

madam, as complete a villain as ever disgraced humanity. A wretch, who, after having deluded this poor man's daughter, after plotting against the innocence of her sister, has thrown the father into prison, and the eldest son into fetters, because he had the courage to face her betrayer! And give me leave, madam, now to congratulate you upon an escape from the embraces of such a monster."

"O goodness," cried the lovely girl, "how have I been deceived! Mr. Thornhill informed me, for certain, that this gentleman's eldest son, Captain Primrose, was gone off to America with his new-married lady."

"My sweetest miss," cried my wife, "he has told you nothing but falsehoods. My son George never left the kingdom, nor ever was married. Though you have forsaken him he has always loved you too well to think of anybody else: and I have heard him say he would die a bachelor for your sake." She then proceeded to expatiate upon the sincerity of her son's passion; she set his duel with Mr. Thornhill in a proper light; from thence she made a rapid digression to the squire's debaucheries, his pretended marriages, and ended with a most insulting picture of his cowardice.

"Good Heavens!" cried Miss Wilmot, "how

very near have I been to the brink of ruin ! but how great is my pleasure to have escaped it ! Ten thousand falsehoods has this gentleman told me ! He had at last art enough to persuade me that my promise to the only man I esteemed was no longer binding, since he had been unfaithful. By his falsehoods I was taught to detest one equally brave and generous."

By this time my son was freed from the encumbrances of justice, as the person supposed to be wounded was detected to be an impostor. Mr. Jenkinson also, who had acted as his valet-de-chambre, had dressed up his hair, and furnished him with whatever was necessary to make a genteel appearance. He now, therefore, entered, handsomely dressed in his regimentals, and without vanity (for I am above it) he appeared as handsome a fellow as ever wore a military dress. As he entered, he made Miss Wilmot a modest and distant bow, for he was not as yet acquainted with the change which the eloquence of his mother had wrought in his favour. But no decorums could restrain the impatience of his blushing mistress to be forgiven. Her tears, her looks, all contributed to discover the real sensations of her heart, for having forgotten her former promise, and having suffered herself to

be deluded by an impostor. My son appeared amazed at her condescension, and could scarcely believe it real. "Sure, madam," cried he, "this is but delusion; I can never have merited this! To be blessed thus, is to be too happy!"—"No, sir," replied she, "I have been deceived, basely deceived, else nothing could have ever made me unjust to my promise. You know my friendship, you have long known it: but forget what I have done; and, as you once had my warmest vows of constancy, you shall now have them repeated; and be assured, that if your Arabella cannot be yours, she shall never be another's."—"And no other's you shall be," cried Sir William, "if I have any influence with your father."

This hint was sufficient for my son Moses, who immediately flew to the inn where the old gentleman was, to inform him of every circumstance that had happened. But in the meantime the squire, perceiving that he was on every side undone, now finding that no hopes were left from flattery or dissimulation, concluded that his wisest way would be to turn and face his pursuers. Thus laying aside all shame, he appeared the open hardy villain. "I find then," cried he, "that I am to expect no justice here; but I am resolved it shall be done me. You shall know,

sir," turning to Sir William, "I am no longer a poor dependant upon your favours. I scorn them. Nothing can keep Miss Wilmot's fortune from me, which, I thank her father's assiduity, is pretty large. The articles and a bond for her fortune are signed, and safe in my possession. It was her fortune, not her person, that induced me to wish for this match; and, possessed of the one, let who will take the other."

This was an alarming blow: Sir William was sensible of the justice of his claims, for he had been instrumental in drawing up the marriage-articles himself. Miss Wilmot, therefore, perceiving that her fortune was irretrievably lost, turning to my son, asked if the loss of fortune could lessen her value to him. "Though fortune," said she, "is out of my power, at least I have my hand to give."

"And that, madam," cried her real lover, "was indeed all that you ever had to give; at least, all that I ever thought worth the acceptance. And I now protest, my Arabella, by all that's happy, your want of fortune this moment increases my pleasure, as it serves to convince my sweet girl of my sincerity."

Mr. Wilmot now entering, he seemed not a little pleased at the danger his daughter had just

escaped, and readily consented to a dissolution of the match. But finding that her fortune, which was secured to Mr. Thornhill by bond, would not be given up, nothing could exceed his disappointment. He now saw that his money must all go to enrich one who had no fortune of his own. He could bear his being a rascal, but to want an equivalent to his daughter's fortune was wormwood. He sat, therefore, for some minutes employed in the most mortifying speculations, till Sir William attempted to lessen his anxiety. "I must confess, sir," cried he, "that your present disappointment does not entirely displease me. Your immoderate passion for wealth is now justly punished. But though the young lady cannot be rich, she has still a competence sufficient to give content. Here you see an honest young soldier, who is willing to take her without fortune; they have long loved each other, and for the friendship I bear his father my interest shall not be wanting in his promotion. Leave, then, that ambition which disappoints you, and for once admit that happiness which courts your acceptance."

"Sir William," replied the old gentleman, "be assured I never yet forced her inclinations, nor will I now. If she still continues to love

this young gentleman, let her have him with all my heart. There is still, thank Heaven, some fortune left, and your promise will make it something more. Only let my old friend here" (meaning me) "give me a promise of settling six thousand pounds upon my girl, if ever he should come to his fortune, and I am ready this night to be the first to join them together."

As it now remained with me to make the young couple happy, I readily gave a promise of making the settlement he required; which, to one who had such little expectations as I, was no great favour. We had now therefore the satisfaction of seeing them fly into each other's arms in a transport. "After all my misfortunes," cried my son George, "to be thus rewarded! Sure this is more than I could ever have presumed to hope for. To be possessed of all that's good, and after such an interval of pain! my warmest wishes could never rise so high." — "Yes, my George," returned his lovely bride; "now let the wretch take my fortune; since you are happy without it, so am I. Oh, what an exchange have I made, from the basest of men to the dearest, best! Let him enjoy our fortune; I now can be happy even in indigence." — "And I promise

you," cried the squire, with a malicious grin, "that I shall be very happy with what you despise."—"Hold, hold, sir!" cried Jenkinson; "there are two words to that bargain. As for the lady's fortune, sir, you shall never touch a single stiver of it. Pray, your honour," continued he to Sir William, "can the squire have the lady's fortune if he be married to another?"—"How can you make such a simple demand?" replied the baronet: "undoubtedly he cannot."—"I am sorry for that," cried Jenkinson; "for as this gentleman and I have been old fellow-sporters, I have a friendship for him; but I must declare, well as I love him, that his contract is not worth a tobacco-stopper, for he is married already."—"You lie like a rascal," returned the squire, who seemed roused by this insult; "I never was legally married to any woman."—"Indeed, begging your honour's pardon," replied the other, "you were; and I hope you will show a proper return of friendship to your own honest Jenkinson, who brings you a wife; and if the company restrain their curiosity a few minutes they shall see her." So saying, he went off with his usual celerity, and left us all unable to form any probable conjecture as to his design. "Ay, let him go," cried the squire; "whatever else I may have

done, I defy him there: I am too old now to be frightened with squibs."

"I am surprised," said the baronet, "what the fellow can intend by this. Some low piece of humour, I suppose."—"Perhaps, sir," replied I, "he may have a more serious meaning. For when we reflect on the various schemes this gentleman has laid to seduce innocence, perhaps some one, more artful than the rest, has been found able to deceive him. When we consider what numbers he has ruined, how many parents now feel with anguish the infamy and the contamination which he has brought into their families, it would not surprise me if some one of them—Amazement! Do I see my lost daughter! Do I hold her! It is, it is my life, my happiness! I thought thee lost, my Olivia, yet still I hold thee, and still thou shalt live to bless me." The warmest transports of the fondest lover were not greater than mine, when I saw him introduce my child, and held my daughter in my arms, whose silence only spoke her raptures. "And art thou returned to me, my darling," cried I, "to be my comfort in age!"—"That she is," cried Jenkinson, "and make much of her, for she is your own honourable child, and as honest a woman as any in the whole room,

let the other be who she will. And as for you, squire, as sure as you stand there, this young lady is your lawful wedded wife; and to convince you that I speak nothing but the truth, here is the license by which you were married together." So saying, he put the license into the baronet's hands, who read it, and found it perfect in every respect. "And now, gentlemen," continued he, "I find you are surprised at all this; but a very few words will explain the difficulty. That there squire of renown, for whom I have a great friendship, but that's between ourselves, has often employed me in doing odd little things for him. Among the rest, he commissioned me to procure him a false license, and a false priest, in order to deceive this young lady. But as I was very much his friend, what did I do, but went and got a true license and a true priest, and married them both as fast as the cloth could make them. Perhaps you'll think it was generosity made me do all this. But no. To my shame I confess it, my only design was to keep the license, and let the squire know that I could prove it upon him whenever I thought proper, and so make him come down when I wanted money." A burst of pleasure now seemed to fill the whole apartment; our joy even reached the

common room, where the prisoners themselves sympathised,

And shook their chains
In transport and rude harmony.

Happiness was expanded upon every face, and even Olivia's cheeks seemed flushed with pleasure. "To be thus restored to reputation, to friends and fortune at once, was a rapture sufficient to stop the progress of decay, and restore former health and vivacity. But, perhaps, among all, there was not one who felt sincerer pleasure than I. Still holding the dear-loved child in my arms, I asked my heart if these transports were not delusion. "How could you," cried I, turning to Jenkinson, "how could you add to my miseries by the story of her death? But it matters not: my pleasure at finding her again is more than a recompense for the pain."

"As to your question," replied Jenkinson, "that is easily answered. I thought the only probable means of freeing you from prison, was by submitting to the squire, and consenting to his marriage with the other young lady. But these you have vowed never to grant while your daughter was living; there was therefore no other method to bring things to bear, but by persuading

you that she was dead. I prevailed on your wife to join in the deceit, and we have not had a fit opportunity of undeceiving you till now."

In the whole assembly there now appeared only two faces that did not glow with transport. Mr. Thornhill's assurance had entirely forsaken him; he now saw the gulf of infamy and want before him, and trembled to take the plunge. He therefore fell on his knees before his uncle, and in a voice of piercing misery, implored compassion. Sir William was going to spurn him away, but at my request he raised him, and after pausing a few moments, "Thy vices, crimes, and ingratitude," cried he, "deserve no tenderness; yet thou shalt not be entirely forsaken; a bare competence shall be supplied to support the wants of life, but not its follies. This young lady, thy wife, shall be put in possession of a third part of that fortune which once was thine; and from her tenderness alone thou art to expect any extraordinary supplies for the future." He was going to express his gratitude for such kindness in a set speech; but the baronet prevented him, by bidding him not aggravate his meanness, which was already but too apparent. He ordered him at the same time to be gone, and from all his former domestics to choose one, and such as he should

think proper, which was all that should be granted to attend him.

As soon as he left us, Sir William very politely stepped up to his new niece with a smile and wished her joy. His example was followed by Miss Wilmot and her father; my wife too kissed her daughter with much affection, as, to use her own expression, she was now made an honest woman of. Sophia and Moses followed in turn, and even our benefactor Jenkinson desired to be admitted to that honour. Our satisfaction seemed scarcely capable of increase. Sir William, whose greatest pleasure was in doing good, now looked round with a countenance open as the sun, and saw nothing but joy in the looks of all except that of my daughter Sophia, who, for some reasons we could not comprehend, did not seem perfectly satisfied. "I think now," cried he with a smile, "that all the company, except one or two, seem perfectly happy. There only remains an act of justice for me to do. You are sensible, sir," continued he, turning to me, "of the obligations we both owe to Mr. Jenkinson; and it is but just we should both reward him for it. Miss Sophia will, I am sure, make him very happy, and he shall have five hundred pounds as her fortune; and upon this I am sure they can

live very comfortably together. Come, Miss Sophia, what say you to this match of my making? will you have him?" My poor girl seemed almost sinking into her mother's arms at the hideous proposal. "Have him, sir!" cried she faintly: "no, sir, never!"—"What!" cried he again, "not Mr. Jenkinson, your benefactor; a handsome young fellow, with five hundred pounds, and good expectations!"—"I beg, sir," returned she, scarcely able to speak, "that you'll desist, and not make me so very wretched."—"Was ever such obstinacy known?" cried he again, "to refuse the man whom the family has such infinite obligations to, who has preserved your sister, and who has five hundred pounds? What! not have him!"—"No, sir, never," replied she angrily; "I'd sooner die first!"—"If that be the case, then," cried he, "if you will not have him—I think I must have you myself." And so saying, he caught her to his breast with ardour. "My loveliest, my most sensible of girls," cried he, "how could you ever think your own Burchell could deceive you, or that Sir William Thornhill could ever cease to admire a mistress that loved him for himself alone? I have for some years sought for a woman who, a stranger to my fortune, could think I had merit

as a man. After having tried in vain, even among the pert and ugly, how great at last must be my rapture to have made a conquest over such sense and such heavenly beauty!" Then turning to Jenkinson, "As I cannot, sir, part with this young lady myself, for she hath taken a fancy to the cut of my face, all the recompense I can make is, to give you her fortune, and you may call upon my steward to-morrow for five hundred pounds." Thus we had all our compliments to repeat, and Lady Thornhill underwent the same round of ceremony that her sister had done before. In the meantime Sir William's gentleman appeared to tell us that the equipages were ready to carry us to the inn, where everything was prepared for our reception. My wife and I led the van, and left those gloomy mansions of sorrow. The generous baronet ordered forty pounds to be distributed among the prisoners, and Mr. Wilmot, induced by his example, gave half that sum. We were received below by the shouts of the villagers, and I saw and shook by the hand two or three of my honest parishioners, who were among the number. They attended us to our inn, where a sumptuous entertainment was provided, and coarser provisions were distributed in great quantities among the populace.

After supper, as my spirits were exhausted by the alternation of pleasure and pain which they had sustained during the day, I asked permission to withdraw; and leaving the company in the midst of their mirth, as soon as I found myself alone, I poured out my heart in gratitude to the Giver of joy as well as sorrow, and then slept undisturbed till morning.



JUNTA DE ANDALUCIA

P.C. Monumental de la Alhambra y Generalife
CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA



CHAPTER XXXII. .

The Conclusion.

THE next morning, as soon as I awaked, I found my eldest son sitting by my bedside, who came to increase my joy with another turn of fortune in my favour. First having released me from the settlement that I had made the day before in his favour, he let me know that my merchant, who had failed in town, was arrested at Antwerp, and there had given up effects to a much greater amount than what was due to his creditors. My boy's generosity pleased me almost as much as this unlooked-for good fortune. But I had some doubts whether I ought in justice to accept this offer. While I was pondering upon this, Sir William entered the room, to whom I communicated my doubts. His opinion was, that as my son was already possessed of a very affluent fortune by his marriage, I might accept his offer without hesi-

tation. His business, however, was to inform me, that as he had the night before sent for the licenses, and expected them every hour, he hoped that I would not refuse my assistance in making all the company happy that morning. A footman entered while we were speaking, to tell us that the messenger was returned; and as I was by this time ready, I went down, where I found the whole company as merry as affluence and innocence could make them. However, as they were now preparing for a very solemn ceremony, their laughter entirely displeased me. I told them of the grave, becoming, and sublime deportment they should assume upon this mystical occasion, and read them two homilies and a thesis of my own composing, in order to prepare them. Yet they still seemed perfectly refractory and ungovernable. Even as we were going along to church, to which I led the way, all gravity had quite forsaken them, and I was often tempted to turn back in indignation. In church a new dilemma arose, which promised no easy solution. This was, which couple should be married first; my son's bride warmly insisted that Lady Thornhill (that was to be) should take the lead; but this the other refused with equal ardour, pro-

testing that she would not be guilty of such rudeness for the world. The argument was supported for some time between both with equal obstinacy and good breeding. But as I stood all this time with my book ready, I was at last quite tired of the contest, and shutting it, "I perceive," cried I, "that none of you have a mind to be married, and I think we had as good go back again; for I suppose there will be no business done here to-day." This at once reduced them to reason. The baronet and his lady were first married, and then my son and his lovely partner.

I had previously that morning given orders that a coach should be sent for my honest neighbour Flamborough and his family, by which means, upon our return to the inn, we had the pleasure of finding the two Miss Flamboroughs alighted before us. Mr. Jenkinson gave his hand to the eldest, and my son Moses led up the other; and I have since found that he has taken a real liking to the girl, and my consent and bounty he shall have, whenever he thinks proper to demand them. We were no sooner returned to the inn, but numbers of my parishioners, hearing of my success, came to congratulate me;

but among the rest were those who rose to rescue me, and whom I formerly rebuked with such sharpness. I told the story to Sir William, my son-in-law, who went out and reproved them with great severity; but, finding them quite disheartened by his harsh reproof, he gave them half a guinea apiece to drink his health, and raise their dejected spirits.

Soon after this we were called to a very genteel entertainment, which was dressed by Mr. Thornhill's cook. And it may not be improper to observe, with respect to that gentleman, that he now resides in quality of companion at a relation's house, being very well liked and seldom sitting at the side-table, except when there is no room at the other, for they make no stranger of him. His time is pretty much taken up in keeping his relation, who is a little melancholy, in spirits, and in learning to blow the French horn. My eldest daughter, however, still remembers him with regret; and she has even told me, though I make a great secret of it, that when he reforms she may be brought to relent. But to return, for I am not apt to digress thus, when we were to sit down to dinner our ceremonies were going to be renewed.

The question was, whether my eldest daughter, as being a matron, should not sit above the two young brides ; but the debate was cut short by my son George, who proposed that the company should sit indiscriminately, every gentleman by his lady. This was received with great approbation by all, excepting my wife, who I could perceive was not perfectly satisfied, as she expected to have had the pleasure of sitting at the head of the table, and carving all the meat for all the company. But notwithstanding this, it is impossible to describe our good-humour. I can't say whether we had more wit among us now than usual, but I am certain we had more laughing, which answered the end as well. One jest I particularly remember : old Mr. Wilmot drinking to Moses, whose head was turned the other way, replied, "Madam, I thank you." Upon which the old gentleman, winking upon the rest of the company, observed that he was thinking of his mistress. At which jest I thought the two Miss Flamboroughs would have died with laughing. As soon as dinner was over, according to my old custom, I requested that the table might be taken away, to have the pleasure of seeing all my family assembled once more by a cheerful fireside. My

two little ones sat upon each knee, the rest of the company by their partners: I had nothing now on this side of the grave to wish for—all my cares were over, my pleasure was unspeakable. It now only remained that my gratitude in good fortune should exceed my former submission in adversity.



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THE END.