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Gertrude: An Original Novel (Chapters 1-2)

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GERTRUDE; AN ORIGINAL NOVEL.

CHAPTER I.

"Well! my daughter?" said Mrs. Austin, with an approving smile, and in a tone of inquiry.

The young lady was entering the room with an air of recovered composure, though a slight tinge upon her cheek, and an excited flash of the eye, and an almost imperceptible quivering of the lip showed that she was not entirely free from emotion. In her step, and the carriage of her head there was an expression of self-confidence and offended pride; and, on the whole, it was plain, that whatever might be the feeling of the moment, self-reproach had no part in it.

"Well! my daughter: is all settled?"

"I hope so, Ma'am," was the quiet reply.

"Mr. Crabshaw then is the happy man at last?"

"I trust, Mother, I wish Mr. Crabshaw at least as much happiness as he deserves, but I do not expect that I shall ever contribute to it."

"How!" exclaimed Mrs. Austin, in a tone of unfeigned amazement; "is it possible that you have rejected an offer that has made you the envy of all the girls in the village?"

"I do not know, Mother, who may envy me, but I have certainly given Mr. Crabshaw an answer which should forever free me from his unwelcome addresses."

"Upon my word, *Miss!* you carry a high head. The *unwelcome addresses* of a man of ten thousand DOLLARS a year!!! It would be quite edifying to be admitted to your confidence, and to learn how high a *poor country* girl can lift her eyes, when told that she is fine."

"Mother, you do me injustice. I do not lift my eyes to any thing. It is not of ambition, but the want of it, that you are wont to accuse me."

"Well! be it so. I shall not dispute about the name, you may choose to give your perverseness. I know you will find a high sounding one. I remember how it was with Mr. Clutterbuck, and how you tried to persuade me that I wounded your deli-

cacy, and disgusted you, by teasing you about him. Now this time I have said nothing, and left you to yourself. But though I was silent you could not help knowing my wishes; and that, I suppose, was enough to determine you to disappoint them. Obstinate, disobedient, ungrateful girl!"

Poor Gertrude burst into tears, and sinking on the sofa, covered her face with her hands. She felt that she did not deserve this reproach—but she did not expostulate. It was needless. The Mother, sensible of her injustice, instantly softened.

"My dear Gertrude," she said, "you must forgive my harshness. You have always been good and dutiful, in every thing but this; and hence perhaps it is, that I am the more impatient at finding you so unreasonable and intractable. But what am I to think of your behavior? I have had no reason to suspect that you had gone, like a silly girl, and fallen in love with somebody who was not thinking of you, and I do not know how to understand your obstinate rejection of the best offers."

"Is it not enough, Mother, that I have as yet seen no man whom I can love?"

"*Love!!* repeated Mrs. Austin, with that scornful emphasis, with which the word is sometimes uttered by ladies whose day of love is past; "*Love!* and what should you know about love?"

"Nothing, Mother, but what I am told, and of that I understand and believe no more than what is self-evident—that whenever I do love any body well enough to be willing to leave all my friends, and spend my days with him, I shall not be unconscious of it."

"There you are mistaken, my dear. People are very often in love before they suspect it, and remain in ignorance of their true feelings, until something happens to interpret them."

"I do not know how that can be, Mother. I love you, and my kind good father, and my little sister, and all my friends; and I could as soon be

hungry, or thirsty without knowing it, as insensible to my affection for these."

"O yes! But the love we are talking of is quite a different affair."

"Different! So I have been told before. I wish people would not call different things by the same name. But if I love Mr. Crabshaw, it must be because the love you speak of is more like disgust, contempt and aversion than any thing else. I certainly have no pleasure in his company: I see no sense in any thing he says; his sentiments, to me, seem low and mean: I find nothing in his conduct to approve; and I am always glad when he goes away."

"Pshaw! That is only because he is your lover, and girls are always so, at first. It is disagreeable to be *always* teased and harassed with attentions, which are often ill-timed; but let engagement once establish confidence and security, and so put an end to that sort of troublesome importunity, and who knows how soon you might love him?"

"And suppose I should not, Mother; what then would become of the engagement?"

"But that is not to be supposed."

"Is love then sure to follow?"

"I do not exactly say that."

"Then again, my dear Mother, let me ask what is to become of the engagement if it does not?"

"That will depend on circumstances. If a more advantageous offer, or one more acceptable and equally advantageous should be made, it might be broken off; but, if not, then let the marriage take place, and let love come afterwards."

The only answer to this was a look of perplexed amazement. Gertrude could hardly believe that she had heard aright. Yet her ears could not have deceived her; and she dared not trust herself to utter to a mother she loved and respected, the only reply to such a proposition that rose to her lips.

Mrs. Austin felt that she had struck a hard blow. But she had of late learned to blame herself for her neglect of this important point in the training of a daughter; and, far from wishing to recall it, she was glad it had been given, and determined to follow it up. "My dear child," she continued, "a pure-minded and simple girl like you cannot understand these things. None but a married woman can understand the feelings of a woman toward the father of her children."

Gertrude was indeed a pure-minded girl; but there was a significant emphasis in these words, and they were accompanied by a meaning look, from which her earnest gaze was instantly withdrawn. Ideas which the delicate instincts of woman had taught her to chase from her mind had been summoned by the words of her own mother: and, with downcast eyes, a burning blush, and a starting tear, she sat the image of wounded delicacy and violated modesty.

At this moment Dr. Austin entered the room, and wearily threw himself on a sofa opposite to that on which Gertrude sat. Though but her stepfather, he regarded and loved her as his own child, and unaccustomed to any reserves in his family, thought nothing of breaking in upon a conversation between his wife and her daughter. His presence caused no interruption, though it might have moderated the coarseness of the last remark. But the arrow had sped. The words had been uttered, and were fixed in Gertrude's mind as a text and interpreter to what might follow. The lady went on. "My dear daughter, you must bear in mind your situation and circumstances. You know you have no fortune. The small property left by your father was dissipated in my widowhood, by the necessary expenses of a helpless family; and a young woman so situated, must make up her mind to lay aside all romantic notions, and never think of marrying any man who is not rich enough to establish her in life. You have my example to serve you as a warning, though you can never know the trouble and anxiety I experienced, when left by your poor father in such narrow circumstances. But I formed what I thought the best plan for you. Instead of trying to save a scanty pittance which must soon be gone, I thought it best to give you an education that might qualify you for the highest places in society; and now, if you throw yourself away upon a poor man, you defeat my plan, disappoint my hopes, and prepare for yourself the same distresses which I experienced."

"But Mother, I have no thought, as yet, of marrying any body, and would rather live single all my life, than marry a man whom I cannot love. I am thankful for your attention to my education, and wish I could have profited by it more. But, my dear Mother, you did not endeavor to improve my mind in order to qualify me to be the wife of one whose principles I disapprove, and whose understanding I cannot respect."

"Live single all your life!" exclaimed the Mother, giving the go-by to the latter part of this speech. "And how are you to live? Who is to maintain you, when you have power to do something for yourself, and will not? Here is poor Dr. Austin with his large family of children to provide for, and nothing but his profession and this little farm to depend on: and because he is so good as to give you home, and maintain you without charge till this time, you have no right to expect him to do so always."

The Doctor rose from his seat, walked directly across the room to Gertrude, laid his hand gently on her head, and bending over her, kissed her forehead. "Bless you, my dear noble girl," said he. "I honor your pure and virtuous heart, and love you better than ever for what you have done. I have just seen Mr. Crabshaw, and was pleased, and not at all surprised to learn the result of his

addresses. Set you heart at rest, my child. Are you not my own child? And have you not another and a better father, who, while you cherish your just and noble sentiments will never forsake you, or leave you without a friend and protector when I am gone? You say right. You are not fit to be the wife of a weak or vicious man. But there are men of sense and virtue among the rich, as well as the poor, and it is not unreasonable to hope that some one of these will be found desirous to grace his establishment, with one worthy to share his wealth and honors, and capable of appreciating his worth. Now dry your tears, dear," he added, gently raising her, "and go to your chamber, for I wish to have some private talk with your mother."

Gertrude moved towards the door, but paused and looked back at her mother. Her heart sank as she beheld the fixed and stony look of baffled policy, which all the husband's tenderness had failed to soften. But the warm-hearted girl was not to be repelled by it, and, running to her, she threw herself upon her neck and wept. Then smiling through her tears, she rushed into the extended arms of her kind protector, and, after kissing him with grateful fondness, left the room.

Without waiting to hear what her husband might wish to communicate, Mrs. Austin immediately began to expostulate at his interference with a mother in the management of her daughter. For this he excused himself by reminding her, that he had been appealed to in a way which made it necessary that he should not be silent, unless he meant to leave Gertrude under the mortifying belief that she was an unwelcome burden to her only protector. The words of Mrs. Austin, as spoken by her, were sufficiently distressing, but, adopted by his silence, they must have rendered the young lady's situation absolutely intolerable. So much her mother was forced to admit, but she still insisted that he had no call to say more than was necessary to save himself from misconception, and she boldly threw down the gauntlet in favor of "prudent matches."

"You ought to consider," said the lady, "the education that Gertrude has received. There is not a girl in the land that has had a finer opportunity, and all her teachers give her credit for talents. And then for her looks, she may not be a regular beauty, but you may go far before you find a prettier face or figure."

"All that is very true, my dear, and if I were to speak of Gertrude's pretensions, I should use much stronger language than yours. I know no young woman so beautiful, so intelligent, so accomplished, so amiable, so good, so altogether lovely as she is, and this is the very reason why I have no mind to see her knocked off, like damaged goods, to the first bidder."

"Ah! That's always the way with you. To hear you talk, one would think that the reasons I

give for my opinions were always the best reasons against them."

"By no means, my dear. I know few women of better sense. But 'ladies are ladies,' and I have known the sex too long to be surprised at hearing a woman, and especially a fine woman, reason backward."

"Yes, but I don't reason backward. I know what I am saying, and I did not say that Gertrude was so *very* superlative as *you* make her out to be."

"May be so; but I own I am at a loss to fix on that precise amount of merit in a lady, which must condemn her to be sold like cattle in a market, while either more or less would leave her free to follow the dictates of her best feelings, and consult her happiness. If poor Gertrude has been improved exactly up to that point, I can only regret that her education was so much attended to."

"There it is again! You know I only mean to say that Gertrude has merit enough to give her a right to expect to make a good match."

"And I mean to say precisely the same thing. The only point of difference between us seems to be, what constitutes a good match. Now I maintain that the only good match is a happy match, and that the chance for happiness is very bad between two people, who are closely connected for life, and who dislike each other."

"But people cannot live on love, and they who love each other must be unhappy when they see each other suffering for the want of comforts and even necessaries."

"Very true. But I see no reason why they should want necessaries, because they love each other."

"You know I am not so absurd as to mean to say that."

"Well then! the matter stands thus. There can be no happiness in marriage without love, or without necessaries. The conclusion should be that Gertrude should neither marry a man she does not love, nor one who cannot support her. The question between us is about the first of these propositions, and as I affirm both, you cannot convince me that either is wrong, by proving, what I already believe, that the other is right."

"You are quite too logical for me. But you know what I mean, and you know that when I speak of necessaries, I do not mean victuals and clothes alone. A fine young woman accustomed to admiration cannot be expected to sit down contented in the chimney corner and card wool to spin her a petticoat. When ambition has been cultivated it must have some indulgence, and be allowed to display itself after marriage in jewels and equipages and entertainments and all that."

"The whole of this marriage is 'gowd and a carriage,'" said the husband playfully: and then added, in a graver tone, "My dear Catharine, the very language you use shows that you are strug-

gling against the best feelings of your heart, and the convictions of your own excellent understanding. Why else do you use the word Ambition, when you are speaking of Avarice and Ostentation? Ambition itself is a bad passion, though sometimes ennobled by its objects. But, bad as it is, it is so much less hideous and loathsome than the others, that they are glad to wear it as a mask. As long as you can cheat yourself with a word, you may make a merit of providing an *ambitious marriage* for your daughter. But call it by its right name. Call it a *mercenary marriage*, and you yourself will shudder at the sound."

"Lord! Mr. Austin how strangely you talk. Let a girl marry *prudently*, I say, and she will soon learn to love her husband."

"My dear, we are man and wife, and to you I can talk plainly, and present ideas which should never enter a maiden's mind but in the privacy of her chamber. Reflect a moment on all that is implied in what you have just said. It may be true of a coarse, vulgar-minded, sensual, brutish woman. But is it true of the pure, the refined, the delicate female, true to the instincts of her sex, which prompt to yield the person to him who has the heart, and to no other? Can such a woman look upon the man who has been forced on her by the tyranny of friends or the tyranny of circumstances, but as one who has profaned her person, rifled her charms, and degraded and dishonored her in her own eyes? I do not think of your sex more highly than they deserve. I will not offend you with the appearance of a doubt, by asking if you married me, depending on marriage to bring love. But you have been twice married; and when you gave your virgin charms to Mr. Courtney, was it before your heart was his?"

The tears sprung to the yet beautiful eyes of Mrs. Austin, and her husband kissed them away.

"Those tears," said he, "are an answer to my question. A woman, happy in a second marriage, does not weep to remember a first husband who was not master of her heart as well as her person. None, better than yourself, can understand the workings of a virtuous female heart. Let things be called by their right names, and none will feel more sensibly, that, apart from the arbitrary conventions of society, *Prudence* not *Virtue* makes the chief distinction between the despised street-walker, and the woman who sells herself in marriage."

The *argumentum ad hominem* is a troublesome thing to either sex. To a lady it is unanswerable, especially when accompanied by a compliment. Mrs. Austin if not convinced, was silent. Poor Gertrude heard no more of prudent marriages, and secure in the wild freedom of her guileless heart, her gratitude to her kind and generous protector was unbounded.

Mrs. Austin has said that her daughter was a pretty girl, and her husband said that she was beautiful. All this was true: and more. She was beautiful and she was fascinating. I am not fond of descriptions, but if I knew wherein consisted the peculiar charm, the power of which I have so often felt, I would try to describe it. Perhaps it was in her manner, in which, with all her cultivation, and her high and deep thoughts, there was a childlike simplicity that at once awakened the fond feelings so natural in all good hearts, toward amiable and cheerful children. Perhaps it was in her voice, soft, low, distinct when scarcely audible, winning its way to the ear through other sounds, so that no word of hers was ever lost. In its saddest tones it was never complaining, and in its more cheerful moods there was a playful melody reminding the hearer of the careless and rapid distinctness of the wild notes of the mocking-bird. Perhaps it was in her eye. I never saw but one other such, and the light of that, (it was the light of life to me) is quenched for ever. It was blue and calm and deep as a well. It was not always bright, but the thoughts that rose in her mind glanced through it, as the light that glances from a window, casts back the pale moon-beams, and substitutes a ray from within for the cold reflection from without. In short she was lovely, *and she was beloved.*

Henry Austin was several years older than her. He was the eldest son of Dr. Austin, the first child of an early marriage; and, at the time of his father's union with the mother of Gertrude, he was entering on manhood and its duties. Bred to the bar, he had united his labors to those of his father, for the support of the numerous family whose comfort mainly depended on them. He was a handsome youth, of high principles, fine talents, great steadiness, and strength of character, and honorable ambition. His education qualified him for the dangerous task of assisting in that of his new sister (for so he called her) and it was from his lips that she learned those last and finishing lessons on which the final character of the mind so much depends. It is an old story—as old as Abelard and Eloisa—that a girl of ingenuous and curious mind, under the instruction of a bold and original thinker, is apt to learn—and to teach—one lesson not dreamed of in the philosophy of those who bring them together. There is nothing very seductive in the rudiments of learning, and a young lady is not apt to fall in love with her teacher of grammar, geography, mathematics or natural philosophy. But when we come to the Philosophy of History, and the metaphysics of the affections, to Taste and Belles Lettres and the beauties of poetry, then, if the teacher be a man of genius and spirit, and the pupil apt and enthusiastic, circum-

stances can hardly exist, which shall prevent them from loving. What can be more natural? To the inquisitive mind there is no pleasure like that arising from the perception of new truths. To the benevolent, few things are so sweet as to impart truth to the candid and ingenuous seeker. Thus each becomes to the other a source of enjoyment, welling up from the depths of the heart, like a perennial spring, pure, fresh and inexhaustible. The whole philosophy of love is that it disposes us to live with those who can make us happy, and to be happy with those with whom we live. Hence, if, after giving the characters of Henry and Gertrude, I were to say they did not love one another, I ought not to be believed.

I do not mean to say that they knew it. It was not until she began to be courted that he thought of her as a being to be married; and hence, until then, he never thought of marrying her. Then, indeed, he learned the secret of his heart; but he kept it to himself. She was slower in discovering hers. Teased by the addresses of those alone who were unacceptable to her, the idea of marrying any body was only made absurd to her mind by their importunities. Thinking of marriage only in connexion with disagreeable people, she could only think of it as a disagreeable thing; and it was not until she had been repeatedly told that she must marry somebody, that it occurred to her, that she would rather marry "Brother Henry," with whom she lived so happily, than any body else. But, at the time of which I write, she had not yet come to this conclusion, and said truly that she had no thought of marrying any one.

It is a common remark, that the politic often defeat their own designs. A strenuous effort to overcome an opposing principle or feeling must succeed, or it imparts its own energy to the reaction of the mind, which thus throws off the assailant farther from his object. Such was the effect of the decided demonstration made by Mrs. Austin in favor of Mr. Crabshaw. The mind of Gertrude soon freed itself from the gross ideas suggested by the gross hint of her mother, but the thought of *such a man* as the father of *her* children remained. What then? Were they to resemble him? To wear his stolid look, relieved only by his silly smile? To talk his prosing truisms or vapid niaiseries? To inherit his purse-proud arrogance and his petty meanness? If she *was* to have children, she would rather have them like any body else; and of all men, whom would she so soon have them resemble as him, whom she saw the beloved and admired of all, the pride of his father's heart, and the copy of his virtues? Such thoughts will come; and the result of it was, that, for the next twenty-four hours, the image of Henry Austin was more in the mind of Gertrude than it ever had been before.

To that pure and innocent and sunny mind such thoughts brought nothing painful. She did not

think to analyse the character of her love for him she called her brother; and, whatever it might be, her own so exactly corresponded with it, that her heart felt nothing of that void to which those are doomed who pour out their affections on the insensible, and receive nothing in return. I am not sure that the delights of mutual love are ever so sweet, as in that short interval in which the true nature of our feelings is not fully understood. Then we live altogether in the present moment, without casting one glance toward that dark future, where, though nothing is seen distinctly, ugly shadows will sometimes flit through the gloom, and scare us into undefined apprehensions. The longer that interval is protracted, the more deeply does the passion sink into the soul. The mind sleeps securely in the sweet dream; and when it awakes, it finds every fibre of the heart tied down by the Lilliputian fingers of the tiny imps, that do the bidding of the God of Love.

But others very often detect this state of feeling while the parties are wholly unconscious of it. The keen eye of Mrs. Austin was not blind to what was passing. Though so far influenced by the sentiments of her husband; as to have relinquished the idea of selling her daughter in loveless marriage, she was not at all shaken in the opinion that wealth, as well as love, is necessary to connubial happiness. Her first husband had been a man of small property, but fine talents; and he had married her, when fairly entered on a career of professional success, which promised, not only affluence, but distinction. He had realized but little, though no man's prospects were more flattering, when suddenly death put an end to his career, and left her a widow in narrow circumstances. With the difficulties of her situation she struggled resolutely, practising economy in every thing, but the education of her daughter, in whom she hoped to live over again the life of ambition which had been thus cut short. I here use the word in its true sense. *For herself*, Mrs. Austin was indeed an ambitious woman. It was only when seeking to regulate the destiny of her daughter that she could succeed in cheating herself into that delusion; which dignifies *avarice* with the name of a passion less grovelling, though perhaps not less fatal. She was ambitious; and, had her husband lived, and had his life fulfilled the promise of his youth, her heart would have asked no more than to share his honors, in circumstances far short of affluence. But, when he was taken from her, she naturally felt less the disappointment of ambitious aspirations than the loss of indulgences, to which, in reliance on his growing fortunes, he had permitted her to habituate herself; and her fall from that place in fashionable and wealthy society, which had seemed her proper position. Hence she had learned to doubt the truth of the maxim that a good mind, a good education and a

lucrative profession are the best estate. For the man himself, she admitted this might be so. But for the desolate widow—the helpless children, she required something that should not perish with him.

Thus reasoned Mrs. Austin within herself; and when she remarked the growing attachment between Henry and her daughter, she rejoiced to think that her wailings over her disastared lot, during a long widowhood, had already made Gertrude familiar with these ideas. "Let my fate be a warning to you, my dear Gertrude," she would often say: and now she daily harped on the same theme, without seeming to do so with any particular design. She had been so far successful, that, to Gertrude, there seemed to be but little difference between marrying a poor man with a profession or without one. But so long as she had no thought of marrying any body in particular, the idea was but an abstraction, and, like all abstract ideas, was ready to give way to any impulse of passion. Thus, in spite of all the good lady's training, the unconscious attachment to Henry was daily gaining strength. It was therefore time that something should be done.

Gentlemen are much less sagacious observers in these matters than ladies. They are more easily cheated by names and forms. Doctor Austin had taught his son to call Gertrude "sister," and, as long as he continued to do so, it never would have occurred to the father, that he looked on her as any thing but a sister. He did not wish that he should. Not deficient in worldly wisdom, he had other views for his son. He knew that a handsome young man, of respectable family, good talents, good principles, good habits and good manners, though without property, is an excellent match in this country, for any but a poor girl. His talents should indeed be unquestionable, and he must have had time to place them beyond dispute by his success in life. The doctor therefore had long cherished the hope, that, could he succeed in establishing Henry in business and reputation before his marrying propensities should be fully developed, he might so far better his condition by marriage, as to enable him, without difficulty, to fulfil the duties of a father toward the younger members of the family. He was therefore not a little startled, when his wife, having called his attention to the doings of the young people, gave him her interpretation of the symptoms. He claimed no right to thwart Henry's inclinations. Had he the world to choose from, she who had so long shown herself a daughter to him was the one he would select for his son's wife, did circumstances permit it. But his health was not good, and, in the event of his death the prospect for his family, on the supposition of such a marriage, was anything but cheering. He possessed too much of the young man's confidence to believe that matters could have gone to any great length between the parties, and he justly

thought there could be no harm in affording to both opportunities of making a more prudential choice. The remedy was a winter in Washington for Gertrude.

The session of Congress was just at hand. A sister of Mrs. Austin resided in the metropolis. She was yet in the meridian of life, the childless blooming widow of a wealthy man, who had left her mistress of a splendid establishment. There she reigned, the arbiter of fashion, in an extensive circle, embracing many men of talent, distinction and fortune. She had made it manifest that she had no matrimonial views for herself, and delighted to be surrounded by the young and beautiful, on whose charms she looked without jealousy or envy. Hence she had often pressed for a visit from Gertrude, and now the invitation, so often declined, was accepted.

When a capital measure is resolved on, success must not be sacrificed to minor considerations. It was meant that Gertrude should figure in society with a splendor that might attract attention, and the effect intended to be produced on her own feelings made it indispensable to secure her against any thing like mortification. The small remains of her patrimony were accordingly laid out in rich dresses and richer jewels; the degree of her success, in this, as in all gambling, depending on the magnitude of the stake. She was thus to be sent out as a sort of "drapery miss," her whole chance of happiness and respectability in life depending on the success of a scheme in which she was but a passive and unconscious instrument. In this there was deep policy. Mrs. Austin had not forgotten the story of Cinderilla, and how she hated to quit the ball-room, lay aside the glass slipper and the robe of golden tissue, and resume her rags and her lowly place in the chimney corner. Much the same effect did she anticipate, from a set of costly and splendid jewelry, which, as the wife of a poor man, Gertrude could never wear with propriety.

A day was fixed for her journey when Henry was to be absent at a distant court. The tenderness of parting was dreaded, and it was thought safer to distribute the excitement and the pathos of the separation from her friends so that, taken in broken doses, the effect might be less dangerous. In all this he was necessarily passive, and saw the day of his departure approach, as a condemned criminal awaits the hour of his doom. But he felt that circumstances called for a decided step on his part. Feeling that he deserved, and knowing that he possessed the esteem of his step-mother, the form of laying his pretensions before her seemed quite superfluous. Of her views for her daughter he had no suspicion, and his success in his profession warranted the belief, that, in offering his hand to Gertrude, he would not be guilty of the folly and crime of tempting her to poverty and distress. In short, he was in condition to promise her the

continuance of all the comforts and enjoyments of life to which she had been accustomed, and he rightly thought that to be the exact measure of the good things of this world which is best for the happiness of all who are above want. Thus thinking, he resolved not to leave Gertrude in ignorance of his sentiments towards her. But aware that, whatever her feelings might be, to her they seemed only the feelings of a sister, he feared to press his suit, without first giving some hint, which might set her to examining her own heart.

For an opportunity to do this he watched carefully, and found, to his surprise, that there were difficulties in the way, such as he had never before encountered. To be alone with her at some time of every day was so much a matter of course, that he purposely deferred his communication to the last day of his stay at home. He was to set out in the evening, and the evening came and found him baffled in every attempt to obtain a private interview. He then determined to borrow of the last hours of the night as much time as would carry him to his destination next day. But still he could never find Gertrude for a single moment alone. The presence of her mother or his father seemed an indispensable condition of her very existence. But whatever restraint this placed on him, it imposed none on her. Knowing that he was about to leave her, she addressed her attention almost exclusively to him, though surprised and somewhat hurt at the moody silence with which he met her playful sallies, and his apparent insensibility to her tenderness. He was mute because one thought, which he could not utter, occupied his whole mind: and he seemed sullen, for he was vexed at a difficulty so unexpected. But however a *man* may be embarrassed by such difficulties, a *woman* can not be so baffled. Gertrude felt, she knew not why, that she wished none to hear her parting words to her beloved brother. Indeed she was annoyed, as well as he, by the uninterrupted presence of third persons; and, had he given her a chance to find *him* alone, she would have soon afforded him the opportunity he sought. But by continually seeking her presence he defeated her wish.

The hour of retirement approached. The mother was gathering up her work, and the young lady was putting away hers, when he flung out of the room in despair. Instantly she ran after him, reproachfully, yet kindly, asking if he meant to leave her without bidding farewell.

"By no means," said he in a deep low tone. How could I think of doing so when this farewell is to be the last."

"Good Heaven! What do you mean? Where do you think of going?"

"No where. But we part *as brother and sister*. We meet so no more."

"O my brother!" exclaimed the warm-hearted girl, throwing her arms about his neck, "how can you say that. You do not mean to cast me from *your* heart, and how can you think I can forget my dear kind brother to whom I owe so much?"*

Her cheek rested on his shoulder; her face was upturned to his; his left arm, on which she leaned, encircled her waist. He gazed tenderly on her mild speaking face, and, gently removing the long ringlet that hung upon her cheek, he said with deep and earnest emphasis; "Gertrude, dear Gertrude! You must not deceive yourself. You know I am not your brother. The time is now at hand, when you *must* forget me, or love me *more*, *MUCH MORE*, than ever brother was loved. God bless you," he added, straining her to his breast, and pressing on her lips the first fervid kiss of undisguised passion.

"Ask me not what the maiden feels." None but a lady can answer the question, and none capable of doing so, would so far betray her sex, and lay open the workings of the female heart. She stood a moment, and then, for the first time, eager to let it be seen that her interview with Henry had only been long enough for a brief farewell, she hurried back into her mother's presence, past hastily through the room, ran to her chamber, and throwing herself on the bed, buried her face in her hands. Whether she slept that night, and, if so, what were her dreams, can never be known. But all the next day there was an unsettled look about her; and her eye seemed to swim in an atmosphere of light; and her lips still burned; and a disproportioned brightness glowed on the cheek that had rested on her lover's shoulder. By degrees these traces passed away; her countenance became calm; the flush of her cheek diffused itself in the general hue of rosy health; her step was that of one who treads on air; and her eye, serene and tranquil, looked out on all around as if dwelling on the soft beauties of a summer's eve. Then, as the day of her departure approached, there came another change. She was paler, and somewhat sad; and occasionally a sigh struggled to the air; and a glittering drop hung on her eye-lid, and fell, leaving no trace. Such tears cool the eye that sheds them. It is only the scalding flood of fierce and sinful passion, that leaves the marks of its progress, which, like a stream of lava, parches and burns and leaves all desolate.

* This happened before the bride of Abydos was written. Lord Byron copied Nature, as Nature has always shown herself since Step-Mothers had existence.