RANDOM HOUSE eBOOKS

Moll Flanders

Daniel Defoe

Contents

About the Book

These are the fortunes and misfortunes of Moll Flanders: born in Newgate Prison, twelve years a prostitute, five times a wife (once to her own brother), twelve years a thief and eight years a transported felon in Her Majesty’s colony of Virginia. Daniel Defoe’s rollicking tale presents life in the prisons, alleyways and underworlds of eighteenth-century London, and gives us Moll – scandalous, unscrupulous and utterly irresistible.

About the Author

Daniel Defoe was born in London in 1660. He worked briefly as a hosiery merchant, then as an intelligence agent and political writer. His writings resulted in his imprisonment on several occasions, earning him powerful friends and enemies. During his lifetime Defoe wrote over two hundred and fifty books, pamphlets and journals and travelled widely in both Europe and the British Isles. Among his most famous works are *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722). Though Defoe was nearly sixty before he began writing fiction, his work is so fundamental to the development of the novel form that he is often cited as the first true English novelist. He is also regarded as a founding father of modern journalism and one of the earliest travel writers. Daniel Defoe died in April 1731.

ALSO BY DANIEL DEFOE

Novels

The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe
Robinson Crusoe
A Journal of the Plague Year
The Political History of the Devil

Non-Fiction

The Storm
A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain

DANIEL DEFOE

Moll Flanders

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
Freya North

VINTAGE BOOKS
London

INTRODUCTION

This introduction contains details of the novel's plot

Daniel Defoe, perhaps our first true novelist, is also the founding father of a tradition in literature which British novelists have continued to make their own – namely, the Romp. Bawdiness never at the expense of conscience; action and adventure but always with soul; characters who invariably deserve their comeuppance yet who also make amends. The Romp – fast-paced gallivanting off the beaten track then back on to the road to redemption. I like to cite Fielding's *Tom Jones* and Defoe's *Moll Flanders* as the quintessential novels of this genre and the classic novels that I revere most (I've often thought Tom and Moll would make the perfect couple).

Traditionally, the cover copy on editions of *Moll Flanders* alludes to the theme of redemption – whether or not, at the close of the story, Moll is a true penitent or still the manipulative minx. The concept of redemption underscores the book but I don't feel Defoe set out to preach. For me, a richer theme and one that certainly seemed to engage the author more, is that of the place and plight of women. Defoe might have penned a gorgeously salacious picaresque romp with the characters conning each other and the author conning the reader (after all, Defoe is writing as a woman who is writing under a pseudonym to chronicle the many aliases she has had to use). He may also have produced a great exercise in Irony, but I think he chose the platform of fiction and wrote in the female first person specifically to plead women's cause. 'Women have ten thousand times the more Reason to be wary and

backward, by how much the hazard of being betray'd is the greater.' If you didn't have family and you didn't have money, life was not just hard it was dangerous. If you did have money and you were a woman alone, the perils were greater still. I sense Defoe liked women and genuinely empathised with the challenges they faced in his age.

Moll is acutely aware of this vulnerability throughout the novel. Consequently, she squirrels away her fortune (whether her money comes from her needlework, her body or stealing from others), revealing its true worth only to the reader. She fiercely protects every penny she has, well aware that without it her life is precarious. Material things remain to her a far greater insurance policy for safety and happiness than love itself. Men are gold diggers. After her second husband works his way through tracts of her fortune, Moll is adamant that any future husband must fall for her and not the rumour of her wealth. Frequently, the novel illustrates Moll's theory that men look for comeliness in a whore, wit and beauty in a mistress but money alone in a wife. When at last she meets a man who declares he'd scorn her gold and would embrace her even if she were poor, she knows she has found a good husband. What is important to Moll is that this man has married the wife he loves, not 'a Wife with something'.

At the very start of the novel, Moll makes us aware that if she'd been born in France, 'a poor desolate girl without friends', she'd have been given a better start in life. Instead, this English girl is abandoned when her felon mother is exiled and, by the age of three, she's run away from the gypsies who took her in. Luckily, at this point, the first of Moll's many female allies comes into her life – the kindly nurse and school-mistress who teaches Moll two fundamentals which never leave her: to be housewifely and clean, and to be mannerly. Whatever Moll gets up to in later life, her personal cleanliness and love of linen remain as important to her as good deportment. She is happier

pick-pocketing along the Mall dressed as a woman of society above suspicion, than she is when she briefly disguises herself as a beggar woman for her forays. Even in role-play, the ugliness and baseness of this costume is anathema to her.

By the age of nine, Moll's desire to be able to keep herself, to be seen as a Gentlewoman, is fixed. The entire novel, which relays her whole life, chronicles this pursuit and the situations and circumstances that continually jeopardise an ambition that is fundamentally worthy. After her short marriage to a profligate debtor, Moll knows she must spend what she can ill afford on fine widow's garb because she has learned that money alone makes women agreeable – not beauty, wit, virtue, piety, an education or manners. She takes the name Mrs Flanders: contemporary readers would have known that not only the best linen and lace – but also the best prostitutes – came from Flanders. What Moll terms a Gentlewoman, and what others define as such, may contrast greatly. But she is absolutely distinct about one thing: 'a woman should never be kept for a Mistress that had Money to keep her self'. This woman *wants* to be emancipated. Good for Defoe for believing in women's rights in the seventeenth century.

Was it really Moll who needed her pseudonym – or Defoe? Defoe knew all about disguise because between 1697 and 1701 he worked as a secret agent. During his life, in addition to his novels, he was a prolific pamphleteer and satirist – even when it landed him in prison (which is of course where this novel starts and where the character's life so nearly ends). I believe Defoe used Moll to air some of his profound philosophies on men, wealth, poverty and the law. For example, 'There is nothing so absurd, so surfeiting, so ridiculous, as a Man heated by Wine in his Head and a wicked Gust in his Inclination together: he is in the possession of two Devils at once.'

Moll might wrong a number of men, but Defoe is careful to illustrate that, however dubious her morality becomes, she has little choice but to lead the life she does. There is little doubting that she is a thief, but she needs to survive. She loses her way but she never loses our affection. Defoe's sympathy is not with his sex – but with womankind. It is the female characters that he delights in: they are rounded, sentient and bright. By contrast, Defoe's male characters are intentionally two-dimensional; essentially caricatures used by the author to depict Type rather than individuals. Moll's second husband is the Fop; her beloved Jemy – the Cad; the lover at Bath – the Hypocrite; the financial advisor – the Cuckold. (Here, Moll gives voice to another of Defoe's theories, his reflections on the times: that 'Men can be their own Advisors, able to work themselves out of Difficulties and into Business'. But for a woman to be friendless is next to being in want – even if she has money.)

Defoe shows the men in the novel to be trouble and emotionally inept – but he revels in the warmth, tenderness and camaraderie between his female characters. In Colchester, when she's a child, Moll bonds strongly with the nurse who teaches her to sew and humours the little girl's desire to be a Gentlewoman. The relationship is mirrored much later in the book in Moll's relationship with the Governess – for whom she steals so proficiently yet whom she trusts with her assets and her secrets. After Moll's second husband absconds, she develops a bond with the Captain's Lady: concern and kindness are reciprocated, with the women helping each other to avoid unsuitable men and locate good husband material. In Virginia, Moll's relationship with the woman she thinks is her mother-in-law is affectionate and trusting. Later, her landlady in Bath reduces her rent and puts men 'of Honour and Virtue' Moll's way. When her beloved Jemy has gone and Moll is alone, pregnant and poor, she meets the woman who becomes a true mother figure to her for the rest of the

book. Her blood mother was a Newgate Bird, and Moll's adopted mother's moral fibre is equally questionable – she runs a house where, by charging both the pregnant women and the parish, she gains control of the children born there. She also lets twelve prostitutes operate from there and has another thirty-two girls working elsewhere. Through Moll, Defoe remarks on this 'strange Testimony of the growing Vice of the Age'. Moll's relationship with the woman deepens into that of confidante – she is the only person in her life that Moll genuinely trusts; with information, emotion and the true value of her wealth. The character we first met as Mother Midnight becomes *My Governess*.

It is at the age of fifty-one, and over half-way through the book that Moll's life takes its infamous change of direction – for which she becomes as notorious in her fictitious world as she has in British Literature. Moll shines as an accomplished thief. Initially, she is horrified at herself. However, 'Regret and Reflections wear off when the Temptation renews itself'. For the reader, there is an uncomfortable thrill in accompanying Moll on her sprees. Moll has to admit, while 'poverty brought me into the Mire, so Avarice kept me in'. And when avarice is joined with success, stealing becomes addictive. When she perfects her pick-pocketing, she gives the reader three pages of tips and advice: 'When we are harden'd in Crime, no Fear can affect us, no Example give us any warning'. We want to see exactly how she does it. We want to rifle through her booty. Throughout her criminal life, she continually tries to persuade herself, her Governess, and her reader that she is a cut above the average, a Gentlewoman amongst thieves. We want to believe her – even when she robs the child returning from her dancing class. When Moll is at the height, or rather depth, of her thievery Defoe paints a personality so colourful that we cannot help but root for her and, ultimately, we don't want her to get caught.

Is Moll truly a whore? Does she ever set out to procure money from sexual favours? She does say that poverty is ‘the sure bane of virtue’. But her first undoing (by the elder son of the family who take her in during her youth), which is initially verbal and soon enough physical, she describes as a series of ‘attacks’. In Bath, later on, her landlady tells her she ought to ‘expect some Gratification’ from the men she puts Moll’s way – though Moll justifies this money as loans or gifts. Here in Bath she meets the man who will become her lover for many years and their relationship is chaste for a long time at her absolute insistence. When it finally changes, Moll considers she has ‘exchang’d the Place of Friend for that unmusical harsh-sounding Title of Whore’. By the age of fifty-five, when she concedes men no longer desire her as a lover, she takes money both from their pockets and in exchange for sex. Now, though, there is no chase, no clever or witty parlay, no long-standing involvement. She makes the blunt distinction between whore and mistress – if you are paid per visit, you’re a whore. Throughout the book, however, she tells us it is absolutely necessary for women to ‘preserve the Character of their Virtue, even when perhaps they may have sacrific’d the Thing itself.’

Much has been written on the themes of irony and redemption in Defoe’s novel. Once she has been caught and condemned, Moll warns us gravely: ‘It would be a severe Satyr on such, to say they do not relish the Repentance as much as they do the Crime’. However, the reader is guilty of just that. It has been such a dangerous thrill to accompany her. It was her audaciousness, her will to survive –whatever it took – and her determination to be the best at whatever it was she was doing, legal, moral or otherwise, that captivated us.

Is the ending of the book satisfying? The loose ends are conveniently, even hastily, tied up and any remaining loose morality is downplayed or even overlooked (the gifts the

penitent Moll gives to others are often stolen goods she's kept from her wicked past). Is Moll truly penitent? I see Moll as a fundamentally good woman, whom circumstances dragged into a moral morass, but whose sense of self-preservation gave her the drive to claw her way out. Defoe gives Moll depth and complexity and heart – and also the happy ending that has been a long time coming.

With so much contemporary commercial fiction now available to us, we subliminally choose novels we can absorb almost by osmosis – novels which we can fit into our lives if they fit into our bags – novels where the chapter length is perfectly suited for the commute into work. We opt for the convenience and satisfaction of finishing three whole chapters while travelling between Totteridge and Aldgate (when Moll makes a similar journey it takes her days and is beset by danger). With our fast-paced lives and crowded buses and too much choice on television each night, many of us tend to read novels where the language washes over us like background chatter in a café; fiction where we don't have to read every single word to elicit all the information we need, entire books which can be read practically on auto-pilot without missing anything of the plot.

Moll Flanders demands more of the modern reader. This is partly because the novel was written almost three hundred years ago and partly because it is a very different reading experience from anything currently available in a 3for2 or buy-one-get-one-free offer. And yet the novel remains to this day the definitive feisty romp with much to commend it to the modern reader. After all, at its heart, Defoe's story features a spirited girl who has a tough time in life, who loses her way but never her mind and finally wins the happy-ever-after she's fought for by fair means or foul.

Despite the raunch and ribaldry, the frenetic pace, the outrageous plot lines, the sex, the boozing, the crime, the

punishments and the cleavages stuffed with ill-gotten gains – for the modern-day reader *Moll Flanders* challenges as much as it entertains. After all, the book is four hundred pages of exhausting and sometimes quite taxing narrative without the respite of chapters. There aren't any. The reader cannot skim ahead a few pages in *Moll Flanders* to locate a convenient break between paragraphs. There aren't any of those either. This novel, first published in 1722, is peppered with words I'd never heard, others that are rarely used nowadays, spellings that are uncommon, and the frequent and apparently random capitalisation of words.

My editor would never publish a novel of mine that was not set out in chapter form with regularly placed cliffhangers to manipulate the reader. And if I'd written *Moll Flanders*, my editor would reprimand me frequently with the criticism 'Show! Don't Tell!' *Moll Flanders* is an episodic and relentlessly descriptive account of seventy years of a woman's life. That the structure is so orderly conflicts brilliantly with the chaotic lives it chronicles. Being one of the earliest novels in the English language, it might appear quite crude in its presentation but it is staggeringly rich in its style and content.

You cannot skim-read *Moll Flanders*; you cannot miss out the occasional paragraph. You ought not to read it if you're particularly tired. You need to give Defoe your undivided attention, because his turn of phrase is frequently breathtaking, his complex irony is a joy, and the concepts and morality he delivers through his superbly rounded character of Moll are humbling and beautiful. This early novel brings with it a wonderful contradiction – the modern-day reader must slow right down in order to keep up with the pace, to appreciate the language as well as the action.

For Moll, 'Vice came in always at the Door of Necessity, not at the Door of Inclination'. You can't help but like the

woman. She’s a survivor; she’s the embodiment (in the finest corset) of triumph over adversity. Whatever befalls her, she picks herself up, dusts herself down, re-arranges her cleavage; relying on her nous, her wits and her charm to secure for herself the only life she’d ever wanted to lead – that of a Gentlewoman who didn’t have to worry.

Freya North, 2010

DANIEL DEFOE
THE FORTUNES AND MISFORTUNES OF THE FAMOUS Moll Flanders &c.

WHO WAS BORN IN NEWGATE, AND DURING A LIFE OF CONTINUED VARIETY FOR THREESCORE YEARS, BESIDES HER CHILDHOOD, WAS TWELVE YEAR A WHORE, FIVE TIMES A WIFE (WHEREOF ONCE TO HER OWN BROTHER), TWELVE YEAR A THIEF, EIGHT YEAR A TRANSPORTED FELON IN VIRGINIA, AT LAST GREW RICH, LIVED HONEST & DIED A PENITENT

Written from her own Memorandums

PREFACE

THE WORLD IS so taken up of late with novels and romances, that it will be hard for a private history to be taken for genuine, where the names and other circumstances of the person are concealed, and on this account we must be content to leave the reader to pass his own opinion upon the ensuing sheets, and take it just as he pleases.

The author is here supposed to be writing her own history, and in the very beginning of her account she gives the reasons why she thinks fit to conceal her true name, after which there is no occasion to say any more about that.

It is true that the original of this story is put into new words, and the style of the famous lady we here speak of is a little altered; particularly she is made to tell her own tale in modester words than she told it at first, the copy which came first to hand having been written in language more like one still in Newgate than one grown penitent and humble, as she afterwards pretends to be.

The pen employed in finishing her story, and making it what you now see it to be, has had no little difficulty to put it into a dress fit to be seen, and to make it speak language fit to be read. When a woman debauched from her youth, nay, even being the offspring of debauchery and vice, comes to give an account of all her vicious practices, and even to descend to the particular occasions and circumstances by which she first became wicked, and of all the progression of crime which she ran through in threescore years, an author must be hard put to it to wrap it up so clean as not to give room, especially for vicious readers, to turn it to his disadvantage.

All possible care, however, has been taken to give no lewd ideas, no immodest turns in the new dressing up this story; no, not to the worst parts of her expressions. To this purpose some of the vicious part of her life, which could not be modestly told, is quite left out, and several other parts are very much shortened. What is left ’tis hoped will not offend the chastest reader or the modestest hearer; and as the best use is made even of the worst story, the moral ’tis hoped will keep the reader serious, even where the story might incline him to be otherwise. To give the history of a wicked life repented of, necessarily requires that the wicked part should be made as wicked as the real history of it will bear, to illustrate and give a beauty to the penitent part, which is certainly the best and brightest, if related with equal spirit and life.

It is suggested there cannot be the same life, the same brightness and beauty, in relating the penitent part as is in the criminal part. If there is any truth in that suggestion, I must be allowed to say, ’tis because there is not the same taste and relish in the reading, and indeed it is too true that the difference lies not in the real worth of the subject so much as in the gust and palate of the reader.

But as this work is chiefly recommended to those who know how to read it, and how to make the good uses of it which the story all along recommends to them, so it is to be hoped that such readers will be more pleased with the moral than the fable, with the application than with the relation, and with the end of the writer than with the life of the person written of.

There is in this story abundance of delightful incidents, and all of them usefully applied. There is an agreeable turn artfully given them in the relating, that naturally instructs the reader, either one way or other. The first part of her lewd life with the young gentleman at Colchester has so many happy turns given it to expose the crime, and warn all whose circumstances are adapted to it, of the ruinous

end of such things, and the foolish, thoughtless, and abhorred conduct of both the parties, that it abundantly atones for all the lively description she gives of her folly and wickedness.

The repentance of her lover at the Bath, and how brought by the just alarm of his fit of sickness to abandon her; the just caution given there against even the lawful intimacies of the dearest friends, and how unable they are to preserve the most solemn resolutions of virtue without divine assistance; these are parts which, to a just discernment, will appear to have more real beauty in them than all the amorous chain of story which introduces it.

In a word, as the whole relation is carefully garbled of all the levity and looseness that was in it, so it is all applied, and with the utmost care, to virtuous and religious uses. None can, without being guilty of manifest injustice, cast any reproach upon it, or upon our design in publishing it.

The advocates for the stage have, in all ages, made this the great argument to persuade people that their plays are useful, and that they ought to be allowed in the most civilised and in the most religious government; namely, that they are applied to virtuous purposes, and that by the most lively representations, they fail not to recommend virtue and generous principles, and to discourage and expose all sorts of vice and corruption of manners; and were it true that they did so, and that they constantly adhered to that rule, as the test of their acting on the theatre, much might be said in their favour.

Throughout the infinite variety of this book, this fundamental is most strictly adhered to; there is not a wicked action in any part of it, but is first and last rendered unhappy and unfortunate; there is not a superlative villain brought upon the stage, but either he is brought to an unhappy end, or brought to be penitent; there is not an ill thing mentioned but it is condemned, even in the relation, nor a virtuous, just thing but it carries its praise along with

it. What can more exactly answer the rule laid down, to recommend even those representations of things which have so many other just objections lying against them? namely, of example, of bad company, obscene language, and the like.

Upon this foundation the book is recommended to the reader, as a work from every part of which something may be learned, and some just and religious inference is drawn, by which the reader will have something of instruction, if he pleases to make use of it.

All the exploits of this lady of fame, in her depredations upon mankind, stand as so many warnings to honest people to beware of them, intimating to them by what methods innocent people are drawn in, plundered and robbed, and by consequence how to avoid them. Her robbing a little innocent child, dressed fine by the vanity of the mother, to go to the dancing-school, is a good memento to such people hereafter, as is likewise her picking the gold watch from the young lady’s side in the Park.

Her getting a parcel from a hare-brained wench at the coaches in St. John Street; her booty made at the fire, and again at Harwich, all give us excellent warnings in such cases to be more present to ourselves in sudden surprises of every sort.

Her application to a sober life and industrious management at last in Virginia, with her transported spouse, is a story fruitful of instruction to all the unfortunate creatures who are obliged to seek their re-establishment abroad, whether by the misery of transportation or other disaster; letting them know that diligence and application have their due encouragement, even in the remotest parts of the world, and that no case can be so low, so despicable, or so empty of prospect, but that an unwearied industry will go a great way to deliver us from it, will in time raise the meanest creature to appear again in the world, and give him a new cast for his life.

These are a few of the serious inferences which we are led by the hand to in this book, and these are fully sufficient to justify any man in recommending it to the world, and much more to justify the publication of it.

There are two of the most beautiful parts still behind, which this story gives some idea of, and lets us into the parts of them, but they are either of them too long to be brought into the same volume, and indeed are, as I may call them, whole volumes of themselves, viz. I. The life of her governess, as she calls her, who had run through, it seems, in a few years, all the eminent degrees of a gentlewoman, a whore, and a bawd; a midwife and a midwife-keeper, as they are called; a pawnbroker, a child-taker, a receiver of thieves, and of thieves' purchase, that is to say, of stolen goods; and, in a word, herself a thief, a breeder up of thieves and the like, and yet at last a penitent.

The second is the life of her transported husband, a highwayman, who, it seems, lived a twelve years' life of successful villainy upon the road, and even at last came off so well as to be a volunteer transport, not a convict; and in whose life there is an incredible variety.

But, as I have said, these are things too long to bring in here, so neither can I make a promise of their coming out by themselves.

We cannot say, indeed, that this history is carried on quite to the end of the life of the famous Moll Flanders, as she calls herself, for nobody can write their own life to the full end of it, unless they write it after they are dead. But her husband's life, being written by a third hand, gives a full account of them both, how long they lived together in that country, and how they came both to England again, after about eight years, in which time they were grown very rich, and where she lived, it seems, to be very old, but was not so extraordinary a penitent as she was at first; it seems only that indeed she always spoke with abhorrence of her former life, and of every part of it.

In her last scene, at Maryland and Virginia, many pleasant things happened, which makes that part of her life very agreeable, but they are not told with the same elegancy as those accounted for by herself; so it is still to the more advantage that we break off here.

THE HISTORY AND MISFORTUNES OF THE FAMOUS MOLL FLANDERS, &c.

MY TRUE NAME is so well known in the records or registers of Newgate, and in the old Bailey, and there are some things of such consequence still depending there, relating to my particular conduct, that it is not to be expected I should set my name or the account of my family to this work; perhaps, after my death, it may be better known; at present it would not be proper, no, not though a general pardon should be issued, even without exceptions and reserve of persons or crimes.

It is enough to tell you, that as some of my worst comrades, who are out of the way of doing me harm (having gone out of the world by the steps and the string, as I often expected to go), knew me by the name of Moll Flanders, so you may give me leave to speak of myself under that name till I dare own who I have been, as well as who I am.

I have been told that in one of our neighbour nations, whether it be in France, or where else I know not, they have an order from the king, that when any criminal is condemned, either to die, or to the galleys, or to be transported, if they leave any children, as such are generally unprovided for, by the poverty of forfeiture of their parents, so they are immediately taken into the care of the Government, and put into an hospital called the House of Orphans, where they are bred up, clothed, fed, taught, and when fit to go out, are placed out to trades or

to services, so as to be well able to provide for themselves by an honest, industrious behaviour.

Had this been the custom in our country, I had not been left a poor desolate girl without friends, without clothes, without help or helper in the world, as was my fate; and by which I was not only exposed to very great distresses, even before I was capable either of understanding my case or how to amend it, but brought into a course of life which was not only scandalous in itself, but which in its ordinary course tended to the swift destruction both of soul and body.

But the case was otherwise here. My mother was convicted of felony for a certain petty theft scarce worth naming, viz. having an opportunity of borrowing three pieces of fine holland of a certain draper in Cheapside. The circumstances are too long to repeat, and I have heard them related so many ways, that I can scarce be certain which is the right account.

However it was, this they all agree in, that my mother pleaded her belly, and being found quick with child, she was respited for about seven months; in which time having brought me into the world, and being about again, she was called down, as they term it, to her former judgment, but obtained the favour of being transported to the plantations, and left me about half a year old; and in bad hands, you may be sure.

This is too near the first hours of my life for me to relate anything of myself but hearsay; it is enough to mention, that as I was born in such an unhappy place, I had no parish to have recourse to for my nourishment in my infancy; nor can I give the least account how I was kept alive, other than that, as I have been told, some relation of my mother’s took me away for a while as a nurse, but at whose expense, or by whose direction, I know nothing at all of it.

The first account that I can recollect, or could ever learn of myself, was that I had wandered among a crew of those people they call gypsies, or Egyptians; but I believe it was but a very little while that I had been among them, for I had not had my skin discoloured or blackened, as they do very young to all the children they carry about with them; nor can I tell how I came among them, or how I got from them.

It was at Colchester, in Essex, that those people left me; and I have a notion in my head that I left them there (that is, that I hid myself and would not go any farther with them), but I am not able to be particular in that account; only this I remember, that being taken up by some of the parish officers of Colchester, I gave an account that I came into the town with the gypsies, but that I would not go any farther with them, and that so they had left me, but whither they were gone that I knew not, nor could they expect it of me; for though they sent round the country to inquire after them, it seems they could not be found.

I was now in a way to be provided for; for though I was not a parish charge upon this or that part of the town by law, yet as my case came to be known, and that I was too young to do any work, being not above three years old, compassion moved the magistrates of the town to order some care to be taken of me, and I became one of their own as much as if I had been born in the place.

In the provision they made for me, it was my good hap to be put to nurse, as they call it, to a woman who was indeed poor but had been in better circumstances, and who got a little livelihood by taking such as I was supposed to be, and keeping them with all necessaries, till they were at a certain age, in which it might be supposed they might go to service or get their own bread.

This woman had also had a little school, which she kept to teach children to read and to work; and having, as I have said, lived before that in good fashion, she bred up the

children she took with a great deal of art, as well as with a great deal of care.

But that which was worth all the rest, she bred them up very religiously, being herself a very sober, pious woman, very housewifely and clean, and very mannerly, and with good behaviour. So that in a word, excepting a plain diet, coarse lodging, and mean clothes, we were brought up as mannerly and as genteelly as if we had been at the dancing-school.

I was continued here till I was eight years old, when I was terrified with news that the magistrates (as I think they called them) had ordered that I should go to service. I was able to do but very little service wherever I was to go, except it was to run errands and be a drudge to some cookmaid, and this they told me of often, which put me into a great fright; for I had a thorough aversion to going to service, as they called it (that is, to be a servant), though I was so young; and I told my nurse, as we called her, that I believed I could get my living without going to service, if she pleased to let me; for she had taught me to work with my needle and spin worsted, which is the chief trade of that city, and I told her that if she would keep me, I would work for her, and I would work very hard.

I talked to her almost every day of working hard; and, in short, I did nothing but work and cry all day, which grieved the good, kind woman so much, that at last she began to be concerned for me, for she loved me very well.

One day after this, as she came into the room where all we poor children were at work, she sat down just over against me, not in her usual place as mistress, but as if she set herself on purpose to observe me and see me work. I was doing something she had set me to; as I remember, it was marking some shirts which she had taken to make, and after a while she began to talk to me. ‘Thou foolish child,’ says she, ‘thou art always crying’ (for I was crying then); ‘prithee, what dost cry for?’ ‘Because they will take me

away,’ says I, ‘and put me to service, and I can’t work housework.’ ‘Well, child,’ says she, ‘but though you can’t work housework, as you call it, you will learn it in time, and they won’t put you to hard things at first.’ ‘Yes, they will,’ says I, ‘and if I can’t do it they will beat me, and the maids will beat me to make me do great work, and I am but a little girl and I can’t do it’; and then I cried again, till I could not speak any more to her.

This moved my good motherly nurse, so that she from that time resolved I should not go to service yet; so she bid me not to cry, and she would speak to Mr. Mayor, and I should not go to service till I was bigger.

Well, this did not satisfy me, for to think of going to service was such a frightful thing to me, that if she had assured me that I should not have gone till I was twenty years old, it would have been the same to me; I should have cried, I believe, all the time, with the very apprehension of its being so at last.

When she saw that I was not pacified yet, she began to be angry with me. ‘And what would you have?’ says she; ‘don’t I tell you that you shall not go to service till you are bigger?’ ‘Ay,’ says I, ‘but then I must go at last.’ ‘Why, what?’ said she; ‘is the girl mad? What would you be – a gentlewoman?’ ‘Yes,’ says I, and cried heartily till I roared out again.

This set the old gentlewoman a-laughing at me, as you may be sure it would. ‘Well, madam, forsooth,’ says she, gibing at me, ‘you would be a gentlewoman; and pray how will you come to be a gentlewoman? What! will you do it by your fingers’ ends?’

‘Yes,’ says I again, very innocently.

‘Why, what can you earn?’ says she; ‘what can you get at your work?’

‘Threepence,’ says I, ‘when I spin, and fourpence when I work plain work.’

‘Alas! poor gentlewoman,’ said she again, laughing, ‘what will that do for thee?’

‘It will keep me,’ says I, ‘if you will let me live with you.’ And this I said in such a poor petitioning tone, that it made the poor woman’s heart yearn to me, as she told me afterwards.

‘But,’ says she, ‘that will not keep you and buy you clothes too; and who must buy the little gentlewoman clothes?’ says she, and smiled all the while at me.

‘I will work harder, then,’ says I, ‘and you shall have it all.’

‘Poor child! it won’t keep you,’ says she; ‘it will hardly keep you in victuals.’

‘Then I will have no victuals,’ says I, again very innocently; ‘let me but live with you.’

‘Why, can you live without victuals?’ says she.

‘Yes,’ again says I, very much like a child, you may be sure, and still I cried heartily.

I had no policy in all this; you may easily see it was all nature; but it was joined with so much innocence and so much passion that, in short, it set the good motherly creature a-weeping too, and she cried at last as fast as I did, and then took me and led me out of the teaching-room. ‘Come,’ says she, ‘you shan’t go to service; you shall live with me’; and this pacified me for the present.

Some time after this, she going to wait on the Mayor, and talking of such things as belonged to her business, at last my story came up, and my good nurse told Mr. Mayor the whole tale. He was so pleased with it, that he would call his lady and his two daughters to hear it, and it made mirth enough among them, you may be sure.

However, not a week had passed over, but on a sudden comes Mrs. Mayoress and her two daughters to the house to see my old nurse, and to see her school and the children. When they had looked about them a little, ‘Well, Mrs. —,’ says the Mayoress to my nurse, ‘and pray which is the little

lass that intends to be a gentlewoman?' I heard her, and I was terribly frighted at first, though I did not know why neither; but Mrs. Mayoress comes up to me. 'Well, miss,' says she, 'and what are you at work upon?' The word miss was a language that had hardly been heard of in our school, and I wondered what sad name it was she called me. However, I stood up, made a curtsy, and she took my work out of my hand, looked on it, and said it was very well; then she took up one of my hands. 'Nay,' says she, 'the child may come to be a gentlewoman for aught anybody knows; she has a gentlewoman's hand,' says she. This pleased me mightily, you may be sure; but Mrs. Mayoress did not stop there, but giving me my work again, she put her hand in her pocket, gave me a shilling, and bid me mind my work, and learn to work well, and I might be a gentlewoman for aught she knew.

Now all this while my good old nurse, Mrs. Mayoress, and all the rest of them did not understand me at all, for they meant one sort of thing by the word gentlewoman, and I meant quite another; for, alas! all I understood by being a gentlewoman was to be able to work for myself, and get enough to keep me without that terrible bugbear going to service, whereas they meant to live great, rich and high, and I know not what.

Well, after Mrs. Mayoress was gone, her two daughters came in, and they called for the gentlewoman too, and they talked a long while to me, and I answered them in my innocent way; but always, if they asked me whether I resolved to be a gentlewoman, I answered Yes. At last one of them asked me what a gentlewoman was? That puzzled me much; but, however, I explained myself negatively, that it was one that did not go to service, to do housework. They were pleased to be familiar with me, and liked my little prattle to them, which, it seems, was agreeable enough to them, and they gave me money too.

As for my money, I gave it all to my mistress-nurse, as I called her, and told her she should have all I got for myself when I was a gentlewoman, as well as now. By this and some other of my talk, my old tutoress began to understand me about what I meant by being a gentlewoman, and that I understood by it no more than to be able to get my bread by my own work; and at last she asked me whether it was not so.

I told her, yes, and insisted on it, that to do so was to be a gentlewoman; ‘for,’ says I, ‘there is such a one,’ naming a woman that mended lace and washed the ladies’ laced-heads; ‘she,’ says I, ‘is a gentlewoman, and they call her madam.’

‘Poor child,’ says my good old nurse, ‘you may soon be such a gentlewoman as that, for she is a person of ill fame, and has had two or three bastards.’

I did not understand anything of that; but I answered, ‘I am sure they call her madam, and she does not go to service nor do housework’; and therefore I insisted that she was a gentlewoman, and I would be such a gentlewoman as that.

The ladies were told all this again, to be sure, and they made themselves merry with it, and every now and then the young ladies, Mr. Mayor’s daughters, would come and see me, and ask where the little gentlewoman was, which made me not a little proud of myself.

This held a great while, and I was often visited by these young ladies, and sometimes they brought others with them; so that I was known by it almost all over the town.

I was now about ten years old, and began to look a little womanish, for I was mighty grave and humble, very mannerly, and as I had often heard the ladies say I was pretty, and would be a very handsome woman, so you may be sure that hearing them say so made me not a little proud. However, that pride had no ill effect upon me yet; only, as they often gave me money, and I gave it my old