to her little expecting Partner hastily said—"Charles, I beg your pardon for not keeping my engagement, but I am going to dance these two dances with Coln. Beresford. I know you will excuse me, & I will certainly dance with you after Tea." And without staying for an answer, she turned again to Miss Carr, & in another minute was led by Col. Beresford to begin the Set.

If the poor little boy's face had in its' happiness been interesting to Emma, it was infinitely more so under this sudden reverse;—he stood the picture of disappointment, with crimson'd cheeks, quivering lips, & eyes bent on the floor. His mother, stifling her own mortification, tried to sooth his, with the prospect of Miss Osborne's second promise; but tho' he contrived to utter with an effort of Boyish Bravery "Oh! I do not mind it"—it was very evident by the unceasing agitation of his features that he minded it as much as ever.

Emma did not think, or reflect;—she felt & acted—. "I shall be very happy to dance with you Sir, if you like it." said she, holding out her hand with the most unaffected good humour.—The Boy in one moment restored to all his first delight—looked joyfully at his Mother and stepping forward with an honest & simple "Thank you Maam" was instantly ready to attend his new acquaintance.—The

Thankfulness of M^rs^. Blake was more diffuse;—with a look, most expressive of unexpected pleasure, & lively Gratitude, she turned to her neighbour with repeated & fervent acknowledgments of so great & condescending a kindness to her boy.—Emma with perfect truth could assure her that she could not be giving greater pleasure than she felt herself—& Charles being provided with his gloves & charged to keep them on, they joined the Set which was now rapidly forming, with nearly equal complacency.

It was a Partnership which c^d^. not be noticed without surprise. It gained her a broad stare from Miss Osborne & Miss Carr as they passed her in the dance. “Upon my word Charles you are in luck, (said the former as she turned him) you have got a better partner than me—” to which the happy Charles answered “Yes.”—Tom Musgrave who was dancing with Miss Carr, gave her, many inquisitive glances; & after a time L^d^. Osborne himself came & under pretence of talking to Charles, stood to look at his partner.

Tho’ rather distressed by such observation, Emma could not repent what she had done, so happy had it made both the boy & his Mother; the latter of whom was continually making opportunities of addressing her. with the warmest civility.—Her little partner she found, tho’ bent cheifly on dancing, was not unwilling to speak, when her questions or remarks gave him any thing to say; & she learnt, by a sort of inevitable enquiry that he had two brothers & a sister, that they & their Mama all lived with his Uncle at Wickstead, that his Uncle taught him Latin, that he was very fond of riding, & had a horse of his own given him by L^d^. Osborne; & that he had been out once already with L^d^. Osborne’s Hounds,.”

At the end of these Dances Emma found they were to drink tea;— Miss E. gave her a caution to be at hand, in a manner which convinced her of M^{rs}. E.'s holding it very important to have them both close to her, when she moved into the Tearoom; & Emma was accordingly on the alert to gain her proper station. It was always the pleasure of the company to have a little bustle & croud when they thus adjourned for refreshment;—The Tea room was a small room within the Card room, & in passing thro' the latter, where the passage was straightened by Tables, M^{rs}. E. & her party were for a few moments hemmed in. It happened close by Lady Osborne's Cassino Table; M^{r}. Howard who belonged to it Spoke to his Nephew; & Emma on perceiving herself the object of attention both to Ly. O. & him, had just turned away her eyes in time, to avoid seeming to hear her young companion delightedly whisper aloud—"Oh! Uncle, do look at my partner. She is so pretty!" As They were immediately in motion again however, Charles was hurried off without being able to receive his Uncle's suffrage.

On entering the Tea room, in which two long Tables were prepared, L^{d}. Osborne was to be seen quite alone at the end of one, as if retreating as far as he could from the Ball, to enjoy his own thoughts, & gape without restraint.—Charles instantly pointed him out to Emma—"There's Lord Osborne—. Let you & I go & sit by him.—

"No, no, said Emma laughing you must sit with my friends."

Charles was now free enough to hazard a few questions in his turn. "What o'clock was it?—"

"Eleven."

“Eleven!—And I am not at all sleepy. Mama said I should be asleep before ten.—Do you think Miss Osborne will keep her word with me, when Tea is over?”

“Oh! yes—I suppose so.”—tho’ she felt that she had no better reason to give than that Miss Osborne’s had *not* kept it before.

“When shall you come to Osborne Castle?”

“Never, probably.—I am not acquainted with the family.”

“But you may come to Wickstead & see Mama, & she can take you to the Castle.—There is a monstrous curious stuff’d Fox there, & a Badger—any body would think they were alive. It is a pity you should not see them.”

On rising from Tea there was again a scramble for the pleasure of being first out of the room, which happened to be increased by one or two of the card parties having just broken up & the players being disposed to move exactly the different way. Among these was M^{r}. Howard—his Sister leaning on his arm—& no sooner were they within reach of Emma, than M^{rs}. B. calling her notice by a friendly touch, said “Your goodness to Charles, my dear Miss Watson, brings all his family upon you. Give me leave to introduce my Brother—M^{r}. H.” Emma curtsied, the gentleman bowed—made a hasty request for the honour of her hand in the two next dances, to which as hasty an affirmative was given, & they were immediately impelled in opposite directions.

Emma was very well pleased with the circumstance;—there was a quietly-chearful, gentlemanlike air in M^{r}. H. which suited her—& in a few minutes afterwards, the value of her Engagement increased, when as she was sitting in the Card room somewhat screened by a door, she

heard L^{d}. Osborne, who was lounging on a vacant Table near her, call Tom Musgrave towards him & say, “Why do not you dance with that beautiful Emma Watson?—I want you to dance with her—& I will come & stand by you.—”

“I was determining on it this very moment my Lord; I’ll be introduced & dance with her directly.—”

“Aye do—& if you find she does not want much Talking to, you may introduce me by & bye.”

“Very well my Lord—. If she is like her Sisters, she will only want to be listened to.—I will go this moment. I shall find her in the Tea room. That stiff old M^{rs}. E. has never done tea.”

Away he went—L^{d}. Osborne after him—& Emma lost no time in hurrying from her corner, exactly the other way, forgetting in her haste that she left M^{rs}. Edwardes behind.

“We had quite lost you—said M^{rs}. E.—who followed her with Mary, in less than five minutes.—If you prefer this room to the other, there is no reason why you should not be here, but we had better all be together.”

Emma was saved the Trouble of apologizing, by their being joined at the moment by Tom Musgrave, who requesting M^{rs}. E. aloud to do him the honour of presenting him to Miss Emma Watson, left that good Lady without any choice in the business, but that of testifying by the coldness of her manner that she did it unwillingly. The honour of dancing with her, was solicited without loss of time—& Emma, however she might like to be thought a beautiful girl by Lord or Commoner, was so little disposed to favour Tom Musgrave himself, that she had considerable satisfaction in avowing her prior Engagement.—He was evidently surprised &

discomposed.—The stile of her last partner had probably led him to beleive her not overpowered with applications.

"My little friend Charles Blake, he cried, must not expect to engross you the whole evening. We can never suffer this—It is against the rules of the Assembly—& I am sure it will never be patronised by our good friend here M^{rs}. E.; she is by much too nice a judge of Decorum to give her license to such a dangerous Particularity."

"I am not going to dance with Master Blake Sir."

The Gentleman a little disconcerted, could only hope he might be more fortunate another time—& seeming unwilling to leave her, tho' his friend L^{d}. Osborne was waiting in the Doorway for the result, as Emma with some amusement perceived,—he began to make civil enquiries after her family.

"How comes it, that we have not the pleasure of seeing your Sisters here this Evening?—Our Assemblies have been used to be so well treated by them, that we do not know how to take this neglect."

"My eldest Sister is the only one at home—& she could not leave my Father—"

"Miss Watson the only one at home!—You astonish me!—It seems but the day before yesterday that I saw them all three in this Town. But I am afraid I have been a very sad neighbour of late. I hear dreadful complaints of my negligence wherever I go,—& I confess It is a shameful length of time since I was at Stanton.—But I shall *now* endeavour to make myself amends for the past."

Emma's calm curtsey in reply must have struck him as very unlike the encouraging warmth he had been used to receive from her Sisters, & gave him probably the novel

sensation of doubting his own influence, & of wishing for more attention than she bestowed.

The dancing now recommenced; Miss Carr being impatient to *call*, everybody was required to stand up—& Tom Musgrave's curiosity was appeased, on seeing M^r. Howard come forward & claim Emma's hand.

"That will do as well for *me*—" was L^d. Osborne's remark, when his friend carried him the news—& he was continually at Howard's Elbow during the two dances.

The frequency of his appearance there, was the only unpleasant part of her engagement, the only objection she could make to M^r. Howard.—In himself, she thought him as agreable as he looked; tho' chatting on the commonest topics he had a sensible, unaffected, way of expressing himself, which made them all worth hearing, & she only regretted that he had not been able to make his pupil's Manners as unexceptionable as his own.—The two dances seemed very short, & she had her partner's authority for considering them so.—At their conclusion the Osborne & their Train were all on the move.

"We are off at last, said his Lordship to Tom—How much longer do *you* stay in this Heavenly place?—till Sunrise?"

"No. faith! my Lord, I have had quite enough of it; I assure you—I shall not shew myself here again when I have had the honour of attending Ly. Osborne to her Carriage. I shall retreat in as much secrecy as possible to the most remote corner of the House, where I shall order a Barrel of Oysters, & be famously snug."

"Let us see you soon at the Castle; & bring me word how she looks by daylight."

Emma and M^rs^. Blake parted as old acquaintance, & Charles shook her by the hand & wished her “good bye” at least a dozen times. From Miss Osborne & Miss Carr she received something like a jerking curtsey as they passed her; even Ly. Osborne gave her a look of complacency—& his Lordship actually came back after the others were out of the room, to “beg her pardon”, & look in the window seat behind her for the gloves which were visibly compressed in his hand.—As Tom Musgrave was seen no more, we may suppose his plan to have succeeded, & imagine him mortifying with his Barrel of Oysters, in dreary solitude—or gladly assisting the Landlady in her Bar to make fresh Negus for the happy Dancers above.

Emma could not help missing the party, by whom she had been, tho’ in some respects unpleasantly, distinguished, & the two Dances which followed & concluded the Ball, were rather flat, in comparison with the others.—M^r^. E. having play’d with good luck, they were some of the last in the room.

“Here we are, back again I declare—said Emma sorrowfully, as she walked into the Dining room, where the Table was prepared, & the neat Upper maid was lighting the Candles—“My dear Miss Edwards—how soon it is at an end!—I wish it could all come over again!—”

A great deal of kind pleasure was expressed in her having enjoyed the Even^g^. so much—& M^r^. Edwards was as warm as herself, in praise of the fullness, brilliancy & Spirit of the Meeting tho’ as he had been fixed the whole time at the same Table in the same Room, with only one change of Chairs, it might have seemed a matter scarcely perceived.—But he had won 4 rubbers out of 5, & every thing went well. His daughter felt the advantage of this

gratified state of mind, in the course of the remarks & retrospections which now ensued, over the welcome Soup.

"How came you not to dance with either of the M^r^. Tomlinsons, Mary?—said her Mother."

"I was always engaged when they asked me."

"I thought you were to have stood up with M^r^. James, the two last dances; M^rs^. Tomlinson told me he was gone to ask you—& I had heard you say two minutes before that you were *not* engaged.—"

"Yes—but—there was a mistake—I had misunderstood—I did not know I was engaged,—I thought it had been for the 2 Dances after, if we staid so long—but Capt. Hunter assured me it was for those very Two.—"

"So, you ended with Capt. Hunter Mary, did you?" said her Father. And who did you begin with?"

"Capt. Hunter." was repeated, in a very humble tone—

"Hum!—That is being constant however. But who else did you dance with?"

"M^r^. Norton, & M^r^. Styles."

"And who are they?"

"M^r^. Norton is a Cousin of Capt. Hunter's."

"And who is M^r^. Styles?"

"One of his particular friends."

"All in the same Reg^t^: added M^rs^. E.—Mary was surrounded by Red coats the whole Even^g^. I should have been better pleased to see her dancing with some of our old Neighbours I confess.—"

“Yes, yes, we must not neglect our old Neighbours—. But if these soldiers are quicker than other people in a Ball room, what are young Ladies to do?”

“I think there is no occasion for their engaging themselves so many Dances before hand, M.r. Edwards.”

“No—perhaps not—but I remember my dear when you & I did the same.”

M.rs. E. said no more, & Mary breathed again.—A great deal of goodhumoured pleasantry followed—& Emma went to bed in charming Spirits, her head full of Osbornes, Blakes & Howards.

3

The next morn^g^. brought a great many visitors. It was the way of the place always to call on M^rs^. E. on the morn^g^. after a Ball, & this neighbourly inclination was increased in the present instance by a general spirit of curiosity on Emma's account, as Everybody wanted to look again at the girl who had been admired the night before by L^d^. Osborne—. Many were the eyes, & various the degrees of approbation with which she was examined. Some saw no fault, & some no Beauty—. With some her brown skin was the annihilation of every grace, & others could never be persuaded that she were half so handsome as Eliz: Watson had been ten years ago.—The morn^g^. passed quickly away in discussing the merits of the Ball with all this succession of Company—& Emma was at once astonished by finding it Two o'clock, & considering that she had heard nothing of her Father's Chair. After this discovery she had walked twice to the window to examine the Street, & was on the point of asking leave to ring the bell & make enquiries, when the light sound of a Carriage driving up to the door set her heart at ease. She stepd again to the window—but instead of the convenient but very unsmart Family Equipage perceived a neat Curricle.—M^r^. Musgrave was shortly afterwards announced;—& M^rs^.. Edwards put on her very stiffest look at the sound.—Not at all dismayed however by her chilling air, he paid his Comp^ts^.. to each of the Ladies with no unbecoming Ease, & continuing to address Emma, presented her a note, which he had "the honour of bringing from her

Sister; But to which he must observe, that a verbal postscript from himself w^{d}. be requisite.—”

The note, which Emma was beginning to read rather *before* M^{rs}:. Edwards had entreated her to use no ceremony, contained a few lines from Eliz: importing that their Father in consequence of being unusually well had taken the sudden resolution of attending the visitation that day, & that as his Road lay quite wide from R., it was impossible for her to come home till the following morn^{g}., unless the Edwardses w^{d}. send her which was hardly to be expected, or she c^{d}. meet with any chance conveyance, or did not mind walking so far.—She had scarcely run her eye thro’ the whole, before she found herself obliged to listen to Tom Musgrave’s farther account.

“I received that note from the fair hands of Miss Watson only ten minutes ago, said he—I met her in the village of Stanton, whither my good Stars prompted me to turn my Horses heads—she was at that moment in quest of a person to employ on the Errand, & I was fortunate enough to convince her that she could not find a more willing or speedy Messenger than myself—. Remember, I say nothing of my Disinterestedness.—My reward is to be the indulgence of conveying you to Stanton in my Curricle.—Tho’ they are not written down, I bring your Sister’s orders for the same.—”

Emma felt distressed; she did not like the proposal—she did not wish to be on terms of intimacy with the Proposer—& yet fearful of encroaching on the Edwardes’, as well as wishing to go home herself, she was at a loss how entirely to decline what he offered—. M^{rs}. E. continued silent, either not understanding the case, or waiting to see how the young Lady’s inclination lay. Emma thanked him—but professed herself very unwilling

to give him so much trouble. “The Trouble was of course, Honour, Pleasure, Delight. What had he or his Horses to do?—” Still she hesitated. “She beleived she must beg leave to decline his assistance—She was rather afraid of the sort of carriage—. The distance was not beyond a walk.—”—M^rs. E. was silent no longer. She enquired into the particulars—& then said “We shall be extremely happy Miss Emma, if you can give us the pleasure of your company till tomorrow—but if you can not conveniently do so, our Carriage is quite at your Service, & Mary will be pleased with the opportunity of seeing your Sister.”

This was precisely what Emma had longed for, & she accepted the offer most thankfully; acknowledging that as Eliz: was entirely alone, it was her wish to return home to dinner.—The plan was warmly opposed by their visitor.

“I cannot suffer it indeed. I must not be deprived of the happiness of escorting you. I assure you there is not a possibility of fear with my Horses. You might guide them yourself. *Your sisters* all know how quiet they are; They have none of them the smallest scruple in trusting themselves with me, even on a Race-Course.—Beleive me—added he lowering his voice—*You* are quite safe, the danger is only *mine*.—”

Emma was not more disposed to oblige him for all this.

“And as to M^rs. Edwardes’ carriage being used the day after a Ball, it is a thing quite out of rule I assure you—never heard of before—the old Coachman will look as black as his Horses—. Won’t he Miss Edwards?”

No notice was taken. The Ladies were silently firm, & the gentleman found himself obliged to submit.

“What a famous Ball we had last night!—he cried, after a short pause. How long did you keep it up, after the

Osbornes & I went away?”

“We had two dances more.”

“It is making it too much of a fatigue I think, to stay so late.—I suppose your Set was not a very full one.—”

“Yes, quite as full as ever, except the Osbornes. There seemed no vacancy anywhere—& Everybody danced with uncommon spirit to the very last.—”

Emma said this—tho’ against her conscience.

“Indeed! perhaps I might have looked in upon you again, if I had been aware of as much;—for I am rather fond of dancing than not.— Miss Osborne is a charming girl, is not she?”

“I do not think her handsome.” replied Emma, to whom all this was cheifly addressed.

“Perhaps she is not critically handsome, but her Manners are delightful. And Fanny Carr is a most interesting little creature. You can imagine nothing more *naive* or *piquante*; & What do you think of *L^d. Osborne* Miss Watson?”

“That He would be handsome even, tho’ he were *not* a Lord—& perhaps—better bred; more desirous of pleasing, & shewing himself pleased in a right place.—”

“Upon my word, you are severe upon my friend!—I assure you Ld. Osborne is a very good fellow.—”

“I do not dispute his virtues—but I do not like his careless air.—”

“If it were not a breach of confidence, replied Tom with an important look, perhaps I might be able to win a more favourable opinion of poor Osborne.—”

Emma gave him no Encouragement, & he was obliged to keep his friend's secret.—He was also obliged to put an end to his visit—for Mrs. Edwards' having ordered her Carriage, there was no time to be lost on Emma's side in preparing for it.—Miss Edwards accompanied her home, but as it was Dinner hour at Stanton, staid with them only a few minutes.

"Now my dear Emma, said Miss W., as soon as they were alone, you must talk to me all the rest of the day, without stopping, or I shall not be satisfied. But first of all Nanny shall bring in the dinner. Poor thing!—You will not dine as you did yesterday, for we have nothing but some fried beef.—How nice Mary Edwards looks in her new pelisse!—And now tell me how you like them all, & what I am to say to Sam. I have begun my Letter, Jack Stokes is to call for it tomorrow, for his Uncle is going within a mile of Guilford the next day.—"

Nanny brought in the dinner;

"We will wait upon ourselves, continued Eliz: & then we shall lose no time.—And so, you would not come home with Tom Musgrave?"

"No. You had said so much against him that I could not wish either for the obligation, or the Intimacy which the use of his Carriage must have created—. I should not even have liked the appearance of it.—"

"You did very right; tho' I wonder at your forbearance, & I do not think I could have done it myself.—He seemed so eager to fetch you, that I could not say no, tho' it rather went against me to be throwing you together, so well as I knew his Tricks;—but I did long to see you, & it was a clever way of getting you home; Besides—it wo'nt do, to be too nice.—Nobody could have thought of the Edwards'

letting you have their Coach,—after the Horses being out so late.—But what am I to say to Sam?—"

"If you are guided by me, you will not encourage him to think of Miss Edwards.—The Father is decidedly against him, the Mother shews him no favour, & I doubt his having any interest with Mary. She danced twice with Capt. Hunter, & I think shews him in general as much Encouragement as is consistent with her disposition, & the circumstances she is placed in.—She once mentioned Sam, & certainly with a little confusion—but that was perhaps merely oweing to the consciousness of his liking her, which may very probably have come to her knowledge.—"

"Oh! dear. Yes—she has heard enough of that from us all. Poor Sam!—He is out of luck as well as other people. For the life of me Emma, I cannot help feeling for those that are cross'd in Love.—Well—now begin, & give me an account of every thing as it happened.—"

Emma obeyed her—& Eliz: listened with very little interruption till she heard of M^{r}. H. as a partner.

"Dance with M^{r}. H.—Good Heavens! You don't say so!—Why—He is quite one of the great & Grand ones;—Did not you find him very high?—"

"His manners are of a kind to give *me* much more Ease & confidence than Tom Musgraves."

"Well—go on. I should have been frightened out of my wits, to have had anything to do with the Osborne's set."

Emma concluded her narration.

"And so, you really did not dance with Tom M. at all?—But you must have liked him, you must have been struck with him altogether."

“I do *not* like him, Eliz:—. I allow his person & air to be good—& that his manners to a certain point—his address rather—is pleasing.—But I see nothing else to admire in him.—On the contrary, he seems very vain, very conceited, absurdly anxious for Distinction, & absolutely contemptible in some of the measures he takes for becoming so.—There is a ridiculousness about him that entertains me—but his company gives me no other agreable Emotion.”

“My dearest Emma!—You are like nobody else in the world.—It is well Margaret is not by.—You do not offend *me* tho’ I hardly know how to beleive you. But Marg^{t}. w^{d}. never forgive such words.”

“I wish Marg^{t}. could have heard him profess his ignorance of her being out of the Country;—he declared it seemed only two days since he had seen her.—”

“Aye—that is just like him, & yet this is the Man, she *will* fancy so desperately in love with her.—He is no favourite of mine, as you well know, Emma;—but you must think him agreable. Can you lay your hand on your heart, & say you do not?”

“Indeed I can. Both Hands; & spread to their widest extent.—”

“I should like to know the man you *do* think agreable.”

“His name is Howard.”

“Howard! Dear me. I cannot think of *him*, but as playing cards with Ly Osborne, & looking proud.—I must own however that it *is* a releif to me, to find you can speak as you do, of Tom Musgrave; my heart did misgive me that you would like him too well. You talked so stoutly beforehand, that I was sadly afraid your Brag would be

punished.—I only hope it will last; & that he will not come on to pay you much attention; it is a hard thing for a woman to stand against the flattering ways of a Man, when he is bent upon pleasing her.—"

As their quietly-sociable little meal concluded, Miss Watson could not help observing how comfortably it had passed.

"It is so delightful to me, said she, to have Things going on in peace & goodhumour. Nobody can tell how much I hate quarrelling. Now, tho' we have had nothing but fried beef, how good it has all seemed.—I wish everybody were as easily satisfied as you—but poor Marg^{t}: is very snappish, & Penelope owns she had rather have Quarrelling going on, than nothing at all."

M^{r}. Watson returned in the Evening, not the worse for the exertion of the day, & consequently pleased with what he had done, & glad to talk of it, over his own Fireside.—Emma had not foreseen any interest to herself in the occurrences of a visitation—but when she heard M^{r}. Howard spoken of as the Preacher, & as having given them an excellent Sermon, she could not help listening with a quicker Ear.

"I do not know when I have heard a Discourse more to my mind—continued M^{r}. W.—or one better delivered.—He reads extremely well, with great propriety & in a very impressive manner; & at the same time without any Theatrical grimace or violence.—I own, I do not like much action in the pulpit—I do not like the studied air & artificial inflexions of voice, which your very popular & most admired Preachers generally have.—A simple delivery is much better calculated to inspire Devotion, &

shews a much better Taste.—M.r H. read like a Scholar & a gentleman.—"

"And what had you for dinner Sir?—" said his eldest Daughter.

He related the Dishes & told what he had ate himself.

"Upon the whole, he added, I have had a very comfortable day; my old friends were quite surprised to see me amongst them—& I must say that everybody paid me great attention, & seemed to feel for me as an Invalid.—They would make me sit near the fire, & as the partridges were pretty high, D.r Richards would have them sent away to the other end of the Table, that they might not offend M.r Watson—which I thought very kind of him.—But what pleased me as much as anything was M.r Howard's attention;—There is a pretty steep flight of steps up to the room we dine in—which do not quite agree with my gouty foot—& M.r Howard walked by me from the bottom to the top, & would make me take his arm.—It struck me as very becoming in so young a Man, but I am sure I had no claim to expect it; for I never saw him before in my Life.—By the bye, he enquired after one of my Daughters, but I do not know which. I suppose you know among yourselves."

4

On the 3d. day after the Ball, as Nanny at five minutes before three, was beginning to bustle into the parlour with the Tray & the Knife-case, she was suddenly called to the front door, by the sound of as smart a rap as the end of a riding-whip cd. give—& tho' charged by Miss. W. to let nobody in, returned in half a minute, with a look of awkward dismay, to hold the parlour door open for Ld. Osborne & Tom Musgrave.—The Surprise of the young Ladies may be imagined. No visitors would have been welcome at such a moment; but such visitors as these—such a one as Ld. Osborne at least, a nobleman & a stranger, was really distressing.

He looked a little embarrassed himself,—as, on being introduced by his easy, voluble friend, he muttered something of doing himself the honour of waiting on Mr. Watson.—Tho' Emma could not but take the compliment of the visit to herself, she was very far from enjoying it. She felt all the inconsistency of such an acquaintance with the very humble stile in which they were obliged to live; & having In her Aunt's family been used to many of the Elegancies of Life, was fully sensible of all that must be open to the ridicule of Richer people in her present home.—Of the pain of such feelings, Eliz: knew very little;—her simpler Mind, or juster reason saved her from such mortification—& tho' shrinking under a general sense of Inferiority, she felt no particular Shame.—Mr. Watson, as the Gentlemen had already heard from Nanny, was not well enough to be down stairs;—With much concern they took their seats—Ld. Osborne

near Emma, & the convenient M^{r}. Musgrave in high spirits at his own importance, on the other side of the fireplace with Elizth..—*He* was at no loss for words;—but when Ld. Osborne had hoped that Emma had not caught cold at the Ball, he had nothing more to say for some time & could only gratify his Eye by occasional glances at his fair neighbour.—Emma was not inclined to give herself much trouble for his Entertainment—& after hard labour of mind, he produced the remark of it's being a very fine day, & followed it up with the question of, "Have you been walking this morning?"

"No, my Lord. We thought it too dirty."

"You should wear half-boots."—After another pause, "Nothing sets off a neat ancle more than a half-boot; nankin galoshed with black looks very well.—Do not you like Half-boots?

"Yes—but unless they are so stout as to injure their beauty, they are not fit for Country walking.—"

"Ladies should ride in dirty weather.—Do you ride?"

"No my Lord."

"I wonder every Lady does not.—A woman never looks better than on horseback.—"

"But every woman may not have the inclination, or the means."

"If they knew how much it became them, they would all have the inclination—& I fancy Miss Watson—when once they had the inclination, the means w^{d}. soon follow."

"Your Lordship thinks we always have our own way.—*That* is a point on which Ladies & Gentle^{n}: have long disagreed—But without pretending to decide it, I may say

that there are some circumstances which even *Women* cannot controul.—Female Economy will do a great deal my Lord, but it cannot turn a small income into a large one."

L^{d}. Osborne was silenced. Her manner had been neither Sententious nor sarcastic, but there was a something in its' mild seriousness, as well as in the words themselves which made his Lordship think;—and when he addressed her again, it was with a degree of considerate propriety, totally unlike the half-awkward, half-fearless stile of his former remarks.—It was a new thing with him to wish to please a woman; it was the first time that he had ever felt what was due to a woman, in Emma's situation.—But as he wanted neither Sense nor a good disposition, he did not feel it without effect.

"You have not been long in this Country I understand, said he in the tone of a Gentle^{n}. I hope you are pleased with it."

He was rewarded by a gracious answer, & a more liberal full veiw of her face than she had yet bestowed. Unused to exert himself, & happy in contemplating her, he then sat in silence for some minutes longer, while Tom Musgrave was chattering to Elizth., till they were interrupted by Nanny's approach, who half opening the door & putting in her head, said

"Please Ma'am, Master wants to know why he ben't to have his dinner."

The Gentlemen, who had hitherto disregarded every symptom, however positive, of the nearness of that Meal, now jumped up with apologies, while Elizth. called briskly after Nanny "to tell Betty to take up the Fowls."

“I am sorry it happens so—she added, turning goodhumouredly towards Musgrave—but you know what early hours we keep.—”

Tom had nothing to say for himself, he knew it very well, & such honest simplicity, such shameless Truth rather bewildered him.—L^{d}. Osborne’s parting Compt^{s}. took some time, his inclination for speech seeming to increase with the shortness of the term for indulgence.—He recommended Exercise in defiance of dirt—spoke again in praise of Half-boots—begged that his Sister might be allow’d to send Emma the name of her Shoemaker—& concluded with saying, “My Hounds will be hunting this Country next week—I beleive they will throw off at Stanton Wood on Wednesday at 9 o’clock.—I mention this, in hopes of y^{r}. being drawn out to see what’s going on.—If the morning’s tolerable, pray do us the honour of giving us your good wishes in person.”

The Sisters looked on each other with astonishment, when their visitors had withdrawn.

“Here’s an unaccountable Honour! cried Eliz: at last. Who would have thought of L^{d}. Osborne’s coming to Stanton.—He is very handsome;—but Tom Musgrave looks all to nothing, the smartest & most fashionable man of the two. I am glad he did not say anything to me; I w^{d}. not have had to talk to such a great man for the world. Tom was very agreable, was not he?—But Did you hear him ask where Miss Penelope & Miss Marg^{t}. were, when he first came in?—It put me out of patience.—I am glad Nanny had not laid the Cloth however, it w^{d}. have looked so awkward;—just the Tray did not signify.—”

To say that Emma was not flattered by L^{d}. Osborne’s visit, would be to assert a very unlikely thing, & describe a

very odd young Lady; but the gratification was by no means unalloyed; His coming was a sort of notice which might please her vanity, but did not suit her pride, & she w^{d}. rather have known that he wished the visit without presuming to make it, than have seen him at Stanton.

Among other unsatisfactory feelings it once occurred to her to wonder why M^{r}. Howard had not taken the same privilege of coming, & accompanied his Lordship—but she was willing to suppose that he had either known nothing about it, or had declined any share in a measure which carried quite as much Impertinence in it's form as Goodbreeding.

M^{r}. W. was very far from being delighted, when he heard what had passed;—a little peevish under immediate pain, and illdisposed to be pleased, he only replied—"Phoo! Phoo!—What occasion could there be for L^{d}. O.'s coming. I have lived here 14 years without being noticed by any of the family. It is some foolery of that idle fellow T. Musgrave. I cannot return the visit.—I would not if I could." And when T. Musgrave was met with again, he was commissioned with a message of excuse to Osborne Castle, on the too-sufficient plea of M^{r}. Watson's infirm state of health.

5

A week or ten days rolled quietly away after this visit, before any new bustle arose to interrupt even for half a day, the tranquil & affectionate intercourse of the two Sisters, whose mutual regard was increasing with the intimate knowledge of each other which such intercourse produced.—The first circumstance to break in on this serenity, was the receipt of a letter from Croydon to announce the speedy return of Margaret, & a visit of two or three days from M^{r}. & M^{rs}. Robert Watson who undertook to bring her home & wished to see their Sister Emma.

It was an expectation to fill the thoughts of the Sisters at Stanton, & to busy the hours of one of them at least—for as Jane had been a woman of fortune, the preparations for her entertainment were considerable, & as Eliz: had at all times more good will than method in her guidance of the house, she could make no change without a Bustle.—An absence of 14. years had made all her Brothers & Sisters Strangers to Emma, but in her expectation of Margaret there was more than the awkwardness of such an Alienation; she had heard things which made her dread her return; & the day which brought the party to Stanton seemed to her the probable conclusion of almost all that had been comfortable in the house.

Robert Watson was an Attorney at Croydon, in a good way of Business; very well satisfied with himself for the same, & for having married the only daughter of the Attorney to whom he had been Clerk, with a fortune of six thousand pounds.—M^{rs}. Robt. was not less pleased with

herself for having had that six thousand pounds, & for being now in possession of a very smart house in Croydon, where she gave genteel parties, & wore fine Cloathes.—In her person there was nothing remarkable; her manners were pert & conceited.

Margaret was not without beauty; she had a slight, pretty figure, & rather wanted Countenance than good features;—but the sharp & anxious expression of her face, made her beauty in general little felt.—On meeting her long-absent Sister, as on every occasion of shew, her manner was all affection & her voice all gentleness; continual smiles & a very slow articulation being her constant resource when determined on pleasing. She was now so “delighted to see dear, dear Emma”, that she could hardly speak a word in a minute.

“I am sure we shall be great friends—” she observed, with much sentiment, as they were sitting together.—Emma scarcely knew how to answer such a proposition—& the manner in which it was spoken, she could not attempt to equal.

M^{rs}. R. W. eyed her with much familiar curiosity & Triumphant Compassion;—the loss of the Aunt’s fortune was uppermost in her mind, at the moment of meeting;—& she c^{d}. not but feel how much better it was to be the daughter of a gentleman of property in Croydon, than the neice of an old woman who threw herself away on an Irish Captain.—Robert was carelessly kind, as became a prosperous Man & a brother; more intent on settling with the Post-Boy, inveighing against the Exorbitant advance in Posting, & pondering over a doubtful halfcrown, than on welcoming a Sister, who was no longer likely to have any property for him to get the direction of.

“Your road through the village is infamous, Eliz:; said he; worse than ever it was. By Heaven! I would endite it if I lived near you. Who is Surveyor now?”

There was a little neice at Croydon, to be fondly enquired after by the kind-hearted Elizabeth, who regretted very much her not being of the party.

“You are very good—replied her mother—& I assure you it went very hard with Augusta to have us come away without her. I was forced to say we were only going to Church & promise to come back for her directly.—But you know it would not do, to bring her without her maid, & I am as particular as ever in having her properly attended to.”

“Sweet little Darling!—cried Marg^{t}.—It quite broke my heart to leave her.—”

“Then Why was you in such a hurry to run away from her? cried M^{rs}. R.—You are a sad shabby girl.—I have been quarrelling with you all the way we came, have not I?—Such a visit as this, I never heard of!—You know how glad we are to have any of you with us;—if it be for months together.—& I am sorry, (with a witty smile) we have not been able to make Croydon agreable this Autumn.”

“My dearest Jane—do not overpower me with your raillery.—You know what inducements I had to bring me home—Spare me, I entreat you—I am no match for your arch sallies.—”

“Well, I only beg you will not set your Neighbours against the place.—Perhaps Emma may be tempted to go back with us, & stay till Christmas, if you don’t put in your word.”— Emma was greatly obliged.

“I assure you we have very good society at Croydon.—I do not much attend the Balls, they are rather too mixed,—but our parties are very select & good.—I had seven tables last week in my Drawingroom.—Are you fond of the Country? How do you like Stanton?—”

“Very much”—replied Emma, who thought a comprehensive answer, most to the purpose.—She saw that her Sister in law despised her immediately.—M^{rs}. R. W. was indeed wondering what sort of a home Emma c^{d}. possibly have been used to in Shropshire, & setting it down as certain that the Aunt could never have had six thousand pounds.

“How charming Emma is!—” whispered Marg^{t}. to M^{rs}. Robert in her most languishing tone.—Emma was quite distress’d by such behaviour;—& she did not like it better when she heard Marg^{t}. 5 minutes afterwards say to Eliz: in a sharp quick accent, totally unlike the first—“Have you heard from Pen. since she went to Chichester?—I had a letter the other day.—I don’t find she is likely to make anything of it. I fancy she’ll come back “Miss Penelope” as she went.—”

Such, she feared would be Margaret’s common voice, when the novelty of her own appearance were over; the tone of artificial Sensibility was not recommended by the idea.

The Ladies were invited upstairs to prepare for dinner.

“I hope you will find things tolerably comfortable Jane”—said Elizth as she opened the door of the spare-bedchamber.

“My good creature, replied Jane, use no ceremony with me, I intreat you. I am one of those who always take

things as they find them. I hope I can put up with a small apartment for two or three nights, without making a peice of work. I always wish to be treated quite “en famille” when I come to see you—& now I do hope you have not been getting a great dinner for us.—Remember we never eat Suppers.”

“I suppose, said Marg^{t}. rather quickly to Emma, you & I are to be together; Elizth always takes care to have a room to herself.”

“No—Elizth. gives me half her’s.”

“Oh!—(in a soften’d voice, & rather mortified to find that she was not ill used) “I am sorry I am not to have the pleasure of your company—especially as it makes me nervous to be much alone.”

Emma was the first of the females in the parlour again; on entering it she found her brother alone.

“So Emma, said he, you are quite the Stranger at home. It must seem odd enough to you to be here.—A pretty peice of work your Aunt Turner has made of it!—By Heaven! a woman should never be trusted with money. I always said she ought to have settled something on you, as soon as her Husband died.”

“But *that* would have been trusting *me* with money, replied Emma, & *I* am a woman too.—”

“It might have been secured to your future use, without your having any power over it now.—What a blow it must have been upon you!—To find yourself, instead of Heiress of 8 or 9000£, sent back a weight upon your family, without a sixpence.—I hope the old woman will smart for it.”

“Do not speak disrespectfully of her—She was very good to me; & If she has made an imprudent choice, she will suffer more from it herself, than *I* can possibly do.”

“I do not mean to distress you, but you know every body must think her an old fool.—I thought Turner had been reckoned an extraordinary sensible, clever man.—How the Devil came he to make such a will?”

“My Uncle’s sense is not at all impeached in my opinion, by his attachment to my Aunt. She had been an excellent wife to him. The most Liberal & enlightened minds are always the most confiding.—The event has been unfortunate, but my Uncle’s memory is if possible endeared to me by such a proof of tender respect for my Aunt.”

“That’s odd sort of Talking!—He might have provided decently for his widow, without leaving every thing that he had to dispose of, or any part of it at her mercy.—”

“My Aunt may have erred—said Emma warmly—she *has* erred—but my Uncle’s conduct was faultless. I was her own Neice, & he left to herself the power & the pleasure of providing for me.”

“But unluckily she has left the pleasure of providing for you, to your Father, & without the power.—That’s the long & the short of the business. After keeping you at a distance from your family for such a length of time as must do away all natural affection among us & breeding you up (I suppose) in a superior stile, you are returned upon their hands without a sixpence.”

“You know, replied Emma struggling with her tears, my Uncle’s melancholy state of health.—He was a greater Invalid than my father. He c^{d}. not leave home.”

"I do not mean to make you cry.—said Robt. rather softened—& after a short silence, by way of changing the subject, he added—"I am just come from my Father's room, he seems very indifferent. It will be a sad break-up when he dies. Pity, you can none of you get married!—You must come to Croydon as well as the rest, & see what you can do there.—I beleive if Marg^{t}. had had a thousand or fifteen hundred pounds, there was a young man who w^{d}. have thought of her."

Emma was glad when they were joined by the others; it was better to look at her Sister in law's finery, than listen to Robert, who had equally irritated and greived her.—M^{rs}. Robert exactly as smart as she had been at her own party, came in with apologies for her dress.

"I would not make you wait, said she, so I put on the first thing I met with.—I am afraid I am a sad figure.—My dear M^{r}. W.—(to her husband) you have not put any fresh powder in your hair."

"No—I do not intend it.—I think there is powder enough in my hair for my wife & Sisters.—"

"Indeed you ought to make some alteration in your dress before dinner when you are out visitting, tho' you do not at home."

"Nonsense.—"

"It is very odd you should not like to do what other gentlemen do. M^{r}. Marshall & M^{r}. Hemmings change their dress every day of their Lives before dinner. And what was the use of my putting up your last new Coat, if you are never to wear it."

"Do be satisfied with being fine yourself, & leave your husband alone."

To put an end to this altercation, & soften the evident vexation of her Sister in law, Emma, (tho' in no Spirits to make such nonsense easy) began to admire her gown.—It produced immediate complacency.

"Do you like it?—said she.—I am very happy.—It has been excessively admired;—but sometimes I think the pattern too large.—I shall wear one tomorrow that I think you will prefer to this.—Have you seen the one I gave Margaret?—"

Dinner came, & except when M^rs^. R. looked at her husband's head, she continued gay & flippant, chiding Eliz^th^.. for the profusion on the Table, & absolutely protesting against the entrance of the roast Turkey—which formed the only exception to "You see your dinner",.

"I do beg & entreat that no Turkey may be seen to day. I am really frightened out of my wits with the number of dishes we have already. Let us have no Turkey I beseech you."

"My dear, replied Eliz. the Turkey is roasted, & it may just as well come in, as stay in the Kitchen. Besides If it is cut, I am in hopes my Father may be tempted to eat a bit, for it is rather a favourite dish."

"You may have it in my dear, but I assure you *I* sha'nt touch it."

M^r^. Watson had not been well enough to join the party at dinner, but was prevailed on to come down & drink tea with them.

"I wish we may be able to have a game of cards tonight," said Eliz. to M^rs^. R. after seeing her father comfortably seated in his arm chair.

“Not on my account my dear, I beg. You know I am no card player. I think a snug chat infinitely better. I always say cards are very well sometimes, to break a formal circle, but one never wants them among freinds.”

“I was thinking of its’ being something to amuse my father, answered Elizth.—if it was not disagreable to you. He says his head won’t bear Whist—but perhaps if we make a round game he may be tempted to sit down with us.”

“By all means my dear Creature. I am quite at your service. Only do not oblige me to chuse the game, that’s all. *Speculation* is the only round game at Croydon now, but I can play any thing.—When there is only one or two of you at home, you must be quite at a loss to amuse him—why do not you get him to play at Cribbage?—Margaret & I have played at Cribbage, most nights that we have not been engaged.”

A sound like a distant Carriage was at this moment caught; every body listened; it became more decided; it certainly drew nearer.—It was an unusual sound in Stanton at any time of the day, for the Village was on no very public road, & contained no gentleman’s family but the Rector’s.—The wheels rapidly approached;—in two minutes the general expectation was answered; they stopped beyond a doubt at the garden gate of the Parsonage. “Who could it be?—it was certainly a postchaise.—Penelope was the only creature to be thought of. She might perhaps have met with some unexpected opportunity of returning.”—A pause of suspense ensued.—Steps were distinguished, first along the paved Footway which led under the windows of the house to the front door, & then within the passage. They were the Steps of a man. It could not be Penelope. It must be Samuel.—

The door opened, & displayed Tom Musgrave in the wrap of a Travellor.—He had been in London & was now on his way home, & he had come half a mile out of his road merely to call for ten minutes at Stanton. He loved to take people by surprise, with sudden visits at extraordinary seasons; & in the present instance had had the additional motive of being able to tell the Miss Watsons, whom he depended on finding sitting quietly employed after tea, that he was going home to an 8 o'clock dinner.

As it happened however, he did not give more surprise than he received, when instead of being shewn into the usual little sitting room, the door of the best parlour a foot larger each way than the other was thrown open, & he beheld a circle of smart people whom he c^{d}. not immediately recognise arranged with all the honours of visiting round the fire, & Miss Watson sitting at the best Pembroke Table, with the best Tea things before her. He stood a few seconds, in silent amazement.—"Musgrave!"—ejaculated Margaret in a tender voice.—He recollected himself, & came forward, delighted to find such a circle of Friends, & blessing his good fortune for the unlooked-for Indulgence.—He shook hands with Robert, bowed & smiled to the Ladies, & did every thing very prettily; but as to any particularity of address or Emotion towards Margaret, Emma who closed observed him, perceived nothing that did not justify Eliz.'s opinions tho' Margaret's modest smiles imported that she meant to take the visit to herself.—He was persuaded without much difficulty to throw off his great coat, & drink tea with them. "For Whether he dined at 8 or 9, as he observed, was a matter of very little consequence."—and without seeming to seek, he did not turn away from the chair close to Margaret which she was assiduous in providing him.—She had thus secured him from her

Sisters—but it was not immediately in her power to preserve him from her Brother's claims, for as he came avowedly from London, & had left it only 4. hours ago, the last current report as to public news, & the general opinion of the day must be understood, before Robert could let his attention be yeilded to the less national, & important demands of the Women.—At last however he was at liberty to hear Margaret's soft address, as she spoke her fears of his having had a most terrible, cold, dark dreadful Journey.

"Indeed you should not have set out so late.—"

"I could not be earlier, he replied. I was detained chatting at the Bedford, by a friend.—All hours are alike to me.—How long have you been in the Country Miss Marg^{t}?"

"We came only this morn^{g}.—My kind Brother & Sister brought me home this very morn^{g}.—'Tis singular is not it?"

"You were gone a great while, were not you? a fortnight I suppose?"

"*You* may call a fortnight a great while M^{r}. Musgrave, said M^{rs}. Robert smartly—but *we* think a month very little. I assure you we bring her home at the end of a month, much against our will."

"A month! have you really been gone a month! 'tis amazing how Time flies.—"

"You may imagine, said Marg^{t}. in a sort of Whisper, what are my Sensations in finding myself once more at Stanton. You know what a sad visitor I make.—And I was so excessively impatient to see Emma;—I dreaded the

meeting, & at the same time longed for it.— Do not you comprehend the sort of feeling?—”

“Not at all, cried he aloud. I could never dread a meeting with Miss Emma Watson,—or any of her Sisters.”

It was lucky that he added that finish.

“Were you speaking to me?—” said Emma, who had caught her own name.

“Not absolutely—he answered—but I was thinking of you,—as many at a greater distance are probably doing at this moment.—Fine open weather Miss Emma!—Charming season for Hunting.”

“Emma is delightful, is not she?—whispered Margt. I have found her more than answer my warmest hopes.—Did you ever see any thing more perfectly beautiful?—I think even *you* must be a convert to a brown complexion.”

He hesitated; Margaret was fair herself, & he did not particularly want to compliment her; but Miss Osborne & Miss Carr was likewise fair, & his devotion to them carried the day.

“Your Sister’s complexion, said he at last, is as fine as a dark complexion can be, but I still profess my preference of a white skin. You have seen Miss Osborne?—She is my model for a truly feminine complexion, & she is very fair.”

“Is she fairer than me?”

Tom made no reply.—“Upon my Honour Ladies, said he, giving a glance over his own person, I am highly endebted to your Condescension for admitting me, in such Dishabille into your Drawing room. I really did not consider how unfit I was to be here, or I hope I should have kept my distance. Ly. Osborne would tell me that I

were growing as careless as her son, if she saw me in this condition."

The Ladies were not wanting in civil returns; & Robert Watson stealing a veiw of his own head in an opposite glass,—said with equal civility,

"You cannot be more in dishabille than myself.—We got here so late, that I had not time even to put a little fresh powder in my hair."

Emma could not help entering into what she supposed her Sister in law's feelings at that moment.

When the Tea things were removed, Tom began to talk of his Carriage—but the old Card Table being set out, & The fish & counters, with a tolerably clean pack brought forward from the beaufet by Miss Watson, the general voice was so urgent with him to join their party, that he agreed to allow himself another quarter of an hour. Even Emma was pleased that he would stay, for she was beginning to feel that a family party might be the worst of all parties; & the others were delighted.

"What's your Game?"—cried he, as they stood round the Table.

"Speculation I beleive, said Elizth.—My sister recommends it, & I fancy we all like it. I know *you* do, Tom."

"It is the only round game played at Croydon now, said M^{rs}. Robert—we never think of any other. I am glad it is a favourite with you.."

"Oh! me! cried Tom. Whatever you decide on, will be a favourite with *me*.—I have had some pleasant hours at Speculation in my time—but I have not been in the way of it now for a long while.—Vingt-un is the game at Osborne

Castle; I have played nothing but Vingt-un of late. You would be astonished to hear the noise we make there.—The fine old, Lofty Drawing-room rings again. Ly Osborne sometimes declares she cannot hear herself speak.—L^{d}. Osborne enjoys it famously & he makes the best Dealer without exception that I ever beheld—such quickness & spirit; he lets nobody dream over their cards.—I wish you could see him overdraw himself on both his own cards—it is worth any thing in the world!—"

"Dear me!— cried Marg^{t} why should not we play at vingt un?—I think it is a much better game than Speculation. I cannot say I am very fond of Speculation."

M^{rs}. Robert offered not another word in support of the game.—She was quite vanquished, & the fashions of Osborne-Castle carried it over the fashions of Croydon.

"Do you see much of the Parsonage-family at the Castle, M^{r}. Musgrave?—" said Emma, as they were taking their seats.

"Oh! yes—they are almost always there. M^{rs}.. Blake is a nice little goodhumoured Woman, She & I are sworn friends; & Howard's a very Gentlemanlike good sort of fellow!—You are not forgotten I assure you by any of the party. I fancy you must have a little cheek-glowing now & then Miss Emma. Were not you rather warm last Saturday about 9 or 10 o'clock in the Even^{g}—? I will tell you how it was.—I see you are dieing to know.—Says Howard to L^{d}. Osborne—"

At this interesting moment he was called on by the others, to regulate the game & determine some disputable point; & his attention was so totally engaged in the business & afterwards by the course of the game as never

to revert to what he had been saying before;—& Emma, tho' suffering a good deal from Curiosity, dared not remind him.

He proved a very useful addition at their Table; without him, it w^{d}. have been a party of such very near relations as could have felt little Interest, & perhaps maintained little complaisance, but his presence gave variety & secured good manners.—He was in fact excellently qualified to shine at a round Game; & few situations made him appear to greater advantage. He played with Spirit & had a great deal to say, & tho' no wit himself, c^{d}. sometimes make use of the wit of an absent friend; & had a lively way of retailing a commonplace, or saying a mere nothing, that had great effect at a Card Table. The ways, & good Jokes of Osborne Castle were now added to his ordinary means of Entertainment; he repeated the smart sayings of one Lady, detailed the oversights of another, & indulged them even with a copy of L^{d}. Osborne's stile of overdrawing himself on both cards.

The Clock struck nine, while he was thus agreably occupied; & when Nanny came in with her Master's Bason of Gruel, he had the pleasure of observing to M^{r}. Watson that he should leave him at supper, while he went home to dinner himself.—The Carriage was ordered to the door—& no entreaties for his staying longer c^{d}. now avail,—for he well knew, that if he staid he must sit down to supper in less than ten minutes—which to a Man whose heart had been long fixed on calling his next meal a Dinner, was quite insupportable.

On finding him determined to go, Marg^{t}. began to wink & nod at Elizth. to ask him to dinner for the following day; & Eliz. at last not able to resist, hints, which her own

hospitable, social temper more than half seconded, gave the invitation. “Would he give Robt. the meeting, they sh^{d}. be very happy.”

“With the greatest pleasure”—was his first reply. In a moment afterwards—“That is, if I can possibly get here in time—but I shoot with L^{d}. Osborne, & therefore must not engage—You will not think of me unless you see me.”—And so, he departed, delighted with the uncertainty in which he had left it.

Marg^{t}. in the joy of her heart under circumstances, which she chose to consider as peculiarly propitious, would willingly have made a confidante of Emma when they were alone for a short time the next morn^{g}; & had proceeded so far as to say—“The young man who was here last night my dear Emma & returns to day, is more interesting to me, than perhaps you may be aware—” but Emma pretending to understand nothing extraordinary in the words, made some very inapplicable reply, & jumping up, ran away from a subject which was odious to her feelings.

As Marg^{t}: would not allow a doubt to be repeated of Musgrave’s coming to dinner, preparations were made for his Entertainment much exceeding what had been deemed necessary the day before;—and taking the office of Superintendance entirely from her Sister, she was half the morning in the Kitchen herself, directing & scolding.

After a great deal of indifferent Cooking, & anxious Suspense however they were obliged to sit down without their Guest.—T. Musgrave never came, & Marg^{t}. was at no pains to conceal her vexation, under the disappointment, or repress the peevishness of her Temper—. The Peace of the party for the remainder of that day, & the whole of the

next, which comprised the length of Robert & Jane's visit, was continually invaded by her fretful displeasure, & querulous attacks.—Eliz. was the usual object of both. Marg^{t}. had just respect enough for her B^{r}. & S$^{r's}$. opinion, to behave properly by *them*, but Eliz. & the maids c^{d}. never do any thing right—& Emma, whom she seemed no longer to think about, found the continuance of the gentle voice beyond her calculation short. Eager to be as little among them as possible, Emma was delighted with the alternative of sitting above, with her father, & warmly entreated to be his constant Comp:^{n} each Even^{g}.—& as Eliz. loved company of any kind too well, not to prefer being below, at all risks as She had rather talk of Croydon to Jane, with every interruption of Marg^{t}.'s perverseness, than sit with only her father, who frequently c^{d}. not endure Talking at all, the affair was so settled, as soon as she could be persuaded to beleive it no sacrifice on her Sister's part.—To Emma, the Exchange was most acceptable, & delightful. Her father, if ill, required little more than gentleness & silence; &, being a man of Sense & Education, was if able to converse, a welcome companion.— In *his* chamber, Emma was at peace from the dreadful mortifications of unequal Society, & family Discord—from the immediate endurance of Hard-hearted prosperity, low-minded Conceit, & wrong-headed folly, engrafted on an untoward Disposition.—She still suffered from them in the Contemplation of their existence; in memory & in prospect, but for the moment, she ceased to be tortured by their effects.—She was at leisure, she could read & think,—tho' her situation was hardly such as to make reflection very soothing. The Evils arising from the loss of her Uncle were neither trifling, nor likely to lessen; & when Thought had been freely indulged, in contrasting the past & the present, the employment of mind, the

dissipation of unpleasant ideas which only reading could produce, made her thankfully turn to a book.

The change in her home society & stile of Life in consequence of the death of one freind and the imprudence of another had indeed been striking.—From being the first object of Hope & Solicitude to an Uncle who had formed her mind with the care of a Parent, & of Tenderness to an Aunt whose amiable temper had delighted to give her every indulgence, from being the Life & Spirit of a House, where all had been comfort & Elegance, & the expected Heiress of an easy Independance, she was become of importance to no one, a burden on those, whose affection she c^{d}. not expect, an addition in an house, already overstocked, surrounded by inferior minds with little chance of domestic comfort, & as little hope of future support.—It was well for her that she was naturally chearful;—for the Change had been such as might have plunged weak spirits in Despondence.

She was very much pressed by Robert & Jane to return with them to Croydon, & had some difficulty in getting a refusal accepted; as they thought too highly of their own kindness & situation, to suppose the offer could appear in a less advantageous light to anybody else.—Elizth. gave them her interest, tho' evidently against her own, in privately urging Emma to go.

"You do not know what you refuse Emma—said she—nor what you have to bear at home.—I would advise you by all means to accept the invitation; there is always something lively going on at Croydon, you will be in company almost every day, & Robt. & Jane will be very kind to you.—As for me, I shall be no worse off without you, than I have been used to be; but poor Marg$^{t's}$.

disagreable ways are new to *you*, & they would vex you more than you think for, if you stay at home.—”

Emma was of course un-influenced, except to greater esteem for Elizth., by such representations—& the Visitors departed without her.