MORTIMER;

OR,

MEMOIRS OF A GENTLEMAN.

"This is the excellent frippery of the world."

Shakspeare.

I AM an only child. My father was the younger son of one of our oldest earls; my mother the dowerless daughter of a Scotch peer, who was universally esteemed the most gentlemanlike man of his day. My father was a moderate whig, and gave sumptuous dinners; — my mother was a woman of taste, and particularly fond of diamonds and old china.

Vulgar people know nothing of the necessaries required in good society, and their credit is as short as their pedigree. Six years after my birth there was an execution in our house. My mother was just setting off on a visit for a week, to the Duchess of D—; she declared it was impossible to go without her diamonds. The chief of the bailiffs declared it was impossible to trust them out of his sight. The matter was compromised — the bailiff went with my mother to C— and was introduced as my tutor. The world was not then so inconveniently learned as it is now. The bailiff was frightened, and the secret was kept. At the end of the week the diamonds went to the jeweller's, and my mother wore paste.

I think it was about a month afterwards that a sixteenth cousin left Lady Frances twenty thousand pounds. My father said it would pay off the worst mortgage, and equip him for Melton. My

mother said it would just redeem her diamonds, and new furnish the house; the latter alternative was chosen.

Just at this time, Seymour Conway had caused two divorces; and of course, all the women in London were dying for him. He took a fancy to my mother, who could not but feel highly flattered at his addresses. At the end of the season Mr. Conway persuaded my mother to make an excursion to Paris.

The carriage was at the end of the square. My mother, for the first time in her life, got up at six o'clock. Her foot was on the step, and her hand next to Mr. Conway's heart, when she remembered that her favourite China monster and her French dog were left behind. She insisted on returning — entered the house, and was coming down the back stairs with one under each arm, when she was met by my father and two servants. My father's valet had discovered (I forget how) the flight of his mistress, and awakened his master.

When my father was convinced of his loss, he called for his dressing-gown — searched the garret and the kitchen — looked in the maid's drawers and the cellaret — and finally declared he was distracted. He had always been celebrated for his skill in private theatricals. He was just retiring to vent his agony in his dressing-room, when he met my mother. It must altogether have been an awkward rencontre, and, indeed, a remarkably unfortunate occurrence to my father, — as Seymour Conway was immensely rich, and the damages would, no doubt, have been proportionably high. Had they met each other alone, the thing might easily have been settled, and the lady gone off in tranquillity; — those d—d servants are always in the way!

I have, however, often thought that perhaps it was better for me that the affair ended thus, — as I know, from many instances, that it is frequently extremely inconvenient to have one's mother divorced.

A good face was set upon the matter, and of so forgiving a disposition was my father, that Mr. Conway afterwards became one of his most intimate friends. Mr. Mortimer, with a delicacy which conquered his pride, condescended to borrow of him a few thousand pounds; he could not have chosen a better or more graceful

expedient to convince him how completely he pardoned his presumption.

Not long after this, by the death of my grandfather, my eldest uncle succeeded to the title and estates. He was, as people justly observed, rather an odd man, built schools for peasants, forgave poachers, and diminished his farmers' rents; indeed, on account of these and similar follies, he was thought rather idiotic, especially as he never entered into public life, nor kept up his country connections, and it was therefore no object to him to be popular, — mais chacun à son goût. He paid my father's debts, and established us in the secure enjoyment of our former splendour. This piece of generosity was done however, in the most unhandsome manner, for he obtained a promise from my father to retire from Brooks's, and give up hunting; and prevailed upon my mother to take an aversion to diamonds, and to china monsters.

We also obtained shortly afterwards another increase of income, for my father, observing, with his usual dignified patriotism, that we should be all guillotined if he did not accept a place in the Treasury, accompanied Mr. Burke on a visit to the prime minister, and was fifteen hundred a year richer ever afterwards. The French revolution was no unfortunate event for us.

At ten years old I went to Eton. The day after my arrival I was told to wash tea-cups; I rejected so ungentlemanlike an office with becoming scorn, and was answered by a blow which felled me to the ground. Although my tyrant was much bigger and older than myself, I prepared for an engagement, in which I lost two teeth (luckily first teeth), and received, as a compensation, two black eyes. My mother called to see me the next day, and was naturally shocked by my appearance. Her tears and entreaties obtained from me a promise that I would submit to such derogations from my dignity as a gentleman, rather than fight and maul myself like the children in the street. "Some years hence," said she, "it may be necessary to defend your honour by a personal contest, but it is a very different thing to fight with pistols as a man, or to fight with fists as a boy." So logical an argument, assisted by the more

powerful rhetoric of gold, prevailed upon me to forego the pleasure of being beat at present, for the honour of being shot hereafter.

Of shy habits, and averse to games in which, as my mother sagely remarked, one tore one's clothes without any adequate recompense, I became insensibly fond of reading; my time was given wholly to my books, and I was repaid by the first place in the ensuing examination, and a public compliment on my premature ability. Fortunately for me, or I might have become a bookworm, or an author, I went home after this epoch in my academical career. We had people at dinner, I was permitted to join them. "Observe," said my mother, "Mr. Fitzdonnel; he is the most elegant man in London, the delight of every circle, the very reverse of your father, the very pattern of mine; in short, exactly what I wish you to be." I riveted my eyes on the object of this eulogium; I surveyed him from head to foot; there was nothing particular in his exterior, but I persuaded myself that he was an Apollo. At dinner he spoke much and badly, but all present laughed at his jests, and seemed pleased when he spoke to them. "Who is Mr. Fitzdonnel," whispered I to my father, next to whom I had squeezed myself. "Lord Merivale's second son," was the answer. Now Lord Merivale was the third in descent from a rich tradesman, who had already dissipated his fortune. Young as I was, I could not help thinking that the younger son of a man of no family and no fortune, must have some merit of his own to obtain such distinction, and Mr. Fitzdonnel rose proportionably in my opinion. I was then ignorant by what chances a man comes into fashion, and when there, what high, though alas! what brief, reputation he enjoys. The conversation turned upon one of the literary lions of the day, I think it was Mr. G—. "Ah," said Fitzdonnel, "I never thought much of him, quite a bookworm, not the least a man of the world; I don't know how it is, but it seems to me that learning only confuses real ability; the fire perishes by too much fuel; the more we study books the less we study man, and for persons in a certain station of life, — for diplomatists — for statesmen — for gentlemen, in short, mankind is the only study. I grant you" (added Mr. Fitzdonnel, with a slight smile and an almost imperceptible bow to my mother,) "that at certain times

the study of man is forgotten — but for what? the admiration of woman!" "Henry," said my mother, when I joined the ladies, "did you ever see so agreeable and so sensible a man as Mr. Fitzdonnel?" "Never," said I, and thenceforth I determined to shut up my books, and take to Mr. Fitzdonnel's. I am sure I owe almost as much to my mother in this respect as in all others put together, for she entirely blunted my appetite for knowledge; a thing which daily experience has since taught me only ruins our constitution and our prospects, — makes one content upon little, and, prefer the preservation of our independence to the making of our fortunes.

During the rest of the time that I spent at Eton I indulged in fanciful meditations on Arabian barbs and court dresses, (court was then the fashion,) made six bosom friends all of my own way of thinking, except one (of whom more hereafter) — ran into debt — praised Mr. Pitt — abused the French revolution — and skimmed through the Antijacobin. I was transplanted in the vigour of eighteen to Cambridge, where I bloomed for two years in the blue and silver of a Fellow Commoner of Trinity. At the end of that time, being of royal descent I became entitled to an honorary degree, I suppose the term is in contradistinction to an honourable degree, which is obtained by pale men in spectacles and cotton stockings after thirty-six months of intense application. I do not exactly remember how I spent my time at Cambridge; I had a piano forte in my room, and a private billiard table at Chesterton. Between these resources I managed to yawn through the intermediate hours of breakfast and dinner with more spirit than I could have expected in so low a place. For to say truth, it was an awful congregation of bores. The men drank malt by the gallon, and eat cheese by the hundred weight — wore jockey-cut coats, and talked slang — rode for wagers and swore when they lost — smoked in your face and expectorated on the floor. Their proudest glory was to drive the mail — their mightiest exploit to box with the coachman, their most delicate amour to leer at the bar-maid. I speak too, of those who constituted the best society one could get. The Dons talked to you about fellowships and fluxions, and the reading undergraduates would scarcely talk to you at all; neither was the

loss to be regretted, for their linen was a week old and if you asked them for the wine, they started as if out a reverie and said, "You will find it in Hydrostatics." At twenty I removed to London, where I profited much by my excellent education and the lessons of my mother. Although I could not afford an appearance of splendour equal to many of my rivals, yet I acquired the art of making a great deal out of a little; moreover, the coolness of my temper made me a fortunate gamester. As for my own person I was tall and slender, without any real pretensions to beauty, but my air, my carriage, and my assurance, did for me all which fine features and figure could effect for a person less accomplished.

At the end of the season, I was admired, courted, and very little in debt. I had the prudence, however, to take that debt, small as it was, as a hint that I must increase my ability of payment, but how was this desirable object to be accomplished? Professions are certainly less gentlemanlike than indolence. The Church is the best. The Army, notwithstanding all the titles it counts in its list, is abstractedly and positively vulgar. I grant that it is idle enough, but then one is "under command and has to do duty." What duty can a gentleman possibly have except to pay his debts of honour?

The Law is too bustling and business-like a pursuit; it makes our very mind professional, and we learn to consider even a duel or an intrigue illegal. The Church is really a gentlemanlike, good, younger-brotherish profession, but then one must renounce waltzing and pleasure, if one hopes for a bishopric, and what other hope could induce a gentleman to become a Reverend?

"Marry an heiress;" said my mother. "It is a good thought," said I; and accordingly the next season I had got the six best down in my betting book.

The first, Miss Biddulph, was the daughter of a stock broker, and had 100,000 £. She was a fine showy girl; with a high colour, a loud laugh, and over-flowing with the most excruciating animation and health. She was pleased with my addresses, and at the end of a fortnight, I said, as I went to dine with her father, "I will propose after dinner, if the d—d city cook does not poison me with his paraphrase of French dishes." But happily it was a

family party; the relations were present; her uncle was a pastry-cook, a most worthy person, who never pronounced the h s. — I could not bear the thought of his little grand nephews calling for tartlets — it would have been an insult to the good man — I spared him the possibility of incurring it, and the next morning rode out for the first time with Miss Melvil, — heiress the second on my list. She was young, pretty, and of good family, which went far with me, and of 5000 £ a-year in Gloucestershire, which went much farther. She was a sensible clever young lady, and I therefore made some impression upon her at first; most unaccountably this impression appeared to wear away. I told my mother to observe her and see what I had to hope. She did so, and assured me that Miss Melvil blushed at my name, caressed my dog, and almost fainted when she heard a false rumour that I had fallen from my horse. Upon this hint I resolved to speak. I repaired to Miss Melvil's house: she was alone; I took the opportunity — proposed, and was rejected. There was a tear in her eye, and a softness in her voice, which destroyed the stunning severity of the negative. "What," I entreated to know "what could be the reason of her decision? Could it never be overcome?" Miss Melvil "feared not, but it depended upon me." "Upon me! if so, what wonders could not be accomplished by a love like mine!" The tale was told, and what do you think was the mighty objection? Why my morals forsooth. She required me to renounce gaming, and forswear my "profligate acquaintance." I could only take this as a hint to cut my own father and mother! Could I fail to be horror-struck at so unnatural a proposal?

Miss Melvil owned that she could love me, but said it was necessary that she should also esteem me. She never would blush for her husband. It was too late for me to go to school again, and too early for me to commence hypocrite, so after obtaining a promise that the rejection of my suit should not be divulged, a promise granted with extraordinary ease, and some inexplicable appearance of contempt, I took my hat, and retired, overwhelmed with astonishment and chagrin. My next love was for the 50,000 £ of Lady Jane Carver. I had three rivals, each handsomer, richer, and nobler than myself. Fortunately Lady Jane was blest with a

spirit of contradiction; her father, though no Solomon, had sufficient penetration to discover that I was the worst match his daughter could make, he behaved to me accordingly. His rudeness of course attracted the kindness of Lady Jane; the more the Earl frowned, the more her Ladyship smiled; the cooler he was in his own house, the warmer became his daughter at the houses of others; till at length, by the aforesaid spirit of contradiction alone, I, the plainest, poorest, least attractive, and least deserving of all my rivals, reached the summit in the lady's affection, and looked down with the most refreshing contempt upon my toiling, baffled, and wrathful competitors.

It will be remembered that I said, among my school friends there was only one whose way of thinking differed from my own; it is strange that of all those friends he alone became linked with the thread of my future existence, it is still more strange that he, differing from me in every thing, pleased and fascinated me, far more than my most congenial companions. I loved him indeed, with a warmth which frequently astonished myself. Frederick Morland was the son of a merchant, celebrated for the extraordinary amount of his wealth: of the same age with myself, he had singled me out at Eton as the object of his particular affection; I have said how I returned it.

He was of a very singular disposition — he never thought about himself! He had one foolish darling propensity which actuated every thought, word, and action; it was zeal for the happiness of others. He was not of a light joyous temper, but there was an appearance of heart in his look and voice which gave him a peculiar and indescribable charm. Yet having been less fortunate than myself in a preceptress at home, his notions of society were frequently anything but dignified and acute. For instance, when we were about fourteen, we were walking once in Pall Mall, — a child was run over by a servant in a curricle, — the man passed on without any other remark than an oath: a crowd collected, no one knew anything respecting the infant, who were its parents, where it came from, how it got there, but every one saw from its dress that it must be of that class from which no reward could be expected; and so man, woman, and fellow-child merely stared and

said, 'what a pity!' Morland sprang forward, took the poor devil in his arms, and instead of carrying it to the next public-house, which would have answered the same purpose, ran with it, bleeding and dirty as it was, down Bond Street to his father's in Grosvenor Square, weeping and muttering over it all the way like a madman. Luckily I managed to escape. Two years before I would have done the same thing myself — but nobody knows my obligations to my mother! I have only to add with regard to Morland's character, which I am taking the trouble to sketch because he is shortly to make his appearance, that the same susceptibility of temper which led him to acts of kindness and benevolence, made him also deeply sensible of injury; and his attachment to all whom he once loved was so vivid, that although he might pardon an offence against himself he never forgave an insult to them.

One night at Lady H—'s, when I was paying my court to Lady Jane, I suddenly perceived her attention diverted from my conversation, with that appearance of agitation on her countenance which can rarely be called to the cheek of ladies in a certain station, except by the fault of a lover or the superiority of a rival; the latter was now the affliction of Lady Jane. "Pray," said she, with a sour sneer, "do you think that girl so very handsome?" I turned round and saw the most exquisite creature I had ever beheld, leaning on the arm of my stately and unaltered Achates, Frederick Morland. My eye met his — we knew each other in one moment, and in the next we had joined hands, and felt that the men were mutually as dear as the boys had been. I had left my lady companion, he had quitted his — we were forced to retreat. "You will breakfast with me to-morrow," said I, "but are you married?" "No," "Who then is that beautiful creature?" "My sister: shall I introduce you?" "I shall be too delighted, but I must first disengage myself," and in truth it was time to soothe Lady Jane, for I observed that flashing eye and that frowning brow, which are such agreeable accompaniments to the face of the lady you intend to marry.

I soon made my peace, went with Lady Jane down one dance, which seemed almost interminable, yielded her to Lord Belton with

the most edifying resignation, and in five minutes afterwards was consoling myself with Miss Morland. After one has been jaded for two months with playing the agreeable to faces which half a dozen seasons of dissipation have despoiled of all freshness, and to minds worn perfectly threadbare in the same dull and unvarying routine of flirting and folly, it is something vastly refreshing to meet with features one has never seen before, whose animated and expressive loveliness would alone make them seem constantly new, and a mind as yet unblunted and unhackneyed — an intellectual kaleidoscope constantly changing, brilliant and beautiful in every change! Miss Morland was just o u t. I do love young ladies who are just o u t! all the remarks they make, if they are not too shy to make any, have a most delicious and racy freshness about them — the sparkle of the soda water before it becomes insipid by standing. They have not got into the beaten round of question and answer; they have not yet learned the art of jingling the same bells fifty different ways, harsh variations in monotony. Miss Morland and I became the best friends in the world, and I went home as soon as she left the ball, as much in love as a sensible man can be before he knows the exact fortune of his mistress. Morland came the next morning, and that fortune was ascertained: 80,000*l.* on the day of her marriage, 20,000*l.* more at her father's death. It is impossible to describe the excess of my passion, on hearing this intelligence! I owned to Morland how his sister had smitten me. His eyes glistened, he seized my hand, his sister was dearer to him than his life; his hopes, his wishes, were centred in her. What delight should he experience if the happiness of his earliest friend became by the dearest ties linked and entwined through existence with his own. "I will live with you," he said, "for I shall never marry. I loved once, but she whom I loved is dead, and love sleeps in her tomb; our fortunes like our affections shall be in common, we will distribute them so that others may be sharers in our bliss. From the centre of our happiness the circle shall widen and extend its protection over all who enter the limits of its influence, and when we are weary with the blessings of our own hearth, we will go forth and feast upon the blessings we have given to our fellow creatures."

I was so affected by the enthusiasm with which these words were uttered, that I felt my heart melt within me. I threw myself into Morland's arms, and could almost have wept with a delicious sensation which I had never experienced before. For two months I was daily with the Morlands. The father was of a bold, speculative, restless nature, constantly engrossed with business, and thoughtful and reserved even his scanty hours of relaxation. The mother was a woman of masculine mind and strong sense, cold in her manners, even to her nearest relations, but concealing beneath her freezing exterior a spring of deep and energetic feeling. Her ruling passion was love for her children, for her son in particular — perhaps indeed it was rather pride than love; pride for his talents, for his virtues, for his personal beauty, for his high reputation among the few who had already earned it from the many. Of course I dropt my amour with Lady Jane, who soon after married Lord Belton. — Since her marriage we have been on the most intimate footing, "Honi soit qui mal y pense!"

I had much difficulty in winning the affections of Miss Morland. She saw in her brother a being whom she considered the epitome of every perfection, and as there was little in my character resembling his, she remained unmoved by my attentions, flattering as they must have been; insensibly and inconceivably I slid into a new character — owned my follies — talked of my unfortunate education — hinted at the certainty of reform, if the one whose controul over my heart was so unlimited would deign to direct and inspire me. To this day I know not whether I was in counterfeit or earnest, but my metamorphosis had a wonderful effect. A woman may often resist the most admired rake, but very seldom, when, while he keeps his claims to be admired, he offers for her sake to renounce his pretensions to be a rake. I do believe that at the end of the season I was loved with all that deep and spiritual truth and tenderness of which woman is capable. Women are so silly!

I made a formal proposal to the father, and was as formally accepted, if wife and daughter approved; of the consent of the latter I was certain. For the consent of the former I tried to insinuate that there was no particular necessity. Mr. Morland begged leave

to undeceive me; he left all those trifling domestic arrangements wholly to his wife; he had resolved never to interfere with them. He wished me a good morning — he was going to negociate a loan with government — he hoped to see me at dinner. I went to Miss Morland; it is needless to speak of the smiles and blushes which gave new charms to the most beautiful face in the world; suffice it to say that by Ellen I was not rejected: yes! that was certainly the happiest moment of my life; happier than when, at an earlier period, I first rode a horse of my own — happier than when, in later life, in the full flush of triumph and success, I exultingly seduced away Lord H — 's celebrated cook. I next repaired to Mrs. Morland. She told me coldly that she perceived her daughter's happiness was centred in me, and that she would not therefore object to our marriage, though she candidly confessed I was not exactly the person she would have chosen. Her son's friendship for me went however a great way in my favour; but as Ellen and myself were still very young she required me to go abroad for two years, and if at the end of that time we both still wished for the connection — she would feel most happy to see it cemented. In vain I petitioned for a shorter probation — in vain I talked to Ellen of unnatural parents and Gretna Green — in vain I solicited the brother's interference — in vain I interrupted the speculations of the father; the fiat was despotic. I took an affectionate leave of my parents, was persuaded by Frederick Morland to suffer my creditors to make his acquaintance, and set off one fine morning for Dover. I had scarcely reached the Continent before Peace, like a raw recruit, put on a red coat, and clamoured for war. I managed, with my usual good fortune, to avoid being taken prisoner — got over to Germany — saw whatever I could see — was politely requested to fight against Bonaparte — declined the offer — returned home some months before the end of the two years in a smuggling vessel — having managed to leave every sentiment unworthy of a gentleman to take care of my debts on the continent. Before I left England I was an English rake, I was now refined into a foreign debauchee. The initiated will know the vast difference between the two! I arrived in town and had a most affecting interview with my mother, who only recovered from her swoon at my return, to go into hyste-

rics at the beautiful shawls I had brought her. My first inquiry was for Ellen — short answers and long faces: sifted the matter, and ascertained that her father being a considerable loser by the recommencement of war, had entered into mercantile speculations unusually bold; had failed, and on receiving the intelligence three weeks ago had given his razor a wrong turn, and had left his family the honour of his name, and the reputation of having once been extremely rich agreeable people. What a miserably ungentlemanlike thing, to send a man on his travels for two years on the promise of giving him £100,000, and then to get rid of the promise with the same instrument by which one would get rid of a beard.

With some difficulty I saw that family poor, wretched, deserted, whom I had left in the honour and envy of the world. I threw myself at the feet of her whom I still loved, not indeed with the love of my earlier youth, but with the burning passion of manhood — how beautiful were her tears — how innocent her thoughts, when she asked if I was indeed as unchanged as I declared; if I would indeed take a beggar to my heart, and be contented with the inexhaustible riches of her affection. Mrs. Morland lost all her coldness of manner when I told her I was come to claim my reward. She did not, she must confess, expect such generosity from my character. She must own that she was deceived; I was now indeed worthy to be the friend of her son, and the chosen of her daughter. But where was that son? he met me with a step as proud, and a brow, if not so calm, at least as lofty, as when he stood in the princely halls of his father in the zenith of his prosperity. I was soon restored to my former footing, and it was understood that at the end of the year my betrothed was to be my bride. And now, dear and sagacious reader, dost thou think that my travels had so softened my wits, that all the dictates of common sense had no weight against the romance of my honour or the purity of my love? If thou dost, then the Lord lighten thee — I will not continue the quotation. The fact is, that I still had a marvellous affection for Ellen; in my travels I had seen none equal to her in beauty, in grace, in tenderness. I returned, and even in her grief could not but see how the lapse of time had unfolded the blossoms of her loveliness. Now, although the loss of her fortune

prevented my thinking of her as a wife, yet, thank Heaven, marriage is not the only method of enjoying the woman one adores; but there was no prospect of any alternative save by those opportunities of free and constant intercourse, which could only be obtained by the intimate friendship and confidence of the whole trio, — this, also, there was no other way to acquire but by renewing my former matrimonial offers — neither was there any fear of matters being too closely expedited. Nearly a whole year of mourning had yet to take place before even I could, with any propriety, press for the happy day; during this intervening time, with such advantages as I possessed, and with such increased experience in these matters as I had acquired, it would indeed be strange if I could not effect my purpose.

As it was by no means desirable to be seen in public intimacy with the son of a ruined suicide, as moreover I wished to get rid, as much as possible, of so clear-sighted an observer as Frederick Morland, I took care to procure for him, through my father's interest, a place under government, not indeed very lucrative, but most honourably laborious. To make short a tale, already much too long, I spared no pains to increase and inflame Ellen's pure and girlish attachment to her lover; but there was such an innocence in her every thought, that I could never succeed in corrupting in her even that passion which is the most sensible of corruption. Time flew away — several months had elapsed — and I had made no progress. "The fort (how I love old metaphors, there is no trouble in them) must be carried by a coup de main," said I. It was the middle of summer, I had not been able to leave Ellen, but in order to avoid the disreputable appearance of staying in town at that time of the year, I had hired a house in those fields now honoured by the name of 'the Regent's Park.' There were a few agreeable families in the neighbourhood, a few more still staying in town; "I will give," said I, "a bachelor's feast, I will have tents on my lawn, and lamps on my poplars, and supper in my house, and people shall come masked, and I will call it, in newspaper language, a fête champêtre." With the greatest difficulty I prevailed upon Ellen to quit home for the first time since her father's death, and grace my festival with her presence — Mrs.

Morland would as soon have thought of going to the cider cellar. So Ellen was put under the protection of a mutual acquaintance. I said, on the important day (as I was taking up my hat to depart from Mrs. Morland's house,) "If Frederick likes to come, of course he will, but as I know his aversion to such things, I thought it would be an idle compliment to ask him." Mrs. Morland was, as I had foreseen, piqued at my cavalier invitation. "You may depend upon it, Mr. Mortimer," said she, "Frederick will not trouble you with his presence." "Well, I know he is somewhat cynical," was my answer, as I left the room. Poor Ellen! as I looked up to the window from the street I caught her gaze so full of the fondness of her love!

Well, the evening came, and with it came my guests. I went with considerable patience through the ordinary insipidity of such entertainments; wrapped in a dark domino I mingled with the crowd, and for once heard myself canvassed, blamed, and praised, ridiculed and admired, without a single feeling of depressed or elated vanity; — my whole soul was indeed bent with the concentrated force of flame upon the one thought — that that night I was to be completely happy. So certain was I of success, that fear did not for a moment mingle with my feelings; I joined Ellen, I danced with her, I talked to her in the glowing language of love, I led her to the refreshment table, I drugged the wine and water which I gave her, she drank it without a thought or suspicion; "She is mine," I exclaimed inwardly, and my eye flashed at the thought. "Beautiful Ellen," said I, "there is one room which I have just fitted up, I have not yet shown it you;" I put her arm through mine, we turned to a passage which led to a part of the house wholly unfrequented, and through which the servants had strict orders to allow no one but myself to pass. Just as we got to it, I accordingly turned round, a mask was close behind me. He appeared, however, to have wandered there only through curiosity, for he passed on in an opposite direction; "On your life," I whispered to my Swiss valet, whom I had stationed at the entrance of the passage, "on your life suffer no one to pass." We went through the passage, I felt Ellen's hand tremble in mine, her bosom heaved; — the drug works, I thought.

"Here is the room," I said, as we entered one prepared for my purpose; in a moment I had, unperceived by her, bolted the door, in the next I was at her feet. The agitation of my voice; the fire of my eyes alarmed her, she retreated to the other end of the room; I followed her; my charm was at its operation; never had I known the woman who could resist it; but Ellen was more than woman. "Leave me, Mortimer," she cried, and burst into tears, "if ever I was dear to you — if ever you prized my peace, my life, my eternal happiness — if ever you felt respect for all that was valuable, and precious, and sacred to my soul, do not approach me by another step!" — I paused, but only for an instant — I clasped her in my arms — faint and struggling, she had still the strength to scream; at that moment I heard the loudness of voices in wrath — the expostulation of my faithful Swiss — the sudden silence of that expostulation, — at the same time that a heavy noise, like the falling of a body, shook the house. I heard the rush of steps; I heard three violent assaults at the door of the apartment; at the fourth it gave way, and the dark figure which I had seen in the passage stood before me. He tore the mask from his face, it was Frederick Morland; — Ellen lay on the floor in a swoon, the only sign of guilt was in my confusion. "Wretch," cried Morland, sternly, "if I had been too late, you would only have left this chamber as a corpse." I now saw a pistol in his hand. "Mr. Morland," said I, "your sister — your — your sister — is innocent!" "Quit the room, Sir," whispered Morland, in a voice unnaturally low, "or" — and his pistol was levelled at my breast. Like all gentlemen, education had made me brave; I did not feel so much alarm at my danger, as an internal sinking at my own littleness I believe that was the only time in my life in which I ever quailed to an enemy. I turned to quit the room, a thought struck me; even in that moment of shame, and confusion, and peril, I am proud to say that I had not forgotten the lessons of my youth: "Do not make an exposé," said I, "remember the world." "I will remember," said Morland, with the muttered tone of that suppressed wrath which shook him like a whirlwind, "I will remember my sister's fame, and I will remember the vengeance which . due to him who would

have dishonoured it!" I left the house, I wandered into the garden, groups were scattered over the grass, their laughter smote my ear, their revelry sickened my very soul, I could have roared aloud in the agony of my heart; there, one by one, I saw my guests depart. Insensibly the night melted into day. The bright sun shone forth, exulting in the glory of his summer strength, the green earth glittered in his lustre, but the blight of the winter, and the darkness of the midnight, and the wrath of the tempest, were warring on my spirit. God bless me, dear reader, how excessively poetical! I think I must have been reading my cotemporary Lord Thurlow lately, and borrowing his style; well, I got to bed at last, slept not very quietly, but at least for several hours; and, when I awoke, the following note from Ellen was put into my hands: —

"Yes, Mortimer, it is my hand-writing. Again, and for the last time, you hold communication with one who once asked only to be yours for ever. I do not write to upbraid you; I have enough to do in stifling the reproaches of my own heart; neither will I complain, if I can command myself, for indeed I have cause to be grateful. Shame, it is true, I must feel for ever, but the curse of guilt I have been spared. Time, they say, cures all evils, but I think at present that my heart is broken, — I have nothing on this side the grave to which I can look forward with pleasure. — I have so long been accustomed to love you, to carry every fonder thought, every idea of future happiness as offerings to one shrine, that it seems to me that I have now to tear myself from my past life and enter, spiritless and hopeless, upon a new existence. I have to lay aside what has literally become a part of my nature. Alas, the effort will cost me dear, but it shall be made — if it does not succeed, I have no other choice than to lie down and die. But I said I would not upbraid you, nor complain — you will smile to see how I have kept my word; why, indeed, should I utter complaints either to or against you? Henceforth I am to you as nothing; I even think that I must always have been utterly indifferent to you, or you would not have resolved to lose me for ever, — for, think you, that even if your designs had succeeded, I would have survived my disgrace? No, I should only have lived to curse, — not you, Mortimer, but myself. My shame, my agony, would have killed me on the spot But you are wondering why I write to you now. Believe me, Mor-

timer, it is no common incentive which induces me to do so, it is nothing less than the life of my brother and your own. I know from what he could not conceal, that Frederick will seek his revenge after the fashion of the world. You know how ungoverned and terrible is his anger, whenever he conceives that those whom he loves have been injured. Do not, do not meet him; I do not ask you to incur any reproach from that world to which you are so devoted, — you can leave town immediately, before he has time to see or to send to you: in a few days the mist of his passion will be cleared, and I shall have nothing to fear; it is only for the first moment that I dread. I know, Mortimer, that you will not willingly lift your hand against the friend of your childhood, against one who has loved you as tenderly as a brother; I know that you will not utterly destroy the happiness of my poor mother; I know that you will not ruin the fair fame, and blast the slender hopes of comfort, which remain to her whom you have sworn so often to cherish and love. Grant me this one request, and though I now say farewell for ever, yet I will pray for you with the same fervour as in happier moments. Dare I trust in you, Mortimer — I would fain believe it — see how the paper is blistered with my tears, they are the first that I have shed since we parted; let them speak for me, let them save my brother, my mother, yourself, and I shall be contented if they flow for ever. Grant me this, Mortimer, and when I am on my death-bed I will remember you, and send you my blessing.

ELLEN MORLAND.

I rung my bell, ordered four horses to my carriage immediately. "You shall be obeyed, Ellen," said I, "it is not by me that your brother shall fall." "Sir," said my Swiss servant, entering the room, "there is a gentleman below who insists upon seeing you." "Blockhead, why did you let him in?" Poor Louis had had enough of playing the sentinel the night before! "Go, and tell him I am just setting off to Devonshire, and can see no one." "Sir," said Louis, returning, "I have told him so, and he says he has the more reason for immediately — and — Diable — here he is, Sir." And, in sober earnest, in stalked a military looking figure, whom I immediately recognised as a Colonel Macnaughten, an old friend of Morland's. "Sir," said he, "you will excuse this intrusion." "No Sir, I will not excuse it, begone." My visiter stared, took a chair with infinite sang froid, told

Louis to leave the room, and shut the door, and then quietly taking snuff, said with a smile, "Mr. Mortimer, you cannot affront me now; I am utterly impervious to insult till I have fulfilled my errand, and now I am sure you will not insult me." This errand was, of course, a challenge from Morland. I refused it at once, but said to Macnaughten, who elevated his eyebrows a little superciliously, "Sir, if you are disposed for fighting, and it will oblige you, I will fight you instead with all the pleasure imaginable." My gentleman, who was a Scotchman, laughed for ten minutes at this proposal, and, when he was able, he told me that Morland had foreseen my refusal, had bade him say that he would be satisfied with no excuse, that he would post me in every coffee-house, that he would follow and insult me wherever I went, if I refused; that, in short, no earthly method but the sword would satisfy him. "The pistol, you mean," said I. "True," replied Macnaughten, "if you prefer it, but my principal says that his skill as a shot is so much greater than yours, and he is so determined to prosecute the duel to the utmost, that he cannot resolve to take so unfair an advantage as the use of the orthodox weapon would give him. He tells me that you have often practised the small sword together before you went abroad, and that you are very even antagonists; for myself, I made some demur, as the weapon was now becoming so completely out of use, but seeing my principal so determined, I could scarcely, as a swordsman by profession, withhold my consent. However, it is for you to choose, Mr. Mortimer." I could not but feel that this was generous conduct in Morland, for at that very moment I saw a penknife on the table upon which he had split a bullet but three days before. His generosity was, however, a proof of the deadliness of his anger and his intentions. I must confess that upon hearing the sword proposed, my refusal was much staggered. I had practised fencing abroad, with very considerable diligence and success, and believed myself equal to the most redoubted opponent. Now, with that great superiority which I must possess over Morland, who was scarcely a match for me even before I went abroad, nothing could be more easy than to disarm, or slightly wound the sword-arm of, my antagonist, in either case

the duel would be at an end, and without any fatal results. To gain time for consideration, I told the colonel that I would consult with a friend, and inform him that evening as to my determination. To cut short a long story, finding it did not interfere with the remotest punctilio of honour, to avail myself of my choice of weapons; terrified by the idea of being posted and cut; persuaded of my skill being able to prevent any possibility of danger; and resolved, at all events, that no consideration should tempt me to stand upon any ground but the defensive; I took the only measure which a gentleman really could take, and accepted the challenge. I despatched an equivocating note to Ellen, informing her of her brother's safety, and then waited with tolerable patience for the next morning; that morning came, — I was upon the ground first, Morland was only three minutes behind me. His countenance was composed and firm, but of a deathlike paleness. When I saw him advancing, I felt my heart melt within me; I thought of our boyish attachment, of his generous temper, of his reverse of fortune, of his noble conduct in the very strife wich was about to ensue, and I longed to rush into his arms, to acknowledge my fault, to beseech him to let my future life atone for the past, regain me the hand of his sister, and the esteem of himself; but I was doubtful how my advances would be received; fearful of the misinterpretation which might be put upon them; conscious that the world would talk of Mr. Mortimer being bullied into marrying a girl without a sixpence; — and resolved that I would never lose that reputation more dear to a gentleman than his life.

Our eyes met as we took our station. In Morland's there was a collected ferocity which mine quailed beneath. The duel began with considerable caution on either side; by degrees Moreland warmed; he made some fierce but well directed thrusts, which called forth all my skill; I had him twice in my power, but he was not aware of his danger, and I wished only to disarm or disable his vengeance. At length the opportunity came, he made a pass with more strength than science, his sword was struck from his hand and fell at the distance of several yards, the point of mine was at his breast. He strove to regain himself, his foot slipped, his bosom came upon my blade, and with a thrill of intense and

indescribable horror, I saw him bathed in his blood upon the earth. He writhed in the pangs of death, he tore up the grass convulsively with his hands; his countenance, stamped with agony, wrath, and the last struggle of life, glared full upon me. It was but for a moment, — the catastrophe was over. He was dead! The only friend who ever truly loved me, the warm-hearted, the gifted, the generous, was no more. They hurried me away, I knew not whither; I was encompassed by a terrible dream. If a thunder-bolt had fallen at my feet it would not have awakened me. For a month, so they told me afterwards, for to me there was no knowledge or division of time; — for a month I was in a delirious fever.

They sent for my father; he had the gout, how could he come? They sent for my mother; she was on a visit to her brother in Essex. There was a large party of "distinguished fashionables" there; nevertheless she tore herself away. Her carriage stopped for five minutes at my door; my fever she found was infectious — how could she stay? She got me an excellent nurse, sent me two more physicians, made them promise to write to her every day, returned to London Park, looked charmingly interesting, and talked of nerves and maternal anxiety. I recovered. When I became perfectly sensible of the past, my first question was for the Morlands. My attendants were silent, they pretended to be ignorant, they enjoined me to be quiet and mute; something was evidently concealed beneath this apparent disguise. For some days I remained in this state of ignorance, but such was the vigour of my constitution, that, notwithstanding the restless agitation of my mind, my bodily health hourly amended. When I found myself able to walk without assistance, I discharged my nurse, sent out my faithful servant, let myself out at the door, despatched a boy who was playing at marbles, (happy dog!) for a coach, threw myself into it, and drove to Mrs. Morland's. The house was shut up; I knocked three times before any one opened the door, and at length an old woman of most ominously ill-favoured appearance came forth. "Where is Mrs. Morland?" said I. "In Pancras Church-yard," said the hag with a horrid laugh. "Good God," cried I, shuddering, "is she dead?" "Aye, she died this very

day three weeks. When they told her as how her son was shot dead, she was seized with a paralytic; never spoke for twenty days, till just before her death she cried out 'my son, my son;' and when the doctor called again, an hour afterwards, she was quite dead. But Lord, Sir, how ill you look; if so be as you are going to die, don't die here. We have had quite funerals enough, I 'm thinking." I leant against the railing so sick at heart, that for some moments I was perfectly unconscious. The old woman got me a glass of water. "I suppose, Sir, you knew Mrs. Morland well, and poor Miss Ellen, mayhap." "What of her?" asked I, in a calm tone — the terrible calmness of despair. "She is dead too, I suppose?" "No, Sir, no; she be out of her mind — mad, Sir: they have taken her to Dr. —." I heard no more. I knew no more for several weeks — my delirium returned. Fortunately the hackney coachman had not left the door. How he found my house out I know not — but I was carried there. My life was totally despaired of, but it was not a trifle that could break my heart: I again opened my eyes upon the things of this world, but my constitution was shattered — the freshness of my youth was gone; I have never been the same person since. I will pass over the gradual steps of my recovery. I paid my physician his last fee, promised to take care of myself, ordered my carriage, and drove to Dr. —'s. It was there where the woman had told me Ellen was confined. My mind and soul were filled but with one idea; "I shall see her again," I said; and repeated the same words, without ceasing, till I was at the dreadful gates. There came forth a man of a smiling and rosy aspect; he was the head of the establishment; never did I meet with any one half so polite; but at times, when the smirk left his lip and he was not exerting himself to be agreeable, there was a cruel and sinister expression in his countenance, which betokened a disposition fitting his profession. *

I asked for Miss Morland. "She is too unwell to see any one, Sir," said the doctor. I was prepared for this. I knew something of the nature of private mad-houses. I placed in his hand a draft

* The reader will observe that the description of the mad-house, &c., is retained in "Pelham," though applied to a very different tale.

for no inconsiderable sum. "I am one of her nearest relations, oblige me by accepting this for your attentions, and permit me to see her." The man looked at me and the note; he saw from my pale and debilitated appearance that I was not a Hercules likely to disarrange his Hell, and he was too happy to oblige me. I entered — I passed through a long passage — shrieks smote my ear — they were silenced by the lash. "If Ellen's voice —" I dared not pursue the terrible idea. My guide went on, talking of himself and his humanity, but I answered him not. We came to a small door at the right hand — it was the last but one in the passage — we stopped before it. I trembled so that I entreated him to wait for a minute before he opened it. I heard a low moan; "Now," said I, "I am ready, Sir." The doctor opened the door — I was in the same apartment with Ellen! Oh, God! who but myself could have recognised her! Her long and raven hair fell over her face in wild disorder; she put it aside; her cheek was as the cheek of the dead; the hueless skin clung to the bone; her eye was dull; not a ray of intellect illumined its glance; she looked long at me. "I am very cold," she said, "but if I complain you will beat me:" she fell down again upon the straw and wept. The man turned to me, "This is her way, Sir," said he, "her madness is of a very singular description; she never laughs, rarely says more than two or three words during the day, and is always in tears; it is impossible to calculate her madness, I cannot say even whether she is, or is not, conscious of the past." I did not stay longer in the room. I bribed the doctor to allow me to carry my victim to my home. Night and day for six weeks I was by her side; she knew me not — Not till one night; the moon, which was at its full, shone into the chamber — we were alone — she turned her face to me — and a bright ray shot across her eye and played in smiles upon her lip. "It is over," she said, "God forgive you, Henry Mortimer, as I do!" I caught her in my arms. I am choking at this moment with the recollection — I cannot tell you — you can guess! — We buried her that week by the side of her mother.

Sixteen years since that event have passed over my head. By the death of my relations I have succeeded to the titles and estates of my family. I have never married; and, except that I suffer from

occasional hypochondria and headachs, I am tolerably happy. Of late, too, I have been somewhat troubled with three or four innovating grey hairs; I had a twinge of the gout at Easter, and last Sunday I went to church. Perhaps, I may marry soon, but girls are such flirts! and there is a coarseness in the present age which I find it difficult to tolerate. Women are not soft enough! they eat too much luncheon, and ride too hard. I think I am becoming a *bon vivant*. I have an excellent taste in wines, and am hand-in-glove with Lord —. Such, reader, is my character and my life, if you are in good society, you must often have met me. Had I married her perhaps I might have been different — but — bring me the laudanum drops, Louis!

*** There are a thousand things in this boyish sketch which I should have altered, had I not wished to gratify, rather the curiosity than the taste, of the reader, by presenting to him, uncorrected and untouched, almost the first prose tale of an author who has since so frequently demanded the indulgence of the public; and the original germ of that Novel which forms the subject matter of this volume.

BULWER.

Leipzig, Bernh. Tauchnitz jun.

PELHAM;

OR, THE

ADVENTURES OF A GENTLEMAN.

BY

EDWARD LYTTON BULWER.

WITH THE PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR.

LEIPZIG

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