

The Memoirs of Fanny Hill



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Letter the First

Madam,

I sit down to give you an undeniable proof of my considering your desires as indispensable orders. Ungracious then as the task may be, I shall recall to view those scandalous stages of my life, out of which I emerged, at length, to the enjoyment of every blessing in the power of love, health and fortune to bestow; whilst yet in the flower of youth, and not too late to employ the leisure afforded me by great ease and affluence, to cultivate an understanding, naturally not a despicable one, and which had, even amidst the whirl of loose pleasures I had been tossed in, exerted more observation on the characters and manners of the world than what is common to those of my unhappy profession, who, looking on all though or reflection as their capital enemy, keep it at as great a distance as they can, or destroy it without mercy.

Hating, as I mortally do, all long unnecessary prefaces, I shall give you good quarter in this, and use no farther apology, than to prepare you for seeing the loose part of my life, written with the same liberty that I led it.

Truth! stark, naked truth, is the word; and I will not so much as take the pains to bestow the strip of a gauze wrapper on it, but paint situations such as they actually rose to me in nature, careless of violating those laws of decency that were never made for such unreserved intimacies as ours; and you have too much sense, too much knowledge of the originals, to sniff prudishly and out of character at the pictures of them. The greatest men, those of the first and most leading taste, will not scruple adorning their private closets with nudities, though, in compliance with vulgar prejudices, they may not think them decent decorations of the staircase, or salon.

This, and enough, premised, I go souse into my personal history. My maiden name was Frances Hill. I was born at a small village near Liverpool, in Lancashire, of parents extremely poor, and, I piously believe, extremely honest.

My father, who had received a maim on his limbs, that disabled him from following the more laborious branches of country drudgery, got, by making nets, a scanty subsistence, which was not much enlarged by my mother's keeping a little day-school for the girls in her neighborhood. They had had several children; but none lived to any age except myself, who had received from nature a constitution perfectly healthy.

My education, till past fourteen, was no better than very vulgar: reading, or rather spelling, an illegible scrawl, and a little ordinary plain work, composed the whole system of it; and then all my foundation in

virtue was no other than a total ignorance of vice, and the shy timidity general to our sex, in the tender age of life, when objects alarm or frighten more by their novelty than anything else. But then, this is a fear too often cured at the expense of innocence, when Miss, by degrees, begins no longer to look on a man as a creature of prey that will eat her. My poor mother had divided her time so entirely between her scholars and her little domestic cares, that she had spared very little to my instruction, having, from her own innocence from all ill, no hint or thought of guarding me against any.

I was now entering on my fifteenth year, when the worst of ills befell me in the loss of my fond, tender parents, who were both carried off by the small-pox, within a few days of each other; my father dying first, and thereby by hastening the death of my mother: so that I was now left an unhappy friendless orphan (for my father's coming to settle there, was accidental, he being originally a Kentisrman). That cruel distemper which had proved so fatal to them, had indeed seized me, but with such mild and favourable symptoms, that I was presently out of danger, and what then I did not know the value of, was entirely unmarked I skip over here an account of the natural grief and affliction which I felt on this melancholy occasion. A little time, and the giddiness of that age, dissipated too soon my reflections on that irreparable loss; but nothing contributed more to reconcile me to it, than the notions that were immediately put into my head, of going to London, and looking out for a service, in which I was promised all assistance and advice from one Esther Davis, a young woman that had beer down to see her friends, and who, after the stay of a few days, was returned to her place.

As I had now nobody left alive in the village, who had concern enough about what should become of me, to start any objections to this scheme, and the woman who took care of me after my parents' death, rather encouraged me to pursue it, I soon came to a resolution of making this launch into the wide world, by repairing to London, in order to seek my fortune, a phrase which, by the bye, has ruined more adventurers of both sexes, from the country, than ever it made or advanced.

Nor did Esther Davis a little comfort and inspirit me to venture with her, by piquing my childish curiosity with the fine sights that were to be seen in London: the Tombs, the Lions, the King, the Royal Family, the fine Plays and Operas, and, in short, all the diversions which fell within her sphere of life to come at; the detail of all which perfectly turned the little head of me.

Nor can I remember, without laughing, the innocent admiration, not without a spice of envy, with which we poor girls, whose church-going clothes did not rise above dowlas shifts and stuff gowns, beplaced with silver: all which we imagined grew in London, and entered for a great deal into my determination of trying to come in for my share of them.

The idea however of having the company of a towns-woman with her, was the trivial, and all the motives that engaged Esther to take charge of me during my journey to town, where she told me, after the manner and style, "as how several maids out of the country had made themselves and all their kind for ever: that by preserving their virtue, some had taken so with their masters, that they had married them, and kept them coaches, and lived vastly grand and happy; and some, may-hap, came to be Duchesses; luck was all, and why not I, as well as another?"; with other almanacs to this purpose, which set me a tip-toe to begin this promising journey, and to leave a place which, though my native one, contained no relations that I had reason to regret, and was grown insupportable to me, from the change of the tenderest usage into a cold air of charity, with which I was entertained, even at the only friend's house that I had the least expectation of care and protection from. She was, however, so just to me, as to manage the turning into money the little matters that remained to me after the debts and burial charges were allowed for, and, at my departure, put my whole fortune into my hands; which consisted of a very slender wardrobe, packed up in a very portable box, and eight guineas, with seventeen shillings in silver, stowed in a spring-pouch, which was a greater treasure than I ever had seen together, and which I could not conceive there was a possibility of running out; and indeed, I was so entirely taken up with the joy of seeing myself mistress of such an immense sum, that I gave very little attention to a world of good advice which was given me with it. Places, then, being taken for Esther and me in the Chester waggon, I pass over a very immaterial scene of leave-taking, at which I droped a few tears betwixt grief and joy; and, for the same reasons of insignificance, skip over all that happened to me on the road, such as the waggoner's looking liquorish on me, the schemes laid for me by some of the passengers, which were defeated by the valiance of my guardian Esther; who, to do her justice, took a motherly care of me, at the same time that she taxed me for the protection by making me bear all travelling charges, which I defrayed with the unmost cheerfulness, and thought myself much obliged to her into the bargain. She took indeed great care that we were not overrated, or imposed on, as well as of managing as frugally as possible; expensiveness was not her vice.

It was pretty late in a summer evening when we reached the town, in our slow conveyance, though drawn by six at length. As we passed through the greatest streets that led to our inn, the noise, of the coaches, the hurry, the crowds of foot passengers, in short, the new scenery of the shops and houses, at once pleased and amazed me. But guess at my mortification and surprise when we came to the inn, and our things were landed and delivered to us, when my fellow traveller and protectress, Esther Davis, who had used me with the

utmost tenderness during the journey, and prepared me by no preceedings signs for the stunning blow I was to receive, when I say, my only dependence and friend, in this strange place, all of a sudden assumed a strange and cool air towards me, as if she dreaded my becoming a burden to her.

Instead, then, of proffering me the continuance of her assistance and good offices, which I relied upon, and never more wanted, she thought herself, it seems, abundantly acquitted of her engagements to me, by having brought me safe to my journey's end, and seeing nothing in her procedure towards me but what natural and in order, began to embrace me by the way of taking leave, whilst I was so confounded, so struck, that I had not spirit or sense enough so much as to mention my hopes or expectations from her experience, and knowledge of the place she had brought me to.

Whilst I stood thus stupid and mute, which she doubtless attributed to nothing more than a concern at parting, this idea procured me perhaps a slight alleviation of it, in the following harangue: "That now we were got safe to London, and that she was obliged to go to her place, she advised me by all means to get into one as soon as possible; that I need not fear getting one; there were more places than parish-churches; that she advised me to go to an intelligence office; that if she heard of any thing stirring, she would find me out and let me know; that in the meantime, I should take a private lodging, and acquaint her where to send to me; that she wished me good luck, and hoped I should always have the grace to keep myself honest, and not bringing a disgrace on my parentage." With this; she took her leave of me, and left me, as it were, on my own hands, full as lightly as I had been put into hers.

Left thus alone, absolutely destitute and friendless I began then to feel most bitterly the severity of this separation, the scene of which had passed in a little room in the inn; and no sooner was her back turned, but the affliction I felt at my helpless strange circumstances, burst out into a flood of tears, which infinitely relieved the oppression of my heart; though I still remained stupified, and most perfectly perplexed how to dispose of myself.

One of the drawers coming in, added yet more to my uncertainty, by asking me, in a short way, if I called for anything? to which I replied innocently: "No." But I wished him to tell me where I might get a lodging for that night. He said he would go and speak to his mistress, who accordingly came, and told me drily, without entering in the least into the distress she saw me in, that I might have a bed for a shilling, and that, as she supposed I had some friends in town (there I fetched a deep sigh in vain!), I might provide for myself in the morning.

It is incredible what trifling consolations the human mind will seize in its greatest afflictions. The assurance of nothing more than a bed to lie on that night, calmed my agonies; and being ashamed to acquaint the

mistress of the inn that I had no friends to apply to in town, I proposed to myself to proceed, the very next morning, to an intelligence office, to which I was furnished with written directions on the back of a ballad, Esther had given me. There I counted on getting information of any place that such a country girl as I might be fit for, and where I could get into any sort of being, before my little stock should be consumed; and as to a character, Esther had often repeated to me, that I might depend on her managing me one; nor, however affected I was at her leaving me thus, did I entirely cease to rely on her, as I began to think, good-naturedly, that her procedure was all in course, and that it was only my ignorance of life that had made me take it in the light I at first did.

Accordingly, the next morning I dressed myself as clean and as neat as my rustic wardrobe would permit me; and having left my box, with special recommendation, with the landlady, I ventured out by myself, and without any more difficulty than can be supposed of a young country girl, barely fifteen, and to whom every sign or shop was a gazing trap, I got to the wished for intelligence office.

It was kept by an elderly woman, who sat at the receipt of custom, with a book before her in great form and order, and several scrolls made out, of directions for places.

I made up then to this important personage, without lifting up my eyes or observing any of the people round me, who were attending there on the same errand as myself, and dropping her curtsies nine deep, just made a shift to stammer out my business to her.

Madam heard me out, with all the gravity and brow of a petty minister of State, and seeing at one glance over my figure what I was, made me no answer, but to ask me the preliminary shilling, on receipt of which she told me places for women too slight built for hard work: but that she would look over her book, and see what was to be done for me, desiring me to stay a little, till she had dispatched some other customers.

On this I drew back a little, most heartily mortified at a declaration which carried with it a killing uncertainty, that my circumstances could not well endure.

Presently, assuming more courage, and seeking some diversion from my uneasy thoughts, I ventured to lift up my head a little, and sent my eyes on a course round the room, where they met full tilt with those of a lady (for such my extreme innocence pronounced her) sitting in a corner of the room, dressed in a velvet mantle (in the midst of summer), with her bonnet off; squat, fat, red-faced, and at least fifty.

She looked as if she would devour me with her eyes, staring at me from head to foot, without the least regard to the confusion and blushes her eyeing me so fixedly put me to, and which were to her, no doubt, the strongest recommendation and marks of my being fit for her purpose.

After a little time, in which my air, person and whole figure had undergone a strict examination, which I had, on my part, tried to render

favourable to me, by primming, drawing up my neck, and setting my best looks, she advanced and spoke to me with the greatest demureness: "Sweet-heart, do you want a place?"

"Yes, and please you," (with a curtsy down to the ground).

Upon this she acquainted me she was actually come to the office herself, to look out for a servant; that she believed I might do, with a little of her instruction; that she could take my very looks for a sufficient character; that London was a very wicked, vile, place; that she hoped I would be tractable, and keep out of bad company; in short, she said all to me that an old experienced practitioner in town could think of, and which was much more than was necessary to take in an artless inexperienced country maid, who was even afraid of becoming a wanderer about the streets, and therefore gladly jumped at the first offer of a shelter, especially from so grave and matron-like a lady, for such my flattering fancy assured me this new mistress of mine was, I being actually hired under the nose of the good woman that kept the office, whose shrewed smiles and shrugs I could not help observing, and innocently interpreted them as marks of being pleased at my getting into place so soon: but, as I afterwards came to know, these Beldams understood one another very well, and this was a market where Mrs. Brown, my mistress, frequently attended, on the watch for any fresh goods that might offer there, for the use of her customers, and her own profit. Madam was, however, so well pleased with her bargain that fearing I presume, lest better advice or some accident might occasion my slipping through her fingers, she would officiously take me in a coach to my inn, where, calling herself for my box, it was, I being present, delivered without the least scruple or explanation as to where I was going. This being over, she bid the coachman drive to a shop in St. Paul's Churchyard, where she bought a pair of gloves, which she gave me, and thence renewed her directions to the coachman to drive to her house in ——— street, who accordingly landed us at the door, after I had been cheered up and entertained by the way with the most plausible flams, without one syllable from which I could conclude anything but that I was, by the greatest luck, fallen into the hands of kindest mistress, not to say friend, that the vast world could afford; and accordingly I entered her doors with most complete confidence and exultation, promising, myself that, as soon as I could be a little settled, I would acquaint Esther Davis with my rare good fortune.

You may be sure the good opinion of my place was not lessened by the appearance of a very handsome back parlor, into which I was led and which seemed to me magnificently furnished, who had never seen better rooms than the ordinary ones in inns upon the road. There were two gilt pier-glasses, and a buffet, on which a few pieces of plate, set out to the most shew, dazzled, and altogether persuaded me that I must be got into a very reputable family.

Here my mistress first began her part, with telling me that I must have good spirits, and learn to be free with her; that she had not taken me to be a common servant, to do domestic drudgery, but to be a kind of companion to her; and that if I would be a good girl, she would do more than twenty mothers for me; to all which I answered only by the profoundest and the awkwardest curtsies, and a few monosyllables, such as “yes! no! to be sure!”

Presently my mistress touched the bell, and in came a strapping maid-servant, who had let us in. “Here, Martha,” said Mrs. Brown, “I have just hired this young woman to look after my linen; so step up and show her her chamber; and I charge you to use her with as much respect as you would myself, for I have taken a prodigious liking to her, and I do not know what I shall do for her.”

Martha, who was an arch-jade, and, being used to this decoy, had her cue perfect, made me a kind of half curtsy, and asked me to walk up with her; and accordingly showed me a neat room, two pair of stairs backwards, in which there was a handsome bed, where Martha told me I was to lie with a young gentlewoman, a cousin of my mistress, who she was sure would be vastly good to me. Then she ran out into such affected encomiums on her good mistress! her sweet mistress! and how happy I was to light upon her! and that I could not have bespoke a better; with other the like gross stuff, such as would itself have started suspicions in any but such an unpractised simpleton, who was perfectly new to life, and who took every word she said in the very sense she laid out for me to take it; but she readily saw what a penetration she had to deal with, and measured me very rightly in her manner of whistling to me, so as to make me pleased with my cage, and blind to the wires.

In the midst of these false explanations of the nature of my future service, we were rung for down again, and I was reintroduced into the same parlour, where there was a table laid with three covers; and my mistress had now got with her one of her favourite girls, a notable manager of her house, and whose business it was to prepare and break such young fillies as I was to the mounting block; and she was accordingly, in that view, allotted me for a bed-fellow, and, to give her the more authority, she had the title of cousin conferred on her by the venerable president of this college.

Here I underwent a second survey, which ended in the full approbation of Mrs. Phœbe Ayres, the name of my tutoress elect, to whose care and instruction I was affectionately recommended.

Dinner was now set on table, and in pursuance of treating me as a companion, Mrs. Brown, with a tone to cut off all dispute, soon over-ruled my most humble and most confused protestations against sitting down with her Ladyship, which my very short breeding just suggested to me could not be right, or in the order of things.

At table, the conversation was chiefly kept up by the two madams and carried on in double meaning expressions, interrupted every now and then by kind assurances to me, all tending to confirm and fix my satisfaction with my present condition: augment it they could not, so very a novice was I then.

It was here agreed that I should keep myself up and out of sight for a few days, till such clothes could be procured for me as were fit for the character I was to appear in, of my mistress's companion, observing withal, that on the first impressions of my figure much might depend; and, as they rightly judged, the prospect of exchanging my country clothes for London finery, made the clause of confinement digest perfectly well with me. But the truth was, Mrs. Brown did not care that I should be seen or talked to by any, either of her customers, or her Does (as they called the girls provided for them), till she secured a good market for my maidenhead, which I had at least all the appearances of having brought into her Ladyship's service.

To slip over minutes of no importance to the main of my story, I pass the interval to bed time, in which I was more and more pleased with the views that opened to me, of an easy service under these good people; and after supper being shewed up to bed, Miss Phœbe, who observed a kind of reluctance in me to strip and go to bed, in my shift, before her, now the maid was withdrawn, came up to me, and beginning with unpinning my handkerchief and gown, soon encouraged me to go on with undressing myself; and, blushing at now seeing myself naked to my shift, I hurried to get under the bed-clothes out of sight.

Phœbe laughed and was not long before she placed herself by my side. She was about five and twenty, by her most suspicious account, in which, according to all appearances, she must have sunk at least ten good years; allowance, too, being made for the havoc which a long course of hackneyship and hot waters must have made of her constitution, and which had already brought on, upon the spur, that stale stage in which those of her profession are reduced to think of showing company, instead of seeing it.

No sooner then was this precious substitute of my mistress laid down, but she, who was never out of her way when any occasion of lewdness presented itself, turned to me, embraced and kissed me with great eagerness. This was new, this was odd; but imputing it to nothing but pure kindness, which, for ought I knew, it might be the London way to express in that manner, I was determined not to be behind-hand with her, and returned her the kiss and embrace, with all the fervour that perfect innocence knew.

Encouraged by this, her hands became extremely free, and wandered over my whole body, with touches, squeezes, pressures, that rather warmed and surprised me with their novelty, than they either shocked or alarmed me.

The flattering praises she intermingled with these invasions, contributed also not a little to bribe my passiveness; and, knowing no ill, I feared none, especially from one who had prevented all doubts of her womanhood, by conducting my hands to a pair of breasts that hung loosely down, in a size and volume that full sufficiently distinguished her sex, to me at least, who had never made any other comparison. I lay then all tame and passive as she could wish, whilst her freedom raised no other emotion but those of a strange, and, till then, unfelt pleasure. Every part of me was open and exposed to the licentious courses of her hands, which, like a lambent fire, ran over my whole body, and thawed all coldness as they went.

My breasts, if it is not too bold a figure to call so two hard, firm, rising hillocks, that just began to shew themselves, or signify anything to the touch, employed and amused her hands awhile, till, slipping down lower, over a smooth track, she could just feel the soft silky down that had but a few months before put forth and garnished the mount-pleasant of those parts, and promised to spread a grateful shelter over the sweet seat of the most exquisite sensation, and which had been, till that instant, the seat of the most insensible innocence. Her fingers played and strove to twine in the young tendrils of that moss, which nature has contrived at once for use and ornament.

But, not contented with these outer posts, she now attempts the main spot, and began to twitch, to insinuate, and at length to force an introduction of a finger into the quick itself, in such a manner, that had she not proceeded by insensible gradations that inflamed me beyond the power of modesty to oppose its resistance to their progress, I should have jumped out of bed and cried for help against such strange assaults. Instead of which, her lascivious touches had lighted up a new fire that wantoned through all my veins, but fixed with violence in that center appointed them by nature, where the first strange hands were now busied in feeling, squeezing, compressing the lips, then opening them again, with a finger between, till an "Oh!" expressed her hurting me, where the narrowness of the unbroken passage refused it entrance to any depth.

In the meantime, the extension of my limbs, languid stretching, sighs, short heavings, all conspired to assure that experienced wanton that I was more pleased than offended at her proceedings, which she seasoned with repeated kisses and exclamations, such as "Oh! what a charming creature thou art! What a happy man will he be that first makes a woman of you! Oh! that I were a man for your sake!" with the like broken expressions, interrupted by kisses as fierce and salacious as ever I received from the other sex.

For my part, I was transported, confused, and out of myself; feelings so new were too much for me. My heated and alarmed senses were in a

tumult that robbed me of all liberty of thought; tears of pleasure gushed from my eyes, and somewhat assuaged the fire that raged all over me. Phœbe, herself, the hackneyed, thorough-bred Phœbe, to whom all modes and devices of pleasure were known and familiar, found, it seems, in this exercise her those arbitrary tastes, for which there is no accounting. Not that she hated men, or did not even prefer them to her own sex; but when she met with such occasions as this was, a satiety of enjoyments in the common road, perhaps, too a great secret bias, inclined her to make the most of pleasure, wherever she could find it, without distinction of sexes. In this view, now well assured that she had, by her touches, sufficiently inflamed me for her purpose, she rolled down the bed clothes gently, and I saw myself stretched naked, my shift being turned up to my neck, whilst I had no power or sense to oppose it. Even my growing blushes expressed more desire than modesty, whilst the candle, left (to be sure not undesignedly) burning, threw a full light on my whole body.

“No!” says Phœbe, “you must not, my sweet girl, think to hide all these treasures from me. My sight must be feasted as my touch. I must devour with my eyes this springing bosom. Suffer me to kiss it. I have not seen it enough. Let me kiss it once more. What firm, smooth, white flesh is here! How delicately shaped! Then this delicious down! Oh! let me view the small, dear, tender cleft! This is too much, I cannot bear it! I must! I must!” Here she took my hand, and in a transport carried it where you will easily guess. But what a difference in the state of the same thing! A spreading thicket of bushy curls marked the full grown, complete woman. Then the cavity to which she guided my hand easily received it; and as soon as she felt it within her, she moved herself to and fro, with so rapid a friction, that I presently withdrew it, wet and clammy, when instantly Phœbe grew more composed, after two or three sighs, and heart-fetched Oh’s! and giving me a kiss that seemed to exhale her soul through her lips, she replaced the bed-clothes over us. What pleasure she had found I will not say; but this I know, that the first sparks of kindling nature, the first ideas of pollution, were caught by me that night; and that the acquaintance and communication with the bad of our sex, is often as fatal to innocence as all the seductions of the other. But to go on. When Phœbe was restored to that calm, which I was far from the enjoyment of myself, she artfully sounded me on all the points necessary to govern the designs of my virtuous mistress on me, and by my answers, drawn from pure undissembled nature, she had no reason but to promise herself all imaginable success, so far as it depended on my ignorance, easiness and warmth of constitution.

After a sufficient length of dialogue, my bedfellow left me to my rest, and I fell asleep, through pure weariness, from the violent emotions I had been led into, when nature which had been too warmly stirred and fermented to subside without allaying by some means or other relieved

me by one of those luscious dreams, the transports of which are scarce inferior to those of waking real action.

In the morning I awoke about ten, perfectly gay and refreshed. Phœbe was up before me, and asked me in the kindest manner how I did, how I had rested, and if I was ready for breakfast? carefully, at the same time, avoiding to increase the confusion she saw I was in, at looking her in the face, by any hint of the night's bed scene. I told her if she pleased I would get up, and begin any work she would be pleased to set me about. She smiled; presently the maid brought in the tea equipage, and I just huddled my clothes on, when in waddled my mistress. I expected no less than to be told of, if not chid for, my late rising, when I was most agreeably disappointed by her compliments on my pure and fresh looks. I was "a bud of beauty" (this was her style), "and how vastly all the fine men would admire me!" to all which my answers did not, I can assure you, wrong my breeding; they were as simple and silly as they could wish, and, no doubt, flattered them infinitely more than had they proved me enlightened by education and a knowledge of the world. We breakfasted, and the tea things were scarce removed, when in were brought two bundles of linen and wearing apparel: in short, all the necessaries for rigging me out, as they termed it, completely. Imagine to yourself, Madam, how my little coquet heart fluttered with joy at the sight of a white lutestring, flowered with silver, scoured indeed, but passed on me for spick and span new, a Brussels lace cap, braided shoes, and the rest in proportion, all second-hand finery, and procured instantly for the occasion, by the diligence and industry of the good Mrs. Brown, who had already a chapman for me in the house, before whom my charms were to pass in review; for he had not only, in course, insisted on a previous sight of the premises, but also on immediate surrendering to him, in case of his agreeing for me; concluding very wisely, that such a place as I was in, was of the hottest to trust the keeping of such a perishable commodity in, as a maidenhead.

The care of dressing and tricking me out for the market, was then left to Phœbe, who acquitted herself, if not well, at least perfectly to the satisfaction of everything but my impatience of seeing myself dressed. When it was over, and I viewed myself in the glass, I was no doubt, too natural, too artless, to hide my childish joy at the change: a change, in the real truth, for much the worse, since I must have much better become the neat easy simplicity of my rustic dress than the awkward, untoward, tawdry finery that I could not conceal my strangeness to. Phœbe's compliments, however, in which her own share in dressing me was not forgot, did not a little confirm me in the first notions I had ever entertained concerning my person; which, be it said without vanity, was then tolerable to justify a taste for me, and of which it may not be out of place here to sketch you an unflattered picture.

I was tall, yet not too tall for my age, which, as I before remarked, was barely turned of fifteen; my shape perfectly straight, thin waisted, and light and free without owing anything to stays; my hair was a glossy auburn, and as soft as silk, flowing down my neck in natural curls, and did not a little to set off the whiteness of a smooth skin; my face was rather too ruddy, though its features were delicate, and the shape was a roundish oval, except where a pit on my chin had far from a disagreeable effect; my eyes were as black as can be imagined, and rather languishing than sparkling, except on certain occasions, when I have been told they struck fire fast enough; my teeth, which I ever carefully preserved, were small, even and white; my bosom was finely raised, and one might then discern rather the promise than the actual growth of the round, firm breast, that in a little time made that promise good. In short, all the points of beauty that are most universally in request, I had, or at least my vanity forbid me to appeal from the decision of our sovereign judges the men, who all, that I ever knew at last, gave it thus highly in my favour; and I met with, even in my own sex, some that were above denying me that justice, whilst others praised me yet more unsuspectedly, by endeavouring to detract from me, in points of person and figure that I obviously excelled in. This is, I own, too strong of self praise; but I should be ungrateful to nature, and to a form to which I owe such singular blessings of pleasure and fortune, were I to suppress, through an affectation of modesty, the mention of such valuable gifts.

Well then, dressed I was, and little did it then enter into my head that all this gay attire was no more than decking the victim out for sacrifice, whilst I innocently attributed all to mere friendship and kindness in the sweet good Mrs. Brown; who, I was forgetting to mention, had, under pretence of keeping my money safe, got from me, without the least hesitation, the driblet (so I now call it) which remained to me after the expenses of my journey.

After some little time most agreeably spent before the glass, in scarce self-admiration, since my new dress had by much the greatest share in it, I was sent for down to the parlour, where the old lady saluted me, and wished me joy of my new clothes, which she was not ashamed to say, fitted me as if I had worn nothing but the finest all my life-time; but what was it she could not see me silly enough to swallow? At the same time, she presented me to another cousin of her own creation, an elderly gentleman, who got up, at my entry into the room, and on my dropping a curtsy to him, saluted me, and seemed a little affronted that I had only presented my cheek to him: a mistake, which, if one, he immediately corrected, by gluing his lips to mine, with an ardour which his figure had not at all disposed me to thank him for: his figure, I say, than which nothing could be more shocking or detestable: for ugly and disagreeable were terms too gentle to convey a just idea of it.

Imagine to yourself, a man rather past threescore, short and ill-made, with a yellow cadaverous hue, great goggle eyes, that stared as if he was strangled; an out-mouth from two more properly tusks than teeth, livid lips, and breath like a Jake's: then he had a peculiar ghastliness in his grin, that made him perfectly frightful, if not dangerous to women with child; yet, made as he was thus in mock of man, he was so blind to his own staring deformities, as to think himself born to please, and that no woman could see him with impunity: in consequence of which idea, he had lavished great sums on such wretches as could gain upon themselves to pretend love to his person, whilst to those who had not art or patience to dissemble the horror it inspired, he behaved even brutally. Impotence, more than necessity, made him seek in variety, the provocative that was wanting to raise him to the pitch of enjoyment, which he too often saw himself baulked of, by the failure of his powers: and this always threw him into a fit of rage, which he wreaked, as far as he durst, on the innocent objects of his fit of momentary desire.

This then was the master to which my conscientious benefactress, who had long been his purveyor in this way, had doomed me, and sent for me down purposely for his examination. Accordingly she made me stand up before him, turned me round, unpinned my handkerchief, remarked to him the rise and fall, the turn and whiteness of a bosom just beginning to fill; then made me walk, and took even a handle from the rusticity of my charms: in short, she omitted no point of jockeyship; to which he only answered by gracious nods of approbation, whilst he looked goats and monkeys at me: for I sometimes stole a corner glance at him, and encountering his fiery, eager stare, looked another way from pure horror and affright, which he, characteristically, attributed to nothing more than maiden modesty, or at least the affectation of it.

However, I was soon dismissed, and reconducted to my room by Phœbe, who stuck close to me, not leaving me alone, and at leisure to make such reflections as might naturally rise to any one, not an idiot, on such a scene as I had just gone through; but to my shame be it confessed, that just was my invincible stupidity, or rather portentous innocence, that I did not yet open my eyes to Mrs. Brown's designs, and saw nothing in this titular cousin of hers but a shockingly hideous person, which did not at all concern me, unless that my gratitude for my benefactress made me extend my respect to all her cousinhood.

Phœbe, however, began to sift the state and pulses of my heart toward this monster, asking me how I should approve of such a fine gentleman for a husband. (Fine gentleman, I suppose she called him, from his being daubed with lace.) I answered her very naturally, that I had no thoughts of a husband, but that if I was to choose one, it should be among my own degree, sure! so much had my aversion to that wretch's hideous figure indisposed me to all "fine gentlemen," and confounded my ideas, as if those of that rank had been necessarily cast in the same mould that he