



CHETWYND CALVERLEY, New Edition

William Ainsworth, William Harrison Ainsworth

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Mrs. Calverley had been nearly a year a widow. She was still at Ouselcroft, and apparently meant to remain there. No change whatever had been made in the establishment, and old Norris was still in his place. The will had not been disputed, and the widow was in possession of her late husband's entire property. She intended to allow Chetwynd six hundred a year, in accordance with his father's request, and instructed Mr Carteret to pay him the amount quarterly; but he peremptorily refused to accept any allowance from her, and ordered the money to be returned. He had remained at Ouselcroft until after the funeral, and then went abroad. As may be supposed, no reconciliation took place between him and his stepmother. Hitherto the fair widow had lived in perfect retirement with Mildred, and was only to be seen arrayed in deep mourning in Daresbury Church, in the vaults of which her husband was interred; but she now began to pay visits, and receive her friends. When Mildred re-appeared in society, after her temporary seclusion, she created quite a sensation. We are afraid to say how many persons fell in love with her. She was still in mourning, of course, but her dark attire set off her fair tresses and exquisitely delicate complexion, and suited her slight graceful figure. Then her amiable and captivating manner heightened the effect of her charms, and rendered her almost irresistible. During her father's lifetime she had been greatly admired, and was accounted, as we have said, the prettiest girl in Cheshire; but her beauty was more talked about now, and many a gallant youth thought himself excessively fortunate if he could obtain her hand for a waltz. But Mildred was by no means a flirt, and had no desire to make conquests. On the contrary, she was a very quiet girl, and gave the herd of young men who beset her at balls and parties very little encouragement. She did not care to dance much, and would only dance with those who pleased her, or amused her. There was no sort of rivalry between the lovely girl and her beautiful stepmother. That there were already numerous aspirants to the hand of the wealthy young widow was certain; but it was equally certain she was in no haste to take another husband. She, therefore, felt no jealousy of Mildred, but was delighted to see her admired and sought after, and would willingly have promoted any advantageous match. Mildred, however, made some objection or other to all who were recommended to her. Thus, when Mrs. Calverley praised young Mr. Capesthorne, and said he would have a fine old Elizabethan mansion, with a park attached to it, and asked if he wouldn't do, the young lady replied that she admired Mr. Capesthorne's old house, but didn't care for him. Again, when Colonel Blakemere, who was about to return to Madras, and wanted to take a wife with him, paid her marked attention, and got Mrs. Calverley to back his suit, Mildred settled the matter by declaring she would never go to India. However, these were nothing as compared with what followed. It never rains but it pours, and offers now came by the dozen. Mrs. Calverley received a number of little notes, the writers whereof begged permission to wait upon her, intimating that they had an important matter to lay before her, and at the same time making some slight reference to Mildred, that left her no doubt as to their object. Before replying to any of them, she consulted Mildred; and, having ascertained her sentiments, agreed to see a couple of them on a particular day, and within half an hour of each other. On the appointed day she was alone in the drawing-room, seated in an easy-chair, and wondering who would appear first, when Mr. Vernon Brook was announced by Norris. Mr. Vernon Brook belonged to a good old family, but was a younger son. Dark, sallow-complexioned, and long-visaged, he piqued himself upon having a Vandyke face. To assist the expression, he scrupulously shaved his cheeks, and cultivated a pointed beard.

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