

MALE COQUETRY.

BY H. V. G.

"It is a veritable fact," said Frank Elwyn, entering his sister's room with an open letter in his hand, "that Horace Manners is really caught at last,—is actually going to be married—to be sacrificed, poor fellow. I have a letter from himself."

"Sacrificed!" replied his sister Bella with slight contempt, "why, I think the poor dupe whom he has flattered into believing that he loves her, will be the victim, for, believe me, Horace Manners can never truly love any one but his own precious self."

"How now, Bella," returned Frank, gaily, "what has set you out into such a tirade against my poor friend; you do not know him—you have not even seen him."

"Neither do I wish to see or know him," she replied; "he is precisely one of those men whom every true woman must thoroughly despise; with all his boasted philanthropy and high sense of honor, he is the veriest coxcomb in existence."

"Your judgment is not often so severe, Bella," said Frank, seriously, "and I think you do my friend injustice; he is a fine fellow, though I admit he may have some few weak points, like all the rest of the world. To tell the truth," he continued, smiling, "I had got up a pretty little romance in my own mind, in which my fair sister was to play the part of heroine; and, in short, I fancied you would make just the right sort of wife for Horace, and I should have felt proud to give you to him. But you have made such an endless tour with Aunt Mary, that the chance is lost, and now he is going to wed another."

"*Going to*, you may well say," she replied, laughing, "for he has been *going* to be married, goodness knows how many times, but he always contrives to slip out of the noose before it is drawn tight enough to hold him; and it is this which I despise—a man with a fair tongue and a false heart—a deceiver."

"On my word, Bella, you wrong him greatly," said Frank, warmly; "and the world has wronged him with its false rumours, and idle reports. Really, a man cannot speak to a young lady, but all the gossips in town directly take up the word that he is engaged; and then, forsooth, if he is not driven into matrimony in self-defence, he is

branded as a male coquette—a heartless coxcomb."

"Not so fast, brother mine," said Bella, gaily, "we allow great scope to your sex, and perhaps ourselves inconsiderately encourage your flirtations, sometimes. But the light gallantry which has no meaning, or, if you will, even the devotion of a few idle hours to some fair object of attraction, will seldom be misconstrued by any sensible woman; and even an inexperienced girl, in this enlightened age, would scarcely be silly enough to yield her heart without a more particular summons. No, no, your friend is not attractive enough to conquer by a single glance; he is not very young, nor remarkably handsome, and if he wins a heart, depend upon it, it is not done without design on his part. I have been absent two years," she added, "but the praises of Horace Manners have been wafted to me by a correspondent who shall be nameless, but who was herself, at one time, the object of his flattering attentions, and who might possibly, ere this, have been 'many fathoms deep in love,' had not her good angel whispered a word of caution in good time, just as he was on the point of transferring his homage to another and a fairer."

"Well, Bella," said Frank, laughing, "I will not remind you of the old fable of the 'fox and the grapes,' but, in spite of all the scandal attached to his name, in consequence of his devotion to the fair sex, if Horace Manners were still a disengaged man, I know of no one to whom I would extend a *brotherly* hand more cordially than himself."

"The love that wins my affections," said Bella, "must come in a less questionable shape; it must not be so strongly incrustured with pride, vanity, and egotism. But I confess, it might have been some satisfaction, had I been made the humble instrument of revenging my sex, by paying him back in his own coin. For my heart, long may it remain in my own safe keeping."

Weeks passed away, and the *celat* of Horace Manners' engagement had quite subsided. The world began to give him credit for constancy; his friends approved his choice, and his own self-esteem was flattered by the *éloge* bestowed on his sagacity and good taste. He might well be con-