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OAKCLIFFE HALL OR THE FATAL EFFECTS
OF FEUDAL QUARRELS. A Tale of the Fifteenth
Century [Transcript]

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OAKCLIFFE HALL
OR THE
FATAL EFFECTS
OF FEUDAL QUARRELS.

A Tale of the fifteenth Century.

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Sixpence.

In the reign of our eighth Henry, a family, named Bellonmore, resided at Oakcliffe Hall, a noble pile of building. It gained this appellation partly from the number of oaks that enriched its grounds, and partly from a cliff that arose in its vicinity, which, for various causes, was accounted, by naturalists, a great curiosity.

The edifice was situated just at the head of the river Derwent, which takes its rise in a large valley at Glynsett, in Cumberland; it forms, at first, but a small stream, and passes through the windings of the mountains, as if to conceal its beauties from observation, and, entering a dark wood, falls over a rock into a deep glen, where it forms a small basin, and from thence, gliding through a level green, pursues a rapid and increasing course.

Hospitality and benevolence adorned the hall and reigned in the hearts of Lord and Lady Bellonmore. The distressed traveler, and the wandering pilgrim, there found both food and rest; and a small piece of silver was given them, on their departure. They had one son and a daughter, the only survivors of a numerous progeny: they were deservedly dear to them, and the fond hope of their declining years. Walter was conspicuous among the neighbouring youths for manly beauty: his heart was brave, exalted, and generous; and, for strength, skill, and agility in those exercises proper for his sex, he stood unequalled. Ellinor was rather under the middle stature; but her symmetry was grace itself. Her features were regular, and her eyes, which were of the deepest blue, shone with transcendent brightness; her luxuriant flaxen tresses were tastefully disposed and fancifully decorated with pearl and ribbon: her countenance at once spoke a noble, intelligent, yet innocent, mind; and she was perfectly versed in all the accomplishments then thought requisite for her sex and rank. Such were the children of Lord and Lady Bellonmore; no wonder their fond hearts exulted when they looked on these choicest gifts of benignant heaven.

No particular incident occurred at Oakcliffe Hall, till the marriage of Henry with Anne Boleyn was publicly announced, and the nobility expected to pay their compliments to the new Queen. Lord and Lady Bellonmore had not been at court for many years; but had passed their time in a manner more congenial to their feelings—the superintending, with able assistants, the education of their beloved children, in their elegant retirement, at Cumberland. They now joined in the

mutual opinion, that it was proper for them to lose no time in paying their respects to their sovereign, lest their absence should be construed into disloyalty, and endanger their safety; for it was well known that Henry could be vindictive, and ungenerous suspicion was one of his failings. They intended to take Lord Walter with them, that he might be presented, having just entered his twentieth year: Lady Ellinor was to be left at Oakcliffe under the care of Allicia, her amiable governess, and the venerable chaplain, Lemuel Percy, who was distantly related to the Countess.

In the younger days of Lady Bellonmore, when she shone one of the brightest stars in Henry's court, she had been much noticed by Queen Katharine, and admitted to several of her private parties, where unreserved conversation was allowed, and friendship took place of etiquette. On the birth of several of Lady Bellonmore's children, the Queen had sent them gifts; her friendship for their mother had, indeed, extended so far as to send messages of condolence on the deaths of the sweet infants. Is it then to be wondered at if Lady Bellonmore felt a reluctance of paying court to the woman who had supplanted her royal friend, and that she secretly condemned Henry for acting thus to a faithful consort, and the mother of his child, the Princess Mary, and two others deceased!

The Earl and Countess Bellonmore, with Lord Walter Clerville, were received by Henry and Anne in the most flattering manner; yet Bellonmore could not avoid thinking that his sovereign at times regarded him with the scowl of mistrust. When they had been about six weeks in the vicinity of the court, Lord and Lady Bellonmore signified their intention of returning to Cumberland, and requested an audience to take leave of their sovereigns; this was granted, but they had scarce paid their compliments, when the king, rising from his canopied seat, bid the Earl follow him to his closet. He obeyed with some trepidation, and was closely questioned by the monarch respecting the true motives of his retirement. He gave such answers that Henry was at length convinced disloyalty had no share in the Earl's actions; and he was dismissed with a hint, that, it was expected, he should, at least once in every year, appear at court, and that his daughter should be presented to the queen, as soon as she was of the usual age.

When Lord and Lady Bellonmore returned to Oakcliffe Hall, they were much pained by the pallid looks of Ellinor; and heard, with surprise, that she had not been indisposed. The chaplain and Allicia related that she had appeared greatly altered since the second week of their departure; and her spirits seemed greatly depressed, though she either could not or would not assign a cause, and they knew of none. Her parents made use of every gentle persuasion to learn the reason of this despondency, but in vain; she answered only by tears and entreaties, that they would not renew a subject so painful to her feelings: thus were they obliged to put up with this tormenting incertitude, and to behold the health and vivacity of their Ellinor daily declining. They ardently wished for the return of Walter; they knew his influence was great with his sister, and that his presence would enliven her. But a fortnight at least must elapse before the youth would arrive, as he had remained behind them in compliance with the request of Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, who had taken a great liking to the heir of Bellonmore, that he might be present at a tilting match between his Grace and a noble Chevalier from France.

Medical aid was of no use to Lady Ellinor: her parents resolved not to harass her with questions; but trusted to time for a development of the cause of this sudden change in her manner; that a

cause did exist was certain, nay, Ellinor had never attempted to deny it. To amuse her mind from dwelling on this secret theme, they made short but frequent excursions about the country, and visited the lakes, with all their romantic surrounding elevations, descents, and vallies: parties were invited to the hall, and nothing left untried to chase away all unpleasant ideas that might obtrude; yet the desired effect was not produced: with their visitors, common courtesy obliged Lady Ellinor to join in conversation, or make one in their amusements; yet it was visible to her ever-attentive parents, that this exertion was displeasing to her, and she sought with avidity every opportunity of sequestering herself in her own apartment.

Lord Walter's stay at court was protracted some weeks beyond the appointed time, by repeated invitations from the Duke of Suffolk; and, pleasing as his presence would have been to his parents, they could by no means think of sending him a command to return, as, they thought, such powerful patronage might, at some future period, prove of great service to their beloved son.

At length his unannounced arrival at Oakcliffe Hall was greeted with unfeigned joy by its amiable inmates, even Ellinor's smiles returned; but, alas! only a few days elapsed, and her gloom was resumed. The Earl and Countess related to Walter the uneasiness they were in, relative to his sister. He replied, her dejection, though she had evidently strove to hide it from his notice, had not escaped him; but he had hoped the cause had been explained to his parents.

He was aggrieved at hearing the contrary, and assured them he should have recourse to every means that affection, solicitude, and delicacy could suggest, to learn the cause of Ellinor's woe, which, from the ravages it had already made in her lovely face, he conjectured to be of magnitude.

Now Walter was returned, he, with his beloved sister, resumed their morning rides about the vicinity of Glynsett. Their evening rambles in the grounds of Oakcliffe were also renewed, and he also read to her, while her delicate fingers industriously plied the needle, forming flowers, that vied with nature's choicest production, on the satin or canvass, with which she adorned the walls of their chamber. In vain the young Lord sought her confidence; in that point she was inflexible as a marble statue, and Walter soon found himself obliged to wholly drop the subject, or entirely offend his loved sister.

That the young Lord was uneasy is not to be denied; yet he consoled himself with the idea that his sister was too virtuous, and inherited so great a share of the noble sentiments that had heretofore, and at present, distinguished the Bellonmore race, to act derogatory to honour, or swerve from the chaste demeanor that ought to grace every look and motion of her sex—"Dearly as I love her," soliloquized Walter, "I would sooner see her dead at my feet, than a stain to a name, which the foul breath of envy or calumny has never yet dared to brand with reproach."

The Countess had been, for some time past, afflicted with a pain in her chest: one morning she was awakened at a very early hour by the acuteness of the anguish she endured. A medicine, which had been prescribed for her, was placed in a closet at the opposite end of the chamber; the good lady, unwilling to disturb the repose of her attendant, left her bed that she might procure the mixture; but the darkness of the room prevented her from finding the phial; to obviate this

inconvenience, she opened one of the window hangings, which were of thick arras; the morning was fine, and the sun, which had not long risen, shone with exhilarating (7) brilliancy; the Countess was cheered by the scene, and stood some moments contemplating it; she was just going to withdraw from the window, when, to her surprise, she beheld a small door open, which was at the bottom of some winding stairs, leading to a suite of rooms now appropriated to the use of Lady Ellinor.

The door stood half open a few moments before any person appeared, when Lady Ellinor, leaning on the arm of her attendant, Cicely, issued forth, and proceeded along one of the avenues, which was of great length, and terminated in a pleasant grotto, that the Countess and her children had adorned with various productions of earth and ocean, proper for such a retreat. Ellinor ←corrected misspelling (7) had nearly gained the end of the avenue, when a youth came from the grotto to meet her: she left her attendant and gave him her hand; then turned into another avenue, followed by Cicely at a respectful distance.

Lady Bellonmore was too far off accurately to distinguish forms at the end of the walk; but she did not entertain a doubt that it was Lord Walter, who had met his sister, that they might take an early ramble; yet she was not pleased, and her mind was restless and uneasy, though she could not, even to her own heart, explain the source from whence these emotions sprung.

At the usual hour she descended with the Earl to the parlour, where the family took their morning repast. Lady Ellinor was already there, and seemed more cheerful than she had been for some time past. Lord Walter not appearing, the Countess asked her daughter where he was. His entrance at that moment prevented the necessity of a reply. "I must apologize," said he, "for keeping you waiting; but I was tormented for the most part of the night with such a dreadful head-ach, that it was late this morning ere I fell asleep; I was surprised when my valet awoke me, and announced the hour ten; I just slipt on my clothes in any fashion that I might join you." The Countess was electrified—she recollected the occurrence of the morning, and had nearly fainted; but, suppressing her emotions, she attributed to indisposition the visible change in her countenance. As soon as she retired to her dressing room she dismissed Blanche ←corrected misspelling (8), her aged and faithful attendant, with orders to return to her in an hour, and to take care, during that time, that her privacy was not intruded on. That hour was spent in various contemplation of what course she had best pursue. To inform Walter that some person met his sister clandestinely, might be the cause of bloodshed, perhaps the loss of her only son; for she knew his nice sense of honour would prompt him to seek immediate satisfaction for the injury. To expose Ellinor to the resentment of her father, was a task from which she shrunk, as she knew he would be severe in his resentment, and might, perhaps, immure his daughter in a convent for her disobedience: after much reflection, she deemed it most expedient to confide her troubles to Blanche, on her secrecy she knew an implicit reliance might be placed, and she was clever and intelligent.

While Blanche assisted her to change her dress, the afflicted mother imparted her anxiety, on account of Lady Ellinor, and concluded by requesting her attendant to watch on the following morning, and, if possible, discover whose family the youth belonged to, and the footing on which he was received by the fair one.

Blanche promised to do her best, and the Countess felt much relief at having imparted her woe, and put matters into a favourable train to gain an explanation.

The next day, at the appointed hour, Blanche entered the dressing her lady; and without waiting for interrogatories, signified that she had something of importance to communicate, and Lady Bellonmore intreated her to proceed without delay.

“I placed myself,” said Blanche, in the dark part of the grotto, just behind the angle which prevented me from being seen, and I thought it very probable that they would not proceed much further than the entrance, if they should come there to converse. The clock had just struck five, when Lady Ellinor and Cicely appeared, and I cautiously drew in my head; they came to the grotto, and my young mistress expressed great surprise that Lord Arthur Villiers was not come.” “Lord Arthur Villiers!” exclaimed the Countess, leaning back in her chair—“Am I in a dream, or do my senses deceive me?” “Neither, my good lady,” said Blanche, hastening to her assistance; “the tale is too true, and I knew you would be much affected.”

At the respected request of Blanche, the Countess drank a small glass of cordial, and her attendant resumed the thread of her discourse: “Lady Ellinor seated herself near the entrance of the grotto, and gave Cicely orders to retire immediately, on the arrival of Lord Arthur, and gather some flowers for her dressing room, which might serve as a good excuse, if any one were to see her in the garden at so early an hour; but she was to be particularly watchful, and give notice if any one approached from the house.” Lady Ellinor uttered several deep sighs and appeared much depressed at the non-appearance of her lover; at length he came, and accounted for his absence by the indisposition of the Duke of Belgrave, his father, who had been attended during the night by three physicians, and he had but just sunk into a slumber, which promised to be beneficial, when Arthur set out to keep his appointment with Ellinor.” ←don’t think this quote mark is necessary (9) Blanche proceeded to relate to the astonished matron that the most fervent vows of everlasting love were made by the youthful pair, and their distress arose from the thoughts of the separation that must soon take place between them—his Grace meaning to return with his family to their stately mansion at Westminster, on the very first day that his medical attendants should pronounce him able to undertake the journey by easy stages, (for, though his present illness was severe, they had declared that he was not in the least danger). After this conversation the lovers separated, with a promise to meet the ensuing morning at half-past five. Lady Ellinor then rung a small hand-bell, and Cicely appeared with the flowers which they divided between them, and returned to Lady Ellinor’s apartments. “This is all, my honoured mistress, that I have to relate, and I am grieved that I could not learn, what to you must have been the chief object of sending me to the grotto, how this mysterious courtship commenced.” “That most certainly was one principal object,” replied Lady Bellonmore, “yet another equally important, was to discover who had the temerity to visit clandestinely a daughter of our noble house—But next to the shock that the duplicity of my child inflicts on this aching heart, is the affliction of the discovery, that Lord Arthur Villiers is the object on whom her affections are placed in that unfortunate attachment. I foresee all the feuds that have now for years laid dormant revived with increased vigour between the houses of Bellonmore and Belgrave—Unfortunate Ellinor! while my heart condemns, it pities thee; for thy deviation from duty and propriety will be severely punished by the consequences resulting from it.”

“Let us hope better things, my lady,” said Blanche, “may not the marriage of Lord Arthur and Lady Ellinor be the means of forming a firm amity between the two families, and terminate their implacability?”

“Ah! Blanche, I can indulge no such prospects; the hatred subsisting between the duke and my lord will never be eradicated; and I have just reasons to suppose that my son has been sedulously brought up in the same sentiments by his father. Whether his Grace has inculcated this animosity in his offspring I have yet to learn; but heaven grant that Walter may not make a discovery similar to mine; the consequences might be fatal—O I have much to fear!”

The entrance of Lord Bellonmore put an end to their discourse; company dined at the hall; yet the countess let no opportunity escape to think how she had best reveal to Ellinor the barrier that seemed to her for ever to preclude all ideas of her reunion with Arthur. “To night,” said she mentally, “our party will undoubtedly break up so late that I cannot pass an hour with my child: an abrupt disclosure must be avoided, though I shall be obliged (heaven knows with what reluctance!) to give many a pang to her gentle bosom;—yet I would not, for worlds, wound her feelings more than prudence and maternal duty will oblige me to. She must see Arthur ere I impart to her that they must meet no more—thus no plans can be laid for clandestine correspondence, as I shall take care to prevent these romantic interviews in the grotto.”

The countess arose before her beautiful daughter had left her couch, she watched the movements of Lady Ellinor and Cicely as they left the hall, till they were out of sight; she then resolved to take another path, which would lead her to a clump of trees, where she could conceal her person from view, and yet command a perfect sight of the grotto. The Earl was fast asleep, there was then no necessity for accounting him for her early ramble,—for, in those days, separate chambers and an indifference to a husband’s opinion, were circumstances rarely known. She gained the place of her seclusion without being observed. Lord Arthur was arrived, and in earnest conversation with his fair mistress. The Countess was at too great a distance to hear one syllable of their discourse, though, from their manner, she was convinced it was ardent and impassioned. She waited with impatience for the departure of the youth, but an hour elapsed before her wishes in that respect were gratified. At the moment of separation, an exchange of miniatures took place—Arthur’s looks were dejected, as he tore himself from Ellinor; and no sooner was he out of sight, than the fair disconsolate, casting herself on the rural seat of the grotto, gave way to all the violence of unrestrained, and, as she then thought, unobserved grief.

The Countess drew near with gentle steps, and taking one of Ellinor’s hands within her own, said, “My sweet child, be not alarmed!” But she was alarmed, and started from her recumbent posture in trembling agitation, while her cheeks were suffused with the scarlet hue of guilty consciousness.

“Ellinor,” said the affectionate matron, “your emotions give me pain; I will not dissemble with you, but at once acknowledge all I know of your clandestine meetings with Lord Arthur Villiers.”

Ellinor sunk on the seat in silent agony, and listened with respectful silence and attention to what the Countess had to relate, who concluded in these words—“you will find it much more

conducive to your happiness to make a friend and adviser of your mother, than, by scorning her counsel, ← added this comma (12) oblige her to be a rigid punisher your faults. In the first instance, tell me, I conjure you, without reserve, how came you and Lord Arthur acquainted? was Allicia in fault, or did Lemuel permit his visits?"

"O no, dear madam," interrupted Ellinor, "they are both ignorant of our mutual attachment; but I will explain to you the chance that first introduced us to each other:— Father Lemuel, myself, and Allicia, were walking at a short distance from the back grounds of the hall, engaged in pleasing converse, when we were alarmed by an audible groan, but we could distinguish no object; the afflicting sound was repeated, and Father Lemuel proposed searching among the adjacent thickets; we did so, humanity getting the ascendancy over any fears we might have for our personal safety. Lemuel took one path, and Allicia another: we had not preceded far, when we perceived a youth, elegantly clad, extended on the ground, the blood flowing profusely from a contusion in his head. We drew near, and addressed him in the gentlest accents language could devise; alas; he answered not, but was wholly insensible to surrounding objects; happily for us Father Lemuel was within hearing of our call, and hastened to our relief; he supported the graceful unknown, while I applied some salts to his nose; Allicia ran to the hut to get assistance, that the young gentleman might be conveyed to an apartment, and receive the attentions due to his situation. Allicia soon returned with some domestics, who had contrived a kind of litter to convey the youth to the mansion. A surgeon was instantly sent for, who declared our guest in no danger; the contusion being but slight, though loss of blood had occasioned this alarming insensibility. His wound being dressed, we had the pleasure to see the youth recover his reason. For a few moments he gazed around him with every indication of surprise; but, recollecting himself, said, 'Hospitable strangers, to your care I am doubtless indebted for my existence, for in the lone place where I met with this untoward disaster, 'tis a chance but I had perished.' Lemuel made a proper reply, and assured him that, though the noble owners of the mansion were absent, he could answer for them that they would be extremely displeased if every attention was not paid to those whom misfortune rendered guests at Oakcliffe Hall. 'Oakcliffe Hall!' repeated the youth, in accents that denoted both surprise and chagrin, 'Am I then under the roof of Lord Bellonmore? Mysterious powers of fate! of what avail are the resolves of man! vain beings, you plan, you plot, and one moment overturns your subtle schemes.' This speech terminated with a deep sigh, he seemed much exhausted, and the surgeon forbade him to converse more for the present. I retired with Lemuel and Allicia, and our wonder was mutual at the expressions of the youthful stranger, for he had not declared his name. We were just sat down to supper when a servant entered, and informed us that Lord Arthur Villiers was missing from Belgrave Castle, and that a number of domestics were in search of him. From the description given, our informant supposed our guest to be that nobleman, and asked permission to go to the Duke's and relate the event that had happened at Oakcliffe Hall. After some hesitation, Lemuel advised me to consent to that measure; but just at the moment, hearing the sound of the stranger's bell, Gregory's departure was suspended till we should hear what he had to impart. One of the attendants entered to say, that the presence of Father Lemuel was requested in the stranger's chamber; he immediately obeyed the summons, and it was upwards of an hour ere he returned to the saloon, where I and Allicia were sitting. He surprised us by the intelligence that Lord Arthur Villiers had left the hall, and gave the following explanation: The youth confessed, that such was the enmity of his father to the Bellonmore family, (though the cause he had never imparted to him) that he had strictly prohibited any of his family from holding any intercourse with those of the Earl, and

had threatened likewise to punish his (Lord Arthur's) temerity with death, if he ever knew him to enter the hall, or form any friendship with its inmates—'In my solitary ramble,' continued Lord Arthur, 'through the wood, where I was perusing some of the commentaries lately published by an august personage, I was attacked by two ruffians, who, not contented with my surrendering my money, and what valuables I had about me, added to the robbery the most barbarous treatment. Great are my obligations to Lady Ellinor and the lady who attended her—but was I to assert this fact to his Grace, such, I am sorry to say, is the suspicious tendency of his disposition, that he would say it was all a stratagem, and accuse me of forming designs of which the bare idea never entered my brain. Thus situated, I have consulted with the good surgeon, he gives it as his opinion, that now the friendly shades of night surround us, I may be removed to his house, and my father must be led to suppose that I have never been under any other roof since my misfortune; to those of your domestics who know of this event, I beg some gold (which I shall remit to-morrow) may be distributed to purchase their silence.—Receive, reverend sir, my sincere thanks, make my acknowledgements to the ladies—tell them words are not adequate to convey an idea of the reluctance I feel in quitting them in a manner so unhandsome; but I hope that some future time will permit me to pay my unfeigned respects to them.'—missing quote mark (14)→ Lemuel," continued Ellinor, "told us that Lord Arthur seemed much depressed at leaving our mansion, and several times expressed his regret that the Belgraves and Bellonmores were not on amicable terms. I ventured to ask Father Lemuel what was the foundation of this hapless animosity? He heaved a deep sigh and replied, "I will not, Lady Ellinor, so far deviate from truth as to say that the cause is unknown to me, but the seal of secrecy was placed upon my lips by your noble father; and, I trust, you know me too well to suppose, for a moment, that I would break my faith, 'twas so solemnly given; if not, I think the word of a civilized being ought to be their bond, and I can only add, that I am sorry this day's vicissitudes has revealed to you that any connection ever subsisted between your family and Lord Arthur's, strive to banish it from your remembrance; to you tis a matter of no import, and give not your innocent mind up to fathom mysteries or form romantic notions.'

"The solemn manner in which the good chaplain spoke, and some indefinable sensations that I felt, forced a tear from my eyes. Lemuel took my hand—'Daughter of my revered patron, be not offended at my plain speaking—my hairs are silvered o'er with age, I have watched over you with a fondness next to parental, from your tenderest infancy; your happiness will give ecstasy to my heart—your misery will inflict on it pangs of acute anguish—may heaven send you the former, and avert the latter!' 'Thank you, my good father,' returned I, 'for your pious affectionate wishes—heaven forbid that any misconduct of mine should ever give you one moment's uneasiness.' He tenderly embraced me and retired; Allicia, you know, madam, is not given to many words; she made but few comments on what had passed, and we retired for the night at an hour much later than usual since your departure from Oakcliffe. Whether from design or accident I know not; but neither my governess nor the chaplain ever resumed the subject of Lord Arthur, or mentioned his name in my presence: I blush while I confess I could not repress the ardent desire that glowed in my bosom of seeing or hearing of him, and of knowing if he had recovered from the effects of his accident in the wood. About a week had elapsed when one night, as I stood at my toilette untwisting the braids, attended by Cicely, I perceived a very small but elegantly painted billet laying in my pin box, ←should this be a semi-colon? (15) I took it up and was going to break the seal, when, repressing my eager curiosity, I turned to Cicely and demanded with some asperity how the letter came there?—Know, I continued, that you have

displeased me greatly.—My attendant made such protestations of her innocence that I could not disbelieve her; and thus was the conveyance of the letter wrapt in mystery. It was from Lord Arthur, and merely contained a repetition of the thanks and sentiments he had expressed to Father Lemuel on leaving Oakcliffe. Alicia not being an early riser, Cicely accompanied me in a walk that I took every morning, by her permission, in her own ground, between the hours of seven and eight. By some means Lord Arthur was apprised of this circumstance, and became my constant companion in these short rambles—all my reluctance, and the scruples I first started, were obviated and put to flight by his eloquent arguments and protestations, and we confessed a mutual flame.”

“Imprudent girl!” interrupted the Countess, “nay, speak not a word in defence—I know what you would say; but I shall not listen to you: nothing but your youth and inexperience can plead your excuse. But tell me, why this inconsistency? If you and Lord Arthur were on such good terms, how came that drooping demeanour and despondency of mind so visible on our return to the hall, from which no efforts could arouse you?”

Lady Ellinor sighed, the countess repeated the question with a threat, that she would reveal the whole transaction to the earl and Lord Walter, if she used any prevarication.

“My despondency,” said Lady Ellinor, “arose, dear madam, from a combination of circumstances; your presence, and that of my loved father, brought to my mind most forcibly how greatly I had deviated from duty; but I loved too much to break off my clandestine interviews with Lord Arthur, which now took place at an earlier hour for fear of detection; I knew the impropriety of this arrangement, but had not the resolution to desist: added to this, the day subsequent to your return I was informed by Lord Arthur that the Duke of Belgrave had been informed by some means of his being conveyed to Oakcliffe after his accident. His rage was ungovernable, and he frequently declared that he would sooner his son had perished than have been sheltered under the roof, or received a benefit from the hand of Clerville, and had forced him to take a solemn vow never to enter Oakcliffe Hall again, unless subsequent circumstances rendered it expedient so to do by his Grace’s commands, which the Duke considered as an impossible event. This rooted enmity of the father of my lover to every individual of our family was and still continues as a rankling thorn in my bosom, as it is so inauspicious to the mutual sentiments existing between the unfortunate youth and myself. This morning Arthur came to take leave of me; he did not expect to go to London till the Duke his father was able to travel; but on the preceding evening his Grace had ordered him to repair immediately to the metropolis where he has given him some important commissions to execute, and to see that their town-house is properly prepared for the reception of their family, which will follow in a few days. This is all, my dearest mother, I have to reveal; but I solemnly declare, that no plan of correspondence has been concerted between me and Lord Arthur, and we trust entirely to propitious chance for our next meeting.”

“You have, my child,” said the Countess, “unfortunately given your heart to a youth, who, of all others, is the most unlikely to render you happy: I speak not of his personal merits, or accomplishments; was he all that could be perfect in human nature, he could never, as a Villiers, gain the consent of your parents. You must not readily rush on to misery—this childish passion

will wear off—be it my care to prevent your ruin, if possible, that I may hereafter attach no blame to my own conduct, or reckon myself deficient in my duty.”

Lady Bellonmore arose with majestic (16) dignity, and stepping into an oratory, which privately formed a part of the grotto, took a missal from the altar, with which she approached the weeping Ellinor, and forced from her lips a reluctant vow, “never to become the wife of Lord Arthur Villiers clandestinely, appoint any more interviews with him, or receive a letter, knowing that it came from that youth.”

This ceremony being concluded, the Countess tenderly embraced her daughter, and advised her to repair to her chamber, to seek a few hours repose, and she would excuse her on the plea of an head-ach to the Earl and Lord Walter at their morning repast.

Ellinor gladly availed herself of this offer; she longed for solitude, that she might indulge her sorrows. Her separation from Lord Arthur would of itself have been a severe affliction; but the discovery of their mutual passion, the mysterious animosity between the two noble families, and the oaths which the Countess had with such solemnity made her take, was an addition her fragile frame could not support, and a violent fever was the consequence of these accumulated woes. Lord Bellonmore was a frequent guest in her chamber, for he dearly loved his daughter; but happily no delirium resulted from her indisposition, or she might have revealed unpleasant truths, and exposed herself to reprehension.

It was long ere Lady Ellinor recovered her health, her spirits had received too severe a shock to allow them to return to their usual tone, and melancholy was apparent in her every action.

The Duke of Belgrave’s family had left the vicinity of Glynsett about three months, when the Bellonmores met a severe affliction in the death of the amiable Countess: her health had long been precarious; but her existence was now terminated by a rapid decline: a few hours previous to her decease, she took an affectionate leave of her husband, children, and those servants who, from their long residence to the family, were considered as a part of it—she then desired every one, except Ellinor, to leave her chamber.—Her wish was complied with, and she thus addressed her sorrowing child: “Ellinor, remember the vows you have taken; they are registered in heaven; my death does not absolve you from them: a few hours, perhaps moments, and I am no more; may heaven bless, or punish you, as you observe or break the solemn promises I enjoined and you acquiesced in. If it is possible for the souls of the departed to revisit the earth, your nights shall not be peaceable nor your days happy, if you break your oath.”

Ellinor renewed her promises, and the Countess fervently blessed her: she then desired her to recall those whom she had ordered from her chamber. Nothing material occurred, till the return of the Duke and his family to the vicinity of Glynsett.

Lord Arthur flew on the wings of love and hope on the subsequent morning to the grotto, in expectation of seeing Lady Ellinor—He knew she must be apprised of their arrival at the castle by the ringing of the bells, and the rejoicing made by the villagers to welcome their lord; but the fair one came not—he was not aware of the discovery the late Countess had made, or the restrictions she had imposed on her observant daughter, and he retired in despair. This was not

unknown to Ellinor; Cicely had been sent secretly to observe if he renewed his visits to the retreat, where many an hour had flown rapturously on the wings of love; this did not interfere with her vows, and she could not resist the impulse that urged her to this step.

Lady Ellinor could not help rejoicing in the constancy of her lover, and again lamented the cruel mysteries that rendered her love a crime. Cicely observed that it was more than probable Lord Arthur would visit the grotto on the following morning; her prediction was true—willing, as the votaries of love ever are, to catch at the straws of hope, supposed some event had hindered his fair one from an interview, that, perhaps, was wished for on her part with as much pure ardour as on his own. The moment Cicely saw him she presented him with a letter from her mistress, and (as she was ordered) then hastened away before he could ask her any questions; for the chaste Ellinor was fearful lest the unguarded expressions of Cicely should betray to Lord Arthur the excessive regret her lady felt at the cruel destiny that threatened their eternal separation.

Lord Arthur read with amazement, horror, and indescribable anguish, the lines penned by his beloved Ellinor, explaining her hapless situation with regard to him, and the vows imposed on her by the late Countess: “Cruel fate,” exclaimed the youth, “must I then renounce all hopes of happiness and Ellinor? but here (kneeling down) I swear never to give my hand to another—No, rather let me end my days secluded in a monastery’s gloom, where I may undisturbed mourn my disappointed prospects.” Such was the anxiety that preyed on Lord Arthur’s mind, that a fever ensued, attended with nervous symptoms, which greatly alarmed the Duke, who assenting to the advice of the physicians, ordered his son to prepare for an immediate tour to the south of France; he would not hear of a negative, and the youth, though greatly chagrined at being sent such a distance from Ellinor, was forced to acquiesce.

Though Lady Ellinor was restricted from seeking an interview with her lover, he was under no such restraints, and he determined to risk life itself to see her, before his departure from Glynsett: One of the inferior domestics had long been in his interest; it was Margaret, the same who had placed the billet on Ellinor’s toilette. The late Countess, when apprised of this circumstance, had caused Blanche ←corrected misspelling (18) to seek the delinquent among the household. Those she interrogated denied (and with truth) any knowledge of the affair: the very menial capacity of Margaret exempted her from the enquiry, as it was not even supposed that she had ever entered into that part of the edifice where the superiors of the family resided. She now, for a small gratuity, undertook to forward the wishes of Lord Arthur, whose knowledge of her arose from his having visited her father’s hut during a severe frost, to administer aid to the almost starving individuals that composed the peasant’s family. She knew that her mistress passed above an hour every night in a small chapel that was situated very distantly from the suit of rooms that had been occupied since the decease of the Lady Bellonmore. The Earl, who was much indisposed, had retired to his own chamber soon after sun-set; and Lord Walter was gone with Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, on a visit to the French monarch, where they had settled to stay some months, to enjoy the pleasures of the Gallic court.

As soon as twilight appeared, Lord Arthur, pretending an inclination to sleep, dismissed all his attendants but Arnold, who, by the Earl’s orders, occupied a pallet in the same chamber, that he might be at hand to assist his master; from him the youth had nothing to fear—on his secrecy he could depend; and bidding him answer to any enquiries that might be made, that he was asleep

and must not be disturbed, he wrapped himself in his scarlet cloak, and hastening down a private staircase, sallied forth to meet Margaret, who had promised to attend his coming at the corner of the dove-house, which was situated at a remote part of the grounds. She was true to her promise, and, guided by her directions, he soon found himself in the chapel, and concealed himself in one of the confessional boxes, that formed a range on one side of this antique place.

He waited near an hour before Lady Ellinor appeared, leaning on the arm of Cicely; the latter, placing a taper on the altar, silently retired; her fair mistress raised her voice in prayer, and petitioned for the repose of her mother's soul, and her father's earthly happiness. She then reverted to her own situation, and prayed to heaven to soften her anguish, and restore health and happiness to her lover, ←should comma be a period? (19) "May he be blessed, though Ellinor lives wretched! O fatal mystery! O my mother! what severe pangs hast thou inflicted on my filial breast; but, let me not presumptuously arraign thy conduct, doubtless it was just and propelled by necessity. Her tenderness was too great to act thus, because the house of Bellonmore and Belgrave were at enmity: she would not carry hatred to the grave; nay, even beyond its confines, for has she not continued it in my person by those fatal vows?" Then a deep sigh interrupted her proceedings in this mournful soliloquy—Lord Arthur, unable longer to repress his feelings, unguardedly re-echoed the sigh.—Ellinor shrieked, and was hastily flying towards the door when her progress was impeded by Arthur's rushing from the confessional towards her: unhappily she did not recognize her lover, but instantly fainted, and fell on the floor. Arthur at first severely blamed his own imprudence for thus alarming her. But these thoughts were presently erased from his brain by others of a most reprehensible nature: Ellinor was now in his power, and he determined to bear her from the hall. To accomplish this purpose, he was aware that he had many difficulties to overcome; but he determined to surmount them, or perish in the attempt.—He conveyed the fair insensible in his arms to the grotto, the scene of their former interviews.—It has been before observed that the late Countess had an oratory formed in one part of it, here he deposited his fair burthen, and then hastened to the castle: he had received a great quantity of money from the Duke, for his ensuing expenses on the continent—he had likewise a large sum by him, which had been the savings of years from an over liberal allowance; all this he secured, with several valuables; and then hastily imparting his project to Arnold, they repaired to the stables, and, selecting two of the fleetest horses, they returned as near as possible to the grotto.

During the absence of Lord Arthur, Ellinor recovered in some degree her recollection; but the violence of the blow she received in falling had so deranged her, that, after faintly calling a few times on Cicely, she relapsed into a distressing torpor. In this state she was conveyed by Lord Arthur and his attendant to their horses, the youth mounting one of them, took charge of his lovely prize, whom he tenderly supported in his arms; Arnold followed for a few paces, when Lord Arthur commanded him to ride forward as fast as possible to the next inn, and procure a carriage with swift-footed steeds; by travelling with expedition he had hopes to be soon out of the reach of pursuit, as it was a great chance that this sudden elopement should not be discovered till the following morning.

Ellinor, by the freshness of the air and the motion of travelling, now revived to a sense of her miserable situation; finding herself in the arms of a man, and travelling through a dismal wood, she uttered a piercing shriek, and, in frantic accents, intreated to know why she was thus removed from her dear parent, and whither she was conveyed. Attributing his actions to the force

of his love, Arthur confessed what he had done, and acknowledged that it was his intention to proceed immediately to the continent, and there espouse his Ellinor, where they could reside till their friends were reconciled.

Lady Ellinor was almost maddened at the presumption of Arthur; at that instant all sentiments of love were banished from her breast, and she considered him as a barbarian to her peace; her sudden absence might hasten her affectionate parent to the grave—must her vows be treated as nought—must she marry one, between whom and herself a fatal mystery seemed to pend? No, it would be criminal in the extreme, and she resolved to invoke the aid of heaven and earth to her assistance, rather than become the victim of a plan, which the madness of love and disappointed hopes had prompted Arthur to form, and attempt to execute—yet she pitied and condemned by turns.

In the most plaintive accents she besought him to convey her back to Oakcliffe Hall; but he steadily persisted in refusal.—“Remember,” said Ellinor, impressively, “that you will lose my esteem, nay, my love, for ever, by this act of compulsion: unless the mystery that at present envelopes us is cleared up I never, never will be yours—sooner would I die than turn apostate to the vows I made in the presence of my mother and my God. Restore me to my home, place me in any part of the grounds of Oakcliffe, and I will account for my absence in some manner (should it be questioned), but perhaps it is only known to Cicely, who may suppose I am wandering about the grounds and make no alarm, that will draw censure upon myself and acquit you from suspicion.”

The infatuated Arthur replied, that he would sooner lose life itself than renounce the hopes he entertained of calling her his, and yielding her to some successful rival; “By every religious tie,” said Ellinor, “which a merciful divinity has ordained to keep us mortals in a path of rectitude, I swear that I will be none but your’s. If the wished-for happiness of spending our days together is prevented, the solitude of a nunnery shall hide your Ellinor from the world, and there she will retire in spite of the influence of every kindred tie.”

Between the persuasive arguments of the lady and obstinate adherence of the youth to the path of error, into which he had wandered, the time wore away till they arrived at the inn, where the assiduity of Arnold had procured a carriage and four horses in readiness for their instant progress; refreshments were also placed in the vehicle, that nothing might impede their journey, or risk a discovery.

Lady Ellinor could be induced by no soft persuasives to enter the carriage, her soul revolted at the idea, but her calls for aid were not attended to by the people belonging to the inn, who believed, in the account given by Arnold, that the gentleman and lady were brother and sister, and that she laboured under a mental derangement, for which she was removing to London, where he had hopes of effecting her cure, as there the best advice was to be had; that they travelled privately and mostly in the night, as it was the wish of the lady’s friends to keep her malady a secret from the world. Ellinor, urged by desperation, burst wildly from Lord Arthur and his servant, and precipitately fled along the road, pursued by the two latter, when a gentleman, clad in slight armour, rode towards them at that instant, when Lord Arthur now came up and

forcibly endeavoured to convey Ellinor to the carriage. "O my God!" exclaimed the afflicted lady, "I am lost for ever! will no one believe me? O wretched Ellinor! what a fate is thine!"

Lord Arthur, irritated by what he deemed a capricious obstinacy, treated her with a roughness of demeanor foreign to his usual manners, and the fair one sighed to think how much she had been deceived in her opinion of Lord Arthur.

With the assistance of Arnold, he was lifting her up the steps of the carriage, while she piteously implored him to forego intentions that could only bring misery on them both: "Never but with life," said the impetuous youth, "will I relinquish you, though your stubbornness should convert your love into hate; for the present we will wave the discussion of this subject, now you are wholly in my power."

"'Tis false, dastardly villain, (said the stranger, who, till now, had appeared wholly regardless of their proceedings,) 'Tis false! and blest be the power that sent me to the rescue of a fondly beloved sister!—Draw, and defend yourself, or—" "Hold, hold, I entreat you," said Ellinor, springing from the carriage; but her words were vain, the two noblemen engaged with incredible fury, till Lord Arthur fell, covered with wounds, calling on heaven and Ellinor to forgive him. The distracted maiden kneeling beside him, uttered every thing which love or pity could suggest to sooth her expiring lover, who, blessing her fervently, linked her hands in his and breathed his last. Ellinor was now conveyed insensible to a chamber of the inn, where an elderly woman attended with restoratives.

When Ellinor revived, she enquired for her brother, and, to her inexpressible horror and regret, was informed that he was in the next apartment with a surgeon and other attendants, the former of whom had declared he could not survive many hours, having received two mortal wounds in the breast. This additional woe overpowered the fragile frame of Ellinor, and for several days her life was despaired of.

The Earl of Bellonmore and the Duke of Belgrave were instantly sent for, and the attendants of the two unfortunate combatants were retained in custody till their arrival, which took place without procrastination: these two noblemen, whose unhappy feuds had been the primitive cause of their disaster, now sat in one chamber, and their animosity seemed stifled in the anguish they endured. From Arnold an elucidation of the horrid facts was obtained, his sorrow was great and severe, and he was dismissed on that account with more gentleness than his conduct in aiding Lord Arthur deserved. Robert, the attendant of the noble Walter, accounted for their being so fatally and unexpectedly in England, by stating that the Duke of Suffolk, having received despatches from King Henry, left the court of France instantaneously, accompanied only by Lord Walter and a few attendants, leaving the rest of his suite and three servants of his friend to follow the baggage. On their arrival in England, Walter, willing to give his friends an agreeable surprise by his unexpected presence, took leave of the Duke; and, attended by Robert, set out on his fatal journey.

The Duke returned mournfully to the castle, with the remains of Lord Arthur borne on a litter, that funeral honors might be paid to his remains at Glynsett. His grief for the loss of his son was

such, that his constitution, already much impaired by early dissipation, gave way, and he soon followed Lord Arthur to the grave.

Lord Walter lived but three days, and continued quite insensible the whole of the time. It was nearly three weeks before Ellinor could be removed to the hall—her woes were great; but she buried them in her own bosom, that she might pay attention to her father, who daily verged towards the grave: the loss of Walter was more than he could bear, and he only survived him two months, leaving Ellinor sole heiress to all his wealth. But fortune or aggrandizement had now no charms for her, and she resolved to retire to a nunnery at Feversham, where her aunt presided as the Abbess; she richly endowed the holy edifice, and distributed the remainder of her wealth to charitable purposes.

Previous to her departure from Oakcliffe Hall, the ill-fated Ellinor, in looking over the papers that had belonged to her deceased parents, found several which tended to explain the cause that forbade her union with Lord Arthur. They were as follows:

The present Duke of Belgrave had unhappily, long after his marriage, under a feigned character, seduced a sister of the Earl of Bellonmore's from the paths of virtue. His treachery was discovered, and Angeline restored to her friends: she died in giving birth to Ellinor. The Countess lying-in at this period of a still-born child, had it privately buried, and adopted Angeline's as her own: the secret was known only to herself and the Earl for some years, though at length, for fear of ill consequences, he imparted it to the Duke. It is also necessary to remark, that these two families had long been enemies through political feuds, and bore each other the deadliest hate. The seduction of Angeline had been attempted more from motives of revenge and triumph, than any other passion. His Grace and the Earl, after a long series of public animosity, at length, tired of the conflict, harboured a silent, but not the less vindictive, detestation to each other.

Alas! their guiltless offspring eventually became the victim of these feuds; for the duke, ashamed to acknowledge the Lady Ellinor as his daughter, merely exerted his authority in preventing the least prospect of an union between her and her brother Lord Arthur; whilst the Earl and Countess of Bellonmore, fearing the imputation of disgrace on their noble blood, kept the story of their adopted daughter's birth a secret from her, and thus prevented her from being united to her supposed brother, the noble and gallant Lord Walter. Thus did two noble families become extinct, from the spirit of revenge on one hand, and too nice a sense of honour on the other.

We shall conclude this tragical story with the following appropriate lines, from an eminent poet of the present day. The subject is the career of a seducer:—

The wretched libertine's too vicious heart,
 A vile depravity must e'er impart;
 Corrupted villany, of artful kind,
 Seductive schemes, employ his worthless mind;
 The mask of friendly truth he dares display,
 With seeming kindness plots his dreadful way;
 Beneath deceptive smiles pursues his aim,

Ruins domestic peace, destroys its name;
 Tho' Virtue's self doth ne'er his bosom warm,
 Her garb he takes, to work the specious harm;
 With fairest semblance to mature his plan,
 This baleful wretch degrades the name of man.
 The daring thief is pure as innocence,
 Compar'd with one from whom there's no defence;
 In whose base breast the worst of thoughts attend,
 Who, while he stabs you, calls himself your friend:
 And when the toils of death this fiend o'ertake,
 And he his guilty views must e'er forsake;
 Assail'd perhaps, while some nefarious train
 Of baleful schemes employs his fruitful brain;
 When flutt'ring breath must yield, no refuge near,
 'Tis then his coward soul will shrink with fear:
 The retrospective glance his thoughts pursue,
 Presents a long, and ill-spent life to view;
 The past, a dreadful scene of ev'ry ill,
 The future prospect gleams mor (24) frightful still;
 He'd fain recoil, nor meet impending fate,
 Repentance comes, but comes, alas! too late.

THE END.

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