

CECILIA,
or
MEMOIRS OF AN HEIRESS
Volume 1 (of 3)
By Frances Burney

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PREFACE

"Fanny's Cecilia came out last summer, and is as much liked and read, I believe, as any book ever was," wrote Charlotte Burney in Jan. 1783. "She had 250 pounds for it from Payne and Cadell. Most people say she ought to have had a thousand. It is now going into the third edition, though Payne owns that they printed two thousand at the first edition, and Lowndes told me five hundred was the common number for a novel." {Footnote: *The Early Diary of Frances Burney, with a selection from her correspondence, and from the journals of her sisters Susan and Charlotte Burney.* Edited by Annie Raine Ellis. 1889. Vol. II. p. 307.}

The manuscript of *Cecilia* was submitted to Dr Burney and Mr Crisp during its composition, and their suggestions were in some cases adopted, as we learn from the *Diary*. Dr Johnson was not consulted, but a desire at once to imitate and to please him evidently controlled the work.

Under these circumstances it is naturally less fresh and spontaneous than *Evelina*, but it is more mature. The touch is surer and the plot more elaborate. We cannot to-day fully appreciate the "conflict scene between mother and son," for which, Miss Burney tells us, the book was written; but the pictures of eighteenth century affectations are all alive, and the story is thoroughly absorbing, except, perhaps, in the last book.

Miss Burney often took the name of her characters from her acquaintances, and it seems probable that some of the "types" in *Cecilia* are also drawn from real life. The title of Miss Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* was borrowed from *Cecilia*, and some points of resemblance may be traced between the two novels.

The present edition is reprinted from:—

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THE RIGHT HON. EDMUND BURKE TO MISS F. BURNEY. (AFTER READING CECILIA.)

Madam,—I should feel exceedingly to blame if I could refuse to myself the natural satisfaction, and to you the just but poor return, of my best thanks for the very great instruction and entertainment I have received from the new present you have bestowed on the public. There are few—I believe I may say fairly there are none at all—that will not find themselves better informed concerning human nature, and their stock of observation enriched, by reading your "Cecilia." They certainly will, let their experience in life and manners be what it may. The arrogance of age must submit to be taught by youth. You have crowded into a few small volumes an incredible variety of characters; most of them well planned, well supported, and well contrasted with each other. If there be any fault in this respect, it is one in which you are in no great danger of being imitated. Justly as your characters are drawn, perhaps they are too numerous. But I beg pardon; I fear it is quite in vain to preach economy to those who are come young to excessive and sudden opulence. I might trespass on your delicacy if I should fill my letter to you with what I fill my conversation to others. I should be troublesome to you alone if I should tell you all I feel and think on the natural vein of humour, the tender pathetic, the comprehensive and noble moral, and the sagacious observation, that appear quite throughout that extraordinary performance.

In an age distinguished by producing extraordinary women, I hardly dare to tell you where my opinion would place you amongst them. I respect your modesty, that will not endure the commendations which your merit forces from everybody.

I have the honour to be, with great gratitude, respect, and esteem, madam, your most obedient and most humble servant,

EDM. BURKE

WHITEHALL, *July 19, 1782.*

My best compliments and congratulations to Dr Burney on the great honour acquired to his family.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The indulgence shewn by the Public to *Evelina*, which, unpatronized, unaided, and unowned, past through Four Editions in one Year, has encouraged its Author to risk this SECOND attempt. The animation of success is too universally acknowledged, to make the writer of the following sheets dread much censure of temerity; though the precariousness of any power to give pleasure, suppresses all vanity of confidence, and sends *CECILIA* into the world with scarce more hope, though far more encouragement, than attended her highly-honoured predecessor, *Evelina*.

July, 1782

BOOK I.

CHAPTER i. — A JOURNEY.

"Peace to the spirits of my honoured parents, respected be their remains, and immortalized their virtues! may time, while it moulders their frail relics to dust, commit to tradition the record of their goodness; and Oh, may their orphan-descendant be influenced through life by the remembrance of their purity, and be solaced in death, that by her it was unsullied!"

Such was the secret prayer with which the only survivor of the Beverley family quitted the abode of her youth, and residence of her forefathers; while tears of recollecting sorrow filled her eyes, and obstructed the last view of her native town which had excited them.

Cecilia, this fair traveller, had lately entered into the one-and-twentieth year of her age. Her ancestors had been rich farmers in the county of Suffolk, though her father, in whom a spirit of elegance had supplanted the rapacity of wealth, had spent his time as a private country gentleman, satisfied, without increasing his store, to live upon what he inherited from the labours of his predecessors. She had lost him in her early youth, and her mother had not long survived him. They had bequeathed to her 10,000 pounds, and consigned her to the care of the Dean of ———, her uncle. With this gentleman, in whom, by various contingencies, the accumulated possessions of a rising and prosperous family were centred, she had passed the last four years of her life; and a few weeks only had yet elapsed since his death, which, by depriving her of her last relation, made her heiress to an estate of 3000 pounds per annum; with no other restriction than that of annexing her name, if she married, to the disposal of her hand and her riches.

But though thus largely indebted to fortune, to nature she had yet greater obligations: her form was elegant, her heart was liberal; her countenance announced the intelligence of her mind, her complexion varied with every emotion of her soul, and her eyes, the heralds of her speech, now beamed with understanding and now glistened with sensibility.

For the short period of her minority, the management of her fortune and the care of her person, had by the Dean been entrusted to three guardians, among whom her own choice was to settle her residence: but her mind, saddened by the loss of all her natural friends, coveted to regain its serenity in the quietness of the country, and in the bosom of an aged and maternal counsellor, whom she loved as her mother, and to whom she had been known from her childhood.

The Deanery, indeed, she was obliged to relinquish, a long repining expectant being eager, by entering it, to bequeath to another the anxiety and suspense he had suffered himself; though probably without much impatience to shorten their duration in favour of the next successor; but the house of Mrs Charlton, her benevolent friend, was open for her reception, and the alleviating tenderness of her conversation took from her all wish of changing it.

Here she had dwelt since the interment of her uncle; and here, from the affectionate gratitude of her disposition, she had perhaps been content to dwell till her own, had not her guardians interfered to remove her.

Reluctantly she complied; she quitted her early companions, the friend she most revered, and the spot which contained the relicks of all she had yet lived to lament; and, accompanied by one of her guardians, and attended by two servants, she began her journey from Bury to London.

Mr Harrel, this gentleman, though in the prime of his life, though gay, fashionable and splendid, had been appointed by her uncle to be one of her trustees; a choice which had for object the peculiar gratification of his niece, whose most favourite young friend Mr Harrel had married, and in whose house he therefore knew she would most wish to live.

Whatever good-nature could dictate or politeness suggest to dispel her melancholy, Mr Harrel failed not to urge; and Cecilia, in whose disposition sweetness was tempered with dignity, and gentleness with fortitude, suffered not his kind offices to seem ineffectual; she kissed her hand at the last glimpse a friendly hill afforded of her native town, and made an effort to forget the regret with which she lost sight of it. She revived her spirits by plans of future happiness, dwelt upon the delight with which she should meet her young friend, and, by accepting his consolation, amply rewarded his trouble.

Her serenity, however, had yet another, though milder trial to undergo, since another friend was yet to be met, and another farewell was yet to be taken.

At the distance of seven miles from Bury resided Mr Monckton, the richest and most powerful man in that neighbourhood, at whose house Cecilia and her guardian were invited to breakfast in their journey.

Mr Monckton, who was the younger son of a noble family, was a man of parts, information and sagacity; to great native strength of mind he added a penetrating knowledge of the world, and to faculties the most skilful of investigating the character of every other, a dissimulation the most profound in concealing his own. In the bloom of his youth, impatient for wealth and ambitious of power, he had tied himself to a rich dowager of quality, whose age, though sixty-seven, was but among the smaller species of her evil properties, her disposition being far more repulsive than her wrinkles. An inequality of years so considerable, had led him to expect that the fortune he had thus acquired, would speedily be released from the burthen with which it was at present incumbered; but his expectations proved as vain as they were mercenary, and his lady was not more the dupe of his protestations than he was himself of his own purposes. Ten years he had been married to her, yet her health was good, and her faculties were unimpaired; eagerly he had watched for her dissolution, yet his eagerness had injured no health but his own! So short-sighted is selfish cunning, that in aiming no further than at the gratification of the present

moment, it obscures the evils of the future, while it impedes the perception of integrity and honour.

His ardour, however, to attain the blessed period of returning liberty, deprived him neither of spirit nor inclination for intermediate enjoyment; he knew the world too well to incur its censure by ill-treating the woman to whom he was indebted for the rank he held in it; he saw her, indeed, but seldom, yet he had the decency, alike in avoiding as in meeting her, to shew no abatement of civility and good breeding: but, having thus sacrificed to ambition all possibility of happiness in domestic life, he turned his thoughts to those other methods of procuring it, which he had so dearly purchased the power of essaying.

The resources of pleasure to the possessors of wealth are only to be cut off by the satiety of which they are productive: a satiety which the vigorous mind of Mr Monckton had not yet suffered him to experience; his time, therefore, was either devoted to the expensive amusements of the metropolis, or spent in the country among the gayest of its diversions.

The little knowledge of fashionable manners and of the characters of the times of which Cecilia was yet mistress, she had gathered at the house of this gentleman, with whom the Dean her uncle had been intimately connected: for as he preserved to the world the same appearance of decency he supported to his wife, he was everywhere well received, and being but partially known, was extremely respected: the world, with its wonted facility, repaying his circumspect attention to its laws, by silencing the voice of censure, guarding his character from impeachment, and his name from reproach.

Cecilia had been known to him half her life; she had been caressed in his house as a beautiful child, and her presence was now solicited there as an amiable acquaintance. Her visits, indeed, had by no means been frequent, as the ill-humour of Lady Margaret Monckton had rendered them painful to her; yet the opportunities they had afforded her of mixing with people of fashion, had served to prepare her for the new scenes in which she was soon to be a performer.

Mr Monckton, in return, had always been a welcome guest at the Deanery; his conversation was to Cecilia a never-failing source of information, as his knowledge of life and manners enabled him to start those subjects of which she was most ignorant; and her mind, copious for the admission and intelligent for the arrangement of knowledge, received all new ideas with avidity.

Pleasure given in society, like money lent in usury, returns with interest to those who dispense it: and the discourse of Mr Monckton conferred not a greater favour upon Cecilia than her attention to it repaid. And thus, the speaker and the hearer being mutually gratified, they had always met with complacency, and commonly parted with regret.

This reciprocation of pleasure had, however, produced different effects upon their minds; the ideas of Cecilia were enlarged, while the reflections of Mr Monckton were embittered. He here saw an object who to all the advantages of that wealth he had so highly prized, added youth, beauty, and intelligence; though much her senior, he was by no means of an age to render his addressing her an impropriety, and the entertainment she received from his conversation, persuaded him that her good opinion might with ease be improved into a regard the most partial. He regretted

the venal rapacity with which he had sacrificed himself to a woman he abhorred, and his wishes for her final decay became daily more fervent. He knew that the acquaintance of Cecilia was confined to a circle of which he was himself the principal ornament, that she had rejected all the proposals of marriage which had hitherto been made to her, and, as he had sedulously watched her from her earliest years, he had reason to believe that her heart had escaped any dangerous impression. This being her situation, he had long looked upon her as his future property; as such he had indulged his admiration, and as such he had already appropriated her estate, though he had not more vigilantly inspected into her sentiments, than he had guarded his own from a similar scrutiny.

The death of the Dean her uncle had, indeed, much alarmed him; he grieved at her leaving Suffolk, where he considered himself the first man, alike in parts and in consequence, and he dreaded her residing in London, where he foresaw that numerous rivals, equal to himself in talents and in riches, would speedily surround her; rivals, too, youthful and sanguine, not shackled by present ties, but at liberty to solicit her immediate acceptance. Beauty and independence, rarely found together, would attract a crowd of suitors at once brilliant and assiduous; and the house of Mr Harrel was eminent for its elegance and gaiety; but yet, undaunted by danger, and confiding in his own powers, he determined to pursue the project he had formed, not fearing by address and perseverance to ensure its success.

CHAPTER ii. — AN ARGUMENT.

Mr Monckton had, at this time, a party of company assembled at his house for the purpose of spending the Christmas holidays. He waited with anxiety the arrival of Cecilia, and flew to hand her from the chaise before Mr Harrel could alight. He observed the melancholy of her countenance, and was much pleased to find that her London journey had so little power to charm her. He conducted her to the breakfast parlour, where Lady Margaret and his friends expected her.

Lady Margaret received her with a coldness that bordered upon incivility; irascible by nature and jealous by situation, the appearance of beauty alarmed, and of cheerfulness disgusted her. She regarded with watchful suspicion whoever was addressed by her husband, and having marked his frequent attendance at the Deanery, she had singled out Cecilia for the object of her peculiar antipathy; while Cecilia, perceiving her aversion though ignorant of its cause, took care to avoid all intercourse with her but what ceremony exacted, and pitied in secret the unfortunate lot of her friend.

The company now present consisted of one lady and several gentlemen.

Miss Bennet, the lady, was in every sense of the phrase, the humble companion of Lady Margaret; she was low-born, meanly educated, and narrow-minded; a stranger alike to innate merit or acquired accomplishments, yet skilful in the art of flattery,

and an adept in every species of low cunning. With no other view in life than the attainment of affluence without labour, she was not more the slave of the mistress of the house, than the tool of its master; receiving indignity without murmur, and submitting to contempt as a thing of course.

Among the gentlemen, the most conspicuous, by means of his dress, was Mr Aresby, a captain in the militia; a young man who having frequently heard the words red-coat and gallantry put together, imagined the conjunction not merely customary, but honourable, and therefore, without even pretending to think of the service of his country, he considered a cockade as a badge of politeness, and wore it but to mark his devotion to the ladies, whom he held himself equipped to conquer, and bound to adore.

The next who by forwardness the most officious took care to be noticed, was Mr Morrice, a young lawyer, who, though rising in his profession, owed his success neither to distinguished abilities, nor to skill-supplying industry, but to the art of uniting suppleness to others with confidence in himself. To a reverence of rank, talents, and fortune the most profound, he joined an assurance in his own merit, which no superiority could depress; and with a presumption which encouraged him to aim at all things, he blended a good-humour that no mortification could lessen. And while by the pliability of his disposition he avoided making enemies, by his readiness to oblige, he learned the surest way of making friends by becoming useful to them.

There were also some neighbouring squires; and there was one old gentleman, who, without seeming to notice any of the company, sat frowning in a corner.

But the principal figure in the circle was Mr Belfield, a tall, thin young man, whose face was all animation, and whose eyes sparkled with intelligence. He had been intended by his father for trade, but his spirit, soaring above the occupation for which he was designed, from repining led him to resist, and from resisting, to rebel. He eloped from his friends, and contrived to enter the army. But, fond of the polite arts, and eager for the acquirement of knowledge, he found not this way of life much better adapted to his inclination than that from which he had escaped; he soon grew weary of it, was reconciled to his father, and entered at the Temple. But here, too volatile for serious study, and too gay for laborious application, he made little progress: and the same quickness of parts and vigour of imagination which united with prudence, or accompanied by judgment, might have raised him to the head of his profession, being unhappily associated with fickleness and caprice, served only to impede his improvement, and obstruct his preferment. And now, with little business, and that little neglected, a small fortune, and that fortune daily becoming less, the admiration of the world, but that admiration ending simply in civility, he lived an unsettled and unprofitable life, generally caressed, and universally sought, yet careless of his interest and thoughtless of the future; devoting his time to company, his income to dissipation, and his heart to the Muses.

"I bring you," said Mr Monckton, as he attended Cecilia into the room, "a subject of sorrow in a young lady who never gave disturbance to her friends but in quitting them."

"If sorrow," cried Mr Belfield, darting upon her his piercing eyes, "wears in your part of the world a form such as this, who would wish to change it for a view of joy?"

"She's divinely handsome, indeed!" cried the Captain, affecting an involuntary exclamation.

Meantime, Cecilia, who was placed next to the lady of the house, quietly began her breakfast; Mr Morrice, the young lawyer, with the most easy freedom, seating himself at her side, while Mr Monckton was elsewhere arranging the rest of his guests, in order to secure that place for himself.

Mr Morrice, without ceremony, attacked his fair neighbour; he talked of her journey, and the prospects of gaiety which it opened to her view; but by these finding her unmoved, he changed his theme, and expatiated upon the delights of the spot she was quitting. Studious to recommend himself to her notice, and indifferent by what means, one moment he flippantly extolled the entertainments of the town; and the next, rapturously described the charms of the country. A word, a look sufficed to mark her approbation or dissent, which he no sooner discovered, than he slid into her opinion, with as much facility and satisfaction as if it had originally been his own.

Mr Monckton, suppressing his chagrin, waited some time in expectation that when this young man saw he was standing, he would yield to him his chair: but the remark was not made, and the resignation was not thought of. The Captain, too, regarding the lady as his natural property for the morning, perceived with indignation by whom he was supplanted; while the company in general, saw with much surprise, the place they had severally foreborne to occupy from respect to their host, thus familiarly seized upon by the man who, in the whole room, had the least claim, either from age or rank, to consult nothing but his own inclination.

Mr Monckton, however, when he found that delicacy and good manners had no weight with his guest, thought it most expedient to allow them none with himself; and therefore, disguising his displeasure under an appearance of facetiousness, he called out, "Come, Morrice, you that love Christmas sports, what say you to the game of move-all?"

"I like it of all things!" answered Morrice, and starting from his chair, he skipped to another.

"So should I too," cried Mr Monckton, instantly taking his place, "were I to remove from any seat but this."

Morrice, though he felt himself outwitted, was the first to laugh, and seemed as happy in the change as Mr Monckton himself.

Mr Monckton now, addressing himself to Cecilia, said, "We are going to lose you, and you seem concerned at leaving us; yet, in a very few months you will forget Bury, forget its inhabitants, and forget its environs."

"If you think so," answered Cecilia, "must I not thence infer that Bury, its inhabitants, and its environs, will in a very few months forget me?"

"Ay, ay, and so much the better!" said Lady Margaret, muttering between her teeth, "so much the better!"

"I am sorry you think so, madam," cried Cecilia, colouring at her ill-breeding.

"You will find," said Mr Monckton, affecting the same ignorance of her meaning that Cecilia really felt, "as you mix with the world, you will find that Lady Margaret has but expressed what by almost every body is thought: to neglect old friends, and to court new acquaintance, though perhaps not yet avowedly delivered as a precept

from parents to children, is nevertheless so universally recommended by example, that those who act differently, incur general censure for affecting singularity."

"It is happy then, for me," answered Cecilia, "that neither my actions nor myself will be sufficiently known to attract public observation."

"You intend, then, madam," said Mr Belfield, "in defiance of these maxims of the world, to be guided by the light of your own understanding."

"And such," returned Mr Monckton, "at first setting out in life, is the intention of every one. The closet reasoner is always refined in his sentiments, and always confident in his virtue; but when he mixes with the world, when he thinks less and acts more, he soon finds the necessity of accommodating himself to such customs as are already received, and of pursuing quietly the track that is already marked out."

"But not," exclaimed Mr Belfield, "if he has the least grain of spirit! the beaten track will be the last that a man of parts will deign to tread,

*For common rules were ne'er designed
Directors of a noble mind."*

"A pernicious maxim! a most pernicious maxim!" cried the old gentleman, who sat frowning in a corner of the room.

"Deviations from common rules," said Mr Monckton, without taking any notice of this interruption, "when they proceed from genius, are not merely pardonable, but admirable; and you, Belfield, have a peculiar right to plead their merits; but so little genius as there is in the world, you must surely grant that pleas of this sort are very rarely to be urged."

"And why rarely," cried Belfield, "but because your general rules, your appropriated customs, your settled forms, are but so many absurd arrangements to impede not merely the progress of genius, but the use of understanding? If man dared act for himself, if neither worldly views, contracted prejudices, eternal precepts, nor compulsive examples, swayed his better reason and impelled his conduct, how noble indeed would he be! *how infinite in faculties! in apprehension how like a God!*"

{Footnote: Hamlet.}

"All this," answered Mr Monckton, "is but the doctrine of a lively imagination, that looks upon impossibilities simply as difficulties, and upon difficulties as mere invitations to victory. But experience teaches another lesson; experience shows that the opposition of an individual to a community is always dangerous in the operation, and seldom successful in the event;—never, indeed, without a concurrence strange as desirable, of fortunate circumstances with great abilities."

"And why is this," returned Belfield, "but because the attempt is so seldom made? The pitiful prevalence of general conformity extirpates genius, and murders originality; the man is brought up, not as if he were 'the noblest work of God,' but as a mere ductile machine of human formation: he is early taught that he must neither consult his understanding, nor pursue his inclinations, lest, unhappily for his commerce with the world, his understanding should be averse to fools, and provoke him to despise them; and his inclinations to the tyranny of perpetual restraint, and give him courage to abjure it."

"I am ready enough to allow," answered Mr Monckton, "that an eccentric genius, such, for example, as yours, may murmur at the tediousness of complying with the customs of the world, and wish, unconfined, and at large, to range through life

without any settled plan or prudential restriction; but would you, therefore, grant the same licence to every one? would you wish to see the world peopled with defiers of order, and contemners of established forms? and not merely excuse the irregularities resulting from uncommon parts, but encourage those, also, to lead, who without blundering cannot even follow?"

"I would have *all* men," replied Belfield, "whether philosophers or ideots, act for themselves. Every one would then appear what he is; enterprize would be encouraged, and imitation abolished; genius would feel its superiority, and folly its insignificance; and then, and then only, should we cease to be surfeited with that eternal sameness of manner and appearance which at present runs through all ranks of men."

"Petrifying dull work this, *mon ami!*" said the Captain, in a whisper to Morrice, "*de grace*, start some new game."

"With all my heart," answered he; and then, suddenly jumping up, exclaimed, "A hare! a hare!"

"Where?—where?—which way?" and all the gentlemen arose, and ran to different windows, except the master of the house, the object of whose pursuit was already near him.

Morrice, with much pretended earnestness, flew from window to window, to trace footsteps upon the turf which he knew had not printed it: yet, never inattentive to his own interest, when he perceived in the midst of the combustion he had raised, that Lady Margaret was incensed at the noise it produced, he artfully gave over his search, and seating himself in a chair next to her, eagerly offered to assist her with cakes, chocolate, or whatever the table afforded.

He had, however, effectually broken up the conversation; and breakfast being over, Mr Harrel ordered his chaise, and Cecilia arose to take leave.

And now not without some difficulty could Mr Monckton disguise the uneasy fears which her departure occasioned him. Taking her hand, "I suppose," he said, "you will not permit an old friend to visit you in town, lest the sight of him should prove a disagreeable memorial of the time you will soon regret having wasted in the country?"

"Why will you say this, Mr Monckton?" cried Cecilia; "I am sure you cannot think it."

"These profound studiers of mankind, madam," said Belfield, "are mighty sorry champions for constancy or friendship. They wage war with all expectations but of depravity, and grant no quarter even to the purest designs, where they think there will be any temptation to deviate from them."

"Temptation," said Mr Monckton, "is very easy of resistance in theory; but if you reflect upon the great change of situation Miss Beverley will experience, upon the new scenes she will see, the new acquaintance she must make, and the new connections she may form, you will not wonder at the anxiety of a friend for her welfare."

"But I presume," cried Belfield, with a laugh, "Miss Beverley does not mean to convey her person to town, and leave her understanding locked up, with other natural curiosities, in the country? Why, therefore, may not the same discernment regulate her adoption of new acquaintance, and choice of new connections, that

guided her selection of old ones? Do you suppose that because she is to take leave of you, she is to take leave of herself?"

"Where fortune smiles upon youth and beauty," answered Mr Monckton, "do you think it nothing that their fair possessor should make a sudden transition of situation from the quietness of a retired life in the country, to the gaiety of a splendid town residence?"

"Where fortune *frowns* upon youth and beauty," returned Belfield, "they may not irrationally excite commiseration; but where nature and chance unite their forces to bless the same object, what room there may be for alarm or lamentation I confess I cannot divine."

"What!" cried Mr Monckton, with some emotion, "are there not sharpers, fortune-hunters, sycophants, wretches of all sorts and denominations, who watch the approach of the rich and unwary, feed upon their inexperience, and prey upon their property?"

"Come, come," cried Mr Harrel, "it is time I should hasten my fair ward away, if this is your method of describing the place she is going to live in."

"Is it possible," cried the Captain, advancing to Cecilia, "that this lady has never yet tried the town?" and then, lowering his voice, and smiling languishingly in her face, he added, "Can anything so divinely handsome have been immured in the country? Ah! *quelle honte!* do you make it a principle to be so cruel?"

Cecilia, thinking such a compliment merited not any other notice than a slight bow, turned to Lady Margaret, and said, "Should your ladyship be in town this winter, may I expect the honour of hearing where I may wait upon you?"

"I don't know whether I shall go or not," answered the old lady, with her usual ungraciousness.

Cecilia would now have hastened away, but Mr Monckton, stopping her, again expressed his fears of the consequences of her journey; "Be upon your guard," he cried, "with all new acquaintance; judge nobody from appearances; form no friendship rashly; take time to look about you, and remember you can make no alteration in your way of life, without greater probability of faring worse, than chance of faring better. Keep therefore as you are, and the more you see of others, the more you will rejoice that you neither resemble nor are connected with them."

"This from you, Mr Monckton!" cried Belfield, "what is become of your conformity system? I thought all the world was to be alike, or only so much the worse for any variation?"

"I spoke," said Mr Monckton, "of the world in general, not of this lady in particular; and who that knows, who that sees her, would not wish it were possible she might continue in every respect exactly and unalterably what she is at present?"

"I find," said Cecilia, "you are determined that flattery at least, should I meet with it, shall owe no pernicious effects to its novelty."

"Well, Miss Beverley," cried Mr Harrel, "will you now venture to accompany me to town? Or has Mr Monckton frightened you from proceeding any farther?"

"If," replied Cecilia, "I felt no more sorrow in quitting my friends, than I feel terror in venturing to London, with how light a heart should I make the journey!"

"Brava!" cried Belfield, "I am happy to find the discourse of Mr Monckton has not intimidated you, nor prevailed upon you to deplore your condition in having the accumulated misery of being young, fair and affluent."

"Alas! poor thing!" exclaimed the old gentleman who sat in the corner, fixing his eyes upon Cecilia with an expression of mingled grief and pity.

Cecilia started, but no one else paid him any attention.

The usual ceremonies of leave-taking now followed, and the Captain, with most obsequious reverence, advanced to conduct Cecilia to the carriage; but in the midst of the dumb eloquence of his bows and smiles, Mr Morrice, affecting not to perceive his design, skipped gaily between them, and, without any previous formality, seized the hand of Cecilia himself; failing not, however, to temper the freedom of his action by a look of respect the most profound.

The Captain shrugged and retired. But Mr Monckton, enraged at his assurance, and determined it should nothing avail him, exclaimed, "Why how now, Morrice, do you take away the privilege of my house?"

"True, true;" answered Morrice, "you members of parliament have an undoubted right to be tenacious of your privileges." Then, bowing with a look of veneration to Cecilia, he resigned her hand with an air of as much happiness as he had taken it. Mr Monckton, in leading her to the chaise, again begged permission to wait upon her in town: Mr Harrel took the hint, and entreated him to consider his house as his own; and Cecilia, gratefully thanking him for his solicitude in her welfare, added, "And I hope, sir, you will honour me with your counsel and admonitions with respect to my future conduct, whenever you have the goodness to let me see you." This was precisely his wish. He begged, in return, that she would treat him with confidence, and then suffered the chaise to drive off.

CHAPTER iii. — AN ARRIVAL.

As soon as they lost sight of the house, Cecilia expressed her surprise at the behaviour of the old gentleman who sat in the corner, whose general silence, seclusion from the company, and absence of mind, had strongly excited her curiosity.

Mr Harrel could give her very little satisfaction: he told her that he had twice or thrice met him in public places, where everybody remarked the singularity of his manners and appearance, but that he had never discoursed with anyone to whom he seemed known; and that he was as much surprised as herself in seeing so strange a character at the house of Mr Monckton.

The conversation then turned upon the family they had just quitted, and Cecilia warmly declared the good opinion she had of Mr Monckton, the obligations she owed to him for the interest which, from her childhood, he had always taken in her

affairs; and her hopes of reaping much instruction from the friendship of a man who had so extensive a knowledge of the world.

Mr Harrel professed himself well satisfied that she should have such a counsellor; for though but little acquainted with him, he knew he was a man of fortune and fashion, and well esteemed in the world. They mutually compassionated his unhappy situation in domestic life, and Cecilia innocently expressed her concern at the dislike Lady Margaret seemed to have taken to her; a dislike which Mr Harrel naturally enough imputed to her youth and beauty, yet without suspecting any cause more cogent than a general jealousy of attractions of which she had herself so long outlived the possession.

As their journey drew near to its conclusion, all the uneasy and disagreeable sensations which in the bosom of Cecilia had accompanied its commencement, gave way to the expectation of quick approaching happiness in again meeting her favourite young friend.

Mrs Harrel had in childhood been her playmate, and in youth her school-fellow; a similarity of disposition with respect to sweetness of temper, had early rendered them dear to each other, though the resemblance extended no farther, Mrs Harrel having no pretensions to the wit or understanding of her friend; but she was amiable and obliging, and therefore sufficiently deserving affection, though neither blazing with attractions which laid claim to admiration, nor endowed with those superior qualities which mingle respect in the love they inspire.

From the time of her marriage, which was near three years, she had entirely quitted Suffolk, and had had no intercourse with Cecilia but by letter. She was now just returned from Violet Bank, the name given by Mr Harrel to a villa about twelve miles from London, where with a large party of company she had spent the Christmas holidays.

Their meeting was tender and affectionate; the sensibility of Cecilia's heart flowed from her eyes, and the gladness of Mrs Harrel's dimpled her cheeks.

As soon as their mutual salutations, expressions of kindness, and general inquiries had been made, Mrs Harrel begged to lead her to the drawing-room, "where," she added, "you will see some of my friends, who are impatient to be presented to you." "I could have wished," said Cecilia, "after so long an absence, to have passed this first evening alone with you."

"They are all people who particularly desired to see you," she answered, "and I had them by way of entertaining you, as I was afraid you would be out of spirits at leaving Bury."

Cecilia, finding the kindness of her intentions, forbore any further expostulation, and quietly followed her to the drawing-room. But as the door was opened, she was struck with amazement upon finding that the apartment, which was spacious, lighted with brilliancy, and decorated with magnificence, was more than half filled with company, every one of which was dressed with gaiety and profusion.

Cecilia, who from the word friends, expected to have seen a small and private party, selected for the purpose of social converse, started involuntarily at the sight before her, and had hardly courage to proceed.

Mrs Harrel, however, took her hand and introduced her to the whole company, who were all severally named to her; a ceremonial which though not merely agreeable

but even necessary to those who live in the gay world, in order to obviate distressing mistakes, or unfortunate implications in discourse, would by Cecilia have been willingly dispensed with, since to her their names were as new as their persons, and since knowing nothing of their histories, parties or connections, she could to nothing allude: it therefore served but to heighten her colour and increase her embarrassment.

A native dignity of mind, however, which had early taught her to distinguish modesty from bashfulness, enabled her in a short time to conquer her surprise, and recover her composure. She entreated Mrs Harrel to apologise for her appearance, and being seated between two young ladies, endeavoured to seem reconciled to it herself.

Nor was this very difficult; for while her dress, which she had not changed since her journey, joined to the novelty of her face, attracted general observation, the report of her fortune, which had preceded her entrance, secured to her general respect. She soon found, too, that a company was not necessarily formidable because full dressed, that familiarity could be united with magnificence, and that though to her, every one seemed attired to walk in a procession, or to grace a drawing-room, no formality was assumed, and no solemnity was affected: every one was without restraint, even rank obtained but little distinction; ease was the general plan, and entertainment the general pursuit.

Cecilia, though new to London, which city the ill-health of her uncle had hitherto prevented her seeing, was yet no stranger to company; she had passed her time in retirement, but not in obscurity, since for some years past she had presided at the table of the Dean, who was visited by the first people of the county in which he lived: and notwithstanding his parties, which were frequent though small, and elegant though private, had not prepared her for the splendour or the diversity of a London assembly, they yet, by initiating her in the practical rules of good breeding, had taught her to subdue the timid fears of total inexperience, and to repress the bashful feelings of shamefaced awkwardness; fears and feelings which rather call for compassion than admiration, and which, except in extreme youth, serve but to degrade the modesty they indicate.

She regarded, therefore, the two young ladies between whom she was seated, rather with a wish of addressing, than a shyness of being attacked by them; but the elder, Miss Larolles, was earnestly engaged in discourse with a gentleman, and the younger, Miss Leeson, totally discouraged her, by the invariable silence and gravity with which from time to time she met her eyes.

Uninterrupted, therefore, except by occasional speeches from Mr and Mrs Harrel, she spent the first part of the evening merely in surveying the company.

Nor was the company dilatory in returning her notice, since from the time of her entrance into the room, she had been the object of general regard.

The ladies took an exact inventory of her dress, and internally settled how differently they would have been attired if blessed with equal affluence.

The men disputed among themselves whether or not she was painted; and one of them asserting boldly that she rouged well, a debate ensued, which ended in a bet, and the decision was mutually agreed to depend upon the colour of her cheeks by the beginning of April, when, if unfaded by bad hours and continual dissipation, they

wore the same bright bloom with which they were now glowing, her champion acknowledged that his wager would be lost.

In about half an hour the gentleman with whom Miss Larolles had been talking, left the room, and then that young lady, turning suddenly to Cecilia, exclaimed, "How odd Mr Meadows is! Do you know, he says he shan't be well enough to go to Lady Nyland's assembly! How ridiculous! as if that could hurt him."

Cecilia, surprised at an attack so little ceremonious, lent her a civil, but silent attention.

"You shall be there, shan't you?" she added.

"No, ma'am, I have not the honour of being at all known to her ladyship."

"Oh, there's nothing in that," returned she, "for Mrs Harrel can acquaint her you are here, and then, you know, she'll send you a ticket, and then you can go."

"A ticket?" repeated Cecilia, "does Lady Nyland only admit her company with tickets?"

"Oh, lord!" cried Miss Larolles, laughing immoderately, "don't you know what I mean? Why, a ticket is only a visiting card, with a name upon it; but we all call them tickets now."

Cecilia thanked her for the information, and then Miss Larolles enquired how many miles she had travelled since morning?

"Seventy-three," answered Cecilia, "which I hope will plead my apology for being so little dressed."

"Oh, you're vastly well," returned the other, "and for my part, I never think about dress. But only conceive what happened to me last year! Do you know I came to town the twentieth of March! was not that horrid provoking?"

"Perhaps so," said Cecilia, "but I am sure I cannot tell why."

"Not tell why?" repeated Miss Larolles, "why, don't you know it was the very night of the grand private masquerade at Lord Darien's? I would not have missed it for the whole universe. I never travelled in such an agony in my life: we did not get to town till monstrous late, and then do you know I had neither a ticket nor a habit! Only conceive what a distress! well, I sent to every creature I knew for a ticket, but they all said there was not one to be had; so I was just like a mad creature—but about ten or eleven o'clock, a young lady of my particular acquaintance, by the greatest good luck in the world happened to be taken suddenly ill; so she sent me her ticket,—was not that delightful?"

"For *her*, extremely!" said Cecilia, laughing.

"Well," she continued, "then I was almost out of my wits with joy; and I went about, and got one of the sweetest dresses you ever saw. If you'll call upon me some morning, I'll shew it you."

Cecilia, not prepared for an invitation so abrupt, bowed without speaking, and Miss Larolles, too happy in talking herself to be offended at the silence of another, continued her narration.

"Well, but now comes the vilest part of the business; do you know, when everything else was ready, I could not get my hair-dresser! I sent all over the town,—he was nowhere to be found; I thought I should have died with vexation; I assure you I cried so that if I had not gone in a mask, I should have been ashamed to be seen. And so,

after all this monstrous fatigue, I was forced to have my hair dressed by my own maid, quite in a common way; was not it cruelly mortifying?"

"Why yes," answered Cecilia, "I should think it was almost sufficient to make you regret the illness of the young lady who sent you her ticket."

They were now interrupted by Mrs Harrel, who advanced to them followed by a young man of a serious aspect and modest demeanour, and said, "I am happy to see you both so well engaged; but my brother has been reproaching me with presenting everybody to Miss Beverley but himself."

"I cannot hope," said Mr Arnott, "that I have any place in the recollection of Miss Beverley, but long as I have been absent from Suffolk, and unfortunate as I was in not seeing her during my last visit there, I am yet sure, even at this distance of time, grown and formed as she is, I should instantly have known her."

"Amazing!" cried an elderly gentleman, in a tone of irony, who was standing near them, "for the face is a very common one!"

"I remember well," said Cecilia, "that when you left Suffolk I thought I had lost my best friend."

"Is that possible?" cried Mr Arnott, with a look of much delight.

"Yes, indeed, and not without reason, for in all disputes you were my advocate; in all plays, my companion; and in all difficulties, my assistant."

"Madam," cried the same gentleman, "if you liked him because he was your advocate, companion, and assistant, pray like me too, for I am ready to become all three at once."

"You are very good," said Cecilia, laughing, "but at present I find no want of any defender."

"That's pity," he returned, "for Mr Arnott seems to me very willing to act the same parts over again with you."

"But for that purpose he must return to the days of his childhood."

"Ah, would to heaven it were possible!" cried Mr Arnott, "for they were the happiest of my life."

"After such a confession," said his companion, "surely you will let him attempt to renew them? 'tis but taking a walk backwards; and though it is very early in life for Mr Arnott to sigh for that retrograde motion, which, in the regular course of things, we shall all in our turns desire, yet with such a motive as recovering Miss Beverley for a playfellow, who can wonder that he anticipates in youth the hopeless wishes of age?"

Here Miss Larolles, who was one of that numerous tribe of young ladies to whom all conversation is irksome in which they are not themselves engaged, quitted her place, of which Mr Gosport, Cecilia's new acquaintance, immediately took possession.

"Is it utterly impossible," continued this gentleman, "that I should assist in procuring Mr Arnott such a renovation? Is there no subaltern part I can perform to facilitate the project? for I will either *hide* or *seek* with any boy in the parish; and for a *Q in the corner*, there is none more celebrated."

"I have no doubt, sir," answered Cecilia, "of your accomplishments; and I should be not a little entertained with the surprize of the company if you could persuade yourself to display them."

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