

WILLIAM GODWIN

DAMON AND
DELIA: A TALE

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PART the FIRST

CHAP. I.

Containing introductory matter

The races at Southampton have, for time immemorial, constituted a scene of rivalry, war, and envy. All the passions incident to the human frame have here assumed as true a scope, as in the more noisy and more tragical contentions of statesmen and warriors. Here nature has displayed her most hidden attractions, and art has furnished out the artillery of beauty. Here the coquet has surprised, and the love-sick nymph has sapped the heart of the unwary swain. The scene has been equally sought by the bolder and more haughty, as by the timid sex. Here the foxhunter has sought a new subject of his boast in the *nonchalance* of *dishabille*; the peer has played off the dazzling charms of a coronet and a star; and the *petit maître* has employed the anxious niceties of dress.

Of all the beauties in this brilliant circle, she, who was incomparably the most celebrated, was the graceful Delia. Her person, though not absolutely tall, had an air of dignity. Her form was bewitching, and her neck was alabaster. Her cheeks glowed with the lovely vermilion of nature, her mouth was small and pouting, her lips were coral, and her teeth whiter than the driven snow. Her forehead was bold, high, and polished, her eyebrows were arched, and from beneath them her fine blue eyes shone with intelligence, and sparkled with heedless gaiety. Her hair was of the brightest auburn, it was in the greatest abundance, and when, unfettered by the ligaments of fashion, it flowed about her shoulders and her lovely neck, it presented the most ravishing object that can possibly be imagined.

With all this beauty, it Cannot be supposed but that Delia was followed by a train of admirers. The celebrated Mr. Prattle, for whom a thousand fair ones cracked their fans and tore their caps, was one of the first to enlist himself among her adorers. Squire Savage, the fox-hunter, who, like Hippolitus of old, chased the wily fox and timid hare, and had never yet acknowledged the empire of beauty, was subdued by the artless sweetness of Delia. Nay, it has been reported, that the incomparable lord Martin, a peer of ten thousand pounds a year, had made advances to her father. It is true, his lordship was scarcely four feet three inches in stature, his belly was prominent, one leg was half a foot shorter, and one shoulder half a foot higher than the other. His temper was as crooked as his shape; the sight of a happy human being would give him the spleen; and no mortal man could long reside under the same roof with him. But in spite of these trifling imperfections, it has been confidently affirmed, that some of the haughtiest beauties of Hampshire would have been proud of his alliance.

Thus assailed with all the temptations that human nature could furnish, it might naturally be supposed, that Delia had long since resigned her heart. But in this conjecture, however natural, the reader will find himself mistaken. She seemed as coy as Daphne, and as cold as Diana. She diverted herself indeed with the insignificant loquaciousness of Mr. Prattle, and the awkward gallantry of the Squire; but she never bestowed upon either a serious thought. And for lord Martin, who was indisputably allowed to be the best match in the county, she could not bear to hear him named with patience, and she always turned pale at the sight of him.

But Delia was not destined always to laugh at the darts of Cupid. Mrs. Bridget her waiting maid, delighted to run over the list of her adorers, and she was much more eloquent and more copious upon the subject than we have been. When her mistress received the mention of each with gay indifference, Mrs. Bridget would close the dialogue, and with a sagacious look, and a shake of her head, would tell the lovely Delia, that the longer it was before her time came, the more surely and the more deeply she would be caught at last. And to say truth, the wisest philosopher might have joined in the verdict of the sage Bridget. There was a softness in the temper of Delia, that seemed particularly formed for the tender passion. The voice of misery never assailed her ear in vain. Her purse was always open to the orphan, the maimed, and the sick. After reading a tender tale of love, the intricacies of the Princess of Cleves, the soft distress of Sophia Western, or the more modern story of the Sorrows of Werter, her gentle breast would heave with sighs, and her eye, suffused with tears, confess a congenial spirit.

The father of Delia—let the reader drop a tear over this blot in our little narrative—had once been a tradesman. He was naturally phlegmatic, methodical, and avaricious. His ear was formed to relish better the hoarse voice of an exchange broker, than the finest tones of Handel's organ. He found something much more agreeable and interesting in the perusal of his ledger and his day book, than in the scenes of Shakespeare, or the elegance of Addison. With this disposition, he had notwithstanding, when age had chilled the vigour of his limbs, and scattered her snow over those hairs which had escaped the hands of the barber, resigned his shop, and retired to enjoy the fruits of his industry. It is as natural for a tradesman in modern times to desire to die in the tranquillity of a gentleman, as it was for the Saxon kings of the Heptarchy to act the same inevitable scene amidst the severities of a cloister.

The old gentleman however found, and it is not impossible that some of his brethren may have found it before him, when the great transaction was irretrievably over, that retirement and indolence did not constitute the situation for which either nature or habit had fitted him. It has been observed by some of those philosophers who have made the human mind the object of their study, that idleness is often the mother of love. It might indeed have been supposed, that Mr. Hartley, for that was his name, by having attained the age of sixty, might have outlived every danger of this kind. But opportunity and temptation supplied that, which might have been deficient on the side of nature.

Within a little mile of the mansion in which he had taken up his retreat, resided two ancient maiden ladies. Under cover of the venerable age to which they had attained, they had laid aside many of those modes which coyness and modesty have prescribed to their sex. The visits of a man were avowedly as welcome to them, and indeed much more so, than those of a woman. Their want of attractions either external or mental, had indeed hindered the circle of their acquaintance from being very extensive; but there were some, as well as Mr. Hartley, who preferred the company of ugliness, censoriousness and ill nature to solitude.

Such were the Miss Cranley's, the name of the elder of whom was Amelia, and that of the younger Sophia. Miss Amelia was nominally forty, and her sister thirty years of age. Perhaps if we stated the matter more accurately, we should rate the elder at fifty-six, and the younger somewhere about fifty. They both of them were masculine in their behaviour, and studious in their disposition. Miss Amelia, delighted in the study of theology; she disputed with the curate, maintained a godly correspondence with a neighbouring cobbler, and was even said to be preparing a pamphlet in defence of the dogmas of Mr. Whitfield. Miss Sophia, who will make a much more considerable figure in this history, was altogether as indefatigable in the study of politics, as her sister was in that of theology. She adhered indeed to none of our political parties, for she suspected and despised them all. My lord North she treated as stupid, sleepy, and void of personal principle. Mr. Fox was a brawling gamester, devoid of all attachments but that of ambition, and who treated the mob with flattery and contempt. Mr. Burke was a Jesuit in disguise, who under the most specious professions, was capable of the blackest and meanest actions. For her own part she was a steady republican. That couplet of Dr. Garth was continually in her mouth,

From my very soul I hate,
All kings and ministers of state.

CHAPTER II.

A Ball

Thus much it was necessary to premise, in order to acquaint the reader with the situation of our heroine, and that of some other personages in this history. Having discharged this task, we will return to the point from which we set out.

It was at one of the balls at the races at Southampton—the company was already assembled. The card tables were set, and our maiden ladies, together with many other venerable pieces of antiquity, were assembled around them. In another and more spacious room, appeared all that Southampton could boast of youth and beauty. The squire and his sister, Mr. Prattle, and lord Martin, formed a part of the company. The first bustle was nearly composed, when Damon entered the assembly.

He appeared to be a stranger to every body present. And, as he is equally a stranger to our readers, we will now announce him in proper form. Damon appeared to be about twenty years of age. His person was tall, and his limbs slender and well formed. His dress was elegance itself. His coat was ornamented with a profusion of lace, and the diamond sparkled in his shoe. His countenance was manly and erect. There appeared in it a noble confidence, which the spectator would at first sight ascribe to dignity of birth, and a perfect familiarity with whatever is elegant and polite. This confidence however had not the least alloy of *hauteur*, his eye expressed the most open sensibility and the kindest sympathy.

There is something undescribably interesting in the figure we have delineated. The moment our hero entered the room, the attention of every person present was fixed upon him. The master of the ceremonies immediately advanced, and escorted him to the most honourable seat that yet remained vacant. While Damon examined with an eager eye the gay parterre of beauty that appeared before him, a general whisper was excited upon his account. "Who is he?" "Who is he?" echoed from every corner of the room. But while curiosity was busy in his enquiries, there was not an individual capable of satisfying them.

The business of every one was now the choice of a partner. But as one object had engrossed the attention of all, they were willing to see the election he would make, though every one feared to lose the partner he had destined for himself. Damon was therefore, however unwilling to distinguish himself in so particular a manner, constrained to advance the foremost. He passed slightly along before a considerable number, who sat in expectation. At length he approached the seat of Delia. He bowed to her in the most graceful manner, and intreated to be honoured with her hand. She smiled assent, and they crossed the room among a croud of envious rivals. Besides the lovers we had mentioned, there were four others, who had secretly determined to dance with Delia.

But if the gentlemen were disappointed, to whose eyes the beauty of Delia, however unrivalled, was familiar, the disappointment and envy of the fair sex upon the loss of Damon, whose external and natural recommendations had beside the grace of novelty, were inexpressible. The daughter of Mr. Griskin, an eminent butcher in Clare-market, who had indeed from nature, the grace of being cross-eyed, now looked in ten thousand more various directions than she ever did before. Miss Prim, agitated in every limb, cracked her fan into twenty pieces. Miss Gawky, who had unfortunately been initiated by the chamber maid in the art of snuff-taking, plied her box with more zeal than ever. Miss Languish actually fainted, and was with some difficulty conveyed into the air. Such was the confusion occasioned in the ball at Southampton, by the election of Damon.

Affairs being now somewhat adjusted, the dances began. Damon at every interval addressed himself to his lovely partner in the easiest and most elegant conversation. He talked with fluency, and his air and manner gave a grace and dignity to the most trifling topics. The heart of Delia, acknowledged the charms of youthful beauty and graceful deportment, and secretly confessed that it had never before encountered so formidable an enemy.

When the usual topics of conversation had been exhausted, the behaviour of Damon became insensibly more particular, he pressed her hand with the most melting ardour, and a sigh ever and anon escaped from his breast. He paid her several very elegant compliments, though they were all of them confined within the limits of decorum. Delia, on the other hand, though she apparently received them with the most gay indifference, in reality drank deep of the poison of love, and the words of Damon made an impression upon her heart, that was not easily to be erased.

But however delicious was the scene in which they were engaged, it necessarily drew to a conclusion. The drowsy clocks now announced the hour of three in the morning. The dances broke up, and the company separated. Delia leaped into the chariot that was waiting, and quickly arrived at the parental mansion. Fatigued with the various objects that had passed before her, she immediately retired to rest. For some time however a busy train of thoughts detained her from the empire of sleep. "How lovely a stranger! How elegant his manners, and how brilliant his wit! How soft and engaging the whole of his behaviour! But ah! was this the fruit of reverence and admiration? Might it not be no more than general gallantry? Oh that I were mistress of his heart! That he would lay his person at my feet! What a contrast between him and my former admirers! How doubly hateful does lord Martin, the lover favoured by my father now appear! But ah! who is this Damon? What is his fortune, and what his pretensions? His dress surely bespoke him a man of rank. His elegant manners could have been learned in no vulgar circle. How sweet, methinks is suspense! How delightful the uncertainty that hangs about him! And yet, how glad should I be to have my doubts resolved."

Soothed with these and similar reflections, the lovely maid fell asleep. But even in sleep she did not forget the impressions she had received. She imagined that Damon now approached her pillow. But how unlike the Damon she had seen! His eyes had something in them superior to a mortal. His shoulders were adorned with wings, and a vest of celestial azure flowed around him. He smiled upon her with the most bewitching grace. But the gentle maid involuntarily stretched out her arms towards him, and the pleasing vision vanished from her sight.

Again she closed her eyes, and again she endeavoured to regain her former object. Damon indeed appeared, but in how different a manner! his countenance was impressed with every mark of horror, and he seemed to fly before some who inveterately pursued him. They appeared with the countenances of furies, and the snakes hissed around their temples. Delia looked earnestly upon them, and presently recollected the features of the admirers we have already celebrated. The noble peer under the figure of Tisiphone, led the troop. Damon stumbled and fell. Sudden as lightning Tisiphone reached the spot, and plunged a dagger in his heart. She drew it forth reeking with blood, and the lovely youth appeared in the agonies of death. Terrified beyond measure, Delia screamed with horror and awoke.

In the midst of reveries like these, now agitated with apprehension, and now soothed with pleasure, Delia passed the night. The sun appeared, her gold repeater informed her that it was twelve, and, assisted by the fair hands of Mrs. Bridget, she began to rise.

CHAPTER III.

A Ghost

Mr. Hartley had breakfasted and walked out in the fields, before Delia appeared. She had scarcely begun her morning repast, ere Miss Fletcher, the favourite companion and confidante of Delia, entered the room. "My dearest creature," cried the visitor, "how do you do? Had not we not a most charming evening? I vow I was fatigued to death: and then, lord Martin, I think he never appeared to so much advantage. Why he was quite covered with diamonds, spangles, and frogs." "Ah!" cried Delia, "but the young stranger." "True," answered Miss Fletcher, "I liked him of all things; so tall, so genteel, and so sweetly perfumed.—I cannot think who he is. I called upon Miss Griskin, and I called upon Miss Savage, nobody knows. He is some great man." "When did he come to town?" said Delia, "Where does he lodge?" "My dear, he came to town yesterday in the evening, and went away again as soon as the ball was over. But do not you think that Mr. Prattle's new suit of scarlet sattin was vastly becoming? I vow I could have fallen in love with him. He is so gay and so trifling, and so fond of hearing himself talk. Why, does not he say a number of smart things?" "It is excessively strange," said Delia. (She was thinking of the stranger.) But Miss Fletcher went on—"Not at all, my life. Upon my word I think he is always very entertaining. He cuts out paper so prettily, and he has drawn me the sweetest pattern for an apron. I vow, I think, I never showed you it." "What can be his name?" said Delia; "His name, my dear; law, child, you do not hear a word one says to you. But of all things, give me the green coat and pink breeches of Mr. Savage. But did you ever hear the like? There will be a terrible to do—Lord Martin is in such a quandary—He has sent people far and near." "I wish they may find him," exclaimed Delia. "Nay, if they do, I would not be in his shoes for the world. My lord vows revenge. He says he is his rival. Why, child, the stranger did not make love to you, did he?" "Mercy on us," cried Delia, "then my dream is out." "Oh, bless us," said Miss Fletcher, "what dream, my dear?" Her curiosity then prevailed upon her to be silent for a few moments, while Delia related that with which the reader is already acquainted.

In return, Delia requested of her friend to explain to her more intelligibly what she hinted of the anger of lord Martin. "Why, my dear, his lordship has been employed all this morning in writing challenges. They say he has not writ less than a dozen, and has sent them by as many messengers, like a hue and cry, all over the county—my lord is a little man—but what of that—he is as stout as Hercules, and as brave as what-d'ye call'um, that you and I read of in Pope's Homer. He is in such a vengeance of a passion, that he cannot contain himself. He tells it to every body he sees; and his mother and sister run about the house screaming and fainting like so many mad things."

Delia, as we have already said, was endowed with a competent share of natural understanding. She therefore easily perceived, that from an anger so boisterous and so public, no very fatal effects were to be apprehended. This reflection quieted the terrors that her dream had excited, and which the young partiality she began to feel for the amiable stranger would otherwise have confirmed. Her breast being thus calmed, she made about half a dozen morning visits, among which, one to Miss Griskin, and another to Miss Languish, were included. The conversation every where turned upon the outrageousness of lord Martin. All but the gentle Delia, were full of anxiety and expectation. The females were broken into parties respecting the event of the duel. Many trembled for the fate of lord Martin, so splendid, so rich, and consequently, in their opinion, so amiable and so witty. Others, guided by the unadulterated sentiments of nature, poured forth all their vows for the courteous unknown. "May those active limbs remain without a wound! May his elegant blue and silver never be stained with blood! Ah, what a pity, that eyes so bright, and teeth so white, should be shrowded in the darkness of the grave."

The dinner, a vulgar meal, that passed exactly in the same manner as fifty dinners had before it, shall be consigned to silence. The evening was bright and calm. It was in the close of autumn; and

every thing tempted our lovely fair one to take the air. By the way she called upon her inseparable friend and companion. They directed their course towards the sea side.

Here they had not advanced far, before they entered a grove, a spot particularly the favourite of Delia. In a little opening there was a bank embroidered with daisies and butter-cups; a little row of willows bending their heads forward, formed a kind of canopy; and directly before it, there was a vista through the trees, which afforded a distant prospect of the sea, with every here and there a vessel passing along, and the beams of the setting sun quivered on the waves.

Delia and her companion advanced towards the well known spot. The mellow voice of the thrush, and the clear pipe of the blackbird, diversified at intervals with the tender notes of the nightingale, formed the most agreeable natural concert. The breast of Delia, framed for softness and melancholy, was filled with sensations responsive to the objects around her, and even the eternal clack of Miss Fletcher was still.

Presently, however, a new and unexpected object claimed their attention. A note, stronger and sweeter than that of any of the native choristers of the grove, swelled upon the air, and floated towards them. Having approached a few paces, they stood still to listen. It seemed to proceed from a flute, played upon by a human voice. The air was melancholy, but the skill was divine.

The native curiosity of Miss Fletcher was not upon this occasion a match for the sympathetic spirit of Delia. She pressed forward with an eager and uncertain step, and looking through an interstice formed by two venerable oaks, she perceived the figure of a young man sitting in her favourite alcove. His back was turned towards the side upon which she was. Having finished the air, he threw his flute carelessly from him, and folded his arms in a posture the most disconsolate that can be imagined. He rose and advanced a little with an irregular step. "Ah lovely mistress of my soul," cried he, "thou little regardest the anguish that must for ever be an inmate of this breast! While I am a prey to a thousand tormenting imaginations, thou riotest in the empire of beauty, heedless of the wounds thou inflicted, and the slaves thou chainest to thy chariot. Wretch that I am, what is to be done? But I must think no more." Saying this he snatched up his flute, and thrusting it into his bosom, hurried out of the grove.

While he spoke, Delia imagined that the voice was one that she had heard before though she knew not where. Her heart whispered her something more than her understanding could disentangle. But as he stooped to take his flute from the ground his profile was necessarily turned towards the inner part of the grove. Delia started and trembled. Damon stood confessed. But she scarcely recollected his features before he rushed away swifter than the winged hawk, and was immediately out of sight.

Delia was too full of a thousand reflections upon this unexpected rencounter to be able to utter a word. But Miss Fletcher immediately began. "God bless us," cried she, "did you ever see the like? Why it is my belief it is a ghost or a wizard. I never heard any thing so pretty—I vow, I am terribly frightened."

Delia now caught hold of her arm. "For heaven's sake, let us quit the grove. I do not know what is the matter—but I feel myself quite sick." "Good God! good heavens! Well, I do not wonder you are all in a tremble—But suppose now it should be nothing but Mr. Prattle—He is always somewhere or other—And then he plays *God save the king*, and *Darby and Joan*, like any thing." "Oh," said the lovely, trembling nymph, "they were the sweetest notes!" "Ah," said her companion, "he is a fine man. And then he is so modest—He will play at one and thirty, and ride upon a stick with little Tommy all day long. But sure it could not be Mr. Prattle—He always wears his hair in a queue you know—but the ghost had a bag and solitaire." "Well," cried Delia, "let us think no more of it. But did we hear anything?"—"Law, child, why he played the nicest glee—and then he made such a speech, for all the world like Mr. Button, that I like so to see in Hamlet." "True," said Delia,—"but what he said was more like the soft complainings of my dear Castalio. Did not he complain of a false mistress?" "Why he did say something of that kind.—If it be neither a ghost nor Mr. Prattle. I hope in God he is going to appear upon the Southampton stage. I do so love to see a fine young man come on for the first time with *May this alspishus day be ever sacred!*"

Or,
I am thy father's spirit."

CHAPTER IV.

A Love Scene

In such conversation the moments passed till they reached the habitation of Mr. Hartley. Miss Fletcher now took her leave. And after a supper as dull, and much more tedious to Delia, than the dinner, she retired to her chamber.

She retired indeed, but not to rest. Her brain was filled with a croud of uneasy thoughts. "Alas," said she, "how short has been the illusion!—But yesterday, I was flushed with all the pride of conquest, and busily framed a thousand schemes of ideal happiness—Where are they now?—The lovely youth, the only man I ever saw in whose favour my heart was prepossessed, and with whom I should have felt no repugnance to have engaged in the tenderest ties, is nothing to me—He loves another. He too complains of slighted passion, and ill-fated love. Ah, had he made his happiness depend on me, what would not I have done to reward him! Carefully I would have soothed every anguish, and taught his heart to bound with joy. But what am I saying?—Where am I going?—Am I that Delia that bad defiance to the art of men,—that saw with indifference the havock that my charms had made! With every opening morn I smiled. Each hour was sped with joy, and my heart was light and frolic. And shall I dwindle into a pensive, melancholy maid, the sacrifice of one that heeds me not, whose sighs no answering sighs encounter!—let it not be said. I have hitherto asserted the independence of my sex, I will continue to do so. Too amiable unknown, I give thee to the winds! Propitious fate, I thank thee that thou hast so soon discovered how much my partiality was misplaced. I will abjure it before it be too late. I will tear the little intruder from my heart before the mischief is become irretrievable."

The following evening Delia repaired again by a kind of irresistible impulse to the grove. She asked not the company of her friend. She dared alone hazard the encounter of that object, at which she had trembled so much the preceding day. Unknown to herself she still imaged a kind of uncertainty in her fate which would not permit her to lay aside all thought of Damon. She determined at all events, to have her doubts resolved. "When there is no longer," said she to herself, "any room for mistake, I shall then know what to do."

As she drew near the alcove, she perceived the same figure stretched along the bank, and with his eyes immoveably fixed upon a little fountain that rose in a corner of the scene. He seemed lost in thought. Delia approached doubtfully, but he heard her not. Advanced near to her object, she reclined forward in a posture of wonder and attention. At this moment a sigh burst from the heart of Damon, and he raised himself upon the seat.

His eyes caught the figure of Delia.—"Ah," said he, starting from his trance, "what do I see? Art thou, lovely intruder, a mere vision, an aerial being that shuns the touch?" "I beg ten thousand pardons. I meant not, sir, to interrupt you. I will be gone." "No, go not." Answered he. "Thou art welcome to my troubled thoughts. I could gaze for ever."

Saying this he rose and advancing towards her, seized her hand. "Be not afraid," said he, "gentle fair one, my breast is a stranger to violence and rudeness. I have felt the dart of love. Unhappy myself, I learn to feel for others. But you are happy." As he said this, a tear unbidden stole into the eye of Delia, and she wiped it away with the hand which was disengaged from his. "And dost thou pity me," said he. "And does such softness dwell within thy breast? If you knew the story of my woes, you would have reason to pity me. I am in love to distraction, but I dare not disclose my passion. I am banished from the presence of her I love. Ah, cruel fate, I am entangled, inextricably entangled." "And how, sir," said Delia, "can I serve you?" "Alas," said he, in no way. My case is hopeless and irretrievable. And what am I doing? Why do I talk, when the season calls for action? Oh, I am lost."

"Dear Sir," answered Delia, "you terrify me to death." "Oh, no. I would not for the world give you an uneasy moment. Let me be unhappy—but may misfortune never disturb your tranquility. I return to seek her whose fate is surely destined to mix with mine. Pardon, loveliest of thy sex, the

distraction in which I have appeared. I would ask you to forget me—I would ask you to remember me—I know not what I am, or what to think."

With these words he took the hand which he still held in one of his, and raising it to his lips, kissed it with the utmost fervour. Immediately he caught up his hat, which lay beside him on the ground, and began to advance along the path that led out of the grove on the side furthest from the town. But his eyes were still fixed upon Delia. He heeded not the path by which he went; and scarcely had he gone twenty paces, ere he changed his mind and returned. Delia was seated on the bank and seemed lost in reverie. Damon threw himself upon his knees before her.

"Ah, why," said he, "am I constrained to depart!—Why must I talk in riddles! Perhaps we may never see each other more. Perhaps the time will come when I shall be able to clear up the obscurity that at present I am obliged to preserve. But no, it cannot be. I never was happy but for two poor hours that I enjoyed your smiles, and, drinking in the poison of your charms, I forgot myself. The time too soon arrived for bitter recollection. My mistress calls, the mistress of my fate. I must be gone—Farewel—for ever."

Saying this, he heaved a sigh that seemed almost to tear his breast asunder, and with the utmost apparent violence he tore himself away, and rushed along the path with incredible velocity.

Delia was now alone. But instead, as she had flattered herself of having her doubts resolved, she was more uncertain, more perplexed than ever. "What" cried she, "can all this mean? How strange, and how inexplicable! Is it a real person that I have seen, or is it a vision that mocks my fancy? Am I loved, or am I hated? Oh, foolish question! Oh, fond illusion! Are we not parted for ever! Is he not gone to seek the mistress of his soul! Alas, he views me not, but with that general complacency, which youth, and the small pretensions I have to beauty are calculated to excite! He had nothing to relate that concerned myself, he merely intended to make me the confidante of his passion for another. Too surely he is unhappy. His heart seemed ready to burst with sorrow. Probably in this situation there is no greater or more immediate relief, than to disclose the subject of our distress, and to receive into our bosom the sympathetic tear of a simple and a generous heart. His behaviour today corresponds but too well with the suspicions that yesterday excited. Oh, Delia! then," added she, "be firm. Thou shalt see the conqueror no more. Think of him no more."

In spite however of all the resolution she could muster, Delia repaired day after day, sometimes alone, and sometimes in company with her friend, to that spot which, by the umbrage of melancholy it wore, was become more interesting than ever. Miss Fletcher, could scarcely at first be persuaded to direct her course that way, lest she should again see the ghost. But she need not have terrified herself. No ghost appeared.

Disappointed and baffled on this side, Delia by the strictest enquiries endeavoured to find out who the unknown person was, in whose fate she had become so greatly interested. The result of these enquiries, however diligent, was not entirely satisfactory. She learned that he had been for a few days upon a visit to a Mr. Moreland, a gentleman who lived about three miles from Southampton.

Mr. Moreland was a person of a very singular character. He had the reputation in the neighbourhood of being a cynic, a misanthrope, and a madman. He kept very little company, and was even seldom seen but by night. He had a garden sufficiently spacious, which was carefully rendered impervious to every human eye. And to this and his house he entirely confined himself in the day-time. The persons he saw were not the gentlemen of the neighbourhood. He had no toleration for characters that did not interest him. When he first came down to his present residence, he was visited by Mr. Hartley, Mr. Prattle, squire Savage, lord Martin, and all the most admired personages in the country. But their visits had never been returned. Mr. Prattle pronounced him a scoundrel; squire Savage said he was a nincompoop; and lord Martin was near sending him a challenge. But the censures of the former, and the threats of the latter, had never reached his ears. His domestics were numerous, but they were hired from a distance, and were permitted as little communication as possible with the powdered lacquies of Southampton. Of consequence, however much the unaccommodating conduct

of Mr. Moreland disposed his neighbours to calumniate him, scandal was deprived of that daily food which is requisite for her subsistence, and the name of that gentleman was scarcely ever heard.

CHAPTER V. *A Man of Humour*

We will now return to lord Martin. All his messengers, from what cruel fate we cannot exactly ascertain, miscarried; and it was not till Damon had left the country, that he learned that he had been a visitor at the house of Mr. Moreland. Finding that he had missed his expected vengeance, he discharged his anger in unavailing curses, and for three days he breathed nothing but daggers, death, and damnation. Having thus vapoured away the paroxysm of his fury, he became tolerably composed.

But adverse fate had decreed a short duration to the tranquility of his lordship. Scarcely had the field been cleared from the enemy he so greatly dreaded, ere a new rival came upon the stage, to whose arms, though without any great foundation, the whole town of Southampton had consigned the charming Delia.

The name of this gentleman was Prettyman. He was just returned from his travels, and was reckoned perfectly accomplished. He was six foot high, his shoulders were broad, his legs brawny, and his whole person athletic. The habits however he had formed to himself in foreign countries, will not perhaps be allowed exactly to correspond with the figure which nature had bestowed upon him. He generally spent two hours every morning at his toilette. His face was painted and patched, his whole person strongly perfumed, and he had continually in his hand a gold snuff-box set with diamonds. His voice was naturally hoarse and loud, but with infinite industry he had brought himself to a pronunciation shrill, piping, and effeminate. His conversation was larded with foreign phrases and foreign oaths, and every thing he said was accompanied with a significant shrug.

The same period which had introduced this new pretender to the heart of Delia, had been distinguished by the arrival of a Sir William Twyford, who paid his addresses to Miss Fletcher. Sir William was exactly the reverse of Mr. Prettyman. With a genteel person, and an open and agreeable physiognomy, his manners were perfectly careless and unstudied. A predominant feature in his character was good nature. But this was not his ruling passion. He had an infinite fund of wit and humour, and he never was so happy as when he was able to place the foibles of affectation in a whimsical and ridiculous light.

As it was vanity alone, that had induced Mr. Prettyman to pay his addresses to the lady, who was universally allowed to surpass in beauty and every elegant accomplishment in the place in which he was, he would have been less pleased that his amour should have terminated in a marriage, than that by his affectation and coquetry he might break the heart of the simple fair one. Accordingly, it was his business to make the affair as public as possible.

Lord Martin, had been sufficiently irritated by the pretensions of Damon. The new intruder had wrought up his passion to the highest pitch. In the mean time he had renewed an acquaintance which he had formerly made with sir William Twyford. Sir William, upon all occasions, cultivated the intimacy of such, as, by any striking peculiarities, seemed to furnish a proper subject for his humour. He now contributed every thing in his power to inflame his lordship against Mr. Prettyman. He offered to become the bearer of a challenge, and to be his lordship's second in any future combat.

Lord Martin broke off the conversation somewhat abruptly, and began to reflect with himself upon what had passed. He had hitherto contrived, by some means or other, though he dealt very largely in challenges, never to have come to actual battle. But he had too much reason to think, that if he made sir William his messenger, he should not be able with any degree of honour to contrive an evasion. "It is true," said he, "I am in a most confounded passion, but a wise general never proceeds to action without having first deliberated. Zounds, blood and fire! would I could put an end to the existence of so presumptuous a villain! But then it must be considered that Mr. Prettyman is six foot high, and I am not five. He is as athletic as Ajax, but to me nature has been unfavourable. It is true I understand cart and terce, parry and thrust, but I have heard that Prettyman studied under

Olivier. Many a man has outlived the passage of a bullet, or the thrust of a sword through him. But my constitution is so delicate! Curse blast it, death and the devil, I do not know what to do."

Sir William, as soon as he had left lord Martin, repaired to the lodgings of Mr. Prettyman. After a short general conversation, he began, "My dear friend, here has happened the unluckiest thing in nature. You have made some advances, you know, to the charming Delia." "True," cried Prettyman, "I have bestowed upon her a few condescending glances. *C'est une charmante fille.*" "Well," added sir William, "and the whole town gives her to you." "*Parbleu!* the town is very impertinent. There will go two words to that bargain." "My lord Martin, you know, has enlisted himself amongst her admirers." "Pox take the blockhead, I suppose he would marry her. *Bien.* After I have led her a dance, he shall do what he pleases with her." "But," said sir William, "my lord intends to call you to an account." "*Morbleu,*" cried Prettyman, "I thought I had been in a land of liberty." "But let me tell you, my lord is very absolute. He has fought some half a dozen duels in his time, and every body is afraid of him." "*J'en suis excèdè*

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