

from one of my gambling friends in town, dunning me in the most genteel manner for a couple of thousand pounds which I owed to him. I shudder while I relate the step which I now took. I was the sole executor of my father's estate, and the property of my sisters had been left entirely under my control. Wretch that I was, I secretly appropriated the whole of the means of support of my confiding sisters. I mortgaged their portion of the estate, as I had done my own. On taking leave of these gentle creatures, I durst not look them in the face as they hung around me, and kissed me with tears of pure and innocent love.

From the moment I robbed my sisters, and only from that moment, I felt myself degraded past all recovery, lost beyond redemption. Wherever I went, I bore about me this intolerable feeling of irretrievable disgrace; and to escape from it, I plunged deeper into guilt. But now comes another scene in my infamous career. Accident about this time threw me into the society of a young gentlewoman, of good family, and possessing a handsome fortune in her own right. Her person was attractive—almost beautiful, and her face shone bright in the lustre of a pair of intelligent black eyes, matched, or rather contrasted, with a fine set of white teeth. Hitherto I had never thought of marrying. The life I had led had in fact made me incapable of loving a virtuous woman as she deserves to be loved. Let no woman who values her happiness unite herself to a reformed debauchee.

Finding my society agreeable to this lady, whom I shall call Amelia, the idea by degrees occurred to me, that she would be an advantageous speculation, as we used to say at the club. Her person, as I said before, was attractive, but that did not much matter, and her fortune was liberal, which mattered a great deal. She was young, romantic, and somewhat buoyant in spirits. I played the hypocrite finely. We rode out together through the beautiful landscapes of a most beautiful country, and she greeted every murmuring brook, twittering bird, and rocky glen, with a vivacity of admiration that would have called up a corresponding feeling in any heart but one like mine, laboring under a sense of degradation, combined with the lethargy of worn-out sensibilities. She had neither father nor mother living, but she had friends, who, though ignorant of the extent of my fall, still knew enough of my habits to think me unworthy of her hand. But young women who are rich, and mistress of themselves, are, I believe, not apt to be controlled by friends in the choice of a husband, and believing, as Amelia did, that they wronged me, she was only the more determined to do me right. She consented to trust me with herself, her happiness, her destiny—and we were married.

For some months I led a prodigy of a life. I neither drank nor gamed; and the connexions of my wife began to give me credit for a thorough reformation. But alas! when evil passions are within, they will come out at last. One of my sisters married, and it became necessary that her portion should be forthcoming. I had now a man to deal with, and farther deception became impossible. The crisis of my fate arrived. My generous, noble-hearted wife had peremptorily resisted all the cautions of her relatives to have her fortune settled on herself. No: she always replied no, I trust him with my happiness, and my fortune shall go with it. It rested with me now, either to tell her candidly my situation, and throw myself on her generosity, or to make use of her fortune secretly, to replace that of my sister's. That strange pride which elings even to guilt and degradation, prompted me to the latter. To replace the money of which I robbed my sister, I robbed my wife of that, which after events proved, she would have given me with all her heart.

I began to estrange myself from home, and, by degrees, to drink drams, to keep up the courage of dastardly guilt, and make me sufficiently a brute, to meet her, after my nightly orgies, without sinking

into the earth. Now it was that my downhill course became more rapid than ever.

To meet my perpetual losses, I made other drafts upon my wife's fortune, and to dull the sense of infamy, I drank deeper of brandy. Sometimes I rallied the remnant of good principle that was within me, and abstained both from gambling and drinking for days and nights, sometimes weeks together; but again I was carried away by impulses and habits, only the more impetuous for their momentary restraint. My wife behaved with propriety, she kept my secret, and neither betrayed me to her friends, nor uttered a reproach. She bore all in silence.

During this period we had two children, a boy and a girl. I could not bear to look at them, from the moment their little eyes began to know me. I had injured them as well as their mother; and bad as I was, I never could bear the looks of those I had wronged. To the virtuous and happy father, these little strangers form those gentle links that bind him the closer to his home, and inspire new feelings of gratitude and goodness. But it was not so with me. I was rapidly becoming an outcast from the domestic circle; an alien from all that is good, and beautiful, and elegant. My tastes, my propensities, my habits, were now all assuming the same hue of infamy and irretrievable debasement.

The depredations I had committed on the inheritance of my children, were now brought to light by that inevitable train of events which never fails, sooner or later, to bring the villain to his reckoning. Nearly at the same time, my estate was advertised by the sheriff, on a foreclosure of the mortgage. It was thus discovered that I was a beggar when I married, and that I had since become a scoundrel. Even my unbending pride, aided by the maddening bowl, could not stand this. I could not endure the sight of those who, from having once looked up to me, now shunned me with averted eyes, or gave me only glances of cool contempt.

One day I happened to meet an old acquaintance in company with two or three gentlemen, in such a way that it was impossible for him to pretend not to see me, or for me to avoid him, without actually sneaking away. I accosted him, but he took no notice of me. 'I believe you don't know me,' said I. 'O yes I do know you,' he replied, and turned on his heel. The emphasis he laid on this little word was admirably expressive. I understood it, and so did the gentlemen present. My blood boiled, and the more for knowing I deserved this treatment. I poured forth a deluge of invectives, and provoked him at length so far to forget himself, as to knock me down. That very hour I sent him a challenge, for I was not yet sufficiently abject to put up with a blow; and though I acknowledged to my own heart that I deserved the treatment I had received, still I burned for revenge. It was in vain that the friend to whom the gentleman applied to carry his answer, represented me as unworthy of his notice, a man without any reputation to lose, and to whom a blow could add no deeper disgrace. 'I should have thought of all this before I gave the blow,' he replied. 'Having noticed him in the first instance, I have no right to say now that he is beneath my notice. I must offer either apology or atonement. I cannot condescend to beg his pardon, and there is but one other alternative.'

Under the influence of these mixed principles of right and wrong, did this high-spirited young man consent to meet me. My habitual excesses had so shattered my nervous system, that nothing but copious draughts could steady my hand. I drank deep that morning; and though my vision was indistinct, my hand did not tremble. My second, one of my old club companions, who was an old amateur of duelling—that is to say, in the second, not in the first person—gave me many special directions how to hold my pistol, and when to fire. But I was stupefied by the time we got to the ground, and every object swam before my eyes,

as if floating on the waves. I scarcely heard the words 'one—two—three—fire.' I raised my pistol mechanically, and yet—strange and inscrutable dispensation!—my antagonist fell dead at the first fire. A mother lost her only son—an amiable and virtuous woman an affectionate husband—and three children became orphans—for the wife survived the shock but a few months. Thus, as my worthy second assured me triumphantly—thus, and at this price, had I vindicated my honour. What honour? The honour of an unnatural brother, a brutal husband, an unfeeling father, a beastly sot!

It is now time to speak of my poor wife and children. From time to time, during the progress of the scenes I have just been sketching, Amelia had been strongly urged by her friends to leave me, but she always mildly, yet peremptorily, refused. 'My lot,' she would say, was of my own choosing; and whatever it may be, I have made up my mind to bear it to the end.' Even this devotion did not touch my heart. On the contrary, I taunted her with her ridiculous attachment, and scarcely a day passed that I did not ask her with gross barbarity, why she did not go to her friends. I did not want her company—not I; nay, I wished to get rid of it, and never see her face again. I found fault with her domestic economy; reproached her with not keeping her children decent; with being a slut in her own person, though she was neatness itself; with being ugly, disagreeable, stupid, tiresome, a millstone about my neck, the bane of my life, and the cause of all my misery. What will a good wife not submit to?—she bore it all.

If there ever was a lost, hopelessly, irretrievably lost being in this world, it was myself. I was dunned for money I could not pay. I was shunned by my neighbours; my servants left me, as it was a disgrace to serve; and even the sots of the neighbourhood disdained to drink with me, because, as they said, 'a gentleman ought to be ashamed to make a beast of himself.' Though I literally lived without food, had become a bloated mass of physical manition. My hands shook; my face was swelled and livid. Mental tortures!—But they are past all description. The reader will think this bad enough, but as yet he has seen nothing. The tragedy is still to be exhibited.

One day—it was an ominous day—the anniversary of our marriage—in a fit of savage hilarity I declared I would celebrate it with more than usual splendour. I got up at twelve the preceding night, and intoxicated myself before sunrise, when I went to bed and slept myself partly sober again before dinner. At dinner I again drank deeply. I proposed a toast—'Our wedding day, and many happy returns of it.' A sudden pang seemed to cross my poor wife's mind, and produce a train of bitter recollections. 'Was it not a happy day, Amelia?' said I, tauntingly. She burst into tears, and covered her face with her hands for a minute; then slowly removing them, she replied, with a look of agony that still haunts me day and night, 'Yes, it was a happy day—but—' The tone and look irritated my already infuriated spirit. 'But what,' replied I—'Come, speak out—let us have no secrets on this happy day.' 'We have paid dearly for it,' she said—'you with the loss of fortune, fame, and goodness. I with a broken heart and a shattered reason.'

'And I alone am to blame for all this, I suppose.'

'No; I blame nothing but my own folly. I had my warnings, but they came too late, or rather, as my conscience tells me, I shut my ears to them. Would I had died,' added she wringing her hands, 'before that miserable day.'

'You are no longer the gay, sprightly, animated, witty thing that won my heart,' said I.

'Your heart!' replied she, scornfully; 'but who was it that robbed me of my gaiety; that worried my sickened soul by night and day; that has broken my heart, and turned my brain? Do you know the man, the monster I would say?' Her eyes now flashed fire,