

ETHELINDE;

OR THE

RECLUSE OF THE LAKE

CHAPTER I.

THE visit of the Ludford family to Sir Edward and Lady Newenden that evening, had been principally at the desire of Mr. Rupert and Miss Clarinthia, who flattered themselves that they might be included in the party to Lord Danesforte's. Mrs. Ludford, while she affected to despise every thing but the substantial comforts of riches, was yet very solicitous to

be noticed by "people of quality;" and was never so well pleased as when she compared that affluence acquired by trade, to the more brilliant but frequently ill supported splendor of such of the nobility as believed themselves obliged to make an appearance more equal to their rank than to their fortune. Every opportunity therefore of making this comparison she eagerly seized; and when they afforded at once gratification to her pride, and occasion to display the talents of her son, every thing was obtained that could make her eager for the party.

With avidity she engaged with her son and daughter in the project of going to Danesforte; where Mr. Rupert was to write for the theatre, and Miss Clarinthia to take a part: so had they arranged it in their imagination; and infinite was their mortification neither to meet Lord Danesfort or to hear any thing of the intended party; but to be received, if not with coldness, at least without any pleasure;

sure; and to observe throughout the house symptoms of confusion, which, while it disappointed their expectations, piqued their curiosity.

During their journey home, they made various conjectures on the cause of Ethelinde's journey to London. "'Tis some affairs I suppose of her father's," said Miss Ludford. "We all know how terribly embarrassed he is. Poor dear girl! she is much to be pitied."

"Pitied, for what?" cried the elder lady. I dare say she would be much affronted at being pitied. She thinks herself rather an object of envy, I suppose: and as to this journey, I dare say it happens because Lady Newenden has found out at last that every body talks of her and Sir Edward."

"Indeed, mama, I am convinced that was mere scandal; besides, it looks, I think, more like a wedding than any thing else. I am sure that Mr. Montgomery is a lover."

“ Perhaps he may. He has nothing, I suppose; most likely some dependant on Sir Edward. ’Twill be convenient enough to have Miss Chesterville married. There are ways great people have of settling matters very commodiously; and Chesterville will be glad to get his daughter off, that he may have nothing to interrupt him at his beloved gaming-table.”

“ Dear ma’am,” exclaimed the gentle Clarinthia, “ I declare I do not believe any harm of Ethelinde; and I understand that Mr. Montgomery is a man of family.”

“ Of family !” answered her mother; and what good does family do? Chesterville was a man of family too; and my sister Ethy never considered that his family would not support her and her children. I am sure she made a bad history of it with her honourable connections; and I dare say her daughter will
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do the same, or worse; for, like her, she sets up for a beauty."

"The girl is certainly handsome," said young Ludford, conceitedly; "but in my mind that is all. 'Tis a pretty inanimate creature; I have tried to make something of her, but she seems totally to be deficient in spirit and discernment."

"The world supposes," said Mr. Emmerley, "that Sir Edward has been more successful, Ludford; and if that is really the case, her predilection in his favour must excuse her blindness to you."

"Oh! I forgive her from my soul," replied Mr. Rupert. "I never think your fine misses worth much trouble; nor should I have thrown away a thought on this, had not she had the reputation of an understanding in a superior style."

"I wonder how she acquired such a character," said Mrs. Ludford.

“ Why, by being puffed by Sir Edward,” replied her son, “ to be sure; he is reckoned a man of sense and reading, and his word was taken for that of his great favourite. ’Tis nothing but puffing that gives people character. Then the girl is handsome; and a very, very small share of wit will make a pretty woman in fashion.

“ And I suppose a fashionable carelessness of her reputation too is one reason for her fame: for my part I should, as she is related to me, be much better pleased if she was either less talked of, or talked of more to her advantage.”

While this party was indulging their spleen on the subject of poor Ethelinde, Mr. Maltravers was labouring to adjust matters between Sir Edward and Lord Danesforte: the former of whom was very desirous of avoiding every measure that might expose the reputation of his wife; and the latter, even more anxious to evade relinquishing his arrangement with

Lady

Lady Newenden, and his future projects in regard to gaming parties with Davenant, both of which he apprehended would be broken if he resented the conduct of Sir Edward. Though his Lordship possessed courage or rather fierceness enough to have no apprehensions of the event of a meeting, he yet found little inclination to hazard it, when it made him every way liable to danger and inconvenience, without promising any possible advantage. His personal courage nobody doubted; and he therefore determined rather to make the apology, at which Mr. Maltravers gently hinted, than become liable to fall by the hand of Sir Edward, or to be obliged to quit the country, should he himself have the advantage. Lady Newenden obstinately refused to make any concession; and the day after Ethelinde's departure, continued to keep her room. But Sir Edward, as he sat at breakfast alone, was surprised by the entrance of Lord Danes-

forte, who, gaily and carelessly approaching him, took his hand—"My dear Newenden," said he, "we strangely misunderstood each other yesterday. The devil, I believe, was in you. Prithee, Newenden, what has got possession of your head? If it had been any body else, I can tell you, I should have set about obtaining an explanation in a different way; but I know you are my friend, and that your conduct of yesterday was a mere fit of ill humour. Why the devil would you desire to put an end to our party; it is impossible but what you must think better of it."

Sir Edward withdrew his hand, and calmly, but coldly, answered—"My Lord, I cannot think otherwise of it than I did before; nor should I, without long consideration and very substantial reasons, have desired Lady Newenden to have given it up. My Lord, I will be explicit with you; I have too good an opinion of my wife to believe her capable of offending

fending against her honour and mine; but the appearance of such great familiarity with any society I disapprove——”

“Cæsar himself not more nice, ha? My dear Sir Edward, one would really think you had been born and educated an hundred and fifty years ago. Ridiculous! If it was known that you had this whim in your head, and of a woman too whose conduct is so irreproachable as Lady Newenden’s, upon my soul you would be laughed to death, and be held up as the Mr. Strickland of the modern world.”

“I should be very indifferent about that—my own happiness, the honour of my family, is of some consequence to me; the opinion of those whom you call the modern world, of none.”

“Why, upon my soul, you grow worse and worse: ’tis so absurd, Newenden, that we will not argue upon it. Lady Newenden goes surely to Danesforte. I have every thing prepared; and

it will be the damndest thing in the world to disappoint us. Besides you will go with us yourself, and Mr. and Mrs. Maltravers. Surely, in point of propriety, you may defy all the old cats in Europe to find fault; but why the devil you attend to their gossip, I cannot guess; and why, having lived so long in the world, you have not yet acquired courage fearlessly to please yourself."

"Pardon me, my Lord, I *have* acquired that degree of resolution; and therefore it is that I shall please myself in the present instance; and instead of going at this inauspicious season a longer journey, shall return with my family to Denham."

"Since that is the case, Sir Edward," said Lord Danesforte, gravely, "it becomes necessary for me to enquire what are your objections to accepting an invitation to my house."

"Simply, my Lord, because I dislike
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the dissipation in which Lady Newenden has been of late too much engaged; and, above all, I dislike deep play, and will suffer it no longer."

"Do you mean, Sir," said his Lordship, looking more and more displeased, "to say that *I* have engaged your wife in deeper play than has been her former custom?"

"My opinion on that matter," replied Sir Edward, "I shall not give when it is thus asked; nor do I conceive that your Lordship has any right to interfere in my domestic arrangements. I do not like my wife should go to Danesforte, and therefore your Lordship must excuse her."

"You cannot however, Sir, prevent my thinking this conduct very extraordinary."

"I embarrass myself very little with your Lordship's thoughts."

"By heaven, Sir Edward Newenden, this is behaviour I do not understand."

“Any explanation that you wish shall be at your service, my Lord.”

Maltravers, who had been in an adjoining room listening, not without apprehension, to the progress of the dialogue, now entered; and dreading lest the dissention should become too violent for accommodation, he could not conceal that he had heard what had passed.

“My dear Sir Edward, Lord Danesforte,” said he, addressing himself to both, “here seems to have been some misunderstanding. Let me beg that it may go no farther. Let me entreat of you, Sir Edward, to think better of me and Mrs. Maltravers than to suppose we would suffer Maria to persist in a plan really improper; but indeed you mistake the thing. My Lord, excuse Sir Edward’s warmth; the little difficulty will be cleared up. Allow me——”

“My dear Mr. Maltravers,” said Lord Danesforte, “I cannot but feel infinitely obliged to you; to Mrs. Maltravers too

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I am deeply a debtor. Thus flattered by your good opinion, it is, I own, doubly mortifying to me to find that Sir Edward Newenden, whose friendship I so highly prized, should have conceived an opinion that the scheme of domestic felicity he prefers has been by my means disturbed. Damn it, I could not have supposed Sir Edward capable of such an idea."

Nor did I, my Lord, name such an idea. Your Lordship is pleased to enquire why I object to Lady Newenden's going to Danesforte. Without discovering that it is an enquiry you have any right to make, I answer that I chuse to put an end to the deep play and perpetual dissipation in which my wife has of late been unusually involved. Why you, my Lord, should find yourself offended by such a resolution, I cannot imagine; but be that as it may it is irrevocable." Sir Edward then left the room; and Lord Danesforte, with a great oath,

oath, protested it was the damndest rudeness he had ever experienced. "What the devil does he mean by it, Mr. Maltravers? Pray has he had many of these amusing humours?"

"Really no, my Lord; for I don't remember that he ever contradicted Lady Newenden before; and now I am persuaded he will think otherwise of the matter. Lady Newenden, I must say, was wrong; she said, in her warmth, some things of my niece, Ethelinde Chesterville, which has piqued Sir Edward, and—"

"I don't wonder at his being piqued," said his Lordship, with a smile of great meaning.

"Not wonder at it?" asked Maltravers.

"As how?"

"Why, my dear friend, you know that nothing hurts, nothing wounds so deeply as an incontrovertible truth."

"Truth! Why do you suppose it is truth?"

"Aye

“ Aye to be sure I do ; and I really thought that it must have passed for such to every body who were not wilfully blind. My good friend you have not seen so much of the world to wonder now at any circumstances of this kind.”

He then related some passages between Sir Edward and Ethelinde, with such observations upon them, that Maltravers, who had imputed the charge merely to the passion and spleen of his daughter, began to see Sir Edward's partiality to his niece in a different and very unfavourable light, and to believe what his Lordship laboured to impress, that the objections Sir Edward had to Lady Newenden's going to Danesforte, originated not in his dislike to her connections, but in his own reluctance to go where Ethelinde was not ; and in his apprehension that her Ladyship's demand for money would prevent his supplying Ethelinde and her father to the extent he wished.

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