

ETHELINDE,

OR THE

RECLUSE OF THE LAKE.

BY

CHARLOTTE SMITH.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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M.DCC.XC.

TO HER ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE
DUCHESS OF CUMBERLAND.

M A D A M,

AS Dedications have been too frequently disgusting to the Patron, and disgraceful to the Author, it is my Ambition, in dedicating these little Volumes to your Royal Highness, to express only the Dictates of Gratitude in the Language of Respect.

My own Heart would reproach me should I fail to declare my deep Sense of that gracious Condescension with which you deigned to interest yourself in the Situation of my Children, whose opulent Relations and future Prospects prevent them not from being at present wholly dependent on their mother.

While the Motive that induced your Royal Highness to allow me the Honour of prefixing your name to this Work has evinced the Goodness of your Heart, I must confess that the Distinction so graciously conferred upon my Book has considerably increased the Diffidence and Apprehension of its Author. It is impossible for me to
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present to the Public a second Novel,
under Circumstances so flattering, with-
out fearing that any little Merit it may
have must appear inadequate to the
Favour it has received.

I have the Honor to be,

M A D A M,

Your Royal Highness's

most obliged and devoted Servant,

CHARLOTTE SMITH.

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ETHELINDE,

• R T H E

RECLUSE OF THE LAKE.

CHAPTER I.

ON the borders of the small but beautiful lake called Grasmere Water, in the county of Cumberland, is Grasmere Abbey, an old seat belonging to the family of Newenden. The abbey, founded by Ranulph Earl of Chester, for forty Cistercian monks, was among those dissolved by Henry the Eighth; by whom it was given, with its extensive royalties, to the family of Bran-

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don;

don ; from whence it descended by a female to Sir Edward Newenden, its present possessor.

His father, a man of boundless profusion, had at his death left every part of his property deeply mortgaged : but Sir Edward, on succeeding to it, had married the heiress of Mr. Maltravers (a gentleman who had acquired an immense fortune in the East Indies) ; and he had retrieved the fortune of his house, and disembarassed his estates, by this opulent alliance.

Though much attached to Grasmere Abbey, which he venerated as the abode of his ancestors, and loved as the scene of his early pleasures, Sir Edward had not seen it for above four years. Lady Newenden had never been farther from the metropolis than to some of those places of public resort where all its conveniences and amusements are to be enjoyed ; and her Ladyship had conceived a dread of a journey into Cumberland, which Sir Edward, to whom her slightest wish was a law, had never earnestly pressed

pressed her to conquer: but in the summer of 1784, as his presence there was absolutely necessary, he besought her, as a favour, to accompany him thither; and as a favour, granted with the most perfect consciousness of its value, she at length deigned to consent.

It was however almost the end of July before her Ladyship gave this reluctant acquiescence: and then, as she had persuaded herself that she was to be condemned for two months to a desert, she had accepted the offer of Miss Newenden, the sister of Sir Edward, to accompany her; and she had invited her cousin Ethelinde Chesterville, and Mr. Davenant, a young man not yet of age, who was distantly related to Sir Edward, and was also his ward, to be of her party.

This gentleman, who was still at Oxford, arrived from thence at the house of Sir Edward, near Windsor, the evening preceding the day on which they were to set out from thence to London, on their way

to the North. About twelve the next morning, therefore, he handed Lady Newenden to her coach, after she had taken leave of her three beautiful children. But Sir Edward lingered behind: he kissed repeatedly each of the lovely little creatures, earnestly recommended them to the care of their attendants; and when on the point of quitting them, again returned, renewed his caresses, and repeated his entreaties that they might have every attention shewn them during the absence of their mother. Then reluctantly tearing himself from them, he proceeded with his wife and Mr. Davenant to the house of Mr. Maltravers, her father, where they dined; and in the evening arrived at their house in Hanover Square, where they were to meet Miss Newenden and Ethelinde Chesterville.

They found Miss Newenden already there. As no great affection had ever subsisted between her and Lady Newenden, they met without any warm expressions
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of pleasure. Their characters and manners were indeed wholly dissimilar. But though there was little friendship between them, there was less rivalry: the indolent apathy of Lady Newenden was not disturbed by the boisterous vivacity of her sister-in-law; who, occupied almost entirely by the stable or the kennel, considered her Ladyship as a pretty, insipid doll, whose mind was a mere blank, and whose person was fitted only to exhibit to advantage the feminine fineries which she herself despised—her own dress being usually such as was distinguished from that of a man only by the petticoat.

The first short compliments had no sooner passed, than Miss Newenden, addressing herself to her brother and Mr. Davenant, lamented that she had been prevented sending forward her horses the day before, as she had intended. “That devilish fellow, Jack Wildman’s groom,” said she, “put a confounded kicking horse into the stable with Meteor, the

day before yesterday; and the dear soul, in kicking at him in his turn, has got a strain in the back sinews. I am wretched about it; for I am sure he must be fired. He'll be of no use to me all the summer, and I question if I shall get him sound by next season."—Sir Edward heard her with more civility than interest; but Davenant, listening more attentively to her distress, they immediately began to consult on the probable advantages of a cold charge; and it was agreed that, as soon as a celebrated farrier arrived, who was to be consulted, they would go together to the stable to inspect with him the condition of Meteor.

Their discourse was interrupted, but not broken off; by the entrance of Colonel Chesterville and his daughter, neither of whom Mr. Davenant had ever seen before. Sir Edward introduced him to both. He bowed slightly to each; and then turning immediately to Miss Newenden, he continued with her a dissertation on the nature

ture and consequences of a strain in the back sinews.

Colonel Chesterville, now near fifty, had been a remarkably handsome man. Military service in various countries, and sorrows suffered in his own, had had more share than time in marking the strong lines of his sensible and manly countenance with something of peculiar dejection. His manners, though perfectly those of a man of fashion, had yet a too visible coldness towards persons for whom he felt no particular esteem; but when he conversed with those for whom his heart owned an interest, especially when he spoke to or of his daughter, all that fire and energy, which had been the leading feature of his character in the younger part of his life, seemed to return. His affections were almost entirely centered in his children. His son, who had entered early into the army, and was now with his regiment at Gibraltar, had by some youthful indiscretions taught the Colonel the anxie-

ties of a father: but Ethelinde was in his opinion the most perfect of human beings; yet those who knew her best found but little partiality or exaggeration in the exalted opinion he entertained of her.

Few girls of her age, for Ethelinde was not yet eighteen, can be said to have any decided character at all; but the circumstances of her life had taught her to think and to feel. In her twelfth year she had lost her mother by a lingering decline: and the deep melancholy into which her surviving parent had fallen in consequence of that event, the thoughtless conduct of her brother, and the increasing anxiety which her father felt either from that or some other cause, had obscured her natural vivacity, without diminishing her personal charms; and had given her a taste for solitude and reflection, without lessening the natural sweetness of her temper. Her father's sorrows had redoubled her attachment towards him; her affection
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for her brother was increased rather than diminished, since his imprudence had made him unhappy. To her he had disclosed his entangled circumstances, even before he dared make them known to his father : and it was by her intercession that the Colonel had so easily pardoned him a second time ; and had parted from him, when he went to his regiment, without any marks of displeasure.

Ethelinde however saw, with great concern, that since that period her father had been more than usually unhappy ; and that, though he was less at home than was his general custom, he could with difficulty conceal, when they were together, the anguish that preyed on his heart.

Conscious of his own dejection, and fearing for the health and spirits of his daughter, which were evidently affected by it, he had, however unwilling to part with her, promoted her going to Grafton Abbey with her cousin Lady Newenden ; and when she objected to it, because she

was unwilling to leave him alone, he told her that he should take the opportunity of her absence to pay a visit of some months to his friend General Sandys, in the neighbourhood of Bath. Ethelinde and her father were now to part, for a few months only; but even so short a separation, at the moment it was to take place, appeared so terrible to Colonel Chesterville, that he lost all his fortitude when it arrived. He had continued a very insipid conversation with Lady Newenden till a late hour, because he had not resolution enough to bid adieu to his daughter; but finding that the longer he delayed it the more painful it became, he at length arose, and approaching her, he kissed her, and bade her hastily farewell. He trembled while he spoke; and Ethelinde, who felt and shared his emotion, found her eyes fill with tears, and her hand involuntarily clasped in his, as if to detain him; while he, turning to Lady Newenden, said—"To you, Madam, and to Sir Edward, I confide almost