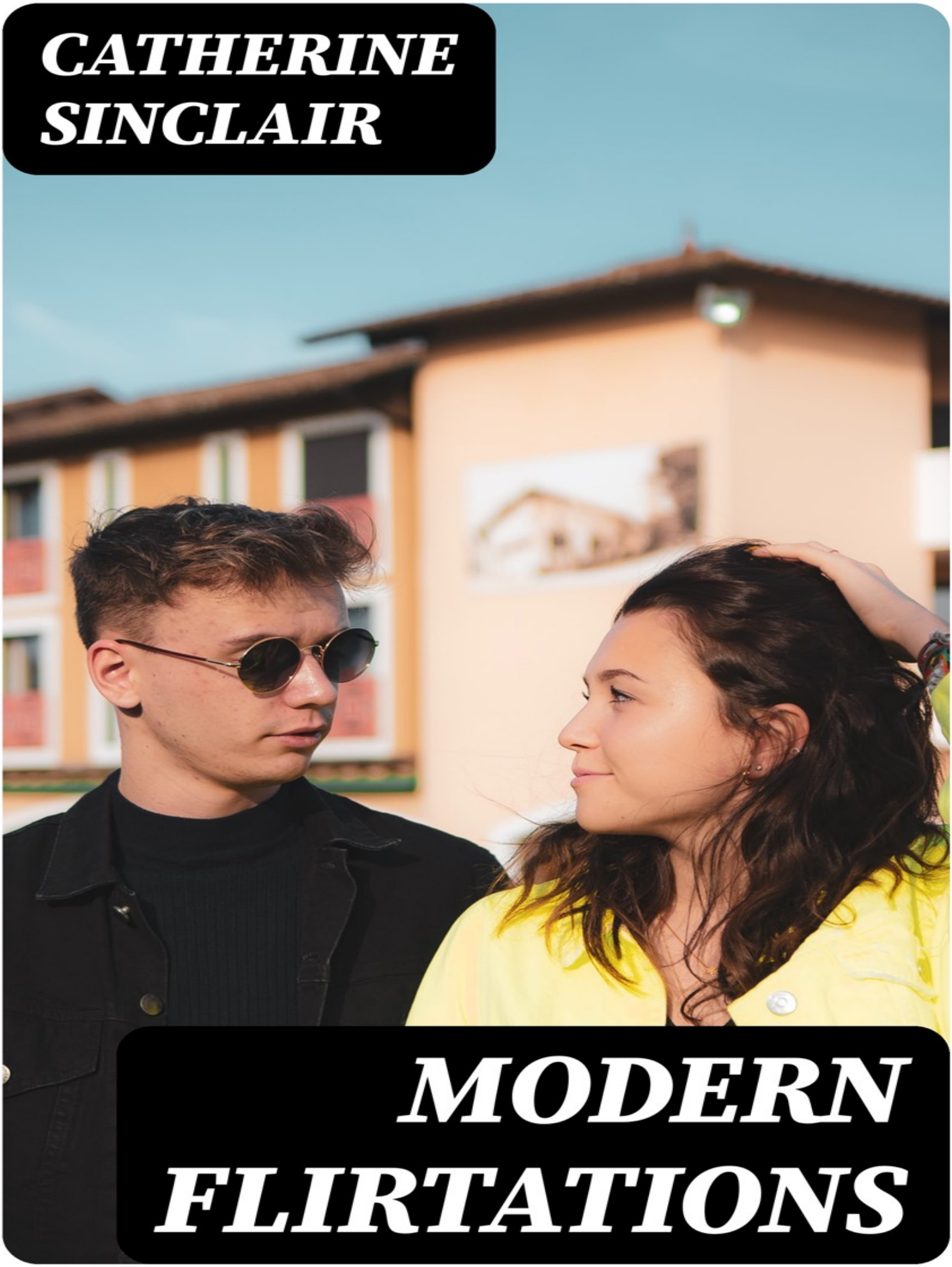
CATHERINE SINCLAIR



MODERN FLIRTATIONS

Catherine Sinclair

Modern Flirtations

A Novel

EAN 8596547233978

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

Table of Contents

PREFACE.

Table of Contents

It was the rule of a celebrated equestrian, which might be adapted to authors as well as to horsemen, that every one should ride as if he expected to be thrown, and drive as if he expected to be upset. Impunity in publishing, far from rendering an author presumptuous, should tend rather to increase his timidity, the danger being greater always of venturing too much, than of hazarding too little; and the more cause any writer has to feel grateful for the lenient judgment of an enlightened public, the more circumspect should he become, not to trespass by an obtrusive reappearance on that notice which has already perhaps been, as in respect to the author herself, beyond all expectation favorable.

An old proverb declares that "a goose-quill is more powerful than a lion's claw," and authors have been called "keepers of the public conscience;" but no influence is perhaps so extensive as that exercised by what is termed "light reading," which has now in a great measure superseded public places and theatrical entertainments, affording a popular resource with which the busiest men relax their hard-working minds, and the idlest occupy their idleness. It becomes a deep responsibility, therefore, of which the author trusts she has ever felt duly sensible, to claim the leisure hours of so many, while it is her first desire that whatever be the defect of these pages, no actual evil may be intermingled, and the cause of sound religion and

morality supported, for her feelings are best expressed in the words of the poet,

"If I one soul improve, I have not liv'd in vain."

Novel-reading, formerly considered the lowest resource of intellectual vacuity, has been lately promoted to a new place in the literary world, since men of the brightest genius as well as of the highest attainments in learning and philosophy, allow their pens occasionally to wander in the attractive regions of fiction; therefore works of imagination, no longer merely a clandestine amusement to frivolous minds, are now avowedly read and enjoyed, to beguile an idle hour, or to cheer a gloomy one, by men of science, of wisdom, and of piety. Such is the general encouragement given now to works of fancy, that, as the literary existence of authors depends on attracting readers, there will scarcely be encouragement enough soon to induce historians and biographers to dip the pen of veracity into the ink of retrospection, while it is perhaps to be lamented that when so large a proportion of the public attention is occupied by novelists, their works being certain of instant circulation, for a very short period and for no more, few authors afford themselves time to aspire at the highest grade of imaginary composition. When such volumes are really true to nature, they convey very important truths in a form more popular than a dry sententious volume of moral precepts, and perhaps history itself can scarcely afford so graphic a portrait of human life as many of those fictitious volumes, written under the inspiration of genius, which portray in vivid coloring, the thoughts and motives by which men are internally influenced.

The Life of Cleopatra, or the Memoirs of Agrippina, can afford scarcely so much direction to young ladies respecting their views of life and manners in the present day, as might be conveyed by a judiciously-drawn portrait of that world as it is, on the stage of which they are about to be personally introduced; and a large proportion of those elaborate volumes dignified with the name of history, can only be considered in the main fictitious, because, while biographers would confidently state the private opinions, secret intentions, and real characters of illustrious men who lived and acted several hundred years ago, they cannot justly estimate the actual dispositions and motives of their own most intimate friends, nor confidently point out what circumstances have influenced the greatest events in their own day. If two authors, entertaining opposite political sentiments, were to write the history of last year, every fact recorded, and every individual mentioned must inevitably be represented, or misrepresented, according to the writer's own private feelings, while each would believe he was writing unadulterated truth.

Thus poetry and fiction, when true to the principles of human life, exhibit the mind and soul of man visibly to the senses; and history, which has been called "the Newgate Calendar of Kings and Emperors," supplies the facts of human existence, and may be considered a portrait of men's persons and external actions.

In writing a story of domestic life, it is singular to reflect how commonly men are remembered by their eccentricities, and loved for their very faults, while the most difficult task in fiction is, to describe amiable persons so as to render

them at all interesting and not utterly insipid. Probably it may be for this reason that modern writers too frequently, instead of describing the principles which ennoble human nature, and the sentiments which embellish life, have painted in vivid coloring, all that is low, mean, and vicious in society, introducing their readers into scenes, the reality of which would be shunned with abhorrence, and flinging over vice such a mantle of genius as converts the deformities of society into subjects of interest—unfortunately even of sympathy.

Were authors obliged hereafter, to live with the characters they create, how few would desire to share with them in such a world! Even where the intention is to represent an attractive character, it seldom appears as one which could be an agreeable acquisition to any family circle; and in works of sentiment or feeling, nothing is less successfully pictured than a generous and refined attachment, fitted to survive every trial or vicissitude of existence, between those who are to love each other for ever. Few stories could be written, if lovers in a romance acted with the slightest degree of confidence or esteem; but such narratives are generally founded on a teazing succession of narrow-minded suspicions, and unwarrantable concealments on the part of heroes and heroines, who condemn each other unheard, and go through volumes of heart-breaking alienation, enough to terminate life itself, rather than ask the most simple explanation, while the reader cannot but feel a certain conviction in closing the last page, that an engagement begun with cavilling jealousies

and painful recriminations, can never become productive of lasting peace.

The mothers and daughters in fashionable society have of late been so harshly stigmatized by the press, that it seems as if some authors had taken up a porcupine's quill dipped in gall, to ridicule their conduct and motives, while not a pen has yet been drawn from the scabbard, nor a drop of ink spilled in their justification; but the weight of censure might become greatly lightened by being more equitably divided among all who are entitled to carry a share, and in these volumes an endeavor is made to rectify the balance more justly, though with what success remains to be discovered by the author herself, as not a single friend ever sees her pages, or puts on the spectacles of criticism till after they are printed. The only peculiarity to which she makes any pretension, in once more presuming to publish, is, that avoiding all caricature, all improbability, and all personality, she has introduced a few individuals acting and thinking in the ordinary routine of every-day life, while her highest ambition is to represent in natural colors, the conduct and feelings of men elevated and ennobled by the influence of Christianity.

When Dr. Johnson remarked once that it required a clever person to talk nonsense well, Boswell replied, "Yes, sir! If you were to represent little fishes speaking, you would make them talk like great whales;" and on a similar plan, authors describing society, instead of sketching the good-humoured chit-chat and lively *persiflage* with which the business and amusements of fashionable life are carried on, too frequently fill up their dialogues with set speeches, moral

essays, and long quotations, such as never are extemporized in any drawing-room, where too energetic a stroke given to the shuttlecock of conversation makes it instantly fall to the ground. The flagrant impossibilities by which a carelessly-written narrative is carried on, destroys often at once the illusion. Persons are described, who may be overheard speaking aloud their most secret thoughts when supposing themselves alone, soliloquizing audibly in the streets, journalizing a history of their own crimes, becoming permanent guests in houses to which they have no introduction, preserving the noblest sentiments amidst the most degraded habits, and dying enlightened Christians when they have lived as dissolute infidels.

A celebrated mathematician threw aside a novel once in disgust, saying that "it proved nothing;" but in these pages the author has endeavoured to prove much. Amidst the bustle and business, the joys and sorrows of life, she has attempted to illustrate how truly "wisdom's ways are of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace,"—how superior is the Christian standard of principle to the mere worldly code of honour or expediency, and how much of the happiness intended for man by his Creator is ruined and forfeited by the perversity of his own will, in neglecting the good of others, and in vainly grasping, like a spoiled child, at more than is intended for his share. While thus writing a fiction, which may perhaps be denominated a large religious tract in high life, the author humbly submits her pages to the judgment of others, and cannot conclude in the words of a more universally venerated, or of a more generally popular fictitious author than the excellent Bunyan:

"Thus I set pen to paper with delight,
And quickly had my thought--in black and white;
For having now my method by the end,
Still as I pulled it came, and so I penned
It down, until at last it came to be,
For length and breadth, the bigness which you see."
MODERN FLIRTATIONS.

CHAPTER I.

Table of Contents

The newspapers have recently adopted a strange habit of sometimes unexpectedly seizing an individual's name, long since retired from public notice, and gibbetting it up before the world's eye, when least anticipated, by volunteering a paragraph to announce, that some aged lord, or ex-minister, whom no one has remembered to think of for half a century or more, is residing on his estates, and enjoying, the editor is happy to understand, astonishing health, considering his advanced years. In observance of this custom, an exclamation of irritability and astonishment, too violent to be worthy of record, was elicited one day, from a dignified and very distinguished-looking old gentleman, with a venerable head, such as Titian might have painted, and a high lofty forehead bearing the traces of deep thought and feeling, when, after having seated himself on his favorite arm chair at the United Service Club in Edinburgh, his eye rested with a look of kindling amazement on these few lines, in large consequential-looking type, on a leading column of the Courant.

June 1829. "We are happy to inform our readers that the brave and noble veteran, once a distinguished hero in many a well-fought fight, Sir Arthur Dunbar, G.C.B., is yet alive, reposing on his well-earned laurels, at a retired mansion in the marine village of Portobello. Though frequently and most severely wounded in battle, besides being deprived of an arm in Lord Rodney's engagement during the year '82,

the Admiral's health continues unimpaired and his cheerfulness invariable, at the advanced age of 70."

"Pshaw! stuff and nonsense! Some enemy is resolved to make a laughing-stock of me in my old age!" exclaimed he, angrily pointing out the paragraph to his gay young relative, Louis De Crespigny, who was familiarly leaning over the high back of his chair; and then crumpling up the offending Courant with an obvious wish that it might be consumed in the flames—"I hope this is only the work of some wretched penny-a-liner; but if I even suspected that my conceited, good-looking scoundrel of a nephew had a hand in the jest, I would cut him off with a shilling,—or rather without one, for I could scarcely raise so much as a shilling to leave him, and he knows that. This is most thoroughly ridiculous! I, who have been dead, buried, and forgotten for years, to be made as conspicuous here, as a hair-dresser's wig-block! The editor shall be prosecuted,—horse-whipped,—or—or made as absurd as he has made me!"

"Why really, Admiral, I wish he had as much good to say of us all, and then the sooner he paragraphs about me the better!—'We are happy to inform our readers that the agreeable and fascinating Cornet De Crespigny, of the 15th Light Hussars, now in his eighteenth year, is still alive!'—the public likes to know the exact age of distinguished men, such as you and I, Admiral!"

"The public is an ass!" replied Sir Arthur, breaking into a smile; "and perhaps I am another, to mind what is said at all, but that rascal of an editor has made me ten years older than I am; besides which, though a grey-haired Admiral of sixty-four is not probably much addicted to blushing, he

really has put my modest merit out of countenance. I would rather pay the newspapers any day for overlooking than for praising me. We ought to live or die for our country; but now, when I am no longer needed, let me stay in peace on the shelf, like," added he, giving a comic smile at his empty sleeve, "like a cracked tea-cup with the handle off!"

"But, Sir Arthur!" replied the young Cornet warmly, "you who never turned your back on friend or foe, are not very likely to remain quietly on the shelf, as long as every man who lives must respect you, and every man who dies continues to appoint you, as my father did, his executor, the trustee of his estates, and the guardian of his children, asking you to lend them a hand, as you have done to me in all the difficulties of life."

"I have but one hand to lend, and that is much at your service, in whatever way it can be useful! the other, though absent without leave, has been my own best friend, as the loss of that arm was the luckiest hit in the world. It obtained me a step at the time, and the pension has supported me ever since. What with my nephew's frantic extravagance, and my two young nieces being but indifferently provided for, I often wish, like every body else, for a larger income. Poor girls!" added Sir Arthur, knitting his bushy eye-brows into a portentous frown, which gave to his venerable countenance a look of noble and manly sorrow. "No one can blame them! but it was little short of insanity in my brother to leave such young children under the sole guardianship of a heartless spendthrift like your friend and my nephew Sir Patrick, who would sell his soul for sixpence."

"Yes! and squander it the next minute," added young De Crespigny, laughing. "I saw Pat produce a £20 note yesterday at Tait's auction-room, and a buzz of wonder ran all through the circle of his friends. Such a sight had not been seen in his pocket for many a day, and he threatened to put it up to auction, saying, he was sure we would all give double the value for it, as a rarity, considering the quarter from which it came. He really seems to pique himself on his poverty, and has the art of doing what another man would be cut for, with so much grace and apparent unconsciousness, that his friends really forget to disapprove."

"I never forget!" replied the Admiral, slowly rising and adjusting his spectacles. "I am even told the incorrigible rascal has mortgaged the legacy he pretends to expect from me! He would do anything short of a highway robbery for money, and has done some things that seem to a man of honor quite as bad. But," added Sir Arthur, growing more and more angry, "as long as he can give his friends a good bottle of claret, they ask no questions! Patrick Dunbar has caused me the only feeling of shame I ever had occasion for, and yet to see that proud snuff-the-moon look of his, you would suppose the world scarcely big enough to hold him! With his chin in the air, as I saw him yesterday, he will certainly knock his forehead some day against the sky!"

"You cannot wonder, Sir Arthur, that Dunbar is in immense favor with himself, when he is so admired, and almost idolized in society. He certainly has the handsomest countenance in Scotland;—as my uncle Doncaster says, Pat is a portrait of Vandyke in his best style. With that grand,

chivalrous, Chevalier-Bayard look, he is the best rider who ever sat on horseback! I could not but laugh when he mounted yesterday for a ride along Princes Street, and turned to me, with his lively, victorious laugh, saying, 'Now I am going to give the ladies a treat!'"

"The insufferable coxcomb!" said Sir Arthur, relaxing into an irresistible smile of indulgent affection. "From the day he first came staggering into this world to astonish us all, he has thought himself the finest sight between this and Whitehall!"

"Of course he does! Pat is asked for so many locks of his hair, by various young ladies, that his valet keeps a wig to supply them; and he might almost pay his debts with the countless collection he has received of sentimental rings, displaying forgotten forget-me-nots, in turquoises and gold! Who, on the wide earth, except yourself, Sir Arthur, would ever dream of finding fault with our gay, dashing, high-spirited friend, Dunbar, the life of society, the model of dress, equipage, and good living. Why! the very instant he opens his lips, all dulness vanishes like a spectre! I wish the whole world were peopled with such men; but he promises to shoot himself as soon as he sees his own equal. He staked his reputation one day that he would!"

"His reputation!! the sooner he parts with it the better! Let Patrick Dunbar exchange his own with the first man he meets in the street, and he will gain by the bargain."

"Pardon me there, Sir Arthur, your nephew is universally allowed to be the best fellow upon earth!"

"Very probably! 'the best fellow upon earth' generally means a selfish, extravagant, scatter-brained roue; but I

must be off! There is a cold, sharp, cutting wind, blowing in at the back of my neck, which makes me feel like Charles the First when the axe fell. If you have any influence, De Crespigny, with my scape-grace of a nephew—all nephews are scape-graces, as far as my experience goes—try to make him more like yourself, and I shall be grateful, with all my heart."

"Like me!!!" said the young Cornet, turning away with a smile; but it was a smile of bitterness, almost amounting to remorse, while he hastily grasped a newspaper, and flung himself into a seat. "No! no! Sir Arthur, he is not quite so bad as that. Dunbar has his faults; he wears them upon his sleeve, and attempts no disguise; but there are many worse men in the world, who are held up as examples by those who know no better. Whenever I reform myself, you may depend upon my lecturing our friend, but not till then. We must both sow all our wild oats first."

"Yes! and endure the fruit of them afterwards," replied Sir Arthur, with a look of anxious kindness at his young relative. "That is the only crop where to sow is more agreeable than to reap! But I waste words! Young men will be young men, and I might as well ask this east wind not to blow, or try to turn the sea from its course, as attempt to stop the mad career of that scatter-brained madcap! It would matter less if he only fell himself hereafter, like a pebble in the stream; but the fatal eddy extends in a wide circle, which must reach the interests of those helpless young girls, my nieces; and I cannot but grieve over the consequences which may, and must befall them, after I go to that rest which is in the grave, and to that hope which is beyond it."

"Never trouble your head about that which shall occur then, Sir Arthur! 'Too much care once made an old man grey.' My motto is, '*apres moi le deluge*!' This little world of ours got on wonderfully well before we came into it, and will do astonishingly well again, after we make our exit," said young De Crespigny, with a strange medley in his tone, of melancholy thought, and contemptuous derision. "Pat tells me that both my young cousins promise to turn out a perfect blaze of beauty, with long shining ringlets that they almost tread upon in walking, teeth that would make the fortune of a dentist, and complexions that Rowland's kalydor could not improve. Ten years hence, I shall propose to one or both of them myself, if that will give you satisfaction."

"Perfect! but as marrying two sisters at once is not quite customary, let your intentions be limited to Agnes. She is several years the eldest; and I like the good old patriarchal rule of marrying by seniority; besides which, she is quite a little flirt already, though scarcely yet in her teens. She will be a young lady, entirely suited for the ordinary marrying and giving in marriage of every-day life; but little Marion is the very light of my eyes, and I must match her by a very high standard indeed. It will be a dark day for me, if ever I am obliged to part with her at all; and being now only in her sixth year, I may, without selfishness, hope to keep her beside me for my few remaining days. I must begin match-making for Agnes, however, directly, and your offer shall be duly considered. A future peer, with countless thousands in expectancy, and not particularly ill-looking, does not fall in our way every morning."

"So all the young ladies seem to think!" replied the young Cornet, in his most conceited tone. "Girls dislike nothing so much as to marry on a competence; there is a great deal of romance in marrying on nothing, and a great deal of comfort in marrying on wealth; but a mere vulgar competence has neither romance nor reality. Now I can offer both! First, actual starvation on a Cornet's pay; and then, with my uncle's leave, the pumpkin will turn to a carriage, and the mice into horses; but in the meantime, Sir Arthur, Pat tells me you keep a capital chop-house at Portobello, so pray invite me to drop in some day at six, to begin my siege of your pretty niece. I must come and see, before I can conquer," added Mr. De Crespigny, in a tone of peculiar conceit, with which he always spoke either to ladies or of them. "Probably next week I may find my way to this *terra incognita* of yours. Is it across the Queensferry, or where?"

"My good friend! you are not so pre-eminently ignorant of geography as you would appear; for did I not see you honoring that dullest of all dull places, the little obscure village of Portobello, with your august presence, only yesterday. I nearly spitted you on the point of my umbrella, you hurried so rapidly past, evidently wishing to escape from that girl in a cloak, who seemed to beset your footsteps!"

"Impossible!!!" exclaimed young De Crespigny, coloring violently, and starting from his seat. "Could it be in the nature of things that I should cut you!"

"True enough! I might have said, like Lady Towercliffe to Prince Meimkoff, '*vous m'avez coupe*.'"

"Indeed!" continued the cornet, trying to conceal his countenance. "I wish you had cut my throat in return!"

"If it is to be done, I would rather somebody else did! Why, De Crespigny! you will set the house on fire with that violent poker exercise! Your own face is on fire already! Have more regard for your complexion! Ah! now it is pale enough! Are you ill? My dear fellow! what is the matter?"

"Nothing! I am merely looking at the beautiful sunset!"

"What! does the sun set in the east to-night?" asked Sir Arthur, jestingly; "that is worth looking at!"

"I am annoyed with a spasm of toothache!" said De Crespigny, putting a handkerchief to his face, which nearly covered it; and then suddenly throwing open the window, he looked far out, as if in search of his groom. He leaned forward so long, however, that Sir Arthur kindly but vehemently remonstrated on the danger of exposing himself, while in so much pain, to the cold air; enumerated a whole host of remedies for decayed teeth; suggested the great comfort and convenience of having the offender extracted by Hutchins, and ended by hoping his young friend would still have a tooth left for his proposed dinner at Portobello.

"Depend upon me for that," replied Mr. De Crespigny, with forced vivacity. "I shall ferret you out next week. I have little doubt your pasture is excellent in that quarter, and there is no one from whom I would be half so happy to receive a soup ticket."

"Keep your flattery for the ladies, where it will always be acceptable, and where I hear you are already an experienced practitioner in the arts of captivation. As for my

dinner, I consider it an imposition to ask any friend, and not give him the best my cook and cellar can furnish; and you may expect whenever you do come, to find a notice over my door, 'hot joints every day!'"

"But it was the society of your house, and not the dinner, to which my agreeable anticipations were directed; and there, you know, I cannot be disappointed! as somebody wisely said, when shown a tempting bill of fare, 'show me a bill of the company!'"

"That reminds me to say, you must not expect my pretty niece to be at my little bathing machine of a house! It would not be fair to inveigle you under such false pretences; but I promise you an old man's welcome, and the best that my cottage can produce; aged as this newspaper makes me I enjoy every inch of life, and hope you, at the same age, will do the same. I may almost apply to my little villa that favourite saying in Spain,

'My home, my home! though thou'rt but small,
Thou art to me th' Escurial.'"

With a cordial shake of the hand, and a smile of cheerful benignity, Sir Arthur withdrew, and as his firm and stately step receded, Mr. De Crespigny watched him with a look of respectful interest, which ended in his turning away after the admiral had disappeared, and heaving a deep sigh, while a cloud of care darkened on his forehead, and a look of angry vexation shaded his previously animated eyes.

Day after day passed on, subsequent to the preceding conversation, during which Sir Arthur frequently postponed his chop, to what he considered an atrociously late hour, in

hopes of his promised guest appearing. Once the admiral felt positively convinced that he had seen him enter a Portobello omnibus at four o'clock, but still he appeared not. Week after week elapsed, and still Sir Arthur ate his dinner alone, in long-surviving expectation that either his own not very dutiful nephew, or young De Crespigny, would "cast up;" but at last these hopes and wishes were ended by his hearing that Sir Patrick's embarrassments had caused him to leave Edinburgh by moonlight, and that, soon after, Mr. De Crespigny as suddenly departed, no one knew why, when, or wherefore.

CHAPTER II.

Table of Contents

The two most dashing, bold, and mischievous boys at Eton during their day, had formerly been Sir Patrick Dunbar and Louis De Crespigny, who astonished the weak minds of masters and pupils, by the strange and startling invention displayed in their exploits, as well as by the ingenuity with which both got safely out of every threatening predicament, and the sly humor or cunning with which they frequently shifted the disgrace, or even the punishment, of their offences, on others who deserved it less, or perhaps not at all. Invariably at the head of every mad exploit, or at the bottom of every secret design, how they could possibly have escaped being expelled was a frequent topic of subsequent wonder among their contemporaries in the classes; but their delight was to run as near the wind as possible, and still to display their skilful pilotage by baffling justice, and evading the utmost rigor of the law, while always ready rather to do harm than to do nothing.

When very young, the two enterprising friends, both since gazetted into the 15th Light Huzzars, had shown an early predilection for military life, by frequently escaping to the neighbouring barracks, assisted by a ladder of rope on which they descended every night from the windows. A gay, joyous reception invariably awaited these lively boys at the mess-table, where they sung many a jovial song, and cracked many a merry jest over their claret, till, after some hours spent in rapturous festivity, they stole silently back within bounds, and were re-admitted at the window, by their

respective fags, who had received orders, under pain of death, to keep awake and answer their signals for the ladder by instantly lowering it. The spirits of both these young companions were more like the effect of intoxication, than mere sober enjoyment; and, on one occasion, they set the table in a roar, by having a rivalship which would best imitate the gradual progress of becoming tipsy, though drinking nothing but cold water; in which exhibition they showed so much talent for mimicry, taking off the surrounding officers before their faces, and making so many home-thrusts and personal remarks, that the scene was never afterwards forgotten in the regiment. On another occasion Sir Patrick caused himself to be placed in a coffin, stolen from the undertakers, and was carried through the barracks by his companions, who made paper trumpets with which they played the dead march in Saul, while all the sentries saluted as they passed. Such juvenile exploits in the dawn of life were now the subject of many a laughing reminiscence, and had been followed by others on a more extended scale and of more matured enterprise, at Mr. Brownlow's, a private tutor, where the two young men afterwards distinguished themselves in a way not easily to be forgotten, causing their better disciplined companions to wonder, though in very few instances to admire.

In the favorite aristocratic achievements of driving stage-coaches, breaking lamps, wringing off knockers, assaulting watchmen, with other fistic and pugilistic exploits, they were nearly unrivalled; and occasionally their genius had soared into an extraordinary display of dexterity, in transposing the signs suspended over shops, and in filching silk

handkerchiefs from the pockets of their friends, merely as amateurs, but still the deed was done, and the laugh raised literally at the expense of the sufferer, as the plunder was retained to be a future trophy of success. Each successive stage of their youth, in short, supplied an inexhaustible fund of standing jests and lively anecdotes, the wit of which mainly consisted in their mischief, while they betrayed an utter recklessness about the opinions or the feelings of others, till at length the patience of their unfortunate private tutor was so completely exhausted that he gave them a secret hint to withdraw, which they accordingly lost no time in preparing to do, but not till they had enjoyed a very characteristic revenge. When Mr. Brownlow had taken a party of friends with him one evening to the theatre, Sir Patrick suddenly discharged from the gallery the whole contents of a prodigious bag of flour, which powdered all the heads, faces, and coats, in the pit, perfectly white, and caused an uproar of anger and of irresistible laughter throughout the house; and the same evening Louis De Crespigny, as a farewell frolic, abstracted a stuffed bear from the neighbouring hair-dresser's, and having equipped it in the costume of Mr. Brownlow, hung it from the lamp-post, where a panic-struck crowd was speedily assembled by the alarming report that the reverend gentleman had committed suicide. A strict investigation took place respecting the authors of these unpardonable tricks, but, though suspicion fell at once upon the real culprits, and the circumstantial evidence against them seemed irresistibly strong, Sir Patrick argued his own cause with so much skill and vivacity, while De Crespigny looked so innocently

unconscious of the whole affair, that, with a silent frown from the master, of stern reproof and suspicion, they were, not honorably acquitted, but allowed to return home without any public mark of censure or disgrace; and soon after both joined their regiment at Dublin.

De Crespigny and Sir Patrick had but one companion whom they acknowledged as their equal at Eton, in all the spirit, enterprise, and vivacity of their characters, but who was, in a thousand other respects their superior, for seldom, indeed, has there been known, in one so young, a character of as much intensity, or which displayed a combination so singular, of superb talents, rare judgment, sound principle, deep piety, and energetic feeling, as in Richard Granville, an object of admiration to all, and of envy to many; though jealously lost half of its bitterness in association with one so eloquent and single-hearted in conversation, so courteously amiable and conciliatory in manner, and with so fine a principle of tact, ready as far as possible to enhance the pleasures, to palliate the faults, and to share the sorrows of all his companions. Cultivated in all that could adorn the heart as well as the head, in whatever was amiable, high-spirited and generous, Richard Granville had but to follow the impulse of natural feeling as well as of principle, and he out-did the very wishes of his friends, while no one excelled him in all the manly exercises suited to his early years. His countenance was illuminated with an expression of intellectual energy, at times almost sublime, while there was a living grace and amiability in his manner irresistibly attractive. Brave, liberal, and resolute, he entered with eagerness into all the offensive recreations of his

companions, and no one excelled him in riding, fencing, and cricket, while he was the best shot in his own country; but he firmly declined ever to squander his time or money on any game of chance, cards, billiards, or gambling in any form. While Sir Patrick's betting-book was from the first a model of skill, in hedging bets, and all the manœuvres of jockey-ology, young Granville said all that eloquence and affection could dictate, to point out how dangerous and dishonorable was the course on which he seemed about to enter, but in vain, for Sir Patrick finished the discussion by offering to bet him £5 he would not be ruined in less than ten years. "I have a fortune and constitution which will last me till thirty," said the young baronet; "and I do not wish to live a day longer."

"It is easy," said Prince Eugene, "to be modest when one is successful; but it is difficult not to be envied." While the very presence of young Granville in the room, with his riotous young associates, seemed as if it held up a glass to their mind's eye, testifying the folly and evil of their course, yet Richard Granville abhorred display, while Sir Patrick and De Crespigny frequently declared he was "too clever and too good for them;" and unavoidable circumstances afterwards combined to estrange the young men still more. A law-suit had been going on almost since the period of their birth, conducted in an amicable way by their guardians, in which the interests of all three were so deeply concerned, and the case so exceedingly complicated, that years passed on, during which the youths had all grown to manhood, and the case remained still undecided; while the one-sided view which was given to Dunbar and De

Crespigny on the subject caused in them an angry feeling of hostility and rancour against their amiable and high-minded young relative, who was so enthusiastically desirous to enter the English church, and devote himself to those sacred duties, that he scarcely wished a favorable decree, which would prevent the necessity for his pursuing a profession at all.

A Scotch law-suit may be compared to a game at battle-dore between the tribunals of England and Scotland, while the gaping client sees the shuttle-cock for ever flying over his head, higher and higher out of reach, and sent backwards and forwards with ceaseless diligence, but no apparent progress; or it is like a kitten playing with a ball of worsted, which is allowed to come often apparently within her grasp, and is then, when she least expects, twitched away farther than before. The Granville case had been decided by the Court of Session, against the two cousins, Dunbar and Crespigny, but being appealed to the House of Lords, was recommended for consideration, re-argued, re-considered, and nearly reversed, while replies and duplies, remits and re-revisals, commissions of inquiry, and new cases, followed each other in ceaseless succession, and many of the lawyers who were young men when the case began, grew grey in the service, while it yet remained in suspense. A grand-uncle of Sir Patrick's had fifty years before, bought an estate of £12,000 a-year from the Marquis of Doncaster, to whom young De Crespigny was now heir presumptive; but Mr. Dunbar having, it was conjectured, entertained some suspicion that the title deeds were not perfectly valid, as an entail had been discovered

afterwards, by which it was generally thought that the land must be restored to the original owner, he hastily and most unfairly sold the property to the late Mr. Granville for £350,000, and dying intestate, after having lost nearly the whole sum in a mining speculation, it could not be proved whether Sir Patrick's father had acted as an executor for the deceased or not, so as to render himself responsible for his debts, and liable to refund the sum paid by Mr. Granville. Thus, whether the entail held good, and carried the estate back to Lord Doncaster, or whether it had been legally broken, so as to entitle the Granville family to keep it, or whether, if it were refunded, the price could be claimed from the heirs of Mr. Dunbar, still continued a mystery never apparently to be solved.

For many generations past, the ancient Marquisate of Doncaster had been inherited by a succession of only sons, all strict Papists, who had each in his turn been reckoned by the next heirs exceedingly sickly and unpromising, but still the wonder grew, for not one had ever died, till he left a substitute in regular rotation, to supply the vacancy which he created himself; and a long train of minorities in the family had caused the accumulation of wealth and property to be enormous, when the present proprietor succeeded fifty years before our story commences. Nothing could exceed his own astonishment at the unembarrassed magnificence of the fortune, of which he most unexpectedly found himself in possession, as his father had been in the habit of concealing the amount of his own income, and allowing his heir rather less than nothing, saying, that as he himself had never had anything to eat till he had no teeth to

eat with, he was resolved that his successor should be similarly treated. In pursuance of this plan, the old nobleman even on his death-bed, had actually expired with a practical joke on his lips. He sent for his son, gravely told him that with debts, mortgages, and settlements, the very encumbered estate he was about to inherit would scarcely pay its own expenses, and recommended him to live in future with the most penurious economy. When the will was opened, finding to his unutterable joy, that he had merely been played upon by the old humorist, who, in reality left him £40,000 per annum clear, so great was Lord Doncaster's surprise, that he declared his good fortune at the time to be "almost incredible;" and it might have been supposed, that he never afterwards completely believed it, as his personal expenses were always in a style more suited to the old Lord's threat than his performance, and he became a fresh instance of what may be so often remarked, that the most extravagant heirs in expectancy become the most avaricious in possession.

There was one singular peculiarity in the settlements of Lord Doncaster's family, that so long as he had no son, or if his son at twenty-one declared himself a Protestant, he had the power of selling or bequeathing the estates according to his own pleasure or caprice; and the ancestor who had inserted this clause in his deed of entail, made his intention evident, that the succession should go to the Roman Catholic Church, rather than to a Protestant heir; but the present peer had taken advantage, on so large a scale, of his own childless privilege, to sell the family estates, that his two deceased sisters, Lady Charlotte De Crespigny, and