

CHAPTER VIII

WILLIAM'S desire of seeing Fanny dance, made more than a momentary impression on his uncle. The hope of an opportunity, which Sir Thomas had then given, was not given to be thought of no more.

5 He remained steadily inclined to gratify so amiable a feeling—to gratify any body else who might wish to see Fanny dance, and to give pleasure to the young people in general; and having thought the matter over and taken his resolution in quiet

10 independence, the result of it appeared the next morning at breakfast, when, after recalling and commending what his nephew had said, he added, "I do not like, William, that you should leave Northamptonshire without this indulgence. It would

15 give me pleasure to see you both dance. You spoke of the balls at Northampton. Your cousins have occasionally attended them; but they would not altogether suit us now. The fatigue would be too much for your aunt. I believe, we must not think

20 of a Northampton ball. A dance at home would be more eligible, and if"—

"Ah! my dear Sir Thomas," interrupted Mrs. Norris, "I knew what was coming. I knew what you were going to say. If dear Julia were at home,

25 or dearest Mrs. Rushworth at Sotherton, to afford a reason, an occasion for such a thing, you would be tempted to give the young people a dance at

Mansfield. I know you would. If *they* were at home to grace the ball, a ball you would have this very Christmas. Thank your uncle, William, thank your uncle."

"My daughters," replied Sir Thomas, gravely inter-⁵posing, "have their pleasures at Brighton, and I hope are very happy; but the dance which I think of giving at Mansfield, will be for their cousins. Could we be all assembled, our satisfaction would undoubtedly be more complete, but the absence of¹⁰ some is not to debar the others of amusement."

Mrs. Norris had not another word to say. She saw decision in his looks, and her surprize and vexation required some minutes silence to be settled into composure. A ball at such a time! His daughters¹⁵ absent and herself not consulted! There was comfort, however, soon at hand. *She* must be the doer of every thing; Lady Bertram would of course be spared all thought and exertion, and it would all fall upon *her*. She should have to do the honours²⁰ of the evening, and this reflection quickly restored so much of her good humour as enabled her to join in with the others, before their happiness and thanks were all expressed.

Edmund, William, and Fanny, did, in their different²⁵ ways, look and speak as much grateful pleasure in the promised ball, as Sir Thomas could desire. Edmund's feelings were for the other two. His father had never conferred a favour or shewn a kindness more to his satisfaction.³⁰

Lady Bertram was perfectly quiescent and contented, and had no objections to make. Sir Thomas

engaged for its giving her very little trouble, and she assured him, "that she was not at all afraid of the trouble, indeed she could not imagine there would be any."

5 Mrs. Norris was ready with her suggestions as to the rooms he would think fittest to be used, but found it all prearranged; and when she would have conjectured and hinted about the day, it appeared that the day was settled too. Sir Thomas had been
10 amusing himself with shaping a very complete outline of the business; and as soon as she would listen quietly, could read his list of the families to be invited, from whom he calculated, with all necessary allowance for the shortness of the notice,
15 to collect young people enough to form twelve or fourteen couple; and could detail the considerations which had induced him to fix on the 22d, as the most eligible day. William was required to be at Portsmouth on the 24th; the 22d would therefore be
20 the last day of his visit; but where the days were so few it would be unwise to fix on any earlier. Mrs. Norris was obliged to be satisfied with thinking just the same, and with having been on the point of proposing the 22d herself, as by far the best day
25 for the purpose.

The ball was now a settled thing, and before the evening a proclaimed thing to all whom it concerned. Invitations were sent with dispatch, and many a young lady went to bed that night with her head
30 full of happy cares as well as Fanny.—To her, the cares were sometimes almost beyond the happiness; for young and inexperienced, with small means of

choice and no confidence in her own taste—the “how she should be dressed” was a point of painful solicitude; and the almost solitary ornament in her possession, a very pretty amber cross which William had brought her from Sicily, was the greatest distress of all, for she had nothing but a bit of ribbon to fasten it to; and though she had worn it in that manner once, would it be allowable at such a time, in the midst of all the rich ornaments which she supposed all the other young ladies would appear in? And yet not to wear it! William had wanted to buy her a gold chain too, but the purchase had been beyond his means, and therefore not to wear the cross might be mortifying him. These were anxious considerations; enough to sober her spirits even under the prospect of a ball given principally for her gratification.

The preparations meanwhile went on, and Lady Bertram continued to sit on her sofa without any inconvenience from them. She had some extra visits from the housekeeper, and her maid was rather hurried in making up a new dress for her; Sir Thomas gave orders and Mrs. Norris ran about, but all this gave *her* no trouble, and as she had foreseen, “there was in fact no trouble in the business.”

Edmund was at this time particularly full of cares; his mind being deeply occupied in the consideration of two important events now at hand, which were to fix his fate in life—ordination and matrimony—events of such a serious character as to make the ball, which would be very quickly followed by one of them, appear of less moment in his eyes than in

those of any other person in the house. On the 23d he was going to a friend near Peterborough in the same situation as himself, and they were to receive ordination in the course of the Christmas week.

5 Half his destiny would then be determined—but the other half might not be so very smoothly wooed. His duties would be established, but the wife who was to share, and animate, and reward those duties might yet be unattainable. He knew his own mind,

10 but he was not always perfectly assured of knowing Miss Crawford's. There were points on which they did not quite agree, there were moments in which she did not seem propitious, and though trusting altogether to her affection, so far as to be resolved

15 (almost resolved) on bringing it to a decision within a very short time, as soon as the variety of business before him were arranged, and he knew what he had to offer her—he had many anxious feelings, many doubting hours as to the result. His conviction

20 of her regard for him was sometimes very strong; he could look back on a long course of encouragement, and she was as perfect in disinterested attachment as in every thing else. But at other times doubt and alarm intermingled with his hopes, and when he

25 thought of her acknowledged disinclination for privacy and retirement, her decided preference of a London life—what could he expect but a determined rejection? unless it were an acceptance even more to be deprecated, demanding such sacrifices of

30 situation and employment on his side as conscience must forbid.

The issue of all depended on one question. Did

she love him well enough to forego what had used to be essential points—did she love him well enough to make them no longer essential? And this question, which he was continually repeating to himself, though oftenest answered with a “Yes,” had sometimes its “No.” 5

Miss Crawford was soon to leave Mansfield, and on this circumstance the “no” and the “yes” had been very recently in alternation. He had seen her eyes sparkle as she spoke of the dear friend’s letter, 10 which claimed a long visit from her in London, and of the kindness of Henry, in engaging to remain where he was till January, that he might convey her thither; he had heard her speak of the pleasure of such a journey with an animation which 15 had “no” in every tone. But this had occurred on the first day of its being settled, within the first hour of the burst of such enjoyment, when nothing but the friends she was to visit, was before her. He had since heard her express herself differently—with 20 other feelings—more chequered feelings; he had heard her tell Mrs. Grant that she should leave her with regret; that she began to believe neither the friends nor the pleasures she was going to were worth those she left behind; and that though she 25 felt she must go, and knew she should enjoy herself when once away, she was already looking forward to being at Mansfield again. Was there not a “yes” in all this?

With such matters to ponder over, and arrange, 30 and re-arrange, Edmund could not, on his own account, think very much of the evening, which

the rest of the family were looking forward to with a more equal degree of strong interest. Independent of his two cousins' enjoyment in it, the evening was to him of no higher value than
5 any other appointed meeting of the two families might be. In every meeting there was a hope of receiving farther confirmation of Miss Crawford's attachment; but the whirl of a ball-room perhaps was not particularly favourable to the excitement
10 or expression of serious feelings. To engage her early for the two first dances, was all the command of individual happiness which he felt in his power, and the only preparation for the ball which he could enter into, in spite of all that was passing around
15 him on the subject, from morning till night.

Thursday was the day of the ball: and on Wednesday morning, Fanny, still unable to satisfy herself, as to what she ought to wear, determined to seek the counsel of the more enlightened, and
20 apply to Mrs. Grant and her sister, whose acknowledged taste would certainly bear her blameless; and as Edmund and William were gone to Northampton, and she had reason to think Mr. Crawford likewise out, she walked down to the Parsonage
25 without much fear of wanting an opportunity for private discussion; and the privacy of such a discussion was a most important part of it to Fanny, being more than half ashamed of her own solicitude.

She met Miss Crawford within a few yards of the
30 Parsonage, just setting out to call on her, and as it seemed to her, that her friend, though obliged to insist on turning back, was unwilling to lose

her walk, she explained her business at once and observed that if she would be so kind as to give her opinion, it might be all talked over as well without doors as within. Miss Crawford appeared gratified by the application, and after a moment's 5 thought, urged Fanny's returning with her in a much more cordial manner than before, and proposed their going up into her room, where they might have a comfortable coze, without disturbing Dr. and Mrs. Grant, who were together in the drawing- 10 room. It was just the plan to suit Fanny; and with a great deal of gratitude on her side for such ready and kind attention, they proceeded in doors and upstairs, and were soon deep in the interesting subject. Miss Crawford, pleased with the appeal, gave her 15 all her best judgment and taste, made every thing easy by her suggestions, and tried to make every thing agreeable by her encouragement. The dress being settled in all its grander parts,— “But what shall you have by way of necklace?” said 20 Miss Crawford. “Shall not you wear your brother's cross?” And as she spoke she was undoing a small parcel, which Fanny had observed in her hand when they met. Fanny acknowledged her wishes and doubts on this point; she did not know how 25 either to wear the cross, or to refrain from wearing it. She was answered by having a small trinket-box placed before her, and being requested to chuse from among several gold chains and necklaces. Such had been the parcel with which Miss Crawford was 30 provided, and such the object of her intended visit; and in the kindest manner she now urged Fanny's

taking one for the cross and to keep for her sake, saying every thing she could think of to obviate the scruples which were making Fanny start back at first with a look of horror at the proposal.

5 “You see what a collection I have,” said she, “more by half than I ever use or think of. I do not offer them as new. I offer nothing but an old necklace. You must forgive the liberty and oblige me.”

10 Fanny still resisted, and from her heart. The gift was too valuable. But, Miss Crawford persevered, and argued the case with so much affectionate earnestness through all the heads of William and the cross, and the ball, and herself, as to be finally
15 successful. Fanny found herself obliged to yield that she might not be accused of pride or indifference, or some other littleness; and having with modest reluctance given her consent, proceeded to make the selection. She looked and looked, longing to
20 know which might be least valuable; and was determined in her choice at last, by fancying there was one necklace more frequently placed before her eyes than the rest. It was of gold prettily worked; and though Fanny would have preferred a longer
25 and a plainer chain as more adapted for her purpose, she hoped in fixing on this, to be chusing what Miss Crawford least wished to keep. Miss Crawford smiled her perfect approbation; and hastened to complete the gift by putting the necklace round
30 her and making her see how well it looked.

Fanny had not a word to say against its becomingness, and excepting what remained of her scruples,

was exceedingly pleased with an acquisition so very apropos. She would rather perhaps have been obliged to some other person. But this was an unworthy feeling. Miss Crawford had anticipated her wants with a kindness which proved her a real friend. 5
“When I wear this necklace I shall always think of you,” said she, “and feel how very kind you were.”

“You must think of somebody else too when you wear that necklace,” replied Miss Crawford. “You 10
must think of Henry, for it was his choice in the first place. He gave it to me, and with the necklace I make over to you all the duty of remembering the original giver. It is to be a family remembrancer. The sister is not to be in your mind without 15
bringing the brother too.”

Fanny, in great astonishment and confusion, would have returned the present instantly. To take what had been the gift of another person—of a brother too—impossible!—it must not be!—and with an 20
eagerness and embarrassment quite diverting to her companion, she laid down the necklace again on its cotton, and seemed resolved either to take another or none at all. Miss Crawford thought she had never seen a prettier consciousness. “My dear 25
child,” said she laughing, “what are you afraid of? Do you think Henry will claim the necklace as mine, and fancy you did not come honestly by it?—or are you imagining he would be too much 30
flattered by seeing round your lovely throat an ornament which his money purchased three years ago, before he knew there was such a throat in the

world?—or perhaps—looking archly—you suspect a confederacy between us, and that what I am now doing is with his knowledge and at his desire?”

With the deepest blushes Fanny protested against
5 such a thought.

“Well then,” replied Miss Crawford more seriously but without at all believing her, “to convince me that you suspect no trick, and are as unsuspecting of compliment as I have always found you, take
10 the necklace, and say no more about it. Its being a gift of my brother’s need not make the smallest difference in your accepting it, as I assure you it makes none in my willingness to part with it. He is always giving me something or other. I have
15 such innumerable presents from him that it is quite impossible for me to value, or for him to remember half. And as for this necklace, I do not suppose I have worn it six times; it is very pretty—but I never think of it; and though you would be most
20 heartily welcome to any other in my trinket-box, you have happened to fix on the very one which, if I have a choice, I would rather part with and see in your possession than any other. Say no more against it, I entreat you. Such a trifle is not worth
25 half so many words.”

Fanny dared not make any further opposition; and with renewed but less happy thanks accepted the necklace again, for there was an expression in Miss Crawford’s eyes which she could not be
30 satisfied with.

It was impossible for her to be insensible of Mr. Crawford’s change of manners. She had long seen

it. He evidently tried to please her—he was gallant—he was attentive—he was something like what he had been to her cousins : he wanted, she supposed, to cheat her of her tranquillity as he had cheated them ; and whether he might not have some concern ⁵ in this necklace!—She could not be convinced that he had not, for Miss Crawford, complaisant as a sister, was careless as a woman and a friend.

Reflecting and doubting, and feeling that the possession of what she had so much wished for, ¹⁰ did not bring much satisfaction, she now walked home again—with a change rather than a diminution of cares since her treading that path before.

CHAPTER IX

ON reaching home, Fanny went immediately up stairs to deposit this unexpected acquisition, this doubtful good of a necklace, in some favourite box in the east room which held all her smaller treasures ;
5 but on opening the door, what was her surprize to find her cousin Edmund there writing at the table ! Such a sight having never occurred before, was almost as wonderful as it was welcome.

“ Fanny,” said he directly, leaving his seat and his
10 pen, and meeting her with something in his hand, “ I beg your pardon for being here. I came to look for you, and after waiting a little while in hope of your coming in, was making use of your inkstand to explain my errand. You will find the beginning
15 of a note to yourself ; but I can now speak my business, which is merely to beg your acceptance of this little trifle—a chain for William’s cross. You ought to have had it a week ago, but there has been a delay from my brother’s not being in town by
20 several days so soon as I expected ; and I have only just now received it at Northampton. I hope you will like the chain itself, Fanny. I endeavoured to consult the simplicity of your taste, but at any rate I know you will be kind to my intentions, and
25 consider it, as it really is, a token of the love of one of your oldest friends.”

And so saying, he was hurrying away, before

Fanny, overpowered by a thousand feelings of pain and pleasure, could attempt to speak; but quickened by one sovereign wish she then called out, "Oh! cousin, stop a moment, pray stop."

He turned back.

"I cannot attempt to thank you," she continued in a very agitated manner, "thanks are out of the question. I feel much more than I can possibly express. Your goodness in thinking of me in such a way is beyond"—

"If this is all you have to say, Fanny," smiling and turning away again—

"No, no, it is not. I want to consult you."

Almost unconsciously she had now undone the parcel he had just put into her hand, and seeing before her, in all the niceness of jeweller's packing, a plain gold chain perfectly simple and neat, she could not help bursting forth again. "Oh! this is beautiful indeed! this is the very thing, precisely what I wished for! this is the only ornament I have ever had a desire to possess. It will exactly suit my cross. They must and shall be worn together. It comes too in such an acceptable moment. Oh! cousin, you do not know how acceptable it is."

"My dear Fanny, you feel these things a great deal too much. I am most happy that you like the chain, and that it should be here in time for to-morrow: but your thanks are far beyond the occasion. Believe me, I have no pleasure in the world superior to that of contributing to yours. No, I can safely say, I have no pleasure so complete, so unalloyed. It is without a drawback."

Upon such expressions of affection, Fanny could have lived an hour without saying another word; but Edmund, after waiting a moment, obliged her to bring down her mind from its heavenly flight by saying, "But what is it that you want to consult me about?"

It was about the necklace, which she was now most earnestly longing to return, and hoped to obtain his approbation of her doing. She gave the history of her recent visit, and now her raptures might well be over, for Edmund was so struck with the circumstance, so delighted with what Miss Crawford had done, so gratified by such a coincidence of conduct between them, that Fanny could not but admit the superior power of *one* pleasure over his own mind, though it might have its drawback. It was some time before she could get his attention to her plan, or any answer to her demand of his opinion; he was in a reverie of fond reflection, uttering only now and then a few half sentences of praise; but when he did awake and understand, he was very decided in opposing what she wished.

"Return the necklace! No, my dear Fanny, upon no account. It would be mortifying her severely. There can hardly be a more unpleasant sensation than the having any thing returned on our hands, which we have given with a reasonable hope of its contributing to the comfort of a friend. Why should she lose a pleasure which she has shewn herself so deserving of?"

"If it had been given to me in the first instance," said Fanny, "I should not have thought of returning

it; but being her brother's present, is not it fair to suppose that she would rather not part with it, when it is not wanted?"

"She must not suppose it not wanted, not acceptable at least; and its having been originally 5 her brother's gift makes no difference, for as she was not prevented from offering, nor you from taking it on that account, it ought not to affect your keeping it. No doubt it is handsomer than mine, and fitter for a ball-room." 10

"No, it is not handsomer, not at all handsomer in its way, and for my purpose not half so fit. The chain will agree with William's cross beyond all comparison better than the necklace."

"For one night, Fanny, for only one night, if it 15 *be* a sacrifice—I am sure you will, upon consideration, make that sacrifice rather than give pain to one who has been so studious of your comfort. Miss Crawford's attentions to you have been—not more than you were justly entitled to—I am the last person 20 to think that *could be*—but they have been invariable; and to be returning them with what must have something the *air* of ingratitude, though I know it could never have the *meaning*, is not in your nature I am sure. Wear the necklace, as you 25 are engaged to do to-morrow evening, and let the chain, which was not ordered with any reference to the ball, be kept for commoner occasions. This is my advice. I would not have the shadow of a coolness between the two whose intimacy I have been observing 30 with the greatest pleasure, and in whose characters there is so much general resemblance in true

generosity and natural delicacy as to make the few slight differences, resulting principally from situation, no reasonable hindrance to a perfect friendship. I would not have the shadow of a coolness arise,"
5 he repeated, his voice sinking a little, "between the two dearest objects I have on earth."

He was gone as he spoke; and Fanny remained to tranquillise herself as she could. She was one of his two dearest—that must support her. But the
10 other!—the first! She had never heard him speak so openly before, and though it told her no more than what she had long perceived, it was a stab;—for it told of his own convictions and views. They were decided. He would marry Miss Crawford. It was
15 a stab, in spite of every long-standing expectation; and she was obliged to repeat again and again that she was one of his two dearest, before the words gave her any sensation. Could she believe Miss Crawford to deserve him, it would be—Oh! how
20 different would it be—how far more tolerable! But he was deceived in her; he gave her merits which she had not; her faults were what they had ever been, but he saw them no longer. Till she had shed many tears over this deception, Fanny could not
25 subdue her agitation; and the dejection which followed could only be relieved by the influence of fervent prayers for his happiness.

It was her intention, as she felt it to be her duty, to try to overcome all that was excessive, all that
30 bordered on selfishness in her affection for Edmund. To call or to fancy it a loss, a disappointment, would be a presumption; for which she had not

words strong enough to satisfy her own humility. To think of him as Miss Crawford might be justified in thinking, would in her be insanity. To her, he could be nothing under any circumstances—nothing dearer than a friend. Why did such an idea occur 5 to her even enough to be reprobated and forbidden? It ought not to have touched on the confines of her imagination. She would endeavour to be rational, and to deserve the right of judging of Miss Crawford's character and the privilege of true solicitude 10 for him by a sound intellect and an honest heart.

She had all the heroism of principle, and was determined to do her duty; but having also many of the feelings of youth and nature, let her not be much wondered at if, after making all these good 15 resolutions on the side of self-government, she seized the scrap of paper on which Edmund had begun writing to her, as a treasure beyond all her hopes, and reading with the tenderest emotion these words, "My very dear Fanny, you must do me the favour 20 to accept"—locked it up with the chain, as the dearest part of the gift. It was the only thing approaching to a letter which she had ever received from him; she might never receive another; it was impossible that she ever should receive another so 25 perfectly gratifying in the occasion and the style. Two lines more prized had never fallen from the pen of the most distinguished author—never more completely blessed the researches of the fondest biographer. The enthusiasm of a woman's love is 30 even beyond the biographer's. To her, the hand-writing itself, independent of any thing it may

convey, is a blessedness. Never were such characters cut by any other human being, as Edmund's commonest hand-writing gave! This specimen, written in haste as it was, had not a fault; and
5 there was a felicity in the flow of the first four words, in the arrangement of "My very dear Fanny," which she could have looked at for ever.

Having regulated her thoughts and comforted her feelings by this happy mixture of reason and
10 weakness, she was able, in due time, to go down and resume her usual employments near her aunt Bertram, and pay her the usual observances without any apparent want of spirits.

Thursday, predestined to hope and enjoyment,
15 came; and opened with more kindness to Fanny than such self-willed, unmanageable days often volunteer, for soon after breakfast a very friendly note was brought from Mr. Crawford to William stating, that as he found himself obliged to go to
20 London on the morrow for a few days, he could not help trying to procure a companion; and therefore hoped that if William could make up his mind to leave Mansfield half a day earlier than had been proposed, he would accept a place in his
25 carriage. Mr. Crawford meant to be in town by his uncle's accustomed late dinner-hour, and William was invited to dine with him at the Admiral's. The proposal was a very pleasant one to William himself, who enjoyed the idea of travelling post with four
30 horses and such a good humoured agreeable friend; and in likening it to going up with dispatches, was saying at once every thing in favour of its happiness

and dignity which his imagination could suggest; and Fanny, from a different motive, was exceedingly pleased: for the original plan was that William should go up by the mail from Northampton the following night, which would not have allowed him 5 an hour's rest before he must have got into a Portsmouth coach; and though this offer of Mr. Crawford's would rob her of many hours of his company, she was too happy in having William spared from the fatigue of such a journey, to think of any thing else. 10 Sir Thomas approved of it for another reason. His nephew's introduction to Admiral Crawford might be of service. The Admiral he believed had interest. Upon the whole, it was a very joyous note. Fanny's spirits lived on it half the morning, deriving 15 some accession of pleasure from its writer being himself to go away.

As for the ball so near at hand, she had too many agitations and fears to have half the enjoyment in anticipation which she ought to have had, or must 20 have been supposed to have, by the many young ladies looking forward to the same event in situations more at ease, but under circumstances of less novelty, less interest, less peculiar gratification than would be attributed to her. Miss Price, known only 25 by name to half the people invited, was now to make her first appearance, and must be regarded as the Queen of the evening. Who could be happier than Miss Price? But Miss Price had not been brought up to the trade of *coming out*; and had she 30 known in what light this ball was, in general, considered respecting her, it would very much have

lessened her comfort by increasing the fears she already had, of doing wrong and being looked at. To dance without much observation or any extraordinary fatigue, to have strength and partners for
5 about half the evening, to dance a little with Edmund, and not a great deal with Mr. Crawford, to see William enjoy himself, and be able to keep away from her aunt Norris, was the height of her ambition, and seemed to comprehend her greatest
10 possibility of happiness. As these were the best of her hopes, they could not always prevail; and in the course of a long morning, spent principally with her two aunts, she was often under the influence of much less sanguine views. William, determined to
15 make this last day a day of thorough enjoyment, was out snipe shooting; Edmund, she had too much reason to suppose, was at the Parsonage; and left alone to bear the worrying of Mrs. Norris, who was cross because the house-keeper would have her own
20 way with the supper, and whom *she* could not avoid though the house-keeper might, Fanny was worn down at last to think every thing an evil belonging to the ball, and when sent off with a parting worry to dress, moved as languidly towards
25 her own room, and felt as incapable of happiness as if she had been allowed no share in it.

As she walked slowly up stairs she thought of yesterday; it had been about the same hour that she had returned from the Parsonage, and found
30 Edmund in the east room. —“Suppose I were to find him there again to-day!” said she to herself in a fond indulgence of fancy.

"Fanny," said a voice at that moment near her. Starting and looking up she saw across the lobby she had just reached Edmund himself, standing at the head of a different staircase. He came towards her. "You look tired and fagged, Fanny. You have 5 been walking too far."

"No, I have not been out at all."

"Then you have had fatigues within doors, which are worse. You had better have gone out."

Fanny, not liking to complain, found it easiest to 10 make no answer; and though he looked at her with his usual kindness, she believed he had soon ceased to think of her countenance. He did not appear in spirits; something unconnected with her was probably amiss. They proceeded up stairs together, 15 their rooms being on the same floor above.

"I come from Dr. Grant's," said Edmund presently. "You may guess my errand there, Fanny." And he looked so conscious, that Fanny could think but of one errand, which turned her too sick for speech.— 20 "I wished to engage Miss Crawford for the two first dances," was the explanation that followed, and brought Fanny to life again, enabling her, as she found she was expected to speak, to utter something like an inquiry as to the result. 25

"Yes," he answered, "she is engaged to me; but (with a smile that did not sit easy) she says it is to be the last time that she ever will dance with me. She is not serious. I think, I hope, I am sure she is not serious—but I would rather not hear it. 30 She never has danced with a clergyman she says, and she never *will*. For my own sake, I could wish

there had been no ball just at—I mean not this very week, this very day—to-morrow I leave home.”

Fanny struggled for speech, and said, “I am very sorry that any thing has occurred to distress you.
5 This ought to be a day of pleasure. My uncle meant it so.”

“Oh! yes, yes, and it will be a day of pleasure. It will all end right. I am only vexed for a moment. In fact, it is not that I consider the ball as ill-timed;
10 —what does it signify? But, Fanny,”—stopping her by taking her hand, and speaking low and seriously, “you know what all this means. You see how it is; and could tell me, perhaps better than I could tell you, how and why I am vexed. Let me talk
15 to you a little. You are a kind, kind listener. I have been pained by her manner this morning, and cannot get the better of it. I know her disposition to be as sweet and faultless as your own, but the influence of her former companions makes her seem, gives to
20 her conversation, to her professed opinions, sometimes a tinge of wrong. She does not *think* evil, but she speaks it—speaks it in playfulness—and though I know it to be playfulness, it grieves me to the soul.”

25 “The effect of education,” said Fanny gently.

Edmund could not but agree to it. “Yes, that uncle and aunt! They have injured the finest mind!—for sometimes, Fanny, I own to you, it does appear more than manner; it appears as if the mind itself
30 was tainted.”

Fanny imagined this to be an appeal to her judgment, and therefore, after a moment’s consider-

ation, said, "If you only want me as a listener, cousin, I will be as useful as I can; but I am not qualified for an adviser. Do not ask advice of *me*. I am not competent."

"You are right, Fanny, to protest against such an office, but you need not be afraid. It is a subject on which I should never ask advice. It is the sort of subject on which it had better never be asked; and few I imagine do ask it, but when they want to be influenced against their conscience. I only want to talk to you."

"One thing more. Excuse the liberty—but take care *how* you talk to me. Do not tell me any thing now, which hereafter you may be sorry for. The time may come—"

The colour rushed into her cheeks as she spoke.

"Dearest Fanny!" cried Edmund, pressing her hand to his lips, with almost as much warmth as if it had been Miss Crawford's, "you are all considerate thought!— But it is unnecessary here. The time will never come. No such time as you allude to will ever come. I begin to think it most improbable; the chances grow less and less. And even if it should—there will be nothing to be remembered by either you or me, that we need be afraid of, for I can never be ashamed of my own scruples; and if they are removed, it must be by changes that will only raise her character the more by the recollection of the faults she once had. You are the only being upon earth to whom I should say what I have said; but you have always known my opinion of her; you can bear me witness, Fanny, that I have

never been blinded. How many a time have we talked over her little errors! You need not fear me. I have almost given up every serious idea of her; but I must be a blockhead indeed if, what-
5 ever befell me, I could think of your kindness and sympathy without the sincerest gratitude."

He had said enough to shake the experience of eighteen. He had said enough to give Fanny some happier feelings than she had lately known, and
10 with a brighter look, she answered, "Yes, cousin, I am convinced that *you* would be incapable of any thing else, though perhaps some might not. I cannot be afraid of hearing any thing you wish to say. Do not check yourself. Tell me whatever you like."

15 They were now on the second floor, and the appearance of a housemaid prevented any further conversation. For Fanny's present comfort it was concluded perhaps at the happiest moment; had he been able to talk another five minutes, there is no
20 saying that he might not have talked away all Miss Crawford's faults and his own despondence. But as it was, they parted with looks on his side of grateful affection, and with some very precious sensations on her's. She had felt nothing like it
25 for hours. Since the first joy from Mr. Crawford's note to William had worn away, she had been in a state absolutely their reverse; there had been no comfort around, no hope within her. Now, every thing was smiling. William's good fortune returned
30 again upon her mind, and seemed of greater value than at first. The ball too—such an evening of pleasure before her! It was now a real animation!

and she began to dress for it with much of the happy flutter which belongs to a ball. All went well—she did not dislike her own looks; and when she came to the necklaces again, her good fortune seemed complete, for upon trial the one given her⁵ by Miss Crawford would by no means go through the ring of the cross. She had, to oblige Edmund, resolved to wear it—but it was too large for the purpose. His therefore must be worn; and having, with delightful feelings, joined the chain and the¹⁰ cross, those memorials of the two most beloved of her heart, those dearest tokens so formed for each other by every thing real and imaginary—and put them round her neck, and seen and felt how full of William and Edmund they were, she was able,¹⁵ without an effort, to resolve on wearing Miss Crawford's necklace too. She acknowledged it to be right. Miss Crawford had a claim; and when it was no longer to encroach on, to interfere with the stronger claims, the truer kindness of another, she²⁰ could do her justice even with pleasure to herself. The necklace really looked very well; and Fanny left her room at last, comfortably satisfied with herself and all about her.

Her aunt Bertram had recollected her on this²⁵ occasion, with an unusual degree of wakefulness. It had really occurred to her, unprompted, that Fanny, preparing for a ball, might be glad of better help than the upper house-maid's, and when dressed herself, she actually sent her own maid to assist her;³⁰ too late of course to be of any use. Mrs. Chapman had just reached the attic floor, when Miss Price

came out of her room completely dressed, and only civilities were necessary—but Fanny felt her aunt's attention almost as much as Lady Bertram or Mrs. Chapman could do themselves.

CHAPTER X

HER uncle and both her aunts were in the drawing-room when Fanny went down. To the former she was an interesting object, and he saw with pleasure the general elegance of her appearance and her being in remarkably good looks. The neatness and propriety of her dress was all that he would allow himself to commend in her presence, but upon her leaving the room again soon afterwards, he spoke of her beauty with very decided praise. 5

“Yes,” said Lady Bertram, “she looks very well. I sent Chapman to her.” 10

“Look well! Oh yes,” cried Mrs. Norris, “she has good reason to look well with all her advantages: brought up in this family as she has been, with all the benefit of her cousins’ manners before her. Only think, my dear Sir Thomas, what extraordinary advantages you and I have been the means of giving her. The very gown you have been taking notice of, is your own generous present to her when dear Mrs. Rushworth married. What would she have been if we had not taken her by the hand?” 20

Sir Thomas said no more; but when they sat down to table the eyes of the two young men assured him, that the subject might be gently touched again when the ladies withdrew, with more success. Fanny saw that she was approved; and the consciousness of looking well, made her look still better. 25

From a variety of causes she was happy, and she was soon made still happier; for in following her aunts out of the room, Edmund, who was holding open the door, said as she passed him, "You must
5 dance with me, Fanny; you must keep two dances for me; any two that you like, except the first." She had nothing more to wish for. She had hardly ever been in a state so nearly approaching high spirits in her life. Her cousins' former gaiety on the
10 day of a ball was no longer surprizing to her; she felt it to be indeed very charming, and was actually practising her steps about the drawing-room as long as she could be safe from the notice of her aunt Norris, who was entirely taken up at first in fresh
15 arranging and injuring the noble fire which the butler had prepared.

Half an hour followed, that would have been at least languid under any other circumstances, but Fanny's happiness still prevailed. It was but to
20 think of her conversation with Edmund; and what was the restlessness of Mrs. Norris? What were the yawns of Lady Bertram?

The gentlemen joined them; and soon after began the sweet expectation of a carriage, when a general
25 spirit of ease and enjoyment seemed diffused, and they all stood about and talked and laughed, and every moment had its pleasure and its hope. Fanny felt that there must be a struggle in Edmund's cheerfulness, but it was delightful to see the effort
30 so successfully made.

When the carriages were really heard, when the guests began really to assemble, her own gaiety of

heart was much subdued; the sight of so many strangers threw her back into herself; and besides the gravity and formality of the first great circle, which the manners of neither Sir Thomas nor Lady Bertram were of a kind to do away, she found herself occasionally called on to endure something worse. She was introduced here and there by her uncle, and forced to be spoken to, and to curtsy, and speak again. This was a hard duty, and she was never summoned to it, without looking at William, as he walked about at his ease in the back ground of the scene, and longing to be with him.

The entrance of the Grants and Crawfords was a favourable epoch. The stiffness of the meeting soon gave way before their popular manners and more diffused intimacies:—little groups were formed and every body grew comfortable. Fanny felt the advantage; and, drawing back from the toils of civility, would have been again most happy, could she have kept her eyes from wandering between Edmund and Mary Crawford. *She* looked all loveliness—and what might not be the end of it? Her own musings were brought to an end on perceiving Mr. Crawford before her, and her thoughts were put into another channel by his engaging her almost instantly for the two first dances. Her happiness on this occasion was very much à-la-mortal, finely chequered. To be secure of a partner at first, was a most essential good—for the moment of beginning was now growing seriously near, and she so little understood her own claims as to think, that if Mr. Crawford had not asked her, she must have been the last to be sought

after, and should have received a partner only through a series of inquiry, and bustle, and interference which would have been terrible; but at the same time there was a pointedness in his manner
5 of asking her, which she did not like, and she saw his eye glancing for a moment at her necklace—with a smile—she thought there was a smile—which made her blush and feel wretched. And though there was no second glance to disturb her, though his object
10 seemed then to be only quietly agreeable, she could not get the better of her embarrassment, heightened as it was by the idea of his perceiving it, and had no composure till he turned away to some one else. Then she could gradually rise up to the genuine
15 satisfaction of having a partner, a voluntary partner secured against the dancing began.

When the company were moving into the ball-room she found herself for the first time near Miss Crawford, whose eyes and smiles were immediately
20 and more unequivocally directed as her brother's had been, and who was beginning to speak on the subject, when Fanny, anxious to get the story over, hastened to give the explanation of the second necklace—the real chain. Miss Crawford listened;
25 and all her intended compliments and insinuations to Fanny were forgotten; she felt only one thing; and her eyes, bright as they had been before, shewing they could yet be brighter, she exclaimed with eager pleasure, "Did he? Did Edmund? That
30 was like himself. No other man would have thought of it. I honour him beyond expression." And she looked around as if longing to tell him so. He was

not near, he was attending a party of ladies out of the room; and Mrs. Grant coming up to the two girls and taking an arm of each, they followed with the rest.

Fanny's heart sunk, but there was no leisure for 5 thinking long even of Miss Crawford's feelings. They were in the ball-room, the violins were playing, and her mind was in a flutter that forbade its fixing on any thing serious. She must watch the general arrangements and see how every thing was done. 10

In a few minutes Sir Thomas came to her, and asked if she were engaged; and the "Yes, sir, to Mr. Crawford," was exactly what he had intended to hear. Mr. Crawford was not far off; Sir Thomas brought him to her, saying something which dis- 15 covered to Fanny, that *she* was to lead the way and open the ball; an idea that had never occurred to her before. Whenever she had thought on the minutiae of the evening, it had been as a matter of course that Edmund would begin with Miss Crawford, and 20 the impression was so strong, that though *her uncle* spoke the contrary, she could not help an exclamation of surprize, a hint of her unfitness, an entreaty even to be excused. To be urging her opinion against Sir Thomas's, was a proof of the extremity 25 of the case, but such was her horror at the first suggestion, that she could actually look him in the face and say she hoped it might be settled otherwise; in vain however;—Sir Thomas smiled, tried to encourage her, and then looked too serious and said 30 too decidedly—"It must be so, my dear," for her to hazard another word; and she found herself the

next moment conducted by Mr. Crawford to the top of the room, and standing there to be joined by the rest of the dancers, couple after couple as they were formed.

5 She could hardly believe it. To be placed above so many elegant young women! The distinction was too great. It was treating her like her cousins! And her thoughts flew to those absent cousins with most unfeigned and truly tender regret, that they
10 were not at home to take their own place in the room, and have their share of a pleasure which would have been so very delightful to them. So often as she had heard them wish for a ball at home as the greatest of all felicities! And to have them
15 away when it was given—and for *her* to be opening the ball—and with Mr. Crawford too! She hoped they would not envy her that distinction *now*; but when she looked back to the state of things in the autumn, to what they had all been to each other
20 when once dancing in that house before, the present arrangement was almost more than she could understand herself.

The ball began. It was rather honour than happiness to Fanny, for the first dance at least; her
25 partner was in excellent spirits and tried to impart them to her, but she was a great deal too much frightened to have any enjoyment, till she could suppose herself no longer looked at. Young, pretty, and gentle, however, she had no awkwardnesses
30 that were not as good as graces, and there were few persons present that were not disposed to praise her. She was attractive, she was modest, she was Sir

Thomas's niece, and she was soon said to be admired by Mr. Crawford. It was enough to give her general favour. Sir Thomas himself was watching her progress down the dance with much complacency; he was proud of his niece, and without attributing all 5 her personal beauty, as Mrs. Norris seemed to do, to her transplantation to Mansfield, he was pleased with himself for having supplied every thing else;—education and manners she owed to him.

Miss Crawford saw much of Sir Thomas's thoughts 10 as he stood, and having, in spite of all his wrongs towards her, a general prevailing desire of recommending herself to him, took an opportunity of stepping aside to say something agreeable of Fanny. Her praise was warm, and he received it as she 15 could wish, joining in it as far as discretion, and politeness, and slowness of speech would allow, and certainly appearing to greater advantage on the subject, than his lady did, soon afterwards, when Mary, perceiving her on a sofa very near, turned 20 round before she began to dance, to compliment her on Miss Price's looks.

“Yes, she does look very well,” was Lady Bertram's placid reply. “Chapman helped her dress. I sent Chapman to her.” Not but that she was really 25 pleased to have Fanny admired; but she was so much more struck with her own kindness in sending Chapman to her, that she could not get it out of her head.

Miss Crawford knew Mrs. Norris too well to think 30 of gratifying *her* by commendation of Fanny; to her it was, as the occasion offered,—“Ah! ma'am, how

much we want dear Mrs. Rushworth and Julia to-night!" and Mrs. Norris paid her with as many smiles and courteous words as she had time for, amid so much occupation as she found for herself, in making up card-tables, giving hints to Sir Thomas, and trying to move all the chaperons to a better part of the room.

Miss Crawford blundered most towards Fanny herself, in her intentions to please. She meant to be giving her little heart a happy flutter, and filling her with sensations of delightful self-consequence; and misinterpreting Fanny's blushes, still thought she must be doing so—when she went to her after the two first dances and said, with a significant look, "perhaps *you* can tell me why my brother goes to town to-morrow. He says, he has business there, but will not tell me what. The first time he ever denied me his confidence! But this is what we all come to. All are supplanted sooner or later. Now, I must apply to you for information. Pray what is Henry going for?"

Fanny protested her ignorance as steadily as her embarrassment allowed.

"Well, then," replied Miss Crawford laughing, "I must suppose it to be purely for the pleasure of conveying your brother and talking of you by the way."

Fanny was confused, but it was the confusion of discontent; while Miss Crawford wondered she did not smile, and thought her over-anxious, or thought her odd, or thought her any thing rather than insensible of pleasure in Henry's attentions. Fanny

had a good deal of enjoyment in the course of the evening—but Henry’s attentions had very little to do with it. She would much rather *not* have been asked by him again so very soon, and she wished she had not been obliged to suspect that his previous inquiries of Mrs. Norris, about the supper-hour, were all for the sake of securing her at that part of the evening. But it was not to be avoided; he made her feel that she was the object of all; though she could not say that it was unpleasantly done, that there was indelicacy or ostentation in his manner—and sometimes, when he talked of William, he was really not un-agreeable, and shewed even a warmth of heart which did him credit. But still his attentions made no part of her satisfaction. She was happy whenever she looked at William, and saw how perfectly he was enjoying himself, in every five minutes that she could walk about with him and hear his account of his partners; she was happy in knowing herself admired, and she was happy in having the two dances with Edmund still to look forward to, during the greatest part of the evening, her hand being so eagerly sought after, that her indefinite engagement with *him* was in continual perspective. She was happy even when they did take place; but not from any flow of spirits on his side, or any such expressions of tender gallantry as had blessed the morning. His mind was fagged, and her happiness sprung from being the friend with whom it could find repose. “I am worn out with civility,” said he. “I have been talking incessantly all night, and with nothing to

say. But with *you*, Fanny, there may be peace. You will not want to be talked to. Let us have the luxury of silence." Fanny would hardly even speak her agreement. A weariness arising probably, 5 in great measure, from the same feelings which he had acknowledged in the morning, was peculiarly to be respected, and they went down their two dances together with such sober tranquillity as might satisfy any looker-on, that Sir Thomas had 10 been bringing up no wife for his younger son.

The evening had afforded Edmund little pleasure. Miss Crawford had been in gay spirits when they first danced together, but it was not her gaiety that could do him good; it rather sank than raised his 15 comfort; and afterwards—for he found himself still impelled to seek her again, she had absolutely pained him by her manner of speaking of the profession to which he was now on the point of belonging. They had talked—and they had been 20 silent—he had reasoned—she had ridiculed—and they had parted at last with mutual vexation. Fanny, not able to refrain entirely from observing them, had seen enough to be tolerably satisfied. It was barbarous to be happy when Edmund was suffering. 25 Yet some happiness must and would arise, from the very conviction, that he did suffer.

When her two dances with him were over, her inclination and strength for more were pretty well at an end; and Sir Thomas having seen her rather 30 walk than dance down the shortening set, breathless and with her hand at her side, gave his orders for her sitting down entirely. From that time, Mr.

Crawford sat down likewise.

“Poor Fanny!” cried William, coming for a moment to visit her and working away his partner’s fan as if for life:— “how soon she is knocked up! Why, the sport is but just begun. I hope we shall 5 keep it up these two hours. How can you be tired so soon?”

“So soon! my good friend,” said Sir Thomas, producing his watch with all necessary caution— “it is three o’clock, and your sister is not used to 10 these sort of hours.”

“Well then, Fanny, you shall not get up to-morrow before I go. Sleep as long as you can and never mind me.”

“Oh! William.”

15

“What! Did she think of being up before you set off?”

“Oh! yes, sir,” cried Fanny, rising eagerly from her seat to be nearer her uncle, “I must get up and breakfast with him. It will be the last time you 20 know, the last morning.”

“You had better not.—He is to have breakfasted and be gone by half past nine.—Mr. Crawford, I think you call for him at half past nine?”

Fanny was too urgent, however, and had too 25 many tears in her eyes for denial; and it ended in a gracious, “Well, well,” which was permission.

“Yes, half past nine,” said Crawford to William, as the latter was leaving them, “and I shall be punctual, for there will be no kind sister to get up 30 for *me*.” And in a lower tone to Fanny, “I shall have only a desolate house to hurry from. Your

brother will find my ideas of time and his own very different to-morrow."

After a short consideration, Sir Thomas asked Crawford to join the early breakfast party in that
5 house instead of eating alone; he should himself be of it; and the readiness with which his invitation was accepted, convinced him that the suspicions whence, he must confess to himself, this very ball had in great measure sprung, were well founded.
10 Mr. Crawford was in love with Fanny. He had a pleasing anticipation of what would be. His niece, meanwhile, did not thank him for what he had just done. She had hoped to have William all to herself, the last morning. It would have been an unspeakable
15 indulgence. But though her wishes were overthrown there was no spirit of murmuring within her. On the contrary, she was so totally unused to have her pleasure consulted, or to have any thing take place at all in the way she could desire, that she was
20 more disposed to wonder and rejoice in having carried her point so far, than to repine at the counteraction which followed.

Shortly afterwards, Sir Thomas was again interfering a little with her inclination, by advising her
25 to go immediately to bed. "Advise" was his word, but it was the advice of absolute power, and she had only to rise and, with Mr. Crawford's very cordial adieus, pass quietly away; stopping at the entrance door, like the Lady of Branhholm Hall, "one moment
30 and no more," to view the happy scene, and take a last look at the five or six determined couple, who were still hard at work—and then, creeping slowly

up the principal staircase, pursued by the ceaseless country-dance, feverish with hopes and fears, soup and negus, sore-footed and fatigued, restless and agitated, yet feeling, in spite of every thing, that a ball was indeed delightful. 5

In thus sending her away, Sir Thomas perhaps might not be thinking merely of her health. It might occur to him, that Mr. Crawford had been sitting by her long enough, or he might mean to recommend her as a wife by shewing her persuadableness. 10

CHAPTER XI

THE ball was over—and the breakfast was soon over too; the last kiss was given, and William was gone. Mr. Crawford had, as he foretold, been very punctual, and short and pleasant had been the meal.

5 After seeing William to the last moment, Fanny walked back into the breakfast-room with a very saddened heart to grieve over the melancholy change; and there her uncle kindly left her to cry in peace, conceiving perhaps that the deserted chair of each
10 young man might exercise her tender enthusiasm, and that the remaining cold pork bones and mustard in William's plate, might but divide her feelings with the broken egg-shells in Mr. Crawford's. She sat and cried *con amore* as her uncle intended, but
15 it was *con amore* fraternal and no other. William was gone, and she now felt as if she had wasted half his visit in idle cares and selfish solitudes unconnected with him.

Fanny's disposition was such that she could never
20 even think of her aunt Norris in the meagreness and cheerlessness of her own small house, without reproaching herself for some little want of attention to her when they had been last together; much less could her feelings acquit her of having done and
25 said and thought every thing by William, that was due to him for a whole fortnight.

It was a heavy, melancholy day.—Soon after the

second breakfast, Edmund bad them good bye for a week, and mounted his horse for Peterborough, and then all were gone. Nothing remained of last night but remembrances, which she had nobody to share in. She talked to her aunt Bertram—she must talk to somebody of the ball, but her aunt had seen so little of what passed, and had so little curiosity, that it was heavy work. Lady Bertram was not certain of any body's dress, or any body's place at supper, but her own. "She could not recollect what it was that she had heard about one of the Miss Maddoxes, or what it was that Lady Prescott had noticed in Fanny; she was not sure whether Colonel Harrison had been talking of Mr. Crawford or of William, when he said he was the finest young man in the room; somebody had whispered something to her, she had forgot to ask Sir Thomas what it could be." And these were her longest speeches and clearest communications; the rest was only a languid "Yes—yes—very well—did you? did he?—I did not see *that*—I should not know one from the other." This was very bad. It was only better than Mrs. Norris's sharp answers would have been; but she being gone home with all the supernumerary jellies to nurse a sick maid, there was peace and good humour in their little party, though it could not boast much beside.

The evening was heavy like the day—"I cannot think what is the matter with me!" said Lady Bertram, when the tea-things were removed. "I feel quite stupid. It must be sitting up so late last night. Fanny, you must do something to keep me

awake. I cannot work. Fetch the cards,—I feel so very stupid.”

The cards were brought, and Fanny played at cribbage with her aunt till bed-time; and as Sir
5 Thomas was reading to himself, no sounds were heard in the room for the next two hours beyond the reckonings of the game— “And *that* makes
thirty-one;—four in hand and eight in crib.—You are to deal, ma’am; shall I deal for you?” Fanny
10 thought and thought again of the difference which twenty-four hours had made in that room, and all that part of the house. Last night it had been hope and smiles, bustle and motion, noise and brilliancy in the drawing-room, and out of the drawing-room,
15 and every where. Now it was languor, and all but solitude.

A good night’s rest improved her spirits. She could think of William the next day more cheerfully, and as the morning afforded her an opportunity of
20 talking over Thursday night with Mrs. Grant and Miss Crawford, in a very handsome style, with all the heightenings of imagination and all the laughs of playfulness which are so essential to the shade of a departed ball, she could afterwards bring her
25 mind without much effort into its everyday state, and easily conform to the tranquillity of the present quiet week.

They were indeed a smaller party than she had ever known there for a whole day together, and *he*
30 was gone on whom the comfort and cheerfulness of every family-meeting and every meal chiefly depended. But this must be learned to be endured. He

would soon be always gone; and she was thankful that she could now sit in the same room with her uncle, hear his voice, receive his questions, and even answer them without such wretched feelings as she had formerly known.

“We miss our two young men,” was Sir Thomas’s observation on both the first and second day, as they formed their very reduced circle after dinner; and in consideration of Fanny’s swimming eyes, nothing more was said on the first day than to drink 10 their good health; but on the second it led to something farther. William was kindly commended and his promotion hoped for. “And there is no reason to suppose,” added Sir Thomas, “but that his visits to us may now be tolerably frequent. As 15 to Edmund, we must learn to do without him. This will be the last winter of his belonging to us, as he has done.” “Yes,” said Lady Bertram, “but I wish he was not going away. They are all going away I think. I wish they would stay at home.” 20

This wish was levelled principally at Julia, who had just applied for permission to go to town with Maria; and as Sir Thomas thought it best for each daughter that the permission should be granted, Lady Bertram, though in her own good nature she 25 would not have prevented it, was lamenting the change it made in the prospect of Julia’s return, which would otherwise have taken place about this time. A great deal of good sense followed on Sir Thomas’s side, tending to reconcile his wife to the 30 arrangement. Every thing that a considerate parent *ought* to feel was advanced for her use; and every

thing that an affectionate mother *must* feel in promoting her children's enjoyment, was attributed to her nature. Lady Bertram agreed to it all with a calm "Yes"—and at the end of a quarter of an hour's silent consideration, spontaneously observed, "Sir Thomas, I have been thinking—and I am very glad we took Fanny as we did, for now the others are away, we feel the good of it."

Sir Thomas immediately improved this compliment by adding, "Very true. We shew Fanny what a good girl we think her by praising her to her face—she is now a very valuable companion. If we have been kind to *her*, she is now quite as necessary to *us*."

"Yes," said Lady Bertram presently—"and it is a comfort to think that we shall always have *her*."

Sir Thomas paused, half smiled, glanced at his niece, and then gravely replied, "She will never leave us, I hope, till invited to some other home that may reasonably promise her greater happiness than she knows here."

"And *that* is not very likely to be, Sir Thomas. Who should invite her? Maria might be very glad to see her at Sotherton now and then, but she would not think of asking her to live there—and I am sure she is better off here—and besides I cannot do without her."

The week which passed so quietly and peaceably at the great house in Mansfield, had a very different character at the Parsonage. To the young lady at least in each family, it brought very different feelings. What was tranquillity and comfort to Fanny was tediousness and vexation to Mary. Something

arose from difference of disposition and habit—one so easily satisfied, the other so unused to endure; but still more might be imputed to difference of circumstances. In some points of interest they were exactly opposed to each other. To Fanny's mind, 5 Edmund's absence was really in its cause and its tendency a relief. To Mary it was every way painful. She felt the want of his society every day, almost every hour; and was too much in want of it to derive any thing but irritation from considering 10 the object for which he went. He could not have devised any thing more likely to raise his consequence than this week's absence, occurring as it did at the very time of her brother's going away, of William Price's going too, and completing the 15 sort of general break-up of a party which had been so animated. She felt it keenly. They were now a miserable trio, confined within doors by a series of rain and snow, with nothing to do and no variety to hope for. Angry as she was with Edmund for 20 adhering to his own notions and acting on them in defiance of her, (and she had been so angry that they had hardly parted friends at the ball,) she could not help thinking of him continually when absent, dwelling on his merit and affection, and 25 longing again for the almost daily meetings they lately had. His absence was unnecessarily long. He should not have planned such an absence—he should not have left home for a week, when her own departure from Mansfield was so near. Then she 30 began to blame herself. She wished she had not spoken so warmly in their last conversation. She

was afraid she had used some strong—some contemptuous expressions in speaking of the clergy, and *that* should not have been. It was ill-bred—it was wrong. She wished such words unsaid with all her
5 heart.

Her vexation did not end with the week. All this was bad, but she had still more to feel when Friday came round again and brought no Edmund—when Saturday came and still no Edmund—and when,
10 through the slight communication with the other family which Sunday produced, she learnt that he had actually written home to defer his return, having promised to remain some days longer with his friend!

15 If she had felt impatience and regret before—if she had been sorry for what she said, and feared its too strong effect on him, she now felt and feared it all tenfold more. She had, moreover, to contend with one disagreeable emotion entirely new to her
20 —jealousy. His friend Mr. Owen had sisters—He might find them attractive. But at any rate his staying away at a time, when, according to all preceding plans, she was to remove to London, meant something that she could not bear. Had Henry
25 returned, as he talked of doing, at the end of three or four days, she should now have been leaving Mansfield. It became absolutely necessary for her to get to Fanny and try to learn something more. She could not live any longer in such solitary wretch-
30 edness; and she made her way to the Park, through difficulties of walking which she had deemed unconquerable a week before, for the chance of hearing

a little in addition, for the sake of at least hearing his name.

The first half hour was lost, for Fanny and Lady Bertram were together, and unless she had Fanny to herself she could hope for nothing. But at last Lady Bertram left the room—and then almost immediately Miss Crawford thus began, with a voice as well regulated as she could—“And how do *you* like your cousin Edmund’s staying away so long?—Being the only young person at home, I consider *you* as the greatest sufferer.—You must miss him. Does his staying longer surprize you?”

“I do not know,” said Fanny hesitatingly.—“Yes— I had not particularly expected it.”

“Perhaps he will always stay longer than he talks of. It is the general way; all young men do.”

“He did not, the only time he went to see Mr. Owen before.”

“He finds the house more agreeable *now*.—He is a very— a very pleasing young man himself, and I cannot help being rather concerned at not seeing him again before I go to London, as will now undoubtedly be the case.—I am looking for Henry every day, and as soon as he comes there will be nothing to detain me at Mansfield. I should like to have seen him once more, I confess. But you must give my compliments to him. Yes—I think it must be compliments. Is not there a something wanted, Miss Price, in our language—a something between compliments and—and love—to suit the sort of friendly acquaintance we have had together?—So many months acquaintance! — But compliments

may be sufficient here.—Was his letter a long one?—Does he give you much account of what he is doing?— Is it Christmas gaieties that he is staying for?”

5 “I only heard a part of the letter ; it was to my uncle—
—but I believe it was very short ; indeed I am sure
it was but a few lines. All that I heard was that
his friend had pressed him to stay longer, and that
he had agreed to do so. A *few* days longer, or
10 *some* days longer, I am not quite sure which.”

“Oh ! if he wrote to his father—But I thought it
might have been to Lady Bertram or you. But if
he wrote to his father, no wonder he was concise.
Who could write chat to Sir Thomas ? If he had written
15 to you, there would have been more particulars.
You would have heard of balls and parties.—He
would have sent you a description of every thing
and every body. How many Miss Owens are there?”

“Three grown up.”

20 “Are they musical?”

“I do not at all know. I never heard.”

“That is the first question, you know,” said Miss
Crawford, trying to appear gay and unconcerned,
“which every woman who plays herself is sure to
25 ask about another. But it is very foolish to ask
questions about any young ladies—about any three
sisters just grown up ; for one knows, without being
told, exactly what they are—all very accomplished
and pleasing, and *one* very pretty. There is a beauty
30 in every family.—It is a regular thing. Two play on
the piano-forte, and one on the harp—and all sing—
or would sing if they were taught—or sing all the

better for not being taught—or something like it.”

“I know nothing of the Miss Owens,” said Fanny calmly.

“You know nothing and you care less, as people say. Never did tone express indifference plainer. 5 Indeed how can one care for those one has never seen?—Well, when your cousin comes back, he will find Mansfield very quiet; —all the noisy ones gone, your brother and mine and myself. I do not like the idea of leaving Mrs. Grant now the time draws 10 near. She does not like my going.”

Fanny felt obliged to speak. “You cannot doubt your being missed by many,” said she. “You will be very much missed.”

Miss Crawford turned her eye on her, as if wanting to hear or see more, and then laughingly said, 15 “Oh! yes, missed as every noisy evil is missed when it is taken away; that is, there is a great difference felt. But I am not fishing; don’t compliment me. If I *am* missed, it will appear. I may be discovered 20 by those who want to see me. I shall not be in any doubtful, or distant, or unapproachable region.”

Now Fanny could not bring herself to speak, and Miss Crawford was disappointed; for she had hoped to hear some pleasant assurance of her power, from 25 one who she thought must know; and her spirits were clouded again.

“The Miss Owens,” said she soon afterwards—
“Suppose you were to have one of the Miss Owens settled at Thornton Lacey; how should you like it? 30
Stranger things have happened. I dare say they are trying for it. And they are quite in the right, for it

would be a very pretty establishment for them. I do not at all wonder or blame them. —It is every body's duty to do as well for themselves as they can. Sir Thomas Bertram's son is somebody; and now, he
5 is in their own line. Their father is a clergyman and their brother is a clergyman, and they are all clergymen together. He is their lawful property, he fairly belongs to them. You don't speak, Fanny —Miss Price—you don't speak.—But honestly now,
10 do not you rather expect it than otherwise?"

"No," said Fanny stoutly, "I do not expect it at all."

"Not at all!"—cried Miss Crawford with alacrity. "I wonder at that. But I dare say you know exactly
15 — I always imagine you are—perhaps you do not think him likely to marry at all—or not at present."

"No, I do not," said Fanny softly—hoping she did not err either in the belief or the acknowledgment of it.

20 Her companion looked at her keenly; and gathering greater spirit from the blush soon produced from such a look, only said, "He is best off as he is," and turned the subject.

CHAPTER XII

MISS CRAWFORD'S uneasiness was much lightened by this conversation, and she walked home again in spirits which might have defied almost another week of the same small party in the same bad weather, had they been put to the proof; but as that very evening brought her brother down from London again in quite, or more than quite, his usual cheerfulness, she had nothing further to try her own. His still refusing to tell her what he had gone for, was but the promotion of gaiety; a day before it might have irritated, but now it was a pleasant joke—suspected only of concealing something planned as a pleasant surprize to herself. And the next day *did* bring a surprize to her. Henry had said he should just go and ask the Bertrams how they did, and be back in ten minutes—but he was gone above an hour; and when his sister, who had been waiting for him to walk with her in the garden, met him at last most impatiently in the sweep, and cried out, "My dear Henry, where can you possibly have been all this time?" he had only to say that he had been sitting with Lady Bertram and Fanny.

"Sitting with them an hour and half!" exclaimed Mary.

But this was only the beginning of her surprize.

"Yes, Mary," said he, drawing her arm within his, and walking along the sweep as if not knowing

where he was—"I could not get away sooner—Fanny looked so lovely!— I am quite determined, Mary. My mind is entirely made up. Will it astonish you? No—You must be aware that I am quite determined
5 to marry Fanny Price."

The surprize was now complete; for in spite of whatever his consciousness might suggest, a suspicion of his having any such views had never entered his sister's imagination; and she looked so truly the
10 astonishment she felt, that he was obliged to repeat what he had said, and more fully and more solemnly. The conviction of his determination once admitted, it was not unwelcome. There was even pleasure with the surprize. Mary was in a state of mind to
15 rejoice in a connection with the Bertram family, and to be not displeased with her brother's marrying a little beneath him.

"Yes, Mary," was Henry's concluding assurance, "I am fairly caught. You know with what idle
20 designs I began—but this is the end of them. I have (I flatter myself) made no inconsiderable progress in her affections; but my own are entirely fixed."

"Lucky, lucky girl!" cried Mary as soon as she could speak— "what a match for her! My dearest
25 Henry, this must be my *first* feeling; but my *second*, which you shall have as sincerely, is that I approve your choice from my soul, and foresee your happiness as heartily as I wish and desire it. You will have a sweet little wife; all gratitude and devotion.
30 Exactly what you deserve. What an amazing match for her! Mrs. Norris often talks of her luck; what will she say now? The delight of all the family

indeed! And she has some *true* friends in it. How *they* will rejoice! But tell me all about it. Talk to me for ever. When did you begin to think seriously about her?"

Nothing could be more impossible than to answer ⁵ such a question, though nothing be more agreeable than to have it asked. "How the pleasing plague had stolen on him" he could not say, and before he had expressed the same sentiment with a little variation of words three times over, his sister ¹⁰ eagerly interrupted him with, "Ah! my dear Henry, and this is what took you to London! This was your business! You chose to consult the Admiral, before you made up your mind."

But this he stoutly denied. He knew his uncle ¹⁵ too well to consult him on any matrimonial scheme. The Admiral hated marriage, and thought it never pardonable in a young man of independent fortune.

"When Fanny is known to him," continued Henry, "he will doat on her. She is exactly the woman to ²⁰ do away every prejudice of such a man as the Admiral, for she is exactly such a woman as he thinks does not exist in the world. She is the very impossibility he would describe—if indeed he has now delicacy of language enough to embody his ²⁵ own ideas. But till it is absolutely settled—settled beyond all interference, he shall know nothing of the matter. No, Mary, you are quite mistaken. You have not discovered my business yet!"

"Well, well, I am satisfied. I know now to whom ³⁰ it must relate, and am in no hurry for the rest. Fanny Price—Wonderful—quite wonderful!—That Mansfield

should have done so much for—that *you* should have found your fate in Mansfield! But you are quite right, you could not have chosen better. There is not a better girl in the world, and you do
5 not want for fortune; and as to her connections, they are more than good. The Bertrams are undoubtedly some of the first people in this country. She is niece to Sir Thomas Bertram; that will be enough for the world. But go on, go on. Tell me more. What
10 are your plans? Does she know her own happiness?"

"No."

"What are you waiting for?"

"For—for very little more than opportunity. Mary, she is not like her cousins; but I think I shall not
15 ask in vain."

"Oh! no, you cannot. Were you even less pleasing — supposing her not to love you already (of which however I can have little doubt,) you would be safe. The gentleness and gratitude of her disposition would
20 secure her all your own immediately. From my soul I do not think she would marry you *without* love; that is, if there is a girl in the world capable of being uninfluenced by ambition, I can suppose it her; but ask her to love you, and she will never have
25 the heart to refuse."

As soon as her eagerness could rest in silence, he was as happy to tell as she could be to listen, and a conversation followed almost as deeply interesting to her as to himself, though he had in fact nothing
30 to relate but his own sensations, nothing to dwell on but Fanny's charms.—Fanny's beauty of face and figure, Fanny's graces of manner and goodness

of heart were the exhaustless theme. The gentleness, modesty, and sweetness of her character were warmly expatiated on, that sweetness which makes so essential a part of every woman's worth in the judgment of man, that though he sometimes loves where it is not, he can never believe it absent. Her temper he had good reason to depend on and to praise. He had often seen it tried. Was there one of the family, excepting Edmund, who had not in some way or other continually exercised her patience and forbearance? Her affections were evidently strong. To see her with her brother! What could more delightfully prove that the warmth of her heart was equal to its gentleness? — What could be more encouraging to a man who had her love in view? Then, her understanding was beyond every suspicion, quick and clear; and her manners were the mirror of her own modest and elegant mind. Nor was this all. Henry Crawford had too much sense not to feel the worth of good principles in a wife, though he was too little accustomed to serious reflection to know them by their proper name; but when he talked of her having such a steadiness and regularity of conduct, such a high notion of honour, and such an observance of decorum as might warrant any man in the fullest dependence on her faith and integrity, he expressed what was inspired by the knowledge of her being well principled and religious.

“I could so wholly and absolutely confide in her,” said he; “and *that* is what I want.”

Well might his sister, believing as she really did that his opinion of Fanny Price was scarcely beyond

her merits, rejoice in his prospects.

“The more I think of it,” she cried, “the more am I convinced that you are doing quite right, and though I should never have selected Fanny Price as
5 the girl most likely to attach you, I am now persuaded she is the very one to make you happy. Your wicked project upon her peace turns out a clever thought indeed. You will both find your good in it.”

“It was bad, very bad in me against such a
10 creature! but I did not know her then. And she shall have no reason to lament the hour that first put it into my head. I will make her very happy, Mary, happier than she has ever yet been herself, or ever seen any body else. I will not take her
15 from Northamptonshire. I shall let Everingham, and rent a place in this neighbourhood—perhaps Stanwix Lodge. I shall let a seven years’ lease of Everingham. I am sure of an excellent tenant at half a word. I could name three people now, who would give me
20 my own terms and thank me.”

“Ha!” cried Mary, “settle in Northamptonshire! That is pleasant! Then we shall be all together.”

When she had spoken it, she recollected herself, and wished it unsaid; but there was no need of
25 confusion, for her brother saw her only as the supposed inmate of Mansfield Parsonage, and replied but to invite her in the kindest manner to his own house, and to claim the best right in her.

“You must give us more than half your time,” said
30 he; “I cannot admit Mrs. Grant to have an equal claim with Fanny and myself, for we shall both have a right in you. Fanny will be so truly your sister!”

Mary had only to be grateful and give general assurances; but she was now very fully purposed to be the guest of neither brother nor sister many months longer.

"You will divide your year between London and Northamptonshire?"

"Yes."

"That's right; and in London, of course, a house of your own; no longer with the Admiral. My dearest Henry, the advantage to you of getting away from the Admiral before your manners are hurt by the contagion of his, before you have contracted any of his foolish opinions, or learnt to sit over your dinner, as if it were the best blessing of life!—*You* are not sensible of the gain, for your regard for him has blinded you; but, in my estimation, your marrying early may be the saving of you. To have seen you grow like the Admiral in word or deed, look or gesture, would have broken my heart."

"Well, well, we do not think quite alike here. The Admiral has his faults, but he is a very good man, and has been more than a father to me. Few fathers would have let me have my own way half so much. You must not prejudice Fanny against him. I must have them love one another."

Mary refrained from saying what she felt, that there could not be two persons in existence, whose characters and manners were less accordant; time would discover it to him; but she could not help *this* reflection on the Admiral. "Henry, I think so highly of Fanny Price, that if I could suppose the next Mrs. Crawford would have half the reason

which my poor ill used aunt had to abhor the very name, I would prevent the marriage, if possible; but I know you, I know that a wife you *loved* would be the happiest of women, and that even when
5 you ceased to love, she would yet find in you the liberality and good-breeding of a gentleman."

The impossibility of not doing every thing in the world to make Fanny Price happy, or of ceasing to love Fanny Price, was of course the ground-work
10 of his eloquent answer.

"Had you seen her this morning, Mary," he continued, "attending with such ineffable sweetness and patience, to all the demands of her aunt's stupidity, working with her, and for her, her colour
15 beautifully heightened as she leant over the work, then returning to her seat to finish a note which she was previously engaged in writing for that stupid woman's service, and all this with such unpretending gentleness, so much as if it were a matter of course
20 that she was not to have a moment at her own command, her hair arranged as neatly as it always is, and one little curl falling forward as she wrote, which she now and then shook back, and in the midst of all this, still speaking at intervals to *me*,
25 or listening, and as if she liked to listen to what I said. Had you seen her so, Mary, you would not have implied the possibility of her power over my heart ever ceasing."

"My dearest Henry," cried Mary, stopping short,
30 and smiling in his face, "how glad I am to see you so much in love! It quite delights me. But what will Mrs. Rushworth and Julia say?"

"I care neither what they say, nor what they feel. They will now see what sort of woman it is that can attach me, that can attach a man of sense. I wish the discovery may do them any good. And they will now see their cousin treated as she ought to be, and I wish they may be heartily ashamed of their own abominable neglect and unkindness. They will be angry," he added, after a moment's silence, and in a cooler tone, "Mrs. Rushworth will be very angry. It will be a bitter pill to her; that is, like other bitter pills, it will have two moments ill-flavour, and then be swallowed and forgotten; for I am not such a coxcomb as to suppose her feelings more lasting than other women's, though *I* was the object of them. Yes, Mary, my Fanny will feel a difference indeed, a daily, hourly difference, in the behaviour of every being who approaches her; and it will be the completion of my happiness to know that I am the doer of it, that I am the person to give the consequence so justly her due. Now she is dependent, helpless, friendless, neglected, forgotten."

"Nay, Henry, not by all, not forgotten by all, not friendless or forgotten. Her cousin Edmund never forgets her."

"Edmund—True, I believe he is (generally speaking) kind to her; and so is Sir Thomas in his way, but it is the way of a rich, superior, longworded, arbitrary uncle. What can Sir Thomas and Edmund together do, what *do* they do for her happiness, comfort, honour, and dignity in the world to what I *shall* do?"

CHAPTER XIII

HENRY CRAWFORD was at Mansfield Park again the next morning, and at an earlier hour than common visiting warrants. The two ladies were together in the breakfast-room, and fortunately for
5 him, Lady Bertram was on the very point of quitting it as he entered. She was almost at the door, and not chusing by any means to take so much trouble in vain, she still went on, after a civil reception, a short sentence about being waited for, and a "Let
10 Sir Thomas know," to the servant.

Henry, overjoyed to have her go, bowed and watched her off, and without losing another moment, turned instantly to Fanny, and taking out some letters said, with a most animated look, "I must
15 acknowledge myself infinitely obliged to any creature who gives me such an opportunity of seeing you alone: I have been wishing it more than you can have any idea. Knowing as I do what your feelings
20 one in the house should share with you in the first knowledge of the news I now bring. He is made. Your brother is a Lieutenant. I have the infinite satisfaction of congratulating you on your brother's promotion. Here are the letters which announce it,
25 this moment come to hand. You will, perhaps, like to see them."

Fanny could not speak, but he did not want her to

speak. To see the expression of her eyes, the change of her complexion, the progress of her feelings, their doubt, confusion, and felicity, was enough. She took the letters as he gave them. The first was from the Admiral to inform his nephew, in a few words, 5 of his having succeeded in the object he had undertaken, the promotion of young Price, and inclosing two more, one from the Secretary of the First Lord to a friend, whom the Admiral had set to work in the business, the other from that friend to himself, 10 by which it appeared that his Lordship had the very great happiness of attending to the recommendation of Sir Charles, that Sir Charles was much delighted in having such an opportunity of proving his regard for Admiral Crawford, and that the 15 circumstance of Mr. William Price's commission as second Lieutenant of H. M. sloop Thrush, being made out, was spreading general joy through a wide circle of great people.

While her hand was trembling under these letters, 20 her eye running from one to the other, and her heart swelling with emotion, Crawford thus continued, with unfeigned eagerness, to express his interest in the event.

"I will not talk of my own happiness," said he, 25 "great as it is, for I think only of yours. Compared with you, who has a right to be happy? I have almost grudged myself my own prior knowledge of what you ought to have known before all the world. I have not lost a moment, however. The post was 30 late this morning, but there has not been since, a moment's delay. How impatient, how anxious, how

wild I have been on the subject, I will not attempt to describe; how severely mortified, how cruelly disappointed, in not having it finished while I was in London! I was kept there from day to day in
5 the hope of it, for nothing less dear to me than such an object would have detained me half the time from Mansfield. But though my uncle entered into my wishes with all the warmth I could desire, and exerted himself immediately, there were diffi-
10 culties from the absence of one friend, and the engagements of another, which at last I could no longer bear to stay the end of, and knowing in what good hands I left the cause, I came away on Monday, trusting that many posts would not pass before I
15 should be followed by such very letters as these. My uncle, who is the very best man in the world, has exerted himself, as I knew he would after seeing your brother. He was delighted with him. I would not allow myself yesterday to say *how* delighted,
20 or to repeat half that the Admiral said in his praise. I deferred it all, till his praise should be proved the praise of a friend, as this day *does* prove it. *Now* I may say that even *I* could not require William Price to excite a greater interest, or be
25 followed by warmer wishes and higher commendation, than were most voluntarily bestowed by my uncle, after the evening they passed together."

"Has this been all *your* doing then?" cried Fanny. "Good Heaven! how very, very kind! Have you
30 really—was it by *your* desire—I beg your pardon, but I am bewildered. Did Admiral Crawford apply?—how was it?—I am stupified."

Henry was most happy to make it more intelligible, by beginning at an earlier stage, and explaining very particularly what he had done. His last journey to London had been undertaken with no other view than that of introducing her brother in Hill-street, 5 and prevailing on the Admiral to exert whatever interest he might have for getting him on. This had been his business. He had communicated it to no creature; he had not breathed a syllable of it even to Mary; while uncertain of the issue, he could 10 not have borne any participation of his feelings, but this had been his business; and he spoke with such a glow of what his solicitude had been, and used such strong expressions, was so abounding in the *deepest interest*, in *twofold motives*, in *views and wishes more* 15 *than could be told*, that Fanny could not have remained insensible of his drift, had she been able to attend; but her heart was so full and her senses still so astonished, that she could listen but imperfectly even to what he told her of William, and saying only when 20 he paused, "How kind! how very kind! Oh! Mr. Crawford, we are infinitely obliged to you. Dearest, dearest William!" she jumped up and moved in haste towards the door, crying out, "I will go to my uncle. My uncle ought to know it as soon as possible." 25 But this could not be suffered. The opportunity was too fair, and his feelings too impatient. He was after her immediately. "She must not go, she must allow him five minutes longer," and he took her hand and led her back to her seat, and was in the 30 middle of his further explanation, before she had suspected for what she was detained. When she did

understand it, however, and found herself expected to believe that *she* had created sensations which his heart had never known before, and that every thing he had done for William, was to be placed to the
5 account of his excessive and unequalled attachment to her, she was exceedingly distressed, and for some moments unable to speak. She considered it all as nonsense, as mere trifling and gallantry, which meant only to deceive for the hour; she could not
10 but feel that it was treating her improperly and unworthily, and in such a way as she had not deserved; but it was like himself, and entirely of a piece with what she had seen before; and she would not allow herself to shew half the displeasure she
15 felt, because he had been conferring an obligation, which no want of delicacy on his part could make a trifle to her. While her heart was still bounding with joy and gratitude on William's behalf, she could not be severely resentful of any thing that injured
20 only herself; and after having twice drawn back her hand, and twice attempted in vain to turn away from him, she got up and said only, with much agitation, "Don't, Mr. Crawford, pray don't. I beg you would not. This is a sort of talking which is very
25 unpleasant to me. I must go away. I cannot bear it." But he was still talking on, describing his affection, soliciting a return, and, finally, in words so plain as to bear but one meaning even to *her*, offering himself, hand, fortune, every thing to her
30 acceptance. It was so; he had said it. Her astonishment and confusion increased; and though still not knowing how to suppose him serious, she could

hardly stand. He pressed for an answer.

“No, no, no,” she cried, hiding her face. “This is all nonsense. Do not distress me. I can hear no more of this. Your kindness to William makes me more obliged to you than words can express; but I do not want, I cannot bear, I must not listen to such—No, no, don’t think of me. But you are *not* thinking of me. I know it is all nothing.”

She had burst away from him, and at that moment Sir Thomas was heard speaking to a servant in his way towards the room they were in. It was no time for further assurances or entreaty, though to part with her at a moment when her modesty alone seemed to his sanguine and pre-assured mind to stand in the way of the happiness he sought, was a cruel necessity.—She rushed out at an opposite door from the one her uncle was approaching, and was walking up and down the east room in the utmost confusion of contrary feelings, before Sir Thomas’s politeness and apologies were over, or he had reached the beginning of the joyful intelligence, which his visitor came to communicate.

She was feeling, thinking, trembling, about every thing;—agitated, happy, miserable, infinitely obliged, absolutely angry. It was all beyond belief! He was inexcusable, incomprehensible!—But such were his habits, that he could do nothing without a mixture of evil. He had previously made her the happiest of human beings, and now he had insulted—she knew not what to say—how to class or how to regard it. She would not have him be serious, and yet what could excuse the use of such words and

offers, if they meant but to trifle ?

But William was a Lieutenant.—*That* was a fact beyond a doubt and without an alloy. She would think of it for ever and forget all the rest. Mr. Crawford would certainly never address her so again :
5 he must have seen how unwelcome it was to her ; and in that case, how gratefully she could esteem him for his friendship to William !

She would not stir farther from the east-room than
10 the head of the great staircase, till she had satisfied herself of Mr. Crawford's having left the house ; but when convinced of his being gone, she was eager to go down and be with her uncle, and have all the happiness of his joy as well as her own, and all
15 the benefit of his information or his conjectures as to what would now be William's destination. Sir Thomas was as joyful as she could desire, and very kind and communicative ; and she had so comfortable a talk with him about William as to make her feel as
20 if nothing had occurred to vex her, till she found towards the close that Mr. Crawford was engaged to return and dine there that very day. This was a most unwelcome hearing, for though *he* might think nothing of what had passed, it would be quite
25 distressing to her to see him again so soon.

She tried to get the better of it, tried very hard as the dinner hour approached, to feel and appear as usual ; but it was quite impossible for her not to look most shy and uncomfortable when their visitor
30 entered the room. She could not have supposed it in the power of any concurrence of circumstances to give her so many painful sensations on the first

day of hearing of William's promotion.

Mr. Crawford was not only in the room; he was soon close to her. He had a note to deliver from his sister. Fanny could not look at him, but there was no consciousness of past folly in his voice. She opened her note immediately, glad to have any thing to do, and happy, as she read it, to feel that the fidgettings of her aunt Norris, who was also to dine there, screened her a little from view.

"MY DEAR FANNY, for so I may now always call you, to the infinite relief of a tongue that has been stumbling at *Miss Price* for at least the last six weeks—I cannot let my brother go without sending you a few lines of general congratulation, and giving my most joyful consent and approval.—Go on, my dear Fanny, and without fear; there can be no difficulties worth naming. I chuse to suppose that the assurance of *my* consent will be something; so, you may smile upon him with your sweetest smiles this afternoon, and send him back to me even happier than he goes.

Your's affectionately,

M. C."

These were not expressions to do Fanny any good; for though she read in too much haste and confusion to form the clearest judgment of Miss Crawford's meaning, it was evident that she meant to compliment her on her brother's attachment and even to *appear* to believe it serious. She did not know what to do, or what to think. There was wretchedness in the idea of its being serious; there was perplexity and agitation every way. She was distressed whenever Mr. Crawford spoke to her, and he spoke to her

much too often ; and she was afraid there was a something in his voice and manner in addressing her, very different from what they were when he talked to the others. Her comfort in that day's
5 dinner was quite destroyed ; she could hardly eat any thing ; and when Sir Thomas good humouredly observed, that joy had taken away her appetite, she was ready to sink with shame, from the dread of Mr. Crawford's interpretation ; for though nothing
10 could have tempted her to turn her eyes to the right hand where he sat, she felt that *his* were immediately directed towards her.

She was more silent than ever. She would hardly join even when William was the subject, for his
15 commission came all from the right hand too, and there was pain in the connection.

She thought Lady Bertram sat longer than ever, and began to be in despair of ever getting away ; but at last they were in the drawing-room and she
20 was able to think as she would, while her aunts finished the subject of William's appointment in their own style.

Mrs. Norris seemed as much delighted with the saving it would be to Sir Thomas, as with any part
25 of it. "*Now* William would be able to keep himself, which would make a vast difference to his uncle, for it was unknown how much he had cost his uncle ; and indeed it would make some difference in *her* presents too. She was very glad that she
30 had given William what she did at parting, very glad indeed that it had been in her power, without material inconvenience just at that time, to give

him something rather considerable; that is, for *her*, with *her* limited means, for now it would all be useful in helping to fit up his cabin. She knew he must be at some expense, that he would have many things to buy, though to be sure his father and mother would be able to put him in the way of getting every thing very cheap—but she was very glad that she had contributed her mite towards it.”

“I am glad you gave him something considerable,” said Lady Bertram, with most unsuspecting calmness — “for *I* gave him only 10*l.*”

“Indeed!” cried Mrs. Norris, reddening. “Upon my word, he must have gone off with his pockets well lined! and at no expense for his journey to London either!”

“Sir Thomas told me 10*l.* would be enough.”

Mrs. Norris being not at all inclined to question its sufficiency, began to take the matter in another point.

“It is amazing,” said she, “how much young people cost their friends, what with bringing them up and putting them out in the world! They little think how much it comes to, or what their parents, or their uncles and aunts pay for them in the course of the year. Now, here are my sister Price’s children; —take them all together, I dare say nobody would believe what a sum they cost Sir Thomas every year, to say nothing of what *I* do for them.”

“Very true, sister, as you say. But, poor things! they cannot help it; and you know it makes very little difference to Sir Thomas. Fanny, William must not forget my shawl, if he goes to the East Indies;

and I shall give him a commission for any thing else that is worth having. I wish he may go to the East Indies, that I may have my shawl. I think I will have two shawls, Fanny."

5 Fanny, meanwhile, speaking only when she could not help it, was very earnestly trying to understand what Mr. and Miss Crawford were at. There was every thing in the world *against* their being serious, but his words and manner. Every thing natural,
10 probable, reasonable was against it; all their habits and ways of thinking, and all her own demerits.— How could *she* have excited serious attachment in a man, who had seen so many, and been admired by so many, and flirted with so many, infinitely her
15 superiors—who seemed so little open to serious impressions, even where pains had been taken to please him—who thought so slightly, so carelessly, so unfeelingly on all such points—who was every thing to every body, and seemed to find no one
20 essential to him?— And further, how could it be supposed that his sister, with all her high and worldly notions of matrimony, would be forwarding any thing of a serious nature in such a quarter? Nothing could be more unnatural in either. Fanny
25 was ashamed of her own doubts. Every thing might be possible rather than serious attachment or serious approbation of it toward her. She had quite convinced herself of this before Sir Thomas and Mr. Crawford joined them. The difficulty was in maintaining the
30 conviction quite so absolutely after Mr. Crawford was in the room; for once or twice a look seemed forced on her which she did not know how to class

among the common meaning; in any other man at least, she would have said that it meant something very earnest, very pointed. But she still tried to believe it no more than what he might often have expressed towards her cousins and fifty other women. 5

She thought he was wishing to speak to her unheard by the rest. She fancied he was trying for it the whole evening at intervals, whenever Sir Thomas was out of the room, or at all engaged with Mrs. Norris, and she carefully refused him every 10 opportunity.

At last—it seemed an at last to Fanny’s nervousness, though not remarkably late,—he began to talk of going away; but the comfort of the sound was impaired by his turning to her the next moment, 15 and saying, “Have you nothing to send to Mary? No answer to her note? She will be disappointed if she receives nothing from you. Pray write to her, if it be only a line.”

“Oh! yes, certainly,” cried Fanny, rising in haste, 20 the haste of embarrassment and of wanting to get away— “I will write directly.”

She went accordingly to the table, where she was in the habit of writing for her aunt, and prepared her materials without knowing what in the world to 25 say! She had read Miss Crawford’s note only once; and how to reply to any thing so imperfectly understood was most distressing. Quite unpractised in such sort of note-writing, had there been time for scruples and fears as to style, she would have 30 felt them in abundance; but something must be instantly written, and with only one decided feeling,

that of wishing not to appear to think any thing really intended, she wrote thus, in great trembling both of spirits and hand :

“I AM very much obliged to you, my dear Miss
5 Crawford, for your kind congratulations, as far as they relate to my dearest William. The rest of your note I know means nothing ; but I am so unequal to any thing of the sort, that I hope you will excuse my begging you to take no further notice.
10 I have seen too much of Mr. Crawford not to understand his manners ; if he understood me as well, he would, I dare say, behave differently. I do not know what I write, but it would be a great favour of you never to mention the subject again. With
15 thanks for the honour of your note,

I remain, dear Miss Crawford,

&c. &c.”

The conclusion was scarcely intelligible from increasing fright, for she found that Mr. Crawford,
20 under pretence of receiving the note, was coming towards her.

“You cannot think I mean to hurry you,” said he, in an under voice, perceiving the amazing trepidation with which she made up the note ; “you cannot
25 think I have any such object. Do not hurry yourself, I entreat.”

“Oh ! I thank you, I have quite done, just done—it will be ready in a moment—I am very much obliged to you—if you will be so good as to give
30 *that* to Miss Crawford.”

The note was held out and must be taken ; and as she instantly and with averted eyes walked towards

the fireplace, where sat the others, he had nothing to do but to go in good earnest.

Fanny thought she had never known a day of greater agitation, both of pain and pleasure; but happily the pleasure was not of a sort to die with⁵ the day—for every day would restore the knowledge of William's advancement, whereas the pain she hoped would return no more. She had no doubt that her note must appear excessively ill-written, that the language would disgrace a child, for her¹⁰ distress had allowed no arrangement; but at least it would assure them both of her being neither imposed on, nor gratified by Mr. Crawford's attentions.